

CATILIS XXV

July 25th

The Queen is Red

So the Micini tribe held another *Great Meeting* in the *Great Hall* to decide how to rescue their *Great Queen*. I shall leave out any further *greats* in order to save paper, which is becoming expensive since the wasp trouble over in Fleagypt, where it is made.

Now Queen Boudicat spoke up.

“My warriors. I hope you have been busy while I’ve been gone.” The Lords of the Micini cowered at the back of their hall and did not dare to answer.

“Is our army strong and ready for war? I trust that we are ready. But my ears must be deaf. For I cannot hear sword or claw being sharpened.”

There followed a guilty silence. No one dared to open their mouth as the Queen paced up and down the hall like a tiger at the Circus. Stopping next to Mane, she asked:

“Are my eyes blind? For I see no war chariots parked outside my hall?”

At last, the Arch Mewid spoke up:

“They are not yet ready for war with Rome, Queen Boudicat.”

“Not ready?” said the Queen, in mock surprise. “Why not? I would throw myself and my daughters into that pit, rather than live under Roman boot!”

“Your warriors could not decide who would be the leader. And many here are worried about the cost of a war,” said the Arch Mewid.

When she heard this, Boudicat sprang to the far side of the hall, right up to the very edge of the pit. There was a gasp, as some feared she would throw herself in. Instead she smiled and called out:

“Good females of the Micini tribe, come here to me, your sister.” From out of the crowd, came many females, who had been waiting patiently all day whilst the males were arguing. Now they padded over to Boudicat’s side of the hall.

“Tell me sisters,” began the Queen, “who shall lead our army into battle?”

“You of course, Queen Boudicat,” answered a young tabby, no older than the Queen’s youngest daughter. Boudicat smiled, and turning to the males, she roared:

“DID YOU HEAR THAT, WARRIORS?”

Looking up, I saw those warriors trembling. Whether it was with fear or shame, I cannot say. Then suddenly she was calm again. Boudicat walked on until she came to the oldest female in the group. A fat old ginger.

“Listen!” commanded the Queen. And the whole hall fell silent.

“Sister, tell me, who shall pay for this war?”

“The Romans will pay for it,” hissed the old one, “With their blood!”