Cleopatra VII

- **Occupation:** Pharaoh of Egypt
- **Born:** 69 BC
- **Died:** August 30, 30 BC
- **Best known for:** The last pharaoh of Ancient Egypt

Born a Princess

Cleopatra was born a princess of Egypt. Her father was the Pharaoh Ptolemy VII. Cleopatra was smart and cunning growing up. She was her father's favorite child and learned a lot about how the country was ruled from him.

Cleopatra's family had ruled Egypt for 300 years. They were the Ptolemy dynasty that had been established by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great. Even though they ruled Egypt, they were actually of Greek descent. Cleopatra grew up speaking, reading, and writing Greek. Unlike many of her relatives, however, Cleopatra also learned many other languages including Egyptian and Latin.

Her Father Dies

When Cleopatra was eighteen years old her father died. He left the throne to both her and her younger brother, Ptolemy VIII. Cleopatra and her ten-year-old brother were married and were to rule Egypt as co-rulers.

Because she was much older, Cleopatra quickly took control as the main ruler of Egypt. However, as her brother grew older, he began to want more power. Eventually he forced Cleopatra from the palace and took over as Pharaoh.

Julius Caesar and Cleopatra

In 48 BC, Julius Caesar arrived in Egypt. Cleopatra sneaked back into the palace hidden inside a rolled-up carpet. She met with Caesar and convinced him to help her win back the throne. Caesar defeated Ptolemy's army at the Battle of Nile. Ptolemy drowned in the Nile River and Cleopatra became the sole ruler of Egypt.

Cleopatra and Julius Caesar fell in love. They had a child named Caesarion. Cleopatra visited Rome and stayed at one of Caesar's country houses.

Ruling as Pharaoh

Despite her romance with Caesar, Cleopatra wanted Egypt to remain independent of Rome. She built up the Egyptian economy, establishing trade with many Arab nations. She was a popular ruler among the people of Egypt both because she embraced the Egyptian culture and because the country was prosperous during her rule.

Marc Antony

In 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated and Cleopatra returned to Egypt. One of the three leaders to emerge in Rome after Caesar's death was Marc Antony. In 41 BC, Cleopatra and Marc Antony met and fell in love. They also formed a military alliance against another of Rome's leaders, Octavian.

Octavian was the legal heir of Julius Caesar. Cleopatra wanted her son, Caesarion, to be Caesar's heir and to eventually become ruler of Rome. She hoped that Marc Antony could help her achieve this goal.

Fighting Rome

Cleopatra and Marc Antony combined their armies in order to fight Octavian. The two forces met at the Battle of Actium. Antony and Cleopatra were defeated by Octavian and had to retreat to Egypt.

Death

The death of Cleopatra is shrouded with mystery and romance. After fleeing to Egypt, Marc Antony returned to the battlefield hoping to recover and defeat Octavian. He soon realized that he was going to be captured by Octavian. Upon hearing the false news that Cleopatra had died, Antony killed himself. When Cleopatra heard that Antony was dead, she became very sad. She killed herself by allowing a poisonous cobra to bite her.

With Cleopatra's death, Octavian took control of Egypt and it became part of the Roman Empire. Her death brought an end to the Ptolemy dynasty and the Egyptian Empire. She was the last Pharaoh of Egypt.

Interesting Facts about Cleopatra VII

- Cleopatra could speak at least seven languages including Greek and Egyptian.
- She claimed to be the reincarnation of the Egyptian god Isis.
- Marc Antony declared her son Caesarion as the legal heir of Julius Caesar.
- Octavian became the first Emperor of Rome and changed his name to Augustus.
- Cleopatra has been the subject of many movies and plays including the famous 1963 film starring Elizabeth Taylor.

MLA Works Consulted Citation:

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Solutions, June 2015, ducksters.com/history/ancient_egypt/cleopatra_vii.ph.