

# The Last of the Romans

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Publisher: tredition, Hamburg, Germany

ISBN

Hardcover: 978-3-7439-4759-7

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This work is dedicated to my Grandfather,  
Jacob and my parents, the people who have  
always supported my work and my  
continued progress

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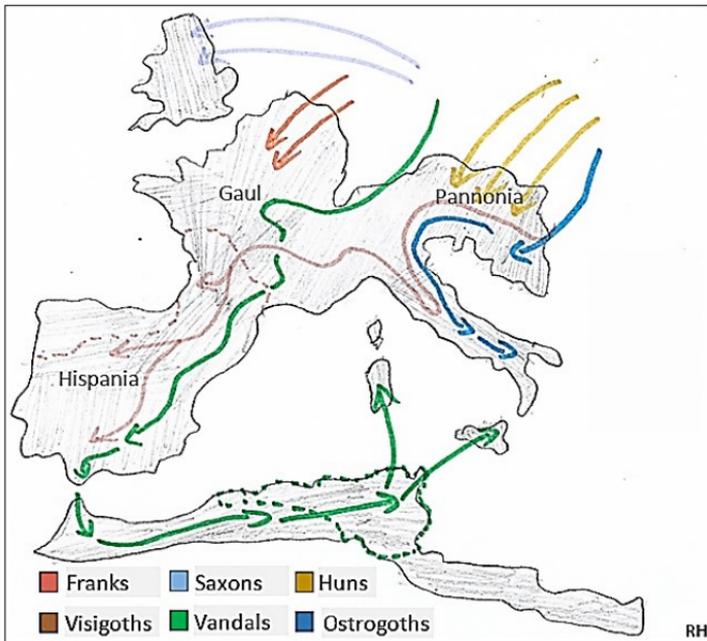
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# Introduction

The West has fallen. The shattered remains of past glory is all that remains. In the year 395, with the death of emperor Theodosius<sup>1</sup>, the Roman Empire was divided. This is the part where my parent's tale turned for the worst. Though the east remains strong, even growing wealthy and powerful, its sibling lay rotting. The western empire began to divide and disappear like smoke. Hispania, the land conquered by Scipio<sup>2</sup> himself, has fallen to the tribe known as the Visigoths. Those treacherous people, who sacked the eternal city<sup>3</sup> herself in 410, they lay claim to Hispania and crown themselves kings. In Gaul, the Franks show up at the horizon. The great general and king, Syagrius<sup>4</sup>, the defender of Rome, is vanquished and

brought to the feet of the Frankish king in chains. The Huns, those savage peoples from the east, the men of the Eternal Sky<sup>5</sup>, ravage the eastern provinces, annexing Pannonia and lay the Romans in their lands under their feet.



Map of the Western Roman Empire showing the migration of the various barbarian nations across the Empire

The great provinces of Africa now face peril. The tribe known to us as the Vandals, take our people captive and sail our own fleet against Rome, sacking it and taking its wealth off to their kingdom in Africa. And yet, the heart of the empire remains. Italy lay in the hands of Romans, the emperor still bears his crown and the populous and Senate are free. But in the year of Our Lord 476, the barbarian general, Flavius Odoacer, rallies our own Rugii<sup>5</sup> and Herulii<sup>6</sup> mercenaries against us, he overthrows the Emperor Romulus Augustulus. Making the Emperor of the west bow at his feet and offer the crown of the Western Empire to this barbarian thug as a gift.



A depiction of Odoacer, the first barbarian King of Italy

Odoacer's reign was short and he himself was thrown away and killed by a savage race of people from the north, the Ostrogoths. Their dirty hand now handle Rome and our heart land of Italy. They enslave our people, making them inferior and submissive to their will.

The East remains free. The light of the world safe from invading hands. And in the center, lies the capital, the queen of the world, protected by the Virgin Mary herself, Constantinople.

Those pesky barbarians tried and failed to take her. Her wealth and power is too tempting for their greedy nature.

My name is Flavius Belisarius.

I was born to my father's house in the year of our lord 505, in the town of Germane in the Province of Thracia<sup>7</sup>. Fortunes stated that my future would be forged in greatness. My life lined with gold and honor, but not without unspeakable tragedy, looking back, I agree.

## Beginning of Greatness

I was always a bright child, never have I faced great challenges in my youth. And yet I was unprepared for life in the East. My mother, what a kind soul, never gave up on teaching me and making me educated beyond belief. As a child, I began to study Latin, that language of antiquity that many of Rome's great minds were fluent in. And so, I began to take up interest in a career. I wanted to be an official. A man of great skill in works of the tongue, yet I am not an aristocrat and not of noble birth. My father saw my frustration and, being my father, he wanted to make me great and successful. He told me to join the army. That was one option I did not know about or take any original interest in.

although I did not believe in it originally, I knew my father's wisdom and that he is right in all sense.

It was summer, the hot Balkan air hit my face. Sweat rolled down my forehead, yet I did not think of it. I was busy occupying myself with preparing by bindle of things to bring along. My mother was crying. She wished to keep her baby boy with her, she remember my youth, as I hugged her and she hugged me in return. How many years have gone by, it is almost hard to imagine. Giving him a last hug and hand shake, I said good bye to my father, and to my mother, I hugged her. A tear rolls down my cheek, as I march off, shield in hand and bindle in the other, I marched off to destiny.

The life of a soldier was one of peril and hardship.



A typical depiction of a fifth century Roman imperial guard

Training was a daily chore that I have come to know and the rough cots and late nights awake had become the norm. I missed my mother. She was always over affectionate and this had never ceased to amaze me. I missed my

father, and how he and I would go hunting in the Moesian country. Yet, this is life and I am a soldier, my life is to serve the Emperor and no one else. My education and competent attitude had served me well. Following my basic training, I began to work to claw my way up the chain of command. I became an expert with the art of the sword, shield and bow and I became an expert cavalry man. I quickly rose through the ranks, beating out all my rivals and competitors. I became a legate and a subordinate to a general whose name I do not recall from my time worn mind. He served me well. He saw my potential and I grew in maturity, skill and agility, not only with the sword or the bow, but with the mind. He was my mentor more than my commander. I became an expert in the art of war and my great achievement

did not go unnoticed. My commander decided that I would be better fit for higher honors. He transferred me to the Palatina Guard, the personal body guards of the Emperor himself. I could not believe that I would go to that sacred city only mentioned in words. That heart of the Empire, Constantinople.

When I finally reached my destination I was greeted by a tall man, shapeless face and thick brow. He walked towards me and asked "Are you Flavius Belisarius?" "Yes" I answered sternly and with no emotion, trying to look tough and fit to serve the Emperor. "Welcome, I am Flavius Manlius, I will be your group leader." He greeted me to my new post with such a warm and compassionate attitude. Never in my short career as a

soldier have I felt so at home such as this.

I served with humility. Never have I boasted or seemed out of placed. Due to my great skills, I managed to quickly rise through the ranks, becoming one of the youngest commanders in the Palatina Guard. During that time, I had the pleasure to meet a man by the name of Flavius Petrus Sabatius Justinianus, I will call him Justinian. He was stern, confident and always boastful. Most importantly though, was the fact that he was the adopted son of the Palatina Guard's commander, a man named Flavius Justin. Justinian soon became aware of my talents and frequently congratulated me in my endeavors. It was a good job to have and just by luck, it served my extremely well.



The Image of the Eastern Emperor, Anastasius I  
Dicorus

In the year 518, the Emperor, Anastasius, who I had the honor to serve, had died childless. Justinian's father, Justin, was paid great sums of wealth, through bribes, by greedy senators who wished to usurp the throne. On Justinian's suggestion, Justin took the bribes he received and used it to woe senators and generals to his side. As Justin had support from the senate, the people, and the army in the great city of Constantinople, he was elevated to the Imperial Purple. Justin worked day and night, securing his

fragile throne and he legitimacy rose in the minds of his courtiers.



The image of the Eastern Emperor, Justin I

Justin ruled fairly, never being selfish or arrogant. He understood the people and knew their wishes. In this way he ruled till his dying breathe, following his beloved wife to the Kingdom of Heaven in the year of our lord, 527. Justinian, my old friend now became my master and commander.



The image of Emperor Justinian I, sovereign of the Eastern Empire

Justinian worked hard, never breaking a sweat as he worked. He worked with a passion and fire never before seen in our long history. He wished to create a grand army for the empire and secure its borders and perhaps even expand it. Yet as Justinian's reign saw some success, dark storm clouds appeared on the horizon. For many years, the Sassanid Empire of Persia was antagonizing Rome. In the past, Romans and Persians frequently clashed in bloody and savage fighting over the land of Syria. Rome wished to

remain its owner as it was a rich and plentiful province, yet this success caused our rival to Persians to become greedy, which eventually led to their surprise attack on the eastern cities of Syria in the year 526. The Sassanid Persians quickly sent a large army under their great general Perozes into Syria, ravaging the land, taking its wealth and enslaving its people. The emperor Justinian I sent the famed eastern legions to harass and fight the invaders. Many great battles were fought, yet we saw little success. In the year Our Lord, 528, the Persians pressed on from the land of Iberia to capture our forts in eastern Lasica. The commander in charge of the Eastern legions fought with great determination, yet he was greatly outnumbered by the Persians. This fact eventually led to a great defeat.

Following this great humiliation, my liege, Justinian, attempted to remedy the deficiencies that were revealed by these Persian successes by reorganizing the eastern legions into two separate armies of the northern and the southern fronts. Giving great consideration to my various skills, Justinian fired the old commander of the eastern legions and decided to appoint me as the commander of the southern Front with a new post at the fortified Syrian city of Dara. He equipped me with a couple legions and sent me off in the spring of that year.

I packed my bags and left my post at Constantinople in early spring, marching east to fight the Persian invaders. We sailed across the Bosphorus strait and landed in Asia Minor. From Nicomedia we began to march east.