

LSS Writing Competition 2019

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As we bear witness to the tumultuous and contentious political happenings of the modern era, it is apposite that we reflect upon the captivating life of Cicero, a tenacious opponent of tyranny and defender of the political institutions and values in which he steadfastly believed...

Cicero stood amid stacks of scrolls and piles of papyri, decades of work regarding the recurrent crises of the Roman Republic. The scrolls documented the extortion of Verres, the corruption of Caesar, and the latest daunting menace to plant itself in the Senate - that festering weed, Marc Antony, who was attempting to choke the Republic and emerge a dictator.

Cicero glanced out the window of his study. '**Iam nox stellata**' he thought to himself. It was time. He gathered his possessions and called to Tiro. One after another, he bade goodbye the few remaining members of his household. They still held the glasses with which they had toasted good fortune an hour earlier, although now they quietly sobbed into their mulsum. Cicero tried to make a joke to lighten the atmosphere. He recounted a trip to a physician which had begun well, but ended badly. The doctor refused payment, asking only for a signed copy of his second philippic. He had merely written 'Dear Dr Clarus' when the man intervened and said he had mistakenly included an 'I' in his name which was, in fact, 'Dr Carus'. Cicero had immediately thought :

'Patientibus carus sed clarus inter doctos'

Alas, nobody laughed and the mood did not shift. **Nolebant consolari.**

Together Cicero and Tiro stepped out of the front door – each knowing, but neither expressing, that it was probably for the last time. Under the cover of darkness, they made their way towards the city gates. As their footsteps echoed quietly down the street, Cicero recollected the events that had led to this moment. Caesar's rise to power. The bribes, the games, the intimation of a rich and easy life. The masses didn't realise, **non nobis amicus verus haec otia fecit.** Then Caesar's shocking demise and the ascension of his pet cat – Marc Antony. Cicero had attempted to stunt his rise to absolute power through the philippics. During the first, Cato had leaned over and whispered in Cicero's ear: 'Take care Marcus Tullius, **leo quaerens quem devoret.**'

For a fleeting moment, he thought that perhaps he should have heeded this advice. Then he might not be a fugitive ex-consul, unceremoniously sneaking out of the greatest city in the world. He departed through the city gates and walked a mile before he stopped to look back. The moon had risen and cast its magnificent light upon the forum. '**O Rus ! Quando te aspiciam!**' he said more to himself than to Tiro. Then he knew he could never regret making a stand against tyranny. The Republic was worth any sacrifice. They marched off together as night descended upon the Curia Julia.