

Greetings to Cousin Yuliana,

I am sending you this letter by way of your father who has delighted us with his presence at our table for a fortnight now. I believe that he will be leaving us shortly, but I hope to be with you before two moons have past. It is unsafe for anybody to travel right now. I can't believe that your mom let you father even come down here! But I guess my father is quite ready to be rid of the confusion and poverty of Rome. I am so glad that your Brother Marcus has taught us how to write and read so we can write each other. I have been practicing privately daily.

But now, Yuliana, I want to tell you some of what has been happening of late. I do not really understand what is going on, but I heard our fathers talking last night and my father said that it appears that Rome is finally collapsing for real. That is why he wants to move us to Britain to be with you, his family. Let me try to explain a bit what has happened since you left us 4 years ago.

As you no doubt remember hearing, Rome was attacked by the Vandals 21 years ago. The damage done by them is no more repaired than when you left, and I believe that it is worse! Just last year, in October, Romulus Augustus became our emperor after our former emperor had been disposed of. I have not yet heard how they got rid of him, though there are many rumors going around. I don't dare tell you any that I have heard. I am sorry, but I must be careful what I write these days. It is also rumored that Romulus Augustulus (as we call him) will be removed from power before too long by Odovacer, leader of the Goths. No doubt you have heard of him.

The trade here has come to a halt. There is little food and no extras for our family and most others. The city is in ruins as I have already said and I rarely see my friend, Camilla. Father is home almost all the time, and we are all constantly scared that something bad will happen. It has been most comforting to have Uncle Marcellus here with us--somebody new to see and talk to you know. I hope this letter finds you and your family well and happy. Pray that we will make it to you safely. I am scared to attempt this venture.

Your loving cousin,

Flavia

Rome, 15 February, A.D. 476