

Asterix the Gaul Study Guide

Asterix the Gaul by René Goscinny

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Plot Summary

Asterix the Gaul is a graphic novel written by Rene Goscinny and illustrated by Albert Uderzo. It relates the adventures of a Gaul warrior named Asterix. Asterix is a small man, but by taking a potion made by the village druid, Getafix, he is very strong and defeats many Romans. This infuriates the Romans, and they yearn to know the secret of his strength. Asterix the Gaul is a highly entertaining and comic graphic novel.

The Romans have conquered all of the Gauls except one village in the northwest. Asterix defeats four Romans who attack him in the woods. When the Romans report their defeat to their leader, Crismus Bonus wonders about the Gauls' strength. Meanwhile, Asterix is in the village and realizes that he needs to take more strength potion. He goes to the village druid, Getafix, to get his dose. Crismus Bonus decides to place a spy in the Gaulish Village to learn the secret to their strength. Caligula Minus is chosen as the spy, dressed as a Gaul, chained and escorted through the woods near the village. Asterix and Obelix hear the Romans approaching. They defeat the Romans and rescue the prisoner, Caligula Minus. The Roman soldiers report the success of their infiltration to Crismus Bonus.

Asterix and Obelix take Caligula Minus to the village where the spy is convinced that there is a secret when he sees the extraordinary strength of the Gauls. Caligula Minus manipulates Getafix into allowing him to try the potion. During a dance, Caligula Minus' mustache is pulled off, and Asterix realizes that the stranger is a Roman spy. Caligula Minus escapes from the Gaulish Village and returns to Compendium where he demonstrates his strength by defeating other guards. He refuses to be cut open so that Crismus Bonus can learn the ingredients in the potion. When the potion wears off, the other Roman guards attack Caligula Minus.

Getafix searches the woods for mistletoes and is captured by the Romans. Crismus Bonus tortures Getafix for the secret, but Getafix simply laughs at him. Asterix worries that Getafix has been gone for a long time and goes to search for the druid. Asterix learns from a merchant that Getafix was captured and convinces the merchant to take him to Compendium. That night, Asterix begins his search for Getafix. First, he overhears Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonicus plotting to use the potion to overthrow Caesar. Then, he finds Getafix's tent and tells the guards he has come to rescue his friend. The alarm is sounded and the tent is surrounded. When Crismus Bonus commands Asterix to surrender, Asterix surrenders. Getafix and Asterix laugh at their plot against the Romans. The next day, Crismus Bonus attempts to torture Asterix to convince Getafix to reveal the secret; the druid agrees. Getafix collects the ingredients but cannot find strawberries. Messengers search for strawberries and some are finally acquired at a great expense and taken to the Gauls. Getafix and Asterix eat the strawberries, saying they need more for the potion. Crismus Bonus begins to cry so Getafix agrees to make the potion now.

No one volunteers to test the potion so they get the merchant to try it. Asterix volunteers to allow the merchant to hit him to test the potion, and he falls over when he is hit,



feigning injury. The merchant leaves, so excited with his new-found strength that he does not notice that his hair is growing rapidly. The Romans drink the potion. Crismus Bonus tests his strength but finds it unimpressive. At his accusations to the contrary, Crismus Bonus is assured that the potion is magical. The Romans are plagued with excessive hair growth and Crismus Bonus offers to release the Gauls if they provide the antidote. Asterix and Getafix collect the ingredients. Getafix makes the antidote and mixes the strength potion for Asterix. The Romans drink the antidote and immediately attack the Gauls; however, Asterix defeats the Romans easily. Roman reinforcements arrive, and Crismus Bonus is summoned to his tent where he finds Caesar waiting for him. When Caesar is taken to see Asterix and Getafix, he learns of Crismus Bonus' treasonous plot. Caesar sentences Crismus Bonus to Mongolia and releases the Gaul as a truce, promising to see them again.



Section 1 (1A-11B)

Section 1 (1A-11B) Summary

Asterix the Gaul is a graphic novel written by Rene Goscinny and illustrated by Albert Uderzo. It relates the adventures of a Gaul warrior named Asterix. Asterix is a small man, but by taking a potion made by the village druid, Getafix, he is very strong and defeats many Romans. This infuriates the Romans, and they yearn to know the secret of his strength. Asterix the Gaul is a highly entertaining and comic graphic novel.

The Gauls have been conquered by Caesar and his Roman invaders. Peace reigns in Gaul between the Gauls and Romans, other than occasional German attacks. There is only one exception: a small Gaulish village in the Northwest region refuses to submit to Caesar and the Romans. Asterix, a brave warrior, hunts in the woods, and four Roman soldiers attack the small man. Asterix defeats the four men. The four Romans report their humiliating defeat to the leader of Compendium, Centurion Crismus Bonus. Crismus Bonus ponders on the superhuman strength of the Gauls, deciding they must have a secret to their extraordinary strength. Asterix relates the tale to his friend Obelix and invites him to eat boar after Obelix finishes his daily delivery route. Obelix points out that the Romans are going to be very angry about being defeated by one man. Asterix is not concerned; as long as he has the druid, Getafix's, potion, the Romans can do nothing to him. Asterix recalls that it is time for another dose of the potion and he and Obelix search for Getafix. Getafix descends from the tree when he is cutting mistletoe with his golden sickle and gives some potion to Asterix. Asterix asks for the recipe, but Getafix refuses to reveal the secret ingredients in the potion. Obelix complains that he is not allowed to partake of the potion also, and Getafix reminds him that because he fell in a cauldron full of the potion as a baby, it would be very dangerous for him to drink any more of the potion. Asterix shakes Getafix's hand as they leave, hurting the druid as he forgets his own magically enhanced strength.

Crismus Bonus yearns to know the secret of the Gauls' strength. He decides to put a spy in the Gaulish Village, but none of the Roman soldiers volunteer for the assignment. The Romans play a game of musical chairs to determine who will be designated the spy. A small man, Caligula Minus, loses, but he refuses to act as the spy on the Gauls. Crismus Bonus execrates threats at the smaller man until he agrees. Back in the Gaulish Village, Chief Vitalstatistix reminds the Gauls to take their potion, because he fears that the Romans have been quiet for too long and will soon launch a new offensive. Obelix is still upset that he cannot drink the potion. Bard Cacophonix arrives, offering to sing his ode on the feats of the Gauls to inspire the warriors, but everyone suddenly becomes very busy and disperses to prevent listening to him. The Romans dress Caligula Minus as a Gaul, chain him, and escort him near the Gaulish Village in order for him to be rescued and infiltrate the Gauls. Caligula Minus laments his duty, wishing he had never joined the guards.



As Asterix and Obelix are walking, Asterix mentions his desire for a fight, followed immediately by the sound of the Romans' approach. Asterix and Obelix hide in a tree. When they attack the Romans, the Romans put up a token show of resistance and are beaten very badly by Asterix and Obelix. The Gauls save the impostor. When asked how he came to be under Roman guard considering all the Gauls except Asterix's village is at peace with the Romans, Caligula Minus explains that he was captured as a spy on his way to see his family. Asterix breaks Caligula Minus' chains. The Roman soldiers report to Crismus Bonus that their spy has infiltrated the Gaulish Village, evidenced by their beaten demeanors. Asterix introduces Caligula Minus to Chief Vitalstatistix and Getafix. As Caligula Minus wanders about the village, he notices the immense strength of all of the Gauls, is convinced that there is a secret to their strength, and determines to find it out for the Romans.

Section 1 (1A-11B) Analysis

This section of the story explains that the Gauls' immense strength is not natural; it is provided by a magic potion that the druid Getafix makes. Asterix's request to know the ingredients shows that Getafix is the only one in the village that knows the ingredients. This foreshadows his being kidnapped. Crismus Bonus' scheme to send a Roman spy to the Gaulish Village to learn the secret of the Gauls' strength foreshadows Caligula Minus' infiltration of the enemy's village. Caligula Minus' refusal to adhere to the determination of the game, as well as his lamentations about his fate and desire to return to Rome, portray him as a weak, cowardly man. Asterix is portrayed as confident and kind by his lack of concern about the Romans' anger and his determination to save the Gaul he sees being manhandled by the Romans. Asterix questions Caligula Minus' story which foreshadows the discovery of the Roman's cover, but Caligula Minus becomes convinced that there is a secret to the Gauls' strength and his determination to find it out foreshadows his discovery of the potion and his escape back to Compendium.



Section 2 (12A-22B)

Section 2 (12A-22B) Summary

Caligula Minus joins Obelix and Asterix at their meal of boar. He tells them that he wants to know why they are so strong. Asterix decides to take Caligula Minus to see Getafix. Caligula Minus asks Getafix about the secret of the Gauls' strength, but Getafix refuses to share the secret with a stranger. Caligula Minus manipulates Getafix by insisting that he will attempt to return home, despite the threats of the Romans and that he will simply blame Getafix if he is captured again. Getafix resignedly agrees to show Caligula Minus the secret and allow him to taste it. When Caligula Minus sees the cauldron full of potion, he plots to steal it for the Romans. He tries the potion and lifts a huge rock. In exhilaration at his new-found strength, he throws the rock in the air, but is pained when it lands on him. Getafix laughingly says that the strength potion does not include invulnerability; that is a different potion and a different story. Chief Vitalstatistix declares that it is time for revelry and a dance begins. The motions are called, and one includes pulling each other's mustaches. When Asterix pulls Caligula Minus' mustache it comes off. Asterix realizes that the stranger is a Roman spy, and the Gauls attempt to catch him. Unfortunately, the potion has made Caligula Minus very strong and fast and he is able to get away. Asterix assures the other Gauls that the spy did not learn much.

Caligula Minus returns to Compendium and informs Crismus Bonus that the Gauls' strength comes from a magic potion. Many of the Roman soldiers mock Caligula Minus, and Crismus Bonus asks for a demonstration. Caligula Minus fights and defeats the other Romans. Crismus Bonus is puzzled as to how to obtain the ingredients for the potion, and one guard suggests cutting Caligula Minus open to learn the ingredients, but Caligula Minus refuses to agree to this solution. Crismus Bonus asks Caligula Minus to hold up a rock to see how long the potion lasts. When the potion finally wears off, Caligula Minus drops the rock, and the other Romans attack him. Crismus Bonus desires to possess the secret to this potion in order to overthrow Caesar and be the emperor of Rome. Back in the Gaulish Village, Getafix needs to pick mistletoe. He refuses Asterix's offer to accompany him. Tullius Octopus captures Getafix and takes him to Crismus Bonus. Crismus Bonus promises that he will allow Tullius Octopus to go to Rome for the circus for his assistance. Getafix refuses Crismus Bonus' requests for the secret potion, and Crismus Bonus tortures Getafix as a means of persuasion. Getafix mocks the Roman Centurion who becomes discouraged.

In the Gaulish Village, Asterix is worried that Getafix has been gone for such a long time. He determines to search for the druid, but Obelix is worried because Asterix has not had any of the strength potion for a long time. Asterix says that he is depending on his own cunning to rescue Getafix. Asterix sees an ox seller on the road to Compendium. The ox seller is upset because he cannot sell his oxen because he needs them to pull his cart for him to be able to get home. Asterix suggests that the ox seller sell his cart and keep his oxen. The ox seller agrees and becomes a cart seller. Asterix asks the merchant if he has seen a druid pass, and the cart seller relates Getafix's



capture. Asterix convinces the cart seller to convey him to Compendium. The cart seller is puzzled when Asterix hides in the hay but cheerfully agrees when Asterix tells him that he plans to play a practical joke on his Roman friends. They reach Compendium, but the cart seller laughs so hard that the guards almost do not let him pass. Luckily one guard recognizes the merchant and permits him to enter the city.

Section 2 (12A-22B) Analysis

Caligus Minus' deception is revealed to the Gauls. Their lack of concern over the spy learning about their potion indicates that the ingredients are very complicated, and the Gauls are sure the Romans will not be able to figure it out. The Romans' betrayal to Caligus Minus when they attack him after the potion wears off conveys the idea that the Romans are treacherous and deceitful. Crismus Bonus' plot to usurp Caesar's position is unveiled, and it becomes clear why he covets the potion so strongly. Getafix is tortured but seems to feel no pain and mocks the Romans. This seems to allude to his earlier declaration to Caligus Minus that he also has an invulnerability potion and that he has likely taken it. Asterix's concern for the druid shows Getafix's importance to the Gauls as well as Asterix's own friendship with Getafix. Asterix tells Obelix that he plans to use his cunning to rescue Getafix, which foreshadows the tricks that he plays on the Romans. The cart seller is portrayed as a dim-witted fool who is easily led into doing whatever he is told. The entrance into Compendium foreshadows Getafix's rescue.



Section 3 (23A-33B)

Section 3 (23A-33B) Summary

Once inside the city, the cart seller is eager to see Asterix's joke, but Asterix tells him that he must wait for night when it will be funnier. When everyone is asleep, Asterix sneaks out of the cart and searches for Getafix. He overhears Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonius plotting to use the strength potion to overthrow Caesar and form a triumvirate. Meanwhile, both men secretly plot against one another. Asterix finds a heavily guarded tent and approaches the guards. He tells them that he has arrived to rescue his friend, the druid. The guards are scared and allow Asterix to pass. One guards the tent, while the other goes for reinforcements. Getafix chides Asterix for the madness of entering Compendium alone. Asterix assures the druid that he has a plan to have fun with the Romans. Meanwhile, the guard tells Crismus Bonus that a Gaul has entered Getafix's tent to rescue the prisoner. Crismus sounds the alarm, and guards surround Getafix's tent. Crismus Bonus demands that Asterix surrender. Asterix exits the tent, throws his arms at Crismus Bonus' feet, and says he surrenders; however, the Romans do not approach the small man until Crismus Bonus threatens them. They bind Asterix in chains. The cart seller sees the chaos and laments that Asterix did not wait for him to see the practical joke. Crismus Bonus threatens to torture Asterix tomorrow for the secret. When the Romans leave them alone, Getafix and Asterix laugh at the stupidity of the Romans and their own plot against them.

The next morning, Crismus Bonus sends for Asterix and Getafix. Asterix tells the Centurion that he does not know the recipe for the potion and Crismus Bonus calls the torturer to convince Getafix to reveal the secret to save his friend. As the torturer ties Asterix to the table, Asterix cries out for mercy, and Getafix agrees to make the potion for the Romans. Crismus Bonus sends escorts into the woods with Getafix to collect the ingredients and holds Asterix as a hostage. Getafix prepares his potion, but he tells Crismus Bonus that he is missing one ingredient: strawberries. It is the wrong time of year for strawberries, but Crismus Bonus sends guards to search for them. The messengers are gone for several days, as Asterix and Getafix joke about their vacation at Caesar's expense. The messengers return without strawberries. Tullius Octopus arrives and says he has bought strawberries at a great expense. Crismus Bonus again promises to send Tullius Octopus to the circus in Rome. Crismus Bonus takes the strawberries to the Gauls and they eat them. They tell the Roman that the strawberries were perfect for the potion; now they need more. Crismus Bonus is so furious that he begins to cry. Getafix calms him and says that he can make the potion without them; it just will not taste as good. The potion is made, but no one is willing to try it. They give it to the cart seller and look for a volunteer to be hit to see if it works. The guards evade Crismus Bonus' request by conversing in Latin. Asterix volunteers and falls to the ground as the cart seller hits him. Getafix is extremely worried about his friend. The cart seller leaves, excited about his new strength, but does not notice that he is growing very hairy. All of the Romans drink the potion.



Section 3 (23A-33B) Analysis

Asterix overhears Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonius plotting against Caesar; this foreshadows the later benefit this knowledge allots him. The two Romans internal plotting against each other shows their utter disloyalty. Asterix portrays his bravery and boldness by his open declaration to the Roman guards that he has come to rescue Getafix. Asterix and Getafix's discussion about having fun with the Romans, followed by Asterix surrendering to the Romans, foreshadows an adventure to come against the Romans. When the torturer comes for Asterix, Asterix begins begging for mercy before the torturer touches him. This is very comic and foreshadows the coming trick on the Romans. The Gauls irritate Crismus Bonus with the strawberries, and Crismus Bonus shows his weakness when he cries over it. The potion being made indicates that the trick on the Romans will have something to do with Getafix's magic. When Asterix falls to the ground after the cart seller punches him, the accompanying illustration makes it evident that it was feigned. The secret of this new potion is revealed when the cart seller leaves Compendium and the illustrations reveals his hair growing longer and longer.



Section 4 (34A-44B)

Section 4 (34A-44B) Summary

Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonius plot against Caesar and ask for the recipe to be written so that they can make more of the potion when they need it. Crismus Bonus decides to test his new strength, but he is only able to lift a small pebble. Marcus Ginantonius points out that this is unimpressive. Crismus Bonus is angry and accuses Getafix of making a non-magical brew. Getafix laughingly promises that the concoction is magical. Asterix and Getafix convulse into laughter as Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonius try to determine what to do to the Gauls. Suddenly, the Romans realize that they are all growing their hair very quickly. Crismus Bonus begs Getafix for the antidote to the hair potion, but Asterix and Getafix decide that they are too tired to make it today and must retire to their tent. When Crismus Bonus trips on his beard, he realizes that he is at the mercy of the Gauls and must strike a bargain with them. He goes to offer them conditions, but is infuriated when he learns of their new game of counting the Romans with beards. Asterix puts on the excessive amount of hair growing on the Romans, amusing Getafix, but angering Crismus Bonus even further. Crismus Bonus offers to release his prisoners if they will make him the antidote. The Gauls are given Roman escorts to travel into the woods and collect the ingredients. Getafix tells Asterix that he agreed to make the antidote so quickly because the hair potion will only last another day. Getafix has an idea though. They return to Compendium to make the antidote but will not let Crismus Bonus watch. Crismus Bonus orders the tent to be heavily guarded.

Getafix concocts the antidote for the Romans in a large cauldron and mixes a small portion of the strength potion for Asterix. The Gauls convey the antidote to the Romans. When Crismus Bonus doubts the validity of the antidote, Asterix drinks it and points out that his mustache is not growing. The Romans drink the antidote, but when their hair stops growing, Crismus Bonus orders the guards to attack Asterix and Getafix. Luckily, Asterix has already drank the strength potion, and he easily beats the Romans. As he and Getafix are leaving Compendium, Roman reinforcements arrive. Crismus Bonus is very arrogant at this point and is sure that the Gauls are defeated. He receives a summons to go to his tent where he finds a cloak laying on his chair. He then hears "Kindly render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and turns to see Caesar sitting near him, angry that no ceremony has been performed to greet him. When Crismus Bonus explains that they have been busily fighting two Gauls, Caesar demands to see the two Gauls that have posed such a problem. Asterix quickly informs Caesar of Crismus Bonus' plot with Marcus Ginantonius to usurp Caesar's empire. Caesar condemns Crismus Bonus and his troops to Mongolia. He releases the Gauls for the service they have performed, but declares that the release is only a truce and he will meet them again.



Section 4 (34A-44B) Analysis

The plot against Caesar further foreshadows Asterix's benefit in using this information against the Romans. Crismus Bonus' inability to lift more than a pebble and his realization that the Romans are very hairy fulfill the foreshadowing that has occurred concerning the joke on the Romans. Even as he acknowledges that he must strike a bargain with the Gauls, he plots against them for when he has accomplished what he wants, showing his untrustworthiness. His irritation at this point allows him to be careless enough for Getafix to make the strength potion in addition to the antidote for the hair potion. The knowledge that the strength potion is made foreshadows Asterix's defeat of the Romans. Possibly, the only surprise is the appearance of the Roman reinforcements, but that is explained when Caesar summons Crismus Bonus. Asterix fulfills many foreshadowing hints when he tells Caesar of the plot against him. Crismus Bonus' condemnation to Mongolia provides the message that wrong begets punishment. Caesar's reminder that releasing Asterix is a truce and they will meet again foreshadows future adventures for Asterix.



Characters

Asterix

Asterix is a Gaul warrior. He is a very small guy, but because he takes Getafix's potion for strength, he is superhumanly strong. Asterix's strength comes from the potion, but his intelligence and cunning come from within him. He is friends with Obelix and Getafix. He is the hero of the story.

Asterix defeats four Roman soldiers single-handedly when he encounters them in the woods. When he sees the Romans leading a Gaul in chains, he rescues the Gaul and defeats the soldiers. Asterix welcomes Caligula Minus into the village and introduces the spy to Chief Vitalstatix and Getafix. He convinces the druid to allow the stranger to try their strength potion. When the Chief declares that it is time for revelry, Asterix dances with Caligula Minus and pulls off the spy's fake mustache. Asterix is unfortunately unable to catch the spy.

When Getafix is gone for a very long time in pursuit of herbs for his potion, Asterix searches for him. He encounters an ox-seller and persuades the man to sell his cart instead. He convinces the new cart-seller to convey him to Compendium in order to rescue Getafix. Asterix boldly walks up to the tent in which Getafix is held hostage and declares that he is here to rescue his friend. When the tent is surrounded by Romans, Asterix surrenders. Asterix and Getafix concoct a scheme to have fun with the Romans. Asterix feigns fear of torture and Getafix agrees to make the potion. When the cart-seller tests the potion, Asterix pretends to be in much pain from the man's punch.

When the Romans grow beards from the hair potion, Asterix mocks them mercilessly. He then assists Getafix in his scheme to cure the Romans and make the strength potion for Asterix. Asterix defeats the Romans until reinforcements come. Asterix earns a reprieve from Caesar when he reveals Crismus Bonus' plot to use the potion to usurp Caesar's throne.

Crismus Bonus

Crismus Bonus is a Roman Centurion and the leader at Compendium. He is deceitful, greedy and treacherous. He is furious when four Roman soldiers are defeated by a single Gaul, and he decides to send a spy into the Gauls' village to learn the secret of their superhuman strength. When the spy returns, Crismus Bonus learns of the strength potion and decides that he must have it. He has Getafix kidnapped and tortures the druid for the recipe. Crismus Bonus plans to use the potion to usurp Caesar's empire. He plots with Marcus Ginantonius to form a triumvirate once Caesar is overthrown.

When Asterix is captured, Crismus Bonus plans to torture the Gaul for information. When he learns that Asterix does not know the secret, the Centurion intends to use him as leverage to convince Getafix to tell him the secret. He becomes very frustrated when



the Gauls eat the hard-to-find strawberries and begins to cry. When Crismus Bonus realizes that Asterix and Getafix have tricked him by making a magic hair potion instead of a strength potion, he is infuriated and must negotiate with the Gauls to get the antidote; however, he secretly plots to capture them after receiving the antidote even though he has promised their freedom. He is surprised when Caesar visits Compendium, but he is at an absolute loss for words when Asterix reveals his treasonous plot to Caesar. His attempts at an explanation are rebuffed by the emperor, and Crismus Bonus is assigned to a position in Mongolia.

Getafix

Getafix is a druid that makes the potion for the Gaul village. He is very cunning and intelligent. When he leaves his home to collect ingredients, he declines Asterix's attendance and is captured. When Crismus Bonus tortures Getafix, Getafix mocks the Centurion. He then plots with Asterix to make fun of the Romans which the pair do quite well. Getafix makes a hair potion for the Romans instead of a strength potion. He laughs as Asterix mocks the Romans. He is granted a reprieve with Asterix for informing Caesar of Crismus Bonus' plot against the emperor.

Caligula Minus

Caligula Minus is an inferior Roman soldier. He is chosen to be the spy on the Gauls when he loses a game of musical chairs. He laments his duty as he is led, in disguise and bound, toward the Gaul's village. He convinces Asterix and Getafix to give him some of the strength potion. When his fake mustache is pulled off by Asterix during a dance, Caligula Minus runs from the Gaul village and returns to Compendium. At Compendium, he gladly fights and defeats the other mocking Roman soldiers, but refuses to allow the Romans to cut him open to discover the ingredients of the potion. When his strength wears out, the Romans attack Caligula Minus and he is not mentioned again.

Obelix

Obelix is Asterix's large friend. He is a delivery guy occupationally and loves to eat boar. He is unable to take Getafix's strength potion because he fell in a cauldron full of the potion when he was a baby, making it dangerous for him to consume any more.

Ox seller

The ox seller is encountered by Asterix on the road to Compendium. He is upset because he is an ox seller but he needs his ox to travel. Asterix suggests that he sell his cart instead. The ox seller becomes a cart seller. When the cart seller tells him that he saw Getafix captured by Romans, Asterix convinces the man to take him to Compendium where the cart seller will be sure to sell his cart. The cart seller is excited



at the aspect of Asterix's practical joke on the Romans. He tries the hair potion first before leaving Compendium. He is not very bright.

Tullius Octopus

Tullius Octopus is a dimwitted Roman soldier. He captures Getafix and finds the strawberries needed for Getafix's hair potion. For these things, Crismus Bonus offers to allow him a holiday to return to Rome and see the circus. Tullius Octopus is very excited at the aspect of getting to go to the circus, exclaiming "Goody goody gumdrops!"

Caesar

Caesar is the Roman emperor who has invaded the Gauls' lands. Crismus Bonus and Marcus Ginantonicus plot against the emperor. Caesar and his troops arrive just as Asterix and Getafix are escaping. He grants the Gauls a truce when he is informed of his Centurions' plans, but he promises to see Asterix again.

Marcus Ginantonicus

Marcus Ginantonicus is Crismus Bonus' second in command. He conspires with Crismus Bonus to usurp Caesar's empire while internally plotting to kill Crismus Bonus and rule alone.

Chief Vitalstatistix

Chief Vitalstatistix is the chief of the Gaul village. He encourages his subjects to consume the potion in order to be able to defeat the Romans.

Cacophonix

Cacophonix is a bard or singer in the Gaul village who no one wants to hear. Everyone runs away as soon as he appears.



Objects/Places

Compendium

Compendium is the Roman stronghold where Getafix is taken when he is captured and Asterix sneaks into by hiding in the cart seller's hay.

Gaulish Village

The Gaulish Village is the last village in Gaul that has resisted Roman occupation. This is where Asterix, Obelix and Getafix live with many other Gauls. The Gaulish Village is surrounded by Roman troops.

Strength Potion

Strength potion is the potion that Getafix concocts for the Gauls to enable them to be superhumanly strong and defeat the Romans

Hair Potion

Hair potion is the potion that Getafix makes for the Romans when they demand he make them the strength potion. It makes their hair and beards grow constantly.

Torture

Torture is Crismus Bonus' persuasion technique for Getafix which does not work. When Crismus Bonus has the torturer tie Asterix, Asterix wails and quakes in fear before the torturer has even finished tying him down. The Gauls use this to trick the Romans

Strawberries

Strawberries are an essential ingredient to the strength potion that Getafix promises to make for the Romans. Unfortunately, they are out of season and it takes day and a lot of money for Tullius Octopus to retrieve strawberries. Asterix and Getafix eat them, declare they are delicious and state that they need more for the potion now.

Boar

Boar is Obelix's favorite meal; he gets very excited when it is served and can never seem to get enough.



Hay

Hay is in the back of the cart seller's cart, and Asterix hides in the hay in order to sneak into Compendium. He tells the cart seller that he is hiding so that he can play a practical joke on his friends, the Romans.

Chains

Chains are tied around Caligula Minus after he is disguised as a Gaulin order to make it appear as though he has been captured. When Asterix rescues Caligula Minus, he breaks the chains with his hands.

Golden Sickle

A golden sickle is what Getafix uses to cut down the mistletoe he uses for the potions. He cuts himself on it when Asterix surprises him.

Musical Chairs

Musical chairs is the game that the Roman soldiers play to determine who will be the spy on the Gauls' village.



Themes

Cunning and Intelligence

Through Asterix the Gaul, much of the action is spurred by Asterix's cunning. When Asterix offers to accompany Getafix on his route to collect mistletoe for the strength potion, Getafix deters him by stating that though his strength comes from the potion, Asterix's intelligence and cunning is all his own, and it would be a great loss to the village if they were to lose Asterix. Asterix proves his agreement with Getafix's statement when he searches for the druid and reassures Obelix's fears that Asterix has not had the potion in a long time, by saying that he plans to use his cunning to find Getafix.

Asterix uses his cunning and intelligence to convince the ox seller to become a cart seller, and when he learns that Getafix has been taken captive, he convinces the merchant that he can make a profit in Compendium in order to get a ride to the Romans' fortress. Asterix hides in the hay and explains this conduct by telling the merchant that he plans to play a practical joke on the Romans. When Asterix finds Getafix, he boldly approaches the guards and tells them he has come to rescue his friend, rather than attacking them or releasing Getafix secretly. He confides in Getafix that he has an idea to have fun with the Romans.

The hair potion is produced and applied to the Romans, an invention of both Getafix and Asterix to irritate and mock their enemy. In the process, they annoy Crismus Bonus even more by demanding strawberries, which are out of season, and then eating the expensively procured fruit. When the hair potion begins its effect, Asterix's puns on hair and beards greatly upsets the Centurion. When the Gauls agree to concoct the antidote, they also fix a batch of strength potion for the Romans, but rather than simply defeating them, they give the antidote to the Romans first, allowing the Romans to think they have a chance. Asterix's final display of his cunning is exhibited when he tells Caesar of Crismus Bonus' plot against his leader, procuring the Gauls' freedom and condemning Crismus Bonus to Mongolia.

Magic

Magic plays an important role in this story. All of the action of the novel is fueled by the magic that takes place. Crismus Bonus is impressed by the strength of the Gauls and determines to learn the source of their strength, convinced that it is magic. In reality, the Gauls' strength is magic, a potion made by the druid Getafix who is the sole being who knows the recipe to create the brew. When Crismus Bonus learns of this potion, he kidnaps the druid and attempts to torture him for the recipe.

When Asterix arrives at Compendium to save his friend, the Gauls agree to make the potion for the Romans. In reality, they concoct a different potion that causes the



Romans' hair to grow continually. Crismus Bonus begs for an antidote, and Getafix agrees to give it to him. Getafix and Asterix prepare the antidote and the strength potion. This enables them to defeat the Romans at Compendium, although reinforcements arrive and it is ultimately Asterix's intelligence that saves the Gauls.

Additionally, when the Roman spy, Caligula Minus, tastes the strength brew, he throws a rock on himself, and Getafix laughingly tells him that he has an invulnerability potion as well. When Getafix is captured and tortured, he mocks the Romans, seemingly feeling no pain. In consideration of his earlier statement to Caligula Minus, it would appear that Getafix doses himself with his own invulnerability brew.

Roman Treachery

Roman treachery is seen throughout Asterix the Gaul. First, when Caligula Minus returns from his assignment as a spy on the Gaulish Village, he is attacked as soon as the potion wears off. The very act of sending a spy to the Gaulish Village is treacherous in itself. Then, Crismus Bonus kidnaps Getafix, an act that seems quite cruel, followed by torture which is inhumane.

Crismus Bonus is driven to learn the ingredients to the potion because of his ambitions to overthrow Caesar and become the emperor of Rome. He plots with his second-in-command, Marcus Ginantonicus, to form a triumvirate after overthrowing their leader. Ironically, even as the two men plot against Caesar, they secretly plot against one another as well. Both Romans desire to be the sole emperor of Rome.

When the Gauls give the Romans the hair potion, Crismus Bonus begs for the antidote, promising to release Getafix and Asterix as payment. Internally, he plans to forfeit his part of the bargain and attack the Gauls as soon as he receives his desire. The entirety of the novel's action occurs because of the Romans' treachery and disloyalty to their leader, Caesar.

Style

Point of View

The point of view for this graphic novel is an omniscient third person narrator. The story is told from a point of view that is distant and distinct from the characters that participate in the action of the plot. There is an approximately equal amount of exposition and dialogue. Most of the story is actually displayed through the illustrations while a small amount of exposition and a small amount of dialogue helps the reader along. Without the illustrations, the reader would be very lost in the plot.

The point of view that is used provides much of the humor of the story since the reader is privy to foreknowledge that the characters do not have. The thoughts of many of the characters, as well as private conversations between certain characters, are provided and help to create anticipation for the plot to unfold. The events are seen from a detached position that does not explicitly inflict judgment on the characters and allows the characters to justify or condemn themselves.

Setting

The setting of Asterix the Gaul is in Gaul, a country that has been invaded by the Romans. It is set in the Middle Ages. In particular, the story takes place in a Gaulish Village in the northwest corner of Gaul that is the sole village that has not surrendered to Roman dominion. It is surrounded by fortified Roman cities that seek to invade it. The city that this installment particularly focuses on is Compendium where Centurion Crismus Bonus is in charge.

The Gaulish Village is ruled by Chief Vitalstatix. It is where Asterix, Obelix, Getafix and the other Gauls live. Compendium is where the Romans, including Crismus Bonus, Marcus Ginantonicus, and Caligula Minus live. Much of the action also takes place in the woods surrounding these two central locations. A little bit of the action occurs on the road to Compendium when Asterix encounters a merchant who informs him that Getafix has been taken prisoner by the Romans.

The majority of the story is spent alternating between Asterix in the Gaulish Village and Crismus Bonus in Compendium. It is common to see Crismus Bonus plotting against the Gauls in Compendium in one strip, while the next strip portrays Asterix laughing at the Romans. After Asterix travels to Compendium to rescue Getafix, most of the action takes place in Compendium, particularly in Asterix and Getafix's tent where they plot against the Romans. The final scene takes place in the Gaulish Village where Asterix and Getafix have returned after Caesar released them. It is the scene of a celebration feast for the Gauls.



Language and Meaning

The language of the graphic novel is very casual. Because most of the story is told through the illustrations, many of the sentences are actually fragments that assist in explaining what is going on exactly in the picture. The language is very conversational, modern day English. There are many cliches and famous quotes that appear throughout the work; for example, toward the end, Caesar tells Crismus Bonus to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." This quotation appears in the New Testament of the King James Version of the Bible, as well as in many other works. Cliches often commonly appear as well.

The language used is very humorous in many places, such as when Asterix refers to the merchant as a "fathead." The Roman guards frequently revert to speaking Latin when they attempt to evade Crismus Bonus' commands that they do not wish to volunteer for. This humorous evasion tactic assists in reminding the reader that these soldiers are Roman, but is mainly just comical. The language that individual characters use portrays their personalities. For example, Tullius Octopus displays his simplicity when he is promised a holiday to see the Roman circus, and he exclaims "Goody goody gumdrops!", not exactly the level of dignity and maturity that is expected from a Roman soldier. Obelix portrays his overbearing hunger in the last sentence of the novel with "I could eat another boar!" Overall, the language used in Asterix and the Gaul is very easy to understand and humorous.

Structure

This short graphic novel is only forty-four pages long. Each page is broken into two strips or sections. The novel is numbered by page and strip, so it ranges from 1A to 44B. Each strip has varying numbers of illustrations or scenes, but they generally contain 6-10 illustrations per strip. The ideas are not broken up dependent upon the strips or pages and one strip may alternate between two or three settings. The plot is simple: Crismus Bonus, a Roman, attempts to learn the secret of the Gauls' strength, and Asterix, a Gaul, attempts to prevent it and save the village's druid, Getafix, when he is kidnapped in an attempt to learn the secret. In the process, Asterix plays tricks on his enemies, the Romans.

The story is quick-paced and linear with no flashbacks. The only reference to history is given in the very beginning of the story with a preface as to the state of the Gauls and Romans. The only event in the story that hints at a flashback is Getafix's reminder to Obelix that he cannot drink the strength potion because he fell in a vat of it as a baby and it would be dangerous for him to drink anymore. The story is very easy to read and understand, as well as very comical.



Quotes

"Here is the potion that makes the drinker invincible. It increases his strength tenfold for a limited period of time." Getafix, 4A

"We've been laying siege to these Gauls for years! They've got a lot of nerve! This morning's provocation is going too far. One against four is no joke! They're making us look ridiculous." Crismus Bonus, 5A

"Couldn't we bring them round and start again?" Obelix, 9A

"Oh, I'm a guide. I show Barbarian tourists round the night life of Lutetia." Caligula Minus, 13A

"No, Asterix, you stay here to guard the village. You get your strength from the potion, but your intelligence and cunning are all your own...it would be a disaster for us to lose you." Getafix, 19A

"Goody goody gumdrops! I'm going to the circus!" Tullius Octopus, 19B

"Is this torture going on much longer? I've got better things to do!" Getafix, 20B

"Huh! I'm relying on my cunning to find the druid." Asterix, 20B

"This fathead will spoil everything!" Asterix, 22B

"We must get the druid's recipe! With it we shall be invincible. We can go to Rome and take over from Caesar! The two of us will form a triumvirate!" Crismus Bonus, 23B

"Do you mind? I've just come to rescue Getafix the Druid. He's a friend of mine." Asterix, 24A

"I lay down my weapon at your feet, Centurion, as our Chief Vercingetorix laid his arms at the feet of your master Caesar! Well, come on, do something! I surrender! I can't hang about all day!" Asterix, 25B

"Mercy! Mercy! I can't stand it! Stop! Mercy!" Asterix, 27B

"We're having a nice holiday at Caesar's expense!" Asterix, 28B

"Come to think of it, those were excellent strawberries."

"Yes, just the sort I need. Go and get me some more." Asterix and Getafix, 29B

"I thought the sky had fallen on my head!" Asterix, 32B

"I've done it! I'm a superman!" Crismus Bonus, 34B

"Let's not split any hairs." Asterix, 37B



"That's our strong point, we're bursting with ideas!" Asterix, 38B

"You think of everything, Roman! Look at my moustache- it's not growing longer!"
Asterix, 41A

"Kindly render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's!" Caesar, 43A

"Crismus Bonus was extremely eager to get hold of the recipe for a magic potion which would have made him invincible, removing all obstacles between himself and the imperial throne." Asterix, 44A

"As for you, in exchange for the service you have rendered me, I grant you your freedom...but this is only a truce, Gaul. We shall meet again!" Caesar, 44B

"I could eat another boar..." Obelix, 44B

Topics for Discussion

Explain how Crismus Bonus displays stupidity in his plan to form a triumvirate with Marcus Ginanotonicus.

Summarize three examples of Crismus Bonus lying.

Describe the merchant's predicament.

How does Asterix use his cunning to rescue Getafix?

Compare and contrast the impressions given of the Gauls and the Romans.

Asterix tells the merchant that he wants to play a practical joke on the Romans. How does he do this?

How is Getafix a heroic character?

How is Caligula Minus a tragic character?