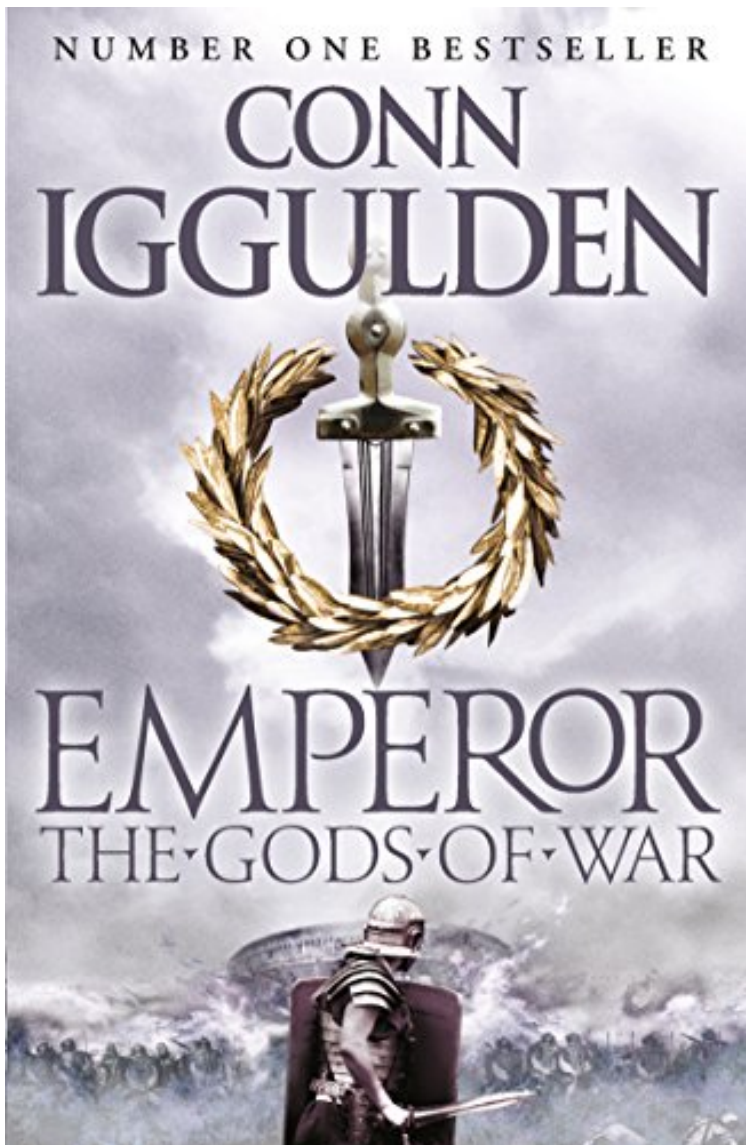


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# Emperor: The Gods of War



*Par Conn Iggulden*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe ultimate Rome storyFresh from triumph in Britain and Gaul, Caesar is marching on Rome with his legions of hardened veterans. To unseat Pompey, now dictator of the Empire, he must make the terrible decision to wage war on his own people.The glory that Julius, Brutus, Mark Antony and Octavian enjoy is short lived. There are lands to conquer and choices to make that may yet tear them apart. What cost will Caesar suffer for the path he has walked? Who will make him pay?The final instalment in the bestselling Emperor series.ExtraitChapter OnePompey pronounced each word as a hammer blow: "Therefore, by his actions, Caesar is today declared Enemy of Rome. His titles and honors are revoked. His right to command legions is struck from the records. His life is forfeit. It will be war."The Senate chamber

was finally still after the storms of debate, the tension showing in every face. The messengers who had killed horses to reach them had no way of knowing the pace of those who followed. The Rubicon line had been crossed and the legions of Gaul were racing south. Pompey had aged visibly over two days of strain, yet he stood before them with a straight back, his experience giving him the strength to dominate the room. He watched as the senators slowly lost their frozen expressions, and saw dozens of them meet each other's eyes in private communication. There were many there who still blamed Pompey for the chaos in the city three years before. It had been his legion that had failed to maintain order then and his Dictatorship that had arisen from that conflict. He knew there were more than a few voices muttering for him to put aside the position and elect consuls once again. The very building in which they sat was a constant reminder, with its smell of fresh lime and wood. The ashes of the old site had been cleared, but the foundations remained as a mute testament to the destruction and rioting in the city. In the silence, Pompey wondered whom he could trust in the struggle. Who amongst them had the strength he needed? He had no illusions. Julius was coming south with four veteran legions and there was nothing in Rome to stand against them. In just a few days, the commander of Gaul would be hammering at the gates of the city and some of the men before Pompey would clamor to let him in. "There are hard choices to be made, gentlemen," he said. They watched him closely, judging his strength, his weaknesses. One slip, he knew, and they would tear him apart. He would not give them the chance. "I have legions in Greece who have not been infected by the enthusiasms of the mob in Rome. Though there may be traitors in this city, the rule of law has not lost its voice in our dominions." How closely he watched them then to see who looked away, but every eye was on him. "Gentlemen, there is no other option but to leave Rome for Greece and gather our armies there. At present, the bulk of Caesar's forces remain in Gaul. Once they join him, the whole country could fall before we have a sufficient presence in the field. I do not wish to lose a race to reinforce. Better to be certain and go to our armies. There are ten legions in Greece waiting for the call to defend against this traitor. We must not disappoint them." If he remains in our city, we will return to tear him out, exactly as Cornelius Sulla did to his uncle. The battle must be joined with him. He has made that clear by ignoring the lawful orders of this Senate. There can be no agreements, no peace while he lives. Rome cannot have two masters and I will not allow a rogue general to destroy what we have all built here. Pompey's voice softened slightly and he leaned forward on the rostrum, the smell of wax and oil strong in his nostrils. "If, through our weakness, he is allowed to live, to triumph, then every general we send out from Rome will wonder if he cannot do the same. If Caesar is not crushed, this city will never know peace again. What we have built will be worn down by constant war over generations until there is nothing left to show that we were once here under the eyes of the gods, and that we stood for order. I defy the man who would steal it from us. I defy him and I will see him dead." Many of them were on their feet, their eyes bright. Pompey barely looked at those he despised, men filled more with air than courage. The Senate had never been short of speakers, but the rostrum was his. "My legion is not up to strength and only a fool would deny the value of the battles in Gaul to his men. Even with the guards from the road forts, we do not have sufficient force to guarantee a victory. Do not think I enter into this lightly. I greet the news with pain and anger, but I will not scorn him from our gates and then lose my city under me." He paused and waved his hand lightly at those who had risen. Confused, they sat down, frowning. "When he comes, he will find this Senate house empty, with the doors broken from their hinges." He waited through the uproar as they understood at last that he did not intend to leave alone. "With his legions raping your wives and daughters, how many of you will stand against him if you are left behind? He will come in looking for blood and will find nothing! We are the government, the heart of the city. Where we are, is Rome. He will be nothing more than a ruthless invader without you to put the seal of law on his words and actions. We must deny him our legitimacy." "The people will think" someone began from the back. Pompey shouted over the voice, "The people will endure him as they have endured all their history! Do you think it would be better to leave you here while I gather an army on my own? How long would you last under torture, Marcellus? Or any of you? This Senate would be his and the final barrier would be overcome." Out of the corner of his eye, Pompey saw the orator Cicero rise and suppressed his irritation. The senators looked at the small figure and then at Pompey, seeing him hesitate. Cicero spoke before he too could be waved down. "You have said little of the communications we sent to Caesar. Why have we not discussed his offer to halt?" Pompey frowned at the nodding heads around him. He sensed they would not stand for a blustering answer. "His terms were unacceptable, Cicero, as he knew they would be. He seeks to drive a wedge between us with his promises. Do you really believe he will end his drive south simply because I have left the city? You do not know him." Cicero folded his arms across his narrow chest, raising

one hand until he could stroke the skin of his throat."Perhaps, though, this is the place to debate the issue. Better to have it out in the open than leave it to be discussed in private. Have you responded to his offer, Pompey? I recall you said you would answer him."The two men locked gazes and Pompey gripped the rostrum more tightly as he struggled not to lose patience. Cicero was a subtle man, but Pompey had hoped he could depend on him."I have done everything I said I would. I wrote under Senate seal to demand he return to Gaul. I will not negotiate while his legions are within striking distance of my city, and he knows it. His words are simply to confuse us and cause delay. They mean nothing."Cicero raised his head. "I agree, Pompey, though I believe all information should be made available to us here." Choosing not to see Pompey's surprise, Cicero turned his head to address the senators on the benches around him. "I do wonder if we are discussing a Roman general or another Hannibal who will be satisfied with nothing less than power torn from our hands. What right does Caesar have to demand that Pompey leave the city? Do we now negotiate with invaders? We are the government of Rome and we are threatened by a mad dog, leading armies we trained and created. Do not underestimate the danger in this. I concur with Pompey. Though it will hurt worse than anything we have suffered before, we must retreat to gather loyal forces in Greece. The rule of law must not bend for the whims of our generals, or we are no more than another tribe of savages."Cicero sat down, after meeting Pompey's eyes with a brief flicker of amusement. His support would sway a number of the weaker ones in the chamber, and Pompey inclined his head in silent thanks."There is no time for lengthy debate, gentlemen." Pompey said. "Another day will change nothing except to bring Caesar closer. I move we vote now and plan accordingly."Under Pompey's stern eye, there was little chance of rebellion, as he had intended. One by one, the senators rose to show their support, and no one dared abstain. At last, Pompey nodded, satisfied."Alert your households and plan for a journey. I have recalled all the soldiers in Caesar's path to the city. They will be here to help man the fleet and arrange our departure."The sun shone on the back of Julius's neck as he sat on a fallen tree in the middle of a cornfield. Wherever he looked, he could see dark patches of his men as they rested amongst the golden crops and ate cold meat and vegetables. Cooking fires had been forbidden as they crossed into the lowlands of Etruria. The wheat was dry and rough to the touch and a single spark could send sheets of flame racing across the fields. Julius almost smiled at the peaceful scene. Fifteen thousand of the most experienced soldiers in the world and he could hear them laughing and singing like children. It was a strange thing to be there, out in the open. He could hear the calls of birds he had known as a boy, and when he reached down and took a little of the leaf mulch in his hand, he was home."It is a fine thing to be here," he said to Octavian. "Can you feel it? I'd almost forgotten what it is like to be on my own land, surrounded by my people. Can you hear them sing? You should learn the words, lad. They'd be honored to teach them to you."Slowly, Julius rubbed the damp leaves together in his hand and let them fall. The soldiers of the Tenth reached a chorus, their voices soaring over the fields."I heard that song from the men who followed Marius, years ago," he said. "These things seem to survive somehow."Octavian looked at his general, tilting his head as he assessed his mood. "I feel...Revue de presseDelightfully entertaining historical fiction. BooklistIggulden is a grand storyteller. USA TodayFrom the Trade Paperback edition.