

Lucius Caecilius Iucundus – A Typical Day

Caecilius gets up at first light and is helped to dress by Creon. Creon is a well-educated Greek slave who takes care of his master's personal needs and also works as his secretary. Creon is about the same age as his master and has belonged to him for 10 years. The two men like and respect each other and have quite a friendly relationship.

After dressing, Caecilius takes breakfast with the rest of his family. Breakfast is a casual, light meal usually eaten standing and consisting of fairly coarse bread, fruit, and water or watered down wine.

The first business of the day is to see any clients who have called at the house to visit Caecilius. Some houses have special stone benches along the walls outside where clients can wait, but Caecilius lets his clients wait in the atrium. They are admitted by another trusted slave called Strabo who is Sicilian. He is Caecilius' steward, and is the most senior of all of the household slaves.

Having met with his clients, Caecilius prepares to go out into the city. Today he is going first to the senate-house where a debate is about to take place and then to the law courts where he is appearing on behalf of one of his clients in a property dispute. He will be accompanied by his secretary, the slave Creon, and by his elder son, Quintus Caecilius. At sixteen, Quintus Caecilius has finished school and is now completing his education by shadowing his father as he goes about his daily business. Learning by example from one's elders is considered a vital part of a young man's education.

Business continues until about midday and then people return home for lunch. Lunch is another casual meal but is slightly more substantial than breakfast. It usually consists of bread, eggs, fish or cheese, nuts and fruit and a drink of water or wine. After lunch there is a choice of leisure activities. Caecilius' favourite pastime is to meet his friends at the baths.

After bathing and exercising in the *palaestra*, Caecilius returns in time for dinner. This evening he and his wife are expecting important guests so they are holding a small dinner party. Attending will be Caecilius and Metella, plus their two eldest children, Quintus Caecilius and Lucia Maior. Their guests will be Lucia's prospective husband and his parents. Lucia Minor is considered too young to attend a formal dinner party, especially since arrangements for the forthcoming marriage will be discussed. The dinner party is causing much excitement among the women of the family and much preparation has gone into it.

Caecilius has spent a lot of time and effort finding a suitable husband for Lucia. The chosen young man is eighteen and is called Sextus Cornelius Calvus. Lucia has only met him a few times but she does like him. Caecilius could make his daughter marry anyone he wanted without taking her feelings into account (such is the power of the *paterfamilias* – the head of the Roman *familia*), but he is quite liberal and wants his daughter to be happy in her new life.

Sextus Cornelius is the son of an old friend of Caecilius so he knows the family well. The marriage is a good match as both families are wealthy and belong to the traditional upper class. It is a marriage of equals.

Their dinner includes a starter of eggs, shellfish, and salad, and is followed by a lavish seven courses including dishes with beans, peas, carrots, eggs, duck, hare, pork, and quails. Sextus Cornelius is particularly impressed by the final, luxurious dish of peacock which was brought in lovingly by the slave Grumio. Dessert of pastry and dates sweetened with honey was followed by wine.

Following dinner, the family and guests are entertained by a troupe of acrobats accompanied by musicians on the flute and lyre. Lucia is secretly disappointed that her mother hadn't organised for a trained leopard to entertain them, but she would never say anything to her father. Caecilius hopes that all the trouble Metella had gone to planning the dinner will mean that Sextus Cornelius is certain to marry Lucia.