

a furious Cleopatra who announces that in order to prove that the Egyptians are still a great people they will build a magnificent palace for Caesar in Alexandria in just three months. An amused Caesar replies that if this unlikely feat is accomplished he will indeed admit that Egypt is still a great nation.

Cleopatra immediately summons Edifis, the best architect in Alexandria ('Which isn't saying much,' admits Cleopatra!), and informs him that he has only three months to build a great palace for Caesar. If he succeeds he will be covered in gold and if he fails he will be thrown to the crocodiles. Edifis is unsurprisingly rather unhappy at this new assignment as it appears to be an impossible task requiring almost supernatural powers. But then he remembers somebody who might be able to

help. None other than his old friend Getafix, the wise druid who lives in the Gaulish village that continues to defy Roman rule. When Edifis travels to the village he receives a warm welcome and Getafix tells him he would be delighted to help as he'd wanted to visit Alexandria again anyway to look up something in the library. Asterix and Obelix (of course) will go too as they all seek to help Cleopatra put one over on Caesar and stop Edifis from being thrown to the crocodiles.

Asterix in Cleopatra has just about everything you could ask from an Asterix book. The story is fun and clever, the art is superb, some great characters are introduced, and the book is consistently amusing and entertaining. The opening pages immediately set up the task that our heroes will be charged with and I love the

way we move from Cleopatra's magnificent palace to the Gaulish village where it's snowing and Asterix and Getafix are playing a game of dice in a cosy hut with a log fire roaring away in the background. The speech by Chief Vitalstatistix as the party prepares to leave is great too. 'You, my friends, are to represent the spirit of Gaul on the banks of the Nile! Show yourselves true-born Gauls, by Toutatis, and may the sky never fall on your heads!' Some lovely art here of ships at sea and a classic encounter with the incompetent Barbe Rouge inspired pirates who always seem to end up scuttling their ship. 'One more classical remark from you and I'll make you eat your wooden leg!'

There are many memorable moments in the book with all the jokes and some wonderful panels that catch the eye. A lovely

lighthouse at night panel ('A tower to guide ships?' ponders Obelix. 'These Egyptians are crazy!') and a great illustration when they approach Alexandria in their sailing ship. Some good visual jokes too when Getafix, Asterix and Obelix visit Edifis at his own (very shoddy and wonky) house and realise he really is a terrible architect. Uderzo's art is a delight in Asterix and Cleopatra and he really makes the most of the location with wonderful interiors and great landscape panels. I really love the panels here when Getafix, Obelix and Asterix are locked inside a pyramid by forces working for Edifis's arch rival Artifis, becoming trapped in the maze like corridors. 'I am very much afraid this might be the end our adventures, by Belenos!' admits Getafix. This section includes something very rare indeed when Getafix, for once, allows Obelix (who fell in the magic

potion as a baby) to drink some magic potion in order to break down a heavy door deep within the pyramid.

We learn here how the Sphinx lost its nose (in typical Asterix style) and there are some nice twists and turns in the story when Caesar tries to interfere in the process. I liked Cleopatra's food taster too, this character providing some good panels, and there is a clever bit when our heroes are framed by a poison laced cake being sent to Cleopatra in their name and Getafix must act quickly with one of his potions. It's great fun to see Getafix have a larger than usual role in the story and he has some good moments here. 'These pyramids built by the Egyptians as tombs constitute one of the wonders of the world!' Getafix tells Obelix as they gaze out at them. 'Magnificent! From the summit of these pyramids twenty