The intricacies of his brooch did nothing to ease his nerves. The dark choppy waters slapped Caesar’s toes accusingly, aggressively. He never had been one for omens, but it was difficult not to interpret some divine warning in the broiling of the clouds, the restlessness of the Rubicon. Carefully, so no-one noticed, Julius curled his toes in the nourishing silt, repressing an ecstatic shudder as peaceable, idyllic memories of infant frolicking in these same waters came to fore, leaving the indefinable ache of loss. What had been won? What had been lost? His torn and conflicting halves grated assiduously. Caesar: the shining hero, Zeus’s bolt, eagle of the Romans, fist of the mighty; Caesar: the coward, half a consul, a lamb bred for slaughter. The parades, the mobs, the cheering, the baying.. How would history remember him? As indecisive, recalcitrant or bloodily victorious, triumphant over bureaucracy? Choices, choices, choices... His wife was barren, his hair was wilting, this last march had wriggled its way into the cracks and crevices of his knees. His back, spiny as a board – how long would that last? Many had laid conquered, begged for mercy at his feet but never time. His prime was water in his fingers, better to burn brighter for years! Than to gutter for decades?! O what a star he’d make! Scorch the obstinate, jowled cats that call themselves the Senate! (How they would yowl ) Enemies would undoubtedly be made, yes, but better a knife in the back than the lectures of the old! He would be untouchable (for a time at least) none would rival him. Julius sniffed hard and the acid-tang of campfires ignited in his throat. Behind him a population of golden, shield-beating faithfuls mingled like an unearthly hive. Yet in a second, they could swarm and plunder. Their loyalty was to one man, and had Caesar not shed blood and slew(ed) with the rest of them? Was he not their voice and guardian? Had he not earned the title of Emperor?! His resolve wound tighter behind his icy eyes as he coolly surveyed the spires and slums of the mother-city. His—every yard of it.

“A yard: the distance from the tip of the king’s nose to the end of his outstretched thumb”

He chuckled, “Veni, Vidi, Vici,” and waded into the Rubicon.