Mad men of history:

Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus Augustus

Commodus reigned as Emperor for 12 years: 180 – 192 AD. In the view of Dio Cassius, a contemporary historian, his reign marked the descent "from a kingdom of gold to one of rust and iron" - a famous comment which has led some historians, notably Edward Gibbon, to take Commodus' reign as the beginning of the decline of the Roman Empire.

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| Commodus | Gladiator’s Commodus |
| Commodus was declared co-emperor with his father, Marcus Aurelius. |  |
| Marcus Aurelius had reigned as a co-emperor with Lucius Verus for a short time. |  |
| Commodus was present during his father’s final victory against the Marcomanni. |  |
| Marcus Aurelius wanted his son to be his heir – he gave him the titles of ‘Imperator’ and ‘Augustus’ with Tribune and Consul powers. |  |
| Marcus Aurelius died on an illness whilst on campaign. |  |
| Commodus had little interest in the running of the state. |  |
| Commodus had five sisters – four with husbands. |  |
| Lucilla (Commodus’ eldest sister) was the widow of Lucius Verus. |  |
| Lucilla engineered a conspiracy against her brother. |  |
| Lucilla’s plan involved her two lovers. |  |
| The plot failed – the lovers were killed. Lucilla was exiled and executed. |  |
| Commodus became more and more tyrannical. |  |
| Commodus modeled himself on Hercules and. After a fire, re-founded the city of Rome as Colonia Commodiana. |  |
| Commodus made frequent appearances as a gladiator – and charged the Romans an appearance fee of 1,000,000 sesterces. |  |
| Commodus enjoyed slaying wounded soldiers in the arena – pretending they were giants. |  |
| Commodus killed 100 lions, 3 elephants, 1 giraffe and an ostrich in one day. He waved the decapitated ostrich head at the senate. |  |
| Commodus was killed by his lover – a gladiator named Narcissus who strangled him in the bath. |  |
| Commodus’ death sparked a period of civil war. The victor, Septimus Severus, became a new emperor. |  |