

THE PILATE VERDICT

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CREDITS RUN

1 EXT. VAST WASTELAND - DAY 1

Two figures slowly cross through the dusty plain.

DISSOLVE TO:

2 EXT. GREEN FIELDS - DAY. 2

The two figures are becoming clear. It is an old man with a donkey whose payload are two large earthen jars.

DISSOLVE TO:

3 EXT. FORREST - TWILIGHT 3

The donkey and the old man pass through the trees. Shafts of light shoot through the branches.

DISSOLVE TO:

4 EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT 4

The traveling pair silhouetted against the moonlight.

EPHARUS

Come on girl, don't slow us down now. We have a very important mission here. We will find water soon. Then we will rest.

The donkey gives a he haw.

MATCH CUTS
BETWEEN THE
DONKEY AND THE
WARHORSE

5 TITLE GRAPHIC - THE PILATE VERDICT 5

6 EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY 6

Warhorse that stands among the scattered bodies of the defeated Samaritans.

SAMARIA 36 AD

Prisoners march tied to one another along the road. As we pass by them, dozens of crucified Samaritans hang on crosses in the distance. A prisoner escapes his captors but is quickly dispatched by a Roman javelin. A Roman chariot rumbles by. The war wagon carries a sole passenger, Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea.

ANNOUNCER

It is six years after the Crucifixion. Tiberius Julius Caesar's reign over Rome has been devastating to its citizens as well as to its senators. Several of its ruling class have been assassinated for merely being seen with the wrong person. Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea, has fallen out of favor with Tiberius Caesar. Pilate has political enemies on all sides. He knows his days are numbered.

The chariot comes to a stop. The Centurion, Cornelius, commander of the praetorian guard, walks through the remnants of the battle. He approaches as Pilate dismounts. Pilate is a fit fifty year old with a wealth of political skill and intuition, but on this day he is feeling the wear and tear of his responsibility.

Cornelius drops to one knee.

CORNELIUS

My Lord, Pilate. We have routed the enemy and await your inspection.

PILATE

How well were they armed?

Pilate takes a long pull on his wine goblet.

CORNELIUS

Armed sir?

PILATE

What kind of heavy weaponry did they have? Chariots? Catapults? Have you recorded any inventory yet?

Cornelius is hesitant and trying to avoid delivering bad news.

CORNELIUS
Sir, there wasn't that much.

PILATE
What do you mean, not that much?

CORNELIUS
They were virtually unarmed.

PILATE
Unarmed?

CORNELIUS
Your critics will turn this
incident against you.

PILATE
To what end? These people only
understand the strength of numbers
against them.

Pilate empties his wine goblet and throws it off screen.

PILATE (CONT'D)
(absently ponders)
Rome would have been just fine
without this forsaken part of the
world in its quiver. These people
will never understand the blessing
of Empire.

7 EXT. CLEMON'S HOUSE - DAY.

7

Birds flush from the bushes that surround a small columned
gazebo with a statue of Hermes in the center. In the
distance, the city scape of ancient Rome.

An attractive woman in her late thirties rushes down the
steps of her home in the upscale section of Rome. She directs
her servants as they scurry around in an effort to please
her. She tries to board the carriage while a servant blocks
her way cleaning the step to the seat.

PORTIA
Stop, stop it, don't waste my time
with such trivia.

SERVANT
I am only doing as I am....

PORTIA
I don't want to miss Clemens'
report to the court.

The servant drops the foot stool and stands at attention.

SERVANT
We are ready, mistress.

PORTIA
(Climbing aboard)
I hope my husband is ready.

8 EXT. ROMAN SENATE - DAY.

8

There is a great deal of activity up and down the steps of the Roman court. Senators and dignitaries pass one another with the same determination as a modern day federal building.

Around the perimeter of this circular room, gaily colored drapes take a bit of the edge off the dour expressions of the senators. A young lawyer, Clemens, sits beside his client Tutia, listening to the plaintiff speak. Clemens is obviously polished and emerges from the equestrian class. He is very shrewd in his defense of his client Tutia, who is accused of defrauding his partner in the shipping business.

Sitting in the center of the court, but not in the chair of Caesar, the presiding senator Domitus speaks with a voice of authority.

DOMITUS
Please explain how this supposed
crime took place.

RITANIUS
For the past eight years, I have
been the captain of the ship
Hespian, carrying grain from Egypt
to Rome. Tutia was the managing
buyer and seller of the grain that
we transported. Our written
agreement states that we will share
the profits equally.

Tutia tugs on the cloak of Clemens.

TUTIA
(whispers to Clemens)
There was never anything in
writing.

CLEMENS

Do not worry. I will take care of everything.

RITANIUS

But these documents demonstrate that while I received payment for grain sold at 25 denarii per measure, Tutia in fact was selling the grain for 40 denary per measure.

Ritanius hands some papers to Senator Domitus who passes them first to Placcus, then to Hadriatus.

DOMITUS

And what do you have to say for yourself in this matter Tutia?

Clemens confidently stands and approaches the court. The senators murmur with obvious approval.

CLEMENS

Honorable court, my client Tutia has asked that I speak in his defense.

Domitus leans back in his chair and smiles.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

It is true that my client Tutia has been in the shipping business for the past few years and that Ritanius was the captain of the ship jointly owned and operated by Tutia and Ritanius. My client also admits to an oral agreement to split the profits of the sales with Ritanius. Under dispute is the legality of the papers you have been given. It is Tutia's contention that those papers are a forgery.

RITANIUS

That is a lie! Tutia knows that those sales contracts are authentic.

CLEMENS

In such matters, it is difficult for the court to know the truth when all one has is the conflicting testimony of two people.

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

However, there is additional evidence that proves conclusively where truth resides in this case.

DOMITUS

We are always in search of truth; please continue.

CLEMENS

Close inspection of government records regarding the sale of grain from the Hispianes shows that in truth, it is Rome that has been defrauded by both of these men. Ship's records repeatedly show the purchase of 3000 measures of grain in Egypt. But Rome has been purchasing 5000 measures upon delivery.

TUTIA

What?! Where did you get that!
What are you doing to me?!

Clemens produces papers and hands them to Domitus. Domitus gives Clemens a knowing look as he takes the papers and hands them to Julian. There is great murmuring in the crowd. In the gallery a young woman smiles with pride.

RITANIUS

(with gritted teeth)

Tutia, you fool! Can you not see what he is doing?

SENATOR JULIAN

It is indeed a grave mistake to defraud Empire! Perhaps this is not a case to be treated in the absence of Caesar.

DOMITUS

On the contrary, this is a case that needs swift justice so that the Emperor not be troubled! It is clear what must be done.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

I agree with Domitus. I call for swift judgment!

SENATORS

Hear, Hear! Judgment!

JULIAN
 (speaking to Domitus)
 And what about Sejanus.

DOMITUS
 He would not act with less severity
 than this court. Clemens the court
 thanks you for bringing the true
 fraud to light. You shall receive
 10,000 denarii from the judgment
 rendered in this court.

Clemens bows in humble thanks.

TUTIA
 (to Clemens)
 You lying cheat. You have double-
 crossed me! Clemens, you will pay!

Tutia is knocked to the floor by the guard with the handle of
 his sword.

DOMITUS
 Ritanius and Tutia, for defrauding
 Rome, this court sentences you both
 to forfeit all property and
 proceeds attached to the Hespian.
 You both are stripped of Roman
 citizenship, and must complete
 eight seasons of labor in the
 Barbarian outlands.

WOMAN IN CROWD.
 (Screaming)
 NO! He will die!

She starts sobbing hysterically

Tutia regains his feet and lunges at Clemens, grabbing him
 from behind.

TUTIA
 You are supposed to be my lawyer

He is immediately restrained by soldiers and escorted from
 the courtroom. Clemens never turns around and acknowledges
 the commotion behind him. He flashes a winning smile.
 Ritanius is dumbfounded as guards escort him from the court.

Portia looks toward, Senator Senius. He smiles at his
 daughter.

From down the long hall leading to the court room he picks up the pace to join the other senators.

SENATOR PLACCUS

He is a talented young man, Senius.

SENIUS

He has quite a future.

Portia grabs her father's arm.

PORTIA

But Clemens owes much to you,
father.

SENIUS

Yes..... I thought I knew who was
using whom when this marriage was
arranged.

Portia gives her father a coy look of shock at the thought that her father was "using" Clemens in marrying off his daughter. They all laugh together. The other two senators move on. Portia stops her father.

PORTIA

We all get what we want in the end,
Father. If only Clemens could
petition before Tiberius.
It would help position him for
Senator.

SENIUS

If he wants to be Senator he must
choose his time wisely

Senius holds his daughter's gaze. There are things that are happening that are only suspicious among the senators.

10 EXT. COAST OF ITALY - MORNING

10

The sun rises over the sands of Campania. An empty carriage floats along on the shoulders of half naked slaves followed by a parade of ornate umbrellas joggled in the air by a variety of occupations from astrology to cleaning the imperial pot.

Out in front by 50 meters a tall, erect man in his mid-sixties, walks briskly through the sand alone, leading the procession.

Further down the beach a half dozen soldiers on horseback gallop at a furious pace toward the old man. The old man stops and watches through inquisitive eyes. The riders come to a halt about 20 meters from white haired man. They all dismount. The leader approaches the distinguished old man, then falls to one knee and salutes.

CENTURION

Princeps first citizen Tiberius Augustus, Emperor of Rome, I bring a scroll of great importance from the senator known as Domitus.

TIBERIUS (chuckles to himself)

Domitus, huh.

Tiberius forces a fiddler crab out of the sand with his toe and absent minded, watches it run into the shallow surf.

TIBERIUS (CONT'D)

These crabs are interesting creatures, centurion.

The centurion is at a loss. A bit nervous he is afraid to look in the direction of the crab.

TIBERIUS (CONT'D)

Look how they shuffle side to side. By instinct they know just when to rush toward the tide. This is all well and good until someone much more powerful forces them out of their hole.

The centurion attempts to break a smile but is not quite sure.

TIBERIUS (CONT'D)

From your cloak I see that you were in the Praetorian Cohort of Esquiline?

CENTURION

(proudly)

Yes, sir.

Tiberius takes time to read the message he has received, then rolls it up again.

TIBERIUS

You must have served under Pontius Pilate.

CENTURION
Not a better man.

TIBERIUS
No, not a better man.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. THE CITY OF CAESAREA ON PALESTINIAN COAST - DAY 11

From a panorama go to cu of Roman Procurator's residence, If he wants to be Senator he must choose his time wisely with Roman soldiers guarding the stairs leading to entrance. The building bears the standards of Caesar above the arched windows.

12 INT. PILATE'S RESIDENCE - JERUSALEM - DAY 12

Through the window of the residence, we see Pilate in a serious conversation with a Centurion.

CU of Pilate.

PILATE
I know, Cornelius, I know. I understand these things better than he thinks.

Cornelius the Centurion stands before Pilate having just delivered news that is obviously unsettling.

CORNELIUS
Is this not what you have been waiting for? A chance for you and Procula to return to Rome? I sense that there is no joy in your voice.

Pilate peeks over the rim of his cup.

PILATE
Tiberius wants me back in Rome not to advance my post but to advance my demise. This is not about protocol with Vitellius. He wants me to believe that the over stuffed General is insulted because I did not consult him about the Samaritan insurrection.

Cornelius stands at attention. He is loyal to Pilate and has some sympathy for his circumstance.

CORNELIUS

But your grace, it is only rumors.

Pilate slowly raises his head.

PILATE

Rumors are all it takes,
Cornelius...- beat - That's all it
takes.

13 EXT. - CLEMENS' HOUSE - NIGHT 13

A four columned home of the equestrian class sits atop a hill overlooking Rome in the moonlight. A glow brightens the sheers over the window.

14 INT. - CLEMENS BEDROOM - NIGHT 14

Portia fixes her hair before bed. Her husband paces behind her. He tries to straighten the handle on an old copper lamp.

PORTIA

You were marvelous today. Everyone was so impressed. You wrapped around the very thing that is most important... the treasury of Rome.

CLEMENS

It was not that difficult to figure out. No one minded the sacrifice of Tutia, nor Ritanius, for that matter. One must always remember that Rome is the true client.

Portia smiles a conspirator's smile.

PORTIA

It will not be long now. The right opportunity in front of the Emperor and a senate seat is yours.

Clemens sets the lamp down, failing to fix the handle.

CLEMENS

Portia, please let it rest. The stars must align too delicately for that to happen.

PORTIA
Do not trust the stars, my dearest,
trust your wife.

CLEMENS
Keep your father out of this.

PORTIA
Oh, all he will do is see to it
that you have an audience. We just
have to find the right opportunity.

CLEMENS
Portia, let me find the client. I
do have some insight-- I am not
helpless in these matters.

Portia seductively drags her scarf around Clemens face,
teasing him.

PORTIA
But I have the perfect choice!

CLEMENS
Who?

PORTIA
I cannot say.

Clemens playfully grabs her.

CLEMENS
Portia, quit playing games with me.

PORTIA
I am not telling!

Clemens tosses her on the bed and begins tickling her. She
begins giggling.

CLEMENS
Portia? Who is it?

PORTIA
Stop!
(more giggling)

She calms herself and with some playfulness says:

PORTIA (CONT'D)
Pontius Pilate.

CLEMENS
Procurator of Judea?

PORTIA

The same.

CLEMENS

He is a condemned man. Tiberius is rolling the heads of anyone who was tied to Sejanus and Sejanus is the one who arranged Pilate's appointment to post.

PORTIA

That is just the point. If you can get Tiberius to exile Pilate instead of pushing him into Zeus' playground, well, who knows, you could be as popular as a winning gladiator. That would mean a great deal of money from Pilate, and the Senate for sure.

CLEMENS

Do you know what happens to gladiators that lose?

Portia moves in close and looks into her husband's eyes.

PORTIA

I would not let you risk anything like that if I were not absolutely sure you would win.

Portia sighs and smiles up at him.

CLEMENS

Besides how would I ever convince Pilate I could save him.

PORTIA

Leave that to me....

15 EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - NIGHT

15

Pilate's reflection emerges from the shadow of a Roman square sail as it moves to the rhythm of the oarman's drum through the moonlit sea. Pilate stands on deck looking out into the ocean contemplating his fate. Behind him a shadowy figure moves silently between the torches. It is Procula, Pilate's wife. She eases up beside her husband. Pilate pours himself another drink.

PROCUA

Lovely evening.

PILATE

I had better enjoy it while I can.
When we get to Rome, the nights
will begin to collapse.

Procula knows he is greatly troubled but she tries to be a
foundation of support.

PROCUA

Now you sound like me projecting
events that have not yet
occurred... that may never occur.

PILATE

Events are occurring Procula as we
speak.

PROCUA

Do not worry, dearest to my heart,
God has a plan for us all.

PILATE

(cynically)
huh... Which god is it today?

Procula smiles and holds him close.

Pilate looks down at her. She is a real puzzle to him.

16 EXT. TIBERIUS PALACE - NIGHT 16

Over the wide shot of the palace we hear Tiberius violently
gagging and hacking with a vengeance.

17 INT. TIBERIUS PALACE - NIGHT 17

Domitus shouts orders as he heads to the Emperor's chamber.
Slaves scurry around in a panic.

DOMITUS

Get the Cushite physician! The
others are just quacks! And where
is that slave with hot wine!?

He makes a meager attempt to kneel on the run as he
approaches the dying Caesar. He tries to hold Tiberius still
as he wails and coughs.

DOMITUS (CONT'D)

I am here now, my sovereign. Calm
yourself.

Tiberius is wild eyed, staring at Domitus in the middle of his convulsions.

DOMITUS (CONT'D)
 (continuing; to the attendants)
 Hold his legs... now take it slow... that's it..

Tiberius' breathing begins to slow and he calms himself to where the death rattle is barely audible.

TIBERIUS
 It grieves me to think that you are the only one to hear this Domitus, so gather some more witnesses.

Domitus trying to cover the obvious jab, smiles.

DOMITUS
 Your whisper is the loud shout of a command to my ears, your worship.

Domitus shoves anyone at hand toward the draped bed.

DOMITUS (CONT'D)
 Come close, nearer; did you not hear him?

TIBERIUS
 Domitus, I had wished my son Marcus would have succeeded me, but with his passing I thought Claudius, along with his brothers, showed promise.

DOMITUS
 They are very talented men, my Caesar.

Domitus hopes to hear his name next.

TIBERIUS
 That is the problem, Domitus. If either one of them - cough - became Emperor, then the people may forget me. So I have chosen Gaius Caligula as my successor - cough -

Domitus can't believe his ears.

DOMITUS
 Caligula?

TIBERIUS

I know you think he is debauched to the point of complete idiocy and I want you to know - cough - you are right.

Domitus exchanges glances with frightened servants and doctors.

TIBERIUS (CONT'D)

If Caligula is Caesar the people of Rome will remember the reign of Tiberius as the good old days. I will be elevated once again in their eyes. - cough, cough-

Domitus is about to explode in anger and disbelief.

TIBERIUS (CONT'D)

- cough - See to it, Domitus, that he becomes Emperor.

Tiberius slips away, leaving Domitus and Rome with the epitome of debauchery. It can be easily read on the face of Domitus.

One of the female slaves wails with grief, falling on the dead Caesar's body. The camera pushes in on a cu of Tiberius.

DISSOLVE TO:

18 INT. BACCHANAL - NIGHT

18

CU Caligula, disgustingly drunk, wails with laughter as he rolls over on to a couple of his concubines. Trays of food and other servants go flying. He kicks with silly giggles, pretending he is swimming.

CALIGULA

I'm swimming in women! I'm swimming in women! Who will join me?

More women pile on his back. Wine splashes across their bodies and the food is ground into the participants as they wallow like pigs.

Domitus makes his way through the bodies and trafficking waiters. He stands near Caligula waiting for a break in the action so that he might deliver the news.

Caligula notices him standing there. He pushes himself up on one elbow.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Oh, Domitus, what brings you back to Rome? It must be important to break you away from slobbering over Tiberius! How is the god of heaven and earth anyway? hee hee

Caligula pushes one of the girls away in a playful romp.

DOMITUS

He is dead. -beat-

CALIGULA

Dead, huh? Fairly strange for a god, don't you think? hee hee

Domitus stands expressionless.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

(continuing;
sarcastically)

Oh, I am sorry. I am supposed to have some sort of grieving going on about this time... well boo who..haha..who..who..who is Caesar now? haha hehe

Domitus' eyes make a slow lizard blink.

DOMITUS

You.

Caligula drops his wine glass.

19 INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

19

C.U. of a sculpted bust of Tiberius being unveiled. The atmosphere is high pomp and protocol. Several priests surround the bust chanting and tossing rose petals that drift down on to the statue. A crowd mills around talking among themselves, not really paying attention but they are in attendance.

Several of the senatorial class stand watching the proceeding whispering the politics of the day. Drapes and curtains with the graphics of Tiberius and the symbols of his historical triumphs.

The high priest of the temple preaches the virtues of Tiberius and his ascension to take his place among the gods of the Pantheon.

HIGH PRIEST

...and the great Tiberius will take his seat in the realm of Zeus, Hermes, Mars, Venus, Augustus...

SENATOR JULIAN

And leave the rest of us to deal with Caligula.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

Tiberius can twist the dagger even from the grave.

Portia and Clemens, accompanying Senius, hear this and know it's true. Clemens is completely deflated.

CLEMENS

Well Portia, it looks like my controversial case before Caesar will rest with Tiberius.

PORTIA

Pilate must still report to Caesar because of the complaint filed by Vitellius, as frivolous as it may be. Opportunity still beckons, my love.

CLEMENS

No one cares anymore with Tiberius gone. No one dares push the treason theory and besides, everyone knows how unpredictable Caligula is.

Portia mulls this over a bit.

PORTIA

The reputation of Caligula may work for us.

CLEMENS

How? Your father is close to him as well?

Portia ignores the private jab.

PORTIA

Caligula is a fool who hates the Jews.

(MORE)

PORTIA (CONT'D)

If you take a position for Pilate that he should be elevated into the higher ranks because of his passionate effort to suppress the Jewish rebels, then the issue will be raised, the talk will ensue, Caligula will act upon his emotion rather than his intellect. Pilate will receive accolades and we will be one step closer to the senatorial class.

Clemens stares at his wife. He doesn't know whether to hit her or kiss her.

CLEMENS

Remind me never to face you in court.

Portia suppresses a coy blush.

20

EXT. DOCKS AT REGHIUM

20

The pier at Reghium is modest, but a great deal of commerce is conducted from small fishing vessels to mighty Roman battleships. On this day though, the transport freighter that carries Pilate and Procula is the largest ship tied to the pier.

Sailors rush around securing the ship. The square mast begins to collapse and several Roman soldiers take their place on deck.

The ship's captain goes to his esteemed guest.

CAPTAIN

Procurator Pontius Pilate, we have landed safely in Rome. It has been an honor to be in your service.

Pilate slips him a small bag of coins.

PILATE

Thank you, captain.

CAPTAIN

We hope that you will sail with us again.

The captain leaves.

Pilate looks out at Rome in the distance.

PILATE
 Procula, it is time to face
 whatever suspicions that Tiberius
 thinks of me.

PROCULA
 Things are never as they seem, my
 husband. If only I could carry
 this burden for you.

PILATE
 You cannot. The gladiator knows
 the consequences of losing before
 he enters the arena. Time to go.
 Force a smile.

PROCULA
 I have no need to force it.

Pilate raises one eyebrow at his wife.

PILATE
 You are a strange woman, Procula.

She smiles and they start off the ship.

21 EXT. DOCKS AT REGHIUM - DAY

21

As they reach the end of the gang plank, Pilate looks around
 the docks. Cornelius stands giving out orders on the
 movement of Pilate's possessions.

PILATE
 Cornelius, have one of the slaves
 find us some transportation into
 Rome.

CORNELIUS
 Procurator, that has already been
 arranged by a solicitor of the
 court, a man named Clemens.

PILATE
 What? Who?

A well dressed slave bows before Pilate.

SLAVE BELLA
 My master, Juris Prudence Clemens,
 wishes your indulgence in the
 offering of his personal carriage
 into Rome;
 (MORE)

SLAVE BELLA (CONT'D)
and the wife of the solicitor,
Portia, offers Procula her home and
private baths for rest after such a
long journey.

Portia and Pilate start to board the carriage.

PROCULA
Portia? The daughter of Senius? It
has been years since I have seen
her. I heard that she married an
equestrian ...Juris Prudence, you
say.... How did she know we were
arriving?

SLAVE BELLA
Your arrival is a big event.
Everyone knows.

PILATE
(under his breath)
The hounds are always out for a
blood-letting.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. CLEMENS HOUSE - DAY

22

The carriage pulls up in front of the house. Portia and Clemens come out of the entry way to greet their guests. Bella makes a fuss with the other slaves about the handling of the baggage.

CLEMENS
Welcome, welcome Pontius Pilate,
Procurator of Judea. I am Clemens
and this is my wife Portia. We
were fortunate in the calculation
of your arrival.

Portia rushes to hug Procula. Procula isn't quite sure why the sudden affection and friendship from an old acquaintance with whom she wasn't all that close in the past.

PORTIA
Procula, it has been so long.

PROCULA
Yes it has.

PORTIA

When I heard you were returning to Rome I told Clemens that he had to meet you and Pilate.

Procula politely smiles and with some obvious aloofness speaks.

PROCUA

It was kind of you to have us met at the dock.

PILATE

Yes indeed. I did not know whether we would be welcomed or hauled off by the Praetorian guard.

CLEMENS

Come in and dine with us. Much has transpired during your voyage

Pilate politely nods his head.

23

INT. CLEMENS DINING ROOM - DAY

23

The room is elegantly designed and illustrates life among the equestrian class-- some art, several servants, and an intimate dining table for four.

CU of a baked pheasant with the feathered head cape and saddle still in place.. travels via a smartly dressed slave to the table.

Dinner conversation is in lively pursuit.

CLEMENS

.....so by turning what once was perceived as a disadvantage into an advantage, we can now petition Caligula to raise your status, your post, and most importantly, your income.

Clemens flashes his shrewd, winsome smile.

Portia grabs his hand in congratulations of their clever scheme.

PILATE

haha.. very good Clemens, very good.

(MORE)

PILATE (CONT'D)

You know, aboard ship, Procula and I never dreamed Tiberius would die and on top of that, appoint Caligula as Caesar.

Slave Bella motions to the plain copper lamp with a bent handle.

SLAVE BELLA

Shall I add some light?

PORTIA

No... Do not light that one. It is so..so... nothing. Ha Ha

Procula smiles courteously.

CLEMENS

There are some very strange things happening in Rome.

PILATE

Wait until you go to Judea! That place is beyond strange!! haha Is that not right, Procula?

Procula politely smiles at her husband's joke.

PILATE (CONT'D)

The Jews always have a prophet or rabbi-- that is what they call their holy men-- performing some trick or cheap magic that gets everyone stirred up.

Procula cuts her eyes toward her husband.

PORTIA

I have heard of such things going on there. Strange cults and the like.

(to Procula)

Were you not afraid?

PROCULA

(coolly)

No, not really.

PILATE

I am reminded of this one story... about six years ago they had this prophet or priest or something they called Jesus. He had the whole lot of them in a frenzy.

(MORE)

PILATE (CONT'D)

On one hand, they called him "King of the Jews" and on the other hand they wanted me to hang him on the cross. This sauce is delicious.

PORTIA

Bella is quite proud of it.

CLEMENS

What did you do?

PILATE

I could find nothing this man had done wrong.

CLEMENS

So you let him go?

PROCUA

(seriously)

No, he crucified him.

Pilate is a bit peeved at Procula.

PILATE

I did not crucify him! His own people crucified him. I just let them use the system to accomplish their goal.

Clemens grins, contemplating the ingenuity of the move.

PILATE (CONT'D)

I thought it might shut them up for awhile.

PORTIA

(ever the flatterer)

That was quite clever.

PILATE

(dismissively)

Yes... clever.

Portia knows she touched a nerve but is confused on how to recover.

PORTIA

(hesitantly)

We have fresh oranges from the South.

Procula smiles in an effort to save her hostess.

PROCULA
Judea is a very strange place.

24 EXT. DESERT - DAY 24

It's pouring down rain. Epharus pulls Naomi's reins to no avail.

EPHARUS
Come on you worthless bag of ticks.

The donkey jerks her head and Epharus slides into the mud. The donkey leans down and nudges Epharus.

EPHARUS (CONT'D)
Oh, now you want me to go.

25 EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY. 25

GRAPHIC
JERUSALEM

Overlooking the Temple grounds, the Court of the Jews with priests and worshippers milling around outside the Holy Place.

26 INT. COURT OF THE JEWISH SANHEDRIN - DAY 26

GRAPHIC: COURT OF THE HIGH PRIEST CAIAPHAS

The Sadducees and Pharisees sit in the draped hall in two semi-circles. In the center a Sadducee and a Pharisee are squared off in an argument.

SADDUCEE
I warned you from the beginning
that killing Jesus would only make
things worse!

From one side of the hall a Pharisee shouts his rebuttal.

PHARISEE
There is no need to cover old
ground again. We cannot change
what has already happened. We must
address the current unrest.

SADDUCEE
You Pharisees are part of the
problem.

(MORE)

SADDUCEE (CONT'D)
 Your lead prosecutor, Saul of
 Tarsus, has become a Jesus follower
 himself!

A general furor erupts in the room before the high priest,
 Caiaphas stands.

CAIAPHAS
 Silence!

The room comes to a quick halt. The arguing Pharisees and
 Sadducees slowly sit. Caiaphas takes a dramatic pause as he
 scans the court.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)
 We must work together on this. We
 cannot allow the Roman authorities
 to think that we are divided among
 ourselves.

SADDUCEE
 But Caiaphas, we obviously are
 divided! The masses are enthralled
 by these Galilean followers of that
 false Messiah. Saul's conversion
 only makes us look more foolish.

PHARISEE
 Our efforts to suppress them by
 imprisonment only seem to make them
 more bold in their speech!

CAIAPHAS
 Enough. We make no progress with
 such arguments. We must convince
 Rome that we are united against
 this rabble. They must understand
 that none of this would have
 happened if their own procurator
 had acted properly in the first
 place!

A Temple guard enters the room and approaches Caiaphas with a
 message. Caiaphas reads it, with growing look of disgust on
 his face. He takes a deep breath to control himself.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)
 We are adjourned for now. I must
 face the "courageous" Idumean
 Herod. Doubtless he too wishes to
 find a scapegoat.

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: THE PALACE OF HEROD ANTIPAS.

CU Gauze being wrapped around Herod's bare foot. Oil is poured on his gout-infected limb by two physicians. Caiaphas stands a meter away spinning a gold chain around his fingers. Herod watches the physicians work as he tries to out-manuever the high priest.

HEROD ANTIPAS

You keep telling me you have this matter under control, and I hear otherwise. Aiii-- Be careful there.... you're nothing but butchers!

CAIAPHAS

Majesty, we have only suffered a minor set-back.
(forcefully)
It is under control, I assure you.

HEROD ANTIPAS

You call this conversion of Saul, your chief prosecutor, a minor set-back? I have to go to Rome and explain this unrest.

Herod screams at his physicians.

HEROD ANTIPAS (CONT'D)

If I EVER WALK AGAIN!

Herod pauses, catches breath and turns back to Caiaphas.

HEROD ANTIPAS (CONT'D)

With Pilate gone, I intend to have charge of all Judea, and the irritation of these Jesus followers will not deter me!

Caiaphas glances at the rotting flesh and moves to an angle so that Herod will have to twist to have eye contact, inflicting just a little more pain on himself.

CAIAPHAS

Yes, majesty. We will arrest Saul ourselves and use his death to prove the ignorance of these pretenders.

HEROD ANTIPAS

You have tried that before, and they only become more numerous. yiii!-- GET AWAY FROM ME!

The physicians cower, retreating.

HEROD ANTIPAS (CONT'D)

No, I believe you are incapable of handling this after all. I have decided to restore your father-in-law to the position of High Priest. Perhaps a change in your leadership will restore some order in Jerusalem.

Caiaphas places his hand on one of the surgeons sissors behind him, clearly wishing to put Herod out of his misery. But he refrains from actually picking it up.

CAIAPHAS

(seething, but controlling his tone)

Yes, majesty; as you wish. But are you sure my people will agree with your decision?

HEROD ANTIPAS

It is the responsibility of you and your father-in-law to see that they do!

CUT TO:

28 EXT. JEWISH SECTOR OF ROME--DAY 28

Traditionally dressed Jewish men and women are filing through a doorway of a building in a modest section of Rome.

GRAPHIC: JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

29 INT. JEWISH SYNAGOGUE - DAY 29

With the men sitting in front and women sitting in back, the congregation is reciting the Shema.

CONGREGATION

..... shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

SYNAGOGUE RULER

Before our departure, brother
Aquila has insisted once more on
speaking to us.

Aquila then rises and stands before the audience.

AQUILLA

My, brothers, you must believe that
God has heard our cries and
answered our heart's desire for
Messiah. But our fathers in
Jerusalem did not understand.

MAN IN CROWD

Sit down, Aquila-- we have been
through this before.

AQUILLA

Why will you not listen? Jesus of
Nazareth was crucified by Pilate at
the instigation of our own corrupt
leaders-- But God raised him from
the dead! He is alive! There are
witnesses.

SYNAGOGUE RULER

Sit down, Aquila!

AQUILLA

Our own Jewish brothers saw him
ascend into heaven.

SYNAGOGUE RULER

Stop spreading lies!

AQUILLA

Just as our prophets foretold!

SYNAGOGUE RULER

Enough!!! We have enough trouble
keeping peace with the Romans
without your stirring the waters of
rebellion.

AQUILLA

But you yourself must know that if
Messiah has come, he is LORD of our
lives. We must obey him, not the
traditions of Jerusalem, and
certainly not a pagan like Caesar!

VOICES FROM CROWD

No more!... Heresy!.... You will
have us all in prison.... Or worse!

30 EXT. ROMAN COURT-DAY 30

A carriage makes its way through the crowded streets. It comes to a stop. The driver dismounts and lowers the step for Portia. She makes her way up the steps of the court.

31 INT. ROMAN COURT-DAY 31

Portia displays greeting smiles as she takes her place in the gallery. Everyone knows her and greets her with respect. She smiles at Clemens who stands in the wings with Pilate. A general makes his report before Caesar.

GENERAL BARONIUS

The intruders have been
exterminated. We suffered very few
casualties and the northern road is
now safe.

Caligula take a bite of a pomegranate. The juice dribbles down his face. He stares at the general. The general stands there dumbfounded waiting for a response. Caligula starts to giggle. The general doesn't know what to make of it. Caligula laughs out loud.

The senators begin to laugh to support Caligula. The general thinks it's best that he join in.

Clemens cuts his eyes toward Pilate.

All of a sudden in a schizophrenic rage, Caligula throws the fruit hitting the general in the temple.

CALIGULA

(screams)

You fool!! You come into this court
and boast of killing a few
Barbarians when the Jews are
disrupting everything in the city.
Where did they come from, why are
they here anyway?!? The road east
is full of Hebrew bandits. We do
not have an army. We have a band of
whining nurse maids.

GENERAL BARONIUS

But your.....

Caligula starts throwing cups, dishes, anything loose within grabbing distance at the general.

CALIGULA
Get out of my sight! Get out!!
Get out!!

The general scurries out. The senators cower not knowing what's going to happen next.

Caligula turns on his heels toward one of the senators and glares at him. The senator blinks in fear. Suddenly Caligula softens his expression.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)
(continuing; sullenly)
Who is next?

DOMITUS
Pontius Pilate, your worship.

Domitus eyes the Emperor.

Pilate's eyebrows arch.

CALIGULA
Oh, there is a next case-- how unfortunate...

Suddenly Caligula becomes light-hearted.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)
Could I have another one of those blue mushrooms?
(giggle)

A servant scurries away.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)
Well.... on with it.

A court speaker steps forward. The senators stand.

32 INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

32

COURT SPEAKER
Hail Caesar and the Roman Empire
over which his reign as supreme and
omnipotent god over all....

Uninterested, Caligula dips his blue mushroom in the sauce.

COURT SPEAKER (CONT'D)
... citizens that live beneath the
rule of the Emperor. May his name
forever live. Hail Caesar!

SENATORS
(collectively)
Hail Caesar!

The senators sit.

COURT ANNOUNCER
(continues)
Pontius Pilate, Procurator of
Judea, reports to the court of the
Emperor. As his advisor and chosen
Juris Prudence, Clemens sets forth
the report and the presentation of
Pilate. Hail Caesar!

Clemens and Pilate step into the center of the courtroom's
floor.

CLEMENS
Hail Caesar!

Caligula leans over to Domitus.

CALIGULA
What is this about?

DOMITUS
Just a routine report from the East
by one of your governors.

CALIGULA
Oh, very well.

Caligula spears another mushroom.

CLEMENS
I will be brief and not indulge the
Senate and your worship in
meaningless detail. During Pontius
Pilate's 10 year service to Rome in
the East, he has kept peace among
the people of Judea, suppressing
Jewish and Samaritan uprisings, and
soliciting even greater allegiance
to Caesar. The collection of taxes
has been consistent, and any
threats to the state by myriad
Jewish factions have been rooted
out with swift judgment.

CALIGULA

(impressed)

Maybe we should have Pontius Pilate take care of the Jewish problem we have here in the city.

The senators mumble in "yes men" approval.

CLEMENS

This is a post that would be a great honor to the governor and he declares that he would be vigilant in the execution of his duties.

The senators chuckle among themselves at the play on words.

Portia smiles with pride.

Domitus doesn't like how this is going.

CALIGULA

A man with Pilate's experience in such matters needs a title and compensation that is equal to the task, that is if such a task can be achieved efficiently.

Clemens turns on the charm.

CLEMENS

Pontius Pilate will be returning to your worship in search of new challenges before the leaves begin to turn in the summer palace gardens.

33 INT. COURT - DOMITUS REBUTTAL

33

Pilate thinks Clemens may be getting carried away with his victory. Domitus sees nothing but a new challenger to his position in the court of Caesar. He slowly rises, dramatically clearing his throat.

DOMITUS

Lord Caesar, let me be the first to congratulate the Procurator on the fine job he has done in Judea, but there are a few rumors, which I am sure are without foundation, that this esteemed body of servants to Rome would like cleared up.

Clemens glances back at Pilate.

Portia straightens in her seat.

DOMITUS (CONT'D)

Here in Rome there has been a growing current of unrest among our Jewish residents. Their infighting threatens the peace in our great city.

CLEMENS

(interrupts)

And Pontius Pilate would dispatch such matters with ease.

DOMITUS

Yes, I am sure he would. But the fact still remains that the Jews who congregate in these cults within this very city do so in the name of a fanatic named Jesus. They are causing a great deal of talk that is unfavorable to my Lord Caesar himself.

CLEMENS

Surely you are not suggesting that the honorable Procurator has any connection to such unrest.

DOMITUS

It has been said that this Jesus was executed by your client the Procurator some six years ago, but the effort was left undone. None of the followers were executed. By Pilate's incompetence, this rebel became a martyr. Suddenly we have problems with Jews throughout Empire. Even here in Rome!

Clemens quickly collects his thoughts.

Pilate watches Domitus like a hawk.

CLEMENS

Whatever the source of the Jewish problems in Rome, I assure you that Pontius Pilate was neither the instigator or was even tolerant of any such activities.

Domitus turns, addressing the whole Senate.

DOMITUS

Pontius Pilate was negligent and incompetent. He neither handled the execution of Jesus quickly and efficiently, nor did he rid the state of his followers. This is common procedure when it comes to combating rebel factions.

Several glances between the senators shoot around the room.

Pilate is extremely uneasy.

CLEMENS

With all due respect Domitus, neither I nor this court need to be reminded of the process.

DOMITUS

Well, someone needed to remind your client.

CLEMENS

This man's record stands for itself! His reputation is without flaw or damage.

DOMITUS

Clemens, you yourself are trying to damage the good name of this Senate by trying to make us look like fools.

CLEMENS

By no means am.....

DOMITUS

(no stop)

How dare you propose that we endorse and fund Pontius Pilate to abolish the Jewish problem when it is he who is responsible for it from the first!

The senate clamors, shouting in angry agreement.

SENATE

Yes! What is the idea of this!?
He is the cause, not the cure!
(etc.)

Caligula spits out a grape pit.

Portia, embarrassed, tries to slip away from the balcony.

28 Clemens looks dead into Pilate's eyes. Pilate is cold steel.

34 INT. COURT HALLWAY - DAY 34

Portia clips down the hall trying to exit without any contact. She runs into Senator Hadriatus turning the corner.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

Portia, what is the hurry my dear..
the fun is just beginning!

PORTIA

To what amusement are we referring?

SENATOR HADRIATUS

Do not take it so personally. Your
horse has just stumbled a bit.

The senator makes a slight chuckle. Portia smiles (a facade).

PORTIA

Well "my horse," Senator Hadriatus,
has not even made the first turn
yet. I believe your amusement may
become even more enriched as you
watch the events unfold.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

(good natured)
I am sure I will.

PORTIA

Do not get too close though. That
horse may run right over you.

Portia snaps her head and struts off.

The senator blinks at how intense Portia is and shrugs it off.

CUT TO:

35 INT. PILATE'S QUARTER'S - DAY 35

ECU Pilate's finger flicks his ring with the Roman seal. It spins on its edges. The ring travels across the glossy surface of the table. Pilate bites his tongue in controlled rage as the young lawyer batters him.

CLEMENS

Why did you not tell me about this
Jesus character?

PILATE

I did.

CLEMENS

When?

PILATE

At dinner, the first night we were
here.

CLEMENS

You acted as if that was nothing, a
minor incident. From what Domitus
says, this Jewish Christ is the
basis for the growing trouble
through Empire.

PILATE

It was nothing!!

CLEMENS

Well it is something now!

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

If Domitus can prove you bungled
this Jesus matter, then blame the
birth of the Jesus-cults on you, do
you know what they will do to you?

Pilate is unaffected, battle-hardened in such matters. He
spins his ring again, then lazily raises one eye.

PILATE

A lot less than Tiberius would have
done.

CLEMENS

How can you be so indifferent?

PILATE

So you say.

CLEMENS

What?

PILATE

Nothing.... just something that
once was spoken to me.

The ring spins off the table and clinks across the floor. Pilate doesn't bother to pick it up.

36 EXT. DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT - NIGHT 36

A couple of senators stumble out past the guards on each side of the door. A passerby cranes his neck to see who's inside. He is watched by the guards. This is obviously a first class den.

37 INT. DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT - NIGHT 37

It's the usual collection of politicians and bureaucrats that populate such haunts. Domitus makes his way through the crowded room. Some lounge in pillowed booths with an extra share of female companionship. Others consume the flavor of the day, but all congratulate Domitus for his performance in court that day as he runs the gauntlet of praise.

SENATOR PLACCUS

Quite a show, Domitus.

DOMITUS

Your praise is always cherished, Senator.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

Clemens was so arrogant and sure of himself. You left him speechless!
haha

DOMITUS

The best is yet to come.
(after gulping a drink)
Never under-estimate the cunning of my colleague. He always serves himself first!

SENATOR HADRIATUS

Yes, indeed!

SENATOR CASSIUS

It looks bad for old Pilate.

DOMITUS

Here, drink up. They are on me.

The pals begin to crowd around Domitus.

SENATOR PLACCUS
 Without Pilate around, this Jewish
 problem would undoubtedly fall
 under your responsibilities.

Domitus glances shyly, as though with regret.

DOMITUS
 This will be a burden I must bear,
 if it comes to that. If only Pilate
 had followed protocol-- quick
 execution of the leader AND the
 sympathizers. I do not think the
 Procurator can wash his hands of
 the trouble he is in.
 (haha)

Senator Hadriatus raises his glass.

SENATOR HADRIATUS
 To the victor go the spoils.

They all toast Domitus, laughing together.

38 INT. PORTIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

38

ECU. A coin splashes into a half full wine glass. Clemens sits on a stool, the wine glass on the floor between his feet. With his head down he drops another coin into the glass. He's trying to think but Portia wants to thrash this thing out.

PORTIA
 Laughing! That is what Hadriatus
 was doing in the hall. His face
 was not moving, his old lizard
 tongue was not wagging, but he was
 laughing all right and he was
 laughing at me because of you!

Another coin drops in the wine goblet.

PORTIA (CONT'D)
 How can you take a simple procedure
 of a report on activities in Judea
 or Palestine or whatever they call
 it and turn it into an all out
 fight with Domitus..... maybe he
 is right... maybe Pilate is
 incompetent.

CLEMENS

I did not know about the Jesus incident. It came out of nowhere. Pilate should have warned me.

He drops another coin in.

PORTIA

Warned you! You are the clever lawyer. You are supposed to be the one with all the brains. You looked the part of the fool, today, not Pilate. You should have been prepared.

(beat)

No matter, I suppose... I shall just have to work on this myself.

CLEMENS

Calm yourself. I have an idea.

PORTIA

It is a bit late for "ideas". It is time for someone to act!

Clemens stares at her, not really seeing her.

CLEMENS

I will be back later.

Clemens jumps up, knocking over the wine cup. He grabs the plain copper lamp with the bent handle on his way out. Portia is furious. She screams for the servant.

PORTIA

Bella!!

39

EXT. ROMAN STREETS - NIGHT

39

The streets are dark and deserted except for a few beggars meandering around in the moonlight. It is a small business section of Rome, in which houses are also obvious store fronts. Clemens roams the street; the lamp lights the way. He is looking for something, some connection to the Christian cults. A number of people are milling around in the streets. A prostitute steps from the darkness in front of a wandering Clemens. She smiles, then kisses him. He seems relaxed with this gesture.

PROSTITUTE

My dear Clemens, where have you been hiding? Not with my rivals, I hope.

CLEMENS
Syntyche, I am on other business
tonight.

Syntyche pulls him closer.

SYNTYCHE
I know the only business you are
interested in.

Clemens eases her back.

CLEMENS
Do you know where I can find any of
the Jews that call themselves
Christians?

SYNTYCHE
I do not take a census... Jews,
Gentiles.... they are all the same
to me.

CLEMENS
They are not the same to the
Emperor.

SYNTYCHE
Really? I heard he did not care
what form his pleasure took. ha ha

Clemens gently smiles, and wanders deeper into the darkness.
As he makes his way through the streets. He stumbles over a
blind beggar and his ratty dog, who sit against a building.
The dog yelps at Clemens.

BEGGAR
You are a Roman guard?

CLEMENS
No, a citizen in search of the
Jewish Messiah cult. Do you know
where any of these people meet?

Clemens senses the beggar knows.

BEGGAR
Why do you seek them?

CLEMENS
I want to know more. I want to
know more about their leader. This
Jesus...

BEGGAR

(smiles)

Everyone should know of him. They say he heals the sick and blind. The followers of Jesus have been kind to me.

Clemens kneels down next to the beggar. He slips a coin into his hand and says:

CLEMENS

Tell me, old man, where are they so that I may hear about him, too.

The old man smiles.

40

EXT. MODEST HOUSE--NIGHT

40

CU A hand knocks on the door. No one responds. Clemens knocks a little louder. The door cracks. A strong looking face peers out. He surveys the caller.

CLEMENS

Do not be alarmed. My name is Clemens. I am council to the court of the Senate. I am not here to harass or persecute anyone or reveal any secrets held by your people.

AQUILLA

You have the wrong house.

CLEMENS

I seek only knowledge of the one the Jews call Christ.

Aquilla is taken back a bit.

AQUILLA

Why do you seek this knowledge?

CLEMENS

To protect the one I defend in Caesar's court.

Aquilla looks over Clemens again.

AQUILLA

(hesitantly)

I am compelled to impart the story of Jesus regardless of who asks.

Aquilla eases the door open and lets Clemens in.

41 INT. ROMAN COURT HALLWAY

41

Clemens and Pilate walk through the shadows toward the court. In the background we hear the court speaker is half way through his repetitious introduction.

COURT SPEAKER

....omnipotent god over all
citizens that live beneath the rule
of the Emperor, may his name...

PILATE

Personally, I think you are out of
your mind. You sound more like my
wife than my lawyer.

CLEMENS

It is the only strategy. We have
to make it seem that the actions
you took or did not take, six years
ago, were reasonable and were in
the best interest of Rome at the
time.

PILATE

This had better work or I will
carve you up for Caligula's
amusement right out there on the
senate floor.

Clemens hears the "Hail Caesar" and steps out into the center of the Senate Rotunda.

CLEMENS

Hail Caesar!
(with a little too much
enthusiasm)
I have come before this...
honored...body...of..

Clemens looks around and there is no Caligula to be found. The senators sit with a straight face as if nothing is wrong. An empty chair sits where Caligula is supposed to reside over court.

42 INT. COURT - CALIGULA MISSING

42

Clemens collects himself.

CLEMENS

Honored body of Roman law and those
senators who preside..

A giggle comes from behind the short wall in front of the throne. Clemens is a bit confused. A young girl of about 16 jumps up with her clothes half ripped off her. She giggles again as a hand reaches for her. She scampers off.

Caligula stumbles up, very disheveled, with a sheer over his head. His back is to Clemens. Caligula calls out to the girl.

CALIGULA

ha ha I cannot play that game
anymore. I have to listen to some
stupid lawyer.

Clemens shuffles around not really knowing how to react. He tries to start again.

CLEMENS

Honorable body of...

CALIGULA

(words slurred)
The only honorable body in this
room just left! ha ha

The senators laugh like they think that was funny.

Caligula flops down in his chair.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Now what were you saying?

Pilate lazily closes his eyes in a slow blink.

Undaunted, Clemens pushes on.

CLEMENS

If I could indulge the senate with
a modest observation.

Caligula waves his hand in approval as he picks through the food tray.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

Throughout Empire, Rome has
tolerated the religion and customs
of the various peoples that prosper
under Caesar's rule. These people
have many gods.

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

Egypt has Isis and Horas, and Persia has Mithras, Asia has Artemis. Even here in Rome we have never opposed the desires of the people to increase the Pantheon when new gods were made known to us. The Pax Romana continues because of our shared conviction that a god is personified in Caesar... Gaius Caligula.

Caligula grins. He likes this god talk when he's included.

Pilate listens warily, not knowing whether this is going to work or not.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

These gods are the emotional foundation of a conquered people. And Caesar Augustus as well as the senate, during his time, were wise enough to realize what turmoil it would cause if Rome disrupted these central beliefs. Rome wants taxes more than it want converts. This strategy has worked over the generations.

43 INT. COURT - CLEMENS

43

DOMITUS

I do not see what the gracious deeds of Augustus have to do with your client.

CLEMENS

In truth, a great deal. It was in accordance with the pattern already established, that Pontius Pilate correctly and shrewdly made the right decisions in the execution procedure of the rebel called Jesus. He was allowing the Jewish people to maintain their faith convictions.

DOMITUS

If he acted so correctly why do we have all of these cult followers?

Clemens smiles at Domitus.

CLEMENS

So that you might understand, Domitus, there are many factious elements among the Jews. One such group chose to believe that this Jesus was martyred and became a god. The beliefs offer no threat as long as allegiance to Caesar is maintained and taxes are collected.

DOMITUS

Did you say that a dead Jew became a god?

CLEMENS

He has become such to many of the Jewish populace.

DOMITUS

That is ridiculous.

CLEMENS

Why do you find that so unusual? We Romans make such claims for the now departed Tiberius as well as the living Emperor!

Caligula grins once more with the thought of his own deity.

44

INT. COURT - CHALLENGE

44

Domitus can read this one.

DOMITUS

Very true without slightest objection.

CLEMENS

Well then.. the reason that Pontius Pilate handled the whole affair with gentle but clever political manipulation was to avoid a full out rebellion. To satisfy the politicians of Judea he crucified Rabbi Yeshua. To keep the sect leaders quiet, he put a sign on the cross--"King of the Jews." It really was all quite harmless to Rome.

DOMITUS

Harmless! It sounds much like foolish incompetence!

Caligula looks puzzled.

Mumbling filters through the court.

CLEMENS

The Jews were divided over this leadership. On one hand, you had the establishment and on the other you had these Jesus followers. Loyalties were split. A civil war in Judea or anywhere in the empire cuts the collection of taxes and disrupts the economic stability. Avoiding the catastrophe was Pilate's sole ambition.

DOMITUS

If Pilate's ambition was avoiding disruption of empire, his actions failed miserably!

CLEMENS

He sought to appease the leaders among the Jews but also give a token recognition to those who thought their king was this mild mannered man from Galilee. My client took every precaution to pacify the varying beliefs of the masses.

45 INT. COURT - VARYING BELIEFS

45

Caligula is staring off, completely bored with the whole proceeding. Unwittingly he reaches for some fruit, then is a bit startled when he hears himself addressed by Domitus.

DOMITUS

My Lord, Caesar, all in this court are witnesses to my colleague's outrageous claims. A Jew becoming a god by being crucified! HA! Keeping peace by allowing new factions to be created!

CLEMENS

(undeterred)

With the court's patience I can illustrate how important this divine man was to these people. Allow me to present witnesses who also understand the power structures of Judea.

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
 They will prove my client's
 uprightness in this matter.

(Long pause) Caligula looks straight at Clemens but doesn't
 seem to see him.

CALIGULA
 (finally, and dull)
 No wonder my uncle stopped coming
 to the city.....
 (personality change)
 Yes, yes, whom do you wish to
 present?

CLEMENS
 Allow me to put before the court
 Herod Antipas, King of Judea, and
 recently come to Rome to visit his
 brother.

Caligula leans over to Domitus.

CALIGULA
 (a loud whisper)
 I thought this king was in our
 pocket.

DOMITUS
 Yes, my Lord Caesar.

Domitus turns from Caligula and addresses the court.

DOMITUS (CONT'D)
 I have no objection at all to Herod
 standing before this court. His
 testimony will shed great light on
 these ludicrous claims..... I
 simply ask for the first right of
 question.

Caligula waves off in a mocking manner.

CALIGULA
 Very well-- you may go first.

46 INT. COURT - PRESENTING PILATE

46

Clemens steps back to his table and flips through his notes.

PILATE
 You have no idea what you are
 doing. Antipas is a worm.
 (MORE)

PILATE (CONT'D)
He will do anything to protect his
sore-ridden skin.

CLEMENS
I can handle Antipas-- it is your
skin that I am protecting.

PILATE
I have heard about your protection
techniques.

Clemens cuts his eyes toward Pilate. This jab cuts deep.

47 INT. COURT -HEROD ANTIPAS CALLED TO THE STAND

47

Using a crutch Herod limps to center stage, grimacing. His
ulcerated foot leaves stains on the floor as he walks. He
fawns a politically correct smile as he addresses the court:

HEROD ANTIPAS
I welcome the opportunity to speak
before so august an audience!

DOMITUS
I am sure you do.
(with subtle sarcasm)
Tell us, Antipas, of your
relationship with Pilate.

Herod's eyes cut around the room assessing the audience. He
calculates his move.

HEROD ANTIPAS
Uh, we each performed our
respective duties to Rome. I in
Galilee, Pilate in Judea.

DOMITUS
Did you know this Rabbi Yeshua?

HEROD ANTIPAS
(too eager)
I assure you that this Jesus of
Nazareth was never a threat to
Empire when he was under my
jurisdiction.

DOMITUS
Did he ever do or say anything that
would lead you to think he was some
sort of divine man to the Jews?

HEROD ANTIPAS

No sir! Jewish Messiah pretenders come and go in Palestine. This one never did anything beyond some innocent preaching in their synagogues while he was in Galilee.

(pause, checking the response)

I was always diligent to protect the interests of Empire!

DOMITUS

Did you ever question him personally about his identity?

HEROD ANTIPAS

(glancing at Pilate)

Well yes, at the request of Pilate. But since I was only visiting Jerusalem, I had no formal authority. He was under arrest by Pilate at the time, so I quickly sent him back to the Procurator.

DOMITUS

Did you agree with Pilate's handling of the crucifixion?

HEROD ANTIPAS

Well, I think everyone wondered at the time why he would arrest Jesus, but ignore his disciples.

DOMITUS

That is precisely the point I made to this distinguished body of wisdom.

Domitus moves back to his seat.

48 INT. COURT - CLEMENS CROSS EXAMINATION OF HEROD ANTIPAS 48

CU of Pilate's eyes which blaze with anger. Caligula squirms, passes gas, then abruptly leaves the room. Senators try to ignore this process.

Clemens stands and moves toward Herod.

CLEMENS

Herod Antipas, your family has reigned over the Jews for three generations .

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

You must be well educated in the Jewish religion and customs.

HEROD ANTIPAS

I have always been sensitive to the needs of my subjects.

CLEMENS

So you have heard the claims from your subjects that Jesus rose from the dead.

HEROD ANTIPAS

Yes, but they are untrue! Only the peasants and commoners believe in such things because of their plight.

CLEMENS

It is said that you yourself were afraid he was an ancient prophet come back to life!

HEROD ANTIPAS

Sir, I certainly did not believe this man Jesus was anything other than a carpenter pretending to be a prophet!

CLEMENS

You once beheaded a man named John the Baptizer because you thought him to be a Jewish prophet.

HEROD ANTIPAS

Well, I did have him executed, but I never personally thought him a prophet.

CLEMENS

You often sought to see this Jesus perform miracles because you thought he was John the Baptizer resurrected from the dead.

Herod squirms in his seat. This irritates the gout in his foot.

HEROD ANTIPAS

I never believed that he was some other man come back to life.

DOMITUS

The king of Judea is not on trial here!

Domitus looks for Caligula. Caligula re-enters with a big smile and walks toward his seat.

CALIGULA

Yes, yes. But somebody is! Let the "king" of Judea continue to wiggle.

CLEMENS

You heard that Jesus raised a man named Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the tomb for four days, and you yourself sent soldiers to find this Lazarus.

DOMITUS

This is absurd! Clemens adds one outrageous claim to another!

HEROD ANTIPAS

I certainly did not go looking for anyone who already was given a proper burial.

The senators are beginning to enjoy the cat-fight between Clemens and Domitus.

DOMITUS

We all heard Herod say this man Jesus was no god. But he was a trouble-maker that Pilate should have dealt with. What more do we need to hear?

Caligula stands up waving his arms in a spasmodic rhythm.

CALIGULA

Ok, Ok, everyone who is a god, please stand up! No other gods, heh? Who is the next witness?

Herod limps away, whining, as he goes out of the room. He looks over his shoulder at Pilate. Their games never seem to end.

DOMITUS

My lord, Caesar, the leader of the Jews themselves is available to testify to the truth of Pilate's failures in this matter.

CALIGULA

A Jew in this court? I should have stayed on the pot! This Jew is what?

DOMITUS

He is/was the high priest at the time of Jesus' death.

CALIGULA

Very well, but only after a recess-- my bowels already are churning-- a Jew in court can only make matters worse...

49

INT. BATHS - DAY

49

Portia rises out of the bath. A female slave covers her with an elegant robe. She is obviously a very attractive woman. Another maid sprays her with a perfume. Procula is announced.

HOUSE SERVANT

Madam Procula is here to see you, my lady.

Portia shifts her eyes in knowing awareness.

PORTIA

By all means, show her in.

Procula appears at the entrance to the baths.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

Procula dear, so good of you to come.

PROCULA

I was somewhat surprised by your invitation.

Procula looks at Portia with cool aloofness.

Portia watches a slave girl manicuring her nails.

PORTIA

If you and your husband are contemplating other ways of resolving this situation, you need not worry.

PROCUA

I have had no such conversations
with my husband.

PORTIA

My dear, the Roman court is full of
rhetoric and male posturing, like a
bunch of puffed up roosters at a
cock fight, and my husband can
scratch with the best of them.

A smile begins to form on Portia's face.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

Besides, it is not what happens in
court that counts.

The slave girl finishes the hand. Portia drips oil on her
neck and chest, then smiles a conspirator's smile.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

If things do not go our way..
well... Caligula has certain
weaknesses that I am intimately
familiar with.

PROCUA

One cannot
be thankful enough for your
interest in our welfare.

Portia leans over and kisses Procula on the cheek.

PORTIA

Trust me.

50 INT - COURT ROOM - DAY - CAIAPHAS

50

CU of Caligula belching loudly. He smacks his lips and
smiles, playing as if he thinks himself cute.

COURT ANNOUNCER

My Lord Caesar, the high priest of
the Jews, Caiaphas.

Caiaphas, dressed in all of his high priestly robes, walks
with some boldness and stern facial expression as he enters
the court.

SENATOR HADRIATUS

A Jewish High Priest before
Caligula-- who would have imagined!

SENATOR JULIAN

Former high priest-- and perhaps
former human by the time this is
over! ha ha

CAIAPHAS

Kind Emperor and honorable court, I
protest this intrusion into the
life of my people, and the
religious freedom that we have been
granted historically for the past
80 years.

Domitus stands shaking his head in an effort to say that
Caiaphas has it all wrong.

DOMITUS

Sir, we have not called you before
us to debate your position or the
current status of religious freedom
among your people. We wish to hear
you speak concerning this man Jesus
whom Pilate executed during his
time as Procurator. Understand that
you have immunity to speak freely
of what you saw and heard at the
time.

Pilate pulls Clemens in close. He is outraged.

PILATE

I cannot believe they are giving
this snake immunity.

CLEMENS

Domitus will use anything at his
disposal.

Clemens turns on his heels.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

Yes, please tell us about your
conversation with Procurator Pilate
before the crucifixion of one of
your holy men.

Caiaphas grinds his teeth at Clemens' comment.

CAIAPHAS

My lords, we have sought always to
live at peace with Empire, and have
called upon your gracious judgments
only when the deepest convictions
of our faith were threatened.

(MORE)

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

From time to time certain radical groups spring up that are a threat to our way of life. This Jesus seemed like a meek, harmless man to many, but I knew better.

CLEMENS

(Interrupting)

Knew better is right! You knew that he was a divine man, performing miracles and teaching people to follow him instead of you.

Caiaphas is cool.

CAIAPHAS

I knew nothing of the kind. Those were only rumors.

CLEMENS

Was it the peace of Rome or your own political power that was threatened?

Caiaphas remains unrattled.

CAIAPHAS

I am insulted by your question. It was my duty as high priest to look out for the welfare of my people. Our people are good citizens throughout Empire.

Clemens pauses and settles himself.

CLEMENS

Why did you hold a spurious trial in the middle of the night?

CAIAPHAS

Time was of the essence. The imposter needed to be dealt with before our great feast, lest real trouble break out in Jerusalem.

CLEMENS

So this "trial" demanded the immediate execution of Jesus.

CAIAPHAS

Often the greatest threats to Empire come from the most innocent of appearances.

(MORE)

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

It was precisely because I wished to maintain our good relations with Rome that I asked Pilate to crucify this man Jesus.

CLEMENS

Were not the followers of this man claiming that he was a son of your god?

CAIAPHAS

He and his followers were blind zealots.

CLEMENS

And the problem now is that many of your people believe even more strongly that he is the son of God and thus a god himself?

CAIAPHAS

Sir it is blasphemy in our faith to make such claims. Yes, Jesus claimed such equality with our God. But I/we knew him to be an imposter.

CLEMENS

Lord, Caesar, it is exactly as I have claimed. My client, Pontius Pilate, was acting to keep the peace among the Jewish people.

DOMITUS

It sounds more like his actions increased the conflict by bowing to their wishes to execute this martyr.

Caiaphas hurries to defend his actions.

CAIAPHAS

My lords, this court understands how such Christ claims become a nuisance to Empire if left unchallenged. That is why we acted when both Herod Antipas and Pilate refused to act.

There is a rumbling in the Senate when a Jew accuses both men of incompetence.

SENATOR CASSIUS

(sarcastically)

I am touched that this priest is looking out for Roman welfare.

CLEMENS

This court is already aware of the sparkling record of Pilate in dealing with unrest among the Jewish people. There are many examples of his swift retribution for any appearance of threat to Empire!

CAIAPHAS

But Jesus was a much more insidious enemy. Pilate was tricked into mocking us rather than eliminating the pretender and his followers.

Pilate jumps to his feet.

PILATE

"Tricked?!" Nobody was tricked!

Clemens tries to get things back on track.

CLEMENS

My Lord, Caesar, this man has answered that his own people thought Jesus was a son of a god. We need not hear further testimony. My client Pilate was hesitant to act because he was protecting the religious convictions of many Jewish people. He was not concerned with the power and control issues of their high priest.

DOMITUS

Clemens, do you fear the rest of what the high priest has to say?

Caligula looks disgusted and tired of the whole testimony.

CALIGULA

Is there some point to all of this?

CAIAPHAS

The point is, my Lord, Caesar,

Caligula is taken back by the direct answers to Caesar by a Jewish priest.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)
 that because of the failure of your
 Procurator, Pilate, to provide
 protection at the tomb, the body of
 this man Jesus was stolen. His
 followers then claimed that he rose
 from the dead.

Pilate is livid. He jumps to his feet again pounding on the
 desk.

PILATE
 Your own guards were at the tomb
 and the body was stolen right from
 under their incompetent noses.

Clemens turns sharply toward his client.

CLEMENS
 Sit down. You are not helping this.

PILATE
 This is outrageous! Caiaphas sees
 his opportunity.

CAIAPHAS
 Worse yet, many now proclaim--
 please, my lord, Caesar, take no
 offense from me at what I am about
 to say. There are now many who
 have become attached to this sect,
 both from our people and from
 yours.

CALIGULA
 What? Roman citizens?

CAIAPHAS
 In defiance of your immanence they
 are saying that Jesus is God and
 Lord of life!

CALIGULA
 (screams)
 What?! Romans believing a Jew is
 Lord?! How dare you insult the
 intelligence of the court with such
 claims. Get this Jew out of my
 sight!

Caiaphas bows.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)
 NOW!

The guards push and shove Caiaphas out of the court.

CUT TO:

51 EXT. FORREST - DAY

51

The donkey stands rigid in the middle of the dirt road. The two large jars sit hanging unevenly on the donkey's back. Epharus runs around Namoi in an effort to rebalance the jars. He pushes on one jar and it slides over the donkey's back. Epharus tries to hold one jar in place and move to the other one. It's a delicate dance to keep the jugs from crashing on the rocks.

EPHARUS

Hold still Namoi. Our cargo is very valuable. Our master will be extremely angry if we fail. Whoa Whoa. I got it. Now if I can just balance it here.

The donkey moves forward and bucks a little. The jars slides back toward the ground.

If I just had something to wedge under the saddle. My hat. That will work. You can't outsmart ole' Epharus.

Epharus restarts his journey. When his back is turned, Naomi swings her head around bites the hat and pulls it out. The jars slip to the right and Epharus does not notice.

52 INT. PILATE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

52

A candle plays flickering patterns against the wall. Pilate finishes off another goblet of wine. Clemens stares out the door at Rome in the distance.

PILATE

(in a low, bitter voice)
I would have been better off explaining my relationship to Sejanus!

Clemens doesn't answer, he just stares through the sheers.

Pilate mumbles as he talks into the goblet.

PILATE (CONT'D)

I should have known this "defense" would leave my carcass rotting in the gutters of Rome!

Clemens turns from the window in absent thought.

CLEMENS

There is something to this Jesus story...?

PILATE

What?!? Well of course there's something to it. Judea was splitting at the seams because of it.

CLEMENS

No, I mean.....

PILATE

I know what you mean. But those toads in that senate do not know what you mean and unless you can convince them of what you mean the street urchins will be kicking my head through the streets in a sack.

Pilate throws the goblet across the room.

CLEMENS

I am on the right strategy and I know it!

PILATE

Right strategy?!? Do you honestly think that Caligula is going to believe that this Jew was a god? Your ego is bigger than his!

CLEMENS

When Jesus came before you that day you had one of several choices.

PILATE

Do not tell me what my choices were! You were not there! I had the real rebel leader already in jail. Barrabas, a cold blooded murderer. He was the real danger, not this simple Galilean. By law, they forced me to let him go free and take Jesus in his place! That was the mistake I made!

CLEMENS

Was Barrabas a follower of Jesus?

PILATE

No, completely different faction.

CLEMENS

Was he an eye witness to any of the miracles that Jesus performed?

Pilate hesitates and gives Clemens a curious look.

PILATE

Uh..probably, there were lots of rumors flying around at the time. Thousands claimed to have seen miracles.

Clemens becomes keen in his questioning of his client.

CLEMENS

Like what?

PILATE

Well...they...they claimed he fed five thousand people with two fish and a few loaves of bread.

CLEMENS

Did Barrabas see this?

PILATE

I have no idea what he saw. We never interrogated him.

CLEMENS

What happened to him?

PILATE

His type never changes. He went right back to his treacherous activities so we arrested him again.

CLEMENS

Did you crucify him too?

PILATE

No, but he is probably dead. He was sentenced to be a slave on the war ships.

54 EXT. BEACH - BARRABAS

54

Several war ships sit at anchor in the distance. On the beach a cluster of slaves chained together collapse into the sand. They are exhausted, filthy and war torn. The ship slave master shouts at his human power source.

SLAVE MASTER

You will be fed here. The wounded and sick will be separated. The rest of you..well, you know the rules.

Two Roman soldiers begin to unlock one of the wounded slaves.

SLAVE

No! No! I can row! I am still good, please no! Barrabas, help me...help me Barrabas!

They drag the slave off. Barrabas turns his head. Suddenly Barrabas is poked with the blunt end of a spear.

SLAVE MASTER

You Barrabas?

BARRABAS

Yes.

SLAVE MASTER

You must have some friends in high places.

The slave master nods over his shoulder.

Barrabas squints his eyes trying to get a clear image of Clemens standing under a military canopy. Barrabas doesn't recognize the stranger.

SLAVE MASTER (CONT'D)

Unlock him.

55

55

Clemens sits in a chair under the shade. The two guards arrive with Barrabas. They shove Barrabas to his knees in the sand. Clemens reaches out and helps Barrabas up.

CLEMENS

Here, sit here.

Barrabas cautiously sits on a box. The guards don't know what to make of this.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
I am Juris Prudence Clemens. I
represent Pontius Pilate,
Procurator of Judea.

Barrabas grunts in amusement. Clemens examines Barrabas.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
Pilate needs your help.

An ironic smile comes over the prisoner's face.

BARRABAS
Really?

CLEMENS
Yes. What do you know about this
Jesus,
(beat)
the man exchanged for your freedom
some years ago?

Barrabas' whole body language changes. He begins to tremble.
Clemens watches this reaction. It's almost infectious.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
Did you ever meet this man before
he took your place on the cross?

Barrabas tries to get control of himself.

BARRABAS
I..I never met him, but I saw him
in Galilee.

CLEMENS
What did he do? Did he do anything
that might make you think he was
something special, a magician? Did
he do any tricks?

Hesitating, Barrabas stares right into Clemens eyes. Clemens
waits for a response.

BARRABAS
He raised a man from the dead.

CLEMENS
What?

BARRABAS
I saw it with my own eyes.

Clemens gets very uncomfortable. He has opened a box that maybe he didn't mean to open.

BARRABAS (CONT'D)
The man had been dead for four days. Rabbi Yeshua walked into the man's tomb and then the dead man walked out. He...he..

Barrabas begins to break apart. Clemens knows he's telling the truth.

CLEMENS
You saw this with your own eyes?

BARRABAS
(screams)
Why would I lie about such a thing!
Why would I invent such a tale!?

Barrabas breaks down crying.

BARRABAS (CONT'D)
(continuing; sobbing)
I should not be alive today. He died in my place.

Clemens cannot look at Barrabas any longer. He stares out at the sea.

CLEMENS
(whispers)
He does not sound like an ordinary man.

56 EXT. COURT HOUSE STEPS - HADRIATUS

56

Long shadows ripple across the court house steps. Domitus climbs toward the first deck of the palace. Senator Hadriatus is descending the steps. As they pass one another, Senator Hadriatus stops.

SENATOR HADRIATUS
Domitus, I see that you are next in the arena. He is in a foul mood.

Domitus casts his eyes towards the top of the stairs.

DOMITUS
One can predict the weather with more accuracy.

57 INT. CALIGULA PALACE - RABBIT

57

Inside the palace a small rabbit peeks out from behind a brightly painted piece of wood. An arrow slams into the wood. The rabbit scampers out of site. A wider shot reveals a wooden maze about a foot high that spreads out on the floor of the palace like an area rug of 10' x 10' feet. Sitting high above it is Caligula with a small bow and arrow.

CALIGULA

Aw! Missed him.

GUARD

(announces)

Senator Domitus.

CALIGULA

Domitus come in, come in.

DOMITUS

Your worship.

Caligula fires another arrow at the trapped rabbit.

CALIGULA

Do you like to hunt?

DOMITUS

On occasion.

CALIGULA

No, no Domitus. Ha Ha. Ambitious men like you hunt all the time.

Calculating his position, Domitus watches Caligula shoot another arrow at the rabbit.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

....you hunt big game.

DOMITUS

Sir?

CALIGULA

Domitus, you fool! You have Pilate's blood in your nostrils and you lie in ambush...

DOMITUS

But my Caes....

CALIGULA

Do not lecture me on the importance of the court, especially when it comes to men of Pilate's position. Nor do I care what happens to his counsel. Finish it, quickly!

DOMITUS

From the beginning I have prided myself in only looking out for Caligula's interest. I understand your desires and will act upon them.

Caligula aims the bow and arrow at Domitus. Only a slight twitch of the eyebrow indicates Domitus' hidden fear of the unpredictable.

CALIGULA

See that you do.

Domitus bows and turns to leave. He takes one step and the arrow hits the column directly behind him. He hesitates then moves on.

Caligula cackles in the background.

58

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

58

Clemens walks callously through an industrial section of Rome. He peeks inside various building. From the street, Three craftsmen are working at different tables (one is sewing canvas material; another is measuring fabric; a third is speaking with a customer who turns to leave just as Clemens walks in. Aquilla (the one sewing) sees him come in but ignores him.

WORKER

Can I provide assistance?

CLEMENS

I wish to speak to the shop owner.

Aquilla just keeps sewing.

WORKER

Is there a problem?

CLEMENS

Please, I come in good faith. I have spoken to Aquilla before.

AQUILLA
(without looking up)
Yes, yes, the lawyer. Somehow I
suspected you would find your way
back to my door.

Aquilla puts down the cloth and needle on the table next to a plain copper lamp very similar to the one in Clemens's home. Turning toward Clemens, Aquilla begins with slow deliberate speech.

AQUILLA (CONT'D)
If you are here for my help to save
Pontius Pilate, you are in the
wrong place.

CLEMENS
Hear me out. I am not here to
compel you to the Roman court. I
am only here to find out more about
the one you call Christ.

AQUILLA
(after pause)
What more do you wish to know?

CLEMENS
When I was here before you said
that this Jesus became a god when
he died.

AQUILLA
I told you no such thing! You only
heard what you wished to hear.

CLEMENS
But you did say that this Jesus
lives.

AQUILLA
Yes, he lives. Not that he died
and was proclaimed a god like one
of your emperors. He is God who
became a man-- not a man-made god.

CLEMENS
You really believe this?!

AQUILLA
No, I experienced it.

CLEMENS

I met another man who said he was an eye-witness of this Jesus, one named Barabbas.

AQUILLA

(his eyes flash)

Huh! I would hardly call HIM an eye-witness. He and Jesus have NOTHING in common!

CLEMENS

Yes, I know, except this Barabbas is strangely affected at the very mention of the name Jesus.

AQUILLA

He ought to cry at the mention of his name. So why are you really here?

CLEMENS

Aquilla, surely you do not believe that 5,000 men can be fed by 5 loaves and two fish?! You cannot believe that a withered hand suddenly has life in it. Why do you have such confidence that your claims are true? Why is it that you and the others seem so at peace?

Aquilla pauses, picks up the canvas again, then looks deeply into the eyes of Clemens.

AQUILLA

So this is no longer about the court-- it is about you.

59

INT. DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT - NIGHT

59

It is a small bar but it is where the powers of the city can turn gossip into a damp cell. Its crowded and laughter carries targeted taunts.

A number of senators sit reliving the events of the day.

HADRIATUS

(grins)

So, your son-in-law has put on a clever defense.

Some of the other senators chuckle. Senius can read the sarcasm.

SENIUS
Yes, clever.

CASSIUS
His cleverness is going to make
your daughter a widow before this
is over. HA HA

HADRIATUS
(leans in close to Senius)
He can not possibly win the missing
body argument! I must say though,
that blaming it on the gods was
ingenious!

SENIUS
(disgusted)
Insanity is the better word!

CASSIUS
Perhaps it is time to give some
fatherly advice.

PLACCUS
He should have done that to Portia
before the wedding! HA HA

Senius tries to cover his embarrassment as the other senators
enjoy the joke on him.

CUT TO:

60 EXT./INT. SENIUS' HOUSE

60

The light reflects off Clemens' face as he extends the plain
copper lamp ahead of his path. He is escorted into the house
by a servant. Clemens is taken to a sculpture where Senius
is angrily cutting the stone with a chisel. When Clemens
arrives Senius' demeanor changes, putting on a pleasant face.

SENIUS
Ah, Clemens. Thank you for coming
at this hour. How is my daughter?

CLEMENS
I am certain you did not call me at
this hour to inquire about the
welfare of one who is so capable.

Senius smiles at the acknowledgement of his daughter's
talents.

SENIUS

Yes, well.... I hope you have a different strategy for the court tomorrow. At the moment you are the court jester!

Clemens looks at the floor.

CLEMENS

A jester I may be, but I am on the right track.

SENIUS

Right track?! You have put me and my daughter at risk pursuing this rubbish!

Senius knocks a chunk of marble from the stone.

CLEMENS

The circumstances of this Jesus of Nazareth were completely unlike other messianic pretenders. There was no army, no efforts to gather weaponry or soldiers, no treacheries committed by his followers.

SENIUS

Since when have such circumstances mattered to the court?

CLEMENS

Pilate gave the Jewish authorities a choice between a known murderer and this mild-mannered preacher. They preferred the release of the murderer and begged for the death of Jesus.

SENIUS

If I did not know your political designs, I would think you are actually concerned for Pilate. Let Domitus have him, and quickly.

CLEMENS

This man Jesus was nothing more than a travelling preacher who went around healing people and teaching them to be kind to one another.

SENIUS

You are not listening! Remember
who the real client is, son-in-law.

Senius cocks his head to drive the point. Clemens' own words strike a cord. He draws himself up.

CLEMENS

This is not about the actions of Pilate, it is about the will of God! Of the God of the Jews, I mean. What if there really is no corpse? What if this Jesus really did rise from the dead?

SENIUS

If you keep this up, you will lose any access to Caesar's court you once had! I am the reason you made it this far in Rome! If this does not stop, you are through!

CLEMENS

Do you not see? Pilate had no choice in the matter. He was acting as their God pre-ordained... I have only to show that what happened to Pilate was beyond his control-- an act of the Jews' God.

Senius seems stunned by the personal interest Clemens has in this defense. He looks straight into his eyes.

SENIUS

Clemens, the only act of god this defense will show is that of Caligula taking off your client's head, and yours with it! Stop this madness, NOW!

61 INT. PILATE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - PROCULA SOOTHES PILATE 61

Extreme Close up bottom of the wine goblet. It lowers revealing the bloodshot eyes of Pilate. He tries to drink again, but the glass is empty.

He starts to vomit and cough.

Procula patiently, sadly watches him wretch. She eases up to him, wiping his brow with a wet cloth.

PROCULA
 Things will work out for the best,
 my love. You will see.

Pilate begins to catch his breath. Her tenderness softly
 soothes his anger.

PILATE
 I knew it was not right at the time
 it was happening.

PROCULA
 I know.

PILATE
 You tried to tell me. It was in
 your dreams. You tried to warn me.

PROCULA
 I am sorry I was not more forceful.

Pilate picks up a dagger from the table. He fumbles with it
 between his fingers.

PILATE
 What's done is done....Clemens is
 in as much trouble as I am with
 this tact. They will trap him for
 certain. He needs a credible
 witness, not some Jewish priest or
 cult member. It has to be someone
 with integrity in their world.

He drops the dagger to the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.

62 INT. PILATE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - HALLUCINATION

62

The glow of a lamp leads Procula through the halls of the
 residence. She searches the dark corner of the house.

PROCULA
 PilatePilate.

There is no answer. She searches on till she comes to an
 entrance way covered by a heavy drape. She eases the drape
 back. Inside she can barely make out the silhouette of her
 husband slumped over in the chair.

PROCULA (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 Pilate, are you asleep.

There is no answer.

PROCULA (CONT'D)

Pilate.

Fear rakes over her soul. As she stares at the motionless body. Her breath trembles. She is terrified.

PROCULA (CONT'D)

My dear husband.

Pilate snorts. A drool of saliva and wine streams down from the corner of his mouth as he slowly turns his gaze toward her. She rushes to him and kneels down in front of him.

PROCULA (CONT'D)

I thought you had...

PILATE

I am not brave enough for that.

Procula pulls the lamp closer.

PROCULA

You are doing it slowly.

Pilate takes another drink and looks glassy eyed at his bride.

PILATE

(Almost angry)

He was an innocent man.

Voices of the accusers echo in and begin to swirl around Pilate.

VFX MATCHING
SHOTS

VFX accusers blister in from all directions. Pilate swims in swirling hallucinations.

ANANIUS (ECHO)

He is a criminal.

ZADOK (ECHO)

An instigator of sedition.

CAIAPHAS (ECHO)

He refuses to pay tribute to
Tiberius.

Visual Effects of Pilate face swirling in with the accusers.

PILATE
I knew these were lies!

CAIAPHAS (ECHO)
He claims to be Messiah, King of
the Jews.

ANANIUS (ECHO)
That is treason.

Efx settle leaving a distorted Pilate CU. Silhouetted in front of him is the hand of Jesus hanging at his side. Pilate looks up at Jesus.

PILATE
So you are a king?

CU of Pilate as Jesus speaks.

JESUS
(VO)
You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.

PILATE
What is truth?

EXT. - STEPS OF THE ROMAN COURT - DOMITUS DEAL

Clemens hurries up the steps of the Roman Court followed by two servants carrying scrolls and papers. Domitus stops Clemens in mid stride.

DOMITUS
Clemens, Clemens.....

Clemens stops and slowly turns to the familiar, voice.

CLEMENS
(cautiously)
Yes Domitus, do you need my assistance?

DOMITUS
Clemens, this whole process which started out to be a simple report to the Emperor has turned into a circus.

(MORE)

DOMITUS (CONT'D)

It seems to be trapping us all. The public is beginning to hear about what is going on. There is pressure on Caligula to now face this problem with some show of leadership.

CLEMENS

Whose fault is that?

DOMITUS

(ignoring the cut)

I am willing to make you a deal.... an arrangement. One that closes this matter and perhaps you can save your career and everything that goes with it.

Domitus lays on a heavy pause and studies Clemens.

CLEMENS

Go on.

DOMITUS

You get Pilate to admit that he mishandled the entire Jesus affair along with subsequent events and he will voluntarily forfeit his rank as well as his possessions to the state. This will bring things to a swift close.

CLEMENS

And Caligula saves face in not having to make a decision and avoids any problems from Sejanus' old friends which still hold powerful positions.

DOMITUS

Best of all you, Clemens, will have found favor in the eyes of Caesar because you quickly put this away when you realized public pressure would mount in such a case. Everybody wins, everybody gets what they want.

CLEMENS

What about Pilate?

DOMITUS

Since when have you had a personal interest in the outcome of your clients? This was never about saving face for Pilate with you. We both know that!

CLEMENS

Why are you now so interested in saving face for me?

DOMITUS

(frustrated)

Do not be a fool Clemens. This is your chance to get a step closer to a senate seat. Caligula wants this thing to go away.

CLEMENS

Why, are we getting too close to the truth?

DOMITUS

What is truth?

63

INT. CLEMENS DINING ROOM - CLEMENS/PORTIA ARGUMENT

63

Slave Bella delivers the main course to a table where Portia and Clemens dine. Slave Bella places the entree in a routine presentation.

PORTIA

Dearest, that is wonderful! This is the perfect scenario. Caligula feels this is getting sticky, you turn the tables and help Caligula. A senate seat is almost assured.

Clemens stares at his empty plate.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

What troubles you? This is what we wanted!

CLEMENS

I cannot sacrifice Pilate just like that.

PORTIA

Why not? He probably deserves it anyway.

CLEMENS

There is more at stake than just Pilate.

PORTIA

What? Some principle about whether Pilate crucified the right Jew? Do not be foolish. No one cares!

CLEMENS

I care.

This stops Portia cold. She stares at her husband, easing back in her chair. She doesn't quite know what to make of the comment.

PORTIA

You are going to pursue this Jesus strategy!?

CLEMENS

I have to.

PORTIA

You have to!? You have to?! Why!?!

CLEMENS

If I just had a first-hand witness that they would listen to. Someone credible in their eyes.

Portia heats up as she hears his stubborn plan.

PORTIA

I do not believe you! Domitus hands you a senate seat on a plate and you are still trying to figure out how to convince them that some Jewish rebel is God!! You are insane!

54 Portia stomps out of the house, leaving Clemens standing there bewildered. 54

64 EXT. BEACH - PROCULA APPROACHES CLEMENS 64

Clemens is standing on the beach where the slaves were. He is looking out in the harbor at the slave ships.

SLAVE BELLA

Sir, you have a visitor.

Clemens looks back up the hill and sees Procula. He begins walking toward her.

PROCULA

Sir, I know my presence is untoward. But I must talk to you. I went to your house and the slave Bella brought me here.

CLEMENS

I do not mind your coming, unless you also are going to tell me that I am insane.

Procula smiles.

PROCULA

Not at all! In fact, you are the only sane one in the court. Whether you realize it or not-- I suspect you do not-- your strategy is the truth.

Clemens stares at her in silence, a bit puzzled by her comment.

CLEMENS

You are a Jesus follower. I should have realized this from the first.

PROCULA

Yes, I am a "Christian" as our detractors love to call us.

Clemens studies her a moment.

CLEMENS

Did you see this man alive after his death? Did you actually witness his miracles? Do you...

PROCULA

I know-- do I have any proof that you can use in court to justify your claims. Even if I did, we both know that my testimony is invalid because I am a woman, not to mention that I am the wife of the defendant!

PROCUA (CONT'D)

But I do know of a credible witness. I hope you realize, however, that if he were to speak the truth in this case, it might only bring more humiliation to you and my husband.

65

EXT. MILITARY POST - DAY - CORNELIUS

65

At a military post within the confines of the city-- Captain Cornelius is inspecting troops as they march by in parade. Others are practicing with swords, or spears. A soldier comes to Cornelius.

SOLDIER

Sir, there is a representative of the court of Caesar here to see you.

Cornelius looks over the soldier's shoulder at Clemens.

CORNELIUS

Show him to my quarters.

Cornelius raises up from a wash bowl splashing his face with water. He takes a towel and begins drying himself. Clemens sits in front of Cornelius' crude desk a bit nervous in the presence of this man.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I suppose I have been expecting you. How goes the court proceeding for my superior?

CLEMENS

If you expected my visit, you must also know that it does not go well at all. What started as a simple matter of celebrating the triumphs of Pilate in Judea has become the search for a scapegoat.

CORNELIUS

My lord Pilate expected such an end before we arrived, but we all expected his relationship to Sejanus to be his downfall.

CLEMENS

Yes, and with the new Emperor, disliking Jews was to our advantage, had your superior not misplaced the body of this Messiah figure named Jesus.

CORNELIUS

(mumbles)

All beyond Pilate's control...

(addressing Clemens)

There is no corpse when resurrection occurs.

CLEMENS

You are a believer also?

Cornelius stares at the lawyer. He draws a deep breath.

CORNELIUS

(nervously)

It was my guard detail that nailed him to that cross.

(pause)

I myself drove the spear into our Lord's side.

Cornelius trembles. Clemens is spellbound. Cornelius begins to recover and suddenly calms.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I am witness to the new life that he gives to all who believe in his resurrection.

Clemens is struck by the clear truthfulness of this testimony.

CLEMENS

And you would testify to that before Caesar?

Cornelius stands and stares back at Clemens with a suspicious air.

CORNELIUS

You wish me to testify so that I can save your reputation. I care only about glorifying God and his son, Jesus Christ!

Clemens finds the remark extremely odd. He slowly rises and turns toward the door.

CLEMENS

I have heard stories about miracles, and raising people from the dead. The cult followers believe Jesus himself is alive... But what makes no sense is why? Why have a crucified Christ? Why make statements such as yours about only wishing to glorify this Jewish God and his Son Jesus Christ.

CORNELIUS

Only discovering the truth about one's own existence can give you that answer!

Clemens is even more puzzled, talking more to himself than to Cornelius.

CLEMENS

Why does a murdering thief break down and cry at the mention of his name and Pilate need a drink to talk about him?

CORNELIUS

Why is a lawyer whose only real concern is power and position in the Senate asking such questions?

Clemens drops his eyes avoiding contact with Cornelius.

CUT TO:

66

INT. COURT OF CAESAR - DAY

66

CU of a flute being played very poorly by Caligula. The noise continues for a few seconds before Caligula stops and smiles proudly.

DOMITUS

Excellent, my Lord!

Cut to the group of senators, as the playing resumes.

SENATOR JULIAN

Perhaps today we can finally leave Pilate and the Jews behind us.

SENATOR PLACCUS
 Pilate and his counsel will need
 the Fates to smile on them just so
 they can leave the city rather than
 leaving this life!

SENATOR JULIAN
 This is better than the Circus!

SENATOR PLACCUS
 This is the circus.

As the Senators take their places, the Court speaker is
 nearing the end of his introductions...

COURT ANNOUNCER
Emperor, may his name be....

Caligula stops and lays down the flute.

CALIGULA
 Yes, Yes, get on with it. Let it
 be known that not even wine and
 fruit can see me through another
 day of drivel about the Jews and
 whatever it is that Pontius Pilate
 has done or not done. So as
 counsel for Pilate, Clemens, I
 understand that Domitus has offered
 us all a way out of this. I hope
 you have carefully considered his
 offer.

CLEMENS
 My Lord, Caesar, the kindness of
 Domitus to my client is noted and
 appreciated...

Pilate's mind races.

PILATE
 (whispers)
 What offer is he talking about?
 You never mentioned any deal to me!

CLEMENS
 It was of no consequence.

PILATE
 What?!

67 INT. COURT HOUSE - CORNELIUS

67

Clemens turns to the court.

CLEMENS

However, we are all most interested in the truth of my clients' actions in Judea and the truth about the affairs of the Jews. It is with that goal in mind that I beg the court's indulgence in hearing from one more witness-- a Roman soldier whose record of service and loyalty to Caesar is a model to all in the Praetorian. He has served with distinction as Centurion of the Italian Cohort in Judea for the past ten years. He is eye-witness not only to the affairs of the Jews and Pilate but also an eye-witness to the crucifixion of the man Jesus. He is Cornelius, newly appointed captain in the Praetorian guard.

There is much murmuring in the crowd.

DOMITUS

My lord, Caesar, I fail to see what another supposed "eye-witness" can add to our knowledge. It will not change the incompetent behavior of Pilate.

CALIGULA

Silence! So far you have made me suffer through the dim-wit Herod, and a Jewish priest with his own agenda-- perhaps one of our decorated heroes can say something intelligent. Show him in.

Cornelius enters the room and takes his seat before the court.

CLEMENS

Cornelius, this court is aware of your spotless record and the admiration you enjoy from the public. Explain your role in the crucifixion of Jesus.

CORNELIUS

That particular day, I was assigned to crucifixion detail. Along with a few of my men, we led the three criminals executed that day to the place of the skull and we carried out our orders. There was nothing particularly unusual about the event at first.

CLEMENS

What do you mean, 'at first'?

CORNELIUS

We just did our job. The one called Jesus acted strangely through-out. While the other two writhed in pain as we nailed the hands and feet, he was silent. He made no sound when we raised him into position. In fact, the first words he uttered were a plea to his God for our forgiveness.

CLEMENS

Forgiveness for what? You were simply completing your sworn duties.

CORNELIUS

Yes, he understood that. Somehow he seemed to be the one completing his duty.

This stalls Clemens, trying to collect his thoughts and recover.

DOMITUS

Yes, yes, can we get on with this?

CLEMENS

What happened next, Cornelius.

CORNELIUS

Then strange things began to occur. The sky darkened, to the point of becoming black as night and it was only the noon hour. He made one strange cry in the Hebrew tongue, then collapsed. Then came the earthquake.

DOMITUS

What has any of this to do with the incompetence of Pilate.

CALIGULA

No, No, continue-- I like stories about earthquakes and eclipses!

CLEMENS

You are sure that Jesus was dead?

CORNELIUS

All could see that Jesus was already the color of death. A spear was thrust in his side-- he was dead all right.

The admission rattles Cornelius again.

CLEMENS

So you removed his body and buried him?

CORNELIUS

No, Pilate gave permission to a Jewish follower to take down the body-- but I did oversee the procedure and I and my men witnessed the tomb in which the corpse was laid.

CLEMENS

Were you asked to guard the tomb for any reason?

Pilate achieves eye contact with his old loyal soldier.

CORNELIUS

The rock covering the tomb took 6 of us to move in front of the opening. There was no need for a guard, even though the Jews were clamoring for one.

DOMITUS

There is nothing new or insightful about this testimony!

Caligula cuts his eyes toward Domitus, causing him to reluctantly cower. Caligula motions to Cornelius to continue.

CORNELIUS

Pilate refused to give them a Roman sentry, so the Jews themselves posted guards at the tomb. Their own guards cannot explain how the stone was rolled away.

CLEMENS

Cornelius, what happened to the body of Jesus?

Cornelius stands a bit taller. Pilate lowers his head trying to anticipate the answer.

CORNELIUS

Sir, this man predicted before his death that on the third day he would rise from the dead, and that is exactly what happened.

The crowd bursts into catcalls and cries of disbelief.

CROWD VOICES

Impossible!You're Mad!.....
Away with him..... What
superstition!

Pilate glances around the Senate and sees how agitated they are becoming.

DOMITUS

It has already been admitted that the body was stolen by cult followers. This is all lunacy!

Pilate rushes to the center of the floor, shoving Clemens aside.

PILATE

I have nothing to do with this defense or this soldier's testimony!

Clemens forces his way forward and addresses Cornelius.

CLEMENS

Before this court and the Emperor himself, what do you say?

Pilate pushes Clemens to the floor.

PILATE

You are a mad man! Do you not see what is happening?

Two guards restrain Pilate. Cornelius shouts out his conviction.

CORNELIUS

I believe that Jesus is the son of God, that he is alive even now, and that he is LORD over all, even Caesar and Rome.

The senators jump to their feet.

CROWD

Away with him! Caesar is Lord!
Caesar is Lord! Away with him.

Domitus screams over the noise of the crowd.

DOMITUS

We will not stand for this!

CALIGULA

How dare you insult Empire and Emperor with such trash. I, Caligula am Lord of this Senate, Lord of Rome, and Lord of YOU! Your treasonous tongue will be ripped from your throat!

The Senate roars. Clemens is shocked by Cornelius' dramatic stand. The guards rush Cornelius, expecting extreme resistance. The Centurion's look at the guards stops them in their tracks. With courageous dignity, the Centurion makes an about face and marches out. The Senate falls silent. Caligula makes toad-like blinks. Pilate double-takes from Cornelius to Caligula. Clemens watches in awe as Cornelius walks away.

68

INT. PILATE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - CLEMENS/PILATE

68

Clemens' copper lamp with the bent handle lights Pilates room. There is a knock on the door. The door cracks.. a restless Pilate peeks out.

PILATE

Have you not done enough? Must you torture me further?

CLEMENS

Please, I must speak to you before tomorrow.

The lamp illuminates Pilate's trembling hand loosely wrapped around a wine goblet. Pilate's sleepless sunken eyes gazes at his lawyer. His breaths are in slow, short, clipped struggles.

PILATE

I have been a slave to this wine skin for over six years.

Pilate stares into the goblet then downs it.

PILATE (CONT'D)

..I had every intention of letting him go.. I found no fault with him. He stood there on the Lithostratos dressed in their attempt to mock him, a crown of thorns, a scarlet robe of a king. The more they shouted for his blood, the more I referred to him as their King.

Pilate coughs, nearly throwing up his wine. It dribbles down his chin.

CLEMENS

Why did you not let him go?

PILATE

I don't know. I was afraid I guess.. afraid of the circumstances.. afraid of my position. Afraid of him. It seemed that the more he was beaten the more afraid I became.
(cough)

Clemens can't believe this confession of Pilate. Not a confession of guilt, but a confession of the heart.

CLEMENS

I came here to tell you what I plan to do tomorrow. I want to surrender my...

Pilate ignores Clemens, staring into space.

PILATE

(interrupts)

He said I would not have any power over him at all if it had not been given to me from above.

(MORE)

PILATE (CONT'D)

He acknowledged me as his judge yet took it away by saying that the power came from above. No man ever stood before me with such courage... He knew that I, like his betrayer, had sold his life for a bribe and that washing my hands did not make me clean of the injustice.

Pilate begins to cry. The goblet hits the floor, spilling out what was left. Clemens' heart races, his eyes dart around the room as more of the event sinks in.

CLEMENS

(taking a deep breath)

Did he.. did he rise from.. the dead?

Pilate's head lies sobbing in his hands. He catches his breath. He slowly raises his head. His swollen eyes look deep into Clemens' soul.

70

INT. ROMAN DUNGEONS - NIGHT

70

A torch travels through the corridors of the Roman dungeons. It is carried by a guard that escorts Clemens past what's left of human carrion sealed up for life. They arrive at a locked door with just a slot for food. Clemens eases the door open. He can hear someone mumbling.

CORNELIUS

Thank you, Father, for allowing me to suffer as your own son suffered. Thank you....

The guard lights Clemens' plain copper lamp and he enters the dark hole. The light shines on a beaten, bloodied Cornelius. He interrupts his prayer.

CLEMENS

Cornelius, it is Clemens.

Cornelius squints his eyes, temporarily blinded by the light. In low, calm tones, he responds

CORNELIUS

Ah, lawyer Clemens, welcome to my temporary home.

CLEMENS

I never intended for this to happen.

CORNELIUS

We both knew this would be the outcome. What are you looking for, some absolution? You need not have guilt for me.

CLEMENS

It is not my guilt that brings me here. It is your courage. I want what you have.

CORNELIUS

Unless you confront your own guilt, you cannot understand my courage.

Clemens reacts somewhat defensively.

CLEMENS

What do you know about my guilt?

CORNELIUS

I know that you are a man who always has acted only for his own interests, using others for your own gain. That is why you came looking for a witness. That is why you are here now.

Clemens is stunned by the obvious truth of Cornelius' words. He starts to defend himself.

CLEMENS

You know nothing about my life! I acted as any other aspiring lawyer acts who is trying to better himself.

Cornelius squints at him in silence, then speaks.

CORNELIUS

And now what is there to show for your efforts? You are just a man who gambled his life and lost.

Once more Clemens is amazed by the words of Cornelius. He stares at him in silence, then asks with some longing in his voice.

CLEMENS

What must I do?

71 INT. SYNAGOGUE - PROCULA/AQUILLA

71

Candles light the little ceremony of a hand full of Jewish Christians. In their midst, Clemens slips quietly into the back of the room. There is one other Gentile present.

AQUILLA

Let us all kneel and offer praise and thanksgiving to our Lord and Savior. Our brother Cornelius has participated in the sufferings of Messiah before the highest courts of Rome on this day. May God give us all such a Spirit of boldness.

The group begins to kneel and bow their heads. Procula tugs at Aquilla's robe.

PROCULA

I would like to include someone else in our prayers.

AQUILLA

Our Lord Jesus will listen to all prayers given from the heart.

PROCULA

If it be his will, I beg that we pray for my husband, Pontius Pilate.

The room is stunned. Clemens also is amazed. He looks at Aquilla to see what he will do. One of the Christian cries out to Aquilla.

CHRISTIAN 1

We cannot pray for the man who condemned our Lord to death!

CHRISTIAN 2

He has been our oppressor for years.

The others mumble among themselves. Clemens watches Aquilla closely. Aquilla smiles at Procula then turns to the group.

AQUILLA

We dare not forget our Lord's own words on the cross--"forgive them for they know not what they do." Would to God that even the Emperor might know the gift of God's love.

The Christians exchange looks, then turn faces toward the heavens. Aquilla turns and raises his arms. Clemens watches intently.

AQUILLA (CONT'D)

Oh gracious and heavenly father, we come to you with great thanksgiving and with humble hearts petitioning on behalf of your servant Cornelius and even our enemy Pilate.

Clemens inhales with amazement at this process.

AQUILLA (CONT'D)

As we were commanded to pray for our enemies, we now ask you to look upon Pontius Pilate with tender mercy and forgiveness.. We pray that we also might be given strength to forgive rather than harbor hatred towards those who despise us and treat your Son with contempt....

Clemens is awestruck as he looks around the room. He cautiously raises his face toward heaven.

Clemens' eyes begins to form tears.

72 EXT. CLEMEN'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

72

The sun creeps behind the skyline of Rome.

A bit disheveled, Portia makes her way down the steps, making a poor effort to straighten herself up. Slave Bella helps her into her carriage.

Clemens stands silently looking out at the sunrise. The plain copper lamp adds a warm glow to the room. Portia rumbles into the house. Her husband blandly gives her a slow glance, then turns back to the view of the landscape. She watches him waiting for some sort of acknowledgement.

PORTIA

What are you doing?

CLEMENS

Thinking.

PORTIA

(defensive)

Thinking about what?

CLEMENS
I'm thinking about how I would like
to have what Cornelius has.

Portia is taken aback.

PORTIA
Cornelius has the death penalty!

CLEMENS
(softly)
On the contrary, Cornelius has
everlasting life.

PORTIA
What? Have you lost your mind?!

Sadly Clemens looks at his wife. His heart goes out to her. She has no idea. He smiles softly at her. His look escapes her.. she can't figure him out. It angers her.

PORTIA (CONT'D)
Do you know what I've been doing?!

CLEMENS
Yes.

PORTIA
I've been trying to save your skin.

CLEMENS
Mine?

This makes Portia even angrier.

PORTIA
Yes yours. I have coddled you
along ever since we've been
married. I thought you had talent.
I thought I could clear the way for
you.

CLEMENS
The way has been cleared for me but
unfortunately you did not do it.

Portia doesn't understand.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
It is all about forgiveness, you
know. I could not see that or hear
it before.

PORTIA

I cannot bear this anymore! You have embarrassed me in front of the entire Roman senate, you are a laughing stock. They call you "Theophilus Clemens." Did you know that? Soon the whole city will know you as "God lover Clemens"!

A little smile crosses Clemens face.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

You think it is funny or ironic?!

CLEMENS

I think it istrue.

PORTIA

Well, "Theophilus," you can deal with this one alone. I am through! With you..this house..all of it! I should have listened to my father.

Covered in sadness he watches her as she storms out of the house followed by the servants.

CLEMENS

(whispers to himself)

Forgive me, dear Portia.....

73

INT. COURT ROOM - CONFESSION

73

In the middle of the court oil is being poured onto the back of the head of Caligula. Caligula raises his brow. The oil streams down his face as an attendant quickly wipes it away and massages the Emperor's scalp.

Clemens waits in the center of the court. Two guards stand on each side of Pilate, just a few paces behind. Procula hides in the shadows watching and Portia is nowhere to be found.

Caligula bites into a mushroom and sprays a lemon slice on his tongue.

CALIGULA

Before I pass sentence, do you have anything to say on behalf of Pilate? Make this quick. I am growing weary of you Theophilus.. uh..Clemens.

A little chuckle rumbles from the senate. Pilate raises his eyes toward his counsel.

CLEMENS

If it pleases Caesar and this honored Senate of Rome, I must confess and fall upon my knees and beg mercy of the court. Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, war hero and servant of Caesar, put his faith and trust in me to represent him and his accomplishments to the judicial body of Rome. I have failed in representing him in a proper manner.

Pilate's eyes widen at this news. Is it another strategy? Is he trying to save his own skin?

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

In my effort to prove that Pontius Pilate made the right decisions as governor of Judea, I had to prove that Jesus Christ was a god. And I did just that. I proved he was God.

DOMITUS

Clemens, that is not the conclusion of this court!

CLEMENS

No, but it is my conclusion.

DOMITUS

This is absurd.

CLEMENS

I understand for the first time in my life what it means to have faith in a real God that becomes part of your total being.

The senate is quiet and looks unusually captivated by Clemens words.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)

The emptiness of my soul has been filled with the love of God as a result of my search for the identity of this man who was crucified. The casualty of this revelation is the defense of my client, Pontius Pilate.

(MORE)

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
 It is not Pontius Pilate who is
 incompetent, it is his counsel.

The senate mumbles to one another in an effort to lessen the confusion.

Domitus cuts his eyes toward Caligula trying to judge his response. Caligula leans back in his chair and studies Clemens.

CLEMENS (CONT'D)
 I stand ready to accept any
 judgment you might levy against
 Pilate upon myself in his stead.

Pilate is caught totally off guard, he starts toward Clemens but is restrained by the guard.

Caligula raises up in his chair. Domitus takes this as a cue.

DOMITUS
 Clemens cannot sacrifice himself
 for Pilate! He not only has become
 Theophilus, but he has lost all
 memory of Roman Law. I simply will
 not allow it!

Caligula snaps his head toward Domitus with rage in his eyes.

CALIGULA
 You what! You won't allow it! Who
 do you think you are? I judge! I
 condemn! I decide! I am Caesar,
 Domitus! Not you!

Domitus shrinks as small as he can get.

DOMITUS
 Your worship I had no...

74 INT. COURT - SENTENCING

74

CALIGULA
 Clemens, step forward.. Pontius
 Pilate, step forward.

The two stand side by side facing their judge. Caligula stares at them, his mind racing about.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

You both should be grateful that I am not the drunken fool that you take me to be. Otherwise, you both would hang on a cross like the Jew before sundown..... Pontius Pilate, your lawyer has made a noble gesture but unlike this Jesus we have heard so much about, he cannot sacrifice himself for your failures. It is clear to me that the reason we have a Jewish Christian problem in Rome is due to the fact that you were too lenient in Judea. I am not sure that you yourself are not bewitched by this Jewish magician.

Pilate tries to hide any response to the comment that might be revealing.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

I have taken your history and devoted service to Rome into account. Thus, I am not going to invite you to join your friend Sejanus in the crematorium, but you will be banished into exile on the hinterland of Empire to live with barbarians and thieves in the farthest regions of Gaul.

Domitus smiles.

From the rear of the court Procula breaks down, sobbing into her cloak.

Caligula studies Clemens a moment.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Theophilus Clemens-- for I doubt you can outlive the name-- you have made a mockery of this Senate and of me. Your god on earth...

Clemens locks eyes with Caligula.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

(continuing; pause)

..has stolen your loyalty and devotion to Caesar. You also have become the very thing that is rapidly becoming a nuisance to Empire.

(MORE)

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

I have every reason to execute you with no lawful interference. But, I refrain from this action due to the talents of certain members of your family.

Caligula grins taking sadistic pleasure in the comment. Clemens cringes as he is reminded of his wife's infidelity.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Clemens, you are banished from this court and the city proper. You will forever be known by the name you acquired in this court... Theophilus.

Clemens bows his head.

The camera pulls away leaving Clemens standing with Pilate. They look at each other briefly, then Pilate looks back at the Roman Seal over Caesar's throne and is escorted out of the court. The senate begins to shuffle out.

Caligula watches Clemens as he just stands there. Senator Senius tightens his lips and looks sorrowfully at his son-in-law.

Caligula giggles out loud.

CALIGULA (CONT'D)

Now, let's eat.

The court announcer begins to declare the adjournment.

COURT ANNOUNCER

The high court of Rome and the honorable senate.....

FADE TO BLACK

75 EXT. THEOPHILUS' HOUSE - DAY

75

Tucked in the hills of tuscanY a handmaDE house leans against Weak Supports.

On the road leading up to the house a robed man leads a small donkey laden with two large baskets. The road is dusty and hot.

Outside the modest house an old man feeds a few chickens next to a small garden. Its been 35 years since anyone has visited him. The old man shades his eyes in an effort to see the man with the donkey.

The man with the donkey calls out.

EPAPHRAS

Are you the one they call
Theophilus?

A slow smile begins to cross Clemens face.

CLEMENS

Yes, I am he.

EPAPHRAS

I bear gifts from a distant friend.

CLEMENS

I have few friends these days,
come..come.. have some cool water.
The sun is so hot.

EPAPHRAS

Thank you brother. You are most
gracious.

The house is of modest size with many of the furnishings from Clemens' home in Rome. There is a shaded court yard in the center where they sit and are served cups of water and a bowl of fruit. Epaphras finishes his water and drags his sleeve across his mouth.

EPAPHRAS (CONT'D)

I have traveled many months to find
you. My master, Physician Luke of
Troas carries a passion in his
heart that I might succeed in the
delivery of his message.

CLEMENS

Message?

EPAPHRAS

Yes, The Message.

Epaphras puts the large basket in front of Clemens.

Gently removing the top from the basket, Clemens discovers a large scroll bound in leather straps. He raises his eyes slowly to Epaphras.

EPAPHRAS (CONT'D)

The deed is done now. Theophilus,
I must go.

Epaphras makes his way down the lane. He stops and takes one last look at Clemens' little house nestled in the trees.

76 INT. THEOPHILUS' HOUSE - NIGHT

76

A light shines from the plain copper lamp with the bent handle as Clemens unrolls the scroll on his crude table. As he begins to read, tears begin to form in his eyes.

CLEMENS

In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed....

Dissolve to a fading image of Clemens leaving the graphic full screen.

VOICE OF CLEMENS

good to me also, having followed closely for some time past, to write an orderly account to you, most excellent Theophilus,
(screen text only)
that you might know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed....

77 SUPER: GOSPEL OF SAINT LUKE 1:1-4

77