

# **This Magnificent Madness**

or

**A T P H I L I P P I**

(Loosely based on the books of Acts, Luke, and  
Philippians)

by

**Frederick L. Saur**

**THIS MAGNIFICENT MADNESS**

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by Frederick L. Saur

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## **ACT I, scene i**

Anthony, a retired Roman centurion, reacts negatively to the events of Paul's first visit to Philippi and the growth of Christianity. The boys Marcus, son of Lydia, and Ditus (Epaphroditus), son of Anthony, plot to, and eventually pour water from the rooftop onto pedestrians. Both Rufio, Anthony's comrade-in-arms, and Lydia, his neighbor, are upset by the arrest of Paul and his casting out of the spirit from the slave girl. Rufio has brought a gift of model ships for the boys, which later gets them into trouble. Rufio does not understand why Anthony studies many foreign philosophies.

### **Scene ii**

Pothinus, an Egyptian merchant, discusses Christianity with Lydia. When an earthquake shakes the buildings, Anthony cynically questions if the earthquake is a sign from the new Christian god.

### **Scene iii**

After the earthquake, Anthony cannot sleep because he is troubled by Paul's message which contradicts some of the writings he has studied. Anthony is endeavoring to find peace of mind, now that he is retired.

### **Scene iv**

Anthony instructs his new steward, Kalchus, to accompany the boys to the circus to watch Stylus, his former steward, a thief, fight for his life. Anthony discusses his study of philosophers with Pothinus. Rufio brings news that Paul is freed from prison. Rufio also returns a corona to Anthony stolen by Stylus. Rufio is upset when his wife Syntyche contributes dormice for the Christian love feast. Ditus angrily confronts his father about the death of Stylus. Frustrated by his son's reaction, Anthony throws the corona, symbol of his career as a centurion, to the floor. Anthony explains his cynicism about religion to Pothinus. Pothinus buys from Rufio the slave girl whom Paul has freed from prophesy. Ditus and Marcus play a game of war and Marcus is injured when he falls from the rooftop.

## **Act II, scene i**

The next day, Syntyche comes to Euodia with pagan charms to cure the ill Marcus. Rufio conspires with Kalchus to cheat Anthony by falsifying accounts. Anthony refuses to join Pothinus and the Christians as they pray for Marcus, but Anthony does study what writings about Jesus are being circulated. Anthony is impressed as he watches his son pray for his playmate, who then recovers.

### **Scene i i**

Eight years later, Rufio and Kalchus, now a free man, discuss how Anthony has become a compassionate slave owner, though he refuses to become a Christian. Lydia and Euodia await news about their sons who are in Rome with Paul: Ditus is ill and Marcus has disappeared. Lydia attempts to mediate the quarrel between Euodia and Syntyche about the celebration of Holy Communion. Anthony is furious to learn that Kalchus has falsified accounts and instructs Kalchus to correct the accounts before he is punished. Ditus, now a man and called Epaphroditus, returns safely and in good health from Rome with the letter called Philippians.

### **Scene iii**

Later that day, Lydia reads Paul's letter (Philippians) to Euodia and Syntyche and persuades them to resolve their differences. Rufio invites Pothinus to meet with Kalchus, who is altering accounts to win favor with Anthony's debtors. Pothinus refuses to alter his debts. Iras tells Lydia they have been unable to find the runaway Marcus. Fearing for his life, Kalchus requests Ditus intercede, Anthony demonstrates his Christianity by dismissing Kalchus without punishment and agrees to state publicly his belief in the divinity of Christ

and to be baptized.

## CHARACTERS

(4 MEN, 5 WOMEN, 2 BOYS – AGE TWELVE)

**Anthony** is over fifty years of age with the bearing of a soldier. His piercing eyes are shadowed by a brooding, furrowed forehead. Used to commanding and being instantly obeyed, he is a vain man, refusing to acknowledge that time and the injuries of war require that he temper his activities, and he endeavors to disguise his limp and the stiffness of his joints when he rises from a chair and walks.

**Euodia** (Euo'di.a), is younger than Anthony, pretty, kind, an aristocratic Roman matron who runs her household with authority, but always accedes to her husband's wishes.

**Lydia** is a brisk, middle-aged business woman, very attractive, with a strong personality.

**Rufio** is barrel-chested, retired comrade in arms to Anthony, as eager to please his friend as he is to earn money and position in the community of Philippi. He has the charm of the country politician but lacks the polished guile. In the years between Acts I and II, he and his wife gain at least 20 pounds, enough to show self-indulgence but not to encourage laughter.

**SYNTYCHE** (Syn'ty.che), Rufio's wife, is vain, pretty, plump, eager to be a leader in the community even if others must take a lower place at the banquet table.

**Pothinus** is of middle age, large, with the grace of movement of a champion athlete. His dark skin and beard are complemented by his colorful clothing and jewels which he wears not in vanity but to impress his customers and fellow merchants. In contradiction to his intimidating physical presence, he displays a warm, gentle, winning personality. He is best played by a black actor with a bass voice.

**Ditus** (**EPAPHRODITUS the man in Act III** [Ep.aph.ro.di'tus]) is as tall as his father Anthony, with the noble bearing of his father without but his arrogance and vanity.

**Fria** is young, pretty, curious, and coquettish.

**Kalchus**. Beneath his subservience is a strong, willful personality. He is in his early twenties and should not be taller than Anthony.

**Ditus** (Epaphroditus the boy in Acts I and II) may be taller than Marcus with a lighter complexion.

**Marcus** should be darker, since his mother Lydia is from the near east. The boys' personalities are revealed through their conversations and actions. They are friends and rivals, twelve years of age.

**IRAS**, the slave with "a spirit of divination," is young, black, with a contralto voice and exotic in voice, movement, and dress.

## **COSTUMES**

Should be kept simple; togas on the men unless you permit hairy legs to be shown. Traditional Roman gowns on the women. The boys wear short gowns, unless they appear in togas, with a purple stripe along the edge. Some costumes are described within the text.

## **SETTING**

One setting: the flat, open roofs of two dwellings, with exits right rear and left. The roof stage left (Lydia's) is a storage area, with an assortment of burlap bundles and baskets and a knee-high table left center with two stools behind it. A screen or drape to separate a small area from view by the audience is used in several scenes. The roof-top right (Anthony's) has a shelf near the right exit which holds an assortment of scrolls, writing materials, cups and bowls. A canvas canopy may extend out from the wall to protect the shelf from the weather. A writing table with two stools is right center. The only demands and complications in the setting are

1. The illusion of roof-top height may be created rear center by filling the area to suggest the tops of tress fronted by a knee-high wall
2. Two knee-high parapets should separate the roofs and create a narrow alley between. These walls may run diagonally across the stage from behind the right rear exit to left front, or down the middle of the stage off-center left, OR ON A SMALL STAGE, position all action concerned with the alley at rear center, with the alley running across the rear of the stage with a knee high wall separating the two roof-tops. Do keep the setting simple and sparse.

The earthquake must be created as a physical understatement, with very little motion – a slight movement of glass on the tables and a basket falling from the wall or a pile of baskets rolling across the floor.

# AT PHILIPPI

## Scene I

AS THE CURTAIN OPENS, THE MELODY HEARD AT THE CONCLUSION OF ACT II IS HEARD. IN THE VERY DIM LIGHT, ANTHONY IS SLOWLY PACING RIGHT TO LEFT. HE PAUSES TO UNROLL A SCROLL, STUDIES IT, THEN TOSSES IT BACK ONTO THE TABLE AND RESUMES PACING, REACHING STAGE RIGHT AS EUODIA, CARRYING A SMALL LAMP, ENTERS FROM RIGHT AND MOVES TO CENTER.

**EUODIA:** Anthony! Another sleepless night? Or did you have one of your hateful dreams?

**ANTHONY:** Go back to bed. I will join you soon.

**EUODIA:** I cannot rest when you are awake. Whatever troubles you must trouble me.

**ANTHONY:** (Sharply) Go to your bed.

**EUODIA:** How have I angered you?

**ANTHONY:** You know your place. I would be alone. (EUODIA MOVES TO EXIT RIGHT. REGRETTING HIS SHARPNESS) Stay. You are my wife; come share my thoughts. (SHE SITS LEFT OF THE TABLE, HE PACES THE WIDTH OF THE STAGE ONCE, PAUSES AT TABLE TO LIFT A SCROLL AND THEN DROP IT TO THE TABLE, THEN WALKS RIGHT TO FACE FRONT) I have been troubled by this stranger Paul and his philosophy. This new belief is much too kind and loving for my world.

**EUODIA:** You have said you are not satisfied with petty politics that weaken Rome and foolish men who worship many gods.

**ANTHONY:** (NODS IN AGREEMENT AND SMILES BITTERLY) Such words are treasonous from a Roman's lips.

**EUODIA:** Your words will go no further. Only your wife has heard them. Anthony, your rest is more important than philosophies. The city of Philippi lies before you; its rulers are asleep. Come, rest with them.

**ANTHONY:** Are good Romans and all their gods asleep? Are there any men out there who question as I do? And if there are such men, how can they sleep?

**EUODIA:** Tomorrow at the river we will ask.

**ANTHONY:** (TURNS TO FACE HER) The river is a woman's meeting place.

**EUODIA:** Other men come and listen. Clement comes; he questions Paul and finds his answers wise.

**ANTHONY:** Paul is clever to speak of a god who cares, who loves mankind; quite opposite to other gods, who do not care for men but, selfish, demand gold and blood.

**EUODIA:** Then you will join us once again and learn?

**ANTHONY:** Paul is a Jew, a well-known Pharisee.

**EUODIA:** His god is new too and good to us; his words bring light into our troubled Philippi.

**ANTHONY:** (CROSSES TO TABLE AND PICKS UP SCROLL. BRUSQUELY) This is woman's talk. Get you to bed. I wish to be alone. Leave the lamp.

**EUODIA:** (GENTLY) When you have a need, please send for me. (She exits.)

**ANTHONY:** I should not speak so sharply, but a woman must know her place even if she is good. Why am I troubled now? Why, at this time when I have lived longer, richer than most, can I not rest in body and in mind? Why cannot I be content with what I've done; wear my awards and find comfort when men greet me with respect? Why cannot I enjoy a loving wife and growing son? (UNROLLS SCROLL AND READS) Oh, Epicurus, I thought you correct when you wrote: "The wise man neither seeks escape from living nor fears to cease his life; for neither does life annoy nor does his death seem to be anything evil. For it is not the larger share, but the pleasant time that is most delicious."<sup>1</sup> The pleasant time! (ROLLS SCROLL UP, PLACES IT ON THE TABLE, MOVES DOWN STAGE TO REGARD THE CITY BENEATH HIM) So, Philippi, now I am old, shall I find peace of mind as I gather more wealth; shall I be satisfied with status and expect nothing beyond the grave? Is that enough? Or is dissatisfaction all that's left?

(A QUICK BLACKOUT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY Scene ii.)

## SCENE 2

TWO BOYS ENTER STAGE LEFT. DITUS (EPAPHRODITUS) CARRIES A PITCHER OF WATER, FOLLOWED BY MARCUS. THEY GIGGLE AS THEY ENTER, CHECK TO SEE IF THEY'RE ALONE, AND THEN CROSS TO PEER OVER THE WALL INTO THE ALLEY BELOW.

**MARCUS:** Ditus, let me. It's my roof.

**DITUS:** We agreed that if someone complains and I'm the one who doused him from your roof, then you can say you aren't to blame. And the same for me if you douse them from across the way.

(EUODIA ENTERS FOLLOWED BY KALCHUS. THEY STAND, WATCHING)

**MARCUS:** All right. But pick a fat man, not a beggar.

**DITUS:** Why not a beggar?

**MARCUS:** They're dirty anyway and don't care if their old clothing gets wet.

**DITUS:** I'll pick a fat matron. (THE TWO BOYS LEAN OVER THE WALL, SILENTLY NUDGING EACH OTHER AS THEY EXAMINE THE PASSERS BY. ANTHONY ENTERS SILENTLY AND STANDS, UNSEEN BY HIS WIFE AND THE BOYS. WHEN KALCHUS SEES ANTHONY, HE KNEELS BUT ANTHONY FROWNS AND GESTURES FOR HIM TO STAND UPRIGHT.) Here comes one.

**EUODIA:** Ditus and Brutus! No more of these pranks. You will bring trouble to Lydia and her house.

**DITUS:** Mother, it's just clean water.

**MARCUS:** Better than a chamber pot!

**DITUS:** We both were fouled on our way to gymnasium when Rufio's servant emptied pots on us.

**EUODIA:** Son, I'm sure she meant no harm but did not look and that's no reason for you to do the same.

**ANTHONY:** (LAUGHING) Water's not the same as a chamber pot. Boys, find mischief elsewhere. Lydia's roof is not the place for play. Nor is my rooftop. Son, come here and meet my new steward.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick C. Grant, "Epicurus' Letter to Menosceus," *Hellenistic Religions, the Age of Syncretism*, Grant, New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1953, p. 126.

(PICKING UP A PLANK FROM AGAINST THE WALL, THE BOYS QUICKLY MOVE TO PLACE THE PLANK FROM MARCUS' ROOF TO ANTHONY'S, PLANNING TO CROSS FROM ONE ROOF TO THE OTHER BY MEANS OF THE PLANK.)

**EUODIA:** Not that way. You'll fall!

(RELUCTANTLY, THE BOYS RETURN THE PLANK TO THE WALL. DITUS WALKS TO THE BALUSTRADE, PICKS UP THE PITCHER, LOOKS FROM HIS FROWNING MOTHER TO HIS SMILING FATHER AND DEFIANTLY POURS THE WATER ON A PEDESTRIAN BELOW. INDIGNANT CRIES RISE FROM THE ALLEY. DITUS DROPS THE PITCHER ON THE ROOF AND THE BOYS JUMP OVER THE BROKEN POTTERY AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE BOWELS OF THE HOUSE.)

**EUODIA:** Ditus! ( AND TURNS TO APPEAL TO ANTHONY) Anthony!

**ANTHONY:** Euodia, it was only water. I've told our son to take to the wall when walking down the street and he won't be doused with someone's muck.

**EUODIA:** I'd best go down and see if harm was done.

(SHE EXITS. ANTHONY MOVES TO THE TABLE AND EXAMINES A SCROLL WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE YOUNG MAN WHO HAS NOT MOVED FROM HIS POSITION AT THE REAR OF THE ROOM)

**ANTHONY:** Your name is Kalchus, newly come from Rome.

**KALCHUS:** (FACE EXPRESSIONLESS, STEPS FORWARD AND KNEELS) Yes, senator.

**ANTHONY:** Once senator. Now retired. I'm now a landowner. I don't expect my slaves to kneel to me but I will have obedience. That was my son who poured water from the pitcher. He obeys his father or he's punished, but by me alone. When he's of age, if you attend and serve us well, he will be your master. (IMPATIENTLY MOTIONS FOR KALCHUS TO STAND) How long were you the slave of Marcellus?

**KALCHUS:** Ten years. As his chief steward half that time.

**ANTHONY:** Marcellus was my friend. We fought in Gaul. He saved my life in battle, but I could not save him from the politics of Rome.

**KALCHUS:** Then he is dead?

**ANTHONY:** No, exiled. He's fortunate as are you. He sent you here to save you from the Roman galleys. Rowers are lucky if they live two years.<sup>2</sup>

**KALCHUS:** I have good fortune to be sold to you. My master praised you for your skills in farming and in trade as well as war. He said if I took care I could earn freedom because you respected life.

**ANTHONY:** (LOOKS SHARPLY AT HIS SLAVE, APPRAISING THE COMPLIMENT). I bought you for your skill, not for your life. Marcellus wrote you are a clever steward. Be clever with your work, not with your tongue. If you want freedom, you must work for it. I'll have no lazy slaves within these walls or on my farms. You replace a slave who thought himself my equal. He is now at the arena, competing in the games. The law decreed he fight for his own life. If the thief wins, he'll steal his life from death. (ANTHONY TURNS FROM THE SLAVE TO PICK UP A SCROLL, CONTINUING TO SPEAK MORE TO HIMSELF THAN TO THE SLAVE.) Though death's inevitable for all of us.

(DITUS BOUNCES IN. SLOWLY FOLLOWED BY MARCUS, SHY OF ANTHONY, WHO STAYS IN THE BACKGROUND)

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<sup>2</sup> Brenda Ralph Lewis, Growing Up in Ancient Rome, London, B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1980, p. 10.

**KALCHUS:** My master said you were a fine scholar.

**ANTHONY:** A soldier first, and, since I survived war.... (HE WAVES AT THE TABLE FULL OF SCROLLS) ... I've time to search for purpose in old age.

**DITUS:** Where is Stilus?

**ANTHONY:** I sent him away; Stilus was a thief; he is no more.

**DITUS:** He was my friend.

**ANTHONY:** To you... just... a slave." (SPEAKING DELIBERATELY, TO DISCIPLINE DITUS AND TO COMMUNICATE TO KALCHUS WHAT HE EXPECTS OF A SLAVE)  
A slave who steals faces circus combat.

**DITUS:** But Stilus..."

**ANTHONY:** This is Kalchus, our new steward." (TO KALCHUS.) Meet us in the library below.

(KALCHUS BOWS AND EXITS. DITUS MOVES TO THE BALUSTRADE TO STARE MOODILY AT THE STREET BELOW.)

**ANTHONY:** (Acknowledging Marcus) Well, Marcus, are you here to play at more water games from your friend's roof?

**DITUS:** Father, why did you not confer with me?

**ANTHONY:** 'Confer with you!' About Stilus? He broke the Roman law and we will honor all the laws of Rome.,

**EUODIA:** (Enters) Anthony, Rufio is below and asks for you.

**ANTHONY:** (Changing his tone to placate his son.) Is he the one on whom you poured water? You and Marcus will suspend your pranks while I meet my friend. And it is time you bathed and changed your garments. You look like street beggars, not worth wasting water on.

**EUODIA:** Fortunately, it was not Rufio on whom they dumped. The stranger was soaked. I appeased him with a gift of a meat pie. Rufio asks to see you here.

**ANTHONY:** He knows this is my sanctuary. The rooftop is where I can be alone without interruption... (Tousles Ditus' hair, who draws away, pouting) ... except for pranksters.

**EUODIA:** Rufio is upset. He asks for privacy.

**ANTHONY:** Very well.

(EUODIA MOTIONS TO THE BOYS WHO, RELIEVED TO BE DISMISSED, DISAPPEAR DOWN THE STAIRS. SHE FOLLOWS)

(ANTHONY SHRUGS AT THE INTERRUPTION AND SITS AT THE TABLE, STUDYING A SCROLL. HE DOES NOT NOTICE A WOMAN RISE FROM THE STAIRWAY IN THE BUILDING ACROSS THE ALLEY AND STAND, WATCHING HIM. WHEN HE DOES NOT LOOK UP, SHE PICKS UP A BASKET AND DROPS IT. IT BOUNCES WITH A DULL THUD. ANTHONY LOOKS UP, RISES, AND NODS).

**LYDIA:** I know this rooftop is your private place away from all the clamor of the world. Forgive my interruption, but I must....

**ANTHONY:** Lydia...?

**LYDIA:** You have met my house guest, Paul.

**ANTHONY** He is a very interesting man.

**LYDIA:** You have heard him speak about his god.

**ANTHONY:** Yes. Euodia prevailed on me to join you at the river. I have heard.

**LYDIA:** And have you believed?

**ANTHONY:** His religion's not for me, and not too practical for Philippi. I find no harm in what he practices as long as it does not endanger Rome.

**LYDIA:** He is a Roman citizen. He means no harm, only to bring us good.

**ANTHONY:** Then what's the problem. Why do you come to me?

**LYDIA:** He's been arrested. He's in prison now. Men listen to you because you are respected. Although you hold no office, men of law here in Philippi accept your advice.

**ANTHONY:** And you would have me mediate for him?

**LYDIA:** He would do no harm to any man.

**ANTHONY:** His words are very winning. You and my wife seem convinced his god is the best god.

**LYDIA:** The only true god.

**ANTHONY:** Careful, Lydia, do not forget, my emperor is a god.

**LYDIA:** But Caesar will permit my personal god.

**ANTHONY:** As long as he does not endanger Rome.<sup>3</sup>

(A PANTING RUFIO, FOLLOWED BY DITUS, ENTERS, CARRYING A COVERED BASKET, HOLDING IT BEFORE HIS FAT STOMACH AS IF HE HAS A PRICELESS BURDEN. WHEN HE SEES LYDIA, HE STOPS, FROWNS, AND LOOKED QUESTIONINGLY AT ANTHONY.)

**ANTHONY:** I will consider all that you have said and act upon it should I judge it wise.

(LYDIA BOWS AND EXITS STAGE LEFT.)

**RUFIO:** Friend Anthony.

**ANTHONY:** Comrade Rufio. I see you are dry. (THE MEN EMBRACE. DITUS STAYS A STEP BEHIND RUFIO)

**RUFIO:** Dry? The sun is shining. There is no rain.

**ANTHONY:** Right. There is no rain.

**RUFIO:** I asked Ditus to join us for I bring him a gift to show him how we fought as comrades in arms.

(RUFIO PLACES THE BASKET ON THE TABLE AND WAVES FOR DITUS TO LIFT THE LID. IMPATIENTLY RUFIO ASSISTS THE BOY, SMILING INDULGENTLY. AS DITUS REMOVES TWO NAVAL VESSELS FROM THE BASKET, RUFIO LOOKS UP AT ANTHONY.)

**RUFIO:** These bring back memories. For your son Ditus.

**DITUS:** What beauties, Rufio. Thank you.

**RUFIO:** Anthony, remember how you led the infantry across the corvis from our ship to theirs? Ditus, place the boarding plank - it's called a 'corvis' - here on the pole which swivels

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<sup>3</sup> Mike Corbishley, *The Roman World*, New York, Warwick Press, 1986, p. 62

from deck to deck. Your father led the charge which won the day. The Lydian merchant brought me this from Rome. I had it especially made. Anthony, you are too modest. Your son needs to know how great his father was leading his men on land and sea. He's seen your corona?<sup>5</sup>"

**ANTHONY:** Ditus, why not share this with your friend? Show him how the corvus links the ships.

(DITUS QUICKLY PLACES THE TOYS IN THE BASKET AND STARTS OUT; THEN, REMEMBERING HIS MANNERS, HE TURNS, BOWS)

**DITUS:** My father's comrade honors me with these gifts. (DITUS EXITS CENTER REAR)

**RUFIO:** Your son will make a fine centurion. (LOOKS OUT OVER THE CITY) You command a great view of Philippi from your roof. You were very wise to build so high. Does your neighbor intrude upon your solitude?

**ANTHONY:** Seldom. She respects my privacy.

**RUFIO:** It is not right a woman should control a business. I dislike these foreigners who put on airs. They forget their place.

**ANTHONY:** What is their place? Remember, we are Romans living in a conquered land.

**RUFIO:** The right of conquest. But a woman merchant!

**ANTHONY:** You did not come here to discuss women.

**RUFIO:** This Lydia has a house guest, Paul, a Jew.

**ANTHONY:** And a Roman citizen. (RUFIO IS SHOCKED TO HEAR THIS) So I'm told.

**RUFIO:** That is a problem! A citizen of Rome!

**ANTHONY:** What is there about this Paul that troubles you?

**RUFIO:** You know of the slave girl with the spirit who has a gift for telling the unknown?

**ANTHONY:** I have seen her walking through the streets and know the foolish spend their gold on her. Has she told your fortune?

**RUFIO:** Is it foolish to run ahead of time and know misfortune before it catches you?

**ANTHONY:** And know good fortune and guarantee a win? Rufio, the gods will not reveal the future nor will they give free men or slaves such skill.

**RUFIO:** But she has brought gold to businessmen and told them when to sell and when to buy. But now....

**ANTHONY:** But now...?

**RUFIO:** She's lost her special gift. This Paul, this Jew, who talks of a new god.... She followed him, ignoring all, shrieking, "These men are slaves of the most high God, offering salvation to all men...."

**ANTHONY:** Salvation to all men! Quite a gift!

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Connally, The Roman Army, Silver Burdett Co., 1985, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 68. During the Republic, military decorations were won largely on merit and regardless of rank. The most prized of these was the corona obsidionalis, a grass crown given to the deliverer of a besieged army. The corona navalis (of metal) was awarded for the capture of an enemy ship.

**RUFIO:** This went on for days. She would not use her fortune-telling gift, she would not work, there was no profit now in owning her, and finally, this man Paul, annoyed, in the name of his Christ, cast the spirit out of her. She is useless now.

**ANTHONY:** A slave who brings no profit now to you? She is your slave?

(RUFIO SHRUGS, NOT EAGER TO ADMIT HIS INVOLVEMENT.)

**ANTHONY:** Rufio, is she your slave?

**RUFIO:** I share her ownership with other men. She's been a good investment, brought much gold....

**ANTHONY:** Gold from the gullible who want to know the future. The future's not for sale.

**RUFIO:** But the future's brighter with much gold.

**ANTHONY:** Yes, friend, gold sweetens the unknown.

(LYDIA AND A GIRL ENTER ON LYDIA'S ROOF. RUFIO IMMEDIATELY MOTIONS TO ANTHONY NOT TO SPEAK AS HE SUSPICIOUSLY WATCHES THE WOMEN. SEEING ANTHONY AND RUFIO, LYDIA MOTIONS FOR THE GIRL TO PLACE HER BOX BEHIND A SCREEN AT THE REAR OF HER ROOF WHERE SHE SUPERVISES THE UNPACKING OF THE BOX. RUFIO, FRUSTRATED BY THEIR APPEARANCE, WALKS OVER TO THE BALUSTRADE AND WAITS UNTIL LYDIA EXITS LEFT.)

**ANTHONY:** Lydia uses her rooftop as do I for privacy. Her slave will not eavesdrop. Why do you come to me with this sad tale?

**RUFIO:** This man Paul is whipped, imprisoned, and in chains.

**ANTHONY:** At your request? Rufio, greed has a price.

**RUFIO:** You're sure he is a Roman citizen?

**ANTHONY:** So I've been told. And you have had him whipped!<sup>6</sup>

**RUFIO:** It's too late now. The magistrates agreed. Our protest was that he preached of a god we Romans are forbidden.

**ANTHONY:** Not that your source of gold suddenly was lost? Years ago Caesar Augustus gave the Jews permission to worship as they please.<sup>7</sup>

**RUFIO:** Yes, but they have added a new god - or son of God. It's all nonsense to me.

**ANTHONY:** I have heard Paul. His words cannot harm Rome. The son of god he preaches is too mild.

**RUFIO:** What shall I do?

**ANTHONY:** For now, hold your tongue. Let the authorities proceed with this. If necessary, they'll apologize and Paul will be on his way, a memory.

**RUFIO:** I wish Philippi had never seen his face."

(KALCHUS APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY RIGHT AND STANDS, AWAITING ORDERS. ANTHONY WAVES HIM IN.)

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<sup>6</sup> William Barclay, The Acts of The Apostles (The Daily Study Bible Series), The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 176. To scourge a Roman citizen was a crime punishable by death.

<sup>7</sup> Sakellariou, Macedonia, 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization, Ekdotike Athenon s.a., 1983, p. 207.

**ANTHONY:** Work here. I'll meet with you after we have bailed.

(ANTHONY PUTS HIS ARM AROUND RUFIO'S SHOULDER AND EASES HIM OUT.)

**RUFIO:** Ah, yes. A bath would be refreshing. Just like old times.

**ANTHONY:** Your gift to Ditus is most opportune. He needs diversion from his water pranks.

(THEY EXIT STAGE RIGHT. KALCHUS, CARRYING SEVERAL SCROLLS AND WRITING MATERIALS, SITS AT THE TABLE AND ARRANGES HIS MATERIALS. FRIA, THE SLAVE GIRL, PULLS THE DRAPE OPEN, OR SCREEN AWAY, AND WALKS OVER TO THE PARAPET TO WATCH HIM. SHE IS CURIOUS, COQUETTISH, DETERMINED TO LEARN IF SHE CAN TRUST HIM.)

**FRIA:** You are the new steward?

(KALCHUS LOOKS UP BUT, CAUTIOUS, KEEPS HIS STYLUS IN HAND SO HE CAN IMMEDIATELY RETURN TO HIS WORK IF SOMEONE ENTERS.)

**FRIA:** Have you no tongue? I hear that you are newly come from Rome and that your former master was exiled because he questioned Caesar. Is it true?

(KALCHUS DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE HER QUESTION. )

**FRIA:** I have never been to Rome. Is it both beautiful and evil? You are fortunate to be a slave of Anthony. He is a hard man but you will eat good food and dress well if you work hard.

**KALCHUS:** And what about your house?

**FRIA:** I've been with my mistress fifteen years, ever since she came to Philippi. I know how to extract purple dye and color garments so they will not fade. I've proved my worth. My mistress is most kind, especially since we all have been baptized.

**KALCHUS:** Baptized?

**FRIA:** My mistress has discovered a new god and all within her household are baptized.

**KALCHUS:** She wishes you to worship the same god?

**FRIA:** She is a good mistress. I do her will. If you are clever, you will do as well.

**KALCHUS:** I do not think my master cares about gods and goddesses.

**FRIA:** Some of the other slaves do not trust you. You think you are better than the rest because you read and write and come from Rome.

**KALCHUS:** My skills are valued in the market place. I plan to buy my freedom.

**FRIA:** That takes time and a willing owner.

**KALCHUS:** So I know but I have time. (He turns to his stylus and scroll as if to dismiss her.) And I have a plan.

**FRIA:** Tell me....

**KALCHUS:** No Wait and watch.

**FRIA:** Stylus had a plan!

**KALCHUS:** So I have heard.

**FRIA:** Tomorrow in the circus he will die.

**KALCHUS:** Does he deserve such a punishment?

**FRIA:** He stole from his master. He was a fool."

**KALCHUS:** I am no fool. In time I will be free. (He turns to his writing as if dismissing her.)

**FRIA:** Good. I will be here to watch and wait.

(SHE TURNS TO THE PILE OF BASKETS AND BEGINS SORTING THEM UNTIL KALCHUS SPEAKS)

**KALCHUS:** You... girl. The slaves tell me this is the region for earthquakes. Is it so?

**FRIA:** It is so. Do you fear earthquakes?

**KALCHUS:** I have never felt one. What is one like?

**FRIA:** Sometimes the dishes rattle on the table and the earth shakes. It happens anytime the gods are angry and would punish us. Your master Anthony does not fear. He says he built his dwelling to prove to the gods Roman men are equal to all the gods.

**KALCHUS:** Then he would tempt the gods and anger them.

(VOICE OFFSTAGE LEFT) Fria!

**KALCHUS:** Fria's your name? You had better go.

(CONSCIOUS OF HIS EYES UPON HER, FRIA TOSSES HER HEAD AND SAUNTERS OUT. KALCHUS SMILES AND RETURNED TO HIS WORK. HIS CONCENTRATION IS INTERRUPTED AS EUODIA AND LYDIA ENTER)

**EUODIA:** We will talk here. Kalchus, you may work below.

(KALCHUS STANDS, BOWS, GATHERS HIS MATERIALS, AND QUICKLY EXITS RIGHT).

**EUODIA:** Brutus and Anthony have gone to bathe. There they will learn more of Paul's arrest. The Baths are a good place to hear the news.

**LYDIA:** Men are as eager for gossip as are we; like dogs after cats, they chase for news.

**EUODIA:** They'll not call their news 'gossip.' To the male such talk is necessary, serious business.

**LYDIA:** (LYDIA MOVES TO THE EDGE OF THE ROOF TO LOOK OUT OVER THE CITY. EUODIA JOINS HER) And it is business that caused Paul's arrest. We can see the prison from the roof. Should we wish to see within the walls?

**EUODIA:** How would seeing help?

**LYDIA:** I pray for Paul and his friend Timothy.

**EUODIA:** I find it hard to pray when there is nothing can be done.

**LYDIA:** Pray: 'Thy will be done.' I have felt blessed since Paul has come and taught us of our Lord. This troubled world no longer frightens me.

**EUODIA:** I too find comfort. I hope Anthony will talk more with Paul. (SHE MOVES TO THE TABLE, PICKS UP A SCROLL AND RUNS HER HAND OVER THE ROLLED SURFACE.) I know he reads all our world's philosophers searching for a better way of life.

**LYDIA:** Anthony agrees our god is good.

**EUODIA:** But Anthony is first a champion of Rome.

**LYDIA:** what other man is there in Philippi to whom we may appeal:

**EUODIA:** Clement<sup>8</sup> will hear us. He has joined us at the riverside and he has believed the words of Paul. (SHE SIGHS AND RETURNS THE SCROLL TO THE TABLE. FRIA CALLS FROM THE STAIRWELL ACROSS THE WAY.) Mistress, you are wanted in the shop.

**LYDIA:** Our God of Love will not fail Paul or us.

(THE WOMEN TOUCH HANDS REASSURINGLY AND EXIT RIGHT. IMMEDIATELY MARCUS ENTERS LEFT, CHECKS TO SEE IF ANYONE IS ON EITHER ROOF, AND GESTURES FOR DITUS TO JOIN HIM. THEY EACH CARRY ONE OF THE TOY VESSELS FROM RUFIO.)

**MARCUS:** Now, Ditus, what's your plan?

**DITUS:** This rooftop is your ship. That one's mine. We'll put the plank across, a boarding plank - it's called a 'corvis' - from my ship to yours. I, the Roman, will attack your ship. I'll lead the charge just as my father did."

(THE BOYS PLACE THE TOY VESSELS ON THE LOW TABLE AND DITUS DEMONSTRATES HOW THE CORVIS SWINGS FROM ONE MODEL TO THE OTHER.)

**MARCUS:** Your model has a swivel for the corvis. How can we move the plank?

**DITUS:** We'll pretend it's already moved. And we will fight above the alley.

(MARCUS MOVES TO THE PARAPET – protective railing – AND LOOKS DOWN INTO THE ALLEY BELOW.)

**MARCUS:** It's a long way down. If we should fall, there's no water there as there would be at sea.

**DITUS:** Are you afraid?

**MARCUS:** On the model, the corvis has a fence to protect the soldiers when they cross.

**DITUS:** We'll make a fence. But first let's move the plank.

(THEY STRUGGLE WITH THE PLANK AND HAVE ONE END ON THE LEDGE AS POTHINUS ENTERS AND, AMUSED, STANDS WATCHING. HE SEES THE TOY VESSELS AND GUESSES THEIR INTENT.)

**POTHINUS:** Well, hastati, how can I be of help?<sup>9</sup>

**MARCUS:** Pothinus! (HE JUMPS INTO THE EGYPTIAN'S ARMS AND IS SWUNG ABOUT AS DITUS LOOKS ON, A BIT DISTRUSTFUL OF THE FOREIGNER.)

**MARCUS:** Friend, you have come at last!

**POTHINUS:** Philippi is a magnet drawing me back to the house where I have the best of friends. This must be Ditus. Do you remember me?

**DITUS:** You're the Egyptian merchant. It's two years since you came here to buy.

**POTHINUS:** You both have grown so much had you not been here on the roof, I would not know you. Soon you will be men.

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<sup>8</sup> Philippians 4:3. Paul writes of Clement, who "labored with me in the gospel...."

<sup>9</sup> Connally, p. 10. The "hastati" formed the front line of legionaries in the Roman army in battle. The word "legionaries" may be substituted in the text.

**MARCUS:** Will you stay long? What have you come to trade? My mother has fine purple goods to sell.

**POTHINUS:** Of course. Epaphroditus<sup>10</sup>, I also come to buy fresh grain from your father's barns.

**MARCUS:** Call him 'Ditus.' He doesn't like his name.

**POTHINUS:** It is a noble name. In the Greek it means 'lovely, charming.'<sup>11</sup>

**DITUS:** I know. What about your name?

**POTHINUS:** It was my father's name.

**DITUS:** You were a slave.

**POTHINUS:** Yes, I was, long before you were born.

**MARCUS:** People here talk about how strong and clever you were with the sword and net.

**DITUS:** A gladiator and a slave, you won your freedom after killing fifty men.

**MARCUS:** I heard it was a hundred. Wasn't it?

**POTHINUS:** That's best forgotten. It was many years ago.

**DITUS:** There is a slave in the circus here who has killed twenty men. He's very good.

**POTHINUS:** And he survives. You like to see men die?

**DITUS:** If they die well.

**POTHINUS:** (SADLY) Do you know when a man dies well? (SHAKES HIS HEAD, KNOWING HE HAS ASKED AN IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION FOR SUCH YOUNG BOYS) Let's talk of other things. How is your school? (SILENCE) Which one's the better in gymnasium? (AGAIN SILENCE). At what do you excel? What do you like of all the many games? (SILENCE. POTHINUS TURNS TO STUDY THE PLANK LEANING AGAINST THE BALUSTRADE AND THE EMPTY SPACE BETWEEN THE ROOFS, THEN LOOKS AT THE TOY VESSELS) I think I know just what's your intent, but won't it be quite risky here?

**DITUS:** There can't be any fun if there's no risk.

(LYDIA ENTERS, HER ARMS OUTSTRETCHED TO TAKE BOTH HANDS OF POTHINUS IN GREETING).

**LYDIA:** Pothinus. Welcome back to Philippi. So much has happened since last you were here.

**POTHINUS:** I see these boys will soon be men. I'm glad I didn't bring them toys as gifts.

**MARCUS:** You brought us gifts?

**POTHINUS:** Yes, they are below. They're not unpacked. They're in the brass-bound chest. My man Menenius will find them for you. (THE BOYS RUSH OUT LEFT. POTHINUS WATCHES THEM, LAUGHING AT THEIR YOUTH AND SHAKES HIS HEAD) Lydia, the years are kind to you. Have you some secret antidote for time?

**LYDIA:** Nothing you can market but peace of mind.

**POTHINUS:** Peace does not glitter and does not impress. We merchants seek exotic things

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<sup>10</sup> Philippians 2:25-30; 4:18.

<sup>11</sup> John D. Davis. The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1944, p. 166

to sell to bring more money into the market place. Would men buy peace if it were for sale? (HE TURNS TO LOOK OUT OVER PHILIPPI.) Does Philippi offer peace for sale?

(FRIA ENTERS LEFT AND PLACES A TRAY WITH A BOTTLE AND TWO CUPS ON THE TABLE. LYDIA NODS HER APPROVAL AND FRIA EXITS LEFT).

**LYDIA:** More of peace later. Give me your report.

**POTHINUS:** (PULLS A ROLLED MANUSCRIPT FROM HIS BELT AND HANDS IT TO LYDIA, WHO UNROLLS AND STUDIES IT) All written out, the orders of two years of travel throughout our world. Your purple dye is much admired and greatly in demand.

(LYDIA MOTIONS FOR HIM TO SIT ON A STOOL AT THE TABLE. SHE SITS AND FILLS THE CUPS.)

**LYDIA:** Not only is it good to welcome you to Philippi but also to receive so large an order. How long will you stay with us?

**POTHINUS:** I had planned to travel East within a week but I may linger. I hear you entertain two of this new sect, those who preach about a special Jew, a Messiah, native of Palestine, crucified, then risen from the dead. There's much talk of him all around the cities near the sea, such talk as touches ears, then captures hearts and then imprisons minds. Is it spreading sickness or good health?

**LYDIA:** It is a healing balm for this sick world, the best drug to come to Philippi. Others in Philippi have also come to hear, believe, and be baptized. Does Egypt know of Jesus, the son of God?

**POTHINUS:** The son of God! That is quite a claim. In my travels I meet many gods with many claims. (HE DRINKS) What does this god require?

**LYDIA:** This Jesus gives us simple, moral rules such as a loving father would set down for guidance and protection for his children.<sup>12</sup>

**POTHINUS:** A loving father? Most gods are jealous gods demanding gold and blood for sacrifice.

**LYDIA:** My god does not demand a sacrifice. He sacrificed his son to show his love.

**POTHINUS:** A god willing to sacrifice his son for mortals! And you call this god your god?

**LYDIA:** I have been baptized, I and my house.

**POTHINUS:** I'd like to meet with this god's messengers.

**LYDIA:** That can be arranged, once they are freed. They are in prison.

**POTHINUS:** This is how your god shows love for those who follow him? Rome and the world will laugh at such a god.

**LYDIA:** Have you heard laughter when men are promised peace?

**POTHINUS:** I travel a world where peace is not possible. Rome would not have it so. She thrives on war.

**LYDIA:** That is what the messengers of my god plan to offer Rome: promise of peace.

**POTHINUS:** Lydia, discourage all your friends who think they can win over Rome with love. What do they know of Rome? Let me tell you what I have observed. The wheeled traffic rolls in all night, delivering food and wine until daylight, carrying all merchandise brought in to sell. With all this noise, one can find little rest as the carts rumble past with

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Grant, History of Ancient Israel, Scribners, 1984, p. 227.

men loads. Then, with morning, traffic packs the roads with cattle, horsemen, mules, all that's best and worst of priests, beggars, clever thieves and honest patrons.<sup>13</sup> Sewage fills the streets. The children of the poor that one meets are brutalized by poverty.<sup>14</sup> This leaves few noble men and women to be found in Rome who wish to make the 'Heart of the Empire' home.<sup>15</sup> Your friends who teach of love will not find Rome eager to practice love.

(NEITHER POTHINUS NOR LYDIA SEE ANTHONY AND EUODIA ENTER ACROSS THE ALLEY. ANTHONY CARRIES SEVERAL SCROLLS TO THE TABLE AND, SEEING THE COUPLE, STANDS, SMILING IN GREETING, WAITING TO BE SEEN)

**POTHINUS:** Better to stay here in Philippi. But why are these prophets of your god in prison? (POTHINUS SEES ANTHONY AND RISES)

**POTHINUS:** Anthony! Euodia! Greetings, friends. (BOTH MEN WALK TOWARD THE EDGES OF THE ROOFS, FACING EACH OTHER. . THE WOMEN STAND BEHIND THEM. POTHINUS MOTIONS TO THE PLANK RESTING ON THE BALUSTRADES OF LYDIA'S ROOF) Your sons were planning to create a bridge from one roof to the other. Shall we help them so I can cross from Lydia to you?

**ANTHONY:** I do not think their mothers will approve.

**LYDIA:** They do enough mischief without help.

**EUODIA:** Don't let them see you, or they'll imitate.

**POTHINUS:** Very well, I will go below and, as is proper, enter from the street.

(POTHINUS EXITS LEFT TO DESCEND LYDIA'S STAIRS, LEAVING THE TWO WOMEN WATCHING ANTHONY. ANTHONY SORTS THE SCROLLS ON THE TABLE, UNROLLS ONE, READS FOR FIVE SECONDS AND THEN LOOKS UP FROM EUODIA TO LYDIA AND BACK TO EUODIA.)

**ANTHONY:** Well? No. I have no happy news for you. Your friends are not released. They remain in chains. They are accused and will be tried for teaching practices against the law.

**LYDIA:** Paul and Timothy would not harm Rome.

**ANTHONY:** (ANTHONY TURNS BACK TO THE SCROLLS) I have inquired and I will do no more.

**LYDIA:** I will speak with Clement about Paul.

**ANTHONY:** Clement the scholar, very meek and mild.

(LYDIA BOWS AND EXITS LEFT. WHEN EUODIA REMAINS, ANTHONY GLANCES UP AT HER.)

**EUODIA:** I must speak with you about our son.

**ANTHONY:** Yes? Remember, he is just a boy. His pranks do no harm to any one.

**EUODIA:** He wants to watch the gladiators fight tomorrow.

**ANTHONY:** He has seen men die before.

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> B. K. Workman, They Saw It Happen in Classical Times, Barnes & Noble, 1964, p. 33. (Quoting the Roman writer Juvenal.)

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, p. 5.

**EUODIA:** I do not approve his watching death. Stylus was his friend.

**ANTHONY:** Stylus is a thief. I trusted him. He stole from me... from us. The magistrates decreed that he should die unless he dares to fight to save his life.

**EUODIA:** Ditus wants to watch. He is a child.

**ANTHONY:** (LOOKS UP FROM THE SCROLL BUT NOT AT HER) He is a Roman and he is my son. It is time he learn the Roman way of justice and of punishment. Send Kalchus with him. He also should see how his master deals with thievery.

**EUODIA:** Don't you remember anything Paul said about a god of love and truth?

**ANTHONY:** Enough! (EUODIA STARES AT HIM FOR FIVE SECONDS, THEN TURNS AND EXITS RIGHT. ANTHONY TOSSES THE SCROLL TO THE TABLE.) A god of love and truth... of truth and love. (HE CROSSES TO LOOK DOWN IN THE ALLEY BELOW.) Paul, there is a chasm between your world and mine. (HE TURNS FRONT TO LOOK OUT OVER PHILIPPI.) And my world is stronger.

(SUDDENLY THE GLASSES ON LYDIA'S TABLE RATTLE JUST ENOUGH TO BE SEEN SHAKING AND TO BE HEARD. A BASKET ROLLS DOWN TO THE FLOOR. THE TREMOR LASTS FOR ALMOST A MINUTE. THEN, STILLNESS, NO MOVEMENT, NO SOUNDS FOR ANOTHER MINUTE. SLOWLY A MURMUR RISES FROM THE STREET BELOW, SWELLING TO CRIES OF ALARM. ANTHONY BRACES HIMSELF, EXPECTING MORE MOVEMENT, THOUGH NO MORE TREMORS CAME. IN A MATTER-OF-FACT VOICE, HE SPEAKS) An earthquake. (HE STANDS, MOTIONLESS, FOR TEN SECONDS AND THEN SLOWLY PACES HIS ROOF, EXAMINING THE STRUCTURE, THEN TURNING TO LOOK OVER THE CITY AND WAITS EXPECTANTLY. NO MORE TREMORS. HE LAUGHS CYNICALLY, LOOKS UP AT THE SKY ) Tell me..., god of this prophet Paul, is this your way of proving... you... exist?

(LIGHTS AND CURTAIN)

## SCENE 2

(MORNING. THE SUNLIGHT ON ANTHONY'S ROOFTOP REVEALS THAT THE EARTHQUAKE HAS SHAKEN THE CANOPY LOOSE AND SPILLED SCROLLS FROM THE SHELVES. KALCHUS, AFTER FASTENING THE CANOPY TO ITS POLES AND ARRANGING THE SCROLLS, SITS AT THE TABLE AND BEGINS COPYING. ACROSS THE ALLEY ON LYDIA'S ROOF, FRIA IS RESTACKING BASKETS, SETTING UP THE FALLEN SCREEN, AND HANGING ON THE WALL THE ITEMS THAT HAVE FALLEN. SEEING THAT KALCHUS PURPOSELY IS IGNORING HER, FRIA CROSSES TO THE EDGE OF THE ROOF AND, HANDS ON HIPS, SPEAKS)

**FRIA:** There was no crack in this floor yesterday. (WHEN HE DOES NOT RESPOND, SHE PRETENDS HE HAS NOT IGNORED HER AND CONTINUES) Kalchus, have you no damage to your walls or doors? (STILL NOT RESPONSE. SHE RAISES HER VOICE) Kalchus!

**KALCHUS:** Yes?

**FRIA:** Aren't you afraid to work here on the roof?

**KALCHUS:** My master says his house is better built than any other. It will survive all storms.

**FRIA:** A storm is not an earthquake. There was no crack on this floor before.

**KALCHUS:** You had better get off the roof. Your mistress's home is not as well constructed as is mine.

**FRIA:** It's not your roof. It's your master's. And it wasn't construction that saved us. It was a miracle.

**KALCHUS:** So some say. (HE CONTINUES COPYING)

**FRIA:** How would you explain the prison doors opening and the chains falling loose from Paul and Timothy? We all believe it was our god. The men are free.

**KALCHUS:** Believe what you like. I do not trust in gods.

**FRIA:** Don't say that to your mistress or to mine.

**KALCHUS:** Woman, I know when to hold my tongue.

(HE RETURNS TO HIS COPYING, DISMISSING FRIA WITH A SHRUG. DITUS AND MARCUS, PANTING FROM THEIR RACE UP THE STEPS, RUN IN FROM STAGE RIGHT AND JOIN KALCHUS. DITUS STANDS, LEGS APART, IMITATING HIS FATHER'S IMPERIOUS ATTITUDE WITH SLAVES.)

**DITUS:** Why are you on the roof?

**KALCHUS:** Your mother sent me here to work alone.

**DITUS:** You are to take us to the circus now.

**KALCHUS:** Master, I must copy one more line.

**FRIA:** Marcus, does your mother know you go to watch the gladiators?

**DITUS:** He is my guest and father wants his steward to take us. (TO KALCHUS When you were in Rome, did you watch the gladiators fight?)

**KALCHUS:** No, I only saw the races. My master did not approve of gladiators.

**FRIA:** My mistress does not approve.

**DITUS:** How can she have Pothinus for a friend? He killed many men when he was a slave.

**FRIA:** Marcus, I know your mother will not approve.

**DITUS:** He's going with me. Don't you tell on him.

(AS ANTHONY AND POTHINUS ENTER, KALCHUS STANDS AT THE DESK. POTHINUS STUDIES THE SCROLLS ON THE SHELVES.)

**ANTHONY:** Here they are. They are learning early how to avoid the women when they're about some private work. My rooftop is my place for peace from frowns and tears and wagging tongues.

**DITUS:** (GLARING AT FRIA) But the tongues still follow us up here. Were you my slave, I would have you whipped.

**ANTHONY:** Ditus! We do not whip our slaves.

**DITUS:** You do not let them lash you with their tongues.

**ANTHONY:** Nor will I tolerate my son's sharp tongue. Go below and wait for Kalchus.

(DITUS STOMPS OUT, FOLLOWED BY MARCUS. ANTHONY CROSSES TO THE TABLE TO CHECK KALCHUS' WORK. AFTER STUDYING IT CAREFULLY) This is

complete. Good. Your work pleases me. (HE PICKS UP A RECTANGULAR, LOOSE PIECE OF PAPYRUS) What is this?

**KALCHUS:** A codex<sup>16</sup>. My mistress ordered me to copy all the writings about the god that the man Paul has talked about: some of the life and teachings of this man they call the Christ.

**ANTHONY:** Codex?

**KALCHUS:** These are pieces removed from a scroll. They are easier to carry and are written on both sides, to save papyri. Should a traveler not want such writings to be noticed, codices are easier to be transported in secret.

**ANTHONY:** Tell your mistress I will read them first. You may go. Keep watch on the boys. I want to know if Ditus behaves well and brings no disrespect upon my house.

(KALCHUS BOWS AND EXITS RIGHT. POTHINUS APPROACHES ANTHONY CARRYING A SCROLL.)

**POTHINUS:** You have another library up here. The one below impressed me, but I find these reveal you are of a different mind from most Romans.

**ANTHONY:** How is that so?

**POTHINUS:** These show a mystic bent, a careful search for answers many men will never ask.

**ANTHONY:** Which authors here surprise you?

**POTHINUS:** I see you read the Stoics, Epictetus on Providence, Diogenes, and here's a noble thought from Epicurus. (UNROLLING A SCROLL, HE READS) "The man who lives among eternal values loses all likeness to the common beasts that perish."<sup>17</sup> I have just come from Rome. There I found little concern for values from any man.

**ANTHONY:** Nor will Philippi offer any for you.

**POTHINUS:** And what of my friend Anthony? Does he find values to be coveted?

**ANTHONY:** (ANTHONY PICKS UP A CODEX KALCHUS HAS BEEN COPYING) I find the words of this new god are worthy of study. I have been impressed by this man Paul. He appeals to women who believe their god can command the earth to quake.

**POTHINUS:** The earthquake did accomplish Paul's release.

**ANTHONY:** Fear released a citizen of Rome.

**POTHINUS:** What should we think of the belief that good will conquer evil? The strength of Rome has not grown out of love but out of might. And where is Rome now? What is Rome to us? What eternal values does it boast as foundation for its government? Its citizens flock to circuses to see men fight as if they're beasts. Where is your son now, friend Anthony? Like the rest, watching, hungry for the kill.

**ANTHONY:** Enough, Pothinus. I have sent my son and my new slave to see justice done. A friend would offer answers.

**POTHINUS:** I wish I could. I'm hoping this man Paul will have a few.

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<sup>16</sup> Codex, codices. Unbound sheets in manuscript, especially of Scripture, Greek and Latin classics, or ancient mythological or historical annals - distinguished from scrolls. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, unabridged, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1961, p. 438.

<sup>17</sup> Epicurus, p. 160.

**RUFIO:** (RUFIO ENTERS RIGHT, BREATHLESS FROM HIS CLIMB TO THE ROOF. HE PAUSED TO CATCH HIS BREATH. HE PLACES A BOX ON TOP OF THE SCROLLS AND CODICES. NOT WISHING THE SCROLLS TO BE DAMAGED, ANTHONY MOVES THE BOX.) Pothinus. I am glad to find you here. We must discuss some business later. First, Anthony, this is a sorry mess!

**ANTHONY:** A sorry mess? What is a sorry mess?

**RUFIO:** These men, Paul and Timothy. They are released.

**ANTHONY:** I thought they were in chains!

**RUFIO:** That they were, until the earthquake. When the jailor found they had not escaped, he took them home, washed their wounds, heard about their god, believed, and was baptized.

**ANTHONY:** A very fast conversion!

**RUFIO:** Comrade, you know the jailor would have died if they had escaped.

**ANTHONY:** Rightfully so. A wise Roman rule for soldiers who fail to carry out orders.<sup>18</sup> And so conversion was his way to show how grateful he was to be spared his life?

**RUFIO:** This man Paul must worship a great god who frees him with an earthquake. I am going to the feast that is prepared for Paul's farewell.

**ANTHONY:** Oh, then Paul is leaving?

**RUFIO:** The magistrates insisted that he leave.

**ANTHONY:** Once they learned a Roman had been whipped.

**RUFIO:** We did not know.... (QUICKLY AMENDING HIS WORDS, NOT WISHING TO ADMIT HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE ARREST.) They did not know....

**ANTHONY:** And so you plan to worship this new god?

**RUFIO:** I'll investigate. His power's great. That earthquake did not happen just by chance.

**ANTHONY:** Your little slave could not predict an earthquake once Paul had cast out her demon?

**POTHINUS:** Ah, yes, the slave girl. What's been done with her?

**RUFIO:** Nothing. No one wants her now.

**POTHINUS:** I might buy her.

**RUFIO:** I'll give you a good price. I mean, I'll ask the owners if they care to sell.

**POTHINUS:** Do talk with them.

**ANTHONY:** Why would you want the girl?

**POTHINUS:** They tell me that she comes from Africa, south of Egypt, far below my home. I will return her to her native land.

**ANTHONY:** A kindness only special slaves deserve.

**POTHINUS:** If a god cleansed her spirit, she's unique.

**RUFIO:** She's well rid of, now she has no worth.

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<sup>18</sup> The Jerusalem Bible, Doubleday and company, 1966, p. 221. Soldiers were liable to the punishment intended for their escaped prisoners.

**ANTHONY:** Rufio, what is in the box? (**RUFIO, FULL OF SELF-IMPORTANCE AND RELISHING THE DRAMATIC, WAVES AT THE BOX**) You had a slave, a thief, Stilus by name, who, today must fight for his life for stealing from you and from other men.

**ANTHONY:** He falsified accounts and ran away.

**RUFIO:** And stole from you a precious corona. He thought if he revealed the hiding place, he wouldn't have to die.

**ANTHONY:** I was not aware he'd stolen it. I have not looked at it for a long time. It belongs to the past....

**RUFIO:** Here you are. (**ANTHONY OPENS THE BOX AND REMOVES A "CORONA NAVALIS," A GOLD CROWN WITH A CIRCLET OF LEAVES AND A FRONT SUGGESTING THE PROW OF A BOAT WITH OARS SUSPENDED FROM THE LEAVES. ANTHONY'S FACE IS EXPRESSIONLESS AS HE REGARDS IT.**) Honor us by wearing it again.

(**THE CORONA IS BRILLIANT IN THE SUNLIGHT. ANTHONY PLACES IT IN THE BOX**)

**ANTHONY:** It is an emblem belonging to the past.

**RUFIO:** A reward of gold.

**ANTHONY:** It has lost its charm. The glow is dimming, tarnishing with age.

**POTHINUS:** Gold does not dim or tarnish.

**ANTHONY:** The honor does as the nation's honor also fades.

**SYNTYCHE:** (**A PIERCING, COMMANDING VOICE RISES FROM THE STAIRWAY OF LYDIA'S DWELLING.**) If your mistress thinks they're here, we'll look. This banquet must be special for our guest. We have been blest to have him stay with us....What does the package look like?" (**FANNING HERSELF, SHE LABORS UP THE LAST STEP AND STUMBLES FROM THE LEFT ONTO THE ROOFTOP. FRIA APPEARS BEHIND HER**)

**FRIA:** Everything is labeled.

(**SYNTYCHE SEES THE THREE MEN ON THE NEIGHBORING ROOF, PLACES HER HANDS ON HER HIPS, LOWERS HER HEAD AND PEERS AT THEM WITH NARROWED EYES**)

**SYNTYCHE:** Rufio, there you are. It will soon be time for you to change into your best toga for the love feast. Don't keep us waiting. We've worked hard to make it right. I've prepared dormice stuffed with minced pork, honeyed bread, cabbages with leeks, stuffed dates...."<sup>19</sup>

**RUFIO:** You've brought the mice from home! Syntyche, I've fattened them for our own table.

**SYNTYCHE:** We in holy love will share our special treats. It must be so if we're to show we're followers of Christ. (**SHE TURNS AND, MANY BRACELETS DANGLING FROM HER PLUMP ARMS, WAVES FRIA INTO ACTION.**) Come, girl, look sharp. Where do we begin? We need more cups so all can share the wine that symbolizes our dear Savior's blood.

**RUFIO:** What's this talk of blood? What sacrifice are you about to offer to this god?

**SYNTYCHE:** Nothing like you legionaries do to prove your worship, lying in the earth

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Corona, See Inside a Roman Town, Warwick Press, 1986, p. 75.

wine the blood of beasts pours down on you! Oh, I know about your secret mes. Our love feast is a spiritual thing. You will learn all when you come to eat. Paul will explain. It's a lovely tale. I shed a tear every time I hear of our Lord's death and resurrection. You men are invited too. Lydia is welcoming all, both rich and poor.

**RUFIO:** You're letting in the beggars off the street?

**SYNTYCHE:** Our Lord would have it so.

**RUFIO:** They'll eat my mice? My mice, fattened on the most expensive nuts!

(FRIA HAS OPENED A BOX AND CARRIED IT FORWARD TO SYNTYCHE TO INSPECT.)

**FRIA:** Madam, here are the glasses for the wine.

**SYNTYCHE:** Fine. Now don't be long. We'll meet below. Girl, watch your step; don't break a single glass. (SYNTYCHE AND FRIA EXIT LEFT)

**RUFIO:** My fattened dormice served to beggars! Never! (HE HURRIES OUT RIGHT, ACCOMPANIED BY ANTHONY'S AND POTHINUS' LAUGHTER.)

**ANTHONY:** He has forgotten what had brought him here.

**POTHINUS:** I will follow him, but not to eat. I will study what this god requires. What is the worship and what the sacrifice?

**ANTHONY:** I'll stay and read about this god. I prefer porridge to the solemn feast.

**POTHINUS:** Porridge! In Rome they say too much porridge causes blindness and crippling of the limbs.<sup>21</sup>

**ANTHONY:** Cato lived 'til eighty-five, and he was loyal to the lowly cabbage.<sup>22</sup> I will follow his teaching, leaving the mice, carefully stuffed, to my friend Rufio.

**POTHINUS:** Do share the manuscripts of Paul with me. There's talk of Jesus the Christ throughout the world. The mystery is this: why should a god send his son to death for common men?

**ANTHONY:** That is a mystery.

(POTHINUS STARTS OUT AND THEN PAUSES AT THE DOORWAY. ANTHONY SITS AT THE TABLE AND TAKES UP THE COPIED MANUSCRIPT. POTHINUS RETURNS TO STAND RIGHT OF THE TABLE.)

**POTHINUS:** My friend, I should tell you this. Ditus has spoken of my early life and of the many men I had to kill. I killed to save my life and then in time I killed to gain my freedom. I walked through blood away from combat to enter a free world. (HE PAUSES TO LOOK OUT OVER THE CITY.) But though I'm free to navigate the world, to purchase and to sell my merchandise, there are many nights I cannot sleep. I look behind where I have walked to see if my footsteps have left prints of blood. If there is a god who will free me from all the memories that stain my dreams, I will bend my spirit and my knees to him and at his table I will eat.

**ANTHONY:** (ANTHONY LOOKS AT POTHINUS, SHRUGS, AND RETURNS TO STUDY THE MANUSCRIPT) Then try the banquet table set below. I will stay and read about this Christ.

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<sup>20</sup> Connolly, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Corona, p. 54.

(POTHINUS SIGNS AND EXITS RIGHT. FIVE SECONDS PASS. EUODIA ENTERS RIGHT AND STANDS JUST INSIDE THE ENTRANCE AND STUDIES HER HUSBAND. THEN SHE MOVES TO STAND BESIDE HIM, PLACES HER HAND ON HIS SHOULDER, AND SPEAKS SOFTLY)

**EUODIA:** Husband? Will you join us now? Paul has inquired about your absence. This is his last hour at Philippi. All who heard him at the river are below, all but you. You listened to his words. Can you not accept his god and mine?

**ANTHONY:** Go and eat. I will study here.

**EUODIA:** Many times at night you've left our bed and here, alone, you've paced the moon away and searched for satisfaction in these scrolls. Paul has come to us at Philippi and taught us of a God of truth and love. I have found peace and covet it for you. I believe....

(DITUS ENTERS RIGHT FOLLOWED BY KALCHUS, WHO STANDS IN THE BACKGROUND BY THE DOOR. DITUS RUNS UP TO THE TABLE RIGHT AND STANDS BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, BREATHING HARD, GLARING AT HIS FATHER. ANTHONY REMAINS SEATED, SPEAKING QUIETLY AND FIRMLY IN THE FACE OF HIS SON'S ANGER)

**ANTHONY:** You have returned early from the games. I trust Stilus' punishment was swift?

**DITUS:** It was not just. There are better ways to die.

**ANTHONY:** A better, more just, punishment for a thief? My son, Roman justice is the best.

**DITUS:** It is your justice and it is not right.

**ANTHONY:** You have enjoyed the circuses before.

**DITUS:** Stilus was my friend, not a beast to send before the mob for butchering.

**ANTHONY:** (ANTHONY, HIS ANGER GROWING, RISES TO LOOK DOWN AT HIS SON.) My son knows how a gladiator dies. Such a combat every boy should see to teach him how a soldier should face death. Kalchus, something happened at the games. Speak.

(KALCHUS STEPS FORWARD AND, LOOKING STRAIGHT AHEAD, SPEAKS RELUCTANTLY, SLOWLY, CHOOSING HIS WORDS WITH CARE. AS HE SPEAKS, THE FATHER AND SON GLARE AT EACH OTHER.)

**KALCHUS:** Your slave appeared carrying a sword. He saw your son in the crowd and saluted him. The crowd approved, but this action did not save the man. The skilled gladiator played with him, took away his sword, then gave it back. The crowd cheered as he drew blood, battered your slave's body as one would a toy ball or a girl would stick a pincushion, hacked flesh from his torso and his face....

(EUODIA GASPS AND PLACES HER HANDS ON DITUS' SHOULDERS. KALCHUS PAUSES AND LOOKS AT ANTHONY, WHO NODS FOR HIM TO CONTINUE)

**KALCHUS:** The man had courage but knew he had no skill and, shamed at being used as a plaything, fell upon his sword and took his life, cheating the gladiator and the mob.

**ANTHONY:** He was shamed when he stole from me. Continue.

**KALCHUS:** Some spectators turned and mocked your son as if accountable for the man's death. I encouraged him to leave the games.

**EUODIA:** Ditus. Death has come to one you know. Before you thought the circus was a play, a game for entertainment....

(DITUS TURNS, EMBRACES HIS MOTHER FOR A FEW SECONDS, AND THEN TURNS TO FACE HIS FATHER.)

**EUODIA:** Anthony:

**ANTHONY:** My son should have stayed and faced the multitude.

(DITUS, SEEING THE DISGUST ON HIS FATHER'S FACE, RUNS OFF EXIT RIGHT)

**KALCHUS:** They were angry and might have done him harm.

(WITH A GESTURE OF COMMAND, ANTHONY MOTIONS KALCHUS AND EUODIA TO LEAVE. THEY EXIT RIGHT. ALONE, HE PACES, CROSSING THE ROOF TWICE BEFORE RETURNING TO SIT AT THE TABLE. HE UNROLLS A SCROLL AND READS ALOUD)

**ANTHONY:**What shall it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul...?<sup>23</sup>

(HE PUSHES THE MANUSCRIPT ASIDE AND STRIKES BOTH FISTS ON THE TABLE. HE BOWS HIS HEAD, HOLDING IT WITH HIS RIGHT HAND, HIS LEFT RESTING ON THE TOP OF THE BOX CONTAINING THE CORONA. AFTER A TIME, AWARE OF THE BOX UNDER HIS HAND, HE OPENS IT AND REMOVES THE CORONA. HOLDING IT BEFORE HIM WITH BOTH HANDS, HE SLOWLY RISES AND PLACES IT ON HIS HEAD, HIS FACE THE PORTRAIT OF A PROUD, UNYIELDING, ROMAN ENTURION. SLOWLY HIS FEATURES CRUMBLE WITH UNCERTAINTY. HE REMOVES THE CORONA, STUDIES IT, TURNING IT SLOWLY, IT'S GOLD SEEMING TO BURN IN THE SUNLIGHT, AND THEN VIOLENTLY THROWS IT AGAINST THE RIGHT WALL.

LIGHTS AND CURTAIN

# To Read The Rest, Please Purchase The Script

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 16:26; Mark, 8:36.