

Eutychus & Eliza

The Second Coming as Dramatized for the Elizabethan Stage

Bimillennial Preterist Association

*In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall
punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked
serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.
Isaiah 27:1*

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The Destruction of Leviathan

Foreword

The following pages describe the historical events comprising the second coming of Christ, told dramatically in Elizabethan “blank verse” or “pentameter.” The story begins with the persecution under Nero and culminates in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Elizabethan pentameter is a form of poetic verse whose heightened language lends itself to subjects of especial moment. It is associated today most often with the works of William Shakespeare. In blank verse, each line consists of ten syllables, with the stress falling on the even numbered syllables. This accounts for the unusual word order sometimes required to adhere to its form and achieve its poetic rhythm and affect. About Strom Knidus, the author of this remarkable play, almost nothing is known. Its blank verse would seem to place it during the late English Reformation. There is no record of its production in English theatre. This is not surprising, given Knidus’ controversial interpretation of the Eschaton. Church authorities would almost certainly have suppressed it. Had the play been mounted four centuries ago, Christianity and the world today might have been radically different. Knidus seems to have worked from Biblical and primary sources from the first century Anno Domini. Where this is obvious and helpful, we have appended footnotes. - The Editorial Board

Eutychnus & Eliza

Personae Dramatis

Nero Caesar , Emperor of Rome	Paulinus ,
Poppaea Sabina , Caesar's wife	Proculus , Advisors to Otho
Otho , Emperor of Rome	Celsus ,
Vitellius , Emperor of Rome	Titianus , Otho's brother
Seneca , Roman Senator and Tutor to Nero in his youth	Agrippa II , King of Chalcis
Gallio , Roman Senator, former Consul of Achaia	Bernice , Queen of Chalcis, Agrippa's sister
Lucan , Famous Roman poet and nephew of Gallio and Seneca,	Darius , Master of Agrippa's horse
Barea ,	Phaon , Nero's freedman
Pactus ,	Epiphradius , Nero's secretary
Natalis ,	Sporus , Nero's catamite
Scaevinus , Roman Senators	Annas, Son of Seth ,
Senecio ,	Jesus , Son of Gamaliel, High Priests of the Jews
Quintianus ,	Matthias Son of Theophilus
Tigellinus , Captain of the Praetorian Guard	Ismael ,
Pontius Pilate , Procurator of the Jews	Helcias , Treasurer of Sacred Treasure - Roman Hostages & Instructors of Poppaea Sabina in Jewish Law and Custom
Gessius Florus , Procurator of the Jews during war	John of Gischala , Leader of the Galilean Rebels
Marcus Antonius Julianus , Procurator of Judea	Manneus , a defector from Jerusalem
Flavius Vespasianus , General and later Emperor of Rome	Eutychnus , a young man lately converted to Christ
Titus Flavius , Son of Vespasianus, General of Jewish war after father made Emperor	Maiden , a young woman, daughter to Lucellus
Tiberius Alexander , Commander under Titus of the Roman army	Lucellus , father to Maiden
Larcus Lepidus , Commander of the tenth legion	Christ, the Lord
Sextus Cerealis , Commander of fifth legion	Miscellaneous courtiers, soldiers, citizens, rebels
Eternius , Commander of two legions come from Alexandria	
	Introduction
	<i>Christ before Pilate</i>
	Pilate – What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?
	Mob – Let him be crucified!
	Pilate – Why, what evil hath he done?
	Mob – Let him be crucified!
	Pilate – [Washing hands] I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it!
	Mob – His blood be upon us and upon our children! His blood be upon us and upon our children! His blood be upon us and upon our children!
	Enter Tupper
	Tupper – Our play doth open with Nero in power, The Great Tribulation hath dawned in hour, Which Christ foretold when arrested, Before the Sanhedrim his divinity attested, That seated in his throne on high, He would come in clouds of the sky, ¹ And when led out to Calvary The women he told 'Weep not for me, ² If they do these things when green is the tree What shall be done unto the dry like thee? Behold, I send prophets whom ye shall stone and slay Yet vengeance shall have its day: Before their circuit through the land be done, The Son of Man will be come, ³ Before the last apostle hath died, Israel's end will have arrived. ⁴ When Jerusalem hath been destroyed by sword, Then all shall know that I am Christ the Lord. [Exeunt]
	Helcias – Think thou that she will consent to move him?
	Ismael – Yea, methinks she will.
	Helcias – A deed unlike a woman's nature tis.
	Ismael – Woman's nature can be crueler than man's When after power she doth lust and grasp. In woman, ambition for power doth Destroy nature's stamp and confusion work. Mortifying her womanish instincts Given her for the nourishment of babes, She's turned like to a wolf with taste for blood. Dost not recall Queen Athaliah slew The royal seed to keep the throne herself, Although they were her very grandchildren? Woman therefore should not rule but be ruled.
	Helcias – Indeed, the law doth say no less.
	Ismael - When Nero she didst get to kill his wife, That she might thus be empress in her stead, Didst bid the head be brought that she should view it.
	Helcias – What, view the corpse's severed head?
	Ismael – Yea more, twas she didst goad Nero with taunts To kill his mother, chiding him that she Was lord of Rome and he a slavish boy Who covered 'neath his mother's angry eye. Nay, certain she'll not shrink from our errand;

¹ Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62; Rev. 1:7.

² Lk. 23:27-31.

³ Matt. 10:23.

⁴ Matt. 16:27, 28; Jno. 21:22.

This suited to her ambition.

Helcias – This well she is a religious woman⁵
Else should we scruple to combine with her.

Ismael – An audience have we with the
empress [handing writing to a palace
servant].

Servant – I will escort you and see ye are
announced. [Exeunt]

Scene II

A Chamber in Caesar's Palace

Enter a lady in waiting.

Lady – Ye sent for me m' lady?

Poppaea – I expect important visitors soon,
And require thy assistance to prepare.

Lady – Expectest thou some from the nobles,
Ma'm?

Poppaea – Nay, but chief priests and leaders
of the Jews.

Lady – Ah, the hostages from Jerusalem
Retained by Caesar for good behavior
Against the temple wall the Jews didst build?⁶

Poppaea – Speak not of them thus.
They are my guests and counselors in law.
There; is my veil arranged in proper form?

Lady – Yea, Ma'm, it lieth ever so nicely.

Enter servant-

Servant – M' lady, thy visitors have arrived.

Poppaea – Please, shew them in; leave us
alone for now.

And see that we are not disturbed. [Exeunt]

Enter Helcias and Ismael

⁵ Notwithstanding her murders and intrigues, Josephus refers to Poppaea as a "religious woman," from which it is generally inferred she was a Jewish proselyte. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 11.
⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, viii, 11.

A peg whereon they may their anger hang.

Poppaea – There is none upon whom blame
may be placed
Who would not say "Caesar bade m' do it."

Ismael – Not a person, but a people we've in
mind.

There's a group of religious heretics,
Small, but exceedingly irksome and hated.
There is cause to believe the Roman people
Would, if it meant their end, accept their
guilt
In place of Caesar's.

Poppaea – Where? Who? What people
could so hated be?

Ismael – The Christians. They are hated by
all men.

Poppaea – Ye of this sect have spoken to me
oft.

Ismael – Paul of Taurus, acquitted by
Caesar,⁷

Hath newly been arrested in Asia.

Against our law and temple he doth preach,
And urgeth people Moses to forsake,
Saying Christ will change the law and
customs;

He says the temple soon shall be destroyed.⁸
For these heresies, Paul should surely die.
If Caesar could be persuaded to slay –

Poppaea – Caesar doth require something
different,
Grounds that the Roman people would
approve.

The Jewish nation's hatred for this sect
Is known throughout the Roman Empire.

If what ye suggest is to find approval,

Rome must seem to act in its own interest,

Not settle a private account for Jews.

Besides, if Paul were slain this very night,

This would not end the followers of Christ.

Helcias – Paul doth teach a coming day of
great wrath.

A time of tribulation for all men,

When men's secrets will be declared by fire,

A great conflagration that will devour

⁷ II Tim. 3:16, 17.

⁸ Acts 21:28; cf. 6:14; Matt. 24:1-3.

This age and give birth unto a new world.
So Christians teach throughout the whole empire.

Ismael – The Christians for the most are poor and
slaves,

Classes that harbor resentment and envy.

It is the wounded animal that strikes

Irrationally at the one helping it.

Who would be more likely to fire Rome

And strike at Caesar than the poor and slaves?

Helcias – The Roman masses relish the games
much

And find diversion in the blood and gore.

Let the punishment of the Christians be

A spectacle the masses to amuse

And take their minds from all their many woes

And Caesar will they worship and adore.

Ismael – Their suffering a balm will soon become
To sooth the people's wounds.

Poppaea – The branches wither when the root is
cut.

The Nazarene hath been long time been deceased;

The Christians like sticks should be brought and

burned.

As ye suggest so will I undertake,

And Caesar move to root out this new sect.

Died Christ that Jew and Gentile might forever

live?

Die Christians dominion Caesar and Jewry to
give!

Scene III

Rome, Catacombs

Christians assembled, chanting

The Lord will come, the day is soon,

The Man of Sin he will consume.⁹

His enemies shall flee apace,

And be ashamed for his face.

Leviathan he shall slay!¹⁰

The night of sin be turned to day!¹¹

Death shall yield up its hoard

And man shall live forever more.¹²

⁹ I/2., Nero Caesar; II Thess. 2:1-8

¹⁰ Isa. 27:1; Rom. 16:20

¹¹ Rom. 13:12

¹² Rev. 20:11-15

The earth with fire shall be made new,
The Mount of Olives cleave in two,
His feet upon the earth shall stand,¹³
And his blood of them demand.¹⁴

The Bridegroom comes, heed his call,
Babylon the Great shall fall.¹⁵
A footstool his enemies will be,¹⁶
His retribution on all men see.¹⁷

Man to God will be restored,
And Christ forevermore be Lord.
Heavenly Jerusalem will descend,
And the dwelling of God be with men.¹⁸
A-men.

Leader – Beloved, I received news this day
that our Linus hath been seized and is held
prisoner. With him, five families were
arrested; the children too were seized. All are
condemned to die in the arena. Let us pray
that their faith fail not, though they be cruelly
tried and tested. The Lord hath said that the
day of his coming will be revealed by fire;
fire will test each of us and shew what sort
we be, whether we have root or no.¹⁹ We
must watch and pray.

Ist Member – Soft, I hear footsteps.

Enter, Eutyechus [rushes in]

Eutyechus – Eliza hath been seized with her
parents
And family!

Ist Member – No! Not Eliza! Ye hoped to be
married in spring, did ye not?

2d Member - Roman law doth not permit
virgins to suffer the penalty of death; maids
like Eliza are violated by their Roman guards
before being led out to be torn of famished
beasts or burnt alive whilst crucified.

Eutyechus – Bumt? Crucified?!

¹³ Zech. 12:4

¹⁴ Matt. 27:25

¹⁵ Rev. 16:19; 18

¹⁶ I Cor. 15:25; Heb. 2:8; Rom. 16:20

¹⁷ Rev. 1:7

¹⁸ Rev. 21:3

¹⁹ I Cor. 3:13; Matt. 13:21

3d Member – Strength man, do not despair. Who
knoweth whether God may yet deliver her?

Eutyechus – If I should hope Eliza would be
spared,

Yet, I could not believe; It is not reason.

Whoever going into the arena
Came out alive but such as Christ renounced?
Eliza Christ will not renounce, therefore
She will not be spared. Nay, it is certain
She is lost to me forever. And I,
Whither shall I go? ‘Twere better to die
Than without Eliza live!

2d Member – ‘Tis a sin to speak such. Thou must
accept God’s plan for Eliza. Eliza’s life is Christ’s
to use for his own glory and purpose. All of
earthly life is fleeting, it matters not how we die or
when, only that we be found in Christ. Give God
glory that Eliza hath been chosen to glorify him in
death

Eutyechus – Give thou glory to him, for I cannot!
[Exit]

Ist Member – Someone go after him, he may do
himself a harm in the state he is in. [Member exit]

3d Member – The whole world doth groan under
Rome’s iron sceptre. Is there none to overthrow
this tyranny?

Leader – Brother, hearken to me. God saved his
people out of Egypt and will pluck us out of Nero’s
hand. Verily, his day will come. What are we that
Nero should hate us? It is not us the emperor
rageth against, but our Lord and his doctrine.
Though our bodies be torn of beasts, we know that
Christ preserveth our souls, which no man can
touch, and will clothe us anew with incorruptible
bodies in the resurrection. Be patient; the coming of
the Lord draweth nigh.²⁰

Reenter, Member

Leader – Didst find Eutyechus?

Member – Nay, I did not.

Leader – I fear Satan hath desired to sift our dear
brother. I entreat ye gentle folk, keep young
Eutyechus near in prayer.

Scene IV

A street in Rome

Enter, Eutyechus

Eutyechus – This black, incommodious night
doth storm

And shew the elements in disarray.

The organizing principle of earth and

Foundations of creation are all fled.

All is in rebellion and disorder;

Earth’s primal darkness swalloweth life’s

light;

Love hath withdrawn from earth and chaos

reigns.

Winds scream and tempests blast; the cruel

cold

Of north doth stab at man with icy rain.

Like needles piercing sore his feeble flesh,

Making him cringe and cower like a cur

‘gainst nature’s elements, telling anew

The sad estate of Adam’s fallen sons,

Who live in banishment on earth below,

Estranged from God and heaven’s saving

grace.

Thou sky that lightnings flash and thunders

sound,

Amazing me with terror, dread, and fright,

Look thou upon my low estate and see

That I am frail, weak, and nearly spent.

Thou that with glacial winds dost scream

and blow,

Congaling streams with ice that waters bear

Like blood in veins of earth, which course

and flow,

Try not me with thy cold blasts and rending

storms.

The elements of this my mortal frame,

Knit in frail fixed form unchanging,

Cannot blow and bid the oaken tree bend,

But being flesh, am weak and soon

dissolved.

Yea, threaten me no more, for thou hast

won;

Declare thy terms, I shall concede thee all.

Eliza, my love, thou art all pleasant.

Like summer zephyrs upon twilight slopes

That rustle the sweet grass of yonder fields,

That swoons beneath the warm breeze’ fond

caress.

How terrible my love for thee hath turned;

Like this haughty and tempestuous night!

Thou wast all of life to me who doth wait

In prison cold and dank thy death to meet.

O God, wherefore dost thou requite me thus?
[Exit]

Scene V

Rome, Gallio’s Villa

Enter Lucan

Gallio – Ah, Lucan, my nephew. Come, see this
mantis.

Lucan – Yea, such strange creature have I oft
observed.

From childhood I do remember them.

Gallio – Ah, then thou dost know her hypocrisy;

How piously she folds her arms in prayer,

Only to catch prey and devour her mate.

Lucan – I blame her not so much for catching

prey,

But am disturbed she doth consume her mate.

Let us hope Roman wives learn not from her

Or men will perish soon from Italy.

Ah, but look, here is uncle Seneca.

Enter Seneca

Gallio – Welcome, my brother.

Seneca – Lucan, Gallio, how are you both?

Lucan – Well, mine uncle, well.

Seneca – What is it ye watch in such earnest
there?

Gallio – ‘Tis a mantis I was shewing Lucan.

Seneca – *Insectum mirum*. One of nature’s
marvels.

Gallio - It seemeth me the Jews are like this
mantis.

Lucan – Like the Jews? How so?

Gallio - Their hands are folded piously in prayer
But are polluted with the blood of men.

When Rome was burned all men didst Caesar

blame.

The Jews to Caesar didst propose the Christians

As they on whom should be placed Caesar’s guilt.

²⁰ Jam. 5:8

Thus, Caesar burned Rome and Rome
burneth Christians.
Whilst Claudius the kingdom's keys didst
hold,²¹
He gave command that all Jews Rome
depart²²
For their attacks upon the sect of Christians.²³
Like a boar that hath in a pit been caught,
Jewish persecution was thus restrained and
The mystery of lawlessness was bound,²⁴
Then Nero loosed the beast from its pitfall²⁵
And Paul, whom I refused to try, hath now
Unjustly been slain.²⁶

Lucan – Dost thou defend the Christians,
good mine uncle?

Gallio - A foolish superstition tis perhaps,
But Rome is host to many that are worse.
What is more, its members are virtuous.
Their wives and daughters are both pure and
chaste;
Divorce among them is all but unknown.
Those that are free work hard at honest
trades;
The rest are loyal servants to their masters.
There is no criminality in them.

Seneca – Against my will I was forced to
attend
The burning of one thousand Christians live
In Nero's gardens. I didst marvel then²⁷
That men and women of such mean estate
Should, with such nobleness, endure torments
And did not rather faith in Christ renounce.
It seemed to me the firmest proof of their
Complete innocence of all wrong doing.
The vicious lack resolve and moral courage
To rise above the vicissitudes of life,
But cringe and cower 'neath life's
misfortunes.

Lucan – The Christians thou dost praise for
their resolve
In holding fast their faith e'en unto death.

Yet, doth thy Stoic philosophy teach
Men to escape life's troubles by self-slaughter.
In this dost thou not thyself contradict?
If good men shrink from moral struggle by
Self-slaughter, how shall virtue be advanced?

Seneca – E'en scorpions when compassed by fire
Themselves do sting; why should not men the
same?
I cannot see how virtue is the worse
If men die not the better.

Lucan – Nay, but thou art wrong; in affairs of men
The manner of our dying doth attest
To what we are and what we do believe.
The moral power of our convictions
Is seen in the hold they take of our souls.
Men do not die for what they know is wrong,
But gladly suffer for the good and right.
Self-slaughter therefore doth bespeak some want
In man of life's sustaining principle;
A moral debasement and rotteness
That makes a man unequal to the day,
Causing him to abandon his due post,
And flee before the storm of darker times.
Thou didst say as much when thou saidst the
vicious
Lack moral courage to rise above wrong.
What dost thou say, uncle? [to Gallio]

Gallio – An old song to a new tune doth contain
Parts that repel and attract, so thy plea
Hath parts that both inspire and that disturb.
Only this do I know, that Rome of late
Hath lost her best and greatest citizens
To suicide by the informant's craft.

Seneca – 'Tis that their fortunes might remain intact
And pass to their kin that men make large gifts
And flatter Caesar in their wills before
Opening their own veins to kill themselves.
Lest, they falsely of treason be condemned
Or practicing magical arts against
The emperor, their whole estates escheat
To Caesar and his lying informants.
Who can condemn such care for family?

Lucan – Now is the ancient Roman valor dead
And Christians promoted to the world's head
When truth and self are slain
That kin in comfort may remain.

Enter servant, speaks privately to Gallio

Gallio – I am informed of business I must needs

Leader – Thou didst well, brother; I doubt not but
that thou art right. Eliza lives and reigns with
Christ in Paradise,²⁹ she is past suffering and
beyond the cares of life. Let us commit the body
of our dear sister to the earth and her spirit to the
Lord. [Reads]

We that are in this mortal frame,
In house of clay not long remain,
Shadows lengthen, sun doth wane,
Dust to dust doth soon obtain,
Earth her sons must reclaim.

Beloved, we – [Enter Eutyclus] Eutyclus!
What? Where hast thou been these many days?
We sought thee every whither and feared ye'd
done yourself a harm.

Eutyclus – Call me not Eutyclus, for I'm not he;
A stranger to myself I am become.
Pray tell, neighbor, whose course is there laid out?

Leader – It is Eliza.

Eutyclus – Eliza? Yea, I did hear word of it.
This kindness ye do well to shew the dead;
I give thee thanks. I pray thee, gentle friend,
Do me the kindness as to leave us 'lone
Before her body in the vault is sealed.

Leader – Of course; the office may wait. But
what of thee, thou 'lt return to the fold, I trust; thy
absence from us is but temporary, is it not?

Eutyclus – Nay, friend, I do not think I'll soon
return.
Was she burnt?

Leader – For her fair beauty she was spared
burning but was stripped and crucified before the
mob.

Eutyclus - Alack! Her torments pierce me
through and through.
Prithce, leave us. [Exeunt]

Didst think I would not come, my sweet, to bid
thee sad farewell?
Nay, thou knewest hither I would fly, a last time
my love for thee to tell.
Thine every part was poetry, nowhere was there
flaw,
Comely were thy proportions, beauty all thy law.

²⁹ Rev. 20:4-6; cf. Rev. 14:13.

²⁸ Lat. "Bronze-beard;" a term of
contumely used of Nero.

²¹ Rev. 20:1; cf. II Thess. 2:6, 7

²² Acts 18:2

²³ Suetonius, *Claudius*, XXV, 4

²⁴ II Thess. 2:7

²⁵ Rev. 20:7; cf. 11:7; 17:8

²⁶ Acts 18:12-17

²⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, xlii

Thou wast a tempest of wind and rain; I was
lightning and thunder,
Naught save death of all earth's powers,
could rend our love asunder.

What dost thou in this gloomy vault beneath
the shades of death,
Where nor light nor heat doth abide, nor
aught that draweth breath?
Within these dark, dank walls naught but
mildew breeds,
And upon all that cometh here, rotteness
doth feed.

Like the prison of Tartarus for the sons of
Seth which fell,³⁰
This foul and fulsome hole seemeth like the
very throat of hell.
O that this loathed habitation thou might up
and flee apace,
And amongst the living again resume thy
place.

I had thought to see us wed, my sweet, thee in
gown and veil adorned,
Whence comes it that, in this dread place
thou art wept and mourned?
The dreams and hopes of a lifetime nursed,
gone without a trace,
Disappointment 'tis appointed man in
Death's grinning face.
The marriage bed, soft caresses, drowsy love
awakened,
Envious Mortality one and all hath taken.

Ye ruling orbs, which from creation's dawn
fixed course do run,
By whose ceaseless cycles man numbereth
his life beneath the sun,
Ye stars that in the heavens bum bright,
Look down upon us sons of Adam and
commiserate our plight!
Men are not like ye that endure endless ages
long.

But are as a spark that bumeth for a moment
and forever then are gone.
Did thy guards find amusement to have thee
in thy power?
Did by turns they each east lots, that thee they
might deflower?
Did they with loathsome kisses defile the
temple of thy mouth?
Did they upon enforced bed by turn their lust
debauch?

How was it when thy secret parts were discovered
to vulgar eye?
When cruel nails pierced thy hands and feet, didst
aloud thou cry?

How long upon thy cross did thine agonies endure?
Didst thou long for death to come thy torments for
to cure?

Now thy pains are o'er, thine eyes in sleep eternal
sealed,

Thy spirit lives a thousand years in Elysium's
happy fields.³¹
Like restless purgatorial spirit, whose sins must be
atoned,³²
With broken heart in disconsolate breast, I wonder
earth alone.
Strings of pearls are the tears that from mine eyes
distill,
Till the measure of my life shall have reached its
fill.

Thou King seated upon heaven's throne,
Who all things sees and all things knows,

³¹ "Elysium" was the name give by Greeks and Romans to Hades Paradise, where it was believed that the spirits of the dead sojourned a thousand years. St. John, who wrote to the Greek and Latin speaking people of Asia Minor, appears to allude to this when he says the martyrs under Nero would live and reign with Christ a thousand years in the "first resurrection." Reference to a thousand-year reign in the afterlife assisted readers in interpreting the first resurrection as a symbol of the soul's rest in the timeless realm of Hades, where one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day (Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3: 8); it was intended to strengthen the confessor's against the coming persecution, in which many would suffer death. (Rev. 20:4-6; cf. Rev. 14:13; Plato, *Republic*, Bk. X, 315-320; Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. VI, 734-769.)

³² The notion of purgatory is distinctly Greek and Roman and has no source in the Bible. It found its way into the Christian church through pagan converts. Evidence of this is nowhere more apparent than Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which Dante is led on a tour of Hades by Virgil, the Roman poet. Dante's description is a Christianized account of the afterlife that makes wholesale appropriation of Greek and Roman conceptions, including purgatory, the river Acheron, and Charon, the ferryman who conveys souls to the other side. (Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. VI, lines 235-769)

And doth all ordain and all dispose,
Thou whom mortal sorrows cannot touch,
It ill becometh thee to afflict men such.

Cruelly she died; dissolute I henceforth live,
And to dissipation and riot myself now give.
These sad events and this mournful place,
Wine and libation will from thought erase.
Die Eutyclus, another man become;
From memory of these dread events now
run.
[Kisses forehead, exit]

Act II

Scene I

Rome, Imperial Palace

Nero – Who dares these slanders scrawl
against our person?
I want them found and punished!

Praetorian – The vandals write the
messages at night.
It is impossible to predict where
They will appear else we would catch them,
sire.

Enter Petronius

Nero – Incompetence; I tire of excuses!

Praetorian – I will see that the spies are
doubled, sire.

Nero - If thou canst not produce results,
another

Shall I find who can. Now get out! [Exit,
Praetorian]

Petronius – More *graffiti*, divine emperor?

Nero – The people are weeds that make rank
my garden.
Would that I might pluck them hence one
and all.

I have a mind to loose the soldiers on them
That gratitude they might learn for our
kindness.

Petronius – For which of thy many
kindnesses, sire?

Nero – Why, naturally, for them all, of course.
The taste and refinement we bring to Rome;
Our golden palace and our voice divine.

Petronius - I fear the common herd hath little
taste

For the delights of the immortal gods,
But content is to lick up grass and herbs
Like cattle, sheep, and goats.

Nero – Well art thou called *arbiter elegantium*;
What doth the vulgar herd know of good taste?

Petronius – It is the lot of gods to bear with men
Like the herdsman doth his cattle.

Nero – Yea, Petronius, I think thou art right.
A god should bear with much long-suffering
Men who are our inferiors in all things.
Little wonder I am misunderstood.
I am now called an incendiary,
A matricide, a jockey, and a beast;
I'm faulted with my wife's and brother's murder.
My sensitive side they don't understand.
I am an artist and a musician.

If I seem brutal tis the burdens of
The state that greatly weigh upon me so.
An artist should not suffer as I do.
I wish all Rome had but a single throat
That I might cut it and be freed of them,
And so escape to Greece where I could sing
Upon the stage and be adored.

Petronius – I doubt it not, mine emperor.

Enter Tigellinus, whispers to Nero

Nero - Petronius, do thou excuse us, please;
I have important matters to attend.

Petronius – Of course, most gracious Caesar.
[Exit]

Tigellinus – The freedwoman Epicharis hath died
Under examination, m' lord.

Nero – Did she say anything before she died?
Have the conspirators been discovered?
Out with it man, Speak!

Tigellinus – Nay, but nary a word did she e'er
speak.

Nero – How many know that she is dead?

³⁰ II Pet. 2:4; Gen. 6:1-4.

Tigellinus – We only who are in this room, m' lord.

Nero – Good, good! Let no man know that she is dead.
A trap shall we try to set for our prey.
Give out rumor that she informant turned.
Make some arrests among the senators.
Perhaps the fox can from the brush be scared.
Report as soon as anything doth occur.
Now leave us. I grow weary and must rest.

Tigellinus – Ay, m' lord. [Exeunt severally]

Scene II

Rome, Villa of Scaevinus

Enter Scaevinus, Natalis, Quintianus, and Senecio.

Scaevinus – There have arrests been made of senators.
It is almost certain that Epiclaris
Didst under torture break and turn informant.

Natalis – How do we know she hath informed? have there
Any of our party been put in chains?

Senecio – Nay, I know not any.

Natalis – I went to Lucan's home today and didst
Not find him any wither and was seized
By a certain dark foreboding that we
Were under grave risk and imminent peril.

Senecio – Certain tis if Lucan was arrested
All Rome wouldst have heard. I think twas
but chance
He was not then at home.

Quintianus – Why then were the senators arrested?
Dost think she didst give false information
To be avenged upon some private quarrel
With her own enemies?

Scaevinus – Yea, methinks she did this and warns us too,
That by these arrests we might learn our danger
And move to save ourselves whilst we still can.

Of those involved in the conspiracy?

Nero – Let them die this very night.

Tigellinus – And what of Seneca, m' lord?

Nero – I take great satisfaction in his death
For I hate him; but for appearance' sake,
We grant that he may open his own veins;
But let not perish with him Paulina;
We would deprive him comfort of his wife's
Companionship in death.

Tigellinus – And Lucan?

Nero – Our clemency doth permit that he open
His veins himself and die by his own hand;
If not, then let his head be struck clean off.
Before the senate tomorrow we'll lay
This plot against our life and for our throne.
[Exeunt]

Scene IV

Rome, A Street at Night

Barea – Ho such a one; I wouldst speak unto thee.

Paetus – What, who is there, friend or foe?

Barea – Peace, Paetus, tis I, Barea.

Paetus – Barea, thou didst give me a start.

Barea – Forgive me, I meant not to startle thee;
Turn thou aside here I would speak with thee.

Paetus – What dost thou by thyself in black of night?

Barea – Looking for thee, Paetus; thou wast not home.
But peace; tis safer here than at thy home
Amidst servants that would their freedom buy
With our heads to the emperor.

Paetus – Indeed, the times are dangerous, my friend.

Barea – Rome's greatest men and senators hath Nero

Caused to die or to commit suicide:

Lucan, Seneca, and Lateranus

The plot to kill Ahenobarbus hath

License turned to purge all of Caesar's foes.

The streets of Rome almost do daily witness

The funerals of political victims,

And them slain from envy or for their wealth.

Paetus – Yea, tis much like the days when

Augustus,

Antony, and Lepidus divided

The world betwixt them and proscriptions wrote

Against all them whom they did fear or hate

And caused one hundred senators to die,

Among them Cicero the great.

Barea – I have been sickened to see men whose

sons

Have falsely been slain, kiss the hands of Nero

And offer thanks to the immortal gods

For the safety of the emperor's life,

Fearing, lest if they mourned their own son's

deaths,

They should themselves accused be.

Paetus – Rome's wealth hath bred vice and made her core rot.

She is like an apple that outwardly

Appeareth whole, but hath a worm within.

Twere better we were tributary to

Another nation than be ruled by vice

And greed and live in abject tyranny

Where men their knees do bend and fawn upon

Him whose hands are bathed with their own son's

blood.

Barea – Yea, Comfort is the god that ruleth men's

hearts

And doth make cowards of their consciences.

Where now is Caesar? I didst hear he fled

The pestilence to Antium.

Paetus – Yea, he didst fly unto his villa there.

Thirty thousand hath perished from the plague,

But not hath deigned the gods that Caesar be one.

Barea – The plague and Nero know each other

well,

Both are sent from the very pit of hell

To visit death on Rome and Italy.

Twould be unfit if one destroy the other.

What news of Campania?

Paetus – The whirlwind destroyed whole villages,
And many crops; great famine hath ensued.

Barea – I tell thee, Paetus, I do fear for Rome.
Attempted outbreak of gladiators,
The navy dashed amain, by storm destroyed,
Lightning in numbers heretofore unknown,
Unnatural births in both man and beast,
Two-headed embryos cast out in public,
Or found in sacrifices of pregnant victims.
In Placentia there was born a calf,
Whose leg grotesquely grown into its head,
The soothsayers didst claim foretold coming
Disasters in public affairs abroad.³³
Hath we angered the gods? What mean these
progenies?

Paetus – There are among the servants of my
house
Some members of the sect called after Christ
Of their sect; and I in part believe it.
If he could he would slay virtue itself.

Barea – Paetus, dost know that our names are
enrolled
On Nero's list of enemies to die?

Paetus – Yea, old friend, tis almost certain.
But I fear not to die.

Barea – Nor I, but I like not to die accused
Of crimes I didst neither commit nor ponder.
Tis bitter to die falsely.

Paetus – Indeed, it is; yet can we bravely die
With honor and depart this life in virtue.
That much is in our power, Barea.
Nero can slay me but cannot harm me.

Barea – Indeed, that much to us doth
appertain.
Although small consolation it afford,
Let us be constant thereunto.

Paetus – The gods grant better times in days
to come.
Good night, friend Barea, good night.

Barea – Yea, Paetus, I bid thee fare well;
good night. [Exeunt]

Scene V

Rome, a tavern.

Enter Eutyclus

Tavern keeper – Look ye merry mates, 'tis our
Eutyclus; didst not I tell you he wouldst come?
How now, Eutyclus, thou art late tonight and didst
make us think thou wouldst not come.

Eutyclus – Didst have thee worried did I? Well,
fear not.

Here I be to make merry with m' mates.
Give me wine, Keeper, for my throat is dry
And we shall sing, laugh, and rejoice our hearts.

Patrons – Yea, sing us a song, Euty. Make light
our hearts. There is none like thee to give us
laughter.

Eutyclus – What? Would ye have me sing whilst
yet my throat is dry?

Cruel friends are ye to sore abuse me thus.
But I shall have my just retribution, 'tis sure,
For I shall sing most poor tonight indeed,
Like a rooster being plucked I will crow
Till ye buy me drink just to fill my mouth
And stop my voice from its accursed sound.

Patrons – Nay, but thou must sing, for we have
looked for thee these few hours.

Eutyclus – Didst wait for me? Indeed, now am I
touched

And protest that ye fight not fair and square,
To pluck the stings of mine heart thus, and make
Mine eyes fountains, weeping women's salt tears.
Hear, then, a most sad and mournful ballad. [Sings]

T'was a man who lived at Millwaters,
Who had five fat and fulsome daughters.

T'was tormented the miller's mind

When husbands they could not find.

Their mother with tears did overflow,

While the daughters fatter did grow,

Till finally one day they didst burst.

And what made matters still worse

The blast retouted the mill's waters!

Ist Patron – Now it is thee that dost not fight fair,
breakin' our hearts with sad and mournful songs,
who look to thee for merriment! [Laughter]

2d Patron – Sing us another song, Euty.

sapphire; and her hair glistened like it was spun
with opals, it did. Ah, that was a beauty, that one
was.

Ist Soldier – Fairest in all Rome, I dare say. Yea,
the Emperor himself took notice of her, he did.
She only of them that were crucified he ordered
not to be burnt; but to leave her naked so as all
could admire her beauty.

Eutyclus – What? When? What say, ye? Speak,
man; when was this?

Ist Soldier – 'T was a long time ago, man; afore
the Saturnalia last, it was.

Eutyclus – Saturnalia, didst say? Wast crucified
Uncovered, didst say? What was her name, man?
Speak!

Ist Soldier – Her name? I don't be recallin' her
name.

2d Soldier – Methinks 'twas Eliza; why, what is it
to thee that thou dost threaten thus?

Eutyclus – Therefore shall ye die; she was my
betrothed. [Draws]

2d Soldier – Return thy sword to its place lest I
strike off thy head; we touched not the maid
[Drawing].

Eutyclus – Nay, but thou didst confess with thy
own mouth.

[They fight; Eutyclus is smitten.]

Eutyclus – I am slain! [Exit]

2d Soldier – [To patrons] We touched not the
maid, I swear. We were among them that did but
guard the crowds, not them that crucified her. On
our word, we never touched her.

Ist Soldier – He drew on us, ye all saw it; we are
innocent of his blood. 'T was he that drew; we
touched not the maid. [Exeunt]

Scene VI

A street in Rome

Enter Eutyclus

³³ Tacitus, *Annals*, XLVI-XL VII

Eutyclus - I bleed apace; life's crimsoned flood doth ebb
 And flow away, my soul stranding high
 Upon the littered shore of ruined hopes,
 Like a jellyfish cast upon the sand.
 My wound doth gape and smile like Death's grin.
 My heart is gone; cold invadeth my limbs;
 Death's chill shadow enfoldeth like a shroud.
 Fast cometh Death's grim ferryman to convey
 My soul whence none doth return again.
 Now doth the crimsoned sun sink low and night
 Begin to draw her purple veil across the sky,
 Making chill the air with Death's icy hand;
 Earth's warm breath into vapor doth distill;
 Mists rise like ghostly figures up from hell,
 Spirits denied rest in death for the sins
 Committed in their earthly lives; condemned
 To haunt the night till morning light doth break
 And dissipate their insubstantial forms.
 Now satyrs dance and jackals hunt for prey
 Whilst hyenas their laughter raise aloud,
 Offspring of chaos and disorder bred,
 Whom nature hath foresworn and doth abhor;
 Loathsome things that creep among the shadows,
 Shrinking from light
 Lest their misshapen forms appear,
 And goodly things affright.
 How I have erred and played the fool greatly,
 And been like creatures that do haunt the night,
 Drinking and carousing 'neath shades of dark,
 Concealed from heaven's disapproving eye.
 The wages of my sin do I now reap,
 And pay with all I possess its sore price.
 What terrors doth my punishment hold store?
 'Tis said there are within the bowels of hell
 Fearful torments prepared for souls of men;
 That each sin hath its special place assigned
 Where men receive their just deserts in full:
 The tyrant and the usurer are there;
 The cupurse and the catamite also,
 Cowards, drunkards, them that at heaven
 mocked,
 Thieves, robbers, cheats and frauds, harlots
 and bawds
 All suffer in proportion to their fault:
 Brimstone and sulfurous exhalations,
 Torments of fire and scourge of whip and chain,

And things from which the mind doth shrink in fear.
 O God, let not my sins be counted up
 Nor my sweet soul be numbered with that troop.
 Forgive my sin before this life I part.
 I would not live always amidst life's woe;
 Its countless griefs upon my shoulders heaped
 Like stripes upon the back of erring fools.
 'Tis well to die and so escape mine ills,
 This vile life whose lustre hath been lost,
 Where joy hath fled and sorrows make their home.
 Die Eutyclus, to oblivion descend;
 So life long torment shall find an end!
 [Collapses]

Act III
Scene I

Caesarea, Palace of the Governor

Enter, Cestius and Gessius Florus

Cestius - Judaea is a refractory province.
 In all the world there are none so hard
 To govern as these fanatical Jews.
 They must be ruled with strength, but also fairness.
 They are a conquered people and nation
 And cannot but resent all Romans sorely.
 The more so if they rule with cruelty
 And are extortionate in their exactions.
Florus - Yea, I know the resentment they bear
 toward
 Their rulers and the slanders they heap on them.
 I warrant thee their complaints are groundless;
 They have made like charges against every
 Procurator sent hither to rule them;
 Felix, Festus, Albinus, and Florus;
 The names change but the charges are the same.
Cestius - I detest the Jews as much as any,
 And care little how thou dost govern them,
 So long as they their tribute pay on time
 And at peace under Roman rule remain.
 Their nation hath near Caesar Poppaea,
 A proselyte of the Jew's religion,
 Who undertakes the nation's cause with Caesar.
 If they should send an embassy to Rome,
 Thou dost risk Caesar's displeasure with thee.
 And I would not that thou shouldst Caesar cross.
 Do thou therefore ease somewhat thy rigor
 And be conciliatory with them.
 Then shall they well serve thee profitably
 Like an ox accustomed unto the yoke.

Florus - I thank thee for thy advice, as always
 Thy counsel and instruction will I heed.
Cestius - Good. When thou comest into Syria,
 Thou must dine with my lovely wife and I.
 We yearn much for Roman society.
Florus - I look forward to it with much pleasure.
Cestius - Fare thee well. Keep me informed of things here. [Exit]
Gessius Florus - Now hath these Jews my good repaid with evil.
 Ten thousand of their murders did I wink at,
 Suffering them to kill by Roman law
 Whomsoever they accused as Christians.
 Perfidious and thankless wretches they!
 Dare they complain to Cestius that I
 With too much rigor govern their vile nation,
 And bid me rule with greater mildness?
 Were they sheep I might tenderly shepherd them,
 But being poisonous things which bite and sting,
 Cannot with hand of man be touched or held,
 But must be ruled with implement of iron.
 Occasion against the Jews shall I now find
 And mine enemies to powder grind.
 A friend heretofore I myself did show,
 Now shall I be their avowed foe!
 Servant!
 Enter servant
Servant - M'lord?
Florus - Send to the centurion, tell him I
 Require his presence immediately.
Servant - Yes, m' lord. [Exit]
 Enter Centurion
Centurion - Thou didst require my presence, m' lord?
Florus - I did. Thou art to take ten men with thee

And go to Jerusalem and compel
 The Jews to pay full seventeen talents
 In gold to Caesar for rebuilding Rome
 Which long hath lain in ruins from the fire.
Centurion - What if they claim they have not the money?
Florus - Tell them they may pay from the temple treasure
 For all I care, just so long as they pay.
Centurion - Straight away, m' lord. [Exit]
Florus - Now is my trap well set
 And my prey I'll surely get
 The rogue will I play still more
 And bring this nation to brink of war
 Then my vengeance shall I wreak
 And tread the Jews beneath my feet. [Exit]

Scene II

A street in Jerusalem, a throng with great commotion and howls, throwing dust and garments in the air

1st Citizen - Caesar, save us from this evil
 Florus!
2d Citizen - Away with Florus! Away with the rogue!
 Enter 3rd & 4th Citizens
3rd & 4th Citizens - [Bearing basket betwixt them] Alms, alms, Florus beggeth alms, who will give Florus alms? He is impoverished and destitute of support. Alms, alms, Florus beggeth alms, who will give Florus alms?
5th Citizen - [Laughing] Here, I will give money [casts into basket]. A shekel for Florus that he may buy bread!
6th Citizen - Yea, I too will give alms to Florus [Laughing, casts into basket].
7th Citizen - And I [Casts into basket].
3rd & 4th Citizens - Alms, alms, Florus beggeth alms, who will give Florus alms?
8th Citizen - I would not give that dog a bone, but would cast stones at him if he came about my

doorstep begging crumbs from my table. Let Florus come beg himself and not send his soldiers. Then will he see our generosity when we feed him with dung and drive him away with stones!

9th Citizen – The land is filled with robbers and despoiled;
That dog doth go shares with them in the booty;
He taketh bribes and loots whole toparchies
And sendeth here for money from the temple?

That knave, that rogue, that whoreson cut-purse thief!
Who will obey him in this matter, who?

Diverse from crowd – Yea, let the dog be stoned!
Caesar, save us from this wicked Florus; Caesar save us!

10th – Gold and silver have I none for Florus, but iron have I plenty in my sword and would fane run the dog through! We Jews are not cattle to wear the yoke and pull the plow for our Roman owners; I say it is time to revolt!
(Acclamations from crowd)

Enter, Elder of the people

Elder – Good people, my good people, calm yourselves.

Let there be no more of this dangerous talk
For God has been our assistant this day.
Let us give thanks to heaven for its help.
The centurion hath left with his men;
Our sacred treasure doth remain untouched!
This is a day of triumph and great joy!
[Shouts and acclamations from crowd]
Now get ye home and let there be no mischief
Lest this day be turned to mourning by blood.
Get thee home, I pray, get thee home.
[Exeunt]

Scene III

Before Procurator's palace, Florus sitting in tribunal

[Enter high priest, members of counsel, and elders of the Jews]

Matthias, Son of Theophilus – Hale, noble Florus; peace to thee
And at such a time.

And bring before me whomever they catch.

Matthias – M' lord, be not rash –

Florus – Rash! Ye Jews push me too far.
Centurion!

Centurion – M' lord.

Florus – The Jews protect men known to urge revolt.

Moreover, their tribute is in arrears.
Go to the market place and plunder it.
Slay all whom ye meet; do not spare any.
Bring to my court some of those whom ye catch

To be examples unto all the rest. [Centurion Exit]

Them who presume to shield malefactors
Become their helpers and accessories.
Men scourge the body for the mind's intent.
Ye are the people's head; therefore all they That dwell in Jerusalem are guilty

And shall feel the scourge of our correction
For your sake, and learn to do no more.
Now get ye from our tribunal at once,
Lest I make ye an example also. [To

Matthias and Jews]. [Exeunt]

Scene IV

Upper Marketplace in Jerusalem

Enter Centurion with troops

Centurion – [To troops] Ye men, this is a day of sweet revenge.

Great glory shall he have whose purpled hands

And crimsoned sword doth reek and smoke and drop

With blood of countless enemies destroyed.
Stoke high the fires of thy wrath and rage.

Thy hatred long pent up let now break out;
Now is the day to grind these Jews to powder.

Kill such as ye meet; force the doors of homes

And slay the occupants; none spare alive.
Those Jews most prominent take prisoner

For public example and crucifixion.
Rob and plunder freely; seize what ye will.

Let not thy sword be lax or slow to slaughter!

[Slaughters by soldiers of men, women, children, amidst screams and cries; exeunt all but centurion]

Enter, Queen Bernice with entourage

Master of Queen's Horse – M' lady, Florus hath his soldiers loosed;
They plunder and destroy all whom they meet.
'Tis dangerous to precede further, Ma'am;
We should turn back and get ourselves to safety.

Bernice – Nay, do not turn back, but my message take

And tell the centurion and his soldiers
Thus saith Queen Bernice, Stop now these

slaughters

Else wise will I have thee before the gov' nor
To give account of this day's proceedings.

Go to; make haste; carry thou mine message now.

Master – Yea, m' lady. [Crosses stage to centurion.]

Bernice – Ye men, stay here, draw not any closer
Lest we be consumed in the soldiers' slaughters.

Master – [To Centurion] Centurion, a message from Bernice.

Centurion – Say on.

Master – Thus saith Queen Bernice, Stop now these slaughters

Or thee will she have 'fore the governor.

Centurion – Indeed; this message carry to thy queen:

Am I a Jew that I Bernice should obey?

Let her see Florus, if she has aught to say.
I'll not stay my soldiers at her bidding.

Master – Any thing more, centurion?

Centurion – Yea, tell thy queen, Bernice, Make haste, get hence,

For she in danger is from my men's rage,

And like to be consumed in their fury.

Master – Very well. Thy message I shall take her. [Crosses stage to Bernice.]

[To Bernice] A message, lady, from the Centurion.

Bernice – Say on.

Master - He doth bid thee look to lest thou destroyed be
By the excessive zeal of the soldiers.
Moreover, he doth say, Am I a Jew
That orders from Bernice I should now take?
And bids thee Florus sue with thy complaint.

Bernice – Florus doth hold tribunal after noon.
He shall know our displeasure at these events.
Ye men, make haste, get us hence to safety.
[Exit]

Reenter 5th soldier

Soldier, 5th – [To Centurion] It is done as thou didst command; above three thousand are slain and two hundred taken prisoner, with members of the equestrian order not a few.

Centurion – Equestrian order? It is enough; Keep back the men from further slaughters now.
Charge some the plunder to look close after; The rest cause to report at the palace
Within the hour with the prisoners. [Exit]

Scene V

Procurator's tribunal, Counsel of Jews present, with prisoners assembled

Enter Florus, sits in judgment seat

Florus - Ye are adjudged all enemies of Rome.
Your rulers have concealed malefactors
And seditious persons that railed upon
Our person and the government of Rome.
Have them scourged, then have them crucified
Beyond the city gates where all may see,
And let the people learn to do no more.

Matthias Son of Theophilus - Your grace, I pray thee, have mercy.
Above three thousand citizens have been slain;
What can the death of these few men do more?

Guard – M' lord, Bernice doth seek thy audience.

Florus – Let her come in.

Enter, Bernice

Bernice – My lord, Florus.
I have just come from the upper market;
Thy soldiers slew all whom they chanced to meet;
They plundered booths, forced private homes and slew
Their occupants, and carried off the goods.
How dost m' lord account for these events?

Florus – With all respect and deference, m' lady
Thou dost interfere where thou shouldst not.
We do this day punish those that hide rebels;
Seditious persons who have urged revolt
And speak against the government of Rome.
Were not this course pursued to quench the coals
Of sedition, revolt should soon break out.

Bernice – I was not aware that women, children
And nursing babes at mother's swollen breasts
Didst offer such grave threat to mighty Rome
That they needs be cut down defenseless in the streets.

Florus – The sword, like pestilence, doth not distinguish
'Twillt age and sex, but doth consume alike
All whom it chance to meet in its dread path.
The bitterness of war doth make men shun it;
If war were sweet like love and soft like women,
Men would not soon persuaded from it be.
I trow thou art not ignorant of this.

Bernice - Mock me not.

Florus – M' lady, let there not be rancor 'twixt us.
We both this nation's peace do urge, and seek
To maintain order under Roman rule.
In war, both citizens and soldiers die;
If women with their babes were slain, it was
Unfortunate, but unavoidable.
I seek the good of Rome and to protect
Her holdings and interests in this place.
This day's events were necessary to
Destroy those that would raise insurrection.

Bernice – I did not know the Roman senate hadst
Declared against my nation war.

Florus – Thou dost sound like one that taketh part
against Rome.

Is Nero Caesar not thy sovereign,
Or is thine allegiance to Judea?
Weigh thine allegiance and affections well.
In times like these one must choose where he stands.

Bernice - Think not that I shall fail to inform
Cestius of these events.

Florus – I thank thee and bid thee Good day,
m' lady. [Exit Bernice]

Centurion, have away the prisoners;
And see that they are punished presently.

Centurion – Ay, m' lord.

Florus – And Centurion.

Centurion – M' lord?

Florus – Recall it is a public execution;
I want it to be an exhibition
To burn like smoke the eyes of all who see
And like a bone to stick within the throat
Of all that do bewail the ones condemned.

Centurion – Ay, m' lord. [Exit]

Scene VI

Jerusalem, Palace of the King

Enter Agrippa II

Agrippa – Rufus!
Enter Servant

Rufus – M' lord?

Agrippa – I am expecting elders of the Jews;
When here, bring them in without announcement.
And set before us raisins, figs, and dates,
With water scented with rose and sweet wine.

Rufus – Yes, m' lord. [Exit]

Rufus – [Reenters with elders of Jews] M' lord, the elders of the Jews. [Exit]

Agrippa – Sirs, come in, come in; ye are most welcome.
We are returned safe from Alexandria

And give you thanks for bidding us welcome.
[Enter servant with refreshments]
Here are our refreshments. Please, help yourselves;

Matthias – Thou art most gracious; we return thee thanks.
We do always deem thy absence from Jewry
Unfortunate, most excellent Agrippa.
We trust thy journey was sans incident
And thou didst experience no discomfort.

Agrippa – Without incident, but much discomfort.
Oppressed with heat by day and cold by night;
The desert is a dwelling for naught save
Snakes and scorpions. But we do not complain.
It is a fact of life that needs be borne.
What news whilst we were gone? Has all been well?

Matthias – If it please your excellency, Roman
Rule is not unlike thy desert crossing,
But is full of discomfort for Judea.
It is to be regretted that this Florus
Hath sheathed himself most barbarous of late.
Above three thousand were cut down by soldiers
On Florus' orders, and hundreds crucified.³⁴

Agrippa – Three thousand slain and hundreds crucified!
What could provoke so great a massacre?

Matthias – Florus sought gold from the sacred
treasure,
Feigning Caesar did require money.
Diverse of our people railed upon him;
Some took up arms as if Florus were poor.
When we did not deliver them to him,
He loosed in vengeance upon us his soldiers.
Those that they caught alive were crucified.

Jesus Son of Gamaliel – Two days thence, we persuaded the people
To shew their goodwill and subjection to
The cohorts coming up from Caesarea.
When seditious men didst revile Florus,
The soldiers didst attack them that misspoke;
The multitude, affrighted, didst take flight,
And trampled one another, killing many.
They didst repair unto the temple and
The cloisters they have torn down to prevent
Entrance into the temple by the Romans.

³⁴ Josephus, Wars, II, xiv, 8, 9.

Agrippa – These soldiers' hatred for our nation hath occasioned manifold disturbances
 And bear much blame in bringing us near to war.
 When died my father, these same soldiers didst enter the palace and my sisters' statues Lay hold of, lewdly placing them in brothels In scorn against my family and nation.
 When Claudius learned this, he made grave threats.
 Resolved to send the soldiers unto Pontus, In punishment for their insolent acts.
 But he didst yield and suffered them to stay.
 Now do we taste the fruit of Claudius' Gentle and irresolute demeanor.
 For they have grown bold in their impudence
 And they have Florus as their protector,
 Who doth stir them up to still more mischief.
 Florus and the soldiers we must abide.
 The seditious must be dealt with quickly,
 For ye cannot be ignorant that war
 Will come if our course be not corrected.
 Indeed, I fear it is already too late.

Mathias – Why can not Florus be amended, lord?
 If ambassadors be sent to Caesar,
 Surely he will correct or remove Florus.

Jesus – We have near Caesar Poppaea Sabina.
 Might not we Caesar's wife approach for help
 And she the way for an embassy open?

Agrippa – There is much risk in what ye do propose.
 The world doth seek Caesar's audience,
 And there is not a nation or a people
 That doth not chaff under the Roman yoke.
 He'll not be easily moved to receive
 Accusation against his governor.
 And Florus doeth nothing but he doth
 Make it appear to Caesar's advantage.
 The money he demanded, did not he say
 'Twas for Rome and Caesar? Thus will
 Florus
 Make ye appear to Caesar odious,
 Because ye would not money send to Rome.
 If he reprove him, 'twill but gentle be.
 For Nero hath laid bare the treasury
 And senators and private men doth Caesar
 Accuse deceitfully and put to death

That he may seize upon their lands and wealth.
 Shall Caesar condemn Caesar? I throw not.
 But secretly will Nero commend Florus,
 And slyly smile at his exactions
 Who Caesar's example doth imitate.
 Thus, whether Florus be reproved or no,
 The government o'er Judah he'll retain
 And vengeance surely wreak for your attempt.
 And what is more, the tribute have not ye paid.
 How can ye Caesar's favor hope to gain
 When ye be late to pay the Roman tribute?
 Nay, ye durst not to Caesar send for help.

Mathias – What remedy to cure these ills remaineth?
 To do nothing is to invite our ruin.

Agrippa – Assemble ye the people on the morrow;
 We will address them and seek to persuade
 To give up these vain hopes of rebellion.
 For 'tis certain if it doth come to war,
 Jerusalem like a field shall be plowed.

Scene VIII
Gallery near to Temple, Multitude Assembled

Enter *Agrippa*; *Bernice* is seated in House of Asamoneans above gallery in view of multitude.

Agrippa – We asked you to assemble here today
 Out of our fond affection toward you
 And high regard for your astute judgment.
 The winds of heaven blow upon the land
 And rend the peaceful climate of our times
 With storms and whirlwinds of destruction.
 The coming days and weeks may determine
 Our nation's future for all time to come.
 There be men risen up that move for war
 And promise liberty from Roman rule.
 We cannot but laugh at their pretensions.
 If we can but dissuade you from committing
 To this sad course before it is too late,
 We shall have rendered you faithful service
 And dispensed those duties demanded by
 The bowels of our natural affection
 And our nation's mutual religion.
 Know first, that, though ye all be bent on war,
 Ye be not all moved by the same reasons.
 Some to regain their liberties do hope;
 Some hope to be avenged of supposed wrongs;
 Still others hope to get gain and to seize
 For themselves power and men's property.
 Now the former are by nature most mild.

But they who wish to get into power
 By nature are men wicked and perverse,
 Without regard for law or religion.
 If then ye should get freed of Roman rule,
 Who suppose ye shall thus become your rulers
 But they who are the very worst of men?
 For they who be by nature sweet and mild,
 Whose motives going into war are honest,
 Wish only the comfort of private life,
 And are inclined to overlook their wrongs
 And suffer long abuse of governors.
 But the wicked will omit no artifice
 Or crime that doth tend to their advantage.
 How will this war improve your condition
 then?
 For ye will merely be exchanging tyrants,
 And the wrongs ye hope to avenge will open
 The way for other crimes by other men.
 Now Florus hath the government lawfully
 And was by Caesar himself hither sent.
 But they who shall get themselves into power
 If you revolt will do so unlawfully,
 For they will not look for your permission
 Nor shall they concern themselves with your goodwill.
 If ye do bitterly complain of Florus
 Who hath lawfully got the government,
 What will ye do when they get into power
 That seize the government unlawfully?
 For ye cannot be ignorant that they
 Who move most for revolt are no less than
 Assassin bands of robbers and the Zealots
 Who rove about and prey upon our people.
 The crimes and innocent men they destroy
 Shew how they will behave if they get power.
 If this be the case if ye win this war,
 What shall the case then be if ye should lose?
 What evil will the Romans leave undone?
 Your wives and daughters will they put in
 brothels;
 Your sons shall fight beasts in the arena,
 And you shall be sold into slavery.
 And lose ye must, for it is not possible
 Ye can defeat the power of the Romans.
 Go whether thou wilt, there the Romans rule.
 The Euphrates in the east cannot contain
 them;
 Cadiz on the west is too small; Libya
 Hath been searched over by them in the
 south;
 The Danube their boundary is northward.

And, as if these were not enough, they searched
 For yet another habitable world
 Beyond the seas, and brought their kingdom unto
 The British Isles; places heretofore
 Unknown in other quarters of the world.
 The world is therefore insufficient
 To contain or resist the Roman power.
 Upon what then will ye pretend to rely?
 Ye say that servitude is odious.
 And so indeed it is. But when all nations
 Endure the like estate, ye should take comfort
 That your condition is common to all.
 The Gauls above three hundred nations have,
 And do endure to be subject unto
 The Romans, yea, though they didst fight a war
 Of eighty years their liberty to preserve.
 These submit not from effeminacy
 Of mind nor yet for frailty of body
 Nor nakedness of land, but from respect
 Their nations have toward the Roman army.
 These are maintained by twelve-hundred of
 troops.
 A number less than all their nation's cities.
 The Germans, though they be so great in number,
 And are more fierce and wild than untamed
 beasts,
 And have mountains and rivers like to walls
 Around about to protect them, are now
 Maintained in subjection by eight small legions.
 And if the Britons, who the ocean have
 As a wall, kept the Romans not away,
 On what do ye rely, this city's walls?
 Yet, did not Pompey in the merest space
 Of five short months defeat these walls and bring
 Your tribes under the iron yoke of Rome?
 If your forefathers were unable then
 To keep Pompey out when the Roman power
 Was still new to this corner of the world,
 How shall ye keep them out now that they fill
 The breath and length of all the land and have
 All nations as their helpers in the sieges?
 Upon what then are ye to place your trust?
 Will ye to heaven look for assistance?
 Shall Providence foreswear its purity
 And pollute itself by affording help
 To lawless and accursed men of blood
 Which shall your leaders be in this great war?
 Nay, nay, my countrymen, tis better by far,
 Whilst the vessel be anchored in port,
 To heed impending danger from the storm,
 Than putting forth to sea amidst a gale
 To suffer great, inestimable loss.
 For ye now suffer but the infringement
 Of your ancestral rights and liberties,
 But if ye go to war, ye shall suffer

Loss of all things and be only destroyed.
Man from the crowd – Nay, but we fight not against the Romans, but only Florus.

2d man from crowd – Yea, only Florus and not Rome. [Crowd assents]

Agrippa – If Florus only ye make war against,
Whence do ye omit to pay the tribute?
The cloisters which the Roman fortress join
Unto the temple ye have now torn down.
Are not these tokens ye intend to rebel?
If unto Rome ye will remain subject,
Ye must amend your faults and gather up
The tribute and the cloisters now restore.
If ye omit these, know of a certain
That war will swiftly come upon the land.
Let them that are for peace, therefore, go up
And let the cloisters be repaired this day.
For the rest, I return to my kingdom.
Your leaders obey and all will be well.

[Multitude consents; Seditious depart grumbling; exeunt]

Scene VIII

Jerusalem, city gates

Enter Agrippa with entourage

Agrippa – Ho, Darius, ho!

[Enter Darius, master of the king's horse]

Darius – Yea, m' lord, thou didst send?

Agrippa – We return now to our kingdom in Chalcis.

Send thou some horsemen before to secure
The way that we be safe from robber bands,
For they have grown exceeding bold of late.

Darius – Straight away, m' lord. [Exit]

Agrippa – I hope thou wilt find our journey pleasant,
My gentle sister. [To Bernice]

Bernice – Indeed, I shall; I like the solitude
Of the desert; it is a balm to me,
Bringing refreshment to my weary heart.
How now, what is that? There is a tumult.

The garrisons at Masada and Jerusalem the Jews have taken and slain.
Word of the Jews' revolt hath spread abroad;
Throughout the province the Jews are attacked.

The whole province is filled with violence
And become divided into armed camps.
The Jews dwelling in foreign cities have
Been destroyed by their inhabitants.

In Alexandria, fifty thousand slain;
Twenty thousand here in Caesarea;
The citizens of Scythopolis have
Destroyed thirteen thousand; Tyre, Hippos,
Askelon, Ptolemais, and Gadara,
Without mercy slew those Jews dwelling there.

Unburied corpses lay scattered in heaps.

Florus – Didst say twenty thousand in this city?

Centurion – I did, m' lord; the Greeks
begrudge them much
And would destroy them all.

Florus – Twenty thousand slain in one hour's time;

Indeed, I am impressed. They have done in
One hour what I thought would take them
weeks.

This is good news indeed; I am most pleased.

Hire two hundred men and their wagons
To cast the corpses outside the city.

The stench will be soon insufferable
And I would not that the air be thus fouled.
The weather is most agreeable today;
I think I shall dine on the veranda.

Bring word if aught develops more. That is all. [Exeunt]

Act IV

Scene I

Rome, a room in Lucellus' house

Enter Lucellus and Maiden

Lucellus – 'Twas fortunate we found him
when we did,
Else certain he would soon have bled to death.

I cleansed his wound and the dressing hath changed.
Bind fast his eyes with these cloth bandages;
His head received a mighty blow when he fell.
Then come away, my daughter, stay thou not.

Maiden – Yes, father, I shall obey and not tarry.
[Exit; reenters]
My father, will he live?

Lucellus – I cannot say, the wound is deep, my child.

He is in God's hands; let us watch and pray.
Come now, away; let us to church; avaunt.
Tis late and we are like to miss the reading.

Maiden – Is it well, father, that he be alone?

Lucellus – Sweet my daughter, trouble not thy heart;

He's not alone; God will his angels send
To keep watch; let him rest; come now away.
We shall be late; let us away; avaunt. [Exeunt]

Scene II

The catacombs in Rome

Enter Lucellus and Matden with Christians

1st Member – Greetings brother; the Lord be with you. Ye are as a fragrance of life from the dead to us; we thank the Lord for thy return and that of thy daughter. [To Lucellus]

Lucellus – I give thee thanks, my brother. God bless thee.

2d Member – What news, Lucellus? Hast thou any word?

Lucellus – The young man Eutyclus we found near dead;

A sword wound in his side and a contusion
Upon his head and face where he didst fall.

1st Member – Eutyclus! Nay, it cannot be; he disappeared months ago and hath not been seen.

2d Member – Eutyclus, didst say? Didst hear that all? The young man Eutyclus hath been found; Lucellus saith he is wounded.

Leader – Praise be to God; he hath been in all our hearts and minds. Didst say he is wounded?

Lucellus – A sword wound in the side; deep, but not mortal.
He lost much blood, but I think he will live.

Ist & 2^d Members – O, thank God!

Leader - Dost he know, brother?

Lucellus – Nay, he hath not yet consciousness regained.

Leader – And thy daughter, how doeth she?

Lucellus – She’s shaken, but well, I think.

Ist Member – Lucellus, there is news from Jerusalem.

Lucellus – Indeed, I had not heard; what news?

Leader – The land is in revolt.

Lucellus – Revolt? Then, hath it finally begun.
The days of wrath and vengeance are now come.

What news of the church and the brethren?

Leader - Word is that Cestius didst press a siege
But left off suddenly and all escaped
To Pella in the land of Perea.³⁵

Lucellus – The siege abandoned? Is the war then stalled?

Leader – Nay, Nero hath sent thither Vespasian

To prosecute the war; all Galilee is conquered and subdued; Jerusalem and Judea alone remain in arms.

Yea, Rome also doth drink the cup of wrath; Vindex hath the purple offered Galba, And both march hither Nero to depose. But more of this anon; let us to church And do thou tell us more of Eutychus. [Exeunt]

³⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, v, 3; Josephus, *Wars*, II, xix, 7.

Scene III

Jerusalem, outer-court of temple; people assembled

Enter Annas son of Seth, Jesus son of Gamaliel, priests and elders of the Jews

Annas – My friends, give ear unto me, your high priest.

Ye know how that the countryside is filled With Roman legions, which denude the land Of crops, trees, and men like clouds of locusts
Hither swarmed from hell’s all-consuming mouth.³⁶ These, to escape, men have resorted here,

Including Zealots, robbers, and outlaws,
Who have seized the city and gained control. With murder and robbery not content,
These men’s impiety hath extended

Unto the temple itself, which they’ve made Their fortress whence to prosecute their war,
And for themselves have made a false high priest,
One Phannias, the son of Samuel,
Who winks at their murders and extortions
And blesses them in all their crimes and sins.

Unless their guilt we are prepared to share,
We must retake control of the city
And drive these robbers from Jerusalem.
Therefore, let us arm ourselves and besiege
These wicked men

And our beloved capital city

Begin to cleanse from sin.

Ye citizens take arms and let us fight;
May heaven’s assistance give us might. [They fight, Zealots flee to inner court; exeunt with Annas’ party in pursuit.]

Scene IV

Jerusalem, Inner Court

Enter John of Gischala with Zealots

John of Gischala – Shut up those gates against our enemies;

Get men upon the cloisters and the walls.

Behold, the gates they dare not to attack

Lest they pollute the sacred court and house.
Fools! Their superstition doth make us secure.

Zealot captain - M’ lord, we are shut up as in a cage.
How long can we remain imprisoned thus?

³⁶ Rev. 9:1ff

Had their conscience ease from their foul deed?
Think ye that heaven will wink at your crime?
Would ye rescue the Zealots from our hand?

Their guilt doth reach unto the highest heaven.
This city have they filled with innocent blood
And ye are come to break them out of prison,
And so become partakers of their guilt.

Look up and see the welkin’s dark’ning face;
The heavens brood and lower, threat’ning wrath.
Encamped this night before these walls and towers
Ye shall learn whether heaven accepts your deeds.

Or ye do well this mad course to pursue.

Simon son of Cathlas – Ye Jews have ever been unsociable,
Holding yourselves aloof from other nations,
Supposing ye are better than the rest.

Therefore it doth not surprise us that ye
Shut up the gates against your brother Esau;
Like Jacob, ye supplant us in our right
To enter this city, common to all.

Us ye exclude, the Zealots ye close in;
The Romans ye do eagerly welcome
That ye might deliver the city to them.
Defenders of liberty ye shut up

And shut out, but our enemies let in.

Will ye the gates adorn with festive garlands
When your beloved Romans have arrived?
I shudder to think of the treachery.

Ye do slyly evoke the brooding sky
As if this was an evil omen toward us;

It is not for our sakes this sign hath come

For it doth warn against the bloody deeds

And oppressions by which ye crush this people.

Ye make this people drink wormwood and gall

By your corrupt judgments and exactions

And heaven doth forewarn of coming wrath.

To love liberty ye durst not pretend,

Tis we who’ve come freedom to defend.

And shall by force of arms enforce our right

As soon as dawn doth blush with day’s first light.

[Exeunt]

Scene VI

Inner temple

Enter John of Gischala and Zealot captains

John of Gischala – What fearsome prodigy doth
this storm foretell?

Great sheets of rain with hail and howling winds;
Continuous lightnings and thunderous blasts

Amazing concussions and bellowings
That rend the earth and rocks as though the
world
Were suddenly come to its appointed end.³⁷

Captain – M' lord, the Idumeans lay exposed
To this terrible storm, encamped outside.
They cower 'neath their shields pressed
together
Against the storm attempting to make shelter.

John of Gischala – Yea, I know too well they
are like to die
Unless we send rescue.

Captain – They came to help us, how shall
we help them?
We be enclosed within this prison-house.

John of Gischala – The watch hath Annas let
sleep,
Thinking we will nothing attempt tonight.
Let us send men to cut the bars and gates
With saws the priests use to cut altar wood.
The wind's great howling will conceal the
sound.

The Idumeans shall we then admit.
Take men and saws and do as I have said;
Bring hither their army to spring us hence.
We shall have the city in our control
Before the morning sun. [Exeunt]

Scene VII

Palace of the Annas the High Priest

Enter a servant

Servant – Awake, awake, the streets are filled
with murder!
The master must away before tis too late.
Awake, awake, I say, awake!

Enter Annas with servants

Annas – What means this noise at this dark
hour of night?

Servant – M' lord, the Idumeans have gotten
Within the walls and have the Zealots freed.
Great slaughters and murders fill the city;
Above eight thousand lay dead in the temple;

Above twelve thousand are slain in the streets.
Thy son-in-law, lord Caiaphas, is slain,
With high priests and council members not a few.³⁸
M' lord, they'll be here shortly; thou must flee.
Delay not; make haste; flee this place.

Enter Idumeans, they fight; Annas is taken

Idumean soldier – Bind that pig and have him away
to meet his fate;

This day shall thy corruptions return upon thy pate.
Thou shalt die like a dog, cut down in the streets;³⁹
Thy corpse cast out naked, food for wild beasts;
For this day hath vengeance waited long;

Rejoice ye heavens, let earth break out in song.
[Exeunt]

Scene VIII

A room in Rome

Enter Lucellus and Maiden

Lucellus – Come, we must look in upon the
youngman.

Go thou and see how he doeth; mind you, stay not,
But come again forthwith.

Maiden – Ay, father, I will do as thou dost bid.
[enters room]

Lucellus – A good and obedient daughter she is.
[Maiden emerges from room]

Maiden – Come, father, he doth stir! [Enter room]

Eurychus – I, where am I? Is any there?

Lucellus – Answer him not a word; stand thou afar;
I only will speak to him. Dost hear me? [To
maiden]

Maiden – Ay, father, I will stand hither.

Lucellus – Ay, my good lad, I am here; keep thy
peace;
Thou hast lost much blood and must needs rest
there.

Eurychus – Mine eyes, I cannot see.

Lucellus – Thine eyes are bandaged; a bad
blow thou didst
Receive unto thy head when thou didst fall.
Or so it doth appear.

Eurychus – How came I here? What place is
this, good man?

Lucellus – We found thee collapsed outside
on the street.

Eurychus – We? Thou dost not abide alone?

Lucellus – A servant, a young boy, abideth
with me.

But thou must rest; enough talk for tonight.
Let sleep mend thy wounds; I will come
again

At morning light with some bread and broth
and
We will speak more then. Rest thee now,
rest thee. [Exeunt]

Scene IX

Nero's Palace, Rome

Enter Nero and Phaon

Nero – What news of Galba; will the
Praetorians
Remain loyal unto their oaths?

Phaon – All is lost, is lost, good mine
emperor.
E'en Tigellinus doth abandon you.

Nero – Tigellinus? What e'er shall I do,
Phaon?

Perhaps if I present myself unto
The legions weeping and unarmed I can
Move them unto pity and compassion.
Nay, I will don my tragic robe and weep
Before the people in the Forum and
Implore their pardon and the Praefecture
Of Egypt as a place of exile.

Where is my secretary to assist me;
Mine oration I must compose e'en now.
Surely I can move the people to tears
And their good will and forgiveness obtain.

Phaon – Thou wouldst be torn to pieces; art
thou mad?
Awake, Nero, thou dost dream idle dreams;
The end is come, is come.

Nero – Nor friend nor enemy do I then have
To mitigate my plight?

Phaon – Mine emperor; thou must escape from
here.

The danger is too great; let us away
Unto my villa and await there day.

Nero – This night? Thy villa? Yes, let us away.
Nay, but I will be recognized and slain.
I must remain safe, and in the palace stay.

Phaon – Don thou these beggar's clothes and let
us flee
Else wise ere morning come dead thou wilt be.

Nero – Give them here; thee will I obey.
Avaunt; let us flee this place ere night doth turn to
day. [Exeunt]

Scene X

In Route to Phaon's Villa, suburbs of Rome

Enter Nero, Epaphroditus, and Sphorus

Epaphroditus – Tis sure that soldier didst
recognize thee,
For I didst hear him salute thee as Caesar.

Nero – Alack the day, Fate hath decreed mine
end!
A corpse beside the road didst startle mine horse
And mine hood fell from mine head as he passed
by.
Dost think he will inform against me?

Epaphroditus – Yea, tis certain; here cometh
Phaon now.

Enter Phaon

Phaon – The horses I let loose into the thicket;
My villa is near; from here we go by foot.

Epaphroditus – Take care, there be here many
thorns and brambles.

Nero – Alack, they rend my clothes and tear my
flesh;
Doth nature also hate and torment me?

Phaon – The mud and ooze is thick and deep.

³⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, IV, v, 1-3.

³⁹ Josephus, *Wars*, IV, v, 1-3.

³⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, IV, v, 5.

Nero – I sink, I sink; o help!
Earth ope's it mouth to swallow me alive;
I prithee; let this not become my grave.

Epaphroditus – [Helping him] Our cloaks
must we put over the mud thus.
That we nor sink nor stick in this deep mud.

Nero – I thirst: have we some water?

Phaon – This marsh is foul and its waters
stink.
Tis all there is mine emperor.

Nero – Give it me, this is Nero's chosen
draught. [Drinks]

Phaon – The day doth dawn and matins light
the sky.
We must hurry, avaunt! Let us make haste.

Nero – Prithee, What day is this?

Epaphroditus – Methinks tis June the ninth, is
it not?

Nero – Alack, the day of Octavia's death,
My wife whom Poppaea moved me to
murder!

Yester night I dreamed that Octavia
Came from the realm infernal and my soul
Dragged screaming to the nether-most abyss.
Horrors, horrors, o horrors!

Epaphroditus – Think not on it; 'twas but a
dream.
The stuff of idle minds; see, she is not here.
Do not thou agonize about such things.

Phaon – There, there, at last my villa.

Epaphroditus – It is unsafe mine emperor
thou durst
Not dare to enter lest a slave betray
Thy presence for reward.

Phaon – The risk is great mine emperor; do
not
Thou enter but stay instead in this cave
Here hard by my villa.

Nero – I fear what things may lurk in yonder
cave.
Dost know the shades of my wife haunt not
that place?

Nay, but I'll not into earth's belly go alive.
But will remain here 'neath the moon the sun.

Phaon – I will go first and so prepare a way
That ye unseen may enter through a hole
Into a servant's quarters where thou mayest
Abide until thou dost accept thy fate
And knowest what thou oughtest do. [Exit]

Nero – Fate? Nay, speak not of fate; tis a cruel
word.

“Accept my fate;” O cruel, cruel word.
Some friends are ye that torment me with such
words.

Will not I cheat death yet, my companions?
[Reenter Phaon]

Phaon – I have prepared a way into the house
That ye may enter unobserved by all
And there await day, come what ever may.

Nero – O cruel fate that I in beggar's clothes,
Who was a god among men, should thus hide
In servants' quarters; to this am I come?

Phaon – Come, come, mine emperor; let us away.
[Exit]

Scene XI

Inside Servant's Room

Enter Nero, Phaon, Epaphroditus, and Sphorus

Epaphroditus – Take now thy rest a spell; thy mind
relax.

Nero – Have ye some food and drink?

Phaon – A little bread and tepid water's all
[offering].

Nero – [Eats] I cannot keep this down.

Phaon – Soon soldiers will arrive mine emperor.
Since thou must die, let it be by thine own hand,
As mighty Caesar, and not like a cur dog,
Cut down with shame, a mockery to all.

Nero – If die I must, I will require a grave.
Will not ye dig for me a simple grave?

A simple grave is all that I require.
See, I will lie down that ye may know the length
[lying down].
Oh what an artist dies with me! [Exit Phaon]

Epaphroditus – A runner comes; see
footsteps do approach.

Enter messenger

Messenger – A letter hath arrived my lord
from Rome.

Nero – Give it me, let me read. [Snatches,
reads] I am declared by the senate this day
A public enemy and sentenced to
Be punished in the manner of our ancestors.
What manner is that, dost know?

Epaphroditus – To be stripped naked and
thy neck fixed to
A gibbet with a fork and beaten to death
with rods.

Nero – Give me thy dagger; I will try the
edge.

[Reenter Phaon]

Phaon – Thy grave is ready.

Nero – Alack, alack should such an artist
die?
The edge is too dull; I cannot do it.

Sphorus – Hast thou no shame? Art thou
weak as a woman?

Phaon – Thou dost lose the time; play the
man and die
A Roman and an emperor.

Nero – I know not how to die; will not
someone
Slay himself and shew me how?

Epaphroditus – This is infamy; Nero rouse
thyself!
But soft, I hear the hooves of horses.
Certain it is soldiers are already come.

Nero – The thunder of swift coursers smiteth
mine ears. [Places knife to neck]
Alack, the wound is ineffectual!

Epaphroditus – I shall help thee to thy
death. [Helps drive knife home]

Enter Centurion

Centurion – Stay, Nero, stay; to help thee am I
come.

Nero – Too late, too late – Is this thy loyalty?
[Dies]

Phaon – Thus dieth Nero and terror's reign end.
A wicked life doth a cruel death portend.
Take up the body; the proper rites to it show,
The last of all the Caesars' blood in it did flow.
[Exit]

Act V

Scene I

A Roman camp in Judea

Enter Vespasian and Cerealis

Vespasian – What places are not yet subdued,
commander?

Cerealis – There doth remain Macherus, Masada,
And Herodium, besides Jerusalem.

Vespasian – These rest are but islands in the
desert.

Tis Jerusalem we must overcome
It is the heart and capital of Jewry
Destroy it and the rest shall die of itself.

Enter Titus

Titus – Hail, good my father.

Vespasian – I sent thee to greet Galba in my
name
And congratulations pay for obtaining
The purple and art thou returned in haste?

Titus – I cut my journey short when I received
Information that Galba hath been slain
And Otho o'er the empire doth reign.

Vespasian – Otho! He Nero's trainer was in vice
And sordid unnatural appetites.
What fault was laid to Galba that the throne
From him was so soon torn away?

Titus – His stinginess and severity didst
The soldiers' hatred and resentment earn.
When Galba came to Rome some mutinous
Marines opposed him at the Mulvane bridge.

These overcome, he ordered every tenth man
Be executed in the midst of Rome.
Thousands were butchered and put to the
death.
The loyal troops this alienated
And bred a rebellious mood and temper
Which Otho didst fan into outright war.

Vespasian – His stinginess, what of that?

Titus – The customary gift promised the
soldiers
He did not pay.

Vespasian – A grave miscalculation to be
sure.

Titus – Others he disaffected by recalling
The public money Nero gave to friends,
O'er twenty-two hundred million sesterces.

Vespasian – What? Twenty-two hundred
million!

The empire cannot survive bankrupt.
Well Galba did attempt those funds to claim
Else Rome shall have to tax public latrines!

Titus – Nor is Otho secure; Vitellius
From Germany doth march to seize the
throne.

Vespasian – The government is tossed about
upon
A sea of avarice and ambition,
His own advantage each man looking to
Whilst Rome by civil strife is rent asunder.

Titus – Indeed, one wonders if Rome will
survive.
The people are beset with fear and dread;
Three emperors in six months hath Rome
had.
Since Augustus, all wars on foreign soil
Hath been fought; none in Rome or Italy.
With Galba, war came to the Mulvane bridge
And heaps of dead about the city lay.
A few months more, this scene saw they
repeated,

When Otho's soldiers filled the streets with
slain,
And spent the day in crime and cruel
slaughter.

Now, Otho not three months upon the throne
And civil war doth thither fly again.
Would that were all, but nature too doth war;

Yon Tiber's flood the city hath deluged,
Its current sweeping men away to death,
Undermining apartments, which, collapsing,
Their occupants beneath the rubble crush.
The flood also hath cut off grain from Egypt
Thus famine bearing in its wake.

Vespasian – Thou didst well to return; else had thou
risk.

No gratitude wouldst thou enjoy for gestures
Intended for another emperor
And hostage might have been made by Otho.
Abide here till we shall see how things go,
Then we'll know better what to do.
Upheavals such the world did never know;
I fear what end these portents do foreshew.
[Exeunt]

Scene II

Otho's tent, a field near Bedriacum

Enter Otho, Paulinus, Celsus, Titianus, and
Proculus with attendants

Otho – The gods have smiled on us thus far,
gentlemen.

In each engagement, the enemy hath
We bested and put to flight; but now Valens
And Caecina have forces joined and seek
Our armies to engage and try their strength.
Thus are we put to the choice whether to
Protract the war or try our fortune now.
Give counsel; what say ye? Thou, Paulinus, speak
first.

Paulinus – Their flood of angry arms hath reached
its height and,
Like swollen waters, doth begin to wane.
Their whole force is now gathered in one place
And have no source to look for assistance or
Reserves to replenish their fallen ranks.
They have nowhere whence to renew supplies
And daily their provisions do consume.
Each day we put off battle their troops spend
In tedium and idleness and grow

Restive and insubordinate in mind;
Wishing that matters might come to a head,
Their discipline doth succumb to impatience
And their resolve waneth attenuate.
Their whole advantage, therefore, is in haste.
Our forces have not yet attained full strength
And daily groweth stronger more and more.
Reserves we have almost beyond account.

We have no want or shortage of supplies
But the whole of Italy have to supply our
store.

Attrition and delay I counsel most;
Send not into the field today thy host.

Celsus – I do agree with Paulinus, m' lord.

Otho – Yea, so also doth Gallus who,
injured
In a fall from his horse, could not be here,
But sent his counsel by a messenger.
Now, Titianus, my beloved brother,
Give us thy sage advice.

Titianus – M' lord, I am impatient with
delay

And counsel to let the gods decide the day.
Send thy full army into the field;
At the enemy thy whole strength wield.
As the gods so decree,
Shall the end of this contest be.

Otho – I also am impatient of delay
And fane would bring this war to prompt
conclusion.

Therefore let soldiers gird their glitt'ring
swords;
Let swords drip like icicles in the sun,
Till drops wax into rivulets and rivulets
Grow into streams and mountains melt and
run,
Making rich earth's clods with enemies'
blood.

Let no man rest till day be done
And Otho's right shall have been won.
[Exeunt]

Scene III

A field near Bedriacum

Enter armies from opposite sides; clash of
arms; Otho's army routed and destroyed.
[Exeunt armies with Vitellians in pursuit.]

Scene IV

Brixellum, Otho's tent

Enter Otho, Advisors, Centurion, and
attendants

Otho – Any news of the battle yet?

Centurion – None yet, m' lord.

Flourish without

Otho – Ah, I didst hear a signal that someone
Hath entered camp; perhaps we shall get word.

Enter messenger

Messenger – M' lord, word from the battle lines.

Otho – Say on, say on; how goes the contest,
man?

Messenger – Alack, m' lord, the day is lost!
Tis a complete route; our troops have all fled.
The roads are clogged with dead; forty-thousand
Have fallen down slain.

Centurion – Forty-thousand slain; nay, it cannot
be.

Otho – These things dost thou know of a truth?
Didst thou come from the battle lines thyself,
Or did others tell it thee?

Messenger – M' lord, I speak true and witnessed
myself
The battle and the day's events.

Centurion – There are fresh troops in abundance,
m' lord.
All is not lost; do not lose heart.

Ist. Advisor – Tis true, we have reserves in
abundance
And can regroup again and fight.
Though the loss be great we've only begun.

Otho – Nay, but tis over; I will not this war
Continue nor the lives of these brave men
Expend or waste upon this vain effort.
That were far too dear a price for my life.
Although Vitellius began the war
We shall contend in battle but this once.

I would posterity Otho judge thus
That I didst spare my country needless blood.
Fortune and I each the other know well.
I fear not death; tis man's appointed end.

My death will purchase life for these brave men,
And buy clemency from Vitellius.
Regard as the chief proof of my resolve
That I do not complain of any man.
Tis for that man who has the wish to live
Complaint to make against the gods or men.

Centurion – Say not thou so, m' lord.

Otho – Speak no more of it, I will not hear thee.

Instruct the troops to make peace with the victors;

The sun is set and evening doth descend;

The night approacheth; Otho's day doth end.

Go thou and live; I have had my day.

Depart, depart, I say. [Exit]

A little dinner of bread, meat, and wine,

A little sleep before death's appointed time.

Before doth rise tomorrow morn the sun

My course fulfilled, the race I'll have run.

Come dagger, thy point a last office fill;

Upon thee shall I fall and this body kill.

[Exit]

Scene V

Vitellius' tent

Enter Vitellius; centurion

Centurion – M' lord, Otho hath slain himself

And the senate declared thee emperor.

Vitellius – Then hath the war been won and our task done.

Let us ordain a feast and celebrate

Our accession to the principate.

Otho murdered Galba to seize his throne,

And with his life Galba's death did atone.

Fortune is fickle and hither-thither flies;

Deposed and usurped the usurper dies;

The sun that set on Otho on us doth rise.

Centurion – M' lord, rumor hath it that the legions

Of Asia, Syria, and parts beyond

Hath sworn allegiance unto Vespasian,

Who Egypt's granaries doth now control

And the supply of food for Rome the whole.

Vitellius – The empire by sword obtained

By its holder is not long retained;

Our legions into civil war we send

Our right, our crown, our throne to defend;

The contest for supreme power shall repeat

And the scepter fall at the victor's feet.

[Exit]

Scene VI

Rome, Imperial Palace

Enter Vitellius, counselors and attendants

Vitellius – What legions and detachments have we

sent

To meet Vespasian's threat unto our throne?

Counselor – Auxiliaries from Gaul, Spain and

Britain.

Vitellius – Hath Fabius Valens departed Rome

For Italy, to meet our enemies?

2d Counselor – M' lord, at last he hath departed

Rome.

Some days after Caecina didst he leave,

Not at all like a general to war,

But went along slowly as a parade,

With a long train of concubines and eunuchs,

Illicit pleasures snatching on the way,

Gaining much infamy and reproach

For his adulteries and debauches

In the homes of those that entertain him.

Vitellius – Thus are we held hostage by our

commanders.

We are at war and they do luxuriate

And stretch themselves upon a wanton and

Lascivious bed. Ye gods, attend us!

Valens is envious of Caecina,

Lest by his rival he should be outshined

Therefore doth he thus dawdle and delay.

At Rome he faced neither risk nor disgrace

And would scarcely depart but I forced him.

Let us hope he will play the man at last

And turn back the armies of Vespasian.

Enter messenger

What is it; have ye a message to bring?

Messenger – The eternal gods grant thee all success

And keep thy throne secure always.

Vitellius – I do perceive thou hast ill to report

That thy message with flatteries thou preface.

Messenger – Good my lord, Caecina hath traitor

turned

And didst attempt to disaffect his legions,

Delivering them unto Vespasian,

But they rebelled and threw him into chains,

Maintaining loyalty unto their oaths.

Vitellius – This news thou dost bring is both

bad and good.

Tis well that Caecina hath for his treason

Been clapped in chains and into prison

thrown.

But tis ill to lose our best general.

It will not bide well for our war effort.

Valens I do in part blame for this sad turn.

Had he departed Rome in proper time

This defection might have been prevented.

Messenger – M' lord, I fear there is still

more.

The Flavians hath taken Cremona

And slain Valens at Urbinum.

Vitellius – Valens! Now hath all hope surely

been lost.

To prolong the war is to increase the cost.

I am old and have tasted much of life;

I have known peace and I have known strife;

I care not for myself, but my children,

mother, and wife.

Peace is noble where honorably obtained;

To negotiate surrender, be not ashamed.

Terms of peace we should seek to conclude,

While the victor is in a conciliatory mood;

Lest by too stubborn a resistance, fighting to

the last breath,

Vespasian and his party be satisfied with

naught but death.

Counselor – What wouldst thou m' lord?

Vitellius – We shall assemble Rome and the

Senate

And surrender the imperial power

That virgin Rome civil war not deflower.

Go; give word that all be ready against the

morrow.

May this peace be a source of joy, not of

sorrow. [Exit]

Scene VII

Rome, a public place

Enter Vitellius with wife and children,

citizens, senate, consul, and soldiers

assembled.

Vitellius – Good people, senators, and loyal

soldiers.

Since Nero's death, Rome hath been rent asunder
By intestine strife and civil discord.

Two hundred thousands, perhaps more, have died
In bloody battle and contest of arms.

The soil of our clime is drenched with blood;

The hills littered with bones of unburied slain.

Fair Italy, the maiden of the earth,

Is ruined, spoiled by ravages of war.

Whole villages and cities have been burned,

Their inhabitants slain or sold for slaves.

And what remains but Rome, the capital

And seat of all the earth, to be destroyed.

The Flavians with haste do hither march.

Should war and its attendant horrors come

Into the capital its very self?

Who can predict the loss such would accrue?

Indeed, who cannot such loss plainly see?

Not for earth's treasures would I consent thus.

Ye Vitellians have fought valiantly;

There is no shame or disgrace in defeat

Where heaven hath decreed it so to be.

Who can resist the salty sea and flood,

Oppose the stars or take hold of the wind?

No more can mortal man fortune prevent.

If ye have loved me, grant me this request,

Have pity on me and my youngest son

Whom I would save from the avenging sword,

By yielding to Vespasian this contest,

Retiring to the solitude of private life.

This dagger, emblem of the supreme power,

I now resign, and tender freely up. [Offers to

consul, Caecilius Simplex, who refuses)

Man in crowd – Nay, but we will have thee to our
head; do not thou resign. [Affirmations from

crowd, refusing resignation]

Vitellius – Arrived I here your supreme emperor,

Depart I hence a private citizen. [Exit with

family]

Ist Senator – The day belongs unto the Flavians.

We should to Sabinus' house and salute

The family of the next emperor.

2d Senator – Indeed; but note how the soldiers

complain.

They seem unwilling to concede defeat.

Ist Senator – The legions pick the emperor, not

we.

Tis one thing if Vitellius resign

Another for the soldiers to agree.

Come, let's away

And our congratulations to the victor pay.
[Exeunt]

Scene VIII

Imperial palace

Enter Vitellius and centurion

Centurion – Good m' lord, Sabinus hath been attacked.

By mutinous soldiers of thy party,

Unwilling that thou shouldst resign the throne.

Sabinus flew unto the capital

With others of the Flavian party,

Where their defense they made 'gainst the assault.

As the combatants struggled, fire broke out,

Which the entire capital hath engulfed.

Vespasian's son, Domitian, didst escape,

But Sabinus was taken and is slain,

His body mutilated and beheaded,

Was cast upon the Gemonian stairs.

Vitellius – Vespasian's brother murdered in cold blood,

Who didst no part take in our civil war,

By mutinous and self-avenging soldiers.

The temple of Jupiter Maximus

Reduced to ash; consumed with angry flames.

Now is hope flown of peaceable accord

And the contest sure to come to Rome's streets.

Accursed civil war that cruelly rends

The sacred fabric of society,

The social compact twixt men of kindred blood,

In which are woven the felicities

Of familial familiarity,

Binding man to man and brother to brother;

O vile civil war and intestine strife,

Setting ancestral ties at naught so that

Sons slaughter fathers, fathers butcher sons,

And earth is made to drink her offspring's blood.

Whence rise these storms that make our native trees

Abort their fruit while yet in very blossom

And turn the heads of grain to mildewed ears

Of rottenness and death?

Centurion – M' lord, the Flavians do hasten

hither;

Thou must flee hence and conceal thyself.

Vitellius – Whither shall I flee that I am not known

Nor recognized? If I am not safe here,

I sha 'nt be safe any whither.

Nay, but here shall I wait my destined fate.

Get you gone; hence I'll not depart. [Exeunt]

Scene IX

A house in Rome

Enter Roman man and wife

Man – Get thee in, woman, and bar the door shut.

Be sure to shudder also the windows.

Wife – Why, what to such great cholera doth move thee,

Husband, that thou art so ghostly afraid?

Man – All Rome is mad; mayhem fills the city;

Everywhere death; the streets are clogged with

slain,

As though the world were come to its end.

The Flavian army advanced in three

Several columns; part along the Tiber;

Another by the Flaminian Way.

The third column approached by the Colline gate.

The Vitellians met and them engaged,

Defending the city before the walls.

They kept the Flavians back by showers

Of stones and javelins until late day,

When their cavalry broke through the Colline gate

And didst surround the Vitellian troops.

The Flavians didst win most engagements;

The Vitellians kept reforming lines;

Again and again the process played out;

The Flavians still kept pressing forward.

As vapor doth condense into liquid,

And liquid doth with cold congeal to stone,

The gentle humour of men's hearts waxed dense,

And by degrees to adamant was turned;

Devoid of feeling: cold, hard, inhuman.

The people stood and watched as at the games;

By their applause and shouts they encouraged

First one, then the other party's army.

If one side gave way and hid in shops or homes,

The people urged they be drug out and slain;

Thus did they gain a larger share of booty,

And to the rabble didst the spoils fall,

Since the troops were absorbed in bloody work.

Sights horrible and hideous were seen;

Every where there were battles, wounds, and blood;

Open baths, drinking shops and piles of corpses

Along side men and harlots cheering on.

The merry-making and debauchery

With all the crimes committed in conquest,

So that one might suppose all Rome at once

Was mad with rage and drunken with

pleasure.

Vitellius was dragged from the palace

By a tribune, with arms bound and clothes

torn.

At the point of a sword he then was forced

To lift his face unto his captors' mocks.

Then, driven to the Gemonian stairs,

Where Sabinus' corpse had but lately lain,

He fell beneath a rain of many blows.

Dead, his body was mocked and kicked and

stabbed

So that their ferocity in his death

Was equal to their flattery in life.⁴⁰

O cruel, bloody, base and vile mob.

O horror, horror, horror! ---

The danger gone, Domitian came from

hiding

And offered himself to the victor's party,

Which hailed him as Caesar and escorted

Him unto his ancestral hearth.

Wife – Come, come, away and rest yourself

awhile.

Thou hast seen things no man should see;

come, rest.

The gods allow us peace from cursed war.

[Exeunt]

Act VI

Scene I

Roman camp, Titus' tent

Enter Titus with commanders, attendants,

etc.

Titus – The men are much dejected and

down cast;

And good cause have they for their

dejection.

Two months have we laid siege unto these

walls

And have but small reward for all our work.

We have denuded the land of its trees

For wood to build our siege works and ramparts,

Only to watch them burn in a moment.

The labor of two months reduced to ash;

Set fire unto by these fanatic Jews.

The good fortune of the Zealots' attack

Hath made early defeat impossible.

Wood to rebuild must be brought from afar,

And not without great effort and expense.

Defectors whom we have captured tell us

There are three factions warring with each other⁴¹

Who have destroyed the city's store of grain

And that there is a want of food within.

Thus I propose we dig a ditch around,

Encompassing them in on every side,⁴²

And let hunger devour their resistance,

So that they abandon this vain revolt.

What say ye unto this plan, gentlemen?

Larcius Lepidus - Agreed. Why should we use

our strength and blood

To do what nature will soon accomplish.

When weakened by famine they'll give it up.

Tiberius Alexander – Or in their stubborn

obstinacy die.

Sextus Cerealis – What of the people who have

in the war

No part and must needs perish miserably?

Larcius Lepidus - Tis not we that were authors of

this war.

Shall wicked men escape wrath by holding

Hostage this people? Then shall all revolt

And Roman government be at an end.

Titus – If it were in our power to avoid

Their suffering, another course we'd choose.

Those who defect we shall receive in peace,

With kindness treat, and send their ways

unharm'd.

More we cannot do. This is our command.

Begin at once the trench and wall to build.

Let us make haste this war in triumph to end.

[Exeunt]

Scene II

Lucellus' Home

Enter Maiden

⁴¹ Rev. 16:19; cf. Josephus, Wars, V, i, 4.

⁴² Lk. 19:41-44; Josephus, Wars, V, xii, 1, 2.

⁴⁰ Tacitus, Histories, III, lxxxiii

Maiden – I found this poem from my love; I had forgot he had given it me. [Reads]

*Softly she cometh whom my heart doth love,
More fair by far than winter's silvery moon
And all the stars that in the welkin shine.
There is no flaw in thee, my heart, my dove.
All thy parts are perfect in comeliness.
Thy shoulders are like gently sloping hills
Atop which thy head doth set as a palace
And thy hair, like a dark forest, doth surround.*

*Thy complexion is like the blush of dawn.
Thy breath is more fragrant than an apple
Washed with the morning dew and summer rain;
Thy lips are soft like blossoms newly budded;
Thy mouth is red like the flesh of a plum;
Thy tongue is choicer than a piece of melon.*

A piece of melon? Nay, not melon, sure.
For melon is green. Thus, my mouth is red,
Like the plum, but my tongue is green like melon.
Red and green; nay I do not much like that.
Nay, not melon; he didst mean cantaloupe.
Is not the tongue coloured like cantaloupe?
I suppose my tongue hath been green sometimes
When I didst eat something bad or been ill,
But I would not he write it in a poem.
Certain tis he meant cantaloupe.

*I am hers; she is mine; our hearts are one.
The agonies of love are bittersweet,
The tender stirring of love's desire;
For thought of thee I am all sighs, my love.
Go not away, my heart; wherefore dost thou flee?
My love is gone and I am left alone.
Word doth not come; carefulness gnaweth the bone.*

Gnaweth the bone? O fine, first I am fruit,
and my tongue green, now I am like a dog
That doth gnaw bones. Certain he didst mean
"fill."
"Word doth not come; carefulness filleth my bones."
Indeed, I am certain of it.

*I check each hour; still there is not word.
Why from my darling, my dove, have not I heard?
Twere better by far not to have been born*

*Than suffer love's disprize and worship's scorn.
How long, o heart, such pains canst thou endure?
O cruel love that cuts and leaves the soul to bleed
Wherefore didst heav'n place in man's breast this insatiable need?*

*Despair not mine heart, she doth love thee still
Who is more fair than all things nature boasts.
Didst thou see wither flew the one I love?
I will pursue her unto the earth's end.
I see her now, I call to her, see turns;
Her smile makes my breast swell and heart leap.
Why are thine eyes glassy with tears, my love?
"My tears are tears of joyousness and love."
I am hers; she is mine; our hearts are one.
The tender agonies of love are sweet.*

O what honeyed words my beloved composed.
What joy, what pleasure they do bring my soul.
Is woman made that wouldst not swoon and melt
To hear such words from her beloved?

Enter Lucellus

Lucellus – What, my daughter? With whom dost thou converse?

Maiden – With no one, father; I spoke with myself.

Lucellus – What hast thou there? What is it thou dost read?

Maiden – Nothing, m' lord.

Lucellus – Nay, but it is, else thou wouldst not hide it so.

Give it me.

Maiden – Good my lord, tis a poem.

Lucellus – What kind of poem?

Maiden – A poem of such sweet and honeyed words
Like I have ne'er heard before.

Lucellus – Ah, I see; a love poem is it not?

Maiden – Ay, father, it is.

Lucellus – Well, never mind that.
I will tonight remove the bandages
From Eutychnus and he will see again
And learn who were they who didst care for him
And nurse him back to health.

Eutychnus – I mean in mine head I compose poems;
Something to break up the monotony.

Lucellus – I should like to hear one.

Eutychnus – Alright. This one is in the Latin tongue.

It is nothing, just something to kill the time.

Hic ventus est,

Haec imber,

Amor eorum tonitrus et fulgur

Terra, ventus, ignis et aqua.

Lucellus – It hath a ring; but how doth it translate?

Eutychnus – *He is the wind*

She is the rain

Their kisses thunder and lightning;

Their love is a storm where the elements are

mixed,

Earth, wind, fire and water.

Lucellus – And thou didst make this for a girl?

Eutychnus – Yes. The most beautiful that ever lived.

Alas, but she is gone.

Lucellus – Doth she have something to do with thy wounds?

Eutychnus – Something; but ask me no more. This too painful.

As I didst say, she is now dead.

Lucellus – I see. I am sorry for thee.

But now rest. Tonight thy bandages

Shall we remove. Rest for now, my young friend.

[Exit]

Eutychnus – To see again; how glorious the thought.

To gaze upon the face of the old man

And his servant, the boy of tender years.

Yet is that boy a strange one to be sure.

He doth a word ne'er speak or say at all

But silent is as if he could not talk.

Methinks sometimes I hear him cry softly

And feel his tears bedew my bandages

When he doth clean my wound and bring me

food.

Yea, tis a curious young boy, tis sure.

Ah well, posh! 'Tis nothing! Yet, hasten might
That these eyes veiled in darkness may again
see light.

Scene III

Roman camp, Titus' tent

Enter Titus, commanders, attendants, etc.

Titus – What news about the siege, good my
commanders?

Tiberius Alexander – Resistance doth
decrease almost each day;

The famine doth slowly destroy defense.
It will not be long ere falls the city.

Titus – What policy toward the citizens?

Larcus Lepidus - Those who defect we
peaceably receive,
Allowing them to go their ways unharmed.
But those we catch in arms are crucified,
Sometimes above five hundred in a day,
And room for the crosses.⁴³

Enter Captain

Titus – Yes, what is it?

Captain – There is escaped to us one
Manneus.

A man who paid the public stipend out
For those bodies carried forth of that gate
Entrusted to him and would give account
To thee about the number of the dead.

Titus – Bring him before me here.

Captain – Ay, m' lord. [Exit]

Titus – Now, gentlemen, shall we learn
conditions
About Jerusalem and the famine.

[Reenter Captain with Manneus; Manneus
prostrates himself before Titus.]

It is permitted thee to speak at large;
Tell us what conditions prevail within
And the number of dead.

Children take food from their father's own
mouths;
And these can scarce devour what food they
get.

But robbers break ope the doors and rush in
And seize the crumbs almost out of their
mouths.

If they swallow it down before it's seized,
The robbers treat them with great cruelty,
As if they were defrauded of their right.

If coming in they find them all alive,
They make a trial if they have got food.
Emaciated ones they leave to die.

As judging they are in great want of meat;
The strong they judge somewhere to have
hid bread,

And so invent cruel torture to learn where.
They stop up the privy members of women
With lye and caustic matter that doth burn
And sharpened stakes drive up the seats of
men.

Thus are men forced to suffer and endure
What is terrible even just to hear.⁴⁵

But for the robbers it is all good sport
And merriment that doth provoke laughter.
Famine hath nature so far overcome
One woman didst her child kill and eat.

Sextus Cerealis – Immortal gods forbid!

Manneus – Nay, but tis true, tis true,
horribly true.

The wicked suborn lying prophecies,
And so beguile the people with vain hopes
That God will presently deliver them.
City lanes are full of the dead and dying.

The dead are so many that the soldiers
Do tread upon them when they go to battle.
Men wander about, swollen with famine,
Their skin withered like sticks and black as
coal;

They stagger hither thither as though drunk,
And wander into homes in search of food,
Sometimes the same house several times
each day.

They fall down dead where ever death finds
them.

All with their eyes fixed hard upon the
temple.

Yet have the wicked food enough and more.
The temple's wine and oil they eat for food.
And act as though they were at a banquet,

Laughing at them that starve before their eyes.
Sure there was not a generation worse
Since men were placed upon this earth.

Titus – A good service unto us thou hast wrought;
Here is money; go thou thy way in peace.

Manneus – I give thee thank, m' lord.

Titus – [To captain] See that he is escorted safely
hence
To stay or go wherever he doth will. [Exit with
captain]

Come, let us view the walls of the city
We shall converse of what we have just heard,
And how we should respond to what we've
learned. [Exeunt]

Scene V

*South-west of Jerusalem, overlooking the Valley
of Hinnom*

Enter Titus, commanders, et alia

Tiberius Alexander – There is ahead, m' lord, a
place of cliffs

Exceeding high, of precipitous drop,

Like to a chasm, whose valley below,

Hath been of old the place they put refuse.

'Tis said that there they burned and did bury

Almost two hundred thousand Assyrians

That died of pestilence before these walls

Whilst they besieged their capital city⁴⁶

'Tis there we think they cast those that have died

Of the famine within Jerusalem.

Here; this is the place whereof I didst speak.

Titus – Ye gods above that mortal men give
breath,

What place is this that doth see the with hideous
death?

Sextus Cerealis – Come, lord, away; this is no
place for thee. [To Titus]

Tiberius Alexander – They call it the valley of

Hinnom;

I'm told it is the name they use for hell,

“Gehenna” in their tongue.

Larcus Lepidus - It is much like our poets picture
hell.

⁴³ Josephus, Wars, V, xi, 1.

⁴⁴ Josephus, Wars, V, xiii, 7.

⁴⁵ Josephus, Wars V, x, 1-3.

⁴⁶ Isa. 30: 31-33; cf. 37:36.

Virgil describeth it as a great cavern,
Debouching noxious fumes to heaven's vault,
Whose vapors kill all birds that fly through
them,
And terrors hold for damned men in Tartarus.

Titus – Can hell hold horrors greater than
seen here
Or those we've heard ourselves this very
day?

So many men have I ne'er seen alive
As the bodies I see before me dead;
Six hundred thousand men cast from those
walls,
Into this chasm; all piled high in heaps,
A great entanglement of limbs and flesh,
Unburied, bloated with flies and maggots,
With thick putrefaction running out,
Like carrion, food for the kites and dogs.
I call earth and heaven as my witness
That I am not author of these events
Nor such torments didst willingly inflict.
How often didst we offer terms of peace
That were rejected and were scorned and
mocked,

Saying they had God for their assistant?
Did e'er a people guiltless suffer thus?
Such miseries bespeak heaven's hot wrath,
And what is done is done by God's
command.

Sextus Cerealis – Pray, lord, let us depart
this place. [To Titus]

Titus – Have fire brought and let this place be
burned,
Lest pestilence break out among the host.
The gods for our assistants I do pray
No more shall we our hand stay
Nor linger longer nor delay,
Our final push we make today;
Come, ye that are Romans, let us away
And bring to end this bloody fray. [Exeunt]

Scene VI

Jerusalem

Enter armies of Jews and Romans from
opposite sides, Titus at head of Romans; great
clash of arms; Jews routed. [Exeunt armies,
with Romans in pursuit.]

Scene VII

The Tower Antonia

Enter Titus, with principal commanders, et alia

Titus – How goes the battle? What progress?
Report.

Tiberius Alexander – The whole city is ours, saving
the temple
And upper city; banks were raised against
The inner temple walls and our rams were brought,
And battered the walls, but shewed no progress.
The stones were too great for our rams to move.
The northern gate we've undermined, removing
Its outer stones, yet it still stood unhurt.
Therefore was fire set and the gates were burned.
These quenched, we've made a way to storm within
And we await thy orders when to move.

Titus – Good; we shall make assault tomorrow
morn.

But now, what policy about the temple?
Shall it be saved or shall it be destroyed?
I've called ye here today for your advice.

Larcus Lepidus – Methinks thou art at liberty to do
As need require, to save or to destroy,
According to the rules of war.
The Jews have turned it into a fortress;
Thus as a fortress it must be besieged.
What sanctity it had with God above
Hath been polluted by the Jews' own hands,
Destroyed by their taking refuge inside,
Turning it to a place of blood and war.
To save the temple at cost of men's lives
Is too costly a price for us to pay.

Eternius - It is a most magnificent building,
And doth surpass all others in the world.
Surely it doth behoove us to save it
If we be able.

Marcus Antonius Julianus – It is a source and
symbol of the Jews'
National pride, where they always resort,
And thus a source of national unrest.
Twenty thousand died at their paschal feast
Under Tiberius Alexander

By the seditious temper of the crowd
If the Jews would leave off their rebelling.
Reason would it might be allowed to stand.
But as the contrary doth seem likely,
We are almost compelled to bring it down.
For if it stand, their rebellious temper
Will soon break out again and come to war.

For the great crimes committed in this place.⁴⁷

Titus – Hath heaven said? Then let be done its
will

The high places bring down and the valleys fill.
Let each stone be removed and none remain
Until Jerusalem be made a plane.
Fortress Antonia alone we leave,
Its wall a place for Jews to grieve;
Unto ages a monument to be
Of heaven's wrath and Roman glory.⁴⁸ [Exeunt]

Scene VIII

Rome, home of Lucellus

Enter Lucellus and Eutychnus

Lucellus – Sit here, young friend; let us remove
these strips
That bind thine eyes and veil thy sight in black,
And then shall we find out how thou hast healed.
Art frightened to receive thy sight again?

Eutychnus – Nay, frightened? How? Why should I
be affeared?

Lucellus – Sometimes men are afraid to face life's
problems;
Sometimes it is easier to give up.
The young lady thou didst mention before,
Perhaps her loss is too painful to face?

Eutychnus – At one time this was true, but now no
more.
I have accepted my loss and moved on.
Yet am I disappointed with myself
And am unworthy of the one I lost,
For I didst play the fool and err greatly.

Lucellus – 'Tis our unworthiness that makes love
great.
There, that is the last; now, how dost thou see?

Eutychnus – 'Tis wonderful to see again at last.
The moon is full and softly shineth beams
Of silvery light upon earth's shadowed brow,
Like silken cloth draped o'er a maiden's face.

Lucellus – The eyes provide the poet inspiration.

⁴⁷ Num. 24:24; Deut. 28:15-68; 32:15-43; Isa. 65:1-6, 15, 24; Dan. 9:24-27; 12:7; Mic. 3:12.

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, VII, 1, 1; cf. VI, ix, 1; VII, viii, 7.

Eutychnus – Mine eyes are yet somewhat blurry, tell me, Thy face, do not I know thee from somewhere?
Enter Maiden
Forsooth my eyes play tricks upon my mind! I see there a ghostly image, or phantom!
Lucellus – Peace, my young friend, thy eyes betray thee not.
Behold, it is Eliza!
Eutychnus – Nay, she is dead; I saw and kissed her corpse,
And this her spirit is, returned hence from Elystium, I know not how.
Lucellus – Her corpse thou didst behold and touch?
Eutychnus – Yea, in the vault, beneath a shroud, I saw it.
Lucellus – Didst thou remove the shroud?
Eutychnus – Nay, I durst not presume –
Maiden – Eutychnus.

Eutychnus – Deceivest thou mine ears, o lying specter?
Maiden – Eutychnus; it is I, Eliza.
Eutychnus – Nay, I believe not; what proof canst thou give?
Maiden – Here is the poem thou didst write for me In thine own hand.
Eutychnus – Do not approach; put it o'er there.
Maiden – There; read and see that it is I myself.
Eutychnus – It is; it is in very truth! O Eliza!
But how, who then – [Reads]
Maiden – 'Twas my younger sister thou didst behold.
She sealed her faith by death in the arena.
The soldiers knew not whose body they gave,
Thinking it mine, they surrendered my sister's.
A guard, a Christian, didst help me escape
With this my father, whom thou didst once meet
When he returned from preaching in the east.
Dost thou recall?
Eutychnus - Indeed I do; I thought I knew thy face.
But who was the young boy who brought me food

And washed my wound and dressed by bandages?
Was it thou, Love, that silent vigil kept?
Maiden – It was; and these salt tears did oft time flow
For fear of losing thee, body and soul.
But now nor life nor death may e'er us part;
For God hath brought us both again from death
And we shall live fore'er as man and wife,
If, father, thou dost consent.
Lucellus – I do, and may God his blessing bestow also.
Come, let us to the brethren and inform Them of this good news.
Eutychnus – Indeed, let us go. [Exit Lucellus]
Maiden – Ah, Eutychnus.
Eutychnus – Ay, m' love?
Maiden – What colour is a melon?
Eutychnus – A melon? Why they have orange flesh, of course.
Why dost thou ask?

Maiden – O, never mind; tis nothing. [Exeunt]
Enter Tupper
Tupper – Thus ends our evening's story
Of Christ's coming in clouds of glory.
The chief object has been to see,
How the Lamb of Calvary
Could also the Lion of Judah be.
Of Jews, perished eleven hundred thousand in Jerusalem alone,
The murder of the Messiah to atone;
Of Romans, who this life didst part asunder,
Perhaps as many as half that number.
Therefore ye people great and small,
Kings, potentates, paupers, all,
Be not foolish, receive instruction,
Lest ye come to sudden destruction.
What was true then is true today.
Therefore, kiss the Son, his will obey.

End