

ROME

by
Bruno Heller

EPISODE ONE
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EXT. THE FARMSTEAD OF TITUS PULLO - DAY

We're in the province of Umbria in Italy, a blazing hot day in September of the year 5 B.C. Rolling yellow-green hills, olive groves, grain fields, vineyards, shaggy haired cattle.

A gang of BLONDE GERMANIC SLAVES are hard at work in the fields; a long line of lithe bodies stripped to the waist and glistening with sweat, singing a teutonic work song to the rhythm of flashing scythes. Off at the edge of the field, three swarthy OVERSEERS with whips are lazing in the sparse shade of an olive tree.

A huge and ancient OLD MAN walks along a dusty track lined with elms. He wears a blinding WHITE TOGA, and carries himself with the battered nobility of an old grizzly bear, whittled down by age and violence to a bare nub of bone and sinew and scars. This is TITUS PULLO. Following a few paces behind him is a small and ragged girl - MILA - eight or nine years old, carrying a canvas sack over her shoulder.

LATER - Their path follows the bank of a gently meandering RIVER. Pullo is tired and leaning on Mila just a little.

They come to a junction of paths, where a marble and granite MAUSOLEUM has been built, about the size of an SUV. On it, a bas-relief frieze depicts a Roman Centurion trampling a Parthian warrior underfoot. Beneath the frieze a plaque in the abbreviated lapidary style tells us this is the GRAVE of a much-honored soldier named LUCIUS VORENUS.

Pullo sits down on a stone bench in front of the grave. He takes the sack from Mila, brings out a bottle of wine and takes a long pull from it, then pours a good amount over the grave. Setting the bottle down, he looks around at the serene beauty of the river and the fields and the trees with a contemplative smile. A trout leaps out of the water...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD IN GAUL - DAY - 52 BC

For a brief instant, we're in the midst of a terrible battle between Roman Legionaries and a vast but disorganised horde of Gallic warriors. The combatants are standing on the backs of the slain, slipping and sliding in the steaming gore.

EXT. UMBRIAN RIVER BANK - DAY

The fish flops back into the river and Pullo - smiling nostalgically - comes back from his day-dream. He claps his hands once, like a man with work to do, and takes an ornate sword from the canvas sack.

PULLO

There's dogs in the woods, so don't leave me alone until Cyrus comes with the cart.

Mila nods obediently.

PULLO (CONT'D)

Remind him we owe five sheep to Rufus.

MILA

Yes sir. Five sheep to Rufus.

PULLO

Good girl.

Pullo gets down on his knees and plunges the knife into his guts, pulling upward so that his guts spill out.

He keels over on his side and lies there, calmly allowing his life to ebb out of him.

PULLO'S POV - Another trout leaps from the river. In midleap, the silvery fish turns into the gleam of a flashing sword and we are back to...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD IN GAUL - DAY - 52 BC

Drenched in blood and roaring with joy, THE YOUNG PULLO, a legionary, charges right at us, flailing his sword and bellowing like a bull. He decapitates a GAUL, picks up the head by the hair and charges on, using the head as a club. He fights with such wild aggression that he cuts through the enemy faster than his men can keep up with him. Seeing him do this, CENTURION LUCIUS VORENUS - yells at him angrily...

VORENUS

Pullo! Rally back!

Pullo ignores him. Vorenus is medium height, wiry, sharp-eyed and quick. His manner in battle is cool and measured, like a pool player systematically clearing the table.

Pullo finds himself alone and surrounded by the enemy. Vorenus scowls in contempt at this unprofessional mistake, and signals to the LEGIONARIES nearest him...

VORENUS (CONT'D)

Follow me!

Vorenus cuts through the Gallic ranks toward Pullo, who is being overwhelmed by force of numbers. A club knocks off his helmet; a spear pierces his side; he goes down on his knees.

A GALLIC WARRIOR raises his AXE to strike Pullo dead, but is instead run through by Vorenus. The Gauls are driven back momentarily and Vorenus hauls Pullo to his feet. The battle still rages around them.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

Rally to your octet you drunken oaf!

Pullo's eyes light up with indignant rage...

PULLO

What did you say? Say that again!

VORENUS

Do as you're told!

Pullo punches Vorenus in the mouth. Right in the middle of a battle. Vorenus goes down on one knee. This is a major faux pas and two outraged LEGIONARIES club Pullo down and drag him away to the rear.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT/EXT. MILITARY JAIL - DAY

Pullo comes round in a roomy wooden box. O.S THE SOUND of soldiers cheering madly. Martial music strikes up in the distance. Pullo stands up and peers through a slit.

EXT. ANGLE

Pullo's eyes peering out at the world from inside a wooden cell block on wheels. A mobile jail. Raucously happy soldiers hurry past.

PULLO

Hey! Hey! What's the fuss?

Nobody pays him any attention.

INT. ANGLE - DAY

Pullo sits down, nursing his aching head.

PULLO

Pissdrinking sons of circus whores.

PRISONER O.S

The chief of the Gauls has surrendered to Caesar.

PULLO

(horrified)

Agh! Don't say it!

IN THE ADJACENT CELL -

A skinny, bearded, PRISONER.

PRISONER

The war is over. The boys have been given two days liberty to sack the towns and take personal spoils. That's why everybody's so merry.

ON PULLO

PULLO

(anguished)

And me in here! Porca miseria!

EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Vorenus stands at ease in the first rank of his cohort. Facing him and the rest of the army is CAESAR, his SENIOR OFFICERS, and STANDARD BEARERS; gathered in ceremonial array to accept the Gallic surrender.

The Chief of the Gallic alliance stands in front of Caesar. VERGINGETORIX is a noble figure with long red hair, flowing moustache, and a face of stone.

VORENUS'S POV - Vercingetorix draws his sword and drops it at Caesar's feet. The same with his helmet and armour, and all other badges of rank. Then LEGIONARIES move in and use knives to cut all his clothes off him, until he's naked. He stares into space, already dead to himself. (Vercingetorix is kept alive so that he can be taken to Rome, put on a flat bed cart and very slowly strangled to death as he is paraded through the city)

Off Caesar, poker faced but glowing. This is the glorious climax to eight years of war.

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

An intensely hot day. Heat haze hovers over a meadow of corpses, teeming with SCAVENGERS, human and animal. The buzzing of flies is like the roar of the sea on a rocky shore. In the distance, A TOWN BURNS.

A MILITARY COURIER on a black horse gallops past, raising a cloud of dust.

EXT. ROMAN CAMP IN GAUL - DAY

A TEAM OF LEGIONARIES methodically making slaves of CAPTURED GAULS, mostly women and children.

The soldiers take their supplies from A WAGON filled to the top with IRON COLLARS AND CHAIN, and they keep careful tally on parchment scrolls. This is a well-oiled business. A long line of weeping SLAVES snakes away as far as they eye can see.

Under a canvas awning, Caesar listens to his business agent STRABO conduct a negotiation with two SLAVE BROKERS.

STRABO

...Four denarii? Are you insane?

SLAVE BROKER

That's a floor price. We'll pay the usual premiums for tradesmen and fertile women et cetera.

As this conversation continues, the Courier arrives on his lathered horse and hands a leather mail cylinder to Caesar. Caesar opens the letter and reads. He doesn't move a muscle, but his face turns pale.

STRABO

Set the floor closer to eight.

SLAVE BROKER

Are you serious? Because if you are...

A rushing noise wells up...

INT. TEMPLE OF VENUS. THE FORUM. ROME - DAY - FLASHBACK TO SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER

A bare high-ceilinged chapel of stone. In a shaft of sunlight from the lofty windows, a small group is gathered for a WEDDING CEREMONY, conducted by a priest with his face hidden in a hooded toga. A GROUP OF MUSICIANS with tambors and serpent-horns set up a cacophony so that no evil omens will be heard. At the rear of the chapel there's an audience of fifty or more CITIZENS.

Caesar kisses his smiling daughter JULIA, a dark and elegant beauty of nineteen. Then he literally hands her over to GNAEUS POMPEY MAGNUS, who kisses her the same way (Pompey is 56 years old, craggily handsome in the George C. Scott mold) The ceremony is more of a ritual exchange between the two men than a union of man and wife.

The Priest signals that the ceremony is over. Caesar and Pompey embrace as Julia stands off to one side. They are both wearing armour, and their embrace sounds like the clashing of shields.

EXT. ON THE STEPS OF THE TEMPLE - ROMAN FORUM - CONTINUOUS

Our first view of the FORUM ROMANUM - the heart and soul of the city. A meeting place, a market, and a sacred space all in one - A large open plaza, surrounded by a magnificent jumble of temples and palaces on the steep slopes of the Palatine and Capitoline hills.

A large crowd has gathered to watch the wedding. When Pompey, Julia, and Caesar step into view, the crowd roars approval. Pompey and Caesar are popular heroes, and they interact with the crowd like seasoned politicians or movie stars, waving and pointing at individuals, while preserving distance and a certain amount of dignity. It's clear that Pompey has the higher status of the two men, and this is confirmed when the crowd begins to chant rhythmically.

CROWD

Pompey Magnus! Pompey Magnus!

The chanting CONTINUES OVER...

INT. BEDROOM. POMPEY'S VILLA - NIGHT

Pompey and Julia making love.

INT. BEDROOM. POMPEY'S VILLA - NIGHT

CLOSE ON JULIA nine months pregnant and in labor, screaming blue murder. The attending DOCTORS and NURSES exchange worried glances.

INT. HALLWAY. VILLA - NIGHT

In his nightshirt, his hair awry, Pompey hurries past a gorgeous mural of copulating nymphs and satyrs and enters Julia's bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julia lies pale and wan, eyes tight shut against terrible pain. Pompey kneels by her bedside, agonised.

POMPEY

Julia my love.

She opens her eyes. Looks at him calmly.

JULIA

(weak but strong)

Forgive me Pompey. I have failed you.

POMPEY
No, Julia you have not---

JULIA
---Forgive me.

POMPEY
I forgive you. I forgive you.

JULIA
Thank you. Please, be good to my slaves.

POMPEY
I will.

JULIA
And to my father.

POMPEY
I will.

She shudders.

JULIA
Kiss me.

He dips down, kisses her. She smiles, and weakly points at his head...

JULIA (CONT'D)
Your hair. Funny.

Pompey automatically smooths his hair down. Julia dies. You can see the light leaving her eyes. Pompey howls.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ROMAN CAMP IN GAUL - DAY

Caesar comes back from reverie; the traders still haggling.

SLAVE TRADER
(laughs)
Eight? Four is too generous. Lucullus only got three drachmae a head for bulk like this.

STRABO
These aren't miserable little Syrian peasants. This is the cream of a once-proud nation here.

SLAVE TRADER

A hundred thousand sullen moping head of them. A glut on the market. Won't be able to give them away.

Caesar stands abruptly.

CAESAR

Seven, and be done with it.

SLAVE TRADER

On delivery to Masilia.

STRABO

Please, that's---

CAESAR

---Agreed. See to the details Strabo.

Caesar strides away, followed by his retinue.

ON MARK ANTONY and other mounted OFFICERS waiting for Caesar. When Caesar arrives and mounts up, they move off en masse. Caesar is deep in thought.

ANTONY

You got a decent price off those parasites I hope?

CAESAR

Good enough.

ANTONY

(off the mail cylinder)
What news from the city?

CAESAR

Pompey writes. My daughter Julia has died in childbirth.

Antony doesn't say anything for a moment, then puts his hand on Caesar's shoulder.

ANTONY

I grieve with you.

CAESAR

Thank you.

ANTONY

The child?

Caesar waves dismissively.

CAESAR
A girl. Stillborn.

Another long beat as they ride along at a leisurely pace.

CAESAR (CONT'D)
Pompey will be needing a new wife.

INT. TEMPLE OF DIS - DAY

Julia's shrouded body is propped upright on a slab in the gloomy recesses of the dungeon-like temple. A lyre player plucks an eerily sad tune whilst a funereal mime acts out grief.

Pompey sits stonefaced and ramrod straight on a bench facing Julia. Behind him stand twenty of his retinue wearing PAINTED MASKS, stylised depictions of Julia's ancestors. Behind these ritual mourners there is a small mob of people - his clients, friends, and his slaves.

The lyre player is drowned out by the O.S rumbling of cart wheels and the cheerful clamoring of a crowd nearby, which coalesces into a chant...

CROWD O.S
Cae-sar, Cae-sar, Cae-sar.

Pompey remains stonefaced.

EXT. VIA SACRA - DAY

The street is lined with CHANTING ROMAN CITIZENS...

CROWD
Cae-sar! Cae-sar!

Guarded by a troop of soldiers, SEVERAL WAGONLOADS OF GOLD AND SILVER PLATE trundle by, followed by a long chain of NAKED GALLIC CAPTIVES - women and children mostly - their bare feet painted white to signify that they are for sale.

INT. TEMPLE OF DIS - DAY

The chanting is close now. A well dressed slave named SEXTUS enters. He has a bright glass eye and a brand behind his ear; G P M (for Gnaeus Pompey Magnus). He mutters in Pompey's ear.

SEXTUS
More spoils from Gaul.

Pompey flinches very slightly.

INT. MILITARY JAIL CELL. ROMAN CAMP IN GAUL - DAY

Pullo kneels on the floor, palms up in supplication...

PULLO

Forculus! If you be the right God for this business here, I call upon you to help me. If you will open this door, I will kill a fine white bullock for you. (beat) Or failing that, if I can't find a good one for a decent price, because you know how that is, then say twelve lambs. This, Forculus I vow to you. Thank you.

He gets up off his knees and sits on his bench.

PRISONER O.S

Have you tried Cardea?

PULLO

Don't know him. What does he do?

PRISONER O.S

She. Celtic. Does hinges and joints and bolts, like that.

PULLO

Ni'a. If the proper gods don't work, no use trying any fancy foreigners.

O.S THE SOUND OF HORSES passing by...

EXT. ANGLE

Caesar, Mark Antony, a dozen OFFICERS, a STANDARD-BEARER (carrying a golden emblem of double eagles on a long wooden pole) and a troop of TWENTY CAVALRY go trotting past the Jail. We follow them...

EXT. A TRACK THROUGH THE FOREST. GAUL - DAY

The gloomy dappled light of dense beech woods. Caesar et al riding at a walking pace.

They have just entered an open clearing when AN UNEARTHLY HOWL splits the air and a STORM OF ARROWS strike home. From the trees, a HORDE of MOUNTED BRIGANDS come racing down upon the outnumbered Romans. The soldiers rally round Caesar, his life their first and only priority. But the warriors don't want Caesar. As one, they swarm round the standard bearer and quickly overwhelm his troops. Seizing the standard, the Gauls turn tail and run.

Caesar and his men ride back to help but are only in time to see the standard disappearing into the trees.

Weeping in shame, the Standard Bearer pulls a dagger and stabs himself in the heart. His dying wails morph into CRIES AND MOANS OF PLEASURE.

INT. ATIA'S BEDCHAMBER. ROME - NIGHT

The walls are covered in pastoral scenes of nymphs and satyrs. No furniture in the room beyond a large bed, draped in flowing silk and linen. ATIA, an elegantly beautiful aristocrat in her early thirties, writhes ecstatically astride a muscular little Jewish guy (TIMON the Horsetrader).

Next to the bed, a ten year old greek SLAVE-GIRL waves a big fan, watching with interest as Atia rides Timon to a mutual climax. Watching blankly on a little stool against the wall is a hawk-nosed old lady dressed in black - MERULA - who never ever leaves Atia's presence and never ever says a word.

Staying astride Timon, Atia sips a glass of wine and studies Timon with a clinical eye.

ATIA

That was lovely Timon. Two stallions have come to Rome today.

Timon opens his eyes and looks up at Atia. Sighs.

TIMON

Of course. How childish of me. You want the horse.

ATIA

I do. But don't be sullen now. This was no hardship for me. I've always found something perversely erotic about goaty little men.

She climbs off him, and off the bed, wiping herself with a towel which she then tosses to the old lady, Merula.

WE MOVE thru window to a PANORAMIC VIEW OF ROME.

EXT. ROMAN STREETS - DAY

Swooping down to street level, we find a beautiful WHITE STALLION being led from a STABLE by TWO GROOMS and escorted by several TOUGH-LOOKING JEWS wielding clubs.

The horse is led through the city. A teeming, chaotic, metropolis of a million people.

The crowded streets are narrow and mazelike; a mad hodgepodge of tall, rickety tenements, luxury mansions, and brilliantly painted temples.

The white horse and it's attendants emerge from narrow streets onto the spectacular expanse of THE FORUM.

They go to a little HOLE-IN-THE-WALL OFFICE next to a brothel in the Fornicae (arcades) under the temple of Venus ('VIVAT CAESAR!' reads graffiti on the wall of the temple)

INT. OFFICE. ROMAN FORUM - CONTINUOUS

Timon's deputy SAUL - a crumpled old man - and Pompey's slave SEXTUS are haggling over the horse.

SAUL

Look at him. Look at him and tell me the price is too high. That's the finest horse in the world! That's a horse for an Alexander! A horse worthy of kings.

SEXTUS

Va, it's a good looking animal. But it's just an animal. Pompey won't pay that kind of money.

SAUL

Then Pompey will not have this horse.

Beat. The horse chunters and paws the ground.

SEXTUS

Very well you old leech. Twenty. But the grooms are included.

SAUL

Of course. And a top quality leather harness. It's a very pretty deal.

SEXTUS

Done.

They slap hands. Timon enters.

TIMON

If it's the stallion you're talking about, forget it.

SEXTUS

Deal done. We slapped hands.

TIMON

What can I say? I'm sorry. The horse is sold already.

Sextus thinks this is more haggling strategy.

SEXTUS

(simmering with rage)

Fine, fine. Name your price, Jew.

SAUL

Oh, now we can name our price.

TIMON

In vero, the horse is sold to Atia of the Julians. But we have a huge inventory. Horses of every style, for all budgets. I'm sure we can find another animal that's just right for your requirements.

SEXTUS

Why provoke me? Is your life so cheap?

TIMON

(smile vanishing)

Strong words from a slave.

SAUL

One of Pompey's. Thinks he owns the place.

TIMON

Ah. Pompey is a fine man. Tell him I said so. But the horse is sold.

Sextus spits on the floor and exits. Off the horse...

INT. SENATE HOUSE - DAY

The barnlike stone chamber echoes with the sound of five hundred toga-clad SENATORS talking and arguing. From above, we can see graphically that there are two factions here...

One faction orbits Pompey, who sits on the lowest level of the stepped gallery talking quietly with his cronies. Unlike the other Senators he is wearing the uniform - breastplate, cloak, and tunic - of a Soldier.

The other, larger, faction is led by CATO and METELLUS SCIPIO. (Cato looks like, and in fact is, a monkish zealot. Scipio is more the Trent Lott type, plump and deceptively avuncular.)

The barnlike room echoes with the sound of five hundred men talking and arguing.

In the center of the floor, a PRIEST cuts the throat of a lamb and lets the blood drain into a silver bowl, while a LICTOR reads out a long but rapidfire liturgy to which nobody pays any attention.

Pompey ambles to his own chair in a prestigious spot on the senate floor, separate from the mass of senators. There is an identical but empty chair alongside his.

Ritual done, the Priest shuffles away and the senate is formally in session. The volume rises several notches, to a sustained roar as senators vie to speak first. The presiding MAGISTRATE nods to the HEAD LICTOR, who gestures at the BEARER OF THE FASCES, who pounds his bundled sticks against the floor. The sound slowly quietens the house.

MAGISTRATE

The senate will hear Marcus Porcius Cato.

Scattered hisses countered by cheering and cries for silence. Cato rises.

CATO

(to the magistrate)

Members of the Senate, I have a question for our esteemed consul.

(meaning Pompey)

First of all, I commiserate with you regarding the death of your wife. She was a well born and by all accounts well behaved woman.

(awkward beat)

My question concerns your friend and colleague in Gaul. Why does his chair remain empty? Why does he not come home? His illegal adventure is over. Gaul is long since on it's knees. Why does Caesar keep his brave soldiers from their families and friends?

The Optimiate Senators roar their approval.

CATO (CONT'D)

What can he be doing out there in the wilds? Can there be some remote part of Gaul he has not yet plundered? It's possible. But I doubt it. Mayhap he has acquired some savage Celtic lover who will not let him leave?

(pauses to milk laughter)

(MORE)

CATO (CONT'D)

It's possible. But I doubt it. No.
He stays away because he is scared.

The Populares hiss and growl. The Optimates stamp their feet.

CATO (CONT'D)

For eight long years, without any legal authority, he has gorged himself like a wolf on the blood of Gaul. He has made himself monstrously rich by murder, and theft, and treason. He knows that if he returns to Rome, he will surely be tried and condemned for his crimes. He knows!

The assembly roars.

CATO (CONT'D)

I move that Caesar's proconsulship in Gaul be terminated immediately, that his armies be disbanded and he be recalled to Rome to answer charges of illegal warfare, theft, bribery, and treason.

He sits down to a storm of applause. Scipio jumps up...

SCIPIO

Seconded!

Pompey stands up. The senate falls silent. He exudes the macho vanity of a MacArthur or a Patton. His accent is proudly bluff and provincial.

POMPEY

Very good Cato. Full of vim and verve as usual. But I'm going to spare us all hours of useless clamor, and use my consular veto on your motion. My young friend Caesar has another six months in office. He wishes to serve out his full term in Gaul, and I don't see why he shouldn't be allowed to do so.

A huge outcry. Pompey remains utterly calm. The Lictor pounds the fasces against the floor...

MAGISTRATE

The house will hear Marcus Tully Cicero.

Silver haired and slim, CICERO rises with an elegant bow to the magistrate, and waits patiently for silence.

CICERO

Pompey, it grieves me to say so, but I think you are making a mistake.

The Optimates roar their approval.

CICERO (CONT'D)

You are a man of generous and honest spirit, so perhaps you do not wish to see what others see so clearly. Caesar no longer thinks of himself as your young friend, your loyal captain. He is the conqueror of Gaul, the devourer of nations! He is the master now!

He waits for the shouting to die down.

CICERO (CONT'D)

I hope that when he returns from Gaul he will be satisfied with life as a private citizen like any other. I hope so. But his actions seem to speak otherwise. Why does he ply the mob with races and fights and gaudy feasts? Why does he offer blood in every temple between Ravenna and Brindisi? Why has he bought the debts of every reprobate fool in this senate house?

The hubbub rises.

CATO

Because he wants to destroy the republic and rule Rome as a bloody tyrant, that's why!

CICERO

I do not say so. I accuse Caesar of nothing. I am merely curious as to his motives.

POMPEY

Caesar has been generous to the people because he loves the people. As I do. Because the people are the backbone and the heart of Rome!

Cheers from the Populare faction and the Tribunes. Cicero rolls his eyes at this demagoguery.

POMPEY (CONT'D)

Caesar and I are brothers by sacred oath and bond. I know his heart.

(MORE)

POMPEY (CONT'D)

He is a faithful captain of the Republic.
Until anyone can prove to me that he is
not, I will never betray him. That is
all I have to say.

Pompey sweeps out of the Senate House with his followers in
tow. Sextus joins them as they go down the steps outside.
He whispers discreetly in Pompey's ear. Pompey frowns for
the first time. We move in to listen...

POMPEY (CONT'D)

Atia? What can the stupid woman want
with a horse? What does she care for
horses? It won't do Sextus. It won't
do. I have promised myself that animal.

We leave Pompey and his retinue as they cross the forum.

EXT. STABLE YARD OF ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

The white stallion is brushed by his grooms.

INT/EXT. ATIA'S HOME - DAY

A beautiful ATRIUM. Walls brightly painted with bucolically
sexy scenes from mythology. At least twenty niches
containing masks and busts of venerable ancestors.
A fountain tinkles in BG. Crosslegged on a bench we find
OCTAVIAN, a gawky boy of eleven, his head buried in a book.

A SLAVE enters...

SLAVE

Master Octavian, your mother wishes to
see you.

Octavian shuts his book and follows obediently.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Atia gets out of her bath. Four GORGEOUS SLAVE-GIRLS and one
HANDSOME SLAVE-BOY dry and oil her in a ballet of graceful
servitude. ANGLE - Octavian peeking in around the door.

ATIA

Do please don't lurk Octavian. Come in.

Octavian freezes guiltily.

ATIA (CONT'D)

Don't be a goose. Come in.

He still doesn't move.

ATIA (CONT'D)
(sharply)

Now!

Octavian slouches red-faced into the room. A slender NUBIAN GIRL of about Octavian's age kneels at Atia's feet, oiling her legs.

ATIA (CONT'D)
Did you see the horse I bought?

OCTAVIAN
I did.

ATIA
It is a gift for your uncle. I want you to take the animal to Gaul, and give it to him in person.

Octavian doesn't think that's a good idea.

OCTAVIAN
Why?

ATIA
When he's back in Rome everyone will be giving him gifts. We must be first.

The Nubian slave girl backs away from Atia and accidentally bumps into Octavian. With no conscious thought, as if swatting at a fly, Octavian smacks her in the face, knocking her down.

OCTAVIAN
(worried)
It's a long way to Gaul.

The Nubian girl scurries out.

ATIA
Exactly. While yet a mere boy, you would risk your life to honor your beloved uncle. You ride into Caesar's camp alone on a noble white stallion. Aiiee. That's a gift he won't soon forget.

OCTAVIAN
Alone?

ATIA
Psssha boy. You shall have plenty of slaves. You will be perfectly safe.

Atia kneels in front of him.

ATIA (CONT'D)

And you will make your mamma very proud
and happy. Now give me a kiss.

Octavian kisses his mother. She leans into the kiss, then
pulls away, smiling coquettishly.

ATIA (CONT'D)

Away now and sleep. You leave bright and
early tomorrow.

Octavian looks stricken.

INT. OCTAVIAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Octavian sits on the end of his bed, crying quietly as he
puts various talismans - some coins, a cameo of his father, a
pearl - into a pouch which he then hangs round his neck on a
leather thong.

EXT. ATIA'S HOUSE. COURTYARD - DAY

Atia and her daughter OCTAVIA seeing Octavian off. Octavia
is extremely beautiful, in Latin Grace Kelly kind of a way.

ANDROS - a huge leather-clad ex-gadiator - boosts Octavian
onto the back of the stallion. A travelling party of slaves
is assembled and ready to leave.

ATIA

That's it, sit straight. Aia, you look
delicious. A proper little soldier.
Is he not perfect?

OCTAVIA

He looks scared.

A tear trickles down Octavian's cheek.

ATIA

Nonsense. Roman men are never scared.
He is sad to be leaving his mamma. You
are not scared are you Octavian?

OCTAVIAN

Not scared.

ATIA

There you are.
(claps her hands)
(MORE)

ATIA (CONT'D)

Bene, time flies. Give me a kiss my honey.

Octavian leans down from the horse and kisses her as she stands on tiptoes.

ATIA (CONT'D)

Fair journey my brave handsome boy.
I love you.

OCTAVIAN

I love you too mamma.

Atia beckons Andros and speaks so that only he can hear.

ATIA

Bring him back safe or I will use the eyes of your children for beads.

Atia dismisses Andros with a wave.

On Octavian, failing to look brave as he rides away with his guards and slaves, headed by Andros...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROMAN CAMP. THE BLOCKHOUSE - DAY

Pullo paces to and fro across his tiny cell. He sees a large party of HORSEMEN arrive. From the splendor of their appearance, it must be somebody important.

We leave Pullo and follow the HORSEMEN to:

EXT. CAESAR'S HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Caesar is outside to greet MARCUS JUNIUS BRUTUS and his people. Brutus is an aristocrat, lanky and ill-favored, in his mid-thirties. He scrambles awkwardly off his horse and embraces Caesar with genuine warmth. (We shall later learn that Brutus's mother Servilia is Caesar's longtime lover. Caesar has watched Brutus grow up and regards him with the indulgent affection of a father)

CAESAR

Let me look at you.

He holds Brutus at arms length.

BRUTUS

(ultra-aristocratic accent)
As ugly as ever I'm afraid.

CAESAR

Not at all. Age suits you Brutus.
What's it been? Five years?

He ushers Brutus into his tent.

INT. CAESAR'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

BRUTUS

Six.

CAESAR

Too long.

Brutus looks around the tent with a smile.

BRUTUS

How clever. Almost like a proper house.

Caesar smiles indulgently. Brutus sits down on a bench and lets A SLAVE pull off his riding boots.

BRUTUS (CONT'D)

(remembering something)

Oh. I deeply regret your loss, Julia and
so forth. Horrible business.
Condolences, really.

CAESAR

Thank you.

LATER - THAT EVENING

Caesar and Brutus eating dinner together army style, sitting
on stools instead of lying on couches.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Now tell me, how is your mother?

BRUTUS

Same as ever. She sends her love and
demands to know why you haven't written
to her in months.

CAESAR

I can remedy that. If you will be my
courier.

BRUTUS

If I can ever bring myself to get on
another horse. I had no conception that
Gaul was so far away.

(MORE)

BRUTUS (CONT'D)
My ancestor Quintus Junius Brutus once
said apropos horses---

Mark Antony bustles in.

MARK ANTONY
---Brutus my old cock, what are you doing
here?

BRUTUS
I have been visiting my cousin in Narbo---
He grabs Brutus in a bear hug, lets him go.

MARK ANTONY
How is that idiot cousin of yours?

BRUTUS
He was---

MARK ANTONY
---Sorry. In a bit of a hurry.
(to Caesar)
I need say, a half talent of gold.

CAESAR
(a little dubious)
Do you?

MARK ANTONY
(off Brutus)
See how he trusts me? For the eagles.

CAESAR
Ah, of course.
(calling out)
Strabo!

His Clerk Strabo appears.

CAESAR (CONT'D)
Take his honor Mark Antony to accounting
and give him a half talent in gold.

STRABO
Half a talent in gold.

CAESAR
And not a penny more.

Mark Antony scowls good naturedly and follows the Clerk out.

BRUTUS
I don't know how you tolerate that man.

CAESAR

He likes to fight.

BRUTUS

The way he carries on, one might think he came from no family at all.

CAESAR

He does have a vulgarian streak, in vero. I don't mind it.

BRUTUS

But what's this about eagles?

CAESAR

My personal standard was stolen by brigands.

BRUTUS

Dear me.

CAESAR

A bad business. The legions were already surly and homesick before the eagles were taken; now they are positively mutinous. The men think it a sure sign of my imminent doom, and they clamor like geese for disbandment.

BRUTUS

That bad?

CAESAR

I tell you Brutus, I'm near my wit's end.

Caesar lets silence hang for a moment...

CAESAR (CONT'D)

But enough of my problems. You're only here for one night, eh? We must celebrate your fleeting presence.

EXT. ROMAN CAMP. NIGHT

Brutus, Caesar and their people listen to A LEGIONARY OCTET sing a strange death ballad.

BRUTUS

The men seem happy enough.

CAESAR

Oh, they will still sing for me. But will they fight for me?

INT. MARK ANTONY'S QUARTERS. ROMAN CAMP IN GAUL - NIGHT

Vorenus stands stiffly at attention in front of Mark Antony.

MARK ANTONY

I hear good reports of you Lucius Vorenus. Your tribunes say you have a brain. They say you're the best man we have for irregular operations.

Vorenus almost blushes, but remains poker faced.

MARK ANTONY (CONT'D)

If it was you had to retrieve Caesar's eagles, how would you set about doing it?

Vorenus thinks a moment.

VORENUS

I'd take ten captives from every tribe in Gaul and crucify them one by one until someone tells us where the eagles are. Then I'd go in quick and quiet, and steal them back.

ANTONY

Good. Good. We're of one mind. Do it.

VORENUS

Do it sir?

ANTONY

I believe there's a torture detachment with the third, but you may choose your own men as you wish.

Antony picks up a bulging leather sack and tosses it to Vorenus.

MARK ANTONY

There's a quarter talent there for bribes and such. Spend it wisely.

EXT. ROMAN CAMP - NIGHT

Vorenus walking slowly back to his barracks, cursing himself.

VORENUS

Quick and quiet. You stupid bigmouth idiot!

EXT. ROMAN CAMP - MORNING

Brutus and his entourage are gathered for departure. Caesar hands him a mailpouch.

CAESAR

A letter for your mother as promised.
There's one for my cousin Atia, and
Pompey also, if you'd be so kind.

A TROOP of UBIAN HORSEMEN form up as an escort for Brutus. Their wild hair and strange garb gives Brutus pause.

BRUTUS

Dear me. Ferocious is not in it.
It's sure they are on our side?

CAESAR

Sure.

BRUTUS

I trust to fortune then.

Brutus kisses Caesar on both cheeks and climbs into a luxurious sort of covered wagon hitched to a four horse team.

The wagon trundles out of the camp, escorted by fifty troops and the Ubian Cavalry. We follow them to the outskirts of the camp. Brutus's POV - Taking nails from their mouths and wielding hammers with practiced grace, TWO LEGIONARIES attach a NAKED MAN to a tall wooden cross, lying flat on the ground. We leave Brutus and stay with the Legionaries. Using a simple pulley system, they raise the cross. The crucified man yowls and shrieks horribly.

NEW ANGLE REVEALS this is only the last in a row of at least TWENTY MEN nailed to crosses. Their agonised moans blend into a weird ululating roar, like the sea.

It's a very hot day, and two other LEGIONARIES are taking a well deserved break, sheltering from the broiling sun in the skimpy shade of a cross, sharing a jug of wine and a loaf of bread. The legionary manning the pulley looks wistfully at the wine.

WORKING LEGIONARY

You finish that jug without me, there'll
be trouble.

The cross slots into a post hole with a satisfying thunk. The crucified man screams...

CRUCIFIED MAN

Let me down! Let me down! I know.
I know who took the eagles! Let me down!

LEGIONARY

Idiot. Why did you not sing before we
put you up?

A WHILE LATER

The Crucified Man is off the cross and lies on the ground
with bloody rags wrapped around his hands and feet.

Vorenus kneels alongside him.

CRUCIFIED MAN

(through pain)

Spaniards. Stayed with us for a night
and then rode for the Cardurci country.

Vorenus stands up and strides away, not pleased.

VORENUS

Cardurci. Ei! Fortune pisses on me.

Passing the Legionaries, he gestures at the crucified men...

VORENUS (CONT'D)

Take them down..

He keeps walking. We stay with the Legionaries, one of whom
turns to his workmates, spits disgustedly.

LEGIONARY

Put 'em up, take 'em down. It's a bloody
comedy.

INT. BLOCKHOUSE CELL - DAY

Pullo fast asleep in his cot. The cell door opens. Vorenus
and a TRIBUNE enter. The Tribune pokes Pullo with the toe of
his boot.

TRIBUNE

Legionary Titus Pullo. Wake up.

PULLO

(mumbling)

Mump off and die pigfucker.

The Tribune kicks him hard. Pullo comes up roaring, but
snaps to attention when he sees the tribune...

PULLO (CONT'D)

Sir!

Seeing Vorenus, he bristles.

PULLO (CONT'D)

What's he doing here!?

TRIBUNE

Shut your mouth. You are hereby released to the command of First Spear Centurion Lucius Vorenus. Do your duty to his satisfaction, and you'll be spared the remaining six months of your term.

Pullo is horribly torn. After a moment of struggle...

PULLO

Sorry trib. I won't stand near this shortarsed shit, leave alone serve under him. I'll stay here thanks very much.

TRIBUNE

Huish now. This is orders direct from his excellency Mark Antony himself.

VORENUS

We are ordered to find and retrieve Caesar's eagles.

Pullo perks up. He can't believe his luck.

PULLO

Gerrae. Me? Bring back the eagles? But that's a great honor. Why didn't you say so in the first place?

He laughs out loud, and slaps Vorenus on the back.

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Vorenus and Pullo riding north at a steady trot along a rough cart track. Pullo's uncomfortable on horseback, rolling around like a sack of spuds, but he's very happy to be free and riding out on an adventure. Vorenus is stoically glum.

PULLO

Where'd you learn to ride so well? Like Ubuan cavalry, you are.

VORENUS

My father raised horses in Perusia.

PULLO
Perusia, near Arretium? Round there?

VORENUS
There.

PULLO
Good country.
(hesitates)
Listen brother, I want to thank you for
picking me for this job. It's a noble
way to make amends.

VORENUS
Amends?

PULLO
For getting me into all this cack by
calling me names.

VORENUS
My... Oh. Think nothing of it.

PULLO
No no. I won't forget it. Titus Pullo
never forgets a favour.

Vorensu cracks the first smile we've seen from him; a thin,
brittle thing.

VORENUS
A blessed life lives the blind man.

PULLO
What mean you by that brother?

VORENUS
Say you, what chance have we of finding
the eagles?

PULLO
Easy. The tenth never fails, eh?

He imitates his legion's rallying trumpet...

VORENUS
Little or no chance we have. The eagles
may be anywhere tween here and Ultima
Thule. Maybe buried. Maybe melted down.
Maybe at bottom of the sea. We hunting
a black dog in the night. Not finding
the eagles is much the same as losing
them. We will be disgraced.

PULLO

That's a fine attitude. We shall just have to find them then eh?

(beat)

Wait a minute, so then you wasn't making amends at all...

VORENUS

I chose you because it would have been unjust to drag a friend into this wretched farrago. And I calculate your loss does least damage to the legion.

Pullo turns red. Doesn't answer for a beat...

PULLO

What a cold sad calculating little insect you are. Me, I calculate there's nothing to stop me cutting you up into little gobs right here and riding on. What is to stop me, eh?

VORENUS

If your honour as a centurion of the Tenth is not enough, I shall rely on my superior fighting skills.

Pullo stares at him for a moment, then laughs merrily.

PULLO

Superior fighting skills. Very good.

As Pullo chuckles, CAMERA lets them ride on away...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - DAY

On a stiff breeze, a red sailed, lateen-rigged, MERCHANT SHIP flies toward the mountainous coastline of the Alpes Maritimes in Gaul. Octavian, braced on the deck of the ship, gazes with trepidation at the approaching land.

EXT. GALLIC COAST - DAY

Octavian, his slaves and bodyguards climbing a hillside overlooking the sea. Octavian rides the stallion, and Andros is on a large mule. The sun is shining, the country is gorgeous, and Octavian is beginning to enjoy himself.

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Octavian and his party making good speed across open pasturelands. The sun is sinking low. Octavian is very happy, imagining himself to be a warlord leading his troops to battle.

EXT. FOREST IN GAUL - EVENING

Octavian et al in a deep dark forest. Several of the slaves carry FLAMING PITCH TORCHES. Octavian is falling asleep in the saddle and about to fall off. Andros moves alongside to nudge him awake.

ANDROS

Master Octavian....

Octavian starts awake.

ANDROS (CONT'D)

Vasio is only a few more miles.

OCTAVIAN

I'm aware of that. I'll thank you not to touch me without permission.

ANDROS

Forgive me your honor.

OCTAVIAN

Water.

Andros hands him a flask.

Unheeded by Octavian and the others, the last man in the party is SKEWERED BY AN ARROW. He falls off his horse.

One by one, another three of the rearguard are dispatched in the same way before anyone sees what's going on. A GENERAL PANIC ERUPTS, everybody fleeing blindly into the darkness. One by one, they are picked off by arrows, torch bearers first, until the last torch falls and they are enveloped in darkness. Confused cries of pain and fear. The sensation of galloping through darkness. Then silence.

CLOSE ON Octavian and Andros, in almost complete darkness.

ANDROS

(whispers)

I think we lost them.

A FLAMING ARROW slashes the darkness and embeds itself Andros's neck.

A whole barrage of burning arrows follow, turning him into a pillar of flame. By the light of Andros's burning body, HOODED MEN come running from hiding and try to grab the horse's reins and pull Octavian from the saddle. Octavian slashes left and right with his little sword and actually kills one of the men. Breaking free, Octavian and the horse gallop onward into the night, alone. Two cloaked riders give chase on big black horses. But they are no match for the stallion, which practically flies. The pursuers are left behind.

Octavian reins in the horse and looks around. He's on a dark bracken moor, beneath a sliver of moon, alone and terrified.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ATRIUM OF BRUTUS'S DOMUS - DAY

A small palace. The atrium of the Brutus household is chockful of ancestor's busts and masks.

Brutus has just this minute come home. He hugs his mother - SERVILIA - An earthy, handsome, Sonia Braga type.

SERVILIA

It's good to have you home.

BRUTUS

Mamma, you cannot imagine how good it is to be home.

SERVILIA

You are brown as a bean.

BRUTUS

I think it makes me look quite soldierly.

SERVILIA

It does, it does. And how is Caesar?

BRUTUS

Who?

SERVILIA

Don't be cruel. Is he well? Did he ask of me?

BRUTUS

(teasing)

Did he? I can't recall. I think not so.

Servilia looks downcast.

BRUTUS (CONT'D)

He wrote you a letter though.

SERVILIA

(lighting up)

O you beast! Give! Give it to me!

LATER, IN A QUIET CORNER OF THE HOUSE

Servilia reads her letter from Caesar. Servilia's bodyslave - a plump Greek woman named ELENI - looks on expectantly.

CAESAR V.O

Dearest Servilia, forgive my long silence. These last long months were all blood and iron and mud, and no time for letters to friends. Be sure that I have been thinking of you with great affection. I long to be together and alone with you....

Servilia smiles a little, blushing.

ELENIO

What does he say? What does he say?

Servilia hands her the letter.

ELENI

Great affection. He longs to be alone with you. Ahai! Eh? I told you. Think you he says such things to his wife? Neh. You still have him.

SERVILIA

Affection. What's that? He could not say love.

ELENI

Would you have him pluck a harp? He's a soldier, not a poet.

Servilia smiles, then claps her hands; back to business...

SERVILIA

The day dwindles. Guests are arriving. Has Malchio primed the cisterns?

ELENI

Primed.

SERVILIA

Are the quails plucked?

ELENI

Plucked.

SERVILIA O.S

(to the nearest manservant)
Ganymede, run and tell Master Brutus to
get out of the bath.

The two women exit...

LATER - ATRIUM OF BRUTUS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

What we would call a cocktail party in progress. A flute and harp combo playing sweetly in a corner, milling guests, and servants circulating with trays of food and drink. The guests include Atia, Octavia, her husband GLABIUS, and Pompey.

Brutus, a little tipsy, wearing the helmet of an Ubuan Horseman; to a gaggle of women...

BRUTUS

(off helmet)

You have to imagine hair down to here and great huge moustaches, and the most horrific stench....

MOVE OFF Brutus and the laughing women to Pompey, seated nearby, reading a letter.

CAESAR V.O

.....Brutus tells me you have been heroic in defence of our alliance, despite constant attacks by our optimate friends, for which I thank you as ever. History will show that our iron friendship was all that saved the republic from anarchy....

Pompey lays the letter down, thinking. Brutus joins him, gesturing to a SLAVE for a glass of wine.

POMPEY

Caesar is as terse as ever. Tell me, you are a good judge. How is he in himself? The same old tiger I suppose.

BRUTUS

(hesitates)

He has been better I think.

POMPEY

Oh?

BRUTUS

Very weary, to be honest. A little demoralised even.

POMPEY

Caesar demoralised? Never.

BRUTUS

Oh he tried to hide it, but I could tell. Sad about Julia of course. Goes without saying. Then his standard was stolen, and that has not helped matters.

POMPEY

Stolen? How did he let a fool thing like that happen?

BRUTUS

Not the faintest. His men are all ahoop about it. You know how plebs can be about such things. Desperate to come home. Mutinous.

Pompey gives Brutus a look.

POMPEY

Mutinous? Hard to believe.

BRUTUS

That was his exact word. Mutinous. He's not sure if they'll fight for him anymore. It's not to be wondered at. The lower classes have no sense of loyalty.

On Pompey frowning...

LATER: The party has dwindled somewhat, to a dozen or so.

BRUTUS (CONT'D)

...He looked rather po at that and says no actually, the lower classes are very loyal. To which I replied, well, I defer to your expertise Pompey.

His audience titters approvingly.

BRUTUS (CONT'D)

He suspected I was mocking him, but couldn't be sure. It put the most amusingly provincial expression on his face. He left us shortly thereafter.

More giggling. MOVING, we find Atia in a corner seat, reading the letter Brutus brought her from Caesar.

CAESAR V.O

...I would like to find a wife for my friend Pompey, but I have been gone too long to know who among the females of our family would be suitable. Do me the favour of selecting whichever girl you think most likely to please and offer her to him in my name with all due formalities. I am sorry to impose this task on you. I would ask Calpurnia, but though an excellent wife, she has no eye for this kind of business.

Atia looks thoughtful.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN COUNTRYSIDE. GAUL - MORNING

Octavian and the Stallion lie curled up asleep, concealed from view in a bed of gorse and lavender. After a week alone in the wild, Octavian looks like a small, feral, animal.

The SOUND of a large group of people, coming closer. Octavian wakes and peeks out of his hiding place.

A fifty strong CLAN OF RAGGED BRIGANDS shamble past. Men, women and children; the dankest, vilest, people you ever saw. Their LEADER rides a big GREY MULE, the rest are on foot.

When they are well gone, Octavian rouses the horse, and it stands up, chuntering and nuzzling the boy in friendly greeting. Octavian mounts up and rides off in the opposite direction to that taken by the Brigands.

LATER

Riding cross-country in hilly terrain, Octavian comes across a stray sheep. He chases it down, leaping down off the horse on top of the sheep, and wrestling with it desperately before he's able to stab the thing to death. Insane with hunger, he hacks the sheep apart and tears at the raw flesh with his teeth, like a wild animal. He eats until sated. Looking up from his meal, he finds himself surrounded by the RAGGED BRIGANDS. One of them holds the white horse by the reins. Octavian stands up and tries to put authority in his quavering voice.

OCTAVIAN

I am a Roman citizen of Noble birth.
If you harm me in any way, you will be
punished very badly. Do you understand?

The brigands speak a Celtic dialect. (N.B all subsequent dialogue in italics is Celtic, which sounds like a Scotsman speaking Hungarian)

BRIGAND #1

What did he say?

BRIGAND #2

Fucked if I know.

Octavian tries to run away, and the Brigands make a game of catching him. The pouch round his neck is torn off and his talismans are scattered in the dirt. They beat him senseless, the women and children merrily joining in.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN TEMPLE OF CYBELE - NIGHT

ON Atia kneeling before an ALTAR - on it is a figurine of a boy on a horse. She is deep in an unintelligible rhythmic chant. We gather that she's praying for Octavian's safety.

O.C very close, the SOUND of a BULL, BELLOWING in distress.

NEW ANGLE - Lit by hundreds of olive oil lamps, Atia is in a kind of pit at the center of the temple floor. Swinging gently to and fro inches above her is a HUGE BLACK BULL, head down, suspended from the ceiling by iron chains. Several EUNUCH TRANSVESTITE PRIESTS of the Cybelian Cult dance around, whipping themselves with flails.

Atia's chanting reaches a climax, and a Priest cuts the bull's throat. Atia is drenched in a seemingly endless TORRENT OF BLOOD. She remains perfectly still, her face upturned to meet the gush.

ANGLE - Her daughter Octavia watching, disgusted.

Finally, the blood stops coming, and Atia relaxes her hieratic posture. She opens her eyes and smiles beatifically at the Head Priest, who nods complacently.

HEAD PRIEST

The Great Mother indicates your boy will
come to no harm. He shall return to you.

ATIA

Bene. Thank you.

She raises an arm to let the Priest help her out of the pit. She gestures at her purse holder, who slips the priest a couple of coins as Atia exits with Octavia.

ATIA (CONT'D)

My honey, you are green as an apple.

Octavia follows Atia down a corridor to A SUNKEN BATH. Atia shucks her clothes and climbs in. The water turns red.

ATIA (CONT'D)

This is very nice. It's been an age since you and I have had a proper mother - daughter chat.

She ducks her head under water and comes up cleansed of blood.

ATIA (CONT'D)

Tell me now, how goes your marriage?

OCTAVIA

Very well. Glabius is a good man.

ATIA

You surprise me. I never got that sense. I always thought there were difficulties between you.

OCTAVIA

Must you always have a needle in hand?

ATIA

I was only asking. Excuse my curiosity.

OCTAVIA

There are no difficulties. There were some difficulties in the past. But we overcame them. We love each other very much. So.

Atia takes a beat.

ATIA

That's a shame.

OCTAVIA

What do you mean?

ATIA

Now I feel bad. I thought you would be overjoyed.

OCTAVIA
Overjoyed about...?

ATIA
Uncle Julius intends to marry you to
Pompey Magnus.

OCTAVIA
Uncle Julius intends...

Octavia is stunned, can't take it in.

ATIA
(excited)
I know Pompey is a touch low in manner,
but I'm told he's a perfectly adequate
lover. And of course it's a huge step up
in prestige. You shall be the first
woman in Rome! Think of that.

(beat)
We shall have to get you divorced from
Glabius, obviously. Quick as poss.

Beat.

OCTAVIA
I will not do it.

ATIA
Don't be silly. We can't very well offer
you to Pompey while you're still married
to Glabius can we? That would be rude.

OCTAVIA
I mean, I will not marry Pompey.

ATIA
I know it's a bore darling, but there we
are. Caesar's orders. What can we do?
Besides, is Glabius truly truly such a
prize?

OCTAVIA
I swear by Juno I will not do it. I love
my husband and I love my child and I will
not leave them.

ATIA
You mistake your options precious.
If you do not divorce Glabius willingly,
Caesar will ask Glabius to divorce you.

OCTAVIA
And Glabius will refuse.

ATIA
No doubt. And then he'll be killed.
And does anybody want that to happen?

OCTAVIA
Caesar would not do that.

ATIA
Of course he would my precious.
The man's been in Gaul for eight years.
He's practically a wild beast.

Octavia bursts into tears. Atia takes her in her arms.

ATIA (CONT'D)
But first woman in the city. Think of
that.

Octavia keeps crying...

INT. GLABIUS'S HOUSE - DAY

Moving off A BABY crying in the arms of a NURSEMAID to a household in sad uproar. Octavia is led out of her bedroom by Atia. Both are stone faced, dignified, but Octavia's SLAVEWOMEN weep and wail histrionically.

Octavia takes the baby in her arms and holds it tight. Fighting back tears. She covers the baby's face in kisses, then hands it back to the Nursemaid. Her husband GLABIUS stands at the doorway to the street, his face wet with tears.

GLABIUS
Octavia...

Octavia flinches a little but doesn't look at him or stop. Mother and daughter step into a CROUCHING SIX MAN LITTER. The littermen stand up and they move off. Octavia remains stoic as her home recedes from view.

ATIA
My dear, your servants are quite absurd.
I've never heard such a frightful noise.
No doubt you feed them too much.

Octavia erupts into hysterical tears. Atia sighs and taps the nearest Litterman on the head...

ATIA (CONT'D)
Speed.

The Littermen accelerate from a walk to a sort of smooth trotting pace.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. TERRITORY OF THE CARDURCI - DAY

Rugged heathland. Pullo and Vorenius ride past two massive oak trees set on either side of the path. Numberless corpses, in various stages of decay, are nailed to the trunks of the trees.

A WHILE LATER - Cresting a rise, Pullo and Vorenius find a vast and noisome REFUGEE CAMP that has sprung up around A SMALL FORTIFIED VILLAGE.

Riding down into the camp toward the village, Vorenius and Pullo find a scene of abject misery. The people are wretchedly thin and sickly - women and children and the elderly mostly, and a few maimed warriors - living like animals in holes in the ground, covered by scraps of canvas. They watch the centurions go by with a mixture of fear and hatred. Pullo is visibly upset by the horror of it all. Vorenius is unmoved.

EXT. FORTIFIED VILLAGE - DAY

The village is burnt and semi-derelict. Amongst the ruins, the remnants of the Cardurci nobility have made a squalid home.

The last Chief of the Cardurci is RED AXE; an ancient old man with both his hands chopped off. He sits on a makeshift throne in a hovel of salvaged lumber. He is attended by SEVERAL GUARDS - haggard little boys mostly, and a single WARRIOR, one eyed, his hands also cut off. A dagger is tied to his right stump, a hammer to his left.

Vorenius pulls out a small bag of gold from the saddle bag over his shoulder and places it in Red Axe's lap.

Red Axe just glares at them with rheumy hatred.

VORENIUS

There's fifty denarii in there.

Red Axe pushes the bag of gold onto the floor..

VORENIUS (CONT'D)

If you refuse to co-operate, you will be punished.

RED AXE

*Look around you. What can you do to
punish me? Can you make me live longer?*

Vorenus looks around, studying the other people in the room. His gaze settles on a SMALL BOY, quite plump. Then he turns to Red Axe...

VORENUS

(casually)

*That's a well fed child. Somebody
special?*

A shade passes across Red Axe's stoic face. He turns to a ragged COURTIER and nods sadly.

ONE EYED WARRIOR

No! Tell them nothing!

RED AXE

Silence!

COURTIER

*Twenty men of Osca. They left two days
ago, riding for the coast. The Camargue.*

VORENUS

Thank you.

Pullo and Vorenus exit. The courtier snatches up the bag of gold. The One-eyed warrior stomps away into the shadows.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Pullo and Vorenus on horseback trotting along a dirt trail through fallow fields and swathes of dense woodland.

PULLO

*The British women, now, that's savage
cunny. The first invasion? Babae! They
had their arses in the air before we were
off the boats. That's Cantiaci, anyway.
Iceni women, you have to chase 'em down
like deer. Once you get 'em under you
mind; another story. Slack as your best
Palatine Scortum.*

VORENUS

*Mother of Dis, do you care for nothing
but women?*

PULLO

(puzzled)

What else is there? Food, I suppose.

(beat)

You don't like women?

VORENUS

Of course I do. I'm married to one.
That is, I have a wife.

PULLO

Aha. I see. I see. But since when can
Centurions marry?

VORENUS

I obtained special dispensation.

Pullo regards Vorenius with deeply felt pity.

PULLO

Attat! Fortune smile on you. Nothing
wrong with that. Me, I have simple
tastes. I like to kill foreigners and
take their gold and rape their women.
Basta. Why tie yourself to one puga?
Where's the flavour? Where's the joy?

VORENUS

When was the last time you were with a
woman who wasn't crying, or wanting
payment?

Pullo is still thinking when out of a COPSE OF OAK up ahead
comes a DOZEN MOUNTED WARRIORS, led by the one eyed warrior
we saw with Red Axe. For a moment they stand and glare at
the two Romans. Then...

ONE EYE

Prepare to die Romish scum!

With blood-curdling shrieks, they charge at the Romans.
Vorenius wheels his horse to flee for the cover of the
forest...

VORENUS

The trees!

But instead of obeying, Pullo draws his sword and spurs his
horse forward to charge the oncoming Gauls. Vorenius has no
honorable option but to back Pullo's suicidal play. Cursing,
he draws his sword and gallops after him. Coming alongside
at full gallop, their eyes meet.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

Idiot!

Pullo whoops merrily, and slips, narrowly avoiding falling off. A second later they meet the Gauls head on, and carve a path right through the oncoming horsemen, slashing right and left. Three of the Gauls go down. The Romans wheel round and charge again at the now disorganised mass of men and horses. This time though, Pullo falls off his horse and the Cardurci warriors swarm around him. Vorenius tries to go to his aid, and is dragged off his horse. Fighting back to back, they hold their attackers at bay. Quitting while ahead, the Cardurci snatch up the reins of the Roman horses and gallop away with them.

Vorenius sits down and puts his head in his hands.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

My people fought for Scipio at Zama. They were at Magnesia when Antiochus was crushed. My father's name was mentioned in despatches by Sulla. And I am reduced to this. Unhorsed and robbed by peasants.

PULLO

They weren't so good horses, anyhow.

VORENUS

The gold you ass. We lost the gold.

PULLO

Oh. Cac.

VORENUS

(seething)

You are to be aware, the proper tactic in that position is to find more favorable terrain before engaging the enemy.

PULLO

You run away, that's your decision. Me, I hope I'm a man of honor.

VORENUS

(turning pale with anger)

Now you impugn my honor?

PULLO

(won't back off)

E'ia, my eyes tell my tongue.

All in one motion, Vorenius leaps up, draws his sword, and puts the point to Pullo's throat.

VORENIUS

Ask forgiveness.

Pullo thinks about it, steps back. Vorenius lowers his sword a little. Pullo immediately charges him, slashing wildly. Vorenius parries deftly.

The fight swings to and fro until both are cut and staggering with exhaustion, and they lie down alongside each other in the long grass.

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRY SIDE - DAY

A dusty track between fields of wildflowers. The Brigands are on the move. Their CHIEF rides the white stallion, his LIEUTENANT rides the mule. Octavian - bloody, bruised, and almost naked - is roped to the shafts of a handcart. His face is black with dirt, except for two white lines made by his tears. A LANKY TEENAGE BOY crouches on top of the baggage laden cart, urging Octavian forward with a whip.

EXT. BRIGAND'S CAMP - NIGHT

The Brigand caravan sprawled asleep. Octavian huddled and shivering, tied up under the hand-cart.

OCTAVIAN

(whispering endlessly)

Save me Jupiter save me Jupiter save me
Jupiter save me...

EXT. A STAGE IN THE FORUM. ROME - NIGHT

A full moon. Clear skies. A temporary wooden stage has been set up, lit by a thousand oil lamps. The nobility and the rich are seated on benches in front. As the financial backer Pompey has a place of honor. The hoi polloi stand at the back. Onstage, whilst musicians and singers wail away in BG, scantily dressed MIMES act out a story. They have an elaborate language of gesture and dance which we cannot understand, but the Roman audience are loving it. It seems to be some kind of a surreally ritualized sex comedy, with a rascally slave and a foolish lecher, a beautiful widow...

The audience mill around and chatter throughout the performance, treating it as a sort of outdoor cabaret.

Cato and Scipio arrive with a retinue and approach Pompey, who eyes them warily.

SCIPIO

Pompey Magnus dear fellow, well met.

POMPEY

Scipio, Cato. You surprise me. I would not take either of you for lovers of the pantomime.

SCIPIO

(with a smile)

Perhaps we are not quite as dull and old-fashioned as you think. You know my daughter Cornelia. Widow of the noble Licinius that died at Carrhae.

CORNELIA is a sallow, homely, young woman who curtsies gravely. He returns a slight bow.

POMPEY

Cornelia, your husband was a fine Roman.

CORNELIA

I thank you.

She turns to Scipio.

CORNELIA (CONT'D)

Father, my presence is not appropriate. There are women on the stage.

SCIPIO

So there are my dear. I had no notion. We will not linger then. Pompey, a pleasant good night.

POMPEY

Good night.

Scipio, Cornelia and several of Scipio's people exit. Cato dallies to speak quietly in Pompey's ear...

CATO

If it please you, let us speak alone.

Pompey nods slightly. Cato walks toward a 'backstage' area.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - DAY

Pompey and Cato, in the darkened wings. Their respective bodyguards standing guard. In BG we get an oblique view of the onstage performance...

CATO

I suspect you know what I have to say.

POMPEY

I know only that you have chosen to say it furtively. Which bodes ill.

CATO

Neither you alone, nor we alone, can crush Caesar.

POMPEY

Stop there.

CATO

I do not say that you wish to crush Caesar. I only say that if you did wish it, you could not do it alone.

POMPEY

(angrily)

Horseshit! I have only to stamp my feet and legions will spring up all over Italy! I could squash Caesar like a bug if I wished it so!

(beat, calms down)

I do not wish it so.

CATO

Renounce him Pompey. Renounce Caesar, and his strength will wither away. It is you has the real power. It is you the people truly love. Think you they will still shout Caesar's name when he runs out of Gallic trinkets to throw at them?

POMPEY

Think you I care what names are shouted in the streets?

CATO

Not at all, we merely---

POMPEY

---Good night to you.

Pompey stalks away.

ONSTAGE

The Mimes gesture strangely, writhing to drums and pipes while a singer wails.

EXT. GALLIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A broiling hot day. The Brigands making their slow way along a broad track through scrub pine and sage. Octavian is still hauling the handcart, tormented by the same teenage boy with a whip. Octavian is close to collapse and he stumbles and falls every few paces.

Octavian's POV - out of a shimmering heat haze, two Roman Centurions appear on the road ahead.

Octavian's face lights up with hope.

CLOSE ON Vorenius and Pullo. Vorenius is in full uniform, as clean and trim as ever. Pullo looks like a well armed tramp.

PULLO

I'll take the vongool on the horse first, then him with the axe...

VORENIUS

Gerrae. There's far too many of them. Let me handle this.

PULLO

Sure chief. Which way do we run?

VORENIUS

Ha ha. Just follow my lead.

OCTAVIAN'S POV - The Brigands and the Centurions converge. A few yards apart, Vorenius stops in the middle of the path.

VORENIUS (CONT'D)

(sternly)

Halt in the name of Rome!

The Brigands stop almost despite themselves.

VORENIUS (CONT'D)

(raising an empty hand)

No blood.

The Brigand Leader raises his hand likewise.

BRIGAND LEADER

(smirking)

No blood.

Near the back of the Brigand caravan, Octavian waves frantically.

OCTAVIAN
Romans! Please help me! I am---

TEENAGE BOY
---Shaddup.

The Teenage Boy punches Octavian in the mouth, and he goes down, stunned. Vorenus and Pullo pay the incident no heed.

VORENUS
We are Centurions of the Tenth legion of the Army of the People and Senate of Rome. What tribe are you? What chief?

BRIGAND LEADER
Maddo's boys, of the Mighty Black River Treveri! That's who we are.

The brigands raise a bellicose hooting and bang their swords on their round shields.

VORENUS
We are at peace with the Treveri. You may pass.

BRIGAND
Pass he says. What if we don't want to pass? What if we want to stop here and try on those good boots of yours? What then? What then?

The last two words in Latin. The Brigands hoot. Vorenus fixes the leader with a steady gaze.

VORENUS
You speak Latin, eia?
(the leader nods)
You and I will die. That is certain. But you will die first. If you want to live, pretend I am telling you something so brave and witty and flattering that it pleases you to be merciful.

A beat. Then the Brigand leader laughs, long and hard...

BRIGAND LEADER
Let's go boys. We'll let them live.

BRIGAND
What?! Why?

BRIGAND LEADER
It pleases me to be merciful.

The Brigands move on, in a rumble of muttered curses and threats from the brigands. Octavian is whipped to his feet, and staggers painfully forward, dragging the cart. Passing the centurions, he casts them a pleading glance...

OCTAVIAN

(a whisper)

Help me.

No reaction from Vorenus and Pullo. They stand and watch until the last of the brigands has gone by, then walk on.

ANGLE - Octavian's POV, looking back - The Centurions marching away round a bend in the track.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The Brigands eating a dinner of wheat-mush and beer round a campfire. At the edge of the fire's circle of light, crying silently, Octavian lies amongst the baggage, huddled shivering under a scrap of canvas, tied to the hand-cart.

LATER - OCTAVIAN'S POV: The men are drunkenly asleep or heading that way. The Brigand Leader burps, stands up and staggers over to Octavian.

BRIGAND LEADER

Hello pretty.

The Brigand unhooks the front of his breeches, and reaches in to pull out his dick...

BRIGAND LEADER (CONT'D)

Hungry?

A scything blur draws a thin line of red across the Brigand Leader's throat, then his head sort of hinges backward so that it's hanging upside down between his shoulder blades.

All from Octavian's slightly oblique POV: Vorenus and Pullo descend on the other brigands like wolves and kill six of them before they can even get to their feet. The remaining three are swiftly despatched. The women and children run like rabbits and vanish in seconds. Standing on corpses, Pullo whoops delightedly and holds his sword high. He chants a thanks to the Gods.

PULLO

(rhythmic chanting song)

Look here Mars! Ha! Look here Mars!
Ha! I am Titus Pullo! Ha! These bloody
men are my gift to you! Ha!

Cackling with glee, Pullo starts picking over the bodies for valuables. Vorenius checks on the horse and mule. Octavian just stares at the men, too overwhelmed to speak. The Boy with the whip writhes on the ground, badly wounded.

VORENIUS

The mule's maybe a little lame, but perfectly rideable.

PULLO

First turn on the big'un. Ahai!

This last off discovering gold teeth in the Brigand Leader's mouth. He bashes at the teeth with the butt of his dagger. Vorenius unhitches the horse and mule, ready to go.

VORENIUS

Let's go.

Pullo gets the gold teeth out, pockets them and moves off, passing Octavian without a glance.

OCTAVIAN

Oi'e!

Pullo looks at him blankly. Octavian holds up his bound wrists...

OCTAVIAN (CONT'D)

Please.

Obligingly, Pullo ambles over and with a flick of his sword, cuts the ropes tying Octavian. He staggers to his feet, grabs a thick length of wood, and starts beating the Boy with the whip. Pullo and Vorenius watch with detached interest. The Boy tries to crawl away, but Octavian is in a frenzy and keeps clubbing him viciously until the boy is dead.

PULLO

(oh-kay...)

Eu...

Pullo and Vorenius turn and walk away. Octavian is in an altered state, and doesn't understand for a moment that they are leaving.

OCTAVIAN

Stop!

The men pause.

OCTAVIAN (CONT'D)

I am... I am....

VORENUS
What boy? Speak!

OCTAVIAN
I am G-gai-gai-gai-Gaius Octavian of the
Julii, step-son of Marcius Phillipus,
great-nephew of Gaius Julius Caesar.

With that, he faints. Vorenius shrugs and starts to move on.

PULLO
Hold up man.

VORENUS
What?

PULLO
You heard him. Caesar's nephew.

VORENUS
Horsecack. A household slave, picked up
some fancy talk.

PULLO
Probably. But we should take him with
though, just in case, ni'ai? Right
mentulas we shall look if he is Caesar's
nephew in vero, and we let him get ate by
wolves. Have to keep that one molto
quiet. Never mind losing a bit of gold.

Vorenius rolls his eyes, irritated, but nods his assent.

Pullo picks up Octavian by an arm and a leg and tosses him
over the back of the stallion like a sack.

EXT. FOREST IN GAUL- NIGHT

Riding through moon-dappled forest; Pullo atop the stallion,
Octavian slung in front of him, Vorenius on the mule.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY IN GAUL - DAWN

Octavian wakes and peers out from under a blanket; finds
himself at the edge of the forest, overlooking rolling hill
country. Pullo and Vorenius are eating breakfast round a neat
little fire. Pullo smiles cheerily...

PULLO
Alright son? Want some porridge?

Octavian nods, a little groggy. Pullo hands him his tin bowl
and Octavian devours the contents in a flash.

OCTAVIAN

Thank you.

Pullo ladles out more food for him. This matter-of-fact kindness strikes home. Octavian bursts into tears, much to Pullo and Vorenus's embarrassment. After a while Octavian recovers and wipes his eyes.

OCTAVIAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Won't happen again.

PULLO

Va'. Naught wrong with a few tears.

VORENUS

Caesar's nephew eh?

OCTAVIAN

Great nephew. My mother is the daughter of his sister.

Octavian takes the bowl and again scarfs it all down. Pullo hands him a cup of water. Octavian drains it.

OCTAVIAN (CONT'D)

Thank you. Be assured that you will be amply rewarded for your services to me.

PULLO

See how good he talks? Don't worry about rewards just now young master.

VORENUS

(very sceptical)

Tell me. How does Caesar's nephew find work pulling a brigand's hand cart across Long-Haired Gaul?

OCTAVIAN

(indignant)

I would answer you freely, but I mislike your tone. Do you doubt my word?

Vorenus laughs.

VORENUS

I'd be a fool if I didn't.

CAESAR

Caesar will prove who I am. Take me to him.

VORENUS

We can't do that, as yet. We have orders.

OCTAVIAN

I don't care about your stupid orders! You just take me to my uncle!

VORENUS

He's convincing, I'll give him that.
(turns to Octavian)
Don't irritate me boy. Irritate me and you can go fend for yourself, ei?

Octavian nods assent.

INT. ATIA'S VILLA. BATHROOM - DAY

Under Atia's beady supervision, the beautiful but modest Octavia is transformed into a gorgeous sex-bomb.

ATIA

Do please stop crying my dove. We shall only have to start your eyes over again.
(to the cosmetician slave)
A little more arsenic I think Gaia.

The cosmetician dabs at her palette...

INT. ATRIUM. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Atia greets Pompey and his small evening retinue. Octavia hangs back awkwardly, her eyes red from crying.

ATIA

Magnus, welcome. Overjoyed. All of you.
(sharply, with a big smile)
Octavia, don't be timid. Pompey will not harm you, I'm sure.

Octavia steps forward and smiles politely at Pompey.

OCTAVIA

Good evening sir.

POMPEY

Enchanted.

INT. TRICLINIUM. ATIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Halfway through the meal. Pompey, Octavia, and Atia on couches at the table, along with three affably silent friends of Atia's, there to make up numbers.

On benches against the wall; servants, guards, and Pompey's Valet. With a couple of drinks in him, Pompey is in full flow.

POMPEY

...The Parthian have these mounted archers y'see, that were threatening my left flank. But so rather than shorten the line as would be conventional tactics, I sent in my cavalry reserve, and outflanked the flankers. Hacked the little devils to pieces.

Atia takes a beat to realize that the story's punchline.

ATIA

Brava Magnus. Masterly. You are an artist, is he not Octavia, an artist?

Octavia gives Pompey a feeble smile.

OCTAVIA

An artist.

Beat. Food is consumed, wine drunk.

ATIA

Magnus, tell me something. And be honest. Does my daughter please you?

POMPEY

(a little surprised)

Hem. Who could say it were not so? Very pleasing, no doubt.

ATIA

Bene. Then I can tell you that Caesar, as a token of his abiding friendship and love, offers her to you in marriage.

POMPEY

(confused)

Oh. Ah. Hem.

ATIA

Hnnnnnn?

POMPEY

She is not married to young Glabius?

ATIA

Not at all. Not at all. Divorced.

POMPEY

Ah.

Taken unawares by this gambit, Pompey is unsure what to say. He glances at his Valet as if for guidance. The Valet shrugs, grimaces.

ATIA

(steely)

Perhaps you need time to think.

POMPEY

Not at all. Excuse me. I was just taken unawares. How could I refuse such a worthy and dignified bride? Caesar is far too generous. I accept gladly, joyfully, by all means.

ATIA

Ha! Excellent. Octavia, kiss your husband to be.

OCTAVIA

As you say, mother.

Octavia stands up woodenly and goes to Pompey. Awkwardly, they kiss.

POMPEY

We shall have to wait until next month for an actual ceremony of course. When Julia's mourning days are over.

ATIA

Of course, of course. But you may take your betrothal privileges any time you wish. Now, if you like. Why not?

Pompey is loath to turn down the offer, but can see that Octavia is horribly embarrassed.

POMPEY

Really, that's not ah, necessary.

ATIA

Don't be silly. Octavia would love to. There's no need for shyness. We are all family now, after all, hmmm?

This last with a sharp look at Octavia.

INT. OCTAVIA'S BEDROOM. ATIA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Blushing with shame, Octavia stands like a statue while SLAVES take all her clothes off. Pompey sits in a chair and watches. When Octavia is naked, most of the slaves leave. TWO OLD LADIES IN BLACK remain, hunkering down in a corner.

Expressionless, Octavia climbs onto the bed and gets on her hands and knees. The two Old Ladies turn and look expectantly at Pompey. Pompey stands up and unbuckles his belt...

EXT. A ROMAN ROAD. GAUL - DAY

Pullo on the mule, Vorenius and the Boy on the stallion, at a good trot on the grassy verge of the road. They pause at a roadside shack and Vorenius questions an old man crouched in it's shade. The old man points and nods and they move on.

EXT. HILLSIDE. GAUL - DAY

Switchbacking up a steep slope, they walk the horses.

OCTAVIAN

I understand you have orders, but this is a fool's errand you know. Caesar wouldn't pull a hair for the eagles.

PULLO

You don't understand. The eagles are the symbols of his military honour. If he loses them, Mars will be angry.

OCTAVIAN

(amused)

And punish him with a thunderbolt I suppose?

PULLO

I bet you did not laugh at the Gods when you were tied to that hand cart.

That wipes the smile off Octavian's face.

VORENIUS

If Caesar doesn't care about the eagles, why did he send us to find them?

OCTAVIAN

It would look strange if he made no effort, wouldn't it? Actually, losing the eagles is useful to him.

(MORE)

OCTAVIAN (CONT'D)

Of course, it will affect morale in the ranks, but a couple of rousing speeches will cure that quick enough. He can always get a facsimile made and concoct some heroic fable of it's recovery. Meanwhile, Pompey is no deep philosopher. He will take a symbolic loss for a real weakness.

VORENUS

And why is that useful to Caesar?

OCTAVIAN

Is it not clear?

VORENUS

Indulge an ignorant pleb.

OCTAVIAN

Caesar's ambition and Pompey's vanity have made them mortal enemies.

PULLO

Gerrae. They're like brothers them.

OCTAVIAN

No. But they are both men of honor, and neither wants to be the first to strike the treacherous blow. But Pompey is a conceited sort of a man, and he might be lured into a betrayal if he thinks Caesar is vulnerable. If I was Caesar I would feign weakness, and so try and lure Pompey into open betrayal.

PULLO

Gerrae. The boy's insane.

But Vorenus looks at Octavian with bemused respect.

They reach the ridgeline and look down the other side to a coastal plain that stretches away to a metallic ribbon of sea. A glittering speck moves across the plain toward the sea. CAMERA SWOOPS down off the hills and glides swiftly toward the speck, which resolves itself into THE EAGLE THIEVES galloping hard across grassy marshland, the sun glittering on their swords and armor. Reaching sand dunes and cresting a rise, the horsemen thunder down a beach, toward a motley collection of tents set up above the tide line. Just offshore, a black TRIREME galley rides at anchor.

EXT. GALLIC BEACH - NIGHT

POV - A campfire burning down. Sentries at the edge of the encampment. ANGLE - Octavian and Pullo peek out over a dune at the camp below. Their POV - A shadowy figure creeps into the camp.

ANGLE - Vorenius creeps through the camp undetected, to the back of the largest tent...

He slits the canvas of the biggest tent, and steps inside. SEXTUS, Pompey's agent - instantly recognizable by his glass eye - sitting on a bench, holding Caesar's gold eagles in his hand. Off his first surprised reaction, CUT TO...

EXT. GALLIC MARSHLANDS - DAY

SEXTUS'S SEVERED HEAD tied to Vorenius's saddle, bouncing around wildly as Octavian, Pullo, and Vorenius ride hard across a shallow RIVER DELTA. The men are riding two horses stolen from the Oscans. Pullo carries the eagle standard over his pommel.

They are being chased by a horde of irate Oscans.

EXT. GAUL - DAY

VARIOUS SHOTS - Pullo, Octavian, and Vorenius on horseback crossing a tall grass meadow; fording a river; walking the horses along a mountain path...

They emerge from woods, and find CAESAR'S CAMP spread out across a valley below.

EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP - DAY

Our trio ride into camp. Octavian leads on the white horse. Pullo follows, carrying the Eagles on their pole. They draw a crowd of cheering soldiers, overjoyed to see the Eagles back. Caesar exits his tent to see what the fuss is about...

Octavian halts before Caesar, dismounts, and bows solemnly.

OCTAVIAN

Greetings, uncle.

Off Caesar's puzzled expression...

INT. CAESAR'S TENT - DAY

Caesar, Octavian, Mark Antony, Pullo, and Vorenius, looking at Sextus's head lying on a table. Caesar looks closer. His POV: behind the ear - the branded sign of Pompey Magnus.

CAESAR

Gnaeus Pompey Magnus. My old friend.

This is a bitter-sweet moment for Caesar. He takes a beat before turning to Mark Antony with a rueful smile.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

I misjudged the man. I thought it would require strategy to turn him against me. But he must have set this foolish plan in motion months ago. He must have turned on me the moment that Julia died.

A beat of silence. Vorenus glances at Octavian - The boy was right... Caesar claps his hands.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Bene. The hostilities commence.

Caesar embraces Octavian and Mark Antony, then Vorenus and Pullo, kissing them on both cheeks. For them, this is akin to being kissed by Jesus, and they are incandescent with pride.

EXT/INT. POMPEY'S VILLA - DAY

Pompey posing for an ARTIST. A wooden box is delivered. Inside is Sextus's head, and a message tablet.

CAESAR V.O

Dearest Pompey, a quick note to tell you I have decided to winter my armies closer to home, at Ravenna, so I shall soon have the pleasure of paying you homage in person. By the way, I believe the enclosed man belongs to you. I am, as ever, your bonded brother, Caesar...

POMPEY

Damn.

EXT. VIA SACRA. ROME - DAY

Pompey and his orange-veiled Bride on an open litter at the center of a long wedding procession through the streets. A squadron of SLAVE BOYS DRESSED AS PAN lead the way, using hawthorn sticks to clear a path through crowds of raucously merry onlookers. Directly behind the wedding couple, a BAND OF MUSICIANS play pipes and horns and tambors as loud as possible to drown out the traditional ribaldry of the crowd.

ONLOOKERS

Oi'e! Give it her nice and slow big
boy... Dulce, if he can't do his job,
come see me!... Show us your titties!

A group of Pompey's men keep up a rhythmic singsong chant...

POMPEYANS

Pompey Magnus Pompey Magnus...

At the tail of the procession, one of Pompey's men tosses money and semi-precious baubles into the crowd; creating a tail of seething mayhem behind the wedding party, like the wake of a speedboat...

As they climb the PALATINE HILL The slaves carrying the wedding litter are glistening with sweat, close to exhaustion. In BG a fantastic panorama of Rome.

POMPEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The wedding litter stops outside Pompey's house. A WITHERED OLD CRONE in black is hoisted onto a slave's shoulders, from where she chants an ancient and unintelligible benediction.

The wedding couple walk to the front door.

WEDDING PARTY IN UNISON

Talasio! Talasio!

Pompey carries his bride over the threshold...

INT. ATRIUM OF POMPEY'S VILLA - DAY

All the household slaves are gathered to greet the Bride and Groom as they enter. Pompey sets his bride down.

POMPEY

Here we are then my dear.

The Bride pulls back her orange veil, revealing her to be Cornelia, the homely daughter of Metellus Scipio. She lifts her face to be kissed. Pompey shies, but recovers sufficiently to kiss her on the cheek.

POMPEY (CONT'D)

(to servants)

All of you, this is my new wife,
Cornelia.

A murmur of greetings from the servants.

POMPEY (CONT'D)

I must see to my ah, affairs. Perhaps I shall eat with you this evening?

CORNELIA

As it please you husband.

POMPEY

(awkwardly)

Good. Ah, well then, make yourself at home...

Pompey exits hurriedly. Beat. Cornelia covers her dismay by glaring at the servants.

CORNELIA

Now then. I run a disciplined house. Misbehave and you will be sold cheap in Ostia. Are we clear?

The Servants mumble their assent.

INT. ATRIUM OF ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Octavia wailing. Atia pacing, seething mad.

ATIA

O stop your wailing! Stop it damn you! Maybe if you had summoned up a little charm, instead of moping about like a torpid old she-cow, this would not have happened.

Octavia takes it up a notch.

ATIA (CONT'D)

You have nothing to wail about you stupid girl. Everyone knows it's a political repudiation. One only has to look at Cornelia. A poor sad chicken, plucked and boiled. (beat) You should be happy. You can go back to that tiresome husband of yours.

OCTAVIA

How can I go back to Glabius? I have been dishonored and shamed before the whole city!

ATIA

Nonsense. A girl of good family can't be dishonored by a villainous little pleb like Pompey.

(MORE)

ATIA (CONT'D)
It is I who has been made to look
foolish! It is I who has lost face!

OCTAVIA
I want him dead. I want him dead!

ATIA
(grimly)
That you will have. Pompey will eat sand
for this.

Atia pulls Octavia into a maternal embrace..

EXT. ROMAN CAMP IN GAUL - DAY

Caesar and his staff break camp in full array. Caesar is on the white stallion. Octavian rides alongside him in the place of honor. Riding side by side amongst the other officers, Pullo and Vorenus are mounted on fine horses and wear the gaudy uniforms of senior staff officers. Both men are beaming with pride. They pass Pullo's old cohort...

PULLO
Ohe! Boys! Look! It's me! Titus Pullo!
How you like that eh? This is my horse!

The legionaries laugh and jeer affectionately...

PULLO (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Ei, show respect worm-eaters, or I will
have you decimated!

Just in back of Caesar and his staff comes a horse-drawn CAGE ON WHEELS, inside which sits Vercingetorix, the chief of the Gauls, naked and chained.

We move up and wide to a BIRDS EYE VIEW of Caesar's legions on the move; a river of soldiers, flowing south toward Italy.

TO BE CONTINUED....

ROME

Episode II
"How Titus Pullo Brought Down The Republic"

by
Bruno Heller

1st draft
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EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP OUTSIDE THE CITY OF RAVENNA - DAY

Rain pours down on a great muddy city of huts and tents, aligned on a grid in the exact Roman manner.

CAPTION - *Gaul, near the Italian border. Autumn, 50 BC.*

On the mustering ground at the center of camp, the entire Thirteenth Legion - 5,000 men - is gathered. JULIUS CAESAR is on horseback with several JUNIOR OFFICERS.

Barebacked and tied to a wagon wheel, TITUS PULLO is given a sound flogging by a big Sicilian QUARTERMASTER. Pullo takes the punishment without a murmur.

The rank and file are sullenly restive, a disgruntled and disaffected lot. LUCIUS VORENUS directs the grim CENTURIONS who stalk the lines with staves, delivering whacks to the more obstreperous of the men.

Caesar addresses the Legion as the flogging proceeds. He has an actor's knack for projecting his voice with great volume.

CAESAR

Titus Pullo is a good man, a Hero of the Legion. I love him like a cherished son. I gave him a horse! But Justice knows every man's number. Pullo did wrong, and he is paying for it. As will any man here that breaks the law.... Italy lies close, sure. But that makes none of you any the less soldiers. Soldiers under sacrament. Brawlers and drunkards will be flogged. Thieves will be strangled. Deserters will be crucified. Proceed, Legate.

Caesar rides away. A mounted officer spurs his horse forward and shouts guttural commands at ear-splitting volume. As the rank and file disperse, Vorenus oversees the untying of Pullo by two LEGIONARIES.

PULLO

(grinning stoically)

E'ou, is that all? I was just beginning to enjoy myself.

VORENUS

Idiot. Take him to the medic station.

The legionaries take Pullo's arms, but he brushes them off.

PULLO

N'ia boys, I'll race you there.

Pullo's legs buckle a little but he recovers and walks stiffly away.

INT. CAESAR'S TENT - DAY

Caesar and his slave clerk STRABO - small, skinny, old Greek man - ploughing through a mountain of administrative papyruswork. They have the graceful efficiency of long partnership, and converse without interrupting the flow of work.

STRABO

Three this morning, neh?

CAESAR

(waving them away)

Outcasts and idiots. None of the good men have run. Nor will they.

STRABO

Nor will they follow you to Rome.

CAESAR

Not yet.

STRABO

Time is running out. We cannot wait here forever. This is a very precarious position. What happens in January when your term runs out and we're still sitting here?

Caesar is amused by Strabo's fear.

CAESAR

The business of motivating men to fight is a tricky matter Strabo. I would not expect a slave to understand the subtleties.

STRABO

(grumpily)

Bene. I trust an education in these subtleties will begin shortly.

(surprised, off a document)

What's this? Five hundred thousand?

CAESAR

Tiam, I've put Antony up for election as Tribune of the Plebs. There's alot of votes need buying.

STRABO
 (appalled)
 Mark Antony for Tribune of the Plebs?
 But he...

CAESAR
 You may speak.

STRABO
 I had understood the Tribune of the
 Plebs to be a sacred office, of great
 dignity and seriousness.

CAESAR
 And so?

On Strabo, trying to think of a polite enough reply.

EXT. ROAD IN TUSCAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A LITTLE BLOND GIRL, maybe sixteen months old, peering blankly out at the world from a shawl papoose in the arms of a RAGGED YOUNG WOMAN, whose right leg and right arm are shackled to a chain linking her to twenty other SLAVES all crammed into an ox-drawn freight wagon.

CAPTION - *Six Weeks Later...*

The wagon is with the baggage train in the middle of a column of fifty cavalry troops in marching order, halted in the middle of the road.

It's just after dawn; the hills are wreathed in rising mists, and the horses blow great clouds of steamy breath into the chilly dawn air. VORENUS, PULLO, and OCTAVIAN are amongst the MOUNTED OFFICERS grouped around the standard - A Heron with wings outstretched, representing Mark Antony. Strabo is a few meters back, yawning and stretching atop a small mule.

The jingling of metal and the clopping of hooves and a low murmur of conversation mingles with the very distinct sound of a woman gasping and groaning. MARK ANTONY is in an adjacent field, vigorously screwing a PEASANT WOMAN.

On Pullo et al...

PULLO
 How far now?

VORENUS
 Three hours at pace.

Pullo claps his hands gleefully.

PULLO

Ahai!

VORENUS

Show some dignity. You're under the standard.

PULLO

(gesturing toward Antony)
Talk to him.

VORENUS

He's not under the standard.

Pullo rolls his eyes at Octavian, who smiles back.

PULLO

Three hours away from a wife he hasn't seen in eight years. Man's terrified.

OCTAVIAN

A reunion is a happy event, surely?

VORENUS

Speak of something else.

PULLO

Terrified. What if she's lost her teeth? What if she's gotten skinny? What if she's been letting other men--

VORENUS

---Silence!

At that point, Antony ambles back from his morning ritual, and Pullo falls silent.

MARK ANTONY

(to an aide de camp)
Give her something.

Antony mounts his big black horse and roars like a lion. His men smile indulgently at this familiar display of high spirits. The AIDE hurries over to the peasant woman, gives her a coin. The column moves on.

The peasant woman pockets the coin, straightens her dress, and picks up her harrow.

EXT. ROMAN STREETS - DAY

VARIOUS SHOTS - a documentary camera in the narrow, crowded, streets studies the faces of the people waiting for Mark Antony's procession to come by. An expectant buzz builds to a roar as Antony and his retinue approach. Antony walks into view, and the crowd goes berserk. They love him. He's now clad in a blinding white toga, flanked by Pullo and Vorenus and several other soldiers, who have a hard job keeping the adoring crowd from picking Antony up and devouring him. Antony enjoys himself immensely.

At the junction of several streets is a TEMPLE OF JUNO, the steps of which have been claimed by a large gang of POMPEIAN ROUGHNECKS, led by MILO; a doughy, balding man with eyes like flints. He and his men glower in menacing silence as Antony et al pass by.

PULLO

Pompeian shites. Let us have a go skipper?

Antony wears a theatrical smile...

ANTONY

Don't think of it.

A HIGH ANGLE POV on Antony's procession as it creeps slowly toward the forum.

NEW ANGLE reveals..

EXT. TERRACE OF POMPEY'S PALACE - CONTINUOUS

POMPEY & CATO watching Antony's progress with scowling faces.

INT. BATHROOM. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Atia is lying in her bath when she hears the faint sound of a baby crying. Her eyes narrow. She listens intently. There it is again. She leaps from the bath.

Throwing on a gown, she chases the sound of crying through the house, the servants scattering in fear before her.

Atia throws open a door and discovers OCTAVIA and GLABIUS huddled over their crying baby daughter, trying to get her to shussh. Octavia juts out her chin defiantly.

OCTAVIA

Good. I'm glad. I'm glad you found us Mamma, because Glabius and I---

ATIA

---Silence!

(points at Glabius)

You! Take your wretched child and leave my house!

GLABIUS

I will not. Octavia is my rightful wife and the mother of my child. I will not be denied her.

ATIA

You defy Caesar?

GLABIUS

A fig for Caesar. I do. I do defy him!

ATIA

Bravery now? You are most unpredictable Glabius.

GLABIUS

I defy him with all my heart. I would defy Jupiter himself for this love that we share---

ATIA

---Love? This is not some filthy Greek play! Love? By the five furies if I were not a genteel woman, I would have you flayed and hung from a bracket at the door! Castor! fetch the Dogs!

Glabius takes the crying baby from Octavia and exits.

INT. ATRIUM. CONTINUOUS

Followed by Atia and Octavia, Glabius stalks to the front door; where he stops, swivels.

GLABIUS

Gods be with you Octavia. I love you.

ATIA

Castor! The dogs!

Glabius exits. Octavia struggles for air to speak...

ATIA (CONT'D)

Insolent wretch. I tell you my honey, you are very well rid of that one.

Octavia rushes at her mother and flails away at her.

OCTAVIA (CONT'D)

I hate you I hate you I hate you!

Atia grabs her by the wrist, and slaps her across the face. Crying hysterically, Octavia runs off to her room.

ATIA

Silly girl.

(calls after her)

Your brother will be home soon, so make yourself nice.

INT. TEMPLE OF JUPITER - DAY

Lit by golden shafts of light, a massive seated statue of Jupiter. At Jupiter's foot, a FAT OLD PRIEST - his face hidden in a cowl - bumbles sonorously at Mark Antony, who struggles to hide his impatience...

PRIEST

...By the grace of Jupiter the Plebeian assembly of the all conquering City of Rome states that we the people of Rome have elected Mark Antony here before us to the sacred office of Tribune.

He hands Antony a short white stick. Antony looks to STRABO, Caesar's clerk, crouching at his side.

STRABO

(whispering)

I accept the tribunate and give my oath to Roma that I will speak for the people as it is written.

ANTONY

(with great brio)

I accept the tribunate and give my oath to Roma that I will speak for the people as it is written.

A choir of PRIESTS voice an elaborate, unintelligible, chant.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Tell me that's the end of it.

STRABO

A moment more I believe, Dominus.

Antony looks exasperated. The priests potter about with their liturgical apparatus...

At the back of the temple, Pullo, Vorenus, and Octavian are looking equally impatient.

INT. ATRIUM. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Atia paces impatiently. Finally, there is a knock at the outer gate. A Servant opens the doors and Octavian enters, followed by Pullo and Vorenus.

ATIA
My baby boy!

Atia rushes to Octavian and embraces him.

ATIA (CONT'D)
My poor rabbit. So thin. Was it very horrible? Of course it was. I can't even imagine. We shall never speak of it. We shall just put it totally out of our minds. You're back safe at home now. And who are these?

This last off Pullo and Vorenus, with a tin smile. The two soldiers are a nervous and awkward, a little overawed by the grandness of their surroundings.

OCTAVIAN
You will be very good to them Mamma. They are particular friends of mine.

ATIA
(instantly suspicious)
Friends? In what particular?

OCTAVIAN
Mamma, these are the men that took me from captivity. First Spear Centurion Lucius Vorenus and Legionary Titus Pullo.

Atia relaxes and smiles with genuine warmth.

ATIA
A'hai! So. We embrace you.

She makes a gesture of welcome, but doesn't actually embrace either of them. Vorenus nods his head respectfully.

ATIA
Good fearsome specimens you are. I wonder it took you so long to subdue those odious Gauls.

PULLO

There was a great many of them, ma'am.

ATIA

Ha ha. A great many. Very good.

Beat. What next? An awkward social moment.

ATIA (CONT'D)

Bene, you must be rewarded before you go.
Someone bring me my purse.

A stick-like man exits the atrium at a run.

VORENUS

That is not necessary.

ATIA

Is it not? I do not want to break your
regulations...

OCTAVIAN

They shall stay and eat, mamma.

ATIA

Why not so? There shall be bread and
meat put out in the kitchen.

OCTAVIAN

I mean, they will eat with us.

Vorenius and Pullo are just as appalled as Atia.

VORENUS

Obliged ah, young sir, but, my wife...

OCTAVIAN

Hush. They will eat with us Mamma.

(off her look)

Caesar has given them honorary horses and
they ride with the standard. It is
perfectly acceptable to eat with them.

Atia raises an eyebrow and levels a flinty look at the
soldiers before smiling brightly...

ATIA

Splendid idea. It's symbolical.
We shall all dine together, as equals.

A WAIL from OCTAVIA O.S.

ATIA
 (off Octavian's alarm)
 It's just your sister.

OCTAVIAN
 What is amiss?

ATIA
 (dismissive)
 Women's troubles. Nothing a good
 leeching won't cure.

INT. TRICLINIUM. ATIA'S VILLA - LATER THAT DAY

Atia, Octavian, Pullo, and Vorenus are semi-reclined on two wide couches at a low table piled high with all kinds of food. A lot of wine has been drunk.

PULLO
 In toto? I don't know. I should guess...
 (furrowed brow)
 I don't know, there's too many to think
 of in one number.

ATIA
 And you Lucius? How many?

VORENUS
 Three hundred and nine fighting men.
 I don't keep count on civilians and such.

ATIA
 (purring)
 So many.

OCTAVIAN
 You are very exact.

VORENUS
 The war temple needs an exact number when
 you make an offering.

PULLO
 So wait now, you make an offering for
 every man you kill?

VORENUS
 That's the proper procedure.

PULLO
 Brother. That's a lot of wine and goats.

VORENUS

There's a discounted price once past a hundred.

PULLO

You know that's not your goat they're killing. Everyone in the temple thinks they bought the goat. They're taking the price of ten goats and killing only one. You know that, e'ou?

ATIA

I think it's admirable. Too few people can be bothered to do things the proper old Roman way. I commend you Lucius.

Vorenus doesn't buy her flattery, but he cannot help but bend a little under her charm.

VORENUS

I cannot deny I prefer the old ways.

OCTAVIAN

Vorenus is a strict Catonian.

VORENUS

I believe in the divinity of the Republic. If Cato believes the same, then I suppose I am a Catonian.

ATIA

But Cato and Pompey and those people say your own chief is a war criminal.

VORENUS

They are mistaken.

ATIA

They say he wants to march on Rome and make himself king.

VORENUS

He would never do that. Nor would his soldiers follow him if he did. March on Rome? Never. It's sacrilege. No man of honor would follow him.

PULLO

(cheerfully tipsy)

I'm no man of honor then because me, I say Caesar should ride in here with elephants and squash Pompey and Cato and anybody else that wants it. Like bugs.

(MORE)

VORENUS

We will tax your kindness no longer.

Pullo gets unsteadily to his feet.

INT/EXT. ATRIUM. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Atia and Octavian say good-bye to Pullo and Vorenius...

ATIA

You must return to visit us again.
Octavian needs reliable, virile, friends.
He may rely on you, I do not doubt?

Pullo is bursting with inebriated pride.

PULLO

Your graceful ladiness, of natural
course. Forever and in all ways.

VORENUS

(cagily)
As you say Domina.

Pullo attempts a gentlemanly bow. The soldiers clasp hands
with Octavian and make their exit.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Pullo and Vorenius walk away together.

PULLO

Hmmphh.

VORENUS

Say again?

PULLO

I did not speak.

They reach a busy five-way corner; pause.

VORENUS

Where are you going?

PULLO

I have not decided as yet.

VORENUS

I go up the hill this way. My home is in
that big grey pile there...

ON a tall apartment block poking above the rooftops.

PULLO

E'ia. Go with fortune, sir.

VORENUS

You also Pullo. Go with fortune.

Pullo salutes. Vorenius returns it. Beat.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

The cleaner brothels are in the Suburana,
behind the Venereal temple.

Pullo nods coldly. Vorenius walks away. That's it.

EXT. AVENTINE HILL - END OF DAY

The sun is setting over the Tiber as a HOODED BEGGAR climbs a steep street through a teeming neighborhood of tenement blocks (*Insulae*). Imagine the Lower East Side in NYC; except built of wood and lath and stucco on steep and crooked little streets. This is ancient working class Rome; the same families have lived in these insulae for hundreds of years. Each one is a village, with it's own traditions, it's own Gods, it's own secrets.

The Beggar stops outside the distinctively tall apartment building. There are dozens of children playing raucously in the courtyard, young mums chatting on the doorsteps, old women dozing in the late afternoon sun. Children lined up with buckets at the communal pump.

The beggar sits down against a wall with a good view of the courtyard and the building entrance.

A STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN walks toward us; a voluptuous, raven-haired, green-eyed, Earth Goddess with a baby of eighteen months propped on her hip. This is NIOBE. As she passes the beggar we hear her talking to the baby...

NIOBE

Soon be home darling. Who's my best baby boy? Who's my only little love?

The Beggar jumps up and goes after Niobe. He throws back his hood. It's Vorenius, a crazy light in his eyes.

He grabs Niobe and spins her round to face him. She takes a half beat to recognize him.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Lucius! Wh---

She is cut short by his hand around her throat. In the other hand he brandishes a dagger. The baby wails like a banshee.

VORENUS
What child is that?

NIOBE
Are you mad!? Let me go!

Everyone in the courtyard is frozen, watching without knowing what to do.

VORENUS
Answer me whore! Is this your child?

NIOBE
(half-choked)
Let me go, and I will answer you.

Reluctantly, Vorenius lets her go.

VORENUS
Speak.

NIOBE
(mad as hell)
His name is Lucius Vorenius. After his grandfather.

VORENUS
Speak me no riddles.

NIOBE
He is your child's child. The son of your daughter.

Vorenius stares at her blankly for a second.

VORENUS
My daughter? But the eldest is only, she's, she's...

NIOBE
Thirteen.

VORENUS
Thirteen
(thinks)
Her son, by who?

NIOBE
Crito the Drover's boy. It's all decent and proper.

Vorenius stares at the baby, awed.

VORENIUS

The son of my daughter. My grandson.

Vorenius laughs aloud in wonder, and reaches out to touch the baby. Niobe turns on her heel and stalks away, hugging little Lucius to her bosom.

VORENIUS (CONT'D)

Wait Niobe.

She keeps on walking.

VORENIUS (CONT'D)

Niobe. Stop. I order you to stop!

Niobe disappears through a door.

We hold on Vorenius and his courtyard audience as he realizes what a completely stupid thing he has just done.

INT. STAIRWELL OF INSULAE - CONTINUOUS

Niobe pounds up the rickety wooden stairs with Lucius in her arms. She runs into an apartment on an upper storey, slams the door and locks it. Out of breath and close to hysterics, she leans against the door for support.

A plump teenage girl - VORENA THE ELDEST - appears from another room..

VORENA

Mamma? What's wrong?

Niobe bursts into tears.

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS - NIGHTFALL

As the sun sinks on the far side of the Tiber, The shops and stores are shuttered, the temple doors are closed, and respectable citizens hurry home, anxious to be inside before dark. The streets are left to the homeless, to thieves and drunkards, orgiasts, gamblers, cut-throats, priests of Morpheus, acolytes of Dis, lepers, and madmen.

EXT. ROMAN STREET - NIGHT

Pullo wanders down a crooked little alley of brothels and taverns, grinning like a fox in the henhouse. A cacophony of rough music, Pimps yelling sales pitches, drunkards brawling, children crying.

INT. WINE SHOP - NIGHT

Alone at the bar, Pullo holds up a bowl of wine;

PULLO
(toasting)
Deo Bacchus...

He knocks back the bowl of wine, smacks his lips.

INT. BROTHEL - NIGHT

A small whitewashed partition. Pullo has sex with a PROSTITUTE on a mattress beneath a little altar of Venus.

In the dingy foyer, A THREE-PIECE BAND makes desultory music on harp, pipes, and drum.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BROTHEL - NIGHT

Pullo in the street, dancing drunkenly to the band. The NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN frolic around him. He tosses them a few coins from a fat purse. He is being watched with keen interest by a furtive little man in the grubby but respectable uniform of A SUB-LICTOR'S CLERK.

INT. INSULAE OF VORENUS. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Vorenus knocks softly on the apartment door.

VORENUS
Niobe,
(waits, no answer)
I am sorry. I am very sorry indeed that
I misjudged you. Niobe? Do you hear?
I am saying that I was wrong.
Niobe, I am asking you with all respect
and forbearance. Open the door.

Not a sound from inside the apartment. Vorenus pounds heavily on the door.

VORENUS (CONT'D)
Open the door!

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Vorenus's anger echoing down the stairwell.

VORENUS
Niobe!

The neighbours giggle at the impromptu entertainment.

INT. NIOBE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Niobe sits at a table with her two daughters. The front door is in BG. We hear Vorenius loud and clear. The baby sits on the floor in a corner, playing with a spoon.

VORENUS THE ELDEST

Mamma, pleeeeee please let him in.

More pounding. Niobe makes a gesture of indifference.

NIOBE

Go.

Just then Vorenius kicks the door down, and stomps inside. The girls scream in fear and hide themselves behind their mother. Niobe doesn't move from her seat. Vorenius is halted in his tracks by the sight of his two daughters

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Girls, you remember your father.

VORENUS

(awkward)

Daughters. I, er, uh, I am very, I am very pleased to find you healthy.

Frozen and speechless, his girls stare at him in terror.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

You are both become marriageable then, And fair prizes, e'ia. I am glad of it. A benefice you favor your mother eh? Now you see how ugly your father is.

He attempts a smile. They continue to stare dumbly.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

They are not simple are they?

NIOBE

Greet your father properly, as you have been taught to do.

The two terrified girls creep out from behind their mother, prostrate themselves before him, and murmur humble obeisances.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

I raised them in the old manner, as you would wish it.

Vorenus searches for something, anything, to say.

VORENUS

Niobe...

NIOBE

Niobe now it is? Not whore?

The daughters are still on the floor and Niobe nudges Vorena the eldest with her foot.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Up now children...

The girls scamper away to a corner of the room.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Whore he names me. Shamed forever!
Shamed forever before all my friends and
family and neighbors. Cytheris was
there, and Horatia, and the bitch Fabia;
the whole quarter will hear! Ao'wei!
Eldest, bring me a knife. I shall take
me down and stab me to death in the
courtyard for all the world. The good
gods know that I can't live longer.

VORENUS

Don't be ridiculous.

NIOBE

Eight years Lucius. Eight years gone,
and this is how you greet your wife?

Vorenus reaches into his tunic and pulls out a leather bag.
He tosses it onto the table in front of her.

VORENUS

For you personally. My official spoils,
I put into slaves. They're at the depot.

NIOBE

Official spoils?

VORENUS

I should clear ten thousand denarii.

NIOBE

(thrilled)
Ten thousand!?

Niobe eagerly opens up the bag and empties it onto the table. fifty or so GOLD TEETH, a couple dozen GOLD and SILVER RINGS & BROOCHES, and what appears to be a DRIED PENIS. Niobe's face lights up with gleeful, almost sexual avarice.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

The phallus is off a Suevi I killed in the Rhinelands. Very strong, very fierce people.

Niobe rushes to embrace him. They kiss awkwardly.

INT. PUBLIC LAVATORIES - NIGHT

A STONE BENCH with twenty round holes in it runs around the edge of an otherwise empty whitewashed hall with a high, well-ventilated ceiling that fills the room with a latticework of moonlight. Pullo, very drunk, is one of three men there. One of the others is the Sub-Lictor's Clerk.

PULLO

Call this a mumping brothel district? You want to try Masilia or Narbo a'ia! This is cack, this is. Dead as a Samnite. Where's all the real action?

He points at the Sub-lictor's clerk.

PULLO (CONT'D)

You! Speak! Where is it?

THE SUB-LICTOR'S CLERK

Me? I uh... Very quiet it is since all this political fuss kicked up. And now what with Antony arriving...

PULLO

His bloody excellency General Mark Antony to you, little man.

THE SUB-LICTOR'S CLERK

What ah, species of action were you looking for?

PULLO

Don't care. Cockfight, orgy, I don't give a figareen.

THE SUB-LICTOR'S CLERK

I have a friend who sometimes runs a nice friendly dice game. Perhaps I could---

PULLO

---Bene! Take me to this friendly friend
immediately!

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

The Clerk leads Pullo through a maze of alleys and lanes to an iron-bound oak door set in the wall of a crumbling old ruin. The Clerk knocks, and they are admitted to..

INT. EX-GLADIATOR'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The Roman equivalent of a Hell's Angel's club-house. A crowd of thuggish goons and their slatternly women, drinking and gambling at a couple of big dice tables. Many scars and a serious deficiency of limbs, noses, eyes, etc. tells us these are EX-GLADIATORS. The Clerk gestures discreetly to the TAVERN-KEEPER; an old Myrmidon with one arm, who nods slightly in reply. Everybody turns to look at the new arrivals. Pullo smiles beatifically at them, like he's just seen his dear old mother. This is his kind of place.

A MOMENT LATER

Pullo takes a spot at one of the tables amongst a group of very hard-faced men. He raises a bottle in greeting.

PULLO

Salud!

The man opposite has a face so well scarred and stitched he looks like an an amish quilt - he's called Stilicho.

STILICHO

Where you from friend?

PULLO

Me, my pretty? I'm from the all-
conquering Thirteenth legion of Gaius
Julius Caesar.

Immediate tension and stoney glares off mention of Caesar.

STILICHO

(a polite smile)

Better you keep that quiet.
This here is deep Pompeian territory.

PULLO

(genially)

Very fine territory it is, e'ia.
Pompey is a mighty mighty man. Which who
can deny it?

Nobody seems very convinced by this.

PULLO (CONT'D)

Are we not all Romans? One blood?
Let's play, n'ia?

He drops his bulging purse on the table. The Gambler next to him is a big swarthy BESTIARIUS called TARQUIN...

TARQUIN

Let him play.

The HOUSEMAN looks to the TAVERNKEEPER, who nods assent. Pullo gets the cup and dice. He tosses two gold coins on the table and rattles the dice.

PULLO (CONT'D)

Come along ladies, hear me now.
Furies and River Gods for five.

While he rattles, the other gamblers put complex sidebets down as to whether he'll make his call. In BG we see the Sub-Lictors Clerk taking coins from the Tavernkeeper. Pullo looses the dice with an expert flick. On the tumbling dice...

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

A GROUP OF ARMED MEN make their way by the light of oil lanterns on poles. They are all hooded and masked in one way or another to conceal their identities, but there are four men in the center of the group who by their dress and bearing must be important people. The night people make sure to give them plenty of gangway.

INT/EXT. ATRIUM OF ATIA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Atia at the front door with Octavian beside her as the first hooded men come in from the street through the little sallyport. The four VIPS are revealed to be Cato, Scipio, Cicero, and Pompey. Atia speaks formally...

ATIA

We are honored to receive you.

She bends in polite submission. Pompey steps forward, taking precedence, and makes a gesture of thanks.

POMPEY

We are glad to accept your hospitality.

ATIA
 (viciously sweet smile)
 And how is your lovely wife Cornelia?

POMPEY
 She is well I thank you.

Cato and Scipio merely nod at Atia, not bothering to hide their scorn for this famously wanton woman.

CICERO
 My dear Atia, a pleasure. Forgive us
 for imposing at such a ludicrous hour.

ATIA
 Not at all. I adore it. The secrecy,
 the intrigue. It's most thrilling.

CATO
 I must be certain you comprehend, Lady.
 This meeting is invisible.

Atias gives him a patronising smile.

ATIA
 Be assured Cato, I do not see you.

A banging on the street door. A servant opens the sally port and Mark Antony steps in, followed by a small retinue that includes STRABO, Caesar's clerk.

ATIA (CONT'D)
 General Antony, we are---

ANTONY
 ---Gods Atia, your beauty is painful. You
 are Cupid's razorblade. You are the
 crucifix of Venus. Let me die in your
 arms.

Atia titters girlishly and waves him away.

ATIA
 S'is Marcus.

Antony grins insolently at Pompey et al.

ANTONY
 Good night to you all.

CATO

General Antony, you are inside the sacred precincts of Rome, but yet you wear the bloody red cloak of a soldier! Have you no propriety? Do you dare display your ambitions so nakedly?

Antony looks down at his cloak in dismay. It's impossible to say whether Antony is genuinely contrite, or mocking Cato.

ANTONY

Che brutta figura! It completely fell from my mind. I am most extremely sorry. Will you excuse me, friend Cato?

Cato doesn't know what to say. Antony takes off the cloak.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Atia, take this and burn it.

CICERO

That's not necessary.

ANTONY

No? Bene...

He tosses the cloak to Strabo.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Then let's stop blathering and get down to business, neh?

CATO

(bristling)

Blathering you say?

Atia claps her hands merrily.

ATIA

What a congerie of Heroes! Such vim!
I feel like Helen of Troy. Shall we adjourn to the courtyard?

Atia ushers her guests into an inner courtyard which has been furnished as a symposium, with several comfortable benches and stools casually arranged, so that formal seating precedence need not be observed. Strabo sits on a little stool just behind Mark Antony.

A fountain depicting a cherub stabbing a dolphin tinkles soothingly in BG.

POMPEY

Speak, young Marcus. What is it you are so impatient to tell us?

Octavian slips into the room and takes a seat in a corner. We see this negotiation from his owlish POV.

ANTONY

I have been delegated by Caesar to negotiate a compromise.

SCIPIO

(gloating)

A'hai, I told y--

Cato silences Scipio with a look.

ANTONY

Caesar wishes to avoid bloodshed. He wishes to be known as a man of reason and probity. Therefore, when his present term ends, he is willing to accept the command of a single legion province. Illyria, by preference.

Pompey and the others are shocked and angry. This is not what they were expecting.

POMPEY

I don't understand.

ANTONY

(deliberately misunderstanding)

Command of a province. So he will have legal immunity. So you rascals can't go dragging him through the courts.

POMPEY

Do not be insolent. We are here to discuss the terms of Caesar's resignation. He might have avoided prosecution by accepting a few years banishment.

ANTONY

Strange notion. Banishment for what?

CATO

(raging)

For what? For fomenting a tyranny! For illegal warfare! Theft, murder!

ANTONY
 (derisively)
 ---Gerrae. What else?

Antony has them all steaming now.

POMPEY
 Illyria, e'ia. The man's term of office
 ends in two weeks---

ANTONY
 ---We say six months.

POMPEY
 Neh. Two weeks. He sits alone in
 Ravenna with one mutinous skeleton of a
 legion. And he dares try to dictate
 terms, to me?

ANTONY
 Caesar has many more legions than the
 thirteenth.

SCIPIO
 On the far side of the Alps.

ANTONY
 Winter does not last forever.
 Spring comes, the snows melt.

SCIPIO
 Is that a threat? That's a threat.

ANTONY
 (equably)
 I assure you, it is no threat. The snows
 always melt.

POMPEY
 Let us be clear. If I do not give him a
 province, what will he do?

ANTONY
 He said I should be accurate here.
 What was the phrase Strabo?

Strabo whispers in Antony's ear.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
 'Caesar will take all needful measures to
 protect his interests and those of the
 Republic'.

Cato is speechless with anger.

POMPEY

I am grieved and surprised to find Caesar so bumptious. I had hoped we might have a rational negotiation. If that is his last word, we shall go.

Antony stands up, claps his hands.

ANTONY

Bene, we are done with business then. Who'll have some wine with me?

POMPEY

Good night young man. Pleasant dreams.

Pompey et al exits. Cicero goes last, regretfully. Antony shrugs, drinks some wine.

EXT. ROMAN STREETS - NIGHT.

Pompey, Cicero, Cato, and Scipio at the center of their torchlit escort.

POMPEY

His demands are a bluff. He wishes to appear supremely confident. Evidently he is desperately weak; even weaker than we had thought. This is a last ditch attempt to frighten us into making concessions, while he still has the semblance of an army. He's weak Cicero. Dying.

CICERO

Is that not when all the proverbs tell us to be wary? Does not the dying asp bite deepest?

Pompey scowls at this pedantry. They pass the tavern that Pullo entered earlier. We leave them and go to...

INT. GLADIATOR'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Pullo stands at the dice table, grumpy, swaying with fatigue as he shakes the dice cup. His purse is near empty.

PULLO

Wise Men and Graces on two...

The dice fly. Pullo groans. The other Gamblers yelp happily, and rake up Pullo's stake.

TARQUIN

Those Graces don't like you I think.
You call 'em, they piss in your face.

The other gamblers laugh. Pullo picks up the dice...

PULLO

(big smile)
Suck my dick.

Tarquin tenses, ready to fight. Stilicho holds him back.

STILICHO

Calm, brother.

TARQUIN

The man has a ill way with him.

STILICHO

He's a country boy. Lost alot of money.
He means no offense.

PULLO

None at all.
(rattles the dice)
Twin River Gods. Come up, you mumping
cunnies! Help me now!
(tosses the dice)
Bitches!

Grinning, Tarquin takes the dice cup from Pullo.

TARQUIN

How much have you there Soldier?
A couple three ases?

Pullo grunts in agreement. Tarquin tosses in some coins.
Pullo follows suit.

TARQUIN (CONT'D)

Graces over four.

Tarquin throws the dice casually, without even looking.
His friends whoop with delight. He hit his bet. Tarquin
gathers up the last of Pullo's money, and picks up the dice.

TARQUIN (CONT'D)

How you feel now Soldier? Feel good?

With lightning speed Pullo grabs Tarquin's right wrist, and
pulls his fingers open. FOUR DICE instead of two roll out
onto the table.

A very long beat of utter silence and stillness; Pullo seems totally relaxed, gazing quizzically at Tarquin and his friends, like they are a chess problem. Then, suddenly and swiftly, Pullo pulls his sword, stabs Tarquin, and upturns the dice table.

Stilicho and every other man in the place grabs a weapon and tries to get to Pullo. He fights his way toward the door with a table leg in one hand and a knife in the other. He's clubbed about the head and stabbed at least three or four times, but through size and sheer ferocity, he makes it to the door and out onto the street.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT - VARIOUS SHOTS

Pullo is chased through the dark streets, his pursuers following a trail of blood by the light of a full moon.

INT. GLADIATOR'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Amid the wreckage, Stilicho kneels over the dead body of Tarquin, howling with grief.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

Pullo's pursuers pause in a little plaza, deciding which street to take. There's a water cistern in the plaza, and none of them notice that the water in it is blood red...

When the pursuers run on, Pullo emerges from the bloodied water. He clambers out of the cistern and staggers away into darkness, his laboured breathing lapping into...

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vorenus and Niobe have sex. Vorenus bangs away in a functional manner and Niobe lies there; co-operative, but not what you'd call committed.

INT. ATIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Atia and Antony make passionate love. Antony pounding away like a mad bull, Atia writhing and screaming rhythmically. Atia's body slave Merula - a black-clad little old lady - sits on her stool in the corner, spinning wool-yarn on a hand-held spindle.

INT. OCTAVIA'S BEDROOM. ATIA'S VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Octavia lies on her bed, listening without expression to her mother's screams.

INT. OCTAVIAN'S BEDROOM. ATIA'S VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Octavian ditto.

INT. SLAVE'S CELL - NIGHT

Strabo sits on a cot writing on a wax tablet...

STRABO V.O

....You will be pleased to hear that Pompey and Cato were deeply offended by your negotiating position, and General Antony was as arrogant and provocative as one could hope for...

EXT. ROME - DAWN

Perched atop a mossy old shrine to Mercury near the summit of the Capitoline hill, A BRIGHT RED COCKEREL crows at the rising sun.

EXT. FORUM - MORNING

An elderly priest emerges yawning and grumbling from the little hole in the wall in which he lives.

Next to the Acta Diurna is a kind of huge and to our eyes incredibly complex wall calendar; obviously very old, made of made of wood and brass. The priest moves a golden fish on a little rail from one 'box' to the next, indicating a new day has begun. Then he shuffles off and pees against the wall.

EXT. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Strabo hands a despatch bag to a MOUNTED COURIER.

EXT. ROME - DAY

The Courier walks his horse out of the city, giving us VARIOUS SHOTS establishing daybreak and the city waking...

CARGO WAGONS rumble from warehouses out into the countryside beyond the walls. In the SLAVE MARKET, the day's offerings are lined up and hosed down, and their feet are dipped in whitewash. The BUTCHER sets to killing a fresh batch of pigs. The BAKER pulls his loaves from the oven. In a yard abutting a great statue of Jupiter, a yawning BOY-PRIEST throws corn, and GEESE come quacking.

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Awake in bed, Niobe watches Vorenius beginning to stir from sleep. A faint knock at the front door.

NIOBE
 (calling out)
 Eldest, the door.

ELDEST VORENA O.S
 I know, I know...

Footsteps O.S, then a SCREAM. Niobe leaps out of bed, and rushes to the next room, quickly followed by Vorenus.

Pullo lies sprawled in the doorway, a pool of blood forming under him. Looking up, he sees Vorenus, and tries to salute...

PULLO
 Sir...

With that, he passes out.

VORENUS
 Damnation. Eldest, run get a doctor.

The eldest Vorena edges past Pullo and runs down the stairs. Vorenus starts dragging Pullo's massive bulk inside the apartment...

NIOBE
 Do you know this man?

VORENUS
 He's with the Thirteen. Help me.

NIOBE
 He looks bad. I don't want people dying in my house.

VORENUS
 He won't die.

NIOBE
 These floors are clean yesterday.

VORENUS
 Do as I say woman!

Niobe grudgingly takes one of Pullo's arms. Together they haul him inside the apartment.

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT. ROME - DAY

Pullo is firmly tied down with leather thongs to the big table in the center of the room.

His head and neck are braced with a metal frame contraption, and a whiskery but muscular OLD DOCTOR is using a bow-driven trepanning drill to cut a coin-sized disk out of his skull. The noise of metal on bone is ghastly, and blood flies all over. Vorenius, Niobe, and the two Vorenas and about A DOZEN other OCCUPANTS of the apartment building look on in horrified fascination.

The Doctor stops drilling and gently lifts the disk of bone out of Pullo's skull, exposing his brain. He uses tweezers and a magnifying crystal to extract tiny fragments of bone from Pullo's brain.

Kneeling on the floor in front of a little portable work bench, The Doctor uses a special little hammer to beat a thin disk of brass into the correct shape to fit Pullo's skull.

The Doctor places the brass disc over the hole in Pullo's skull and fastens it in place with tiny silver nails and a little hammer.

INT. VORENIUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Pullo is in Niobe's bed, still unconscious, his head heavily bandaged. Vorenius counts coins into the Doctor's hand...

DOCTOR

There will be copious pus, first putrid, then wholesome. And mayhap fits of the spleen. But that will be all to the good. A purging of the malignance will follow. That's brass.

This last off one of the coins Vorenius has put in his hand. Vorenius grudgingly takes back the coin, gives him another.

VORENIUS

When will he wake up?

DOCTOR

Today, tomorrow, maybe never.

NIOBE

O'iiiiia. Marvelous.

DOCTOR

You might try an offering to Spes. A rabbit or a goat often works. I will send my boy tomorrow to check the dressings. Good day to you.

The Doctor exits. Atia looks around at her bloodstained apartment.

NIOBE

One day. It took you one day to do this.

VORENUS

I apologize.

Vorenus puts on his dagger belt and a wool vest.

NIOBE

Where are you going?

VORENUS

I have business to do.

NIOBE

Business? What business?

VORENUS

(bristling a little)

I understand you are upset, but I will ask you don't question me in that tone. I will return before dark.

Vorenus exits. Niobe bursts into tears.

INT. SLAVE MARKET WAREHOUSE - DAY

A long low and dark loft divided into cages and pens. Various shots of the market's efficient chaos - Slaveherders deliver fresh stock; medics examine the new arrivals for disease. Failures are clubbed and tossed into a garbage-wagon. The slaves are branded, dunked in delousing tanks, then put in to pens. There is a constant low murmuring of pain and wretched despair from the slave-pens, but this is largely drowned out by the dealers and brokers, who keep up a lively hubbub of haggling banter.

Vorenus arrives at the market and tries in vain to get the attention of the hustling employees.

VORENUS

Citizen... Ai'o... I have... Damn.

The market clerks keep hurrying by. Finally, Vorenus just grabs A CLERK by the collar.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

Consignment of twelve, property of L. Vorenus, came in yesterday.

CLERK

Alright soldier, tamp your wick.

He checks a large chalk board on the wall.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Gauls or Greeks?

VORENUS
Belgians.

CLERK
Belgians is Gauls... There we are.
Gaia block, lane fifty, cage eight.

INT. LANE FIFTY, CAGE EIGHT. SLAVE MARKET - DAY

A wooden walled pen. Vorenus's dozen slaves crouched listlessly on a layer of straw. Vorenus consults with A SLAVE DEALER - a pale nub of a man chewing on a wad of aromatic bark. He prods one of the slaves with a stick.

SLAVE DEALER
(an outlandish accent)
This is bona stock, but it's all skin and bone a'ia. You want a good price, let us feed `em up, put some fat on `em. Couple weeks of easy living, these puppies will sell like duck hearts.

VORENUS
Sounds sensible. But is that expensive, the fodder and storage?

DEALER
N'ia. You recoup feed and storage no probs. Come by my cubby, we do the scribe work.

Vorenus follows the Dealer.

DEALER (CONT'D)
Most dealers, they gaff you on a low price and feed `em up theyself. But you brave soldiers come by these people honorable-like in the service of mighty Rome, a'ia. I'll not be one to take your spoils.

INT. NIOBE AND VORENUS'S APARTMENT - DAY

Niobe and her daughters mopping up blood.

NIOBE
 (grumbling under her breath)
 Tone. My father's cock. How is that for
 a tone?

PULLO O.S
 (desperate, pleading)
 Mamma!? Mamma!?

NIOBE
 Gods! He's waked.

Niobe drops the mop and runs to THE BEDROOM. Pullo sits bolt upright in bed, his eyes wide open. Seeing her, his face lights up in a sweet smile.

PULLO
 Mamma!

He bursts into happy tears and holds out his arms for a hug, like a child that's been lost and just found his mother.

NIOBE
 None of that. Lie down and be calm.

She goes to his bedside. He grabs her round the waist and buries his face in her breasts, weeping with joy.

NIOBE (CONT'D)
 Au'aa! Let me go!

She tries to prise herself free, but there's no way. Niobe is a compassionate woman, and his tears have a softening effect. Soon she's gently stroking his back and cooing at him, lulling him to sleep like a child.

NIOBE (CONT'D)
 Shhhh. There now. Shhhh.

Pullo falls back into a contented sleep.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. THE FORUM - MORNING

Chanting under his breath, the Calendar Priest comes out of his hole and moves the Golden Fish from the right hand bottom of the grid to the left hand top of the Calendar.

CAPTION - January, 49 BC.

EXT. GLADIATOR SCHOOL - DAY

Pompey and Cicero sitting on a bench overlooking a small wood-walled corral with a sand covered floor. A VAST GERMAN GLADIATOR, almost naked and wielding a club, sparring with five heavily padded and armored men with long wooden swords. He batters them around the ring like they're children. Pompey's wife CORNELIA watches the fighting with great excitement, whilst affecting indifference. The Gladiators are very close; when the big German slams into the boards, Pompey reaches out and pats the man's shoulder with proprietary air.

POMPEY

Beautiful, neh? A real showman.

CICERO

I am no judge of the sand, but sure, anyone can see he is rare large and aggressive.

POMPEY

Out of Torquo's school. Not cheap I'll tell you. I shall call him Aleman.

CICERO

Sure he will do you great credit.

Beat, watching the sparring.

POMPEY

When the Senate meets tomorrow, Scipio will propose an ultimatum be put to Caesar. I ask you as a friend to support the proposal and enjoin your many friends to do the same.

CICERO

The ultimatum is?

POMPEY

His term of office is over. He must immediately disband his men, resign his command, and return for trial; else be declared an Enemy of the Senate and People of Rome.

CICERO

(alarmed)

But he cannot accept that. Not without dishonor. Once declared hostile, he has nothing to lose, he will fight at any cost. You are declaring war!

POMPEY

(smiling at Cicero's alarm)
Caesar will not have to accept or refuse
the terms, because Mark Antony will
immediately use Tribune's Veto.

CICERO

(thinks)
In vero. But then, what is your purpose?

POMPEY

If the entire Senate votes against him,
Caesar will finally understand that he is
alone against all. He will stop this
bellicose posturing and negotiate a
dignified way out for himself. A few
years banishment perhaps.

(off Cicero's silence)

Of course, anything but a unanimous vote
encourages Caesar to think he still has
friends, and hope.

Aleman picks up an opponent and flings him across the ring.
Cornelia cannot suppress a squeal of delight.

CICERO

Forgive me. I cannot like this plan.
I am no friend to Caesar, nor any tyrant.
But I cannot vote for a proposal I do not
wish to see realized. It would be highly
irreligious.

POMPEY

I must tell you I have made a vow to
Jupiter. Without I get the full backing
of the Senate tomorrow, I and all my
legions will sail for Hispania. And
leave you gentlemen to your own defenses.

CICERO

Attat! And deliver the City to Caesar?
You would do that?

POMPEY

I would.

Cicero looks deeply troubled.

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT - DAY

In the BEDROOM, Pullo still in bed, his head swathed in
bandages, but awake and compos mentis.

He listens in on the MAIN ROOM - Vorenius sits on a stool, splendid and grim in a brand new toga, studying - with evident disappointment - a nervously hangdog boy of fourteen - CRITO - lanky and ill-favored, who stands before him twisting a bullhide whip in his hands. Vorenia stands a step behind Crito with the baby in her arms. Niobe watches anxiously.

VORENIUS

This is he? Crito?

Vorenia bobs her head to say yes.

NIOBE

He's a good boy. From good people.

VORENIUS

(harshly)

Are you boy? Good enough to seed a child of the Voreni? That fought at Magnesia and Zama?

CRITO

(cowed and confused)

Uh... I don't right know sir.

NIOBE

His mother's people are well-found in Ostia for many generations. And his father is a very successful drover.

VORENIUS

There's money in that at least.

CRITO

E'ia sir, we're on the Capua run mostly, move five thousand head a week sometimes.

VORENIUS

(resigned)

E'ou. He cannot be but what he is. When are you a man?

CRITO

Next month sir.

VORENIUS

Bene.

(stands)

I give my consent. You may assure your 'good' people the dowry will be appropriate. Off with you now.

Crito exits as fast as he can with Vorenia and baby.

NIOBE

You could have tried to seem pleased.

VORENUS

He's an ill-favored prole. How can I be pleased?

Vorenus picks up a big dagger, hangs it on a lanyard round his neck and under his toga.

NIOBE

It would have made your daughter happy.

VORENUS

I cannot help that.

NIOBE

Miseria, what a cold brute you are.

Vorenus swivels round ready to hit her, but stops himself. Niobe doesn't back off.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Go on.

VORENUS

I am late.

Vorenus turns and walks out. ON Pullo, concerned.

EXT. FORUM - DAY

VARIOUS SHOTS - A vast crowd fills the forum; some are for Pompey, others for Caesar, and sporadic brawls break out as the two sides mill about. Curial Lictors make a way for a stream of Toga-clad Senators crossing the Forum and entering the Senate House. Their retinues remain outside, prohibited from the sacred house itself.

INT. SENATE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Five hundred Senators take their seats while on the senate floor HOODED PRIESTS KILL A WHITE DOVE and examine it's entrails. Pompey sits with Cato and Scipio and the hardliners. The larger faction of moderates are grouped about Cicero.

Mark Antony enters alone, to a buzz of expectation, and sits down on the Tribune's bench, which stands at right angles to the Senators.

A PRIEST nods at the BEARER OF THE FASCES, who pounds his bundled sticks against the floor. The Senate comes to order.

An ancient old geezer - THE CURIAL MAGISTRATE - stands up on wobbly legs....

CURIAL MAGISTRATE
The Senate will hear Metullus Scipio.

Scipio rises trepidly.

SCIPIO
Conscript fathers, I propose a formal motion. Ergo, without Gaius Julius Caesar immediately lays down his command and disbands his legions, and returns to Rome for trial; this sacred assembly will declare him a public enemy of the Senate and People of Rome.

The next part of his speech is almost lost under the uproar raised by Mark Antony and those few Senators who support Caesar.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
After which time it will be the duty and the obligation of every Roman to do him harm or kill him if they are able.

The doors of the Senate House are kept open, and the proceedings are instantly relayed to the crowd outside.

EXT. THE FORUM - DAY

An outraged murmuring rises as the news flashes through the crowd. People start chanting Caesar's name. The Pompeians start chanting for their man. A few brave souls try to push past the Lictors on the steps of the Senate House. They are clubbed down. A full scale riot breaks out.

INT. SENATE HOUSE - DAY

Everybody is trying to talk at once. The chanting outside is deafening. The Curial magistrate shouts...

CURIAL MAGISTRATE
A motion is proposed. Those in favor, make it known.

The hardcore Catonians stand up immediately. The majority of the Senators waits to see what Cicero will do. Grim-faced, reluctant, Cicero stands up; and the rest of the house follows him. Only Brutus and the few Caesarian Senators remain seated.

CURIAL MAGISTRATE (CONT'D)

No division required. The motion is carried by clear numbers.

Triumphant cheers from Pompey's supporters. Antony jumps up.

ANTONY

I veto! Tribune vetoes the motion!

No-one hears him because just then, the crowd overwhelms the Lictors, surges up the stairs of the Senate House. The guards and servants of the Senators rush to defend their masters, and the fighting spills onto the Senate floor.

CURIAL MAGISTRATE

(shouting)

Session is suspended! Suspended!

Vorenus pushes through the mob to Antony's side. They make their way out of the Senate House.

ON the brawling mob. The Pompeians under Milo are gaining the upper hand.

INT. OFFICES OF THE CURIAL MAGISTRATE - DAY

A silent and chilly marbled hall. Pompey and Cicero have come to consult with the Curial Magistrate.

CICERO

Scipio's motion against Caesar. Does it stand?

MAGISTRATE

Stands. Entered in the annals.

CICERO

Despite that Tribune raised his veto.

MAGISTRATE

Not heard, not formally admitted. No weight. Motion stands.

POMPEY

Let me try and be clear with you. I do not wish that a motion as important as this should stand on a mere trick of procedure.

MAGISTRATE

Trick you say? This is a religious matter. There are no tricks in religion.

CICERO

Session was only suspended, correct?
So Tribune Antony may use veto on the
motion when we reconvene. Formally, it
will be the same session.

MAGISTRATE

That is so.

POMPEY

Juno Inferna, senile old fool, why not
say so to begin with?

Pompey turns on his heel and walks off. His retinue hurries
after him. Pompey gestures and Milo comes forward...

POMPEY (CONT'D)

Mark Antony must not be harmed or
hindered in any way.

MILO

But---

POMPEY

---In any way! Clear?

Milo bows obediently.

INT/EXT. ATRIUM. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Antony confers with Strabo. Vorenus stands close by.

STRABO

The Senate will reconvene tomorrow.
Formally, it is the same session, so you
may yet exercise your veto on the motion.

ANTONY

If Pompey does not stop me.

STRABO

Tiam, he may well try.

ANTONY

Vorenus, rally the men here. Every man
you can get.

Vorenus salutes and hurries away.

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Pullo sits up in bed with little Lucius in his arms, singing
in a soft lullaby voice...

PULLO

'Run and hide, run and hide you red
gaulish cunnies, the thirteen is coming
and your men are all dead....'

The baby gurgles merrily. Niobe enters, puts a bowl of wine
on the bedside table, and takes the baby.

NIOBE

I put extra nutmeg in, like you like it.

PULLO

Marry me, Goddess.

NIOBE

(laughing)

A porcine object like you? Besides, I am
already wed, thanks be to evil spirits.

Pullo hesitates, but decides to speak.

PULLO

You are wrong friend-wife. Your man is a
good man.

ANGLE - Vorenius comes through the front door. He's about to
speak, but hears Niobe's voice...

NIOBE O.S

A good man e'ia. For years and years, I
would lie awake at night and beg the Gods
to send him home.

ANGLE - RESUME on Pullo and Niobe, unaware of Vorenius's
arrival.

NIOBE

I would hear of this battle or that
battle and I would see him clear as a
glass, lying dead and bloody in the mud
somewhere. For eight years I wept.
Eight years! Every day, the girls asking
me, when is Papa coming home? When is
Papa coming? Is it today? When?
And now he's home. And it is not good.
I wish he was still in Gaul. I wish he
had never come back. I hate him. He's a
cold, mean, brute. He has not said a
single loving word to me or his
daughters, not once since he has come
home.

ON Vorenius, deeply hurt.

PULLO O.S

In vero, he is no skilled hand with the ladies. In all these years I fought with him, he never took a woman.

NIOBE

Gerrae.

PULLO

Pullo, he'd say, Pullo my old friend, I have a wife at home, Niobe is her name, and she's worth more to me than all the women in Gaul.

NIOBE

I thank you for trying to make me feel better, but I know you lie. He's no friend of yours. He told me so he wasn't.

PULLO

(equably)

E'ou, he has a bad temper, him. He'll say anything.

ANGLE ON Vorenus. He stamps loudly to signal his arrival before entering the bedroom. He ignores Niobe.

VORENUS

Can you walk Legionary Pullo?

PULLO

What's amiss?

Vorenus moves about the room putting spare clothing and other belongings into a canvas bag.

VORENUS

Antony needs every man. If you can walk, we rendezvous at the house of Atia.

Pullo gets out of bed, wincing a little, but steady.

PULLO

The Pompeians have attacked?

VORENUS

Not yet.

(turns to Niobe)

I would advise you to get the girls indoors and stay indoors until you're sure it's safe.

(gives her some coins)

(MORE)

VORENUS (CONT'D)

That's all I have left. There will be more when I sell the slaves.

(beat)

It saddens me that you are unhappy. Because I have deep affection for you. When I return, we will talk.

Vorenus exits.

NIOBE

Lucius, wait.

Vorenus doesn't stop. Pullo hurries to get his clothes on.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - NIGHT

VARIOUS SHOTS

GANGS of armed young men gathered at street corners; BONFIRES lit in the plazas; doors and windows shuttered and barred; in the TEMPLES, Priests hurry to hide away their gold and silver regalia. BATS come swooping in a great cloud from the eaves of the Temple of Jupiter.

EXT. ATIA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Vorenus and Pullo on the roof, pulling guard duty. Across the city drift the sounds of simmering unrest - breaking glass, bellicose shouting, cries of distress, the blowing of trumpets, and the banging of drums.

EXT. COURTYARD. ATIA'S VILLA - CONTINUOUS

Along the collonade, Antony's soldiers stretched out asleep.

INT. ATIA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Atia, Antony, Servilia, Brutus, Octavian, and Octavia at a formal dinner. A trio of harpist and pipers does not drown the ominous noise of the streets. Nobody is talking much.

SERVILIA

Atia, this quail is most delicious.

BRUTUS

So it is. An optimal quail, one could say. Haha.

Silence.

ATIA

Graces, but this is a merry do. Octavia my honey, look alive at least.

(MORE)

ATIA (CONT'D)

Poor Marcus must think him dead and swimming in Lethe water.

ANTONY

Not at all, not at all.

ATIA

Talk to the poor man, ask him questions.
(to Servilia)

One would think she had been raised by Germans e'ou? I did my best.

OCTAVIA

General Antony, does my mother's screaming irritate you?

ANTONY

Excuse me?

OCTAVIA

When you and my mother are in coitus, there is a deal of screaming. I find it extremely irritating. I wondered whether you did also. Or mayhap you like it? A testament to your skills.

ANTONY

Ah...

ATIA

(unembarassed)

What a big silly baby you are. So spiteful. And for what? You shame only yourself.

Octavia imitates her mother's screams with uncanny precision.

ANTONY

She has you exact.

On Octavian, solemn, silent, unreadable.

EXT. ROOF OF ATIA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Vorenius and Pullo glancing down off Octavia's screams, back to watching the streets. After a moment...

PULLO

Cold.

VORENIUS

Winter.

Vorenus takes a hard biscuit from his tunic and breaks it in half, offering half to Pullo.

PULLO

Obliged.

They chew companionably for a moment.

PULLO (CONT'D)

Women are strange animals.

VORENUS

Ahmmmm.

EXT. THE FORUM - DAY

A THOUSAND MEN, supporters of Pompey, milling about waiting. Milo stands on the steps of the Temple of Venus, bellowing orders at his lieutenants.

MILO

Listen! Listen! We show our strength.
We show them who owns the Forum. But we
do not touch them! Antony must not be
touched!

Grumbling from the lieutenants.

MILO (CONT'D)

None of that! This is Pompey's strict
orders. Him that starts trouble will be
on a cross at nightfall. No blood!

ANGLE - A LITTLE LATER

Antony and his men come along the Via Sacra and enter the Forum. They pause, their way blocked by the crowds of Pompeians. An eerie silence falls, as if the two factions were just two men, staring each other down. The air is thick with hatred and tension.

ON MILO - amid the crowd...

MILO (CONT'D)

Easy now. Easy. Make a lane there.

Pompey's men back off grudgingly. As Antony and his men walk on into the forum, the Pompeians part, and open a lane all the way to the steps of the Senate House.

Antony moves as if he were taking a stroll in a meadow. Pullo and Vorenus are stoney-faced, hands on their swords.

In the sea of hostile faces that surrounds them, we RATCHET in on one particular face, with a distinctive latticework of scars - STILICHO. We find him the second before he and Pullo meet each other's gaze. Both men's hackles rise. Vorenus sees this exchange of glares and is about to say something when Stilicho pulls his sword and charges at Pullo, screaming like a maniac.

STILICHO

Death! Death!

Pullo pulls his sword, and takes a step forward, and lops off Stilicho's head in mid stride.

NEW POV - From way across the Forum, over a sea of people, we see Stilicho's head arcing through the air...

PULLO'S POV - Stilicho keeps running a few steps more, his head replaced by a geyser of blood, before he falls at Antony's feet.

An atomic beat of silence, and then the breaking loose of all hell. Pompey's thousand attack Antony's fifty like wolves.

ON POMPEY, on the steps of the Senate House, aghast...

POMPEY

Stop! Stop! No blood! Let them through!

Nobody hears. The Pompeians fight with a fierce bloodlust, but Antony's men fight for their lives, and despite the odds, they force their way back across the Forum, onto the narrow Via Sacra; where they can make an orderly retreat.

ANTONY

The stables boys! Make for the stables at the Flaminian gate!

VARIOUS SHOTS - The Pompeian mob keeps after them, dogging them all the way to the gates of the City and the military stables beyond. Commanding the rearguard, Vorenus is knocked unconscious and badly cut up. Pullo picks him up and carries him the rest of the way, heaving him onto a horse and strapping him down like cargo, while stones and spears rain down.

EXT. ROMAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Antony's Men on horseback, only forty strong now, galloping hard for the North along the Via Flaminia.

EXT. THE FORUM - DAY

The Forum is littered with dead bodies. Pompey and Cato stand on the steps of the Senate House.

POMPEY

You have what you wanted Cato.
Caesar has no choice now. Come spring,
he will fetch his legions across the Alps
and march on Rome.

CATO

And you will crush him.

POMPEY

(distracted)
Eh what? Crush him? Without doubt.
Without doubt. This is a sad day Cato,
a very sad day.

ON the dead bodies in the Forum...

FADE TO:

EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP - DAY

Pouring with rain as before.

INT. CAESAR'S QUARTERS - DAY

Caesar slumped on a canvas chair, staring at the rain,
listening to a fat CENTURION drone from a large tablet...

CENTURION

...Sixth cohort, five dead, three of
flux, two of fighting. Twenty three
under medics, eight absent, presumed run.
Marching strength two hundred and
fortythree head. Seventh cohort, three
dead, all of flux, six absent, presumed
run. Thirteen under medics...

A COURIER comes hurrying in, muddy from head to foot, and
hands Caesar a single despatch pouch. The Centurion knows to
halt his recital. Caesar opens up the pouch, reads the
tablet. In his minimal way, he registers complete
astonishment. He thinks for a moment.

CAESAR

(quietly)
Soldier, how far behind you is Antony?

COURIER

No more a hour sir. They'm riding hard.

CAESAR

Bene. Get you a fresh horse and a swift drink, then return here. I will have a message for Antony. Don't talk to anyone. Understand?

COURIER

Don't talk. Yes sir.

The Courier salutes and heads for the door...

CAESAR

Gracchus!

GRACCHUS, the CAPTAIN of MUSIC, hurries in.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Sound assembly.

GRACCHUS

Now sir?

CAESAR

Now sir? Run, fool!

Gracchus runs out. We follow him to a sort of open sided wooden pavilion, where an OCTET OF TYMPANISTS and BUCINATORS are slumped on benches, glumly trying to stay warm and dry.

GRACCHUS

Up! Up you dogs! Sound assembly!

The men jump up and grab their instruments. In seconds they are in formation and blowing and banging away fiercely.

From every quarter of the camp, LEGIONARIES come running, and begin to form up on the parade ground.

EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Antony and Pullo et al; caked in the mud and dirt of a long journey; riding hard through the pouring rain. Vorenius now lies in the back of a light wagon. They halt when the Courier meets them, coming from Caesar's camp. Antony takes Caesar's despatch.

EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP - DAY

In the same rain, the Thirteenth Legion is lined up on the parade ground, wet and miserable.

Wearing full battle armor, Caesar enters on horseback. The Legionaries regard him with sullen expectation.

CAESAR

Soldiers. There is bad news from Italy that you should hear immediately... Pompey and the Senate have formally declared that Gaius Julius Caesar is an enemy of Rome.... They have declared that I am a criminal. They have declared, in effect, that all of you also, are criminals. For have you not done my bidding? Every one of you, they say, is a criminal and a traitor.

A great roiling buzz of dismay rises from the ranks.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Thank the Good Gods our beloved comrade Mark Antony is Tribune of the people. Doubtless he will use Tribune's Veto to quash this monstrosity. The sacred voice of the people will be heard through him, and the declaration will not stand. It will not stand, so there is no need for any anxiety on that account...

EXT. ROMAN ROAD THROUGH ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Antony et al crest a shallow rise. Caesar's camp is half a mile ahead in the bowl of the valley.

ANTONY

Full pace!

They gallop down the valley toward the camp.

EXT. CAESAR'S CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Caesar's audience is warmed up now, despite the rain.

CAESAR

...But what impudence! What insolence! These torpid old men say we are criminals! They say when we stormed and burnt Alesia, we committed a crime! They say when we crossed the Rhine and punished the German tribes, we committed a crime! We have made a mighty nation kneel. We have unhorsed a hundred kings and made them our slaves. And these are crimes!?

He lets the men roar their dissent.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

They have declared that it is so. If the declaration stands, I and those that follow me are no longer Romans. We that took sail for Britain, we that trampled the mighty Belgians underfoot, we are enemies of Rome. Tiam boys, us. Enemies of Rome, and any man may strike us down with impunity. The lowest half-greek freedman begging for bones in a Suburran gutter is more of a Roman than we men here. He might shove his cock in the mouth of anyone here, and the Senate would applaud him for a righteous man...

As he continues speaking, Antony's horsemen come racing down the hillside in BG. Caesar has his back to the hill, but his men can see the horsemen clearly, and a buzz of puzzlement rises. Who is it, coming so fast?

CAESAR (CONT'D)

...But the declaration will not stand. Mark Antony will veto it. Pompey and the Senate may hate me past reason, but they would never dare contradict the sacred embodiment of the Roman people and their ancient rights...

The whole legion is looking past Caesar at the approaching horsemen. They come racing through the open gates like they're being chased by demons. Almost as one, the gathered men recognize Antony, and a great gasp goes up.

Antony and his forty men pull up their horses in front of Caesar and the legionary ranks, so that everyone can see that they are all cut and bruised and bloody; their clothes ripped and torn; their horses lathered and wild eyed. The soldiers are agog. They can barely stay in their ranks.

VOICES FROM THE RANKS

What's happened? What's going on? etc.

CENTURION O.S

(a terrifying roar)

Silence there!

Antony and Caesar dismount and embrace. They speak to each other very quietly so no-one else can hear. Five thousand men are staring at them very intently.

CAESAR

Perfect.

ANTONY

Shall I address them? Tell what happened?

CAESAR

Let your men do that. Come get a drink.

POV of the Legionaries - Caesar and Antony walk away, talking intently. Antony's men, dismounting, slumping to the ground in exhaustion.

LEGIONARY

(through closed mouth)

Hiisst. What's befallen?

ANTONY'S HORSEMAN

Pompey's men tried to kill Antony on the way to the Senate House.

Everyone in earshot is aghast, incredulous.

LEGIONARY

Never!

CENTURION O.S

(roaring)

Sub! Take that man's name!

The terrible news radiates across the legion like the ripple across a pond.

LEGIONARIES

Pompey attacked Antony.... The sacred Tribune of the Plebs...!, Tried to kill him... What about his veto? The declaration stands! It can't be true... It's a lie...

CENTURION

(like thunder)

Silence!!!

But the men break ranks and gather round Antony's horsemen to hear the story.

ON PULLO - Dismounted, next to the wagon carrying Vorenus, who is white as a ghost and delirious with pain.

PULLO

We're home brother. Bones will have you better in a firefly's fart. Medic!

A Legionary grabs Pullo's arm...

LEGIONARY

Is it true? Pompey tried to murder
Antony? The declaration stands?

PULLO

Never mind that, where's the medics?
Medic!! Where's the fucking medics?!

A MEDIC comes running in his distinctive long apron.

INT. CAESAR'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Antony draining a goblet of wine. Outside, the Legion sounds
like a gathering storm.

CAESAR

After all these years, Pompey surprises
me. I had hoped to provoke some kind of
aggression sure, but to try and kill a
Tribune? In the Forum? The man has
found some hard black iron in his soul.

ANTONY

Sure it was yon demented little worm Cato
put him up to it.
(off wine)
Excellent, this.

Antony tears off a hunk of bread.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

(chewing on the bread)
So, what are you going to do now?

CAESAR

I am not sure. Let's see what the men
have to say.

EXT. PARADE GROUND. CAESAR'S CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Caesar and Antony walking to the horses. Caesar is calm and
collected, but his eyes are blazing with cold fire.

CAESAR

Any of your people I can mention?

ANTONY

Titus Pullo. Took the head off the first
man that came at me.

CAESAR

(smiles)
Pullo. Il Gordo. Bene.

Caesar steps up off the back of a SLAVE onto his horse, and switches to an expression of almost theatrical belligerence, so that even men at the back of the crowd can see his anger. The legionaries are frightened, angry, and confused. Their officers have given up trying to keep them in line.

LEGIONARIES

(shouting out)

Is it true? Is it true?

CAESAR

It is all true.

A great roar goes up from the men. ANGLE ON Pullo listening to Caesar with a very sheepish expression. Medics are in the wagon, working on Vorenus and the other injured men.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Tribune of the Plebs Mark Antony and fifty men of the Thirteen were assaulted by a thousand head of Pompeian scum. Tribune's Veto was not exercised. Therefore, I am declared an enemy of Rome.

Dead silence from the men.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Titus Pullo! Legionary Titus Pullo!
Step forward!

ON Pullo - A deer in headlights.

CAESAR O.S

Titus Pullo!

Pullo robotically sets himself in motion and marches across the parade ground to Caesar, muttering prayers and curses under his breath. He stops in front of Caesar and salutes.

CAESAR

When fifty brave men of the Thirteen fought Pompey's thousand in the Forum, and saved the Tribune, it was Legionary Titus Pullo drew first blood.

Caesar takes a purse off his belt and holds it up for all the men to see.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

Here's five hundred Denarii.

He tosses the purse to Pullo.

PULLO

(embarrassed, nervous)

Very grateful sir.

CAESAR

A Tribune of the Plebs, assaulted!
In the Forum! On the steps of the Senate
House! Can you imagine a more terrible
sacrilege? I knew that these men hated
me. I knew it. But this?! There can
be only one reason for such depravity.
Pompey and the Senate have run mad.
Our beloved Republic is in the hands of
madmen. This is a dark day, and I stand
at a fork in the road. I can abide the
law and go home and surrender my arms to
the Senate. And watch the Republic fall
to tyranny and chaos. Or, I can go home
with my sword in hand....

The men erupt in cheers and bellicose howling.

CAESAR (CONT'D)

I can go home with my sword in hand and
run those maniacs to the Tarpean Rock!

LEGIONARIES

We're with you! Let's go! Onward! etc.

Caesar shakes his head, and raises a hand for silence, which
he gets immediately.

CAESAR

Think hard before you cry onward,
brothers. It is only I that's named
Enemy. You here may all go home today.
without dishonor, and without blame.
Pompey and the Senate would have it so.
Leave my standard, and it's sure they
will show you every mercy.

The men are in the palm of his hand.

LEGIONARIES

Never! Never! We are with you Caesar!
To Rome! To Rome!

Caesar raises his arms for silence and gets it instantly.
He fixes Pullo with a penetrating eye.

CAESAR

Are you with me Titus Pullo? Will you
come with me to Rome?

PULLO

Ahm, sure. Certainly sir. If ah...

CAESAR

(to the men)

Titus Pullo is with me! And you? Are you with me?

A great thundering roar of allegiance from the men.

EXT. THE RUBICON RIVER - DAY

A silvery TROUT hovers in the current, then darts upward to take a fly.

A BOY on the bank jerks his rod and the trout sails into the air at the end of his line, and lands on the river bank. We are just downstream of a road that fords the narrow and shallow little river, which winds through woodland of ancient elm and oak.

Before the Boy can unhook his fish, he is distracted by the sound of a horse approaching. A muscular little pony ridden by a terrified man appears on the opposite bank; they gallop across the ford without slowing down. The boy watches them go, then unhooks his fish and cuts it open, still alive. He pulls out the fish's liver and pops it in his mouth.

He's still chewing happily when the ground starts to vibrate. From out of the woods on the opposite bank comes FIVE HUNDRED CAVALRY. They go thundering across the Rubicon and off down the road. There's silence for a beat; then singing can be heard faintly in the distance.

NEW ANGLE - ALONG THE ROAD....

Caesar and his officers riding at the head of the Thirteenth Legion - five thousand men - on the march, singing a marching cadence.

With the baggage train in the rear is the MEDIC'S WAGON - a big canvas roofed job with massive wheels pulled by a team of eight oxen.

INT. MEDIC'S WAGON - CONTINUOUS

A mobile sickbay; ten cots neatly built into the sides of the wagon, all of them occupied. Pullo sits near the open doors, watching the countryside go by. He has a fresh bandage round his head like a turban. Vorenus is lying in the nearest cot, asleep or unconscious; half his face bandaged.

The wagon goes rumbling across the Rubicon ford, water rising to the axles. Pullo waves to the little boy with a fishing rod, and sighs ruefully.

PULLO
A'wei, gone and done it now then.

VORENUS
(weak, parched)
Done what?

PULLO
Ah, you're awake then. Water?

Vorenus nods. Pullo holds a leather flask to his lips and gently pours in a few drops at a time.

VORENUS
We're moving.

PULLO
Hmmm.

VORENUS
The whole legion sounds like. Where to?

PULLO
Ahhhuumm.

VORENUS
What did you say?

PULLO
E'u, I'll remember the name they said.

Splashing sounds O.S.

VORENUS
River.

PULLO
Seems so. Want to hear something funny?

He taps the metal plate in his head.

VORENUS
What river?

PULLO
How do I know what river? It's a river.
I don't know anything about rivers.

Pullo's odd manner leads Vorenus toward the terrible truth.

VORENUS

This is the Rubicon.

Pullo sighs, and wipes his face nervously. Confirmation enough for Vorenius.

VORENUS (CONT'D)

(utterly horrified)

Mother of Dis.

He tries to sit up and get out of bed.

PULLO

Stay calm e'u.

VORENUS

Calm? This is rebellion! Treason!
I am no damned traitor! Stop the wagon!
Let me out of here!

Pullo gently pushes him back down...

PULLO

Too late now Chief. We're across.
We're in Italy. You're a rebel whether
you like it or not. Now stop still else
you'll break your stitches.

VORENUS

A'miseria! Caesar, what have you done?
What have you done?

PULLO

He's got no choice, has he? Pompey did
try to kill Antony after all. Caesar
can't well leave that alone, can he?

Vorenius fixes Pullo with an angry glare.

VORENUS

Of all men, you should not dare make that
argument.

Pullo turns ashen white.

PULLO

How's that?

VORENUS

I know who was being attacked.

PULLO

I... I don't know what you mean.

Vorenus sighs and slumps back in bed.

VORENUS

It's no matter now. I will not speak of it again. We are all doomed at any way. One legion against ten? Our tormented corpses will be decorating the Appian Way before the week is out.

PULLO

More water?

Vorenus turns away from the proffered flask.

VORENUS

Better to die of thirst.

PULLO

Gerrae, don't be childish. Drink.

Pullo cradles Vorenus's head so he can drink.

EXT. WALLS OF ROME - DAY

A WILD-EYED MAN on a BIG BROWN MARE comes galloping hard from the North. He jumps off his horse at the City gates, and gasps to the usual crowd gathered there...

WILD EYED RIDER

(out of breath)

Caesar is in Italy.

INT. ATIA'S VILLA - DAY

Atia wails and tears at her hair whilst simultaneously beating the crap out of a cringing MANSERVANT. Brutus stands by, not knowing quite what to do. Octavian enters.

OCTAVIAN

Mamma? What's amiss?

ATIA

Ruined! Ruined! The idiot has ruined us all! I shall have to leave Rome!

Octavian turns to Brutus for a straight answer.

BRUTUS

Caesar has crossed the Rubicon.

Octavian smiles thinly, as if he had expected this.

OCTAVIAN

Ah.

BRUTUS

With a single legion if you please.
Not merely treason, but suicidal treason.
I cannot fathom it.

Atia tires of hitting the manservant, and sits down,
breathing hard.

INT. POMPEY'S VILLA - DAY

Pompey on a bench staring absently at a vast mural
commemorating a big naval battle. Cato enters, hot and
flustered.

CATO

Have you heard?

POMPEY

Mmmm. Strange thing to do. I wonder
what he is thinking.

(he points to the mural)

I remember back when I destroyed the
Illyrian Pirates, there was one
particular old sea-snake, a Liburnian if
I recall, he always seemed to be---

CATO

---Pompey Magnus, never mind the Illyrian
Pirates. What is to be done?

Pompey smiles loftily at civilian jitters.

POMPEY

I have already sent word. My legions are
gathering.

CATO

And you will crush him, neh?

Pompey peers closer at the mural, points...

POMPEY

There's stones falling off. I shall have
to remember to get someone on that.

CATO

Pompey, you will crush him, neh?

POMPEY

What? Crush Caesar? No question.
The poor man is dead.

Pompey spits on the floor.

INT. VORENUS AND NIOBE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Niobe sits at the table with her head in her hands.
O.S. The baby is crying. The elder Vorena runs upstairs and
into the front room...

VORENA

Mamma! Mamma! Have you heard?

NIOBE

I heard.

Vorena goes and gets the child from his crib; returns,
bouncing the baby to make him stop crying.

VORENA

What does it mean? What is going to
happen?

(to baby Lucius)

There now. Stop that.

NIOBE

War. War is going to happen.

The baby won't stop crying.

NIOBE (CONT'D)

He's not stopping is he? Give the little
honeycake here.

Tenderly, Niobe takes Lucius in her arms...

NIOBE (CONT'D)

There we are my little love. I know what
you want...

Unlacing her dress, Niobe bares her breasts and puts her
right nipple in the baby's mouth. Lucius drinks his mother's
milk in silent contentment..

NIOBE (CONT'D)

Who's my greedy little piglet?

TO BE CONTINUED.....