

THE PASSION OF PONTIUS PILATE: A RADIO PLAY

By Kelly Logue

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**PONTIUS PILATE:** Prefect of Judea, scion of Rome. The main character of our story.

**CLAUDIA:** Pilate's faithful and loving wife.

**CARTAPHILUS:** Pilate's right-hand man. Someone who is not afraid to get his hands dirty in the service of Rome. He speaks in a lower-class British accent.

**SEJANUS:** Friend of Pilate and acting emperor of Rome. Betrayed by Pilate to gain the favor of Rome.

**MORNING STAR:** Literally the devil, himself, who appears to Pilate in the guise of a fool. Note: although he identifies as male, he should be voiced/played by the same actress who plays Claudia.

**JESUS BARABBAS:** A murderer and a rabble-rouser who opposes Rome's occupation of Judea. Arrested at the same time as Jesus of Galilee. Pilate admires the finery of his dress. He also speaks in a lower-class British accent.

**JESUS (of GALILEE):** Son of God, and King of Kings. Falsely arrested for blasphemy. Condemned by Pilate for His tattered garments and overall lowly appearance.

**ANTONIUS:** A brutish fighter in Pilate's court, who accidentally kills his opponent. He too speaks in a lower-class British accent.

**JASON:** A page boy in Pilate's court.

PILATE  
(prayer):

Sing to me Muse that I may sway the hearts and minds of men. And should my lips speak false  
then let the masses believe the conviction of my words.

**SCENE I**  
**EXT. PRACTICE FIELD—**  
**AFTERNOON**

SFX: The sound of clashing swords is heard. Men grunt from the exhaustion of battle.

SEJANUS: Hail my old friend, Pilate. May I intrude upon your afternoon?

PILATE: Sejanus! Hardly an intrusion, for someone as important as yourself.

SEJANUS: What has so captured your interest?

PILATE (sighs): No interest I have found, Sejanus. But plenty of boredom to go around. Look for yourself.

SEJANUS (to Pilate): Yes, I see what you mean.

SFX: Again, we hear the clash of swords and men grunting from exhaustion.

SEJANUS (to the men): You men there! Put more effort into your battle! You fight with the vigor of small frail children!

PILATE (sighs): These Judaeans are hardly of quality stock. Though they practice day and night in the ways of war. They are brutes and they fight like brutes. What can I do, except be ashamed.

SEJANUS: It is not just Judaea, my friend. Since our distinguished emperor Tiberius has retreated to his island of Capri, the empire crumbles around us. The men have no vigor. And the women have let themselves go. It's a disgrace.

PILATE: But Sejanus, are you not emperor in Tiberius' stead?

SEJANUS: Sadly, in name only, friend Pilate. Tiberius, even from his pleasure palace in Capri still holds my hand as if I were still a boy.

PILATE (chuckling): Well Tiberius is fond of boys, especially the younger ones if the rumors are to be believed. And he has quite the collection of orphans on Capri.

SEJANUS: It is just another example of how our great empire has become impotent under the leadership of a perverted old man.

PILATE: Perhaps a young buck like you, should take the reins and steer us into greatness again.

SEJANUS: Your lips to the gods' ears, my friend. But alas, the senate would never allow such a thing and I am not confident in my power to challenge them. But what of you, Pontius? How fares the Providence of Judaea under your wise leadership?

PILATE (sighs): The local populace is pacified for the moment. I have ordered the construction of an aqueduct to bring water to Judaea and that has satisfied them. Little do they suspect that it is more for my benefit than theirs. With fresh water at their disposal perhaps they will finally bathe. The stench of the unwashed masses is sometimes overwhelming. Particularly when the sun god is at his peak.

SEJANUS: You treat these peasants too well, Pilate. Do not let them get too comfortable in your kindness.

PILATE: I fear you are right, Sejanus. I have heard rumblings among the unwashed masses regarding the iconography of our weaponry. Apparently such graven images are against the tenets of their lowly religion. My right hand Cartaphilus will gather up some fine Roman stock and put these rabble-rousers to the sword.

SEJANUS: But are you not afraid of further revolt?

PILATE: I am not. In my corner I have their chief priest. A man by the name of Caiaphas. I trust he will quell their rebellious spirit with honey-scented words.

SEJANUS: You are a better politician than even I? Perhaps you should sit on the throne of Rome. It is not unheard of that someone from the equestrian class, such as yourself, should seek a high position in life.

PILATE: What can I say, friend Sejanus. I am by my nature a man of the people.

SFX: Suddenly one of the fighting men screams in gut-wrenching pain.

SEJANUS: You there, with the bloody sword! Did you put this man down?

ANTONIUS: I beg your forgiveness, sir. I did not mean to slay Marcus in such a horrible manner.

SEJANUS: Forgiveness? HA! You shall never have it. Forgiveness is for the weak! I will give you glory instead!

ANTONIUS: Prefect?! Does this man speak true?

PILATE: Antonius?! You do not recognize the importance of the man who stands before you with your dullard eyes. This is Lucius Aelius Sejanus who acts in the emperor's stead. Surely his lips carry the full weight of truth.

ANTONIUS: Forgive me, my lord, I didn't recognize you. The dust in my eyes...

PILATE: This man is very hung up on forgiveness.

SEJANUS: We shall beat that out of him soon enough. This violent display has excited my manhood. I desire the softness of a woman. You man! Accompany me to the temple of Venus where we can satisfy our lust! Then to Rome with us, where we shall toughen you up!

ANTONIUS: Sir?

PILATE: The acting emperor of Rome, offers you a great opportunity and you stand there like a stunned ox. Go with Sejanus!

SEJANUS (to Antonius): Yes, yes. Come on, man. Don't be shy.

SEJANUS (to Pilate): Pilate! Till we meet again, may the gods favor you!

PILATE: And you as well, my old friend. May the goddess of love bless you with great stamina as you conquer her many acolytes.

Cartaphilus enters.

CARTAPHILUS: You called, sir?

PILATE: It is as if you read my thoughts, Cartaphilus.

CARTAPHILUS: Your right hand must be in tune with its master, Prefect.

PILATE: Ah yes, I require your services once more. Take this stinking carcass and throw it into the ocean beyond. Let the sea creatures feast tonight.

CARTAPHILUS: The sea god will be pleased with this offering, I reckon.

PILATE: Let us pray that the God of the Seven Seas has a strong stomach for such foul smelling rot. Look Cartaphilus, already the flies have claimed the decaying flesh as their own.

CARTAPHILUS: Perhaps the ocean waters shall wash away the terrible smell, sir. And loosen the flies grip on him.

PILATE: Ah Cartaphilus, you always see the good, where is none.

CARTAPHILUS: Just trying to see the bright side of life, sir.

PILATE: I wish I had a fraction of your optimism, my good man. I dread the evening ahead.

CARTAPHILUS: How so, sir?

PILATE: My wife, Claudia and I must make a public appearance at a party held by a very dreary noble man who's coffers are as deep as Ploutos' gloomy underworld and if I want secure his continuous political donations then I am forced to attend.

CARTAPHILUS: You have my sympathies, sir.

PILATE: And I envy your evening engagement. I trust that you will put the fear of Rome into the rabbles' gullets.

CARTAPHILUS: The night's work does put a smile on my lips, sir.

PILATE: You truly are my right hand!

CARTAPHILUS: Always, sir.

PILATE: Avail yourself to me tonight, good Cartaphilus. When I return home, I wish your company in my bed.

CARTAPHILUS: As you wish, sir.

PILATE: Good, good. The thought of us together, joined at the hip, will perhaps get me through the doldrums ahead. Now get one of the able-bodied servants to help you remove the remains of this lowly man before the carrion bugs grow fat in their numbers.

CARTAPHILUS: Right away, sir.

SFX: The buzz of a fly whines loudly as it approaches Pilate. Soon Pilate cries out.

PILATE: Damnable creature! You dare bite the hand of nobility! You have tasted my blue blood, now taste the sting of my right hand, gadfly!

SFX: The fly buzzes away mocking Pilate in its escape.



PILATE (to himself): What is this trickery of the mind?! The swarm forms into a large blackened smile. And the mouth of this grinning visage tries to speak...

FLIES: Pilate! We ask a favor from you.

PILATE: No! No! Stay back! Follow me not back to the palace, evil spirit! In the name of Rome! I banish thee!

SFX: Flies continue to buzz loudly as we transition into the next scene.

## **SCENE 2**

### **INT. PILATE'S BED CHAMBER— EVENING**

PILATE (sighs): Thy tender comfort, Cartaphilus, has soothed my troubles away. For such a rough man, you have a mother's touch.

CARTAPHILUS: I am glad to hear this, sir. But if I may be so bold to ask what trouble's you so.

PILATE: Affairs of the state, much of it is above your station and your worry. Oh, but how did it go with the rabble? Did you put the fear of Rome into their rebellious heart?

CARTAPHILUS: I am not sure, sir.

PILATE: Explain yourself, man!

CARTAPHILUS: They surrendered, yes. My men had them by the throat. With swords pressed close to their vitals, we crushed their rebellious spirit and made them swear allegiance to all-mighty Rome. Those that did not were quickly run through.

PILATE: It sounds like a successful night's work. What troubles you then?

CARTAPHILUS: Some of the more spirited ones spoke of a savior. A god of peace who in time would bring the empire to an end.

PILATE: It sounds like defiant hope, born out of spite as if they were some youth challenging the rule of authority.

CARTAPHILUS: There was conviction in their words, sir.

PILATE (scoffs): I hope you quickly silenced their incoherent ramblings.

CARTAPHILUS: We don't want martyrs, sir. That will only make their words carry more weight.

PILATE (scoffs): Tell me you at least ascertained how this god of peace will make himself known to us.

CARTAPHILUS: One their prophets speaks of a lowly man from Galilee dressed in the tattered robes of the common folk who shall arrive astride an ass.

PILATE (laughs): A jackass?! Surely they must be having you on. Either that or these peasants are quite mad!

CARTAPHILUS: If you had seen the seriousness of their faces, sir. You would have believed them too.

PILATE (chuckling): Well, we must make this god welcome in Judaea. Perhaps we shall string him up from the tallest tree so that all may gaze upon him and grovel at his feet.

CARTAPHILUS: You should take this seriously, sir. This Galilean, Jesus by name, could cause you more trouble especially if he has the people behind him. Do you remember that Great Herod once tried to murder all the newborns in Bethlehem out of fear that one of them would some day raise up and challenge him.

PILATE (scoffs): Herod was mad. His sons are no better, especially Herod Antipas. King of the Jews, what a ridiculous title. As if the peasantry even need their own king, when they have Rome to guide them.

CARTAPHILUS: What of the Baptist who preaches in the desert. Rumor speaks that the man, Jesus, sought him out for his blessing.

PILATE: Enough! I now see why your spirit is troubled, Cartaphilus! For you speak of nothing short of sedition under the cover of religion! If they are plotting revolution then they shall feel the full weight of Rome against them! You have opened my eyes. I have been far too lenient in my dealing with the public. An example must be made so they will be cowed again!

CARTAPHILUS: I agree, sir! What do you suggest?

PILATE: Send this Baptist to Herod Antipas! Let him deal with this desert dwelling riff-raff!

CARTAPHILUS: Very shrewd, sir. The Baptist has spoken ill of the marriage between Herod Antipas and his sister-in-law. Antipas is well known to hold a grudge for even a minor insult.

PILATE: I trust your discretion in this matter. Dress and leave my chamber. Now is not the time to indulge in the weakness of the flesh. I must be seen with my wife in public if I am to retain the small seat of power I have here.

CARTAPHILUS: But I can give what you need, sir.

PILATE: Alas, Cartaphilus, it is not so. Can you bear children to carry on my name? Or give Rome sons to carry on the empire?

CARTAPHILUS: But can a woman bring you joy or happiness, sir.

PILATE (sigh): I am a man of the state, my dear man. A cold and distant deposition is much more soothing to the public tastes than a man whose passions are on full display. How can the people trust a man who is overly emotional?

CARTAPHILUS: Women are the weaker sex and easily swayed by the pull of their emotions.

PILATE: Yes, that is true but they are also a necessary evil. Man and woman standing together as a united front calms the public's hearts and gives them the illusion of stability.

CARTAPHILUS: A wise man once said, sir, that if evil is necessary then no good can come from it.

PILATE (aside): I wonder if it is the same wise man who arrives in my city astride an ass.

CARTAPHILUS: Look there, sir.

PILATE: Eh? What is it you spy?

CARTAPHILUS: The morning star, sir. It is unusually bright. A good omen.

PILATE: Perhaps the goddess of love is pleased with our evening romp and has blessed us with her presence.

CARTAPHILUS: I half hoped that another goddess would bless us this evening, sir.

PILATE: You are in a wistful mood this night, Cartaphilus. Has my right hand lost its vigor?

CARTAPHILUS: Have you heard the myth of Tiresias, sir?

PILATE: Can't say that I have. Should I know it?

CARTAPHILUS: It's Greek in origin, sir.

PILATE (aside): Much like our love-making.

PILATE (to Cartaphilus) Ah, the Greeks are fond of their old wives tales. Tell me then Cartaphilus what do the old wives say of this man Tiresias?

CARTAPHILUS: It is a strange tale, sir. When he was a headstrong and witless youth, Tiresias came upon two serpents engaged in the act of love making. The snakes blocked his path, and in the brashness of youth, the young man struck out at the serpents with his walking stick. One of

the snakes warned Tiresias away. But the young man continued his assault, until the serpent took the shape and form of the regal goddess Juno who stood naked before the young man. She revealed that she was having a dalliance with a young shepherd boy who had caught her fancy and had changed them both into serpents to hide from the affair from her husband the god king Jupiter. Tiresias begged for forgiveness. His pitiful cries tempered Juno's vengeful nature and she was going to show Tiresias mercy, until he made the mistake of many young men, and tried to steal a peek at her in all her divine glory. This rekindled Juno's fury and she cursed the poor young man to live as a woman, changing his body into a naked reflection of her own. What do you think it means?

PILATE (chuckles): I believe it is wishful thinking on your part, my good man.

CARTAPHILUS: I believe the story has a deeper meaning, sir?

PILATE: Pray tell.

CARTAPHILUS: That the gods are duplicitous by nature. That their favor or scorn always comes with a hefty price. That leaves a man poorer by comparison.

PILATE: The same could be said, of our Roman Senate. They fancy themselves gods among men.

CARTAPHILUS: My apologies, sir. My mood is... unprofessional. It showed a weakness that I usually keep hidden. I am ashamed.

PILATE: All is forgiven, my faithful servant. We shall simply dismiss your behavior as feverish fantasy brought on by the heat of the night.

CARTAPHILUS: You are too kind, sir.

PILATE: Come now, Cartaphilus you need not make arguments for my love or affection like an old wife. You already have both.

SFX: Pilate kisses the other man on the cheek.

PILATE: Now go my faithful servant. My lonely wife, Claudia, ever awaits her husband.

### **SCENE 3**

#### **INT. CLAUDIA'S ROOM— AFTER MIDNIGHT**

CLAUDIA: Husband! Husband! Wake up!

PILATE (groggy): What?! Have I not already done my husbandly duty? Let me rest, woman!

CLAUDIA: I cannot! See how I tremble in fright, Pontius?!

PILATE: Oh dear, wife, tell your loving husband what troubles your fearful mind?

CLAUDIA: Do not mock me, Pontius! You are the one in danger. It is a threat to your very soul that makes me tremble so.

PILATE (aside): Danger from a refugee of your over-active imagination.

PILATE (to Claudia): Tell me more, sweet wife. You have my full attention.

PILATE (aside): As I shut my ears to your screeching.

CLAUDIA: I dreamed of a wise man, who will come to you dressed in tattered robes to be judged. This man will be beaten and bruised and upon his head will rest a crown of thorns.

PILATE: Oh Claudia, love of my life. You have been deceived by delusions birthed from the Gates of Ivory.

CLAUDIA: No, husband! It is you who are deceived. You will have a chance to show this wise man mercy, but an evil spirit dressed in green-colored gowns has your council and will convince you to condemn the man with promises of fortune and glory...

PILATE: Enough! You speak nonsense and I will listen no more! As if I, Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Providence of Judaea, would ever listen to some colorful fool!

CLAUDIA: But you will listen and you will believe his lies. Come let us flee the providence even if it is just for a while so that you can escape your fate.

PILATE: More nonsense spills from your lips, Claudia. Flee the providence! When there is so much unrest in Judaea! Are you mad?!

SFX: Claudia begins to sob.

CLAUDIA: Oh husband, you will be damned for your pride and evil shall stain your soul forever.

PILATE: Oh my dear wife. Did you forget, my good breeding has given me a formidable constitution and with the backing of Rome behind me, I fear no spirits be they good or evil. So dry those tears and worry not about me.

CLAUDIA: You are my husband, Pontius, you are my life. You are my whole world. Worrying about you is a wife's heavy burden. I beg you, silence your arrogance before it is too late.

PILATE (cold): I wish to be alone now, woman. I will walk the halls, and seek my own council. Do not be here when I return!

SFX: Pilate storms out the room, leaving Claudia sobbing.

**SCENE 4**  
**PALACE HALLWAY—**  
**JUST BEFORE DAWN**

PILATE (to himself): Stupid woman! Frightening herself with fool-hardy dreams and childish fantasies! Does she not understand that I am Prefect of Judaea and a Scion of Rome?! I have no time to indulge such imaginary ramblings.

PILATE (sighs): Ah but, the weight of stately affairs has given me an ill-tempered demeanor, and I fear my lips were too harsh in my admonishment of my better half. Claudia loves me true, perhaps a small escape from Judaea would not be out of order...

SFX: The sound of jiggling bells is heard. The sound dogs Pilate's footsteps.

PILATE: What is that sound?! There should be no one roaming the halls this late in the early morning.

SFX: The jiggling bells draw closer. Pilate raises the alarm.

PILATE: Guards! Guards!

SFX: In response childish laughter is heard.

PILATE: Where are my guardsmen?! Why do they not come at my beck and call?! Stay back, interloper! I warn you! I have no sword but my hands shall tear you asunder!

SFX: In response more childish laughter is heard.

MORNING STAR: Fear not, brave Pilate. Our meeting is a friendly one.

PILATE: Show yourself, then, if you be a friend!

MORNING STAR: I appear!

PILATE (sighs in relief): You are nothing more than a child dressed in such green colored garments. Hmmm, did not Claudia warn me of such a thing... I can not remember...

MORNING STAR: Worry not, friend Pilate. Believe your eyes and see that I am unarmed. The only weapon I ever carry is my sharp tongue.

PILATE: Where be your mother child with the shiny face?



MORNING STAR: I have no mother, sir. And my father is... distant.

PILATE: How did you get past my guards? To now stand in my presence?

MORNING STAR: Not even your stalwart guards would deny my passage. For I be Prince of this World.

PILATE: A lofty title, child, for one dressed as a fool. You look more like a lost boy from Emperor Tiberius' stable than a worldly prince.

MORNING STAR: Look closer, friend Pilate. We have met before. Do you not remember when I kissed your hand?

PILATE: The bite from the gadfly? You drew this injury?

MORNING STAR: I did. I can still taste your sweet equestrian blood.

PILATE: I have indulged this childish fantasy enough. If you are of divine origin then prove it or be gone!

MORNING STAR (Buzzing demonic voice): You would risk madness or even death to satisfy your doubt! A pitiful man like you, Pontius Pilate, is but an ant in my dominion over the Earth! Even Rome bows to me! But if it is proof you need to satisfy your faith than look here...

SFX: The sound of buzzing flies grows louder and louder.

PILATE: That grinning visage! You are the spirit of the afternoon who haunts my mind still!

MORNING STAR (distorted): We are indeed! All flesh belongs to us. We are the eaters of the dead.

PILATE: Forgive me, Great god! My lying eyes did deceive me into believing you were less than the fool you pretend to be.

MORNING STAR (normal voice): Arise my faithful servant of Rome. We have no quarrel between us and your faith in me is forgiveness enough.

PILATE: How should I address you World Prince.

MORNING STAR: As a friend.

PILATE: No, my noble lord. What name should cross my lips in address?

MORNING STAR: A loaded question for I have as many names as I do titles. Add to my collection and you shall be rewarded for your effort.

PILATE: I address you as... Morning Star.

MORNING STAR: Divinely inspired, my friend. But such a gift deserves reward. I shall help you gain the favor of Rome and advance your station in life.

PILATE: I am Prefect of Judaea. This is already a high station!

MORNING STAR: Your dreams are small, my humble friend. I can give you glory beyond imagination, so that the name of Pontius Pilate will be forever enshrined in the annals of history.

PILATE: A promising offer, what I need I do to achieve such a high status.

MORNING STAR: Listen then as I guide your fate. You must remove Sejanus. He stands in your way to greatness. Summon him to Judaea.

PILATE: Sejanus! I could never...

MORNING STAR: Your friend Sejanus satiates your thirst for power by banishing you to the backwaters of Rome. Remove him and advance in life. His removal will earn you the favor of Tiberius who grows increasingly weary of Sejanus' reign.

PILATE: But Sejanus has been a good friend for many years...

MORNING STAR: Need I remind you that a man in your position does not need to dirty his hands. His removal can be delivered by proxy.

PILATE: You have given me much to ponder, god of many names and titles.

MORNING STAR: Sit not too long on this opportunity, my friend, its life is short. The sun rises to banish me away, but I shall return when the moon is high again.

SFX: A buzzing sound signals Morning Star's exit.

## SCENE 5

### ARENA—

#### THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

SEJANUS: Pilate! My friend! I have received your summons and here I have arrived! I am in need of a new fighter, the one you gave me has joined the ranks of Hades! He did not stand up well against our fine Roman stock. It is my hope you have a much more formidable peasant for our games. Hmmm. Strange I come but my only greeting is silence. Pilate! Do not insult me with your rudeness! It is I, Sejanus!

SFX: Whispering is heard all around the man.

SEJANUS: Pilate! I came to you in trust! There is no guard who accompanies me! Why would I need one? Is this not a friendly gathering?

CARTAPHILUS: You've got no friends here, mate.

SEJANUS: Pilate's right hand! You dare!

CARTAPHILUS: Not just me, mate! You have made enemies in Rome.

SEJANUS: The Praetorian Guard betrays me!

CARTAPHILUS: Betray you? You misunderstand our intentions, sir. We wish to honor you...

SFX: The sting of swords being drawn is now heard.

CARTAPHILUS: As we do the dead.

SEJANUS: Curse you, Pilate! Curse you and your right hand!

CARTAPHILUS: Don't worry, sir. It will be quick.

SFX: Cartaphilus runs a sword through Sejanus' chest.

CARTAPHILUS: Poor man, deluded to the end. Chop him up, boys, so we can ship him back to Rome. Let our glorious Senate decide what to do with him.

SFX: The sound of metal striking flesh carries us to the next scene.

**SCENE 6**  
**PILATE'S OFFICE—**  
**DAWN**

SFX: We hear a sound of a pen scratching on paper as Pilate feverishly writes a letter.

PILATE: A gift for your stables, Emperor Tiberius, courtesy of Judaea...

JASON: You sent for me, sir?

PILATE: Ah, there you are, boy. How is your mother, young Jason?

JASON: She is well, but she worries about our coffers, sir. We are not well off and our cupboards are mostly bare.

PILATE: You are not alone in that condition, child. Rome is wealthy but sadly some of its people are not. But I appreciate your mother's hard work. This room has never looked so tidy and the floors are well scrubbed.

Pilate sighs.

PILATE (CON'T): But I have it on good authority that your fortunes are about to improve.

JASON: Sir?

PILATE: I need this letter to Capri. Deliver it to Emperor Tiberius himself, understand, show no one else. To satisfy your curiosity, the letter details the many crimes of Lucius Aelius Sejanus. I shiver just saying his name.

JASON: Was he really that bad, sir?

PILATE: You even need to ask such a question, boy? He was evil incarnate. More monster than man. I can speak no more. Only the emperor has the strength to read the horrors that this letter details. And I have chosen a fine stalwart boy like you to shoulder this burden and bring this man's unspeakable crimes to an end.

JASON: Don't worry, sir. You can trust me.

PILATE: It warms my heart to hear your honesty, young man. Still I shiver in remembrance of the monster Sejanus.

JASON: I need to tell my mother of the journey ahead, sir.

PILATE: Alas! You cannot! You must make haste! The ship to Capri departs soon. Again I press upon you the importance of your task. I shall explain to your mother your heroic actions this day.

JASON: I understand, sir. I will not let you down.

PILATE: You honor Rome with your actions today. Go! I assure you that Emperor Tiberius will reward you handsomely for this swift deliverance.

SFX: The boy exits quickly, at the same time Cartaphilus enters.

CARTAPHILUS: Sir!

PILATE: Right on time, my faithful co-conspirator. Are you ready to dirty your hands once more?

CARTAPHILUS: Lies and bloodshed for the service of Rome, fills with absolute joy, sir.

PILATE: Good. Good. For now that we have assassinated the man, we must assassinate his character.

CARTAPHILUS: What did you have in mind, sir?

PILATE: You must be like the serpent, my good right hand. Dress in peasant garb and whisper of Sejanus' vile deeds and evil intentions as you slither your way through the crowd of unwashed masses. By night's end, it will be foul blasphemy to utter a single kindness in defense of our former friend.

CARTAPHILUS: Understood sir.

SFX: Whispering babel accompanies Cartaphilus' exit.

**SCENE 7**  
**PALACE HALLWAY—**  
**EVENING**

SFX: The jiggling of bells echo in the distance.

PILATE: Who dares approach, Pilate as I walk these halls in quiet solitude? Announce yourself and face my judgment!

SFX: Childish laughter responds.

PILATE: Oh it is you. The star of the morning. The god dressed as a green-colored fool.

MORNING STAR: The same!

PILATE (contemptuous): I would think that the Prince of the World would be more finely dressed.

MORNING STAR: You will find that many world leaders follow my lead and act very foolish.

PILATE (scoffs): I do not appreciate mockery at my expense! What is it you want from me, foolish god?

MORNING STAR: Such a harsh tone for one who has recently sought my council to gain the favor of Emperor Tiberius. Have you not destroyed a rival and secured for yourself a higher station in life? A seat on the Senate waits for you in the near future. And that is but a short step to the throne of the empire itself.

PILATE: There is much wisdom in your speech, if you speak true...

MORNING STAR: I am wordly-wise, equestrian. But my favors and advice are not freely given.

PILATE: What is it you would have of me, Morning Star?

MORNING STAR: Nothing beyond your power, and nothing that will cost you too much. There will come to you a man with the name of Jesus. He will arrive astride an ass to your city.

PILATE: I have heard of this man. He has made quite a name for himself among the peasantry. Some sort of god of peace...

MORNING STAR (scoff): Hardly a god, more of an inconvenience who makes mockery of my dominion upon the earth.

PILATE: A rival prince?

MORNING STAR: A pauper, dressed in dirty tattered robes.

PILATE: So he is a peasant on his way to becoming a common criminal.

MORNING STAR: Yes, yes. Now you see the truth of it. He is nothing short of a troublemaker! In a fit of rage, he will overturn the money changer tables at the temple. Your pocket priest will order his arrest. But he is shrewd, this man and will flee from the scene of the crime. His capture will only come when he is betrayed by a friend with a kiss. Does that sound like a man who should be free to roam the streets of Judaea, Pontius Pilate?!

PILATE (dismissive): If he has broken the law then he shall be punished. Hardly a threat to either me or Rome. A simple flogging will set him on the righteous path again.

MORNING STAR: No threat! No threat! He will bring about the destruction of the empire itself.

PILATE (laughs): Really. And pray tell what will this man Jesus do? Charge into battle grabbed in the armor of tattered clothing astride his mighty ass!

MORNING STAR: He is a deceiver! A plague on my otherwise perfectly ordered world.

PILATE: Enough! You say this man is a threat and then you exaggerate his crimes to bait me. But you tell me nothing about the man himself! Who is this man to you, foolish god!

SFX: Morning Star laughs his childish giggle. The bells of his costume also jiggle with every guffaw.

MORNING STAR: Your eyes are sharp indeed, friend Pilate. So sharp that you cut through my silly deceptions. Yes this man, Jesus, is a rival. He has stolen my father's favor and proclaims himself as my father's true successor.

PILATE: At last the truth comes. No more bluster! No more spitfire proclamations! Now an honest motive becomes clear.

MORNING STAR: Yes. I am found out. My true intentions stand revealed. My hatred of this man, Jesus, consumes every fiber of myself! He must be mocked, humiliated, and made to suffer a slow agonizing death. Only then will the burning hatred I feel be extinguished. If you help me, I

will show you a place where untold wealth flows under your feet. More than enough to buy divinity itself.

PILATE: Why were not honest with me from the beginning Star of the Morning? Yes, I will help you. A good Roman would never turn his back on someone who is in great need, especially with the promise of vast wealth on the table.

MORNING STAR: We are of the same heart, friend Pilate.

PILATE: For the glory of Rome!

MORNING STAR: For the glory of Pontius Pilate!

PILATE: When will this man, Jesus, appear in my court?

MORNING STAR: By the rooster's crow at the entrance of dawn.

PILATE: You have my word, the world of Pontius Pilate, that justice shall be served by daylight!

MORNING STAR: The word of Pontius Pilate carries much weight, as you hold the balance of the world on your broad shoulders.

PILATE: By tomorrow, the balance shall shift and tip in your favor, Prince of the World.

SFX: Morning Star claps his hands in excitement, in tune to the jingle of his bells.



**SCENE 8**  
**CLAUDIA'S ROOM—**  
**EARLY MORNING**

CLAUDIA: Husband! You return!

PILATE: Yes, Claudia. All is forgiven. I apologize for lashing out at you the other night. The weight of the world is heavy upon my shoulders and it made me ill-tempered.

CLAUDIA: Come sit by your wife. Perhaps I can soothe this burden you carry.

PILATE: Very well, I shall surrender to your gentle touch.

SFX: Claudia gasps

PILATE: What is it, dear Claudia?

CLAUDIA: That wound on your hand!

PILATE: A bite from a gadfly, nothing more.

CLAUDIA: A simple gadfly bite would not have marked you in such a way. Look! The infection has spread as it crawls its way to your heart.

PILATE: I am a politician in the court of Rome you silly woman. If my hands be dirty then I shall wash them as I shall wash your tongue out with soap should you anger me again.

CLAUDIA: Beg forgiveness from a higher court, husband. For you shall be judged for your actions today. Please listen to your wife before I lose you forever.

PILATE: That is a woman's heart. Full of worry from the imagined threats to her own person.

CLAUDIA: Not just my own person, husband. You are well.

PILATE (scoffs) What utter rot.

CLAUDIA: There is another who has captured your heart. I know this. Someone who will lead you down a dark path, from which you will never return.

PILATE: You speak of my friends, but you are ignorant of the delicate path one walks with them. In friendship, one must be dominant and yet be willing to compromise one's own interests if the reward proves greater. You must often pretend to be someone you are not in order to obtain your goals. The workings of friendship are hardly the providence of a woman to understand.

CLAUDIA: And yet I know my husband true, not the man he pretends to be in public. And I shall be at your side regardless of your manipulations to gain the favors from your so-called friends.

PILATE: You don't understand what I have to do to remain in power.

CLAUDIA: I beg you husband, do not play the judge today.

SFX: A rooster crows at the coming of dawn. Cartaphilus enters.

CARTAPHILUS: Sir, the man, Jesus, is now in our custody. He awaits your judgment.

PILATE: You see, Claudia. I am pressed into service. You shall be proud of your husband this day for my fair and just handling of this case.

CLAUDIA: Husband listen to me, not to the evil spirits of the night. There is a custom in this area, where in a pardon may be granted to the guilty and condemned. Grant mercy to this man Jesus.

PILATE: Rest assure my dear wife, Claudia. This man shall know the full justice of Rome.

**SCENE 9**  
**JUDICIAL OFFICE—**  
**AFTERNOON**

PILATE: Do my eyes deceive me, Cartaphilus or am I seeing double? Which one is the man Jesus?

CARTAPHILUS: There was some confusion about that sir. This man is named Jesus and this man is also named Jesus.

PILATE: Is this some clever ploy to escape justice? At least the one on the left is better dressed. You there! What is your full name?

BARABBAS: Jesus Barabbas, sir.

PILATE: Very good and what is your crime my good man?

BARABBAS: Murder!

PILATE: A noble pursuit.

BARABBAS: And plotting against the Roman occupation of Judaea.

PILATE: Oh that is less noble. Although who hasn't plotted against Rome, eh Cartaphilus?

CARTAPHILUS (chuckling): Quite right, sir.

PILATE: Other Jesus... Wait, has this man already been judged?

CARTAPHILUS: Sir?

PILATE: He has been beaten.

CARTAPHILUS: Oh right, he was resisting arrest, sir.

PILATE (disbelief): This lowly man in tattered robes was resisting arrest?

CARTAPHILUS: Yes sir.

PILATE: If my right hand says so, then it must be true. Other Jesus, what is your full name.

Jesus remains silent.

PILATE: Did you also cut out this man's tongue, Cartaphilus?

CARTAPHILUS: No, sir.

PILATE: The bruising around his mouth could that be affecting his ability to speak.

CARTAPHILUS: We didn't hurt him that badly, sir.

PILATE (to Jesus): Your silence, sir, will only damn you further in the eyes of this court.

Jesus remains silent.

PILATE: What is your crime?

Jesus remains silent.

PILATE (shouting): WHAT IS YOUR CRIME?! You either speak or this court shall find you in contempt.

Jesus remains silent.

PILATE (sigh, heavily): What is this man's crime, Cartaphilus?

CARTAPHILUS: This man dressed in tatters robes has been accused by your friend Caiaphas of blasphemy. He was heard to say that he is King of the Kings.

PILATE: How is this my problem? Should not this be under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas?

CARTAPHILUS: Herod sent him back to us, but not before dressing him in this tattered robe.

PILATE (sighs): You really are a troublemaker, aren't you?

JESUS: It is you who have said so.

PILATE: Praise be to the gods! This man does have a tongue! Have you anything to say in your own defense?

JESUS: You have already found me guilty.

PILATE (chuckling) Not only a blasphemer, but a soothe-sayer as well.

CARTAPHILUS: I am shaking in my boots, sir.

PILATE: Did you hear that? My right hand is in fear of your astonishing abilities. Tell me then sage, what will be your fate.

JESUS: You will crucify me. My fate is already written in the Book of Life.

PILATE: Such a defeatist attitude. A real man would have fought for his life until he breathed his last. This hardly speaks well of your character as a citizen of Rome.

JESUS: Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.

PILATE: How amusing.

SFX: Pilate claps his hands together.

PILATE: But generous Pilate has not given up on you. Raise your spirits up for there is still a chance for you. Come, let us see how you fair with the populace of Judaea.

PILATE (to Barabbas): You as well, Barabbas, my good fellow. For this judgment must be fair and true.

**SCENE 10**  
**PALACE BALCONY—**  
**AFTERNOON**

SFX: A murmuring festive crowd

PILATE: Good people of Judaea, I your humble Prefect call upon your assistant to judge which of these two men is fit for pardon. Do you choose this fine, upstanding citizen, Jesus Barbbas? A person who is truly a man of the people, save for some violent tendencies against Rome. Observe my people the finery of his dress. Gaze upon his handsome rugged face. Surely this man above all others deserves to walk among you as a free man.

SFX: The crowd goes wild chanting the name of “BARBBAS!” Pilate chuckles in response to the crowd’s reaction.

PILATE: Settle down, settle down. We must give every man a fair hearing.

SFX: The crowd gradually settles down to a low barely audible murmur.

PILATE: Now we turn this poor creature. Hardly a man I’d say, dressed in the tattered robes of vagrant and he needs a bath more than your pardon. Thank the gods that you have not reached my lofty heights. For the air is foul while standing in this dirty creature’s presence. I tell you good people of Judaea, he stinks worse than a donkey’s ass. Forgive me, I think I am going to be sick.

SFX: Pilate pretends to gag before continuing.

PILATE: But do not let my words sway you. Ultimately the judgment is yours to make. I am simply an administrator in these proceedings.

So now speak your choice. Do you wish this fine upstanding fellow, Jesus Barbbas, to be pardoned or do you wish this filth-riddled derelict, Jesus of Galilee, to be released. A ratty-looking creature who’s sour smell originates from the burn trash pits of Golgotha itself!

SFX: The sound of jiggling bells echoes in the crowd, as Morning Star begins to chant.

MORNING STAR: Barabbas! Barabbas!

SFX: The rest of the crowd now joins in.

PILATE (sighs): You poor man. I am so sorry, Jesus of Galilee. I tried my best to rally the crowd to your cause, but the justice of the mob is swift and decisive. My hands are tied. Come both of you, let us re-enter the judicial chamber.

**SCENE 11**  
**JUDICIAL CHAMBERS—**  
**LATE AFTERNOON**

PILATE: My apologies, Barabbas. Justice is swift, but processing your release is not. Please make yourself comfortable while you wait. Can we offer you refreshment? We have a fine decanter of Greek wine, maybe some food.

BARABBAS: I will take all you got, sir! By force if necessary!

PILATE: Oh you are quite the charming fellow.

CLAUDIA: Husband!

PILATE: Claudia! You dare enter these judicial chambers! You know that women are not allowed here.

CLAUDIA: I beg mercy for the man, Jesus.

PILATE: This man?! He has already been pardoned.

BARABBAS: My, my aren't you a pretty bird!

JESUS: I am here, daughter.

CLAUDIA: Forgive my husband, my Lord. He does not understand the evil of his actions today.

JESUS: Arise, Claudia. For today you have been saved.

CLAUDIA: Thank you, my lord. But I care little for my own salvation. It is my husband's damnation that saddens my heart.

JESUS (to Claudia): Worry not. He will not be damned. Your love of him has saved him from that fate.

JESUS (to Pilate): But I tell you this, Pontius Pilate. Claudia's love may have spared you from the lonely despair of Sheol's darkness. But you will not enter my kingdom any time soon. Instead, you shall tarry until I come again.

PILATE (chuckles): Is that a threat? Am I supposed to be shaken by the weight of your words?



JESUS: You shall feel that weight in the years to come, Pontius Pilate. And you will beg for the comfort of death as you wander the earth. But that comfort will be denied to you until the Day of Judgment. .

CLAUDIA: My Lord! No! That is a living death! This is a punishment beyond all cruelty.

JESUS: Not punishment. A lesson he must learn before he can find grace.

CLAUDIA: Shall I ever see him again?

JESUS (to Claudia): When you are my Kingdom, to you it will seem but seconds. For this man, Pilate, it will be several life times before his gaze sets upon you again.

PILATE: I have suffered through this beggar's wisdom long enough. But I shall listen no more to your tomfoolery man of tattered robes and filth. Silence your tongue and say no more.

Jesus says nothing more.

PILATE: You see, Claudia, even your Lord recognizes the authority of Rome. But it will not save you Galilean, for Rome turns its back on you, as I do now!

SFX: We hear the sound of water splashing in a bowl.

PILATE: I wash my hands of you, sir. Your fate lies with my right hand! Cartaphilus!

CARTAPHILUS: Right this way, sir! So you fancy yourself a king do ya?! Well, the boys and I must find you a suitable crown...

CLAUDIA: I pray that you shall see the fault in your reason, husband. You have done something so vile that it stains the very core of your being.

PILATE: And yet my hands are clean.

CLAUDIA: You mock that which you do not understand. I have lost you today, because you are too proud to admit you are wrong, and I fear I shall never see your handsome face again in my lifetime.

PILATE: I understand that the day has taken a toll upon you, and mind and heart are overwhelmed. Oh sweet, sweet Claudia, you always care too much. It is good that you have me to act as a counter-balance to your overreaching kindness. Guards! My wife is over-taxed and needs rest! Lock her in her room if you must, and harden your hearts against her cries.

CLAUDIA: Husband, no! Please...

SFX: Claudia begins to sob as the guard take her away.

PILATE (to Barabbas): I am sorry, my fine fellow, that you had to witness my wife's emotional outburst. This is why we do not allow woman in our Roman court.

BARABBAS: A wise precaution, sir.

PILATE: You are too generous with your praise, Barabbas. But I hope this has not upset your joy in your newly founded freedom. Please, I beg you take this generous bag of coin for your trouble to soothe any pains you may have suffered. For the Court of Pilate is always just.

BARABBAS: That is mighty generous of you, sir. I was going to burn down your palace but your donation has made me reconsider that decision.

PILATE: Oh you are a fine fellow, dear Barabbas. But if you be of an arsonist's bent might I suggest that you burn down the capitol building instead? Not many would mourn the loss of our Roman Senate. Rome is awash with politicians who will happily make promises that they will never keep.

BARABBAS: I shall take that under advisement, sir. Am I free to go? The day grows late.

PILATE: Let me check. Oh yes, I see that my right hand has left your discharge orders on my desk. Go with my blessing.

SFX: The sound of jingling bells followed by clapping is now heard.

MORNING STAR: Masterful work, friend Pilate. I am well pleased by this turn of fate.

PILATE: Oh it is you, the fool. I am glad you are pleased, but it was hardly nothing at all, a minor demonstration of the justice of Rome.

MORNING STAR: Yes! I am a fool. I fool people all the time. And you Pontius Pilate are far too modest in the appraisal of yourself.

PILATE: I am humbled by your foolish flattery.

MORNING STAR: Oh how silly of me to forget, I promised you reward for your faithful service. And fool I might be, but even I repay my debts.

PILATE: Then you are more honest than many in Rome, sir.

MORNING STAR: Flattery must be the currency of Rome, for you spend it so freely. But let us return to the business at hand.

PILATE: Yes, you promised me that my name shall be enshrined in history and that you will show me a place where treasure shall flow under my feet.

MORNING STAR: One promise kept and one still to be fulfilled. Come let us wander.

PILATE: To the treasure?

MORNING STAR: If that is what you desire.

## **SCENE 12**

### **EXT. ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS— EARLY MORNING**

PILATE: I'm not sure. I feel a pull on my heart. I should return to my wife and make amends.

MORNING STAR: But we are already on the road to fortune and glory. See for yourself.

PILATE: How are we outside? Was I just not in the judicial chamber?

MORNING STAR: There is no life for you there anymore. But look yonder see Judea, in the far distance? You will never be allowed to return.

PILATE: My home! My prefect! Claudia!

MORNING STAR: All behind you now! Even as Lord Jesus walks in the shadow of death, your path lies forever forward!

PILATE: Lord Jesus! You lied to me, made me believe he was but a simple beggar.

MORNING STAR: It was an honest mistake. I thought you knew. But look now, a marvel appears in the sky above. Do you see His palace, there in the clouds?

PILATE: I see nothing but the moon and the stars.

MORNING STAR: You see, but do not see with the eyes of a believer. I pity you, man, that you cannot gaze upon His beautiful silver kingdom. We are all servants in His court, you know, even I, albeit a rebellious one.

PILATE: So he was a king. Had I known, my judgment of him would have been far different.

MORNING STAR: And yet the outcome would have still been the same for your fates were already written in stars.

PILATE: Why are we on the road to Damascus?

MORNING STAR: That is where your fortune lies. Always forward, never back, Pilate. Come, come, do not dawdle.

SFX: We hear the crunch of gravel under Pilate's feet.

PILATE: I wish to go home.

MORNING STAR: Is that truly what you want, friend Pilate? If you return home you will miss out on your promised reward. What does your proud Roman heart say?

PILATE: Fine! Let us press on, to see if your lips speak true.

MORNING STAR: No need, we are already here.

PILATE: In Damascus? But how can that be? It is impossible. The distance alone should have taken us days on foot.

MORNING STAR: We have made good time. But if you doubt, look behind you and see how far we have traveled.

PILATE: It is unbelievable. I cannot even see my beloved Judaea anymore.

PILATE (to Morning Star): Where is the treasure you promised!

MORNING STAR (bored): Under your feet as I said. It is yours, provided you put in the work. Dig for it.

PILATE (to himself): This is humiliating, a man of my station, doing the work of a common slave. Wait, what is this inky goo that bubbles from the soil?

SFX: Oil bubbles and then a geyser up in the air. Morning Star claps and his bells jingle in joy.

MORNING STAR: It is the treasure! Treasure beyond imagination as promised. More precious than gold or silver. And worth more than all the gems in Ploutos' underworld.

PILATE: But what am I supposed to do with it? This black goo that spits from the earth.

MORNING STAR: In the here and now? Nothing. It has no value to the people of your time. This inky fluid is nothing more than the decomposing bodies of the giant beasts that once roamed this Holy land. But, in two millennia's time, this black gold shall be more valuable than life itself. Men shall go to war and spill blood for possessions of it. Nations will rise and fall for control of it. And a pauper will become more wealthy than even all of Rome itself just for finding it.

PILATE: Was any of what you promised true?

MORNING STAR (giggling): All of it and none of it. Your promised wealth pours from the earth and the name of Pontius Pilate will live on throughout the ages, also as promised. Of course, your name will forever be said with both contempt and scorn.

PILATE: You tricked me and I'm the poorer man for it.

MORNING STAR: It is your fault, for listening to a fool.

SFX: Morning Star laughs. His childish giggle, soon descending into something that sounds like the buzzing of flies.

MORNING STAR: Ahead is where your future lies! But before you go, show me your face one last time. Ah yes, so handsome. The face of a loving husband and a respected member of society. Give it to me!

SFX: Pilate screams.

MORNING STAR: That is better, your empty expression now mirrors your soul. Heavy is the mark I have given you, faceless one, your very identity has been removed from your person. All you meet on your journey will know your shame and shun you for it. Now go, foul vagrant! Walk the Earth friendless and alone until the Day of Judgment!

SFX: Pilate begins to weep. The sound grows more and more distant as he walks away.

END

