

OUTPOST IN NAZARETH

A Christmas Play

by

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Outpost In Nazareth

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Characters

Messiah #1 (Messiah #2, Marcellus, and Wiseman #3)

Woman #1 (Pilgrim #1)

Woman #2 (Pilgrim #2)

Woman #3 (Mary and Pilgrim #3)

Gaius Publius Sajenus, Roman Tribune

Dominica Sejanus, wife of Tribune

Roman Soldier #1 (Rabbi I and Wiseman #1)

Roman Soldier #2 (Rabbi II and Wiseman #2)

Rabbi #1 and #2

Mary

Marcellus, messenger from Rome

Messiah #2

Wiseman #1, #2, and #3

Pilgrim #1, #2, and #3

Time

Days of Jesus' birth

Place

Nazareth

A street

The palace of the Roman Tribune

Costumes

Bible era robes, sandals, sashes, and headpieces: Messiah #1 and #2
 Woman #1, #2, and #3
 Mary
 Pilgrim #1, #2, and #3

Roman tunics and sandals: Gaius (Tribune)
 Dominca (Wife of Tribune)
 Marcellus (Messenger)

Roman Soldier uniforms: Roman Soldiers

Priestly robes and sandals: RABBI #1 and #2

Oriental king robes: WISEMAN #1, #2, and #3

Scenery

A street in Nazareth

A Roman palace receiving room (of Roman Tribune) with 2 royal chairs

A bench on a street

OUTPOST IN NAZARETH

ACT I, Scene 1

{As the lights come up, Woman #1 and #2 are standing at the top of stage right stairs. They carry baskets. They are talking about what they have in their baskets. Gaius and Dominica enter from stage left arm-in-arm. Roman Soldier #1 and #2 follow Gaius and Dominica during the scene}

Dominica: *{looking around}* A beautiful day.

Gaius: *{arm up surveying the scene}* Peaceful. Nothing happening, except the usual...

{Messiah #1 and Woman #3 enters theatre from center aisle. Woman #1 and #2 point with excitement. They put down their baskets. Gaius and Dominica slowly start to cross toward center stage cautiously}

Woman #1: There he is!

Woman #2: He's here!

Dominica: Trouble?

Gaius: *{shaking head}* *{wearily}* Another one.

{Woman #1 and #2 clap and jump up and down. Messiah #1 waves to audience as he crosses to bottom of stage right stairs. He shakes hands with several of the audience. Messiah #1 and Woman #3 reach bottom of stage right stairs}

Messiah #1: I'm Messiah. The long-awaited hope of Israel!

{Gaius and Dominica cross toward center stage}

Messiah #1 *{cont'd}*: The fulfillment of prophecy. The Scriptures foretold my coming.

{Gaius and Dominica reach center stage. Messiah #1 sees Gaius and Dominica. Messiah #1 points at Gaius}

Messiah #1 *{cont'd}*: I'll free Israel from the pagans.

Woman #1: Free us, O Messiah!

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* I told you.

Messiah #1: *{shaking finger at Gaius}* Behold, the Tribune who holds us in the bondage of Rome!

Woman #2: Free us from tyranny!

Woman #3: *{waving at GAIUS}* Go back to Rome!

Woman #1: *{shaking fist at GAIUS}* Rome's the enemy!

Messiah #1: *{shaking finger at Dominica}* Leave Nazareth before you're slaughtered with your husband.

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* A threatening one.

Messiah #1: *{pointing finger at Roman Soldiers}* I'll rid our land of the Roman troops...

Woman #1: Out with the Romans!

Messiah #1: And Herod. He's not our King. He's a puppet of Rome.

Woman #2: Out with Herod!

{Messiah #1 and Woman #1, #2, and #3 cross to center aisle and wave menacingly at Gaius and Dominica}

Messiah #1: Israel will be free!

Woman #1, #2, and #3: Israel will be free!

Messiah #1: *{pointing at Gaius and Dominica}*
We'll be free!

Woman #1, #2, and #3: *{pointing at Gaius and Dominica}* We'll be free!

{Messiah #1 turns to Woman #1, #2, and #3 and taps chest}

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* Here it comes.

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* Are they ready for it?

Messiah #1: {holding out arms} Come to me!

Woman #1: *{in awe}* He's Messiah!

Messiah #1: *{holding out arms}* Come to me!

Woman #2: *{in awe}* He's the real Messiah!

{Messiah #1 motions with both arms to Woman #1, #2, and #3}

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* He's got them now.

Woman #3: *{in awe}* You're our only hope!

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* He's got charisma.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* Not you too?

Dominica: *{shaking head}* Don't be silly.

Woman #3: We're yours!

{Woman #1, #2, and #3 run to Messiah's arms. Messiah #1 embraces Woman #1, #2, and #3}

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* This one's real good.

Messiah #1: Freedom for Israel!

{Dominica shakes head. Messiah #1 opens

*arms and Woman #1, #2, and #3 move away
from embrace)*

Messiah #1 *{cont'd}*: I'll free everyone!

Woman #1, #2, and #3: We want freedom! We want freedom!

*{Messiah #1 and Woman #1, #2, and #3
exit up center aisle. Gaius and Dominica
watch them exit}*

Messiah #1: Freedom! Freedom!

Woman #1, #2, and #3: Messiah! Messiah!

Gaius: Pretty followers.

Dominica: You noticed.

Gaius: *{pointing up center aisle}* Certainly he did. *{pointing to Dominica}* You noticed his charisma.

Dominica: Will you arrest him?

Gaius: Not unless he mounts an insurrection. Herod's the king. Let him deal with the local zealots. We're here protecting Rome's interest in the trade route that goes to the border with Syria.

{Gaius and Dominica cross to edge of stage}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: Nazareth! *{shaking head}* What a dreary assignment! I'm sorry I've brought you here.

Dominica: *{patting Gaius's arm}* You're my husband. I want to be with you. It's a steppingstone to your appointment to the Senate and our return to Rome. Something we've always wanted.

Gaius: *{pointing up center aisle}* This one was amusing. We need entertainment...*{rubbing hands as if dirty}* here.

Dominica: Could this one be real?

Gaius: *{laughing}* Impossible.

Dominica: Why?

Gaius: There's no such thing as messiah.

Dominica: The Jewish Scriptures talk about messiah coming soon.

Gaius: Where'd you hear this?

Dominica: From the women in town. I hear them talking on the street and at the well. They talk about their God's promises to their people.

Gaius: Their god? There are hundreds of gods, goddesses, demigods, spirits. Rome's full of gods. Which one's your favorite?

Dominica: The Jews believe there's only one God.

Gaius: *{waving hand}* The world's too complicated for one god.

Dominica: Their God is all-powerful. He created the heavens and the earth.

Gaius: Like Jupiter?

{Dominica laughs. Gaius shrugs shoulders}

Dominica: The Jews don't believe in Jupiter.

Gaius: *{putting arm around Dominica}* They're not Romans.

*{Dominica nods without enthusiasm.
Gaius takes arm away}*

Gaius *{cont'd}*: Still, we should know more for security reasons.

Dominica: What?

Gaius: *{pointing up center aisle}* If any of these messiahs unites the people, he'd be a threat to Herod...and Rome. *{waving finger at Dominica}* Keep listening to the women.

Dominica: They've offered me pages of their Scriptures.

Gaius: *{hands up}* Take 'em! Read 'em!

Dominica: You really want me...

Gaius: *{motioning like writing}* Write them down! *{pointing at Dominica}* It could be evidence.

Dominica: There's one who's always willing to talk.

Gaius: *{shaking finger at Dominica}* Good. Good.

Dominica: She's a virtuous woman, very humble and pious.

Gaius: *{patronizing}* Yes. Yes. Talk with her. Learn more.

{Dominica nods with enthusiasm}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: We're meeting with the rabbis from the synagogue today. I'll ask them if anything's going on. There's too much talk 'bout messiahs.

*{Gaius offers his arm. Dominica takes
Gaius's arm. Gaius nods to Roman
Soldiers. Gaius and Dominica cross to
stage right door followed by Roman Soldiers.
All exit stage right}*

{black out}

ACT I, Scene 2

{As the lights come up, Gaius and Dominica are seated upstage on royal chairs. Gaius is stage right. They are talking. Rabbi I and II enter from stage right. They stand at exit. Gaius notices Rabbi I and II at the exit door. Gaius motions for them to cross. Rabbi I and II cross to stage right of Gaius}

Rabbi I: *{to Gaius}* Your excellency.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* Can't they show respect?

Rabbi II: *{to Dominica}* Gracious lady.

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* You know they can bow only to God.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* *{tapping his chest}* I'm a tribune...of Rome.

Rabbi I: We've come because of an unpleasant matter...

Gaius: Before you begin, tell me about the latest messiah who was ranting in the street today.

{Rabbi I and II look at each other}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: A foolish idea.

Rabbi II: Messiah will come...

Gaius: *{patronizing}* Yes, Yes...

Rabbi II: *{with fervor}* He'll free our people.

{Gaius sits up}

Gaius: *{harshly}* *{to Rabbi II}* Rome knows your views. Be careful what you say. If anyone's a threat to Rome...or Herod...

{Rabbi I holds hands up and down for calm}

Rabbi I: *{calmly}* This man wasn't messiah.

{GAIUS sits back relieved}

Dominica: You're sure.

Rabbi I: Our Scriptures reveal how to recognize messiah.

Dominica: In what way?

Rabbi II: He'll fulfill prophecies

Gaius: For instance.

Rabbi II: *{fervently}* The time of His coming.

Gaius: When will that be?

Rabbi II: *{sharply}* Now!

Gaius: *{sitting up}* *{with anger}* What?

{Rabbi I tries to calm Rabbi II down}

Rabbi II: The prophecies are clear. There've been four great empires: *{counting with fingers}* Babylon, Persia, Greek, *{pointing finger at Gaius}* Rome. The other empires are past. Messiah's not come yet! He must be coming during the time of Roman rule!

Dominica: Where's this prophecy in Scripture?

Rabbi II: The book of Daniel.

{Gaius squirms in his chair. Rabbi I holds hand up to Rabbi II to calm him down}

Rabbi I: *{to Gaius}* *{calmly}* We don't know when. Scripture doesn't say exactly...

{Gaius sits back}

Gaius: *{motioning with hand}* How 'bout the man today?

{Rabbi I and Rabbi II look at each other}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: He said he fulfilled prophecies. *{with a sneer}* He's here during the time of Rome.

Rabbi II: He doesn't fulfill any other prophecies.

Rabbi I: He's a fraud.

Gaius: *{to Rabbi II}*: How many others are there?

Rabbi II: *{to Gaius}* Hundreds!

Dominica: *{to Rabbi I}* How can you tell he's a fraud?

Rabbi II: *{to Dominic}* *{with fervor}* Messiah will be righteous.

Rabbi I: This one's lifestyle...He enjoys his women followers.

Gaius: I noticed.

Dominica: *{looking at Gaius}* You sure did.

{Gaius laughs loudly}

Gaius: *{looking at Dominica}* He was charismatic. You noticed that.

Rabbi I: *{smiling}* He has a certain appeal.

Gaius: Why are there so many messiahs at this time?

Rabbi I: False messiahs.

Gaius: False messiahs that claim prophecies are being fulfilled?

Rabbi I: Our people haven't heard from God in four hundred years. Years before, there was a time when many prophets proclaimed Messiah would come. And what he'd be like. *{pointing to Rabbi II}* Some think it's now. Some read Scripture and think it applies to them. They claim to be Messiah and get a following...for a while. Like the man, today. *{shrugging shoulders}* He won't last long.

Rabbi II: *{with intensity}* Our people are under bondage. They want to be free! Messiah's coming! Events proclaim the time's near!

{Rabbi II with shock. Gaius sits up and looks penetratingly at Rabbi II}

Gaius: *{firmly}* *{to Rabbi II}* Are you aware...?

Rabbi I: *{trying to defuse the situation}* We're not aware of anything happening in Palestine, especially here in Nazareth. *{looking at Rabbi II}* Rabbi?

Rabbi II: *{biting his tongue}* Nothing's happening here.

Rabbi I: *{hands up}* *{laughing}* What could?

{Gaius laughs and sits back relieved}

GAIUS: *{with a smirk}* Such a dreary place! Even your God's forgotten it.

{RABBI II shakes head}

Rabbi I: Can we discuss the unpleasant situation that brought us here today?

Gaius: Please, do. This talk of gods...*{pointing to Rabbi I and II}*. I'm more comfortable with administrative duties.

{Gaius looks at Dominica. He shakes head and holds hands up. Dominica smiles weakly at Gaius}

Gaius {cont'd}: Go ahead.

Rabbi I: We're investigating a capital offense crime.

Gaius: *{sitting up}* Continue.

Rabbi II: Adultery.

{Gaius sits back and laughs loudly}

Gaius: *{with a broad smile}* In Rome we'd...

Rabbi II: This is not Rome! Jewish law given by God...

Gaius: *{suppressing a laugh}* Of course.

Rabbi II: *{with intensity}* It is the word of God.

Gaius: *{amused}* Yes, yes. *{waving to Rabbi II}* Go on.

Rabbi II: You must respect...

Gaius: I do. I do.

{Gaius waves Rabbi II to continue}

Rabbi II: Jewish law, God's law!...

{Gaius nods}

Rabbi II: Stipulates death...

Gaius: *{amused}* Then half of Rome...

Rabbi II: By stoning...

Gaius: *{amused}*: We'd have to use all the stones in the coliseum.

Rabbi II: Please, Tribune.

{Gaius suppresses a laugh. Gaius waves for Rabbi II to continue}

Rabbi II {cont'd}: For adultery.

{Gaius sits up and is more serious}

Gaius: What proof do you have to impose a capital sentence?

Rabbi I: We've been told a young woman, engaged to a carpenter, is with child.

Gaius: I said proof.

Rabbi I: We're examining her soon.

Dominica: Who's the woman?

Rabbi II: Her name's Mary. She's engaged to the carpenter Joseph.

Dominica: *{to Gaius}*: She's the woman I've seen many times in the market and at the well.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* *{with cynicism}* A virtuous woman, very humble and pious?

{Gaius rolls eyes and shakes head}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{to Rabbi I}* She'd be under the jurisdiction of the temple law. Rome wouldn't interfere with her sentence.

Rabbi I: Thank you, your excellency. *{with a laugh}* There are some unusual circumstances...

Gaius: *{shaking finger at Rabbi I}* Don't carry out any sentence without proper evidence. Rome won't...

Rabbi I: The woman's told others she's a virgin.

Gaius: Is this a joke?

Rabbi II: *{sincerely}* She's been impregnated by God. The baby's God's son. That's what I've heard.

Gaius: *{with a laugh}*: This is more ridiculous than the stories of our gods in Rome. *{pointing finger at Rabbi I}* Be careful.

Rabbi I: Yes, your excellency.

Rabbi II: *{strongly}* We must consider...

Rabbi I: *{holding up hand for Rabbi II to desist}* We'll take proper care.

{Rabbi I and Rabbi II turn toward stage right exit}

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* Can't they show respect?

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* I told you they can't bow down to you. *{to Rabbi I and Rabbi II}* Sirs, could this be the extraordinary birth of Messiah mentioned in your Scriptures?

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* Where'd you learn this?

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* From Mary.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* The same one?

{Rabbi I and Rabbi II turn back to Gaius and Dominica}

Rabbi I: *{patronizing}* With all due respect, gracious lady...

Dominica: This woman's sincere. She's from a devout family.

Rabbi I: *{patronizing}* This prophecy was written a long time ago.

Rabbi II: *{strongly}* It's true!

Dominica: *{stronger}* You've been waiting a long time for it to be fulfilled.

Rabbi I: *{annoyed}* These prophecies weren't meant...

Dominica: *{stronger}* They're written in your Scriptures.

Rabbi II: *(strongly)* They tell what's happening!

{Gaius stands up}

Gaius: *{holding up hands for everyone to calm down}* We all need to investigate the allegations and circumstances before we jump to conclusions.

{Gaius looks at Dominica, then at Rabbi I and Rabbi II. Dominica and Rabbi I and Rabbi II nod in agreement}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: I intend to.

Rabbi I: We all do.

{Rabbi I looks at Rabbi II for a response. Rabbi II nods reluctantly}

Gaius: Good day, sirs.

Rabbi I: Shalom.

Rabbi II: Shalom.

{Rabbi I and Rabbi II turn and cross to stage right exit and exit stage right. Gaius sits down}

Dominica: Fulfillment of prophecy?

Gaius: Ridiculous!

{Gaius shakes head and turns away from Dominica}

{black out}

ACT I, Scene 3

{As the lights come up, Mary is standing at the top of the stage right stairs with Woman #1 and #2 standing at the bottom of stairs. Each carries a bowl. They are laughing. Dominica enters from stage left. She sees Mary. There is a bench at center stage}

Dominica: Mary!

{Mary turns toward Dominica and smiles. Mary turns back to Woman #1 and #2. Woman #1 and #2 point up stage right aisle. They exit up stage right aisle as Dominica crosses to Mary}

Dominica *{cont'd}*: *{as she crosses}* Mary!

{Dominica reaches Mary}

Mary: Gracious lady.

Dominica: Where've you been? I haven't seen you here at the well for months.

Mary: I've been...

Dominica: Is it true...?

Mary: What have you heard?

Dominica: The rabbis from the synagogue came to my husband claiming you're pregnant.

*{Mary crosses to bench and sits down.
Dominica crosses to bench and stands
stage left of Mary}*

Dominica *{cont'd}*: What's happening, Mary?

{Mary sighs deeply before speaking}

Mary: I've been visiting my cousin Elizabeth. She's pregnant. An angel...

Dominica: Angel?

Mary: An angel's a messenger from God.

Dominica: From where.

Mary: From Heaven.

{Dominica sits down and nods}

Mary *{cont'd}*: The angel told Elizabeth she's to have a son who'd be a prophet. This angel...

Dominica: What does this...?

Mary: His name's Gabriel--

Dominica: Gabriel...

{Mary nods}

Mary: Came to my home.

{Dominica nods}

Mary *{cont'd}*: He told me...*{tapping chest}* I'd also have a son.

Dominica: *{confused}*: I don't understand...

Mary: Elizabeth's beyond childbearing years.

Dominica: It could happen. *{tapping Mary's arm}* *{laughing}* We women aren't always sure when the days are past. Some day you'll a son.

Mary: I'm pregnant now.

Dominica: *{standing up}* So it's true...

Mary: *{standing up}* I've haven't had relations with Joseph or any other man.

Dominica: Impossible!

Mary: Not with God. Elizabeth's son will be the greatest prophet...

{Mary holds her lower abdomen and Dominica looks at Mary}

Mary {cont'd}: To proclaim my son...

{Mary takes Dominica's hands and place them over her lower abdomen}

Mary {cont'd}: Is Messiah, the Son of God.

{DOMINICA keeps her hands on MARY'S abdomen and tries to understand. Then DOMINICA takes hands away abruptly}

Dominica: *{shocked}*: Mary!

Mary: God's sending his Son into the world to be Savior of mankind.

Dominica: For your people?

Mary: For the whole world. He's the God of the whole world.

Dominica: There new messiahs every day in the streets.

Mary: False messiahs.

Dominica: Yes. *{pointing to Mary's abdomen}* As you say.

Mary: Our people have been expecting Messiah for many centuries.

Dominica: I've read the passages in the Scriptures you've given me. I don't know if I believe what...

Mary: You believe me, don't you?

Dominica: *{hands up}* It's so incredible. All so incredible!

{Mary turns away discouraged}

Dominica {cont'd}: What are you going to do now?

{Mary turns back to Dominica}

Mary: I must tell Joseph.

Dominica: He won't believe you.

{Mary looks at Dominica and sighs}

Dominica {cont'd}: Would you blame him?

Mary: *{with anguish}* He must! How can I get through this alone?

Dominica: What 'bout the rabbis?

Mary: They must believe me! *{holding abdomen}* This fulfills prophecy: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son."

Dominica: Is this prophecy in your Scriptures?

Mary: Along with others I gave to you.

Dominica: I'll read it.

Mary: *{with determination}* The rabbis will believe it. They know it's in Scripture.

{Dominica shakes head}

Dominica: If they don't, you'll be stoned to death.

Mary: *{pleading}*: I'm telling you the truth. I'm a virgin...

Dominica: Who's pregnant.

{Mary sits down and looks up with anguish at Dominica. Dominica sits down and brushes away some hair on Mary's forehead. Dominica smiles at Mary and takes Mary's hands}

{black out}

ACT I, Scene 4

{As the lights come up, Gaius and Dominica are sitting on the royal seats upstage}

Gaius: *{shaking head in disbelief}*: An angel spoke to her.

Dominica: He said she'd be with child and give birth to a son.

{Gaius shakes head}

Dominica *{cont'd}*: Then the Holy Spirit over came her.

{Dominica puts her left hand up above her head. Gaius sits up and looks with interest. She then takes her hand and puts it on lower abdomen}

Dominica *{cont'd}*: And the power of the Most High over shadowed her.

Gaius: *{shaking head}*: You believe this?

{Dominica nods}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: She's a virgin?

{Dominica nods}

Dominica: The Holy One to be born is the Son of God, Messiah.

{Gaius sits back}

Gaius: I don't believe it.

Dominica: *{holding up scroll}* You asked me to talk with her and the other women months ago about all these messiahs.

Gaius: To help Rome.

Dominica: Mary gave me this scroll with passages from the Scriptures...

*{Dominica hands scroll to Gaius.
Gaius looks at it and shakes head}*

Dominica *{cont'd}*: A number of these prophecies have been fulfilled. *{reading from scroll}* “A virgin shall conceive.”

Gaius: If she’s a virgin.

Dominica: *{reading from scroll}* “He will be a Nazarene.”

Gaius: That’s easy. She lives here. *{pointing to scroll}* How many more does Messiah have to fulfill?

Dominica: *{waving scroll}*: All of them. Hundreds.

Gaius: The rabbis said that. It’s impossible. No one’ll believe her.

Dominica: But the prophecies.

Gaius: *{waving off}* Two prophecies—if there are two--aren’t going to convince anybody. They shouldn’t convince you either. She’s an adulteress. She’s doomed.

Dominica: She can run away.

Gaius: From Herod’s troops? *{hands up}* From the Roman army?

{Dominica shrugs shoulders}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: She’ll be stoned. The baby’ll die with her. It’ll be over. *{harshly}* There’s no messiah.

Dominica: Her God will protect her. He’ll use a miracle.

*{Gaius stands up and leans over Dominica
in a threatening manner}*

Gaius: *{with anger}*: Her God? A miracle? What are you saying?

*{Gaius hands scroll back roughly to
Dominica}*

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{strongly}* We must get back to Rome—*{tapping chest}* to our own beliefs.

{Dominica looks away}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{pointing to Dominica}* You’ve always been comforted by our gods: Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Diana. *{kindly}* And Vespa, goddess of the home. Hasn’t she helped you? Or Flora, goddess of flowers. Hasn’t she cared for what you’ve grown in your garden? I love your garden.

{Dominica looks at Gaius with a kind smile}

Dominica: *{holding up scroll}* I’ve been reading...

{Gaius sits down}

Gaius: *{with frustration}* This is absurd! You’re from a noble family. You’re named for the gods: “Dominica”—belonging to the gods. You shouldn’t be influenced by...*{long pause}* these people.

{Marcellus enters from stage right. He carries small scroll. Gaius notices his entrance. Gaius points toward Marcellus. Dominica looks at Marcellus}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{to Dominica}* Our messenger from Rome. We need news. Good news.

{Dominica starts to speak. Gaius holds up hand for her not to speak}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: No more talk of religion.

{Dominica tries to speak again. Gaius holds his hand up again}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{strongly}* No more!

{Gaius motions to Marcellus. Gaius is relieved to be interrupted by the arrival of Marcellus. Marcellus crosses to Gaius and Dominica}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: Marcellus, welcome.

Marcellus: *{bowing to Gaius}* Your excellency.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* This is respect.

{Gaius nods to Marcellus}

Marcellus: *{bowing to Dominica}* Gracious lady.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* A noble...Roman... lady.

{Dominica nods to Marcellus}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{to Dominica}* This is it, my appointment to the Senate.

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* *{weakly}* Congratulations, my lord.

Gaius: *{to Dominica}* *{aggressively}* Don't you want to go home?

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* *{weakly}* Of course, my lord.

Gaius: *{to Marcellus}* What news from Rome?

Marcellus: *{holding up scroll}* A decree from the emperor.

Gaius: *{pointing to scroll}* Please.

Marcellus: *{reading from scroll}* "Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus et pater patriae, acclaimed imperator, to Gaius Publius Sejanus, Tribune of the garrison at Nazareth. Greetings."

{Marcellus nods to Gaius. Gaius nods to Marcellus}

Marcellus *{cont'd}*: "You are to insure that all subjects over the age of twelve in the province of Palestine proceed to the town of their family's origin to be registered and taxed".

Gaius: Is that all?

Marcellus: Yes, your excellency.

{Gaius looks down unhappy}

Dominica: *{to Gaius}* I'm sorry, my lord.

{Gaius shakes head discouraged. He shakes off his disappointment and looks up at Marcellus}

Gaius: When's this to happen?

Marcellus: Immediately. Caesar wants it accomplished by the winter solstice. Quirinius, governor of Syria, expects a great movement of Jews.

{Dominica sits forward with interest}

Dominica: Why, Marcellus?

Marcellus: Most Jews in Palestine have been displaced in the past by conquering armies: Babylon, Persia, Greece...

Gaius: And Rome.

{Marcellus nods and smiles}

Marcellus: They must all return to their family home. They're all scattered...

Dominica: Any exceptions?

Marcellus: Even the crippled and lame must go.

Dominica: Pregnant women?

Gaius: Dominica!

Marcellus: *{to Dominica}* No exceptions, gracious lady.

{Dominica sits back satisfied}

Gaius: Anything else?

Marcellus: *{to Gaius}* The Emperor sends his personal regards.

{Gaius nods. He is disappointed}

Gaius: You'll join us for dinner.

Marcellus: *{bowing}* I'd be honored.

Gaius: *{motioning to stage right}* 'Till tonight.

Marcellus: *{bowing to Gaius}* Your excellency.

{Gaius nods to Marcellus}

Marcellus *{cont'd}*: *{bowing to Dominica}* Gracious lady.

{Dominica nods to Marcellus. Marcellus turns and crosses to stage right exit. He exits stage right}

Gaius: *{holding up hands}* No more.

Dominica: Is this the miracle to get Mary and her baby to safety?

Gaius: If Mary's family's from Nazareth, she's going nowhere.

Dominica: Her family must be from some other part of Palestine.

Gaius: Then he won't be a Nazarene. You said he must be a Nazarene.

Dominica: He'll be a Nazarene if he has family here.

{Gaius shakes head}

Dominica *{cont'd}*: *{left hand up}* An act of God?

{Gaius looks at Dominica with anger}

Dominica *{cont'd}*: *{quickly}* Her God.

Gaius: *{resolutely}* An act of divine Caesar.

Dominica: You don't believe that.

{Gaius raises hands}

Gaius: He'll be declared a god when he dies. *{pointing to Dominica}* You can worship him. We have many gods at home you can worship. *{pleading}* Worship anyone you want.

{Dominica stands up}

Dominica: No one could foresee this.

{Dominica starts to cross toward stage left exit}

Gaius: This is not your concern!

Dominica: *{as she crosses}* I must tell Mary!

Gaius: *{harshly}* Stay out of it!

{Dominica reaches stage left exit}

Gaius *{cont'd}*: *{pleading}* Any god you want...in Rome.

{Dominica exits stage left. Gaius turns toward stage rights and sulks}

{black out}

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