



Maud Hart and Delos Wheeler
Lovelace Family Papers.

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

Report on: Flight From Herod (revised)

I can't swing into these final comments on Flight From Herod without saying at the beginning how fine and professional a job of revision he has already done. The fact that there are a couple - a very few - comments still ~~xxx~~ to be made on the book doesn't detract from the first important fact that the revision work was done professionally and creatively; and that the author should know that we know that his revision meant a lot of work for him.

What the revision did was to smooth away a great many of the confusions which hid the story's effectivenesswith the result that the two remaining 'problems' seem to stand out very clearly. I know that they can be fixed; and hope that Mr. Lovelace will agree.

1. There are just too many plotters for us to remember each one's separate individuality.
2. We still, very infrequently, see Mary and the Baby. And we are troubled by Elizabeth's appearance.

This second problem is easy to solve, if the author agrees that it should be solved. In our opinion, the book is very effective now as we never come actually to see the mother and baby until the very end. There are just a very few scenes where she slips through. What would Mr. Lovelace think of cutting or altering those few scenes ?

- a) Mary is actually visible only once - in the Temple scene on page 238. We can avoid that by letting Zacharias wait outside, hear the talk of the old man, but never see the baby or his mother.
- b) Then we see them more dimly, but still there, on page 264 and 265 as they get ready for the flight (I've put a bracket around the sentences which could be cut)
- c) On page 178 there is a direct quote in Joseph's mind over something Mary has said.
- d) On page 279 she is directly described.

None of these references to her are important, save only the Temple scene, and I think that can easily be gotten around.

A little tougher for an author to take is the idea of doing away with so warm and boucing a personality as Elizabeth ! And yet, as the story stands now there is some justice to that position....for it would mean cutting the first 14 pages, and opening the story on page 14 with a bang...which in itself would help strengthen the story still further. Elizabeth now performs no special role...pleasant and likable as she is, she is expendable to the story, and if there are expendable

Letter not to see Mary & baby will eliminate the question of those who lost Journey Disappearance

characters in a story such as this, I think they should probably go ! She is a little less individual in her characterization than the others in any case, although certainly likable. This change, if the author agrees, would mean simply cutting pages 1-13, and pages 178-183. The information in both scenes is, by and large scattered through the rest of the material and would not - I think - present much of a problem.

The second problem of too many villains is a little tougher. But it is possible and even fairly easy to cut down on this number if the author agrees.

The problem is that as it stands, the bad guys out number the good guys enormously ! We have, starting with Herod, seven plotters. And that is a lot ! For under Herod we have Soemus and the Chief Eunuch at the court; then we have Tibni...and he hires three more... Panthera, Naepor, and Muso.

Each one of these, to the author's credit, comes through clearly as a personality....with one big exception. Tibni never does come through clearly, despite his personal fastidiousness...since we are very unclear as to his position in the government, even though it is explained to us.

In balance to that we have the Chief Eunuch, who is of course an easy man to remember, and whom we see in action only in the scene of the slaughter of the innocents.

Therefore: I would like to suggest that we do away with Tibni entirely, and give his role to the Eunuch who is a much easier person to remember, and who has one strong scene already. This would not be too staggering a revision job truly...for Tibni only appears, I believe, three times...the two plotting scenes, and his appearance at court. The chief Eunuch could simply be substituted in the plotting scenes - Tibni's clothes and manner suit him very well....but Tibni's appearance at court would of course have to be written again. We have the one practical difficulty of a group of soldiers for the Eunuch to correspond to Tibni's bodyguard. My suggestion would be the palace guard...or some group that the Eunuch could command in or near the palace.

I do believe that this further effort at simplification is worthwhile. Tibni just never comes into focus ! The Eunuch does. I think he can almost be put in simply by substituting his name for Tibni's in those early scenes..although we would need some background identity too.

In any case, I know that this is a drastic change and one which the author may well be disturbed at. But I do believe that it will simplify and strengthen the story a great deal. And I also still believe that this is a very fine story - worth effort on everybody's part.

(I append a list of the few remaining words which seemed too 'jazzy'...breaking the mood for no purpose. There is a little line drawn beneath each in the manuscript.)

Tibni
212

13...if book starts here..these~~x~~ first paragraphs might go in italics at the very beginning..or could be put in later.

✓ 21

✓ 22

✓ 24

✓ 25

✓ 27B

✓ 31

✓ 34

✓ 38

✓ 43

Also - Muso comes in awfully fast and ~~confusingly~~ confusingly..remains confusing throughout. Would there be any way to introduce him at the same time that we meet the other two? Could you arrange to have all three go to the first meeting? That, of course, spoils most of Naepor's bargaining...but in any case, we must see Muso plain somewhere early in the game. Top paragraph on page 25 for example..is ~~just~~ just too baffling. We need to see him face to face.

✓ 45A

✓ 50 Joseph is described here as Rusco's 'old friend'...can you add explanation of how and when he and Rusco were first friends. He apparently built the villa...when...where was Mary then?

✓ 55

✓ 59

✓ 60

✓ 63

✓ 64

✓ 66

✓ 68..can't decide if "Done a Pompey" could possibly be a phrase of the day...if you say it is - O.K. - sounds pretty odd, though good.

✓ 72

✓ 73

✓ 77

✓ 83 'Your' ?

✓ 83C

✓ 84

✓ 103

✓ 114 'gifted ass' is perhaps too succinct.

✓ 130

✓ 133

✓ 136 Geber's decision, though I know you mean to put it in a low-key, is disappointing. His is the most vivid and in some ways most dramatic regeneration...and yet it is played out in a mumble here. The Magi of course do not encourage histrionics...yet this is a dramatic moment.

✓ 137

✓ 138

✓ 139 - second paragraph - important - and muddled here.

✓ 140..beautifully done scene - this phrase seems jarring.

✓ 141 not clear

✓ 144

✓ 145

✓ 146

5.

(N.B. Don't be discouraged by all these page numbers. Each one refers usually only to a single word that seemed, to my reading, out of character....it looks bad, and it isn't.)

147, 148; 159; 165; 169; 181; 182; 191; 197; 198
199; 209;

217...don't understand this torch and the sleeping sentry...

218 ; ²⁷²⁻²⁷³ 239 'hag', and a repetition of 'I'll get Mary'

240; 241; 242; 243; 244

256, 257 (again, seems too girlishly chatty to have Deborah want to tell Mary about the wedding. Warming - but perhaps too informal) 258; 260 (whole page here seems too contemporary in tone. ²⁶⁴ 265 - reference to Mary maybe out

266; 268.

268-269...is this a little too jocular for tone of book. The happiness is fine, and the warmth...but possibly a little too heavy here.

279 - 281Mary out -

284 see note on margin.

286

288

289

+ 293 ..these military commands all seem too modern

298

313
315; 317 / 323; 331; 341; 348; 349; 350; 352, 370
373; 374

Last paragraph - after the very moving simple description of the page before, seems out of key.

Excellent book I think.

No one can, of course, do more than guess wildly about the men and women who were intimate with Mary and Joseph, her husband, in the first few weeks after the birth of her son, Jesus. One guess, however, comes close to probability. Barring Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's husband, the priest, Zacariah, the intimates were made by chance.

One reason for this was that Mary and Joseph were among strangers. Nazareth was a long eighty miles from Bethlehem and in those days eighty miles cut one off from one's friends. Another

Now - a few specific questions on small points:

I have drawn light lines under words which still seem too modern in ring...they disturb, to my reading, the flow of the story. The page numbers below, when no comment is attached, refer simply to single words of that sort. Look at them again, see what you think. 3

which resulted in the only intimacies of the Holy Family through the period which separated the birth of Jesus from the flight of his mother and father into Egypt.

July 19 Prog. Bull

✓ A hand in the dark^(W)

Picnic today \$1.80

July 24 Courier

For July 27

(W) not for

~~The paper is under~~

The paper was President (H)

Flight From
Harrod

① Difficult

Which does
not always
follow ⁴trans

Must be
made to
conform

Second Revision

morning After

Dear Mr. Lovelace;

The most important comment to be made on FLIGHT FROM HEROD, to my thinking, is that it is a very good book indeed. There is a quality of excitement in the style, and a flavor of originality in the plot that, taken together, have produced what I believe to be a remarkable novel. I wanted to spell out my admiration at the outset in this unadorned way so as to be sure that you would know of that admiration, despite the pin pricks of criticism which will appear in the report that follows. In short, I believe that you have written an extraordinarily effective book here. I believe - and that is the reason this long report is inflicted upon you - that there are some things which may be done to the story which can make it a stronger and perhaps more dramatic a novel. These comments, however are offered simply as a method of drawing your attention again to various aspects of the book that we feel could be strengthened. If you disagree with them - forget them - because they will be meaningless unless you believe that they apply. The basic thing is that FLIGHT FROM HEROD is a fine book that, to our thinking, can be made better. The comments to follow describe the ways we think it can be made better. See what you think of them.

It seems best to list first, fairly fully, some general thoughts on changes, defining in general terms the kind of revisions which should be made. All of the specific alterations in the text which will appear under page references are the result of one of these general beliefs. If you agree with these general points --- then the specific changes suggested later in the report will simply point out passages you may wish to revise. I

you disagree with one or more of the general statements ... then you will be able to ignore the specific changes which relate to that general criticism.

GENERAL REVISION NOTES:

1. Despite the innate drama of the various sub-plots of the story, the main thread of suspense that ties together the novel as it now stands has to do with the fate of the Baby. "Will Herod succeed in killing the Christ-child; or will he not?" is, to our reading, the single plot line that unites the whole novel.

We believe that this is a weakness in the story as it now stands. No reader can really work up inner excitement over that suspense line. We know that Herod fails. We cannot feel any driving urgency to read on just to find out what happens, since we know what happens. However you intend to work out the mechanics of the story --- we know that it will have a happy ending. Which means, in fact, that the novel has no real suspense in it, despite the intense dramatic quality of the pace and style.

Therefore - first general revision point - we believe that the story must be shifted in emphasis and that some other kind of suspense must re-place the spurious suspense which holds the novel together as it now stands.

2. When that element is cleared away, it is clear that there are many other dramatic and exciting stories within this novel. There is the fine story of R Vadius Rusco as a man who refuses to grow old. There is the story of the hunchback - his dramatic decision to leave Herod, and his final fate. There is the love story between ~~Exandra~~ Deborah and her handsome soldier (although there is, quite properly, not much suspense in that story). There is, in brief, a great quantity of fine dramatic material; a great quantity you use to excellent effect. We believe, however, that some of the drama in the sub-plots should be emphasized even more...so that the main suspense line shifts from the fate of the Christ child to the various fates of the people who are affected by Him.

And that is the principle element of my revision suggestions to you, and it involves simply a change in emphasis. The excitement of the story should be shifted from the story of Jesus' escape from Herod...to the story of Jesus' effect upon the people around him at the time of his birth.

You have, of course, already done that. A great part of the strength of this book lies in the moving, forceful way that you have shown the various changes worked within the characters of the people who were near. But the drama of these stories is diminished, in my view, by the fact that that drama must take second place to the "Will Herod get the Child" plot line.

I believe, and hope that you may agree, that the great potential strength of this novel lies in the totally effective and totally convincing way in which it tells the story of various people's reaction to the birth of Christ. Not all are redeemed, of course....if they were this would be a far less powerful book than it is....but each one is changed in some way; and it is in that change that the strongest suspense of the book should lie.

Specifically - this means that the novel should be the story of a collection of people who react to the appearance of Christ. As you will see in the notes that follow - I have tried to strengthen some of these stories by asking for more material on one or another of the minor characters. Take Soemus for example. His reaction to the Baby is particularly interesting....fear keeps him from really turning toward good--yet he does turn at the end enough to warn Rusco. The larger version of that reaction of course comes in the echoing story of Naepor. I think that Naepor's story is a very dramatic one --- yet some of the drama is diminished by the fact that we do not know quite enough about him. We see him fully only in one scene as he plots... we keep track of him through the story of course, but not closely enough to make his last page decision as dramatic in the story as it should be. The high drama of those last pages should not, and does not, revolve around Joseph's leading his family into safety....~~the high drama~~ we know that he succeeds. The high drama comes from the transformation inside Naepor...

If you agree with that premise, then you may agree with the many notes you will find that say "Tell us more about this man!" I hope that you will in any case. At the least, this long discussion of a point will explain, I hope, why you will see so many notes of that kind in the later part of the report.

3. If you're still with me --- the third and fourth general points I wanted to discuss with you refer simply to two ways in which that new emphasis upon the suspense of the story might be stressed. You may well think of other - or better -ways.

One method of giving more background material on these people has to do something with your style. I believe that a major reason for the reader's difficulty ~~for~~ in keeping these people straight in his mind is due to the fact that you almost never take time out to give background narrative. The book is almost exclusively made up of scenes - active scenes where people are talking or acting. You do not often give the reader a breathing space by offering a couple of paragraphs of straight narrative. What I'm asking for actually is the inclusion of a number of "Meanwhile-- back at the ranch..." paragraphs! When, for example, Naepor reappears after some periodyou will find in the notes to follow that I have asked that you re-introduce him with some description...that you fill in the reader slightly on what he might have been doing since last we saw him...that, in short, you make sure that the reader remembers him and believes him to be important to the story. Without the inclusion of a couple of paragraphs of this kind here and there, the story moves too fast and we fall behind.

Panthera is a case in point. We see him in several

intensely dramatic scenes....he is a fine and beautifully drawn villain. But we don't see enough of him to hold him in our mind as we should ! Plenty of action scenes - not enough quiet descriptive passages that will help us really know him. You may feel this is an obscure point -- the specific references to passages which seemed to need such attention will, I hope, make it a little clearer. In brief, however, I believe very deeply that - since it is the change worked in these people which is to form the main story line....you must take time to let us see them - you must be sure that any reader feels he knows them well. As the book stands there is a bewildering number of not-quite-clearly-seen characters. The inclusion of an occasional paragraph of recapitulation will help a great deal I believe.

4. This point too has to do with a heightening of the dramatic effect of the story - and will be the hardest for you to take because it seems the most sweeping. But it is the opinion of everyone who has read the book that the scenes which show Christ directly are of questionable effect. There is a good chance that you will offend a number of people, for example, in writing a scene where Mary burps the baby Jesus! This may seem a quibbling point.. and yet it is the most generally agreed-upon criticism of the book. There is somehow an unpleasant flavor, despite the truly effective and moving quality of your prose in these scenes, in these domestic pictures of the holy family.

Our suggestion - with what we hope is a two-fold ~~XXXXXX~~ effect - is that you never show the Baby directly. On page 138, for example, you have magnificently created the atmosphere of wisdom and reverence that surrounds the Magi. Wouldn't it be the more effective to break off at the point when they all enter in the lighted doorway ? It would seem that this kind of treatment would heighten the drama and even spiritual strength of the story.....and, at the same time, would avoid the possibility of offering offense to a considerable number of readers as you do when you introduce Mary and Christ so casually as in the present version.

I believe so strongly that such a treatment would enlarge the effect of your book. It is, after all, very largely the story of what the Christ-child accomplished in the hearts of people near him at his birth. This is of course a spiritual message, and I believe a very fine one. But then you must not destroy - as in my opinion you do - the power of your story by showing the domestic scenes.

Page 29 ---this is exactly the way the baby should appear in the story -- through the love and through the eyes of the people around Him. Let Him be described by others, let them speak of Him...but keep your people's steps back from actually entering the lighted door!

This will represent a considerable sacrifice on your part, since it means that the whole long, very well done chapter on the Temple will have to be re-vamped. But if you agree that the excitement of the chase for the Christ-child should not be emphasized, then maybe that will be easier to cut slightly.

6. At last I have reached a general point that may be expressed briefly ! It has to do with anachronistic phrases in the manuscript. It may well be that you did this deliberately on the premise that colloquial speech adds pace...~~XXXXXX~~..if you will take the opinion of three ~~xxxx~~ readers thus far, however, these bits of twentieth century slang definitely break the mood. pg 88 "Those Balearic Island smarties"; ...pg 103 "But ten thousand is a pile." etc. You will find marks on the margin all through the script that say succinctly "phrase". Sometimes you may well feel that the phrase questioned was in good usage at this time.....other times you may find phrases that slipped by unmarked yet should be changed. In any case, I, and all other readers here agree, believe that these bits of modern slang should be replaced with less contemporary phrases....they do not add to the effect of the book, and most of them severely detract from that effect. We hope that you agree.

(That turned out to be no shorter-winded a general point than any of the others - sorry. The kind of thought that could be expressed in an instant or two over a luncheon table seems to take paragraphs of qualified sentences)

PAGE REFERENCES AND SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

3: First scene. Movingly done, but has Mary in it...cut scene? Write Mary out of it...keeping her in back room as Elizabeth bustles around? If we agree that the baby should be invisible, this is place to start.

7 Cut view of baby here? Or leave this one view in possibly - setting the passage apart to help to indicate that the scene, and the Baby, are to be the keystone of the novel.

9 Cut Mary - show shepherd and Elizabeth talking.

#11 Cut direct talk of Baby.

Revised

#13

Abrupt beginning to chapter. Could you spare a little narrative writing here? Who are these people? Fine to start with an action scene but it is vital that we get to know these ~~xxx~~ three men, know them well enough to recognize them when we see them later. This chapter, excellently done - but all direct action. We need some help here from you as author.

Revised

#18

For example - we as readers do not know why Sadducee hesitates here. Presumably we discover finally he hesitates because he is a Jew, and owes loyalties beyond his political leanings ---if so --- you must say so. We cannot infer all this from the dialogue and action alone. At mark in margin - needs, I believe, more explanation of why Sadducee felt as he did.

no name

* #19

note on use of name Tibni unexpectedly - we can't remember who that is.

Revised

#22

Again - things moving a little too fast for us to understand who Musio is - can you halt dialogue for a minute and explain why he is mentioned in this conversation and something about him..very confusing as it stands.

#29

Now this is the way Baby should appear in the story--- in various guises as He is described by others in the story --this is a very fine touch here.

Revised

Again, on this page, reader needs orientation - a balcony where? How come we are suddenly talking about these things--reader has no time to catch up to you.

fixed

#25

See note - if legible - about appearance of Rusco in Panthera's musings, without introduction to reader. Confusing.

Revised
See P. 30

#56

Now Nepte is one of the minor characters who should, I believe, get slightly more attention, for her story is an important one - she is one of the few who remain completely unredeemed...she is wonder^{fully} evil... we should know more about her; here and later.

Review

#60...perhaps too much here about the Baby to fit into tone of book...seems a little forced on this page, what do you think ?

not Review

pg 64...see note - again a little forced, perhaps too abrupt an opening, too contrived an opening for a theological discussion.

Review

#66.....here is another place where we need narrative. They make no sense unless we can hear from you, in a straight descriptive paragraph, something about the Temple and its architecture.

Review

The I

designed

#69....Now here is a fine example of this problem of letting the Holy family take so large a role in the story. It somehow seems offensive to have Joseph seeing love in a girl's eyes ? Isn't there some other way you can tell about Candace and her feelings ? Perhaps go into her mind.. you have gone into so many different characters names that direct word from Candace on the subject of her love might not be amiss. In any case, there is something not quite right about using Joseph to forward your plot in this way - I believe .

Review

See 71

#74.....Now this is unfair - but all this material is very interesting, about the kitchen crew and how they worked, But if you could - readers would enjoy getting some more background material. Where did these slaves come from... where did Nepte come from ? How long had most of them been working there - little things of this nature would help fill in a fascinating but confusing picture of life-in-those-days.

Review

#83....Here is an example of the kind of confusing characterization we have mentioned. We must be told something more about Panthera. We cannot remember easily who he is, simply by name. We do not know why Rusco would know of him..or what attitude he might have toward him. You cannot simply move these people around from active scene to scene like men on a chess board..you've got to supply some kind of background narrative for scenes of this kind.

Review

See

above

#84.....It seems to me very important to show the scene where Panthera baited Mary and Joseph in flashback form. This scene is referred to three or four times later in the story---it is an important indication of Panthera's character. To avoid the problem of having Mary and Joseph appearing directly (if we can avoid it) it might be wise to lest Rusco remember the scene --so that we get an idea of Rusco's attitude toward Panthera and so on.

#86.....This is an example of the problems which your speedy pace - excellent for maintaining excitement of the story, but somehow confusing at times - presents. I didn't even know Bracae was there . Looking back of course I find that he was....but could you spare a few words at times like this to make things clear ? Bracae, "still standing expectantly..." or something ? Such phrases are far from deathless...they slow the story ---but they are the more noticable when left out.

(However I must stop this niggling criticism for a moment to talk about larger matters...in this case the larger matter is that this is a magnificently written scene..vividly and excitingly done....my niggling criticism to the contrary notwithstanding.)

A general note about this part of the story:

I believe that by this time there should be some kind of suspense or excitement centering around Rusco. He is perhaps your most fully drawn and strongest character, in a book full of strong characters. In many ways he is hero of the novel. Yet there is no ~~tight~~ tightly drawn plot line concerning him. Since he appears so prominently, and is so important to the story.....I wish that you might find a way to plant some suspense about him...either concerning his future involvement with Herod....or the increasingly dangerous position Panthera and his cohorts are trying to put him into....or perhaps increase the menace that Nepte offers. In any case, I think there needs to be something about Rusco that worries your readers - and that it should come early in the story.

See P. 100
Come add
back to
Panthera

#94 Top sentence -- fine. Panthera would be far more three dimensional if the wuality in this sentence were elaborated through the scenes in which he appears, and in indirect narrative paragraphs where you offer additional comment. As it is, he seems a mincing fool---this paragraph here shows he is a real threat.

See 95

This is made clear by reader reaction to bottom of pg 95. This is example of how fast you move ---we never heard that he was strong, or even that he was a particularly good soldier before this. Characterization is fine--we need more of it.

pg 100..."make a tougher enemy"...excellent - but should tie in with poi t above about building suspense for Rusco. Up to this instant we didn't know these two were enemies, at least not that Rusco would be even slightly worried by it. We need to have him worried by something..could this be elaborated into such a threat ?

Again - reference to earlier scene with Joseph. Maybe you could show that enmity -- and danger to Rusco from Panthera, began at that time, when Rusco interfered with Panthera's baiting of Joseph.

I have had
mentioned
before in
previous page

#101 Under the heading of Give The Reader An Even Break....re-introduce Naepor, we honestly can't remember him by name. Or any of these others. I believe that you must pause to set your scenes - let your readers catch up with you.

#103 Perhaps this a good spot to enlarge up n idea of Baby's effect upon people by discussing Muso here and his change or lack of change of heart.

#104 Here too - take some time to spell out the effect of this job on these men -- clzrify and add suspense by making all complexities a little clearer. See note pg 106

See
above

The start of this doubt is stated in p. 107. W.W. & Gen.

106...for example, we never knew till this moment that Naepor was of a divided mind. Wonderful that he is - fine for the plot, essential to the excitement and message of the story. BUT --- we never were told that he was! You move so fast.

121..... this growing into another man's mind is extraordinarily effective as you write of it....could you linger a little longer on this point...part of mystique of the Magi -yet how is it Geber can do it too...whole thing very interesting, we'd like to hear some more about it.

chap 10

And Geber, who is important to the story..particularly as someone who is profoundly changed by the ~~Exxxx~~ Christ child ----he deserves a fuller introduction anyway. Perhaps a fuller explanation of his special powers would serve both purposes.

Review

#138....Here - as discussed earlier -best to stop scene just as they enter the lighted door.

Some confusion in my mind, sorry to seem obtuse; but the Christmas story is so familiar in its connotation that the Magi and the shepherds came on the night that Jesus was born. This may be in error, and was of course not necessarily true according to the Bible story. But since it is so generally accepted, I think you have to add some comment here describing the fact that the Magi, in your version, came later!

* Refused Explain why -

Review

#143....again, you start a scene at a dead run. Reader can't get located as to who these people are and where they are.. paragraph to set the scene needed here to our thinking.

#145....one thing that might help, if you didn't object to it, would be some physical identification of them. Dialogue here is excellent, strongly and very effectively done...but without some help we cannot keep these people apart.

#173..... Sorry to repeat myself so often..but if you agree that novel's emphasis should be on the change worked in these people, then it is vital that we know these people...full treatment, a brief character study and physical description to cue us in each time they appear. Peleg is one fascinating personality we never see whole....Tibni is another.

(Herod - I must break in here to say -- is magnificently, fully, far too memorably drawn. This is a classic portrait, done very well. I feel that the torrent of tiny criticisms keeps obscuring the basic admiration readers feel for this book --want to re-affirm that admiration here and there through this report.)

#177 -- see note - don't understand.

#179.....again, a chance for what seems an effective cut.Show picture of beggars patrolling...protecting...but don't show who they protect.

Review

Could the discussion about going up to the Temple come up between Joseph and the beggers, or in some other way..in order to avoid direct scene with Mary and the bab ?

196 Again - confusing. Is this the same day-does it follow the last chapter in time since it is the same scene ? Must be made clear. Reader way away from Vadius in his mind. The connection between Herod and he, and this meeting, should have been mentioned earlier, or explained at greater length here.

#197...shouldn't we be told who Orfitus is ? Unwittingly I think you make it very hard on your readers.

#201 for example, this passage could build fine suspense, and add great strength to the story. But you haven't told the reader enough of the background - enough of the political set-up - to make this passage come home to him.

#204....wonderful scene.

#207....sorry to repeat - but again we need clarification

#217...here is a problem I must throw directly into your lap. This is a beautifully done chapter -- if you agree that we should not see the Christ child directly - it must be handled differently. Perhaps told indirectly - perhaps reported by someone else ??

#246 Here again we need to draw out the suspense a bit I think. It's too early in the book to have them all in such accord...could someone waver still a little here ? All are redeemed, in the loose use of the word that I have been employing, already - which ends suspense.

#249....again - may we stop narrative short of Jesus' entering the room.

#255 And make this conversation a little less casual somehow ?

#256 Again stop before baby's appearance.

#272....Here you might consider stressing the effect the baby has had on them - rather than just casual conversation.

#276....if Panthera is one of principle characters - could he have a little scene here - to bring him back into focus.

#279....this is exactly way for Jesus to enter story -in this ~~indire~~ indirect way.

#285 Again - just a line of orientation needed. We didn't even know for sure that this order had been given !

This is a terrific chapter. Without dulling the point by over-emphasis, would you think it fair to stress that somehow the men's revulsion from evil has something to do with the fact that the Christ child is in their minds ? I don't want to turn you into a Lloyd Douglas, but a light touch on this would help tie it to your theme.

ok
to
have
work on

later

work on
later

ok

no but
explains

ok

ok

not
revised
give it this

Grand

all
OK

#306 This will present a problem to be watched if you have decided to cut, or change, that earlier chapter. Maybe, however, you might decide to tell that earlier story through Anna's eyes ?

OK
I think

312....again it is painfully clear that we don't know enough about Muso, or Naepor....passages of this kind make readers wish they knew them better. Hopefully they will know them better by this point in the story, if you believe with us that more background material - in small succinct paragraphs, should have been inserted earlier.

Claudia -
do I need to
do this?

314...for example, this attempt in Naepor to shrug off guilt - very important for story - shows his gradual change in character. This is, in short, a big point in the story - worth making a big point of/

OK

321...and again - this is extremely dramatic, but would be far more effective if we had seen some kind of gradual change in Soemus. As it now stands we hardly know him at all.

All of this chapter telling of the ~~xxxxx~~ siege - is magnificently done.

OK

340...could you put a little more stress here - though maintaining your subtlety, upon Vedius' change in religion. I think this deserves stress...and feel that this may solve the big problem that Vedius, as a main character in the story, does not change at all in the story as it stands...or at least not importantly.

OK

357....Tibni's part in this - because we do not know him well enough - is not clear.

OK

369...Somehow this little joke seems too casual at this point in the game.

Scene at end seems exactly right for book - showing what the Christ child, simply by appearing on the earth, has affected in the hearts and minds of ordinary men.

FINAL NOTE:

Many of these notes, as you see, are repetitious. None of them reflect a great deal of revision work. I believe that all this talk of developing characterization is simply a matter of adding explanatory paragraphs so that readers can know these people and remember them...but the basic structure for the characterization is clearly there already. All that is needed is a slight elaboration of what is deeply and soundly planted in the story already.

Finally - most succinctly - this is a book very much worth working on !
Joyce Kissock Lubold

The Virgillian verse quoted in this novel are from
The Singing Farmer, a most evocative translation of the Georgics by
L.A.S. Jermyn in memory of his son, Peter, killed in World War II
(Basil Blackwell, Oxford, England, publisher.)

0-0

On the journey down from Nazareth nothing much happened, nothing important, nothing at any rate which seemed important. There was, true enough, one event profoundly shocking and an earlier, wicked, bloody one, but after Bethlehem both faded out of Mary's mind because of the later, much greater event. Joseph, understandably, quickly forgot both. A master carpenter, travelling everywhere, often saw far worse than roadside crucifixions and murders.

Other events seemed only what were to be expected in any seven days of travel in those times, or at least not so unexpected as to be disturbing to Mary. They were only proper parts of the excitement of the crowded highway, and she enjoyed them all from the back of the donkey, Briar, while she spun busily, as a good housewife always tried to do when travelling.

A hungry beggar accepted their food and walked with them part of the way. His name was Peleg. At one of the inns where they made their evening fires and slept, a worldly Sadducee, Tibni-ben-Ginath, took a prying interest in Mary, so plainly near her time.

Joseph met his friend and patron, Vedius Rusco Philappicus, the Roman commissioner of roads in Palestine. At Sebaste trouble was almost forced by a centurion named Panthers but Vedius

Rusco came to the rescue before Mary had any inkling of her danger.

South of Bethlehem four shepherds came full of gossip about Wise Men looking for a great thing but not yet sure where to look.

Only such small incidents, none of any seeming importance. Joseph did worry a little about Tibni-ben-Ginath but told himself that considering the rumors which were all around, all Sadducees, to say nothing of Pharisees and the High Priest and the evil, ailing Herod, would be eyeing every expectant mother, since any new-born child might be the very one to challenge their place and power.

At Bethlehem Mary's son was born as had been foretold, although in just about the last place proud Joseph would have chosen. And a radiance filled the sky and the shepherds came again, full of wonder.

Mary and Joseph called the baby Jesus, as Mary had told Joseph they must, and now he filled their minds, leaving room for little else.

31--"They're all over the place," (Meaning Nightingales from Persia). This is exactly the casual language that a woman of the people would use in any time and place, or something so darned close that I cannot think of a better phrase.

34 "came through." Excellent to my mind, but I've changed it.

38-- If you object to "picking us to pieces" which you have checked, although you underlined nothing, I cannot offer anything better.

It is a phrase which belongs to all times. Not only the Romans, but the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Persians, and other civilizations as far back as the records run must have been familiar with habits and practices which would have given birth to such a phrase.

60-- "thrown up her hands." If women haven't thrown up their hands to express ~~flabbergastkaznxyz~~ amazement since the dawn of time, then I refuse to admit that women have hands.

63-- "take it or leave it." I meant this to say that, it was on a good natured take-it-or-leave-it basis that Joseph raised his friendly counter-assumption of equality. How would it be to put a comma, only after ~~an~~ "equality" and then add on the "take-it-or-leave-it." ?

~~63xxx~~ 64--"for every this and that." By now (1 A D) the Roman tendency is to treat lesser dieties as pretty small fry. There are many, many evidences of this. And I make Rusco ~~xxxx~~ share this casual attitude, I hope, by putting, "this and that" into his mouth.

66-- "any old scrub." By definition, "a scrub" is, as to forests, an inferior tree and as to animals, an undersized, inferior animal. I submit that it could have been, almost surely must have been, a word familiar ~~to~~ 2,000 years ago when forests and animals were most important to men.

68 -- "Done a Pompey" is merely a shorter way of saying, "done an imitation of Pompey." A very good way to state what I am trying to state, and since you leave it to me, I am leaving it in. Thankee!

72--How can you object to "Come one, come all." If Hatio didn't shout
--
that at the bridge he certainly said it in substance.

73 -- now be a trifle more serious. This is Bria, thinking. She thinks
in colloquial speech. If you feel it isn't Bria thinking, I'll try
again. But if it is her casual language, then I hope you will ask
for no change.

77 -- here I just don't understand. Again, this is a couple of country
liars letting off steam. I intend it for a light interlude, a laugh.

~~xxxxxx~~

133 (see also 83)--I do hope you are not set on a change from "you" and
"your." As best as I am able to figure, you seem to want words a
formal grammarian might prefer and I, as usual, chose the words any
us would be more likely to grab at. In both instances, it seems to me,
my words leave no doubt. I am not, certainly, saying "you" and "your" to
the reader directly. I am using the words in the commonly understood
sense of "any of us" or "so fine that ~~a~~ fellow touched them again",

134--A check against "footing." I have used it here, and my dictionary
bears me out, and so does the quotation cited from Shakespeare, to mean
the kind of progress on foot made over difficult terrain. It is not
exactly the "footing" of dancing, "footing it lightly" as some poet, I
think Scott once said. But there certainly is, in the word, ~~ak~~ a con-
notation of precision to prevent, A, slide in shifting sand; B, injury
on a trail full of sharp rocks; C, a tumble from stepping on, or
against a rock likely to slide out from underfoot.

137--Just in case seems all right to me.

138--"Gone bare." Well, why not, he means that he's bare, as now.

"Drib and drab". My dictionary says "drib" means a small ^{amount} ~~sum~~ and

"drab" means a small sum.

139--"Ghosted". My dictionary says, "to float about." And that is
pretty much which the travellers seemed, in the darkness, to be doing.

Since you and I are, obviously, in fundamental disagreement on the use of free and easy speech, maybe I ought to start out by offering a general defense of the language I use.

Slang, I submit, has always been the speech most used by most people. I have tried to say as much, perhaps too late, on Page 206, last long paragraph, of this book.

If I am right, and you'll find I am supported by countless examples in every age, then slang shortly ceases to be slang and becomes the very core of colloquial speech, and finally, of course, becomes ~~xxx~~ literature, if you concedexxx that Shakespeare's stuff is literature.

The final conclusion is that no one can say that our slang, our colloquial speech of today, was not acceptable five hundred years, a thousand years, two thousand years, ten thousand years ago.

Because it is entirely true that no matter how far back we go we find men using any word, any phrase, which did the trick. And so how can we argue against the probability that a word or phrase which does the trick now wasn't popular long, long in the past?

CHAPTER ONE

At intervals while the bold sun climbed above the horizon Elizabeth had been dosing the wobbly, new lambs hoping in spite of ^{their} ~~such~~ discouraging evidence ^{weakness} that she had rescued them in time. Now she pulled the rag tent from Number One and tucked him close ^{to} against Number Two, ^{and} both bundled ^{both} up in the same blanket. He drowsed off and his twin drowsed, or at any rate certainly ~~seemed to~~, ^{quit baa-ing}

"Well!" she said in her deep vigorous voice, "If this doesn't do it, nothing will except a miracle. And I can't count on that. I've had ^{one} ~~one~~ ^{miracle} already. It was nothing less than ^{one} ~~a~~ ^{miracle} that I could find the little sillies, freezing under that bush nearly a quarter of a mile from the fold."

She walked to the window and shook her red head at the floor as a sandal caught on one of the limestone chips which had been hammered into the well-pounded earth to make it harder. Always sure that she could improve any state of affairs, Elizabeth was forever giving something or someone a rebuking, corrective headshake. Pulling open the shutters, she shook her head

now at the sun. It was growing warmer so that the brown hills were beginning to push through a scanty night fall of snow.

"A pity," she said, "that you couldn't have helped a few hours earlier!"

A third headshake disapproved a beggar slouching along the unfrequented by-way which passed the house. "A beggar outside the humblest house in Ain-Karin!" she exclaimed. "He must expect to get blood from a stone."

Mary smiled. Seated on a cushion and leaning against the shallow chest which had been pressed into service as her son's cradle, she smiled and worked away.

The brown brook of her hair flowed over her blue dress embroidered from throat to girdle in mellow yellow. Her left arm hugged a big wad of wool against her side and the spindle which had twirled through most of the journey to Bethlehem was busy again. She still felt a little breathless at the haste with which she and the baby had been transported from the inn stable before sun-up on Elizabeth's triumphant order and now she was additionally breathless, and amused, too, by her cousin's unheard of experiment with the lambs.

"If you hadn't taken so much time from your own affairs to fetch us," she said, "you would have been on hand to find the lambs before they nearly froze."

"Hush, hush, hush! What you should say is that lambs, even when they are only three days old, ought to have sense enough to stay with their mothers."

Elizabeth whirled as her six-months-old son

threw the toy he had been playing with, a stoppered bottle with three beads inside. He had reddish hair like his mother's and the build of an infant Samson, and sat staunchly on a sheep-skin in the center of the room.

Retrieving the toy, Elizabeth shook her head at him, but as always her warm blue gaze defeated her. Young John only crewed.

Elizabeth

At first blush ^{or} ~~she~~ seemed -- a tyrant, but closer acquaintance revealed that she was in reality not at all formidable. Tall, spare and gaunt, she was graceful as well; her thin wind-roughened cheeks had a sculptured charm; and her eyes always betrayed that, however duty-bound she felt to correct things and people, she understood and forgave the worst of both.

Elizabeth always ended by forgiving. Her time, her strength, and -- often to her husband's mild dismay -- the family goods belonged to anyone. No friend was ever refused aid; no beggars ever turned from her home empty handed.

Her home was not the one in which she and Mary now talked. Here was half a mile away, an ampler house to do credit to a temple priest of consequence but, because of that fact, too full of bustle for Mary, Joseph had decided. Zacharias, as Elizabeth always managed to make new acquaintances aware, was not merely one of the obscure hosts on duty in the great, golden edifice which Herod was slyly rebuilding in the shadow of the Fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem, although admitting only repairs lest he be accused of sacrilege. Zacharias was a senior priest of the hand-picked division of Abijah.

The temporary home for Mary which Elizabeth had at last found in revolt against that stable full of cows, sheep, donkeys and smells was a single small room, too small even to offer the decent elevated section of dirt floor which kept human occupants a few inches higher than their animals. Small Briar, Mary's mount all the way from Nazareth, had stood that morning as high as his mistress until Joseph ~~him~~ hauled him outside to forage.

The small flat-roofed house of limestone did have one distinction. It blended so inconspicuously into the countryside that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. And there were few passersby for no road passed it, only the byway on which Elizabeth had noticed the loitering beggar.

A gentle knock fell on the door.

"If it's that beggar," Elizabeth said, "he'll get a piece of my mind."

"And bread and cheese, too," Mary said with soft laughter.

"I'll bread and cheese him!" Elizabeth promised and jerked the door open with her most forbidding headshake.

A reverent "Shaddai!" sounded. A brown hand lifted from the deerpost box with its twenty-two sacred lines, and a tall shepherd entered, passing the surprised Elizabeth as confidently as though he had been invited.

He should have seemed ferocious, like most shepherds. He had the usual, alarmingly tousled head of hair and

carried a staff with a crook big enough to hook a leopard. Draped over a shoulder he wore the usual villainous red-dyed sheepskin and at his belt swung the usual pouch crammed, as though to mock the daintier diet of townfolk, with rank cheese, musty olives, dried figs and stale bread all mixed in with stones for his sling. But in spite of all this he seemed only kind, and his set of pipes, with their promise of gentle music, made him seem kinder.

"We thought there might be something we could do," he murmured to Mary. His brown hand waved vaguely to explain how uncertain 'they' were of what might be needed and how willing, no matter what.

Mary's greeting was grateful. "This is one of the four who came to the stable that first night, Elizabeth," she said. "And the day before, they were in Jericho and saw the Wise Men I told you about."

"The Wise Men are still in Jericho," the shepherd murmured.

He was leaning over the chest where the baby slept, and Mary leaned, too, and proudly turned back the cover a bit, and Elizabeth tiptoed to join in the gazing. Tiny and still, he lay in the warm nest. His lashes made feathery arcs on small feather-soft cheeks. From the neck down, of course, he was swaddled, small arms and legs bound firmly in a perfect crisscross.

The room was silent except for the fire's murmur. Silently, the shepherd touched his hand to head and heart.

Young John, with a triumphant gurgle, threw his rattle across the room again, and his mother seemed glad of a chance to vent her feelings in speech and action.

"What a boy!" she cried, and ran to chase the toy and began to poke and pat her son. Pats and pokes found nothing amiss. Her John was as dry as a bone.

One of the lambs gave a broken "Baa-a" and scrambled out of the blanket. His stiltlike legs buckled, bent and sidestepped but he staggered half across the room before collapsing.

The shepherd stooped to the slack woolly ~~parcel~~^{morsel}, lifted it in his arms, sniffed, and looked up in amazement.

"This lamb is tipsy!" he cried.

"It's just had a few sucks from a rag teat," Elizabeth declared in indignant denial.

"You gave the lamb wine?"

"They both got lost last night, ~~in the snowstorm~~, I found them stone cold ^{in snow} under a bush. They looked as though they'd never pull through, so I gave them what Zacharias always takes to warm himself."

"You gave the lambs WINE?"

"Now see here! What's wrong with that? It always helps Zacharias."

The shepherd put the lamb down. It balanced doggedly. Then, drawn by the scent of its kind, it staggered back to the blanket and "Baa-aed" again at not finding the expected natural substitute for the rag teat. The shepherd wrapped it in the blanket,

felt the twin, looked into the eyes of both and turned back to Elizabeth.

"I guess it's all right," he said. "I mean, such stuff for lambs." He laughed. "A man certainly does live and learn. You can give the pair back to their mother."

"I knew Elizabeth would never let a little snow get the best of her," Mary cried merrily. "But where," she added, to the shepherd, "are the rest of you? The three you brought before?"

"Well, of course, somebody has to stay with the sheep."

"I don't even remember your names," Mary said.

"There was so much on all our minds that night,"

"I'm Esrom and the others were Obed and Zerobabal and Beer."

"I'm sure that the great one with the yellow, half-moon beard was Beer," Mary smiled. "That beard belonged to a Beer."

"That was Beer all right. And the quiet one was Obed and the excited one was Zerobabal."

Elizabeth threw a question like a sharp attack.

"See here! We didn't say at the inn where we were going, and on the way we met, I'll swear, not a soul. So how did you know where to come?"

"Where else could I have come?" Esrom asked mildly.

The door opened and Joseph, lean and sun-blackened, and with a crisp black beard, stooped clear of the lintel and entered.

"Elizabeth!" he cried. "Do we run to a little spare bread and cheese? A man can't turn his back on beggars strayed into such an out-of-the-way spot as this. And there are two outside." Tardily, he noticed the shepherd. "Hey! Good morning, Esrom."

Esrom put hand to head and heart.

"Two beggars?" Elizabeth protested. "You mean one!" She rushed to the window. "There are three!" she cried. Her ready suspicion darted at Joseph and Esrom as though they had to be responsible for this trio since she was not. "What under high heaven brought them here," she puzzled, "unless they mean to starve themselves!"

Joseph went to the window, and sure enough there were three beggars, and the newest arrival, the skinny one, farthest away, half hidden behind the spread of a tamarisk tree, resembled the meek beggar who had walked worshipfully alongside Mary on the trip down from Nazareth, as far as the Megiddo turn-off. But why should Peleg be way down here? On the point of calling Mary to look, Joseph sensibly told himself that the resemblance wasn't worth mentioning. But his own surprise held on.

He had seen beggars in many places but always there had been a plain reason for their presence. He could not, however, see any plain reason for their presence in this remote spot. He had hardly reached this conclusion when he was struck by a reason which was startling although still anything but plain. Plain? It was impossible. Just the same the reason, having

struck, stuck. He looked toward Mary, wondering.

"I read a thing once," he said to no one in particular. "At least I think I read it. Or maybe someone said it to me. Or," he pulled down the corners of his strong mouth to deprecate in advance what he was about to add, "maybe I thought it up myself. ~~When something must be defended it is always the poor who first see the need.~~ They can afford to be brave, having only their lives to lose."

Mary looked at him thoughtfully in silence.

Elizabeth flung both hands high.

"Holty-toity! Aren't we thinking big thoughts! Something good, indeed! And whose lives?"

Joseph fitted a big gentle finger into a crease in the soft neck of the sleeping baby.

"I'm sort of unnecessary here," he said, smiling.

"I think I'll ~~do~~ an errand. ^{Philippicus} Vadius Rusco/wants me to push some repairs in his villa, ^{in a few days.} ~~just as soon as I get back~~

~~Secrets.~~ But I need a small chisel so I guess I'll go look for one in Bethlehem."

"I'll go along with you," Esrom said.

"Don't let him get hungry," Joseph said, withdrawing his finger but still looking down at the baby.

"Hungry!" Elizabeth shook her head until her red hair came tumbling down. "Hungry! As though he didn't let us know when he was hungry! Leave baby-feeding to those who know how."

"Didn't I tell you I was sort of unnecessary?"

Joseph whispered loudly to Mary.

"Here!" Elizabeth called. He had reached the door but he turned back and she heaped his hands with slabs of fresh bread and a chunk of pale yellow cheese. "You don't want to disappoint your three friends," she scolded.

Joseph went out.

There were four beggars now!

51

At intervals, while ^{the} early sun continued its bold climb, the ~~big, strong~~ ^{It really} copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which ~~cut~~ ^{cleaning from top to bottom.} off a corner of the room she was ~~tipping up~~. No sound came from that quarter. The baby behind the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on an invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper-haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had been a wife for all of twelve months and her own fifteen-day-old son blinked placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept dirt floor. She glanced again and, reassured again by silence, ^{cautiously} ~~cautiously~~ opened the room's high small window to coax in more warmth.

Outdoors, the sun now was pouring such warmth down on the surrounding, ^{green} ~~winter green~~ hills ^{green from the winter rains} that the night frost had all melted except in a few cold pockets.

"A pity," Judith told the sun, recalling her ~~earlier~~ chilly walk a few hours back, "that you couldn't have been up to warm us when we brought them here."

Her strong voice was a little breathless. That was understandable. She had been on the go since before sun-up, helping the two behind the curtain from their stable under the inn ~~at Bethlehem~~ and then putting to rights this not ~~too~~ much better one-room dwelling. ^{of field stones set in winter}

compelling

Dawn had been a long hour off when an ~~insistant~~, gaunt, ~~middle-aged~~ woman had joggled her from sleep. A woman gaunt, Judith had ~~shortly~~ decided, from the wear and tear of an ingrained determination never to take "No" when she wanted "Yes." The woman had said her name was Elizabeth.

in a low, winning voice

"The innkeeper was right," Elizabeth had said, "You are easily strong enough. Do come along."

Elizabeth ~~had~~ required, she ^{had} explained, just such help as big, strong Judith could easily give to move a cousin of hers from the inn's stable. The cousin, Mary, she was named, had given birth to a son there two nights before.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bethlehem. It was one of the commonest names in all Judea. But she hadn't known any of them was bearing.

"Mary of ---," Elizabeth had said, naming a town, and then sensibly had added, "North of Sebaste."

"Judith had never heard of Elizabeth's Mary, or of Mary's town, ~~either~~, which she promptly forgot. Just some cross-roads village, and since it was north of Sebaste why would she have known ~~it~~? Few around Bethlehem ever travelled ^{even} as far north as ~~even~~ Sebaste, although everybody had certainly heard of that. This was because Herod had drafted someone from almost every Bethlehem family to rebuild the city recently in his unceasing effort to keep the favor of the Emperor Augustus in Rome.



It turned out that Mary had a tall husband, sunblackened and strong enough for anything.

at home in Nazareth & away

would be touching the spindle which was usually near, and with which she had diligently spun wool all the way to Bethlehem. Close to her pallet, in the shallow chest which had been drafted into duty as a crib, would be the child, firmly snugged into his swaddlingcloth, and in that ^{slutwa} white cocoon, sleeping the solid sleep of infancy.

A craft perfectionist, Joseph ~~smiled to remember~~ ^{nodded approval} the skill with which Mary had drawn the swaddling cloth free of every wrinkle and had criss-crossed the band from head to toe. He ~~nodded in revived admiration~~ ^{smiled at nodded again as he} and turned toward the door.

"I came to see if there was anything any of us could do to help," Esrom said. "But I ^{can see} guess not."

"We are doing fine," Joseph said. His gaze twinkled at Judith in memory of all the orders Elizabeth had flung around before rushing off to her own small son. ^{to make sure they both did} "But thank you, Esrom."

"I'll ^{go} get along, then," Esrom said, ~~settling his pipes.~~ "I have an errand in Bethlehem."

"We can walk together for a little," Joseph said, lifting the latch. "But then I swing east and north."

"Have you forgotten your beggars?" Judith asked ~~seriously~~ at his back.

He turned and she heaped his hands with slabs of bread and a wedge of ~~xxxxxxx~~ pale, yellow cheese. He went out.

There were four beggars now.

"But without even ^{sense} ~~sense~~ enough to make sure of a place
for Mary in the inn, before every room was taken," Elizabeth ^{had} said
to Judith. She was not, she added, trusting ^{the} delicate assignment
at hand to ~~him~~. *The likes of him.*

Judith had wanted to point out that her own hands already
were full and overflowing with her own work. She had a husband, ^{too,}

~~Although the subjects of Montezuma had~~

~~Although the people who had built the great Mexican Empire had never been in contact with any other civilized part of the world, they had~~

~~The people of the great Mexican Empire had built~~

~~Through many centuries, the people of the great Mexican Empire, ~~and zzzxxxxx built xxx~~ possessed a surprising learning, partly inherited from tribes conquered centuries earlier.~~

The Mexicans of Montezuma's empire were surprisingly civilized, partly by ~~learned xxxxxx~~ the learning of tribes conquered many centuries earlier. They had never been in contact with civilized nations of any other part of the world. ^{yet} But they had a very

^{accurate} system of arithmetic of their own, very accurate. ^{Their system of} They had discovered ^{so much about} ~~astronomy~~ the stars and ^{sun and moon} astronomy, ^{could} that they had been able to ~~make xxxxxxxx~~ reckon time, by minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years. ~~And the Spaniards were amazed to find~~

a fifty-ton calendar stone which they had made. ^{Amazed the}

~~Spaniards. They could find~~

They knew how to get gold, silver, tin and copper out of the ground, and a mixture of tin and copper was used by them where we use iron. Their goldsmiths, the Spaniards admitted, were better than their own. They were very strict with ~~xxxxxx~~ their small children, but when grown a son and daughter was grown, they were but when a son or daughter had grown up, and knew treated most tenderly, probably because their parents were sure they had learned right from wrong and would

a constantly
as well as ~~an equally demanding~~ new baby. But the wife of a
young, ^{farmer} day-laborer did not stand out against the wife of an
~~influential~~ senior priest of Jerusalem's great Temple.

"I am the wife of Zacharias, senior priest of the
Division of Abijah," Elizabeth had ^{been so fat with} rolled out the impressive
identification ~~so readily~~ that Judith ~~had been so fat with~~ was sure it
was used often, ~~and had been doubly awed.~~ "Do come along. There's
~~is~~ a donkey to carry Mary and the walk won't seem a step to a
girl like you."

The walk had been considerably more than a mile, but
after meeting the mother ^{ill} with her baby, and ^{the husband,} Joseph, Judith had
lost ^{her} ~~the~~ inclination to point out the bother of the ^{chose} ~~work~~ imposed
by Elizabeth.

Even though she had seen, as soon as she came to them,
that husband and wife were Galileans, and even though all
Galileans, because of ~~their~~ crude ways but particularly because
of their outlandish dialect, were ^{laughed at all over} the target of endless ridicule
through ^{had been} Judea, Judith ^{that} found herself thinking strongly that
she was glad ^{that} she had been called.

Why these are wonderful people, even though they are
Galileans, I shall always remember them, though I grow as old
as old Simeon who spends his days in devotion at the Temple, or
old Anna who has lived up there, fasting and praying, since her
widowhood. ^{doubt} I think I shall never forget them.

Warmed by ^{such an unanticipated surge of liking, even love,} ~~her surprising access of willingness~~ Judith
had not minded the cold. She had not minded the long walk. Nor
the housecleaning, although the house had been so long vacant

that her ~~br~~ ^{squatted in} ~~om~~ drove spiders from every nook and cranny. She had not minded even an extra delay ^{had} because Elizabeth ~~now~~ was gone to make sure servants in her own ~~half~~ home, a quarter-mile away were giving her own six-months-old son proper care.

Everybody had babies, Judith thought merrily as she stood at the window. Then merriment changed to surprise. A beggar slouched into sight along the unfrequented by-way which passed the house. A beggar outside a house so humble and lonely? He must believe he could get blood from a stone!

Triple
Space

Judith was still marvelling at such unwarranted optimism when her baby, on his sheepskin, whimpered hungrily. She whirled, stooped for her treasure and, coming erect, uncovered a blooming breast ~~and filled~~ ^{his nose and} mouth before any louder sound could disturb the two behind the curtain.

Mother and child there slept on. And a good thing, after the time they had had! Judith thought back to the stable and said, "tch-tch-tch" as her own son nuzzled for a good hold and then sucked with a will.

Of all places for a baby to be born. It hadn't been even a real stable. Just that limestone cave under the inn, full of cows, horses, goats and even a couple camels. And afterward, according to the story Elizabeth had indignantly told in her ^{was, winning voice} while the ^{long} mile unwound ~~behind her~~, endless fuss and confusion. People coming. People going. People ah-ing. People oh-ing. But the

~~Judith had willingly accepted Elizabeth's claim that the mother and child had remained serene through so much, that the baby, believe it or not, had not cried once. They would, these~~
 Judith had never thought of doubting the most extravagant detail of Elizabeth's story. Of course they and her son would soon have been untouched.

--5-- mother and child serene in spite of so much. The boy, believe it or not, had not cried once ~~in any~~ ~~complaint~~. Judith had not thought of doubting even this ~~most~~ extravagant detail of Elizabeth's story. Of course Mary and her son would be undisturbed. ~~two~~. They had been no bother at all during the journey, and both had dropped instantly into soft sleep on reaching the house, such as it was, that Elizabeth had hunted down when Joseph, to her exasperation, had decided that the bigger home of a senior priest, besieged by petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle.

The house which Elizabeth had found was ~~humble~~. Standing alone, without even one near neighbor, it did have a well. But its first floor did not offer even the decently elevated section which, in almost any house, kept human occupants at night a few inches higher than the beasts they brought in ^{for safety} from leopards, wolves, hyenas and whatever. The donkey, Mary's mount all the way from that Galilean village Judith ~~had never before~~ ^{forgot so early,} ~~heard of~~, had stood that morning as high as his mistress until taken out to forage.

^{low} The house had the usual flat roof ^{of cheap sycamore beams} and ~~limestone walls~~ ^{topped with layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay} and blended so inconspicuously ~~into~~ the surrounding hills that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight.

There were few passersby. No real road came near, only the byway on which Judith had noticed the beggar.

A gentle knock fell on the door. Judith settled her ^{now overflowing with his milk, calm and silent} son, ~~made silent by milky abundance~~, back on the sheepskin.

"If that's the beggar," she said, "He'll get a piece of my mind." She opened the door trying to look ^{depressed} ~~forbidding~~, ^{like} after the manner of Elizabeth.

A reverent "peace!" greeted her and a shepherd pushed ^{past}

as confidently as though he had been invited.

Like most shepherds he seemed ferocious. He had the usual ferociously ^{unkempt} ~~tousled~~ head of hair, and his formidable staff had a crook big enough to hook and strangle a leopard. The usual villainous, red-dyed sheepskin of his trade ^{was} draped over one shoulder and ^{from} ~~at~~ his ~~broad~~ belt swung the usual pouch crammed, as though to mock ~~the~~ daintier townfolks, with rank cheese, musty olives, stale bread and dried figs mixed with not much harder stones for his sling. The sling swung alongside. But in spite of all this he seemed only kind, perhaps because he carried under one arm a set of pipes with ^{their} ~~its~~ promise of gentle music.

"We thought there might be something we could do," he said. A brown hand circled to indicate how uncertain "they" were of what might be needed, but how willing, no matter what.

Then "I think I've heard of you," Judith whispered excitedly, ~~and~~ glanced toward the curtain in a signal ~~for him~~ to keep his own voice low. "You are one of the four who came to the stable that first night. But where are the others?"

"Well, of course, somebody ^{has to} ~~must~~ stay with the sheep." From what Elizabeth told me, you must be Esrom." ~~I don't remember your names, although Elizabeth told me.~~

"I am Esrom, and the others are Obed, Zorobabal and Beor."

"Oh, yes!" Elizabeth said Beor had a yellow beard like a half moon."

"That's Beor, all right. And Obed is the quiet one. Zorobabal gets excited."

"But see here!" Judith threw the exclamation like a stick. "We didn't say at the inn where we were going. And on the way we met not one ^{single} soul. So how did you know where to come?"

"Where else would I come?" Esrom asked mildly.

The door was opened again. Tall, sun-blackened Joseph ^{slept}
~~strode~~ clear of the lintel, his crisp black beard brightly
jeweled from the ^{well} ~~drink~~ he had ^{drunk} ~~taken at the well~~ after watering
the donkey. Looking at him, Judith could not see, for the life
of her, why Elizabeth had ^{refused} ~~been reluctant~~ to depend on one so
plainly capable, ~~reliable~~ and gentle, too.

"Judith!" Joseph keyed his voice to the curtain. "do
we run to a little spare bread and cheese? A man can't turn his
back on beggars strayed into such an out-of-the-way spot as this.
And there are two outside."

Tardily, he noticed the shepherd.

"Esrom? Good morning, ~~Esrom~~. What gets you up so early?"

"Peace!" Esrom touched hand to head and heart. "Oh, I
came just to --- "

"Two beggars?" Judith broke in. "You mean one!" She
went again to the window. "Why, there are three!"

Joseph went ~~and looked~~. Sure enough there were three.
And the most distant, ^{skinny} ~~and~~ barefooted and wearing only a
ragged loincloth, ^{resembled} Peleg, the odd beggar who had
walked worshipfully ^{after} Mary for part of the journey down
from Nazareth.

Four-fifths naked, and seemingly half-starved, Peleg
had proved the biggest braggart Joseph had ever met. He had
drawn jeers from the travelling ^{party} which had formed for mutual
protection against robbers, and ~~when~~ ^{even before} Mary took his part he
had become her adorer, as so many did, once within her spell.

But Peleg, Joseph remembered, had turned west for

Megido, hardly a quarter of the distance from Nazareth to Sebaste. ~~Megido miles and miles to the north.~~ How then could he be ^{so soon} down here? Joseph decided that he had been deceived by a singular resemblance. His ^{confusion} ~~surprise~~ at so many beggars, however, held on. He had seen beggars in all sorts of ~~odd~~ places but always there had been a plain reason. ^{Judea's powerful} ~~The Beggars' Guild of Judea was~~ ^{sent it} ~~powerful, and often sent members strangely and for strange~~ ^{everywhere} ~~reasons.~~ But he could see no reason for their presence in this remote spot. He had ^{known} ~~hardly~~ reached this conclusion when he was struck by a reason which was startling, although anything but plain. Plain? It was impossible! Just the same it stuck like a burr. He looked toward the curtain.

"I read a thing once," he said to no one in particular. ~~"At least I think I read it."~~ Or maybe someone said it to me. Or," he pulled down the corners of his strong mouth to deprecate in advance what he was about to add, "maybe I thought it up myself. It is this: When something is to be defended, it is always the poor who first stand forth. They can afford to be brave, having only their lives to lose."

Judith flung both hands high.

"Hoity-toity! Aren't we thinking big thoughts? Something, indeed! And whose lives?"

Joseph smiled at Esrom and took a staff from behind the door. It exuded a faint cinnamon odor. He had made it of storax wood because storax wood never lost a pleasant, spicy smell.

"Well," he said, "Briar is tethered just a little way off, in plain sight. And I don't see anything in here that needs

---9---
me. I'll be off to work."

"You have found work al--, " Judith stopped ~~so~~ short, ^{so} that her envious "already" never got out. She hoped Joseph had not noticed ~~it~~. She had no right to envy. Of course a carpenter would find work easily, and a master carpenter at top wages. Her own husband was lucky to work three or four days a week picking grapes, spreading figs to dry, plowing, at only pennies a day.

"It is something I just happened to run into," Joseph said, and Judith ^{was relieved} rejoiced because his tone did not indicate that he had sensed any envy at all. "If Mary asks, say I am only a little way off, toward Jerusalem, repairing a ^{room} wall panel in the new villa of Vedius Rusco Philippicus.

"Of the Road Commissioner?" Judith gasped,

Vedius Rusco was the one Roman in Judea whom most Jews admired, sometimes to the point of adoration. The great ex-Primus Pilus of the Tenth Legion, where he had been replaced by one Helius Naepor whom no Jew admired, he was now, by direct choice of the Emperor, in charge of highway building all around Palestine.

Judith had measured out his name slowly, as was fitting when one spoke of a man so favored by Caesar Augustus himself, ^{but} ~~although~~ good manners kept her from asking how in the world two Galilean peasants had gained the help of ^{so lofty an Imperial official} ~~one~~ so great.

"But Joseph, don't you want to tell Mary, yourself? She will be so proud." Judith knew how proud she, herself, would have been to hear ~~from~~ her own man say that he had been employed by Vedius Rusco Philippicus. Quite apart from the security of a selection by ^{guaranteeing} ~~one who could~~ guarantee permanent work, would have

The Mexicans were astonishingly civilized. ^{They had been} ~~No civilized~~ nation anywhere else in the world, ^{found} ~~had ever touched~~ them. But from ^{conquered} ~~tribes they had conquered~~ they had learned much, and had increased this captured wisdom. They had a ^{clearly but workable} simple system of arithmetic. They had learned enough about the sun to measure ~~times~~ minutes, days, weeks, months, years. One of their calendars was carved on a stone weighing fifty tons. They ~~had~~ cut the stone in a mountain and 10,000 men had hauled it to the city in which it was used. They knew how to mine gold, silver, copper and tin. They used a mixture of tin and copper where ~~were~~ ^{the Spaniards used} iron. Their goldsmiths were better than Spanish goldsmiths, the invaders admitted. Boys and girls were taught by temple priests and priestesses, and were very strict, but parents treated their children with great tenderness and love.

a flag represented 20
 a plume 400
 a plume meant 6000
 a half of a quail
 of a plume of pure
 meant 200, 100 or
 3,000, 1500

a flag meant 20, and every added flag meant 20 more.

The first signs were 10 and 10
 other signs were numbers for 1 to 20 were expressed
 by using different marks or dots

the honor of an ^{little} association, however humble, with ~~a hero~~ whose legendary exploits ~~in war~~ rivalled those of the Jews' own Joshua.

Joseph looked toward the curtain but shook his head.

"Let them sleep," he said.

Mary already knew that the Road Commissioner had offered work, and not even ~~with~~ details she would ~~have been~~ glad to hear ^{with} ~~would be disturb~~ the blessing picture which the curtain concealed.

Mary would be lying, ^{with her face toward heaven,} as always after a first restlessness on an unfamiliar, hard, thin pallet, ~~facing the ceiling, the sky and heaven.~~ The brown brook of her bright hair would be flowing over gently rising and falling breasts and over her blue dress embroidered in mellow yellow. One hand, almost surely, would be touching the spindle which was usually near, ^{whether} at home in Nazareth or away, ~~and with which~~ she had diligently spun all the way to Bethlehem. Close by, in the shallow chest drafted into duty as a crib, would be the child, firmly snugged into his swaddling cloth and sleeping, in that ~~safe~~ white cocoon, the solid sleep of infancy.

A craft perfectionist, Joseph nodded approval ^{as he recalled} of the skill with which Mary had drawn the swaddling cloth free of every wrinkle and had criss-crossed ~~the~~ its band from head to toe. Smiling, he nodded again as he turned to the door.

"I came ^{just} to see if there was anything any of us could do to help," Esrom said, "but I can see not."

"We are doing fine, thanks just the same," Joseph said. His gaze twinkled at Judith recalling all the orders Elizabeth, to make sure they both did fine according to her notions, had flung around before rushing off to her own small son.

The Mexicans were astonishingly civilized. They never had been on contact with civilized nations anywhere else in the world, but they had learned much from tribes they had conquered. ~~On~~ this learning they had added much of their own. They had a very accurate system of arithmetic. Their studies of the stars, the sun and moon, ~~enabled~~ them to reckon time, by minutes, hours, days weeks, months and years. A fifty-ton calender stone which they had made amazed the Spaniards. They knew how to mine gold, silver, tin and copper. Their goldsmiths, the invaders admitted, were better than Spanish goldsmiths. They were most tender and loving with their children, although strict when a boy or girl was very young and still learning how to behave. ~~When a child was named, he was baptized as Children are baptized, although the Mexican people, of course, knew nothing about Christianity, had never heard of Christianity.~~

One of their Calenders was carved on a 50-ton stone ~~brought~~ ^{hauled} from ~~the~~ ~~was~~ cut from rock in a distant mountain and hauled by 10,000 men to the city where it was ~~used~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~city~~ where it was used for the moonstone from which the stone was born

"I'll go along, then," Esrom said. "I have an errand in Bethlehem.

"We can walk together for a little," Joseph said, ~~lifting~~
~~the latch,~~ "But then I swing east and north."

"Have you forgotten your beggars?" Judith asked at his back.

He turned and she heaped his hands with slaps of bread and a wedge of yellow cheese until he had to hook the cinnamon-scented staff over one shoulder. He went out.

There were four beggars now.

-----x-----

me. I'll ^{be} get off to work."

"You have found work al--," Judith stopped so short that her envious "already" never ^{got out} was finished. She hoped Joseph had not noticed ^{it} her envy. She had no right to ^{know} any. Of course a carpenter would find work easily, and a master carpenter at top wages. Her own husband ^{was} considered himself lucky to work three or four days a week ~~unxsfarxer~~, picking grapes, ~~pressing wines~~, drying figs, plowing, at only a ~~few~~ pennies a day.

^{and} "It is something I just happened to run into," Joseph said, Judith rejoiced because his tone did not at ~~all~~ indicate that he had ^{at all} ~~sensed~~ any envy. "If Mary asks, say I am just a little way off, toward Jerusalem, repairing a wall panel in the new villa ^(Vedius Rusco Philippicus) of the ~~Road Commissioner~~ who helped her in Sebaste."

"~~The villa~~ of Vedius Rusco Philippicus!" Judith gasped.

Vedius Rusco Philippicus was the one Roman in Judea whom most Jews admired almost to the point of adoration. The great ex-Primus Pilus of the Tenth Legion where he had been replaced by Helius Naepor whom no Jew admired, he was now ~~doing greater things~~ by direct order of the Emperor, ^{in charge of the building of highways all around Palestine} Judith had measured out his name slowly, as was fitting when one spoke of ^{a so favored} the man ~~chosen~~ by Caesar Augustus himself, ^{to} ~~see to the building of highways all around Palestine.~~ Good manners kept her from asking how in the world two Galilean peasants had gained the ^{help} ~~favor~~ of one so great. There was, however, ~~a question~~ she could ask.

"But Joseph, don't you want to tell ^{yourself} Mary ~~herself~~? She will be so proud." Judith knew how proud she, ~~herself~~, would have

o o o

Elsewhere in Judea there was confusion far more puzzling than a few beggars on a track not likely to yield alms. Confusion had been ^{a spreading} ~~sprouting~~ throughout the whole country ever since the strange radiance ... the star, moon, sun, fire or whatever it had been .. over Bethlehem. More and more, thousands were remembering, and puzzling over, the promises of the ~~old~~ prophets. Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, others, too, had made the promise. Each had used his own words but the promise had always been the same.

"Behold, a king shall reign."

" ... ruler of Israel."

" ... the Lord whom ye seek shall come to his Temple."

"...!And unto him shall the obedience of the people be."

Each had promised in a long-gone day of oppression. Each had kindled the hope of freedom. Could it be that the time of fulfillment was at hand? Why not? What better time, than now, when Israel lay under a double oppression, the conquering sword of Rome and the tyrant heel of Herod, ~~the Great?~~

In his Palace at Jerusalem the tyrant, Herod, was enraged after his ^{hurry} Chief Eunuch ^{had reported} ~~hurried to report~~ the widespread ~~talk~~ occasioned ^{had quaked} ~~by the confusion and to quote~~ the prophecies suddenly

An immense circular block of ^{carved} stone, & is interred in 1790
 in the great square of Mexico.....colossal fragment on which
 the calendar is engraved...
 they had means of settling the hours of the day with precision
 the period of the solstices and the equinox, & the
 transit of the sun across the zenith of Mexico
 they knew the movement of the tropical bodies, the length of the
 solar tropical year
 of dark porphyry, nearly 50 tons

meat - in cages
 meat - water
 turkey
 coffee
 pastries
 dishes
 garnishes
 tax-gates

dancing
 "danced gracefully to sound of
 various instruments & dancing

not known
 sculpture
 earthenware
 lacquered wood

disgraceful
 "fell p n. 24 LK on day
 since it had been
 taken with gilt
 Job in awe

14
Herald
so popular. He repeated, "behold a king shall reign," and braced himself against the threat. Well, by guile and treachery he had got rid of more than one pretender to the throne on which he had sat so long. He knew how to get rid of one more.

He was to ^{guileful} ~~crafty~~ to involve himself openly in the riddance. These touchy Jews were too ready to explode ^{when he was involved in} ~~against~~ merely normal afflictions: taxes, labor drafts, land seizures, the quartering of mercenary troops. If they even suspected that their tyrant was striking at prophecy there would be no holding them.

He resolved to use his Chief Eunuch. Not to complete the ^{assignment} ~~chore~~, of course. No Jew could be trusted to complete such a chore; ~~and~~ moreover if the Chief Eunuch ^{showed his hand} ~~remained to the end~~ his master could not fail to be involved. But the Chief Eunuch would be safe enough to ~~make the start~~ ^{find the right man to carry the assignment to completion}.

So the tyrant gave his order and the Chief Eunuch, ~~not~~ ~~too~~ ~~reluctantly~~, went to another part of the city, to a mansion kept secretly for his master's purposes. There he sent for a reliable man who was now on his way.

The ^{red} promise was made in long gone times of trouble. It was meant for these times. But now it kindles new hope. Rome holds Judea and Herod rules. ^{it.} So thousands say that if the ^{this prophecy is} Messiah is ever coming this is the time, when he could lift, they say, a double yoke.

"And ^{See 1 Cor} when any Messiah would be a rival for Herod's throne," Naepor said. "No wonder the old fox worries."

"He has got rid of enough rivals not to fear one more," the Chief Eunuch said. "But he does fear a revolt. ^{And does not} Any ^{any pretension calling} ~~Messiah~~ so-called Messiah could stir one up. ^{make it real} Jews are touchy even in ordinary times. They kick at any tax. Any labor draft when Herod builds to honor Caesar Augustus. Or takes even a bit of land. They roar at the quartering of mercenary troops."

"No wonder," Naepor said. "Look what happens to their women."

The Chief Eunuch chose to ignore this.

"Most of all," he said, "Herod is upset by the frequency with which Bethlehem keeps cropping up in the revived prophecy. Ever since

~~What is it~~

14-A

He resolved to use his Chief Eunuch. He had one other servant he might have used. He had Soemus, his most intimate companion since both were young. But in a matter involving a baby he did not dare to trust Soemus's scruples. So he settled upon his Chief Eunuch. Not to complete ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the assignment, of course. The Chief Eunuch was a Jew, and no Jew could be counted on to complete such a chore. Moreover if the Chief Eunuch showed his hand his master could not fail to be involved. But the Chief Eunuch would serve perfectly to find men to carry the assignment through, and to direct them in the course of it.

So the tyrant gave his order and the Chief Eunuch went to another part of the city, to a ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ^{house} kept secretly for his master's purposes. There he sent for a reliable man who was now on his way.

q n q a s

6 - 2542

6 - 2871

CHAPTER TWO

"Keep walking." the Primus Pilus Helius Naepor warned, scarcely moving his thick lips. "We won't go in until the street is empty. We don't need to run any extra risk. We've got lots of time."

The Primus Pilus of the Tenth Legion, ^{inferior} successor to Vedius Rusco Philippicus, was sometimes compared to a bull, but more often lately to a rhinoceros. As a small rhinoceros he was just about ~~all~~ right. As a bull, he was too fat and he lurched too much.

was fat and lurching because he
He over-ate and over-drunk to take his mind off the disappointment which gnawed at all hours because of ~~the~~ honors and successes he had missed. Nevertheless when, on rising ~~at~~ ^{any} morning, he sucked in his paunch and cinched it tight with a belt as wide as his two hands, he looked less like the ~~the~~ bloated rhinoceros he had grown to be than the ^{massive} fighting bull he once had been.

He was not, moreover, so much less than he once had been, that he did not know how ^{to approach} the Chief Eunuch's ^{secret mansion.} ~~hide-out should~~
~~be expected~~ He had been summoned there before. Most legionnaires who had won rank only a little below a legion's general would have wiped their feet on such a summons, pride would have made them even if honor had not. Naepor's greed and jealousy made him accept.

The summons had found him just out of bed in his quarters in the Fortress of Antonia next to the Temple, ^{There} which the Tenth Legion ^{kept watch} guarded day and night to check riots ~~between~~ ⁱⁿ the Great Court ~~to check riots between~~ ^{dissembling} greedy Gentiles and resentful Jews. He had put on nothing ... helmet, garrison cloak, military boots, greaves ... nothing which would readily identify him as a Roman officer, and he had made the Centurion Panthera do the same.

Of course they had worn swords, daggers and cuirasses, but long, stripped native cloaks covered these and as they started across the deep Tyropoean Valley on the high bridge linking ^{the city} Jerusalem's two chief hills they might have been any early-rising Jerusalemites. They still seemed so in the quiet street of the Chief Eunuch's mansion.

" ... lots of time," Naepor repeated. So they went around a maze of alleys and lanes and approached the ^{back doors} ~~hide-out~~ again.

"Wasn't that boy watching ~~when we went by before?~~" Panthera asked, motion^{ing} across the street. The ^{olive-skinned} centurion ~~was~~ taller and younger than Naepor, with bold, sleepy eyes, ^{and} a small, sensual mouth, ~~and an olive skinned face.~~

"Don't point. And the answer is 'No.'" Naepor's growl had an old campaigner's assurance. "The first time it was a girl. But her cloak was grey and his is blue, and her hair was long and his is short. Still, it won't hurt to go around again."

He wanted a drink, he was getting downright dry, but he was willing to play cautious, even though it was impossible that anyone ^{could} ~~had~~ have discovered their mission.

How could anyone ~~x~~ have had time? They had set out as soon

XXXXXXXXXXXX

as he had received the Chief Eunuch's message. ⁹ But, on the other hand the Fortress might well be watched by spies for the High Priest in the Temple, ^{so} close by, or for Herod across the ~~Tyropoean~~ ^{bridge and} Valley, or for General Proculinus, or even for all three. You never knew ~~and caution always paid off~~. So they went around again and when they approached the mansion for the third time the street was, at last, empty.

"Quick now!" Naepor elbowed Panthera and lurched after him. The door was unlocked as the Chief Eunuch's message had promised. Anywhere in Jerusalem an unlocked door invited robbers. This door, however, was safe. Behind it, filling the ~~cell~~ two cells meant for a doorkeeper and a watchdog, a dozen of the Chief Eunuch's forty-odd bodyguard stood at the alert.

A broad hall stretched back from the cells. Naepor guessed the value of its furnishings with a skill gained ^{at} ~~the sales of~~ a thousand lootings, and told himself that the Chief Eunuch could pay plenty out of his own purse as well as out of the bribe-money he certainly had had from Herod. He would have to, if only because his summons had prevented a badly needed morning nap. Even after two nights and a day the haunting memory of that confusing radiance all over the sky left a man ^{still} done in ~~in~~ after a long sleep.

"Come on!" The Chief Eunuch advanced soundlessly across a rug so soft, thick and rich that it must have cost, Naepor reckoned, twenty times his own whole year's pay. ^{Fifteen} ~~Three hundred thousand~~ denarii! Great Jupiter!
Three hundred Thousand

The Chief Eunuch spoke in a voice so deliberately hushed that it sounded more like a hiss. This was because he spoke most

5,000 + 0

00000

often within the hearing of Herod who had a disease so exacerbating that louder sounds ^{to} were like hooks ^{at} tearing his tormented carcass.

He ^Dwas a slight, mincing, bony man, usually arrogant, ^{The Chief Eunuch} Today ~~xxxx~~ he was

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ smoother than cream, as few Jews and fewer Palace officers ever were toward any Roman. He was elaborately dressed. A multi-colored robe parted as he moved to reveal a tunic of lavender silk more usual on a strutting Egyptian ~~or~~ a flaunting Greek. His shoes were Persian style, high, laced, soft, and stiched extravagantly across the toes with gold thread. Nothing in his garments spelled Jewish austerity, but of course he had entirely cut himself off from his people, and had paid only lip service to the Temple, in all the years he had served Herod.

"This ^{walk} ~~walk~~ has left me dried ^{grumbled} than sand in the sun," Naepor ~~said~~ as he followed his host.

"There is wine," the Chief Eunuch said. "Some from my best Hebron vines." Nothing in his voice hinted that this best was going to be wasted on such guests. He led the way to a great, open, flowery court and Naepor, eying his host's rich apparel in this flood of sunshine, set his price higher.

"He'll pay," he resolved and shaking off his robe lumbered in his own soiled, knee-length woolen tunic to the chshions scattered around the ^{low} wine table. He was the more resolved because he knew that he could ^{count on very} ~~hope for only~~ a few more such profitable assignments. He ~~knew that~~ General Orfitus Proculinus would not permit him to stay on as Primus Pilus of the Tenth Legion much longer. ^{The} His exacting little ^{general} chief was after nothing less than the best legion in the Emperor Augustus's army. In battle a Primus Pilus who fought like a bull helped give it to him. But he was showing unmistakeable dissatisfaction with a garrison Primus Pilus who enforced discipline too porly, and was drunk too often.

---2---
The summons from the Chief Eunuch had awakened him in his quarters in the Fortress of Antonia next to the Temple where the Tenth Legion stood guard day and night to break up riots in the great Court of the Gentiles ^{where greedy Jews meet restless Jews} ~~which might flames~~ into revolt. He had put on nothing ... helmet, garrison cloak, military boots ... nothing which would readily identify him as a Roman officer, and he had made the Centurion Panthera do the same.

Of course they had worn swords, daggers and cuirasses, but long stripped native cloaks hid these. ^{and started} As they ~~walked~~ ^{walked} across ~~high~~ the high ~~the~~ bridge ^{on the high bridge} over the Tyropoean Valley which linked Jerusalem's two chief hills they might have been ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~two~~ early-rising Jerusalem-ites. They still seemed so in the quiet street of the Chief Eunuch's mansion.

"We've got lots of time," Naepor repeated. So they went around a maze of alleys and lanes and approached the ^{hide-out} ~~house~~ again.

"Wasn't that ~~lagger~~ boy watching when we went by before?" Panthera asked, motioning across the street. The centurion was taller and younger than Naepor, with bold, ^{a small sensual mouth and} sleepy eyes in an olive-skinned face and a small, sensual mouth.

"Don't point. And the answer is, 'No.'" Naepor's growl had an old campaigner's assurance. "The first time it was a girl. But her cloak was gray and his is blue and her hair was ~~yellow~~ ^{long} and his is ^{short} ~~black~~. Still, it won't hurt to go around again."

He wanted a drink, he was getting downright dry, but he was willing to play cautious even though it was impossible that anyone could have discovered their ^{Mission. How could anyone} ~~part in the Chief Eunuch's~~

That

Naepor knew he was on his way out. And he knew that on retirement he would never be offered any such civil post as the one for which his old comrade, Vedius Rusco, had been drafted ~~on retiring~~ All his life he had tried to rival Rusco, but now he was fat and almost finished and Rusco was still rising. Remembering this he sat down sullenly, broad head sinking between thick shoulders, coarse hair bristling, thick lips parched for wine.

Identify a Roman, and a Roman officer to boot, and he had made the Centurion Panthera do the same.

Of course they had worn swords, daggers and cuirasses but long, stripped native cloaks hid all these and as they walked toward their assignation across the high bridge which joined Jerusalem's two chief hills on either side of the Tyropoean Valley they might have been any two early-rising Jerusalemites.

"We've got a lot of time" Helius Naepor repeated.
So They went around a maze of lanes and alleys and ~~then~~ again approached the mansion which the Chief Eunuch used, in a part of Herod's the city far from ~~the~~ Palace, for his master's purposes and his own also.

"Wasn't that beggar watching, when we went by before," Panthera asked, pointing across the street. The centurion was taller and younger than Naepor, with bold, sleepy eyes in an olive-skinned face and a small, sensual mouth.

"Don't point! And the answer is 'No.'" Naepor's growl had a veteran scout's assurance. "Before, the beggar wore a grey robe and was shorter. This one wears a grey-blue robe. Besides, at least one beggar is usually in sight. Still, it won't hurt to go around again."

He wanted a drink, he was getting downright thirsty. But he was willing to play cautious, even though it was impossible that anyone could have found out their mission. No one had had time. They had set out as soon as he had got the Chief Eunuch's message.

But, on the other hand, the Fortress might well be under surveillance by spies of the Temple next door, or of the Palace across the Valley, or of little, dandified, watchful General

There was plenty of wine. Six jars! Two were half-buried in snow brought all the way from Mount Hermon under thick

sawdust. There was also ~~bowls of~~ water for guests who desired their drinks thinned instead of undiluted in Judean style. Naepor pushed the water aside. Settling heavily among his cushions, he filled a goblet, drank noisily, wiped his mouth with a hamlike hand, wiped the hand on his already stained tunic and poured again.

Panthera sat opposite. He also had one insistent appetite. Other men dreamed of honors, estates, power, friendship, honorable sons, virtuous daughters. Panthera dreamed only of women and he dreamed with a singleness of desire that ^{had} made inevitable his nickname which was the synonym, in his time and world, for lust. He took one drink but did not refill his goblet. He had been told to watch his tongue as long as they were ~~in the house of the Chief Eunuch.~~
~~xxxxxx~~ in the house of the Chief Eunuch.

"We'll have to bargain about pay as soon as we find out what he wants done," Naepor had warned. "And when you bargain with this ~~xxxxxx~~ hissing snake of Herod's you want a clear head."

Although Naepor went on drinking he kept an entirely clear head. He did not appear in the least drunk. But then, Panthera reflected, he never appeared drunk.

The Chief Eunuch

~~xxxxxx~~ patiently waited to talk business until Naepor should pause long enough between drinks, and meantime looked calculatingly at the ~~centurion~~ olive-skinned, sleepy-eyed young ~~xxxxxx~~ centurion.

To the Premier P. L.

"I ~~xxxxxx~~ am sure," he felt forced to say at last, "that you would not bring an ally of too little experience but I know ~~xxxxxx~~ almost nothing here, of your friend, scarcely more than his name and rank."

ilet

FLIGHT FROM HEROD

by

Deles W. Lovelace

Author of

Journey to Bethlehem

and in collaboration with Maud Hart Lovelace

One Stayed at Welcome

Gentlemen From England

The Golden Wedge

CHAPTER TWO

"Keep walking!" Helius Naepor warned, scarcely moving his thick lips. "We won't go in until the street is empty. We don't need to run any extra risk. We've got lots of time."

Back in the Fortress of Antonia he had taken off everything -- helmet, garrison cloak, hobnailed marching shoes -- everything which readily identified a Roman officer and he had made Panthera do the same. Of course they had kept breast plates and swords and daggers but long, striped, native cloaks hid these and as they walked along the quiet street they might have passed for two Jerusalemites. Naepor was the fatter. Panthera was the taller. They went around a maze of alleys and lanes and approached the house again.

"Wasn't that boy watching when we went by before?" Panthera asked, motioning across the street.

"Don't point! And the answer is, 'No!'" Naepor's growl had an old campaigner's assurance. "The first time it was a girl. But her tunic was gray and his is blue and her hair was yellow and his is black. Still, it won't hurt to go around again."

He wanted a drink, he was getting downright dry,

but he was willing to play cautious even though it was impossible that anyone could have discovered their mission. How could anyone have had time? They had set out as soon as he received Tibni-ben-Ginath's message. But, on the other hand, the Fortress might well be under the eyes of spies for the High Priest in the Temple next door or for Herod across the bridge or for General Proculus, or even for all three. You never knew, and caution always paid off. So they went around again and when they approached the house for the third time the street was, at last, empty.

"Hop to it!" Naepor elbowed Panthera and lurched after him. The door was unlocked as the Sadducee had promised. Measuring the contents of the broad hall with a shrewdness gained from a thousand lootings Naepor told himself that Tibni-ben-Ginath could pay plenty. And would have to if only for the reason that his summons had broken up a needed morning nap. Even after four days the memory of those lights all over the sky still kept a man restless at night.

"Come in!" Tibni-ben-Ginath advanced soundlessly across a rug so rich, soft and thick that it must have cost, Naepor reckoned, twenty times his own whole year's pay as Primus Pilus. "I hope you understand why I set this place for our meeting," the Sadducee added. "It is so much more away from everything and everybody than the Fortress."

He was a slight little man, usually arrogant in manner. Today, however, he was conciliatory, an attitude which a Sadducee seldom assumed toward any Roman. His dress flouted

every austere rule of his religion. A multi-colored robe, entirely unlawful, parted as he moved to reveal a tunic of lavender silk suitable only for a Greek or a Persian. His shoes were Egyptian-style, stitched across the toes with gold and silver thread.

"Any place suits me," Naepor growled. "But the walk has left me drier than sand in the sun."

"There is wine," Tibni said. "Some from my best Hebron vines." Nothing in his tone hinted that this best was going to be wasted on such guests. He led the way to a great, open, flowery court and Naepor, eyeing his host's rich clothing in this flood of sunshine, jumped his price again.

~~"You bet he'll pay!"~~ he resolved and, shaking off his robe lumbered in his own soiled, knee-length tunic to the cushions scattered around the wine table. He was the more resolved because he knew that he could hope for only a few more such profitable assignments. He would not stay on as ~~commander of the Tenth Legion under General Proculus~~ ^{OR filius} much longer. ^{Primo A. line} Naepor knew he was on his way out. And he knew that ~~he was wearing~~ ^{not} ~~on retirement~~ ^{any} he would be offered no such civil post as ^{his old command} the one for which Vedius Rusco had been drafted. He might be offered none at all. All his life he had tried to rival Rusco but now he was fat and nearly finished and Rusco was still rising. ^{Aware of this,} He sat down sullenly, broad head sinking between thick shoulders, coarse hair bristling, thick lips revealing the greed which had always betrayed him.

There was plenty of wine. Six jars! Two were half-buried in snow brought all the way from Mount Hermon under thick

and voices."

"But plenty do," Panthera broke in. "Some say they mean a great leader has been born to the Jews who'll help them lord it over all other people."

"Let Tibni do the talking, and me," Naepor said. "And don't worry about any Jews lording it over Romans. Not while the Tenth Legion hold^s Antonia and can throw a cohort into the Temple in ten minutes, day or night."

"This new-born, whoever he is and wherever he is!" Tibni spoke with a rush. "Herod has told me to find him."

"Crazy old fox!" Naepor grunted. "Did he tell you where to look?"

The Sadducee hesitated. He took no stock in the rumors. But the Messiah just might come, indeed, might already have come, as some of his friends firmly believed, and so before he replied he fought with his conscience. He had to make the search Herod had commanded. But did he need to pinpoint the search? He decided not and set out to confuse the hunters he was trying to hire.

"No, Herod told me nothing," he said. "Of course if you ask in any street you'll get the stock answer. Bethlehem! Ever since the prophets Micah and Isaiah, Bethlehem has always been linked with the Messiah's coming. Besides, King David was born in Bethlehem a thousand years ago and that makes it famous although just a little place." He gave his next words careful emphasis. "But many places are famous and should be searched just as carefully -- Tekoa which was the home of the prophet, Amos;

73 - 20 -
worse even than Romans.

"Herod's sand-flea grandfathers below Beersheba bit the backsides of Jews at every chance," Naepor bellowed, his ~~continuing~~ laughter ~~adding to~~ ~~Tibullus~~ ~~shame~~. "And even though Herod ~~is~~ ^{calls himself} a convert he bites your backsides, ~~too~~. ^{now.} Remember the golden Roman eagle he tried to stick up ~~in~~ ^{over} the Temple! I wouldn't give this goblet of wine for any Messiah's chances if Herod found out where he was."

The Chief Eunuch ~~Tibullus~~ had no good answer so he tried to make a quick one convincing.

"Herod doesn't harm anyone any more," he said. "He's just a sick, feeble ..."

"He's a killer!" Naepor grunted. "And he'll be one till he rots. If it wasn't that most of the time he's too sick to think straight, or remember what he said yesterday, he'd be killing right and left every day."

"He's a half-dead, feeble old man," ~~Tibullus~~ ^{The Chief Eunuch} insisted. "But he has as much shrewdness as ever and that tells him to honor any ^{so-called} Messiah who ^{MAY} appear. If he does this, he may win over many Jews who now hate him."

He drew up grandly, as though conferring a favor. "It is because I thought you ^{would} like to win Herod's patronage and make a little money in the bargain that I asked you here. I'll be glad to let you both ~~help me~~ make this search that Herod asks ^{of me.} (11)"

"Of course we'll help," Panthera said eagerly.

Naepor scowled in reproof at the man he had just

succeeded in elevating to the command of six hundred legionnaires. "You talk too much, Panthera," he growled. "If you don't look out you'll talk yourself out of a lot of money."

He turned to ~~Tabri-ben-Gnath~~, the Chief Eunuch.

"Why do you need us? ^{Herod} ~~You~~ could use your High Priest spy ring and never pay them a copper."

"~~I~~ ^I prefer not," ~~Tabri~~ ^{the Chief Eunuch} said coldly.

"Come on, come on!" Naepor said. "Why are you cutting us in?"

^{Chief Eunuch}
As the ~~Sadducee~~ hesitated Naepor suddenly leaned closer, his heavily veined nose almost touching the other's flushed face.

"I get it!" he shouted. "You're afraid to use ^{the Chief Eunuch of the Palace,} Jews! You know what could happen, even to ~~a Sadducee~~, if a Jew spy began to worry, and talked and spread word of what ^{Herod has put} you ~~up~~ up to. Those who believe in the old prophecies, almost any honest Jew, would chop your head clear from your neck for helping Herod's dirty work along."

^{the Chief Eunuch}
"Herod means no harm!" ~~Tabri~~ shouted. He pushed erect and strode to the end of the sunny court, his multi-colored robe swinging like a tumbled rainbow.

"A favor to Herod might pay off at that," Panthera said at Naepor's ear. "I'm willing if you are."

"Of course I'm willing!" Naepor spoke quietly also. "But let's not tell this swine ~~of a Sadducee~~ ^{too soon} so ~~As long~~ as we don't, we've got him where we want him. He has to do what he's been told to do or Herod will break him. And he doesn't

dare do it himself, or use the Temple's spies or any other Jew
for fear they'll tie him in. He's got to use us, and ~~we'll~~
~~make him pay.~~ He was triumphant as ~~the Chief Eunuch~~ returned,
~~in less open anger~~ and sat down again.

more he'll be willing to

full of conciliating

The man was held off this

again

Chief Eunuch

"All right!" the Sadducee confessed softly.

"I'm inviting you in because I need you. But do not misjudge
my necessity. What I need is not much and I shall not pay
much. I want only to find a lately born child whom some peo-
ple call their Messiah, if any such has been born at all."

the Chief Eunuch

"We'll find him - if -" Naepor's expectation
made ~~him~~ wince. " - if you make it worth our while. We'll
have to cut a lot of sharp corners and they won't be worth cut-
ting if you don't make it worth our while. All three of us."

"Two!"

~~"Salvidinius Muso, also! I can send some of
Panthera's cohort out to search and if General Proculinus asks
questions I've got the answer. The tax Quirinius is collecting
for Rome. Every Jew hates it. Thousands are talking rebellion.
I'll just be using Panthera to smell out a census riot so that I
can stop it before it starts. Like a good Primus Pilus.~~

~~"But the Tribune Muso commands Panthera's cohort.
He won't command long; the general is kicking him upstairs to
make room for a new one and a good thing, too. Because as a
fighting commander Muso is a joke. But he will command while
the search is on and if he gets suspicious he could spoil every-
thing. You've got to cut him in."~~

~~"I won't have this known to anyone else," Tibni~~

"Three!" Naepor ^{knave} insisted. The Tribune of the Eighth Cohort, pink-faced, sly Salvidinius Muso, ^{The pink-faced, sly patrician} must be brought in. Muso was, himself, too ^{crafty} ~~crooked~~ not to ^{suspect} smell something ^{wrong} ~~crooked~~ when Panthera used the cohort as it would have to be used in order to push this hunt.

The Tribune Salvidinius Muso, also," Naepor told the Chief Eunuch. "I can send Panthera and men of his cohort out to search, and if General Proculinus asks questions I've got a fine answer. The new tax Quirinius has ordered collected for Rome, Every Jew hates it. Thousands are complaining. I'll just be using Panthera to hunt for the beginnings of tax riots here and there."

"~~xxxxxx~~ I won't have this known to anyone else," the Chief Eunuch said nervously.

"^{But} I can't ^{make} ~~tell~~ any such yarn of riots ^{stick with} ~~with a straight face~~ ^{to} General Proculinus, unless the Tribune Muso keeps his mouth shut," Naepor said. "Muso is assigned to the Eighth Cohort. He won't be assigned long; the General is kicking him upstairs to make room for a new Tribune, and a good thing, too. Because, as a fighting officer, Muso is a joke. But he will ^{stay} be assigned for much of the time the search is ~~on~~ on, and if he gets suspicious he ^{can} ~~could~~ spoil everything. You've got to pay him, too."

"Not the ~~Patrician~~ Salvidinius Muso. Patrician though he is, I have never trusted him."

"Muso won't let himself be squeezed out. He needs money too much. He always needs money," Naepor said. "He is on leave, on the seacoast, at Caesarea, but when he comes back he will have to be taken in. At that, you're lucky. It isn't often even ^{Herod's} Chief Eunuch can buy three Romans. The likes of Panthera, sure. But not a Primus Pilus. And what chance do you think you'd have of buying

26

said nervously. "Least of all Salvidianus Muso, Patrician though he is, I have never trusted him."

"Muso won't let himself be squeezed out," Naepor said. "He's on leave ^{on the coast} in ^{Caesarea} ~~Cesarea~~ but when he comes back he'll have to be taken in. At that, you're lucky. It isn't often a Jew can buy three Romans. The likes of Panthera, sure! But a Primus Pilus doesn't need to take money under the table. And what chance do you think you'd have trying to buy another army lieutenant of patrician rank?"

^{There are} ^{The Chief Sumach} "It's too many," ~~From~~ said wearily. "I'll give up the whole thing!"

"You can't, and you know you can't," Naepor scoffed. "Herod's sickness makes him forget things and it may kill him tomorrow, but if he lives and remembers and you haven't done what he ordered you'll land in one of the dungeons he's filling up all over Judea. You've got to see this through."

^{Chief Sumach}

"I can pay only what Herod ^{has allowed} ~~is paying~~ me," ~~From~~ ^{The}

"And that isn't much."

"How much?"

"Five thousand denarii."

"You'll do better than that," Naepor grinned. "Five thousand will have to go to Panthera alone. And twice five to Muso and twice as much again for me. I wouldn't stir my stumps for less than twenty thousand."

"Impossible!" ^{The Chief Sumach} ~~From~~ dry-washed his womanish hands of a bad deal.

"You know Herod gave you a lot more than five

thousand." Naepor eyed Tibni. "I'll bet you got -- seven times five!"

"Thirty-five thousand!" ^{Chief Sennah} The Sadducee fell back on his cushions as though he had been struck.

"I caught you!" Naepor roared. "As sure as I'm drinking your prize Hebron wine you're getting thirty-five thousand. I remembered something and caught you! I've lived long enough among Jews to know how much they think of the number seven. It's practically magic. What's that yarn of the Scribes about ^{your} ~~somebody~~ ^{present} named Joshua, and seven priests, blowing seven trumpets, and circling Jericho seven times a day, and on the seventh day bringing the walls down?"

"Ten thousand! Not a mite more," Tibni cried desperately. ^{The Chief Sennah}

"Five thousand to Panthera, ten to Muse, twenty to me," Naepor told him, "And next time don't try to be so smart."

"No!" ^{The Chief Sennah} Tibni cried.

"No?" Naepor brimmed his goblet slowly.

"No!" like a rhinoceros

Naepor lurched up from his cushions, ~~like a great~~ leaving a sunny, comfortable mudhole. ~~beat~~ "Come on!" he told Panthera and snatched up his robe.

"Fifteen thousand!" ^{The Chief Sennah's} Tibni's tone was that of one willing to reason even with the most unreasonable.

Panthera got up reluctantly. Naepor was already in the court's arched exit.

"Twenty thousand!"

"You're wasting our time!"

The Chief Eunuch

"All right, all that you ask," Tibni wheezed, Naepor lumbered back to his cushions. ~~His in-~~
~~ference said that he would have preferred a firm rejection.~~

"Give Panthera a thousand now," ~~he grunted,~~
"And I want two for the Tribune and five for myself. And let's have a drink."

Tibni clapped his hands for a moneybox and paid. Tightlipped, ⁱⁿ defeated, he watched while the Primus Pilus poured from a snow-chilled jar, drank and poured again and again before turning once more to the exit.

o-o

~~Out in the street Naepor refused to share Pan-~~
~~thera's mood of triumph. This thing of hunting down a baby!~~

~~Any way you looked at it, it was a thing a man shied at. ^{His thoughts} ~~He~~
turned to Vadius Rusco, the rival he most envied and how Vadius Rusco would have replied to the offer of such a job.~~

~~Panthera would have gaped jubilantly but Naepor snatched him, and clumped along in silence.~~

~~Fuzzy with wine he found himself recalling an experience of his youth. When he was the newest of recruits he had been marched over the Alps and had found himself high above the clouds. Literally! On every side ^l a leesy white meadow stretched as far as he could see, and he had marvelled in youthful awe and reverence. This, he had thought, was a meadow for the gods.~~

~~"This," he had whispered, "is what Jupiter, Ceres and Venus walk on when they stroll from their palaces." And he had almost cried out, thinking he glimpsed upon the immaculate field, the majesty of Jupiter, the purity of Ceres,~~

29

~~the rosy robe of Venus.~~ ⁴ "Why not?" he had whispered. ¹¹ This meadow must run clean to Olympus. ^{The greatest} ~~Some~~ of the gods could be here this very day. I might see any of them this very minute."

Never before, or ^{later} after, had he felt so strong a desire to be swift after virtue, to be wrapped in the cloak of truth so that he, even he, might deserve the favor of the Olympians who seemed so near.

The desire had not lasted. Naturally! He scarcely had got down the mountains when he felt only his usual thirst, a budding torment even then, and in the first town he had drowned his vision of fleecy meadows, strolling Olympians and virtue and truth. But it had come back sometimes, although less and less often, to be sure. It was years, ~~now~~ ^{now,} he realized, ^{now,} since it had come back, ^{at all} x

And it had never come, his fumbling mind recalled, except when he was shamed, when, as now, he had some dim awareness of letting slip a virtue, a truth which, briefly, he had almost had in his hand. He shook his head. He decided that he needed another drink.

^{the Chief Eunuch's} "It's ~~his~~ ^{own} worry," he grunted, pulling free of his ^{own} worries. He nodded two or three times and blinked. "This hunt isn't our funeral. ^{The Chief Eunuch's} ~~It's~~ responsible. We're just taking orders. We're just doing what we're hired and paid to do. If any harm comes, the blame'll be on the fellow who did the hiring. ^{the Chief Eunuch} That'll be ~~his~~, or maybe Herod."

"I suppose you're right," Panthera said.

"Sure I'm right," Haepor nodded craftily. For

(And blinked against the bright early sunlight.)

the first time in Panthera's experience the Primus Pilus did not seem quite sober.

O-O-O

Out in the street Naepor refused to share Panthera's mood of triumph. This hunting down a baby! Anyway you looked at it, it was a thing a man shied at.

His thoughts turned to Vedius Rusco, the rival he most envied and most desired to surpass. ~~He had not surpassed him as Prince Pilius.~~ He knew how Vedius Rusco would have replied to the Chief Eunuch's ~~offer, and money.~~ ^{proposition and bribe.}

Panthera started to gabble jubilantly, but Naepor hushed him and clumped along in silence.

Fuzzy with wine, he found himself recalling an experience of his youth. When he was the newest of recruits he had been marched over the Alps and found himself high above the clouds. Literally! On every side a fleecy white meadow stretched below and as far as he could see, and he had marvelled in youthful awe and reverence. This, he had thought, was a meadow for the gods.

"This," he had whispered, "is what Jupiter, Ceres and Venus walk on when they stroll from their palaces." And he had almost cried out thinking he glimpsed on the immaculate field the majesty of Jupiter, the purity of Ceres, the rosy robe of Venus.

CHAPTER THREE

Five men were approaching, from three compass points, the new, walled, Roman-style villa of Vedius Rusco Philippicus south of Jerusalem, *more than half way to Bethshem.*

One was Vedius Rusco himself, ex-primus pilus of four tough legions in his day and now, by special appointment of great Caesar Augustus, road commissioner of Palestine. He was trotting his black gelding southward through dangerous country, lately made a little less dangerous by the Capernaum-Gaza ^{now completed well below Jerusalem.} ~~Jerusalem~~ highway ~~which he had just completed.~~ He was followed on a big roan by the giant half-naked Bracae, his bodyguard abroad and his majordomo at home.

Another ^{Tribune} ~~One~~ was a young Roman ~~lieutenant~~ ^{riding northward} on the Gaza road, ~~riding north toward Jerusalem~~ at the end of a rugged journey with an infantry detachment up from Egypt. An armed slave as thick as a wrestler and as black as soot loped alongside the ^{Tribune's} lieutenant's mount, a finger hooked around a stirrup strap.

The last was Joseph. He strode north by east over roadless limestone hills, his sandalled feet now and then calling hollow echoes through the reefs of the caves with which

the countryside was honeycombed.

As he began to follow a descending streambed a distant yellow-bearded shepherd drew away from ^{two} ~~three~~ companions and standing among browsing flocks made arm signals. These were the rollicking inventions of a happy-go-lucky mind. First they imitated a gently rocking cradle, then they thrashed like small, fretful legs. Joseph was quick at signals. He rocked his own arms gently and jovially to reassure his yellow-bearded questioner that the baby was coming along fine.



Vedius Rusco still had several miles to ride and Joseph still had several hills to cross, so only the young Tribune was in view from the Rusco villa when Deborah, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the master, climbed a cramped stairway and came out onto a balcony. So isolated a villa in such a troubled land needed a look-out. And the balcony, facing east, provided an unbroken view along a great arc which began with Jerusalem's towers and curved over brown hills and valleys to the walls of Bethlehem.



Vedius Rusco still had several miles to ride and Joseph still had several hills to cross, so that only the young ^{Tribune} ~~lieutenant~~ was in view from the Rusco villa when Deborah, having climbed a cramped stairway, came out onto a balcony. So isolated a villa in such a troubled land needed a look-out. ~~with as a needed lookout on a troubled land.~~ daughter of the master.

Deborah ~~She~~ was a rounded, amber girl wearing that morning a flowing green dress narrowed at the waist by a wide silver belt. Her foaming, jet hair was bound by a bar of soft gold bent to form a small clasp. Her mouth was full and wide and very quick to smile. She was munching a honeycake.

About the beauty, more or less, of the ^{only child} ~~fifteen~~ ^{and only} ~~year-old~~ daughter of the famous Vedius Rusco Philippicus there were, admittedly, several schools of opinion.

Beauty is as beauty does was the only statement on record from Bria, the big, blonde Cantabrian wife of Bracae

who ran the Rusco household in his absences. She would not say more for fear of making her young mistress vain.

She is almost Miriam, Vedius Rusco often thought. For him the remembered loveliness of the Judean wife he had lost when Deborah was born would always be matchless.

If I had her beauty the master would surely desire me, was the forlorn opinion of Numidian Candace, Deborah's dusky attendant -- and companion and friend -- for twelve years.

Give me nothing to do but smooth and sweeten myself and who would ever notice her, was the opinion of Egyptian Nepte. Nepte was the villa's newest slave, purchased a month before at the Joppa slave market outside Jerusalem where she had stood modestly downcast, ~~with~~ her feet whitened with lime--sign that she was being sold into slavery for the first time. She was new in slavery, but she had already proved her tawny charms over and over. And I will prove them again, she promised herself furiously.

~~tian Nepte, the newest slave in the villa. Nepte had proved her own tawny charms over and over until crimes of which no one in the Rusco household was aware had whitened her feet with lime, sign that she was being sold into slavery for the first time. They will prove themselves again, she promised herself furiously.~~

The opinion of suitors summed up to unqualified praise and all bachelors lucky enough to be invited into the home of Vedius Rusco were Deborah's suitors.

Taking the last crumbs of the honey cake with a quick tongue, Deborah stared up at the ~~wintry~~ wintry sky. She had come to the balcony still hoping for some clue to explain the strange and lovely light over Bethlehem which had broken her sleep almost a week before, and the strange and lovely music which had accompanied the light.

"Just the moon and stars and nightingales!"

Bria had said, frowning when Deborah grabbed the honey cake. A girl who had won the grown-up privilege of her own study, boudoir and bedroom and who was old enough to be receiving marriage offers ought to be able to wait for breakfast. Munching might be all right in front of a foster mother. But in front of servants and slaves! Well!

"The moon and stars were fire-bright that night," Bria had said. "And you know very well that nightingales swarm around here from Persia every winter. They're all over the place. You didn't recognize them because you're used to sleeping like a baby. But lately you toss and turn because you have a proposal on your mind. Even if it is only from the Tribune Salvidinius Muso!" Her shrug said that a proposal from the poorest excuse for a lieutenant she had ever seen, and she had seen the best and worst that four legions could offer, was nothing to keep any girl awake.

Muso

Salvidinius /indeed! Deborah had tried for a

crushing look as she turned her back on Bria and the others and especially on Nepte muttering something about magic. ^{blank} Nepte muttered about magic whenever the lights over Bethlehem were mentioned because, like all Egyptians ~~some~~ saw evil in any unexplained portent.

Hook

"Salvidinius Muso, indeed!" she said again, abandoning her search of the sky. Bria knew very well that a proposal from that lanky pink-faced patrician ^{Did not begin to} less than half tempted her. ~~That old man, past his twenty-seventh birthday!~~

It was the persisting hope for some clue to the strange light and - she stuck to it - the strange enchanting music that had brought her to the balcony but it was the approaching

As though she would think twice of marrying ^{that} old man, past his twenty-seventh birthday!

tribune
young lieutenant who now brought her up on tip-toe.

He had turned away from the dusty legionnaires of the infantry detachment. They slogged steadily on toward Jerusalem under their usual seventy-five pound packs at their usual three miles an hour. ~~This~~ ^{The} solitary horseman grew swiftly recognizable as he headed up the private lane which led to the villa high on its ~~hazy-capped~~ limestone hill, with a sooty slave keeping pace, an unstrung bow and a ~~case~~ ^{quiver} of arrows bouncing on his back.

Deborah had to stand on tip-toe to keep the lieutenant in sight over the villa's wall, ~~a barrier which needed no lookout balconies.~~ After a single look she sighed in satisfaction. She had known that he would be young, ~~and she had expected him to be lean and strong.~~ But who would have dreamed he would be so handsome? And what beautiful armor! Gleaming helmet and shield, inlaid breastplate, ~~and~~ thigh and shin guards!

The lieutenant wisely wore full armor since any tree or rock might hide a Roman-hating Jew who would die happy if he could ram a dagger into an alien back or robbers willing to risk prison for a try at a fat purse. His armor gave off blinding rays as, sighting Deborah considerably after she had sighted him, he jerked his horse to a halt.

Deborah smiled down and Salvidinius Muse faded forever from her mind and exultantly she confessed that she was falling in love at first sight. High time, too! Wasn't she almost sixteen?

The young lieutenant made himself tall in the saddle to catch all -- all -- of the sudden vision ahead, and paralleling Deborah's own confession he told himself excitedly that he was head over heels in love. And high time! Wasn't he almost twenty-one?

At his side the sooty slave made a confession of his own. As his broad nostrils trapped faint savory odors from the villa kitchen he confessed that he was hungry enough to eat half a horse.

O-O

Deborah and the lieutenant continued to look at each other, both sure that the delight which flooded them, as it had flooded uncounted millions through uncounted centuries, had never before come to any man or woman.

"I hope this is the home of Vedius Rusco!" the lieutenant called up.

"Of Vedius Rusco Philippicus!" Deborah corrected proudly. It was not every Roman who could boast a cognomen, and very few could boast one so famous. But then, noting that beneath his helmet his hair, as she had expected, was yellow, she smiled again.

"I have a letter to him," the lieutenant said. "I've brought it from Egypt." He added this information casually, but he hoped she appreciated what it meant to have met and defeated the dangers of those barren, wild miles. "I am ..."

"Don't tell me!" Deborah leaned toward him,

her bare amber arms catching the light, the cool green of her dress seeming to float her an enchanting handsbreadth nearer. "Let me tell you!" And she laid a golden finger on her mouth and gave a sibyllic Um-m-m-m!

"Um-m-m! You are Marcus Seclator Lucianus. You are the adopted son of Marcus Seclator who fought beside Vedius Rusco Philippicus twenty years and more ago. You are Greek-born and you are a military tribune as your father used to be."

Marcus Seclator Lucianus showed little surprise at so much knowledge, but Deborah hadn't really expected much. No doubt he had suspected all along that she would be reading the letters which their fathers exchanged. She went on.

"You have been serving in Egypt, but the legions there are 'sleek, slack and rich.' That is what you once wrote. Half of the soldiers have even traded off their helmets and breastplates. All are fat and soft and their fat, soft general doesn't care. You want service with a fighting ^{legion} outfit. So your father turned to old friends, to my father and to General Orfitus Proculinus of the fighting Tenth in Jerusalem. And you took your first chance to get out of Egypt as soon as ~~your transfer came~~ ~~through~~ the order for your transfer to the Tenth arrived."

She touched her lips again to indicate that the sibyl had spoken and made her dark blue eyes wide and fathomless. Even Bria had admitted, when she happened upon a practice session before the mirror in the lately won boudoir, that this was a tactic likely to disarm a young man.

"And now," Deborah said, "I'll tell you who I am."

"Don't tell me!" Lucianus imitated her sibyllie tone and relaxed in his saddle. "Let me tell you!" He put a finger to his own smiling mouth. "Um-m-m! You are the daughter of a father whose cognomen has become famous from Gaul to Egypt although originally it was given as a joke to a little boy by Octavian who is now great Caesar Augustus. You are famous too." He lowered his voice in pretended awe. "People say that you use sword, dagger and javelin better than many men because your father taught you and he is still the best with all three and with spear, sling and bow and arrow too. And your mother was so great a beauty that people still remember her. And your name is Deborah." He accented the first syllable, in a triumphant finish.

Deborah gave him an indignant look. She was still leaning forward, to reveal more fully her soft throat which was like honey poured in sunlight. This, also, was an effect which Bria had grudgingly admitted was likely to make a young man weak at the knees.

"My mother was not just 'so great a beauty.' She was the most beautiful woman in Judea," Deborah said. "And you mispronounced my name. It is the name of one of the ancient judges of my mother's people, who went to war even though she did not have, like me, a father to teach her how to use a sword. It all happened a long time ago but Jews will never forget how to say her name. It is Deborah." She bore down on the second, not the

first syllable. But then she forgave him. "And now come into our house. You are just in time for breakfast."

A true daughter of Rome, notwithstanding her mother's blood, she made the promise every Roman preferred to hear. "Your bath will be ready before you are ready for your bath. I know a Roman wants his bath first, even ahead of food."

"A bath before food, even for an adopted Roman," Lucianus said. He swung off his horse to show that he made nothing of full armor.

Deborah, her blue eyes wide and fathomless again, vanished with a last green flutter.

"There'll be a side gate somewhere, Micipsia," Lucianus said.

Micipsia did not change the expression of mild surprise which seemed carved into his sooty face. The expression was chiefly due to eyes which protruded and eyebrows which were roundly arched. Both seemed always to be reacting to some unexpected and startling event. In fact, however, Micipsia was rarely caught off guard and rarely startled. He nodded. He and his master understood each other so thoroughly that a nod or a single word usually was plenty. He nodded in the easy assurance of a slave who has shared enough adventures with a young master to warrant acting more like a comrade when they are alone, and spoke a single word now.

"Eat!" he said in a surprisingly squeaky voice and rubbed his broad, hard belly.

The wall's main gate -- double-doors of oak, reinforced with thick iron straps -- slowly opened. Within lay an open space denying any enemy a hiding place and then the villa entrance, smaller double-doors.

As these swung open Deborah appeared just inside. She had unbent the gold band and let the spun ebony of her hair ^{foam} ~~flow~~ wide over the shoulders of her green fluttering dress. Gaily she beckoned him past the doorkeeper who stood half-concealed by the panels he had pushed back and half-withdrawn into the cell where he not only served but slept. In an identical cell opposite an enormous watch dog eyed the young stranger with tentative suspicion.

Side by side Deborah and Lucianus walked down a broad corridor to a big open-roofed room, deeply recessed for ornamental vases and furnished with settees for clients who might demand the road commissioner's time and attention. Braziers filled with slow-burning charcoal were spaced among the seats. The floor, of polished vermillion tile, was covered by a great rug.

Far down the room a large but pleasantly soft woman inspected Lucianus, seeking in this young stranger some link with one she had known well long ago. At sight of her Lucianus ran forward in the excitement which rises so easily when a young man of twenty-one forgets the dignity of his advanced years.

"You must be Bria!" he cried. "My father told me all about you. And Bracae, too! Where is Bracae?"

"Bracae will be here soon," Bria beamed, nodding so vigorously that an iron necklace, shiny from constant wear, clinked. "He and the master are riding ^{home} from an inspection trip." She took the hands he held out. "So you are the son the Tribune Marcus Seclator has written about so often."

"Marcus must have talked about us even oftener," Deborah said, coming up. "Lucianius knows everything about us. The two of them must have spent days -- weeks -- picking us to pieces. I'm afraid to hear what will come out of his mouth next."

"From the way you walked along with him I wouldn't say you were very afraid," Bria said, ~~smiling~~

A girl a year or two older than Deborah, and so tall and strong that she might have been Bria in girlhood except that she was the color of autumn ^{oak} leaves, came into the room. Deborah put an arm around her waist and Lucianius decided that this must be a slave even closer to her young mistress than Hicipsia was to him.

"The bath is ready," the autumn--leaf girl said.

"Let the bath wait!" Lucianius cried. "Does anyone expect me to leave before protecting myself from slander? As though anything but praise could come out of my mouth! There never was such a household as this. You!" The look which he gave Deborah went far beyond the enthusiasm of the single word. "Your father! And where else could anyone find another Bria and Bracae? The pick of the girls in Cantabria! The best man of Gaul!" He began to laugh. "I'll never forget the story my father tells of how he and Vedius Rusco captured Bria and of how

she took a club to Bracae and of how Bracae spanked her."

"Sh-h-h!" Deborah whispered loudly. "We never mention that in this house."

"I should hope not!" Bria snapped, holding back a smile.

"Not mention it?" Lucianius cried. "That grand story! Now let me see if I've got it straight."

"Well, you won't catch me waiting while you try," Bria said, but she did not go.

"Um-m-m!" Lucianius eyed Deborah as he made the sibylline sound. "It was long ago when Octavian was trying to bring peace in Spain among the wild Cantabri. And he and your father and my father and a cohort of the Twelfth were ambushed. But they beat off the attack and finally cornered a handful. And then they found that the handful included an amazon."

"Bria! Fighting as well as any man!" Deborah cried.

"Give me shield and sword and I'll still make many a man back up," Bria said calmly.

"I'll bet!" Lucianius laughed. "Our fathers had a job taking you prisoner. You were too brave to kill, to say nothing of being too pretty."

"I wasn't the homeliest girl in Spain," Bria said complacently.

"But finally they did capture her," Lucianus said. "And then Vedius Rusco bought her."

"Because Bracae ^{Already} ~~was~~ had begun to make eyes at her," Deborah laughed.

"And that was when she took a club to Bracae and he gave her a spanking heard all through the camp of the Twelfth."

"And that was when my father decided that two who fought with each other so beautifully deserved each other," Deborah said.

"So I gave Bracae my club," Bria laughed, no longer even pretending to protest, "and Vedius Rusco Philippius gave me my freedom to make the marriage binding."

"And after your father had retired from the army to return to Rome, and my father was transferred here to the Tenth Legion," Deborah added, ^WBria and Bracae came along. And Bria became my mother's maid until ..." she paused.

"Until I had to take Deborah over," Bria broke in cheerfully. "And what a handful I took! And now I must take over breakfast. Your bath is ready," she reminded Lucianus, striding away.

In spite of that ^{Roman} ~~much-discussed~~ fondness for baths, Lucianus did not follow. He looked at Deborah, and after a moment they sat down, side by side.

"Father will be here for breakfast," she said, just to be talking.

"Imagine meeting him after all my father's stories!" Lucianus exclaimed. "The only Roman alive with undisputed title to four oak leaf crowns for saving four lives

on the field of battle."

"Four? Father almost never mentions any but I never heard of more than two."

"My father," Lucianius explained, "says that two are not in the record because an emperor finds it embarrassing to admit, right out, that he ever needed so much help."

"Are you saying that my father ever saved the life of the Emperor Augustus?" Deborah cried.

"I'd probably be banished if I said it in the wrong place," Lucianius told her. "But my father says that Vedius Rusce Philippicus saved Caesar Augustus once from a burning trireme when Marc Antony's fleet was destroyed at Actium ^{and} once in Spain. The Emperor has never forgotten."

He paused, losing himself again in Deborah's eyes.

Candace from her corner gave a small remindful cough.

"Oh, yes! That bath!" Lucianius said.

) let's cut

CHAPTER FOUR

Vedius Rusco never thought more clearly about private concerns than when riding through dangerous country. The die-if-you-don't watch which a wise Roman always kept in Judea, flanks, front and rear, was just the spur his mind required.

It spurred him now as the black gelding carried him along the new highway, far south of mighty Joppa gate in Jerusalem's west wall, toward the hill on which his villa stood. He was a hard-fleshed, vigorous, prematurely white-haired man, in helmet, breastplate and a floating red military cloak. He rode so vigilantly that he could instantly answer, "No! Nothing there!" when half-naked Bracae, slouching like a bear on his roan, a pace behind, called warningly: "Those trees on the left!" Rusco had already satisfied himself from an earlier vantage point about that clump of trees. He saw in good time every rock and fold of ground which might erupt danger. But he was seeing also every facet of his immediate personal problems. These were three.

One was Deborah and her increasing, innocent absorption in love. One was the ^{Gaza end of the} new highway ~~to Gaza~~ which he must start shortly and the new quarrels which it would start