

THE ANOINTED

by

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CHARACTERS

DOMITILLA	(Tilla) 35-year-old widowed niece of Domitian's.
DOMITIAN	41-year-old Emperor of Rome.
STEPHANUS	48-year-old former steward of Domitilla's.
JOSEPHUS	59-year-old advisor of the emperor.
DOMITIA	43-year-old wife of Domitian and Empress of Rome.
PLINY	35-year-old Roman prefect.
PHYLLIS	65-year-old former nurse of Domitilla, handmaid of Domitia.

SETTING

Initially, the expansive and luxurious Villa of Domitian, 12 miles outside of Rome. Later, the setting is in and around Amisus (modern day Samsun, Turkey), the capital of Pontus. Finally, the Temple of *gens* Flavia.

TIME

AD 96.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(The Villa of Domitian outside of Rome)

DOMITIA

(SONG)

*How can any of us
Really change?
The names shift
But they're all the same.*

*Tell us, god,
What should we do?
We're stuck in life
And where are you?*

*I used to believe
That I mattered.
I used to believe
That I could change.*

*I used to think
That I'd make a difference.
I used to think
That you'd guide my way.*

*But where
Are you?
I've waited too long*

*To be fooled.
Where are
You?*

PHYLLIS

My lady, Stephanus approaches. Wait here.

STEPHANUS

My dear Phyllis. How are you?

PHYLLIS

Stephanus, is that you? You have grown so tall.

STEPHANUS

Indeed, it is I. I heard that Lady Domitia has asked to see me.

PHYLLIS

Yes. The Lady has had troubled dreams as of late. I will bring her. Please wait.

STEPHANUS

Of course. *(to himself)* Troubled dreams? Could they be like mine?

DOMITIA

Stephanus. Thank you for coming. Please, sit.

STEPHANUS

Lady Domitia. Thank you.

DOMITIA

Stephanus, have you heard from my cousin Tilla since her exile to Pontus?

STEPHANUS

No, my lady.

DOMITIA

(sighs) Neither have I. But, night after night she has appeared to me in my dreams, asking for my help. I have inquired about her, but there is little known. Now it appears that will change. Stephanus, you know my husband?

STEPHANUS

Only briefly, my lady.

DOMITIA

I don't mean have you met him. Do you know his... character?

STEPHANUS

He is a brave and noble emperor, my lady, loyal to the good of Rome and all Roman citizens.

DOMITIA

Phyllis?

PHYLLIS

Stephanus, Lady Domitia is to be trusted. Answer her question candidly.

STEPHANUS

I'm sorry, my lady. The emperor has a... mixed reputation. His treatment of those who have disagreed with him has, at times, attracted some criticism.

DOMITIA

And his treatment of my cousin? You were her steward, Stephanus. What do you think of her banishment?

STEPHANUS

(sighs) I believe it was unkind.

DOMITIA

Unkind? Stephanus, he didn't just exile her. Domitian killed her husband, Clemens.

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lady.

DOMITIA

And why did he do those things, Stephanus?

PHYLLIS

Stephanus. Tell her.

STEPHANUS

The emperor exiled your cousin and murdered her husband because she refused his advances. The emperor is a... a tyrant.

DOMITIA

Yes. That's right. A tyrant. A miserable, horrible bald-headed tyrant. And why would he lust after his niece? Do you know why? (*pauses*) Domitian once had another niece, Julia Flavia. She was young and beautiful. She married Sabinus, a good friend of Domitian's. All was fine until Domitian tired of me and Julia caught his eye. At the time Sabinus was *consul* and Domitian accused him of trying to become emperor, and so had him executed. Julia was barely 18 years old and was unaware of Domitian's scheme. He pretended to comfort the girl and to take her under his protection. And in that deceit, he seduced her. They carried on as lovers while all of Rome laughed at me behind my back. But the worst was still to come, for their scandal made Julia with child. And when Domitian saw her belly growing and worried that his impropriety might threaten his rule, he forced her to drink a cure for her pregnancy. (*sadly*) What could the poor girl do? She pleaded with the gods and drank. Phyllis, please...

PHYLLIS

The pennyroyal wine tormented Lady Julia. She called me to her chamber in a high fever, bleeding. She asked to see Lady Domitia. Julia's eyes were dimming and I ran to fetch the Empress, but Julia was in her last moments when we returned. She confessed her indiscretions and begged Lady Domitia for forgiveness.

DOMITIA

And I gave it. I gave it. And I held her hand as she and her innocent child left this world. (*pauses*) That night I confronted Domitian with what had happened. Do you know what he said?

STEPHANUS

No, my lady.

DOMITIA

He said it was my fault she died because I could not bear him a son. My fault! (*pauses*) And now he looks to do the same with my cousin, Tilla. Except that he's convinced the cowards in the Senate that he can take Tilla as his concubine and any heir they produce will be legitimate. (*pauses*) Stephanus, do you know how it feels to be hollow? To be empty of value?

STEPHANUS

I'm not sure, my lady, although I *am* a slave.

DOMITIA

Hmm. And what is Tilla to you? Is she not your owner?

STEPHANUS

Formally, yes, my lady. But... she did not... I did not feel like a slave around her.

DOMITIA

I see. Stephanus, I have learned that the Emperor intends for you to convince Tilla to return. Please, do not refuse him. But take my cousin this letter, so that she will know my mind, and she and I can be at peace despite this turbulence.

STEPHANUS

Of course, my lady. I... thank you.

DOMITIA

Hmm. *(pauses)* Phyllis, are you ready?

PHYLLIS

Yes, Lady Domitia. Farewell, Stephanus.

STEPHANUS

Farewell.

(Phyllis and Domitia leave, Domitian and Josephus enter)

DOMITIAN

Is this him, Josephus?

JOSEPHUS

Yes, Emperor.

DOMITIAN

Stephanus, right? You were the steward of Flavia Domitilla, yes?

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord.

DOMITIAN

And, does she trust you? Don't hesitate. Tell me.

STEPHANUS

Yes, she trusts me.

DOMITIAN

Good. Josephus tells me you were made a slave as a child in Ionia. He says that, despite being a Phrygian, you were a quick study and of submissive temperament. My father purchased you before he was emperor and apparently your loyalty impressed him sufficiently as he made you steward of his granddaughter. And, yet, remind me. What rights does a slave have?

STEPHANUS

None, my lord.

DOMITIAN

So, for example, I could kill you without any repercussion. Well, of course I could, I am *dominus et deus*, master and god of all the Empire. But, Josephus here, a mere Jew and Roman citizen: he could kill you as well?

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord.

DOMITIAN

Hmm. That doesn't really seem... fair, does it? (*pauses*) You know, Stephanus. I have the power to grant any slave his freedom. It's as easy for me as it would be to... (*chuckles*) permit you to live. Do you know Pontus well?

STEPHANUS

Not well, my lord, but I have been there once.

DOMITIAN

Ah, so you do know it. An awful place. Full of strange people and superstitions. Not many Romans there, certainly not the respectable families. Why, there's not even a

gladiator game to be found. (*sighs*) It was very hard to send your owner there. But it had to be done. She had to understand. Rome must come first! You can't really understand that, as you're a foreigner. But even you can see what we've built. This empire, this world and its glory will last forever. (*pauses*) But, do you know what Rome really is?

STEPHANUS

I'm sorry, my lord.

DOMITIAN

The Senate likes to say that Rome is its people. A few madmen will claim otherwise, but most say it's the *real* Romans who are Rome, not some sunburnt African or effeminate Greek. So Rome is its Roman citizens. What do you think?

STEPHANUS

I am not sure, my lord.

DOMITIAN

Then you are at least wiser than the Senators. For they are surely wrong. Rome is not the people whether they are of the good *gentes* or not. No. Rome is not (*sarcastically*) "the Romans." A person is not their feet nor their clothes. These do not make a man, a man. (*pauses*) It is power that makes a man, a man. And what is the power of Rome? Rome is *me*, Stephanus. Without my guidance this empire would be a ship without a sailor. But, without a son to give my laurel crown to, just as my father, Vespasian, gave it to me, Rome will run aground some day. Do you understand?

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord.

DOMITIAN

Then listen well. You must go to Pontus and convince Tilla to return as my concubine, to bear me a son and preserve the heart of Rome. If you succeed, I will reward what you will have done for Rome by granting you your freedom. Don't make me explain what will happen if you fail. Josephus will go with you and help you in your task. I need a break from his droning on about Jewish antiquities in any case. (*pauses*) Stephanus?

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord?

DOMITIAN

Do not fail.

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord.

DOMITIAN

Good. Be ready at the *Portus* tomorrow. Josephus, come.

(Domitian and Josephus leave.)

STEPHANUS

(SONG)

*To see your smile again,
Would bring the light back to life,
The hope back to my eyes. For you*

*Would change the world I know.
You're Spring upon the snow,
You're Aurora with her glow. At*

*Night I wonder where you are,
Wonder if you're much too far
To feel... to feel.*

*But I see now that my dream
Is not just for the night,
But some day it will dawn
In all your light.*

*And I will see you again,
And I could hold my love
Safe within
Again.*

ACT II

SCENE 1

(Pliny's public quarters in Amisus, Pontus. Josephus and Stephanus enter.)

PLINY

(happily) Josephus, it has been too long.

JOSEPHUS

Yes, not since you were made Tribune. And now you're on track to become a governor; Pliny, you have done very well.

PLINY

Perhaps, but look where that has gotten me: counting ships and planning roads. And who is this you've brought with you?

JOSEPHUS

This is Stephanus, formerly the steward of Flavia Domitilla.

PLINY

Ah, I see. Lady Tilla. I suppose you have come for her, then?

JOSEPHUS

Correct. The Emperor desires for her to return back to Rome. Do you know where she is?

PLINY

Likely so, but I must warn you, my friend: I doubt she will leave willingly.

JOSEPHUS

I would be surprised if she was immediately warm to the idea. But, I believe we can persuade her.

PLINY

Oh, I have no doubts of your powers of persuasion, Josephus. But you should know that in her grief Tilla has turned to superstitions.

JOSEPHUS

Superstitions?

PLINY

Yes. There is a strange group here called the "Anointed." I will not pretend to understand them well as they defy rationality. The rumors make them followers of Bacchus, but they talk of "love" and "peace" in the Forum. They make no sense to me. In any case, Tilla appears to have fallen under their spell.

JOSEPHUS

Hmm. The Forum, you say?

PLINY

Yes, you can find her there each morning. She and the other Anointed give food to anyone who can bear to listen to their meaningless blather. I tell you, Josephus: we will have to drive these superstitions out if we'll ever make Pontus a proper province.

JOSEPHUS

Indeed. Well, thank you, Pliny. We will go and find her and, with any luck, convince her of reason.

PLINY

That's exactly my worry, my friend. The Anointed do not recognize reason. Farewell.

JOSEPHUS

Farewell.

SCENE 2

(The Amisus Forum. Tilla is distributing food. Josephus and Stephanus enter.)

JOSEPHUS

Tell me, Stephanus. What does Lady Tilla look like?

STEPHANUS

She stands just a few inches shorter than you, but is much heavier. Her skin is as white as milk, save for her blushing cheeks. Her hair is red like ripe cherries and falls in soft curls upon her shoulders. As for her eyes, they are both bright and dark, like sunlight in a shaded garden...

JOSEPHUS

I get the idea, Catullus. It is no wonder that Domitian seeks her then. Look for the goddess and tell me if you see her.

DOMITILLA

(SONG)

*We will give
What you need
Come and see
Come and feed*

*For your hand
For your head
Daily friend
Daily bread*

*Here is love
Here is truth
Here we are
Here with you*

*Think on this, while you eat
We are one, one family
No caste or race with us
Our love makes us one*

*You can mend your separation
You can purify your soul
You are called to your creation
You are called to become whole*

*We will fill
What you know
Come and grow
Come and sow*

*For your gain
For your good
Now we could
Now we should*

*Spirits rise
Spirits climb
Spirits come
Spirits high
Up we go
Up we cry
Up we flow
Up we fly*

*You will love
What you feel
Come and kneel
Come and heal*

*For your life
For your soul
Join our fold
And behold...*

Love.

Would you like some more bread, child? Take all you need.

STEPHANUS

That's her. That's Lady Tilla.

JOSEPHUS

Your description was apt. Let's hope she recognizes you as well. Come.

DOMITILLA

(surprised) Stephanus? *(happily)* Is that you?

STEPHANUS

It is I, my lady.

DOMITILLA

It is so wonderful to see you! How have you been? I have missed you so.

STEPHANUS

I... I...

JOSEPHUS

(clears throat) Lady Tilla, please allow me to introduce myself...

DOMITILLA

Josephus, do you not remember me?

JOSEPHUS

I... I'm sorry?

DOMITILLA

When I was a child, my grandfather Vespasian would have you tell us tales. We would sit out in the garden and you would make the voices for each character as if we were in a theater. I still remember the one about Hagar and Abraham's donkey-eared son.

JOSEPHUS

Ishmael.

DOMITILLA

Yes! Ishmael! *(brays and laughs)* Oh, how we loved your stories.

JOSEPHUS

I remember. You were so young. Even I was young then. Those were different days.

DOMITILLA

Yes, very different. So what brings you two here? Have you been so lucky as to be exiled as well?

JOSEPHUS

Lucky? No, my lady, but we do bear good news. The Emperor has announced his intention to rescind your exile and summon you to Rome.

DOMITILLA

Oh, has he?

JOSEPHUS

He has. And... *(clears throat)* he has even asked for you to become his concubine.

DOMITILLA

His concubine? But, what about Lady Domitia?

JOSEPHUS

Lady Domitia has agreed that the Emperor's idea is fitting. The Senate has as well.

DOMITILLA

And, what do you think, Stephanus?

STEPHANUS

I believe you should return, my lady. Rome... has not been the same since you left. I have a letter for you from Lady Domitia. *(hands her the letter, which she opens and reads.)*

DOMITILLA

I see. Yes, I understand and appreciate what you are trying to do. But, I'm afraid that I cannot return to Rome. Rome is no longer my home. The Empire was my old life. But now this *(gestures)* is my life.

JOSEPHUS

Lady Tilla, you are of the noblest family in Rome. Are you not called to something higher than handing out bread to street urchins? The people of Rome need you.

DOMITILLA

(laughs) My dear Josephus, those “street urchins” are part of my family. We are one family in love. I am no greater than the least of them.

JOSEPHUS

Tell me, are those your beliefs or those of the Anointed?

DOMITILLA

They are one and the same. Let me ask you something, Josephus: when you look at Rome and see brother set against brother, mother against daughter, everywhere strife and violence and treachery, do you see family? What kind of family makes a slave of its own?

JOSEPHUS

But slaves are not citizens. They are different peoples, different families.

DOMITILLA

Exactly, Josephus. What is “family” in Rome? When my grandfather brought you with him from Galilee and freed you despite all the acrimony it attracted, was that more or less “family” than when my uncle killed my husband?

JOSEPHUS

My lady, please think rationally. We have all suffered from the excesses of passion and anger. But is not the duty of the nobility to show us how to be wise and just? Is it not said that the Emperor is the “Father of Rome”? The Senate gave that very title to Domitian. If *they*, who you know have suffered from his excesses, can see justice in that, can you not do the same? For the sake of the Romans? For the sake of Rome’s slaves?

DOMITILLA

I see no more slaves, Josephus, only people. And they do not need a father they fear, but a family that loves them.

JOSEPHUS

My child, you are a woman and must be forgiven your hasty words, but you can trust in the wisdom of men. Your grandfather did not accept me into his house because he loved me, but because he trusted me. For I was loyal to him and have been loyal to the Roman people ever since. It is loyalty and honor that are the foundation of family, not trifling emotions like love.

DOMITILLA

Perhaps in Rome, but not here, Josephus. Not among *my* family. (*pauses*) I must go. Listen. You are perhaps blind now, but why not see the light for yourself? Tonight, both of you should come join us at that hill above the water. At midnight we have our love feast. You will understand then.

JOSEPHUS

(*sigh*) Lady Tilla, as a Jew I can not participate in idolatry. But we will return to the Forum tomorrow and then I'm sure we can convince you. When you see what the Emperor has planned for you, you will understand. Think on this: you can do so much more for the poor in Rome than here.

DOMITILLA

(*laughs*) The poorest in Rome are in the palaces. With us there is neither Jew nor Gentile, just people. But, very well, Josephus; we can talk tomorrow. Stephanus, you should still come tonight. I assume you have no prohibition against the mysteries?

STEPHANUS

No, my lady, I am still a Phrygian. But, I am unsure of my orders for tonight.

DOMITILLA

Stephanus, why not come find freedom with us?

JOSEPHUS

Lady Tilla, Stephanus has been asked personally by the Emperor to be here. Please consider the... significance of his mission.

DOMITILLA

Of course, my friends. In any case, I will be there tonight and here at the Forum again tomorrow. Until we meet again, farewell.

STEPHANUS

Farewell, my lady.

(Domitilla leaves.)

JOSEPHUS

These blasted Anointed have sapped her mind. Pliny is right. They will need to be driven out. Let's get back to our chambers.

(Pliny enters.)

PLINY

Josephus. I bring news.

JOSEPHUS

Pliny, forgive my foul mood. What tidings have you?

PLINY

The Emperor Domitian has just arrived in town. It seems he intends to bring Lady Tilla back tomorrow. *(pauses)* I see from your expression that you have had as little success as I feared.

JOSEPHUS

Indeed and it does not bode well for any of us. *(pauses)* Stephanus, you must go to the feast she spoke of and convince her of her error. Promise her, lie to her, whatever is needed, but make her see the wisdom of returning with Domitian. Remember, she's a woman. All women are weak and as given to their passions as was Eve. Clearly her grief has made her easy prey for these Anointed garden snakes. What she really wants is the security and warmth of a man she trusts. Even a slave. Stephanus... help her see reason. *(sighs)* Alright, Pliny, let's go and test whether my luck still works after all these years.

SCENE 3

(Hillside clearing at night. Domitilla is there. Stephanus enters.)

DOMITILLA

Stephanus! You came. Wonderful! I'm so happy you're here. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, this is my dear friend, Stephanus.

STEPHANUS

Greetings, my lady and all.

DOMITILLA

Please tell me, Stephanus. What have you heard of us? Of the Anointed?

STEPHANUS

Very little. Pliny seems to believe it a superstition and irrational.

DOMITILLA

Irrational. Yes, I suppose. You see, it doesn't make any sense to the Roman mind. The Romans care so much about who is in control, who has power over whom, that such contests occupy nearly the whole of their logic. They're all so afraid, lest they be made a prisoner or slave. But, do you know what I think makes a person a slave?

STEPHANUS

No, my lady.

DOMITILLA

It isn't who we were born as or what rights the Empire denies us. The only thing that can really make us a slave is ourselves. Yes, they can break our bodies, but they can never break our souls. Not if we don't let them. Not if we don't let fear make us slaves, just as it has the Roman families. For even the Emperor is a slave to his sad little Empire. *(pauses)* Take my hand, Stephanus. You see, you are never a slave. The whole world is within you. And she is calling you back to her, calling you back to where you belong. Do you want to know the great mystery of the Anointed?

STEPHANUS

Yes, please, my lady.

DOMITILLA

Then share with me the kiss of peace. For our mystery is open to you.

(SONG)

Share with me the kiss of peace

Share with me the kiss of peace

Come Holy Spirit

Show us your mystery

We sing out to you

Come and set us free

'Cause you've got the power

And we've got the faith

So come on honey

We will believe

Come eat the bread of life

Drink everlasting wine

Feel the spirit deep inside

Look up and see the sign

The dove of love has

Come

To make our hearts as

One

I know that you feel

The love in you

It holds you close

And loves you too

So come and make it baby

Make this love for you

Lift up your hands

And let love into

You

*Do you see the beauty in your
Soul?
She loves your laughter and brings you
Home
To her you are the child of
Love
So come and join the holy
One*

*You belong with us
You belong with us
We are all in love with you
So love and be one with us*

ACT III

SCENE 1

(The Forum in Amisus. Domitian, Josephus, and Pliny wait.)

PLINY

She is here every morning, Emperor.

DOMITIAN

Is she? Then where is she now? Josephus, you said her slave went to convince her but did not return. This is... troubling, Josephus.

JOSEPHUS

My lord, look. Lady Tilla and Stephanus approach.

(Domitilla and Stephanus enter.)

DOMITIAN

How fortunate for you, Josephus. *(pauses)* At last, Lady Tilla! You look resplendent. How are you, my dear niece? *(pauses but there's no answer, clears throat)* I trust that Josephus and your slave have explained what you are to do.

DOMITILLA

Stephanus is not a slave, Domitian.

JOSEPHUS

Emperor Domitian, my dear lady. Emperor.

DOMITILLA

I do not see any Emperor, Josephus, nor any Empire.

DOMITIAN

You have always been challenging, girl. And it appears exile has not added to your wisdom, despite my hopes. But you do not need to be wise, Tilla, just fetching and obedient. You are halfway there, so why not finish your duty?

DOMITILLA

(calling out) Come and eat with us. For our food is the bread of life and all who eat from it will never go hungry.

JOSEPHUS

What are you doing, Lady Tilla? Please stop, for your own sake!

DOMITIAN

Pliny, tell me how many in Amisus are in need of food.

PLINY

Probably around 5,000 people, Emperor.

DOMITIAN

Grant each of them the sustenance they need for a year. Make it clear that it is a gift from their Emperor. Rome will compensate you fully.

PLINY

Yes, Emperor.

DOMITIAN

Lady Tilla, do you truly want to help these people or do you just want to insult me? I know that I deserve your scorn, but please listen to me. I realize that I cannot undo the misdeeds I have done in the past. I know that I have sinned greatly against you. But you have not understood why. *(pauses)* From our first moments together, you held my heart in the most awful grasp. I was powerless and could not but want you. But neither could I betray my oaths to both Rome and my wife, Lady Domitia. It tortured me, Tilla. It ruined me. And when I finally could not resist you anymore, I laid myself at your feet and begged you to accept me. But you were as proud then as you are now. *(pauses)* You think that I had your husband killed, but you don't know what really happened. After

you refused my love, a prying slave alerted Clemens to my passion. He plotted to kill me, as Josephus himself will tell you. I confronted him and asked his forgiveness, but he was not large enough to have mercy on me. That night I went out to the edge of the garden wall and stared down at the rocks far below. I prayed for Jupiter to guide my spirit, to show me whether I should leap to my death in shame. But as I wavered at the parapet's edge, an eagle appeared to my right. It cried out to me and circled three times. I then remembered my promise to my father, to your grandfather. I promised that I would act not just for myself, but for all of Rome. And so I realized that I must live for Rome's sake. But to do so, there was no choice but to tell the Senate of Clemens' plot. We agreed to call it atheism, but he was just a man consumed by jealousy. And, can I blame him? You are as beautiful as the day we met. Lady Tilla, come and stand with me and your cousin Domitia. Help us make Rome the Empire it is meant to be. Just think of the people you could help.

DOMITILLA

Stephanus, what do you think?

DOMITIAN

(scoffs) You would ask a slave to decide the fate of Rome?

DOMITILLA

He is no slave.

DOMITIAN

Oh, but he is. In fact, I promised him he would be freed, if you would come back. Isn't that right, Stephanus?

STEPHANUS

Yes, my lord.

DOMITILLA

He doesn't need to return to be free. He is already free.

DOMITIAN

(laughs) Do you know what it really means to be Emperor? It means being the moral force in the Empire. It means making the decisions that cause men to love the good and fear the evil. Josephus, didn't you say that your Judaism was ultimately all based on fear of your god?

JOSEPHUS

You are correct, Emperor. It is our privilege to fear displeasing him.

DOMITIAN

Do you hear that, Tilla? The privilege of fear. But I will not force you to come back with me. No, I will simply give you a choice. If you come back with me, I will make you my concubine. You can do great things to help the poor and needy from Rome. And someday our sons will rule the Empire. *(pauses)* But if you do not return, I will wipe your little club of prancing Bacchantes from the Earth. Even your pet, Stephanus, he will die as well. You will see them all die and then you will have to live out your years knowing it was your fault, your stubborn female pride that caused their deaths. *(pauses)* Do you understand me? Which do you choose?

DOMITILLA

Yes, Domitian. I understand. *(pauses and sighs)* I will return with you.

DOMITIAN

Swear it.

DOMITILLA

I swear by the gods to return to Rome.

DOMITIAN

(sighs contentedly) Do you hear that, Josephus? It appears she's more rational than you thought. Lucky you. Gather your items, Tilla. We leave tonight.

(Domitian and Pliny leave.)

STEPHANUS

Tilla...

JOSEPHUS

Come, Stephanus. You will have time enough to see her in Rome. You have done well.

DOMITILLA

Please go. I must say goodbye to my family here. Please.

SCENE 2

*(Pliny's public quarters. Domitian, Pliny, Josephus, and Stephanus are waiting.
Domitilla enters.)*

DOMITIAN

Ah, you've arrived. Excellent, my dear. I just have a little paperwork to finish and we can be off.

DOMITILLA

Yes, my lord.

DOMITIAN

Mmm. Yes, and here is the order, Pliny. Do it at once.

PLINY

All of them, Emperor?

DOMITIAN

Didn't you say you needed to drive them out? But where would they go then but some other corner of the Empire to be a thorn in Rome's side. Pliny, you are steady but oh so slow. You must think ahead. Now's the time to crush this problem.

DOMITILLA

What is the order for?

DOMITIAN

Tilla, try to think like a ruler. Do you know how much bloodshed that little club could cause if they were allowed to spread their nonsense around the Empire?

DOMITILLA

(more desperately) What is it for?

DOMITIAN

It condemns all members of the Anointed to death. But, do not worry. I am not an unkind man, Tilla, nor unfair. Anyone who renounces the Anointed and affirms his faith in the Imperial cult, affirms that I am their master and god, will be spared.

DOMITILLA

But they will never do that! You don't understand their beliefs.

DOMITIAN

Well then you can believe that they will die just like they deserve. Enough talk. Pliny, do it now. I am going make an offering to Mercury and then we will travel. Be ready when I return, Tilla.

PLINY

Yes, Emperor.

(Domitian leaves.)

DOMITILLA

A curse upon him and his unholy Empire.

JOSEPHUS

Woman, control yourself. It is beneath you to utter such blasphemies.

DOMITILLA

Pliny, please remind me. Is it Roman law that a slave is equal to a citizen?

PLINY

No, Lady Tilla. Roman law is very clear that a slave has no worth compared to a citizen.

DOMITILLA

And what of a foreigner? Is a foreigner equal to a citizen?

PLINY

Free-born foreigners may have some value, but very little compared to Roman citizens.

DOMITILLA

Very well. What about me, a Flavian aristocrat and now concubine of the Emperor? Am I the equal of a slave or foreigner?

PLINY

My lady, your value is immeasurably greater than either.

DOMITILLA

Pliny, is it not the law that slaves can be substituted to suffer for their masters' penalties?

PLINY

Sometimes, but the Anointed have no slaves.

DOMITILLA

If a slave can be substituted for a citizen, then surely a citizen can be substituted for a slave?

PLINY

In theory I suppose, but it has never happened. Forgive me, but I don't understand your purpose.

DOMITILLA

Pliny, I want to take the place of the Anointed.

JOSEPHUS

Tilla, that is madness!

DOMITILLA

No, Josephus. It is beyond the rational.

STEPHANUS

Please don't do this, my lady. I cannot imagine a world without you.

DOMITILLA

Stephanus, I wish it was not this way. But I cannot go and sit in Roman opulence when I could have saved hundreds of lives. And these are not strangers; these are my family, my brothers and sisters, my children, my friends! Don't ask me to send them to their death so that that monster can drag me in front of his poor wife. Please. *(pauses)* Remember me, Stephanus. Pliny, I command you to have me executed in their place.

(SONG w/Domitilla and Stephanus)**Stephanus**

*You ask me to remember you
But how could I ever forget
You gave my life new meaning
But now there'll be nothing left*

*You were the bird at night
That sang a song in the dark
You lifted up my broken soul
And put the light into my heart*

*You were the one who showed me
The way
Oh please god won't you
Just stay*

*You belong with us
You belong with us*

Domitilla

*Hear me now
We are more than just our life
Our hearts are filled with spirit
We are given the divine*

*So hear me now
Wherever there is love
Where the many are as one
I am there with
You*

*I know it's hard for you
I'm sorry for the tears. It's true
That I am afraid as well
To leave this world where I dwell*

*But we're all called to higher things
To return to where the soul springs
To find the true meaning of
Endless life is transcendent love
So please remember me*

*Because you belong with us
You belong with us
You belong with us*

PLINY

Lady Tilla, would you reconsider?

DOMITILLA

My choice is made, Prefect. You must see my perspective. I know you understand honor. If you have any loyalty at all to the memory of my grandfather, let my sacrifice be made. *(writes)* Here, now you have it in writing. I command you to substitute me for their debt.

PLINY

If you are so set on this, it is my duty to obey. What else can I do?

DOMITILLA

Wash your hands of the matter, Pliny. My blood is not on you, but the traitor who calls himself God.

PLINY

(sighs) Very well, please follow me.

STEPHANUS

Tilla! I... I can't...

DOMITILLA

The kiss of peace, Stephanus. *(kisses)* Wherever there is love, I am with you.

SCENE 3

(Pliny's public quarters. A fire burns in the distance. Pliny, Josephus, and Stephanus are waiting. Domitian enters.)

DOMITIAN

(scoffs) What a morose bunch. And, all for the sake of some filthy foreigners. Where is Lady Tilla?

PLINY

She has sacrificed herself in place of those you condemned.

DOMITIAN

(pauses... then laughs) Does she really think she has beaten me? As if I would let a woman, a whore like her, ever, *ever* get the best of me! *(writes furiously)* Pliny, take this order and carry it out now. And, actually do it this time or I'll see you on the cross.

PLINY

Emperor... *(sighs)* Yes, my lord.

STEPHANUS

You are still going to do it?

DOMITIAN

(scoffs again) Rather shameless of you, don't you think? But, I respect your drive, Stephanus. You didn't exactly do what I wanted, but at least you tried unlike these useless cretins. Hand me that vellum and I will make it official. *(writes)* There, just like I promised, you are free. Happy now?

PLINY

Stephanus, don't...!

(Stephanus and Domitian struggle, then both collapse)

JOSEPHUS

They are both dead. Stephanus has slain the Emperor. *(pauses)* From bad to worse and now we're deep in it.

PLINY

They are finished. But what of us?

JOSEPHUS

You have Domitian's order regarding the Anointed. I know you are dutiful, but...

PLINY

(destroying the vellum) I can recall no such order, Josephus. I only remember his command to feed 5,000 for a year.

JOSEPHUS

Ah, yes. That sounds right to me as well. Pliny, would you please handle returning the Flavians to Rome so that their ashes may be placed in their temple?

PLINY

Of course. But what of you, my friend?

JOSEPHUS

Lady Tilla was right; I was blind. Yet, finally, I am beginning to see. I have long served the house of Flavius, but that house has come to its end. And now I sense that I must learn more about these Anointed. I've had more than enough adventure for a dozen lives, yet perhaps my tale has another chapter, another book. I must become humble and small, so small that I can find what is even greater than the Empire. I will take a new small name and a new path. And, there, hidden from history, I will find a way to hide the Anointed so that the future's Domitians cannot find them. Farewell, my friend.

SCENE 4

(The temple of gens Flavia. Phyllis and Domitia are there.)

DOMITIA

(praying)

Now I come, come as a suppliant to holy Mysterion,
So that she may kindly send me to the seats of the pure.
I am parched with thirst and am dying; but grant me to drink
From the ever-flowing spring on the right, where the cypress is.

“Who are you? Where are you from?” I am a child of Earth and starry Sky.
I have sunk beneath the breast of the Lady, the Chthonian Queen.
I have approached the longed-for crown with swift feet.
“Happy and blessed, you will be a god instead of a mortal.”

Take heart. Enter the holy meadow, for the initiate is redeemed.

PHYLLIS

You do her honor, my lady. Let's return now, for life goes on.