

OUTCAST

By Laurie Solomon

The moon slipped for a moment behind a cloud, and the narrow overhung street sank into deeper gloom. The towering of the great insula, or tenement building, was silent, even the top floors darkened now, the poor and sodden revellers abed a good hour. Dawn was not far off and the great city of Rome would soon be stirring with the new day. As the moon shone briefly between the dark clouds driven before the rising wind, a shadow detached itself and then joined swiftly the dark mass of the building as loud uncertain footsteps sounded at the end of the street.

A whisper, a sudden almost imperceptible tensing at various places along the big building, and a few minutes later the traveller disappeared beneath the weight of the skulking footpads.

A stifled cry, blows, and it was all over. Three figures, muffled in dark cloaks, pored over the body, dusty and dirty from its journey on its back across the street and into the alley. Briefly the moon shone and a grunt of satisfaction was heard. "Tis he!" A swift searching of the body followed. "Begone, you dogs. There's no more tonight!" Gold glinted as it passed from hand to hand. The three shadows separated, the tallest moving but a few yards down the street before he took refuge in a doorway, awaiting the safety of dawn. Fingering the tablets of the stolen letters under his tunic, he grinned without humor. "He should pay well for these" he thought.

Daylight came greyly, accompanied by showers and a gusty wind, but he took off his cloak and wrapped it around the tablets. He shrugged his heavy travelling garment around him more closely. A gust of wind blew coolly on his face, and stirred the dark hair curling over his forehead; he cursed and smoothed the curls, but not before the mark of the mark of the branding-iron had shone redly; roughly he pulled his cowl down over his head, and striding carefully over the muddy pools already gathering in the street, he hurried quietly down the street before the yawning shopkeepers had begun to open their doors and put out their wares.

He strode along, taking back streets and the poorer quarters, until he reached the Subura, the slum district of the city. Here he feared no one, and he shouldered aside those who were in his way. Curses followed him, and shrill calls from sluts at their doors and windows, but he paid no attention.

When he entered his rooms, on the ground floor of a dilapidated insula, a slovenly girl in a dirty tunic was preparing breakfast, her eyes red from weeping during the night.

On the wide sill of the paneless window she set bread, diluted wine, and cheese; for herself she took bread, raisins, and milk. No word was said. The girl could not trust herself to speak, and the man was hungry and full of thoughts of his night's work. At last he stretched and yawned, and eyed the bed in the corner. Suddenly he laughed, hoarsely, loudly, and partly rising caught the girl's arm and swung her to his knee. Glancing her red-rimmed eyes and fear-stained face he pushed her to the floor. "Crying, always crying! By Jupiter, will you never mind to learn your business and leave me to mine?" She stifled her tears. "Marcus, my lord, my master." His face, which she anxiously watched, softened. "I know it," he said, "but I am in no danger. You will see."

"No danger! You, banished by the Emperor, banished escaped, captured, marked for the arena, escaped again, and back in Rome at the mercy of these dogs! No danger! Are you mad, Marcus?" She was angry now, and her flushed starved face, was almost beautiful.

Angrily he rose and paced the squalid room. His arrogant bearing increased as he forgot himself, and the scar glowed dull red between the disturbed curls.

"You are too young to die, Marcus, there is a life for us yet, if you will but listen to reason. A noble you were and a noble you always will be, but here among the dregs of humanity - Oh Venus! Help me turn my love from his madness!"

He stopped, swung around to face her, his hands on his hips, his swarthy brows lowering at her. "Go! Go where? Where in the Empire will I be safe as I am now among these rats of all nations, these vermin that make up the underworld of Rome? Already I am the master of this section, already my plans for revenge on my enemies are bearing fruit. Give me two years, nay, give me one year, and those that betrayed me and falsely accused me shall be no more! Then shall we live in comfort, my Galla, then shall thou have maidens attending thee, and jewelry, and secrets, and a litter.

Galla dropped on her knees before him, flinging her arms around his waist. "Marcus, my husband! Thinkest thou that I want maidens, and jewels, and ointments? What I want is thee, alive and healthy and happy, and a home again...."

"A home again! Well maybe...."

U.N.B. Autumn Track Team Eros At Breakfast On Monday



"Give yourself up, Marcus, throw yourself before the Emperor, Tiberius, implore his mercy. Fight the false charges against you.... Maybe you will be forgiven...."

"And join the obdres of the turba salutantium, beg the sportula, ha? You want to see me beg, crawl in the dust before any upstart newly-rich, ha? Follow him to the Forum among the crowd of obsequious and hypocritical...." He spat disgustedly. "Sweet life running messages, I suppose, doing the dirty work, framing charges, bearing false witness, anything for the great man's favour: writing complimentary verses, and epigrams! Ha! I can see myself! And you, too, Galla, starving at home, looked down upon by your so-called friends and your family, toadying to my patron's wife and children." He broke off and paced up and down, up and down, his wife too exhausted to do more than lean against the bed.

She eyed him in misery, realizing his agony of mind and the pride that forced them both to this existence. No more would he go to the Baths in the afternoon, no more would he talk in the library or in the gymnasium, or in the other rooms of the great building, to the great of the capital on equal confidential terms. No more would he dine at home in comfort, either alone or with his guests. That three-hour meal, the entertainment and relaxation of the evening after the day's work, was no more for them, she realized. No more would they attend auditions, no more would the quips and the repartee amuse, and sometimes, startle them among their friends. Their daily round of existence as they both had known it was gone. "Thank Juno, though," she thought, "that the terrifying, anxious days of his banishment and his escapes are over - temporarily at least." Marcus had stopped pacing and was staring out of the window at the squalid street and the slums that stretched as far as the eye could see, his hands clenching and unclenching. Slowly he turned and faced her, his face and frame sagging from fatigue and hurt. Galla looked at him with compassion. "Do you have to bear it all alone?"

"If anything should go wrong.... what you do not know will not hurt you...." She understood.

"Sleep," she said, motioning to the bed, "is what you need. I will wake you at noon."

He was instantly asleep, and she took his place at the window, musing. She admitted to herself now, as she had known all along, that their old life was gone, without hope of recovery. Looking ahead she began to see that some measure of security might be attained, if he could expand and keep his hold over these ruffians of Rome. His very form of power should keep them safe from the informers who had begun to be the terror of the Senate, and of the wealthy, before his banishment. If his underworld empire did not attract too much attention.... She sighed.

Galla turned and looked at the sleeping man, and bending, lightly kissed him on the cheek.

THE LADY KNOWN AS FLU

A bunch of germs were hitting it up
In a bronchial saloon;
Two bugs on the edge of the larynx
Were jazzing a ragtime tune,
While back of the teeth, in a solo game,
Sat Dangerous Dan Kerchoo,
And watching his pulse was his light of love,
The lady that's known as Flu.

VIGNETTE

God's plan made a hopeful beginning
But man spoiled his chances by sinning.
We trust that the story
Will end in God's glory,
But, at present, the other side's winning.
—Queen's Journal

A one act comedy entitled "Eros At Breakfast" is to be presented Monday evening as the lighter half of the Founder's Day program. This play by Robertson Davies won honors at last year's Canadian Drama Festival. Participating in the sophisticated satire are Miss Mary Louise Whimster as Hepatica, the shrewd and saucy representative of the "Liver and Lights" Department; Prof. Galloway as Parmeno, the ebullient and dashing ambassador from the heart; Prof. Conrad Wright as Aristophanes, the crusty and professional head of the Intelligence Department; Prof. Ralph Hicklin plays the part of Chremes, the urbane and senior Director of the Solar Plexus Department and R. Rand is Crito, his equally urbane assistant. The play has its setting in the interior of the Solar Plexus Department of a young male undergraduate who has just fallen in love.

The production is under the direction of Prof. R. E. D. Cattle. On Tuesday night the play will be repeated. The general public is invited and it would be appreciated if undergraduates who plan to attend would obtain tickets free of charge from Jack Murray's office in the Art's Building. This is not absolutely necessary, but it would help in ascertaining the probable size of the audience.

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UNB

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