BOOK THE SECOND
IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF JULIA

CHAPTER I

AN IMPERIAL FEAST

Nyria describes the banquet given by Julia, daughter of Titus, and Flavius Sabinus, her husband, in honour of the Emperor Domitian. She tells of the Ethiopian woman's strange prophesying and of how Euphena uttered traitorous allegations concerning Julia's parentage.

Nyria: "Now I will tell thee of that last occasion on which Domitian feasted at the table of my master Sabinus. For thou may'st know that there was much talk afterwards about this banquet and the strange prophesying which the old Ethiopian woman Euphena made in the presence of Caesar.

First, thou dost wish that I should explain the order of arrangement and therefore I will take thee to the house of Julia and show thee how it is planned. Thou knowest that the house stands back on the lower front of the Aventine Hill facing the Palatine and not very far from the palace of Caesar. It is enclosed on three sides by a vast courtyard and, behind, there is a further court in which are the dwellings of the slaves.

We are going up the broad flight of marble steps. Now we have entered by the State-entrance into the atrium. Ours is a particularly fine atrium and takes up almost the whole front of the building. But everything in this house is finer than in any other in Rome. We go through a great doorway at the further end of the atrium, past some public rooms in one of which my master's morning clients wait until he sees them in a room further back. Now, through all the centre of the house, there runs a wide marble space with many pillars and statues. In the middle of it is the tablinum, and there are other rooms for different purposes which can be closed or thrown open. The big space divides here, and on either side of the middle rooms run broad passages with doors that take thee on one side to my master's private apartments and on the other to those of my mistress.

The banqueting-hall lies beyond; but, before reaching it, we come to a beautiful marble court which has columns of carved marble around it and a covered way looking on to a garden. There are inlaid and cushioned chairs and couches in this court and in the centre a great sculptured basin wherein goldfish are swimming. It is in this court that the company assembles for the banquet. Being an affair of State to-day Julia will receive her guests at the great inner doors of the atrium after the fashion befitting each one's rank. For, though Julia's manners have often but little dignity, yet have I seen her hold herself as verily an emperor's daughter should. My master stands more forward and, as the stewards call the names of those arriving, all pass along towards the court and walk and talk and feed the
goldfish until slaves at either end make sound on musical instruments to announce that the feast is ready.

Thou wouldst know of the manner in which the names of such guests were called. 'Twas for the higher Roman ladies—' The Noble, the wife of the Noble,' or 'the Illustrious' or 'the Honourable' according to the rank of the husband. The Domina Valeria was 'the Most Noble Valeria'—the same as Julia, seeing that each was the daughter of an emperor—'wife of the Illustrious Valerius Paulinus.' 'The Illustrious' was only for very high persons—senators or consuls and many such were at the banquet that night. Plinius was 'the Honourable.' But Plinius cared not greatly for titles and if it chanced that I should announce him I would say, 'May it please Julia, Plinius waits.' Then there was Martial, who would always have himself announced as 'the Honourable,' and thus would I call him. And then again the lady Domitilla, who was Stephanus's mistress—she would not be called the 'Most Noble' even though she was entitled to it and her husband was very near Caesar. She liked to be called 'the Domina Domitilla.' She said it was more simple.

It is a vast hall, the great banqueting-room, with many doors to the kitchens and various rooms whence the food is brought. The hall has a wondrous pavement of coloured marbles and rows of pillars set around which, like the walls, are made of various tinted marbles that gleam strangely in the torchlight.

In certain spaces, between the pillars, are curtains of embroidered silk of different thickness for summer and winter, which may be closed or, in the great heats, drawn apart leaving all open to the free air. But in the cold weather the great hall is heated by pipes, and fires in braziers are set upon tripods in various parts. We use many of these tripods, of all kinds and sizes, in gold, silver and bronze. Small ones of gold we set on the table to raise the decorations of fruit and flowers. To-day it was my office to direct the men in placing the larger decorations, and I myself did arrange those dishes which are choicest and most important. For I am accounted to have skill in the handling of flowers.

Also, beyond the table are set other tripods for the standing of jugs of water and wine. The wine is brought in vessels of chased silver and of finest glass engraved in colours, and there are goblets of the same. As it pleases thee, I will tell thee fully of the furnishings of the banquet and the setting of the table.

Thou knowest that in some great houses of Rome 'tis customary to place the guests in companies of three or four at the small wooden tables which have become the fashion of late. But in this house, for State banquets, there is but one great marble table, which has slabs that may be added or taken away according to the number of persons. The number is large to-day, I think about forty. All the slabs have been put in.

The table is rounded at the ends, which are adorned with precious stones, and stand upon supports of gold in the shape of stooping beasts. It has been for a long time in my master Sabinus's family, and not even one somewhat of its fashion, which on special occasions Domitian uses, can compare with it in splendour.

I want thee to know about the marble of Sabinus's table. 'Twas dug out of a quarry in Phrygia,¹ and is shaded in pink like the heart of a rose and

¹ Mygdonian marble—marble of Phrygia—was considered the best. See Ovid's Heroides, Ep. XV (Letter from Sappho to Phaon), v. 142. Note to p. 152. Bohn Trans.
veined with purple and deep crimson. Domitian, who often says clever things, declared that there had been a sacrifice to the gods on the spot where the marble was dug, and that the blood spilled on the earth had run into the marble and caused the purple-red veins. Or else that Bacchus had held high revel in that place and the oblations from the wine-cups had sunk into the ground.

It was a lovely table. The rose-pink shone up through mother-of-pearl dishes set upon the marble, and there were low lights floating in vessels of scented oil which came from a far place called Leba— if there be such a one—and being reflected in the marble caused the pink and red of it to gleam with a soft brilliance.

But these floating wicks were but for decoration. On the walls were great torches made of specially prepared wood which gave a strong illumination.

And I must tell thee of the fountain of wine, and the marble group in the centre of the table. 'Twas of four naked figures, each one holding a long pipe bent upward, out of which the wine rose high in a red spray and played across into four shells placed at the corners which received it. The wine made no stain upon the marble, for the machinery within was such that when the shells at the corners were full they did not overflow, but the wine went back again into the spouts.

At the table, Caesar had his own chair, which was always sent from the palace beforehand to the house where he dined. It was of gold and ivory, with lions' heads on the arms, and, crossed at the back, were two great gold eagles. There were velvet cushions to it, embroidered in gold, and also a canopy. But at the beginning of the feast Caesar did not always have the canopy. He would get very hot and it was his way to flush easily. If afterwards there were a set entertainment, or if he thought he was not being paid sufficient respect, he would order the canopy to be put up.

The Empress likewise had her seat brought beforehand. It was of black ebony with beautiful inlay of mother-of-pearl. She liked a slender, high-backed chair. My mistress and my master, Julia and Sabinus, had their own chairs. The rest were on couches to hold three. Sometimes a small couch for one would be put in between. It would not have been proper to have them for two persons; they were always for three or for one.

No, the people do not look the least as if they were lying down. The couches are low and covered with tapestry—is that the word?—in purple and gold; it is according to the fortune of the master. Of course, I am telling thee about our house: other people's houses might not be so fine, but we have everything of the best. You might think the couches uncomfortable, but they are not; nothing is stiff or formal, but all is arranged for comfort. There is a piece for the back and a cushion for the elbow, and there are tripods for plates and glasses in case it is more convenient than reaching out to the table. In Julia's house people do as they choose. In the house of my Domina Valeria they would have had to be more careful.

About the order of going in—Julia walks beside the Emperor and Sabinus with the Empress. At a public or official banquet the Emperor and Empress would have gone in first, but at a private banquet Caesar would be seated next the lady of the house and the Empress next her host.

Thou dost wish to know the manner of converse with Caesar. Now, Domitian was very uncertain of mood even with Julia; a small matter would put him out. He was always better tempered after he had well eaten and

1 For Domitian's habit of flushing, see Appendix I, Bk. II.
drunk, and Julia knew this and would press upon him the choicest dishes and sign often to the wine-bearer to fill his cup—he had his own cup, which was brought with his chair; likewise he had his own servant. His bodyguard stood close outside, not actually in the banqueting-hall. I have heard that some Emperors insisted upon their guard being behind them because of their fear of assassination, and I should have thought that Domitian would have done this. But he did not in the house of Julia.

The mode of addressing him is usually 'My lord' or 'Caesar' or 'Great Caesar.' Some will begin by saying 'If it be Caesar's pleasure,' or if they are not sure whether he wishes to be addressed, they will bring in his name so that he may take notice or not as he pleases. But no one addresses him unless he has spoken first.

As they went along to the banqueting-room Julia walked close to Caesar and, plucking at his sleeve, whispered in his ear. She could not speak loud for Sabinus was following with Domitia. I saw this while I stood aside until they had passed. Then I had to hurry into the banqueting-hall by a door of service so that I should be behind Julia's chair when she sat down.

I will tell thee of the libation to the gods. Domitian, being of the highest rank, should have made it with my master, all the rest standing. Thus would it have been in a Roman house where the old customs are observed. But on this occasion, in the house of Julia, as neither its mistress nor the Emperor had any regard for these ancient rites, few of the guests paid much attention to the ceremony. Nor did I myself give it close heed. This, I think, was the way of it.

Those men who carried the wine-vessels and the slaves under them would fall into line as the company entered the banqueting-room and, the chief of them leading, would go to the place prepared where there is a hole in the floor and a metal drain beneath it. Into this the head steward, carrying the wine-flagon in one hand and a cup, open at the bottom, in the other, would pour the wine through the cup while he recited a prayer in words somewhat like this:

'To the great god Jupiter and all these gods,' adding to the name of each one, as he says it, an adjective describing that god's special quality, 'whose blessings are shed in the firstfruits of everything that is given and on everything that is now spread for man's enjoyment... Be it poured forth...'

Some of the guests would stand for a moment just as a matter of form, but most of them would sit down when they saw that Domitian was seated.

It used to seem to me such silly waste. But my master did have a real feeling about the libation. When there was only a small banquet he would take the wine-flagon from the steward and himself pour forth and say the prayer. Sabinus was always very fond of praying... And that shows how little use there is in praying to those heathen gods, for they did not help Sabinus when he needed it at the last.

I don't think Domitian cared much about any of the gods. I expect it was because he thought it would please the people that he swore by Pallas. And then, though he would deride superstition, he was very superstitious himself in certain ways. I am sure that he was impressed that night by Euphena's sayings.

The food which is served at a Roman dinner?... Well, at the beginning we have little things to give an appetite. Of course, we slaves do not;
but—this will amuse thee—the slaves will often pretend that they are served like their masters. . . Thou knowest, among slaves, there are some high up who have their own slaves to wait upon them, and at the Saturnalia they will spend a lot of money and have a banquet the same as those of their masters at which their slaves serve them, and they think it is all very fine and delightful. . . .

Now, before the real dinner, there are little cold dishes—fishes in oil, radishes, cloves, fruits and small meats flavoured so that they are hot and pungent. Then there are the regular hot dishes. First broths—such delicious broth!—sometimes snail broth, which is thought to be a delicacy, but for my part I like it not. After that, mountains of meat cooked in different ways. . . .

Oh yes, the people do eat a great deal. But there are many of them, and that means the serving of much food. Thou dost think it coarse—so do I. . . . The greater the banquet the earlier do we begin. About three o'clock, before the sun is down. It goes on a long time, for there are waits during the meal, and much laughing and talking among the men and women. Sometimes, between whiles, they will go out into the court, where there is music going on, but no one may leave the house before the Emperor departs, unless it be some official personage who has to attend to business of the State, and then he would ask Caesar's permission to go. . . .

Yes, of course, there is music too in the banqueting-hall—it is strange, but I often do not seem to notice things until you ask, and then I see whether it is so or not—men come in and blow reed pipes and dancing girls enter. There is a raised platform at one side of the room on which they perform. Julia will pay great sums to dancers and to fine actors who come and recite.

Domitian and Julia sat at one of the great rounded ends of the table. At Domitian's further side sat a man of the State—a certain general, I think, but I remember not his name. Julia would not have had another woman next to Caesar.

The order of seating was arranged by the stewards at the command of Julia, though sometimes I think the guests pleased themselves in their placing.

Thou knowest, I am not supposed to do anything at these banquets. I am there because Julia has a fancy that I complete her if I stand behind her chair, and she likes to have me there to fetch anything or to carry a message to my master.

Sabinus had the Empress beside him at the opposite end of the table. She looked thin and worn, as usual very well dressed, but as though she were scarcely able to support the weight of her grandeur, and she talked little and in a rather hard voice. She likes my master—but no one could help liking Sabinus.

Julia used to say that Domitia was dull enough to suit Sabinus, and that she herself liked to have lively company round her.

Pliny was on a couch1 for three near the middle of the table with my Domina Valeria on one side of him, and his wife Antæia on the other. Julia was rather cross about Antæia, who is very young and simple, and said that if children were brought to feasts their protectors should not need to hold them by the hand all the time.

1 Couches at meals. "Couches were usually made to hold three. It was customary for Roman ladies to be seated at meals, specially on ceremonial occasions." Ovid's Amores, Bk. I, El. 4. Bohn's Translation. Note.
Julia would have liked Pliny to be near her, for wherever Pliny is the talk goes well, and Julia has small art in conversation.

Pliny took the speech as a joke and Antæia made no trouble; she just smiled and, part of the time, Pliny held her hand. She was quite happy to listen to him talking to other people—she thought him so clever. Afterwards I heard she was studying to please him; he was teaching her and she had also a tutor. She was small and pretty with a bright look and soft almond-shaped eyes, wide in the middle; she did not paint her face, but she used to try to make herself look beautiful. Her slaves did that for her. She had a head-woman who dressed her very well.

Thou dost always want to know how people are dressed. Julia is all jewels to-night. She has strings of rubies and emeralds and pearls and some large amethysts in front and one very large ruby. It is so like Julia to mix them all up like that. Her stola is white, but it is so heavily embroidered that one does not see much else and, thou knowest, stolas are not supposed to be ornamented except just round the edge. . . .

My Domina Valeria? Oh, she is quite different from all the other women. She is wearing a white stola of silk—soft, lovely stuff, fastened on the shoulder with amethysts. She will be sorry she has put on the amethysts because of Julia's envy. Julia would give her eyes for these stones. Valeria has beautiful amethysts—two bands round the upper part of the arm and two bands at the wrists with slender gold chains catching them together. Except for these, her arms are quite bare, but hanging back from her shoulders she has white sleeves lined with pale violet and edged by a strip of white fur. On her head is a gold circlet which has points going up tipped with amethysts and pearls between. There is a close collar of pearls round her neck. She never has her neck so very much open as some of the Roman women, and to-night she is wearing her palla. Julia has taken off hers, but Julia likes to shew more of herself. My domina's palla is of pale violet embroidered in white silk and silver.

Valeria is not greatly given to talk, but her manner is gracious, and she doth always speak freely to Pliny who, she says, does not say foolish things, and knows how to treat a woman.

Tacitus, too, is her friend. He was sitting beside a woman who writes poetry—Sulpicia.1 Yes, I think that is her name. He talked a little across the table to Valeria, and when people began to move about he came round near to her. I am very glad that she has these two this evening—it will make all the difference to her pleasure—and that she is not at Julia's part of the table. She does not like Domitian. . . . Oh, of course, he admires her. All men admire Valeria, but she will have none of that kind of admiration. . . .

Now there is something which I do not understand about Caesar and my domina. Always there is Julia; she goes on while others come and go. But I have heard it said, though Valeria never spoke of it to me, that one day he did something which offended my domina. I suppose he was making love to her or trying to.

Yes, her husband—Valerius Paulinus—he also is at the banquet. He sits on a couch with Martial and a Roman lady, who is a friend of Julia, called Galla.

Thou sayest that thou hast read about Galla. But her hair is not really golden if Martial says that. It is light brown,2 and she powders it with gold

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1 Sulpicia, a Roman poetess. See Appendix 2, Bk. II.
2 The fashion among Roman ladies of wearing yellow hair. See Appendix 3, Bk. II.
dust. This is a fashion with some Roman ladies, but it is not considered a fitting custom, being a mark of those women who are of light behaviour. My Domina Valeria would never do this. But it is true that for her there is no need, seeing that her hair, if it be brown like Galla's, has in it beautiful golden lights.

Paulinus has on a flame-coloured tunic that suits him well. He is dark, with a good deal of hair on his face—Valeria does not like men to have much hair on their faces, but she would never ask him to take his off. He is not very tall—broad and strong, he looks fat without being so. The muscles shew on his arms, which are big and firm and white. He is very much a man, though a man of common kind, and his eyes have in them the look of one who likes to please himself.

No, the man my domina loves is not here to-night, though he visits at Julia's house. But Julia would not ask him to meet the Emperor.—I am not sure—but I do not think that Caesar doth greatly favour Licinius Sura.

Oh yes, there are many others here. Not far from my master are the Domina Domitilla and Flavius Clemens. Domitilla has a beautiful face—it is the beauty of peace and goodness—regular features, a soft skin of palish yellow, a smooth curved nose and a rather wide mouth with a sweet smile. Her hair is brown, streaked with grey, she always wears it parted in the middle, waving over her ears, and knotted low upon her neck. She doth not favour Jewellery, but I remember two quaint golden pins that she wears in her hair.

Flavius Clemens is better looking than my master Sabinus. He is tall and fair; his hair falls in curls to his shoulder, and he wears a beard.

Nyria resumes her story:

"Now that they were seated at table, Julia ceased from her private talk with Caesar. It seemed to me that Domitian was in angry humour, and that because of it Julia signed to the flagon-bearers to fill his cup, and when he had drunk she asked him if he liked the wine, saying it was a special vintage from a place of which I know not the name.

Domitian answered that it was better than he should think Sabinus had the wit to purchase, at which Julia laughed and said that, in truth, Sabinus was not a wise wine-buyer, but that no liquor came on her table which she had not herself sampled.

And thereat, Domitian, whose face had been somewhat scowling, seemed to smile, and he replied that he might have known it, seeing that mere water ran in Sabinus's veins and that Julia's blood being of lustier quality must need the best vintages to keep it rich and fiery.

Methinks Julia was pleased at this, for she bent closer to Domitian and whispered again. . . . They began to eat of the pungent dishes of which I have told thee, and afterwards slaves came staggering under the piles of different meats in mighty platters of silver. After each course bowls of scented water were handed and delicate napkins that the guests might wash and dry their fingers.

Domitian noticed the silver plate, of which there is much in my master's family, and said, as if in jest, though I thought there was meaning in his voice, 'that were Sabinus's head ever forfeit to the State there would be a goodly haul for Caesar.'

1 Flavius Sabinus, Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. See Appendix 4, Bk. II.
'My lord forgets,' said Julia, 'that Sabinus would leave a widow, and it is in her that his estate would be vested.'

At which Domitian looked at her full with that reddish light in his eyes which sometimes, if he turns them on me, makes me afeard, and answered that should he be that Cæsar he would not leave unclaimed the most valuable part of Sabinus's property.

Julia bridled her head and retorted saucily that she might hold a different opinion on that matter.

Domitian turned a little and again looked at her, and he said that Domitian was not the man to go against a lady's wishes, but that he thought that he knew what in such case those wishes would be.

By the way he spoke and looked I think he meant that he knew she would be pleased to go to him. Julia got very red and said that there could be no keeping of any secret from the knowledge of great Cæsar.

I heard all their talk, for Julia would have me close behind her, and if she dropped her fan or kerchief or aught else, as she was wont to do, I had to go still nearer to pick such things up for her. Thus I saw also the face of the Emperor when he looked at Julia and his red eyes glowed again as he said in seeming banter that, after all, the change might suit her better, for if Sabinus gave her silver, he could give her gold.

Now Julia protested that 'twas shameful of Cæsar to make fun of her poor silver plate, seeing that she put before him the best she had, and that all her care was to give a fitting reception to the greatest of the Cæsars.

She smiled at him and her shoulders shook, and she became very red, and Domitian, who was getting red too, and full of wine, replied that truly he had no cause to complain of her generosity, for she had always given him of her very best, and that so long as she gave him herself he would not be particular as to the manner of her reception.

Then Julia felt, I think, that he had said too much, for the people on either side seemed to be listening. She only laughed and said 'twas kind of Caesar to speak thus, and called his attention to the sconces of gold and enamel which held the torches on the wall, and had cost, she said, a pretty penny.

Domitian looked about him and muttered, and when he turned his head he caught sight of me and grinned but did not speak. Directly afterwards the General next him remarked upon the marble figures around the wine-fountain and Domitian said that the prettiest figure had been put in the background out of sight.

Julia heard him and asked what he meant, and she scowled at me so that I felt afeard of what might happen, when Cæsar answered her that the prettiest figure was myself, and that if I were undressed I should look very well in the centre of the table, instead of one of the marble images that upheld the fount of wine. At that, there was much coarse laughter and talk about the shapes of those images of naked women, and I got me to the other side of Julia and, stooping low, hid my face.

So for a few minutes I did not hear what was spoken until there came some mention of the Empress, and Julia said plainly that she thought little of Domitia's looks that evening. Whereon, Domitian said that she was but treating them to the faces she wore at home, and as it was no pleasure to sit opposite them he did not care to dine often with her at his table.

'But she is smiling now,' he added, 'and it may be that to Domitia Sabinus is better company than his own wife finds him.'
"The two are well matched for intelligence," said Julia, whose way it was to speak sharp things which she thought were clever.

Now all the first part of the evening Domitian seemed to be in ill-humour, and when the General on his other side remarked upon the grand manner in which everything was done in this house, Cæsar said sarcastically that it had indeed the appearance of a princely household.

Then Julia put in proudly:

"Truly it is as Cæsar knoweth a princely household, and so it should be seeing that its mistress is the daughter of a Cæsar."

She looked at Domitian as though challenging him to deny her right, and his manner changed somewhat. Nevertheless it still shewed displeasure as he said in a surly tone, that "though Julia might be a rightful princess, Sabinus is far from being a prince," and he added, "When I gave permission for Julia's lictors, I did not intend that Sabinus's servants should wear the royal livery."1

I understood now what had angered him, for the men had received new liveries, and a fine show they made in white and gold with crimson pieces down the front.

Thou knowest the house slaves were all clad alike. The outdoor slaves and bearers wore another kind of dress.

Julia seemed to consider what she should answer. Then she spoke meekly:

"If Cæsar will condescend to observe the men closely, he will see that there is a difference in the gold facings and that the fashion of the liveries is not the same as that of his own servants."

To which he replied more gently that 'twas strange to hear her make excuses for Sabinus. At which she shrugged her shoulders and said that 'twas no use in blaming Sabinus for 'twas she who managed all things in her own house, and that should she make a mistake she must needs bear the consequences. She looked very handsome and defiant as she spoke and the Emperor seemed pleased at her thus answering him, for he only said with a laugh that he did not consider that a fair division, for that if she took the trouble of management it was but just that Sabinus should shoulder the responsibility. And he added something about the marriage laws which decree that one partner must abide by whatsoever the other may choose to do.

Said Julia laughing, that she felt certain such was not Cæsar's true way of thinking, for she knew that his views were more advanced, and that she thought society would be improved when he should remodel the laws of marriage.

Cæsar replied that he proposed to set about that business shortly and that 'twere best to begin it by dissolving a few of the worst-assorted unions. He might start, he said, with his own and Julia's.

'Twas plain by Julia's eager look that she followed his thought.

But he went back to the subject of the liveries, saying that he should not forget what Sabinus had done, nor should he permit it, and that if Julia were impatient for her slaves to wear the royal livery she must wait until they were the royal slaves.

Julia said no more on that matter, but ate and drank cheerfully. We all knew that Julia had no love for my master.

And yet as I stood behind Julia's chair and could see my master at the far

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1 Nyria uses incorrectly the term "royal": it should be "imperial." For Domitian's anger at the assumption of the Imperial liveries, see Appendix 5, Bk. II.
end talking pleasantly to the Empress, I thought it strange that any woman should not prefer him to Domitian.

I heard Julia say something about Sabinus having been chosen as Consul by the Senate and the people, and Domitian answered dourly that Sabinus was not yet a Consul, and that though the voice of the Senate might elect him, it was the voice of Caesar which made the appointment. ①

NYRIA (resuming her account of the banquet): "I think it was when Caesar spake thus that Julia sent me on a message to my master concerning the healths of certain persons for the drinking of which she wished him to give the order. For thou knowest there was a custom, towards the end of the feast, of drinking the healths of various people and my master would speak to the head-steward whose duty it was to call out the names. It was then that they drank from the fountain of wine in the centre of the table. One of the chief stewards would dip a long silver ladle into the hollow guarded by these statues of naked women and would fill from it a great flagon, out of which he poured into the guests' glasses. It was sweet and very rich wine, unlike the wine of thinner quality which played through the spouts across to the four corners.

The people made way for that steward so that he could reach the fountain easily. He had a different badge on his arm from the rest of the table-slaves, who, though all in the same livery, wore, each one, a badge marking his class.

The first toast was always the toast of Caesar, when the Chief Steward would address the master thus:

'Most Noble and Illustrious Flavius Sabinus, most Noble Clemens, Nobles and most Noble Ladies, glasses are filled and it is now our humble duty and our highest privilege to drink to the greatest of the Caesars. Hail to Domitian!'

Sabinus would stand, but most of the others did not: they waved their right arms high and shouted, 'We drink to thee, Domitian. Hail, Caesar!'

Domitian would smile and lean forward and bow. If it pleased him, he would make a sign to the toast-master and give a toast. This time it was 'To the Most Noble Julia.'

But the Empress Domitia's health had to be drunk before Julia's. If Domitian were in a good temper, he would say:

'Hail to thee, Domitia! If not, he would be silent.

Afterwards the healths of the Consuls—if any were present—would be drunk. It was always customary that the cup should be quaffed entirely and the drinker would turn the brim of his cup to the table. Then a slave, leaning over, would wipe the table with a damask napkin. People who drank out of glass cups had them rinsed between the toasts. Domitian, who used his own cup, did not have it washed. But the cup must be drained. For if the drops from the different toasts had mingled, that would have meant an ill augury.

Now, there is a thing I should tell thee—about the grapes I used to squeeze for Caesar's cup. That would come nearer the end when he had already drunk a good deal. Julia would choose a specially fine bunch from a basket of fruit that I handed her, and likewise the ivory pressers, and with these

① For the election of consuls and the time of their entering into office, see Appendix 6, Bk. II.
she would squeeze the juice of two or three of the grapes and I would squeeze the rest into the cup and add a very little water—it is considered not quite right for Roman ladies to take no water with their wine, but Julia liketh not much water with hers. Then, afterward, I would put before her a tray holding many small bottles of essences and she would mix a few drops of essence with the grape-juice in the cup so that it doth seem some wonderful wine of strange and choice flavour. This cup is thought to be a great compliment and it must be prepared by someone near the person—not an ordinary slave, so I have to do it for Julia in her presence and she doth give it to the Emperor with her own hand. I think that oft when she doth command the cup 'tis to turn Caesar's thoughts, or haply to excite his interest if the mimes and dancers who perform on the platform between the courses have not for him sufficient attraction.

But when Paris\(^1\) doth sing and dance none have eyes or ears for aught else, and to-night Julia had engaged him at I know not what great cost.

Of course, he was not among the company, and I heard that he was ill-pleased at having to wait and eat in the antechamber prepared for the other performers—the more so because the Empress was Julia's guest.

I would have thee understand that Domitia was very fond of Paris and there was great talk and scandal concerning her and him. But the worst of that came afterwards. The talk had begun not long before when at a public performance at which the Emperor was not present, Domitia gave to Paris a mark of favour that was considered ill-fitting from the wife of Caesar to a common actor who in truth doth rank no higher than a gladiator. For at the end of his dance, as Paris made obeisance before the royal seat, the Empress had bidden him come closer, and, taking a chain from round her neck, had with her own hands hung it upon the dancer's breast.

'Twas told in our household that Caesar had severely reprimanded Domitia for her unseemly act, but I know not how this may have been.

If it please thee I can tell thee well of the appearance and the art of Paris, for often have I seen him perform at the houses where I went in waiting on my mistress Julia, and also at the public shows.

He was not young—about thirty-five, I suppose—tall, handsome, brown-looking. He had brown hair, brown eyes, a brownish face, and a bright red colour in his cheeks. His limbs were finely shaped. There was flesh upon them but not fat, and he had not great muscle as have the gladiators. For the different parts he impersonated he wore different dresses, but in some of his dances he had no clothing save a loin cloth and, because of his beautiful form, the Romans liked him best thus. His motions had a wondrous grace, and he danced, 'twas said, like one whom the gods inspired.

Usually he began in playful fashion as though 'twere the Muse of Comedy he sought to serve. And then the spirit of music would sway him. For, as he played upon the lyre which he held, his movements would become soft and long and slow, in unison with the measure. And then he would stand still and sing. His singing was marvellous fine art, they said. Of that I know nothing, but it sounded in my ear wild harmonies that stirred my heart and truly, it was wondrous sweet.

This night of the banquet Domitia kept very still with her eyes fixed on Paris.

'Twas Julia who set him his part in the performance and he gave that

\(^1\) Paris the dancer and lover of Domitia. See Appendix 7, Bk. II.
strange song and dance which had brought him much renown, and in which verily it would appear that he sang and danced his life away.

At the end 'twas like a dream. But, at the beginning, he played riotously in the manner of the Bacchae with a wreath of vine-leaves upon his head, at first flinging himself into the most fantastic postures and the swiftest movements so that all felt like to dance themselves. Then gradually he went to a slower measure, and to gliding motions, lifting his feet above the floor and sustaining himself above it so that it seemed as though he belonged to the air, and did not need the ground for support. For he would raise his feet higher in each movement and likewise his arms and his head till he looked as if he would fain float away upwards far from all touch of earth. So, for some moments he rested, as it were, in mid-air, then took the wreath from his head and flung it from him, and came back to earth again.

But now he danced in soft, dreamlike fashion, seeming to draw away into the shadow until he vanished altogether.

The people called for him and forced him to return, applauding him mightily and throwing flowers, gold, and ornaments from their persons at his feet. And Paris would step forward and bow and smile, with gestures even more graceful than those he had made when he danced.

Domitian threw him nothing. He sat with his hands on the arms of his chair and looked and sometimes laughed, and from time to time whispered to Julia.

Julia never troubled to show favour. If she were not pleased, one knew it. If she were, she regarded it as her right. Pliny walked up and put something in Paris' hand. Others did the same. But Domitia sat cold and stiff, just looking at him, her eyes fixed and shining, the corners of her mouth twitching a little, otherwise making no sign. You would have felt very sorry for the Empress.

Then Julia broke off her whispering to Domitian and spoke in a loud voice to Paris, congratulating him upon the favour shown to him by her guests.

But, said Julia, the success could not be complete unless the Empress should give some sign of appreciation. Could it be that Paris had failed to win the Empress' approval?

Paris only bowed. It was not his place to answer. He looked awkward and moved as if to retire. All might have passed off had not Julia whispered again to Domitian. Then, in an imperious voice, Caesar deputed the Empress to give sign to Paris of their joint approval of his performance.

Domitia turned very white and kept from looking at Julia, who watched to see what she would do.

Domitian enquired if there were a jewel the Empress was wearing which she might present to the dancer, and Domitia seemed not to hear or not to understand his meaning. But Julia made sign to one of her house-slaves, desiring him to take Caesar's orders, and Domitian bade the man convey them to the Empress.

Domitia looked very angry and afterwards I heard that many remarked to each other on the indignity put upon the Empress in forcing her to receive Caesar's command through the lips of Julia's slave. She seemed frightened, too, and nervous, and began feeling her jewels as if considering the matter. She was foolish thus to hesitate for, as she raised her arm, Domitian exclaimed that he saw on her wrist a certain bracelet which it was his pleasure she should give to Paris.
Domitia went still whiter and clutched at the bracelet with her other hand as if she were loath to part with it. 'Twas of green stones engraved in gold and linked by a chain that hung loosely.

Now will I tell thee a secret that was known to few beyond Stephanus, the goldsmith—my good friend as already thou knowest. The bracelet was a gift to Domitia from Paris who had paid Stephanus a goodly sum for it. . . . And I think that Julia and Domitian guessed this and that 'twas the cause of Caesar's insistence.

Thus, with all eyes upon her, Domitia was compelled to remove the bracelet and she was about to put it into the hand of Vibius the steward to take to Paris.

But Domitian gave a great laugh and bade the Empress pay Paris the highest compliment by clasping with her own fingers the bracelet on his arm. 'For,' said Caesar, 'the favour of an Empress should not be lightly held nor lightly bestowed.'

Very cold and proud, Domitia rose and went to the platform where Paris bent on one knee, his head bowed, his face crimson, not daring to lift his eyes to hers.

Domitia seemed horribly frightened when she turned back and saw Domitian's look after she had obeyed his behest. For she must have guessed that he and Julia knew the truth about the bracelet. Domitian grinned and showed his teeth between his thick red lips, and Julia threw herself back in her chair and laughed outright. I think Domitia could have killed Julia at that moment.

After Paris had gone, some Jewish women sang songs of their own country—strange wailing songs—I did not care for them. The women were dark and handsome with large dark eyes and long noses and long black hair and pale faces. They kept on beating their knees and swaying from side to side as they sang, and there was something curious about their singing and about themselves that made you look and listen.

Domitian did not care at all for them. He said the women were like sour plums and gave him a pain inside, and that he wished for something more cheerful.

I laughed a little at that. I could not help it. He must have heard me laugh, for then he said that he was sure Nyria could sing better than that, even if she had a cold in her head.

I did not want him to notice me, and I tried to get behind Julia's chair again. But he leaned back and spoke to me, saying that it was not the custom in Rome for pretty women to hide their faces, and that there was no need for me to set a new fashion.

Julia looked round and scowled. He saw that he was vexing her, but he had drunk much wine and did not seem to care. 'Come on, Curly-locks,' he said, 'come round here. My footstool is big enough for you and for my feet as well.'

I turned to Julia to help me, but she would not. She stared straight down her nose, which always meant that she was angered. But she dared not gainsay Domitian. He caught hold of my dress and would have had me sit on his footstool.

'If it please Caesar,' I said, 'I would rather stand.' But he looked displeased yet let me be, and there came on to the stage some black men who made a show of swallowing swords and serpents, and Domitian laughed at
some of their pranks, though, he said, 'twas amusement for boys and nothing else.

At that Julia said she was sorry Caesar was so ill-entertained. To which he answered that, on the contrary, he had been well entertained, and most of all by herself, which somewhat restored Julia's humour.

But he would not leave me alone. ' Why,' he said, ' should not Nyria do something for her keep to amuse them? '

' Nyria is but a barbarian brat who can do nothing but serve in women's rooms,' said Julia.

Then Caesar said he'd warrant I'd learned some tricks from my own country-women. Could I not show him how they clad themselves? ' Twould be sport for the Roman ladies and their lords to watch the robing and unrobing of a princess of my conquered land.

Julia laughed loud and said sneeringly, ' The brat says she was a princess herself, and so she ought to know all about their ways and manners. '

I burned with shame, remembering that Caesar had likened me to the marble women round the wine fountain. He pulled my hair and asked if putting red on her cheeks were not the first part of a German princess's robing.

Now the gold fringe on his tunic caught in some of Julia's chains as she leaned towards him and, while she unhitched herself, he asked who had clad her so bravely this evening. Had it been Nyria?

' No,' Julia said, the brat had been late of coming in, and all the evening she had suffered because of the clumsy tiring of one of her other dressers.

Said Domitian, ' How was it that the maid was late? ' and demanded of me where I had been. So I answered him that the Most Noble had given me permission after I had done the flowers to go out by myself for a while, and that I had walked that morning upon the hill-side.

Then Julia cried wrathfully that I was a wild thing, good for nothing but to tramp the hills and had best go back to my barbarians, and that she knew not why so much talk was made about me.

Whereon Domitian laughed and answered that it was in Julia's interests that he wished to know why I had been late. Did a slave understand so little of her duty that she was thus neglectful in performing it? Moreover, as Caesar concerned himself with the welfare of his people, it behoved him to discover the position for which I might be fitted, since it was not that of a slave.

I understood not Caesar's mood of banter and knew not how to reply. For I did not want Julia to learn that I had visited the Domina Valeria and had talked a little with Stephanus. And I would have thee know that upon Euphena truly lay the blame of my not coming in time for my mistress' dressing. But I liked not to get the old black woman into trouble.

Now I must needs pause in my tale of the banquet and, as thou willest, I will tell thee of Euphena, the old Ethiopian woman, and how she prevented me from tiring Julia's head.

Thou knowest that Euphena lived in one of the little huts round the outer courtyard where the slaves dwell. ' Twas a good hut which had two rooms in front and, behind, a kitchen and sleeping chamber.

Euphena was very ugly, though she would make the slaves laugh by boasting that she had been accounted beautiful among her own people. She was black and shiny like marble, and her face, I thought, must resemble the
faces of witches, so grim was it and her yellowish eyes so oft sending forth
a strange dark fire.

She, too, did jeer at me for saying that I was a princess, and would pro-
claim that she herself was the true princess and came from a court far
greater than any I could prate of. She had been married and had a baby
girl who died just before Julia gave me to her to look after, telling her that
I would serve instead. But Euphena hated me because I am fair, and because
I had been put in the place of her own child which was black.

Thus thou dost understand, it was Euphena’s business to see that I had
my bath rightly and my hair well combed, and that my robe was ready,
so that I should not be kept from my work for Julia by having to dress
myself.

Nevertheless, on that day of Julia’s banquet, Euphena did have the robe
prepared and the combs for my hair ready, likewise the bands. I had three
bands of gold braid for the evening to keep my hair back—and I might have
dressed myself in good time had I been allowed to enter the hut.

But Euphena was squatting in front of the door and at first she would
not speak, so busy was she in muttering to herself over the great circle she
had made upon the ground with curious marks drawn within it. She was
casting my master’s fate. Afterwards she said that she was doing it at this
hour because the stars in the sky were rightly placed, and that she could only
read the signs when the stars were in a certain position in the heavens. But
I have no understanding of such matters.

Euphena had learned the lore in her own country. She used to get
white sand from the edges of the quarries. Then she would distil a mixture
from berries which Stephanus gave her and would keep the mixture in
bottle until it became potent. This she would mix with her white sand on the
ground and would set forth those strange figures upon it.

Now, when I made towards the door to enter, she drew herself up on her
knees and thrust out her arms to keep me away, saying that I must not
step over the circle she had drawn upon the ground before she had read the
figures.

I said that I should be late for the robing of Julia if I did not go in at once
and get myself ready. Did I think, she cried, that the destinies would wait
for me? It mattered little, she said, whether a thing so insignificant as I
were late for any robing.

And she stooped again and went on muttering.

A crowd of slaves had come around and were leaning on the little wall
around her hut. The men were all dressed for the banquet and were eager
to know what Euphena read. But she took no heed and went on with her
muttering.

I stamped my foot and told her that I must enter for Julia had bidden me,
and Julia’s word was law.

At that, Euphena flared up and spoke.

‘What is Julia that she should rule Rome? Her word is law indeed, but
yet lawgivers may be laid low, and the seeds are even now sown of that which
shall bring forth her doom.’

There was a stir among the slaves. All of them hated Julia, and they
pressed Euphena to tell more. For, said they, would not our master Sabinus
glory in his freedom?

‘Sabinus and freedom have no commerce with each other,’ said Euphena.

‘For in greater degree than any one of us, Sabinus is a slave—slave to a
female tyrant and soon to be slave and victim of the next most cruel tyrant in Rome.'

I was not able to hear further, for I passed behind Euphena and tried to squeeze through the doorway. For a while, her outstretched arms hindered me, being strong as bars of iron. And then at last, she dropped them and let me go. She said that my garment had caught the grey ash and that I had made for myself a part in the evil fate she had spoken of, which ere long would fall upon many in Rome.

I laughed and would not listen. But when I went within, I heard some of the men shout after me that whatever harm might befall, Nyria should not suffer: they would see to that.

And Euphena went on with her muttering to the ground.

I sped to Julia's room as soon as I was dressed. But 'twas long past the appointed hour and Julia was exceeding wroth. For another girl—one Thanna to whom I had taught the art—had been forced to tire her in my absence and had not pleased my mistress in her doing of my work.

The Instrument's speech falters and it is clear that her strength is becoming exhausted. After a few moments' pause, she speaks again. "I think we ought to stop. But there is much yet about the Banquet that I can tell thee."
CHAPTER II
THE BLACK SORCERESS

Nyria tells of how Euphena read the stars, and of how she made certain direful prophecies concerning the fates of those present at the Banquet which Julia gave.

Nyria: "Thou knowest that when I left off from the Banquet to tell thee about Euphena, Domitian was trying to make me do something for his amusement. He wanted me to sing or dance or play. But I can do none of these things. I have always been very fond of music, but no one ever taught me to play on any instrument and I have forgotten the songs of my own country. I only know the songs which the slaves sing to the different gods and in praise of the Saturnalia. . . . Shall I tell thee about the Saturnalia? But the time for the Saturnalia is not yet. I had better go on about the banquet.

Then Domitian said to me, 'If thou canst do nothing thyself, thou must find a substitute.'

The black men were just finishing their performance. But I did not see what they were doing. I was too frightened, for the Emperor was looking at me.

'How can I find that, Lord?' I said. 'When Caesar commands, his slaves must obey. But the Most Noble has ordered these to perform before Caesar and if Caesar be not satisfied with them, how can I, who am the meanest of his slaves, please him better?'

I think he was only teasing me, but I did not know that then. He kept on saying that I must supply an artist if I could not do anything myself. Then he asked if I had not been fooling with the artists—with Paris perhaps—when I came in from my walk? And was not that the real reason why I had been late?

I said 'no,' and when he urged me, I told him the truth.

'Indeed, my lord, I did hasten back. But when I looked into the banquet-ing-hall I saw that one of the men had changed somewhat the flower decoration for which I am accountable, though I do it not all myself. Therefore I must needs replace the form of it as the Most Noble had made direction . . .'

I explained that thus I had been hindered a little and that afterwards, when I hurried to Euphena's hut, I had been further delayed at the door of it. And then I stopped and stammered lest I should be telling tales; and Caesar questioned me sharply, 'Whom saw you at Euphena's door?'

'None, my lord, but Euphena herself.'

Said Caesar, 'I know not who Euphena may be. By her name she should be a female. Else should I have construed "Euphena" into "lover." Dost thou speak the truth, child? Was there none but Euphena there?'

'It was so, my lord. Euphena would not let me pass. Euphena was—'

I stammered again; and again Caesar questioned me sternly.
'Answer. What was Euphena doing?'
'May it please Cæsar, Euphena was reading the stars.'
He drew himself up at that and leaned forward, his mouth agape, his eyes brightening. Cæsar, they said, feared the astrologers.²
'Oh, ho! So we have a star-reader in the fair Euphena! Though I know not how Euphena could read the stars, seeing it was daylight.'
He turned to Julia. 'Produce Euphena,' he said.
Julia shrugged her great shoulders and answered boldly:
'How shall I produce Euphena? Does Cæsar suppose that I know the name of every slave and underling in this household? Cæsar, it appears, enjoys the converse of slaves, but Julia has other matters to fill her mind.'
Domitian smiled disagreeably. 'Produce Euphena,' he said.
I think Julia saw that she had spoken too straightforwardly, for she took a cringing tone.
'How shall I produce the slave, my lord? It is some underling the brat knows of, not I. Or mayhap a street beggar, or the slave of some other household.'
And we who listened knew that Julia lied. For she did know Euphena.
Domitian called me to him. 'Canst thou produce Euphena, little one?'
I looked at Julia, sorely frightened.
'If thou dost wish, my lord,' I answered, not knowing what else to speak.
'But Euphena—is—'
I was going to say old and ugly, but I thought Euphena would not like that—yet it was the truth—and that Cæsar would not care to look upon her black face. Or that he would scoff at it: and though Euphena had not been kind to me I did not want her scoffed at. And so instead, I said, 'Euphena is—timid.'
'Timid!' Cæsar repeated. 'Is she then a young and lovely maid? And has she yellow hair and turquoise eyes like Nyria's?'
'No, may it please Cæsar. Euphena is—' and still I knew not how to speak of her.
'It seems that Euphena is something wonderful and mysterious,' said Cæsar. 'Of that we will judge for ourselves, eh, Nyria?'
'As it may please Cæsar,' I said, and I made a movement to draw away.
'Hold! Stay a moment, child,' he said. 'Euphena was reading the stars thou dost say. How could that be since the stars were not yet in the sky?'
'The stars were in the sky, my lord, and Euphena knoweth their places for she has much strange lore. Euphena says that it is only when a man's birth-stars are in a certain position that she can read his fate.'
'And whose fate was Euphena reading?' asked Domitian.
'I had like to have bitten out my tongue. But I answered him.
'The fates of my master and of the Most Noble, may it please Cæsar.'
'Oh, ho! Dost thou hear, Julia? Art thou not anxious to know what the stars and Euphena said of thee?'
But Julia pouted and her brow darkened.
'I listen not to slaves' talk,' she answered.
'No, that is left for Cæsar,' replied Domitian. 'Go, child, and fetch Euphena.'
I sped, for I dared not disobey Cæsar though I knew well that Euphena would flay me for my reward. It may be that the same thought struck Cæsar,
² Domitian's fear of the astrologers. See Appendix 8, Bk. II.
for he stayed me before I reached the door, bidding Vibius the steward call me back.

'Come, stand again beside my chair, child,' he said. 'Thou art so small we might easily lose sight of thee.' He nodded curtly to Vibius. 'Do, you, fetch Euphena.'

I crouched behind Caesar's great golden chair for I was ashamed to face Euphena. All the room waited for her coming. Some laughed and said that now we should hear State secrets, and others that those who desired to question the gods should stand forward to hear what the voices of the stars had to say to them. But courtesy required that all should give place to Caesar and to Sabinus and Julia.

Julia had no mind to see Euphena. I could tell that. She plied a great fan of green and gold tipped with red feathers, and I knew by the movement of her hands that she was displeased and thought, 'Alas! there will be more strokes for me to-morrow and I am sore of skin already.'

Presently Euphena came between Vibius and Bibbi—that was one of the men who used to beat us, a strong man too. Bibbi was not an Ethiopian, but had white blood in him of which he thought much. At the Saturnalia, Bibbi was the grandest of us all. He had hold of Euphena's arm and loosed it when she came near. They pushed her before them till she was at the front.

But she made no obeisance to Caesar. Once she looked at him, and then at Julia, and I saw Julia look at her and it seemed to me that she shrank from Euphena's eyes. One might have thought that Julia and not Euphena was the frightened slave.

Euphena did not seem to care. She held herself proud and upright. She was a little shrivelled old woman and the bones stuck out on her arms and neck. She wore a scarlet petticoat and orange-coloured jacket which should have been buttoned to her throat. But the top buttons were undone and half her skinny breast was showing. On a cord, round her neck, she had a brownish stone with unknown marks upon it—a charm she said, and at night Euphena muttered the prayers which she said were graven on the stone. She feared greatly to lose this charm. Some of us would tease her, saying that her stone had not brought her much happiness. For Euphena had suffered a good deal. But she would get angry and answer that the charm had brought her the greatest happiness of all that could come to her, because it gave her power to bring distress on those she hated. A good many of us were afraid of Euphena. I think I feared her less than most because, although she beat me and was always cross, I do not think she ever really wished me harm.

She hated Julia worse than anybody. To-night, she looked at Julia with scorn in her eyes. 'Twas not for her to speak first, but I almost think she would have done so.

Domitian stared at her and then he gave a great long laugh.

'So thou art Euphena!' he said, and laughed still louder, and many in the room laughed with him. It was a way they had to gain favour. Julia was always first to echo Caesar's laugh, but to-night she laughed not before Euphena.

'So thou art the lovely Euphena!' he said again, yet laughing.

'Thus, in Rome, they call me,' she answered. 'But I am no Roman woman.'

With that there came a fresh burst of laughter.
'Truly thou art no Roman woman, for Roman women are not so fair as thou art, Euphena,' mocked Domitian.

'Fairness is but skin deep,' said Euphena. 'Look for it in the eyes of those who lead honest lives, Caesar, not on the faces of Roman women. . . . Nevertheless,' Euphena went on, 'I know full well that I was fair when Roman robbers stole me from my kingdom. And what I once was, that I must ever be. Therein is a deeper truth than thou dost understand, O Caesar!'

'Ho! So thou wouldst teach Caesar!' scoffed Domitian.

'A thankless task,' said Euphena. 'But there are many things I could teach Caesar that it would be well Caesar should learn.'

Some of us looked to hear her ordered fifty lashes, but it seemed to me that Euphena's words and bearing were what Caesar had desired to amuse him. For he laughed still more.

'That's as it should be,' he said. 'For know that I have sent for thee here to-night that thou mightst teach me, as well as these noble lords and ladies, something of that which we do not know. For I suppose thou wilt admit, Euphena, that there are others in Rome who are ignorant besides Caesar?'

Euphena looked him in the eyes and said,

'No man is truly ignorant save he who thinks there is nothing for him to learn. But there are many more important things in the universe than only those which Domitian holds of account.'

'Well, well, we will grant that we know nothing and that thou knowest everything,' said Caesar impatiently, 'at least for to-night, since thou art here to give us instruction in the wisdom of the stars. So speak on, fairest Euphena, and be not afraid that thou wilt suffer for over-boldness. I pledge the word of a Caesar that whatever thou sayest, it shall go unpunished.'

'What wouldst thou have me tell thee, Caesar?' asked Euphena.

'That which thou wast reading to-day by the light of the invisible stars,' he answered. 'Or perhaps thou hast some other means of augury?'

'Means are many and all are good in their fashion,' she said. 'The book of Fate is most often closed to man, but should a page lie open, one who has eyes to see may read it easily.'

'So! Then read our fates. First, tell us that of the Most Noble.' And he bowed to Julia.

Then I, looking at Julia, saw her shrink. For Euphena's eyes were fixed upon her.

'The Most Noble?' Euphena repeated. 'Of whom dost thou speak?'

'Of thy mistress, the Most Noble Julia, woman,' said Caesar angrily, and Euphena boldly answered,

'My mistress Julia has no right to the title of Most Noble save that granted her by the courtesy of Caesar.'

'How! What dost thou say?' Domitian shouted in fury. 'No right! Woman, I pledged the word of a Caesar that thou shouldst go unharmed, but I bargained not for insults to thy mistress.'

But Euphena seemed heedless of his wrathful words.

'Caesar demanded a page from the book of Fate on which Julia's destiny is written,' she said. 'Be it so. Is it of the past or the future that he wishes me to tell?'

Meanwhile, many of the guests had left their seats and there were murmurs of reprobation at her audacity. But all were silent when Caesar spoke.

'Begin at the beginning. What were the auguries which hung round the birth of the Most Noble Julia, daughter of Titus?'
Over the cradle of Tatiana, the only daughter of Titus, were auguries of untimely death, none of lust and bloodshed. The daughter of Titus passed away in infancy. Before ye sits the daughter of Furnilla and of Lupus\(^1\) the scavenger. No daughter of Titus, she.

Then a sudden stillness fell, and then, at the back, some whispered to each other. Afterwards, I heard 'twas said that there had been scandal in Rome which Vespasian forbade to be spoken, before Titus divorced his wife Marcia Furnilla. But of that, I know naught. It was as though, for a minute, rage had struck Julia and Domitian dumb. Caesar was the first to recover speech and he laughed again, long and strangely.

'No daughter of Titus!' he repeated. 'Come, come, Euphena, thou dost promise well. We demanded to be amused and verily thou hast made a good beginning.'

'Tis more than can be said of Julia,' said Euphena, 'even though she may be placed near the throne of Caesar and would fain sit upon it.'

I think there was a dark meaning in Euphena's words and that she spoke of the plans of Julia and Caesar, for neither said aught until Julia cried to him:

'How canst thou listen to the wild talk of a gossiping old Ethiopian?' and she bent and whispered to Caesar while Euphena stood and looked scorn at both. But Caesar only smiled,

'We would see to what length her wildness will take her,' he answered.

'Those whose ancestry be free from blot need not shrink from the old black woman's tales. Let her continue to divert us, I pray you... But mark you, woman,' and he spoke threateningly to Euphena, 'though I have given Caesar's word for thy safety, and though, as thou sayest, Julia stands near Caesar, nevertheless she is not on the throne beside him and may deal with her own slaves as she will. Take heed lest thy mistress command that they slit thy tongue and sell thee for a beast of burden in the slave-market.'

Euphena spake back proudly, 'I have no fear that my mistress will slit my tongue or condemn me to the slave-market. The old Ethiopian is still too useful to the high-born Julia for her services to be dispensed with. While Domitian reigns in Rome and Julia holds his favour, Euphena will be needed for an instrument of the destinies to carry out their bidding.'

'Caesar is proud to have a share in service so exalted,' Domitian scoffed. But I thought there was a troubled note in his voice and even something of fear of Euphena whose contemptuous stare was ill to meet. I saw the hand of Julia steal towards his and press it as if she sought protection.

'Go on, woman,' said Caesar. 'Tell us more of the Most Noble whose fate according to thee should now be all on the ascendant.'

And Euphena answered, 'On the ascendant, truly, until her feet shall touch the step of the throne and shall find there no foothold. The empire of Rome is vast and the power of Caesar mighty, but the realm of shades is vaster and the power of Death more mighty still.'

Julia seemed like to speak, but the words were choked in her throat. I know not what she would have said, for now it was the Empress who broke in. She had come up with my master and I could tell by the way she looked at Julia and the quick way she breathed that she was eager to know more.

'How say you, star-reader?' she asked. 'Is it that the Most Noble Julia

\(^1\) The name Lupus has been inserted. For the accusations against Marcia Furnilla see Appendix 9, Bk. II.
will not compass her ambition and that the supreme control of life and death will not be hers?

Euphena answered her slowly, 'By the stars it is written that Julia will compass her ambition and that the power of life and death shall lie in her hands. But those hands which have committed violence are apt to tremble, and in snatching at the cup of life may take instead the potion of death.'

Now Sabinus came closer and stood against Julia's chair. Often have I thought that Sabinus was really fond of his wife. She sat all huddled up and affrighted. There was no true spirit in Julia.

As Sabinus touched her she turned and made a snarling sound and it seemed that the sight of Domitia kindled to strength her ire. She set her shoulders and looked straightly at the Empress and then to those around as she spoke with mocking courtesy.

'Twere a pity,' she said, 'that they should be interesting themselves in one so lowly as she was reputed to be, seeing that before them stood the highest and most virtuous lady in all the Roman Empire—the Empress herself, who sought not her own glory but was ever gracious and mindful of those beneath her. If indeed the stars wrote truly, would they not proclaim that Domitia loved kindness and hated tyranny?'

Now, I must tell thee that we slaves who listened knew that Julia spoke in irony. For Domitia is as hard upon her slaves as Julia herself and as difficult to please. This I have heard, being acquainted with some of the Empress's women. It may be, I think, because she is so unhappy that Domitia is contemptuous and bitter and is not loved by the people.

At Julia's words, Euphena raised her skinny arms that seemed to point starward.

'True it is,' she said, 'that Domitia hates tyranny. Know, therefore, that in time hence when Fate's decrees shall be fulfilled, it will be Domitia's voice that shall bid the assassin strike and deliver Rome from the tyrant.'

Euphena made the blood curdle in all of us. We felt that we were hearing dreadful things and we did not know what they might forebode. And yet Caesar sat like a red-faced lump and did not chide the old woman for her ravings. It seemed as though he guessed not her meaning. I know not if it were that a cloud came over his mind as sometimes happened when he had drunk much wine.

I thought that for this reason—and because he kept silence and none could ever tell how Caesar's mood might turn—many who had held somewhat apart drew near and made diversion by their questioning concerning certain methods of divination. Among these were Pliny and Martial the poet with Paulinus and my Domina Valeria. Domitia had shrunk back. There was a wild, startled look in her eyes, like that it seemed to me of one who looks through prison bars and hopes yet fears to be free. She said no more, but stood biting her lip and twisting her fingers in and out of the gold fringe on her palla. Domitia was never at rest.

Then Julia, seeing the faces pressing forward, bade Euphena read the fates of any such as might desire it, unless, she said, they feared she would predict for them no better joys than she had foretold for others before them.

I heard not then what Euphena prognosticated, for 'twas at this time that Julia bade me bring the grapes and the pressers and order the tray of essences for the preparation of that cup for Caesar of which I have already told thee.

1 Domitia's connivance in the assassination of her husband. See Appendix 10, Bk. II
There was whispering and talk and laughter between my mistress and Caesar and I think it was now that some barbarians who play strange music upon certain instruments of their country, came upon the platform. But few paid them any heed, for most of the guests kept their eyes and ears fixed on Euphena.

I saw a look in the eyes of my Domina Valeria as though she wished Euphena might tell her something. And Julia saw the look too, and with a loud laugh called Valeria by her name, bidding her come forward and hear what happy fortune might be written on the stars for her.

'For,' she said in gibing fashion, 'we understand that Paulinus is but lately ordered to Egypt, and Valeria should be recompensed for that heart-breaking separation from her loved and loving husband.'

On that someone said—I think it was Martial, for often he vexed my Domina by ill-timed compliments—that mayhap Valeria would accompany Paulinus on his mission rather than both should endure separation, and that in such case Rome would be the gloomier, since one of its most brilliant lights would be extinguished.

And Julia laughed again and said that however much Valeria and her lord might desire each other's company, Paulinus knew well that his wife's health would not permit her to make so arduous a journey.

Paulinus' face was black. I saw him scowl at Martial and methought there was ill-blood between the two that evening because of the favour shown him by Galla. I saw, too, that Paulinus looked at Valeria as if he could have whipped her. She grew paler still and stiffened in silence when Julia and others urged her to hear what Euphena might have to tell. Then, seeing she must speak, she answered very distantly 'that in her opinion the gods were wise in screening the future from our gaze, and that for her part she had no wish to lift the veil they had hung before the eyes of men.'

At that Euphena took up the word.

'Oh, wise woman, remain ever thus wise. Pallas must have taught you wisdom, seeing that for your peace 'tis best the future should be hidden from your eyes.'

But Julia was full of spite and curiosity. 'Look!' she cried, 'that future is not hidden from the eyes of Euphena. The spirit of prophecy is upon her. Let her speak and tell us what she sees.'

Euphena was standing quite still, her arms clenched across her breast, her eyes wide open and staring strangely. Her lips were agape, but she made no sound.

'Tell us . . . tell us . . .' called they all, except Valeria who stood as if frozen, so proud and cold she seemed. And then—I remember not if it were Paulinus or Caesar who commanded roughly, 'Speak, hag, and tell us what comes to thee.'

Once or twice Euphena tried to speak but could not bring forth her words. Then she began muttering. And the muttering waxed louder and her speech more clear as she told of things that were plain to her and yet as naught to the rest of us who heard her: told of a mighty concourse of people and of the air full of sounds—sound of the tread of feet, of shouting and applause, of a great burst of trumpeting and cries of 'Hail, Caesar!' 'Twas the Games, she said, and all Rome, from the highest to the lowest, was gathered to the Show.

And then she told of a gladiators' contest, and I remember not of what

1 Egyptian expedition. See Appendix II, Bk. II.
besides for a dimness and a giddiness fell upon me. Yet, through the mist I seemed to hear cries and groanings and there was a strange roaring. . . . 'Ah . . . ah! 'Tis the beasts roaring. Ah . . . ah!' . . .' (in a scream of terror).

And as the slave-girl’s voice came through the lips of the Instrument—this woman of to-day—it broke in that wild shriek of horror. The Instrument’s hand clutched that of the Recorder. . . . Then, after a moment, the hand dropped. Nyria spoke—agitatedly but no longer in terror . . .

Nyria (resuming): ‘. . . I cannot remember: ‘tis all confused. Euphena was there. She was seeing something terrible . . . something that seemed to frighten her and to affright those who listened. . . . I saw Valeria standing white and cold and affrighted also.

And then I heard Euphena saying—something like this, ‘that there were hearts to be fought for and lives cast away which must float upon the ages before they could drift back to her feet.’ . . . And Euphena seemed to be reproaching Valeria for this thing of her doing. . . . There was something about jealousy and betrayal. . . . Oh, I know not if I have got that right. . . . I knew not what dreadful meaning lay beneath Euphena’s words.

I felt sore afraid, and I was very cold although the rooms had been so hot. . . . Julia was plying her great green and gold fan. . . . And when Euphena told of the noise of the people and the echoing shouts and the roaring of the beasts. . . . There were beasts! I saw them pressing all around the banqueting-hall . . . coming nearer to me . . . and nearer. . . . And the dizziness took me again and all the place faded . . . and I lost myself. . . . I know not what happened then. . . . Someone picked me up out of the throng and they poured water on my face. Caesar sent Vibius to me with a cup of wine and I drank of it and felt stronger.

I was ashamed. But I was tired. I had been out all day and there had been no time to eat.

They let me sit on a stool against the wall. I feared their anger. Domitian looked at me and I liked not the manner of his smile. But I saw that I should not be scolded and felt less afraid.

Euphena was talking to Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. I am quite sure that Domitilla did not wish to ask her fate. She stood with her hands on Flavius’s arm as though she would protect her husband. A pained but calm smile was on her face. I heard Domitian say to Euphena:

‘Thou hast told naught about my own household. Tell me this: The boys,’¹ he named them—‘Vespasian and Domitian, sons of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla—will they be good rulers after me?’

‘They will rule no wider kingdom than their own souls,’ answered Euphena. ‘They are not ripe to rule. Yet the sons of such parents are too ripe and worthy to be either tyrants or dupes.’

Then I mind me that Plinius came up to notice how I fared, and that when Domitian spied him as he stood holding his young wife’s hand, Caesar bade him, with some jesting compliment, seek Euphena’s auguries on the stout sons he should give for service to the State.

Now, Plinius had ever a clever polish to his speech and I have heard it said that ‘twas his sole merit with Caesar to be a whetstone to his master’s wit.

¹ For the sons of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, see Appendix 12, Bk. II.
And he smiled and turned his response to Caesar's pleasure, while shielding as best he could Antœia's blushing confusion, by saying that what he most wished to know of the future was whether he should always be as happy as he was in the present.

And Euphena answered, 'Man is no fit judge of happiness, for he measures it only by the desire of the moment. Nevertheless,' she added, 'even if the thing which Plinius loves most be taken from him, yet will he find his joy given back to him when the days of his mourning shall be over.'

Antœia, having but a child's understanding, would have had Euphena tell her in what manner her husband should be called upon to suffer. But Plinius said quickly, 'No, no. I do not desire such knowledge. Royally have the gods smiled upon me up till now, and I will not shrink before their frown.'

Then, further said Euphena, that not only would the gods continue to smile on Plinius, but that governors and princes should show him favour and that the Emperor himself would be his closest friend.1

Whereat some of the company looked at each other and laughed a little, for though everyone liked Pliny it was not thought that he could ever be in closest friendship with Domitian, albeit Caesar did grant him favour.

'Twas then that Sabinus leaned over to speak to Julia and thus, unawares, bringing himself forward, seemed to remind Caesar of somewhat he had forgotten. Full well I guessed 'twas the words I had spoken when Caesar had questioned me concerning Euphena's markings on the ground, and I had said she was casting my master's fate.

He looked from my master to the old woman and loudly bade her answer him.

'There is one,' he said, 'of whose auguries thou hast told me naught. What wrote the stars about thy master Sabinus and about his house?'

'Little but what bodeth ill,' she answered. 'Soon shall the house be without its head, and when the ruler passes from it the house shall be shattered and fall in ruins. Even now, the cloud hangs over it, and bloody darkness surrounds this banquet.'

She held her arms out around her as if she would compass the dwelling. She was quivering and her fingers pointed to the wall where were the torches and the wreaths of flowers, and it seemed to me that she saw shapes dark and dreadful lurking everywhere.

Drawing in her arms with a curious and ominous gesture she foretold that evil hap was about to come upon the godless, and that since with the godless the godly must likewise suffer, many at the feast that night and elsewhere in Rome would be embroiled in the terrors which should shortly befall the city.

'How can there be peace,' she cried, 'when death strikes at the lifting of a tyrant's finger?'... But rest satisfied,' she cried, 'ye shades of Sabinus and Flavius Clemens'—and she reeled forth a string of other names that I cannot remember. 'For,' said she, 'he who is your judge and your executioner will be called in worse terrors to his own doom.'

Then fear and confusion came on all present, and many moved from around Euphena as if in dread of what might befall.

Domitian rose from his chair, red of face and then pale, and it seemed, like to foam with fury. Yet, scarce could he speak save to mutter darkly

1 Euphena's two prophecies to Pliny would have referred to the death of his first wife Antœia, and his very happy later marriage to Calpurnia, and the second to his great friendship with Trajan as shown in the Letters of Pliny.
and call vengeance on all prophets of ill. Nevertheless, he gave not command of vengeance upon Euphena, though Vibius and Bibbi waited ready to drag her away.

Euphena stood looking in a scornful way at Julia, who gave her affrighted glances and pressed close to Domitian’s side.

’Twas all Julia could do to quiet him. She bade him not be troubled at what the woman had said. Had she not prophesied evil to all—to herself as well? And since she, a weak woman, paid no heed, surely the greatest of the Caesars need not suffer disquiet.

Domitian listened in silence. Then of a sudden, he broke into a great laugh, and said that verily ’twas a fine evening’s amusement to invite Caesar to a banquet and provide a soothsayer to foretell his end.

Thereon he drank more wine, and made appearance of merriment, yet ’twas plain that he had been much disturbed. In truth, all of the company were ill at ease.

I had come back to my place behind Julia, but none took notice of me, for which I was thankful since else I might have been blamed. Flavius and Domitilla were the calmest. They went among the guests talking in gracious, dignified manner. Sabinus, too, stood calm. ’Twas not for him to make excuse and thus, mayhap, lay himself open to Caesar’s censure. He spoke courteously, saying that he trusted Caesar had not been ill-amused by the old woman’s wild talk.

I trembled for my master. Domitian looked at him straight, and frowning as if pondering in what fashion to shape his displeasure.

‘Verily,’ he said, ‘the amusement provided had made him merry. But ’twas in his mind that others might not be so well amused when further acts of this interesting drama should take place.’ Then he said to my master that he believed Flavius Sabinus had been elected consul and should enter into his office in a few months.

Sabinus bowed silently.

Then Domitian said that he feared he had been unwise in sanctioning the appointment of his valued kinsman to the office, for there were dangers attached to it, and it might be that harm would befall Sabinus.¹

My master looked straightly also as he answered Caesar:

‘Flavius Sabinus, my lord, like other men, can live but once and die but once. Therefore may he comport himself during life as befitteth one of his gens, and may the favour of the gods grant him an end that shall be equally befitting.’

For a minute none uttered. Euphena stood waiting. . . . Now Domitian spoke to Julia, and she looked across to the Ethiopian and said:

‘You have done what was required of you. Go.’
And Euphena walked forth untouched.”

¹ Election of Flavius Sabinus to the office of consul. See Appendix 13, Bk. II.
Nyria relates how Euphena warns Julia that a certain potion may, on the third time of taking, have an ill effect: how Julia silences the Ethiopian's evil croakings by the gift of a gold chain: then, how Julia orders her litter and pays a visit to Domitian at the Palace, taking Nyria with her, and of how, in that thought-progress, the Recorder becomes one of the train.

Nyria: "Thou would'st know what happened after the Banquet. . . . That thing which I remember best is the old black woman, Euphena. I thought she would have been angry with me, and I waited for her to scold, but I saw her no more that night. I was afraid and I went not to the slaves' court but just slipped off my dress and rolled myself in my mat. Of course, I ought to have got my own night things, but I was afeard to go out to Euphena.

I did not help to unrobe Julia. I was wanted for the dressing and the head-tiring. The under-women did the disrobing and thus learned the order of Julia’s appareling. The head-woman superintended and saw that her mistress was comfortable for the night, but I did not have to attend.

I remember that Sabinus came that night and asked admittance. He never dared demand it: he always asked humbly. I was at the door and took the message—and it was that he wished to see her. But Julia refused. She said that she was tired, and Sabinus went away looking sorrowful. Then I rolled myself round and tried to sleep. But I was called to go to the atrium for something that Julia had dropped. The atrium was all deserted and there were no lights except the night lamps which were always left burning. Even the fountain was turned off. I went past the door of the chapel where was the altar to the household gods. Sabinus was in there saying his prayers to his gods. I could not hear what he said, but I saw by his attitude that he was praying.

When I went back, I laid me down and I would have liked to pray for Sabinus, but I did not know to whom I should pray. I did not think Sabinus's gods helped him much, and I did not seem to want to pray to those Roman gods. So I just rolled myself in my blanket and lay by Julia’s door without praying. But I thought of my master and tried to make a kind of picture of him. I should have liked best if Julia had gone to him and been kind. I could not help feeling that Sabinus was in danger. There seemed great meaning in what Euphena had said.

Julia went to bed looking very cross. She had said good-night to everyone in the fitting manner, but she did not seem happy.

Then the next morning when I awoke I did not go out to get my things at Euphena's. I washed my face in Julia's own bathroom before she was up, and I combed my hair with one of her combs, and put on a wrapper of one of
the girls, for I had not my morning robe. I had no business in Julia's bath-
room, but I was afraid to go to Euphena.

By and by, I saw the old crone coming towards the loggia outside
Julia's rooms where I was waiting to be called for the dressing of Julia's
hair. My heart beat at sight of Euphena. It seemed greatly daring in her to
approach so near when she had not been summoned—unless she had come
for me. I feared that she might want to claim chastisement for me for having
betrayed her so that she had been made scoff of by Cæsar the night before.
But when she saw me, she looked at me straightly and bade me tell Julia
that Euphena waited. I answered that I, too, was waiting to be summoned
and would give her message when I went in. She answered, 'That will do,'
and turning round, sat her on the step, with her skinny arms folded on her
knees, and looked out across the courtyard. I could not bear her silence,
so I went near her and said:

' Thou art not angry with me, Euphena ?'

'Angry! ' she said. ' Why should I be angry? What canst thou do to
make Euphena angry? ' And this she said as though I were not worthy even
to anger her.

'Because I spoke of thee and of thy powers last night to Cæsar,' said I.
' So that he summoned thee to prophesy before him. In truth, Euphena, I
had not thought he would do that.'

'One does not expect children or fools to think,' she said. ' Tush! child,
do not fret thyself for so small a matter. Thou wilt have enough to fret for
erelong. The gods use strange and simple means at times to compass their
will and if thou hadst not spoken, still should I have been summoned to
Cæsar's presence. For it was necessary that Domitian and his lawless wanton
should hear the truth.'

Then said I, ' But will these things come true, Euphena ?'

'Wait,' she answered. ' The stars do not tell falsely.'

I stood humbly silent. I was frightened. Euphena spoke strangely,
and when I looked at her, she drew with her lean finger the pattern of a bier
upon the ground.

'So—a fine corpse she will make! ' Euphena muttered. ' And thou and
I shall dress her for the burying, child? Thou wilt like that. It will repay
thee for the many whippings she has ordered thee and the blows she has dealt
thee with her own fair hand, eh, Nyria? '

'If you mean Julia,' I said, 'she has been cruel to me, but yet I do not
want to see her dead.'

'Dead women cannot strike,' said Euphena. ' Thou art not used to death,
though in tending Stephanus's patients thou shouldst have learned not to
shrink from it. For thyself, child, death shall threaten thee more than once
before it shall snatch thee at the last.'

Then Samu—who was one of the under-women—called me, and as I went in
I heard Euphena whine after me for Samu to hear:

'Speak for me, pretty one. For an interview with the divine Julia is an
honour that the highest among her slaves may not demand. Yet would I
see and speak with her if it be possible.' And Euphena bent double, putting
her hands to her head so that Samu laughed scorn at the ugly thing. But I
ran in and made obeisance to Julia.

'May it please the Most Noble, Euphena waits without,' I said, as I
took the combs and pins and shook out the tresses which Julia added
to her own—I know not wherefore, seeing that she had much hair upon
her head. But Julia was not satisfied unless I raised it to the height of a tower.  

' Euphena!' Methought Julia's face changed. 'What wants the hag?' Julia was never over-civil to her slaves.

'She craves permission to speak to the Most Noble,' I answered.

I saw a strange, frightened look come over Julia's face. She seemed to shrink from seeing Euphena. I listened for her to say that she was concerned with her robing and could see no one, but instead of that she shrugged her shoulders petulantly and, crossing the room, sat down before the mirror to have her hair dressed.

'Let her enter,' she said, and I waited, expecting she would stop my work, but instead of that she turned upon me crossly:

'Get on, Nyria, why art thou so slow?' And I went on to comb out her hair until it hung like a great black cloud round her.

One of them had gone to summon Euphena, and presently she entered and stood within the door, her arms folded and a lurking look of malice in her face. I could scarce take my eyes from her, and called forth a short word from Julia for my bungling.

'Well,' said Julia sharply to Euphena, 'what is it?'

'Knowing that the Most Noble would summon me if I came not, I but forestalled her pleasure,' said Euphena.

Then Julia, with her hands on the arms of her chair, looked across at Euphena and catching sight of her head-woman and the two girls stooping, the one in folding a robe and another in the polishing of some silver ornaments, she said angrily:

'Go, ye gaping fools. What stand ye there for? Do I need all the females in the household to listen because I choose to speak to one of them? Begone.'

Ere one could think, they had passed behind the curtains. But I knew full well that one of them would listen. This one was a girl called Thanna. She was of the country—a stout girl, well-looking, with a round face, dark eyes and quantities of dark hair, which she would try and dress like Julia's. She was not a good waiting-maid unless Julia chid her. But she managed to guard herself from punishment, and when she performed her task ill did contrive that the blame fell on me. She was ever talking of when Julia should marry her to somebody and would always have her fun, so that she would laugh and joke even with Bibbi, whom most of us hated—he being the slaves' beater.

Bibbi was a brute. He had no feeling. He liked beating us. Bibbi was the strongest man among the slaves and a good lasher.

I thought it strange that Julia did not send me away too. But often it seemed that to Julia slaves were no more than posts. And this though many of Julia's slaves would have been glad to do her a mischief by telling some evil tale of her. Slaves can listen easily, but they know there are always others who would betray their fellow-slaves to curry favour.

I waited for the command to go. But Julia said no word to me. I think she had forgotten. So I went on brushing.

'Well, what is your errand, O black beauty?' she said jeeringly to Euphena.

Julia was never over-civil in her speech, and she wished to seem clever and oft would sharpen her wits on us.

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1 The Flavian lady's coiffure. See Appendix 14, Bk. II.
Euphena answered her boldly:

'Julia, reputed daughter of Titus, may call her slaves what names she pleases. But the time will come when she will be glad of any one of them to stand between her and destruction.'

'Well—well. What made thee tell all those lies last night, old fool?'

'I tell no lies,' said Euphena calmly. 'The stars speak truth and I am but their mouthpiece.'

'And so the stars told thee to talk that folly?'

'The stars are the servants of the gods, O Julia, and I am their servant, not thine only. They bade me warn thee, Julia, while there is yet time. Soon it may be too late. Once, twice, have I saved thee from exposure. This third time the potion may fail, and though thou be no child of an emperor and but an emperor's wanton, yet the warning may avail thee to save thy skin if thou hast the will to take it.'

'Knowst thou that I can have thee stripped and lashed in the Forum till the blood spurts?' said Julia between her teeth.

'But thou wilt not. Euphena's skin is safe, so long as Julia needs a wise woman from the wisest of all races to succour her.'

'What is it that thou dost want of me?' said Julia snarling and dropping back in her chair till all her long hair was caught so that I could not brush it.

'Nothing,' said Euphena. 'I need nothing, O Most Noble Julia. Nevertheless, the stars which warn if listened to, may save their victims. And thou hast promised me my freedom, Julia?'

'Not while I have need of thee,' laughed Julia. 'Dost thou think that I can part with thee yet? Nay, nay—not while I am young and good-looking and Domitian lives. But if one of thy magic potions should act upon Domitia, so that she stood no longer in my road, there is no knowing, Euphena, what I might not grant thee.'

Euphena shook her head.

'I have no business with Domitia. My work lies only with thee. Whilst thou art my mistress, Julia, I am bound to serve thee. Other than that I will not do.'

'Thou canst serve me best by obeying my orders, old fool, and not in setting up the wisdom of thy age against that of youth and comeliness. Take this and consider the matter. It may make up thy mind for thee, and thou wilt come back later more ready to obey.'

She picked up a handsome gold chain set with emeralds that lay half out of a casket near by and flung it at Euphena. The old woman's eyes glistened and she made a snatch at the gaud, catching it in her hands and laughing with joy at its glittering length.

'Now that is a gift fitting from a princess,' she cried. 'Thou canst command me, Julia. But remember,—and she came closer,—it is not with Domitia alone that thou hast to contend.'

Yet, I don't think Euphena would have minded doing Domitia harm, though she did not hate her. And here, I will tell thee, Domitia was very nearly drugged. I heard it from one of her women. She was brought a cup—but it tasted ill and she threw the cup away. Twice this happened and afterwards she would take nothing but what her own women prepared for her. I wondered why Julia gave the chain to Euphena. I think it must have been to bribe her. Thou knowest, Julia had had Euphena since before she got me, but it had only been quite lately that Euphena came often to her apartments and then she would be with her a long time. We used to wonder
THE EMPEROR DOMITIAN
what Julia could have to say to her. Yet none of us would have told Julia anything about Euphena, because Julia had not her slaves' confidence. So I know not how she found out about Euphena’s powers. Perhaps Euphena told her herself.

Thou seest, masters and mistresses never really know what their slaves think and feel. The slaves are a people by themselves and are not themselves when they go into the dressing-rooms. Of course, sometimes thou hast a master or mistress who is thy friend and whom thou canst speak to, but it is not usual. Clemens and Domitilla were like that. And Valeria was like that, too—to me. But with Julia it was quite different. Euphena did not talk after Julia had given her the chain. She just cringed a little and bent low down to her knees which she had not done before. Euphena loved jewels. She loved things that she could deck herself with. Sometimes, to make her kind to me, Stephanus gave her chains of shells and things made up of coloured beads. He would bring them to her as a present. But he always took care to say before he gave them, ‘And how hath Nyria fared of late?’ She understood.

After Euphena had gone, taking the chain with her, Julia remained very quiet with her head down. She did not even look at herself in the mirror, I saw that she was in deep thought, for her brows were knitted. I went on pinning up her hair without her scolding me or saying that I drove the pins in.

Presently a sort of shiver seized her, but I do not think it was from horror, for she broke into a laugh and sat up staring at herself in the glass as though she were pleased with her looks and muttering to herself. . . . I heard her say, ‘Ah, that will be good—very good indeed.’ And then in a pettish way, ‘What’s the use of getting her out of the way, when there remains the other?’ Then again, ‘But with a clear road before her, where may not Julia go?’

And when her hair was dressed, she took off her wrapper—the hair was always done last—and she stood up in all her robes and seemed well pleased at the sight of herself. Then she said, ‘I look well’—and turned to me, ‘Do I not look well, Nyria?’

I was startled, for she seldom spoke thus to me. If she asked or took anyone’s opinion, it would be that of Emilia her head-woman. I thought she would have scorned to question me and I was not ready with my answer, which made her angry.

‘Speak! she said. ‘Is my beauty such that it blinds thee?’

I answered looking at her.

‘The Most Noble is well-looking surely.’

But she was not satisfied.

‘Bah! Thou art faint in thy praise. If I were that pale gowk, Vitellius’ daughter, mayhap thou wouldst have found something better to say.’

But I, bending low, answered nothing and she turned again to the mirror and gazed at herself from head to foot. It was propped against the wall, for she had sent away the slave who held it.

‘Ah,’ she said. ‘The daughter of Vitellius may claim the blood of an emperor in her veins though Euphena denies the claim of Julia. But which would look best, I wonder, upon the throne of the Caesars?’

And again was I startled, not knowing how I should answer. Still Julia questioned me.
Should I not make a fine empress, girl—a better one than that skinny peevish woman who flouted me last night?"

But I had no mind to answer her, for Julia was false and, had it pleased her, she would have got me reported to the Empress for treason. So I just shook my head and said:

"Nay, Most Noble, how should Nyria judge?" which angered Julia again. But she was too pleased with herself to be angry for long."

Nyria (resuming): "Now, after she had thus questioned me, Julia commanded that her litter should be in waiting and her women finished the robing. You can see her if you will, but speak not loud. She is there, choosing from that golden box her head-woman holds before her what jewels she will wear. She is going to the Palace to visit Caesar.

Her dress... I am never good at describing clothes... Well, she has on, underneath, a white garment that falls in folds very close together: it is of the finest, softest wool. Over that there is another garment which is draped from the hips and beautifully embroidered in silk and gold thread. The material is a mixture of silk and wool... The colour... oh, Julia mixes up colours and always has too much of everything. There is almost every shade in that embroidery, worked on bronzy-red... a good deal of violet, but that goes with the palla, which is purple.

The palla comes last; it is a kind of cloak draped from the shoulders... Sometimes Julia wears a veil over her head... you see, her hair is elaborately dressed and it would depend on the jewels she is wearing. The litters are covered over. To-day she has on a veil of fine silk and she wears undersleeves beneath the palla of softest silk which crease from the wrist to the elbow. The wind is fresh this morning, otherwise she would go with arms bare."

I asked Nyria to let me accompany her if Julia should take her to the Palace.

Nyria (demurring): "There might be trouble. Julia would see you."

Upon which I pointed out that since I am invisible to Nyria herself, I should also be invisible to Julia.

Nyria: "But she may hear you... I did take somebody to her house once... I had to leave him outside... It was the man who told me to fly... But I think I might take you... Wait... She will say in a minute if I am to go... Do you see those lovely yellow stones... The Emperor gave them to her... in a long chain that goes three times round the neck... and there are gold bands clasped with them below the shoulder and round the wrist and chains like the necklace hanging over the arm... And Julia has most lovely pearls, too, from Britain, which were given her by the Emperor..."

Yes, she says I am to go with her to the Palace... Thou knowest... when Julia visits Caesar, she doth see him alone and desires no great retinue. Nevertheless, it would not befit her dignity were none of her women in attendance, yet there is naught of state in having one so small as I... You must wait, for I have to get ready... If you like to come forth, her litter is outside... This is the big hall... the atrium. Dip your hand in the fountain and you will see that it is scented... Can you walk? I have to walk behind the litter... I hope you will
not be tired. . . . It is a nice road to the Palace. We do not need to go through the streets.

Now, we must go up those great marble stairs. . . . See, there are orangetrees in pots placed at intervals on either side. . . .

You go up and up and you come to rows of beautiful pillars . . . quantities of them. . . . Some are red and some have gold on them and other stones of different kinds let in near the top. . . . And now we are in that wide open place where are so many statues. . . . They put up statues to everybody in Rome and I never stop to look at them. . . .

But I believe these are very fine. Such a number of women! I like the shapes of them. . . . They were all daughters of a king . . . and what was it that happened? . . . Did they all have husbands?1 . . . I have heard the story: it must have been the Domina Valeria who told me.

Now we are going into the Palace. . . . Julia never gets out of her litter until she is at the door of the first reception-room . . . through the long hall. . . .

Here are more marble steps, with a pattern upon them. . . . In the hall are things of great value: it is a pity that thou art not with someone who could point them out. I never look at anything: I so dislike coming here.

There are a good many soldiers about. We passed long lines of them down that side and this. Those standing on either side of the door are officers.

This is where the carpet begins. . . . Here is a very long room. It is beautiful: the walls are all inlaid with marble and there are fine statues in the corners. But I always walk straight through and look only at the litter in front of me.

Julia waits in the litter till they have found out if the Emperor can see her. He always sees her, but there may be other people there. He sends them away, unless it's a State call, and then soon they go away of themselves.

I hold my shoulder for Julia to put her hand on as they help her from the litter. . . . Ay! (with a little laugh) 'She weigheth heavy'. . . .

We shall be in the throne-room in a minute. . . . Art thou nervous? I have been here so often that I ought not to be. But when I am with the Emperor I forget that he is a man. He seems to me like a huge animal. . . .

Now they have opened the door and there are those men with the rods. . . . What are they called?2 . . . Thou knowest . . . they carry those bundles of golden rods strapped in front of them by straps that go over the shoulders and round the loins. They wear tunics and cloaks—and things on their heads; and they have the high kind of shoe which is laced up the legs. . . . There is a word. . . . I remember not the name. They are always fine-looking men, for they add to the dignity of the Emperor or of whomsoever they are with. . . . I think they belong only to the Emperor and to those who are concerned with the State. Julia had them when her father was alive and she would like to have them now, but it is only when she is with her husband in some affair of State that they go before her: she hath them not for herself.

Caesar has risen . . . he does not do that for everyone. He gives his hand to Julia. Two or three other men are with him. One who is dressed in white with a purple border and carries a roll of parchment with a blue seal hanging from it is talking to the Emperor. . . . He salutes Julia.

1 The Portico of the Danaids. See Appendix 15, Bk. II.
2 Nyria meant the licctors with the gilded fasces, which had an axe in the middle of the bundle of rods.
The manner of the royal salute is thus . . . thou knowest, the soldiers have longer spears when they are on the royal-guard duty, and to salute the Emperor they grind these very long spears which come above their heads. . . . They make a movement across to their left shoulders and then to their foreheads and then down to the ground . . . that is a royal salute.1

But, for warfare, they carry shorter spears and hold them nearer to the head-piece. These are of older date and did see much service in the time of Titus . . . it was in the thought of Titus that a man could serve better with the shorter spears because they came to closer grip with the foe. But Domitian doth like the look of the tall spear-heads which, when the sun be upon them, do shine with a blue light. . . .

Thou knowest what a spear-head is like. . . . They are broad things, wide as thy two hands together and shaped to a point, and, at the other end, they are flat and have a clamp of metal round the lower end which always rings when they make this movement. . . . Titus would have laughed at that, for he cared not for such show. . . .

Now we are through the long line of soldiers and we are outside in the sunshine. . . . I know not why it is, but when I am at the Palace something seems to tell me that one day I shall go there in evil plight. . . . Thou knowest, the women of my country are said to have the gift of prophecy. I never go up to the Palace without feeling that claw at my heart. . . .

Yet Caesar is kind. Sometimes he gives me presents. Once he gave me some gold chains. . . . Stephanus will not let me wear them . . . and, of course, I could not wear them, for Julia would be angry. . . . And Stephanus will not have them for his shop. . . . I wanted to give them to him. But he said it would not do . . . that people would know and there would be trouble. So I buried them. Thou wilt not tell. . . . Say thou wilt not."

Then, replying to a question from the Recorder:

"Methinks the gentleman with the parchment roll was Plinius, but I only noticed that he saluted Julia. I never like to look at the men. . . .

Plinius,2 Juvenal,3 Martial. . . . Yes, I can tell thee about them. Plinius has a great deal to do with writing. He is . . . what is thy word for it? . . . a gentleman. He says amusing things in a quiet way and does not make coarse jokes. . . . I can tell thee of him another time. He has faults, but they are only little ones and one passes them over. . . . I remember Martial. . . . He goes to many of the great houses. But he is poor himself and lives in small rooms high up in a lodging-house near the river. . . .4

Hispulla? . . . Yes, I think I have seen her. . . . There is a very fat old lady who comes to Julia's.5 The bearers puff so when they bring her. She has some good jewellery: she complains of the heat."

1 The Imperial Salute (not verified) and the Pilum (spear). See Appendix 17, Bk. II.
2 The younger Pliny. See Pliny's Letters.
3 Juvenal. See Juvenal's Satires.
4 Martial. His dwelling-place. His poverty. See Appendix 18, Bk. II.
5 The corpulence of Hispulla. See Appendix 19, Bk. II.
CHAPTER IV

THE GOSSIP OF THANNA

Nyria tells of the accident through which she made acquaintance with the Domina Valeria and of how she was taken into the shop of Stephanus and heard the story of the bracelet: then of the evil rumours concerning Sabinus which Thanna had gathered at the Palace of Domitian.

The Recorder asks Nyria how and when she had learned from her friend Stephanus the true story of the bracelet which Domitia had, at the Emperor's command, given to Paris.

Nyria: "It was one day some time before the feast of which I have told thee when I was carrying a basket of flowers as a present from Julia to a friend. I had the basket on my head and was walking on, just thinking to myself and did not notice that I was in the way when the Domina Valeria's litter came along the street. She has fine black bearers... particularly strong men. They do not mean to be rough, but it is their custom to push and clear a way for the litters they are carrying. The head-man struck me on my shoulder, which was bare, and I cried out. The flowers fell, but I caught some of them. My shoulder was bleeding and the blood ran down my arm and my robe.\(^1\)

The Domina stopped the litter and spoke to the man. Then she called me up and said she was sorry and asked if she could do anything for me. I scarce could answer, though not for the pain. That seemed naught... as thou wouldst understand if thou hadst had so many lashes laid on at a time as was oft my lot.

But it was so strange to be spoken to by a great lady as if I were like unto herself. ... I knew who she was, for she had come sometimes to Julia's house... And just then Stephanus ran out, for the litter was passing close by his shop. 'Tis in one of the narrow streets where are small high houses... Stephanus's house is the third from the end.\(^2\)... The Domina told him rather imperiously to take me into his shop and bind up my arm, and that angered him. He hath big square teeth in his upper jaw, and he bit them down upon his lip and made a snarling sound in his throat. 'Twas the way he showed his wrath.

He signed to me to come, and he drew round to my other side and put his arm round my shoulder lest it be harmed. ... And after he had dressed the wound he gave me my amber beads from the shop and brought me things to amuse me. ... 'Twas then I saw the bracelet which he was making at a table within where he used to do his work so that he could likewise watch the shop and see who entered.

\(^1\) The rude treatment of pedestrians by litter-bearers and fore-runners. See Appendix 20, Bk. II.

\(^2\) The shop of Stephanus. See Appendix 21, Bk. II.
The stones of the bracelet had come from the East, he said. They were bright green chrysoprase and he was engraving a legend upon them. Stephanus could engrave very well. He had sharp-pointed instruments with which he made marks on the stones, and then he filled in the marks with gold. He worked at a dresser with drawers, in which he kept his instruments and the gums for fixing the gold on the stone.

He said he was engraving upon it the copy of an old Eastern motto. Of these he had a book wherefrom customers chose as they pleased, and when I tried to spell out the words, he told me their meaning.

It was this:

'No crown is brighter than the crown of love. Happiness and long life are much, but love is greater than all.'

Oh yes, he knew that the bracelet was for Domitia. Paris had not told him, but Stephanus always seemed to know everything.

Then he said to me something about wanting to set such a crown upon his own princess's head. That made a laugh between us, because when Stephanus had first seen me he had picked me up and tried to kiss me: and I told him that was not befitting and that he should show more respect to a princess. I was very small then or I would not have been so foolish. After that, he used to call me 'my princess,' and I liked not that others should hear him, for I was but Nyria, Julia's slave.

Now I answered him:

'Princesses do not wear crowns save when they reign,' and he said:

'This princess hath reigned since she was ten years old. Her throne is in the heart of one Stephanus, goldsmith and jeweller in the little street off the Via Argentaria.'

I laughed, for we had turned it into a joke. What I liked best—and yet least—was when Stephanus said 'my little lady.' I wanted to be a lady, though I am only a slave. And I liked it least because I knew that Stephanus was laughing too when he said 'princess.' But when he said 'my little lady' there was less laugh in him. Yet I like Stephanus best when he is merry.

He is very merry at times. He hath a great laugh. His big shoulders shake and his face will crinkle up like an autumn leaf and his eyes shine and twinkle.

He is not very tall, but tall enough. I like not very tall men. His hair is dark and curly and he has hair on his face. He has rather curious-looking eyes... a kind of golden brown with odd lights in them sometimes. His complexion inclines to red, but his arms and neck are whiter than his face. He wears a tunic generally, but when he is in the shop he puts on his toga... it looks better...

Thou hadst thought that only a Roman citizen can wear the toga and I believe that is so. But Stephanus is a Roman citizen. He was brought over from Greece a long time ago and he was a slave, but now he is a freedman, and when a man is a freedman he can wear anything... His mistress was Domitilla... she is a cousin or niece... I am not sure which... of Caesar. She is a very sweet lady.

Oh no, he is not her servant now. But he goes very often to see her, and if there is anything special she wants done, she asks him to do it. He was her steward and, thou knoweth, a steward is a very important person...

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1 The Roman Toga. See Appendix 22, Bk. II.
2 Relations of Stephanus with Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. For historical references, see Appendix 23, Bk. II.
It is in this way. My master’s steward walks about among the people in the mornings and sees that no one comes who has no right to be there. I speak not of the slaves but of the clients who come to see my master.

My master sees the slaves all together at the morning service in the chapel. He is like a priest then and he leads the service. It is for the family gods: there is a small altar to them in the atrium and a larger one in the chapel.

Fresh flowers are always put on the altars and wine set as an offering and there’s something else. I can’t remember what it is. I’ll find out and tell thee. I have to be at the service sometimes, but I do not go if I can help it.

These are the gods who are supposed to watch over the family interests. They are the spirits of ancestors (pronounced hesitatingly) and homage is paid to them thus. There is a little singing . . . and there are a few prayers. My master Sabinus stands in front of the altar and opens his hands, and lifts them. He prays a prayer in which any members of the family may join, but they must be of the same blood or by adoption. The slaves may not speak in that prayer. But there are others in which they join. Sometimes, the service is before the clients come: sometimes it has to be after. My master is very particular about this service, though there are some in Rome . . . those who have no family . . . who care not for it. It is for this that men must marry; else there would be no children to do honour to the spirits of the ancestors. Julia careth not: she doth not want children; my master would like to have them.

Nyria, recalled to the point from which she had wandered, says with a little conscious laugh:

"How didst thou know that Stephanus would marry me if he could? Did he tell thee? No. Well, it is not that Stephanus talks, but he lets people see and they always tease me about him. Oh, not Julia. Of course, she would not know anything about it unless she had to. But I do not think that Julia would like me to marry yet, though she might make me do so later on. Masters and mistresses always want their slaves to marry. Because thou seest their children are the property of the master.

But how would it be, thou dost ask, seeing that Stephanus is a freedman and I am a slave? There are two ways . . . one by my being freed, and if my master Sabinus thought I really wished to marry Stephanus I am sure he would free me, but I do not think that Julia would give me my freedom. Or else, Stephanus might marry me while yet I am a slave. I should have papers that would be filled up and I should still belong to Julia . . . unless Stephanus could buy me.

Dost thou know about being married? I understand it not. I do not want marriage. But if it had to be somebody, I would rather it were Stephanus. Sometimes the slaves are forced to marry. There are such dreadful stories. For the masters like their slaves’ marriages to be in the 'Family' and the women are not really married . . . first there is one and then another . . . it makes me shudder. I am lucky, but that is only because Julia keeps me with her. I’ve been fit to be married for two or three years.

If I married Stephanus I should live in his house, but if I had children I

1 The Familia—or household of slaves.
should be obliged to give up any that Julia wished to take, and she might claim me for work too. ¹

I get dreadfully puzzled about it all, and sometimes Stephanus makes me feel sorry when I do not want him to come near me. For I think Stephanus is the best man I know, and that it would be well if I could care for him as he wishes. . . . I asked the Domina Valeria, and she said 'Never marry a man you do not love. If you feel now that you do not like him to touch you, you would want to kill him afterwards.'

But I do not feel that I should ever want to do that. I like to have Stephanus for a friend. . . . Thou knowest, he does doctoring and I help him with the nursing and he tells me what to do. . . . He learned doctoring for the love of it, and he knows a great deal about herbs and I help him to gather them. I like that part very much. . . . Stephanus tells me of many things. . . .

Oh, thou knowest how a man talks. . . . Stephanus knows that I like not to hear him swear. . . . He would swear by Hecate—methinks it was Hecate, goddess of virgins—he doth not hold with girls being unmarried, and he always said that was why he must needs swear by her.

Yet he was always very gentle and respectful to me, even when he was merriest. I never had a hard word from Stephanus. He was so gentle when he touched one, though his hands were big and strong.

But he had a quick temper. I have seen him angered when patients gave trouble and would not take his potions. He would turn on his heel and say they could rot there and die. It was dreadful to hear him. He tried to give up his swearing, because I said I would not go with him on his round if he spoke so.

And I have seen Stephanus wring a bird's neck when he was angry. Once, when there was a patient who was very ill and a cock kept crowing outside, he strode out and wrung its neck before you could think.

He himself had a bird that talked, which an old woman whom he tended gave him ere she died: and this bird would pick up the words of those who went past and who spoke ill of Stephanus. For there are always some ready to abuse as well as others to befriend.

So the bird would whistle, as Stephanus came up, and call, 'Here comes Stephanus, rogue and robber.'

And Stephanus would shake his fist at it and say, 'I'll have thy neck, thou lying clown.'

For he did not like being called names, though the bird would fall into a chuckle and Stephanus would laugh too.

One day, in his passion, it might have gone ill with that bird, but it had caught my name and would whisper from its perch:

'Here comes Nyria. Hie thee, Stephanus, quick. The maid looks wan.'

And then, when I came in, the bird would flutter its wings and dance on its perch and cry:

'A potion. . . . A potion,' till Stephanus and I were fit to die of laughing.

Stephanus said he could not part from the bird because it gave him word when I was coming.

But it was a treacherous bird and one dared not speak aloud in his hearing. He was quick to pick up every phrase and all the gossip of the street. He

¹ To verify Nyria's information concerning the Roman laws of slavery, see Appendix 24, Bk. II.
would shout till anyone passing thought 'twas some person that talked to
him.

Stephanus called the bird by some long name belonging to one that lived
in hell, of which now I mind me not. . . . Ascalaphus.1 . . . Methinks 'twas
so. . . . I will find out. . . .

Stephanus' bird had a beak that pecked hard and it would try to kiss
me thus and to rub its head against my fingers. But folks said that Stephanus
should not keep such a bird because it was a disgrace to the street. . . .

For, if a lady's litter stopped, the bird would cry:

' Here comes a fine dame. She is worth a good bargain.'

Thou shouldst know that Stephanus was often called the witch-doctor
because of the cures he made, and some said that the evil spirit which helped
him lived in the bird.

But Stephanus had doctored Euphena when she was ill of fever, and 'tis
true that he had commerce with her and sometimes brought her, himself,
berries that she got from him for her magic, though oft-times he gave them
to me for her. He said that these could do no harm and that they amused
her. And I have heard them talk together of things that seemed to me
wondersome and to savour of witchcraft.

For there is no doubt that Euphena hath much strange knowledge. If
Stephanus desired to learn whether a patient would mend, he would come to
her and describe the case and then ask:

' Say, Mother, will she live? ' And it always came to pass as Euphena
said.

He did the gathering of his simples early in the morning and sometimes
—when Julia was away from Rome—I could go out with him then and help
gather them. For some reason, Julia did not care to take me to Albanum
when she went there to see Caesar.

And at other times I would snatch an hour or two to go out with Stephanus
after Julia's tiring and robing were finished, if she did not want to take me
out with her. For then I had no work except the flowers. We always had
our orders. Julia would say at her dressing if she wanted us.

Oft I wondered how Stephanus found time for doctoring with all his other
work. But he had a young man in the shop with him to be there when he
was called away. Also, this youth would take the jewels to customers, unless
they were very valuable, and then he and Stephanus would take them
together."

``Now I mind me of somewhat I should have told thee. 'Twas Domitian
who first took Paris into favour for himself and thus brought him to Domitia's
notice. And of this did Juvenal make great game.

' Tis thus,' he said, 'that the sparrow or the chaffinch doth act foolishly
in permitting the cuckoo to sit upon his nest, for if he so doeth, then will
there be no room for him, and who shall say to which are due the eggs that
lie therein. But Domitian, not satisfied with being the cruellest knave that
ever ruled over Rome, must needs be a fool likewise, wherein he doth outdo
Nero, who was no ass for all his braying.'

Now, thou knowest, in the beginning Domitian did care very much for
Domitia and he would have cared for her still, though I dare say he would
have got tired of her in the end because Domitian was by nature fickle. So
men said of him, but I think 'twas not wholly true, seeing that he ever held

1Ascalaphus, turned into an owl. See Appendix 25, Bk. II.
to Julia. But 'twas known that he had never really won Domitia who always hated and despised him for his theft of her. And though he was her master, from the first she covertly scorned him. Then, as time went on, she grew bolder, and, unmindful lest she lost her state, did openly show her love for Paris.

Nevertheless, when Domitia went forth in pomp with Cæsar, she did uphold her dignity and was in very truth an empress. Oft-times have I thought 'twas because of this that Cæsar kept her at his side.

Belike, he wearied of the peevish look on her face. I have heard him say that 'quicker than a storm might do she did turn all sweet things sour, and that he'd liefer have Jove's thunderbolt cast before him at a feast than sit opposite Domitia's scowl.'

Yet would it have needed a stout heart to oppose Cæsar. If Domitia had had more courage she would have left him boldly or else have comported herself better to his liking. But she lacked the strength for either.

Methinks, she would not have minded much had Cæsar put her away. But this he did not do, mayhap for fear of the people.

Nevertheless, there came to Domitia certain times of happiness. For Cæsar did oft sojourn at Albanum and companied there with Julia. And Domitia having a villa of her own at Gabii did make excuse to stay in it and had Paris in secret to visit her. But she could not be with Paris openly partly for fear of Cæsar, and likewise because Paris, being engaged for a certain period to play and dance, dared not be absent long from the city.

I heard it said that Domitian kept her short of money, or she would have paid Paris' forfeit to the theatre and gone with him far from Rome.

But I know not if Paris would have liked to go. Juvenal thought not and said that a man was a fool who made any woman his mistress, but that a greater fool was he who did serve two mistresses whereof only one was a woman and the other his art, seeing that between the two he could serve neither well.

Stephanus doth tell me everything himself, yet he liked not that Juvenal should speak thus freely before me. Oft did I laugh when Stephanus would have silenced Juvenal and I would say to him:

'It matters not, Stephanus, for thou wilt tell me thyself, later.' And he would make answer:

'Thou art a very catling with thy wheedling ways, for when thou comest round Stephanus how can his tongue lie silent?'

Whereat Juvenal would laugh and say:

'Another fool, eh Stephanus! Truly I reckoned there was one less in Rome than thou wouldst give me to believe! But thou dost ill name this maid. For the cat in Egypt, where they have brought the species to such perfection that they must needs worship it, is reckoned a very mine of wisdom: and Nyria, methinks, is not so wise as she should be else would her shoulders suffer less from the whip. And for the wheedling ways of which thou speakest, in very truth, are they not the natural gift of her sex? What woman ever born knew not how to wheedle a man! Verily, he must be strong who dare face unaided a wheedling woman. Were I a lawmaker in Rome, I'd teach her youth ... each man of them ... to avoid women until he had grown strong as are the gods.'

Whereon Stephanus would chuckle afresh, for he always had the laugh and the last word, and he would say:
'By thine own showing, friend Juvenal, were man no stronger than the gods, he would be in ill plight before a woman. 'For how did Apollo and his compeers submit themselves to the wiles of even mortal maidens!'

After a short interval, when the Recorder asked Nyria to continue her account of what happened during the few weeks which had now elapsed before the Saturnalia, she continued her story.

Nyria: "Nothing very particular happened. One thing which I remember is that on the next time Julia went to see Domitian, when, after the robing, she bade me call her women and gave her orders, 'twas Thanna that she bade attend her... which seemed to me strange, for Thanna, being dark, doth not suit her so well as I who am fair. Alack! I was afeared that Domitian had noticed me overmuch for Julia's pleasure.

Thanna had only a woollen garment to go in... not a fine embroidered one like mine. But she twisted a red veil that had embroidery upon it round her head and shoulders... one, she had told us, that was bought with kisses at the shop of an old Jew pedlar, and Thanna was proud to say how cheaply she had got it...

I thought Julia had a different air when she came home. She was more cross and yet she seemed pleased with herself; she looked angry, but there was something of triumph in her look as though she had got what she had been wanting.

Thanna, who was always full of every bit of news she could pick up, came in bubbling with somewhat and eager to tell it to us. But Thanna was ever one to drive a bargain. So she offered to sell her news to each of us and tried to barter it to Aemilia for a gilt comb that Aemilia wore and to me for, I think, amber beads. Some price must she have from every one of us slaves.

Of course we laughed and said we would not. Then, said Thanna, neither would she tell.

But I did not think she could have learned very much, because, thou knowest, Domitian always sent me away when he talked alone with Julia and I knew they were even less likely to have kept Thanna in the room.

But it seemed as though Thanna really had something special to tell.

So Aemilia gave her one of her combs—not the gilt one—and she got something out of each of them. I shook my head, for I had no mind to pay and neither was I curious. Nor did I care to have dealings with Thassa though I am not proud.

Julia and Sabinus dined alone that night in a small room off the atrium. Part of the time I was behind her chair, and as they talked I saw her look at Sabinus more scornfully than usual. He was humbly pleasant as ever, and trying to interest her in what he had done.

He had been to the Senate that day. There, had he been summoned for some questioning as to his opinions, which he said had surprised him, for, he said, he thought they had known his views upon the measures that were being brought forward and upon certain reforms that he desired to put forward during his consulship.

I did not understand all their talk. There was something about giving greater privileges to the slaves and making it easier for them to get freedom. Sabinus wished a law passed that any one of them who had done some very worthy deed—such as saving his master's life or that of one of his family, or standing his master in good stead on any momentous occasion—should
by law have his freedom offered him and be permitted to take it if he wished.

This had been the subject of much discussion and most of those in the Senate, I understood, had objected to it on the ground that such a question as freeing a slave should be left wholly to the discretion of the master. Many of the wiser and kindlier men of the Senate opposed Sabinus and he did not understand this.

Sabinus had been, I had heard, already nominated consul by the Emperor himself, and he began asking Julia about Cæsar's own views on the matter. Had they changed and was Domitian likely to withdraw his support?

Julia answered scornfully that the support of Cæsar was an uncertain thing. She said that was partly why she had always tried to keep Domitian's favour—in order to further Sabinus's interests, and if indeed the Emperor were his friend, he might thank her, Julia, for it.

'Oh, if that were but so!' said Sabinus, resting his arms on the table and leaning across to look at her. Then he said some half-broken, warm words that made my heart bleed for him. But Julia answered him coldly that the servants were still in the room and bade him go on with his dinner and not be a fool.

And I saw that Sabinus was hurt, and in a few moments he changed his talk and began to speak of his cousins Flavius Clemens and the Domina Domitilla. But Julia was scornful again.

' I hate that woman,' she said—' a piling meek-mouthed fool. One who would be one thing to your face and another behind your back.' Those were not her words, but it is the sense of them.

'No,' said Sabinus, 'that was never the way with Domitilla.' Julia laughed and said did he not know that Domitilla belonged to the secret sect that called themselves Christians? And yet she paraded Rome as if she were fit to be the wife of a prince, which those who dealt with such mean, underhand, rebellious plots and practices, were not.

Sabinus flushed and looked very vexed, and went on eating in a meditative manner. And so did Julia, she seeming busy with her own thoughts.

Every now and then a bitter smile would catch the corners of her mouth and I, standing by her chair, saw it and wondered.

Presently, Sabinus looked up and asked Julia courteously whether, since she had heard somewhat of that sect, she knew aught of one Clement whom they reckoned as their head-priest and who seemed a learned and holy man of note among them.

Julia shook her head and said she knew naught of priests. . . . Then she asked icily:

'Where didst thou see this wonder?'

Sabinus answered simply that he had met him at the house of Flavius Clemens with whom Clement was distantly connected.1 'Therefore,' said Sabinus, 'he is in some sort a relative of my own, and as such I should like to show him hospitality.'

Julia made a mouth of disgust and said: 'I advise thee to be careful, Sabinus. Domitian hath no sympathy with this secret sect and whether he call in question thy views upon the amendment of the laws or no, he is not likely to approve the reception in this house of one who is known to be a partner in that band of irreverent conspirators. . . . I care nothing myself,' she went on, 'for any man's religion. Let him worship what gods he will.

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1 Clement, third bishop of Rome. See Appendix 26, Bk. II.
Nor does Domitian, I fancy, if the truth were told, hold serious scruples on that score. But he hath a superstitious leaning to the gods of his ancestors, and moreover, he is Caesar and bound to uphold them. He will have his thumb upon this band of canting conspirators, and then—where wouldst thou be? In any case I do not see why thou shouldst trouble thyself about this man. The Flavians are a big brood with many hangers-on whose pockets are empty and who clamour for them to be filled. Let others fill them, say I. I will not be concerned in the matter. Only, should danger overtake thee, remember that I gave thee warning.' And with that she quaffed a big goblet of wine and set it down.

'Nay, I have done no wrong,' said Sabinus gently. 'Domitian must know that I serve the Roman gods. I seek none better. Though they forget me—and I sometimes think they do—yet will I still serve them faithfully, for they are the gods of my fathers and they should be the gods of those that come after me. But alas! there are none.'

He said that so sadly that my heart grieved for him, but Julia only laughed and said, 'For my part I thank the gods that there are none to come after me—at least no milksops like thee. Thou hast not the spirit of a mouse, Sabinus. If thou hast been more of a man thou mightst have ruled—who knows?—even Julia.'

Said Sabinus sadly, 'To my mind, there should but be one sort of government for husbands and wives and that is the rule of love.'

Julia threw herself back and laughed again. 'Such ideas would have suited Numa and his Egeria,' she sneered, 'but assuredly no woman of the days of Domitian.'

Presently, they sent me away from table and I was free to go and get my supper. Euphena was supposed to give me my supper. Vibius, the chief steward, arranged all that.

I went to the dressing-rooms and would have passed to Euphena's house. The women were sitting on the steps of the loggia outside Julia's apartments and were talking together. Even Aemilia seemed excited.

'Here comes she who has not paid, and she shall learn nothing,' exclaimed Thanna.

'It does not matter, Thanna,' Aemilia said. 'If what thou hast heard be true, Nyria will know it when it comes to pass—perhaps before, for Rome is a sink of foul talk, and such sinks leak.'

'Nay, but I was the first to bring it and shall I not be paid?' cried Thanna sharply.

' Thou art an evil bargainer,' said Aemilia—' one who would bargain with her master's fate.'

'I care not,' said Thanna. 'Ye may all be sold, but I shall go with Julia to the Palace, and some day I shall wait upon an empress. Sabinus gone, Domitia will soon follow. Think of that, girls! An empress forsooth! That is better than to be only the wife of Sabinus.'

'She remains the same woman,' said Aemilia acidly. 'Julia will always be Julia. I wish thee joy of thine empress, Thanna.' For myself, I would rather be sold.'

'No, no, Aemilia, thou wilt not be sold; thou hast too good an eye for colour,' said Thanna saucily. 'Julia loves colour and the royal purple and gold will become her.'

I listened transfixed. What were they going to do to Sabinus?

'Of what dost thou speak?' I said. 'Hath ill happened to Sabinus?'
'She has not paid. She shall not hear. She shall not hear,' shrieked Thanna.

'Nay, but it may, after all, be well with Sabinus,' said Aemilia sadly. 'For the gods are more tender than man.' And I knew by the sound in her voice that Aemilia could only mean one thing, and horror struck at my heart for I loved and pitied Sabinus. I went over to Aemilia and took her hand.

'Has the edict of Caesar gone forth?' I said. 'It cannot be. Sabinus knows nothing. He is but now talking of his consulship to Julia.'

'Nay,' said Aemilia shaking her head. The Emperor sends forth no edict when it is a deed of which he is ashamed. The command will come to Sabinus, when it does come, under the mask of a message of friendship. . . .'

"Now will I tell thee what came to my knowledge afterwards. It seemed that Thanna had been talking to a man of the Guard who was making love to her and after her way—for Thanna was very sharp though she was young—she would not grant favours without a good return.

She told him that such as he could give her nothing in money or jewels worth selling her kisses for—since the Guard was known to be but ill-paid. But that she would be kind for a bit of news that should make her hair curl without the aid of irons.

Then he told her this—that he had heard in snatches things that had been dropped by the Emperor and by Julia in unguarded moments. Also, that Domitian had been with one or two of his advisers—or those he called his advisers, for Domitian took ever his own way—and the Guard had gathered that there would be work for the Praetorians in the removal of Sabinus. What the fate was that should come upon him they had not heard. And since he was already elected consul and since it appeared he must hold that office—at least for a little while—his doom would not be immediate, and they supposed that Domitian meant to let him serve and then bring forward some accusation against him. It was perhaps for this reason that Domitian had sent a hurried message to the Senate House that day."