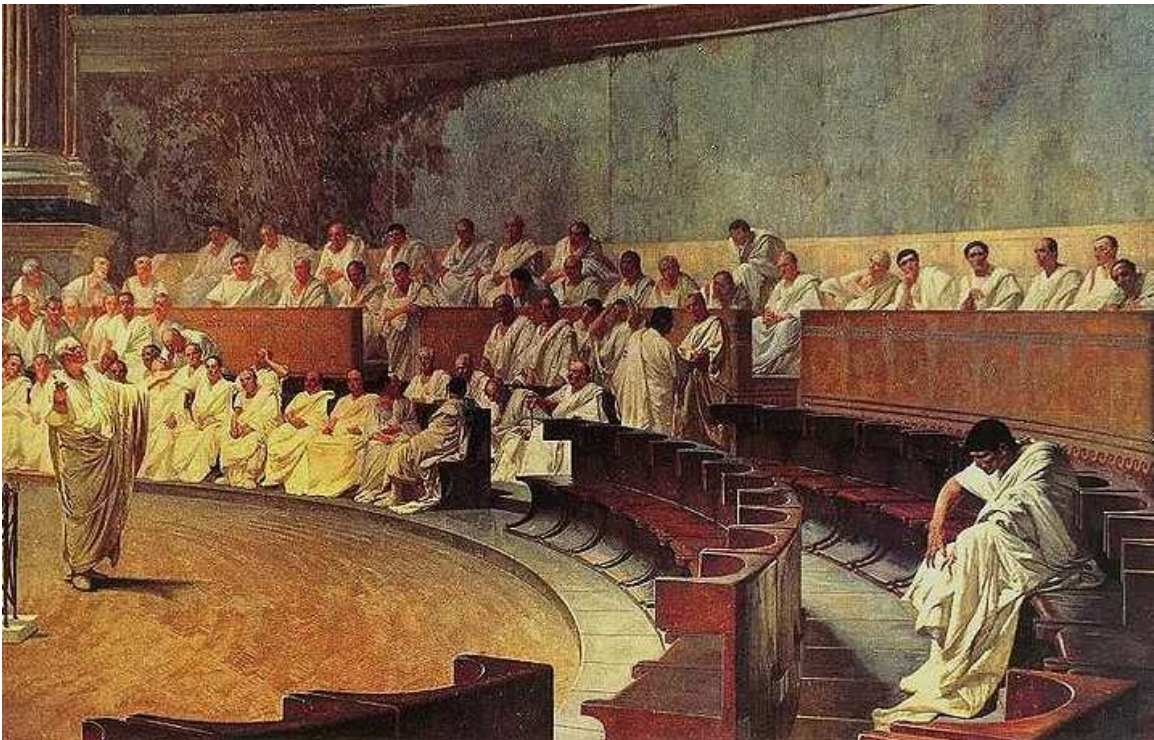


# CATILINE

By Joseph Schaedler



## CAST

CICERO Consul  
GUY ANTONY Consul  
SILANUS Consul-elect  
MURENA Consul-elect  
CLODIUS Bodyguard to Cicero  
CATILINE Conspirator against Rome  
MANLIUS Conspirator against Rome  
LENTULUS Conspirator against Rome  
CETHEGUS Conspirator against Rome  
STATILIUS Conspirator against Rome  
CAEPARIUS Conspirator against Rome  
GABINIUS Conspirator against Rome  
CURIUS Conspirator against Rome  
FULVIA Intimate to Curius  
CRIX & GANNIX Envoys of the Allobrogian Gauls  
VOLTURCIUS Messenger of the Conspirators  
FLACCUS Praetor  
POMPTINUS Praetor  
CATULUS a Senator  
DRUSUS a Senator  
GUY PISO a Senator  
ATTICUS Friend to Cicero  
JULIUS CAESAR Praetor-elect  
CATO People's Tribune-elect, later People's Tribune  
MARCUS PETREIUS Military Tribune to Antony  
METELLUS NEPOS People's Tribune  
Senators, Citizens, Conspirators, Merchants, Heralds, Messengers, Officers, Soldiers,  
Prison Wardens, Military Tribunes, Commoners, Gladiators and Servants

## SETTING

Various parts of Rome and Italy over the course of year 63 BC.

### ACT I

SCENE 1: The Roman Forum

SCENE 2: Catiline's House

SCENE 3: Fulvia's House

### ACT II

SCENE 1: The Roman Forum

SCENE 2: The Temple of Jupiter Stator

### ACT III

SCENE 1: Lentulus' House

SCENE 2: The Roman Forum

SCENE 3: A Street near Lentulus' House

SCENE 4: Lentulus' House

SCENE 5: The Milvian Bridge outside Rome

### ACT IV

SCENE 1: The Temple of Concord

SCENE 2: The Roman Forum

SCENE 3: Atticus' House

SCENE 4: The Temple of Concord

SCENE 5: The Tullianum Jail

### ACT V

SCENE 1: Guy Antony's Camp in Etruscany

SCENE 2: A Field in Etruscany

SCENE 3: The Roman Forum

ACT I  
SCENE 1  
The Roman Forum

*Enter stages left, right and center various CITIZENS diversely occupied. Enter stage right Egyptian and Roman MERCHANTS.*

ROMAN MERCHANT:

The Republic of Rome, and this city  
Her capitol, wrought with iron, clothed with gold!  
Once ago, yon forum's sacred bosom  
Did unfold our nation's founding fathers,  
Whose oath conceived new-begot liberty  
By refusing any king's o'erlordship.  
Afield anon 'gainst that proud Tarquin rex  
They defended our nascent democracy,  
From which success countless successors sprang  
T'commands opposing countless challengers,  
Each in sequence more terrible than their last,  
And, by defeating them all, held us whole  
As our serial triumphs expanded Rome  
Beyond the former frail bounds of this town  
Unto the foremost domain of the world!  
So now, while we mart at Rome's placid core,  
With grand pomp does one acclaimed commandant,  
Pompey the Great, march through the distant east  
Annexing Syria's subdued Seleucids,  
In sweep e'en to your Gizan sphinx's gaze  
Warding those wondrous pyramids behind't.

EGYPTIAN MERCHANT:

Chatter of Pompey's dread mammoth array  
Thrums through Egypt's every alley and court,  
E'en to th'palace of pharaoh Ptolemy,  
Who, seeking this Roman lord's patronage,  
Both proffered him present of lavish sum  
And offered invite to see our capital.  
Pompey took the wealth, the visit declined.  
Such was the state of affairs in Egypt  
When out our grain laden barges did part  
Alexandria's Pharos fired harbor,  
With bounty hither bound for bounteous gain.  
Oh what an eminence is pharaoh Pompey!  
What a colossus, whose stride's mere rumble  
Can so menace and quake such potentates!

ROMAN MERCHANT:

Eminent he is indeed, but no pharaoh.  
Roman law forbids that no man may  
Reign as king exalted to haughty sway,  
Save extreme crisis, then but transitory.  
Such is our custom - that all Rome's citizens  
Stand among ourselves emperored as equals.

EGYPTIAN MERCHANT:

Yet how come you then by your leadership?

ROMAN MERCHANT:

Whereas you serve god pharaohs' primacy  
Deified for life by family bloodline,  
Rome's republic divides supreme power  
Between two presidents we call consuls.  
They both prevail for but an annum's span  
In charge from year's start to December's end,  
Checked throughout by two ruling bodies more -  
Th'patrician senate of past magistrates  
And people's assembly of common crowd.  
Each midsummer our consuls' successors  
Are chosen by th'centuries' committee -  
All our citizen soldiers split hundredwise -  
Who do convene upon the Field of Mars  
And tally up their votes this very day.

[To a nearby CITIZEN]

You sir, has any pronouncement forthcome  
Revealing the results of today's poll?

CITIZEN:

Their choices for next year's consuls still pend,  
But all their attendant praetors are told.

ROMAN MERCHANT: [To the EGYPTIAN MERCHANT]

Officers junior only to consuls,  
Our praetors serve as both judges in court  
And police chiefs, should emergency ring.

[To the CITIZEN]

Pray tell us, what sorts of praetors we've won.

CITIZEN:

Consul Cicero's brother they opted

And several loyal optimatists else.  
Yet some popularists did advance too -  
Julius Caesar, that skyward rocket  
And foremost favorite among the people,  
There furthered his ethereal ascent.  
Also progressed that rupted Lentulus,  
Affiliant to Catiline's radical fringe.

ROMAN MERCHANT:  
Gods gall such gain by that fate addled gull!

[To the EGYPTIAN MERCHANT]  
You see, my good Egyptian counterpeer  
As Roman affluence waxed well ample,  
An industrious few of our elite  
Forged plentitudes boundless beyond fathom  
While th'base multitude but squandered their coins  
In fool pursuits that lurched themselves bankrupt.  
So now here, as in any community,  
That gross belly of those lacking resource  
Does envy our best men, extol the worst,  
Hate the old orders, hope for novelties,  
And hating their own lot they seek t'change all,  
Heedless about turmoils and seditions  
Since poverty easily keeps them unharmed.  
Thus we bide a graspy mass of takers  
Bloating 'gainst our prosperity makers,  
Ready for revolution, given chance.

EGYPTIAN MERCHANT:  
Stunning this strife! So then, Rome's starkest threat  
Strides not without but hides rather within.

ROMAN MERCHANT:  
Yea, and th'tempest needs but distempered head  
For whose roil and rage they'd blast us wracked.  
Wroth tribunes e'er stock our low assembly,  
While th'senate's aristocracy itself  
Is sundered into two parties apart.  
Their optimatist bulk props th'oligarchy  
'Gainst a breakaway popularist faction  
Who instead court th'commons' vulgar urge,  
And by sembling to serve their public's good  
Each attempts t'erect his own tyranny.  
Caesar shines forth their premier idolled sun,  
Though he's yet too fresh, too unriperly young,

To orient some uprising revolt.  
Rather he cloy the masses as but client  
To his billionaire goldfather Crassus.  
Still, Caesar's menace dulls calm and clement  
When compared to that worstmost rogue - Catiline!  
That dissolute and his destitute sect  
Would dissolve our very social fabric  
Through pursuit of a 'Clean Slate' policy  
T'abolish all outstanding debts outright  
And, ledgers voided, rob our moneyed class,  
Uproot nature's order and upend th'realm!  
So vowing this to Rome's vulgarities,  
Catiline today stands himself candidate  
For Rome's highest office of consulship,  
A prospect most appalling t'apprehend  
And one our good serving consul Cicero,  
That soul as blessed in mind as tongue to speak't,  
Defies most fervently with word and deed  
To warn lest our wards admit that lunatic.  
T'this end he's tailored a coalition  
He labels the concord of the orders,  
Of optimatists and popularists,  
Eyeball foes else, now fashioned new allies,  
Their old upbraids rebroidered to fabric  
Our tecting aegis 'gainst Catiline's designs.

*Enter stage center a HERALD.*

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement]

FIRST CITIZEN:

Eccé, th'herald is here! Herald, herald!

SECOND CITIZEN:

The committee has chosen our consuls  
And dispatched us this mouth to tell't! Tell us!

THIRD CITIZEN:

Aye share it, good herald! Give us their names!

FOURTH CITIZEN:

Ascend the rostra and satisfy us  
With their desired names! Name our next consuls!

[The HERALD goes up to the rostra platform above the crowd]

FIRST CITIZEN:

Peace, men! Let us hear him out!

SECOND CITIZEN:

Hush, men, peace!

HERALD:

Hark, people of Rome, listen to my speech!

The centuries have voted favorably,

Designating consuls two nobled men -

First chosen is Cato's kin Silanus,

Second is the veteran Murena.

Optimatists both have carried the day.

Gods bless the senate and people of Rome.

[The CITIZENS variously roar with approval and disapproval]

*Descend and exit stage center HERALD.*

FIRST CITIZEN:

Another optimatist power lock

Does clasp next year to ruly constancy.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Not so - it does but barrier yet again

The people's keyest rights encaged away.

SECOND CITIZEN:

So hurtles Rome blind through these hitchy times

Needing tether lest we bolt out to ruin.

*Enter stage center CLODIUS and SOLDIERS.*

CLODIUS:

Make way, people of Rome, clear path! Make way!

For here comes passing through in procession

Our Roman consuls present and future!

Behold these four gallant gents and revere!

Remove now apace! Give way!

FOURTH CITIZEN:

Space, men, space!

*Enter stage center CICERO wearing a cuirass breastplate, GUY ANTONY, SILANUS and MURENA.*



CICERO:  
Look, handsome Clodius.

CLODIUS:  
Yes, lord Cicero?

CICERO:  
Gratitude again, Clodius, boundless thanks  
To you and your unit of veterans.  
Your vigilant duties as bodyguards  
Have doubtless preserved me today intact  
Despite dark Catiline's deathly devising  
That compels this my breastplate encasement.

CLODIUS:  
Glad to play captain of such guard.

CICERO:  
Well good.  
So see you, Silanus and Murena,  
When responsible men assume power  
Over a dulled and much discordant drove,  
Then shall rootings t'incense a vile response  
Utterly consume its most depraved swine.  
Thus the best's leaders need stand protected  
Lest the worst's urges become enacted.

SILANUS:  
Words too well proofed before our very sight  
In too oft repeated violent cycles  
That swayed Rome's too potent people to twist  
Her victor's sword inward her own vitals.

MURENA:  
True that, Silanus, and so our safeguard,  
Though prevailing at security thus far,  
May yet show too paltry within a flash  
Should all of Rome's petty and gruntful mob,  
Legions of landless vets among their count,  
Mount a full scale riot against our order.

CICERO:  
But we've forces further still in reserve  
From th'new discharged legions now thronging Rome,  
Those with whom yourself toured, Murena, fought.  
All treasure flushed, sated thus, loyal bred

By their field commanders' benevolence,  
If new tumult heaves high, they'll rally t'us.  
In these times, though, we all do but poise us  
'Pon the razor's tip whose slightest shiver  
Would carve all good men scalped most gravely.  
And you would, Guy Antony, you half-beast,  
You lionized thug, you wellborn lowlife,  
And - abhorrent hap! - you my co-consul,  
Blithely would you knock the homeland's topple  
Or - worse yet - abet Catiline's rash project,  
If Rome's downshake could heap up your coffers!

ANTONY:

What's to say? So reels this teetery age  
That we who'd slick through Rome's course of honors  
Need steady retap of revenue's spigot  
To fulfill our social obligations -  
Impress our patrons, endow our clients,  
Host our guest friends, lobby our magistrates.  
Sapping else, we'd succumb t'our debts enslaved.  
Mine's the moral norm, I just perform't well,  
And - welcome presage! - what great livelihood  
Awaits me in royally rich Macedon,  
That so plentiful province overseas  
Whose royal pressing I'll get t'oversee  
After our term's end in th'presidency!

CICERO:

Remember, Macedon's yet mine by law,  
Allotted me by the senate's decree  
To govern upon our consulship's close,  
And only by my own dispensation  
May you usurp its gross mismanagement.  
Yet I'll bequeath't, if you preserve my price  
For that lush transfer - avoid you Catiline,  
Shun all his ilk, deny them ear or voice,  
Second my motions, obstruct any theirs,  
In sum, uphold your post's proper duties  
At least while you improperly do hold't!  
Restrain your base greed while in high office,  
And hostaged Macedon falls beneath you.

ANTONY:

I recall all, Cicero, and agree  
To these terms, acting retained in your hire.

CICERO:

How I hate abandoning Macedon  
To Antony to plunder, sack and spoil,  
But better to give up a jeweled diadem  
Than clasping it t'oblige Rome's decapping.  
Have no doubt, sirs, that Catiline's nothing less  
Than a direct, dire and most mortal threat  
To our mere survival. Even today,  
Within the centuries' committee ranks  
There lurked a dozen score undrawn daggers  
Ready at some preset signal to pluck  
And thrust death unto each good man present,  
Ourselves among their appointed targets.  
Had I not heard of it and responded  
With this assemblage of veterans at arms  
Outclassing Catiline's collusive array,  
He'd have there realized such bloody carnage.  
And still he may, dealt on some smaller scale,  
Should we stay too long on public display.  
Such forms surest reason for discretion  
In ope exposure to the commons' sphere,  
Lest 'pon exhibit we occasion them  
Fresh chance to hazard some brash incident.  
So get we to our homes, or elsewhere safe.  
My wise wife Terentia expects me hence.  
Clodius, escort on.

CLODIUS:

Aye, lord Cicero.  
Forward, veterans! Clear passage, citizens!

*Exit stage right CICERO and his procession.*

SECOND CITIZEN:

Such thunderous rumblings the consul does vent!  
What turbulent torsions disturb him so!

FIRST CITIZEN:

He bellows it right! Catiline's fulming spite  
Dares tinder th'spark to kindle a crisis!

THIRD CITIZEN:

Rather 'tis void and bluster! They revile  
That hero for just furing his disgust!

FOURTH CITIZEN:

Lo, here comes Catiline! Let him air his mind!

ROMAN MERCHANT:

Come, let's away, lest my displeas'd face  
Betray our contrary disposition  
To Catiline's notice, and spur his dispatch  
Of delinquent youth to dispense with us.

*Exit stage right Egyptian and Roman MERCHANTS and some CITIZENS. Enter stage center CATILINE, LENTULUS, MANLIUS and CETHEGUS.*

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement]

THIRD CITIZEN:

All hail Catiline! Rome's one rightful consul!  
Avé lord Lentulus! Praetor-elect!

CATILINE:

I praise you, people, for your accolades!  
Alas th'optimatist establishment  
Thwarts us again, grudging graft enough  
To splice votes centurion to their terse branch.  
Thus they resnuff the public's broader good  
To clip me from my deserved consulship,  
And keep our cloven nation bowing down.  
There are two bodies in this republic.  
One feeble and bearing an infirm head,  
The other firm and massive, but headless.  
This body, so well deserving it's head  
Shall not want for one so long as I live!  
They can keep me from office, but never  
Can they halt me from heading off their crimes!  
No they cannot! For I'm no manhood mere  
In this heady post, but our latest heir  
To front our steadfast cause for fair redress!  
Ever again have visionary men  
Recognized our disadvantaged condition  
And sought in vain t'attain its amendment,  
Only to crack beneath the state's elite.  
Too long have they soundly injured Rome's folk!  
Too oft met they our protests with violence!  
Too smug do they ignore this city's rage,  
Deeming our suit as but a whimsy chase,  
Trusting their delays shall choke us tranquil,  
And failing to mark that each doused reform

Smolders still to resurge like the phoenix  
Whose fiery vigor no power can quench!  
Take they my head, a new scion succeeds me!  
End they him, fresh offspring shall issue thence  
Till they, outworn at last, yield to our claims,  
Or reactive stiff, they'll buckle and fract!  
Th'more they idle us, th'more we vibrant throb!  
The more they revel richened palatial  
While shunting Rome's masses to paupered slums,  
The more militant we'll uprise from th'gulf  
With vital resolve that overcomes all!  
Hold your hopes high, those torches beacon bright  
To usher in our destined victory!  
We will have relief! We shall triumph yet!  
Keep courage, my people! Valeté all!

[Aside his entourage]

Come let's away, we've much private to say.

[CATILINE and his retinue begin to move towards stage left]

THIRD CITIZEN:

Power to the popularists! Clean slate!

FIRST CITIZEN: [Aside to a fellow CITIZEN]

Filthy cleansing, that dumps Rome to such dregs!

CATILINE:

Hark, young Cethegus, know you that citizen?

CETHEGUS:

He looks familiar. Easy to make known.

CATILINE:

Good. Make note of him. He slanders our cause  
And dupes his respecting clients to hear't.  
Such men dare cripple our moves in the heat  
Of our next racing contest for command.  
Add him to the list of untrustworthies  
For your youth brigades to interdict speechless.

CETHEGUS:

Aye, my juveniles will silence him mute.

CATILINE:

Well worked out. Now my good centurion chief,

Gaius Manlius, my loyal captain,  
The voted backing of your century  
For my candidacy gladdened my eye,  
Though sadly we witnessed our general loss.

MANLIUS:

'Twas as joyous to punch my vote for you  
As 'twas grievous to see it suffice.

CATILINE:

Aye so. City failed, you'll canvass th'country  
With new campaign up in Etruscany,  
Where several veteran cohorts yet unraised,  
Their war pay spent, their old feats still observed,  
Would steely ballots cast to win our charge.  
On this enterprise all shall be apprised  
Within my domicile this selfsame night.  
Lentulus, our one good praetor-elect,  
Today's win bids you celebrate tonight  
With those boosters who hoisted you to it.  
Somehow I pray you may slipper away  
From your own victory festivities  
To include your ear among my hearers.

LENTULUS:

When Catiline conveys his solemn logos  
And plots detour of the world's wayward course  
From its errancy back to th'proper path,  
Then e'en divine heaven's sphere needs incline  
To observe the momentous milestone!  
So shall I, upon my life, come attend  
As your league's loyalmost confederate!

CATILINE:

Your sworn allegiance sturdies my firmness  
As does th'fidelity among you all,  
Outweighed only by your varied valors  
And those of our faction's further fellows,  
Who shall tonight confide in our venture.  
Of these, some high reputed prominents  
I bid you go summon on my behalf.  
Mercantile Gabinius loves you deep,  
Lentulus, guaranteed at your gala  
With Statilius along. Guide them to us,  
For both these businessmen are our party.

LENTULUS:

'Tis certitude I'll conduct them to you.

CATILINE:

Merry. Now Cethegus, head of my youths,  
Two outstanding delinquents, wealth endowed,  
Run hoodlum gangs most worthy collusion.  
Caeparius and Curius go they by name.  
Keep you them close?

CETHEGUS:

Aye, both those hooley boys  
Consort most cozy in with my antics.

CATILINE:

Smashing. Do seek these out and bring them in.  
They are devoutly ours, and will devote  
Their rowding crowds to enhance our street squads.  
Pray now, get you all to your engagements.  
Impute about town and intrigue away,  
Then return to me at the end of day  
For our tryst. Until then, ponder the earth  
And the wonders we will work upon her.

*Exit stage left LENTULUS, MANLIUS and CETHEGUS.*

So it begins - we embark and launch out  
Upon a rapid course most treacherous  
'Gainst that faithless elite most treasonous!  
They frivol blind among fortunes untouched  
And blather but trite and empty pledges  
Of someday affluence for those commons  
Who languish and despair most destitute!  
Such is their offense to their own people.  
Oh my people! My pride, you bulls once proud,  
Who toiled so hard and yoked their slanted rules!  
Don't let their false promises delude you!  
Th'wretched won't find a faithful defender  
Unless he be one who's wretched himself.  
If you'd replace your debts, recoup your costs,  
Look you t'his debts, his holdings, his daring.  
That man needs be least timid and ruined most  
Who'd be liege and flagship for your ruined host.  
Such a one am I, fit to grasp the helm  
And ferry Rome clear from her late wreckage.  
I'll skipper us straight through on my fleet craft,

Or if drowned, turn Rome's tide forever aft!

*Exit stage left CATILINE, exit diversely stages left, right and center the various CITIZENS.*

## SCENE 2

### Catiline's House at Night

*Enter stage center CETHEGUS, CAEPARIUS and CURIUS. Enter stages left and right SERVANTS offering refreshments borne on platters. Enter stage right a SERVANT leading in LENTULUS, STATILIUS and GABINIUS.*

SERVANT:

Good gentles! Do welcome lords Lentulus,  
Gabinus and Statilius, come well  
To the receptive household of Catiline!

CETHEGUS:

Ah! So grand of you, Lentulus to show,  
And you brought these two merchant men in tow!

LENTULUS:

Indeed, Cethegus my lad! Though held up,  
Scarce could we three uphold the slightest care  
For any meeting else than this affair!  
Good, you gathered your comrades to our cause.

CETHEGUS:

Aye, Caeparius here runs a fearsome gang,  
And this one, Curius, leads a like-sized throng.  
Confided both, they aspire t'advance us.

LENTULUS:

I'm confident that these youths so inspired  
Shall each meet with great advancement thereby.  
Yet where tarries our party's head Catiline?

CETHEGUS:

He bides aside with general Manlius  
Charting precise trooper tactics up north  
To best secure their takeo'er strategy.

*Enter stage left CATILINE and MANLIUS.*

Ah look! From speech to sight, here stands the man,  
Posed to present his plan. Salvé Catiline!



CATILINE:

Salvé Cethegus! Salveté you all!  
Every one faithful, every one worthy!  
Were not your faith and worth so apparent,  
Vainly had this prospect occasioned us,  
But as I've through much and many travails  
Proved you all to be forceful and faithful,  
I'll dare begin this great and glorious deed.  
We've the same views of good and of evil,  
Same wills, same won'ts – 'tis firmest amity.  
What I've in mind you've all diversely heard,  
And e'er more each day does my heart enflame  
'Pon considering our future condition  
Unless we win back our own liberty!  
Since th'republic fell to that princely few,  
They alone accrue its tax and tribute.  
While th'rest, decent men, strong, noble and base,  
Count a mob, without favor, without weight,  
Mere annoyance to those on high for whom,  
If th'republic worked, we'd be reverend.  
Thus all favor, power, honor, riches,  
All's retained their own, or where they wish it.  
They spend to raise up seas and raze down alps,  
Yet howso much their funds are frittered off,  
They cannot e'en dent their moneyed reserves.  
They left us peril, defeat, poverty.  
For us skulks but dearth at home, debts abroad,  
An ill condition, sights on much rougher -  
What have we left but a wretched lifestyle?  
What man with man's spirit can tolerate  
Their reign of riches outpoured on themselves,  
While we lack means for mere necessities?  
How long will you endure't, you bravest men?  
Isn't to die with glory better far  
Than a life spent wretched and dishonored,  
Indecently lost for others' smug sport?  
Yea truth - by the gods! - victory's in our hands.  
Our age is prime, our spirits strong, while they  
Droop weak and antique through long years of ease.  
Such work needs but begin - th'rest will follow!  
Therefore awake! Here's your wanted freedom,  
With riches, honor, glory set in sight!  
Fortune posts it all for victors' prizes.  
Action, option, risks, needs, and war's plush spoils  
All exhort you more than this orator.

Use me as commander or commando,  
Nor my soul nor my body will falter .  
These things I hope to enact as our consul,  
Unless perhaps my wits do delude me  
And you would rather be slaves than rulers.  
Such is the sum of our general cause,  
Who would glean particulars pray speak now.

CURIUS:

Your words catch my soul as they do the truth.  
Yet by what means plan you the town's takeo'er?

CATILINE:

Why, by means of arms, my fledgling Curius,  
In the hands of a loyal multitude!  
Northwards Etruscany maintains vast plains  
Where waste idle whole legions of veterans,  
Discharged long since to fresh plotted farmsteads.  
As warriors, being death's disciples, oft prove  
Unfit at tilling life into the land,  
So too failed these vets, inept to a man,  
Whose each deficient dream swelled deficits  
Into proportions far too prodigious,  
Until they, o'erdrawn and constrained by need,  
Lastly pawned both their acres and themselves  
Into bound servitude to their lenders.  
Now these derelicts, so loathing their plight,  
Will all enlist forthwith in our project  
To disturb the state that disturbs them so.  
Already they agitate openly  
For precisely what our program entails -  
Debt abolition and wealth proscription  
Honed on those very usuring vultures  
Who preyed upon them so incredibly.  
But add positions high and plunder deep,  
Plus all else that victor's license will bring,  
And we'll raise copious recruits from these troops.  
Under command of sir Manlius here,  
They'll march down on Rome and secure our coup!  
So account these Etruscan legions ours.  
Now, can I count on every one of you?  
If any finds such flaw in my designs  
As demands they desert our ring, pray tell't.  
I'll vouchsafe those doubters out as neutrals,  
Cordial though craven, yet free from backlash.

LENTULUS:

Count me as your first, Catiline, to the last!

CATILINE:

Fine pronouncement, my princely Lentulus.

CETHEGUS:

I'll match his motion and second him here!

CATILINE:

Oh how you move me too, hot Cethegus.

GABINIUS:

Note my network yours!

STATILIUS:

Count my colleagues too!

CATILINE:

Grand, Gabinius! Splendid, Statilius!  
Our company shall interest your partners much.  
And how go you, Caeparius?

CAEPARIUS:

Why, armed, sir!  
We're always war strapped, and we march for you.

CATILINE:

Your troop's displayed strut will advance us far.  
What's your stance, Curius? I'm dying to know!

CURIUS:

Doubt not! My crew stumps for your living reign!

CATILINE:

Your each affirmed vow bonds firm my resolve  
To enforce our unison sworn duty,  
Whose gambit shall play out most triumphant,  
Being composed of boundless virtues diverse  
Such as congress together in this house.  
Now, let's further endow this mortal pledge  
To save Rome by shedding her rusted blood  
With libation tonight, as oath divine,  
Drunk upon Roman blood freshly outpoured.  
Boy, convey those wine-welling bowls hither.

[A SERVANT bears wine bowls on a platter to CATILINE]

Now Manlius, do provide me your blade.

[MANLIUS hands CATILINE his dagger]

O you gods whom Roman temples revere  
And ancestral spirits whose lives passed here,  
By whatever names you would wish be called,  
You whose majesties ordained Rome's grandeur  
From which we magnify you with honors,  
If you wish Rome to endure eternal,  
Then bless our quest unto just fulfillment.

[CATILINE cuts his forearm, which bleeds into the bowls]

So pray I, who would first spill my own blood  
Before I'd seek to draw any other's.  
This is my blood, which I give up for you.  
Drink this in memory of our covenant.

[The CONSPIRATORS each drink from and pass around the bowls]

Now are we confirmed deepest men of faith.  
Go forth and multiply our membership  
As immense as the arc of the rayed sun.  
Here dawns the rise of our conspiracy  
Whose bright climax will snuff out tyranny!

*Exit stage center the various CONSPIRATORS, exit stage left CATILINE.*

### SCENE 3

Fulvia's House that Night

*Knocking off stage. Enter stage right FULVIA*

FULVIA:  
Gods above! What means these thunderous claps  
Whose racket unrests my halcyon home?  
Quiet nights come rarely and persist never,  
Such the hectic life of a socialite.

*Enter stage center a SERVANT.*

From Vulcan's forge, who hammers 'pon our bolt?

SERVANT:

Mistress Fulvia, the foregate's crasher  
Is your longtime standing suitor Curius.

FULVIA:

Doubtless he batters seeking admittance  
To voice some heartfelt lovelorn admission.  
Let him in quick, lest his tardied knuckles  
Rhapsody awake the whole neighborhood.

SERVANT:

Yes, my lady.

*Exit stage center the SERVANT.*

FULVIA:

Fond Curius tracks back here.  
No paragon of discretion, this one.  
He was quite a prospect once, but his mouth  
Ran looser than prudence could latch it fast.  
Thus hearing censure from proper powers,  
He cooled th'intrigues of his prior partners  
And cost himself that most crucial quality  
In our current culture - strong confidantes.  
Cut from the hottest tips, his lucre dipped  
And those love prizes he'd largessed by th'hour  
Lessened into latter day promises.  
Empty hands don't long handle highborn dames,  
And so I bid he finger someone else,  
One more befitting his dwindled digits.  
So I thought we'd ended it, until this.  
Likely he'll mewl like a backhanded whelp,  
And whimper up countless absurd protests.  
Oh I hope he can at least keep his feet -  
Crawling so unbecomes a full grown man.

*Enter stage center the CURIUS.*

Why, dearest sweet Curie - why come you here?

CURIUS:

Oh Fulvia, my Fulvia, my one  
And only love, my brightly feathered dove,  
My sunlit sky and heaven stars above!  
Aurora's rose is but her jealous blush  
That your beauty outshines her dawning brush!

FULVIA:

Oh Curie, come off this honeyed poesy.  
For its syruped sentiment but jades me.  
My fancy needs charming deeds, not vain words,  
And for too long you've done nothing of note.

CURIUS:

Oh, cast that into the past, Fulvia!  
I'm employed in a new occupation  
Whose exploits shall whole mountains and flush seas  
Render into our personal playthings!  
This night, my cadre did solemn conjure  
Our aim t'reframe Rome's foundering husk of state  
Into a booming galley we'll control.  
The feat's in motion, and when accomplished  
All those nostril fops who once downgazed me  
Shall sue and stumble for my clemency!  
Soon enough, Fulvia, my unsheathed sword  
Shall sweep its menace o'er all vivid hearts,  
With none left fearless but those who've submitted,  
Or else th'heedless heaps of catalogued dead.  
Th'hazard o'erhangs e'en you, my Fulvia -  
Only by swearing submissive to me  
May you remain unscathed when lord Catiline  
Accedes, crimson soaked, to his purpled throne!  
You've scoffed me far too oft, too little thought  
My promises would e'er amount to aught -  
How much you've grieved me so, you cruel vixen!  
Now that I'm pledged and bound adventurous  
To claim a share of Rome's supremacy,  
I swear, before you bruise my bravery  
Through some shrewd smirk or shrewish mockery,  
That you consider first my temperament -  
This project's got me in a bruising mood,  
And don't you doubt what bruising I can do!  
Oh, can't you see how much this means for me!

FULVIA:

Oh my gods, Curie! Such raw potency  
So sudden you possess! Oh dear my heart!  
What a titan you're grown! Oh how immense!  
How intense! Astounds the wit, whelms me o'er!  
Can't speak - giddy dizzy - oh spinning room!

[FULVIA starts to swoon, CURIUS catches and holds her]

CURIUS:

I've got you safe! All harm I'll keep at bay!  
Fear you not, Fulvia, and do be calmed.  
Of course my increase jolts you beyond sense  
As demands reflecting rest to digest.  
I've yet many rounds to compass tonight.  
You should retire and restore your blushed poise.

FULVIA:

Yes, Curie. My body's rebalanced now,  
Though my quivering mind still careens atilt.  
Do give me leave to recover tonight,  
Then return tomorrow once I'm renewed.

CURIUS:

Easy the boon that brings me back to you!  
Retire well, Fulvia, unwind your cares,  
And dwell your dreams 'pon our attending bliss!

*Exit stage center CURIUS.*

FULVIA:

Now that's the way to treat a threatening man -  
Wooze yourself alack and make for the floor,  
And then their protective instincts resurge,  
Making them fall back into your service.  
Lucky break that he scooped me up mid drop,  
Yet should he falter, you must follow through  
Down to the ground, for its one dumbstruck punch  
Assures less hurt and features more intact  
Than his wrathful sequence of fisty swipes.  
Gods! What sharp yips did bark from Curie's lips!  
So fiercely spit! Though lacking th'backing bite.  
But his sworn Catiline's not one so defanged -  
That maw'd champ up blood abundant to gorge  
His ravenous appetite for power.  
Yea, war most uncivil does loom ahead  
Whose rough pursuit shall devour prey profuse.  
Despite Catiline's worth, he can't long prevail  
Deploying dullard captains like Curius.  
They'll but prouduce their own ignoble ends,  
And so ending, induce disgrace 'pon all  
Their circle's surviving former fellows,  
Ringing me in too - that I'll not accept.  
To salvage my name, I must th'state secure.

There hangs a touchy thread to traipse along -  
Favor th'elite too flagrantly too soon,  
And errant free Catiline will clip me out.  
Display my faith too slightly or too late,  
And then it's spurned as scurried self service.  
The work needs start now and clandestine run -  
Tonight I'll fly and leak informative  
Their plot to Terentia, the consul's wife,  
And then tomorrow Curius I'll convert  
Into an infiltrator for the state,  
Who'll spy and spill all Catiline's sealed designs,  
Absolving both our names in the process.  
This covert course to gain my exemption  
Shall pave Rome's pathway clear to redemption!

*Exit stage center FULVIA.*

End of ACT I



ACT II  
SCENE 1  
The Roman Forum

*Enter stages left, right and center various CITIZENS diversely occupied.*

FIRST CITIZEN:  
Salvé good sir.

SECOND CITIZEN:  
A good day to you too.  
Say - what proceeds here?

THIRD CITIZEN:  
The senate's convened.  
Cicero spurred his emissars though town  
To rouse up this emergency session  
O'er some figured security crisis.  
Before this congress to the curia called,  
Th'alarmist struts proud and puffs bombastic,  
Plainting his staleworn "I have heard" something,  
Uttering now "terrorists", now "treasonous",  
And striving by these insinued charges  
To shock th'senators into such distress  
That th'jolted reactionaries adopt  
Passage of his sought consulta decrees,  
Condemning th'framed objects of his tirade  
And cumbering th'caged subjects of this city.

SECOND CITIZEN:  
Surely this all must pertain to Catiline,  
Whose demeanor perturbs the consul so.

FOURTH CITIZEN:  
Indeed so, but the maligned man protests  
That his will is benign and beyond blame,  
And pledges them his own head as surety  
By attending this civil convention,  
Ready to submit to what they verdict  
Without resistance, reserve or respite.  
Thereby he secures some moderate calm  
From th'extremest discords unloosed of late.

*Enter stage center a HERALD, who ascends the rostra platform above the crowd.*

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement]

FIRST CITIZEN:

Lo, the senate has rendered it's judgment!

SECOND CITIZEN:

Divulge us their reckoning, herald clear!

HERALD:

Hark, people of Rome, listen to my speech!  
Our most august consul, lord Cicero,  
Has today before the gathered senate  
Accused its eminent citizen Catiline  
Of crafting a covert conspiracy  
To strike down Rome's officialdom of state  
Using tactics most savage and bloody.  
The consul promoted his urgent case  
Through indices both verbal and physic,  
The which a newcomer report did bolster  
By confirming the observed assemblage  
Of a rogue army in th'Etruscan fields  
At the command of Gaius Manlius.  
Presented with such drastic conditions,  
The senate responded with duressed decree  
That their ultimate consultum take force,  
Which final act suspends civilian rights  
T'install instead the rule of martial law  
Dictated by our authorized consuls,  
Who must vigil and deploy every toil  
Lest some detriment befall th'republic.  
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That their ultimate consultum take force,  
Which final act suspends civilian rights  
T'install instead the rule of martial law  
Dictated by our authorized consuls,  
Who must vigil and deploy every toil  
Lest some detriment befall th'republic.  
Thus sundry magistrates have been dispatched  
T'enforce the various parts of Italy,  
Foremost the praetor Metellus Celer,  
Fresh expressed northwards t'our Gallic frontier  
To draw off a preponderance of troops.  
Catiline himself, inculpated as complicit,  
Does comply to watched custody at th'home  
Of tribune-elect Calpurnius Bestia.

Lastly, so as to resolve these perils  
With most honed effect and least shedded blood,  
The senate awards sizable reward  
For any substantive intelligence  
Informed them about this conspiracy.  
Gods bless the senate and people of Rome.

*Descend and exit stage center HERALD.*

[The CITIZENS variously murmur with anxiety and apprehension]

FIRST CITIZEN:

How altered, how upset the city's face  
Contorts its lately levity and lust  
Into grim spasms of unsettled gloom.

SECOND CITIZEN:

New cares do weary and encrease old cheeks,  
Moving demurrals, or muting stumped mouths.  
We've nor yet war to wage, nor peace to keep,  
But no place nor person befits credence,  
And each must measure this public menace  
According to his own substantial risk.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Duly deserved, with metrics imbalanced  
On such an immense and improper scale!  
Were reportional dispersals upkept  
From those ably endowed to those in need,  
Then would all Romans spurn revolts as one.  
But when exploits uplift th'exclusive few,  
Then th'excluded and exploited masses  
Ought but sneer and mock all highflown discord  
Which nothing touches their downcasted brows.

FOURTH CITIZEN:

When powerful lords scramble and tremble  
In their complex contests for dominance,  
'Tis but an empty and removed concern  
For many whose cares are simply consumed  
With their own struggles for mere subsistence.  
But look! Hereby passes Catiline himself!  
Let's hear how he answers this indictment!

*Enter stage center CATILINE, LENTULUS, CETHEGUS, CAEPARIUS and CURIUS.*

Catiline! Lord Catiline! Pray give us your voice!

FIRST CITIZEN:

Do you admit to your charged wrongdoings?

THIRD CITIZEN:

Do you deny their fancied accusations?

CATILINE:

Good people of Rome! I do testify  
In this holy place under heaven's sight  
That I have not, am not and will not e'er  
Lead, enjoin, or follow any conduct  
Intending the harm or endangerment  
Of Rome's bravest and most blessed people,  
Whose welfare is my firstmost ambition  
Against all threats from without or within.  
Rather, these aspersions of my person  
Are all void and entirely baseless rants  
From a paranoid and prejudiced scold  
Fixated too long on our crippling.  
Hunching forth his shadowy pretextures  
At today's gathered senate, he did ruse  
Their passage of th'ultimate consultum,  
Which but empowers him dredge deeper still.  
Such launched ravings from his private quarrel  
I refuse th'honor of public reply.  
Instead, I do but powerless accede  
To their strictures as best keeps Rome at ease.  
Keep calm, good countrymen! Valeté all!

[Aside his entourage]

Pace with me, sirs, some way to Bestia's place.

[CATILINE and his retinue begin to move towards stage left]

CURIUS:

Lord Catiline, how shall we unloose your will  
With you confined at tribune Bestia's keep?

CATILINE:

Bother you not with good tribune Bestia,  
For the man's precisely of our party.  
In fact, I've already with him arranged  
To condition my escape this midnight.  
Thence I'll visit our ally Laeca's house

Wherein our conjury will then convene  
To devise and stage our design's next phase -  
The assassination of Cicero.  
As his tamperance bedevils our cause worst  
So shall his decease our wills enthuse best.

LENTULUS:

For such will we've two skilled executors,  
A determined terminating duo,  
Knights both, hailing from th'equestrian class  
That seconds but th'patricians' cream prestige.  
Statilius and Gabinius know them,  
And mission now to draw them to the meet.

CATILINE:

Well constelled, good lieutenant Lentulus!  
Tonight, I'll bid these two luminaries  
Call upon the consul's home at daybreak,  
Pressing t'extend him some customed salutes,  
But sleeving scabbards whose points, once unsheathed,  
Will raze his demise for our new raised dawn!  
While Manlius mounts our Etruscan head,  
We'll cut down their headmaster from Rome's court!  
Now let's all away to our diverse tasks,  
Until tonight's gathering springs the next act!

*Exit diversely stages left and right CATILINE, LENTULUS, CETHEGUS and CAEPARIUS.*

CURIUS:

Mars the momentum Catiline can compel!  
It 'mazes witless the witnessing mind  
And would 'spire marvels, were he 'stablished strong.  
But Fulvia dear has convinced me else.  
She concludes his throngs too immature green,  
And stakes they'll meet premature conclusions  
Impaled upon armed optimatist poles.  
To 'scape us from such grisly reddened scrapes,  
She's confided unto Cicero's wife  
Of Catiline's plans what she knew, and swore more  
Will forthcome through my secret agency.  
For which provision I'll off presently  
To relate her these tidings she'll relay  
Onwards t'our consular handler couple.  
Thus we back both sides in this civic duel.  
May Catiline neglect our duplicity,

For he'd butcher all such complicity!

*Exit stage left CURIUS, exit diversely stages left, right and center the various CITIZENS.*

## SCENE 2

### The Temple of Jupiter Stator

*Enter stages left, right and center SILANUS, MURENA, CATULUS, JULIUS CASEAR, CATO and various other SENATORS, all taking seats on benches and keeping diversely occupied.*

MURENA: [To CATULUS]

Crisis succeeds crisis with shuddering speed,  
And each one compels us to reconvene  
In formed fullness as Rome's senate council.  
First we audit th'day's fresh developments,  
Then ponder we their fluent gravity,  
Concluding with such issued consulta  
As bulwark best our sound security.  
Now this Temple of Jupiter Stator  
Stages our most direly urged showing yet,  
Doubtless for its defensible construct  
To deflect that loon-risen hostile tide.  
Say Catulus, our lordliest of peers,  
Whose peachless character and long tenure  
Entitle you stand prince of the senate,  
That prestiged rank to which we all defer,  
When last had Rome's chariot coursed so cursed?

CATULUS:

Brave Murena, for half a century  
I've toga'd this republic's privy courts.  
Many an intrigue, many an outrage  
Have I beheld about my bold career,  
But these deranged errors of Catiline's craze  
Do scandal us more than most all that's passed  
After the end of savior Sulla's reign,  
By whose dictatorship twenty years back  
We'd first dissolved our constitution's bonds  
Since th'yore days when black monstrous Hannibal  
Did cast his shadow 'cross the continents.  
Perforce installed we Sulla's dominance  
But to persecute back into temper  
Those fevered popularist partisans  
Of th'tragic fallen hero Marius -  
Then was the last time, my good Murena,

When popularists so convulsed our state  
That Romans murdered rightful magistrates.  
Newly we learnt that Catiline did last night  
Sneak morning assassins to Cicero,  
Intent on descending his life to hell  
And our entire people to veiled mourning.  
But - thank th'gods! - that eagle of a consul  
Did th'ploy with his Argusine eyes forespy  
And, stocking his home with offsetting force,  
Refused them admittance and spoiled their hopes!  
We are blessed to keep that keen-sighted man  
To shepherd us through these hatred hazed hours.

SILANUS: [To CATO]

Good Cato, my earnest brother by law  
That spoused me to your sister Servilia,  
Your stoic face eludes all scrutiny.  
How takes your upright heart this downfall tale  
Of dawn's failed effort at Cicero's head?

CATO:

I cannot say what truly shames me more -  
Their special depth of villany t'attempt,  
Or th'general breadth of apathy t'abstain  
And forbear from bearing forth some tip-word  
To help us defuse this seething fragrance  
Lest it detonate the town a-cinder.  
Th'whole public heard of today's tried horror,  
Yet none -oh contempt! - not one cared forthcome  
Any clue to their subversive motions  
So that we, the city's conscript fathers,  
Whose principal point is Rome's protection,  
Might cleanly shield these orders they struck foul!  
How shall we avail such society  
Whose very people apprize her nothing?

*Enter stage left CATILINE and LENTULUS.*

[The SENATORS variously murmur with anxiety and apprehension, while CATILINE and LENTULUS move towards stage right]

Great Zeno's porch! That cocky basilisk  
Dares slander his step across the threshold!  
Gods grant our mongoose consul curbs his track!

CATILINE:

Slander indeed, Cato! Private slander!  
Composed of but baseless accusations!  
Contrived by but a baseborn accuser!  
Cicero's too invidious aspect  
More ferrets this meet than any fault mine,  
And I'll not blink from his glaring affront,  
But rather will redeem my reviled name  
Confronting the weasel's deviance here!

[CATILINE and LENTULUS take seats on a bench stage right. SENATORS seated nearby shift away towards stage center, including CAESAR]

Et tu, Caesar?

CAESAR:  
Yes "and me", and too all  
Who'd slip contagion of your smirched ailment,  
For today you can't but contaminate.

*Enter stage left CLODIUS.*

CLODIUS:  
All rise for our presiding magistrate.

[The SENATORS rise]

*Enter stage left CICERO*

CICERO:  
Be seated.

[The SENATORS sit]

Straight to th'issue's relation -  
As is both befitting and fulfilling  
For th'Roman people of Quiritan stock,  
We relate unto you, conscript fathers -

[CICERO recognizes CATILINE]

Oh Jove forfend! The devil's in our midst!

[Aside]  
What nerve! The cur bets his face unnerves me.  
Nay, I'll siren such a dicing alarm  
As shall spoil his name beyond recovery!



[To the assembly]

*Quo usque tandem* - How much longer still,  
Catiline, will you abuse our patience?  
How long now will this your furor toy with us?  
To what end vaunts this unreined audacity?  
Is it nothing to you the night's presence  
Palatine, nothing the city vigils,  
Nothing th'awe popular, nothing the concourse  
Of all good men, nothing this wellest-walled  
Locus for the senate's holding, nothing  
Do these faces and frowns move you at all?  
Don't you sense your plots exposed already,  
Your conjury held constrained by th'science  
Of these men - don't you see it? What last night -  
What the one before'd you done, where were you,  
Who'd convoked, what of your undertaken  
Plot do you think any of us don't know?  
Oh the times! Oh the customs! All these things  
Th'senate knows, th'consul sees; but this man lives.  
He lives? Rather he actually e'en comes  
To th'senate, becomes a participant  
In the public council, with his eyes notes  
And designates for death each one of us.  
To death, Catiline, by consul's command  
Ought you have been led long ago, 'pon you  
Conferred that ruin you've long planned for us all,  
For we've this senate's decreed consultum,  
Enclosed in script, as though in a sheath hid,  
By which your decease is licensed full.  
But you live, and you live not giving up,  
But strengthening still your audacity.  
A camp's in Italy set 'gainst Rome's people -  
At th'jaws of Etruscany collected,  
Each single day grows its hostile number;  
Yet that camp's general and leader of th'host  
Within our walls and e'en here at senate  
We do see daily mulling intestine  
Some ruin for th'republic. E'en so, you live,  
Yet such as you live now - by my many  
And firm presences beset lest you try  
Movement 'gainst th'republic. You're checked throughout;  
Like clearest day to us are all your plots.  
There's nothing that you do,  
Nothing you try, nothing you consider  
But what I would not only hear about

But also see and plainly recognize.  
Now do you understand how I keep watch  
Much more fiercely for the security  
Than you do for the ruin of th'republic.  
Do you dare deny it? Why so silent?  
I'll prove it if you try denying it.  
For I see to be here in the senate  
Certain men who were there with you as one.

[LENTULUS slides away from CATILINE]

Oh gods immortal! Where on earth are we?  
What republic have we? In what city  
Live we? Here - here they are in our number,  
Conscript fathers, in this the entire world's  
Holiest and gravest council, men who seek  
All our demise, men who plot this city's  
And the entire world beyond's destruction.  
Since these things are thus, Catiline, do proceed  
On to where you've started - Get out at last  
From the city; th'gates are open; go forth.  
Too long has that Manlian camp of yours  
Wanted you its commander. And lead out  
With you all who are yours, purge the town.  
You'll have freed me from a wonderous worry  
Once a wall stands in between you and me.  
No longer now may you turn up 'mong us;  
I won't bear, won't suffer, won't allow it.  
You ask - "Is this exile?" I don't bid it,  
But, if you consult me, I do urge it.  
For what is there, Catiline, in this city  
That could still possibly give you delight?  
Herein's no one outside your conjury  
Of dissolute men who doesn't fear you,  
No one who doesn't despise you.  
You came a little while back to th'senate.  
Who from this such a crowd, from so many  
Of your friends and contacts saluted you?  
Do you expect voiced contempt, when you're pressed  
By th'heaviest judgement of taciturnity?  
What of this - that at your advent those seats  
Were vacated, that all th'consular men,  
Relinquished that part of th'seats nude and void -  
With what spirit should you bear this, do you think?  
If your parents had feared and hated you,  
I think you would retreat somewhere from their eyes,

Now your homeland, which is th'common parent  
 Of all, hates and dreads and has long judged  
 You to think of nothing but her parricide;  
 Will you not revere her authority?  
 'Tis she who treats thus with you, Catiline,  
 And somehow silently speaks - "No misdeed  
 For some several years now has taken place  
 But by you, no debauchery without you;  
 Those former things, though being unbearable,  
 Yet I bore as I could; but now for me  
 To fear you alone - this is unbearable.  
 For which reason depart, and relieve me  
 Of this terror; if it's true, lest I'm pressed,  
 If false, so I'd desist some being terrified."  
 If these things, as I said, th'homeland did speak,  
 Doesn't it all deserve to come to pass?  
 "Refer it" you'd say, "unto the senate" -  
 That's what you'd posit - and, if this body -  
 So please it, - should decree for you to go  
 To exile, you'll just conform, so you'd say.  
 I'll not refer that which is abhorrent  
 To my morals, and yet I'll make you see  
 What these men think of you. Get out of town,  
 Catiline, free the republic from fear,  
 To exile, if this word you seek, set forth!

[CICERO pauses for effect of silence]

What's that? Can you at all attend, can you  
 At all attune your whims to their silence?  
 They allow't, they're tacit. Why do you seek  
 Th'authorization by their eloquence  
 Whose volition of reticence you now sense?  
 Said I this to any decent fellow  
 Here present, then would th'senate upon me  
 Quite rightly have brought on their blows and hands.  
 Yet about you, Catiline, when they quiesce,  
 They approve, when they allow, they decree,  
 And when they're tacit, they are clamoring!  
 And not only these men whose authority  
 Is clearly dear t'you - though their lives but vile -  
 But Rome's equestrians too, and that crowd  
 Surrounding th'senate, all readily induced  
 To escort you straight through the gateports,  
 Relinquishing this place you've long strove t'waste.

For the which, as I've much said now, set forth  
With your importune band of criminals,  
Confer yourself to Manlius, incite  
Th'dissolute citizens, separate yourself  
From the good ones, bring war to the homeland,  
So you're shown not as my outcast t'strangers,  
But to have gone invited t'your own kind.  
Now, if unto me all the republic  
Should speak thus - "Cicero, what are you doing?  
Will you patiently let him get away  
So he'll seem not cast out from the city  
By you, but rather cast loose upon it?  
Won't you command he be led off in chains,  
To be executed with steep suffering?"  
Now if I'd judged this to be the best course,  
Conscript fathers, t'punish Catiline with death,  
I'd not have dowed a single hour's usage  
To this glacial goon for further living.  
But yet there are some here in this body  
Who either can't see that which looms o'er us,  
Or they do see but would dissemble it.  
This I know - if he joins Manlius' camp,  
Then no-one so stupid will there be left  
Who'd not see his conjury to be real,  
None so depraved who'd not confess to it.  
Yet with this one man done in I too know  
That this the republic's pest would be but  
Briefly repressed, not forever compressed.  
But if he should rather cast himself out  
And with him seduce away his own kind,  
Then will be extinguished and then destroyed  
Not merely this so o'ergrown public pest  
But th'very root and seed of all our ills.  
I promise you all this, fathers conscript -  
Such diligence shall there be in us consuls,  
Such authority in you senators,  
Such valor in th'Roman equestrians,  
Such breadth of consensus in all good men  
That by Catiline's departure you will see  
Everything laid bare, exposed, quashed, avenged.  
With these various omens then, Catiline,  
For the sheer survival of th'republic,  
For your ruin and wreckage, and for their end  
Who have chosen to join themselves with you  
In your every crime and killing, set forth  
To your impious and nefarious war.

O father Jove, who father Romulus  
Did constitute with the same auspices  
That inaugur'd this township's first founding,  
This man and his ilk shall you warden off  
From yours and th'other gods' holy temples,  
From th'shelters and bulwarks of the city,  
From th'lives and fortunes of all our citizens,  
And these public enemies of decent men,  
Hostiles of th'homeland, larcens of Italy,  
Conjoined together by their federy  
And nefarious society of crimes  
Shall you dispatch to eternal sufferings -  
All of them, both the living and the dead.  
Now then, conscript fathers, with things being thus,  
What so please you should be done about this?  
Shall we urge Catiline's dismissal from Rome?

[General silence among the SENATORS]

Yet th'issue prompts some severance urgently.  
Or haps we must deport some other lord -  
Ought we oust our senate's prince Catulus?

[The SENATORS generally roar with disapproval]

Lo here repeals a motion's opposal,  
As contrasts its former by plaudit proved!  
Yea, by your mute declaration so carries  
Empassed our posed bid for Catiline's exile.  
If any dares countermand this, rise now  
And consult us with his speeched persuasion.

[CICERO sits. CATILINE rises]

CATILINE:

Conscript fathers, I know how I appear  
With my downcast face and suppliant voice,  
Pleading before you after th'hateful speech  
Unjustly railed against my waylaid name.  
Don't suspect it's evidence of my guilt,  
But aspects plain of my evident grief  
At this grievous and rashly broached assault  
Whose futile charges I must altercate.  
Rush no credit into what he accused,  
For you know I spring from such a family  
And so nurtured my livelihood since youth

That I've all hopes for every good in life.  
You can't suppose that I, a patrician,  
Who myself, like my forefathers, have primed  
Manifold benefits for Rome's people,  
Could work to imperil our republic  
Whose preserve's naught but sport to Cicero,  
That rude provincial and plebeian mere,  
That migrant huck, that slavish mongrel nag -

SENATOR:  
Traitor!

SECOND SENATOR:  
Parricide!

THIRD SENATOR:  
Public enemy!

[The SENATORS generally uproar angrily at CATILINE]

CATILINE:  
No reasoning can placate these furies!  
Being circumrounded so with enemies  
Prodding me off headlong, I'll extinguish  
This my incensement with wider berthed ruin!

*Exit fleeing stage right CATILINE and LENTULUS amid the continuing uproar.*

[CICERO rises. The SENATORS become quiet]

CICERO:  
At last, we've sent that prodigious beast off,  
Or rather followed his exit with words.  
Furying audacity, exhaling sin,  
He's gone, escaped, evaded, broken out.  
We'll need convene more to array for war.  
That later. We've no further matters now,  
And so I hold the senate no longer.  
Our business ended, carry on with care  
For Catiline's clutch still grasps at Roman air!

*Exit all diversely stages left, right and center.*

End of ACT II

ACT III  
SCENE 1

Lentulus' House at Night

*Enter stage left LENTULUS. Enter stage right CETHEGUS, CAEPARIUS, CURIUS, STATILIUS and GABINIUS led in by a SERVANT.*

SERVANT:

Lord Lentulus greets you sirs to his home.

*Exit SERVANT stage right.*

LENTULUS:

Gladness dews my eye to receive you each,  
For the heart lofts high to hold reunion  
With men whose minds forge deepest communion!  
Do tell, Statilius and Gabinius,  
How accommodating seem Rome's peddlers  
To Catiline's partisan merchandise?

STATILIUS:

Why, our revolutionary product  
Does plainly vends itself to most the mart,  
So discouraged or disgruntled downright  
Languishes Rome's merchant majority  
Beneath th'optimatists' favorless thumb.  
Repulsed by such adverse hindrance, they'll tract  
T'our raised offer of more diverse prospects.

GABINIUS:

What Statilius speaks I second throughout,  
For everywhere I find low-laid clients  
Begging their higher-up guest-friends for aid,  
Which patronage most sadly forthcomes not  
Because of that ultimate stinginess  
In th'elites withholding all at the top.  
And this unsocial breach spans far and wide,  
Frustrating even our subjects' upkeep -  
I just met a delegation of Gauls  
Who came from their province beyond the Alps  
T'entreat their local patron beg th'senate  
For redress of some sufferings back home.  
The senate's sure to disappoint their pleas.  
Such iniquity being ubiquity,  
We'd need smooth Mercury's winged messaging

To pull in every potential recruit.

*Enter stage right CATILINE led in by a SERVANT. Exit SERVANT stage right.*

CATILINE:

Salveté, you most princely lieutenants!  
Night and day and night again unstopping  
Have I persevered at our grand project -  
Rest is for the weakling and followsome,  
But I'm fortitude's forefront paragon,  
Who seizes herein fresh chance t'exhibit  
That preterclarion endurance of mine  
For hunger, for cold, for lack of all things!  
While Cicero sputters his darting tongue,  
My javelin will thrust forth from Rome this night.  
Under her privacy I'll entourage  
To join with Manlius' Etruscan camp,  
Posting in my wake public epistles  
Whose claims I've parted for our Gallic front  
Will briefly drowse our rivals' high alert.  
As I marshal our mustered arms' array  
For nimble march down on Rome from the field,  
You six form my hexfold head here in town.  
Lentulus, your prior consular standing  
Promotes you to precedence o'er th' cabal,  
With eminent Cethegus as second.  
Follow you rest their dictates to mischief  
And rouse up widespread untimely chaos  
Most timely before my triumphal tour,  
When we shall, like heroic Greeks of old,  
Revel our vengeance o'er those vanquished foes  
Whose decadence despoiled our Trojan home!  
Now I must part you to commence my trek.  
Gods grant your havoc impacts conclusive  
So we'll meet again as Rome's champions!  
Remember our cause, our effecting pledge,  
Our finest moments pleading your action  
Afore my recall. Avail, one and all!

*Exit stage right CATILINE.*

CETHEGUS:

How impulse quickens within the just breast  
When judgment, sharply ruled, shrewdly expressed,  
Compels the resolve t'execution it!  
Come men, let's rally our adherent sects



And incite them to ripe insurgency!  
E'en now my home conceals plenty stocked arms  
To furnish our files for blazing revolt  
And gouging open optimatist throats!

LENTULUS:

You too much mind th'moment, Cethegus,  
So little learned of the larger plan.  
To rush out now would merely rout our selves  
Because their force here still outnumbers ours.  
The shining stars in heaven must align  
So our worldly feats beneath them might thrive,  
Else we'd careen to disastrous downfalls  
O'erwhelmed and awestruck as sad Phaëthon.  
To avert such ill boding cometry,  
We must first wait, and let a lulling space  
Torpor and dull that consul's urgencies,  
O'ersoothed by Catiline's hollow olive branch,  
During which t'expand our coalition  
With all who possibly harbor grievance  
Or by misfortune or mere temperament,  
And then t'extend this combined battery  
Against all th'optimatists' divisions  
In one single decisive master stroke.  
Now, to this exact point, Gabinius,  
You spoke about exacting conditions  
That afflict some Gallic delegates here.  
Have you become acquainted with them well?

GABINIUS:

These Gauls call their tribe the Allobroges,  
A people fond of practiced horsemanship  
Whose home upon Geneva's alpine heights  
Marks our empire's extremest north frontier.  
Much commerce I've commenced with them and mark  
Their leaders, driven to despair by debt,  
Did prompt these envoys' issuance to Rome,  
Entreating us their desperate easement suit.

LENTULUS:

Your spilled cognizance brims my confidence  
That these Gauls pose accomplices ideal,  
Whose grafting would accomplish us the palm!  
We needs must switch those sapped and hapless slaves  
Into our battle-strapped and helpful staves.  
Go meet their embassy, Gabinius,

And water first their parching appetites.  
Affect concern for these Gauls' disaffect,  
And air contempt for th'senate's frigid scorn.  
Confide you then our flowering plans to them  
And swear how we'll best flourish their interests -  
Avow their petition's fulfilled success;  
Assure their bloodlust's thrill o'er Rome's defeat.  
In sum, lure their outgrowth from fealty stale  
Unto a fresher splice among our staff,  
By which vast hybrid we'll transplant our fates  
From deepest torment into steepest glee,  
As we, gaining the laurel wreath afield,  
Attain ourselves Jove's oaken crown of rule!  
So to the task, guileful Gabinus,  
And plant in them our seed of amity.

GABINIUS:

I'll work my words and win over their shafts  
To our weaponry. Join me, Statilius.  
Our charms when twinned exceed the both alone.

*Exit stage right STATILIUS and GABINIUS.*

LENTULUS:

So needs we all solicit th'populace  
Through this brief passing span of truceful time.  
Convince them of our honest convictions,  
And bid those parties found most welcoming  
Enroll within our broad collective ranks  
And tend the pending call for junctured strife  
T'allieve Rome's epidemic bankruptcy.  
Thus starting th'popularists' collection  
Will end with th'optimatists' destruction!  
So forward, men, to rouse latent allies.  
An easy goal, when targets so abound.

CETHEGUS:

The aim's as pithy spelled and clear to see,  
As are its marks eclipsed and multitude.  
So let's all out, Curius and Caeparius,  
And each one come back thronging in returns!

*Exit stage right CETHEGUS, CAEPARIUS and CURIUS.*

LENTULUS:

So now our conjury turns its new page,  
Perhaps as was foretold in those three books  
Which that Cumaean Sibyl did bestow  
Upon the final Tarquin king of Rome.  
Our chiefs did since consult those mystic tomes,  
So pregnant full of sacred prophecies,  
To best illumine disasters imminent.  
Among her predictions illustrious  
Were writ that three destined Cornelii  
Shall dominate the town as monarchies,  
But only two did yet wield such command -  
Cinna, that popularist Marian,  
And th'optimatist Sulla who topped him.  
My flowing own Cornelian bloodline  
Shall reign soon, donning that third fatal crown,  
For our authority mounts preordained,  
As all my psychic friends attested too.  
Auspicious thus does every sooth forecast  
How my regime completes her script at last!

*Exit stage left LENTULUS.*

## SCENE 2

### The Roman Forum

*Enter stages left, right and center various CITIZENS diversely occupied. Enter stage left the Gauls CRIX and GANNIX.*

GANNIX:

Ah Crix! They wracked us wrong, that senate did!  
Those raping magistrates refused our plea,  
And your own worth, noble Crix, thanely Crix,  
They chid as merest bastard vassaldom.

CRIX:

Too true you ken the case, Gannix, too true,  
And now a howly hell befalls our lot  
To bear the bafflement back to the clan.  
The Romans knobbed our bungles filthy cruel!

*Enter stage right STATILIUS and GABINIUS*

GABINIUS:

Look there, Statilius! There stand th'alien Gauls,  
And hampered foul, to judge by their pursed scowls.

Lets change their grim chagrin to cheery grins  
With proffered option to enlarge our league,  
Which can alone advance their solvency  
When we've repealed the cheats who hindered it.

STATILIUS:

Let's charge it as full steeds, Gabinius!  
On your point I'll run wing to gait these Gauls  
Enstabled with our stallion team! Chase on!

GABINIUS: [To the Gauls]

Well met good men, firm Gallic delgates!  
Though ill it seems your firmness was received.

CRIX:

How sick it flicts me that my ailing tribe,  
Encumbered hard by debt's debility,  
Envoyed us here to beg deliverance,  
Yet we can naught deliver back but scorn  
From your unfeeling Roman governors!

GANNIX:

Aye banely battered, remedy denied  
By Rome's resolve 'gainst tend'ring aught relief,  
We've nary refuge left but starving death.

STATILIUS:

Grave exit plans from somber conditions.  
Yet we'll extend more lively escapades  
If you can still conduct yourselves as men,  
For we know friends whose differing designs  
Will reckon soon with Rome's corrupt regime,  
Wipe clean the slates of every pauper's debts,  
And refund our familiar adherents.

GABINIUS:

So bold a people as you gallant Gauls  
Must quicken at this opportunity  
To finely trade your traumas in for bliss!

*Enter stage center a HERALD, who ascends the rostra platform above the crowd.*

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement]

But here's the herald from the senate rushed!  
Do hold you while we witness together

What latest insults these despots provoked!

HERALD:

Hark, people of Rome, listen to my speech!  
Our senate determined beyond dispute  
That lord Catiline, who lately parted Rome,  
Has hastened north unto Etruscany  
And joined with Manlius' rogue veteran corps.  
In consequence, both these men are decreed  
Official public enemies of th'state,  
And subject to th'extremest punishment  
Immediate 'pon their due apprehension.  
Conversely, the senate has fixed this week  
As a season for settling clemency,  
Wherein all others intrigued with Catiline  
May turn in their arms without punishment,  
Unless they're convicts of capital crimes.  
Besides this, our consuls will levy troops  
For Guy Antony to field 'gainst Catiline,  
While Cicero retains a presence here  
To defend Rome against any turmoil.  
Gods bless the senate and people of Rome.

[The CITIZENS variously roar with approval and disapproval]

*Descend and exit stage center HERALD.*

FIRST CITIZEN:

Impressive miseries the man remarked!  
Impress, good men, impress to serve the state!

SECOND CITIZEN:

Rude tempests do vex our vast republic!  
Two factions fighting, claiming honor both  
As rival wardens of our public good.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Skewed contest - one for many, one for few,  
And all here amassed know which slants for us!  
For nor moderation nor modesty  
Can temper th'optimatists' ambitions!

GABINIUS: [To the Gauls]

See, men, how grievance 'gainst the leadership  
Does gall our Roman citizens aghast,  
As riled up as your own provincial Gauls.

The senate rules aloft, too out of touch,  
And governs for their own aggrandizement  
Through all their subjects' cruel impoverishment.  
Our party preps a cleansing remedy  
To mend and heal this morbid malady -  
The amputation of such tumorous lords.  
We'll cut the first incision quickly soon,  
From which beheadings shall gush manifest  
The bulged resistance of their partisans.  
Now, thorough treatment of that influence  
Entreats our martial medics operate  
Assisted by your Gallic cavalry.  
So what say you? Care you to cure yourselves  
With scalpels wielded o'er the turf of war  
Against the very sources of your woe?

CRIX:

No man can shirk a shot to come out right  
And ever aft still call himself a man!  
So, by my precious torc, I deign to swear  
Ourselves exultant and passionate keen  
T'attach with such a fine confedery!  
Yet if we'd draw our elder generals  
You must share all this infant scheme's outline,  
And pen us pledges, by your leaders signed,  
That we'll convey posthaste back to our home.  
Do get this and you'll get our Gaulish horse!

GABINIUS:

Each aspect you request we can provide  
With all facility this selfsame night.  
Tonight, go find the quarters of our prince,  
The lord Lentulus, a former consul  
Whose swell renown widespreads through all of Rome.  
Anyone can direct you to his door.  
We'll abide there with all your needs readied.  
Now, so his doormen may admit you swift  
We'll pass them your names. Pray, tell us your names?

CRIX:

All call me Crix, and he by Gannix goes.

GABINIUS:

Crixus it is! And Gannicus, well met!  
We bid you pleasant day while we prepare  
Th'accomplishment of your every desire!

Good day to you both!

CRIX:  
Great days for us all!

*Exit stage right STATILIUS and GABINIUS*

GANNIX:  
At last, advantage breaks our luckless streak!  
But I'm unsure how best we might advance  
Our kinsmen's interests through this parish feud.  
These rebels promise debt's complete discharge,  
The fun of war, and hope for hefty spoils  
When victory's reached. Yet that's uncertain hope  
Against rewards for certain from their foes,  
Whose greater reserves and sturdier designs  
Do urge us to prefer th'established side.

CRIX:  
It seems we stand amidst a crossing bridge  
And dither o'er which end to exit it,  
To forge ahead t'rebellion's fargone side  
And venture after vast gains though strange lanes,  
Or turn our deference back t'routine terrain  
Whose earnest scene could earn us sweet reprieve.  
We need mere clemency, not dominance,  
So let's unveil these masked defiant plans  
Unto the ruling ministers of Rome.

GANNIX:  
Aye, Crix! Let's lay open their covert wiles!  
That Cicero seemed a most honest lord  
And shined most kindly 'pon our own patron,  
And so our man, once he's apprised, can court  
An audience for us with the consul,  
To whom confessing this conspiracy  
We'll then profess our loyal agency!

CRIX:  
So canny, Gannix! Sleekly well conceived!  
To work, though, all must fall within the day,  
And heaven's lamp drives well along his way.  
So let's dash over to our patron's lair  
And timely stitch our injuries' repair!

*Exit stage left CRIX and GANNIX, exit diversely stages left, right and center the various CITIZENS.*

### SCENE 3

A Street near Lentulus' House at Night

*Enter stage left CLODIUS, followed by CRIX and GANNIX.*

CLODIUS:

A little further on and you will reach  
The brazen face of Lentulus' abode,  
Wherein regales his bounding revelry.  
There gapes th'entry port, evident t'espionage,  
So here we'll part, and you, our doubling spies,  
Go enter th'home, engage its tenants' trust,  
Extract signed pledges, exact spoke details,  
Which all accomplished, extricate yourselves  
With th'evidence and testimonials,  
To render over all to Cicero  
Who gives you his thanks for undertaking  
This daring undercover assignment.

CRIX:

Ah, think you naught upon it, dapper lad,  
For naught's too rough or dangerous for us  
If it will free us from our crushing debts,  
Which bruise our clan with more calamity  
Than could this sting, gone bust, beharm ourselves.  
It's time we're off into this shroud of night,  
To share with dawn all we can bring to light!  
Give Cicero our regards, and fare you well.

*Exit stage right CRIX and GANNIX.*

CLODIUS:

Yes, fare you well, you tools of Cicero!  
So am I, but unlike these servile dupes,  
I've a more masterful ambit in mind,  
One embracing both parties of this strife  
In turns as best promote my potency.  
Such self advancement proves the true excuse  
For all our leaders' contentious conduct,  
Popularists and optimatists both,  
And public good but plays the mere pretext,  
Be it the people's rights or senate's might,  
Which veils our every lord's naked pursuit



After his own supreme empowerment.  
Thus I, born 'Claudius', a noblest line,  
But dropped the noble 'au' for common 'o',  
And switched o'er to plebeian 'Clodius',  
To better please our masses' conceit  
And gain me popularity thereby,  
Which Cicero employs as his asset.  
And so for now I hold the nobles' line,  
But yet their selfish reign can't long survive,  
And when a peoples' coup at last amounts  
Some strength sufficient to outmatch th'elite,  
I'll count among that wary vigilance  
Who'll recognize the looming power shift  
And timely skip o'er to th'ascendant side!  
But I must find that fight some other day,  
For this conspiracy has lost it's way!

*Enter stage left CLODIUS.*

#### SCENE 4

##### Lentulus' House at Night

*Enter stage left CETHEGUS, STATILIUS and GABINIUS, all bearing drinking cups and attended by SERVANTS offering further refreshments borne on platters. Enter stage left LENTULUS*

LENTULUS:

My heartily resolved compatriots,  
I've news to hearten us more resolute,  
Come straight from Catiline's own courageous mouth  
Into the ear of our swift courier  
Newly returned from the Etruscan fields.  
Our leader boasts that friendly countrymen  
Have flocked t'enlist with his upright standard  
In such numbers that he now has command  
Of soldiery worth two entire legions!

CETHEGUS:

A splendid sum to fight upon our side!  
Append the Gauls, the battlefield is ours!

*Enter stage right a SERVANT leading in CRIX and GANNIX.*

SERVANT:

My lords, let me present your Gallic friends,  
For whose engagement's sake you've gathered here

Within lord Lentulus' palatial hall.

LENTULUS:

Welcome, good men! How we've expected you  
With joyed and jubilant expectancy,  
As for a new born son or paycheck day!  
Now you'd perceive our plot's particulars,  
And I'm full partial to portray you them.  
We've already massed a most forceful cast  
Whose lineup still lists larger by the hour.  
The scene opens on Saturnalia,  
Rome's solstice holiday, when ranks fall flat  
And every slave may play his master's peer.  
On that day, our friendly tribune Bestia  
Will hold an assembly of the people  
Where he'll condemn lord Cicero's actions,  
And press his blunt blame on that sharp consul.  
His public spectacle displayed by day  
Will signal our dormant community  
T'enact that sleeping night their diverse roles.  
Gabinus and Statilius both burn  
To torch the town in sync at twelve locales,  
Strategic each to spark utmost tumult  
In whose midst we may easiest access  
The stages for our next performances,  
The first in which we bleed our audience.  
Cethegus here'll beset Cicero's door  
And there aggress his decisive exit,  
While teeming extras, weaponry wardrobed,  
Range out in trouncing bands to strike further  
Appointed elites from their galleries.  
So, once all Rome lays swoonful and concussed  
From such broad swept slaughter and arson fire,  
We'd burst out to meet Catiline's armed troupe.  
Then after a brief intermission's span,  
We'll recourse our full retinue to Rome  
And draw th'optimatists' final curtain!  
Thenceforth the city will base our domain  
Wherefrom lord Catiline's men shall march t'unlimb  
All th'optimatists provincial branches,  
And if your cavalry should jointly serve  
In these excursions, your Gauls would incur  
Grand amplitudes of bootiful exploits!  
Thus scans our scoped plans in conspired review.  
So, does our ensemble inspire you too?

GANNIX:

'Tis brilliantly well schemed, lord Lentulus,  
And crafty hatched a ploy as e'er been spawned!  
Yet to be clear - you all endorse this draft?

CETHEGUS:

When I claim this plan meets my principles,  
'Tis deemed authoritative for us all,  
Even our principal peers absent here.  
Young Caeparius outstands foremost from us,  
For he's off at Ostia, Rome's seaside port,  
Inducting dockworkers to our gangways,  
While Curius' remote truancy tonight  
Does rise from a more juvenile impulse -  
Like Fulvia's soft flesh pressing him hard!  
And no wrong that! Have no doubt, were he here,  
Curius would horn his stiff favoritism too.  
Yet as I confirm my steadfast assent,  
I must once more affirm my stray protest -  
That we are wasting too much idle time,  
And threaten massive opportunities  
Doubting ourselves and delaying our day.

Saturnalia's most a month away,  
And th'outbreak we still but deliberate  
Will finish best when done immediate,  
For I say action, not consultation,  
Is the work for such a crisis as this!

And though I, with but a few adjutants  
Could achieve all our aims on any day  
With a dashing raid on the curia -  
Proving alacrity the best of boons! -  
I must defer from that method preferred  
Because these more methodical colleagues  
Dismiss its bold promptness as being prompted  
By a too daring hand and likewise heart  
Pattering a too spirited pattern.

Such spirit, so I'm told, your chieftains lack,  
That they would shrink from so large a labor  
Unless they first obtain writ testaments  
From each member of our directorate.

CRIX:

Alas our need for these written scriptures

Withstands fundamental and absolute.  
Our eldermen have far too sorely learned  
How brittle blown are huffed the hearsay oaths  
That Romans boast, whistle, and pitch up front  
When pacting promised business with our tribe,  
The which they later scrap and breach the deal  
After excessive much of our scant means  
Has been expensed beyond recovery.  
Such blistering treatment, too oft repeated,  
Our mayorships recall and still recoil  
From all proposals aired with Latin words,  
Demanding that your fighty folk's projects  
Come tangibly stamped in material form.

GANNIX:

Gabinius alone here rates exempt  
Among those rarest Roman counterpeers  
Whose diverse dealings with our same nation  
Distinguished him with uncommon respect.  
His honest past earns him a present pass,  
But you unproven rest must scrawl your suits.

LENTULUS:

Your wanted correspondence we've composed  
This earlier evening in triplicate,  
With Cethegus, Statilius and myself  
Each authoring a separate epistle  
Which signed and sealed we handed then over  
To our company's junior courier,  
The lad Volturcius who lounges now  
In one of my home's inner cubicles.  
Child, go summon this youth to us.

SERVANT:

Aye, sir.

*Exit the SERVANT stage left.*

LENTULUS:

Now I hear you two deputies intend  
Depart tomorrow for return to Gaul.  
Well, that same night our same Volturcius  
Will mission north to pass a missive up  
From my versed hand to watchful Catiline's eyes,

[LENTULUS picks up a letter from the platter of a nearby SERVANT]

This one, exhorting him encouragement.

*Enter stage left VOLTURCIUS, carrying a drinking cup and wearing a satchel.*

Ah, here's the man. Good night Volturcius!

VOLTURCIUS:

Great night, my lord, that flows with such delights!

LENTULUS:

So shall this nectar flow forever aft!  
'Tis good to see you've dropped your duties not,  
For plain you clasp your purse upon you still.  
Present you here those three letters we wrote,  
For they were meant for these two present Gauls.

[VOLTURCIUS produces three sealed letters from his satchel and hands them to the GAULS]

As we promised, sirs, so you have our oaths,  
As proofs how all our promises bear fruit!  
Now take, Volturcius, my latest script  
For postage to Catiline tomorrow night.

[VOLTURCIUS takes letter from LENTULUS]

Good, keep it safe. Well then, Gallic grandees,  
As both your farewell day and direction  
Concur with Volturcius' northward slope,  
Care you to cruise along with our envoy  
And make Catiline's acquaintance on your way?

CRIX:

Oh gods above us yes! We're thorough fain  
To meet the man in charge of our relief!  
Be sure we'll meet him here at next nightfall  
On our excusing route forth from your town.

LENTULUS:

Things are settled well when they're set up well!  
Enough about tomorrow's unborn day -  
Tonight yet juvenates with party life!  
So let's retire from my front atrium  
T'recline in style back by my courtyard pool,  
You Gauls included, if you're craving cups.

GANNIX:

Although we'd fancy start a playful break,  
Our day demands such closure work ahead  
That we must sally off, good night to all.

LENTULUS:

Gods speed your winding way to graceful lanes!

*Exit stage right CRIX and GANNIX.*

Come men, let's toast these new won foreign friends  
Who bolden our long sought domestic ends!

*Exit all stage left.*

#### SCENE 5

The Milvian Bridge the next Night

*Enter stage right POMPTINUS with a body of SOLDIERS, all armed.*

POMPTINUS:

Your praetor bids you pause a pace, my men,  
At our appointed destination zone -  
The Milvian bridge that links Rome's north confines  
To sprawling Etruscany's fields beyond  
Via its vaults o'er Tiber's blonded flow.  
Lord Cicero got crucial notice leaked  
From his clandestine Gallic informants  
That they will cross this very bridge tonight  
With an escort who heads to meet Catiline  
And transfers damning testaments in hand.  
The consul, being so timely well advised,  
Did command praetor Flaccus and myself,  
Both duly powered as captains of police,  
Should each lead here assembled presences  
And lay in wait to waylay their convoy  
As they proceed o'er this constrictive span,  
To apprehend them with their evidence.  
Let's set the snare on the bridge's far end  
Where we'll discern best their exit movements  
And capture them while coming straight to us.

[POMPTINUS and his retinue move to far stage left]

Let's hope Catiline's young herald lacks valor

T'resist like some new Horatius at th'bridge.  
Rather he'll resign, like Gracchus junior.

*Enter stage right FLACCUS with a body of SOLDIERS, all armed, who continue towards center stage.*

SOLDIER:  
Praetor Pomptinus! Shadows stir in th'dusk!

POMPTINUS: [To FLACCUS and his retinue]  
Night wayfarers, halt! Th'bridge now costs a toll!  
Tell us who crosses, what sovereign you serve!

FLACCUS:  
A praetor loyal to lord Cicero.

POMPTINUS: [Meeting FLACCUS and his retinue stage center]  
Good praetor Flaccus! Rightfully responded!

FLACCUS:  
Righteously required, praetor Pomptinus!

POMPTINUS:  
Robust the presence that you brought the bridge.  
Mine own are posted at the farther end,  
In place t'encase the bridge's rustic side.  
They're ready set to ambush passers by  
And close off access to the open road.

FLACCUS:  
Grand. We'll take cover on that urban side  
To spy their passage. Then, when alert sounds,  
We'll rouse and block retreat to Rome's alleys.  
Now I to my corner and you to yours.

[FLACCUS moves his retinue far stage right as POMPTINUS returns to his retinue far stage left. All draw their swords and take concealment]

*Enter stage right VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX, all armed and wearing satchels, who continue towards center stage.*

VOLTURCIUS:  
Now say farewell to Rome, or good riddance,  
Kind Gauls, for we depart her northern edge.  
You'll next stroll her hills as surmounting lords!

[POMPTINUS and his retinue run from their concealment and move mid stage to block the advance of VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX]

POMPTINUS:

Halt, traitors! Freeze where you stand! Hold you still!  
Or make a move and we'll drill your hot blood!

[VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX all draw their swords]

VOLTURCIUS: [Brandishing his sword]

How fit the town stays hateful to the last!  
I'll puncture yet a prick or few of you!

[FLACCUS and his retinue run from their concealment and move mid stage to block the retreat of VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX]

FLACCUS:

Hold, bandits, hold! Or else we slash your backs!  
You're boxed into this bridge with no recourse!  
Throw down your arms and give yourselves up now!

[CRIX and GANNIX throw away their swords and fall prostrate in surrender]

VOLTURCIUS: [Seeing them surrender]

Ah, Dis below us! What a worthless pair!  
At least try t'lump their strides up trippingly!

[Advancing towards POMPTINUS and his retinue, VOLTURCIUS recognizes POMPTINUS]

Pomptinus, ho! My gamesome drinking chum!  
If still you know me, and those laughs we shared  
On sweet Falernian and servants' tricks,  
Mind my past favors and favor me now -  
Pray yield me outlet to yon Cassian Way  
Where idly I'll roam its fallow farmsteads.  
Just this I beg of you for old games' sake!

POMPTINUS:

What though we jeered and pealed the times of chimes,  
And playful capered to the tympany?  
Those jester hours we pranced when Rome was sane.  
The sickly wits you venture with these days  
Contrive threats 'gainst us far too serious grave  
For my honor to spare as trifles slight.  
Nay, I'll arrest you in the consul's name,



Or cut you down with mine own blade.

[POMPTINUS advances menacingly on VOLTURCIUS]

Have at!

[VOLTURCIUS throws down his sword and kneels in surrender]

VOLTURCIUS:  
Pomptinus wait! I cov your captive ward!

POMPTINUS:  
Your first wise choice at last, Volturcius.  
Now men, exchange your soldier roles for guards  
And take them to the Tullianum jail,  
Whereat stand vigil o'er them through the night  
Till Cicero bids further transfer hence.

[SOLDIERS take hold of POMPTINUS, CRIX and GANIX]

FLACCUS:  
Before you go, hand me your luggage o'er,  
Whose cargo portends quite a heinous heft.

[POMPTINUS, CRIX and GANIX give their satchels to FLACCUS]

Now get these curs out of my sight. Away!

*Exit stage right SOLDIERS leading off VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX.*

Let's bring the consul what our trap has sprung.  
His strategy's next stage has just begun!

*Exit stage right POMPTINUS, FLACCUS and SOLDIERS.*

End of ACT III

ACT IV  
SCENE 1

The Temple of Concord

*Enter stages left, right and center SILANUS, MURENA, CATULUS, CASEAR, CATO and various other SENATORS, all taking seats on benches and keeping diversely occupied.*

SILANUS: [To CATO]

Spectacular the greeting morning's news  
That called us senators together here  
In the Temple of Concord's harmony -  
A locus fit for representatives  
In Cicero's concord of the orders!  
Catiline's conspiracy kneels compromised  
With his urbane guerillas rounded up  
By provident lord Cicero last night.  
He locked up Lentulus and Cethegus,  
Plus a shady pair of equestrians,  
Which leaves one ringleader named Caeparius  
Still on the loose, or rather, on the run.  
That Damoclens sword, fallen bloodlessly,  
Has slackened off Rome's suffocating mood  
Enough for us to congregate again  
And counsel th'case that Cicero will air  
To justify his midnight custodies.  
I could not dream more welcoming report,  
Cato, my wife and I danced our delight!

CATO:

It firms me that my sister Servilia  
Yet keeps Rome's better interests as her care.  
Your husbandry steers her straight, Silanus,  
For else she's err to slip to some disgrace.  
I likewise know all you told, and one more -  
A praetorian search of Cethegus' home  
Discovered there a vast hid weapon hoard,  
Which, emptied, their subordinates defangs.  
Thus runs one of Cicero's prized dicta,  
To wit - "the arms must to the toga cede,  
And the laurelled concede to the lauded."  
How the consul must now feel moved in twain -  
With glee, exposing this conspiracy  
And rescuing the city from peril,  
But also grave with dubious concern  
At catching such high standing citizens

Attempting treason, that steepest of sins.  
The man must press his anxious issue forth  
Unto this fickle flock of senators  
Whose senses waver much too frequently,  
For folly e'er follows on power's path.

*Enter stage left SOLDIERS leading CETHEGUS, STATILIUS and GABINIUS in chains through to exit stage center.*

[The SENATORS variously murmur with interest and concern]

Behold the captives, soon to convicts be!

*Enter stage left more SOLDIERS leading VOLTURCIUS, CRIX and GANNIX through to exit stage center. Enter stage left still more SOLDIERS led by POMPTINUS and FLACCUS wearing a satchel, who all stand stage left. Enter stage left CLODIUS.*

CLODIUS:  
All rise for our presiding magistrate.

[The SENATORS rise]

*Enter stage left CICERO leading in LENTULUS by the hand and accompanied by more SOLDIERS, one of whom takes custody of LENTULUS and leads him off stage center. The remaining SOLDIERS all stand stage left.*

CICERO:  
Be seated.

[The SENATORS sit]

Now for th'issue's relation -  
As is both befitting and fulfilling  
For th'Roman people of Quiritan stock,  
We produce unto you, conscript fathers,  
Our plentiful and incriminating proofs  
That those Romans late clapped with manacles  
And held now in this temple's inner cell  
Conceived and hatched a grave conspiracy  
Plotting death for Rome, for her republic,  
And for everyone seated in this room.  
First, let's begin with some testimony.  
Bring here the errand boy Volturcius.

*Exit a SOLDIER stage center. Re-enter the SOLDIER stage center with VOLTURCIUS, who is led to directly face CICERO.*

Young man, your questionable deeds of late  
Demand you answer my poised questions now.  
Where were you going when we caught up with you?  
Whose correspondence carrying? And last -  
How came you to know what those men conspired?

VOLTURCIUS:

Forgive me, but I simply knew the men  
As free providers of good provender  
For poverty blown derelicts like me.  
My briefest companionship wholly fell  
Within this kind context of charity,  
And I, who dared not doubt its decent source,  
But reverential rather for the alms,  
Did merely see the passionate ardor  
Of aspiration, not conspiracy.  
That's all I can say, for it's all I know.

CICERO:

Oh come now, son, you know much more than that.  
You know you were heading straight to Catiline.  
You know you bore him treason in your bag.  
You know, this shown, you'll face th'ultimate doom.  
And you know I'll prove it all to this room!  
But I'll have you know that as Rome's consul  
I've power to offer you public pledge  
Securing you total immunity  
From prosecution for your past misdeeds,  
Provided that you testify in full  
Of everything you've witnessed and performed.  
This pledge I grant here. It belongs to you.  
So, tell us what calamity they urged.

VOLTURCIUS:

Being cleared now lets me clearly see at last  
How darkly laid their plans were from the first.  
I'd met those men only a few days back,  
Introduced by the absent Caeparius.  
They swore a goal t'uproot all Rome's orders,  
And claimed unnamed allies of mighty clout,  
With Catiline their head and a hidden force  
Up in th'Etruscan soil awaiting news  
Which they expected me to bring to him  
When you arrested me upon the bridge.  
That's all I am aware. They'd more informed

The Gallic deputies you seized with me.

CICERO:

We thank you for your candid narrative  
And turn you to our soldiers' custody

[VOLTURCIUS is led stage left to stand among the SOLDIERS]

Now bring us forth these Gallic deputies  
T'expand th'account of deadly perfidy.  
Now conscript fathers, you will find these Gauls  
More predisposed to be deposed herein,  
For they'd behaved as my stealth operatives  
Whose crucial conduct exposed this mayhem.

*Exit a SOLDIER stage center. Re-enter the SOLDIER stage center with CRIX and GANNIX, who are led to directly face CICERO.*

Salveté, brave champions of justice!  
Your name is Crixus and he Gannicus?

CRIX:

'Tis simply Crix, my lord, and Gannix he.

CICERO:

Do pardon us, but when in Latin lands,  
Our Roman accents deafen native slang.  
So, Crixus, you both feigned to hate the state  
And infiltrated their delinquent ranks.  
Relate to us what they proposed to do.

CRIX:

At your behest we joined with those bound men,  
And they bespake a scheme of slaughter  
Run through by Cethegus and Caeparius,  
With widespread scorching of Rome's monuments  
That their equestrians were tasked to light,  
All timed to match th'advance of Catiline's troops.  
They strove for total chaos through the town  
And murder so abounding that your priests  
Would think the early dead but fortunate  
T'escape the later scope of butchery.  
They quibbled some about the plot's timing,  
As Lentulus did want their deeds deferred  
To fall on some upcoming holiday  
While Cethegus would rather act at once.

Yet Lentulus directed them as chief,  
And so his preference won o'er the group.  
What's more, when last we parted ways from him  
With fond farewells departing for the bridge,  
The man flew to a mystic temperament  
And, spouting some Sibylline oracle,  
Professed himself a third Cornelius  
Foretold to steward o'er a ruined Rome.  
He moreso swore that killing season nigh  
By augurs' vows at portents some years back,  
When thunder smote your Capitoline hill  
And molted down its monument to Jove.  
Th'whole conjury affirmed this year was theirs,  
And urgently desired our tribe of Gauls  
To mount our martial steeds and ride to Rome  
As cavalry in Catiline's servitude.  
We promised it with one condition set -  
That they endow us written guarantees  
T'assure our elders of their earnestness,  
Though truly we demanded documents  
But to achieve your lordship's bold request  
That we acquire condemning evidence.  
Their trust was so complete that their three chiefs  
Lentulus, Cethegus and Statilius  
Each rendered up their scribbles eagerly,  
The which we on our persons kept possessed  
'Till praetor Flaccus took them 'pon arrest.  
There lands the sum of our compiled report.

CICERO:

Our gratitude to you, heroic Gauls,  
For gallantry against these graceless crooks!  
You are dismissed, your duties discharged through.  
Get with the guards and watch their guilt resolved.

[CRIX and GANNIX are led stage left to stand among the SOLDIERS]

You've heard our claim consistently described  
By diverse sources with contrasting views,  
Who point alike to traitors in our midst.  
Enough, I say, for breath ephemeral;  
Let's else inspect exhibits tangible,  
Fathers conscript, for those notes referenced  
Are here preserved in our possession yet,  
Intact, unread, and damning to their end.  
Brave praetor Flaccus, draw the traitors' texts,

And produce me some means to open them.

[FLACCUS produces three sealed letters from his satchel and hands them along with a knife to CICERO]

Good praetor Pomptinus, fetch forth th'accused  
So they, confirming their own handiwork,  
Debilitate what scant respect they've left.

*Exit POMPTINUS stage center. Re-enter POMPTINUS stage center with LENTULUS, CETHEGUS, STATILIUS and GABINIUS in chains, who are led to directly face CICERO.*

Release their bonds, for they fester now  
Constrained in fetters of general scorn.

[POMPTINUS removes the CONSPIRATORS' chains]

So let's begin with madcap Cethegus.  
Yet, cad, before we entertain your script,  
Pray first explain what possible misuse  
You had in mind to trove that barbed stockpile  
We found in your apartments this daybreak?

CETHEGUS:  
Why, passion for fine arms' as time honored  
And robust a custom among Romans  
As any occupation of the state.  
I've long made them my studious practice  
And 'tis no crime, sir, t'practice one's pastime!

CICERO:  
The yawning flaws of that excuse are splayed  
So evident they need not my retort.  
So to your letter. This it's seal is yours?

CETHEGUS:  
I admit it, so help me Mercury.

CICERO:  
Let's hear its message, by your knuckles tongued.

[CICERO opens the letter]

“We swear to do what your legates affirm.  
Please do yourselves what actions we urged them.”

Just now these selfsame foreign legates swore  
How their precise urged actions were to raid  
Their roughshod horse upon our trampled backs,  
Laid low by the thrusts of your stockpiled swords.  
What's your answer?

CETHEGUS:

I can none. I have none.

CICERO:

Oh would your shame had stayed you so abject  
When Catiline first proposed his base project!  
Look, fathers conscript, how conspicuous  
Is this conspirator haltered in's guilt!  
Now we'll another sanguine letter show -  
This one stained with Statilius' crimson stamp.  
Acknowledge you 'tis your mark?

STATILIUS:

Woe I do.

CICERO:

Well then, let's all see your confessional.

[CICERO opens and reads the letter]

Why 'tis verbatim same as Cethegus'.  
Wrote you both together as copyists?

STATILIUS:

No, lord.

CICERO:

But you did not write this alone -  
You had Gabinius close by your side  
Endorsing every syllable you lined.  
Admit it, since the Gauls already have  
Accused him through, and since it is the truth.

STATILIUS:

I must confess it then.

CICERO:

No wonder this,  
For you two always ran so thievish thick  
And double headed at monstrosity



We could predict each absent fiend's motions  
From his other twin beast's perceived actions,  
Inseparable e'en t'your dually lapsed ruin!  
Well then, fathers conscript, a second set  
Comes clean to us about their filthy feats!  
So now we reach their third letter, their worst,  
For this insignia upon its seal  
Denotes a lord who should have held above  
The baseborn clutches of this rabble plot,  
None less than Rome's new praetor Lentulus,  
Who once Rome honored with the consulship  
Before corruption kicked him from our ranks.  
Lord, do you recognize this as your seal?

[LENTULUS nods]

It is indeed most notably embossed -  
The image of your noble grandfather  
Who loved our homeland and its citizens.  
This seal, though mute, ought to have recalled you  
Back from your error into wickedness!  
But to the wayward missive of your hand.

[CICERO opens and reads the letter]

Again we see identical intent,  
Beseeching foreigners to execute  
Your bidding of these Gallic deputies.  
In light of your own onetime eminence,  
Lord Lentulus, I grant you potency  
T'apply your polished oratoric skill  
In speaking some defense for these affairs.

LENTULUS:

As citizen and titled magistrate,  
I'll use this overdue entitlement  
To rectify the counterfeit reports  
Compiled upon my colleagues and myself,  
Refuting all as sheer vindictive hype,  
For there's indeed conspiracy adrift,  
A breathing one that sighs subversive gists,  
Yet not for Rome. 'Tis purely plied for us,  
Composed between an overzealous lord  
And underscrupled lackeys who contort  
My gentle party's blameless sympathies  
Perversely overblown to mutinies.

And so, parading blatant perjuries,  
His underlings packed fabrications on,  
Hand forged themselves while resident free-range  
As welcomed guests in our too trustful homes.  
Ah wanton peasant! And you stranger Gauls,  
Who pay back charity with treachery!  
What had I been to you? Some doubtless prey  
Whose boosted snare enhanced your trappings's hems?  
And whyfore came you first to our households,  
Besides to lodge as framing imposters  
And scavengers for this witch-hunter's hoax?

GANNIX:

I can no more brook this slander man's tale  
That dastards our pledged fealties as forsworn!  
We spoke the purest truth, and swore it too,  
Of how you talked about a prophecy  
Predicting that your kingdom's coming quick.  
If this were false, reproach the very thought  
Before these men and your whole pantheon,  
Who hearken close to judge you from afar!  
Dare you deny your Sibyl? Swear it now!

LENTULUS:

Oh utterance of terrific prodigies,  
Whose malice damns worse punishments divine  
Than this mere earthly body could chastise!  
Your terror prodigious strikes utterly  
At every sense, so conscience pricks me up  
And drags all gifts of eloquence away!  
My lords, I'm too devout to gainsay th' gods -  
And must confess I worshipped Sibyl so,  
And did what all these witnesses avowed!

CICERO: [Aside]

Dull superstition spurs the errant fool!

VOLTURCIUS:

Good lord! I beg you open and read out  
The lastmost letter Lentulus gave me,  
Which he directed for Catiline himself.

CICERO:

Of course, so we'll conclude our relation  
Of this malign affair with last night's note  
That Lentulus wrote to his lord Catiline.

Lord praetor Flaccus, give the evidence.

[FLACCUS produces a letter from his satchel and hands it to CICERO]

Lord Lentulus, again confirm your seal.

[LENTULUS nods. CICERO opens the letter]

Well, here's a fuller verse of vice. It reads -  
"Who I am you know by him I sent you.  
Take care you be a man, and consider  
Into what situation you're progressed.  
Provide for what is needful to you now,  
Take care t'attain your aid from everyone,  
Even from the lowliest."

SILANUS:  
Slaves, men! Slaves!

CATO:  
They'd sic a second Spartacus on us!

[The SENATORS generally uproar angrily. CICERO raises his hands and calls for calm.  
The SENATORS become quiet]

CICERO:  
Your noisy wrath echoes my silent ire!  
Now let's discuss which consulta mandates  
Will best address these circumstances dire  
To the survival of our republic.  
So then, fathers conscript, with things being thus,  
What so please you should be done about this?

[CICERO sits. CATULUS rises]

CATULUS:  
As prince of this our senate, I shall speak  
A sentence I'm sure the body entire  
Will adopt without slightest variance.  
Upon a friendly note, I first propose  
We all adore lord Cicero with thanks,  
With these his praetors, whose faithful foresight  
Did save th'republic from gravest peril!

[The SENATORS generally roar with approval]

CICERO:

We're grateful you congratulate us so.

CATULUS:

And so should Rome's populace as a whole,  
So let's allot a sacred day aside  
For th'general public to praise supple thanks  
To th'gods for favoring Rome with Cicero,  
Who freed th'city from fire, her citizens  
From slaughter, and all Italy from war -  
Th'honor's first touch upon a toga'd man!

[The SENATORS again generally roar with approval]

These happier boons concluded, now, and through,  
We must commence with more vindictive dooms  
Upon th'expounded perpetrations vile  
Rehearsed t'our 'stonished, shocked and startled ears.  
Of th'accused faults, their peerless guilt glares forth  
As by their downcast glowers as th'upraised proofs,  
His transgress worst whom Rome advanced too well,  
High ranking Lentulus, debased now low,  
Exposed a rankling traitor 'gainst his home!  
Such conduct nothing fits our public lords,  
And so we move he abdicate forthwith  
That forecast post of praetorship - the which  
His vacant plan already had forfeit -  
To humbly slink and slump a private man.  
'Tis said apparel flaunts apparent t'all  
Its person's prominence. So, senators,  
Leave him no garb to garble his degrade.  
Nay, strip the pretext - Off with his toga!

SILANUS:

Yes, off with his toga!

MURENA:

Dismantle him!

[The SENATORS generally uproar with angry approval. CICERO rises, raises his hands and calls for calm. The SENATORS become quiet]

CICERO:

What uniform consensus thus adorns  
And decks our princely Catulus' address!  
Now Lentulus, divest yourself for us

From those your antic emblematic robes,  
Whose office you're found so unsuited for.

[LENTULUS takes off his toga and hands it to a nearby SOLDIER]

CATULUS:

The felon thus descends to privacy,  
Discovered at his public enmity.  
Now, I think all these culprits have been proved  
Most basely guilty of the highest crimes.  
Your clamor's shown that most of you agree  
With my conviction to convict them all.  
Yet I must hear if anyone contrives  
Some alternate frame. Can a single soul  
Implause a cause of slandered innocence  
For any of these rogues against the shown,  
Convincing, and contrary evidence?  
Good lords, deliberate. I pray he speak.

[CATULUS pauses for effect of silence]

Oh silent harmony of concord, rung  
Concertedly throughout the senate house.  
Your verdict thus sustains my sentence sound,  
That this entire collective stand condemned  
As guilty criminals of every charge,  
Whose least count cumpers such enormity  
And taints th'authors with such perniciousity,  
That we're obliged to ban their civil rights,  
And treat them as monstrosities, not men.  
On that specific reprimand, I close  
Th'opined advice owed to our magistrate,  
Just adding one point - Let him open it  
Undivided t'this general multitude  
For our decisive vote upon my bid.  
This we will pass with no detracting voice,  
Promoting it from forward sentiment  
To full consultum, by this body backed -  
A shield t'our head of state, impervious  
To any future complaint tried at court.  
Thus clad and unconstrained, eased from suspense,  
He can enforce whatever discipline  
Enacts corrections t'these perverted turns,  
The crueler t'them, the kinder to us all!

[CATULUS sits]

CICERO:

Much gratitude for your apt sentence, sir.  
Now you assess it too, conscript fathers.  
I submit his proposal to a vote,  
Complete as lord Catulus worded it -  
Civic-wide adulation for my work,  
Civil rights' deprivation for their guilt.  
Whoever thinks this valid, say he "aye".

[The SENATORS universally say "aye" in approval]

CICERO:

Whoever thinks anything else, say "nay".

[CICERO pauses for effect of silence]

With nor dissention nor intercession  
The motion carries into consultum.  
I bid lord Catulus draw up its text  
For public filing in Saturn's temple.  
The ponderous wrongs of Catiline's corporals  
Beg we ponder punishments capital,  
And innovate a loaded precedent  
Whose heavy bearing on Rome's own statecraft  
Trumps and encumbers our exempted hands.  
It both demands that such grievous commands  
Expressly be upheld by this senate,  
And that 'tis not some broiled reaction's thrust  
But rather th'cold cast of contemplation.  
For this reason, the senate is adjourned.  
Go, each of you, and vigil this tonight  
Until th'enlightenment of morning dawns,  
When we, enlightened too, will meet again  
T'advise their needed mournful penalties -  
The more to mourn, being such necessity.  
In the interim, this uncivil set  
Shall we split into separate custodies,  
Secured among those magistrates' households  
Best fortified to such captivity,  
Each quartered under quarantine, apart,  
Aside, and locked away from liberty.  
As for the throng outside the senate house,  
Whom rumors of revolt now rabe with doubt  
And want of a report to calm their qualms,  
We needs content them with our news at once.

Such proclamation so provocative  
Demands a mouthpiece of more prominence  
Than the tongue of our usual herald.  
Thus I myself will go pronounce aloud  
Our order's triumph t'ease that disturbed crowd.  
I hold the senate in session no more.  
Away with them, until tomorrow's meet  
Resolves just punishments for their receipt.

*Exit all diversely stages left, right and center, some SOLDIERS returning the CONSPIRATORS to chains and leading them away.*

## SCENE 2

### The Roman Forum

*Enter stages left, right and center various CITIZENS diversely occupied.*

FIRST CITIZEN:

'Tis sure some massacre, planned most adverse,  
That our alert consul did just avert.  
'Twas on th'rabid cusp of bathing Rome red.

SECOND CITIZEN:

We've all heard advertised how smothering dreams  
Dispersed in the wake of last night's alarms  
Before much deeper slumbers could be formed.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Much chatter, sure, all jawed from ignorance,  
Inclinations claimed as information,  
And partial theories uttered as if facts.  
Patricians fiercely jockey t'run the state  
While we plebeians starve for a clean slate.

*Enter stage center CLODIUS and SOLDIERS.*

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement]

FOURTH CITIZEN:

Straight from the Temple of Concord they come!

FIRST CITIZEN:

Eccé proud soldiers!

SECOND CITIZEN:

Tell us your account!

CLODIUS:  
Attention, people of Rome!

FOURTH CITIZEN:  
Hear him, men!

CLODIUS:  
Your consul Cicero arrives forthwith  
T'inform the forum of the day's events.

*Enter stage center CICERO, who ascends the rostra platform above the crowd.*

CICERO:  
Hark, people of Rome, listen to my speech!  
The Republic, good men, and all your lives,  
Your goods, your fortunes, with your sons and wives,  
And this domicile of clarion empire,  
This happiest and handsomest city,  
All's seen today, with th'immortal gods' steep love,  
By my own labors, counsels, and hazards,  
Snatched back from flames and blades, those fangs of fate,  
And so preserved, restored now to you all.  
And if no less enjoyed and bright for us  
Appear these days we're saved than those we're born,  
It's since salvation's gaiety is sure,  
While birth's condition's not, and also since  
We're senseless born, but with sensation saved.  
When Catiline fled, he left associates  
Behind in Rome conspiring crimes so cruel  
My rhetoric alone would fail belief  
Unpropped with writ exhibits from their hands.  
These we got last night 'pon the Milvian bridge  
And read the senate aloud at daybreak,  
All by repentant witnesses avouched  
Until th'conspirators themselves confessed,  
The main import of which I'll speak in brief.  
They'd have commenced by kindling arson fires,  
Set down precise to light up all of Rome  
With hazy havoc their provisioned squads  
Would prowl and perforate whatever moves,  
Not merely lords but every one of you,  
As Catiline's army storms our smoldering town.

[The CITIZENS variously roar with dismay. CICERO raises his hands and calls for calm. The CITIZENS become quiet]



Have patience, men, about this villainy,  
For howso much it jeopardized us ill,  
Th'alerted senate remedied it well!  
With punishing consulta passed today  
They found th'accused all guilty of each charge,  
And stripped th'whole conjury of civic rights.  
They deprived Lentulus of his praetorship,  
Remanding him, his second Cethegus,  
Plus knights Statilius and Gabinius  
To different lordships' custodies, the same  
Assessed for still fugitive Caeparius.  
Such was the senate's lenience, Romans,  
That from such a throng of domestic threats  
They saw how a few felons' punishments  
Could save the state and cure the common sense.  
Beyond this, they decreed a public day  
For thanks to th'immortal gods in my name,  
Which supplication stands unique in this -  
Others were made for deeds conducted well,  
This one alone for Rome's own salvation.  
Now with these captains captured and contained,  
Esteem all Catiline's perils as repelled,  
His hopes, supplies, abilities collapsed.  
In fact, once Catiline was himself removed,  
Nothing was left to fear from his remnants -  
He was the one true terror in our walls,  
Who'd been so sharp, so bold, so crafty shrewd,  
Vigilant of vice, diligent at doom,  
Having an apt conceit for felony,  
For which conceit he lacked nor tongue nor hand.  
Unless I had expelled so vile a man  
From his inside traps to camped banditry,  
But he instead had in the city stayed -  
Though all his ploys were foiled while he was here,  
I scarcely could much longer have repulsed  
So vast a mass of malice from your necks.  
Nay, rather he, to say the very least,  
Would have begot his violence upon us,  
Who never could thus have freed th'republic  
From such perils amid such peace and quiet.  
Although my ministry achieved this all,  
Our labors seem beyond mere human means  
As shows of godly favor and consent -  
Yea, we can almost see them with our eyes.  
You all remember how two years ago

The capitol above was heaven struck,  
With many sacred idols blasted down,  
And we, in awe, consulted soothsayers  
Who swore our ceaseless strife had galled the gods  
To burn and bleed us, and t'entomb the law  
Under the rubble of a civil war  
Downthrowing all Rome's districts and her realm.  
They prophesied that such disastrous times  
Were drawing nigh, and could not be forestalled  
Unless these gods, appeased in every way,  
Would sway the fates themselves t'respin our thread.  
Among the seers' professed appeasement tasks,  
'Twas bid we build that grand image of Jove  
To watch our forum from the capitol,  
Whose oversight they hoped would help illumine  
What murky counsels hatched against the state.  
Yet tardiness so lagged the statue's work  
That he was not emplaced till this same day,  
This selfsame morning, and so first observes  
Conspirators escorted through th'forum  
Along with witnesses to this temple,  
Where we laid bare their schemes against the state,  
Exactly how the augurs had forehoped,  
And all beneath that gaze of Jove restored.  
Who could conject 'twas bare coincidence?  
Who could deny the sheltering favor  
Of Jupiter, the best and greatest god,  
Has salvaged you from a most wretched end,  
And salvaged you without blood or a fight,  
A toga'd folk with me your toga'd duke?  
For this, since a thanksgiving stands decreed,  
Do celebrate that day with your households -  
We've many oft held honors to the gods  
Both just and due, but juster ones never.  
Recall our civil discords heretofore,  
Not only those you've heard recounts about,  
But also those your very eyes beheld.  
And yet now all those prior dissents pertained  
Not to destroying but to altering  
Th'republic. Their men sought to be foremost  
Within it, not for it to be no more,  
Themselves to flourish throughout the city,  
Not to flash and burn the city throughout.  
And yet again all those milder dissents  
Were measured so their resolutions came  
Not by the revival of harmony

But by the murdering of citizens.  
However, Catiline's men in this one war  
Composed their code so all who felt secure  
While Rome remained secure were deemed their foes,  
Unfit t'outlive the infinite bloodshed.  
This danger I've contained, preserving all  
Of Rome untouched, her citizens unharmed,  
And for my service I ask no reward  
Except this day's enduring memory,  
In which our cherished works shall be sustained,  
Increased through your descriptions ever more.  
It's also your due to provide, Romans,  
As others' good deeds bring them benefit,  
That mine may never bring me injury,  
That if some undertaken grievance courts  
You 'gainst my preservation of the state,  
You spurn th'accusers and spur my acclaim!  
So, Romans, since the glowing vespers now  
Begin t'resume their mother night's embrace,  
Go venerate that Jove, that guardian  
Of this city and you her residents.  
Depart you all to your abodes, and there,  
Although the peril's just now been dispelled,  
Defend them still with watchful vigilance  
Alike the prior night. It won't need be your doing  
For much longer, for peace perpetual  
Is possible, and this shall I provide.  
Gods bless the senate and people of Rome.

[The CITIZENS variously roar with excitement. CICERO descends, joins his retinue and begins to move towards stage right]

*Enter ATTICUS stage left.*

ATTICUS:  
Avé, good consul! Salvé, Cicero!  
Our greatest leader and my greatest friend!  
It pains me Rome fixates on fortune so,  
Rather than virtue as Athenians do.  
And so the more is my delight that you  
Will stay my household's private guest tonight.  
When we, casting public business aside,  
Can ponder together the right and true.  
My home's prepared, if you're prepared to come.

CICERO:

With gratitude I say let's go at once,  
For dear Terentia keeps my home to host  
Rome's Vestals in the Bona Dea's fest,  
Whose female cult forbids the sight of men.  
Now let's away. Escort on, Clodius.

CLODIUS: [Aside]  
Oh how I'd peer within that holesome show!

*Exit stage left CICERO and his entourage.*

FIRST CITIZEN:  
Was such a cleansing fit to slate for Rome?  
To redistribute wealth's inequity  
By burning everything of value down  
And beggaring all citizens alike?

THIRD CITIZEN:  
Were this war but a daggering of lords  
We commons only could have gained thereby,  
But t'employ a citywide holocaust  
Would wage its woeful losses worst on us,  
Who daily scrounge to meet our barest needs.

SECOND CITIZEN:  
While one man conjures cruelties immense  
The other gently plucks deliverance.  
Two quite diverged careers now clearly show -  
Hell bent Catiline, heaven sent Cicero!

*Exit diversely stages left, right and center the various CITIZENS.*

### SCENE 3

Atticus' House at Night

*Enter stage center CICERO and ATTICUS attended by a SERVANT.*

CICERO:  
Good Atticus, I tell you that friendship  
Transcends other connections in this wise -  
While goodwill may falter and fail outright  
From one's connections, it cannot from friends.  
And from this principle it follows close  
That you'll forgive our open dialogue  
Being cut short by th'intrusion of my guard,  
Who knows my longing not to be disturbed

Unless the newsprung issue mattered much.

ATTICUS:

'Tis sure some duty of the state appeals,  
The honoring of which could nor offend  
Nor need our pardon. Go, admit the man.

*Exit SERVANT stage left.*

While th'epicure in me shuns politics  
For a scholastic life of purity,  
Your stoic code drew you to high office  
With worldly obligations to uphold.

*Enter stage left CLODIUS led in by a SERVANT.*

CLODIUS:

My lord, I must report the breaking news -  
We've caught at last th'elusive Caeparius  
Bestirring some plebeians to rise up  
And free his captive fellows from their holds.  
We've learned of like incitements being urged  
By th'traitors' own dependants and their clients  
Throughout the city deep into the night,  
Arousing serfs and workingmen to riot  
And rescue their lords. Still others were heard  
Engaging heads of mafious bodies  
Accustomed t'hassle th'public for a price.  
Already one such gathered mob beset  
The court of Cethegus' detention cell,  
But those equestrians we posted there  
Did hold their knighthoods and their stations firm  
As they unflinching faced down th'rambling throng,  
Which loosed but lazy taunts and hollow threats  
Till, teasing out their mission's vanity,  
The thwarted rabble yielded up the place.  
Still, twilight projects permeate the town.

CICERO:

They aim to saturate the common crowd  
Encircling th'morning congress we've arranged  
To judge the traitors' crucial punishment.  
While we consult, they'll drum a frenzy up  
Among the dense and plastic masses round,  
With lurid pipings of discordant tunes  
About the law's withdraw and thralldom's croach,

Until th'enchanted droves beat down the doors  
And change our chamber to a charnel house!  
Such circumstance demands a presence stiff  
Be placed to fence the Temple of Concord,  
So th'senate unmolested may confer  
What fateful consulta we would enforce.  
For this insurance, get you forth tonight  
And deputize you every able knight  
Residing idly yet within Rome's bounds.  
Instruct their drafted arms to palisade  
Our girded fane against a vulgar thrust.  
Go to this with all haste, fair Clodius.

CLODIUS:  
My speed will rival Hermes' wings, my lord!

*Exit stage left CLODIUS.*

ATTICUS:  
Come now, let's reason forth in privacy  
Until publicity intrudes again.

CICERO:  
Oh how I burn for splendid insight's glow -  
That piercing lamp of probed philosophy  
To blazon clear my crisis-shadowed mind,  
Which frets the senate's final sentiment  
Could spark a fatal civic precedent.

*Exit all stage center.*

#### SCENE 4

##### The Temple of Concord

*Enter stages left, right and center SOLDIERS who stand guard at the entrances. Enter stages left, right and center SILANUS, MURENA, CATULUS, CASEAR, DRUSUS, GUY PISO, CATO and various other SENATORS, all taking seats on benches and keeping diversely occupied.*

SILANUS: [To CATO]  
O rarest day, that crams the forum space  
So thickly choked with Rome's community!

CATO:  
Those rude and yapping dogs scent pungent blood  
And clog the trail to lap upon the cut,

Without a care whose opened vessels run,  
Foul radical or optimatist fine.  
A quarry flushed from either quarter suits  
Their feasting eyes to view it's victim end  
Or their rough Skyllan limbs t'rend it to shreds.  
The rascal pack bellows so ravenous  
And teems so plenty rife, they'd prey on us  
Were not our consul provident enough  
To levy first a pride of knightly lions  
As prowling sentinels whose steely barbs  
Unnerve and lash the profane bloodhounds back,  
Sheathing this sanctuary undefiled!

MURENA:

My word, Cato, you talk unpopular  
For a new sworn tribune of the people!

CATO:

Quite the reverse, my brave lord Murena!  
As tribune, I represent Rome's people -  
Rome's - whose patricians count her parentage,  
Th'integral leaders of her general good,  
And so any fraction of childish plebes  
Who'd tear this civic family apart  
Deserves as much disdainful enmity  
As any parricide inclined offspring.  
But folks who love Rome's gentry - them I serve  
And cherish more than my only born son!

*Enter stage left CLODIUS.*

CLODIUS:

All rise for our presiding magistrate.

[The SENATORS rise]

*Enter stage left CICERO.*

CICERO:

Be seated.

[The SENATORS sit]

Now for th'issue's relation -  
As is both befitting and fulfilling  
For th'Roman people of Quiritan stock,

We reconvene you here, conscript fathers,  
This turmoiled day after a night's travails  
From which my own survival does surprise  
Not only to my own self but all of you.  
I see your eyes all turned to me,  
I see you all concerned for the well being  
Not only of the state but of my health.  
Yet if this is consulship's condition -  
For me t'endure all pangs and sufferings  
Even unto the ultimate extreme,  
I will bear through it not only bravely  
But even gladly, if it heals the state.  
So put my own forgetful case aside  
To think upon yourselves and your own kin,  
And look on all the tempests threatening Rome  
Unless you make provision against them.  
The men being held conspired to burn the town,  
To kill you all, to raise Catiline as king -  
Th'indicted proofs drew them to confess all,  
And you adjudged them guilty beyond doubt.  
I'm now resolved to render up to you,  
Fathers conscript, a thing as yet untouched -  
That you should here assess their punishment,  
Which I'll preface with consular insight.  
For th'longest time I've seen a great furor  
Twisting about within our republic,  
Infecting novelties, inciteful woes,  
But this so huge, so ruinous conjury  
I never thought could come from citizens.  
However, now, your sentiments incline,  
You needs must settle this before tonight.  
You see their referenced crime's massivity,  
For which, if you think its participants  
Numbered few, then you err most recklessly.  
This illness far more widely germinates,  
And won't be suppressed by some policy  
Of putting off and holding out delay.  
Whatever reckoning satisfies you  
To censure needs be swiftly verdicted.  
So then, fathers conscript, with things being thus,  
What so please you should be done to these men?  
As Rome's next leaders, soon to be sworn in,  
I yield the floor to our consuls elect  
To voice this session's forefront sentences.  
Speak first, Silanus, tell us what you think.



[CICERO sits. SILANUS rises]

SILANUS:

Those men, who'd have tried to deprive us all  
And th'entire Roman populace of life,  
Who'd destroy th'empire, extinguish its name,  
I think unfit to profit one pulse more  
Of time alive and breathing general air.  
This kind of punishment was frequent once  
Against reprobate citizens of th'state,  
And yet why even call them citizens?  
Since those who'd be th'republic's enemies  
Can no wise claim themselves her citizens.  
My sentence is these traitors should suffer  
Th'extremest punishment's execution!

[SILANUS sits. MURENA rises]

MURENA:

As consular partner with Silanus,  
To share our names as title for next year,  
When Rome's days cross that threshold of Janus  
Whose calendary door gapes close at hand,  
I'll share a sentence doubling his advice,  
Identical in conscience and command.  
We've learned the savage plans these men laid up,  
We know what miseries they meant for Rome -  
Our virgins violated, boys abused,  
Our children torn from their parent's embrace,  
Our matrons made to suffer th'victors' wills,  
Our shrines and homes despoiled by knife and fire,  
Till every place is filled up in the end  
With arms and corpses, carnage and lament!  
My vision wracks me to see this city,  
This radiant light of the orb of the world  
And lofty citadel of all nations,  
Collapsing in sudden conflagration.  
I see o'erstretching the buried homeland  
Wretched unburied heaps of citizens.  
There whirls before my eyes the furied sight  
Of mad Cethegus howling o'er our dead.  
Then when I picture Lentulus reigning  
As he confessed his fatal hope had been,  
With purpled Gabinius at his side  
While Catiline returns with his bandit force,  
I bristle vehemently at the sight.

Now since these things do all appear to me  
So miseried and miserably severe,  
Therefore against those who wished perform them,  
I urge the vehement severity  
Of th'supreme penalty. They must not live.

[MURENA sits. CICERO rises]

CICERO:  
Our future consuls couply voice consent  
For urgent death. Does this meet consensus  
Among Rome's former consuls present here?

[CICERO sits. CATULUS rises]

CATULUS:  
Engraced as foremost ranking senator  
Among th'attendant dozen consulars,  
I pledge th'aforesaid motion my support  
And move its' ministration pass forthwith  
However wise our consul deems it fit -  
Tossed from Tarpeian rock or Tiber drowned,  
Strung brightly up or throttled in the dark,  
These captured traitors must descend to Dis  
T'enrich the living world by leaving it!  
I ask those of my fellow consulars  
Who follow my judgment to now say "aye".

[Thirteen CONSULAR SENATORS universally say "aye" in approval]

The sentence for capital punishment  
Achieves the full unanimous support  
Of this grand order's highest echelon.  
Can any senator dare gainsay it  
Among our body's lower more degrees?

[CATULUS sits. CAESAR rises]

CICERO:  
It seems our newly made praetor Caesar  
Would add a new opinion to our sense.  
Tell us, Julius, what novelties you think.

CAESAR:  
I would indeed append th'advanced sentence.  
All men, fathers conscript, who contemplate

Such difficult issues ought to be free  
From hate and bias, from rage and pity.  
Let not these tyrant passions so avail  
That hostaged prudence can no way prevail.  
See to it, fathers conscript, lest their crimes  
Weigh on you more than your own dignity,  
Nor let these ponderous deliberations  
Heed your rage more than your reputation.  
No one sees their own injuries as slight,  
Many hold them heavier than is fair.  
But some normal reactions are licensed  
Only to common folks, fathers conscript.  
If those whose lives pass in obscurity  
Commit some crime in anger, few will know't,  
For their fame and their fortune are the same.  
Yet those endowed with great authority,  
Who must conduct their era from on high -  
Their deeds are known to all mortality.  
Thus in greatest fortune is freedom least,  
And neither zealousness nor hatefulness  
Becomes us, and least of all wrathfulness,  
For what is called anger in commoners,  
This same in a commanding magistrate  
Is termed proud insolence and cruelty.  
Plus, most people only recall outcomes,  
Forgetting th'instigators' devilish crimes,  
And just discuss whether the punishment  
Had been somehow excessively severe.  
I'm sure Silanus, that brave, upright soul,  
Spoke what he said from zeal for th'republic,  
Worked up by nor fondness nor enmity -  
So noble's his mannerly modesty.  
Yet, to be true, his sentence seems not cruel -  
For what could be cruelly done t'such cruel men? -  
But downright foreign t'our nation's customs.  
Now surely 'tis our fear or their offense  
That led Silanus, good consul elect,  
To select this new sort of punishment.  
On fear, a discussion would be pointless,  
Since by our clarion consul's diligence  
We've such a sizeable presence in arms.  
On the penalty, I can fairly say  
When life's beset with grief and wretchedness,  
Then death's in fact relief from suffering,  
Not torment. It dissolves all mortal woes,  
And hence hereaft's nor place for cares nor joys.

Or else you may ask - "Who could reprehend  
What we decree 'gainst such blatant traitors?"  
I tell you Time will, someday, and Fortune,  
Whose whims do regulate all nations' fates.  
Though these men earned whate'er befalls them here,  
You must consider everybody else,  
And what your statute forebodes for the rest.  
All bad examples from good precepts rise,  
So when this government someday descends  
T'incompetent lords or to immoral men,  
This new example will then be transferred  
From deserving and suitable persons  
To undeserving and unsuited ones.  
Now I don't fear abuse from Cicero  
Nor in these days, but great societies  
Contain many and varied temperaments,  
And it's possible, at some other time,  
When some other consul handles the troops,  
That some falsehood deludes their faith as truth,  
And then by this example we've decreed  
That consul draws his murdering sword on us.  
Then who'd limit it, who'd moderate him?  
Our forebears, fathers conscript, never lacked  
Nor prudence nor courage. Nor obstained they  
Too proud t'adopt what foreign institutes  
They saw were apt for some ally or foe.  
They preferred t'follow likewise boons at home,  
And rather emulate than envy them.  
At first they copied Grecian practices  
Of punishments both corporal and supreme.  
Yet later on, as th'republic matured  
And factions for the masses waxed robust,  
Then innocents got rounded up to fall  
Enlooped as casualties of these techniques,  
Until our forebears set up further laws  
Which thence prefer exile for the condemned.  
For this reason I think, fathers conscript,  
That we should not advise new policy  
Askance from our forefathers' keen insight.  
There surely was virtue and wisdom more  
Within those men, who with scant resources  
Made Rome's empire so vast, than is in us  
Who barely can retain what they well gained.  
Now, would I want these traitors' dismissal  
To augment Catiline's army? Not at all!  
But I propose this - confiscate their goods,

And prison their selves about those districts  
With strongest resources to lock them up.  
I bid we pass a sanction moreover,  
Lest anyone refer their cause again  
To our senate, nor take it to the plebes,  
That whoso either tries be senate damned  
As agents working 'gainst the republic  
And the safety of all her populace.  
Just spare these unjust traitors' lives alone,  
To languish lonely and bereft of hope.  
These terms mark my sentence, as built on more  
Bedrock of sense than dewy sentiment.

[CAESAR sits. CICERO rises]

CICERO:

We've heard two sentences at variance.  
One man would see the traitors put to death.  
While th'other lifts that deadly penalty  
T'impose instead every other suffering.  
His option seems unjust for you t'adopt  
And difficult for me to implement,  
But if decreed, I will it undertake.  
It even holds some benefit for me -  
Our popularist Caesar's sponsorship  
Would mellow th'commons' ripe response to it,  
Whereas with Silanus' alternative  
I know not what ampler antics could stir.  
Yet our republic's needs must still come first,  
And if you favor Silanus' sentence  
I'm sure the Roman people will release  
Us from the bitter plaint of cruelty  
Once I've maintained our act's a leniency,  
And that our judgment's but t'ensure the fruits  
Of Rome's republic stay preserved for all,  
For which my personal own vehemence  
Comes motived not from some enraged temper -  
For who's milder than me? - but rather moved  
By simplest mercy and humanity.  
Thereon, to prove this point, I'll prompt the crowd -  
If any father of a family,  
Whose offspring's by a servingman done in,  
His wife cut down, his homestead burnt, and yet  
Would not inflict that brutal slave's torment -  
Does this man seem clement and merciful,  
Or most inhuman, stony-cored, and cruel

Who won't allieve his own painful anguish  
Through the painful anguish of it's culprit?  
So put are we against these criminals,  
Who wish to slaughter us, our wives, our kids,  
Who sought t'destroy our every single house  
And th'universal homestead of our state -  
That if we've grown most vehement 'gainst them,  
We yet possess mercy in it indeed,  
Or else if too remiss, we'd need endure  
The deepest shame of highest cruelty  
Amid our toppled town and countrymen.  
'Tis far a better thing for us to fear  
Lest, being remiss in punishment, we seem  
Detached and downright cruel to our homeland,  
Than if, severe in reaction, we be  
Too vehement towards it's harshest foes.  
Now here I'll hush the smattered mutterings  
That cluck their doubts of my capacity  
To execute what you today decree.  
I've everything provided and prepared,  
Set up with utmost diligence and care,  
Enhanced by the Roman people's goodwill  
Both for our sovereign empire's retention  
And our common fortune's conservation -  
Everyone's with us, men from all orders,  
Of all classes, even of all ages,  
Filling our templed forum with their prayers.  
This cause, alone since this city's founding,  
Has spawned the sense of being one and the same,  
Of harmonied concord throughout th'orders  
Of Rome, except a few crazed radicals  
Who, sensing their impending ruin, prefer  
T'expire with others rather than alone.  
The patient ranks all tender their consent,  
Just as, beset with firebrands and th'iron shafts  
Of this profane and brazen conjury,  
The homeland stretches forth her suffering hand.  
Therefore, keep your minds on th'preservation  
Of Rome's people, of your wives and children,  
Of th'altars and hearths, her shrines and temples,  
Of all the city's shelters and structures,  
Of our imperial might and liberal rights,  
Of Italy, and Rome's whole commonwealth,  
To reach your verdict with such diligence  
And bravery as you've set forth so far.  
You have a consul who won't hesitate

To execute the statutes you decree,  
To defend them so long as he shall live,  
And who can stand himself accountable.  
We've not yet heard this body's silver tier.  
Praetorian senators, tell us your thoughts.

[CICERO sits. DRUSUS rises]

DRUSUS:

With all respect to our good consulars,  
I'm moved the more by Caesar's wise remarks  
That warn us lest, in murdering these men,  
We murder thus the law's rooted safeguard  
Against state-sanctioned reaping of Rome's seed  
Unless they flourish arms adverse t'our soil.  
If we conclude to take this easy course,  
We sow the piercing thorns of precedent  
Upon the path, and license their abuse  
By rival branches of our native trunk,  
To flog the vital sap from Cicero  
Till his demise, with graced impunity.  
It pallors me to fate this for our lords,  
And so, to nip this budding pestilence,  
I raise my voice for Caesar's sentiment.  
If any else praetorian minister  
Agrees with me, I bid you now say "aye".

[Several PRAETORIAN SENATORS say "aye" in approval]

Good lords, echo this outspoken chorus  
With your own call for our confined refrain  
Above Silanus' too transgressive verse.

[DRUSUS sits. SILANUS rises]

SILANUS:

Now look here, lords, I feel my spoke approach  
Has warped contorted and been skewed astray  
From its intended line, and needs return  
To clear its path back to the rightful track.  
When I proposed th'extremest penalty,  
I meant the strongest suffering we can cast  
Within the constitution's civil frame.  
As Caesar just outlined in starkest terms,  
Civilian executions would so fray  
And tear apart that civilizing web

Of trust on which our social fabric hangs,  
That its unseaming would unseemly loose  
Authorities hell-bent to follow suit  
With flimsy pretexts furthered as excuse,  
While we, the meddling Penelopes  
Whose crafty handiwork enstitched the flaw,  
Could but lament what hardships we'd spun home,  
And how we'd rent this mantle of regime  
Into her everlasting burial shroud!  
So then, to best prevent such disarray,  
I push for permanent imprisonment  
Throughout Rome's districts for these criminals.  
Dump one into the Tullianum jail,  
That long forsaken underground cistern  
Sunken beneath the Capitoline mound,  
Which dungeon chamber, fetid with neglect,  
Would best bedeck the lifetime lodging den  
Of haughty Lentulus' benighted lot.  
Disperse the rest to likewise bleak confines  
That chafe their dismal absence of restraint.  
Such is the mind I have on this affair.

[SILANUS sits. CATO rises]

CATO:

I've much a different mind, fathers conscript,  
When I consider th' affair's dread peril  
And yet observe some lords' opinions here,  
Which fixate on lean punishments for men  
Who planned a war against our own homeland.  
This threat demands we take precautions now  
Against these traitors, rather than debate  
What our dealing with them might institute.  
Now, you may prosecute all other crimes  
Once they've occurred, but if you don't provide  
Lest this one hap at all, then once it's come  
Will all your pleas for justice wail in vain -  
In taken towns, the vanquished have nothing.  
So, by the gods immortal, I beg you,  
Who always prize your wealth more than the realm,  
If you'd keep those preferred attachments safe,  
Then wake up now and rescue your bruised state!  
We're not resolving rents or revenues -  
Our liberty and lives waver in doubt!  
I've often railed to this body aloud,  
Often deplored the luxury and greed



Our citizens delight to wallow in -  
 The sort my stoic soul defies outright,  
 And which in others I can scarce condone.  
 But though you oft dismissed my counsel slight,  
 Somehow th'afflicted republic held firm -  
 Her opulence sustained your negligence.  
 So now we're too fargone to treat the germ,  
 But merely if that syndrome's swelled excess  
 Shall still be ours, or, along with ourselves,  
 Shall altogether be the enemy's.  
 Yet even here - oh my! - some persons dare  
 To sponsor terms of mildness and mercy -  
 So long have we skewed the true names for things.  
 Squandering another's goods is charity,  
 As boldness in wrongdoing is bravery,  
 Lavishness acclaimed, idleness indulged,  
 With no distinction drawn 'tween right and wrong,  
 Ambition's dispossessed virtue's prestige.  
 So it's no wonder, when each one of you  
 Pursues divisive passions, in the thrall  
 Of homely pleasures and stately treasures,  
 Your public left in pain for private gain,  
 That this should set the state to such extremes,  
 And tempt impulsive strikes on her weakness.  
 But I give up, so go ahead and let  
 These spendthrifts splurge and pardon common thieves,  
 But let them not so freely splash our blood,  
 And, sparing some few criminal villains,  
 Bring total ruin t'all decent citizens!  
 The thing is this - what you choose t'institute  
 For Lentulus' and th'rest will likewise steer  
 The martial drive of Catiline's rebel herd,  
 And howso more intensely you decree,  
 By thatso less inspired will their mood swoon.  
 Yet if they see you slack in the slightest,  
 At once will their full savagery stampede.  
 We're faced with high-born traitors conjuring  
 To burn the homeland down that brought them up,  
 Yet even now you dawdle all and doubt  
 What should be done with enemies taken  
 While breeding subversion inside our walls?  
 Yes, go ahead, then, and have your "mercy"!  
 Oh say "these youths but strayed by ambition."  
 And even dismiss them armed! Then indeed  
 Shall all that mildness and mercy of yours,  
 Once they've got arms, contort to misery.

Of course the case is tough and terrible,  
But here you freeze up, awkward and soft-spined,  
Each one awaiting every other's tongue,  
And blindly trusting to the gods divine  
Who've saved this state so oft from grave peril.  
'Tis not by vows nor vulvety appeals  
That one acquires the favor of the gods.  
By vigilance, by action, by insight -  
By these were Rome's prosperities achieved.  
When you retreat to cheap frivolity,  
In vain will your entreaties reach the gods,  
Who rankle at you, vengeful and irate.  
Thus, fathers conscript, were there error room,  
I'd gladly let this crisis set you straight  
From your perverse contempt for my advice.  
But we're being circumvented everywhere.  
Catiline's legions are pressing at our throats.  
While unknown others lurk within our walls  
And through Rome's heart as secret enemies.  
We can nor plan nor ready anything  
Secluded long from hostile intellect,  
Which prompts the more need for expediency.  
So here's my sentence - since catastrophe  
Has comet-like been thrust upon our heads  
By th'expletive oaths of strayed prodigies,  
Our captives t'this convicted and confessed,  
Therefore, upon these confessed terrorists,  
As though exposed for capital offense,  
Let us impose the punishment of death  
In the grander manner of our forebears.

[CATO sits. GUY PISO rises]

PISO:

Fathers conscript, I thank the gods as much  
For fitting Cato to his strict resolve  
As I do curse Silanus' fluid whims,  
And float my doubts of Caesar's pitying drift,  
Whose every flawed detail so poorly suits  
The uniform duress pressing our necks.  
Well, rather all its fashioned floss but one -  
That death alone's too kind for these cruel men.  
They ought to suffer more, so I suggest  
We drop them to their graves consumed with grief  
That menacing their fellow citizens  
Impoverished their proper families.

I call for confiscation paired with death  
To doubly vex these villains' aftermath!  
Whoso agrees, say "aye" if you're with me.

[Several SENATORS say "aye" in approval]

So, death and confiscation, blended both,  
Resounds so plauded as insists a vote.

[CAESAR rises]

CAESAR:  
Now see here, fathers conscript, recognize  
The ugly aspect of your arrogance,  
How callous and intolerant you look  
In grasping my proposal's cruelest clause  
While scrapping to the side it's clement core!  
Lords, witness your hubris and turn from it  
Lest you lose sight of your humanity.

[CATO rises]

CATO:  
Again lord Caesar spouts philanthropy  
And gushes forth a tearful homily  
For men who should nor live nor e'er been born,  
And by whose deaths the state escapes downfall,  
Upon the scarp of which precipitous  
She reels and teeters as we speak. Now here,  
When Caesar bluffs this matter's no concern  
So great as blatant criminals' defense,  
It sketches him as one aligned too well  
With their conspiracy to blot Rome out,  
So well that I do well suspect his hand  
Itself conscribed the pattern of their plans.  
Oh subtle Caesar! How the chance of us  
Uncovering evidence t' expose your guilt  
Must draw your dread as much as 'tis your glee  
That we're yet lacking any trace of it,  
You feeling both emotions palpably!  
It will turn up, and upturn all your scams!

[CICERO rises]

CICERO:

Lord Cato! Cease these accusations, sir!  
We've heard enough accused in these late days  
To stop our ears a year from heeding more,  
Unless they come with ironclad proof up front,  
Not like this unadorned affront of yours!  
From all my covert auditors, not one  
Did utter word of Caesar's being involved,  
While every one confessed unanimous  
About those culprits we must penalize,  
Which is itself an amply loaded task  
Without imposing Caesar's burden to't.  
His pardon weighs both plausible and prone  
T'acquit th'other conspirators on trial.  
Thus I'll leave pristine Caesar in the clear  
That we may focus on the blemished rest,  
And let's dispense with confiscation's greed  
To concentrate on execution's need.  
So lords, here's my proposal for your vote -  
My deputies shall fetch these criminals  
And bring them to the Tullianum jail  
Wherein we shall exact their instant deaths.  
Whoever thinks this proper, say he "aye".

[The vast majority of SENATORS say "aye" in approval]

CICERO:

Whoever thinks otherwise from it, say "nay".

[CAESAR and some SENATORS say "nay" in opposition]

*Enter stage right a SERVANT, who brings a note to CAESAR.*

The "ayes" possess by far the greater part.  
The motion carries into consultum.  
Lord Catulus, compose this text as well  
For public filing in Saturn's temple.

[CATO sees CAESAR reading the note]

CATO:

See here, good lords! A moment past you scrapped  
My claim of Caesar's black complicity  
For that I lacked an inkling of hard proof.  
Well, look! His hand enclasps the wanted script

Of scarlet testament to his defect!  
I say that note's come post from Catiline's ranks,  
And call on Caesar t'read it out at once  
Or yield it o'er to one of us who will!  
Who'll second me to strip his slick pretense?

[SILANUS rises]

SILANUS:  
I second my kin-law! Let's hear what's writ!

CATO:  
My kindred sister's groom kindly responds.  
So, while we're still together, still alive,  
Lord Cicero, compel the note be spoke.

CAESAR:  
You'll no compulsion need to learn these lines.  
I'm full content t'unfold its contents quick  
As flits the heart that jotted them to me.

[CAESAR reads the letter]

“Don't grind away your lush virility  
On that pruned gaggle of senility.  
Come shape with me a pair more intimate,  
And feel as fresh as can be got in sweat.”  
And here she signs “Your darling Servilia.”

CATO: [Rushing over to CAESAR]  
You lie! How dare you smirch my sister so!  
How dare you hide your shame through shaming her!  
If you'll not read it real then hand it here!

[CAESAR hands the letter to CATO, who reads it]

Ah, wanton woman! Have it back, you bauch!

CAESAR: [Taking the letter back]  
Why yes, I'll have it back, as I've had her,  
But I'll have nothing more of this! Come, friends!

[CAESAR and some SENATORS begin to move towards stage right]

CLODIUS: [To the SOLDIERS standing guard at the entrances]  
You guards! Do not allow those men to pass!

They all fly derelict of their duties  
At best, or else are parties to the worst  
Of treacheries, and, fearing being found out,  
They're making break to turn to fugitives!  
Unsheathe your swords and fence a picket line!  
Stockade that vagrant gang! Block their escape!

[A number of SOLDIERS draw their swords and surround CAESAR and his retinue. The SENATORS variously murmur with agitation and concern at the actions they are witnessing. CLODIUS turns to CICERO]

Here Caesar, that inflated Phoebus, shrinks  
Encinched within a razor zodiac.  
But give the sign and flick him from the sky.

[CICERO shakes his head]

CICERO:  
To murder thus these honored Roman lords  
Would trample paranormal and unjust.  
It disagrees with me, so let them go.

[The SOLDIERS sheathe their swords and back off from CAESAR and his retinue. The SENATORS continue to variously murmur more agitatedly]

*Exit stage right CAESAR and his retinue.*

[To CLODIUS]  
Forget those fleeting bothers, Clodius,  
For we've concerns much more precarious,  
Whose last restraint's our sanction to secure.  
For this bound end, I bid you send summons  
To Rome's three wardens of the capitol,  
And in my name invoke that trinity  
Approach the Tullianum jail post haste  
With all the needed implements in hand  
To execute their mandatory task  
Of throttling traitors' necks till they be dead.  
The wardens sent ahead, continue on  
With men-at-arms to ferry Cethegus  
Beneath the Tullianum's belly vault,  
Wherefrom we'll undertake him deeper still.  
Bid praetors Flaccus and Pomptinus march  
An escort presence out t'remand the rest,  
Save Lentulus. I'll bring him in myself.  
Tonight this marathon of turnabouts

Between my wits and Catiline's strident scamps  
Is ready set to sprint its final lap  
Unto a finish truly terminal.  
Now go, relay the praetors their paces,  
And spring your step into your own races.

CLODIUS:  
With fleeter foot than dread Achilles ran!

[CLODIUS goes and confers with FLACCUS and POMPTINUS. The SENATORS continue to variously murmur agitatedly. CICERO raises his hands and calls for calm. The SENATORS become quiet]

CICERO:  
Fathers conscript, be calm! Peace, senators!  
These deep disturbing actions we've observed  
Do well deserve a deep upset response.  
'Tis normal to abhor abnormal doings.  
Yet, lords, you need respect how all our deeds  
Were done deservingly, as needful means  
To botch, miscarry and abort stillborn  
Those misbegot and inbred plots they've hatched  
To spawn abhorrent acts of savagery  
Against your persons and your native land,  
Yea, even mince your cradle bound newborns!  
'Tis more upsetting and unnatural  
By far than any nigh-trespass of ours.  
Should my incautious staff strive too headstrong,  
Their work's yet waged to take good care of Rome  
While malconceived outrages threaten her,  
And if in this we act outrageously  
'Tis simply our protective honesty  
And th'existential nature of that threat.  
You've shown you share our too perturbed regard  
Towards such menacing duplicity,  
When, careworn with concern, you voted up  
Today's consultum law that I put down  
The mongrel miscreants who brooded it.  
So now, good lords, that I may do your will  
And discipline those whelpish brutes for good,  
I do not hold the senate any more  
For your concern and insight, both profound,  
My deepest gratitude I give, and leave  
You free to cherish your reclaimed freedom,  
Though till our punishment's known publicly  
To have been passed upon the loathed captains

And drained the thirst from their foot-soldiers' knives,  
I urge you keep apart in privacy  
So we together may come out alive.  
Get you home safe, good senators of Rome.

[To some nearby SOLDIERS]  
Come you with me, and you attend as well.  
Though our next steps must tread unpleasantly,  
Deliverance is coming presently!

*Exit stage left CICERO and his SOLDIERS, exit all others diversely stages left, right and center.*

## SCENE 5

### The Tullianum Jail

*Enter stage center THREE WARDENS each bearing a rope.*

FIRST WARDEN:

Oh gods, the stench! My nostrils quease at it!  
These danky drafts upheaved my gullet's huff!  
Look now, my eyes are watering up with rheum.

SECOND WARDEN:

That last reflex at least provides some boon,  
Good brother warden, dampening from sight  
A bleaker scene than anyone should view -  
This room, bestrewed with grisly implements  
And spattered everywhere from past torments.  
Of Rome's worst slums, not one ranks more grotesque  
Than th'rankness of this Tullianum dump!

THIRD WARDEN:

Too true, sworn brethren of the capitol,  
But we shall yet depart this dismal den  
Once we've completed our macabre duties.  
There's five ill-fated felons coming here  
Whose destined doom's never to leave again.

FIRST WARDEN:

Nor stay for long, for by these stifling cords  
Their time in here will be quite shortly clipped.  
I say, fellows, in all our warden days  
We've never snuffed out yet a nobler set  
Of more patrician criminals than these  
We are about to strangulate to death.



SECOND WARDEN:

How highly born, how lowly fallen now.  
Why, Lentulus once held the consulship!  
Though he'd but had it for the briefest stint  
Before his loosened moral turpitude  
Caught up with him and ousted him mid-term.  
I crave you leave his throttling to me,  
That I may claim hereafter how I've latched  
My fingers to the pulse of history.

FIRST WARDEN:

The honor's all yours.

THIRD WARDEN:

No complaint from me.

*Exit stage left CICERO and his SOLDIERS, leading in LENTULUS in chains.*

LENTULUS:

How dare you even think to place me here!  
This pit's unfit for foreign peasantry,  
Much less a Roman gentleman like me,  
Elite in both that highest consulship  
I've held, and in the noble family  
Cornelian from which I sprang, itself  
The lofty fount of countless consuls more.  
So base a lair as this sinks far beneath  
A peer of my exalted pedigree!  
Remove me from this sty and retain me  
Another lodging more appropriate.

CICERO:

What haught delirium has milked your mind  
Completely void of reason, Lentulus,  
To babble on about propriety  
Ignoring your unseemly circumstance.  
That former consulship you briefly clutched  
Was soon withdrawn from your too venal palm,  
And yet, intoxicated with yourself,  
Degenerate and decadently spoiled,  
You dared betray more decent consulars  
Than ever lined your lineal descent.  
It marvels me how after all of this  
You dare expect some honored treatment yet,  
As, pumped up full of pride and peacock struts,

That swollen head's devoid of any shame -  
Shame t'hate Rome, shame t'imperil her, shame t'fail  
And be found out - good gods the impudence!  
Do you expect to get away from this  
With nothing but a slap upon the limb?  
I'll twist a rictus from that shameless grin.  
Come wardens, handle him!

SECOND WARDEN:  
With breakneck haste.

[The SECOND WARDEN strangles LENTULUS to death]

CICERO:  
A worthy end t'a worthless waste of life,  
Disgraceful in its creeds and deeds alike.

*Exit stage left FLACCUS and POMPTINUS, with SOLDIERS leading in STATILIUS,  
GABINIUS and CAEPARIUS in chains.*

FLACCUS:  
Lord consul, here's three wayward goats you sought.

CICERO:  
Well herded, Flaccus and Pomptinus, thanks  
For hauling in these shamble footed strays  
Who once a hideous Chimera formed  
To wrest away Rome's cornucopia.  
But I, as though astride a Pegasus,  
Espied your blundering capers from on high  
And undermining blockages devised  
To choke your movement first, and then your lives!  
If this you doubt, then look upon the corpse  
Of your lost leader, Lentulus no more!

GABINIUS:  
He's gone! Ah sorrow!

STATILIUS:  
We're to follow too!

CAEPARIUS: [To CICERO]  
Tyrant! You'll go down too for this someday!

CICERO:  
How rich in malice, in manners how poor,

With both defects developed far too dense  
For any teaching t're-enlighten them.  
Such slack disciples, so beyond reform,  
Need a more stringent guidance from their faults.  
Go to, taut counselors, and lesson them.

[The THREE WARDENS begin strangling STATILIUS, GABINIUS and CAEPARIUS]

*Enter stage left CLODIUS and SOLDIERS, leading in CETHEGUS in chains.*

CLODIUS:  
I hope I haven't missed the main event.  
Ah good, the spectacle's on full display -  
Cethegus, view your future and despair.

[STATILIUS, GABINIUS and CAEPARIUS fall dead]

CETHEGUS:  
'Twas desperation deeper than to die  
That first provoked us all to raise revolt  
In outrage at this state's tyrannic turn  
Against her native born community,  
Misled by you, her blind, detached elites.  
You drilled our peoples off to distant drums,  
Disrupting their domestic industries  
To follow through your hollow-trumped pretexts,  
Which ill purported they'd warded Rome's health  
Just so you could import cheap foreign slaves,  
Whose costless labors piled your riches high,  
But bankrupted our free civilians' trades.  
The toll's worse still for Rome's native soldiers,  
Whom duty spurred to join your spurious tours  
And leave their income-strapped kindred behind,  
A common turn, since for all Roman men  
Enrollment for the draft's compulsory.  
The vastest portions of those faithful ranks  
Must each come home to bleak calamity -  
His old neglected livelihood pawned off,  
His too shorthanded family broken up  
And pressed into degrading drudgeries  
For scraps of daily grain and hovel cots.  
Such hardship, past unfit for any man,  
Beleaguers now the broadest swathes of Rome,  
While you, who'd o'erseen this catastrophe -  
You, who dispatched our men to far-off wars  
Unrecompensed for their abandoned trades -

You, who turned profiteers through vulture loans,  
Who poached their beggared families' few assets  
And lastly pitched them destitute away -  
You opportunist optimatist lords  
Refuse to even face the crisis' scope  
Or your own hands in bringing it about,  
Blaming instead its downshaken victims  
And leeching th'unredeemed city to ruin.  
Your skewy sovereignty's contrived th'undoing  
Of much more Roman life and property  
Than e'er our conjury did angle for,  
Which slants yourselves the real traitors of Rome  
And we her latest martyrs, though not th'last,  
For so many despise their mounting debts  
Stamped in the margins of your unclean slates,  
That our abrupt demise will change nothing.  
In fact, th'ensuing peace will prove diseased  
And fleeting brief before new challengers  
Erupt against your rule, and should they fail  
There will yet rise abundant others more,  
Until the last at last topples your crown  
And righteously stops your dishonest lives.  
With so many so desperate and upset,  
Your biased order's destined for collapse.  
So go on, put me down, and by my death  
Inspire the next uprising to begin.

CICERO:

Provide this hopeless bandit's hoped-for end.

[A WARDEN strangles CETHEGUS to death]

For this dead silence lively cheers will chime  
Throughout the salvaged city's thronging streets.  
As for the corpses, ritual insists  
That traitors' bodies suffer banishment.  
Dispose them so, beyond the city walls.

[Some SOLDIERS go about picking up the bodies and carrying them towards stage left]

Unburdened praetors, come along with me  
Down to the forum, where I will inform  
The anxious public masses still convened  
That this momentous action has transpired,  
Dissuading thus their hidden underlings  
And sympathizers, ignorant groups both,

From any dreams of rescue once night falls.

CLODIUS:

How will you break the news? What shall you say?

CICERO:

I'll say these criminals have lived their lives,  
And through that perfect tense of completion  
Thus euphemize the killing of these crooks.

CLODIUS:

You'll be hailed our nation's father for this,  
Rome's savior and the state's second founder.  
Lampights will blaze in your honor tonight  
At every door in show of public love.

[Aside]

Yet these same fickle and forgetful folks  
May fondly someday turn hateful on him,  
And run their onetime hero out of town.

[To Cicero]

Rome's living commanders, who once triumphed,  
Will each admit their debt to you alone  
For their own safety and preservation.

CICERO:

Indeed, to first expose and then expunge  
The greatest revolt with least disorder  
Should earn a consul praise of every kind.  
I've kept the peace in Rome most peaceably,  
Clasping the civic torch bright and unquenched  
Throughout my ministry's dusking sunset.  
Let's go enlighten the bewildered crowds,  
Rome's skies are cleared of Catiline's squalling clouds!

*Exit all stage left.*

End of ACT IV

ACT V  
SCENE 1

Guy Antony's Camp in Etruscany

*Enter stage left GUY ANTONY, enter stage center MARCUS PETREIUS and some Military Tribunes.*

ANTONY:

A pox upon this land, Etruscany!  
If I should never tread it's turf again  
Once this war's over, it will be too soon!  
I swear it's venom soil has poisoned me -  
Ah gods, my feet's afire! A pox on it!  
All day we traipse in chase of Catiline  
Along the Appenines' hard mountain spine,  
Now up to Gaul, now down again to Rome,  
His double legions and our trailing three  
All chiropract the back of Italy!  
Tribune Petreius, second in command,  
Has Catiline's position changed today?

PETREIUS:

Lord legate Antony, the criminal  
Yet holds his presence at the mountains' feet,  
Using th'advantage of that ground's incline  
To handicap us from advancing forth.  
By this deterrence he delays combat  
In chancy hope his cohorts back in Rome  
Will overthrow the city's garrison  
And level reinforcements 'gainst our flanks  
To tilt the looming battle more his way.  
The recent news that his conspirators  
Were first exposed, then executed dead,  
And soak now in the Tiber's sandy bed,  
Has toppled that unbalanced gambit down.  
Soon as the tale's been tipped off to his troops,  
The man will need to risk instant combat  
Before trickling deserters drain his ranks  
Too thin and too disheartened t'win the day.  
Rash Catiline's apt to rush upon us soon,  
So keep your units ready to engage.

*Enter stage right a SOLDIER.*

SOLDIER:

My lords! Our scouts report that Catiline moves.  
He's brought his forces down from the highlands  
And spread its full array upon the plain  
To press a bloody rivalry of arms.

PETREIUS:

The martial hour is come for us at last!  
Lord Antony, shall we march our full host?

ANTONY:

My toes are so inflamed with acid pangs  
That I can scarcely pace my tent today,  
Much less march out our legions to the foe  
Or run their rallies o'er the battlefield.  
I sorely must remain behind to mend  
And leave the war's command to you instead.  
Tribune Petreius, you I put in charge  
Over our soldiers. Lead the men with skill.

PETREIUS:

I'm honored by your choice, lord legate sir.  
My fellow tribunes, let's alarm the troops  
And marshal them to meet the enemy.  
Exhort your cohorts to remember this -  
They fight against ill-armored misfit thieves,  
And they're the ones fighting for their homeland,  
For their children, their altars and their hearths.  
Ours the greater ranks, ours the bravest deeds.  
Let's march our units forth to victory.

*Exit all stage center except GUY ANTONY.*

ANTONY:

Ah! Every step's trodden on adder's fangs!  
'Twas living far too well that laid me ill,  
For they do say that richer wines and meats  
Induce these disturbed humors they call gout,  
And so it's also styled the king's disease.  
Still, by this suffering I enjoy reprieve  
From th'even more unbearable prospect  
Of terminating the living career  
Of one who'd been a firm comrade of mine,  
For Catiline oft did drain many a cup  
With me in lewd salutes through splendid nights.  
Alas no more. However this day ends,  
I'll wake tomorrow more bereft of friends.

*Exit stage left GUY ANTONY.*

SCENE 2

A Field in Etruscany

*Enter stage right SOLDIERS led by MANLIUS, who march in formation and finally stand at attention. Enter stage center CATILINE.*

MANLIUS:

All hail our lord commander, Catiline!

SOLDIERS:

Avé, Catiline!

MANLIUS:

Stand at ease, good men.

My lord, here stands our most elite recruits,  
Made from the most heroic veterans,  
Whose grand command I transfer now to you.  
All told, our two legions of soldiery  
Are set to face lord Antony's array,  
Which stands hard pitched directly to our front  
And set to test their manhoods against ours,  
While spotters have discerned in the distance  
A second Roman head far to the north.

CATILINE:

The more our need to tempt fortune at once  
In grim faced warfare 'gainst lord Antony,  
Lest by delay those faraway legions  
Arrive untimely and augment his sum.  
Though Rome's forces are elephantine sized,  
They are not infinite. Keep this in mind -  
Any determined man can easily  
Consume an elephant completely whole.  
He just must take it one piece at a time.  
Guy Antony's consumption time comes now,  
That northern legion's time will follow soon,  
And then we'll take that choicest piece of all -  
At last the gleaming citadel of Rome!  
As for this battle line drawn 'fore our eyes,  
I have a view for you to hold our right,  
Brave Manlius, while I'll our center claim  
And, backed with these skilled vets, drive at their heart.  
What's more, bid all our horse be sent away,



So that, with every man on equal foot,  
And everyone's endangerment the same,  
Our soldiers' courage all the fuller swells.  
That settled, I've some words yet for the men.

[To the SOLDIERS]

I'm well aware, soldiers, of words' limits,  
How they do not increase valor in men,  
That no army gets switched from idleness  
To action, to boldness from timidity  
By its commander's oration alone.  
Howso much courage a man's spirit owns  
Already by nature or nurturing,  
Thatso much he'll aptly show in the fray.  
He whom neither glory nor risk-taking  
Thrills with excitement is useless to exhort -  
His terrified spirit stops up his ears.  
Still, I've convoked you to advise some things  
And to affirm the cause for our conduct.  
Our plot's position is precarious,  
Emplaced between two hostile regiments,  
One before Rome the other toward Gaul,  
Both in our way, and holding our place here  
Is by necessity prohibited.  
Wheresoever we should prefer to go,  
The way ahead needs clearing by the sword.  
Therefore I urge you all be resolute,  
And when you enter battle, remember  
You carry everything in your right hands -  
Riches, distinction, fame, your own freedom,  
The homeland itself, all within your grasp.  
If we win, all will be securely ours -  
Supplies abundant, cities opened up.  
If we should yield to fear, then those same things  
Will turn adverse - no place nor friend will shield  
Someone whose own arms couldn't shield himself.  
Besides, soldiers, the same necessity  
Does not hang o'er us as the enemy.  
We strive to liberate the entire homeland,  
While theirs is but a hollowed out campaign  
For the hoarded power of a few elites  
Who'd left us ruined to lead our lives outcast  
In deep disgrace, begging strangers for aid.  
Since real men look upon such conditions  
As loathsome and beyond intolerable,  
You chose instead to follow our warpath.

Therefore, aggress yourselves the more boldly,  
Recalling your former virility,  
And if you'd see our movement's work succeed,  
Then boldness is the job at hand today.  
None but the victors can change war to peace,  
But hoping for survival in retreat,  
When th'arms that fend our bodies from our foes  
Avert from them - now that's the true madness.  
In battle, danger's always most extreme  
For those the most extremely terrified,  
While boldness bulwarks warriors like a wall.  
As I scan you, as I esteem your deeds,  
A vast vision of victory grips me.  
Your vigor, prowess and raw valor all  
Excite me, as well as necessity,  
Which makes even the cowardly souls brave.  
If goddess fortune frowns on your virtue,  
Take care lest your spirits yield unavenged,  
Lest captured you fall slaughtered like cattle.  
By fighting, rather, in real men's custom,  
Relinquish nothing to the enemy  
But a blood-drenched and tearful-stained triumph.  
For every man awaits his dying day.  
Brief and irreparable fade all lifespans.  
Yet to extend one's fame with hero's deeds -  
Such virtue's work breeds immortality.  
Now you know how I feel in this, soldiers.  
I'm fiercely proud to lead you paragons  
Of true manhood into the battle's maw  
Anytime, anywhere, so now, so here.  
To war! May every man strike home his spear!

*Exit all stage left.*

### SCENE 3

#### The Roman Forum

*Enter stages left, right and center various COMMONERS who convene forward stage left as the people's assembly, diversely occupied in loose formation. Enter stage right CICERO, SILANUS, MURENA, CATULUS and various other SENATORS, who convene backward stage right in distant observation of the assembly.*

CICERO:

Now consuls, Murena and Silanus,  
The Hours have crossed the calendary gates  
Of entry to doubly-faced Janus' month,

Passing Rome's year-long custody to you.  
 May this new year under your stewardships  
 Cruise through more smooth and tranquil in its tide  
 Than its insurgent predecessor did,  
 Whose tempests I'd scarce steered us through unsunk.  
 Behold the people's assembly below,  
 That babbling cauldron of brute temperaments  
 Which, by antique accords struck with Rome's plebes,  
 Plays th'lower body of our state's congress,  
 Wherein these yapping popularist hounds  
 Always complain for more unearned handouts,  
 Ingrateful of the bounties we've bestowed.  
 'Twas in response to recent grumblings here  
 That forced the senate to increase of late  
 The dole of grain allotments for the poor,  
 Stuffing their mouths to stop their barking yaps.  
 This seething crucible demands close watch,  
 As Rome's most apt touchstone to fresh turmoil.  
 They've stirred up oft beyond the boiling point  
 To bring the city low with blazing riot,  
 Enticed to frothing violence by tirades  
 Of the people's tribunes, who govern them  
 As a compliant channel for discord.  
 What wicked agents of dissent are they  
 Who'd lay the nation waste to reign empowered.

*Enter stage left METELLUS NEPOS carrying a scroll and CAESAR, who both ascend the platform backward stage left above the people's assembly.*

CATULUS:  
 No more alarming couple struts through Rome  
 Than that titanic pair of firebrands.  
 The one, lord Caesar, after our abuse  
 Of him in the senate, has sharply banked  
 To court the popularist faction's trust,  
 For which intent he's married interests  
 With his new-forged plebeian counterpart -  
 Metellus Nepos, the people's tribune,  
 That mad hyperbole of wickedness  
 Presiding o'er th'assembled plebes below.  
 Nepos, who once served as an officer  
 In general Pompey's great Asian campaign,  
 Now plays his general's lackey here in Rome,  
 As his personal agent o'er the plebes.  
 His new alliance with Caesar bodes ill,  
 For a union of Pompey and Caesar

Could do much damage to subvert the state,  
Especially if Caesar's own patron  
The gilded tycoon Crassus joins in too.  
Already Nepos, rooting for vengeance  
On lord Caesar's behalf 'gainst Cicero,  
Has twice pestered this man's crisp dignity.  
The first in seeking to prosecute you  
For the conspirators' execution,  
The which our senate circumvented well  
By ruling that those who acted 'gainst them  
Were henceforth all indemnified from trial.  
His second effort made to outrage you  
Fell on your final day of consulship,  
When, addressing the people's assembly  
Amassed to hear your farewell oration  
Nepos drew on his tribunician power  
To intercede and veto your speaking,  
Declaring that a lawless murderer  
Of his own citizens while in office  
Should not have leave to speak when leaving it.  
He ordered you confine your parting words  
But to the rote traditional statement  
That your duties were faithfully performed.

CICERO:

I first accepted his imposed limits,  
But once ascended to the rostra stage  
I then composed a most impromptu oath  
About how I alone, by my insights,  
My efforts, and my own imperiled head,  
Have without tumult, with nor troops nor arms,  
Saved our state from the torch, its citizens  
From the sword, Italy from disaster,  
And th'republic itself from stark demise,  
How I'd in very truth saved Rome's homeland  
And maintained her hegemony secure!

MURENA:

At that the people roared their approval  
With vigorous applause so thunderous  
Its echo must have reached Etruscany  
Where Catiline's army heard and cringed dismayed!

CATULUS:

Would that they'd died before the sound reached them,  
For then would Nepos lack his claimed pretext

Of Catiline's imminent and pressing threat  
To justify his propositioned bill  
That Pompey be recalled straight home from th'east,  
Commanding hither all his armaments  
As Rome's alleged protector from the rogue,  
Though Pompey's supreme power's the true goal.  
This he lately proposed to the senate,  
But was frustrated there when lord Cato,  
Being a fellow tribune of the people,  
Voiced his own unilateral veto,  
Declaring that so long as he still lives,  
Pompey shall never own a force in Rome.  
Thus Cato's virtuous enthusiasm  
Withstood Nepos on decency's behalf.  
With our senate's patrician verdict blocked,  
Nepos must prod the people's assembly,  
Trusting the quite consensual commons  
To vote his bill into plebeian law,  
Which recourse he presses for passage now.  
Yet should Cato show up as Nepos' peer,  
His tribunician veto powers wield  
As valid here as any court of Rome,  
And so would vacate Nepos' last resort.  
Therefore we need that dauntless mule at once.  
Where is that puritan of stubbornness,  
That smug and self-assured cock? Where's Cato?

*Enter stage left GLADIATORS, who take positions around the people's assembly.*

MURENA:

Now what profanity has Nepos brought  
Into the bounds of our sacred forum!  
A purchased band of gladiator slaves  
To menace and intimidate such plebes  
In the assembly who'd reject his bill.

NEPOS: [To the COMMONERS]

Avé, my good plebeian councilmen!  
Now that the presence of security  
Employed for our protection has arrived,  
As an elected tribune of the plebes  
I call the people's assembly convened  
In due observance of our forebears' oaths,  
To hear and vote upon a plebiscite  
Of mine own composition. But first,  
Let's celebrate lord Caesar's charity

In wringing fuller shares of public grain  
From his patrician fellows' stingy purse.  
Avé, lord Caesar for your grace! Avé!

[The COMMONERS variously roar with approval]

*Enter stage center CATO.*

CATO:  
Oh, bold is that person, and a coward,  
Who levied such a force against one man,  
A single man, unarmed and unadorned!

[CATO moves towards the stage. The COMMONERS variously roar with approval and disapproval in equal pro-Cato and pro-Nepos portions]

FIRST COMMONER:  
Courageous Cato's come!

SECOND COMMONER:  
Cato the bull!

[CATO encounters some GLADIATORS in his way]

CATO:  
Aside, you thugwits, move! Those slings you bear  
Were made to missile o'er arena sands,  
Not 'cross the holy forum's pavement stones!  
Step back, I say, make way, you muscle lunks,  
So used to lifestyles thrust in jeopardy  
You overlook how dangerous it is  
To challenge me, a sworn people's tribune,  
Who, through the sanctions of our sacred law,  
Am sacrosanct and marked inviolate  
From any harm or interfering deed  
Upon pain of the cursed offenders' death,  
Exacted with devout impunity.  
You touch me, and the whole plebeian host  
Is pledged to terminate your forfeit lives,  
So back off, brutes, or face the people's wrath!

[The GLADIATORS step aside. Cato continues onto the platform to take a place between NEPOS and CAESAR]

FIRST COMMONER:  
Stay bold, Cato, in your gallant heart!

SECOND COMMONER:

Let's rally firm t'embolden him the more,  
Good men, and nor forsake our liberty  
Nor that grand champion striving for it!

NEPOS: [To CATO]

Don't think you'll pull a veto off in here  
As smoothly as you did in the senate.  
That alabaster body of glacial veins  
Lacks all the rowdy vitals this one has,  
Which brands it least susceptible t'your stunts  
And most uncaring what becomes of you.  
If you speak up, my guards can stop your mouth  
With full immunity from consequence,  
For stones fly without owner in a riot.

CATO:

Despite your might, I must do what is right.

NEPOS:

In doing so, you'll do our people wrong  
Most mightily, but let the blows unfold.

[To the COMMONERS, as he unrolls his scroll]  
Be peaceful, people, peace! Now listen close  
As I read my proposal for your vote.

CATO:

As tribune of the people, I refuse  
To let you ruse the commons with this script!

[CATO snatches the scroll from NEPOS]

I hereby veto this scam of a bill!

[The pro-Cato COMMONERS variously roar with approval]

NEPOS: [To the GLADIATORS, as he struggles with CATO for the scroll]  
You guards! The scene's tumbled to Tartarus!  
I order you to scare up the alarm  
By rushing on these wayward protesters!

[The GLADIATORS start to march upon the pro-Cato COMMONERS and pelt them  
with stones, to which action the pro-Nepos COMMONERS join in]

Barrage this pigheaded blockage as well,  
To knock him sensible, or senseless else!

[Some of the GLADIATORS start to start to pelt CATO with stones. CATO loses hold of the scroll but still refuses to move]

SILANUS:  
That surge is battering my brother hard,  
Though he withstands it like Gibraltar's scarp!

MURENA:  
Had you served as a brother-in-arms once,  
Like I did, on a frothing battlefield,  
Perhaps you'd act a better brother t' him,  
And rather rush to help him beat retreat  
Than stand aside to watch his agony!  
Witness the valor of a veteran!

[MURENA rushes over to CATO, as the pro-Cato COMMONERS begin to disperse and exit stage right before the GLADIATORS and pro-Nepos COMMONERS pelting them]

CATO:  
Hail down, you stones, and crack my spattered brow!  
Unleash your gritted showers! Volley on!  
Hurl all the world's sharp pebbles 'gainst my cheeks,  
'Tis but a spritz of dust to me! A mist  
Of trite distraction, pointless passion pangs  
My stoic wits dismiss as trivial  
And contrary to reason's crystal call  
That Rome not suffer Nepos' shady bill!  
I vetoed once, I'll veto it again  
So long as I've the breath to back my will!

NEPOS: [To the GLADIATORS, as he sees MURENA approach]  
Allow the consul through! Let him approach  
And rid us of this headstrong obstacle!

MURENA: [To the GLADIATORS, as he reaches CATO]  
Enough, you Polyphemic savages,  
Who've pared the crowd to Nepos' preference!  
But lend your bully slings a moment's pause,  
And I'll escort bruised Cato from the stage,  
To leave your rump assembly unrestrained  
From ramming through Nepos' misguided bill.

NEPOS: [To the GLADIATORS]



Relax your arms, and let the vanquished pair  
Withdraw in peace! Yet, should they linger long  
You have my leave to draw and swat away  
At these two pests 'till they be gone at last -  
Or having fled or fallen, I care not!

MURENA: [To CATO]  
Come, Cato, follow me and quit this place!  
Your decimated party's been dispersed  
By enemies encircling you alone  
And wounded half to death! You must take flight  
Before their violent tastes devour you whole!

CATO:  
I can't abandon Rome! I must hold firm  
Lest Nepos' crippling bill slips through to law!

MURENA:  
The passage of that law cannot be stopped,  
Nor slowed a scruple through your sacrifice.  
Nepos will gain his aim before sunset,  
And beams to seize it o'er your scarlet corpse.  
Yet if you throw your life away today,  
No tribune else will dare or care enough  
To catch your fervent passion of virtue,  
And, like the Pharos, flash his veto bright  
'Gainst Nepos' next proposed atrocity.  
Without you here, th'assembly's his echo  
To dupe all year, unhindered and unhinged,  
Unqualified, with simple primacy  
To monkey up more meddling plebiscites  
And swing the swooning state's complete collapse.  
'Tis staying here that's true abandonment  
Of your homeland in her most desperate time,  
Whereas forsaking this hopeless display  
Better affirms your steadfast constancy.  
Good Cato, let this stand not be your last,  
But part the scene with me and persevere.  
Let's to yon temple of the Gemini  
As brothers still endowed with liberty  
To spite the rise of stealing tyranny.

CATO:  
You tell the truth of it. 'Tis wrong to die  
While yet we lack a sceptered autocrat  
Atop a lately foisted Roman throne

With villain force to dictate strange virtues  
Upon the state's subjected populace,  
And meantime this deranged intemperance  
Enrolls the rabble hot to suffer it,  
Against which rash infection's further growth  
My scalp alone can prick a surgeon's nip.  
So long as I may honor moral law  
With pure and unimpaired integrity,  
I'll cherish still these duties I owe earth  
And count it rightful to prolong my life  
More than to end it conscientiously.  
Guide me away. I'll follow you along.

*Exit stage left CATO and MURENA.*

NEPOS: [To the remaining pro-Nepos COMMONERS]  
Our adversaries all now turned away,  
Return to order, you assemblymen  
Who weathered Cato's outburst of contempt,  
And, calmly, let's approve my bill at last!

*Enter stage right CLODIUS and SOLDIERS, all carrying clubs and followed by the pro-Cato COMMONERS.*

CLODIUS:  
Hold, you! We've brought some sticks to match your stones,  
And, being equipped more equally this meet,  
We're spoiling to contest a second set,  
Which bout's result will even up the score  
And crown us th'worthier competitors!  
Let's hand out havoc, boys, and batter up!

[a general brawl erupts between the factions]

*Enter stage left CATO and MURENA.*

CATO:  
The righteous rallied to defend our cause!  
Strike vengeance, men, and vindicate my wounds!

[a trumpet sounds offstage]

That sound! Good men, that sound's a martial horn,  
Which blows a hasty messenger's approach  
Here from our home-guard chasing Catiline's rogues!  
They must have joined the rebels in combat

And sped report to our divided town,  
So cease your quarrelling, all you partisans!  
Be peaceful, fellows! Hear the herald out,  
For if the risky battle's turned adverse,  
Then nothing bans that bandit horde's advance,  
And he you hammer at in this cross fray  
May instant change to colleague under siege!

NEPOS:

Withhold your rampant blows, my militants,  
And learn the messenger's late bulletin!  
If Catiline's cleared our brimful battle-lines  
And treads the emptied track towards our walls,  
Then violations are marching this way,  
With hostile eyes upon both factions here,  
And expert weaponed hands more copious  
Than either portion can alone withstand!  
Desist your grappling, people! Part your feud!

[the general brawl dies down]

*Enter stage center a MESSENGER, who ascends the platform above the crowd.*

MESSENGER:

Good Romans, hear my good news from the north!  
The traitor Catiline threatens us no more,  
But lies now dead upon th'Etruscan field  
Where Antony's army did counter him  
But brief ago, and cut short much of life!

'Twas dreadful work, for Catiline's veterans,  
Remembering well their former valiance,  
Did crisp advance a fearless palisade,  
And when our trumpet blared its summons dire,  
These rebels launched against our charging ranks  
With such a force that all momentum stalled  
And hacking brawls consumed our deadlocked lines.  
There in the forefront's center Catiline whirled.  
He braced th'exhausted, got them reinforced,  
And saw to an omneity of needs,  
While fighting much himself and smiting dead  
A multitude of men in close combat -  
That man successfully did execute  
The duties of a vigorous trooper  
And rigorous commander all at once!  
When keen Petreius, acting our legate,

Glimpsed Catiline flexing with such firmity  
Against all reckoning, he improvised  
To drive th'elite praetorian cohort  
Straight into Catiline's concentrated core,  
Thus doing them in, confused upon the spot,  
Or scattered in resistance elsewhere by,  
While flanking pincers caved both rebel sides.  
Once Catiline knew his multitude was spent  
And but a few men yet remained with him,  
Then, mindful of his high nobility,  
Along with his once-pristine dignity,  
He rushed headlong into his thickest foes  
And there expired, hard-fighting, pierced throughout.  
Then, only in the battle's aftermath  
Could we discern what daring and resolve  
Engalled the spleens of Catline's mutineers,  
For nearly every rebel's lifeless corpse  
Covered th'exact position he'd first held  
When fighting had begun, that paucity  
Of men whom our praetorians dislodged  
Having retreating but a slim degree.  
Their whole force fell with only frontal wounds,  
And none resigned to be taken alive.  
We found Catline's body far from his troops,  
Amid a heap of his opponent's dead,  
His face retaining after his demise  
The same ferocity he'd sneered in life.  
We gained that trophy grim and tarnished through -  
Our staunchest soldiers fallen on the field,  
Or limping gravely wounded off of it.  
All through that hushed and littered battleground  
Many had found among the rebel dead  
A family member's corpse, or old guest-friend.  
Still others crowed at private enemies.  
Thus varied went responses through our force -  
Elation, mourning, lamentation, glee.  
Such is our story. Sound it through the town.

*Descend and exit stage center the MESSENGER.*

NEPOS:

So fabulous a narrative as this  
Deserves a million anthems of acclaim!  
The hazard's passed away, lies buried deep,  
And should another rise t'unsettle us,  
Great Pompey with his oriental force

Can rebound back to Rome and put it down.  
Here stands a day demanding accolades!  
Let's serenade uplifting jubilees  
Throughout the city for her army's feats!  
Come, people, let's away to celebrate!

*Exit all diversely stages left, right and center, except CATO and the various SENATORS.*

CATO:

Those vicious traitors earned their vicious ends.  
The same again is worthy any man,  
Whether a Roman or a foreign born,  
Who, for the splurge of worldly luxury,  
Would wash the holy balm of virtue off,  
While utmost blood counts a cheap price to pay  
For those who prize such values utmost dear.  
Go, senators, get home and contemplate.

*Exit all diversely stages left, right and center, except CICERO.*

CICERO:

Peace cools the field, the city hot at war.  
We tower the superpower of the world,  
Yet what's our gain of it, when trenchant debts  
Ensnare so many stranded citizens  
That few revere their state's prosperity  
More than revile the prosperous within't.  
And there's a justice to the discontent,  
For what have we elites apportioned them?  
Two parties of incessant quarreling,  
Both steeped in rancor, jealousy, mistrust,  
And neither tendering solvent policies  
To heal the nation's general disease.  
One promises a moon of silver coin  
Should be unhoarded out to those in need,  
While th'other rates that sum incredible  
And chides the needy as insufferable.  
Between these deep-entrenched and pugnacious poles  
Recriminations vent, and nothing else,  
Save crusty bread and dusty circuses,  
Which nothing lend to public loyalty.  
Small wonder, then, a mounting hunch resents  
Our ministries so much they'd turn their backs  
On th'whole archate, and sell their freedoms cheap  
To some imperialist philosopher,  
Whose all-enthraling and potential dooms

Might gild the costly bondage more cozy  
Than does this worn and threadbare liberty,  
Which chafes the body politic it decks.  
There's much for common folk to rankle at -  
Our o'erblown prices and inflating loans,  
Their earnings underpaid and insecure,  
With every furlough baiting bankruptcy  
And that compounding spiral of defaults  
Which nick and chisel all estate away  
To yield the wretch a splintered legacy  
Of huddled squalor for his lifetime's toil.  
Freedom wields value most for those who thrive  
And own the means t'avail of it most oft.  
But meaningless freedom's meaningless freedom -  
It dangles trite to those who scarce survive,  
Whose numbers deluge this community  
And may submerge it, drowned entirely,  
Alike Atlantis, lost to history.  
It pends on us who've scaled to dignity,  
In both the public and the private spheres,  
To better balance opportunitites  
Back to the masses stuck below our state,  
So that achievement's chasm, now gaping wide,  
May shorten narrower and better bridged,  
And th'average citizen, more prospering,  
Will treasure more his fellow countrymen.  
Else, shirking our responsibilities  
Through further politics of prim neglect  
And more self-sighted anti-social scorn,  
We'd so demote the general welfare  
As will ensure domestic turbulence  
Dismembers our defective federy.  
If we forbear such duties as we owe  
The public trust, we'd vouch our families  
Receipt of a much mortgaged legacy,  
One o'erdrawn far and deeply in arrears,  
Whose annexed dividends may ill oblige  
The mortal forfeit of their tender lives  
To satisfy some future demagogue,  
If not our own, more soon, t'a present one.  
Thus rookish lords who skimp their citizens  
Oft sacrificial pawns make of their kin,  
As free states propped on narrow interest groups  
Succumb to widespread discord from within.  
It trembles me the powers of this land  
Could dare deride reform's wide-rumbling cry

Till its shrill tenor rattles our death knell,  
As this pillar of state we'd spired so high  
Collapses in on its degraded frame,  
For which sad fate we've most ourselves to blame.

*Exit CICERO stage right.*

THE END