

QUO VADIS full feature animation film

based on the novel by
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SCENE 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 DAY_EXT_ROME_PANORAMA

Sunrise. Under the early morning light appears City of Rome.

NARRATOR

This is Rome. The eternal city. The sixty-third year of the modern era.

Camera begins slowly panning to the right, showing a panoramic view and the outline of Rome's buildings, meanwhile the progress of the time of a day is shown through the changes of the light.

NARRATOR

Thirty years ago, far to the East of the Roman Empire, in the land of Judea, Jesus Christ was crucified.

The natural soft morning light transforms into the afternoon. The camera reaches the central point of the Arena - The Egyptian Obelisk. A white pigeon sits on top of the obelisk.

NARRATOR

The Passion on the Cross was not the end, but the beginning of a new life.

FADE OUT

SCENE 5 DAY_EXT_APPIAN ROAD. EARLY EVENING

FADE IN

Appian Road is empty at this time of a day. There is only a long shadow of PETER THE APOSTLE, who looks ahead at the hilly surrounding area. Beneath his hood you can see his grave expression and tired face.

The sun begins to appear from over the hillsides. Peter shields his eyes with his hand, trying to see the white pigeon, which flapped its wings loudly.

Peter sinks to his knees, resting his hands and head on his staff. Around his outline appears a pulsing, golden light.

Then the single beam of light splits like a prism into two streaks - one of them is pale pink - another clear, luminous.

The staff slides from under him and he falls face down in the Sand, his head still covered by his hood. Peter stretches his hands forward as if reaching for someone's feet.

Silence falls. The golden light fades. Peter raises his head slightly.

PETER
Quo Vadis, Domine?

SCENE 6 CREDITS

The screen lights up with "Quo Vadis".
(ENTER OPENING CREDITS)

SCENE 7 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

The interior of PETRONIUS'S home.

Petronius stands in his atrium close to a pool filled with fresh water. There is a statue of Petronius behind him. Both he and his statue stand motionless. Petronius observes the golden haired EUNICE, who is straightening the folds in her tunic.

MARK VINICIUS enters the atrium with the springy step of a soldier.

VINCICIUS
Greetings Petronius! May the Gods
bring you prosperity!

PETRONIUS
By Jupiter! My nephew Marcus
Vinicius! A true god of war. Dear
me, let me embrace you!

Petronius makes a sudden movement towards Marcus Vinicius, unknowingly almost knocking Eunice over.

Petronius hugs Vinicius.

PETRONIUS
Welcome back to Rome! You return
from the war in Armenia?

Vinicius takes a step back and turns sideways to Petronius.

VINICIUS

Yes and a sorry business it is, a
totally unnecessary war!

He retreats further into the chamber. Petronius follows him
and puts a hand on his shoulder. Vinicius turns his head.

PETRONIUS

A true soldier turns away from war
only when love has him enslaved. Do
I guess correctly?

Vinicius remains silent.

PETRONIUS

Has Cupid's arrow pierced your
heart?

Vinicius face glows with radiance.

VINICIUS

What a perceptive judge of people
you are, Petronius! No wonder
you're Ceaser's chief counselor.

PETRONIUS

To advise Nero, it's sufficient to
know the ways of monkeys. What am I
saying! Even monkeys are not so
stupid as to believe everything
they're told.

VINICIUS

Is it that bad at the Palatine? War
lets you forget about those things.

PETRONIUS

War even allows one to believe that
there's a method to all this
madness. But Rome will soon cure
you of any such illusions. Unless,
you've been enchanted by
somermaid. Speak up, boy!

Vinicius grabs his arm and begins to speak rapidly.

VINICIUS

Returning from the battle, I
stopped at the house of Aulus
Plautius. He made me most welcome,
and that was where I saw her. One
day, at dawn, I caught sight of her
at the fountain. The morning rays

(CD)

VINICIUS (CD)
 seemed to pass right through her
 body.

Vinicius' face beams. Petronius laughs.

PETRONIUS
 As transparent as a young sardine!
 So you truly have fallen in love
 with a mermaid!

FADE OUT

SCENE 8 DAY_INT_PLAUTIUS PALACE_FOUNTAIN

FADE IN

FLASHBACK. Slow motion. LIGIA is seen from behind standing next to a fountain and dipping her hand in the cool water. She turns to the camera and smiles with girlish innocence.
 END OF SLOW MOTION

Vinicius stands admiring Ligia. He is at first struck dumb by her beauty.

VINICIUS
 Are you Venus?[Pause] Because only
 a goddess could look like that.

Ligia stares at Vinicius, but makes no reply. A girlish smile full of curiosity spreads across her face.

VINICIUS
 Allow me ...

Vinicius stutters like a nervous schoolboy.

VINICIUS (CD)
 ...to...

Ligia bends down and with her finger draws the "Pisces" symbol in the sand. Vinicius suddenly crouches beside her and when he tries to take her by the hand, but Ligia's hand gives him the slip.

VINICIUS (OFF)
 They call her Lygia, but her name
 is Callina. She makes... this
 hunger burn inside me. She must be
 mine.

END OF FLASHBACK

SCENE 8A DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE - ATRIUM

BACK TO REALITY

Petronius watches with amusement as Vinicius nervously paces up and down the terrarium alongside the pool.

PETRONIUS
The maiden or the fish?

VINICIUS
Both.

In the meantime, several beautiful slave girls enter - two Ethiopians, three slender Greeks and Eunice.

PETRONIUS
Better fish than these you see here
are not to be found in all of Rome.
Eunice!

An intimidated Eunice walks up to them.

PETRONIUS
What do you think of Eunice? She
smells of violets. Even I do not
know how sweet her kisses taste.
Take her.

Eunice throws herself at Petronius' feet, pleading.

EUNICE
Please, Master, don't send me away.

Petronius is visibly upset by her disobedience.

Vinicius turns down the offer by shaking his head and turning his back to them as an Ethiopian slave presents a bowl of oils for Petronius to rinse his hands.

VINICIUS
I want only Lygia. She is worth a
hundred of these. She is the
daughter of kings.

Petronius wipes his brow, wraps his arm around Vinicius's shoulder and leads him towards the exit.

PETRONIUS
You mentioned hunger? Let's go for
breakfast. That will refresh the
body, and then we'll do something
for the soul. What do you think of

(CD)

PETRONIUS (CD)
 the Plautiuses? What do you say we
 pay them a visit?

After they exit, the slaves pick up all the baskets and
 bowls and leave.

Eunice looks around and when she sees no one is looking she
 runs up to the statue of Petronius, stands on her toes and
 lightly kisses him on the lips.

SCENE 9 DAY_INT_PLAUTIUS PALACE_COLLONADE

House of Aulus Plautius. Interior decorations in the atrium
 leading to the garden.

Petronius and Vinicius stand opposite their hosts, POMPONIA
 and AULUS PLAUTIUS. Beyond, in the courtyard, can be seen a
 wonderful fountain. The pearls of water shine and reflect
 the sun with a rainbow.

Petronius bows his head towards the hosts.

PETRONIUS
 I thank you for the hospitality you
 gave my sister's son.

AULUS PLAUTIUS
 As you well know, Petronius, I spent
 half my life on the battlefield.
 Seeing Marcus reminded me of my
 younger years. Today, as we grow
 older, our whole world lies within
 these walls.

PETRONIUS
 In my soul I think how different
 your world is from that over which
 our Nero reigns.

Suddenly he turns his head at the sound of joyful laughter
 from a girl and child.

Running up from the atrium is Lygia and little AULUS. The
 boy stumbles and falls at the feet of Petronius.

Petronius and Lygia both lean down to pick up the child.
 Their eyes meet and lock momentarily.

The little boy gets up on his own and runs out of the room.
 Lygia runs after him.

Pomponia replies to Petronius with a wise, gentle smile.

POMPONIA
It's not Nero, but God who rules
the world.

Petronius turns towards Vinicius. Vinicius is standing as still as a statue, staring at the place where Lygia left the room.

PETRONIUS
There are many gods, everyone has
his own.

Pomponia responds with conviction.

POMPONIA
There is only one God - just and
omnipotent

FADE OUT

SCENE 10 AFTERNOON_EXT_ROME_STREET VIEW_FORUM ROMANUM

FADE IN

Lightning. The contours of the street slowly emerge. Petronius and Vinicius are being carried in a litter. Beneath them the heads of noble pedestrians flash by.

The litter, held up by runners, turns sharply through the crowd and its passengers almost fall out.

PETRONIUS(OFF)
And so you are writing poems?
That's quite the fashion these
days. But you must be careful -
Redbeard can't abide competition.
So you'd better be writing bad
poems or none at all.

Petronius smiles sadly. Vinicius's expression does not change, then he suddenly explodes.

VINICIUS
I don't care about Caesar, nor do I
care about poetry!

Petronius shakes his head impatiently.

PETRONIUS
I do believe you really are in
love.

Vinicius is uncomfortable in the litter. He bangs on the side and the runners come to a halt. Vinicius jumps out into the street among the crowd.

VINICIUS

And you, were you never in love?

He yells at Petronius. Petronius gives him a manuscript as he leaves.

VINICIUS

What's this?

PETRONIUS

Poems. The author: Redbeard.
Required reading.

"Nero Augustus Ceasar" is written on the parchment.

Vinicius shakes his head and moves away disappearing into the crowd. Petronius taps with his cane for the runners to continue.

PETRONIUS

To the Palatine Hill, Ceasar's
palace!

The litter hastily moves away.

SCENE 11 DAY_INT_PLAUTIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

The house of Aulus Plautius. The CENTURION HASTO enters with several PRAETORIAN GUARDS. The host stands in front of the group of soldiers. The centurion bows his head slightly.

HASTO

Commander! I bring you greetings
from Caesar!

Plautius frowns.

AULUS PLAUTIUS

Speak up Hasto! What is the charge?

The centurion takes a step forward.

HASTO

No charges against you, sir, but an
order from Caesar: the Divine Nero
is grateful to you for giving
shelter to the daughter of the
barbarian king. But as a hostage,

(CD)

HASTO (CD)
 the girl belongs to Caesar.
 Therefore our divine emperor
 commands you to hand her over.

Plautius turns around and looks at his wife, to whom Lygia is clinging. Next to the women stands the powerfully built URSUS.

SCENE 12 DAY_INT_PLAUTIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

Tears stream down the cheeks of Lygia and Pomponia. Plautius says with a voice that trembles.

AULUS PLAUTIUS
 Lygia! Both Pomponia and I love you
 like a daughter, but you are
 Caesar's responsibility ...

Aulus walks past the women and disappears into the house. Ursus kneels before Pomponia.

URSUS
 Domina! Allow me to go with my lady
 to the house of Caesar.

She wipes away her tears.

POMPONIA
 You are not mine, but Lygia's
 servant, Ursus! Guard her closely!

Little Aulus runs into the room and clings to Lygia's leg, crying as Pomponia makes the sign of the cross on her forehead.

POMPONIA
 May the Lord watch over you,
 daughter. Trust the God and believe
 that his mercy endures for ever.

SCENE 13 LATE AFTERNOON_EXT_PETRONIUS PALACE_COLLONADE +
 INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_PATIO

Plautius steps out of his litter and heads into the home of Petronius.

On a shaded patio, Vinicius trains with his sword. He stops training at the sight of Plautius.

Aulus Plautius and Vinicius stand opposite each other. The commander's face is drawn in anger.

AULUS PLAUTIUS

I curse the moment you and
Petronius crossed the threshold of
our house!

VINICIUS

Plautius! What are you saying? Why,
I am the most faithful of all your
friends!

AULUS PLAUTIUS

You are a thief! You have stolen my
daughter!

Vinicius rushes across to Plautius.

VINICIUS

Speak up, tell me what has
happened! Where is Lygia?

Plautius halts Vinicius with a look, before he can get too
worked up.

AULUS PLAUTIUS

Your uncle, Petronius persuaded
Caesar to take Lygia to the
Palatine, to his palace.

SCENE 14 NIGHT_EXT_ PALATINO_ PALACE ENTRANCE

The grounds around Caesar's palace - Palatine. Twilight. The
growing buzz of laughter and cheers can be heard. The
outlines of columns and rows of statues of gods can be seen.
Along them move crowds of people heading towards Caesar's
feast.

It gets darker; all that can be seen are the outlines of
human figures moving in different directions. Somewhere far
away music is playing. The light comes from lamps and
lanterns, along with torches burning in the gardens.

Two female figures are seen passing down a walkway bordered
by perfectly trimmed hedges. They are illuminated by lamps
burning on the ground behind them. The camera follows behind
them, eventually catching up.

One of the women is Lygia. She walks nervously, looking
around anxiously. She is dressed in a beautiful gold tunic
and a unique hair style. She seems a changed person as she
holds on tightly to the arm of the other woman, ACTE. Her
companion is older but also beautiful and speaks with a
warm, soothing voice.

ACTE

You would incur the wrath of Caesar by not attending his banquet. He wants to see you! Fear not, Lygia. I'll be right there with you.

LYGIA

You have been at Nero's side... As a wife. But I'm so terribly afraid of him.

ACTE

That is why I promised Pomponia not to let you out of my sight. Calm yourself Lygia, Caesar will soon forget about you, and his Poppea will never allow him to come close to you!

Lygia smile's awkwardly as they disappear into the crowd of guests walking up the stairs.

SCENE 15 NIGHT_EXT_ PALATINO_ PALACE ENTRANCE

Two male figures move along a walkway surrounded by illuminated sculptures. They enter into the circle of light, allowing them to be recognized. It is Petronius and Marcus Vinicius.

Marcus's face is clouded with emotion. Petronius repeatedly glances at his companion and says with sarcasm.

PETRONIUS

Cease this silence and grim expression, or they will think that you are hiding a dagger somewhere in the folds of your robes!

VINICIUS

This is not what I wanted, Petronius!

Petronius places his finger over his lips and laughs.

PETRONIUS

You know too little of the ways of this world, Marcus. The war has made a savage of you. This is Rome. The centre of the world. Here we handle matters discretely.

VINICIUS

Lygia should not have been abducted
from the house of the Plautiuses.

Petronius responds strongly.

PETRONIUS

Only the emperor could have taken
her away, to then give her to you.
You will be able to spend this
night in her arms.

Vinicius is stopped in his tracks, surprised.

SCENE 16 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Large hall. Palatine - Caesar's Palace. A lot of guests at
tables in a brightly lit room. Candles flicker on the tables
and walls but the guests at the tables sit gloomily in
silence. Acte comes in with Lygia.

SCENE 17 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

The buzz and hum of the banquet. Servants bring in great
plates of food. Acte and Lygia are seated behind the long
table.

Acte nods towards the brightly lit end of the room and its
decorated table. Lygia looks towards the throne with
disdain.

At that moment the room erupts in great applause full of
screaming and cheering.

CROWDS

Hail Caesar! Hail Caesar!Hail
Caesar!

CEASAR NERO, surrounded by dignitaries, enters the room.

Caesar is placed at the table next to his closest court,
Among which are two arch-enemies fighting for influence in
Caesar's court - Petronius and TIGELLINUS - the commander in
chief of the Praetorians.

At that moment thousands of yellow rose petals fall from the
ceiling onto the tables and guests. Lygia stares at Nero.
Lygia whispers with fascination.

LIGIA
 Redbeard...!

SCENE 18 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Nero's table. Caesar looks around the room. After a moment, he focuses and squints in one particular direction.

NERO
 Is this the beauty that Vinicius
 loves so much?

Tigellinus leans over to Caesar and whispers in his ear.

TIGELLINUS
 A beauty she is indeed Sire, too
 beautiful for Vinicius.

Petronius's face contorts with anger.

PETRONIUS
 Sire, you are more generous to
 Vinicius than if you were his own
 father. Even Tigellinus has noticed
 she is too narrow in the hips, but
 as usual he is trying to score. You
 have missed the boat, Tigellinus!

Nero grabs his emerald monocle, puts it up to his eye and stares at Lygia. Both of them await Nero's verdict. Nero busts out laughing.

NERO
 Yes, missed. Too narrow in the
 hips.

Petronius releases a sigh of relief as Tigellinus sends him a deadly stare.

SCENE 19 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

VOICES
 Poppea! Poppea!

Electrifying cheers run through the room.

AUGUSTA POPPEA, the wife of Caesar approaches, majestically gliding across the hall dressed in robes the color of amethyst and wearing gorgeous jewelry and an amazing hairstyle resembling a giant sailing ship.

Nero, still staring at Lygia, pays no attention to his wife as he turns the emerald monocle around in front of his eye like a prism.

Poppea walks up to Nero and snatches the monocle out of his hand. She stares into his face him and jealously hisses at him.

POPPEA

You don't need this, my divine
Nero. The greatest beauty is right
beside you.

Surprised, Nero turns to her with a grimace. He reaches out and tears a ruby from her neck and looks at her through it, twirling the stone in front of his eye.

POV Nero. This stone is cut with several facets; through it we can see five heads of Poppea.

NERO

This is a woman with five heads.
I'll get rid of at least four of
them. Her hairdressers cost me too
much.

Poppea can't hide the anger on her face but duly takes her place next to her husband as thousands of red rose pedals fall from the ceiling.

She mutters under her breath.

POPPEA

You better watch for your own
head, Nero.

SCENE 20 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Acte and Lygia at the table. Lygia watches Poppea with delight.

LYGIA

How beautiful she is!

VINICIUS

You are a hundred times more
beautiful.

Lygia hears the voice of Vinicius, who is standing behind her.

VINICIUS
Hail, Callina-Lygia!

Vinicius takes a place next to the girl, moving Acte to the side. He is wearing a scarlet tunic, his bare arms decorated in golden epaulettes.

Vinicius reluctantly looks at Acte. He grabs Lygia by her hand and leans over, whispering in her ear. Lygia tries to pull away gently.

VINICIUS
I knew I'd find you here. But
little did I know it would make me
so happy!

Acte begins to intervene as Vinicius pulls Lygia towards him, but upon hearing Nero is going to sing, she interrupts, wanting everyone to listen to him sing.

ACTE
Hold your breaths! Caesar is about
to sing.

SCENE 21 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Nero recites a poem, posing grotesquely like an actor, while holding his zither in his hands.

NERON
Sweet Venus, founder of Rome and
pride of the Gods, You who guard
travelers on the high seas, and
make the land fruitfull for all
living things, the Goddess of
sunlight who stills the storm for
you clouds clear away...

The young FREEDMAN PITAGORAS kneels at the feet of Caesar. He removes the laurel wreath from his head and puts it at the feet of Caesar with an expression of adulation on his face.

CROWDLL
Oh heavenly voice! Our divine
Caesar! Redbeard, the greatest poet
in the world!

Nero looks quizzically at Petronius and then at Tigellinus, then again at Petronius. A boundless self-admiration appears on his face.

Petronius remains in an indifferent silence, as if the spectacle did not make the slightest impression on him.

Not finding delight in the eyes of Petronius, Nero changes his expression to that of a little boy begging for the praise of his father. Petronius drags out the situation but in the end speaks while retaining his stone face.

PETRONIUS

Cursed be the fate that has us live
with such a poet. Were his verses
any worst, perhaps I could find it
in my heart to praise them. But I
remain silent. Embarrassed.
Destroyed by their beauty.

Nero's face lights up with delight and boundless vanity.
Nero grabs a chalice to take a drink of wine.

Pitagoras throws himself to pour more wine for Nero as
Tigellinus fumes in jealousy.

TIGELLINUS

Thy verses, Caesar, were born like
you among the gods. Their father is
Zeus Apollo and their mother....

Nero turns red in anger.

NERO

Silence Fool! My mother was
Agrippina, a cursed woman...

A gloomy expression appears on Nero's face.

NERO

I had no choice; I had to sentence
her to death, because she sent an
assassin to murder me. If I hadn't
acted quicker than her, you would
not have heard me singing today.

Tigellinus, wanting to calm Caesar's anger, yells out with
excitement in his face as he raises a glass of wine.

TIGELLINUS

On behalf of the city and the world
I thank you Caesar for destroying
your mother and freeing us from her
evil power.

With contempt Petronius stares at Tigellinus and reaches for Nero's emerald monocle, putting it up to his eye. Through it he sees the weird party and its already drunk guests, hugging, kissing, raising glasses and eating.

In the background, shadowy slaves move around carrying massive trays of food and pitchers of wine.

The image is drowned by another precipitation of multicolored rose petals. Petronius removes the sapphire from his eye and hands it to Nero, jolting him from his mad, distant stare.

PETRONIUS

Close your ears, Nero, lest the words of fools hurt them. Your world is like an emerald. Rare and fragile.

SCENE 22 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

An already drunk Vinicius wraps his arms around Lygia. She tries to get out of his grasp.

VINICIUS

Lygia, Lygia...! Kiss me! Caesar has promised you to me...!

SCENE 23 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Loud noises as Gladiators enter the arena between the tables. With bare bodies rubbed in oil, they begin to battle. Two guests shake hands.

FIRST GUEST

I wager that Croto will wring his neck!

The fight continues. One of the gladiators wins an advantage, choking his opponent and throwing him to the ground.

The winner puts a foot on the back of his foe and crosses his arms over his chest in a sign of victory. The hall erupts in the cheers of the men and women looking on.

CROWD

Croto! Croto! Croto!

SCENE 24 NIGHT_INT_ NERO PALACE_ LARGE BANQUETTE HALL

Vinicius tries to kiss Lygia, in the struggle she knocks over a cup of wine. He's drunk, with no control over himself. He mumbles, meanwhile Acte tries to stop him.

VINICIUS

[Drunk] Love me, Lygia! It was I
that beat the Parthians and bore
the glory of Rome to the world. And
now Rome gives me my due reward
worthy of a hero. You!...(his
speech slurs off into drunken
mumbling)

Lygia tries to push him away with her last ounce of strength. Acte tries to restrain him. At this moment a gigantic form appears above Vinicius.

A giant - Ursus appears from behind Vinicius and picks Lygia up like a doll. They disappear among the guests and servants, meanwhile Vinicius is too drunk to realize what's happening.

SCENE 25 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

House of Petronius. Atrium. Petronius is walking alongside the pool, scolding Vinicius, who is hiding his face in his hands.

PETRONIUS

It is as I feared. This war has
made a savage of you. You have
become one of us. A bastard of the
court. Redbeard can be proud of
you. I have forfeited the
friendship of the Plautiuses just
to decorate your empty head with a
wreath of withered leaves.

Vinicius drops his head in shame. Petronius is furious.

Eunice silently slips into the room and turns towards Petronius.

EUNICE

Master, I found the man that you're
looking for and who is looking for
you.

From behind Eunice appears a clumsy figure of an old man in a torn coat, who bows and mutters. CHILON CHILONIDES.

CHILON

Chilon Chilonides at the service of
the equal and the more equal.

Petronius looks the man over with interest and then stares at Eunice. He regards her with amusement. Eunice blushes and walks out in embarrassment.

SCENE 26 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

Chilon smiles at Eunice as she runs out.

CHILON

She complains of unrequited love. I
gave her two threads from the
mantle of Venus. I have my methods.

PETRONIUS

Are you a magician?

The stranger pulls his clumsy hands from his worn coat. His smile contorts his face.

CHILON

A philosopher, Master! Do you not
know?

Vinicius stands over Chilo.

VINICIUS

Do You know what we want from you?

Chilon squints his eyes.

CHILON

I am to find some girl who has been
abducted by her slave from a feast
held by Caesar.

Vinicius yells back in anger.

VINICIUS

Only remember, this is not just
some girl, you villain. It is the
divine daughter of the King of the
Lygians, called Callina!

Chilon stares into Petronius's face, unsure who is in charge and who holds the money. He is afraid of Vinicius.

Petronius calms the situation.

PETRONIUS

Do you have a way to do this?

CHILON

If you have the means, sir, I'll find a way.

PETRONIUS

So you are a philosopher for money, in other words a crook.

Petronius seems cynical, as the newcomer once again fiddles with his old coat.

CHILON

I'm saving up, to hire a scribe, who'll transmit my message to posterity. For myself, I do not keep a penny. Not even for a coat.

From one side, Vinicius throws Chilon a bag jingling with coins. Even though he wasn't looking, he catches it like a juggler.

VINICIUS

When will you start?

Chilon hides the bag in his jacket.

CHILON

I already have!

His tone becomes confident.

CHILON

Noble lords, will you permit me to in turn ask a question or two?

Petronius nods.

CHILON

Did you notice the divine Lygia having any special marks: amulets, tattoos?

Vinicius shakes his head. Chilon falls back and frowns.

CHILON

It won't be easy.

Vinicius comes to life and suddenly shouts.

VINICIUS

But wait! I remember now! She drew
a fish in the sand!

Chilo twists his head and mutters.

CHILON

A Fish?

VINICIUS

A Fish.

CHILON

I shall do all in my power...
but...you see for yourselves...
you understand...

Showing the holes in his coat as he slowly walks backwards
towards the exit and disappears. Petronius calls out to him.

PETRONIUS

Tell my servant to give you a new
coat!

From outside the door Chilo calls back.

CHILO (OFF)

Thou art a true philosopher,
Master! You hate even the slightest
injustice.

Eunice shows up in the doorway looking more beautiful than
usual. Petronius looks at her in amazement.

Vinicius interrupts his staring.

VINICIUS

What now?

Petronius puts his fingers to his nose and, changing his
voice, pretends to be Chilon.

PETRONIUS

First we fumigate the house, and
then ask Eunice to accompany us.

Eunice runs up to Petronius. He caresses the flowers in her
hair and asks haughtily.

PETRONIUS

Could it be that love really
exists? Happy is he who experiences
it.

SCENE 27 EVENING_EXT_ DARK ROME STREET

Darkness. A gloomy path on which Chilon is sneaking beneath gray walls. He runs into the first lit building, a winery.

SCENE 28 EVENING_INT_ WINERY

The interior of the winery. Chilon sits down at the nearest table.

CHILON
Wine, Sporus!

The host puts a pitcher before him. The Greek pushes it away.

CHILON
Something better than this, you
swindler! The best in the house!

He shouts out and throws a gold coin on the table. Sporus hands him a chalice. Chilon takes a huge gulp and pours the last bit onto the table top.

He draws the shape of a fish in the wine. Sporus watches with a blunt expression.

CHILO
Have you ever seen this sign?

Sporus' face expressionless. A second gold coin falls onto the table.

SPORUS
All types frequent this place.

CHILON
Do you know who these are?

Sporus mumbles.

SPORUS
Fish...people?

A third gold coin falls on the table.

CHILON
Can you at least count to three,
fool?

Sporus' eyes light up. He grabs the coins and wipes away the drawing in the wine.

SPORUS

Fish in Greek is Ichthys. Jesus
Christ, the Son of God, the
Saviour.

CHILO

Christ? The one who was crucified
in Judea?

SPORUS

The same.

SCENA 28A BEFORE SUNSET_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE VIEW TO THE ROOM
WITH A TABLE

A golden sunset, though the sky is still blue. Chilon sneaks
up to the home of Crispus and cautiously looks inside.

At a table are sat: the Apostles Peter and Paul, Crispus,
Nazarius and Lygia. Peter breaks bread, dips a piece in wine
and passes it to Paul. He passes out the bread, doing the
same for all those present.

This scene is accompanied by music.

SCENE 29 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

House of Petronius. In the doorway appears the haggard
figure of Chilon.

CHILON

Pax Vobiscum. Peace be with you.

Vinicius grabs him, pulls him in and shakes him like a dog.

VINICIUS

Where have you been, you villain!?

He yells through clenched teeth.

Chilon's voice breaks as he wheezes.

CHILON

Don't choke me, Sir. I'm just a
philosopher.

Chilon wheezes and snorts trying to catch his breath.

VINICIUS

Where is Lygia?

CHILON
She's safe, among her own people.

VINICIUS
Meaning?

CHILON
Your divine Lygia is a non-divine
Christian.

Vinicius is stopped in his tracks, but after a while, unable to find an answer to this news, he turns to Chilon in a more friendly tone.

VINICIUS
Do you now anything more?

CHILON
More means more....for the both of
us, less than tomorrow, but a lot
more than yesterday.

Chilon is alluding to extra payment.

VINICIUS
Haven't I paid you enough?

CHILO
Haven't I told you enough, Sir?

Chilon immediately responds. Vinicius opens a box and pulls out another purse with money for Chilon.

VINICIUS
Here, take this, and you'll get a
lot more when you lead me to her.

SCENE 30 NIGHT_EXT_DARK ROME SUBURBAN STREETS

Darkness. Two hooded characters move through narrow alleyways. Behind them follows a hooded figure, the enormous and powerfully built Croto. The shortest of the three removes his hood, showing the face of Chilon.

CHILON
Who is this, Sir?

Chilon nods towards the second figure who takes his hood off.

VINICIUS
Croto. The Wrestler.

CHILON
You are a cautious man, Sir.
Guarding your virgin is a true
giant.

Vinicius shoves Chilon, whose hood falls over his face.

VINICIUS
If you have lied to me, Croto will
count your bones first and then he
will deal with the giant!

CHILON
But if I'm telling the truth?

VINICIUS
You will receive a house and five
slaves.

CHILON
This very night, Christians will be
gathering in Ostrianum. There is to
be a man present who knew Christ.
They call him "The Rock" - Petrus.
The Apostle Peter. They are going
to pray together. That's where
we'll find her, Sir.

SCENE 31 NIGHT_EXT_RAVINE OUTSIDE ROME

The three hooded figures are close to the entrance to a deep ravine. Around them, ahead, on all sides and at the top of the ravine are hundreds of twinkling lights. The lights are concentrated in one meandering stream flowing down to the bottom of the ravine.

Vinicius, Chilon and Croto, still hidden beneath their hoods, slow their pace, allowing others to hurry past them on their way up to the outlet of the ravine.

SCENE 32 NIGHT_INT_CAVE IN OSTRIANUM

One of the caves in Ostrianum. Two fires burn by a wall that has windows giving a view over distant houses scattered along via Nomentana.

Lights go out in the houses as the residents go to sleep. Someone lights a bonfire with a torch, lighting up the area, then follows an interval filled with light and song. The shadows of those in attendance reflect off the side of the ravine.

The camera's view is from behind Vinicius and Chilon. The men stand far back from the fires.

By the fire stands the old Apostle Peter. He stands tall and straight with dignity and inner strength. The light from the fire illuminates his gray head and aged face. He speaks. Around him the hooded figures listen.

CHILON

That's the one, the first disciple
of Christ, a fisherman!

Peter raises his hand, making the sign of the cross, blessing the followers, who fall to their knees.

PETER

I have come to greet you in the
name of He who sent me. I have come
to tell you to renounce luxuries
and pleasures. To love poverty,
moral purity and truth. To endure
patiently all harm and persecution,
to beware of treachery, and set an
example for one another.

In Vinicius's eyes we see the reflection of the fires. Under the influence of Peter's words his face begins to change. In the fire reflecting off of his eyes the gentle face of Lygia appears.

PETER

I saw Him, and he was like light
and the joy of our hearts, for we
believed that He rose again and
though the seas may dry up, and the
mountains turn to dust, His glory
shall not pass...

Chilon tugs at Vinicius's coat.

CHILON

There! Take a look! He's right
there! The giant!

Vinicius turns his head in the direction of Chilon's pointing finger. He sees the massive Ursus.

SCENE 33 NIGHT_INT_CAVE IN OSTRIANUM

At that moment, the followers begin to sing as they move forward to Peter and bow their heads.

Peter dips a branch in water and baptizes them.

Lygia stands next to Ursus, staring off in front of her as the dancing flames reflect off their faces, making her almost transparent. Vinicius takes off his hood.

VINICIUS

Lygia!

Vinicius rushes forward but Chilon holds him back, grabbing him by the coat.

CHILON

Wait, Sire! You'll bring disaster
on our heads. When this is all
over, we'll follow them, and then,
in the darkness, this fellow
here...

Chilon looks at Croto, who is standing behind them with huge arms crossed over his chest. He makes a gesture with his hands as if breaking Ursus's bones. He takes one step forward and directs his mindless, but faithful gaze on Vinicius.

CROTO

Now?

SCENE 34 NIGHT_EXT_RAVINE OUTSIDE ROME

High on the tops of the ravine we can see the silhouettes of those returning home from the Christian meeting. The sky in the background is slowly lightening as dawn approaches.

SCENE 35 NIGHT_EXT_ ROME STREET

A dark alley. Chilon looks around the corner.

CHILON

They went into that house.

He whispers, nodding towards the gray facade of a house. Croto stands in front of the building opposite the entrance.

CROTO

Now?

From behind him appears the shorter Vinicius.

VINICIUS

Now!

He cries out his decision and leads the way. Then they disappear into the hallway leading into the house, while Chilon hides behind the corner.

SCENE 36 NIGHT_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE_ENTRANCE +
NIGHT_EXT_CRISPUS HOUSE COURTYARD 1

They walk down a long hallway. A large figure appears and blocks their progress. From the darkness emerges the face of Ursus.

URSUS

And who would you be seeking?

CROTO

You!

Croto screams and throws himself on the giant.

CROTO

RAAAAAARUH! [Savage battle cry]

URSUS

UNNH! [Grunts in reaction]

The two giants fight.

SCENE 37 NIGHT_EXT_CRISPUS HOUSE_COURTYARD 2

Vinicius runs down the hallway and out into a courtyard.

By a fireplace burning in the courtyard Lygia sits, accompanied by an old man, CRISPUS.

Vinicius heads towards them. The fire illuminates the faces of Lygia and Crispus.

Vinicius pushes the old man out of the way and grabs the girl. He runs back out of the courtyard. In his way lies the fallen body of Croto.

Ursus inflicts a heavy blow to Vinicius's head. The freed Lygia calls out to the giant.

LIGIA
No, Ursus!!! No! Don't kill him!

Vinicius slumps to the ground.

FADE OUT

SCENE 38 DAY_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE_MAIN CHAMBER

Darkness. Voices can be heard.

VINICUS(OFF)
Kill me.

His voice is full of sorrow.

CRISPUS(OFF)
He was lucky; you almost broke his
neck, Ursus.

URSUS(OFF)
In my former life I killed a lot of
people, but back then I did not
know Christ.

LIGIA(OFF)
Trust in the Lord, Ursus. He knows
best why you were born with such
strength. And such a great heart...

SCENE 39 DAY_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE_MAIN CHAMBER

House of Crispus. Vinicius is lying on a bed with a serious
head wound. He opens his eyes.

Crispus leans over the injured Vinicius and wipes his
forehead with a damp cloth. Ursus looks at him from a
distance as Crispus treats him. In the corner, there is
Nazarius sitting on a low stool. He is cutting a piece of
wood to a form of a little bird.

Lygia sits at the end of the bed.

When Vinicius sees her he whispers with all his strength.

VINICIUS
It's you, Lygia.

Lygia looks at him with care.

LYGIA

Peace be with you, Marcus.

Crispus hands Vinicius a clean slate with a stylus.

CRISPUS

God tells us to love our enemy, so we have dressed your wounds. Now write a note to your people, have them come for you.

Vinicius tries to lift his head.

VINICIUS

You want me to leave? Now, when I've found Lygia!? I have harmed her, it's true. But I swear to the gods, to my gods, that I will not touch the woman I love more than my life. May your God also be my witness. Permit me to stay. If only for one day.

Vinicius' head falls back.

Lygia, emotionally moved by his words, rises from the end of the bed with her eyes turned to Crispus.

LIGIA

Let him stay. Let him live.

SCENE 40 DAY_EXT_LAKE WITH A BOAT + DAY_EXT_SUNNY BEACH

Dream of Vinicius and his POV.

Water floods his vision. One can see how he is struggling with the waves. Around him is darkness, wind, a storm. He's struggling, losing strength until he slides under the water.

With his last ounce of strength, he pulls himself to the surface and reaches out to grab the end of an oar, by means of which he is hauled into a boat. It turns out the person who handed him the oar is Peter.

The fishing boat is going across a wide fiery lake. A sweet angelic hymn begins to play as the boat reaches a shore with clean golden sand.

The white pigeon is silently gliding at the sky. End of POV.

Vinicius wet and tired after battling the elements lies on his back in the boat.

Peter is not there anymore, as Lygia bends over Vinicius with a gentle, beautiful smile.

LYGIA
Come, follow me; I'll show you the way!

FADE OUT

SCENE 41 DAY_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE_MAIN CHAMBER

FADE IN

Vinicius opens his eyes in the house of Crispus. His head rests on the lap of Lygia, who is stroking his forehead.

VINICIUS
I saw your soul in a dream.

SCENE 42 DAY_INT_CRISPUS HOUSE_MAIN CHAMBER

Lygia melts away like a ghost. It was a ghost, a dream.

Vinicius's head still rests motionless, but now it's resting on a cushion instead of Lygia's lap.

URSUS
Lygia told me you should drink this, Master.

Ursus comes closer to Vinicius and hands him a metal cup with some hot brew, the cup hidden in his massive hands.

VINICIUS
Are you Lygia's slave?

URSUS
Where we come from, there are no slaves.

VINCIUS
Where is that?

URSUS
Where the forest has no end, where there are castles made of wood, and a great abundance of honey and bread. Where "yes" means "yes" and "no" means "no".

VINICIUS

And Lygia?

URSUS

When you Romans appeared in our forests, Lygia's father, our king died from a Roman arrow. Soon after that her mother died. Your leader, Plautius took the child under his wing. Rome became her home. And Christ her consolation.

There is a transition to a stable from this chamber. You can see a donkey, which is eating hay in a shadow and suddenly, a face of Lygia, hidden there, listening, close to the donkey - appears.

VINICIUS

Christ! Who is he, that he could bring consolation to the Romans!?

URSUS

He who changes sorrow to joy. And death itself, which for you is the end of life, is for us the beginning.

Lygia runs out of her hiding and faces Vinicius.

LYGIA

Yes! Believing in Christ we cannot be unhappy.

VINICIUS

And I am happy believing in you. I don't need Christ for that.

LYGIA

You are mistaken, Marcus. Christ is love.

VINICIUS

If it is as you say, let me see for myself. Be my wife. We will celebrate the biggest wedding ever seen in Rome. I shall ask the emperor himself for his blessing...

Lygia looks at Vinicius.

Her eyes begin to fill with tears and she runs out of the room.

SCENE 43 DAY_EXT_CRISPUS HOUSE_COURTYARD 2

Upset, Lygia runs out of the room and into the courtyard where fish are hung up and drying.

Peter is sitting on a bench, leaning against his staff. Next to him sits the taller and more powerfully built APOSTLE PAUL.

NAZARIUS(16), Peter's companion is sitting under the tree. HE stays silent, but his nimble finger turn a piece of wood and a knife. Now you can see a bird figurine that Nazarius sculpts.

Running through the courtyard, she doesn't notice them until Paul speaks.

PAUL
God bless you, my child.

Lygia stops and turns around to look at them.

Peter taps his staff on the flagstones beneath his feet.

Lygia lowers her head and approaches them.

PAUL
Sit down with us, young lady.

Lygia sits down on the stones beside the bench and begins to listen to their conversation.

PAUL
Do you remember how you attended
the wedding at Canaa in Galilee?

Peter nods his head with a smile, remembering the old times.

PETER
But you wer'nt there! How do you
know about that?

PAUL
You told me all about it yourself,
remember?

PETER
My mind is weakened by old age, but
John has written everything down.
Have you read it?

PAUL

Yes, I've read the whole thing. You went to a wedding, and they ran out of wine.

PETER

And Jesus called a servant and said, "Fill the wine jars with water."

PAUL

He blessed the love between the woman and the man.

The apostles now look at Lygia sitting by their feet listening to the conversation.

She begins to blush, but sits in silence with no need to speak, just to listen.

PETER

While the eyes of the one you love remain closed to the light of truth, avoid him so that he does not lead you into sin. But pray for him and know that there's no sin in your love.

Paul glances at Peter.

PAUL

Trust in your love. Christ has softened hearts even harder than the heart of one Roman.

Peter nods his head.

PETER

Thrice I denied our Lord, but he forgave me and commanded me to be a good shepherd to the people.

Apostle Paul stands up, turning out to be a large man.

SCENE 44 NIGHT_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_LIBRARY

House of Petronius. He lounges in a seat in his library.

The soft light of the moon enters to the library.

Eunice peeks around the corner, looks at Petronius as always, with love, as he quietly reads verses of Horace out loud.

PETRONIUS

I will not all die, a greater part
of me will rise again. As long as
high priest climbs the Capitoline
Hill...

Petronius raises his eyes from the pages and continues to
speak the verse in near silence.

Petronius can see Eunice looking at him, unaware that she is
reflected in a huge mirror. He momentarily stops reciting,
and then suddenly ends the poem aloud, as if speaking to
Eunice.

PETRONIUS

...May Melpomene, the muse of song
take pride in what I have made of
all talents she gave to me, and
crown my head with laurel wreath.

Without taking his eyes off Eunice, he puts down the book.

PETRONIUS

Have you ever thought about
freedom, Eunice?

Eunice retreats behind her corner, hiding.

PETRONIUS

You could leave this place, if I
were to free you.

Eunice suddenly appears from around the corner again.

EUNICE

Oh no! Please don't do any such
thing, Master.

Eunice approaches him from behind as he continues to look at
her in the large brass mirror.

PETRONIUS

Freed, you could go your own way,
have a husband, children, a life of
your own...

Eunice falls to her knees.

EUNICE

You are my life, my Lord.

PETRONIUS

But admit that you envy the
beautiful Romans, their fine
apparel, jewellery, hairstyles,
lovers...

EUNICE

Love is not jealous or boastful, is
not borne up by pride.

Eunice looks into his eyes and then he sees what kind of
innocent soul hides behind her beautiful face. He reaches
out towards her with his hand but doesn't touch her, as if
he were scared to touch such beauty. He motions to her to
come closer.

PETRONIUS

But what if I sent you to work in
the fields? What if I married
another woman? Or had you whipped?

EUNICE

Love bears every kind of suffering,
believes all things, sees hope
everywhere, endures everything.

PETRONIUS

But sooner or later it ends, burns
out and dies...

Petronius slides out of his seat and reaches out towards
Eunice without touching her, kneeling in front of her.

EUNICE

Love never dies.

SCENE 45 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_ATRIUM

Vinicius reclines by the pool in Petronius' home.

He still has a bandage on his head.

Petronius is sitting across the pool with Eunice on his lap.
He says irritably.

PETRONIUS

And so you have gone quite mad. You
free your slaves, distribute your
fortune among the poor ...

VINICIUS

I have come to believe their
teaching that happiness, beauty,
and love are nothing but vanity.

PETRONIUS

If you want to repay evil with
goodness ... then ... then what do
you repay goodness with!?

Vinicius raises his hand and interrupts Petronius. Petronius
begins to walk away.

VINICIUS

I cannot repay their goodness with
evil.

Petronius angrily turns around.

PETRONIUS

Do you intend to accept the
teachings of this ... Christ?!

VINICIUS

When I'm ready.... I would like you
to meet him too, Petronius.

At that moment a beautiful Greek slave enters the room and
hands Petronius a letter, he reads it and with a sigh throws
the paper into the pool like a paper boat.

PETRONIUS

Caesar orders us to go together to
Antium. I advise you not to refuse
such a request.

VINICIUS

I cannot leave Lygia.

PETRONIUS

If you do not wish to lose her for
ever, better start packing before
Redbeard notices your absence

VINICIUS

I want nothing from Caesar. If I'm
going anywhere, then I shall go with
Lygia and the Plutiuses to Sicily.
If that is what she wants...

Petronius looks at Vinicius with growing pity.

PETRONIUS

No one is free. Everyone has someone above him who decides whether he lives or dies. Keep *that* rule in mind.

Chilon's contorted face appears in the doorway.

CHILON

Psst....

VINICIUS

What is he doing here?!

Chilon approaches them and reaching the pool, sits down, takes off his sandals, and dips his tired feet in the cold water. He begins his game with a mysterious expression.

CHILON

I know where to find....

Vinicius jumps to his feet.

VINICIUS

You dare not speak her name!

Chilon is completely surprised by this turn of events.

CHILO

Why is that, sir? What has changed since you promised me a house and five slaves. Have I not kept my word?

Vinicius grabs Chilon by his coat and lifts him up over the pool, his feet dangling above the water.

VINICIUS

I'm telling you not to hang around here any more and to forget that you ever knew us.

CHILON

If you drown old Chilo, you'll be doing a favour to the enemies of Rome. Along with me will perish matters important to the Empire, saved in this head of mine.

Chilon tries to tap his head. Vinicius eventually throws him down at the edge of the pool.

VINICIUS

You are to cease your spying, now!
And do not show up around!

Vinicius throws a purse of coins towards the door.

Chilon runs after it and catches it, already close to the exit. He turns around and looks at Vinicius with plots and revenge in his mind.

CHILON

You're very generous, Sir. Chilo
will never forget it.

He gives a low bow and exits.

SCENE 46-47 EVENING_ANTIIUM AT THE SEA SIDE_EXT_TERRACE

Antium. A large terraced villa. Below can be seen the calm waters of the bay.

NERO

And so Troy burns, burns, burns...

Nero, with a zither in his hands plays the last two chords, pathetically picking at the strings as he leans against a rail under a blood red sunset.

The groan of the zither endlessly prolongs the last notes of Nero's poem.

He looks around at Petronius, Vinicius, Poppea and Tigellinus with an expression of boundless pride.

Tigellinus claps his hands with an idiotic smile as he nods his head, as if he was agreeing with what he had just heard.

NERO

What do you say? Did you see the
fire that consumes Troy?
Tigellinus, you first - what do you
think of my description.

Nero is surrounded by Petronius, Vinicius, Poppea and Tigellinus. Servants move around silently in the background.

Nero has just finished reading a poem, now he proudly cocks his head and looks at those present.

Tigellinus claps his hands in appreciation and nods.

TIGELLINUS

Amazing!

NERO

Amazing? Tigellinus! But was it true? Did you feel the fire burn your hands?!

Tigellinus stutters like a pupil in front of the blackboard.

TIGELLINUS

Oh! Divine one! It burned and... blinded!

Nero casts Petronius a contemptuous look.

Moving across, he closely observes Poppea, who with a look of indifference on her face, stuffs some grapes into her mouth. She has no understanding or interest in the poetry of Caesar.

With a look of disgust, Nero turns around and yells out to the servants with an impatient voice.

NERO

Clear the tables. Augusta is choking.

Two servants instantly bring out trays and bowls.

Meanwhile, Nero looks at Petronius intensely.

Petronius withstands the long stare, and after a long pause pronounces his judgment.

PETRONIUS

Throw your verse in the fire, Caesar; that would be the best thing for it.

Caesar tries to control his anger and squints at him.

NERO

What do you find so wrong in my description of the fire, Petronius, that you would have the fire consume it?

PETRONIUS

It is too cold.

NERO
It burnt Tigellinus.

PETRONIUS
Don't believe him, divine Caesar.
Your talent could wipe Rome from
the surface of the earth, let alone
Troy!

Hearing this, Nero calms down.

NERO
It's true. The gods gave me talent.
That is why I am sharing it with
you.

PETRONIUS
The greatest poet of Rome does not
look for acclaim from his soldiers,
but is worthy of eternal glory in
the pantheon of fame.

Nero swells with pride and looks at Tigellinus with
contempt, who shrinks in his armor.

NERO
Tigellinus has the mind of a mouse
and skin thin as a woman's. Come
back tomorrow, Petronius, and you
will die in the flames.

Tigellinus's face blackens with anger.

NERO
As a sculptor seeks his model, so I
need to see a real fire.

TIGELLINUS
At your command, Sire, I will order
all of Antium to be set alight for
you!

NERO
What is Antium for Caesar!

SCENE 48 NIGHT_EXT_ANTIUM AT THE SEA SIDE_BEACH

Antium. Coast. Petronius and Vinicius walk slowly along a
sandy beach. Jupiter shines like a lantern.

VINICIUS
Aren't you playing with life and
death?

Wrapped in his thoughts, Petronius for a moment doesn't
reply.

PETRONIUS
If you want Caesar to agree to your
wedding with Lygia, he must be
pleased with himself.

VINICIUS
So why do you tease Tigellinus?

PETRONIUS
Tigellinus does all he can to
prejudice Caesar against me.

Small waves lap the shore.

VINICIUS
It is said he who lives by the
sword, dies by the sword.

PETRONIUS
It is also said: if you want peace
- prepare for war.

VINICIUS
How are we to know what it's all
worth. I'm a soldier and you are a
diplomat ... who will judge us?

PETRONIUS
You yourself and I myself.

The late evening horizon is illuminated by the sphere of
Jupiter, lighting up the way for the two men walking across
the beach as tiny waves crash onto the shore.

SCENE 49 EVENING_ANTIUM AT THE SEA SIDE_EXT_TERRACE

Small waves lap the sands.

The crackling and popping of burning wood and houses. The
great fire, born in Nero's head, in his poem, reflects off
of the water. The flames were born in Nero's head, in Nero's
poem.

We can heard only the groan of his zithar.

Nero is watching from the terrace of a villa in Antium. He turns around and looks at the room of guests, as if waiting for applause.

Petronius speaks first.

PETRONIUS

We need air, Caesar. We are suffocating and the fires of Troy will soon reach us.

NERO

What are you saying, Petronius? Have the stanzas of my poem made such an impression on you?

PETRONIUS

I am quite burning up and don't know what will quench the fire. You have ruined my life, Sire. Vinicius, who remains stubbornly silent, could say the same, if he were not frozen with terror.

NERO

What have you to say about my fire - you've felt the fire of battle?

Vinicius freezes, not knowing what to say in response to Nero.

Tigellinus takes advantage.

TIGELLINUS

Divine Caesar. Though I have been in a hundred battles...

Nero, with a gesture signals him to be silent. He looks at Vinicius, expecting an answer. Petronius tries to help.

PETRONIUS

Vinicius would rather die than face the might of your poems, Nero.

Nero breaks out into laughter.

NERO

Then you shall die, Vinicius, if you don't tell me whether you'd prefer to receive a poem or a horse from me?

Petronius is bitterly silenced.

VINICIUS

I'd rather have a poem, Sire. Horses
there are many, but only one
Caesar. Nothing is worth more than
his words.

Nero's face lights up in appreciation and he cries out to
the servants from the terrace.

NERO

Bring me my horse!

He turns to Petronius.

NERO

They think me a monster ... they
call me matricidal, they are
jealous of my talent. The burden of
magnitude is hard to bear. You
alone understand me - the Artist!

He puts his hand on Petronius's shoulder.

Tigellinus as always looks on their relationship with
jealousy.

The servants bring along his horse beneath the terrace.

NERO

And I do so like to make people
happy. Vinicius - the steed is
yours!

Confused, Vinicius looks at Petronius. Petronius nods
reassuringly, implying that you can't refuse Nero.

Footsteps on the terrace approach from behind. Nero turns
around. Faon, the freedman falls to his knees in front of
Nero.

FAON

Forgive me, divine emperor! There
is a fire in Rome! The greater part
of the town on fire!

Nero looks at him with curiosity then raises his eyes and
hands.

NERO

Ye Gods! At last I shall see a
burning city and finish my poem!

FAON

The flames are swallowing up the
people! Rome is dying, Sire!

Vinicius walks off down the terrace, not listening to the
conversation. He jumps on his horse and rides towards Rome.

Nero turns to Tigellinus.

NERO

Tigellinus. Will I be in time to
see the fire?

The face of Tigellinus shows great excitement as he savors
Nero's every word.

TIGELLINUS

Sire, the show is for you.

SCENE 50 NIGHT_EXT_HILLS AROUND ROME

A horse with its neck outstretched and panting heavily
rushes past gardens and hedges. Vinicius leans over the
horse's neck. He urges the animal on.

The horse and Vinicius reach the hill. On the horizon we see
the city engulfed in gold and pink, with flashes, like
distant thunder.

SCENE 51 NIGHT_EXT_HILLS AROUND ROME

The horse on top of the hill rears up on its hind legs.
Vinicius calms him down and looks down on the city.

The burning city can be seen in the distance, a mass of fire
and smoke. Vinicius heads down towards the city.

SCENE 52 NIGHT_EXT_ROME STREET IN FIRE 1

Vinicius tries to navigate with his horse through the
chaotic crowds in the city. The forms of people are hard to
see through the thick black smoke. Every now and then a
terrified face, black from the smoke flashes into view.

Screams of pain, anger, and curses can be heard.

VOICES

Death to Nero! Mother killer! Down
with the tyrant! We know he did
this! Assassins! Arsonists! Hang
them all!

SCENE 53 NIGHT_EXT_ ROME STREET CLOSE TO THE CRISPUS HOUSE

Vinicius enters the street on which Crispus lives. From the entrance of the street fire can be seen. The fire quickly moves towards the rider, engulfing and consuming the vines surrounding him. The horse rears back in fear.

A RUNAWAY runs past. Vinicius grabs him by his tunic, almost falling off of his horse.

VINICIUS

Where are they!?

RUNAWAY

There's no one here! The Christians
have left for Ostrianum!

He disappears in the smoke. The horse turns around. Its hooves pound on the flagstones of the street as it disappears into the clouds of smoke.

SCENE 54 NIGHT_EXT_CRISPUS HOUSE_COURTYARD 2 DURING THE FIRE

Vinicius on horseback enters a Courtyard. There are still tongues of fire on the walls and roof.

Vinicius hangs limply over the horse's neck. He falls, rolling onto the grass and lies on his back. His face is blackened with smoke. He falls unconscious.

FADE OUT

SCENE 55 NIGHT_EXT_BURNING ROME_AQUEDUCT

FADE IN

Nero's entourage stops at the edge of an aqueduct. Nero takes a few steps forwards and from the top looks down on the burning city. They are surrounded by scorched tree trunks and a growing angry crowd.

Nero turns to his entourage and recites a short line with a pathetic voice as he gestures towards the burning city.

NERON

Homeless ruler of a homeless
people, where will I lay my
miserable head this night...

From beneath the aqueduct, the roaring of the crowd grows louder.

SCENE 56 NIGHT_EXT_BURNING ROME_AQUEDUCT

Nero tunes his zither and looks down. Striking the strings he begins to sing.

NERO

Oh star of my ancestors, dear
birthplace ... Oh star of my
ancestors, dear birthplace...

After these few words, he throws the zither into a gap in the aqueduct where it smashes among the crowd below.

Nero wraps himself in his robe and stands in statuesque pose. A sinister howl comes from the crowd down below.

CROWD

Where's Caesar!?! He put us in
hell! Death to Nero! Mother killer!
Down with the tyrant!

Nodding his head, Nero says plaintively

NERO

This is how the people appreciate
me and my poetry.

Tigellinus comes up beside him.

TIGELLINUS

Have the praetorian guards called
out to attack them, Sire.

Petronius comes up on Nero's other side.

PETRONIUS

Speak to your people, Sire and
promise them something.

Tigellinus glares at Petronius. Nero raises his head to the sky and with a heavy sigh sarcastically comments on the proposal.

NERO

Would you have the divine Caesar
speak to the rabble?

Nero stares at Tigellinus.

NERO

You go down to them!

Tigellinus lowers his head in silence.

PETRONIUS
Caesar, I will go.

NERO
Yes, you my most faithful ... Go
and lavish promises on them!

SCENE 57 NIGHT_EXT_BURNING ROME_AQUEDUCT

Petronius alone stands on the edge of the aqueduct, staring at the crowd. He raises his arms and after a while the hubbub subsides.

CROWD
Petronius! It's Petronius!

PETRONIUS
Citizens!

From afar, Nero listens to Petronius, adding his own comments to the speech.

NERO
...And you scum...

PETRONIUS
The city will be rebuilt.

NERO
...as soon as we're done with the
show...

PETRONIUS
Caesars gardens will be opened to
you.

NERO
...just don't throw any garbage
around or bring your goats...

PETRONIUS
From tomorrow, grain, wine and oil
will be handed out!

NERO
...fill your bellies till you
choke...

PETRONIUS
Then Caesar will organise for you
games such as Rome has never seen
before.

NERO
.. and will never see again...

PETRONIUS
Great feasts and generous gifts
await you!

NERO
...Rome has burnt to the ground -
long live Rome!

CROWD
Bread! Bread! Games! Bread and
games! Bread! Bread! Games! Bread
and games!

SCENE 58 DAY_EXT_CRISPUS HOUSE_COURTYARD 2 BURNED AFTER THE
FIRE

Nazarius leans over Vinicius and splashes the rider's face
with water. Marcus Vinicius opens his heavy eyelids. The sun
temporarily blinds him.

NAZARIUS
Our house is burned down, Master!

Vinicius tries to pick himself up.

VINICIUS
Where is she?!

SCENE 59 DAY_INT_ROME_UNDERGROUND CAVERN

An underground cavern. A few lights give a faint glow. The
cavern is filled with people kneeling and praying.

NAZARIUS(OFF)
There are caves beyond the gardens
of Agrippina. They have taken
shelter there.

Standing against a wall is a more clearly illuminated Peter
the Apostle. He makes the sign of the cross with his hands.

PETER
Peace be with you!

The crowd responds with a murmur of pained and fearful
voices.

CROWD

Do not abandon us! Do not leave us
on this day of judgment!

Peter raises his hands.

PETER

Woe to the world, and woe to the
sinful. Fire has come to the city
of crime, but the Lord has shown
mercy to those of you washed by
baptism! Peace be with you!

Peter moves among the crowd, blessing them.

Suddenly, he stands opposite Vinicius. Vinicius bows his
head low. He looks around and sees a vat of water. Someone
hands him a twig with a few leaves still swaying on it.
Peter dips it into the water and sprays Vinicius with it,
baptizing him.

PETER

I baptize you in the name of the
Father, the Son and the Holy
Spirit. Follow me.

SCENE 60 DAY_INT_ROME_MODEST COTTAGE HOUSE_CHAMBER

Interior of a modest cottage on the outskirts of the city.

Lygia is busy hanging fish on a line. She does not see
Vinicius who has entered and is standing, watching his
beloved Lygia.

When Lygia turns and sees Vinicius, she for a moment does
not know what to do. But her feelings overcome her doubt and
she throws herself into his arms. There is a wooden pigeon
sculptured by Nazarius sitting over their heads, on the
ledge in the wall.

VINICIUS

I promised you that I'd never leave
you...

LYGIA

And then I'll say "where you go
Caius, there go I Caia".

VINICIUS

This very day we'll sail for
Sicily. My house is your house.

LYGIA

My heart is your heart.

During this time Peter the Apostle has also entered the room. As he sees them in such a love and community, he approaches them and takes Vinicius's right hand and joins it with Lygia's right hand.

PETER

Love one another. There is no sin
in this love of yours.

Vinicius looks into the eyes of Lygia.

VINICIUS

I, Marcus Vinicius, take you Lygia
Callina for my wife and promise
that I will not leave you for as
long as I live.

Lygia looks into his eyes.

LIGIA

So help us, Lord God Almighty.

Nazarius runs into the room.

NAZARIUS

The gladiators have revolted. They
are killing everyone!

Peter silences him with a gesture and directs his words to Vinicius.

PETER

This is a great evil ...

In the distance we hear the growing roars of lions collected in an animal pit.

VINICIUS

Don't stray away, Father. I'll come
for you.

Vinicius straitens Lygia for the last time and runs out of the room.

The roars of the lions become increasingly loud and clear.

There are upcoming screams of people, as well.

CROWD

This way! Run! God! Help us!

Horror overcomes the faces of those gathered.

PETER

Did He abandon His flock?

FADE OUT

SCENE 61 DAY_INT_ROME_PALATINO_NERO'S CHAMBER

FADE IN

Palatino. Nero's chamber. Petronius stares at Nero.

PETRONIUS

Sire, you need to go to Hellas.
It's getting too dangerous in Rome.

Tigellinus abruptly interrupts him.

TIGELLINUS

That is not a good idea! Civil war
could erupt before you get to
Ostia, Sire! The Praetorians may
betray us!

Angry voices from a crowd approaches from a distance.

CROWD

Death to the arsonists of Rome!
Mother killer! Coward! Death to the
tyrant! Arsonist! Burn him at the
stake! Burn them all!

NERO

They have enough grain and oil,
what more do they want?

TIGELLINUS

Vengeance.

Nero squints and collects his thoughts for a moment.
Suddenly an idea comes to mind and he smiles evilly.

NERO

And vengeance requires a victim,
Tigellinus. You must go out to them
and admit it was you who set fire
to Rome.

Tigellinus looks petrified. After a moment he looks at Nero's with defiance.

TIGELLINUS

I burned Rome on your orders!

Nero and Tigellinus measure each other like wild beasts.

The sudden voice of Faon standing in the doorway to the hall interrupts the moment.

FAON

The divine Poppea wishes to see Tigellinus.

SCENE 62 DAY_INT_ROME_PALATINO_POPPEA'S CHAMBER

Poppea's Chamber. The Empress lies on a bed holding the collar of a huge leopard. In front of Tigellinus - Chilon.

TIGELLINUS

So, you say that Vinicius...?

CHILON

Yes, Master.

TIGELLINUS

And how about Petronius?

CHILON

Perhaps! It may very well be.

Poppea bursts into hysterical laughter.

POPPEA

Don't be ridiculous, Tigellinus. Petronius, that lover of life and pleasure - a Christian? You won't protect us with this. The anger of the people will turn against Nero and will fall on me.

Chilon falls to his knees and crawls towards Tigellinus, glancing at Poppea the entire time.

CHILON

Vinicius is with them. I swear! Lygia too is a Christian. They have married. They mean to disappear from sight, and leave Nero in this stench of a burnt city.

TIGELLINUS

You came here with with? You have
nothing on Petronius?!

Chilon rubs his fingers together insinuating money.
Tigellinus rejects him with a kick.

CHILON

Catch the nephew in the net, and
the uncle will fall into the trap
of his own accord. And may I count
on your good graces, Master?

SCENE 63 DAY_INT_ROME_PALATINO_NERO'S CHAMBER

The room in which Nero resides. Poppea and Tigellinus enter.

Nero laughs sheepishly, clearly nervous. From afar, under
the Palatine, the screams of the crowd can be heard.

CROWD

The mother killer set fire to Rome!
Death to Nero!

NERO

It's getting nasty. We had better
make our escape to Hellas.

Caesar walks over to Tigellinus.

TIGELLINUS

The people already know that it was
Caesar who set fire to Rome!

NERO

If I so desire, I can turn the
people against you.

TIGELLINUS

I haven't killed my mother. They
remember Agrippina and haven't
forgiven you that... crime.

NERO

You played your part in it.

TIGELLINUS

As in everything that goes on in
the palace.

Silence.

Petronius listens from the side of the room, looking out from a window at the hills covered by the figures of the growing crowd.

PETRONIUS

Do my ears deceive me, Nero; do you really intend to let this muscle-bound fool have the last word?!

Tigellinus looks at Petronius as if he had been struck with an arrow in the windpipe. All of a sudden he takes a more conciliatory tone.

TIGELLINUS

The people need revenge and... someone to sacrifice. You have heard, Sire, of the followers of this prophet, Christ? As soon as we agreed to have him hung on the cross, they made a God of him. It was they who set fire to Rome!

Nero's face begins to assume an expression of anger, grief and indignation.

NERO

What did this poor city do to deserve such a crime ... at their hands? And what is Rome to do now, with these beasts?

Poppea walks up to the emperor.

POPPEA

They are your enemies! Punish the arsonists!

TYGELLINUS

They go around the city trying to convince people to turn against Caesar.

Nero makes another theatrical gesture.

NERO

What punishment and torment fits such a crime?

Petronius comes out of the shadows, silently and intently watching the faces of Poppea and Tigellinus and then Nero. He starts to talk with a growing power in his voice.

PETRONIUS

Beware, Sire, for they will say
that Nero burned Rome, but threw
the blame on the innocent. Nero -
the coward.

Tigellinus stands by Nero.

TIGELLINUS

One word from you, and Petronius
will forever hold his peace.

Nero looks at Petronius, cocking his head, feeling hurt.

NERO

Though he has wounded my heart, I
still love him like a brother.

PETRONIUS

If you treat your brother as you
treated your mother, there will
soon be nobody in the world to love
you.

Petronius walks out silently.

SCENE 64 DAY_EXT_PETRONIUS PALACE_COLLONADE + PETRONIUS
PALACE_HALL_VIEW THROUGH THE WINDOW

House of Petronius. PORTERS quickly bring a litter through
the gate. Petronius gets out and heads towards the entrance.
Eunice is there to greet him.

EUNICE

Vinicius was waiting for you! He
wanted to say goodbye. This very
day, he departs with Lygia for
Sicily.

Petronius embraces her affectionately.

PETRONIUS

And if it should happen that we had
to part?

EUNICE

Where you go, Master, there I go.

PETRONIUS

Some voyages have to be taken
alone.

EUNICE

Take me with you.

Petronius strokes her golden hair and with his arm around her they both enter the house.

From inside can be heard their voices, interrupted by Eunice's laughter, as if they were children playing.

PETRONIUS(OFF)

I have no right to decide about the life of the beautiful Eunice.

EUNICE(OFF)

Eunice belongs to you.

PETRONIUS(OFF)

Then I am the happiest man in Rome. There are some things that cannot be taken from me.

SCENE 65 PETRONIUS PALACE HALL VIEW THROUGH THE WINDOW

He has barely crossed the threshold of his house, when Petronius must regretfully put an end to Eunice's joy.

PETRONIUS

Forgive me. I do not ask you to accompany me.

His face maintains a carefree expression, trying to hide his depression. He kisses Eunice on the forehead, turns around, and disappears into his library.

SCENE 66 NIGHT_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_LIBRARY

Library. Petronius is writing, leaning over his desk. We see his outline from behind, along with the outline of columns leading to the garden.

After a few moments, Paul the Apostle appears in the entrance. He stands for a moment looking at Petronius.

PAUL

You do not want her to accompany you and you are setting her free. Note well God's goodness and severity: he was severe with cut branches, and for you he is good - if you persist in this goodness.

At the sound of his voice, Petronius looks up, confused.

PETRONIUS

Who are you? A thief?

PAUL

They told me I would find Vinicius here. I say to you, I, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle to preach the good news from God.

Petronius snorts and laughs bitterly.

PETRONIUS

"Enemy of Rome!" "Arsonist"! Are you here seeking revenge?

PAUL

Do not mete out justice yourselves, but leave that to God. "I mete out punishment, and I will repay for everything" - says the Lord. Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Stunned by the discussion, Petronius stands up and paces the room.

PETRONIUS

Good? What is that compared to wealth, fame and happiness, which the tyrant can destroy at a moment's notice?

PAUL

Wish well for those who persecute you. Live in harmony with one another. Do not pretend to love, but really love other people.

PETRONIUS

Death cancels everything. Have you not heard the groans of victims?

PAUL

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, God will take those who have died in Jesus and lead them into eternity.

PETRONIUS

If God is on your side, what will become of those who are against you?

Petronius lifts his head to hear the reply, but Paul is no longer there.

SCENE 67 AFTERNOON_EXT_ROME_STREET VIEW_FORUM ROMANUM

Street of Rome. Crowd. You can hear the roar and drunken singing of the crowd among the ruins of the still smoking city.

CROWDS

Christians to the lions! They
poison our wells! Let the animals
at them! Get rid of these fanatics!
Death to all Christians! Death to
all Christians!

The litter with Vinicius is having trouble moving through the crowd. After a while it disappears into the smoke.

SCENE 69 DAY_INT_PETRONIUS PALACE_LIBRARY

Petronius stands with his back to the library table, exactly where Paul stood before. Standing in the dark corner, he looks out the window at the vegetation growing around the columns of the atrium.

He doesn't turn round at the sound of Vinicius approaching.

VINICIUS(OFF)

Caesar has accused the Christians
of setting fire to Rome!

Vinicius, angry, runs into the library.

PETRONIUS

Have you hidden her?

VINICIUS

They sent over a hundred
Praetorians after them. They took
everyone away. The elderly, women
and children. Did you know about
this?

PETRONIUS

Let's say that I underestimated
Tigellinus. What about Lygia?

VINICIUS

Apparently she's together with the
others in prison.

Petronius claps his hands. Out of nowhere his female servants appear.

PETRONIUS
Bring swords and mantles.

Finally Petronius turns around, but his face is still hidden in the shadows.

PETRONIUS
You'll have to bribe the guards to release her immediately. Otherwise it will be too late!

VINICIUS
Talk to Caesar. Nero loves you. He will release her for you.

PETRONIUS
Do you think a man who sentenced his own mother to death can love? Today, I'm the first he would deprive of a voice and the last person he'd like to hear.

SCENE 70 DAY_EXT_ROME_PRISON GATE

Dressed in mantles, Petronius and Vinicius approach the prison walls. As they get closer they see a double line of soldiers surrounding the sealed entrance to the prison.

CROWD
Arsonits! They burned down Rome!
Death to Christians! Let the animals at them! Get rid of these fanatics! Death to Christians! Throw them to the lions! Let's rid the city of these fanatics! Death to all Christians! Let's see their God save them now!

Petronius searches for the commander, eventually spots him and approaches him. It is KRICSOS.

PETRONIUS
Hail, Kricsos! You have been ordered to guard the jail?

Kricsos stands at attention.

KRICSOS

Yes, noble Petronius. The Prefect fears there may be an attempt to free the arsonists.

PETRONIUS

My slave is in there. This is some mistake. I know her well and I know that she had nothing to do with them.

KRICSOS

My orders are to let no one out!

Despite this, Petronius takes a step forward, Niger blocks his path.

PETRONIUS

Don't you dare....

You can hear the clinking of weapons from the PRAETORIAN GUARDS.

KRICSOS

That means no one, Sir.

VINICIUS

And are you also forbidden to let anyone in?

KRICSOS

....That was not prohibited.

VINICIUS

So tell your men to let me through the cordon. I want to find those who burned down my house.

After a few moments of debating this in his head, Kricsos gives his men the signal to let them in.

Vinicius turns round, embraces Petronius, says goodbye and enters the prison.

SCENE 71 DAY_INT_ROME_PRISON

Vinicius passes over the threshold of the prison and is enveloped in darkness. The hallways and cells are filled with people. They stand calmly, quietly, most of them are praying. Words of prayer reverberate throughout the prison.

CROWD

Our Father who art in
 heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy
 kingdom come. Thy will be done on
 earth as it is in heaven. Give us
 this day our daily bread, and
 forgive us our trespasses, as we
 forgive those who trespass against
 us, and lead us not into
 temptation, but deliver us from
 evil.

In the meantime, Vinicius wanders around helplessly, looking for Lygia. A CENTURION approaches Vinicius; he leans over and whispers in his hear.

CENTURION

I've seen you before, Sir. In
 Ostrianum.

VINICIUS

Are you....?

With his long Gallic sword the centurion draws a fish in the sand.

VINICIUS

I must find Lygia.

CENTURION

She's no longer here.

Vinicius grabs him by the shoulder.

VINICIUS

Do you know where she is now?

The centurion shakes his head.

VINICIUS

Well, do you know how to get out of
 here?

Centurion turns around, nods his head towards Vinicius and disappears into the darkness.

SCENE 72 DAY_EXT_ROME_PRISON_EXIT_STREET

Vinicius exits through a side door from the darkness of the prison and comes out into afternoon sunlight.

He takes a few steps and encounters the Apostle Paul. He sees him, however, from a distance across the entire width of the street. The Apostle looks in Vinicius's face. A litter passes between Paul and Vinicius.

The voices of its PORTERS can be heard.

PORTERS

Make way for the noble Chilo! Make way!

Vinicius grabs the edge of the litter and tips it in his direction. Chilon slides across to him, his eyes wide with surprise.

VINICIUS

Greetings to you, Chilo.

Chilon tries to cover his face with his arm.

CHILON

Hail, Vinicius, but do not hold me up. I hasten to my friend Tigellinus!

Vinicius grabs him by the robe and screams.

VINICIUS

It was you who betrayed them!

Chilon replies arrogantly.

CHILON

My friend, if you have a request, come to my house. I welcome all visitors and clients in the morning, after I have taken my bath.

Vinicius is still half holding on to his tunic.

SLOW MOTION. Some invisible force pulls Vinicius back. He looks back and meets the eyes of Paul. In one flash of truth there is an explosion of energy and agreement between the two men.

Vinicius turns his head back on Chilon and looks deeply into his eyes.

VINICIUS

May God forgive you.

Vinicius then finally lets go of his tunic and lets the litter pass on.

Vinicius then looks back to where Paul was standing, but he is already gone.

SCENE 73 DAY_EXT_APPIAN ROAD + DAY_EXT_APPIAN ROAD_PANORAMA

Appian Road is empty at this time of a day. There is only a long shadow of PETER THE APOSTLE, who looks ahead at the hilly surrounding area. Beneath his hood you can see his grave expression and tired face.

The sun begins to appear from over the hillsides. Peter shields his eyes with his hand, trying to see the white pigeon, which flapped its wings loudly.

Peter sinks to his knees, resting his hands and head on his staff. Around his outline appears a pulsing, golden light.

Then the single beam of light splits like a prism into two streaks - one of them is pale pink - another clear, luminous.

The staff slides from under him and he falls face down in the Sand, his head still covered by his hood. Peter stretches his hands forward as if reaching for someone's feet.

Silence falls. The golden light fades. Peter raises his head slightly.

PETER

Quo Vadis, Domine?

VOICE

If you abandon my people, I shall go to Rome to be crucified once again.

PETER

Christ! Forgive me!

Suddenly, there is Nazarius coming from the distance. He pulls the bridle of a gray Donkey. The Donkey denies to go with four hooves. Each step is difficult for them.

Nazarius managed to pull up the Donkey.

The confused face of Nazarius as he bends down over the old man. Then from above them a pained voice speaks out.

The golden light fades as Nazarius grabs Peter and helps him up off his knees.

NAZARIUS

Let us not delay, Peter, at any
time they may catch up with us
here.

The Apostle Peter gets up, and leaning on his cane turns around to stare in the direction of Rome. Suddenly he heads back towards the city. Nazarius catches up to him and grabs his arm, trying to stop him.

NAZARIUS

Where are you going, Master?

Peter slowly turns his head, holding his staff in one hand and pointing towards the city with the other.

PETER

To Rome!

In the distance you can see the Circus.

SCENE 74 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

The Arena of the big Circus. View from the imperial terrace towards the audience.

Nero sits on an elevated podium with the magnificently dressed Poppea beside him. They are surrounded by the court.

Petronius is sitting next to Tigellinus. Chilon is on the right hand side. The place to the left of Petronius is empty. Petronius looks around.

Vinicius takes a seat next to his uncle.

PETRONIUS

Have you found her?

Vinicius shakes his head.

Nero looks towards Petronius and Vinicius.

He gets up. The crowd in the Circus roars and cheers.

CROWD

Nero! Nero! Divine Augustus!
Christians to the lions!

SCENE 75 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

Arena. Massive gates are located on the left and right side of the arena. The shrill sound of trumpets breaks the silence.

As soon as the trumpets fall silent, the gate on the right side opens with a crash. From the black depths of the open gate emerge human figures that slowly move towards the center of the arena. The crowd in the Circus murmurs.

CROWD

Christians! Christians! Christians!

The Christians huddle together in the middle of the arena, squinting under the sun. They kneel and bow their heads together while holding each other.

CROWD

Bring on the animals! The animals!

The trumpets begin to play again. The gate on the left side of the Circus opens. From a black tunnel emerges a lion. Behind it, more lions rush out.

The animals sniff the air, growl and squint in the bright light. The crowd Howls with delight.

From the middle of the cluster of Christians comes the song -"Christus Regnat".

SCENE 76 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

The scene is accompanied by music. Images shown from a distance, without dramatic shots.

Nero's terrace. With his sapphire monocle, Caesar looks out on the arena. Poppea's eyes shine with excitement. She embraces her husband's neck and shoulders.

Tigellinus wears an expression of contempt and triumph.

A lion lurks closer, readying to pounce on the tight cluster of kneeling people. He pounces and seizes in its mouth the neck of an old man.

The crowd goes wild.

Increasingly horrified by this sight, Chilon slides lower and lower into his seat.

The lions drag their victims across the sand, the arena is now filled with the screams of those being murdered.

SCENE 77 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

Chilon's head is tilted back unnaturally. Face pale, eyes closed, sweaty forehead. With a wild roar of laughter, Tigellinus jerks Chilon's arm.

TIGELLINUS

Look! Look! This is your doing!

Petronius from behind Tigellinus reaches out towards Chilon. With his carved cane he taps lightly on his pulsating Adam's apple.

PETRONIUS

The gods created him a foul villain. He has become a veritable demon! But even a demon cannot endure this.

Chilon wheezes, his eyes shut tight. He reaches breaking point.

CHILON

Enough, Caesar! Enough!

Vinicius looks up. He sees something and nudges Petronius's arm. Petronius follows his gaze. At the top of the arena stands Peter, making the sign of the cross with his hand. Standing in the light, he looks like a ghost.

VINICIUS

Look! Peter is here!

Peter's piercing eyes are looking straight at Petronius. Instead of Peter, all he can see is a pigeon in an oncoming white pigeon.

PETRONIUS

I can't see anyone.

Peter's piercing eyes are looking straight at Petronius, even though he denies his existence. Suddenly, a big white pigeon is appearing, where Peter was supposed to stand.

Some strange energy passes between them. The howling of the crowd in the Circus mixes with the roars of the maddened animals.

Tigellinus leans into Nero's ear.

TIGELLINUS

I have something even better arranged for tomorrow.

SCENE 78 TWILIGHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINO GARDENS

Twilight. Palatine Gardens. The area where cypress trees once grew is now covered with large crosses. On these are tied half naked people, their arms attached to the crosses by thick ropes, their heads hanging down, their bodies covered in bruises and marks from beatings.

The crosses are draped in dry garlands of ivy. Suddenly a large peal of trumpets.

Nero looks down on the scene from the windows of the Palatine. He makes a gesture and puts his monocle to his eye to examine the nearest cross. On it hangs Crispus.

Standing next to Nero is the pale Chilon, swaying on his feet.

SCENE 79 TWILIGHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINO GARDENS

Darkness falls. Close-up of the crucified Crispus. His head slowly rises.

The victim is still alive. He opens his eyes and stares at Chilon. His chapped lips move silently, his chest rising with each breath as his face shines. He whispers.

CRISPUS

I forgive and ask for forgiveness.

TIGELLINUS

Set the fire.

The ivy is immediately lit, lighting up the main avenue of the garden as the flames travel up the shafts of the crosses.

Chilon's white robe shines yellow and purple in the reflection of the fires. He hides his face in his hands and is shaken by spasms.

SCENE 80 TWILIGHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINO GARDENS

Chilon runs down the middle of the avenue past the burning crosses, the flames whipping at him as he tries to find an exit from the garden. Once past the fires, he trips and falls, crashing to the ground.

SCENE 81 TWILIGHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINE GARDENS

A hooded figure bends over Chilon and touches his arm.
Chilon fears to open his eyes.

CHILON

I am cursed, damned.

The face of Paul emerges from under the hood.

PAUL

I bring you salvation.

CHILON

For me there can be no salvation.

Paul then draws a cross on his forehead. From Chilon's chest comes a moan.

CHILO

Christ!

The Apostle Paul disappears back into the darkness.

SCENE 82 TWIGLIHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINE GARDENS

Trumpets, noise and fanfare.

Suddenly out of the darkness emerges a figure wearing a soot covered robe. He stands in front of the imperial retinue. It is Chilon. He points at Nero.

CHILO

Murderer of your own mother! Woe to you! It was you who set fire to Rome. And Rome will have its vengeance on you. Your time has passed.

He points dramatically at the burning crosses.

CHILON

I swear that the innocent are being killed here. The arsonist of Rome is this one! This man!

With his right hand Chilon points at Nero and freezes in that pose. Silence falls. At first single voices are heard, then a growing number of ominous cries rise up from the crowd.

CROWD

Arsonist! Murderer! Tyrant! Mother
Killer! Despot! Redbeard! Down with
Caesar! Down with tyranny!

SCENE 83 TWIGLIGHT_EXT_ROME_PALATINE GARDENS

A still burning stake collapses in front of the caravan of horses, scaring them and knocking Chilon to the ground. His head and neck are showered with sparks and burning splinters. The frightened horses panic and stampede, trampling Chilon. Wheels run over his limp body.

FADE OUT

SCENE 84-85 DAY_INT_ROME_PALATINO_NERO'S CHAMBER

FADE IN

VOICES (OFF)

Arsonist! Murderer! Tyrant! Mother
Killer! Nero the murderous dog! Who
set our city on fire?! You burnt my
house, you dog! We will have
vengeance!

Chamber in Pallatino - the palace of the emperor. Nero is walking around the chamber.

TIGELLINUS

The ship is waiting in Naples,
Caesar.

NERO

So we shall take a vacation on
Hellas after all?

Petronius stands before Caesar.

PETRONIUS

Before you sail Sire, and deprive
us of your divine presence, do
faithful Petronius one last favour.

NERO

What's that supposed to mean?

PETRONIUS

Bless the young couple.

NERO
You're getting married?

PETRONIUS
Vinicius wants to marry the Lygian
hostage.

TIGELLINUS
Nero, she's one of them. She's in
the prison.

PETRONIUS
She found herself there through
your stupidity, Tigellinus.

Tigellinus's face turns black with anger. Nero squints
suspiciously.

NERO
One thing that worries me,
Petronius, is that you take sides
with the arsonists.

Now Nero looks at Tigellinus.

NERO
We will organise a wedding the
likes of which Rome has never seen.

SCENE 86 TWILIGHT_EXT_ROME_PETRONIUS PALACE_COLLONADE

Twilight. In front of Petronius's home. The sky is covered
in driving clouds. Fires lit in the house cast long shadows
along the walls.

Leaning against the columns of the house is Vinicius,
waiting for word from Petronius. At the sight of his
chariot, he jumps up and waits at the front for it to stop.

VINICIUS
Tell me that you bring her freedom!

Petronius does not reply right away. Then from the darkness
appears a figure in a gray tunic. He's obviously in hiding.
He looks around nervously, making sure he isn't being
followed. He whispers.

NAZARIUS
Is that you, noble Vinicius?

VINICIUS
Nazarius? Where did you come from?

NAZARIUS
I have a message from Lygia. In her fever she keeps repeating your name. Ursus is with her.

VINICIUS
How do you know this?

NAZARIUS
I know a centurion.

VINICIUS
I'm going with you!

Nazarius begins to run off in panic. He stops, turns, and from a distance conveys the most important part of his message.

NAZARIUS
Lygia asks you, Master, to persevere in your love and trust of God.

Nazarius raises his eyes towards heaven. The moonlight filters directly onto his face. Suddenly the heavens open with lightning and thunder. The sudden downpour soaks them. Nazarius disappears in the pouring rain and darkness. Vinicius cries out to him, but the rain drowns out his words.

VINICIUS
I will wait for her! Always!

Petronius wraps his arm around Vinicius and forcefully brings him inside.

PETRONIUS(OFF)
Pull yourself together, soldier. Or pray, if you know how.

SCENE 87 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

Circus. Brilliant sunlight. Nero is on the terrace. With him is Tigellinus, Poppea, and even Hasto, Pitagoras and Faon. The sand in the arena has turned to pools of mud from the rain.

Petronius sits away from Nero, in an adjacent terrace, next to Vinicius, who is as white as a sheet. With dark rings under his eyes, he stares at the gates. Behind them armed PRAETORIANS hold prisoners.

As always, a peal of trumpets marks the beginning of the spectacle. Nero is curious how the spectacle is affecting Petronius and his nephew. He can't resist staring at them through his monocle.

Suddenly he bursts out laughing and shouts to Tigellinus, who is leaning on Nero's chair.

NERO

I underestimated you, Tigellinus.
You're worse than me.

TIGELLINUS

I had lessons from the best master,
Nero.

NERO

I can do anything, but you've
managed to amaze Petronius himself.
Look!

Petronius looks pale and exhausted. He slowly stands up. Now he can be seen standing tall above the others, staring at one point in the arena. He slowly turns his head and looks straight at Nero. Very slowly and clearly he speaks over the noise of the trumpets.

PETRONIUS

If their God really exists, what
will become of those who are
against Him?

The gate on the right opens, revealing the dark abyss of a tunnel.

A moment later a huge athletic figure emerges. Ursus enters the arena. Struck almost blind by the rays of the sun, he squints and looks around. He is half naked and devoid of any weapon. He kneels down and bows his head as if in prayer. He freezes in that position. The crowd begins to murmur, then scream.

SCENE 88 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

The left gate opens and an enormous German bull runs out. It has a half naked girl tied to its back. With chapped lips, a pale Vinicius whispers

VINICIUS
God, I trust in you.

He closes his eyes and mouths a silent prayer.

Ursus sees Lygia hanging limply across the bull's back. He charges towards the bull and extends his hands.

URSUS
(savage war cry) Ruuaaaaah!

The bull rears its powerful head, its horns ripping Ursus's left side. Blood pours from the wound.

URSUS
(a warriors' shout of pain)
Urraah!

Ursus falls to the ground as the crowd roars and the bull runs around the arena.

CROWDS
Get him! Get him! Kill the giant!
Bleed him like a bull!

The injured Ursus struggles to get up. He sizes up the beast and then lunges at it, grabbing it by the horns.

URSUS
(warrior's savage grunt and
cry) Uuurrrrrrrrah!

The bull starts shaking its head.

Ursus tightens his muscles around the bull's neck. The animal pushes back. Ursus plants his feet in the ground, halting the beast's advance and they remain momentarily frozen. A murmur of admiration rises from the crowd.

Ursus begins to twist the bulls head. Straining his muscles to their limit, he throws the beast to the ground. The animal's head, held in the giant's vise-like grip, begins to tilt downward. The beast lets out a roar as it begins to foam at the mouth.

A moment later, Ursus twists the bull's head into an unnatural position. Roaring, it falls to the sand, kicking with its hooves. Ursus kneels over the fallen beast, takes hold of Lygia and lifts her up. The arena goes crazy.

CROWDS

Giant! Giant! Giant! Giant!

Ursus holds her body up as he moves towards the imperial terrace.

The air is filled with the sound of thousands of screaming spectators. Ursus kneels, holding up Lygia, extending her towards Caesar.

CROWDS

Giant! Giant! Giant! Giant!

SCENE 89 DAY_EXT_ROME_CIRCUS

Imperial terrace. Nero looks down, squinting. Clearly upset, he throws down his monocle. He looks around. The crowd chants.

CROWD

Mercy! Mercy! Mercy! Free them!
Free them! Free them! Mercy! Mercy!
Free them! Free them! Mercy! Mercy!
Set them free!

From all sides thumbs go up - a sign of mercy. The whole arena is a forest of raised thumbs.

Nero does not want to accept their decision. He is furious. He looks to Poppea, Faon and the others for support. However, everyone is showing the thumbs up. Nero directs his gaze at Tigellinus. The pressure of the chanting crowd is enormous.

CROWD

Arsonist! Murderer! Tyrant! Mother
Killer! Despot! Redbeard! Down with
Caesar! Nero the murderous dog!
Down with tyranny!

Tigellinus gazes at the crowd. In the end, he too reluctantly raises his thumb. Suddenly, the crowd once again starts shouting malevolently at Caesar.

Nero still has yet to deliver his judgment. He keeps looking for at least one thumb turned down to support his decision.

He looks at Petronius. They stare at each other for a while. First, second, third look. And suddenly Petronius raises his hand and then holding this position, without taking his eyes off Nero, he changes direction and shows a thumbs down.

It is just as Petronius expected. Nero despises his former friend, seeing in him the antithesis of everything he hates in his own life. He cannot bear the thought of acting like Petronius.

Caesar's thumb slowly drifts upwards.

A look of relief passes over Petronius's face.

SCENE 90 DAY_INT_CIRCUS_DARK CORRIDOR TO THE STREET VIEW

Ursus walks down the corridor leading from the arena towards the light coming into the Circus from the street.

Vinicius stands in the sun's rays, on the other side of the bars.

The guard opens the gates of the Circus and Ursus takes a step towards freedom. He gives Vinicius the body of the unconscious Lygia.

Vinicius turns round, carrying his beloved away towards a new life, away from the Circus, away from Rome.

SCENE 91 DAY_INT_ROME_PETRONIUS PALACE_LIBRARY +
EXT_ROME_PANORAMA

The morning light penetrates to the library. Petronius leans on Eunice's arm. They sit in the library, next to the window, overlooking the garden, huddled in a beam of sunlight, staring into the distance, motionless.

The centurion Hasto stands at the door behind them. Even he does not want to disturb this peace and waits a moment before speaking up.

HASTO

On Caesar's orders, Petronius, I
bring you death sentence.

The camera zooms out from the centurion's face and continues as Petronius and Eunice enter the frame, leaning against each other, their heads touching.

When we finally see their faces, they are frozen in a smile, but devoid of life. Their eyes are closed.

Off screen can be heard a whispered conversation, but the camera still continues to move backwards. In addition, going upwards - slowly like a balloon, like a soul escaping the body.

PETRONIUS (OFF)
Do you think Vinicius and Lygia
have reached Sicily by now?

EUNICE(OFF)
Oh, yes. Surely. They were carried
on the wings of love.

PETRONIUS(OFF)
It's time we also took a journey.

EUNICE(OFF)
Finally, Master, I'll have you at
my side, forever.

PETRONIUS(OFF)
It's a pity you do not wish to
stay. In my testament I left you
all my property.

EUNICE(OFF)
Where we are going now, we won't
lack anything!

The camera goes on, floating, leaving the bodies of the people below and flows over the Petronius Palace gardens.

Suddenly, there is a white pigeon taking flight. The camera follows him.

SCENE 92 EXT_ROME_PANORAMA

The camera continues to float, following the pigeon.

Camera soared for bird so high that suddenly found itself among the clouds. Dairy light completely overlighted the view.

When the camera broke through the clouds, you can see the landscape, which is filled to the horizon with a waterline, or mirrors, or clouds.

How aviator loses the consciousness of his position, so we do not know at first that we see only a reflection of a bird.

The camera follows the pigeon as in a dream, farther and farther.

After a moment, the prospect of full of light, glare and seductive color shows its unreal, heavenly meaning.

PAUL (OFF)

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Thus faith, hope and love - these three endure: but the greatest of these is love.