PONTIUS PILATE

A Novel

Books by Paul L. Maier

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PONTIUS PILATE

A Novel

PAUL L. MAIER

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For Joan

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Preface

The trial would become the central event in history. But for the judgment of one man, a faith shared by nearly a billion people today might not have been born. At least it would not have developed as we know it. The decision of the Roman prefect of Judea on the day called Good Friday may have stemmed from pressures of the moment, but it was conditioned by the turbulent politics of the Mediterranean world at that time. What really happened at that most famous of all trials? Was Pilate's judgment motivated by cowardice, expedience, or necessity? Where did he come from, and what became of him afterward—this man who unwittingly switched the flow of history into a new channel? This book proposes several answers.

There is too little source material on Pontius Pilate for a biography, yet too much for recourse to mere fiction. These pages attempt a compromise which might be called the documented historical novel. It seemed an appropriate genre for a case, such as Pilate's, in which much authentic data is available, yet with insurmountable gaps in the information.

In constructing this account, I first searched for all surviving bricks of fact, then cemented them together with regrettably fictional mortar into what I hope is something of an accurate restoration of the original structure of Pilate's career. As a documentary novel, it differs from regular historical fiction in that *no* liberties were taken with the facts: the bricks

were used as discovered, without alteration. Reference notes on the most significant and controversial points of scholarship are provided at the end of the book. Most of these notes involve original sources, some of which provide new historical data.

To aim for accuracy, I adopted the following rules: (1) All persons named in this book are historical characters; no proper name has been invented—if it is not known, it is not given. (2) No portrayal of any personality, no description of any event, and no episode, or even detail contradicts known historical fact (unless by author's error). (3) Only where all evidence is lacking is "constructed history," based on probabilities, used to fill in the gaps. Even here, as much use as possible is made of authentic historical data as ballast, also in dialogue. Important constructed segments have been identified as such in the Historical Note at the close of the book.

The role of the prosecution on Good Friday has, of course, been bitterly debated. I have largely followed the New Testament version of the trial because even Talmudic sources concerning Jesus substantially accord with it, as demonstrated in the Notes. But for later generations to draw anti-Semitic conclusions from Jewish involvement on Good Friday was an incredible blunder. The prosecution, acting in absolute good faith, still represented only a very small fraction of the Jews of the time, and its responsibility was never transferable. Indeed, to be anti-Semitic because of Good Friday is as ridiculous as hating Italians because Nero once threw Christians to the lions.

This portrayal has also tried to tell "the greatest story ever told" from its least-told vantage point, uncovering what may be one of the last aspects of that story which still needs telling. What happened in Palestine in the early first century is usually viewed from a Christian or Jewish—not Roman—perspective. Events in Judea are rarely linked to that larger complex which controlled the province: the Roman Empire. Yet the culmination of Jesus' career was not a story of one city, but a tale of two—Jerusalem *and Rome*. This, then, is the other part of the story.

Paul L. Maier
Western Michigan University
January 22, 1968

Preface to the Second Edition

I am pleased that this book has gone through so many printings and translations since its first publication twenty-two years ago. Since that time, archaeological discoveries and historical research have not outdated any of the findings in these pages, and have, in fact, confirmed several of them.

Paul L. Maier
Western Michigan University
March 1, 1990

Preface to the Third Edition

Ever since the first Doubleday edition of this book in 1968, I have been watching for any fresh documentary evidence that might enhance the solid historical record on Pontius Pilate in this book, but have found nothing, so the text stands unchanged.

Surprisingly, however, some very important archaeological discoveries have occurred, all of which directly support the biblical record on which

this book is based. In addition to the cornerstone of the Tiberieum in Caesarea with Pilate's name on it, already covered in these pages, the bones of the first crucified victim ever discovered came to light in 1970 in northeastern Jerusalem. A seven-inch spike was still lodged in the heel bones, thus overturning critical claims that victims were tied to crosses, not nailed as in Jesus' case.

Even more exciting, the very bones of Joseph Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who prosecuted Jesus before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate on the morning of Good Friday, were discovered by accident in the fall of 1990. The bones were in a beautifully crafted ossuary inscribed with Caiaphas's name in a first-century burial site at a park south of the Temple area in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The geographical and archaeological sites in Galilee and Judea associated with both Jesus and Pontius Pilate also support the New Testament in every instance, and so the hard evidence from both past and present shows that recent attempts to deny that Jesus was a historical figure only advertise the folly of any who make such unsupportable claims.

I am more than grateful to the reading public here and abroad for their generous response to Pontius Pilate for nearly half a century, and commend Kregel Publications for its continued commitment to biblically based resources that inform and inspire readers.

Paul L. Maier
Western Michigan University
November 11, 2013

Notable Characters

Roman Prefects (Years of Rule)

Annius Rufus AD 12–15
Valerius Gratus AD 15–26
Pontius Pilatus AD 26–36
Marcellus AD 36–37
Marullus AD 37–41

Herods of Judea (Years of Reign)

Herod the Great, king of Judea 37–4 BC
Pheroras, tetrarch of Perea 20–5 BC
Herod Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea 4 BC–AD 6
Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee 4 BC–AD 39
Herod Agrippa I, king of Batanaea AD 37–41, king of Galilee AD 40–41, king of all Judea, AD 41–44
Herod Agrippa II, tetrarch of Chalcis AD 50–52, tetrarch of Batanaea AD 52–100

Roman Emperors (Years of Reign)

Augustus (Octavian) 31 BC–AD 14
Tiberius AD 14–37
Gaius (Caligula) AD 37–41
Claudius AD 41–54
Nero AD 54–68

Other Major Characters

Procula, Pilate's wife
Joseph Caiaphas, high priest of Judea
L. Aelius Sejanus, prefect (commander) of the Praetorian Guard
Yeshu Hannosri, Jesus the Nazarene
Cornelius, courier and later centurion for Pilate
Rabbi Helcias, Temple treasurer
Salome, daughter of Herodias
Herodias, wife of Herod-Philip
Herod-Philip, son of Herod the Great
Chuza, chief steward (manager) for Herod Antipas
Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas
Malchus, servant of Caiaphas
John the Baptizer (John the Baptist)

PONTIUS PILATE

A Novel

Chapter 1

A salvo of trumpet blasts echoed across Rome, saluting the sunrise on the first of April, A.D. 26. It was the daily signal for synchronizing water clocks with the moment of the sun's appearance, a courtesy provided by men of the Praetorian Guard, billetted in their new camp at the edge of the city. Rome's day had begun at least an hour earlier with the first coral glimmer of dawn, when many of the merchants started opening their shops. By the time the sun peered over the hills east of Rome, the city was a raucous symphony of clattering carts, hammer blows, and screaming babies. Some in the leisure class allowed themselves the luxury of slumbering on till seven o'clock, but only those who had wined to excess would rise any later. The citizens of Rome took advantage of every daylight hour, because nights were dark, and illumination poor.

From the commanding heights of his palace terrace on the Palatine Hill, Tiberius Caesar Augustus looked out across his noisy capital with a lethargic stare, half hoping that Rome would somehow vanish along with the morning mist, that all fourteen districts of the city might slowly dissolve into the Tiber and be disgorged into the Mediterranean like so much waste. Tiberius was well through his twelfth year as *princeps*, "first citizen" or emperor of Rome, that lofty office which he could not enjoy because of its demands, nor yet lay down without shattering precedent and inviting personal peril.

Unbiased voices in Rome agreed that Tiberius was governing surprisingly well, considering his unenviable role of having had to follow the glittering career of his stepfather, the now-Divine Augustus. And Tiberius had come to power under the most unflattering circumstances. Augustus had first appointed others to succeed him, naming Tiberius only after these had died. Now Tiberius nourished an obsessive resentment at having to be "emperor by default," listening too hard for the inevitable whispered comparisons and brooding too often over his bitter, corrosive memories of Augustus.

A tall, erect figure despite his sixty-six years, the princeps turned back into the palace for a breakfast of wine-soaked bread, pullet eggs, and a brimming cup of *mulsum*, a wine-and-honey mixture without which no Roman could face the day. Tiberius ate alone, fatedly alone. The joy of family life was denied him. When he was a boy of four, the first tragedy had occurred: his mother Livia divorced his father in order to marry Augustus, a bit of ambitious social-climbing common enough for that era. What scandalized Rome was the fact that on the day of her second wedding, Livia was six months pregnant—by her previous husband. That night, the Statue of Virtue supposedly fell on its face in the Forum, and had to be repurified at great expense. Not until his own happy marriage with Vipsania could Tiberius forget his complicated childhood.

But Augustus doomed that marriage, too. He insisted that Tiberius, as future successor, divorce his beloved wife Vipsania in order to marry his only offspring, Julia, instead—so desperately did Augustus want his personal bloodline to continue. Yet Julia soon became Rome's civic personification of vice, a woman so adulterous and vile that Augustus himself banished her for life to a Mediterranean island.

Only his son was left to Tiberius, Drusus, the promising heir apparent, but he had died of a strange illness three years earlier. Tiberius Caesar, sovereign of seventy million people in an empire extending from the English Channel to the gates of Mesopotamia, was a man quite alone.

He beckoned to a servant, pondered for a moment, and said, "Send word to Sejanus that I'll see him this afternoon at the eighth hour." The domestic delivered the message to one of the praetorian bodyguards, who hurried off eastward toward the mansion of Sejanus on the slopes of the Esquiline.

L. Aelius Sejanus was prefect, or commander, of the Praetorian Guard, that corps of elite troops who protected the emperor and served as Rome's government police. A swarthy, muscular figure of large build, Sejanus was today flawlessly draped in a white woolen public toga. The prefect was middle-aged—though ageless in the eyes of the women of Rome—and he betrayed Etruscan ancestry in his non-aquiline features, so unlike the typical, high-bridged Roman face.

The inner Sejanus, his real loyalties and true political motives, was a storm center of controversy. Many claimed that Rome never had a more selfless and public-minded official, certainly never a more efficient one. But his opponents hinted darkly that Sejanus was a true Etruscan of old pre-Republic stock, and, as such, Rome's mortal enemy, a ghost of Tarquin risen up to haunt the Empire.

His rise had been meteoric. Though only of equestrian, or middle-class, status, Sejanus now possessed powers which made blue-blooded, patrician senators scurry to join his following, or sulk jealously outside it. Part of his attainment was inherited. Augustus had named his father, Seius Strabo, prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and Tiberius had appointed Sejanus to the same post, sending Strabo abroad to govern Egypt.

In the decade since that time, Sejanus had gradually enhanced his office; no longer was it merely a steppingstone to authority, but now represented poised, concentrated power itself. His brilliant reorganization of the praetorians had accomplished it. He had proposed to unite the nine praetorian cohorts, or battalions, scattered throughout Italy into one large barracks near Rome, where the elite home guard would be far more readily available to the emperor in any emergency. Tiberius had approved the idea, and a sprawling new *Castra Praetoria* was erected on the Viminal Hill, just outside the northeast city walls of Rome. But these troops were loyal to their prefect, and when Sejanus spoke, nine thousand guardsmen listened and obeyed.

Too much power in the hands of one man? Tiberius thought not. He needed this instant security, and he had never detected in Sejanus a shred of disloyalty to himself or "the Senate and the Roman People," as the Empire officially designated itself. Tiberius judged that a man like Sejanus was indispensable at this stage of Rome's governmental evolution. No

longer a republic, not yet a fully developed empire, Rome badly needed a strong administrative bureaucracy in place of her hodgepodge of commissions. Tiberius had this problem in mind when he urged Sejanus to serve also as his deputy in supervising the developing civil service of the Empire.

The message from the Palatine was delivered to Sejanus just as the two consuls for the year 26 A.D. were leaving his house. They had come to sound him out on rumors about Tiberius's plans for an extended vacation away from Rome. Characteristically, Sejanus would neither confirm nor deny the news. As the honor guard of ten lictors quickly shouldered their fasces and rattled to attention to escort the consuls through the streets of Rome, the two could be heard arguing over Sejanus, Calvisius whining his objections to the man, and Gaetulicus just as stubbornly defending him, a mirror in miniature of Rome's collective sentiments in the matter.

From the library where he conducted his official business, Sejanus looked into the atrium, or entrance court, of his mansion and saw the imperial messenger threading through the crowd of officials, clients, and functionaries, all waiting to see him. Upon reading the note from Tiberius, Sejanus rose quickly from his chair and took a few steps off to one side, turning his back to the noisy throng in the atrium in order to give himself a few moments of concentration. With shoulders hunched and chin to his chest, he remained motionless for perhaps half a minute, gathering together in his mind all the diverse factors bearing upon one of his latest political moves. Yes, he decided, the time was right to approach the emperor. But there was at least one step necessary before that. Grasping a stylus, he inscribed the following on a wax tablet:

> L. Aelius Sejanus to Pontius Pilatus, greeting. I should like to see you early this afternoon, perhaps about the seventh hour. Had I not promised lunch to Domitius Afer, we could have dined together. Another time. Farewell.

The message written, he turned briskly to summon his next visitor.

A guardsman returning to the *Castra Praetoria* brought the note to the tribune of the first praetorian cohort, acting camp commander whenever

Sejanus was absent, Pontius Pilatus. Pilate read the message and frowned slightly. Not that he disliked Sejanus—quite to the contrary—but he felt saturated with embarrassment over what had happened the previous night. At a party in honor of the praetorian officers' staff, when everyone had imbibed freely, Pilate had proposed a toast to "Biberius Caldius Mero" instead of "Tiberius Claudius Nero," a too-clever pun on the emperor's given name, which meant "Drinker of Hot Wine." Everyone roared with approving guffaws except Sejanus, who merely stared at Pilate, a shivering, superior stare which the tribune spent much of the morning trying to forget.

If Tiberius got word of his indiscretion, he could lose more than his praetorian rank. Just the year before, he recalled with a shudder, a history published by Senator Cremutius Cordus had dared to eulogize the Caesar-slayers Brutus and Cassius as "the last of the Romans." Accused of treason, Cordus starved himself to death and his writings were burned. Speech was no longer so free as it had been in Rome's republican era. With an inner chill, Pilate prepared for the confrontation with Sejanus.

The message from Sejanus had been civil enough, but the time for the appointment was extraordinary, just after lunch when most Romans took a brief nap. This had to be important. After a quick—and wineless—meal, Pilate decided to change to civilian garb. His tunic sported the *angusticlavia*, a narrow bordering strip of purple running the length of the garment and indicating that the wearer was a member of the equestrian order, a class second only to the senatorial, which boasted the *laticlavia*, a wider purple strip. In public, the tunic was largely covered by a toga, and draping the toga was nearly an art. Every fold had to hang properly, gracefully, and just the right amount of purple had to show from the tunic: too much would be ostentatious, too little would betray false modesty. Pilate let several folds of purple appear near the shoulder, a compromise in good taste.

Accompanied by an aide, Pilate made his way down Patrician Street, a major axis leading southwest from the *Castra Praetoria* toward the heart of Rome. Except for his attire, he was not distinguishable from the milling Romans of all classes using that thoroughfare. Less than middle-aged and in the prime of his years, Pilate was of medium build, and his

square-cut face was topped with curly dark hair duly pomaded with olive oil. He looked more typically Roman than Sejanus, but, like his superior, Pilate was also not of purely Roman stock. His clan, the Pontii, were originally Samnites, hill cousins of the Latin Romans, who lived along the Apennine mountain spine farther down the Italian peninsula, and who had almost conquered Rome in several fierce wars. The Pontii were of noble blood, but when Rome finally absorbed the Samnites, their aristocracy was demoted to the Roman equestrian order. Still, the Pontii had the consolation of ranking as *equites illustriores*, "more distinguished equestrians," and members of Pilate's clan had served Rome in numerous offices, both civil and military. Some had entered the business world, made fortunes, and even regained senatorial status in the Empire.

A sharp turn eastward up two winding lanes on the Esquiline brought them to the sprawling home of Sejanus. As Pilate was escorted into the atrium, the steward announced that Sejanus could see no one else that afternoon. A troop of disappointed clients, office-seekers, and hangers-on left the premises.

"Come in, Pilate," Sejanus invited, with unanticipated warmth. The two moved through an elegantly columned peristyle into the library. "I assume the garrison is running smoothly in my absence?"

On his guard, Pilate replied with the expected pleasantry.

"I have an appointment with the princeps in an hour," Sejanus said, his smile fading, "so we won't have as much time as I'd like."

"About last night, sir," Pilate faltered, cleared his throat, then resumed with just a trace of Oscan dialect in his Latin, "I regret how the wine must have addled my wits. My little joke was—"

"Oh . . . that," Sejanus broke in. "Yes. Clever, but dangerously clever. Better forget that pun. But we were among friends, so we can let it rest. Now, if that had been a public banquet, matters might have taken a different turn."

Vastly relieved, Pilate was promising to bridle his tongue in the future when Sejanus again interrupted. "As a high-ranking member of our equestrian order, you have an excellent education, Pilate, and you've nearly completed your military obligations with distinction. Now, what would you like to do after you've finished your stint with the praetorians?

Resume your rise in the order of offices open to the 'equestrian career'—a civil service directorship, say, prefect of the grain supply? A foreign prefecture? Or, perhaps, stay on with the Guard and replace me as praetorian prefect some day?"

Pilate was not reassured by the smirk that accompanied Sejanus's last remark. A subtle man himself, and closer to the prefect than most Romans, he detected a patronizing ring to the question but did not rise to the bait. "Not your post—I think I'd collapse under the demands of the office," he responded dutifully. "But, while I've made no definite plans, I do prefer administration, so I hope to serve Rome in some kind of public office."

"Good. Too many promising members of our class are deserting politics for business—yet the Empire needs administrators now, not merchants."

The two men sat back easily in their chairs, to all outward appearances merely enjoying a casual conversation. But Pilate knew better and remained alert, having learned from experience that Sejanus was apt to circle his subject for quite some time, picking up bits of potentially useful information before settling on the real purpose of an interview. Rather than push the pace, Pilate offered measured responses.

Sejanus then turned the conversation in a more profitable direction. "Now, Pilate, let me ask you several random questions, and don't bother trying to fathom their significance, for the moment. First, what is the city saying about Sejanus?"

"The praetorians are loyal to you to a man. So is most of Rome. Tiberius seems distracted lately, if you'll pardon my presumption. He's aging, of course. And ever since the death of Drusus he seems a changed man—morose, suspicious, sullen. He's rarely seen in public. He doesn't get on well with the Senate. The general feeling is that for the good of Rome, a strong executive agent is needed to run the government for him, now more than ever. And you are—"

"Enough diplomacy, Pontius Pilatus. Be candid enough to show the other side of the coin."

"I was just coming to that," Pilate quickly responded, sensing that Sejanus was testing his integrity as well as his tact. "But you know best who your opponents are: Agrippina and her party, perhaps a third of the

Senate—patricians who resent any equestrian in power—and a few stubborn republicans who feel you're holding together a government which should be allowed to collapse."

Agrippina, widow of Tiberius's popular nephew Germanicus, was an arch enemy of Sejanus. She resented his rising influence over the princeps at a time when her sons were next in line for the throne, while Tiberius equally resented her ardent campaigning in their behalf. Agrippina and Sejanus, then, constituted opposite poles in the highly charged party politics of Rome.

"Yes, that's an adequate catalogue of the opposition," Sejanus commented to Pilate, "but what about the commoners, the men on the street?"

"The plebeians have never been better off. Rome is at peace. The economy is prospering, and you are given credit for much of this. In candor, though, it's also known that you recently wrote to Tiberius, asking for Livilla's hand in marriage, and that he did *not* give you permission—"

"This is public knowledge?" Sejanus's eyes were widening.

"Some of the Guard heard it gossiped in the Forum. But it's also thought that you'll have your way—eventually. And the people see you as a patient man."

Livilla was the widow of Tiberius's son Drusus, and her affection for Sejanus so soon after her husband's death was a little below decorum. And since such a marriage would have driven Agrippina insane with jealousy, Tiberius had wisely disapproved it at this time.

"Yes, it was a bit premature. An error on my part, Pilate. Love sometimes interferes with intellect, as you must know! . . . Now, several other issues. Are you a religious man, Tribune?"

The query clearly caught Pilate by surprise. He shifted his position and cleared his throat. "Well . . . naturally I revere the official gods of the state—"

"Yes, of course. I'll wager you're a real fanatic," said Sejanus with a satirical smirk, since neither of them took Jupiter or Juno seriously, or any of the other Greek deities rebaptized under Latin names. Lately, it seemed, the gods were invoked only for proper emphasis in curses.

"Well, how about philosophy, then," Sejanus probed, "the intellectual's substitute for religion? Which school do you follow?"

Pilate reflected a moment. "I'd consider my view something of a cross between Skepticism and Stoicism. Searching for ultimate truth is fine exercise, but has anyone ever found it? If so, what *is* truth? Truth as taught by the Platonists or the Epicureans? By Aristotle or the Cynics? To that extent I suppose I'm a Skeptic . . . On the other hand, Skepticism alone would seem inadequate for any rule of life. Here, I think, the Stoics, with their magnificent emphasis on duty, and the oneness of Providence, have something to teach the Roman state."

"Well, what about Jewish monotheism, then?"

"The Jews are supposed to believe in one divinity, but they're hardly Stoics!"

"Any other opinions on the Jews, as a people?"

"I think any Roman would agree that they're a hard-working but terribly inbred and clannish sort of folk, always quarreling among themselves. Yet they bury their differences when it comes to competing with our businessmen! No, I don't think Jews make very good Romans, and you remember the Fulvia scandal, of course."

Several years earlier, four disreputable Jews had persuaded a Roman matron named Fulvia to send as an offering to the temple at Jerusalem a purple robe and some gold, which they promptly appropriated for themselves. When he learned of the swindle, Tiberius furiously banished the Jews from Rome, along with some foreign cultists and astrologers—the first such Roman persecution.

"I have to see the emperor soon," Sejanus continued, "so allow me now to be brief. Valerius Gratus, the prefect of Judea, has been in office there eleven years, and the princeps and I think it's time for a change, an opinion, I'm glad to say, which Gratus also shares. In a word, I plan to suggest you as *praefectus Iudaeae* to succeed Gratus—if you approve." He paused. "Now, before you tell me otherwise, let me give you some of the background. At the moment, Judea is an especially important post, since there's no governor in the province of Syria during the current interim."

"What about Aelius Lamia?" objected Pilate.

"Lamia!" Sejanus laughed. "He's *legatus* of Syria all right—in title, but certainly not in fact. The princeps mistrusts him, and he has to serve his term of office here in Rome as absentee legate. So there's no brother

governor just across the border in Syria to assist the Judean prefect if he runs into difficulty. Therefore we need one of our best men in that post. I thought of you for two reasons: a prefecture would be next in order for your equestrian career; and also your record—it's excellent; it speaks for itself."

"Thank you, Prefect! I'm honored that you thought of me in this connection," he managed to say smoothly.

Actually, Pilate was overwhelmed. A provincial governorship was a dramatic promotion for him, the largest step upward in that sequence of offices which the Romans called "the equestrian career." In assessing his future, Pilate had hoped eventually for a governorship, but had never anticipated Judea. Gratus had been such an able administrator that one simply never thought of replacing him.

"I'm rather curious, though, as to why you had me in mind *for Judea*," Pilate added, stalling for time in which to organize his reactions.

"Your experience in that quarter of the world, of course. You served, I seem to recall, as administrative military tribune with the Twelfth Legion. Correct?"

"Yes, but that was in Syria."

"Next door to Judea," said Sejanus, with a wave of his hand. "But perhaps you're not interested in governing a province?"

"Quite to the contrary! When do I sail?" Smiling, Pilate quickly ascribed his reticence simply to surprise.

"As you know, I'm sure," continued Sejanus, "your salary will be adequate—100,00 sesterces*—not to mention the perquisites. And if your performance warrants it, your stipend can be increased proportionately. The Jews are difficult to govern, of course, so you'll be earning your wage. But after your term in Judea, greater honors might await you in the government here, especially if you serve Rome well abroad."

Pilate was about to pose some questions when he was again interrupted, conversations with the praetorian prefect being notoriously one-sided. "But all of this is only conditional at the moment. Tiberius must first approve you, of course, and this afternoon I'll begin the process of winning that approval. I'll start by citing the needs of Judea, and then

* About $10,000 at current valuation, though see the Notes for further discussion.

casually mention your name and background. Midway in our discussion I'll refer to you again, and once more at the close. By then you'll be something of an old friend to the princeps. This doesn't mean, of course, that he'll approve you today. Never. That would look as if he were acceding to me, and he's sensitive to criticism on that score. Tiberius will 'decide' on you in a month or so, and that will be it."

"Do you think I should plan for the prefecture, or wait for Tiberius's approval?"

"Plan. I'm not going to suggest any other candidates, and I don't think the emperor has any in mind."

With that he escorted Pilate out to the atrium, and prepared for his own visit to the Palatine.

Pilate stepped out into an afternoon that had become unseasonably warm. A southwest wind was pouring down from the Aventine, carrying with it a fresh, wheaty smell from the large state granaries along the Tiber. Soon it would rain, but not till late in the afternoon.

While returning to the *Castra*, Pilate luxuriated in his transformed prospects. He had come expecting a reprimand, no, a cashiering; he had left with a Roman province. To govern Judea would be more than a challenge, of course. From all reports, it was an enormously complex task to keep the Jews satisfied under Rome's rule. He knew that Palestine had been restive and turbulent ever since Pompey conquered it nearly ninety years earlier. Rome had tried indirect government under King Herod and direct administration under her prefects, but a growing hostility between Roman and Jew in that sun-saturated land had still given birth to a series of riots and rebellions, each of which was put down in blood.

This was the prospect which troubled Pilate. He tried to analyze Sejanus's unexpressed motives for selecting him, and it soon became rather clear. Pilate had gained the reputation of being a tough commander ever since he had helped put down a mutiny in the Twelfth Legion by an adroit combination of oratory and force, applied in fairly equal parts. Word of Pilate's role reached Sejanus, and he had sent him a commendatory letter on that occasion. Maintaining control was the first commandment in Sejanus's decalog.

Suddenly, Pilate wondered if his prefect had a deeper motive. What

about Lamia, the absentee governor-without-a-province? Was it only Tiberius who was suspicious of him and prevented his going to Syria? What about Sejanus? Several years earlier, Lamia had crossed swords with Sejanus in a public trial and since then had gone over to the party of Agrippina. And though quarantined to Rome, eastern affairs did pass over his desk. Someone, therefore, had to represent the party of Sejanus in the East, now that his father, who had been prefect of Egypt, was dead. Someone? Himself!

Well and good. For several years, he had staked his career to the fortunes of Sejanus, his fellow equestrian who was now second only to the emperor, and that calculated decision had paid off handsomely. Judea would be a formidable assignment, but if he succeeded, in Sejanus's words, "greater honors await you in the government here." It was a typical Sejanism—hyperbole with a dash of satire—but it gilded Pilate's prospects.