

FORUM ROMANUM: SHOW #16

De Artibus Magicis

LVII A.D.

(quingquagesimo septimo anno Domini)

DCCCX A.V.C.

(octingentesimo decimo anno ab urbe condita)

I. Salutatio

Favonius: Salvete, omnes! Mihi nomen est Marcus Favonius et hoc est Forum Romanum! Quid novi est hodie? Brevi tempore videbimus. Ante omnia, autem, ecce Dictum Hodiernum!

II. Dictum Hodiernum

Lector: Hoc est dictum hodiernum: Non semper ea sunt quae videntur.

III. Quid novi?

On the Art of Magic

57 A.D.

810 A.U.C.

(810 years after the founding of Rome)

I. Greeting

Favonius: Hello everyone! My name is Marcus Favonius, and this is Forum Romanum! What's new today? We'll see in a little bit. But before everything else, here is the saying of the day!

II. Saying of the Day

Lector: This is the saying of the day: Things are not always what they seem.

III. What's new?

Favonius: Verba notanda. Et nunc videamus quid novi sit. Hodie spectaculum novum insolitumque visum est. Imperator Nero Claudius Caesar divi filius ludos edidit et—quod maxime mirandum est—nonnullos ex ordine senatorio et equestri coegit ut in ludis ipsis certarent! Cui facto multi spectatores reclamabant, inter se murmurantes hoc factum infra dignitatem esse; apud vulgus tamen erat aliquid gaudii spectare nobiles viros tam ridiculos factos. Constat omnibus ludos scaenicos et circenses maximi momenti Neroni esse, nam illis rebus operam studiose dare solet. Et nunc oportet nos introducere hominem insignem et hodiernam quae est cum Iulia Pauli.

IV. Persona Notanda

Iulia: Gratias, Favoni. Mecum est Locusta, venefica fama notissima. Iubeo te salvere, Locusta!

Favonius: Words to remember. And now let's see what's new. Today a new and unusual spectacle was seen. The emperor Nero Claudius Caesar, son of a god, put on games and – which is particularly to be wondered at – forced some from the senatorial and equestrian ranks to compete in those very games! Many spectators were crying out against this action, whispering together that this action was very improper; but still in the crowd there was some joy to see the noble men made so ridiculous. All agree that the theater and chariot races are particularly important to Nero, for he is accustomed to work diligently in those areas. And now it's appropriate for us to introduce the famous, contemporary person who is with Julia Pauli.

IV. A Person You Should Meet

Iulia: Thanks, Favonius. With me is Locusta, a very well-known poisoner. Hello, Locusta!

Locusta: Lucusta nominari malo, si non incommodumst, tametsi multi me Locustam appellant.

Iulia: Bene, Lucusta. Ut fama est, tu in amicitiam aliquam Neronis Caesaris recepta est, nonne?

Locusta: Ita est. Neronem ego novi et is me.

Iulia: Sunt multi qui dicant te propter venenorum scientiam tuam etiam in amicitiam Agrippinae, matris Neronis, receptam esse.

Locusta: Fortasse de morte divi Claudii nunc loqueris?

Iulia: Etiam. Dicunt Claudium fungis veneno imbutis mortuum esse, enimvero dicunt te hoc venenum Agrippinae, Claudii uxori, dedit.

Locusta: I prefer to be called 'Lucusta', if it isn't inconvenient, although many do call me 'Locusta'.

Iulia: Fine, Lucusta. As it is reported, you are a friend of Nero Caesar, aren't you?

Locusta: Yes. I know Nero and he knows me.

Iulia: There are many who say that you became a friend of Agrippina, the mother of Nero, because of your knowledge of poisons.

Locusta: Perhaps now you are speaking about the death of the divine Claudius?

Iulia: Yes. They say that Claudius died after eating mushrooms soaked in poison, and they say that you gave this poison to Agrippina, the wife of Claudius.

Locusta: Nec aio nec nego. Multi fungis malis mortui sunt. Haec solent fieri.

Iulia: Etiam idem dicunt tua opera Neronem veneno Britannicum necavisse, Propterea quod Nero te divitiis amplissimis remuneratus.

Locusta: Sane sunt multi qui ita putant. Neronem me divitiorem fecisse fateor, sed propter medicamenta potionesque efficaces quae ego ei ipsi paravi. Non semper ea sunt quae videntur.

Iulia: Sed tu narra mihi, si incommodum non est, quales potiones igitur paraveris?

Locusta: Quae prosint gutturi, nam Nero, ut omnes bene sciunt, tenui gutture cantat.

Iulia: Tu ergo es medica non venefica.

Locusta: I neither admit it nor deny it. Many have died from bad mushrooms. These things happen.

Iulia: And, likewise, they say that by your work Nero Britannicus died from poison, on account of which Nero rewarded you with incredible wealth.

Locusta: Of course, there are many who think so. I admit that Nero made me rather rich, but because of the medicines and useful tonics which I prepared for him. Things aren't always what they seem.

Iulia: But tell me then, if it isn't inconvenient, what sort of tonics you prepared?

Locusta: Those which are good for the throat, for Nero, as everyone well knows, sings with a tight throat.

Iulia: Therefore, you're a doctor, not a poisoner.

Locusta: Ita dicas. Non sum ignara et medicamentorum et venenorum.

Iulia: Et nil in morte nec Claudii nec Britannici versata es?

Locusta: Satis de his rebus iam dixi. Fortasse sic voluerunt di immortales nam, ut aiunt, “Summa sedes non capit duos.”

Iulia: Hoc est quod dicunt. Sed narra tu nobis, si non molestum est, quare tu scias potiones medicamentaque parare.

Locusta: Narrabo. Cum adhuc essem puella in Gallia habitans occurri cuidam vetulae, peritissimae arte disciplinaque magica.

Iulia: Unde fuit haec vetula?

Locusta: Thessalia scilicet, in Graecia. Nonne tu

Locusta: As you say. I am not unaware of both medicines and poisons.

Iulia: And you had no role in the death either of Claudius or of Britannicus?

Locusta: I’ve said enough already about these things. Perhaps the immortal gods wanted it thus for, as they say, “The highest seat of power does not hold two.”

Iulia: This is what they say. But tell us, if it is no trouble, why you know how to prepare tonics and medicines.

Locusta: I’ll tell you. When I was still a girl living in Gaul, I met a certain little old lady, very skilled in the art and discipline of magic.

Iulia: Where did this little old lady come from?

Locusta: Thessaly, of course, in Greece. Surely

iam scis omnes quae artibus magicis bene uti
sciant a Thessalia venire?!

Iulia: Ita vero, iam audiui Thessaliam esse loca
magis strigisque frequentia.

Locusta: Verum est. Et haec vetula Thessalica
me plurima docebat de venenis et de herbis quae
vim maximam habent, et de multis rebus aliis—
astrologia et augurio agendo. Etiam mihi dixit se
scire cum animalibus avibusque loqui.

Iulia: Verum hoc ridiculum est! Desiste ludos
facere!

Locusta: Non mentior. Re vera, olim, multa
nocte, hisce oculis egomet vidi hanc vetulam,
quodam cantu facto, corpus unguere et, dicto
citius, bubo facta est!

you already know that all who know how to use
the art of magic effectively come from
Thessaly?!

Iulia: Yes. I've already heard that Thessaly is a
place filled with witches and hags.

Locusta: It's true. And this Thessalian little old
lady taught me many, many things about the
poisons and about the herbs which have the
greatest power, and about many other things –
about reading horoscopes and telling the future
through augury. She also told me that she knew
how to talk with animals and birds.

Iulia: But this is ridiculous! Stop joking around!

Locusta: I'm not lying. Really, at one time, late
at night, with these very eyes I saw this little old
lady, after saying a certain incantation, smear her
body with oil and, quicker than a word, become
an owl!

Iulia: Magnum narras, vix credibile! De his rebus nil nisi fabulas novi, in quibus Circe et dira Medea arte magica uti solent.

Locusta: Non solum in fabulis sunt mulieres huiusmodi. Audivi de magis quae possint crematos excitare mortuos aut lunam caelo deripere carminibus Hecateiis.

Iulia: Ah, Hecate, patrona magarum. Dic nobis pauca, si licet, de hac dea arcana.

Locusta: Pauca dicam. Triformis Hecate, ut iam dixisti, est patrona magarum strigarumque. Vespertino tempore tantum, ut dicunt, per terras ambulat; latratus canum aut nescioqui ululatus nocturni adventum Hecates significant.

Iulia: Haec arcana Hecateia faciunt ut horream.

Iulia: You're telling a tall tale, hard to believe! About these things I know nothing except for the stories in which Circe and awful Medea are accustomed to use magic.

Locusta: Women like this are not only in stories. I've heard about witches who are able to wake the cremated dead or to tear the moon from the sky with incantations to Hecate.

Iulia: Ah, Hecate, the patroness of witches. Tell us a few things, if it's all right, about this mysterious goddess.

Locusta: I'll tell you a few things. Tri-formed Hecate, as you've already heard, is the patroness of witches and hags. She wanders over the earth only at night, as they say; the barking of dogs or the howling of any nocturnal thing signify the arrival of Hecate.

Iulia: These mysteries of Hecate make me get

Locusta: Sunt multa alia genera magicorum—
fascinatio, tabellae defixionum...

Iulia: Nempe plura audire velim, Locusta, sed
satis temporis non nobis est. Gratias ergo tibi
plurimas ago.

Locusta: Nihil est. Valeas, Iulia Pauli.

Iulia: Et tu vale. Haec est fabula hic, Favoni.
Rursus ad te!

V. Tempestas Hodierna

Favonius: Tempus est audire de tempestate
hodierna. Itaque, ecce Aulus Serenus!

Serenus: Gratias tibi ago, Favoni. Id quod
Locusta dixit non tam incredibile mihi videtur.
Cum adhuc essem servus audivi de quodam
homine qui versipellis erat. Quadam nocte,

goose bumps.

Locusta: There are many other kinds of magic –
charms, curse tablets...

Iulia: I really want to hear more, Locusta, but we
don't have enough time. Therefore, I thank you
very much.

Locusta: It's nothing. Goodbye, Julia Pauli.

Iulia: And goodbye to you. That's the news here,
Favonius. Back to you!

V. Today's Weather

Favonius: It's time to hear about today's
weather. And so, here is Aulus Serenus!

Serenus: Thanks, Favonius. That which Locusta
said doesn't seem so amazing to me. When I was
still a slave, I heard about a certain man who was
a werewolf. On a certain night, and after saying

nescioquo carmine dicto, hic homo lupus factus est! Noli me iocari putare! Non sine causa inquit Locusta, "Non semper ea sunt quae videntur." Sed tamen, videamus quatenam sit tempestas hodie. Romae est paullulum frigoris hodie ut saepe fit his temporibus anni. Nubilosum est. Pernubilosum, ut fit hieme. Totam per Italiam sol obscurus est, a flumine Pado usque ad Siciliam. Ubi tu es, Phoebus Apollo? Apage nimbos, aio! Et nunc, videamus quatenam sit tempestas alibi circum Mare Nostrum. Multis in partibus nil nisi imbres! Pervehementer pluit in Graecia, praesertim hic ubi est Thessalia, loca strigarum, ut iam audivimus. Pluit quoque in parte meridiana Graeciae, etiam in Creta. Licet imbres agricolis placeant. Mihi autem, haud placent. Tonitrus et multa fulmina et audita et visa per Mare Aegaeum item per Mare Adriaticum. Ob turbulentiam marium, nefas est navigare. Vae nobis, augures obnuntiant de tempestate crastina, quam ob rem plus tempestatis horrendae expectemus. At tamen, iam satis est. Aulus Serenus sum atque spero caela sint vobis valde

an incantation I don't know, this man became a wolf! Don't think that I'm joking! It's not without a reason that Locusta says, "Not all things are as they seem." But still, let's see what the weather is like today. In Rome is it's a little cold today as often happens at this time of year. It's cloudy. Very cloudy, as happens in winter. Through all of Italy the sun is blocked, from the Po river all the way to Sicily. Where are you, Phoebus Apollo? Get rid of the clouds, I say! And now, let's see what the weather is like in other places around the Mediterranean. In many places there's nothing except rain! It's raining very heavily in Greece, especially here where Thessaly is, the home of hags, as we've already heard. It's also raining in the southern part of Greece, even in Crete. It's alright that the rains may please the farmers. But to me, they are not at all pleasing. Thunder and multiple flashes of lightning have been seen and heard throughout the Aegean Sea and likewise throughout the Adriatic Sea. Because of the turbulence of the seas, sailing is not allowed. Woe is us, the augurs

serena!

V. De Ludis

Favonius: Multas gratias, Serene. Et nunc, ut de ludis audiamus, praesto est Scirtus Agitator!

Scirtus: Avete omnes! Eamus ad ludos! Ludi hodierni editi sunt ab Imperatore Nerone Claudio Caesare Augusto et consensu omnium optimi erant, nempe ut dignum est. In circo, Iason, auriga audax, centum palmas complevit in factione Prasina equis his: Danao, Oceano, Victore, Vindice. Ante circenses ipsos complures homines scelesti ad bestias merito ac iure missi sunt. Etiam facti sunt ludi scaenici—tragoedia una et complures mimi, qui populum facilem aequumque habent. Actor primarum partium autem erat Nero Caesar ipse qui plausu frequente saepius revocatus est, nec mirum. At tamen, ut

are warning about tomorrow's weather, so we're expecting more terrible weather. But now that's enough. I'm Aulus Serenus and I hope that your skies are always clear!

V. Sports

Favonius: Thanks a lot, Serenus. And now, to hear about the games, here is Scirtus Agitator!

Scirtus: Hey everybody! Let's get to sports! Today's games were put on by the Emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus and by consent of all they were excellent, as certainly is proper. In the Circus, Jason, a bold charioteer, won 100 victories for Team Green with his horses: Danaus, Ocean, Victor, and Avenger. Before the actual chariot races wicked men were sent to the beasts deservedly and justly. Also plays were performed – one tragedy and many mimes, which keep the people easy-going and even-keeled. Moreover, the actor of the first parts was Nero Caesar himself who was called back

dicitur in ludis scaenicis, acta est fabula! Atque interea, spectator care, vive valeque et otiosus esto!

VII. Valedictio

Favonius: Gratias, Scirte. Et nunc, ludis amotis seria quaeramus. Ut repetamus nuntios principales: Hodie Imperator Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus, divi filius, ludos edidit atque viros nobiles coegit ut essent participes horum ludorum! Multi inter se murmurant hoc turpiter factum esse. Sic factumst hodie. Gratias plurimas agere volumus Locustae, vel medicae vel veneficae (optio tua est). Totum est ad hanc editionem Fori Romani. Gratias summas agimus et di vobis faveant. Valete omnes!

© 1998 by John Donohue

continuously by the frequent applause. But, as is said in showbusiness, that's a wrap! And in the meantime, dear viewer, live and be well and take it easy!

VII. Farewell

Favonius: Thanks, Scirtus. And now, with games set aside, let's look at serious matters. To review our main news: Today the emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus, son of a god, put on games and forced noble men to be the participants of these games! Many whispered together that this was done dishonorably. It happened like this today. We want to to thank Locusta very much, whether she's a doctor or a poisoner (the choice is yours). That's all for this edition of Forum Romanum. Thanks a lot, and may the gods favor you. Farewell everyone!

© 2017 Translation by Joseph Klomprens. Used by permission of the ACL.

