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NARSES

My Emperor you sent for me?

JUSTINIAN

To enquire into the state of your health, general.

NARSES

Your Majesty is most gracious.  
The rheumatism in my back -

JUSTINIAN

What interests me is my army in Italy.  
It's at present commanded by Cethegus,  
a Roman. He's used it to defeat the Goths.

NARSES

Which was our purpose too. my Emperor.  
The army is maintained at his expense.  
Why should we pay for it until we have to?

JUSTINIAN

I'd like to save money, Narses, but I  
also like to win battles. When the Goths  
attack again, and they will soon, then  
it is you, a Byzantine who must command  
our Byzantine forces.

NARSES

But Majesty, we must turn Belisarius'  
defeat to our advantage. Though I agree  
it was a defeat that should not have been.  
It was the Empress, was it not, who  
proposed Belisarius for command of this  
campaign?

JUSTINIAN

Narses, what is going on in that agile  
little brain of yours?

NARSES

I was merely thinking how strange it <sup>is</sup> was  
that the Empress should so suddenly have  
lost her flare for making things turn out  
exactly as she planned?

Dear Mr. Leisenfer  
In case you are  
in trouble I would  
suggest that we  
are sending  
the mixed  
solid trash  
in German  
35 m/m.  
to you. But  
this only possible  
by the middle  
of January  
Regards  
R. B. Schmidt

JUSTINIAN

You noticed that, General?

NARSES

Forgive me, your Majesty, but from where I stand, I see things that others may overlook.

JUSTINIAN

Perhaps the world was not designed to be/spied upon from such an angle.

NARSES

Your Majesty, I am aware of the risk in what I'm saying, and I do not expect your easy gratitude.

JUSTINIAN

What do you expect?

NARSES

There are 2 possibilities: one that the Empress was unable to outwit Cethegus. Two, she did not wish to. Either way the danger to yourself is obvious. ~~I would propose a test.~~

JUSTINIAN

~~A test?~~

NARSES

~~I shall draft a letter, which we shall ask the Empress to sign, relieving Cethegus of his command.~~

JUSTINIAN

~~To what purpose?~~

NARSES

Let us see, whether Theodora, who gave your army to Cethegus, will as readily take it back again.

JUSTINIAN.

You go too far, Narses. Therefore  
go further. ~~Prepare your letter and~~  
~~tell the Empress that it's my will~~  
~~that she should sign it.~~

NARSES

Yes, my Emperor.

AND ... ~~Justinian~~ JUSTINIAN  
Remember Narses, your head will remain  
safely on your shoulders if you can  
convince me that the conspiracy was  
hers and not your own.

THEODORA

General?

NARSES

Ah, my Empress, I bring a gift for you.  
~~It~~ arrived by messenger from Rome, with  
the compliments of Cethegus.

THEODORA

Cethegus? How sweet. What is it then?  
A ring? A bracelet? A necklace?

NARSES

Something far more precious, your  
Majesty. Xenophane!

THEODORA

He knows how I love onyx. It is my lucky  
stone.

NARSES

The urn is sealed, your Majesty.

THEODORA

Sealed?

NARSES

It contains the ashes of Belisarius.

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(Here are some  
children's voice  
and laughter of  
Totila

We are  
pronouncing  
Totila  
in English

TEJA

The ring is tight, but still  
Rome gets supplies.

TOTILA

They have no water, all the aqueducts  
are cut.

TEJA

But there are springs and cisterns in  
the city, Witichis must conquer Rome.  
Our soldiers are impatient.

TOTILA

What? Storm these walls? You must be mad!

TEJA

But there's another way. Rome has a  
sewer system.

TOTILA

Well, every city has a sewer system.

TEJA

But did you never examine it? You spent  
6 months in Rome and saw nothing but  
your Mistress' eyes.

TOTILA

Don't remind me of Julia, I'm trying  
to forget.

TEJA

And can you?

TOTILA

No.

TEJA

Then conquer Rome and take her hostage.

TOTILA

I don't want her that way. I fight  
Cethegus to force him to accept peace.