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TOWNELEY CYCLE 8: Caesar Augustus

Final Draft

EMPEROR: Be still, beau sires! I command you.  
That no man speak a word here now  
But I myself alone.  
And if ye do, I make a vow  
This sword about your necks shall go. 5  
Therefore, be still as stone!

And look you grieve me nought;  
For if ye do, it shall be bought  
Most dear, by great Mahound!  
You need not, I am sure, be taught 10  
I would care little if I brought  
You bleeding to the ground.

For all is mine that one earth stands:  
Castles, towers, towns, and lands,  
To me homage they bring. 15  
For I may bind, and loose from bond;  
Everything bows unto my hand;  
I lack no earthly thing.

I am lord and sire over all;  
All bow to me, both great and small, 20  
As lord of every land.  
None is so comely: none at all;  
Who denies this shall foully fall --  
On this I give my hand!

For I am he that mighty is: 25  
All heathendom my hand shall kiss,  
At my all-mighty will!  
Both rich and poor, both more and less,  
At my pleasure I may redress,  
And suddenly save or spill.

Caesar Augustus I am called:  
A fairer body to behold  
Breathes not, of blood and bone;  
Rich nor poor, young nor old --  
Such another, so I am told, 35  
In all this world is none.

But one thing grieves me more and more:  
My land shall soon see sorrows sore,  
For lack of counsel wise.  
My counsellors, so wise of lore, 40  
Help to give me comfort sure:  
Hide nothing from my eyes!

As I am he of highest fame,  
Your own reward ye then shall name,  
To help me if ye may. 45

COUNSELLOR 1: To counsel you, lord , is our aim,  
And no man living, whole or lame,  
Our counsel grave shall stay.

Your messenger you here must call,  
Let him go forth, whate'er befall, 50  
Bid him ride low or high  
Through all your lands, and over all,  
Among your folk, both great and small,  
Your peace imperial to cry.

And to command both young and old 55  
That none so hardy be, nor bold,  
To bow to none but thou;  
If any shall, in chains them hold,  
And punish them a thousand fold.

EMPEROR: I shall, I make a vow! 60



For he is called wise with good cause.

EMPEROR: Now I assent, without a pause --  
 Of wisdom thou art the well!  
 Men's praise this knight most justly draws.  
 He shall never destroy my laws 95  
 Were he the devil of hell!

Come Lightfoot, lad, look thou be smart,  
 With my message to depart  
 With speed to Sir Sirin.  
 Say sorrow pricks me to the heart; 100  
 Pray him comfort me with his art,  
 As mine own dear cousin.

And come again before tonight,  
 Or never come within my sight --  
 Never within my land! 105

MESSENGER: Yes, surely, lord, for I am light!  
 I shall, ere noon of day be bright,  
 Bring him here by the hand.

EMPEROR: Yea, boy, and as thou love me dear,  
 Look that thou spy, both far and near 110  
 On all, in every town,  
 To see if any news be there,  
 Or any chatter anywhere  
 Of that lad, up or down!

MESSENGER: All ready, lord, I go apace, 115  
 To seek and spy in every place,  
 After that wicked lout!  
 If men let rumours run their race,  
 Their crowns I shall crack with my mace,  
 In every whereabouts! 120

And therefore, lord, have here good day!

EMPEROR: Mahound now speed thee on thy way,  
That wields both water and wind;  
And specially, here I thee pray,  
To speed thee as fast as thou may. 125

MESSENGER: Yes, lord, that shall ye find.

Mahound thee save and see, Sir Sirin!  
Caesar, my lord and your cousin,  
He greets you well by me.

SIRINUS: Thou art welcome to me and mine! 130  
Come near, and tell this news of thine:  
Quickly, what may it be?

MESSENGER: My lord prays you, as ye love him dear,  
To come now, if your will it were,  
To speak with him awhile. 135

SIRINUS: Go greet and tell him, messenger,  
I come indeed, and very near,  
Behind thee not a mile!

MESSENGER: All ready, lord, at your bidding!  
Mahound thee honour, my lord king, 140  
And save thee by sea and sand!

EMPEROR: Welcome, beau sire! -- say, what tidings?  
Now tell me, without tarrying,  
What heard thou in my land?

MESSENGER: I heard nothing, my lord, but good: 145  
Sir Sirin, in whose house I stood,  
This night he will be here.

EMPEROR: I thank thee, by Mahound's blood;  
These tidings may amend my mood.  
Go rest thee, messenger! 150

SIRINUS: Comely Mahound, on whom we call,  
He save thee now, lord of lords all,  
That sits with thy company!

EMPEROR: Welcome, Sir Sirin, to this hall!  
Beside myself here sit thou shall: 155  
Quickly, come up to me!

SIRINUS: Yes, lord, I give you full assent!

EMPEROR: Wherefore, sir, for yourself I sent  
I shall tell thee tonight.  
Therefore now listen with good intent: 160  
My rule may soon be racked and rent!

SIRINUS: How so, by Mahound's great might?

EMPEROR: Sir, I am given to understand  
That a queen, here in this land,  
Shall bear a baby here 165  
Shall be crowned king of sea and sand,  
And all shall bow unto his hand --  
Such tidings I do fear!

He shall command both young and old;  
None shall be ready, I am told, 170  
Service to give to me!  
Then would my heart be cold,  
Should such a beggar bold  
My kingdom thus wrest from me!

And therefore, sir, I would thee pray 175  
Thy best counsel to me to say,  
To do what I may best.  
For certainly, if now I may  
Find where he be, I shall him slay,  
Be he to East or West! 180

SIRINUS: My counsel, lord, in what you've said,  
Is this, as ever eat I bread --  
Now hear what best may be:  
Go search your land in every stead,  
And bid that boy be struck down dead 185  
By whoso first him see.

And also this I counsel thee:  
To banish that babe utterly  
That would be king with crown.  
Command each man he come freely 190  
To thee, and bring a head penny,  
That dwells in tower or town.

Let this be done by the third day;  
Then may none of his friends say  
But homage he has made! 195  
If ye do this, sir, win you may  
Their worship, ever and a day,  
If homage they have paid!

EMPEROR: I thank thee, sir, most ardently,  
For these good tidings thou tell me! 200  
Thy counsel shall prevail.  
Lord and sire of this country  
Without an end, here make I thee  
For thy good counsel!

My messenger! -- look thou begone 205  
And quickly travel, town to town,  
As noble countryman.  
I pray thee, as thou love Mahound,  
And the reward that shall be found,  
That thou come fast again! 210

Command all folk there, everyone --  
Rich nor poor, forget thou none! --  
To own now only me,  
And bow to me as lord alone.  
And who will not, shall be struck down: 215  
This sword their scourge shall be!

Bid thou the old, and the youngling,  
That each man know me for his king,  
For dread death come him to;  
And bid each man, in tokening 220  
That I am lord, a penny bring,  
And homage to me do.

To my statutes, who will not stand,  
Fast to flee out of my land  
Bid them -- they shall not stay! 225  
Now by Mahound, god great and grand,  
Thou shall be made knight by my hand:  
Now, therefore, fast away!

MESSSENGER: Already, lord, it shall be done.  
But I shall not return here soon -- 230  
And therefore be not wroth.  
I swear now, sir, by sun and moon,  
I come not before afternoon,  
Be ye eager or loth!

But have good day: I make my way, 235  
For longer here I may not stay.  
My parting I prepare.

EMPEROR: Mahound, all-knowing, courteous alway,  
Prosper thy journey well, I pray,  
And guide thee as thou fare! 240

Here ends Caesar Augustus