

Diocletian
(Through the Eyes of His Humble Servant)
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One day in the year 245 AD my lord Diocletian was born of modest birth. In the years to come he would rise to power through the army, reform the government, the military and the economy. He made both friends and enemies along the way. I, his loyal servant through his entire reign, would like to share with you the many accomplishments of this great and fearless leader.

In the year 282 AD Carus became Emperor of the Roman Empire and my lord was, at this point, general of the Danubian legion. He began gaining the new Emperor's trust and was appointed "*Comes Domesticorum*" which is Commander of the Calvary Arm of the Imperial Bodyguard. This new position pleased him very much and he thirsted for more power. Carus was supposedly struck by lightning, killing him and leaving his son Numerian, Emperor. Shortly after, Flavius Aper declared that Numerian was sick and then he died. It was obvious to my lord that Aper had killed him. It was no surprise to me when my lord himself killed Aper and in doing so his troops without delay elected him Emperor! However, there was another legal predecessor to the throne... Carinus, the other son of Carus. So on April 1st my lord, Diocletian, being unafraid of battle and loving victory, met Carinus at Margum to fight for the title of Emperor. Carinus was winning when one of my lord's officers killed him leaving an army without command. It didn't take long for this weakened army to surrender, giving my lord Diocletian what he had so ferociously fought for: to be the One and Only Ruler of the Roman Empire!

Being Emperor, my lord faced many problems, the biggest being the empire was simply too large for just one emperor. He came up with a brilliant idea. He would create a "*tetrarchy*". This would split the empire in two and have an "*Augustus*" and a "*Ceaser*" in both the east and the west; the Augustus being the main emperor and the Ceaser being the co-emperor. The co-emperor would rule over a small portion and when the Augustus retired or died the co-emperor would take his place. My lord, Diocletian chose the eastern empire for himself and assigned the western half to his lieutenant, Maximian. Diocletian also appointed two Ceasers, Constantius who was Maximian's Ceaser and Galerius who was Ceaser under my lord. Although the "*tetrarchy*" really didn't last in the short term it set the example for the permanent division of the empire in the future.

My lord not only liked power but loved being treated and respected as a god so he adopted the name "*dominus et deus*" meaning "lord and god" (this was the name we servants were expected to call him by) and also responded to the name of "*Jovius*" associating himself with the god Jupiter. My lord was never seen in public and when in the presence of spectators he had everyone lay face down on the floor. Sometimes they were permitted to kiss his robe but never allowed to look at his face. This was his attempt to be more of a god-like figure and to gain more power over the people. No one really had the respect for him that he thought. Most of us servants obeyed him with hate in our hearts, but others loved what he did and served him with respect and support.

My lord was not a Christian and he despised any one who was. In 297 AD he ordered all soldiers and administrators to make sacrifices to the gods. Anyone who refused was stripped of their positions and sent away to live among the people. Another decree was issued that all Christian places of worship were to be destroyed along with all Christian doctrine. More of my lord's horrible actions were ordering Christian clergy to be thrown in prison and not let out until they made sacrifices to the Roman gods. The last religious decree my lord made was the one stating that all Christians were to bow down and worship the Roman gods and anyone who refused was executed. What he failed to realize is that forcing them to make sacrifices didn't make them forget their Christian beliefs, and his actions did not abolish Christianity in the Roman Empire. The God of these Christians saw to it that His people survived to carry on His will. I played a small part in the preservation of these humble people as did his wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria. If my lord had found out I would surely have been severely punished. I took on the responsibility of making sure Diocletian never found out about his family's involvement with the Christian faith. I shall not discuss any further my involvement with the Christians. This account that I write is to share the accomplishments, good and bad, of my lord Diocletian.

In 305 AD, after around twenty-one years of ruling and starting to recover from a recent brutal illness, my lord did something that would have been considered unthinkable by the Romans; he resigned from the throne compelling a reluctant Maximian to do the same. The close relationship between these two leaders was never the same after this. Retiring to his palace in Dalmatia he spent his days tending to his cabbage fields and living a somewhat quiet life, which was a big change from his crazy twenty-one years in office.

It was a sad day in the palace on the third of December in the year 316 AD when my lord Diocletian did not awake from his slumber. Everybody was in a state of quiet shock and even I who despised most of what he did was silent and somber for the next two weeks. My lord became much more bearable to be around in this later years or perhaps it was I who mellowed and could see him through forgiving eyes. Something I learned from my time spent with the Christians. All in all, my lord lived a life of excitement and he had the power he wanted. Although he may not have used it as wisely as he could have or as civil as he should have, he was good and kind to his servants and I say God bless him.