

THE VESTAL VIRGIN

NYSIA. (*Snatches it from her hands, glances at*
Thou liest! (*Swoons*).

LUCINA. Alas! would it were but s

LEPIDUS. What would'st thou, woman, cease the
puling tears!

Yield up thy message without more delays.

LUCINA. (*Reads*)

*To the priest Oros from the General Lucio, greeting
When this shall reach thee, know that time and
place change all things. I did once affect Nysia
till my sight beheld a greater perfection. She
whom I have conquered hath already overcome me
victor by her charms and shall be a wife with
Lucio for her mate e'er this shall lie beneath thy
eyes. Thou wast Nysia's playfellow in your
childhood, be to her that thou canst in my defection*

LUCI

LEPIDUS. 'Tis false, incredible, he could not do
(*Seizes the paper*) His own hand-writing, his
self same subscription!

The heavens are falling, sure the deep-laid
foundations

Whose bosom bears all confidence and piety
Crumble beneath our feet, the solid earth
Sinks from before us in this strange misfortune

LUCINA. My lord! My lord!

LEPIDUS. Let every curse that blas
The blood of lustful youth, and brings old age
In fell black wrinkles like the mummy, light
him!