

AFRICANUS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. TEMPLE OF BA'AL - NIGHT

A silver coin rests in the center of a bronze basin. It bears the profile of a bearded man crowned with a laurel wreath.

The temple is just a glorified tent. The walls are still wet with mortar and the roof is a billowing sheet of wool. An abundance of candles give the room a faint glow.

A man in a hooded cloak leans against a pillar, with only his hungry eyes catching the light. This is ITHOBA'AL (25).

Another man, built like a grizzly bear with a beard to match, steps forward. This is HAMILCAR BARCA (34).

ITHOBA'AL

Let us begin.

HAMILCAR

Why are the Gods so bloodthirsty?

ITHOBA'AL

Keep blaspheming and you might find out.

Hamilcar turns to the shadowy entrance to the temple and beckons for someone to proceed.

Two HIGH PRIESTS enter the inner sanctum, leading an ox by a collar and chain.

Hamilcar's eyes remain on the entrance.

HAMILCAR

Boys, come here!

Two boys, HANNIBAL (8) and HASDRUBAL (6), step into the light, their eyes wide with fear. They have curly hair, tanned skin, and green eyes like Hamilcar.

The priests lead the ox up to an alter.

Hannibal and Hasdrubal cannot take their eyes off of the temple's sole idol.

A large bronze statue of Ba'al looms over the alter. The god is the spitting image of Zeus, save for two horns and a cloud of flies BUZZING around it.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

It's not the god. Just a hunk of
rock and metal.

Hannibal inches forward, but Hasdrubal hides behind a pillar.

Hamilcar pulls out a dagger and walks toward the alter.

ITHOBA'AL

Ba'al, lord of storms, god of
thunder and lightning, we give this
gift -the gift of life.

Hamilcar brings the blade to the ox's throat.

HAMILCAR

May it be worth something this
time.

Hamilcar SLASHES the ox's throat.

CUT TO:

EXT. SICILIAN FORTRESS - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Blood SPLATTERS on Hamilcar's face as a nearby CARTHAGINIAN
SOLDIER takes a spear through his throat.

Hamilcar rushes forward and clashes with a ROMAN SOLDIER.

The Carthaginians and Romans squeeze into the breach of the
fortress, hacking and stabbing at anything and everything.

Hamilcar fights like a lion, slashing his way through the
Roman ranks, leading his pride onto victory.

The remaining Roman soldiers break and run.

The Carthaginian soldiers throw up their arms in CELEBRATION.
Now we see them clearly, with their sun-kissed skin, dark,
curly hair, and bright green eyes.

HAMILCAR

After all this time you'd think
they'd take the hint!

A Carthaginian soldier rushes over from within the fortress.

CARTHAGINIAN SOLDIER

The Romans are coming back!

HAMILCAR

From which direction?

CARTHAGINIAN SOLDIER

All of them!

Hamilcar rushes to the ramparts of the fortress to scout.

The Roman army, an ocean of red and silver, marches up the black slopes on all sides toward the fortress.

HAMILCAR

Close the breach! Everyone else to the ramparts!

A Roman Envoy, FABIUS MAXIMUS (20's), dressed in ceremonial armour, approaches the fortress alone.

FABIUS

Hamilcar Barca, I am Fabius Maximus. I am here to negotiate your surrender.

HAMILCAR

I've been up here six years, Latin dog! I'll take my chances.

ITHOBA'AL (O.S.)

But Carthage will not.

Ithoba'al appears from within the Roman ranks to join Fabius.

HAMILCAR

What is this?

FABIUS

We have terms. All of Carthage's armies have laid down their weapons, save for yours.

ITHOBA'AL

The council has decided. Give up, or be branded a traitor.

HAMILCAR

I only see one traitor here.

ITHOBA'AL

Think of your boys back in Carthage. I can't protect them from the mob when they hear about this.

Hamilcar ponders for a moment, then throws his sword down and leaves the fort with his hands in the air.

HAMILCAR
 You're a real man, Ithoba'al.
 Hiding behind children.

ITHOBA'AL
 Two children for the whole of
 Carthage? A fair price to pay.

The Romans allow Hamilcar to pass, then swarm into the fort, throwing the surrendering Carthaginians into the dirt.

EXT. GREAT SEA WALLS - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Hannibal, torch in hand, sits with his legs dangling over the edge wall. Like a pair of arms, the sea walls reach out into blue with a narrow entrance between them for ships to enter.

HASDRUBAL (O.S.)
 Can we go home now?

Hasdrubal is on the walkway, twirling his torch like a sword.

HANNIBAL
 He's coming.

HASDRUBAL
 He's not coming, Hannibal. I'm
 tired. I want to go home!

Hannibal stands up, trying to get a better look out beyond the dark horizon, but there's not a ship in sight.

HANNIBAL
 He's coming, Hasdrubal. He
 promised. He promised...

A dark shape appears over the horizon, then another appears, then another, all converging on the harbour; once under the light of the moon, all doubt vanishes. These are ships.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
 See, told you so!

Hannibal leaps to his feet and runs to the harbour.

EXT. HARBOUR OF CARTHAGE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

The last few ships slip between the sea walls and into the arms of the great harbour. Other ships come to rest between the columns of the circular dock.

Carthaginian Soldiers cross the bridge into the city.

Hannibal moves through the crowd, searching.

Hamilcar steps off one of the boats and right away, Hannibal flies into his arms.

Hamilcar drops to his knees and embraces his son.

Ithoba'al steps off the ship and can't stand the sight. He strides past Hamilcar and into the night.

HANNIBAL

Papa?

Hamilcar is inconsolable.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Papa, let's go home.

Hamilcar looks up and sees the shame of the soldiers. He regains his composure and rises.

HAMILCAR

Not yet.

Hamilcar's eyes look towards the heart of Carthage.

INT. CARTHAGINIAN SENATE HALL - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Rubbing the sleep out of their eyes, pulling their silk robes tight, the CARTHAGINIAN SENATORS settle into their seats.

Hamilcar presides over the gathering.

HAMILCAR

How is that the queen of cities and master of the waves, surrenders at the first sign of trouble?

Ithoba'al hangs in the shadows.

ITHOBA'AL

We didn't expect the Romans to build a navy and annihilate ours. Peace is our only option.

HAMILCAR

You think you can buy peace? The Romans know better. They know that peace comes at the end of a sword.

ITHOBA'AL

Three thousand talents costs less than our lives.

The Carthaginian senators chime in, GRUMBLING in agreement.

ITHOBA'AL (CONT'D)

Be grateful we didn't hand you over too. The Romans want your head.

HAMILCAR

But you didn't. You couldn't.

ITHOBA'AL

How do you suppose that?

HAMILCAR

The treasury is empty and the fleet is gone. You know the only way we're getting silver is by force.

(A beat)

There is some in Hispania. I'll take what's left of my army and go get it for you.

ITHOBA'AL

You have the gratitude of Carthage.

HAMILCAR

No, I have terms.

ITHOBA'AL

Say again?

HAMILCAR

You'll get your silver, but whatever territory I conquer is mine. I'll govern it on behalf of Carthage, as will my sons after me.

ITHOBA'AL

Build a temple, make your payments on time, and you have a deal.

Ithoba'al offers his hand, but Hamilcar leaves him hanging.

HAMILCAR

Done.

Hamilcar reaches into his pocket, fishes out a few silver coins and drops them on the floor.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Consider that your first payment.

The Carthaginian senators rise and close in on Hamilcar.

Hamilcar heads for the door, his hand resting on his sword, cowing the senators, parting them like Moses did the Red Sea. He slams the doors behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE OF BA'AL - NIGHT

The bloody knife HITS the floor and slides down the alter.

The ox GURGLES and takes its last breath. It's blood runs down the alter and into the basin, drowning the coin within.

ITHOBA'AL

It is done. May Ba'al smile upon our enterprises.

HAMILCAR

Your tribute payment is waiting outside, and your ship will be waiting in the harbour.

ITHOBA'AL

See you in a year, Hamilcar.

Ithoba'al leaves with the priests.

HAMILCAR

Hannibal, come here.

Hannibal joins his father in front of the basin.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Put your hands in the blood.

Hannibal plunges his hands into the blood.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Forget all this magic and talk of the gods. What we're doing now is making a promise. A secret promise.

Hamilcar puts his own hands in the blood.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Repeat after me.

(A beat)

I swear...

HANNIBAL

I swear...

HAMILCAR
That for all of my days...

HANNIBAL
That for all of my days...

HAMILCAR
I will be an enemy of Rome.

HANNIBAL
I will be an enemy of Rome.

Hamilcar nods and gestures for Hannibal to remove his hands from the blood. Fishing the coin out, Hamilcar places it in Hannibal's palm.

HAMILCAR
This coin is proof of your promise.
Every time you see it, you remember
our promise. Understand?

HANNIBAL
Yes, father.

EXT. BA'AL TEMPLE MOUNT - NIGHT

Hamilcar and Hannibal watch Ithoba'al scurry down the hill.

HAMILCAR
I have a surprise for you, son.

The Carthaginian Soldiers bring over a baby elephant.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)
You did well tonight.

Hamilcar heaves Hannibal up onto the elephant's back.

HAMILCAR (CONT'D)
His name is Surus. You treat him
like your own brother. He'll grow
very big, and one day, when you
stand on his back the whole world
beneath you will be yours.

Hannibal looks out over the city of New Carthage. Buildings are still coming up, and the port is a mess of wooden scaffolds and rigging, but still, the place is vast.

Hannibal opens up his palm and looks at his bloody coin.

EXT. ROOFTOPS OF ROME - DAY

"Many years later."

The city of Rome spreads out over seven hills as far as the eye can see. Temples, apartments, and basilicas stand in stoic majesty while winding streets make a maze of city.

A young Roman, with long hair, fair skin, and sharp eyes ignores the sights for a Greek scroll. This is SCIPIO (18).

GAIUS (O.S.)

And where are you this morning?
Sparta? Egypt? Troy?

Scipio turns around to see:

GAIUS LAELIUS (18), an impish looking Roman with short black hair, dark eyes, and a smile that could tempt the devil.

SCIPIO

Following Alexander beyond the
rivers of India.

GAIUS

Oh good, then you can tell Lucius
why we're so late today. "Sorry, we
were at the ends of the earth."

SCIPIO

Is it that time already?

GAIUS

It was... An hour ago.

SCIPIO

Race you?

Scipio and Gaius climb down the side of the apartment building, using the wall reliefs as hand-holds. They descend to the streets and run into:

EXT. THE FORUM - DAY

Scipio and Gaius shove their way through the throngs of Romans, trying to break ahead of each other.

The crowd is thickest in the heart of the forum, with the citizens swarming market stands operated by TRADERS from all across the globe.

Scipio and Gaius leap up into the surrounding streets. They charge straight ahead, dodging and weaving until-

BOOM. Scipio crashes into a senator, sending them tumbling.

The senator picks himself up and towers over Scipio. His closely cropped military beard and short hair prove this is no frail old man. This is AEMELIUS PAULLUS (40's).

PAULLUS

Watch where you're going.

Scipio scrapes himself up off the ground and dusts off his tunic, doing his best to avoid Paullus' gaze.

SCIPIO

Sorry, senator.

PAULLUS

Is your father a respectable man?
Didn't he teach you better?

SCIPIO

Some might say he's the most
respectable man in Rome. But then,
I'm not my father.

(A beat)

Take care, senator.

With that, Scipio bolts.