

DIDO & AENEAS

Written by

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Based on *The Aeneid* by Virgil

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BLACK

A lyre plays a slow and haunting song, something eastern, ancient, and passionate.

The song ends, and in its place, the wind begins.

EXT. PALACE OF CARTHAGE - DIDO'S TOWER - NIGHT

The lyre rests against an open door which leads into a candle lit staircase.

A woman stand alone on the balcony, swaddled in black silk, her long dark tresses, sun-kissed skin, and feline eyes bathed in moonlight. This is DIDO (30).

Dido's eyes turn from the stars downward to:

The city of Carthage.

A diamond in the rough, most of the buildings are homes, simple one or two story affairs, built to last. A few market places dot the city along the narrow and winding streets.

Dido's eyes catch the twinkle of torchlights moving down the main street towards the great harbour like a river of stars.

A fresh breeze blows by, and Dido enjoys it like the caresses of a lover. The moment passes, Dido takes her lyre and goes on her way.

EXT. CARTHAGE - HARBOUR - NIGHT

The CARTHAGINIANS gather, all cloaked in mourning garb, only their tanned faces and curly, thick hair exposed.

Dido appears in the midst of the crowd, her lyre clutched to her chest. She wears a golden tiara on her head, and the sight of it is enough to part the crowd.

The Carthaginians bow in respect to Dido as she makes her way towards a small ship, tied to the pier.

Dido stops short of the boat and turns to face the crowd, and with a wave of her hand, they rise. Dido prepares to speak.

Boom. The roar of thunder.

Dido turns towards the sea.

A flash of lightning out in the distance.

Boom.

Dido sights storm clouds growing over the sea.

Several bolts of lightning arc across the sky.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

The wind picks up, kicking the quiet sea to life. Waves splash against the pier.

Dido withdraws, heading back towards the city.

The crowd follows suit.

In almost no time at all, the storm is over the city. The wind and waves batter the moored ships, and lightning bolts race across the sky over Carthage.

EXT. CARTHAGE - BEACH - MORNING

Waves break against a massive front of rocks. The first morning light reveals a cave carved into the rock by erosion.

A beautiful young woman, a Carthaginian, sticks her head out of the cave. We'll call her JUDITH (21).

JUDITH
(Calling into the cave)
It's morning! Wake up!

Judith returns to the cave, and a few moments later, she is joined at the mouth of the cave by an older man, also a Carthaginian, who we'll call Ithoba'al (37).

ITHOBA'AL
We needn't rush.

Ithoba'al tries to pull Judith in for a kiss, but she recoils.

JUDITH
No, I can't.

ITHOBA'AL
You did.

JUDITH
Today I haven't had a drop of wine.

Judith climbs out of the cave, careful of the sea.

Ithoba'al follows Judith, reaching out for her.

ITHOBA'AL
My love, please!

JUDITH
Our families will not allow it!

Judith lands on the sand and runs down the beach. She sees Carthage over an outcrop of rocks. Judith rounds a corner, tears in her eyes, but when she looks ahead, she freezes.

Ithoba'al bumps into Judith from behind, and when he recovers, he too sees:

A destroyed fleet.

One ship is turned out on its side, another ran aground, and many others are smashed.

Judith and Ithoba'al walk amongst the wreckage, their jaws hanging, and their eyes wide.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Ba'al, what have you done?

A hand shoots up from the sand and grabs Judith's leg.

Judith looks down and sees a bloodied man, AENEAS (30), half-buried in the sand, looking up at her with pleading eyes. Judith screams and runs off, Ithoba'al behind her.

INT. PALACE OF CARTHAGE - DIDO'S CHAMBER - MORNING

Dido sits in front of a mirror, brushing her hair. She puts her brush down and pulls up a set of purple robes, seeing how they'd look on her.

SYDONIA (O.S.)
Now that's beautiful.

A pair of slender, but well-defined, arms slide down over Dido's shoulders. Dido's sister, SYDONIA (20's), leans in and gives her sister a kiss on the cheek.

Sydonia is beautiful, like Dido, but she keeps her curly, dark hair, in a ponytail, and wears her nightgown loose.

DIDO
I don't know.

SYDONIA

I mean, the black is very
flattering, but purple really is
your color.

Dido grasps her sister's hand.

Sydonia pulls back, snapping her fingers to call forth two
SERVANT GIRLS.

SYDONIA (CONT'D)

We should go hunting. The sun is
out, the sky is blue...

DIDO

I have to arrange for the
ceremonies again.

Dido, taking care of herself, changes into her royal robes,
and applies her cosmetics and jewelry.

Sydonia allows the servant girls to strip the clothes from
her sculpted body.

SYDONIA

If you're going to lock yourself in
here, you might as well dress
yourself in a sack.

DIDO

You're speaking to the queen.

SYDONIA

No, I'm speaking to my sister, who
is as beautiful as a desert rose.
And about as smart as one too...

Dido spins in her chair to face Sydonia.

DIDO

This city will not run itself.
You'll have to go frolic alone.

Sydonia wears leather armor, battle-ready. The servant girls
hand her a quiver full of arrows and a bow.

DIDO (CONT'D)

And where are you going dressed
like that?

SYDONIA

The beach.

Sydonia takes a hand-axe from one of the servant girls and fixes it to the belt on her waste.

EXT. CARTHAGE - BEACH - DAY

Aeneas stands alone, his glossy eyes looking out over the beach. He is tall, well-built, but wretched. His sandy-blonde hair is thick with a mix of sand and blood.

The beach is alive with activity. The survivors of the wreck, THE TROJANS, partake in all the appropriate activities: salvaging goods, piling bodies, and lamenting their fate.

One Trojan, with a bristling military beard, and a battle-scarred body, leaps onto a rock to survey the damage. He is THEOPHILUS (40).

Aeneas sees Theophilus, and then, their eyes meet.

Theophilus leaps from the rock and dashes to Aeneas, half-tackling him, pulling him into a bear hug.

THEOPHILUS

Aeneas! Thank the gods!

AENEAS

For what?

THEOPHILUS

Don't blaspheme.

AENEAS

The gods should finish what they started. They'd be doing me a favour.

Aeneas tries to shove past Theophilus, but Theophilus shoves him to the ground.

AENEAS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

THEOPHILUS

You want a way out?

Theophilus removes a finely crafted bronze sword from its scabbard and tosses it at Aeneas' feet.

THEOPHILUS (CONT'D)

Here. It's your decision, and whatever you decide, I'll be right on your heels.

Aeneas takes the sword in hand, recognizes it, contemplates his next move.

Theophilus waits, not even blinking.

Aeneas reaches out to Theophilus and receives his hand.

AENEAS

How many did we lose?

THEOPHILUS

Too many.

AENEAS

Can you find me three good men?

THEOPHILUS

For?

AENEAS

A scouting party.

Theophilus throws his arm around Aeneas and leads him down towards the Trojans on the beach.

THEOPHILUS

I think we can manage that.

EXT. CARTHAGE - BEACH - LATER

Aeneas and Theophilus walk through the crowds of survivors. Aeneas nods his head in response to the looks of surprise and the hasty bows that follow.

A group of Trojans crowd around some commotion near the only ship that appears relatively unscathed. A shrill voice rises from within the midst of the crowd.

PHRYGIAS (O.S.)

I don't care how far away we are!

Aeneas and Theophilus push their way into the midst of the crowd, coming upon:

PHRYGIAS (25), a short, but stocky man, with wild, curly locks, and hungry eyes, waving a spear around, pointing it at a stunned crowd.

PHRYGIAS (CONT'D)

Everyone else is dead. I'm your best shot now.

THEOPHILUS

What are you doing, Phrygias?

Phrygias spots Theophilus and Aeneas, his hard composure melting away.

PHRYGIAS

Aeneas... I...

AENEAS

Our best shot at what?

PHRYGIAS

Going home.

AENEAS

Did you hit your head? Or did I?

PHRYGIAS

Nobody can forget what happened.
And nobody should let it stand,
least of all, you.

Phrygias grips his spear and steps forward.

Aeneas draws his sword and gets ready to fight.

An arrow lodges itself between Aeneas and Phrygias.

Aeneas and Phrygias turn to see:

Sydonia, bows and arrow at the ready. She is standing on the outcrop of rocks.

SYDONIA

(In Phoenician)

Drop your weapons!

THEOPHILUS

(In Trojan)

We don't understand!

From this point, when the characters speak Greek, it is heard as English.

AENEAS

Do you speak Greek?

SYDONIA

Surrender now, or else.

THEOPHILUS

Peace would be a sensible option
for someone with such poor odds.

SYDONIA

(Calling over her
shoulder, in Phoenician)

Boys!

Moments later, a massive army of Carthaginians appear on the outcrop, all wielding spears, swords, and axes, wearing leather armor, studded with bronze.

The Trojans slowly raise their arms in surrender.

EXT. STREETS OF CARTHAGE - DAY

Sydonia leads the captivate Trojans down the main street.

Two strong columns of CARTHAGINIAN SOLDIERS flank the unarmed Trojans on either side.

The citizens of Carthage all scramble to get a look at these visitors from a far away land.

Right behind Sydonia, Aeneas walks with Theophilus and Phrygius. They all whisper in Trojan.

PHRYGIAS

They're probably going to eat us.

AENEAS

They look civilized to me.

THEOPHILUS

At least we know they'll chew.

SYDONIA

(In Greek)

Do you like your tongues?

They all nod.

SYDONIA (CONT'D)

(In Greek)

If you want to keep them, keep your
mouths shut.

They all continue on, finally approaching:

THE PALACE.

INT. PALACE OF CARTHAGE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

Two massive wooden doors open as Sydonia leads Aeneas, Theophilus, and Phrygias in.

Three Carthaginian soldiers keep their spears pressed into their prisoners' backs.

Far across the room, Dido sits enthroned. She is exquisite and terrifying in her full regalia.

As the group reach the vicinity of the throne, the Carthaginian soldiers force them to kneel.

DIDO
(In Phoenician)
Where do they come from?

SYDONIA
(In Phoenician)
They washed up on shore. They speak Greek.

Dido speaks in Greek, which we hear as English.

DIDO
I don't take kindly to Greek raiders.

PHRYGIAS
We are not Greeks!

Sydonia throws Phrygias on his back and places the blade of her axe against his neck.

SYDONIA
Nobody said "speak."

DIDO
Who among you is your leader?

Nobody says anything.

SYDONIA
That means speak!

AENEAS
I am.

DIDO
And you are?

AENEAS

Aeneas, son of Anchises. Prince of
Troy and Dardania.

DIDO

Trojan? You are far from home.

AENEAS

Where exactly are we?

DIDO

You are in Carthage, and I am its
queen, Dido.

AENEAS

We're in Africa...

Aeneas takes moment to digest this fact.

DIDO

If you are not raiders, as you say,
then why leave your home?

AENEAS

My people need shelter.

DIDO

Troy's famed walls are not enough
for you?

AENEAS

Troy's walls have fallen.

Dido rises from her throne.

DIDO

Grim news indeed, but for your
sake, I hope it's true.

Dido SNAPS her fingers.

Carthaginian soldiers drag Aeneas and company away.

DIDO (CONT'D)

Convince me, Trojan. Your life
depends on it.