

SEVERUS  
Episode One

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Written by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. THE CITY OF LEPCIS MAGNA - MORNING, 160 A.D.

Establishing shots.

The sun rises over a small, beautiful Middle-Eastern city during the heyday of the Roman Empire. Some structures are clearly older and more primitive, but the influence of Roman architecture, and Greek before it, are everywhere. There is a large river in the middle of the city that flows to a wide harbour full of sailing vessels flying all manner of different flags from all over the world.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, MAIN SQUARE - MORNING

We focus in on a small market square where carts full of olives and olive oil, harvested from local farms, roll past pulled by beasts of burden. Children play in the streets.

Roman soldiers of all skin colours patrol in tell-tale legion armour, armed with short swords.

Carts full of fresh fish roll past, chased by stray dogs.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLIVE FARM - DAWN

A beautiful young woman (PACCIA, late teens, dark-skinned, attractive with bright, but wise eyes) walks to the road and looks towards the city. She has a small basket in her arms as if she's heading to the market. She begins walking towards the city, and we can see a tall archway in the road, the Marcus Aurelias Arch.

Up the road a way, she is met by two other young women. (DITA and SHEA.) We hear no dialogue, but they greet each other warmly with embraces and laughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - SIMULTANEOUS

Establishing shot. We see that the elaborate structure rests atop a rocky outcropping that juts out from the water. A long wooden pier connects it to the land, supported by thick beams. Beneath is the beach where the sea waves lap gently at the sand.

Up on the pier, the palace is busy. Servants and slaves run back and forth clearly preparing for some big event, hanging banners and tending the grounds to make them immaculate. Banners are hung, beautiful desert flowers are placed along the pier. As everyone works, two men (DENDE and MAZ, dark skinned, rough-looking, with long beards and weathered faces) watch from the beach below with keen interest.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL - SECONDS LATER

An older, well-dressed man (PUBLIUS, early fifties but active and energetic. His hair is greying on his head and in his beard.) enters the hall. Behind him are servants carrying barrels of wine. He begins to direct people. Soon, other obvious men of wealth step up to greet him.

PUBLIUS

Yes, hello! Yes, it's good to see you.

(To a Servant)

Tell me, did the barrels arrive yet?

SERVANT

No, sir. Not yet.

PUBLIUS

No?! Damn!! I better not have to bring the wine myself, I shall be very upset.

SERVANT

I'm sorry, sir. It is coming in from the docks today straight from Rome.

PUBLIUS

Well, that is cutting things very close. I want to know the very second that wine arrives! And if it doesn't, I shall have someone's head!

CUT TO:

EXT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - LATER

Establishing shot. It is a large home of Roman architecture. It is well kept, with a handful of servants bustling about. It is not immune to the beautification efforts going into the city.

The grounds look perfect, picturesque, and there are several servants clearly working hard to ensure it stays that way. Foliage is being trimmed, stone pathways are swept clean, and weeds are plucked from gardens.

CUT TO:

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE, SEVERUS'S ROOM - DAWN

A young SEVERUS (15, dark-skinned, athletic build, with keen, sharp eyes) wakes. He dresses quickly, then looks out the window. He sees the sun is beginning to rise on the large estate.

CUT TO:

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE, COMMON AREA - MINUTES LATER

Severus finds himself alone in the house. A young MALE SERVANT approached Severus with a plate of dates and a pitcher.

SEVERUS

Where has everyone gone?

MALE SERVANT

Your father has gone to the palace to help prepare for the arrival of the Legate. Your mother rose early to speak with the Suphete on behalf of your brother.

SEVERUS

And my brother?

MALE SERVANT

He awaits you at the Hippodrome stables.

Severus smirks and takes a handful of dates.

SEVERUS

I had better go meet him, then.

Severus steps towards the door.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, COMMON AREA - DAWN

ANNO, (dark-skinned, about 17 years old, charming, handsome, and confident) seems as if he has just risen from bed. As he enters the common area, a small group of young men, mostly in their late teens, but few are clearly younger, wait for him.

He smiles at them. One of them, (ELAN) a young man a little taller and skinnier than Anno, speaks up.

ELAN

Anno! There were men asking for you.

Anno's face turns dark.

ANNO

What men?

ELAN

They looked like desert men. Rough, dangerous. Maybe bandits. Are you in trouble?

Anno hides his annoyance.

ANNO

No, of course not. If those men return, tell them I will meet them later in the usual place. But now, I must go speak with our friend Severus.

ELAN

Do you think he'll help?

ANNO

Oh, he will. Trust me.

Anno flashes a smile, then steps towards the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, MARKET SQUARE - MORNING

The market vendors are busy cleaning their stalls and moving items around. They laugh and seem to be in good spirits, speaking a multitude of languages, but somehow, these various merchants understand each other.

Young Severus leans against the wall of a large stone building with Roman architectural features. Anno approaches him. Anno stops several feet away and leans on the same wall and bears a wry smirk. No one pays them any attention. An old woman slowly walks past. They remain silent until she has hobbled away. Then, Anno speaks.

ANNO

They are amusing, aren't they?

SEVERUS

They're raising their prices for the Roman delegates.

ANNO

Oh, yes. Tomorrow, an olive will  
cost as much as a house.

SEVERUS

While our people struggle to afford  
a single pit.

Anno chuckles.

ANNO

It's the way of things. The poor  
take money from the rich, the rich  
take money from the poor. Rome  
takes money from them all.

SEVERUS

They are like worms eating the fat  
of the dead.

ANNO

Yes.  
(pause)  
We all took a vote last night in  
your absence.

SEVERUS

My father would be furious if he  
knew I was working with you. I  
could not slip away.

ANNO

We're using your plan.

Severus turns to Anno in shock.

SEVERUS

My plan?

ANNO

Yes. It is inspired. A move  
Hannibal himself would be proud of.

Severus looks stunned and cannot find his voice.

ANNO (CONT'D)

Be proud, my friend.

SEVERUS

(angry)  
No. Not the plan with the  
elephants? That idea was not meant  
to be taken seriously. It's a  
stupid plan conjured from too much  
wine and late nights. Why would you  
waste time on such a stupid plan?

ANNO

Be calm, my friend. It's a good plan. It will humiliate the Romans, and no one but Romans shall be harmed.

SEVERUS

No, Anno! If even one legionary dies, the Legate will send his soldiers to kill us all. What shall we do then? We are not warriors, we are a handful of men. Most of us are still boys! Shall we kindly ask them to leap into the sea and drown?

Anno laughs.

ANNO

We will blame the attack on the Garamantes. Rome will attack those desert savages, making themselves weaker while we get stronger.

Severus seems doubtful, but Anno smiles and puts a hand on his shoulder. Severus seems to accept his answer, but with reservations.

SEVERUS

I don't like it. I don't even think it will work. And no one must die, Anno. Once people die, it is no longer a statement, it is a declaration of war. That's not what I want.

ANNO

Yes, I know. You have never failed to correct me on that.

SEVERUS

My reasons are sound! Once we use violence, there is no going back. Once blood is shed, it will flow like the Wadi Lebda. And it won't stop. I don't seek war, Anno!

ANNO

Very well, Severus. I promise, we will make sure no one dies. It's your decision anyway, you are the one who tames the giant beasts. Without you, we cannot move forward. But tell me it will not be a gratifying sight, the Legate shaking his fists with impotence, trapped and waiting for rescue.

Severus does not seem convinced.

SEVERUS

No one, Anno. Not one person, Roman  
or African.

ANNO

I thought you hated the Romans.

Severus looks even angrier, possibly because Anno is right.

SEVERUS

I hate the Roman way, the Roman  
gods, the Roman sword that dangles  
above us. I hate the Roman culture  
drowning our own. Romans themselves  
are just people. Africans are  
losing their culture to these  
foreigners, and that I will not  
have. But no one need die for it.  
We would be no better than the man-  
hunters.

ANNO

All right, my friend. You don't  
need to convince me.

There is a pause while Severus seems to calm down. A pair of  
pretty young women walk by. Anno smiles at them, but they  
don't seem to notice him. Once they have passed, Severus  
turns back to Anno.

SEVERUS

When did you want to do it?

ANNO

At the height of the festival.  
Tomorrow night, at the feast,  
before the pageant at the  
Hippodrome. Once the sun sets, the  
pier comes down.

There is a long pause while the two watch a pair of merchants  
get into a shouting match in obviously different languages.  
One of them finally shrugs, relents, and tosses a coin to the  
other. The other merchant catches it, smiles, and goes about  
his business. A banner featuring the colours of Imperial Rome  
slowly rises in the distance.

ANNO (CONT'D)

The palace is spending a great deal  
on this celebration.

SEVERUS

Foolishly! They spend money to  
avoid spending money.



ANNO

They are cowards, not fools. If they spend mere hundreds to avoid paying thousands, they will have done a great service. But they still must sacrifice their pride, and that cost cannot be measured. They fear Rome's taxes, and Rome's wrath should they be unable to pay.

SEVERUS

Rome has no claim to Africa. If they wish our olives that badly, they can buy them for the cost of a house.

Anno laughs.

ANNO

That's why I like you, Severus. You are wise beyond your years. Now, can you have your army of beasts ready by tomorrow?

SEVERUS

Yes. I suppose. Have the others meet me in the circus before the parade. I'll instruct them on how to handle them.

Anno smiles and pats Severus on the shoulder.

ANNO

Tomorrow we send a powerful message, my friend.

Anno casually walks away. Severus calls after him.

SEVERUS

Anno! No one dies tomorrow.

ANNO

(laughs)  
I promise. No one dies.

Anno walks off. Severus looks unconvinced, but after a few more seconds, he also casually wanders off.

CUT TO:

INT. HIPPODROME - LATER

The open theatre is a poor shadow to the commonly pictured coliseum in Rome, but it is clear from the blood-stained ground and rows of seats that the same entertainment is found here.

A young man (GETA) stands in the middle with a horse who is slowly dragging him along even though he is holding the reins tightly.

Severus walks into the arena. He appears amused. Geta seems less so. Geta looks up to see Severus approaching.

GETA

You are late!

Severus smiles at Geta's irritation.

SEVERUS

How can I be late? The sun is barely up and there is yet another day before the festivities.

GETA

Do not toy with me, brother. We have much to do for the parade and this animal vexes me.

Geta seems legitimately angry and worried. Severus steps closer. Severus steps up to the horse's head and slowly reaches out a hand. He makes a comforting sound and the horse seems to calm some. Severus takes the reins from his brother.

GETA (CONT'D)

You have a strange gift to get beasts to do your bidding.

SEVERUS

They don't do my bidding. You do not command animals. You earn their trust.

GETA

They can trust that I will whip them if they don't do my bidding.

SEVERUS

(Wryly)  
Clearly that strategy is working well for you, brother. A horse that does not trust its rider will throw them off. A horse will not leap to its own death for you. It cannot be commanded like a man. Hannibal here will not die for you, but he will carry you if you treat him well.

GETA

You care more for these animals than you do for your own family.

SEVERUS

That's not true at all. After all, I have never whipped 'Hannibal,' here, and so far, I have yet to use a whip on you, despite a lifetime of temptation to do so.

Severus grins. Geta is not impressed.

GETA

Just teach me enough to ride this creature in the parade.

Severus nods and gestures for Geta to take the reins. Geta takes them and tries to mount the horse. He manages to climb on, but almost slips off to the other side. Severus tries not to smirk. Soon, Geta is on the horse, and has a hold of the reins.

SEVERUS

Good. Now... hold on...

Severus smacks the horse's rear, and the horse begins galloping. Geta holds on for dear life while Severus can't help but laugh. The horse makes a quick rotation of the arena. Then Severus clicks his tongue and the horse slows down to a light trot, then to a stop. He turns to Severus and comes trotting over to him. Geta has managed to hold on, but he seems shaken.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I do hope your scholarship to Rome covers riding lessons.

GETA

That was not funny, Severus! I will not be made a fool of before the Romans!

SEVERUS

No, you're capable of making a fool of yourself. Worry not, older brother, you'll be able to ride this beast through the streets with no difficulty. He is a well-behaved beast.

GETA

Please, brother.

Severus nods, seriously.

SEVERUS

Be calm. I will not allow my older brother to look foolish before our foreign masters.

GETA

You kick against the Romans more than this horse kicks against me.

SEVERUS

Because we are African.

GETA

You are young, Severus. You don't understand. Rome has brought the world together. You would stand against the entire world, by yourself?

SEVERUS

I stand against no one. I merely stand for Africa.

GETA

Talk like that is why father keeps you in the stables.

SEVERUS

Well, I would rather shovel out the leavings of the horses than gleefully roll in that of the foreigners.

GETA

(Snaps)  
We are half Roman!

SEVERUS

(Smirks)  
And half African! So... I have the luxury of choosing sides, just as you do.

GETA

That is your problem, brother. You believe they have to be two sides.

Severus nods and shrugs, conceding the point. Then he makes a gesture and clicks his tongue. Hannibal jumps up on his hind legs and Geta stumbles back. Severus grins at his brother's momentary humiliation before extending a hand to help his brother up.

CUT TO:

INT. HIPPODROME, STANDS - SECONDS LATER.

We pull back to see a small group of young women watching from the seats. One of them is PACCIA, with two of her friends Dita and Shea (Young, pretty, wearing clothes that aren't quite as fine as Paccia's.)

DITA

(laughing)  
Your betrothed, is he as skilled in  
bed as he is with that beast?

PACCIA

(defensively)  
Please don't mock him. He is a  
great man, and shall rise to great  
heights in the Roman Empire.

DITA

Provided a stallion does not knock  
him down.

They laugh.

Their laughter is just loud enough to catch the attention of  
Severus and Geta. They look up at the women. The women duck  
down out of sight.

PACCIA

We've seen enough. Come, we'd  
better visit the shops before the  
cost of bread rises to the cost of  
a horse.

DITA

Oh, fear not. Fishing ships shall  
come in soon with food for  
everyone.

PACCIA

And you shall 'politely' ask them  
for a discount?

SHEA

We cannot all be betrothed to  
wealth, Paccia.

They begin to sneak away. Paccia looks back towards the  
arena, but her gaze seems to fall on Severus, not Geta.

CUT TO:

INT. HIPPODROME - SECONDS LATER.

Geta is once again rightly mounted. He is leading the horse  
in a gentle trot while Severus paces next to him, holding the  
reigns.

GETA

Thank you, brother.

SEVERUS

We are blood. No argument would  
make me turn my back on blood.

GETA

That is good to hear. There are rumours about you spending time with...

SEVERUS

With who?

GETA

Disagreeable people.

Severus laughs.

SEVERUS

Oh? Like who?

GETA

Anno bel Adish.

SEVERUS

Oh, him.

GETA

You do not deny it?

Severus shrugs.

SEVERUS

Anno and I have many things we agree on, and many things we disagree on. Just like you and I, brother.

GETA

Anno is a madman. It is said he wishes to incite a violent uprising.

SEVERUS

Anno sees himself as a great hero. He seeks the opportunity to prove that he is.

GETA

For instance, in a war?

SEVERUS

Possibly.

GETA

And what about you, brother?

Severus thinks for a long moment.

SEVERUS

The problem with war is that it never really ends.

(MORE)

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

No, we need not go to war with Rome to free ourselves from it. Rome wants our olive oil and our coin. We have something they want. They have armies that could take it from us. But it need not come to that. If we make Rome respect us, we can ask them to leave us alone.

GETA

You plan to rid us of Roman influence by asking very nicely?

SEVERUS

Why not? I doubt it has been tried yet.

GETA

And you say that I am naive. Rome respects strength.

SEVERUS

We are Africans. We have strength.

GETA

But not unity. We do not have one African nation, one tribe, one coin. We do not march under a single banner.

SEVERUS

Perhaps we should. I have heard that the entirety of Africa is as large as the area of the Roman Empire itself. Imagine if we all stood as one. Even if the Romans did not agree to let us be free, they would be forced to listen to us. Perhaps they would even steal from our culture the way they stole from the Greeks before them.

GETA

(laughs)  
My brother, who conquered the world with culture.

SEVERUS

Again, it hasn't been tried.

GETA

When I am in Rome, I should love to see what the Romans think of your ideas. It should prove to be very entertaining.

SEVERUS

Marcus Aurelias said "Remember that what pulls the strings is the force hidden within; there lies the power to persuade, there the life - there, if one must speak out, the real man."

GETA

He also said "Confine yourself to the Present." So shall we try to steer this beast now, or must we walk in circles all day?

Severus laughs and hands the reins to Geta.

SEVERUS

Brother, you will be in a parade. Hannibal will follow the other horses along the streets.

GETA

And what if he is provoked by something?

SEVERUS

Like what?

GETA

Perhaps the gigantic beasts that will follow us?

SEVERUS

Fear not. Just hold on, and he will carry you as far as possible from the noise. Though, it may not be where you want to go.

GETA

Amusing, brother.

SEVERUS

Truth. Trust the beast, and he shall trust you.

GETA

Is that your secret?

SEVERUS

One of many. Now, see if you can steer, the way I showed you.

Geta tightens the reins and begins to steer the horse. Hannibal obeys and Geta smiles, becoming more confident.

GETA

You are a good teacher, little brother.



SEVERUS

And I didn't even need to use the whip!

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, FABRIC MARKET - MINUTES LATER

Paccia, Shea and Dita are walking through the Fabric Market, laughing and in generally good spirits, though Paccia obviously seems a little less enthusiastic. She walks a little more slowly and seems to have no interest in the finery displayed around her.

DITA

We should find some silks to adorn you in, Paccia.

SHEA

Or perhaps... Ourselves. If we can afford them.

PACCIA

I almost pity the Romans. I think these vultures would charge them for the very air they breathe if they could figure out how.

DITA

And what's the harm in that? Rome is rich, and we are not.

SHEA

It is only right to take from Rome in trade what they take in taxes. The way these Legionaries act as if they own our city, the least we can do is make them pay for it.

DITA

My father says Rome does this everywhere. So long as we pay taxes, Rome will let us live in peace.

PACCIA

It is simply tribute to avoid war.

DITA

But we also get aqueducts and soldiers to fend off those savage Garamantes. Romans get to die fighting them instead of us. I think that is worth paying some taxes.

PACCIA

It seems everything in life is about money in some way.

SHEA

Oh, Paccia, you are speaking of your wedding again, aren't you?

PACCIA

My marriage is arranged, Shea. It is done so my father and Publius may both be stronger and more wealthy. I am an olive being sold.

DITA

I think you are worth more than an olive.

Shea looks to one of the stalls selling jars of olives.

SHEA

Though, perhaps, not at these prices.

PACCIA

You make light of me.

DITA

Arranged marriages are how most of us will find husbands. Personally, I would prefer no husband. To spend my years mothering children while some old fool drinks wine and makes elaborate plans for the movement of coin sounds dull and lifeless.

SHEA

I would like to have children some day.

PACCIA

As would I. But I don't see why it cannot be by my choice and will.

SHEA

Perhaps you could arrange a trade after a few years. Sell off your husband for a better one... or maybe just for coin.

Dita laughs. Paccia smiles.

PACCIA

It has an amusing irony to it.

Dita gets a shrewd look on her face.

DITA

Or perhaps you already have a better husband in mind.

PACCIA

What do you mean?

Dita just smiles knowingly. Shea seems distracted by something in one of the market stalls. She wanders over, leaving the other two standing there.

Shea examines some fine silk fabric, and we pull back to see Dende step behind the stall, and discreetly duck between hanging curtains, disappearing from view. No one else seems to notice this except for the merchant in the stall, who looks around in suspicion for a brief moment before turning to Shea.

SHEA

How much for the red one?

She points to a small red scarf.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - LATE MORNING

A small caravan is rolling along a Roman-built road. A dark-skinned man (GARAMONTE) in Roman Legion armour stands in the middle of the road. As the Caravan approaches, he raises his hand. The lead wagon comes to a stop, the CART DRIVER looking down at the single soldier.

CART DRIVER

Hail Caesar.

GARAMONTE

Caesar is not the Emperor.

CART DRIVER

Hail Rome, then. We are traveling to the city of Lepcis Magna to sell spices and buy olive oil.

GARAMONTE

There are raiders along this road.

CART DRIVER

I am confused. Where are the other Romans? Why are you alone?

The man in armour steps up to the Cart Driver, drawing his sword.

CART DRIVER (CONT'D)

Gods!

The Cart Driver draws a blade, but the Garamonte raider is too fast and stabs him. More figures in rough, dark clothes appear and begin slaughtering the people on the caravan. Then, they climb into the carts and wagons. They then urge the animals onward, up the road towards Lepcis Magna.

CUT TO:

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - LATER

Severus and Geta come inside. We can hear the booming voice of Publius, their father, ordering servants around. As the two young men step around a corner, they see him speaking to a very harried-looking woman, clearly a servant.

PUBLIUS

No, no. I am certain we have real Roman wine somewhere. Keep looking! I'll not have the delegation drinking sea water when I know I have *many* bottles of imported wine.

Severus rolls his eyes while Geta smiles and nods to his father. Publius dismisses the servant with a wave.

PUBLIUS (CONT'D)

My boys! Geta, Severus, tell me you have made progress.

SEVERUS

Geta no longer soils himself when the horses whinny.

Publius laughs. Geta shoots an angry look at his brother.

GETA

I believe I shall be able to ride the beast tomorrow.

PUBLIUS

Good! If the Legate is impressed, they may speak well of you in Rome.

SEVERUS

(Flatly)  
Which is very important.

Publius holds up a hand. Severus falls silent.

PUBLIUS

Severus, you may curse the Romans day and night. I demand no loyalty from you towards them. But your brother has a bright future, and you would be wrong to ruin that for him.

Severus looks like he wants to argue, but doesn't.

SEVERUS  
(Quietly)  
You're right. I'm sorry, father.

PUBLIUS  
No... apologise to Geta.

Severus turns to Geta, irritated but humble.

SEVERUS  
I'm sorry, brother.

PUBLIUS  
Good. Now, Severus, if you can be civil, you can join us at the feast tomorrow night.

SEVERUS  
The feast?

PUBLIUS  
Yes. The Suphete has invited many of the prominent families to join the Roman delegates. We will be only a few seats from the Legate himself.

GETA  
That's fantastic! One word from him, and I shall be in Rome by year's end.

Severus looks horrified.

PUBLIUS  
Their eyes of Rome shall be on all of us.

SEVERUS  
I... Father, you cannot attend!

PUBLIUS  
Oh yes I can. Your brother, mother, and I shall be in attendance. I would very much like you to be there as well if you can keep your Roman hatred in check for a single night.

Severus opens his mouth to speak, but stops. Geta looks at him and an angry expression crosses his face.

GETA  
Severus...

Severus dismisses his brother's concerns.

SEVERUS

I must go. I must prepare the elephants for tomorrow's parade.

Severus turns to leave. He is stopped as his mother, Pia (Early-to-mid thirties, pale skinned, pretty with dark hair) comes in from outside.

PIA

Now Publius, are you putting the fear of the Gods into the house staff as well as our boys?

Publius smiles warmly and embraces Pia.

PUBLIUS

Of course, dear. A firm hand will not drop a single coin.

GETA

Though it could crush an egg.

Publius laughs. Severus gets an uncomfortable look on his face and continues towards the door.

PIA

The Suphete says the scholarship is as good as done.

PUBLIUS

That's wonderful!  
(to Geta) I'm so proud of you, my boy.  
(to Severus) And Severus...

Severus stops and turns back to his father.

PUBLIUS (CONT'D)

Thank you for what you are doing. I know we have different ideas about the Romans. You have put aside your pride and anger for the good of your family. That is the mark of a great man. Pride is a poorly-forged blade.

SEVERUS

You always taught me to have pride in my heritage.

PUBLIUS

Too true. But if that pride is not tempered with softer metals, it is brittle, and when snapped, will hurt the one who wields it. Do you understand?

SEVERUS

I... I think I'm learning it.

Publius frowns at his son's remark. Severus turns and leaves in silence. Geta casts a worried look to his father.

GETA

He has been speaking with that rogue, Anno.

PUBLIUS

I've heard those rumours. But he is my son, and your brother. He is blood. If we cannot trust our own blood, then we can trust no one.

GETA

And what if he is trusting the wrong person?

Publius sighs.

PUBLIUS

Leave it to my adolescent son to question a good aphorism. Go get changes, you look as if you've been dragged through the dirt.

GETA

I have been.

Publius laughs. Geta scowls.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, FABRIC MARKET - EARLY AFTERNOON

The same caravan we saw earlier now rumbles slowly through the streets to the markets. It rumbles to a halt in front of a familiar stall of silken fabric.

Several men dismount from the carts, leaving only a few left to drive the remainder of the caravan along. From the back of the fabric stall, Dende appears.

DENDE

You made it! Good, quickly, now come.

The various Garamonte men enter the fabric stall and slip behind the hanging curtains.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

In the alleyway is a small improvised camp where Dende and Maz have been hiding out. The many men slip inside, one by one, filling the space quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, FABRIC MARKET - SIMULTANEOUS

Dende looks to the remaining drivers on the carts.

DENDE

Sell what you can and get rid of the wagons. Use the coin to buy oil and lots of rope, the longest, sturdiest rope and chain that you can find. Go!

The caravan begins to move again. Dende turns and ducks into the stall.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SECONDS LATER.

Dende appears through the curtain. Maz appears in the crowd and beckons Dende over.

MAZ

This will be very cramped.

DENDE

Sacrifices. The Romans cannot know we are here or we will lose the element of surprise.

MAZ

What is this plan that involves rope and chain?

Dende laughs.

DENDE

It is madness and genius at once, assuming that fool Anno does what he needs to do. Besides, if it doesn't work, we will just burn everything and hope for the best.

Maz smiles.

MAZ

That's a plan I like.



DENDE

I know, my friend, I know. But it will be so much sweeter to kill the Legate in person. His blood on my blade will show Rome that this is our land.

MAZ

That does sound inviting as well.

DENDE

The Romans only defeat us with numbers. After today, we shall show them how useless their numbers are.

CUT TO:

INT. HIPPODROME STABLES - LATER

Many horses are resting and feeding in the stalls. Severus is feeding the animals and has some grooming tools. He comes up to Hannibal and pats his head gently.

SEVERUS

It's easy for you. Your loyalty is never in question.

He hears footsteps and turns. We follow his gaze to Paccia who stands there alone at the doorway.

PACCIA

You have a gift with these animals.

SEVERUS

The great Hannibal said that you cannot strike fear into a creature ten times your size. You must earn it's loyalty.

PACCIA

Didn't most of Hannibal's elephants die crossing the Alps?

SEVERUS

Yes. And many of his men, too. But he still sacked Rome and we speak of his name to this day.

PACCIA

Severus, I... I wish to ask you about your brother.

SEVERUS

Oh?

PACCIA

Geta has always been... Hard to reach. He always seems to be looking away, into the distance.

SEVERUS

My brother looks towards Rome.

PACCIA

That is what bothers me. Rome is very far away. And they say, in Rome, men take wives only to produce children. That Roman men prefer...

SEVERUS

Not Geta! Surely not Geta.

PACCIA

I don't want to believe it. But he is very cold to me. He rarely allows me to his bed, and when he does, it is without passion.

SEVERUS

Geta has many worries.

PACCIA

And he does not let me help alleviate them.

Severus sighs and shakes his head.

SEVERUS

I cannot speak to my brother's intentions.

Severus doesn't say more, but he clearly wants to. Paccia bites her lip and looks up at Hannibal.

PACCIA

But you understand your beasts, who lack the ability to speak.

SEVERUS

(Slightly angry)  
Do you have a purpose here?

Paccia takes a long breath.

PACCIA

I have no love for the Roman way.

Severus looks at her, a little suspicious.

PACCIA (CONT'D)

If I am to marry a man who will not share a bed with me, I will live in misery. My womanhood is not merely a vessel for making children.

SEVERUS

Paccia, I am sorry. I did not arrange your betrothal, and I doubt I shall have the choice of my own.

Paccia is quiet for a moment. She looks to Severus and their eyes meet.

PACCIA

The burden borne by the powerful Roman family?

Severus looks at her with fire in his eyes.

SEVERUS

I am not Roman!

PACCIA

No. You have too much passion to be Roman.

She looks at Severus with a curious longing, but then turns away, as if she is ashamed. She looks back to him.

PACCIA (CONT'D)

I will see you at the feast tomorrow.

Severus watches her leave. He heaves a long sigh.

Several seconds go by before Anno appears, stepping casually around the corner. He has a wide smile on his face and shakes his head in recrimination.

ANNO

You should have kissed her.

SEVERUS

(Enraged)  
Explain what business it is of yours!

ANNO

My apologies. In my discreet arrival, I couldn't help but overhear.

SEVERUS

And I can trust you not to repeat anything you heard, correct?

(MORE)

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

Otherwise, my animals shall be very sleepy tomorrow, and unfit for your ludicrous plan.

ANNO

*Your plan.* But never fear, my friend. I care nothing about who you share your bed with, and I care less about your brother.

Severus looks unhappy, but seems to accept the answer.

ANNO (CONT'D)

Your message sounded very urgent.

SEVERUS

My family will be at the feast tomorrow night.

Anno does not react.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

You promised me no one would be harmed. I will hold you to that.

ANNO

Severus, I'm surprised at your lack of trust. I gave you my word. I keep my word.

SEVERUS

You had better.

There is a tense silence.

ANNO

My friend, I would never dream of endangering your family. What we are planning is to send the Romans home humiliated and empty-handed. No one will be harmed.

SEVERUS

That includes servants, yes? And slaves? And even Legionaries?

Anno does not flinch.

ANNO

Of course.

Severus does not seem convinced.

ANNO (CONT'D)

I sense a lack of trust, dear friend.

SEVERUS

Oh, good. Then you are not stupid.

ANNO

Have I given you reason not to trust me?

SEVERUS

Yes, actually. Whenever I say, 'protest, denounce,' you respond with 'riot, destroy.' I worry you have a thirst for blood, not freedom. That you have somehow convinced a group of innocent boys to do something dangerous and stupid. I will have no bloodshed on my conscience.

ANNO

(nods)  
Perhaps. Though, sometimes blood must be shed to make fertile ground.

SEVERUS

Sometimes. But not this time. Not when my family stands on that ground.

Anno nods.

ANNO

Of course not.

Severus gives Anno a serious look.

SEVERUS

I meant it when I said I will hold you to that.

ANNO

I would expect nothing less, my friend. You have honour and pride. I would not dare oppose that.

Anno gives him a reassuring smile, then turns and walks for the door. Severus still seems conflicted and unhappy as he begins to groom Hannibal.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA - LATER

Anno walks along the market, passing stalls selling various goods. He passes by a large stall full of fresh fish. He nods to the man in the stall. The man nods back.

Anno steps inside the stall. The back wall is merely a long curtain that the man lifts up. Anno slips behind it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SECONDS LATER.

Anno finds himself between two buildings. Several dangerous-looking men sit in this alley, including Dende and Maz. Dende rises, approaching Anno.

DENDE

Well?

ANNO

He will still help us.

Dende seems unconvinced.

DENDE

Your friend thinks much of himself.

ANNO

He is a fool. A rich fool born to a family of rich fools. We will be better off when their bodies litter the harbour

DENDE

And if he changes his mind before we are ready?

ANNO

Then... we will just have to improvise.

DENDE

Also a terrible plan! The reinforcements from the barracks will be upon us in moments.

ANNO

Trust me, I have Severus under control.

DENDE

You had better. Maz has not hunted anyone in a long time, and he is beginning to think you look like a cave-dweller.

Anno gets a sick look on his face. He turns to Maz, who simply glares in a threatening fashion. Anno looks pensive.

ANNO

Tell Maz he will have plenty of Roman prey very soon.

DENDE

Good!

ANNO

It is not wise to threaten your allies. You Garamantes are seen as worse than the Romans. If we did not need you to free this city, I would tell you to go rot in the desert.

DENDE

Yes, I've heard it before. We are savages, monsters, cannibals, murderers. And the Romans rape little boys and eat raw mice. The northern tribes sacrifice virgins to their gods, and slant-eyed men eat dogs and worship trees. Do not pretend your people are above monstrous things when you willingly pay apathetic fools from afar to keep them from murdering you all.

ANNO

Are you saying we are cowards?

DENDE

Never. But you came to us for help. That means you accept how we do things, or we leave. And you can fight the Romans with elephants and horses.

He laughs, and the others also share a chuckle. Anno is less than pleased.

ANNO

I am more dangerous than you think, Dende. Pray you never discover that.

Dende laughs and Anno slips back out through the shop stall. Maz shakes his head and looks down at his knife.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA - NIGHT

It is dark, but light from the many windows of the city tenements cast a soft glow on the streets. There are still many people milling around, servants on late-night errands, Roman Legionaries on patrol, late-night revellers beginning the celebration a day early.

The markets are closed, and Severus walks along the streets. He looks conflicted, and in the darkness, he can hide his unhappy face. As he walks along, he passes a pair of Legionaries (LAJOS and SEOK, both younger Legionaries, but their armour and confident stride speaks of their experience. They are light-skinned, but tanned from the hot desert sun) The Legionaries pause to look at him. He barely notices them and continues to walk, but they call out to him.

LAJOS

You! Boy!

Severus turns to them in silence.

LAJOS (CONT'D)

What are you doing at this late hour?

SEVERUS

I am walking the streets of my home. This is a free city.

SEOK

True. But these are dangerous times. A young man of your stature is not safe on these streets at night.

SEVERUS

(angry)  
This city is my home! I am safer here than anywhere in the world! Go on about your business, foreigner. I am in no mood for Roman foolishness.

LAJOS

Roman foolishness?! Perhaps we should-

SEOK

No, don't. This is Publius's son.

Lajos seems as if he is about to argue, but then backs down.

LAJOS

Very well. Enjoy your evening, citizen.

SEVERUS

What if I were not Publius's son?! What if I were simply walking these streets in rags and desperate for food? So desperate I took a coin from you. Would you enact your Roman law on me?!



SEOK  
Boy, you should not-

SEVERUS  
Boy?!

LAJOS  
That's enough.

The Legionary reaches for his sword. Seok stops him by grabbing his hand.

SEOK  
Son of Publius, offence was not intended.

SEVERUS  
It was taken!

SEOK  
Well, I can't help that. Travel in safety, son of Publius. Danger walks these streets.

Seok gives Lajos a look. Lajos shrugs out of his grip and the two begin to walk away. Severus watches them, almost wanting to continue the confrontation, but then turns and continues on his path, feeling defeated.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT, LATER

Severus looks up at the Palace. It looks majestic cast against the sea, lit by hundreds of small braziers and torches, fit for the Emperor himself. Severus stares at the monument to everything he hates and sneers. He then looks down at the ground, feeling his anger leave him. He seems just as enraged by his own confusion as he is by the Romans.

Severus looks out to the sea beyond, the various ships in the harbour and the stars shining high above.

Severus shuts his eyes and bows his head, as if in prayer for clarity or guidance.

After a moment, he opens his eyes again and looks once more to the Palace. He looks to the ground, and grabs a loose stone. He seems ready to hurl it towards the palace, but stops himself. He remains frozen, holding the rock.

He turns and hurls it at the ground in frustration. It chips a little and bounces away, and Severus winces. He looks down and sees a chip of the rock has nicked the skin on his shin. He has a tiny bleeding cut there.

A small dribble of blood runs down his foot, over his sandal, and onto the ground.

He shakes his head, then wipes the blood off. He starts walking off, away from the palace, just as conflicted as before.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, MAIN SQUARE - MORNING

Severus approaches Anno and several other young men. There is a tense, nervous energy to the scene. The streets have been cleared of debris and people for the parade.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEPCIS MAGNA, ARCH OF MARCUS AURELIAS - MORNING

Several large carriages bearing the imperial colours and banners of Rome rumble along the road, entering the city through the archway. They are accompanied by many Roman soldiers, all in resplendent armour. As the carriage slowly rumbles into the city, we see Dende and Maz are watching from the side of the road.

CUT TO:

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE, COMMON ROOM - MORNING

Geta is wearing very fine clothes, and making sure they are in good condition. Paccia is there, also well dressed, and soon they are greeted by Publius. He puts his arms around them joyfully. Paccia casts a glance at Geta, but Geta doesn't seem to even notice that she's there. Publius enters and pats his son on the shoulder.

PUBLIUS

Nervous?

GETA

Of course I am nervous.

PUBLIUS

Yes, but at least you are honest.

He smiles reassuringly, then steps away. Geta turns to Paccia.

GETA

Well? How do I look?

PACCIA

Like a fine Roman citizen.

GETA

I hope so. Thank you so much,  
Paccia. When you are my wife, I  
promise, you will want for nothing.

PACCIA

Geta... You know what I want.

Geta's face falls.

GETA

Please, Paccia. Not now.

PACCIA

No... You are right. You have  
enough on your mind today. I will  
not add to your troubles.

She embraces Geta, but the look on her face is one of sad  
loneliness. Pia enters and smiles.

PIA

My handsome son, are you ready?

GETA

I don't think I shall ever be  
ready. But it is time.

PACCIA

You will do well, my love. The God  
are with you.

Geta smiles and heads for the door.

PIA

Paccia, will you be coming with us,  
or with your parents?

PACCIA

My father did not receive an  
invitation.

Pia seems shocked.

PIA

I shall have to speak to the  
Suphete. The betrothed of house  
Septimius deserves a seat, as does  
her family.

PACCIA

I'm not offended. Those things  
don't matter to me.

PIA

Well, they matter to us. We have done many great things for this city. Gratitude is not required, but it is appreciated.

PACCIA

Ah.

PIA

What?

PACCIA

Nothing. I'm just learning more and more about Geta.

Pia smirks knowingly.

PIA

Oh really?

Paccia smiles, but is clearly a little uncomfortable.

PACCIA

I think I shall go with Geta and follow him in the parade to show my support.

PIA

An excellent idea.

Paccia smiles.

PACCIA

I look forward to the feast.

PIA

As do I.

Paccia steps out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - SECONDS LATER.

Paccia starts walking quickly, hoping to catch up to Geta.

CUT TO:

INT. CIRCUS, ANIMAL CAGES - LATER

Severus motions for Anno and the rest of his group to follow him. They walk to the cages where the elephants rest. He gestures to one of the larger beasts, and makes a clicking noise with his tongue. The beast rises to its feet. The rest of the young men seem impressed, but also intimidated.

SEVERUS

They are truly gentle giants.

ANNO

I thought you liked them because they could be used for war.

SEVERUS

They can be, yes. But they are not born into war.

ANNO

Not like us.

Severus looks at Anno seriously.

SEVERUS

We are not born into war, either. It is a choice.

ANNO

A terrible choice. Live in tyranny or go to war to be free men.

Severus looks like he's going to argue, but stops. He bites his lip and seems to think for a moment.

SEVERUS

Now, you promised me, no one dies. You will just demolish the pier and humiliate the Romans.

ANNO

I swear it, my friend. Then perhaps Rome will see that we are far too costly to keep in their gigantic menagerie.

Severus looks at the elephants once again. He pats one on the snout.

SEVERUS

You had better be right. My family is determined to be at that feast. I will not abide their harm.

ANNO

Of course not.

SEVERUS

How do you plan to avoid the legionaries?

ANNO

They will not stop us. We are part of the parade.

(MORE)

ANNO (CONT'D)

We will take the elephants down to the beach instead of back to the Hippodrome. Trust me.

SEVERUS

I don't.

Pause.

ANNO

Then ask yourself this question: How badly do you want to get rid of the Romans?

Severus looks away. He clearly doesn't have an answer.

ANNO (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. Relax. Tonight at dusk, Rome will be humiliated and their mighty empire will limp home with a wounded leg. Now... Show us how to lead these monsters.

SEVERUS

They are not monsters. So don't think of them that way. Here, they respond to gentle commands.

Severus lets out a call, and the elephant steps out of the cage. The rest of Anno's group stands back.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

Fear not. He will be content to get into the sun and he will be rewarded with good food later. He knows this.

ANNO

I thought these beasts were bred to fight in the Hippodrome.

SEVERUS

Not the elephants. Well, not *these* elephants. I raised them myself, trained them. I can make them stand on two legs like a man, and flap their ears.

Anno smiles and claps his friend on the shoulder.

ANNO

And you claim you are no magician.

SEVERUS

I am not. Please, be careful with these creatures. They will do as you command them, but be gentle.

(MORE)

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

And do not let the Legionaries kill them!

ANNO

I promise, my friend.

Severus still seems doubtful. He clicks his tongue, and the elephant raises its leg. Severus climbs up onto its back.

SEVERUS

Just like that, and you can ride him all day. He will expect a treat at the end. He likes fruit and will eat more than you can imagine.

Anno smiles.

ANNO

I see. My friends, do as Severus does. Let us get ready. The Parade begins at mid-day. We don't want to keep the crowds waiting. They will be awestruck by our marvellous beasts.

The others laugh. Severus begins unlocking the other cages and summoning the animals out. One by one the young men mount up and follow Severus's example.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - LATER

The carriages from Rome, as well as the long train of guards, pull up to the Palace. A well-dressed man of clear Roman descent (The Suphete) stands there. The carriage door opens, and the LEGATE steps out. He approaches the Suphete and they exchange greetings. Meanwhile, the Legate's entire entourage pours out from the other carriages to fall in behind him. Soon, they are led across the long pier to the Palace. A Centurion departs from the entourage and sets up a guard patrol at the edge of the pier.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIPPODROME - LATER

After much preparation, Anno and his friends ride the elephants out from the Hippodrome. Severus watches them go. As he does, he notices some of Anno's group have small daggers on them. He looks shocked, but reluctant. In his indecision, he allows the group of elephants to march away towards the city. A small crowd gathers around them as they go marching away.

Severus is about to leave when he notices several men, all gruff-looking, begin to follow the elephants at a distance.

Severus shakes his head and turns away.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BRIDGE OVER WADI LEBDA - LATER

Severus walks alone along a bridge over the Wadi Lebda river. In the distance, up the river, we can see the Palace and the ships in the harbour. Severus has a dour look on his face. A pair of Roman Legionaries, the same from the previous night, walk past, then stop.

LAJOS

Hail, son of Publius.

SEOK

Will you be attending the feast later?

SEVERUS

No. I will not. Excuse me.

SEOK

Pardon us, my boy. Are you well?

SEVERUS

No. I... I am worried for my elephants in the parade today.

LAJOS

I have seen elephants. They are hearty beasts and can take care of themselves. Even against the savages of the desert.

SEVERUS

Savages?

SEOK

Pay no mind to him. He believes a wild rumour.

LAJOS

It is no rumour. I would not like to find a dagger in my back today.

SEVERUS

What rumour?

LAJOS

The Garamantes are in Lepcis Magna. We are to be on watch for them. They may try to kill the Legate.



Severus turns pale. He looks distant, as if he is just now putting the pieces together.

SEOK

It is idle talk made over cups of wine. Nothing more.

SEVERUS

Perhaps... Perhaps you are right. Thank you for your warning.

Severus turns and begins to run.

INT. HIPPODROME STABLES - LATER

Geta stands before Hannibal, the horse, looking up at the great beast with a little fear. He gently reaches out and pats Hannibal's head. The horse responds with a gentle nuzzle. Geta smiles. Then Severus comes running into the stables, out of breath and clearly rushed.

GETA

Late again, dear brother? Fear not. I think I have found acceptance with your beast.

SEVERUS

Geta... Geta, please, listen. Tonight, at the feast...

GETA

What has you so worked up, Severus?

SEVERUS

Just do not go to the Palace tonight.

Geta looks angry.

GETA

I knew it. You have been conspiring with that renegade Anno!

SEVERUS

Geta, listen to me-

GETA

No! No, I won't be listening to you, brother and traitor! I will be telling Father, and I'll be telling the Suphete. What is the plan, then? Murder the Legate?

SEVERUS

No! No, Geta, listen it's not like that.

GETA

Then you're at least semi-intelligent. I have heard things about Anno. That he has made friends with the savages of the desert.

SEVERUS

The Garamantes? No, Anno would never-

GETA

Open your eyes, Severus! Without Roman soldiers, we would be but cattle to those butchers. What happens if the Romans leave the city, hm? Who will protect us then? Do you have an army hidden in these stables?

SEVERUS

Geta!! Stop! Please, I don't want you to get hurt. Or father. Or-

GETA

Or your Roman mother?

Severus looks at Geta in horror. Geta stares at him coldly. Geta then mounts Hannibal with no problem. He looks at his brother, and sympathy slips into his expression, though he fights against it.

GETA (CONT'D)

You are still my brother, my blood. And I will not mention your name. But when I reach the Palace, I *will* tell the guards to watch out for your friends. Anno will be dead by dusk.

SEVERUS

(Desperately)  
I don't want anyone to die!

GETA

Then don't associate with fools!

Geta spurs Hannibal onward and the horse trots away at a casual pace. Severus watches his brother go and shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIPPODROME STABLES - MOMENTS LATER

As Geta trots away, Severus comes out from the stables, looking defeated.

Paccia is nearby, and she smiles up at Geta as he rides confidently out towards the main square. She then looks at sees Severus, who's anguished face looks as if he's been stabbed in the heart. She comes over to him.

PACCIA

Severus...

SEVERUS

Paccia! Thank the gods! Please, you must convince Geta and my father not to attend the feast tonight!

PACCIA

I... I don't understand. Why not?

SEVERUS

I think I've made a terrible mistake. Please, don't let them enter the Palace! I have to go.

Severus runs off into the streets of the city. Paccia stands there in confusion for a moment, but then turns and runs off in a different direction.

CUT TO:

INT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, MAIN SQUARE - A LITTLE LATER

The parade has begun, and we can see Geta is among many finely-dressed young men on horseback who march along the street. There are crowds of people watching and cheering, a few vendors trying to hock their wares, and of course, Roman soldiers there to keep order.

Severus is but a single face in the crowd, and though he struggles to work his way up the road, he cannot push past everyone in such a thick throng.

Behind Geta and the other men on horseback is a small train of elephants. Severus sees this, and realises that the men riding them are *not* the teenage boys that Anno had with him. Severus looks horrified and stares in shock. He looks up and sees Dende riding the elephants. Though he doesn't know who Dende is, the expression on his face reveals that he knows something is wrong.

He turns and heads for the rear of the elephant column. Once he gets there, he sees Anno, casually following the parade.

Severus runs up to Anno and grabs him, pulling him off the street.

He drags Anno aside into an alley.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY ALLEY - SECONDS LATER.

Severus pushes Anno against a wall and punches him in the gut. Anno almost cries out, but only a whimper escapes him.

SEVERUS

Who are those men?! Are those Garamantes?! Answer me, bastard!

ANNO

(Wheezing) My friend-

SEVERUS

You are not my friend! You lied to me, didn't you?! There is no resistance, is there? Just you, some other boys, and your barbarian allies!

Anno gets t his feet and looks Severus in the eye.

ANNO

You foolish child. Rome is for Romans, Africa is for Africans. Yes, I have allied with the Garamantes. They have taken the animals. Our friends need not risk their lives.

SEVERUS

You have sold this city to butchers!

Severus does not notice a figure come up behind him. A heavy hand lands on Severus, and we pull back to see Maz grab him and throw him hard against the opposite alley wall. Severus tries to fight back, but Maz strikes him and slams his head. Maz then removes a knife. He is about to plunge it into Severus's chest when Anno stops him.

ANNO

No! There is nowhere to hide the body, and there are still hours to go before sundown.

MAZ

That hasn't stopped me yet.

Anno opens his mouth to say something, but a look of horror comes over his face.

ANNO

No... You didn't!

Maz says nothing. He looks at Anno with disdain and aims the dagger at Anno's stomach. Anno's face goes pale and he stumbles back, narrowly avoiding the blade by sheer luck. But Maz still kicks him hard, sending Anno back into the wall.

His head strikes the stone wall and we hear an audible crack. Maz does not let up his vicious assault and slams his fists into Maz's face several times, knocking him to the ground. He then raises the dagger again.

Severus recovers enough to strike Maz and knock the dagger from his hand. Maz, though, does not even slow down or react to being disarmed. Instead he tackles Severus to the ground. Maz, meanwhile, stumbles back, leaving a heavy blood trail. He drops to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY ALLEY - SECONDS LATER.

Overhead shot. Severus is pushed off of Maz, and receives a sharp kick to his head. Severus reels and falls to the ground.

Anno falls limp and inert.

Maz stands up, then looks at Anno and Severus. Severus is groaning and trying to get back up. Maz growls angrily. He grabs Severus and begins dragging him further up the alley. Severus tries to struggle, but it's clear that, without a weapon, he is out-matched by the desert barbarian.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY - LATER

Maz drags Severus through several alleys to the large one they had been using as a hiding place earlier. There are half a dozen bodies there, all Anno's boys. Severus is tossed to the ground next to one of the bodies. Blood is everywhere.

Severus starts to get up, but Maz stands over him.

MAZ

You are not the first boy I have  
killed today.

Severus looks at the bodies in horror, then back up to Maz.

SEVERUS

You're a Garamante, aren't you? You  
hunt people for pleasure!

Maz smirks lightly.

MAZ

Not people. Cave-dwellers. Though  
for you and your weak, fearful  
people... I will make an exception.

SEVERUS

Your plan will fail! My brother knows that you are coming! He will warn the Suphete!

MAZ

The young man who looks like you, riding atop a stallion? Yes, fear not, he shall warn no one.

Severus looks horrified and seems to realise he's put his brother in danger.

SEVERUS

My God... Your people will be inside the palace when the pier goes down. You will trap everyone inside and-

MAZ

(laughs)  
Yes, and then slaughter them while the Legion stands by outside, helpless. It is a good plan. I commend you for coming up with it.

Severus's eyes widen.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA - LATER

The parade is closing in on the Palace. Geta looks down and sees some Roman Legionaries keeping pace with them. He tries to get their attention, but they are all looking away from him, singing their loud war songs. He cannot shout over the din of the song or the cheering crowds. From behind, Dende on the elephant has a small dagger in his hand, much like Maz's.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SECONDS LATER.

Maz sits there comfortably on a rock while Severus is clearly waiting, expecting to be killed.

SEVERUS

Why do you wait to kill me?

Maz shrugs.

MAZ

Your friend was right. You are important, a rich boy. Someone finds your body, and they will tear this city apart to find the killer. Instead, I keep you alive. I'll kill you when the palace falls. No one will care then.

SEVERUS

You sick beast!

MAZ

This is what you wanted, yes? Drive the Romans away? You will have your wish.

Severus screams with rage and attacks Maz, but the larger man easily punches him down again.

MAZ (CONT'D)

You should not waste your remaining breaths. Think, instead, of your loved ones and their quick deaths. It is a mercy. When my people take this city, we shall not be so lenient as these weak Romans.

Severus pulls himself up into a sitting position. He looks Maz in the eyes.

SEVERUS

I will kill you.

MAZ

(Amused)  
No.

Severus sits there, infuriated but helpless. He turns to the corpses around him. Some have been beaten, others merely stabbed and left to die.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY

POV shot: Severus's POV

Severus sees one of the bodies is the young man who had a dagger in his tunic. Severus can just see the shape of it hidden beneath the fabric.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY

He looks away, turning to spit at Maz. Maz does not even react, but he apparently has not seen the hidden knife either. Maz doesn't react to the spit. He doesn't seem to regard Severus as a threat.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - SUNSET

The parade arrives at the Palace with the large crowd of dignitaries and Legionaries standing out in front. The Suphete and the Legate are there. Both of them seem more interested in getting their wine cups refilled by the servants than in the display of Roman loyalty.

In particular, one servant fills the Legate's cup a little too much, and it spills onto his hand. The Suphete goes to strike the servant, but the Legate catches his hand.

LEGATE

Hold your wrath, friend. For while spilled wine is a great sin, a bruised servant will bring wine more slowly, which may be a greater sin.

The Suphete smiles and nods, lowering his hand. The Servant meekly bows and slips away.

We pan around to see that the column of young men on horseback is approaching. Geta seems to have given up on getting the attention of the Legionaries and instead looks ahead to the Suphete and Legate.

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - NOON

Paccia runs past several servants and into the main house. She seems as frantic as Severus was.

PACCIA

Publius?! Pia?!

Paccia grabs a servant, the same one Publius was ordering around earlier.

PACCIA (CONT'D)

Please! Please tell me they have not yet gone!

SERVANT

Y-yes, they left early to see the parade.



PACCIA

We have to find them!

SERVANT

Well... We could send a runner, but the crowds will be thick and they will be difficult to find.

PACCIA

We must try. *I* must try. Send a runner, send five! They must not go to the Palace!

Paccia turns and runs out the door. The Servant stands there, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Severus sits in defeat among the bodies. Maz is lazily cleaning his fingernails with his dagger. Severus leans back, getting himself a little closer to one of the bodies. While Maz appears preoccupied, Severus carefully reaches behind him and discreetly pulls the dagger from its hidden sheath on the dead body.

He moves very slowly, desperate not to make any noise or sudden movements.

Sweat drips down his face, mixing with some blood from the small wounds he's taken in fighting with Maz.

As the blade comes free, the metal drags slightly over the ground, making a noise.

Maz looks up. Severus freezes.

MAZ

What was that, little rich boy?

SEVERUS

What was what?

Maz stands and approaches Severus, his own dagger at the ready.

MAZ

Stand up, boy.

Severus does as he is ordered. He starts to rise, and just as he does, he swiftly leaps forward and plunges the dagger into Maz's chest. Maz is surprised, but still manages to slash at Severus.

Blood begins to flow from a gash in Severus's chest, but it is shallow.

Severus pushes the savage away and stabs him again in the throat. Blood splatters against Severus. He reacts as if he is struck with ice water. Severus watches the light go out of the man's eyes, and his body go limp. Severus stares in horror at what he has done.

He looks down at the blood-soaked dagger in his hand. Maz's blood is all over him. Severus looks to the sky as if begging for absolution, but when he sees how low the sun is in the sky, he looks back to the blade in his hand. There is no time for grief, no time for absolution.

Severus leans down and picks up Maz's dagger from his dead hand. He looks at the two blades, one in each hand, and it's obvious he feels the weight of them.

He looks back to the sinking sun and takes in a deep breath. Severus then walks away from the alley full of corpses.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - SIMULTANEOUS

Geta and the column of men on horseback reach the Palace, and nearby, the Suphete and Legate sit, still talking and barely paying attention to the fanfare.

Behind Geta, Dende slips off his elephant and jogs ahead to Geta.

DENDE

Something troubles you, friend?

GETA

Yes! I can't get anyone to listen. Please, you must tell the Suphete, they are in danger.

DENDE

Danger? From what?

GETA

I suspect rebels will attack them.

DENDE

I see. I shall inform them and the Legionaries immediately!

Geta seems visibly relieved. Geta steps away and we follow him as he turns to some nearby legionaries that march along with the parade.

DENDE (CONT'D)

Hail, soldiers of Rome. I bring a warning.

(MORE)

DENDE (CONT'D)

That young man on horseback, I have seen him with rebel elements. The Legate is in danger.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - SECONDS LATER.

We see from a distance as several legionaries surround Geta and escort his horse away from the area. Once away from the parade, Geta dismounts and the legionaries start roughing him up, away from the prying eyes of the crowd.

We pan back to the parade, and now see Publius and Pia approach the Suphete and the Legate.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - SIMULTANEOUS

Publius and Pia bow their heads to the Suphete and the Legate.

PUBLIUS

Greetings, friend from Rome.

SUPHETE

This is Septimius Publius Geta, and his wife Pia Fulvia.

LEGATE

Ah, I have heard the name Fulvia before. I believe I know your kin back in Rome.

PIA

Tell them they are always in my thoughts.

SUPHETE

Their son is applying for scholarship to Rome.

LEGATE

Oh? That is excellent. I do hope he gets it. Rome is a city where all are welcome. I should like to meet this ambitious young man.

PUBLIUS

He is there, with the riders- Oh...

Publius looks, but does not see Geta among the riders.

PIA

Where is Geta?

PUBLIUS

I don't know. I can't even imagine what would be so important that he would miss this chance.

SUPHETE

Well, surely he will be at the feast.

PUBLIUS

Yes... Yes, I'm sure he will be.

LEGATE

I look forward to meeting him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA - SIMULTANEOUS

Geta kneels in submission before the Legionaries. One of them looks at him closely.

LAJOS

Wait... Are you not a son of Publius?

SEOK

This is his other son.

GETA

My father will be furious when he hears of this. What did you think you were doing?!

LAJOS

We were told you were a rebel with intent to murder the Legate.

GETA

Severus! You fools have the wrong son of Publius! It is my mad brother who consorts with rebels!

LAJOS

I'm confused.

GETA

Who told you I was with rebels?

LAJOS

One of the elephant riders.

GETA

Then it would be wise to find him, don't you think?!

SEOK

He's right. Find that man  
immediately. Tall, dark-skinned,  
rugged desert clothes, long beard.  
Find him!

The legionaries depart, but Seok stays with Geta.

SEOK (CONT'D)

Now hold on... tell me what exactly  
is going on.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH

Beneath the pier, the elephants have been led down the beach  
towards the support beams.

The men riding them carefully dismount. Other men, also  
Garamantes, approach them carrying thick ropes which they  
begin tying to the harnesses on the elephants.

Dende looks up at the sun, which rapidly approaches the  
horizon.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK OF THE WADI LEBDA

Severus washes the blood off of himself in the flowing water.  
He splashes water on his face and shakes his head. He seems  
to still be in shock. He still has both blood-stained  
daggers, but they are tucked into his clothes. He looks up  
the river and can see the palace bathed in the waning  
sunlight. His face seems to fall, looking at the distance he  
must cover. He then looks to the flowing river, and his gaze  
follows the length of it out to the harbour. Swallowing hard,  
he makes sure the daggers are secure. He then jumps into the  
river and begins to swim with the current towards the  
harbour.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - MINUTES LATER

Seok and Geta stride towards the Palace with a few  
Legionaries in tow. As they approach, an exhausted and sweat-  
covered Paccia comes running up to them.

PACCIA

Geta! Geta, thank the gods!

GETA

Paccia?! What is wrong? You look as if you've run over the entire city twice.

PACCIA

I have! You must... Must listen...

Paccia pauses to catch her breath.

PACCIA (CONT'D)

Severus... Says you're in danger. You... You cannot go to the feast.

SEOK

(to Geta) If your brother is a traitor, why would he send this girl to warn you?

GETA

Let us ask him when we find him.

PACCIA

No, Geta, he's no traitor.

GETA

We will speak of this later. For now, come on. We will speak directly to the Legate.

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - SECONDS LATER.

The Garamantes have most of the elephants harnessed to the ropes. A small group of Legionaries approaches them. Dende looks up at the approaching Romans. He smiles warmly and goes to greet them.

DENDE

Good evening. Is everything well?

LAJOS

You were the man who told us to seize the son of Publius.

DENDE

Who?

LAJOS

The young man on horseback.

DENDE

I'm afraid I still don't know this person.

LAJOS

Well, you seemed to know him.

DENDE

I think there is some confusion.

The Legionary looks past Dende to the elephants.

LAJOS

What are you doing with those animals?

DENDE

Well, we can't have them running off.

The Legionary looks skeptical.

LAJOS

I want you to clear this lot of animals out immediately. They belong in their cages. The parade is over.

DENDE

But, sir, these animals are too large to move through so thick a crowd. People could be trampled.

LAJOS

If you won't move them, we will.

Dende stands aside.

DENDE

You are welcome to try.

The legionary glares at Dende, then steps forward. As he gets close to the elephants, Dende and the other men draw daggers. They close in suddenly, and the legionaries find themselves surrounded, fending off small knives and swords. But they have been caught off guard. The fight is quick, and within mere seconds, the legionaries are stabbed and tossed into the darkness beneath the pier.

DENDE (CONT'D)

Good work. Now fetch the oil.

He turns to the group and smiles. He makes a gesture, and they go back to the elephants.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - SECONDS LATER.

Seok, Geta, Paccia and the legionaries approach a small contingent posted at the end of the pier. The CENTURION himself stands guard there, an older, weathered man who stands with confidence.

He seems battle-hardened and has the scars to prove it. Unlike the Legate, his armour is not shiny, but scuffed and marred from combat.

CENTURION

Hold.

They stop.

SEOK

Sir! I must see the Legate. We believe there is a danger.

CENTURION

What manner of danger?

SEOK

We don't know, sir. But-

GETA

An attack may be coming.

CENTURION

Very well. You may pass.

The Centurion gestures to five of his men.

CENTURION (CONT'D)

You, escort them inside. Make sure they are safe.

Seok and the others hurry across the pier with the Legionaries right behind them.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL - LATER

Many servants are preparing for the feast, setting out elaborate trays of food from roasted pig and lamb to gigantic plates of fruit and berries that glitter like jewels. Many of the guests are mingling and gradually working their way over to the tables. Servants rush to and fro re-filling cups of wine. The Suphete and Legate walk to their places at the great table.

SUPHETE

I hope these festivities please you, sir.

LEGATE

Oh, they do. It is strange. I find wherever I go, people are desperate to please me.

He gives the Suphete a sly grin.



SUPHETE

We want Rome to know that we are a good friend to the Empire.

LEGATE

Yes, so I can see. Though your merchants seem to be fevered. They tried to convince me that a bottle of wine was worth as much as an entire vineyard.

SUPHETE

Let me know the man, and I shall have him arrested.

LEGATE

No need. I can overlook the occasional street rat. What I find more disturbing is what the legionaries tell me. The tribes of Garamantes that plague them at every turn. Many of my men die defending your fine city. It is an expensive proposition.

SUPHETE

No doubt part of their strategy.

LEGATE

They strike, and fade away like ghosts.

The two sit at the table. Many other dignitaries begin taking seats around them.

SUPHETE

I have petitioned Rome before about dealing with them. They often attack caravans and travellers as well.

LEGATE

Yes. And sometimes they pose as merchants and travellers to get into free cities.

The Suphete pales.

SUPHETE

Are you saying they have infiltrated Lepcis Magna?

LEGATE

There is a rumour to that effect. My men are looking into it now.

SUPHETE

Then, perhaps we should not be at this feast. If there are assassins waiting...

LEGATE

Rome does not cower before savages. Neither shall we. My men are ready and waiting if something should happen. No assassins shall enter this hall tonight. And if they do, I shall serve them my blade to chew on.

More dignitaries enter, including Publius and Pia. They sit down near the Suphete and Legate. As they do, Geta and Seok enter. Paccia is with them, and she is hanging on to Geta as if for dear life. Seok is struggling to get through the crowd.

SEOK

Legate! Sir!

PUBLIUS

Geta! There you are! Paccia? What happened to you two?!

GETA

Father! We must leave here at once.

LEGATE

Seok, what is the meaning of this?

SEOK

Sir, we believe an attack is coming.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

The elephants are harnessed, and tied to the support beams on the pier beneath the palace. The Garamantes then go to the pile of Roman legionaries with small jugs. They tip the jugs over, pouring oil on the dead men. They add scraps of driftwood, branches, barrels, anything that will burn and add more oil.

From above them, on top of the pier, more men lower ropes for Dende and his crew.

DENDE

Now go. We don't want to be around when these beasts panic.

The men begin climbing the ropes up to the top of the pier.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER - MOMENTS LATER

Dende and his men climb over the side. There are dozens of Garamante men there to meet him. Several Roman soldiers lie dead nearby, stabbed repeatedly.

One of the Garamantes hands Dende a lit torch. Dende smiles. Behind him, the last rays of the sun are disappearing. He leans over the side of the pier and drops the torch. The men quickly run towards the Palace.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - SECONDS LATER.

Severus climbs onto the beach. He sees the elephants tied to the pier. He begins running towards them. The torch hits the ground, igniting the oil on the ground. The fire spreads quickly, and soon a massive blaze has been lit beneath the pier.

Severus cries out.

The elephants begin to panic. They try to stampede away, but the thick ropes that lash them to the pier snap tight. The sound of groaning wood is heard. The elephants jump and pull, trying to run from the fire. Their harnesses and the ropes begin to fray, but not before one of the pillars that holds the pier up cracks and shifts out of place.

Severus stops dead, and sees that the fire is spreading up the pillars now. The pillar cracks again and slips, tilting and de-stabilising the entire pier.

Severus screams.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

Aerial shot as the pier buckles. Fire spreads along the timber, and soon, large sections of the pier topple over and down onto the beach. The Palace is now isolated on its rocky outcrop, and no one can reach it.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - SECONDS LATER.

Severus watches as the ropes give way, the pier crashing down. The freed elephants begin stampeding towards him. Severus turns and dives into the water to escape them.

As the beasts charge past, Severus slowly climbs back onto the beach. From the Palace, there comes the sound of fighting, screaming. Severus looks up in helpless horror.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL

The Garamantes are slaughtering people everywhere. Roman soldiers continue to try to stop them and herd the dignitaries away. The Legate has a sword drawn, and leads his men against the attackers.

Publius and Pia are huddled behind a table, defended by several legionaries.

Across the hall, Seok and Geta try to fight their way in. Geta is not an expert swordsman, but he sees his family in danger and does what he can.

A Garamante tries to slash at Geta's throat, and Seok intervenes to block the swing. This opens him up for another Garamante to slip a dagger in between his ribs. He screams, and Geta stabs clumsily, but effectively, at the Garamante, sticking his sword into the man's stomach. Seok parries another attack and looks at the dagger in his side.

GETA

You're wounded.

SEOK

I cut my meat with bigger blades than that. I can fight on.

Geta seems surprised by the Legionary's resolve. They fight on.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - MINUTES LATER

Severus stands by the destroyed and ashen pier. The wood still smoulders, and some fires still crackle around him. There is a dangling rope, smouldering from the end, just out of Severus's reach. He tries to leap up and grab it, but it is just too far out of his reach.

He lets out a frustrated growl, then desperately looks around for something to stand on.

Up the beach, one of the elephants has stopped running and seems content to splash in the water on the beach.

Severus stares at it, then lets out a call. The elephant looks back at him. Severus smiles. He lets out another call and the elephant begins to wander over.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - SIMULTANEOUS

Groups of Roman Legionaries are gathered at the edge of the destroyed pier. Their Centurion surveys the situation. They can hear the screams coming from the palace.

CENTURION

How did this happen?!

LEGIONARY

We don't know, sir. We heard elephants, and then the entire pier collapsed and caught fire.

CENTURION

Don't you mean caught fire, then collapsed?

LEGIONARY

No, sir. The other way around.

CENTURION

Gods... We need to get across. Ships and cranes will take too long. We need ropes... We need the longest ropes you can find, all of you!! Now!!

Several legionaries rush to obey his commands.

Inside, the screaming becomes louder.

CENTURION (CONT'D)

They're getting slaughtered in there...

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER, BEACH - SECONDS LATER.

Severus is on the back of the elephant, and now he can reach the end of the rope. He leaps, grabs it, and slowly begins to climb. Smoke clouds drift over him, and parts of the other beams nearby, tilted and cracked, are burning hot. Severus sweats as he climbs. Every hand-over-hand makes him sweat more, makes his grip more uncertain.

When he gets close to the top, he removes a dagger from his tunic and stabs it into a seam in the wood. He uses that as a hand-hold, and climbs up onto the remains of the pier.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE PIER - SECONDS LATER.

Severus stands alone, surrounded by smoke and flame, on a crumbling section of the pier. He quickly rushes across and reaches the grounds of the palace just as a loud crack and groan of timber echoes around him. The entire section of pier tilts and begins to fall away.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - SIMULTANEOUS

The last of the pier tumbles down. The legionaries look on in horror. The Centurion looks over and some of his men have approached with rope.

CENTURION

Good men!! Call the archers forward! We'll tie ropes to the arrows and fire them across.

LEGIONARY

Will they hold?

CENTURION

Not for everyone. But if we can get one man over there with long, thick ropes, he can tie them off and the rest can climb over. Get it done!

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL - SECONDS LATER

Severus climbs in through a window and sees the carnage around him. Mad with hatred and rage, he turns to the nearest Garamante and charges. The man is caught by surprise, and Severus plunges his dagger deep into the savage's throat. The Garamante screams and bubbles blood from the wound. Severus pulls out the dagger, then takes the dead man's sword.

Another Garamante sees this and squares off against Severus. Severus grimly looks the man in the eye, and prepares to fight.

We pan across the room to Publius and Pia. They see Severus, covered in blood and facing one of the attackers. They look horrified, Publius on the verge of screaming.

Panning over to Geta and Seok, they also see Severus joining the fight, and Geta almost drops his sword in shock.

The Garamante slashes at Severus, who dodges quickly, and counter-attacks brutally. There is no art to it, only fury. His attacks are clumsy, but effective, and the Garamante has no chance to avoid the blades. Severus cuts deep gashes in the man's chest and thigh. Blood pours from the thigh, a major artery having been hit, and he stumbles to the floor.

Severus turns, and sees the Legate is standing off against Dende to defend the Suphete. Severus recognises him as one of the men riding the elephants.

Severus runs across the room to flank Dende opposite the Legate.

The desert bandit is already well matched by the Legate, but Severus's wild thrusts at his backside distract him. Dende sees he is outnumbered and backs away from both of them. The Legate and Dende press their attacks, but Dende jumps back and uses a table as cover to retreat out of the hall.

The Legate looks at Severus briefly before turning and giving chase to the Garamante leader. More legionaries emerge from their own smaller side battles and follow their leader, giving chase to Dende.

Severus stands there, dripping blood, wounded, but alive and clearly in a state of shock. He drops his blades and sinks to his knees in exhaustion.

Geta and Seok rush over to him, Geta appearing terrified. Seok seems less surprised.

GETA

Brother! What is happening?! I... I don't understand.

SEOK

We can understand later. I don't know how many of those barbarians there are, but they've destroyed the pier. No one can get to us right now.

PUBLIUS

Destroyed the pier?! How?!

SEOK

I don't know.

Geta turns to Severus with a sharp look.

GETA

Perhaps with elephants?!

Severus looks to his brother with shame in his eyes. Geta doesn't need to hear any more.

Publius and Pia come out from behind cover. The legionaries protecting them join with Geta, Severus, and Seok.

SEOK

You two, find a good defensive position and keep these two alive.

He turns to Geta.

SEOK (CONT'D)

You, Geta... Can you keep fighting?

GETA

Yes. Yes, I can.

SEOK

(To Severus)  
And you! Hey!

Severus seems to snap out of his stupor and turn to the Legionary.

SEOK (CONT'D)

Can you keep fighting?

The question seems to rouse something in Severus. He reaches down for his blades.

SEVERUS

Yes. Yes, I can. I must.

SEOK

Good to hear it. Come with me.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER.

The legionaries are pressing a counter-attack against the Garamantes. It looks as if it is a stale-mate. It seems more of the bandits keep appearing from windows and doorways as soon as one falls. Roman soldiers seem to continue to appear as well, most of them wounded or otherwise battered. Blood is everywhere. The Legate continues to direct his people while the Garamonte fight chaotically, without discipline, but with a beastly blood lust.

LEGATE

Herd them back! Keep a front against that doorway, don't let any more in!

A Roman soldier slices a Garamantes throat, spraying blood in a high arc.



Severus, Geta, and Seok enter through a wide archway. Immediately, Garamonte challengers bleed through from the crowd. Severus is surprised at his own reflexes as he kills a Garamonte with a thrust of his sword, operating as much out of panic as he is rage.

Geta is almost panicked, but he fights as well. A blade flies past his face, cutting part of his ear off. He howls and aims a slash at his attacker. He misses, but Seok uses the opening to stab the man in the side. Geta finishes him off with a wild slash that cuts deep into his neck.

The Legate looks over at this trio, seeing Geta and Severus fighting the Garamantes.

In the endless melee, Dende appears, sliding along the edge of the battle. Severus sees him. He pushes aside two Garamantes, both of which find themselves surprised by the shove, and even more surprised as Roman swords pierce their chests and emerge the other side. Severus is soaked with blood as he approaches Dende.

Dende sees Severus coming, recognises the boy, and sees him flying through the fighting towards him, covered in the blood of Garamantes, even the cold, merciless Dende seems taken aback.

Severus attacks without mercy or form, slashing wildly and with rage. Dende barely dodges and blocks the blows, but soon recovers and manages to counter the flying blades. He knocks the sword from Severus's hand, but Severus leaps forward, catching his hand on the sword, but plunging his dagger into Dende's chest.

The barbarian looks shocked at Severus, who's hand drips blood from a deep cut.

Through the loud clanging and screaming of combat, everything goes silent for a long moment.

Severus watches Dende, who almost smiles a little, before he falls back. The knife remains in his chest. Severus lets go of Dende and the knife, and the man sinks to the ground.

On the ground, Dende looks up at Severus. It's hard to hear what he's saying, but Severus can see his lips move, and we barely hear what he says, a wry smile touching his paling face.

DENDE

For... Rome.

The light goes out of Dende's eyes.

Severus also goes pale. He looks down at the blood all over him. A hand lands on his shoulder. Severus turns quickly to attack, but he has no weapon. He is about to hurl his fist at the Legate, but the Legate catches his hand.

LEGATE

Easy! Calm down! The fighting is over!

Severus looks around to see the entire hall is filled with the dead. The only ones standing are Romans, and himself.

LEGATE (CONT'D)

You fought well for Rome today, young man. What is your name?

Severus's eyes go wide and he cannot find his voice.

SEOK

His name is Septimius Severus, sir. That is his brother, Geta, the sons of Septimius Publius Geta.

The Legate turns to Geta and nods, a small smile touching his lips.

LEGATE

You both fought well today. Rome is proud to have such dedicated young men in it's great Republic.

Severus seems to turn more pale. Geta looks at his brother, unsure as to what exactly has happened, but glad they are both alive.

The Legate extends his bloodied hand to Severus. The confused, exhausted Severus takes the hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - LATER

Several thick ropes have formed the basis of a simple bridge, and people are being brought across one at a time.

Geta steps off the bridge, and a frantic Paccia runs up and embraces him.

A moment later, Publius steps off and walks up to them, clearly exhausted.

Severus comes across next. When he reaches the other side, he sees the Legate waiting for him. He gestures for Severus to follow him so they can talk.

LEGATE

You were not with the delegates before the fighting.

Severus says nothing.

LEGATE (CONT'D)

You were wet and smelled of the sea when you entered. You climbed up from the beach, yes?

Severus continues to say nothing.

LEGATE (CONT'D)

I didn't get to command a legion by being easily fooled. My men are going to hunt down every rebel and Garamonte in this city and they will be put to death. I would hate to hear that such a talented fighter and resourceful young man of wealth was somehow associated with those rebels.

Severus gives him a look, one of near panic.

LEGATE (CONT'D)

I see. Well... Since your actions today saved my life, the life of the Suphete, and your family, I think I can safely say I know where your loyalties lie. Young people sometimes make foolish choices. I know I did. So consider this piece of advice: Continue to be silent. It could save your life some day.

The Legate gives Severus a small smile. Publius, Geta, and Paccia come over. Pia is stepping off the bridge, and joins the familial group for a round of embracing. Publius and Pia have tears in their eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA - MORNING

As the dawn breaks, there are several young men lined up in the street. Roman Legionaries, led by the Centurion, are ready to execute them. Anno is among them, bloodied, beaten, but alive. A crowd looks on, with Severus right out in front, looking grim. He and Anno stare at each other.

SEOK

By the order of the Suphete, Grand Magistrate of Lepcis Magna, these traitors against the city and the Empire are hereby sentenced to death.

There is a long pause as Seok turns to the condemned men.

SEOK (CONT'D)

Should the condemned have anything left to say before the end, speak now.

Severus stares at Anno. Anno looks back at him, rage burning in his eyes, but he says nothing. Severus is almost shaking with tension.

The Roman Legionaries draw their swords. They step behind the condemned men and wait.

The Centurion nods, and the Romans cut the throats of the condemned men. As Anno's throat is cut, he maintains his glare at Severus until the light fades from his eyes and he falls to the ground. Only then does Severus look away. Seok seems to notice Severus, but also says nothing. The Centurion waves his hand, and several servants appear to drag the bodies away.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER PALACE GROUNDS - LATER

Roman soldiers are already beginning to build a new pier to bridge the gap to the palace. The Centurion is overseeing the construction.

CUT TO:

INT. THE STREETS OF LEPCIS MAGNA, MAIN SQUARE - LATER

The Legate and Publius walk through the streets. The Legate has a small smile on his face.

PUBLIUS

I want to thank you for your protection during the attack.

LEGATE

It is my pleasure and my duty. It is further my honour to fight beside those fine young men of yours.

PUBLIUS

Yes, I am very proud of my sons.

LEGATE

You should be prouder still. Rome will be glad to have them as citizens, and scholars.

Publius looks overjoyed.

PUBLIUS  
Both of my sons?

LEGATE  
Both of them. Your younger boy,  
Severus... I sense he would do  
exceptionally well in the Legion.  
He has a warrior's spirit.

Publius nods, almost sadly.

PUBLIUS  
That is a new development. Severus  
has always been a gentle, scholarly  
boy.

LEGATE  
He has fire.

PUBLIUS  
He has pride.

LEGATE  
Many young men do. Last night, I  
saw a young man cast aside his  
pride. It cost him something, but  
what he has gained in return will  
forge him into a great man.

PUBLIUS  
It is unfortunate it took such  
tragedy to do so.

The Legate nods, but a small smile touches his lips.

LEGATE  
I have seen tragedy forge great men  
from the weak, and weaken great men  
to nothing.

PUBLIUS  
As have I.

They stop and look up at the Palace in the distance, hovering  
over the water.

PUBLIUS (CONT'D)  
Severus prefers Africa.

LEGATE  
Then he may remain. Though we both  
know Rome is where the best men  
belong.

PUBLIUS  
He is stubborn.

LEGATE

Good. I would not respect him otherwise. It is his choice. The offer stands indefinitely.

Publius smiles.

PUBLIUS

Thank you.

Legate nods.

LEGATE

I am here to serve.

EXT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - LATER

There is a small fire burning in the back. Severus sits brooding into a cup of wine while Geta and Publius dance around the fire, singing a song of victory and pride, a Roman song. Pia joins in after a moment, waving a jug of wine in the air that she almost drops. Paccia is there as well, dancing with Geta around the fire.

Publius breaks off and walks towards his solemn son.

PUBLIUS

Be of good cheer, my boy! Don't you understand? Today has been a great day for you! And your brother!

SEVERUS

Today, many men that I know died.

Publius sits down beside his son, sighing seriously.

PUBLIUS

Last night, many men that I know died. But we did not. I have studied many ways of grieving the dead. The Hebrews wail and cry, the Romans sing sad songs, and we in Africa have thousands of different rituals. But I prefer to celebrate the fact that we are *not* dead, and those who are dead were good people. They would wish us to celebrate their lives.

SEVERUS

There is little for me to celebrate. My friend was a traitor, and I am no better.

PUBLIUS

Be silent, Severus! You are no traitor!

SEVERUS

I have betrayed everything I believe in. I have fought and killed men. I have killed Africans and protected Romans. I watched friends die and wished I were with them while being relieved that I escaped the blade. What kind of man am I?

PUBLIUS

You are my son! You saw your family in danger, and you fought. Romans, Africans, what does it matter? You fought to save lives, not to take them.

SEVERUS

I did both.

PUBLIUS

Then grieve and celebrate with us.

Severus smiles slightly.

SEVERUS

My feet are too tired to dance. But I shall drink in celebration.

Publius claps his son on the back and smiles. There is a gleam of pride in his drunken eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Publius and Pia stagger off inside the house. The fire is now down to smouldering embers giving off only a slight warm glow. Geta is passed out on the grass nearby with Paccia standing over him.

Severus steps over and checks on his brother. Paccia looks up at him.

PACCIA

He still breathes. But he will sleep for some time, and awaken with much pain.

SEVERUS

Which is precisely why I do not attempt to drink an entire barrel of wine in one night.

PACCIA

He is exhausted. He had never killed a man before today.

SEVERUS  
Neither had I.

Paccia looks up at him.

PACCIA  
They say that changes a person. Did  
it change you?

SEVERUS  
No. I changed first. Then I killed.

Paccia nods and stands.

PACCIA  
I saw you. You fought as if crazed,  
a wild man.

SEVERUS  
That is how I felt. Paccia, all of  
it was my fault. I listened to  
fools and became a fool, myself.  
There are men who would burn this  
city to keep it from the Romans. I  
almost became one of those men.

PACCIA  
But you are not. You have your  
brother's potential for greatness,  
but a greater passion.

SEVERUS  
Is that what I have? Passion?

She takes his hand, and they stare at each other for a long moment. Their eyes meet, his filled with regret, anger, but a smouldering fire. Hers has fear, awe, but also admiration and lust.

CUT TO:

INT. SEPTIMIUS HOUSE, SEVERUS'S ROOM - LATER

Paccia and Severus kiss passionately, their clothes casually torn off and discarded. She pushes Severus towards the bed, and he pulls her down on top of him. He rolls her over, and holds her down.

She gasps in surprise, but does not struggle. Severus runs his hand over her body, down between her legs. He finds her ready.

We see him slide closer, and she gasps as he enters her. Her hands grip his shoulders and he begins to slowly move, not in fast thrusts, but in slow, careful motions. She looks as if she will cry out, but bites her lip.



Severus has a strong grip on her, and she on him. She shifts and wraps her legs around him, moving her hips slowly to compliment his motions. Her eyes roll back and she lets out a small noise of pleasure.

The motions begin to speed up, and Paccia lets out another small cry. Severus groans and now begins to speed up. She tries not to cry out, but with each gasp for breath, she lets out a low moan. It becomes a rhythm, consistent, powerful, with Severus beginning to lose control of himself. He starts to groan and grunt as well, and Paccia grips his shoulders tight, her fingernails digging in.

An anguished cry of rage crashes over the scene. Both of them stop instantly, scrambling apart. Severus stumbles back, naked, and Paccia scuttles back up the bed. Standing in the doorway is a still-drunk Geta.

From somewhere else in the house, we hear Publius calling out.

PUBLIUS (O.S.)

What was that? Geta? Severus?!

Severus looks ashamed of himself, Geta looks crushed. There are no words exchanged. Each brother looks shattered by what's happened.

Paccia avoids looking at Geta. Pia appears in the doorway a moment later. Her jaw falls and Severus burns with even more shame.

FADE TO:

BLACK.