

SEVERUS
Episode Four

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INT. LEPICIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Paccia sits in front of a window looking out on the city. Her hair is cut short now, and she wears a loose sort of robe.

In her hand is a parchment, and out the window, the sun rises on a beautiful ancient city. We hear Severus's voice-over.

SEVERUS (V.O.)

My dearest Paccia, I deeply long for you. I don't know if my letters are even arriving, as the Moors murder most of our messengers. But still, we fight on. Oh, my love... I have discovered that in my youth, I have been mistaken about so many things.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEPICIS MAGNA, MARKET SQUARE - LATE MORNING.

Paccia is browsing some exotic fruit at a stand. The merchant approaches her and slowly shakes his head. She turns away, ashamed.

SEVERUS (V.O.)

I hope you are doing well. I pray you are doing well. I want you to know that I have not abandoned you. I am coming back, and we shall reclaim our happiness.

Paccia turns and walks away from the stall, almost weeping.

CUT TO:

INT. LECIS MAGNA, BROTHEL - NOON

Paccia walks in through the door. Around her, barely-dressed women are leading men back and forth. The air is hazy with incense.

Paccia lowers her head, but some of the men look at her with lust.

CUT TO:

INT. LECIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Paccia removes her clothes, and she is significantly skinnier than she was. There is a knock on her door. She quickly re-dresses and answers.

Standing there is a prostitute, she is partially dressed, but she hands Paccia a loaf of bread. Paccia looks as if she's about to weep. The prostitute puts a finger to her lips. Paccia nods and takes the loaf, closing the door.

SEVERUS (V.O.)

I promise, our suffering shall end soon.

CUT TO:

INT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Paccia takes a piece of parchment, quill and ink. She begins to write a letter in return.

PACCIA (V.O.)

Dearest Severus, please return soon! I know you are not receiving my letters because you have not heeded my pleas. The Madame who runs this brothel allows me to live here, but I have no money for food or clothing.

Paccia looks up at the half-eaten loaf of bread. She breaks off a chunk and chews before turning back to the page.

PACCIA (V.O.)

If you could just send me a little coin, please, Severus. I should have followed you to Rome. I should have followed you to Spain. I starve here. Even with coin, many merchants refuse to sell to me. I survive on the charity of whores.

Paccia wipes away a tear. She takes a long breath and continues to write.

PACCIA (V.O.)

Please, my beloved... return soon. I face a hideous choice if you do not.

CUT TO:

INT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER

A skinny, naked Paccia looks at herself in the mirror. She is clearly trying not to weep.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEPCIS MAGNA, MARKET SQUARE - MORNING

Paccia leans down and picks up a coin from the dirt. She quickly heads to a small stall of ripe-looking fruit. She holds out the coin. The merchant smirks and hands her a small bundle. She opens the bundle and inside is a handful of olives. She devours them on the spot.

CUT TO:

INT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Paccia opens her door, and standing there is a man, naked, intoxicated, and he turns to her.

MAN

Well... Hello there... Perhaps you could help me with my little problem...

Paccia looks at the man. He smiles.

MAN (CONT'D)

I have twenty denarius if you do.

Paccia bites her lip. She sucks in a breath.

CUT TO:

INT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Paccia sits alone in her apartment. On a small table beside her is bread, cheese, fruit, and dried meat. There are discarded rinds and seeds there.

Tears slip down her cheeks.

CUT TO:

INT. LEPCIS MAGNA, BROTHEL, PACCIA'S APARTMENT - WEEKS LATER

A less skinny Paccia examines herself in the mirror, but she clearly doesn't like what she sees. She turns away and dresses.

On the bed there is another parchment letter.

SEVERUS (V.O.)

Dearest Paccia, I have amazing news. My brother has forgiven me. I have never been one to trust my fate to the Gods, but truly they must have smiles upon us.

(MORE)

SEVERUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Not only have I survived the harshest, most difficult trial of my life, but we now have a safe place to call home. Geta now governs Sicily, and has invited us to stay in his villa. I have sent coin that will get you on a vessel, and Geta shall meet you if you write him and let him know you are coming.

Paccia picks up a small pouch of coins. She looks to the mirror again and glares in hatred. She then walks out the apartment door.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEPCIS MAGNA, PIER - LATER

Paccia stands beside a Roman boat captain. She hands over several coins. He smiles and nods towards the ship.

SEVERUS (V.O.)

I still have business to attend to for Rome. But fear not, for I shall return a wealthy, important man, with many stories and good, loyal friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - LATER

The Roman vessel sails across the water, far from land. Paccia stands on the bow and looks out on the wide, open blue. There is no land in sight. She turns all around her, spreading her arms, smiling for the first time in a long time.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - NIGHT

Severus stands before the entire Senate. Commodus sits upon what appears to be a brand new golden throne. General Pertinax watches as the Praetorian guard pushes Severus forward, into the middle of the room.

COMMODUS

Septimius Severus of Lepcis Magna... You stand accused of plotting to murder the Caesar of Rome.

SEVERUS

Never! Caesar, what madness is this? I have just spent over two years of my life in service!

COMMODUS

The evidence comes from your own hand.

Commodus holds up a letter.

COMMODUS (CONT'D)

(Reading)

For my dream did not reveal who the two bodies were lying in the mist. I fear they may be the father and son emperors.

Severus looks horrified.

SEVERUS

That... That was the letter...

COMMODUS

Sent to your brother. Your brother is the one who informed us of your treasonous mind, and past. And he writes to you as well.

Commodus holds up a sealed scroll, then thrusts it into Severus's hands.

COMMODUS (CONT'D)

Your trial shall begin tomorrow, at Noon. Guards, throw him into a cell!

SEVERUS

No! Wait!

Severus kicks and cries out as he is led away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SICILIAN PORT - MORNING

The Roman vessel arrives at port, and Paccia almost leaps off the boat, onto the dock. There stands a smiling Geta, waiting with open arms, wearing very fine clothes.

GETA

Paccia!

Paccia runs up and embraces him, crying tears of happiness.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERUS'S CELL - NIGHT

Severus opens the scroll and holds it up to the scant light provided by a nearby torch.

GETA (V.O.)

Hello Brother, Paccia arrives today. By the time my message reaches you, my vengeance will be complete. I must thank you, Severus, for making everything so clear to me. Your dream has haunted me for many nights, but I understand now.

CUT TO:

INT. GETA'S VILLA - LATE MORNING.

Geta and Paccia enter the beautiful ancient home. Paccia is stunned and delighted. She spins in wonder and goes to embrace Geta once again.

Geta smiles.

GETA (V.O.)

There was only one way this would end, brother. We both know that.

As Paccia kisses Geta on the cheek, Geta smiles even more widely, his eyes sparkling with madness. He seizes Paccia by the throat with one hand.

GETA (V.O.)

I consider your debt now amply paid. And tonight, I shall pay mine.

Geta pushes Paccia against the wall, holding her throat in his hand. She tries to scream and struggle, but everything goes silent. Geta rips at her clothes, then, while she is pinned, presses against her. She starts to scream, but he clamps down in her throat. Soon, his other hand is around her throat as well.

CUT TO:

INT. GETA'S VILLA - NOON

Paccia lies on the floor, half-naked, with dark bruises around her throat. GETA stands over her body with a dagger in his hand.

GETA (V.O.)
Farewell, brother. I look forward
to continuing your suffering in the
next world.

Geta raises the dagger high and plunges it into his own chest. Scarlet surges from the wound, and Geta falls to his knees. He has a broad, insane smile on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERUS'S CELL - MORNING

Severus sits on the cold stone floor, weeping.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - MORNING

Commodus awakens in a large bed. There are naked bodies all around him, men, women, and some with streaks of blood on their backs from what appear to be wounds from a whip.

A Praetorian Guard enters the chamber and salutes him. Commodus smiles and nods, standing up.

CUT TO:

INT COLISEUM, ARENA - LATE MORNING.

Commodus stands in the arena, a sword in one hand, a shield in the other, and no armour. His opponent is a larger man, well-muscled, and similarly armed. Commodus attacks him. They fight for a long, tense moment, Commodus clearly a skilled swordsman. He disarms the larger gladiator and holds the sword at his throat.

COMMODUS
To your knees!

The gladiator kneels.

We pull back to show General Pertinax approaching from one of the gates. He is flanked by the Praetorian guards.

GLADIATOR
I yield!

COMMODUS
Wise choice.

Commodus turns to see Pertinax approaching.

COMMODUS (CONT'D)

Did you see? I do believe the blood
of the gods flows within me!

PERTINAX

Hail, Caesar!

COMMODUS

No. Hail Commodus.

Pertinax looks stunned, but nods and complies.

PERTINAX

Hail, Commodus. Forgive me.

COMMODUS

So forgiven. What is your business,
General?

PERTINAX

Sir, this arrest of Septimius
Severus... Based on a letter,
describing a dream, riddled with
personal fear and concern... It
isn't right.

COMMODUS

Do you deny that dreams can give
way to secret desires? Perhaps
desires we are too afraid to
express?

PERTINAX

I cannot say. I am no expert in
such matters. But I do know this
man. Severus has been a good and
loyal friend to Rome.

COMMODUS

Not always. Did you know, it was
his doing that caused the slaughter
at Lepcis Magna?

Pertinax pauses.

PERTINAX

... No, I did not.

COMMODUS

Or that he spent all of his youth
railing against Rome and it's
influence?

PERTINAX

Well that is not the man I saw on
the battlefield, nor the one who
loyally executed your wrath upon
the traitors in Syria.

COMMODUS

Perhaps he is not the man you know.
Severus is condemned by his own
brother's hand. Do you know him
better than his own brother?

PERTINAX

I believe I do.

COMMODUS

Then speak truth at his trial.
Perhaps you shall sway my mind. I
have always valued your judgment.

PERTINAX

I am honoured, Commodus.

COMMODUS

Great Commodus.

PERTINAX

(Nods)
Great Commodus.

Pertinax bows. Commodus makes a dismissive wave. Pertinax
turns to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - NOON

Severus stands before the Senate in chains. He looks at the
floor and says nothing. Pertinax is there, as is Pompeianis,
and every single member of the Senate. Even still, many seats
are vacant. In senatorial garb is Severus's old friend,
Plautinius, who watches in horror.

COMMODUS

Septimius Severus of Lepcis
Magna... You stand accused of
treason against the great Commodus,
ruler of Commodia, Emperor of the
world. What have you to say in your
defence?

SEVERUS

(Mutters)
Foolishness.

COMMODUS

What was that?

Severus looks up, fury in his eyes.

SEVERUS

This is pure, complete foolishness. You would convict me of treason on evidence of a letter, speaking of a dream. Of the word of my jealous, angry brother who has since murdered my wife. You would believe the fantastic lies over my years of service?

COMMODUS

We will determine your heart, Severus. Loyalty, or execution.

SEVERUS

My love is dead. I have murdered scores of fellow Africans. I have betrayed myself in my youth, all for Rome. Is this how Rome repays it's debts?

COMMODUS

Be careful, Severus. You act as if you don't care if you are executed.

SEVERUS

(Infuriated)
I don't!

PERTINAX

Great Commodus, these are not the words of a treasonous man.

COMMODUS

This dream, Severus... You will describe it to us.

SEVERUS

I can add nothing that you haven't already seen in the letter.

COMMODUS

(Angrily)
Two bodies on the ground, you said they were the father and son emperors!

SEVERUS

(Also angrily) I was wrong! It was my wife and brother!

The senate chamber falls silent.

POMPEANIS

Great Commodus...

COMMODUS

(Shouting)
What?!

POPMPHEANIS

(Softly)
This man has clearly suffered a betrayal of his own. He has lost two people, two important people, in his life. Even if his dreams did suggest violence against Great Commodus, surely such a fleeting, passing idle thought has already been punished sufficiently by the Gods.

Commodus considers this for a long moment.

COMMODUS

Yes... Yes, this is true. But we must be sure he still has no treasonous intent.

PERTINAX

Great Commodus, I believe that I can answer for you. I have spoken with Severus many times, we have become good friends. He has spoken of his great admiration for your father.

COMMODUS

My father is dead by my mother's hand! Oh...
(Pause)
Yes, I do keep forgetting. Remind me to have her found and killed as well.

SEVERUS

Great Commodus...

Commodus turns to Severus. Severus raises his eyes to the emperor.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

If you do not believe my words, or the words of your own trusted advisors, or even the word of your father, but you believe the word of a confessed murderer consumed by hatred and revenge... Then this trial has no point. Hand me a blade, and I shall end my own life rather than suffer this hideous existence any longer.

Commodus looks at Severus. He turns to Pertinax.

COMMODUS

Well, I can hardly argue with that.
General, give him a blade. I want
his blood to paint this floor.

POMPEANIS

While your decision has wisdom like
your own father, I have a humble
suggestion, great Commodus.

COMMODUS

Yes, my friend?

POMPEANIS

Perhaps Severus would be better
used to paint the sands of the
Northern Lands with the blood of
the Germanic tribes.

COMMODUS

(Smiling)
And that, dear friend, is why I
rely on your council. What say you,
Severus?

SEVERUS

I-

PERTINAX

He accepts, sir.

Severus stares at Pertinax. Plautinius finally speaks up.

PLAUTINIUS

Yes, let us send Severus to
Germania!

The Senate murmurs with agreement.

COMMODUS

Well now... The senate agrees with
me? I feel I have no choice now.
Severus... It is the decision of
the great Emperor Commodus the
First that you are not guilty.

Commodus smiles, but Severus looks tired and ashamed.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN BARRACKS - LATER

Severus stands, shouting at Pertinax, in what appears to be a
sort of makeshift office for the General.

SEVERUS

(Shouting)

You should have let them kill me! I was right all along about Rome! To hell with Romans, with Rome, with Commodus and this insane Commodia!

PERTINAX

Keep your voice down, you fool! I just saved your life.

SEVERUS

I didn't ask you to!

PERTINAX

Well you didn't stop me, either!

Severus closes his mouth.

PERTINAX (CONT'D)

You think I don't know how grief can poison a man? But the truth is that Commodus is Caesar, and we serve Rome.

SEVERUS

(Bitterly)
Commodia.

PERTINAX

(Angrily)
Rome!

There is a tense moment of silence.

SEVERUS

He was going to kill me for having a dream.

PERTINAX

I know. But trust me, I am a student of history. Emperors like Commodus have come before, and they will probably come again, but for now, at this moment in time, we must let Commodus write his own destiny. If he continues to be paranoid, then he will find himself surrounded by enemies. We need not interfere.

SEVERUS

I don't want to interfere! I just want... Gods, I don't know what I want. I want to run, hide, I want to die, I want to live...

Severus sits down heavily and cradles his head in his hands. Pertinax also takes a seat.

PERTINAX

Grief has killed good men. And you, Severus, you are a good man. You earned the loyalty of men who had lost hope, and turned away hordes of invading savages. Marcus Aurelius chose you for that...

SEVERUS

I didn't choose it for myself.

PERTINAX

Then perhaps it's time you did choose for yourself. The Emperor wants you to help against the last bastions of resistance in the North. Now you are not legion, if you choose to leave, you will not be a deserter. But I would be honoured if you would join us, help Rome, help bring peace to the world. And perhaps, if you are lucky, when Commodus is consumed by the fires of his own madness, you can return and take a place of honour and influence. You could help make Rome what it should be.

SEVERUS

The wise ruling the foolish.

PERTINAX

What?

SEVERUS

Something Marcus Aurelius said to me.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - EVENING

Severus walks along towards the centre of Rome, and the palace. He looks grim, determined.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - LATER

Severus enters, flanked by Praetorian guard. Commodus is there, alone, but the chamber is almost wrecked with tipped cups of wine, a destroyed bed, and discarded garments everywhere. Severus seems taken aback. Commodus himself is partially dressed, and clearly intoxicated.

COMMODUS

Ah, Severus. What brings you here?

SEVERUS

I have decided that I shall indeed go to Germania and end the fighting there. I shall join the legion, and fight for the glory of Rome.

COMMODUS

Commodia.

SEVERUS

(Hesitant)
Yes, of course.

COMMODUS

Excellent. I wish you luck, Severus. If you like, you may stay, drink with me. I understand you have quite the prowess in battle. I wondered if perhaps... I could test myself against you.

Severus seems to understand Commodus's meaning, but he pretends not to.

SEVERUS

I'm afraid I must decline, great Commodus. I have much work to do for your glory.

COMMODUS

Oh, yes, of course. Of course. Be well, then, Severus.

Severus nods. The Praetorian guards escort him out.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

As Severus walks the halls, Demetrius comes running up to him. Severus pauses and looks at his friend.

SEVERUS

Demetrius... What's happened?

DEMETRIUS

Sir, someone is here to see you.

SEVERUS

Who?

DEMETRIUS

She says that she is your wife.

Severus's face changes, becoming pale at first, then gaining a vitality, a hope.

SEVERUS

Where?!

DEMETRIUS

Here, in the palace. She is waiting in a suite.

Demetrius ushers Severus along. Severus seems stunned, but soon follows pace behind Demetrius.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE - LATER

Severus comes into the chamber full of hope, brushing aside the curtain over the door. In the room is a feminine silhouette in the moonlight. Severus dares to hope as he steps inside.

SEVERUS

Paccia?! Paccia, what happened? How did you escape?

The woman turns. It is Julia, from the Syrian temple. Her stomach has a slight bump to it.

JULIA

No, my sweet Severus. I am not your dead wife. I am your living one.

Severus recoils and draws his sword.

SEVERUS

You! You poisoned me! You took advantage of me! Raped me!

JULIA

I recall you agreeing to the ritual.

SEVERUS

Deceiver!

JULIA

Come now, what's done is done, my love.

SEVERUS

I am not your love!

JULIA

Yes... You are. Your coming was foretold. Your dark hand shall hold the entire world, and I shall be at your side. I shall bear your children, and together-

SEVERUS

You are a madwoman! What you have done is horrific!

JULIA

I have created life within me from your seed. It was an act of love.

SEVERUS

You promised to help me decipher my dream. All you did was send me into horror for days! Weeks!

JULIA

You fled before we could finish. But the ritual is complete. We are bound as husband and wife.

SEVERUS

Not by Roman law!

JULIA

A technicality.

SEVERUS

I should kill you.

JULIA

You will not. Instead, you will go to fight for Rome. I have foreseen this. You shall become an even greater man than you are now. And when you return, the first part of the prophecy will have come true.

Severus looks away for a long moment. He turns back to her with controlled rage.

SEVERUS

I care not for your damned prophecy. You carry my child, and so I will *grudgingly* accept responsibility for it. But we are not husband and wife.

JULIA
You will accept, in time.

She puts her arms around him, but he shrugs her off.

SEVERUS
My love is dead. And now I go to
war.

Severus walks out of the chamber. Julia simply watches him go, seemingly content.

JULIA
You will stand before greatness,
and then seize it. I shall be there
when you do, my love.

FADE TO:

EXT. DANUBE RIVER - MONTHS LATER

Severus and a column of Roman legionaries march North up the river. Severus now wears legion armour, with the rank of Legate, and his arm bears the tattoo of the legion.

FADE TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - LATER

Severus and his men arrive at a massive Roman encampment. A Centurion approaches and salutes him.

CENTURION
Hail, Caesar!

SEVERUS
Hail. What is the situation,
Centurion?

CENTURION
The scattered tribes have begun
banding together to strike us. They
have killed negotiators and seem
determined to kill as many Romans
as possible.

SEVERUS
Status of your men?

CENTURION
Two-hundred and seventy.

SEVERUS

I bring more than twice that. Now, tell me about the terrain, and show me what sort of men we are up against.

CUT TO:

BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - DAY

General Pertinax sits alone in the senate chamber. After a few moments, a handful of senators begin shuffling in quietly. Their faces are hidden.

SENATOR 1

General.

PERTINAX

Senators? Why do you hide your faces?

SENATOR 1

You know why.

PERTINAX

You wish to keep your identities secret. Then you fear I might tell great Commodus of this meeting, inform him of the men who would work against him.

SENATOR 2

Lucas and Fulvius were stupid and rash. But their intentions and loyalty cannot be questioned.

PERTINAX

It is an awful risk, asking the man who killed Lucas to join his comrades.

SENATOR 3

No it isn't. General, we are loyal Romans. Commodus has wrecked the economy, spent all of Rome's money on self-aggrandising nonsense. He spends his days and nights in carnal pleasures that would sicken the most dedicated hedonist.

PERTINAX

None of this is new information to me.

SENATOR 1

We have a plan, but we need your support.

PERTINAX

What sort of support?

SENATOR 1

The support of the military. Many legions are loyal to Commodus, if they were to rebel, we would need a greater, and more beloved military leader to calm or quell them.

PERTINAX

Regardless of your intentions, a civil war in Rome would be disastrous. You can count on me to prevent that disaster. But I have no stomach for this treason.

SENATOR 1

Then I grant you this bitter tonic for your stomach, General: Commodus plans to dissolve the senate, killing us if necessary. And you, General, still hold a senatorial seat.

PERTINAX

As do you, Pompeianus.

Senator 1 removes his hood revealing his identify as Pompeianus, Commodus's closest advisor.

POMPEANIUS

So you see why I must do this.

PERTINAX

(Laughs)
My old friend, I thought perhaps you had gone mad by allying yourself with that lunatic.

POMPEANIUS

We live in a mad Rome. Perhaps I have gone a little mad myself. But the Empire must run, must survive, and it cannot so long as Commodus remains Emperor.

PERTINAX

Unofficially... I agree. But am I to commit my men to fight a civil war over the machinations of some rogue senators?

POMPEANIUS

It's your choice. But Commodus will, if all goes well, be dead by tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, BATH HOUSE - NIGHT

Commodus sits in a steaming bath. A bottle of wine is open next to him. A shadowy figure enters.

COMMODUS

There you are, my sweet.

The figure steps into the light. A very feminine face is seen.

COMMODUS (CONT'D)

Well, come on now...

The figure disrobes, and while the face is feminine, it is clearly a male. The figure steps into the water. Commodus pulls him closer, grinning with lust.

COMMODUS (CONT'D)

I was wondering the other day, my sweet, how long you can hold your breath...

From the darkness behind Commodus, a pair of hands reach out and push Commodus below the water. The effeminate male sits there watching dispassionately. The figure behind Commodus is strong, and through the struggle, we see it is the Gladiator from the arena. He holds Commodus under the water and soon, the Emperor's struggles cease. A final surface bubble pops. The Gladiator withdraws his hands from the water.

A single tear rolls down the face of the effeminate male as the Gladiator approaches. The effeminate male nods, then takes in a breath and closes his eyes. He willingly sinks beneath the water. The Gladiator puts a single hand on his head and holds him there.

Soon, there is some quick, involuntary thrashing, then all goes still.

POMPEANIS (V.O.)

It was quick. Our spy did his duty. Apparently, his time with our depraved Caesar made him lose his desire for life.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - MORNING

Pompeanis and Pertinax sit in the senate chambers.

PERTINAX

Then it's done?

POMPEANIUS

His body will be discovered soon. Are you ready?

PERTINAX

One can't be ready for this sort of thing. I shudder at the man who is.

POMPEANIUS

The senate is still somewhat divided on the idea of even naming a successor. But so soon after Marcus Aurelius's death, and the madness of Commodus, a smooth transition is what we need.

PERTINAX

A wise idea.

POMPEANIUS

I have nominated you for the next Caesar.

PERTINAX

Me?! Why me?!

POMPEANIUS

You are loved, respected, wise, and popular. And though we disagree, we can do so civilly. Unlike Commodus and his enemies, both invisible and real.

PERTINAX

I don't want to be Emperor. I am a servant of Rome, not it's master.

POMPEANIUS

Rome does not need masters now. It needs an emperor who will serve it.

Pertinax looks uncomfortable. Pompeianus stiffens as the Praetorian guard enters the chamber suddenly.

POMPEANIUS (CONT'D)
What's happened?

GUARD
Great Commodus is dead.

POMPEANIUS
Dead?!

GUARD
Drowned in his bath.

Pertinax turns to Pompeianus, who wears a perfect mask of innocence.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Severus stands with a column of Roman soldiers. A horde of Germanic warriors rushes towards them.

SEVERUS
The phalanx is in place?

CENTURION
Yes, Legate.

SEVERUS
Close the trap. Slaughter them all.

The Centurion turns and lets out a loud bellow that carries across the entire column. As the tribesman get closer, Romans appear from the edges of the woods, with shields covered in leaves, and they form together into a V behind the charging savages.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)
SHIELDS!

The Romans form together, creating a wall of shields. The Germanic tribesman attack, and while they busy themselves against the impenetrable Roman wall, archers from the rear saturate the field with arrows. Arrows fall like rain on the Germanic tribes. Their ranks break, and they try to withdraw. As they see themselves surrounded by Romans, Severus raises his hand.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)
CONSTRUCT!

From the edges of the walls, Romans break off from the shield formation and move inside. The walls shuffle closer together, maintaining closed ranks.

The remaining Germanic warriors find themselves quickly outnumbered and trapped while Roman legionaries cut them down.

Severus watches the slaughter with passionless eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - LATER

Demetrius, the Centurion, and Severus sit and toast to their victory.

CENTURION

I must admit, that manoeuvre was genius. Sadly, I don't think we can get away with it too many more times.

DEMETRIUS

Why not? I didn't notice any survivors. Who will tell the others about it?

They laugh, and even Severus chuckles.

DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)

Cheer up, sir. A few more battles like this, and the tribes will have no warriors left to fight.

SEVERUS

Yes, but it does not feel like victory. It feels like murder.

DEMETRIUS

May I speak with my friend in private?

The Centurion nods and stands.

CENTURION

Of course. Hail Caesar.

Severus nods and halfheartedly salutes. Once the Centurion has left, Demetrius turns to him.

DEMETRIUS

We have fought many battles together, my friend. I know you. Something disturbs you.

SEVERUS

My wife and brother are dead. A madwoman bears my child.

(MORE)

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

The Emperor wanted to execute me for a dream. I find I have lost reason to fight.

DEMETRIUS

Well... keeping both your arms is a good reason.

Severus smiles.

SEVERUS

How do you do it? Carry on while missing a part of yourself?

DEMETRIUS

It does take much longer to strap on my shield. But what are my choices? Besides, I am a better fighter with one arm than most men with two. I know in my heart that I fight for a day when the world no longer needs fighting. That is worth more than just my hand.

SEVERUS

That is your purpose?

DEMETRIUS

To eventually be unemployed, yes.

Severus chuckles.

SEVERUS

Paccia loved me for my passion. Without her, I find I have none left.

DEMETRIUS

You feel like you've lost your purpose.

SEVERUS

Among many other things.

DEMETRIUS

One thing I have found since joining the legion, is that there is always a new purpose around the corner.

SEVERUS

I have never been one to take things on faith.

DEMETRIUS

Well, whatever works for you. Or doesn't.

(MORE)

DEMETRIUS (CONT'D)

But if it means anything at all,
you've earned the respect and
admiration of men throughout the
legion. And you can't tell me
General Pertinax won't have
something for you to do. Rome
always needs something.

SEVERUS

This is true.

Severus looks into the distance for a moment. He seems
doubtful, but a little less despondent.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME, THE PALACE - MONTHS LATER

Legate Severus leads his troops home. There, he receives a
heroes welcome with flying banners. Outside the palace,
Pertinax stands there in purple.

As Severus approaches, his jaw falls. His lip quivers for a
moment and he looks as if he may scream.

Through the fanfare and the singing, Severus almost misses
seeing Julia, now extremely pregnant, and standing there to
welcome him and the rest of the heroic legionaries.

She walks up to him and kisses him. Severus masks his
feelings, and looks back up to where Pertinax and several
senators wait.

Severus approaches Pertinax and looks him up and down.

PERTINAX

You should see the look on your
face, my friend.

SEVERUS

Obviously, you were at least right
about Commodus.

PERTINAX

Welcome back to Rome, Severus.
Now... I don't put much stock in
these things, but Pompeianis says it
must be done.

Pertinax holds out his hand, on one of his fingers is the
Imperial ring.

Severus understands. He bows his head, and kisses the ring.
The crowd goes wild.

PERTINAX (CONT'D)

Rise, General Septimius Severus.

SEVERUS

General?!

PERTINAX

I need someone to run my legion.
And I trust exactly zero Roman
politicians.

Julia cheers and kisses Severus again.

JULIA

Hail Caesar.

Severus looks both happy and worried, but he smiles at his old friend.

SEVERUS

Hail Caesar.

From the group of senators, Plautinius steps forward and shakes Severus's hand.

PLAUTINIUS

My friend! Who at home would
believe this now, eh?

Severus smiles, but it is a hollow smile.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE - LATER

Julia cries out in pain. A pair of midwives attend to her while Severus watches from nearby. Julia turns to him in between painful contractions and flashes him a smile.

JULIA

I bear this pain for you!

Severus says nothing. Julia turns and cries out again as another contraction strikes.

MIDWIFE

The baby is crowning.

JULIA

Soon now... Soon now...

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE - LATER

Severus stands beside Julia. She gives one great cry and the baby's head slides out. The Midwife catches, carefully turns the infant slightly, and it finishes sliding into her arms.

MIDWIFE

It is a son.

At seeing his newborn son, Severus's face softens.

SEVERUS

I have a son...

JULIA

I gave you a son...

The midwife puts the infant on Julia's chest. It cries briefly, but as it makes contact with her skin, it seems to calm and begin rooting for her breast.

Severus reaches out and puts a hand on the viscera-covered child. Severus sniffs and a tear rolls down his cheek.

SEVERUS

I have a son.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE, LATER.

While Julia sleeps nearby, Severus holds his newborn son in his arms. Demetrius is there, as is Seok and Plautinius. They toast Severus with cups of wine and wide grins.

SEOK

Congratulations, my friend.

PLAUTINIUS

Hear, here!

SEOK

Perhaps he will play with my own son someday.

SEVERUS

Perhaps.

DEMETRIUS

Have you picked out a name?

SEVERUS

Oh yes. His name is Lucius.

DEMETRIUS

Why Lucius?

SEVERUS

Julia picked it. I would have preferred something more...

PLAUTINIUS

Let me guess... African.

Severus chuckles and nods.

The Praetorian guard appear at the entrance, and shortly thereafter, Pertinax enters the chamber. He smiles at Severus.

PERTINAX

He looks just like you, Severus.

SEOK

I'd hope so.

They chuckle. Severus smiles a wide smile. The baby remains asleep in his arms.

PERTINAX

Is your wife well?

SEVERUS

Yes. She sleeps now, from the exhaustion.

SEOK

My wife was in such pain, she needed weeks of bed rest. I have never in my life found such a love of cleaning up the bodily fluids of another creature.

Pertinax laughs.

PERTINAX

You are lucky men.

DEMETRIUS

Luckier than some.

He holds up his stump. Pertinax grins.

PERTINAX

How many other one-handed men do you know who have become personal friends of the Caesar.

DEMETRIUS

I think I shouldn't answer until I sober up. I still believe this is some drunken delusion and I'm lying in a field somewhere bleeding to death.

SEVERUS

It's quite real.

He looks down at his son again.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

Quite real.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL - LATER

Severus sits with Pertinax, Pompeianus, and two other men he does not recognise, an old, fat Roman (CLODIUS,) and a well-dressed Syrian (NIGER.)

PERTINAX

Thank you for coming. Especially you, Severus, since I know you have just had a child. I do not wish to keep you from your family, but I'm afraid the situation is grave. You men are the most powerful in all of Rome right now. I need all your help if I am to right the mess Commodus made of Rome. And to begin with, I want that archway that says "Commodia" scratched out.

There is some laughter.

POMPEANIUS

We laugh, but it is quite serious. Rome's treasury is depleted. Our good friend Pescennius Niger here has been kind enough to float a loan to us at no interest until we can stand on our feet again.

Niger nods his head.

NIGER

It is my pleasure.

SEVERUS

How bad is it?

PERTINAX

Commodus devalued the denarius, printed worthless money, spent gratuitously, and eliminated taxes for his wealthy friends. Currently, Rome operates at an unprecedented deficit.

CLODIUS

It is worse than that, my friends. Without the money to pay for the basic needs, maintenance, and safety of the realm, we face a cessation of labor, shortage of materials, and I don't think the legion will fight for free with weapons and armour they buy for themselves.

SEVERUS

Gods... And the senate could do nothing?

POMPEANIUS

Trust me, General. We did as much as we could. The situation would be even worse had we not taken steps to... occupy the late Caesar.

PERTINAX

Here is the reality. Rome needs money. I plan to reinstate the taxes, but that will simply slow the decline. For Rome to survive... (He sighs)
We must expand.

SEVERUS

Expand?!

PERTINAX

And raise taxes on the free cities.

Severus slams his hand down on the table.

SEVERUS

No! No, I have seen Roman taxes push free cities into abject poverty.

CLODIUS

The what would you suggest?

Severus thinks for a moment.

SEVERUS

Raise the tax on the wealthy.

Clodius scoffs and Niger glares.

CLODIUS

You can't be serious.

SEVERUS

Rome needs money. Who has money? Not the poor.

CLODIUS

It is not that simple.

NIGER

No, I agree with Severus. As a temporary measure, to ensure the survival of Rome.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, HALLWAY - LATER

Severus walks along the hall with Niger.

NIGER

I was pleased to see another African on this trust council.

SEVERUS

As was I.

NIGER

And don't fear the panic of that fool, Clodius. Rich men fear loss of wealth more than loss of life.

SEVERUS

Perhaps. But I have heard of Clodius Albinus, and he has worked hard to achieve his wealth. Though, admittedly, he has acquired more than simple wealth over the years.

NIGER

(Laughs)
Yes, he has a belly that could hold two men.

SEVERUS

And women.

Niger laughs again.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

Pregnant women.

Niger laughs even harder. Severus smiles and shares in the laughter.

NIGER

He is old, fat, and slothful. It shall be his end. And make no mistake, he despises both of us.

SEVERUS

I did not notice.

NIGER

He hides it well. Watch your back,
my friend.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE - LATER

Severus finds his wife and son sleeping. He walks to the window and looks out on Rome beneath the moonlight. He looks doubtful once again.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Niger and several other men play a dice rolling game. Niger rolls and cheers at the outcome.

NIGER

Yes! Perfect! Perhaps I shall also
lend these winnings to Rome so
another Emperor may spend unwisely.

Niger laughs. A heavy hand lands on his shoulder. A member of the Praetorian Guard stands there behind him. Niger looks up at the Guard.

PREFECT

May I speak to you?

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, BASEMENT - LATER

Niger sits in a room surrounded by minor treasures and works of art. The Prefect of the Praetorian Guard enters and removes his helmet.

PREFECT

You know, I have been a member of
the guard since Marcus Aurelius co-
ruled with his daughter Lucilla. I
liked them both. Smart, good
people. But between wars and some
small crises, they were forced to
conduct secret auctions to pay
Rome's debts. Commodus put a stop
to the auctions. He even paid to
buy back some of the treasures at
twice the price.

NIGER

He would have made a terrible
businessman.

PREFECT

Exactly. The army, the guard included, are being asked to accept a decline in wages. I know for a fact that within the year, Rome won't be able to even pay us. No matter our patriotism, no one fights who isn't getting paid, somehow.

NIGER

The Emperor was a general. Surely he knows this.

PREFECT

But he can't do anything. Not while he answers to those fools in the Senate.

NIGER

Ah. I see.

PREFECT

Good. Because I have my own ideas on how to save Rome from itself. And frankly, I'm tired of waiting for politicians to stop messing around and actually solve problems.

NIGER

I see. And what is my part in this?

PREFECT

My guards know everything that goes on in this palace. I know you've been having... meetings with the new Generals wife.

NIGER

(Chuckles)
I admit nothing.

PREFECT

You don't need to. But when the time is right, we will want your support. And help eliminating potential problems.

NIGER

As it happens... I rather have a plan of my own.

The Prefect smiles. He seems to understand.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, SUITE - DAYS LATER

Severus and Julia are mid-argument. Severus is gathering items like he is packing.

SEVERUS

I will not have my wife and child
in such harm's way. There is too
much danger!

JULIA

So you will abandon me! Tell me, is
that not how you lost your last
wife?

SEVERUS

Do not speak of her!

JULIA

Faithful, loyal, Paccia. You do
know your brother raped her before
he killed her.

SEVERUS

(Snarling)
You manipulative witch! You know I
could easily have you killed!

JULIA

Where is that concern for my safety
now?

SEVERUS

The concern is not for *your* safety!

Severus looks at baby Lucius, who is crying.

JULIA

Rome is becoming more dangerous
than a battlefield! In battle, you
can see your enemies.

Severus hesitates, but looking into her serious eyes, he
realises what she means.

SEVERUS

Damn you...

Severus pauses. He looks away as if to storm off, but then
turns back angrily.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

Do you know something?

Julia does not answer.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)
 You do. And it puts our child in
 danger.

Julia still does not answer.

SEVERUS (CONT'D)
 Pack your things. We will go. I
 will arrange for your safe lodging
 somehow.

Julia steps up to kiss him, but Severus leans away from her
 lips.

JULIA
 You still believe I do not love
 you.

She simply walks away, her face taking on a neutral mask.

Severus grimaces and turns walking in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, EMPEROR'S CHAMBER - DAYS LATER

Pertinax has obviously cleared out all of Commodus's things,
 and several slaves are scrubbing the floors and walls.
 Pertinax has a cheap, temporary wooden table that he uses as
 a sort of desk while he goes over stacks of parchment and
 piles of scrolls.

Severus enters and salutes.

SEVERUS
 Hail, Caesar.

PERTINAX
 Stop that, Severus. Please, come
 in... I'd offer you a seat, but
 after what Commodus has done in
 this chamber, I thought it best to
 scrub everything and burn the
 fabrics.

SEVERUS
 That's disgusting.

PERTINAX
 So is what I found by the bed.

SEVERUS
 What did you find?

PERTINAX
 I'll only say that it was still
 moist.

Severus cringes.

SEVERUS

Sir, Julia and my son are coming
with me to Germania.

Pertinax looks at him seriously. He puts down all the papers
and stares at Severus with intensity.

PERTINAX

Are you quite certain.

SEVERUS

Yes.

PERTINAX

I see.

There is a long pause as Pertinax taps on the wood with his
knuckles.

PERTINAX (CONT'D)

Already. They move against me
already.

SEVERUS

It is rumour and innuendo.

PERTINAX

(Sighs)
I didn't even want the job. That
slimy Pompeianis convinced me to
take it.

SEVERUS

And already, that man, Niger, on
your council, he tries to convince
me to work against Clodius.

Pertinax brushes a number of parchment papers off his desk in
annoyance.

PERTINAX

Must everyone fight for every
little scrap of power?!

SEVERUS

It is the way of things.

Pertinax nods with a sigh of resignation.

PERTINAX

You are right, my friend. Rome is
about to become very unpleasant.
Take your family and go in safety,
my friend.

SEVERUS
Thank you, my friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANUBE RIVER - WEEKS LATER

A cold wind blows as the Romans march up the bank of the river. Severus does not walk with the troops, nor ride a horse in the open. A carriage rumbles along with the column, and we see Severus's eyes peer through the window.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVERUS'S CARRIAGE - SECONDS LATER

Severus sits and pores over a map of the area. Julia is asleep nearby, and in a small cradle, Lucius slumbers.

Eventually, Julia stirs and speaks in her sleep.

JULIA
Niger... Niger, it is not your son.

Severus looks at her with a burning fury in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Emperor Pertinax walks along the halls. The Praetorian Guard walks with him. From the other end of the long hallway, another group of Praetorian Guards approach, their Prefect in the lead. Pertinax casts a glance to the men beside him, then looks ahead.

Soon, the guards surround Pertinax, blocking any possible escape. The lead guard stands before him.

PREFECT
Hail Caesar.

PERTINAX
The Praetorian Guard... Of course. Yes, of course. No one else would be foolish enough to engage me in combat. Even you need eight men.

GUARD
We don't *need* eight.

PERTINAX
Yes, you do.

Pertinax seems to barely move, but a dagger sprouts from the neck of the guard next to him, and he spins the man to use him as a shield.

Pertinax takes his sword, then draws his own sword, backing up enough that every guard is in front of him, and his back is to the wall.

PERTINAX (CONT'D)

Come on then. I've fought for Rome since I was old enough to fuck, let's see if the remaining seven of you can do what thousands have failed to do.

The guards try to outflank Pertinax, each one taking a swing at him, but he manages to block both blades with his own. He counters faster than they expect, cutting one guard's sword-hand at the wrist. He drops his sword, blood pouring out of his open wrist. He steps back and tries to clasp his hand over the wound to stop the blood. With that opening, Pertinax whirls his swords, forcing the guard to step back. He spins and aims both swords in a parallel cut at the lead Guard. The lead Guard blocks it, barely. The other Praetorians counter-attack. Pertinax takes a slash across his side, and one on his upper thigh. He winces and grunts in pain, but fights on as he uses the opening from those attacks to plunge his swords into the bellies of the guards that attacked him. He then draws the daggers out of the guards own sheaths and hurls them at the lead guard. He takes a dagger in the shoulder, but parries the other one.

Pertinax gains some distance and grabs one of the dropped swords.

PERTINAX (CONT'D)

Well now... Those odds are a little better. Or did you want to call more men in?

Pertinax grins a mad grin.

PREFECT

We serve Rome.

PERTINAX

So do I! That's the tragedy of a civil war.

PREFECT

Enough of this.

The guards close in. Pertinax parries several swings, but another blade does get through and puts a deep gash in his arm. He lets out a growl of pain and rage, blood running down to the floor in a mighty red river. Pertinax gets a look on his face, one of both grim determination and resigned defeat. He knows he will bleed to death.

He presses his attack, hacks at the knees of one of the guards and sends him screaming to the floor. The rest of the guards surround him and the lead Guard knocks the sword from Pertinax's hand.

Pertinax smiles and falls to his knees. He raises his arms up as if welcoming his own death.

PERTINAX

Thank you for letting me die... as
a soldier.

The guard prepares to swing his sword.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - DAWN

The entire Senate is once again assembled. Plautinius seems confused and Clodius seems angry. Pompeianus has a worried look on his face. Niger is also there, but he is smiling broadly.

PLAUTINIUS

This is unorthodox. Even Commodus
never asked us to convene so early.

CLODIUS

Military men are early risers.

POMPEANIUS

Niger, do you know something that
we don't?

NIGER

I'm sure I know many things that
you do not.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE CHAMBERS TO:

We see only the severed and still-dripping head of Pertinax as the lead Guard walks with it towards the central chamber.

INT. ROMAN SENATE - SECONDS LATER

Everyone gasps as the Praetorian Guard enters, three of them obviously wounded, but many more follow behind. They flood the senatorial chamber and surround the senators. The lead Guard holds up Pertinax's head. The senators shout, scream, and Pompeianus seems to faint.

PREFECT

Attention all you fat, stupid, bureaucrats! Your Emperor is dead. Rome is broke. The military is owed money for building the very empire that you sit here and enjoy. So now, the military shall ensure that you enjoy this luxury at a price. Nominations for the next Emperor begin now. The highest bidder shall receive the crown.

PLAUTINIUS

No! This is madness!

CLODIUS

Rome was built as a Republic, and so should it return to! If this mania has shown us anything, it's that Emperors are more trouble than they are worth.

Some senators seem to agree with Clodius

PREFECT

Sure. If you are *all* in agreement, then there will be no Emperor. But... does just *one* among you want that title?

NIGER

I'll open the bidding. Five thousand denarius.

PREFECT

Excellent, thank you good sir.

PLAUTINIUS

No! Please, everyone! This cannot happen! The Republic must be represented by the people, not currency!

The Prefect smiles.

PREFECT

Insufficient bid. Does anyone else want the title of Emperor? Going once...

The room erupts into chaos as senators begin leaping over each other to bid on the title. Plautinius looks and sees Pompeianus lying on the floor. He goes over to the older man in concern. He lifts his arm, and it falls limply to the floor. Plautinius holds a small, smooth stone up to the old man's nose. He watches, but nothing steams on the surface.

Plautinius looks back up as the bidding reaches a fever pitch.

One man (DIDAS,) not in senatorial robes, but in fine garments, steps forward with a large sack full of coin. He holds it up to the Guard.

PREFECT (CONT'D)
Can anyone top half a million?!

The room falls silent.

PREFECT (CONT'D)
Then the winning bid goes to Didas
Julianus. All hail Caesar!

The Guard places a bloodied laurel on Didas, who smiles widely. Niger looks infuriated.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - WEEKS LATER

Severus sits with his three-month old son. Young Lucius smiles up at Severus and coos. Severus smiles back at him, but it's clear something weighs on his heart. Nearby there is a parchment on the floor. It is scrawled hastily in Latin.

PLAUTINIUS (V.O.)
Dear old friend, Severus. I came to Rome with you because I was in love with the Republic, and hoped to be a part of the glorious golden age that Marcus Aurelius was building. But now, the last shred of the Republic is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE - WEEKS AGO

Plautinius watches as Clodius and Niger shout at the Guard, and each other, from different sides of the chamber. Senators drift towards one, the other, or to the middle. Plautinius stands in muted horror.

PLAUTINIUS (V.O.)
The title of Emperor is for sale to the highest bidder! Clodius and Niger collect allies, while Didas Julianus pays off the Praetorians, and hires mercenaries.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, BATTLEFIELD

A long stretch of cold, muddy ground is littered with the dead and dying. Severus walks through this field of misery with blood dripping from his hands.

PLAUTINIUS (V.O.)

I have resigned from my senate seat. I wish to avoid the inevitable stacking of bodies. You are lucky that you left when you did, my friend. For they would surely have come for you. You are commander of many legions, you are a hero to Rome, and they say you can defeat an army with ten men. The Praetorians fear you.

Severus looks down at the body of Seok, a bloody smear across his face, and a Saxon sword in his belly.

PLAUTINIUS (V.O.)

Do not return to Rome. Take your family, flee back to Africa. I should like to see you there, my friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

It is snowing. Severus walks through an inch of snow, up a small hill, to look at the massive camp. He looks up to the sky and holds out his hand, catching snowflakes on them.

He smiles slightly.

CUT TO:

INT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - LATE EVENING

Severus sits in his tent. Plautinius's letter sits on the floor. A pregnant Julia is naked next to Severus and a small brazier, keeping warm from both. Severus stares angrily at the flames.

SEVERUS

Rome will burn.

JULIA

Will it, my love?

SEVERUS

Tell me you had nothing to do with this.

JULIA

With what?

SEVERUS

(Smiles ironically)

You slept with Niger. You convinced me to flee Rome. You bear me a son and tell me that I am bound for greatness. The Emperor dies, and the world sits on the brink of madness... Tell me that you had nothing to do with this.

JULIA

(Serious)

I had nothing to do with this. Severus, my love, we are but pawns of prophecy.

Severus pushes her away and stands.

SEVERUS

(Angrily)

Yes... Just a pawn. Well I am done being simply a piece on a giant game board.

JULIA

What? I don't-

SEVERUS

Silence your lying tongue. I tolerate you for the sake of my son, so he will not grow up without a mother. I have accepted you because you bear me another child. But I'm beginning to wonder if perhaps my children would be raised by a lying witch.

JULIA

My love-

SEVERUS

No! I am not your love. I will not be your pawn, or anyone else's. I have let anger, grief, and confusion cloud my mind for too long. I am Septimius Severus of Lepcis Magna, General Commander of the Legion, and when I am done making peaceful pieces of these tribesmen, I will take my army to Rome and end this foolishness! The foolish will not rule the wise, and I will no longer be a fool, myself! And be warned, wife of mine...

(MORE)

SEVERUS (CONT'D)

I am through with your treachery,
and if you want the company of my
bed again, then you shall not seek
out others!

Julia is on the verge of tears. Young Lucius starts to cry from his crib. Severus looks Julia in the eye, and she is afraid.

JULIA

No... No this is wrong. You are to
be Emp-

SEVERUS

Do not speak it, witch! I am to
restore the Republic. Stay by my
side or leave. I don't care which.

Severus pulls on a tunic and steps out into the cold.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMANIA, ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - SECONDS LATER

Demetrius is now wearing the armour of a Centurion, and he salutes Severus.

DEMETRIUS

General, what is it?

SEVERUS

Send out messages to all the other
legions in Germania, in Africa, and
everywhere!

DEMETRIUS

Everywhere?!

SEVERUS

I did not mis-speak. Tell them the
Emperor is dead and Rome has
fallen. Tell them we will march on
Rome and take it back.

DEMETRIUS

Fallen? Who could have toppled
Rome?

SEVERUS

The only people whose stupidity
ever could, the Romans.

Severus turns back into his tent Demetrius gapes after him, but then turns and runs off to send the messages out. He calls out to the rest of the camp.

DEMETRIUS

The Caesar is dead! Rome has
fallen!

CUT TO:

BLACK.