

HANNIBAL AT THE GATES
"THE LIGHTNING REBORN"

FADE FROM WHITE:

EXT. SAGUNTUM -- MORNING.

Blinding light fades away, revealing the gorgeous Iberian Peninsula. Farmers in linen tunics till a nearby field. In the background, dominating a hilltop, is the city of SAGUNTUM.

SUPER: Saguntum, Iberian Peninsula

SUPER: 220 B.C.E.

High stone walls surround the fortress city. Archers patrol high above the MAIN GATE. The banner of Saguntum--two crossed swords and a wreathed-helmet--waves above the highest tower.

ANGLE ON the BARRACKS, a large open square with eight buildings on the perimeter. Soldiers train with blunt swords.

ANGLE ON the CITY COUNCIL, where the wealthy chat with the leaders of the city.

ANGLE ON the FORUM, an open area filled with kiosks and carts.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, FORUM.

Merchants and farmers peddle their goods, hounded by traders and citizens alike. In the center of the forum, on a slight riser, are three CARTHAGINIAN CORPSES. They are each strapped to large wooden Xs, primitive execution devices. The crowd ignores them, as though this is just another part of daily life.

Suddenly, a BOY races past, followed by LARGE MEN.

ANGLE ON ERIKO (9), a young boy, weaving through the crowds and stalls to escape his pursuers.

BALBUS (O.S.)
Get back here!

Eriko glances over his shoulder, eyes wide. Seven ROMAN HEAVY INFANTRY thunder after him. One is just about to grab Eriko when the boy slides under a cart. He's up in a flash, sprinting as fast as he can when BAM! Eriko slams into a wall of a man. He scrambles to his feet to see...

HANNIBAL BARCA (30), a tall and fearsome soldier. His skin is onyx, muscle toned from years of fighting, and his eyes behold a startling intellect.

HANNIBAL
Are you all right, boy?

The boy nods. He glances at a lean man by Hannibal's side: GISGA (28), a wiry and deadly warrior. Gisga is Egyptian, and bears intricate tattoos on his arms.

ROMAN SOLDIER (O.S.)
There he is.

Hannibal takes a step forward, sliding Eriko behind him. Gisga, without a word, places himself forward and to the left of Hannibal. It's a defensive posture, but it looks natural.

Hannibal eyes the soldiers with disdain. They're dressed in heavy armor, carrying short swords but no shields. Each bears the letters SPQR in black ink on their biceps. Their tunics are lobster red.

CAPTAIN BALBUS (35), a vicious man, steps to the front.

BALBUS
Hand over the boy.

HANNIBAL
What are his crimes that warrant such an excessive hunt?

BALBUS
He was careless and disrespectful to his betters. He needs to be taught some manners.

Hannibal looks the captain up and down. He notices a child's SANDAL PRINT on the Roman's boot, and a WINE STAIN on the gleaming armor. A small crowd forms around the scene in a large circle. Three children stand in front holding WOODEN SWORDS.

HANNIBAL
Better?
(beat)
I don't see anyone fitting that description here. Just a group of savages wanting to punish a child for being a child.
(beat)
Fucking Romans.

Balbus sneers.

BALBUS
What did you say?

GISGA
(matter-of-fact)
He said "fucking Romans."

Balbus balks at Gisga's directness.

BALBUS
Mind your tongue, barbarian, before
I have it cut out. You speak to
Balbus Sabinas, Captain of the
Fifth Scouting Legion. By the
authority of the Roman Empire, I
demand--

HANNIBAL
Nothing. You demand nothing of me,
because you can demand nothing.

Balbus nods to his soldiers and they draw their swords. Gisga
gently places his left hand on his sheath, thumbing his sword
forward. Hannibal doesn't flinch.

The soldiers advance.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
The Ebro River.
(beat)
Every man, woman, and child in
Iberia knows this river.

The soldiers pause, uncertain.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
The treaty that keeps the peace
between our empires marks it as the
end of your world and the beginning
of Carthaginian Territory.
(smiles)
And you, Roman, are standing well
South of it. You have no authority
here.

BALBUS
(scoffs)
A Carthaginian then? A commander,
from the sound of it. What is your
name?

HANNIBAL
Hannibal Barca.

Balbus is unmoved, but his soldiers glance at each other. Hannibal gestures to Gisga.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
And this is Gisga.

Four of the soldiers take eager steps back. They stare at Gisga, their swords trembling. Hannibal notices.

BALBUS
Barca. Ever since I arrived in this gods-forsaken place, I hear this name. Barca.
(beat)
Your father was a legend, or a terror, depending on who you ask.

HANNIBAL
I know who my father was.

BALBUS
They say his son is the Lightning Reborn.
(snorts)
I'm not impressed.
(beat)
Now, I may be south of the Ebro, but you are within the walls of Saguntum. And that--

Balbus gestures to the decaying corpses of Carthaginian citizens.

BALBUS (CONT'D)
--is how Saguntum treats barbarians. You have even less dominion here than I.
(steps forward)
Now, you are outnumbered, out-armed, and out of your depth. Hand over the boy.

Balbus smirks, satisfied. Hannibal glances at the corpses in the forum, at the boy, at the Romans, and at Gisga. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

SFX: All sound slows to a crawl and vanishes, leaving a ghostly silence.

Hannibal opens his eyes and time has stopped. The city is frozen, motionless. A BLUE TINT has overtaken the world. This is Hannibal's MIND SCAPE: A moment between moments where he processes his thoughts.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (O.S.)
Will you yield?

Over Hannibal's shoulder, a tall, gaunt man watches the scene. The WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (40), Hannibal's dead father, grimaces. He is a vision of death, dripping wet, with arrows protruding from his back like a porcupine. His eyes are haunting and white.

HANNIBAL
If I do, they will beat the boy to death.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
Seven against two aren't strong odds.

HANNIBAL
Six. Their captain isn't a fighter. He leads from the rear.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
Six then. Still not better.

Hannibal glances at the Romans. His eyes spot glaring details. As he speaks, we focus on them.

HANNIBAL
Their armor is pristine. Unmarked by battle.
(beat)
Their swords are without dents or scratches. Untested.
(beat)
Their eyes betray their fear. They have never smelt their own blood in the air.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
You might get lucky.

Hannibal looks at Gisga. Every inch of him is poised for the fight. This is the calm, and he is the storm.

HANNIBAL
I don't need luck. I have Gisga.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
The Egyptian is talented, that is true. He can take three, maybe four men at a time. Those remaining will come for you, and the boy.

Hannibal glares at the soldiers. We see their faces, full of fear. We see their eyes, locked on Gisga. Only Balbus watches Hannibal.

HANNIBAL

They flinched at my name. They
leapt at Gisga's. Even now, they
fear taking their eyes off him,
lest his legend prove true.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

And if you stand atop a pile of
dead Romans?

HANNIBAL

Gisga has learned restraint.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

Very well.

Hannibal blinks and the world returns. Hamilcar vanishes.

BALBUS

Give me the boy, now!

HANNIBAL

Come and get him.

Balbus seethes.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

(to Gisga)

No corpses.

Gisga releases his sheath and glances around, spotting the children with toy swords. He makes a gesture and a child tosses the wooden blade over. Gisga drags the tip through the sand, marking a line for the soldiers to cross.

The crowd has grown with the tension.

BALBUS

Kill them.

Two Romans lunge for Gisga. The moment they cross the line in the sand, he attacks. Gisga is a blur of precise strikes. The wooden blade cracks across jaws and necks and the Romans collapse to the dirt in seconds.

There is a moment of disbelief, and then the remaining soldiers attack. Gisga is on them in a flash.

Hannibal watches, his hand remaining on Eriko's shoulder. He keeps the boy at his back, but never releases him.

Gisga finishes the fight. Six Romans lay on the ground, rolling and moaning.

Only Balbus remains standing. Gisga approaches, his face dispassionate and professional.

GISGA

Are you impressed yet?

Balbus hasn't even drawn his sword. He grips the hilt too late. Gisga catches the Captain's hand, staying the sword in its sheath. He head-butts Balbus, staggering him, and breaks the wooden sword over the Roman's head. Balbus crumples to the ground. The fight is over.

Gisga hands the broken sword to the child from the crowd, frowning apologetically. The child takes the pieces excitedly, chasing his friends with the "magic sword."

Eriko slides away from Hannibal.

ERIKO

Thank you.

Eriko tries to leave, but Hannibal catches his tunic.

HANNIBAL

Not so fast, little thief.

ERIKO

(blushes)

How did you--

HANNIBAL

(taps his ear)

You jingle too much.

Hannibal holds out a hand and Eriko drops in a stolen purse.

ERIKO

Then why did you help me?

HANNIBAL

Those men weren't going to punish you for stealing. They were going to hurt you because they could.

Hannibal notices RED MUD on the boy's sandals, as well as scuff marks on his knees and hands.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

They don't let little thieves through the main gates.

ERIKO
I didn't come in through the gate.

HANNIBAL
(smiling)
Clever. What is your name, boy?

ERIKO
Eriko.

Hannibal opens the coin purse and pulls out a silver DENARIUS. He frowns.

HANNIBAL
Who did you take this from?

ERIKO
(shrugs)
One of the nobles. I don't know.

Hannibal pockets the purse.

ERIKO (CONT'D)
Hey!

HANNIBAL
If you're caught spending Roman
Denarii, you'll hang.
(glances at corpses)
Or worse.

Hannibal pulls out his own purse, a worn leather sack with a lightning emblem stitched on one side. He kneels and places the purse in Eriko's hands.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
If you're going to keep stealing,
either get better or be faster.
(beat)
If you ever decide you want a
different life, enlist in the
service of Carthage.

ERIKO
I'm not Carthaginian.

HANNIBAL
Neither is most of our army. Ask to
be assigned to Hannibal Barca. I'll
teach you how to soldier and pay
you a fair wage.

Eriko shakes the purse, smiles at the weight, and takes off without another word. Gisga walks over to Hannibal, who lifts the Denarius to the light for a better look.

GISGA
(looks at corpses)
The rumors were true. It seems any affiliation with Carthage warrants an execution inside these walls.

HANNIBAL
And I know why.

Hannibal tosses the coin to Gisga.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
The General was right. Rome is already here.

GISGA
It's just a coin.

Hannibal shows the purse.

HANNIBAL
This is not a trader's purse, Gisga. This is a bribe.

GISGA
In that case, we should be going. We've made enough noise.

Hannibal nods. He gives a final look to the dead Carthaginians in the square.

HANNIBAL
Fucking Romans.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME -- DAY.

Rome the republic. The capital city is already impressive, sprawling for miles around.

SUPER: Rome, Italy

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OF SENATOR RUFUS, BEDROOM.

A lavish home in the wealthy-district of Rome. A window overlooks the expansive city. In the comfortable bed, two Romans engage in enthusiastic love-making. The man on top is muscular and youthful. He finishes with a flourish, rolling off to the side.

PUBLIUS SCIPIO (25), catches his breath. He's handsome and knows it, and his smile is easy and infectious. Next to him is PETRONIA (45), a witty woman of wealth. They nuzzle together in the afterglow.

PETRONIA

That was...vigorous.

SCIPIO

Only the best for you, my love.

PETRONIA

(smirks)

The best? That's mighty bold of you.

SCIPIO

It's just an expression.

He grins madly and brushes her hair off her face.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)

You are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

PETRONIA

Oh, stop it, Scipio. I'm not some naive girl that needs to be so disingenuously wooed.

SCIPIO

(feigns insult)

I have never wooed disingenuously.

PETRONIA

So you haven't said that to half the women in Rome?

SCIPIO

I have, yes. And I have every intention of saying it to the other half as well. But today...

Scipio kisses her passionately.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
Today, I mean every word.

PETRONIA
Silly boy.

Scipio flinches and recovers.

SFX: Door slamming.

Scipio jerks upright.

SENATOR RUFUS (O.S.)
Petronia. Are you home?

Scipio leaps from the bed, naked and sweaty. He stares at the door to the bedroom.

SCIPIO
Who is that?

PETRONIA
(calm)
My husband.

SCIPIO
What's he doing here?

PETRONIA
He lives here.

SCIPIO
You said he'd be gone until morning.

Petronia gestures to the rising sun out the window.

SENATOR RUFUS (O.S.)
Petronia?

PETRONIA
In the bedroom, darling.

SCIPIO
What are you doing? He'll kill me!

PETRONIA
(playful)
You're a strong man. I'll bet you could take him.
(beat, then laughter)
Or you could try the window.

Scipio, now in his trousers, glances out the window.

SCIPIO
You'll be the death of me.

Scipio gets halfway out the window before glancing back.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
(sincere)
I meant it. You are truly
beautiful.

PETRONIA
Go, silly boy.

Scipio drops away from the window a second before the bedroom door swings open. SENATOR RUFUS (60), a jovial man, smiles at his wife.

SENATOR RUFUS
Still in bed, my love? Are you
unwell?

PETRONIA
I've never felt better, Rufus. I
was just waiting for you to come
home.

She summons him to bed suggestively.

PETRONIA (CONT'D)
Though I admit, I did get started
without you.

Senator Rufus, blissfully ignorant, saunters toward his wife.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME, CITY STREET -- DAY.

A bustling street in the Roman Republic. Citizens and soldiers wander about their daily routines.

Scipio emerges from an alley, tucking in his shirt. He perks up when he sees a friendly face.

Across the street, sitting on a box next to a TOY VENDOR, is a chubby young man. POLYBIUS (25) fiddles intently with a toy puzzle made of wood and rope. He's hungover, unshaven, and sweating booze.

Scipio saunters over.

SCIPIO
Polybius.

POLYBIUS
(without looking up)
You're back

SCIPIO
He came home.

POLYBIUS
People tend to do that.

SCIPIO
Why are you still here?

POLYBIUS
Because I'm a good friend.

Polybius glances up. His eyes are bloodshot.

POLYBIUS (CONT'D)
Scipio, have you considered NOT
bedding married women?

SCIPIO
I don't set out to do that. It just
happens.

POLYBIUS
Constantly. It happens constantly.

SCIPIO
Not on purpose.

POLYBIUS
What? Are you saying you
accidentally fall into these
women...repeatedly...in their
homes?

Polybius twists and bends the toy, frustrated.

SCIPIO
You certainly paint a picture.

Polybius fails to solve the puzzle and growls.

POLYBIUS
You know, Rome is filled with
unmarried women to pursue. Or men.
There are plenty of unattached men
as well, if that's your preference.
I'm not so restrictive. I won't
judge.

SCIPIO
(raises an eyebrow)
I appreciate your open mind.

POLYBIUS
I speak because I care. You'll live
longer, and perhaps even advance
your career if...

Polybius cuts off, lighting up with excitement as he nearly solves the puzzle...then resumes righteous anger when it foils him again.

POLYBIUS (CONT'D)
Damnit!

He shakes the toy in Scipio's face.

POLYBIUS (CONT'D)
This fucking piece won't go where I
fucking want it to.
(to the toy)
Do as I command, wooden demon!

Scipio laughs.

SCIPIO
What on earth are you doing?

Polybius gestures to the TOY VENDOR.

POLYBIUS
This swindler bet me 20 Dinarii
that I couldn't unlock the puzzle.

SCIPIO
And clearly that is going well.

POLYBIUS
He's the greater fool. He never
specified a time limit. I plan to
sit here until either I solve the
damned riddle or they bury me on
the side of the road.

SCIPIO
So you're optimistic?

POLYBIUS
No. I just don't have any money.

SCIPIO
Ahh, now I see why you waited for
me.

Scipio reaches for his coin purse. Polybius glances up and freezes.

POLYBIUS

Uh-oh.

SCIPIO

What?

POLYBIUS

Have you ever noticed when somebody says "don't look now," invariably, the first thing the other person does is to look?

SCIPIO

No?

POLYBIUS

Well, don't look now.

Scipio, of course, turns around to see CONSUL CORNELIUS SCIPIO (50), a regal and severe man. SENATORS and SOLDIERS flank the Consul, escorting him down the street.

SCIPIO

Shit.

POLYBIUS

See?

SCIPIO

Yes, you're a genius.

(beat)

Who can't figure out a child's toy.

POLYBIUS

Uncalled for.

Cornelius spots Scipio and his eyes narrow. He says a few words to his entourage and walks patiently over. The Senators and Soldiers continue on their way. Scipio and Polybius tense up.

CORNELIUS

Captain Scipio.

SCIPIO

(lowers gaze)

Consul Scipio.

CORNELIUS

Don't you have a command in your charge? You should be at the barracks.

POLYBIUS

Forgive me, Consul. This delay is my fault. He was just helping me with a serious personal issue.

Cornelius looks down at the puzzle in Polybius' hands.

CORNELIUS

You're a good friend, Polybius, and a skilled orator. But if you wish to one day tell the histories of Rome, you will need to become a better liar.

POLYBIUS

I'll work on that, sir.

CORNELIUS

(to Scipio)

Men your age are usually eager to prove their worth. To seek glory. To bring honor to their family name through conquest and victory.

SCIPIO

I'm sorry to be a perpetual disappointment, father.

CORNELIUS

(taken aback)

Disappointment? Is that what you think?

Cornelius takes the toy from Polybius. He puts the puzzle in Scipio's hand, takes a step back, and waits.

Scipio looks down at the puzzle, examining it for a moment. He BLINKS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELYSIUM -- DAY.

Scipio opens his eyes in his MIND SCAPE: The perfect green fields of Elysium. There is no sound, no movement, just Scipio, the toy, and an expanse of tall grass.

Scipio tosses the puzzle in the air. It bursts into its component pieces and hovers before him. Each rope, pulley, and gear moves on its own. Scipio studies each part.

Once satisfied, Scipio opens his palm and the toy assembles and falls. Scipio BLINKS again.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME, CITY STREET -- DAY.

Back in the real world, Scipio holds the toy in his hand. Barely a second has passed. With a few precise movements, Scipio solves the puzzle and unlocks it. Inside is a small wooden figure: A crudely carved naked man. Scipio hands the solved toy to Polybius, who races off to tell the vendor.

Cornelius is stoic.

CORNELIUS

Most men walk through this world
with a fraction of your talent. I'm
not disappointed in you, I just
want to see you become the person I
know you can be. Rome, and its
people, will have need of that man
someday.

SCIPIO

Rome has you, father. What use will
it muster for me? I could spend my
entire life chasing glory, only to
remain safely in your shadow.

Cornelius regards his son for a moment before flicking him hard in the forehead. Polybius loiters awkwardly nearby.

CORNELIUS

That shadow exists only in your
mind, my son. So long as you think
yourself the lesser, that is all
you will ever be.

(to Polybius)

Polybius, I trust you can get my
son to his station?

POLYBIUS

Of course, Consul.

Cornelius walks away, leaving Scipio stunned.

POLYBIUS (CONT'D)
(to Scipio)
It's like his words were nice, but
his tone so...not. Fathers and
their sons, am I right?

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM CITY COUNCIL HALL -- MEANWHILE.

An elegant, if somewhat archaic, grand hall. The banners of Saguntum hang on the walls.

ANGLE ON Balbus and his men, kneeling on the floor. He is bruised and bitter.

MURRUS (O.S.)
Two men did this?

ANGLE ON MURRUS (30), an enormous warrior. He looms over Balbus and the soldiers.

BALBUS
One, actually.

ANGLE ON the throne. In a high-backed wooden chair sits AMACUS (70), the elder of Saguntum. He is withered and frail.

Next to AMACUS is SENATOR MARCUS CATO (45), a handsome and ambitious man. On his left is DANO (30), a frightful swordsman.

BALBUS (CONT'D)
The other--

AMACUS
Barca. You're sure it was Hannibal Barca?

BALBUS
(nods)
He mostly just spoke. We underestimated them...him...them.

CATO
(to Amacus)
You seem unsettled, Elder Amacus.

AMACUS
The timing is no coincidence. The Carthaginian General sent his most trusted dog to sniff around Saguntum. They must know something.
(MORE)

AMACUS (CONT'D)

(beat)

This was a mistake, Senator Cato.

CATO

You worry too much, my friend. So a barbarian wandered your streets for a day?

AMACUS

(anxious)

We executed citizens of Carthage on those streets, Senator. Barca has to have seen that.

CATO

This is no matter. Soon you will be under the protection of Rome, with the Empire's full strength behind you.

(beat)

I'm taking our agreement to the Senate myself.

AMACUS

That will take weeks, if not months. Hannibal is probably at Carthago Nova already, spilling our secrets to his General's ear. They'll be at our gates in a fortnight.

CATO

Your walls are strong and tall, Amacus, and Carthage is but a shadow of its former self.

(beat)

Their forces are mercenaries, loyal to gold. They will balk at the mere mention of the Legion. And as for their General...

He shares a conspiratorial look with Murrus and Dano.

MURRUS

I wouldn't waste a moment's concern. His methods have earned him no small share of enemies. And this is a dangerous world.

Amacus squirms.

AMACUS

You're certain?

CATO

I understand experience and wisdom
have made you a cautious man. It
is, after all, a heavy burden you
bear. The welfare of so many. I
leave for Rome at first light, and
will deliver an appeal to Senate so
convincing the gods themselves will
come to Saguntum's aid. And, as a
demonstration of our friendship and
trust, I will leave two champions
to personally safeguard your walls:
Murrus and Dano.

Murrus and Dano take a knee and place their fists over their
hearts.

MURRUS AND DANO

By our honor.

CATO

Now please. Worry no longer.

Amacus considers for a moment, then nods and smiles.

CATO (CONT'D)

Excellent. Now, if you'll excuse
me, I need to prepare for my
departure. Thank you for your
hospitality.

Cato and Amacus embrace. Cato, Murrus, and Dano leave the
hall.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, FORUM -- EVENING.

Cato, Murrus, and Dano pause in the empty street.

DANO

That old man is so scared and
frail, it's sickening.

CATO

A necessary nuisance, for the time.
Rome needs this city. Its silver,
its fertile fields, and its
assertive coastline. Make no
mistake, Saguntum will be Rome's
foothold to take Iberia and beyond.

(beat)

(MORE)

CATO (CONT'D)

No matter what happens, do not let that decaying sack of bones submit to Carthage. The gods know, he will try.

(beat)

The other matter. It has been seen to?

MURRUS

Of course, Senator. Nothing connects back to us.

CATO

Excellent.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARTHAGO NOVA -- NIGHT.

The strategic harbor of Carthago Nova, the second home for the Carthaginian Empire. A GREAT HALL stands a few buildings from the main harbor, with the city radiating outward in rings. Fires illuminate the growing city, creating a warm and welcoming image.

SUPER: Carthago Nova, Iberian Peninsula

SFX: Horses galloping.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARTHAGO NOVA WALLS.

Outside the modest walls of the city, soldiers stand guard at the large gate. Hannibal and Gisga ride up on horseback, coming to a quick stop. They dismount and hand their reins to waiting attendants.

HANNIBAL

Has the General returned? I need to speak with him at once.

The SOLDIER, a young boy, hesitates.

GISGA

Hey! Have you forgotten how to speak? Make noises with your mouth.

SOLDIER

I...

HASDRUBAL (O.S.)

Hannibal.

Hannibal and Gisga look to the main gate to see HASDRUBAL (28), Hannibal's younger brother. Hasdrubal is tall and broad, more a brawler than a thinker. Hasdrubal wears a grave expression.

HANNIBAL

Hasdrubal?

(beat)

What is it, brother?

HASDRUBAL

(grim)

The General.

CUT TO:

INT. MAP ROOM.

A modest room filled with maps of various provinces and towns. A large, long wooden table sits in the center of the room, illuminated by several hanging lamps. The space is crowded with officers and nobles, all standing vigil over the body on the table. Among them is MAGO (18), Hannibal's youngest brother.

The GENERAL lays in state, wearing his finest armor.

Hannibal stands near the General's head, his hands on either side of the body. The entire room watches him expectantly.

HANNIBAL

How did this happen?

HASDRUBAL

An ambush, along the road home.
Maybe bandits. A coward's arrow
found its mark during the
commotion.

There is a long silence.

HASDRUBAL (CONT'D)

Hannibal, the men have made their
decision--

HANNIBAL

Wait.

(beat)

Just...wait.

Hasdrubal nods. He gestures to the attendants and the room clears out.

HASDRUBAL

We'll be outside. Take as long you need.

The room is empty. Hannibal stares down at the General, his mind burdened. He inhales deeply and the world is swallowed by the blue tint of his MIND SCAPES. The Wraith of Hamilcar appears from behind, circling the table.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

(wincing)

You're thinking too many things at once. Stop, and go through them one at a time.

Hannibal exhales and unclenches his body. The Wraith of Hamilcar relaxes.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Good. Let's begin.

The wraith gestures to the body.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

First.

HANNIBAL

This wasn't bad luck. It was an assassination.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

Who?

HANNIBAL

It could be anyone. A conquered tribe, a disgruntled ally.

(beat)

The subjects of Targus have been furious since he killed their king.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

Or...

HANNIBAL

(certain)

Rome.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

Why?

HANNIBAL

They woo Saguntum, but they have no presence here. The General's wealth and word ensured our army remained large and ready.

(beat)

His sudden death breeds discord. It's a distraction they can use.

(beat)

But I can't prove it.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

You don't need to, just know that it's a possibility. Next.

HANNIBAL

The rebellious territories will seize this opportunity. We'll have to conquer Iberia all over again.

(beat)

Time is not on our side.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

It rarely is. Finally.

Hannibal doesn't answer. He's holding something back.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Say it.

HANNIBAL

Transition of power. The men will choose a new leader soon, and the Senate will spend weeks debating, just to hear their own voices.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

Wrong.

Hannibal is surprised.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

The men have already chosen.

(beat)

General.

Hannibal scowls.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR (CONT'D)

Don't pretend you didn't notice a roomful of tested soldiers, officers, and spies look to you for direction.

HANNIBAL
You assume much.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
You're right, what do I know? So,
go outside and see what happens.

Hannibal glances at the exit but doesn't move.

HANNIBAL
I'm--

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
(irritated)
Not saying it doesn't make it go
away.

HANNIBAL
Quiet now, let me think.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR
(grins)
Quiet? I'm not some bothersome
apparition tormenting you. I'm just
another voice in your head. If you
want me to go, you need only think
it.

HANNIBAL
Leave.

The Wraith of Hamilcar dissipates, along with the blue tint.
The world returns to normal.

IMILCE (O.S.)
Well, that's no way to greet your
wife.

Hannibal, startled, wheels about. He sees IMILCE (30) smiling
at him as she enters. Imilce is Iberian, tall and regal. She
has the bearing of a Queen, and seems in control at all
times. She is visibly pregnant.

HANNIBAL
Imilce.
(beat)
I didn't...I wasn't--

Imilce quiets him with a soft kiss.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
I was just...talking to myself.
It's normal, don't overthink it.

She looks at the General, frowning.

IMILCE

I'm so sorry, Hannibal. I know he was your friend.

(beat)

I didn't want to interrupt, but there is quite a crowd waiting outside.

She touches his arm.

IMILCE (CONT'D)

It's not like you to hide away.

HANNIBAL

(ashamed)

I'm...afraid.

IMILCE

There is no shame in that, Hannibal. The men outside offer you an immense responsibility. A burden you will wear the rest of your days.

HANNIBAL

It's not that.

(beat)

My father was a good man. But for the sake of his country, he sacrificed his humanity. He did unspeakable things in the name of Carthage

(beat)

I'm afraid that, when I'm tested, I may not have the strength to do what must be done. And even more afraid of the man I will become if I do.

IMILCE

All men are haunted by the memories of their fathers.

She takes his hand and places it on her stomach.

IMILCE (CONT'D)

I'm sure one day it will be the same for him.

Hannibal smiles but turns away. Imilce grabs his face with both hands.

IMILCE (CONT'D)

You are not Hamilcar Barca. He
fought his wars his way. You will
fight your wars your own way.

(beat)

Now go. Be great.

Hannibal gathers his strength, and then we see the decision made in his eyes. He kisses his wife. Then he leans down and kisses her stomach. Hannibal squeezes her hand and exits to...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS.

...a long hallway leading to a terrace. He steps out onto...

CUT TO:

EXT. TERRACE -- CONTINUOUS.

...a small terrace outside the Command Hall. Gisga, Hasdrubal, and Mago wait outside. Nearby are FUANO (40), a husky aide, and BOSTA (30), an Iberian spy. Hasdrubal holds the GENERAL'S HELM, a gorgeous mixture of iron and bronze. The emblem of HOUSE BARCA (a lightning bolt) is embossed over each temple, and a plume of black feathers sticks out like a mohawk.

The local garrison--a few hundred officers and soldiers--stand in attendance around the terrace.

HANNIBAL

(to Hasdrubal)

The men have made their decision?

HASDRUBAL

Unanimously.

Hasdrubal offers the helmet.

HASDRUBAL (CONT'D)

General.

Hannibal places a hand on the helm, feeling its power course up his body. He pauses for a moment, just for himself, then takes the helmet and places it on his head.

HANNIBAL

I accept.

The crowd cheers and roars Hannibal's name.

CROWD

HANNIBAL! HANNIBAL! HANNIBAL!

Hannibal gathers his Captains close.

HANNIBAL

Fuano, make haste to Carthage and inform the Senate what has happened. Let them know I am in command, and I will enforce the will of Carthage until death or they replace me.

(to Hasdrubal)

Hasdrubal, there will be defiance from some of the tribes. Remind them of the generosity of Carthage. And her wrath.

Hasdrubal and Fuano nod.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Mago.

The young man perks up.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Take your scouts and a platoon of infantry to the ambush site. Hunt down those responsible and bring me names or heads.

Mago nods.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Gisga, take as many men as needed and secure the territory from here to Saguntum. I want the Elder to see our banners surrounding his city.

(to Bosta)

Bosta, take your best spies and go into Saguntum. Blend in and gather information. There is a hidden entrance to the city. Find it.

(beat)

It will be small. Look for red mud. And take care, they will not hesitate to execute a Carthaginian.

(to all)

Congratulations. You are all promoted to senior Captains.

(MORE)

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)
Call in all of your banners and pay
your mercenaries. Tomorrow, we
march.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE.

1. EXT. CARTHAGO NOVA -- DAWN.

The city as seen from above. Horses ride in every direction.

2. INT. MAP ROOM -- DAWN.

Hannibal stands in the war room, staring at his map. Carthago Nova and a few scattered territories are marked with BLUE INK and BLUE STONE PIECES (lightning bolts). Saguntum and areas to the north are marked with RED INK and RED STONE PIECES (swords).

Hannibal taps one of the territories with a dagger.

3. EXT. BERGISTAN CAMP -- DAY.

Hasdrubal meets with the BERGASTANI CHIEF (orange clothing). They are Iberian, dressed in leathers, and greet him with an angry sucker punch. Hasdrubal recovers, sneers, and charges.

4. EXT. SAGUNTUM, MAIN GATE -- NIGHT.

Bosta and his spies bribe their way into the city.

5. EXT. WOODS -- MORNING.

Mago and his scouts look through the ambush site. The ground is still stained with blood. Mago lifts an ARROW and observes the shaft and fletching. The feathers are BLACK with WHITE TIPS.

SFX: Thunder crashes.

6. EXT. CONTESTANI REGION -- DAY.

Rain drowns a battlefield covered in bloody men. Gisga, leading a charge of fearsome warriors, clashes with CONTESTANI (yellow and black armor). Gisga is a whirlwind of blades and fists. He ducks a strike and drives his blade through the attacker.

7. INT. MAP ROOM.

ECU Map of Iberia. Blue paint is applied to various regions, and the Lightning Bolt Tiles are moved. Hannibal nods approvingly.

8. EXT. CASTELLANI CAMP -- MORNING.

Hasdrubal, sporting bruises, arrives at the CASTELLANI CAMP (green clothing). This is a tribe near a river basin, with straw huts and noble spearmen. The CHIEF, an enormous native, delivers a vicious sucker punch. Hasdrubal charges.

9. EXT. SAGUNTUM FORUM -- AFTERNOON.

It's fall, and colorful leaves decorate the trees in the forum. Bosta and his team are disguised as beggars. Bosta watches Murrus and Dano walking past traders.

10. INT. SMITHY -- NIGHT.

Mago looks through the stores of arrows at a smithy. He shakes his head. This isn't the place. He is frustrated.

11. EXT. EDETANI REGION -- DAY.

Gisga rushes across a grassy field holding only a shield. We see a row of EDETANI ARCHERS (red and white armor) firing at him. Gisga dodges and blocks the shots, drops his shield, and tackles three men.

12. INT. MAP ROOM.

ECU of the map. Blue paint is applied to more regions.

We see Hannibal look at the map, then glance outside. Snow covers the city.

13. EXT. AUSTEANI CAMP -- AFTERNOON.

At the AUSTEANI CAMP (brown clothing). Hasdrubal catches a fist aimed at his head.

14. EXT. SAGUNTUM CITY STREETS -- DAY.

Basto and a few spies walk by the INNER WALL. Basto kneels down near a filthy trench covered in RED MUD. The trench leads to a small HOLE in the wall. He smiles.

15. INT. HUT -- DAY.

Mago sits with a few travelers. He hands them a coin purse and the FLETCHING he found earlier. They nod excitedly.

16. EXT. CLEARING -- MORNING.

Gisga stands in a snowy clearing, discussing terms with three tribes (red and gold, black and gold, and green and gold). There are dozens of warriors for each tribe, and Gisga has only ten men. Suddenly, all of the tribesmen draw their weapons.

Gisga shakes his head and draws his sword. He attacks.

17. INT. MAP ROOM -- NIGHT.

Imilce brings Hannibal food. She's carrying a NEWBORN BABY. Hannibal takes a moment to kiss his son's forehead before returning to the map. There is a lot of BLUE.

18. EXT. OETANI CAMP -- NIGHT.

A meeting in a coastal city. These are Imilce's people.

The OETANI KING (white clothing) approaches Hasdrubal. Hasdrubal immediately tenses up, but the King presents a peace offering. Hasdrubal and his men laugh.

19. INT. TAVERN -- DAY.

A dusty tavern in Saguntum. Two horns of mead hit a table. We pull back to see Murrus and Dano taking the horns and drinking. We pull back further to reveal Bosta acting as the server. He smiles at the men and returns to his post.

20. EXT. BEACH -- DAY.

Close on a seabird with BLACK WINGS TIPPED IN WHITE. We pull back to see Mago admiring the bird while holding the arrow. He rises and walks over to his scouts. They have six ASSASSINS on their knees with swords at their throats. Mago compares arrows from the assassins' quivers to the one he found. Perfect match.

Mago draws his own sword. This ends today.

21. EXT. LLERCAVONES REGION -- EVENING.

Gisga lands with a crash on three LLERCAVONES cavalry (green and blue armor). He dances about, cutting down another three soldiers. When he turns, he sees a group of soldiers approach waving a white flag.

ANGLE ON Gisga, smiling.

22. INT. MAP ROOM -- NIGHT.

Blue lightning bolts are placed on the map, further and further north. A hand comes in, abruptly moving the pieces further toward Saguntum.

We pull back to see Gisga moving the pieces. Hasdrubal and Hannibal smile.

Hannibal taps Saguntum with his dagger.

END MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROMAN TRAINING CAMP -- DAY.

The barracks of the 12th Roman Century. The square, stone building sits on the outskirts of the city, separate from the bustling civilian quarters. Soldiers patrol the walls and train in the yard. Some wear full armor, while others spar in just trousers.

In a circular fighting pit, two INFANTRYMEN fight with sword and shield. One is PRISCUS, easily seven-feet-tall. The other is VERUS, only five-feet if that.

Scipio, dressed in his officer's garb, watches from the side. Verus is fast, but keeps attacking head on. Priscus bashes him again and again, knocking him into the sand. Scipio glances away from the fight to Polybius, sitting on the grass nearby. Polybius scribbles on a parchment, barely paying attention.

SCIPIO

You don't have to be here.

POLYBIUS

I don't have anything better to do.

SCIPIO

(beat)

Are you keeping an eye on me?

POLYBIUS

Your father pays well, and I need the coin.

Scipio looks back in time to see Verus hurled across the pit by a vicious kick.

SCIPIO

Enough.

(to Polybius)

Wait, are you serious?

Polybius gives an impish grin. Scipio stares incredulously for a beat, then walks into the fighting pit.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
(to Verus)
You, what are you doing?

VERUS
Um...fighting, sir?

SCIPIO
No. He was fighting. You were
dying. Frequently.

VERUS
I'm trying, sir.

SCIPIO
You kept charging in.

VERUS
He's bigger than me.

SCIPIO
Yes he is. They often will be.
Opposing soldiers aren't matched by
height and weight before a war. You
draw who you draw, and you drew a
giant.

Scipio looks Priscus up and down, realizing just how big he
is.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)
(to Priscus)
Gods, you are massive.
(to Verus)
That's unfortunate for you. So, you
have two choices: Win or die.

VERUS
Against...that? I can't win, sir.

SCIPIO
Not if you fight him his way.
(beat)
Look at him. What do you see?

VERUS
A mountain pretending to be a man.

SCIPIO
(chuckle)
Nice.
(beat)
The gods must have had a surplus of
muscles when they made you.
(MORE)

SCIPIO (CONT'D)

(to Verus)

But no. What he is, aside from menacing, is human. He's a collection of fragile parts, waiting to be undone.

Scipio takes the training sword from Verus' hands and stands next to Priscus.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Strike his heel, and he cannot walk. Slash his wrist, and he cannot grip a weapon. Pierce the meat inside his thigh or arm, he'll be dead in moments.

Priscus winces when the blade taps his nether regions. Scipio places the the point in Priscus's armpit.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)

All machines have weaknesses. Break one, and the whole structure collapses.

Scipio tosses the sword back to Verus. He turns at a sudden noise: A horse rider charges through the gates of the barracks. The MESSENGER slides off before the horse completely stops, rushing over to Scipio.

MESSENGER

Captain Scipio, the Senate is calling a session with the Generals. You've been summoned.

SCIPIO

By the Senate?

MESSENGER

At the request of Consul Scipio.

Scipio nods and takes the summons.

SCIPIO

(to Verus)

You have neither the reach nor skill to attack him directly. So how do you take down a mountain?

VERUS

One piece at a time, sir.

SCIPIO

Right.

(to Priscus)

You, don't change a thing. You're a terror. When we finally march to war, I'll hide behind you.

PRISCUS

(laughs)

Yes, sir.

Scipio walks back to Polybius, reading the summons.

SCIPIO

Are you coming?

POLYBIUS

(shakes head)

I'm not paid enough to suffer the Senate.

SCIPIO

But what if I get lost along the way?

POLYBIUS

If I fix you all at once, I'm out of a job.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE CHAMBER -- DAY.

The infamous Roman Senate, filled with the true power of the Empire. The circular room is set with thick marble pillars and stone reliefs of the great history of Rome. A central platform is raised a few steps to allow Senators to hold the floor. Two rows of chairs, set parallel to one another, flank the dais. The room is filled to capacity. The median age seems to be 1000.

Prominently seated are four older men: Senator Cato, Consul Scipio, GENERAL QUENTUS FABIAS (50), the legendary officer, and GENERAL GAIUS VARRO (40), a portly and bellicose man.

Scipio slips in the chair behind his father and sits quietly.

CORNELIUS

I'm glad to see you made it.

SCIPIO

Yes. Polybius is doing a great job. You should give him a raise.

Senator Cato rises and takes the floor. The chamber is silent.

CATO

My fellow Senators, Consuls,
Generals, and honored guests, it is
my deepest privilege to serve.

(beat)

After months of exhaustive
negotiations, maneuvers, and
manipulations, it is my pleasure to
present our new offer of allegiance
from the Saguntines and the great
city of Saguntum!

The crowd gently applauds. Cato was expecting more.

CATO (CONT'D)

There is, of course, a price for
such loyalty. Our new friends are
currently dealing with a nuisance
of sorts: The encroaching
Carthaginian army.

A murmur ripples through the chamber. Senator Rufus stands.

SENATOR RUFUS

Senator Cato.

CATO

The chamber recognizes the
honorable Senator Rufus.

SENATOR RUFUS

Thank you. We are all very
impressed with your
accomplishments. Truly, to deliver
such a jewel without a single
battle? It is a great testament to
your diplomatic prowess.

The chamber applauds in agreement.

CORNELIUS

(quietly, to Scipio)

These old fools will cheer for
anything.

SENATOR RUFUS

But Rome is an empire expanding in
all directions. Our armies are
scattered about the Mediterranean.

(MORE)

SENATOR RUFUS (CONT'D)

With the Seleucids to the East and the Gallic Tribes in the north, I don't know that we have the flexibility to send a force to Saguntum without overextending ourselves.

CATO

Nor should we, Senator. Not yet, anyway. A Roman army crossing the Ebro would be seen as an act of unbridled aggression, not just in Carthage, but in the entire region.

SENATOR RUFUS

What schemes have you devised, Senator?

Cato grins, proud of himself.

CATO

I propose we send an envoy to Carthago Nova with utmost haste to issue a stern warning to their new general: Saguntum is under the protection of Rome, and an attack on her sovereignty is an attack on the entire Empire.

The crowd cheers, save Cornelius and Scipio.

CATO (CONT'D)

Our message to him will draw a line in the sand: Either he will submit, tuck tail and return to his powerless port in Carthago Nova, leaving Iberia for the taking...

SENATOR RUFUS

Or?

CATO

He will attack Saguntum in a rage, crashing against those stone walls until he exhausts his meager forces. And even if he manages to take the city, he will find a Roman Army marching through those gates within the year, liberating the peninsula from the barbarians once and for all.

(MORE)

CATO (CONT'D)

(beat)

Either way, the Empire wins.

The crowd cheers again. Scipio sits in disbelief, shaking his head.

SCIPIO

(to himself)

What a stupid fucking plan.

The chamber quiets. Cornelius wheels slowly on Scipio, incredulous. Scipio realizes, with horror, that all eyes are on him.

SCIPIO (CONT'D)

(to Cornelius)

Did I say that out loud?

CORNELIUS

A bit.

CATO

Is there something you would like
to share with the chamber, young
Scipio?

Scipio hesitates, frozen.

CORNELIUS

It's too late to be bashful now.
Rise and address, son.

Scipio slowly rises to his feet. He clears his throat, and the sound is deafening in the sudden silence.

CATO

The Senate recognizes Publius
Scipio.

SCIPIO

Thank you. Um. With all due
respect, Senator...that is a stupid
fucking plan.

The crowd pauses, then bursts out laughing. Cornelius is horrified at first, then bemused. He sees the wheels turning in his son's head. Cato is furious, but wears a mask of civility.

CATO

(to Cornelius)

Perhaps, Consul, you should have
taught the boy more decorum.

Cornelius stands and crosses his arms.

CORNELIUS

How I choose to raise my son,
Senator, is my right as his father.
You are addressing a Centurion of
the Roman Legion. A man that is the
direct result of the millennia-long
evolution of warfare. When he
speaks, it would behoove you to
listen.

Scipio takes new strength from the surprising compliment.

CATO

Of course, Consul.
(to Scipio)
Please, Centurion. Educate us.

SCIPIO

There is no world where Carthage
"tucks tail" in the face of this
insult. They will strike.

(beat)

And this Hannibal must be the son
of Hamilcar Barca, the Lightning
that nearly ended our Empire a
generation ago. Senators, we teach
his tactics in our yards and
fields.

(to Cato)

Saguntum will be attacked for sure,
and will not be waiting for you in
a year's time.

CATO

I have seen the towering walls of
Saguntum with my own eyes, and read
the accounts of sieges weathered
time and again. It is impregnable,
boy. Hannibal has neither the men
nor the resources to lay a siege.
He will shatter against those
walls, and his reign will end the
same as his barbarian father. We
will raise the banner of Rome over
Saguntum and secure, once and for
all, our foothold in the West.

More cheering, Scipio shouts to be heard.

SCIPIO

Then this isn't actually about
helping anyone?

CATO

(mocks insult)

Dear me, the boy is right. We shall never be known as the kindest of Empires.

(biting retort)

Our duties in this chamber are for the welfare of Rome. Saguntum's silver mines will make this Empire richer, and when our cups runneth over, even the poorest citizens will feel as kings. We will field an army the likes the world has never seen, and plant the banner of Rome across the earth.

(beat)

Your resistance betrays you, boy. You are a child who knows nothing of the true nature of conquest. Even worse, you dishonor yourself and your family by overestimating these barbarians.

SCIPIO

And you risk everything by underestimating them.

CATO

I've heard enough. Thank you, for your energetic opinions, Centurion. However, we are graced with a man of unequalled prowess in the art of war.

(beat)

General Fabias?

Fabias rises. He looks far too old, and is in terrible shape for a legendary warrior. Fabias considers, milking the spotlight.

FABIAS

Ahh, to have the vigor of youth.

The chamber laughs.

FABIAS (CONT'D)

I believe Senator Cato has a firm handle on the situation. We have no need to entangle our precious soldiers this early, when a far easier victory is but a short wait away.

The crowd cheers. Scipio storms out in disgust.

CATO
(smug)
Excellent.

INT. HALLWAY OF THE SENATE -- LATER.

Scipio leans against a tall pillar outside the Senate Chamber. The crowd leaves noisily, laughing and cheering. Cornelius emerges and spots Scipio.

CORNELIUS
That was well said, Publius.

SCIPIO
Were we at the same meeting? That was humiliating.

CORNELIUS
Your delivery was...brash. But your arguments were sound.

SCIPIO
They didn't listen.

CORNELIUS
They often won't. That doesn't mean you shouldn't speak.

Scipio watches Fabias and Varro waddle from the chamber, giggling to each other.

SCIPIO
Of course Fabias the Patient agrees. A war where he can just sit on his ass?

Cornelius snickers.

CORNELIUS
This is the way of the world, son. Old, entitled men make decisions based on whim and wonder, to the detriment of us all.
(beat)
I'm surprised it took you this long to notice.

Cornelius prods Scipio off the pillar, placing an arm over his shoulder.

SCIPIO
Where are we going?

CORNELIUS
I think you could use a drink.

CUT TO:

INT. TAVERN -- DAY.

A small, mostly empty tavern in Saguntum. Banners and hunting trophies hang on the walls. Murrus sits at a table, drinking a horn of wine. Amacus stands near the door speaking animatedly with a GUARD. Bosta, dressed as a servant, cleans the tables and busses the dirty dishes.

Dano enters, edging past Amacus. He takes a seat with Murrus.

DANO
I worry for his health. He may drop
dead before Carthage even arrives.

MURRUS
That would be a relief. I'd take
his head myself, but I wonder if
even that would stay his tongue.

Dano spies a parchment on the table.

DANO
Is that word from Rome?

Murrus slides the document over. Dano stares blankly.

DANO (CONT'D)
There are no pictures?

MURRUS
(smiles)
Not for official missives, Dano.

Dano stews while Murrus snickers. Finally, Dano hisses at him.

DANO
Well, can you read it for me?

MURRUS
Certainly.
(beat)
It says the Senate concurs. Rome
will stay this course.

Murrus picks up the message and holds it over a nearby candle. When it catches, he drops it to the sandy floor.

DANO

When do reinforcements arrive?

MURRUS

A year, maybe? They're sending an envoy to Carthago Nova to threaten the new general.

DANO

Why are you smiling? That's not good news.

MURRUS

We're going to be promoted.

DANO

A pay raise is only good if you're alive to collect.

MURRUS

(laughs)

Dano, did you ever wonder why they sent a Senator instead of an Army?

Dano shakes his head.

MURRUS (CONT'D)

This city has never been taken by force. The walls are too high, the stores are too full, and there are 90,000 able-bodied men ready to take up arms against any enemy.

(beat)

Hannibal will come, and we will wait him out in comfort. If we keep the doors locked until Rome arrives, we'll be made generals.

Dano smiles, then frowns.

DANO

Don't generals have to...read a lot?

MURRUS

They'll hire an attendant to help you with your letters.

Murrus claps his friend on the back.

MURRUS (CONT'D)

Hell, we're not going anywhere for a while. We can probably find someone here to teach you.

Amacus' shrill voice rises and Murrus winces.

MURRUS (CONT'D)
Now if we can just survive *him*
until then.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARTHAGO NOVA -- NIGHT.

The city is alive, celebrating the victorious campaigns of the army. A crowd of Iberians, Celts, and Carthaginians dance and sing and drink.

ANGLE ON Ten HOODED FIGURES in red cloaks, silently moving through the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARTHAGO NOVA, GREAT HALL.

Outside the Great Hall, a large bonfire burns for the officers of the Army. Tables are set with roasted meats, fruits, and horns of wine and mead.

ANGLE ON Gisga and Hasdrubal. They've set up a target away from the crowd. They throw knives, laughing and drinking.

Hasdrubal hurls his knife and hits a bullseye. He dances and hollers.

HASDRUBAL
Ha! Dead center. Can't do better
than that.

Gisga nods and moves away from the target.

HASDRUBAL (CONT'D)
I've never known you to walk away
from a challenge.

GISGA
Who's walking away?

Gisga stops double the distance from the target. He takes a breath and hurls his knife. It buries itself in the handle of Hasdrubal's knife. Hasdrubal walks over, dumfounded.

HASDRUBAL
How...
(beat)
You couldn't just let me have it?

GISGA

Where's the fun in the that?

Hasdrubal lines up with Gisga and draws another knife. He aims at the target, winds up, and stops.

ANGLE ON Hasdrubal and Gisga in the foreground, framing the target dead center in the background.

HASDRUBAL

I bet you're a terrible loser.

GISGA

Can't say. Never lost.

HASDRUBAL

Okay, but this one's the last. I make it, I win.

GISGA

You gonna keep talking all night?
My wine's getting warm--

A KNIFE flies between their faces and lands with a THUNK in the handle of Gisga's knife. The blade-tower holds for a moment before the entire target falls over. Hasdrubal and Gisga look at the target, at each other, and then toward the source of the throw.

ANGLE ON AIFE (20), a female Celtic warrior. She is shorter than both men, and wears a mix of furs and leathers. Her face is painted with blue, and her hair is tied into knots. She smiles triumphantly and winks at Gisga, then walks away.

Hasdrubal is concerned. Gisga is in love

HASDRUBAL

You know her?

GISGA

Never in my life. One of the Celts,
I imagine. Their women are skilled
warriors.

HASDRUBAL

Better than the men?

GISGA

Hey, it's the person, not the
plumbing.

HASDRUBAL

In any case, I think she was
looking for your attention.

GISGA
I believe she has it.

Hasdrubal shakes his head.

HASDRUBAL
Only you would chase a woman after
she throws a knife at your face.

GISGA
Near my face.

HASDRUBAL
There's a difference?

GISGA
A rather important one.

Gisga wanders off in search of the woman.

GISGA (CONT'D)
(calling back)
Don't wait up!

Hasdrubal watches his friend disappear.

HASDRUBAL
Their children would be terrifying.

INT. HANNIBAL'S QUARTERS -- MEANWHILE.

A modest home. Hannibal's family banner hangs on the wall, along with his FATHER'S SWORD--a well worn artifact of war. Hannibal paces with LUXINIO (1) his firstborn son. Imilce sneaks into the room and watches them quietly. After a moment, Hannibal spies her and smiles.

IMILCE
You don't want to join the
celebration?

HANNIBAL
(stares at Luxinio)
I am right where I want to be.

IMILCE
The entire city honors your
victories, Hannibal.

Hannibal's gaze dances between Imilce and his son.

HANNIBAL
My accomplishments these past
months pale in comparison to yours.

Imilce walks over and caresses her son's face.

IMILCE
On that we agree.
(beat)
Are you ever going to put him down?

HANNIBAL
Of course. One day. When he can
order me himself. Until then, I
shall carry him as my standard.
Unless he grows too heavy to bear.

IMILCE
(laughing)
Well, if you're worried about him
growing too soon, we can get
started on making another.

They kiss passionately, eagerly.

IMILCE (CONT'D)
Imagine a brood of tiny Hannibals
terrorizing the countryside.

HANNIBAL
We could rule over all of Iberia.

IMILCE
You think so small. The world!

They kiss again, but are interrupted by a knock at the door.
A HERALD appears, sweating bullets.

HERALD
General.

HANNIBAL
Come, he won't bite. He hasn't the
teeth.

Hannibal hands Luxinio to Imilce.

HERALD
General, there is an envoy at the
Great Hall requesting an audience.

HANNIBAL
From where?

HERALD
(hesitant)
Rome.

OFF HANNIBAL'S REACTION.

CUT TO:

INT. GREAT HALL, ENTRANCE.

A long hallway leading to the Great Hall, illuminated on either side by a row of torches. Hannibal, Gisga, Hasdrubal, Mago, and Imilce--carrying her son--march toward the large room.

HANNIBAL
Did I cut your celebrations short?

HASDRUBAL
It's the burden of leadership,
brother. Besides, I want to hear
what these Romans have to say.

MAGO
None of us were doing anything
important.

GISGA
Speak for yourself. I just met the
woman I mean to marry.

Everyone stops and stares at Gisga. Imilce glows.

IMILCE
Gisga, that's lovely.

HANNIBAL
Are you being serious? I can never
tell.

Gisga realizes all eyes are on him.

GISGA
What? I'm a person. I have
feelings.

HANNIBAL
Since when?

IMILCE
(scolding)
Hannibal!

CUT TO:

INT. GREAT HALL -- MEANWHILE.

A large and imposing room, filled with war trophies and the banners of allied tribes and regions. The great Lightning Bolt of House Barca hangs highest of all. Soldiers stand in the corners.

In the middle of the court are the ten hooded men from earlier. In the center stand FLACCUS and TAMPHILUS, two older Roman representatives. The other eight men are BODYGUARDS.

FLACCUS
This city is far more impressive
than I'd imagined.

TAMPHILUS
Indeed. I expected a circle of huts
made of straw and shit.
(beat)
Though its hospitality is wanting.
To make guests wait so shows a lack
of civility.

HANNIBAL (O.S.)
But you aren't guests, are you?

The Romans watch Hannibal and his entourage enter.

HASDRUBAL
Are all Romans so arrogant to
believe themselves welcome at all
hours of the night?

TAMPHILUS
We will be brief.

Hannibal takes a seat in a high-backed wooden chair on a raised platform. He beckons to the envoy.

HANNIBAL
Then, get on with it.

FLACCUS
We are honored, General.
(beat)
We come bearing a message from the
Roman Senate.
(MORE)

FLACCUS (CONT'D)

First, congratulations on your ascension to Supreme Commander of the Carthaginian Army. We are impressed by your deftness. Few in history have achieved so much with so little.

Hannibal's eyes narrow at the slight.

FLACCUS (CONT'D)

You are truly the "Lightning reborn," as your men claim.

(beat)

But this expansion ends now.
Hannibal--

HASDRUBAL

General.

Flaccus hardly skips a beat.

FLACCUS

General, your conquest ceases at the gates of Saguntum. By order of the Senate of the Roman Republic, Saguntum is now an allied city of the Empire. Any advancement on the Sanguntines will be seen as an attack on the Roman body, and there will be dire consequences.

The room is silent for a long moment. Hannibal taps his finger against the armrest. He looks to his captains, to his wife, and finally to his son. His finger stops.

HANNIBAL

Consequences?

(beat)

Excuse me..."dire consequences."
How theatrical.

FLACCUS

Now, Hannibal--

HANNIBAL

General.

Hannibal stands and takes a menacing step forward.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Rome has no claim over any land south of the Ebro River. How dare you impugn upon the affairs of our Empire?

FLACCUS

You must see reason.

Hannibal pulls a coin purse from his tunic--the same coin purse he took from Eriko. He tosses it at the Romans' feet and silver Denarii spill onto the floor.

HANNIBAL

Reason? For years, Rome has sought to influence Saguntum. You exploit its people, bribe its officials, and turn their laws against us. Everywhere I turn, I hear your lies, and see your coin.

Flaccus and Tamphilus recoil, uncertain.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

Yes, I know of your schemes. Your violations of the treaty signed with my father's blood. And you come *here* and speak to *me* of consequences.

(beat)

Consider your message delivered, envoy. Now scurry home to your masters with another: Rome can do her worst, and I shall do mine.

TAMPHILUS

You think too highly of yourself, General. Even the great Hamilcar Barca could not turn barbarians into a threat against the Roman Legion.

FLACCUS

I urge you to reconsider. For the sake of your people. Your armies will be slaughtered, and they'll be the lucky ones.

(looks at Imilce)

If you persist in this course of action, there will be--

Hannibal snaps his fingers.

HANNIBAL

Finish that threat, and it will be the last thing you say in this life

Hannibal takes a few steps forward. The Romans draw their swords. All the Carthaginians, except for Hannibal, draw theirs.

IMILCE

Enough!

Imilce stands by the throne, Luxinio in hand.

IMILCE (CONT'D)

(to Romans)

How dare you come bannerless, under cover of darkness, and demand an audience? What arrogance you spew here tonight could have been your lives. You are messengers, and your message is delivered. Now leave, while your legs can carry you.

Flaccus turns to leave, but Tamphilus is indignant.

TAMPHILUS

Forgive me, but in Rome, a woman--

IMILCE

Woman? I'm not some war bride won through conquest. I am Princess Imilce of the Onetea. I have more a right to speak in this hall than any man present.

(beat)

Now leave in peace.

The Romans look to Hannibal, and his eyes burn with hatred.

Tamphilus backs down, and the guards follow suit, sheathing their weapons. The Romans head for the door.

The Romans gone, Hannibal turns to address his men.

HANNIBAL

Rome's greed and treachery have passed far too long.

(beat)

Alert your banners. In the morning, we march to Saguntum.

The Captains scatter. Hannibal goes to Imilce and embraces her.

HANNIBAL (CONT'D)

(to Luxinio)

I do this now, so that he won't have to.

IMILCE

I know. Now go and be great.

They kiss.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO SAGUNTUM -- MORNING.

Hannibal's army marches the dusty road to Saguntum. Gisga rides his horse alongside Hasdrubal. They call out encouragement to the troops. As they reach the middle, Gisga spots Aife amongst the Celts. He waves.

AIFE

You left so soon last night.

GISGA

I'm sorry if I kept you waiting.

AIFE

Oh, I didn't wait.

Gisga grins.

GISGA

You still haven't told me your name.

AIFE

Aife.

(beat)

Is it true what they're saying?

GISGA

They say a lot, you'll have to be more specific.

AIFE

We're going to war with Rome?

GISGA

Does that scare you?

AIFE

(smirks)

Saguntines, Romans, Greeks. Doesn't make a difference to me. They all bleed the same. But it's nice this war is bringing me near you.

GISGA

Careful, I might be falling for you.

AIFE

Oh, don't do that. I'll be sad if I
have to kill you.

Gisga and Hasdrubal ride for the front.

HASDRUBAL

This is the strangest courtship
I've ever seen.

GISGA

Well, it is important to woo if you
want a relationship that lasts
longer than a few thrusts.

Hasdrubal swats at Gisga but misses. They hit each other
playfully.

The army marches on.

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL -- MEANWHILE.

Inside a modest room, filled with maps and scrolls, Murrus
and Dano study a miniature model of the city. Black clay
rectangles represent the Carthaginians, while White clay
rectangles represent Saguntine forces.

MURRUS

Put more archers on the wall. And
have the reserves stage at the
barracks around the city.

Amacus enters in a panic. He's white as a sheet and looks a
decade older.

AMACUS

Hannibal is on the march, less than
a day's ride. Where are the Romans?
They promised reinforcements if we
signed the alliance.

MURRUS

They will come in time.

AMACUS

In time for what? To remove our
heads from the pikes?

MURRUS

Elder, your people need to see
strength. If you panic, they panic.

AMACUS

My people? My people ask me to be wise, to make decisions that keep them safe. I've risked too much, befriending the Senator. No gold is worth this.

DANO

Elder, please.

MURRUS

You're not yourself. Rest and let us handle this.

AMACUS

No. I feel like myself for the first time in a long while. Hannibal is not unreasonable. He always offers peaceful terms before a battle. I will submit the city to his control in order to protect the citizens.

Murrus puts an arm on Amacus' shoulder.

MURRUS

(sighs)

Elder, I understand you are afraid...

(long pause)

Fuck it.

Murrus grabs Amacus in one quick motion, places his hands around the Elder's head, and snaps his neck. Amacus slumps into Murrus' arms.

DANO

Gods! What have you done?

MURRUS

I'm assuming that's rhetorical.

Murrus cradles the dead Elder, searching the room.

DANO

No, really. What have you done? We were sworn to him. We swore to him.

MURRUS

You heard him. He was going to surrender the city. No matter how that plays for Saguntum, it certainly means the death of any Romans inside.

DANO

People are going to notice he's missing.

MURRUS

So we say he fled in the night. A coward like him, people will believe.

Murrus drags the body to a chest and stuffs the Elder inside.

MURRUS (CONT'D)

Thankfully, the Elder had us to stand in his place should he abandon his post. We will watch over the city.

Dano thinks about that...and comes around.

DANO

That could work.

MURRUS

When Cato's forces arrive, this will all be wiped clean. For now, let's just be thankful he's stopped talking.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WALLS OF SAGUNTUM -- EVENING.

A vast open field leads up to the hill-city of Saguntum. Hannibal's forces have arrived and set up a camp well away from the reach of the city's archers.

A few hundred yards from the gate, Hannibal, Gisga, and Hasdrubal sit astride horses bearing a white flag. Gisga stares at the city, deep in thought.

GISGA

Have the walls always been so tall?

HASDRUBAL

Losing your nerve?

GISGA

No. I just remember them being shorter.

The gates open and Murrus and Dano ride out to greet the invaders.

HASDRUBAL

Neither of them look like the city
elder.

Hannibal regards this quietly. Murrus and Dano arrive. Murrus
spits on the ground to the side, clearly meant as disrespect.

MURRUS

I am Murrus, Champion of Saguntum.
This is Dano. And you must be
Hannibal.

HASDRUBAL

General.

MURRUS

(smug)
Certainly.

HANNIBAL

Where is Amacus, the city Elder? I
wish to discuss terms of surrender.
There is no need for violence here.

MURRUS

I speak with the full authority of
the city, and the citizens of
Saguntum. There will be no
surrender. We are more than
prepared for you, barbarian. Our
men are ready, and we have
provisions enough to last a
generation inside these walls.

HANNIBAL

Before the sun sets tomorrow, my
banners will be hanging from those
walls. Submit and I will be
merciful. Not a single citizen will
come to harm.

MURRUS

No surrender.

HANNIBAL

Then we are done here.

Hannibal and Hasdrubal turn and ride away. Gisga waits a
moment.

MURRUS

What are you looking at?

GISGA
Wrong choice.

Gisga drops the white flag.

GISGA (CONT'D)
See you in the morning.

Gisga catches up to Hannibal.

CUT TO:

INT. HANNIBAL'S TENT -- EVENING.

The sun sets over the Carthaginian camp as the Captains assemble inside the war tent. A table and map have been set in the center, and torches burn inside, illuminating the planning session. Hannibal, Gisga, and Hasdrubal stand around the map.

HANNIBAL
Amacus would have submitted.
(beat)
No matter. Saguntum falls tomorrow.

The tent flap opens and Mago enters followed by Bosta, dressed as a beggar. They embrace the other Captains.

HASDRUBAL
Bosta, you smell like shit.

BOSTA
Thanks. It took a while to match
your normal musk, but I think I've
found it.

HANNIBAL
(to Bosta)
Welcome back, Bosta.

BOSTA
Thank you, sir. I'm eager to wear
my armor again.

Bosta brushes his clothing, and Hannibal notes the RED MUD on his knees and sandals.

HANNIBAL
Soon.
(beat)
I trust you found our backdoor?

BOSTA
(smiles)
Yes, sir.
(beat)
When do we move?

HANNIBAL
When the night is darkest.

BOSTA
My men are waiting.

HANNIBAL
Good. Then let's get started.

CUT TO:

EXT. HANNIBAL'S CAMP -- NIGHT.

Soldiers secure their armor and ready their weapons for the next day's battle. As we watch them prepare, Hannibal briefs.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Hasdrubal, the Numidians need to be
ready to ride at first light.

We see the NUMIDIAN CAVALRY, tribal warriors of incredible prowess.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Make sure the infantry commanders
know the layout of the city by
heart, and the paths to their
assigned areas. There are 90,000
men inside that city, compared to
our 30. We cannot lose the element
of surprise, or the momentum, or we
will lose everything.

We see INFANTRY reviewing maps and practicing the attack,
made up of various tribes and regions.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
And be clear: No raping, no
pillaging. We're not sacking the
city. We're occupying. The citizens
won't put up a fight if we don't
give them reason to hate us.

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL -- MEANWHILE.

Saguntuine ARCHERS stand atop the main wall overlooking the battlefield.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Mago, take fifty men and gather
pinewood, then make your way to the
battlefield. Have each man start a
fire a hundred paces from the next.

A fire lights up in the battlefield and the archers point.
Then another. And another. And five more. Ten more. It looks
like an army of thousands has arrived closer to the walls.
The archers look disheartened.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Keep those fires burning all night,
into the morning, and ensure your
last piece of wood is the largest.

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTERN WALL OF SAGUNTUM -- MEANWHILE.

Bosta, Gisga, and twenty soldiers sneak through the darkness
toward the city. They stop at a very small opening -- a slit
trench -- and wait. Gisga seems overwhelmed by the smell, but
he notices the ground is RED even in the dim moonlight.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Gisga, take your best men and
follow Bosta to the secret
entrance. While the guards are
distracted by Mago, make your way
inside.

Bosta sneaks inside the trench, squirming through. A moment
later, ropes fly over the wall and land near the soldiers.
Gisga catches the first and starts to climb. Halfway up, he
glances down and shivers.

GISGA
Definitely taller.

Bosta, from the top of the wall, hisses down.

BOSTA
(whispering)
Hey! We're sneaking. There's no
talking during sneaking.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM ALLEY.

Gisga and his team hide the ropes and join Bosta's team.
Uniforms of the City Guard are handed around.

BOSTA
Get dressed quickly.

GISGA
How did you get so many?

BOSTA
It's a dangerous city. Men go
missing all the time.

Gisga slips into his new armor.

GISGA
Remember, at first light, take
these off. I don't want to
accidentally kill all of you.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL.

Gisga and his men, now dressed as GUARDS, join the archers
atop the wall.

HANNIBAL (V.O.)
Secure the wall and wait for
morning. Remember to signal when
you're in position.

ARCHER
What are you doing here? We aren't
to be relieved until dawn.

BOSTA
Murrus wants more bodies up here.

GISGA
Can't be too careful with these
barbarians.

The archers turn and watch the fires outside. Gisga draws a KNIFE.

ARCHER

Honestly, I agree. I've got a bad feeling.

GISGA

Should have listened to it.

The Carthaginians slay the archers and toss their bodies from the wall. They assume the positions, carrying the bows and standing near the GATE CONTROLS.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS -- MEANWHILE.

A CARTHAGE SPY peers inside a barracks. Hundreds of Saguntine RESERVES sleep on the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACKS -- CONTINUOUS.

The Spy closes the door to the barracks and locks it with a wooden bar. He looks around a large square and watches seven other SPIES secure rest of the BARRACKS.

The Spy builds up KINDLING around the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL -- MEANWHILE.

Gisga pulls a MIRROR from a pack on his pack and sets it on the wall--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL -- DAWN.

--and suddenly it's dawn. Gisga secures the mirror and uses it to catch the sun, signaling the Carthaginian forces below.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD.

Hannibal sees the reflection from the wall.

The fires from the night before are still burning, and smoke has completely obscured the battlefield. We can hardly see two men deep in the ranks.

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL.

Murrus sleeps against the wall in full armor while Dano stands guard. Dano rouses his commander, nervous at the stillness of the morning.

MURRUS

What? What is it?

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD.

Hannibal, at the front of his forces, pauses to look back at his men. He beams with pride.

Hasdrubal rides up.

HANNIBAL

They're ready. Let's go win a city.

HASDRUBAL

Perhaps you should command from the rear.

HANNIBAL

A leader leads, brother. My place is at the front.

HASDRUBAL

Then I'm beside you.

(beat)

Any words for the men?

HANNIBAL

Do you remember father's lessons? A good general knows just what to say to inspire.

(beat)

And a great general needs no words at all.

Hannibal draws his sword and raises it to the sky. His army roars in response, deafening and inspiring. Hannibal points toward the city and charges.

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL.

Murrus and Dano watch from the window as the army approaches. The smoke prevents them from seeing much.

MURRUS
So it begins.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN GATE.

Hannibal charges toward the main gate, followed by his men. Tendrils of smoke cling to their horses as they run.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL.

GISGA watches the cavalry approach and slips off his armor.

GISGA
NOW!

CUT TO:

INT. GATE HOUSE.

Bosta activates the gate mechanism. Then he breaks it so it cannot be closed again.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN GATE.

The main gate crashes open just as the army reaches it. Hannibal keeps his momentum as he charges into a surprised line of CITY GUARDS.

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL.

Murrus and Dano watch the gate crash open.

DANO
What happened!

MURRUS
Get that gate back up!

SNIK!

An arrow narrowly misses their heads. They duck as a volley strikes the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, CITY STREETS.

Hannibal rides through the street. He sees City Guards pierced with dozens of arrows. Hannibal looks up to see Bosta waving. Hannibal nods and rides on.

ANGLE ON Bosta as he picks up a red flag and waves it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACKS.

The Spy sees Bosta wave the red flag and grabs a nearby TORCH. He sets the Barracks on fire. Around the square, all of the Barracks go up in flames. The soldiers inside scream.

CUT TO:

INT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL.

On the floor, Murrus looks at Dano.

MURRUS
To arms!

They rush for the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, FORUM.

Hannibal, still on his horse, follows his forces into the city proper.

Numidian cavalry, led by Hasdrubal, push through the streets, cutting off corridors and funneling the enemy. The Saguntines cluster at choke points, only to be slaughtered by Gisga's forces from above.

Every direction Hannibal looks, his soldiers are winning the battle. He sees three Celts match up against five Saguntine spearmen. He sees a team of archers play cat and mouse with a platoon of infantry.

MURRUS (O.S.)
Barbarian!

Hannibal turns to see Murrus and Dano across the Forum, along with twenty Saguntine INFANTRY. Murrus brandishes a WAR HAMMER. They beat their shields and beckon.

HANNIBAL
(to nearby soldiers)
To me!

Ten Carthaginian SOLDIERS rush over and stand in line with Hannibal.

Both sides charge.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, ROOFTOPS.

Gisga and his soldiers fight a platoon of heavy infantry. It's a fierce battle, but Gisga cuts through with practiced precision.

In a lull in combat, Gisga surveys his surroundings. He sees Hannibal in the Forum fighting Dano and Murrus alone. Hannibal is in trouble!

Gisga charges across the rooftops, striking down enemy when they pop up. He bounces off walls, climbs and leaps, until he is above the forum.

ANGLE ON Hannibal as he is knocked to the ground. Murrus and Dano close in for the kill.

ANGLE ON Gisga. He leaps without fear, flying toward Murrus.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, FORUM.

Gisga lands on Murrus, knocking him away. Gisga bounces up, blocking a strike by Dano, and counters with a powerful kick. Dano backs off long enough for Gisga to grab Hannibal's arm. Gisga hurls Hannibal up and toward Murrus while he takes off after Dano.

Gisga and Dano draw swords and fight. It's blinding and brutal. Dano is just as quick and twice as strong. Each strike sends Gisga staggering back. A swipe almost takes Gisga's head off!

Hannibal squares off with Murrus. He eyes the war hammer, watching how its weight slows Murrus down. Hannibal lunges in, testing his enemy. Murrus grabs Hannibal and shoves him backward.

As Hannibal steps back, he focuses on Murrus and the BLUE TINT takes the world. Hannibal quickly spots three things:

- Murrus' armor is loose at the left strap.
- Murrus' shin guard has fallen off.
- Murrus' armor doesn't cover his armpits.

The BLUE TINT disappears and Hannibal is on the attack. He targets Murrus' shoulder and scores a hit on the loose armor.

Gisga and Dano batter each other, but Gisga's technique is improving every second. He reads the attacks better, spots openings faster. He catches Dano with a quick short slash that slices across Dano's gut. Gisga steps back and allows Dano to fall to his knees. Gisga moves in quick and cuts off Dano's head.

Hannibal ducks a powerful swing of the hammer, then slashes Murrus' exposed leg. The giant howls and raises his hammer overhead. Hannibal leaps in, driving his sword into Murrus' armpit. The giant collapses to his knees, spilling buckets of blood.

HANNIBAL

Yield!

Murrus spits blood at Hannibal's feet. He sees Dano's decapitated body and brims with anger.

MURRUS

ROME AETURNUM!

Hannibal buries his sword in Murrus' chest. With Murrus and Dano dead, a strange calm falls over the battlefield.

Hannibal looks around, amazed but not surprised that it is his troops surrounding him. The Carthage Army erupts into cheers.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN SENATE CHAMBER -- DAY.

Senator Cato reads a piece of parchment in a mostly empty chamber. Senator Rufus walks over.

SENATOR RUFUS

What is that, Cato?

CATO

A correspondence from my man in Saguntum...

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, FORUM.

On Murrus' face as the life drains away. A hand reaches down to close the warrior's eyes. We look up to see Hannibal paying respects to a fallen enemy.

CATO (V.O.)

He assures me he has everything well in hand...

Hannibal rises and looks at Gisga, who has paid the same respect to Dano. Hasdrubal rides up on horseback.

CATO (V.O.)

That he will hold the city until the end of days if need be.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM -- DAY.

The banners of Carthage and Barca rise over Saguntum. We pull back to see a city overtaken. Columns of black smoke rise from the ruins of the barracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAGUNTUM, CITY COUNCIL -- NIGHT.

The city square outside the main council building. Hundreds of civilians are assembled, surrounded by several soldiers of the occupying army. Mago addresses them.

MAGO

General Hannibal Barca, Supreme Commander of the Carthaginian Army, claims this city in the name of Carthage.

(beat)

We did not come here for plunder. We did not come here for blood. Any who submit and live in peace and order are welcome to remain. Your homes will not be garrisoned. Your lives will not be threatened. Those who wish to leave may do so unmolested.

(beat)

If you wish to fight, look to the 90,000 empty beds in your city...and hopefully you will change your mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE FRONT WALL.

Hannibal watches the setting sun. The smoke has cleared and the empty fields seem peaceful below. The world tints blue as the Wraith of Hamilcar appears.

WRAITH OF HAMILCAR

You took the city that couldn't be taken in a day. That is quite a victory.

Hannibal shakes his head.

HANNIBAL

This was the easy part.

(beat)

Tomorrow, we go to war.

FADE TO BLACK.

END CREDITS.