
H A N N I B A L

A PLAY FOR RADIO

by

O. D. Erickson

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HANNIBAL

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MUSIC

THEME

ANNOUNCER

DAVIUS

(THE NARRATOR: AN OLD GREEK WARRIOR)

I speak out of the dead wind, Junes,
That which lifts the curtains
Through the rambling hall of memory,
Because I must, being old.
Listen. He is dead now for twenty years
But his voice rings like the clear-eyed
Virgin in me.

JUNES

(A YOUNG MAN) You're shivering, old Davius.

DAVIUS

Cold with death's lips.
Oh we are all mad, Junes, or we would not
Surrender to the dark stranger, following him
Into the wilderness.
But, when I saw him
Something cleared in me,
As the child who hides there
In a mother-dream, touching those braids
Of long leaves,
Wakes to the pain and wonder of this world.

(COUGHING)

Of Carthage he was, when Rome
And Carthage still fought and bartered
For the Mediterranean blue.
There was a war by which Carthage
Won the humiliation of terms from Rome.
On this, Hannibal's father, Hamilcar,
Built his mountain of revenge.

He took the boy before the presence
Of Ashteroth, the god, and made him swear eternal
hate of Rome, and later sent him to the land of Spain
There to learn the sinewy art of war.

He learnt it well.

JUNES Continue, old warrior.

DAVIUS To sharpen the old spear of memory? It's poisonous
with rust.

JUNES I have heard you before and it was always beautiful.

DAVIUS This was painful. Something is murdered when a great
man falls.

Well, in the Spring of that year my father took me
to the camp of Hannibal outside Saguntum.

SOUND BATTERING RAM. TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS. GROUPS OF CRIES
HOLD B.G.

DAVIUS' Oh, Hannibal!
FATHER

HANNIBAL Hello, Themes. Now, Maherbal. Assault the left tower
with the hooks. We'll divert the bastards and then
rush the breach.

MAHERBAL I'll do it, Hannibal.

MESSENGER Sire, there is a deputation from the city pleading
your meeting them.

HANNIBAL I won't see 'em.

MESSENGER I think they wish to capitulate.

HANNIBAL Oh, bring them then.

THEMES Hannibal, General....

HANNIBAL Yes, Themes?

THEMES Sire, here is my son, he I mentioned to you, named Davius.

HANNIBAL Glad to have you with us, young Davius. Do you like
the look of it?

DAVIUS Yes, Sire.

HANNIBAL Will you follow us to Rome?

THEMES Ah, he will, he will, he hates the Romans more than I...

DAVIUS I will follow you, Sire, anywhere.

MESSENGER The deputation awaits, Sire.

HANNIBAL (AFTER A MOMENT'S SILENCE) Well, have you had enough of us? Will you surrender?

DEPUTY Oh, Hannibal, it is true that you have reduced our city to stones and blood. Through the streets move only the shades of people; women clutching to their dried dugs~~x~~ their starved and nameless children; fathers whose hunted hungry eyes tear their own fleshless sides. Nothing is left us Hannibal, but our pride that will neither starve nor die in us though it consumes us.

HANNIBAL Get on, sir, you're eloquent.

DEPUTY In the face of death men may be eloquent.

HANNIBAL Then this means.....

DEPUTY That though we recognize the limitless scope of war, ask it to stop before our shrunken frames, not to defile the bonelike visage of our mothers; not in debasement but in the name of mercy, ask, that if we turn the city free to you, you, on the other hand withhold the lust and pillage of your soldiers.

HANNIBAL You are lost.

DEPUTY But alive.

HANNIBAL By the gods, bravely you've held us eight months at bay. The soldiers expect their loot today. Do you believe that I, who love my soldiers more than I pity you, you who knew the outcome but stubbornly manned your massive walls as though you meant to win, who had the chance for mercy but turned your face from it, do you think that I would speak one word to my men, say to them: "Restrain yourselves". What puny, yellow words before the rush of war! Get back, then, if its your pride you love and not yourselves and you shall see all; pride, power, wealth, in dust.

DEPUTY Sometime the Gods will terrify you!

SOUND SHOUTS BG

SOLDIERS Hurray! The breach is wide.

HANNIBAL So, it is too late,
 You see, at any rate.

DEPUTY Hannibal, for this you'll feel the iron teeth of
 Rome sink in the sides of your puffed design.
 Rome will avenge us!

HANNIBAL Rome, too, will fall! (PAUSE) In less time than
 this, sir. This practise makes me know the way.
 Take them away.

MAHERBAL Hannibal, the riot's begun.

HANNIBAL Aye, Maherbal.
 Soon, it'll spread to Rome and shade the sun.

SOUNDS SHOUTS OF TRIUMPH AND WILD LAUGHTER. SOUNDS OF RIOT FADE.

MUSIC TRANSIT TO HARP.....SAD..... ORIENTAL.

SHECEBRA You will come back to me, Hannibal? Promise me.

HANNIBAL Shecebra, you'll come to me. Fifty cinqueremes will
 bring you to Rome when I have taken it. There, you'll
 be my queen, and all our days will pass like this.

SHECEBRA Can Rome replace the splendour of these valleys?

HANNIBAL Our love has valleys, Shecebra, and plains, and
 fastnesses like peaks. Our love is its own landscape.

SOUND SHECEBRA MAKES A SHARP SWEEP OF HARP

SHECEBRA Don't go.

HANNIBAL Can the sun stop?

SHECEBRA I dreamt last night that we met again, but it was
 different, you were so much older and we talked as
 though it were the last time.....
 And then there was a cry for Hannibal. The doors
 were shaken by the fists of soldiers, and the street
 below was filled with Roman faces. I woke then.

HANNIBAL I dreamt too last night, a dream surpassing that.
 My father came to me, huge in war dress, his plumes
 like fire. He took my hand and held it hard as he
 used to do, and with the other pointing across the
 Gallic mountains, said: "Go there. Italy is yours".
 I shook to hear the words, and looked up at his livid
 countenance. "How?" I asked him, "The mountains
 are too high". At which he smiled, as he always did

when I asked a foolish question. "Go," he said.

SHECEBRA (AFTER A MOMENT'S SILENCE) And...no more?

HANNIBAL No more.

SHECEBRA It may have been imagination. One cannot trust the dead.

HANNIBAL Better than the living...

SHECEBRA No, they exist elsewhere and we do not know their rules.

HANNIBAL To me, it's plain. His words have shaped my mind in one direction shutting out that ~~which~~ compels selection. I am under the fist of the moon and guided by dreams....

SHECEBRA Stay with me. I fear your dreams. Oh, Hannibal, Rome

is too great -- it grows to conquer men and soils --

I know that men do not fight gods and Rome's deceit has made an ally of them.

HANNIBAL No!

SHECEBRA Do not attempt this, Hannibal....

HANNIBAL Why, you're but a woman, Shecebra, who wants her lover in her arms, not out of them. (HE LAUGHS) I shall be away for awhile.

SHECEBRA Stay, Hannibal..

HANNIBAL I go to win a grove in Italy for you, Shecebra. Before the Spring has washed the snows away and blown the flowers back to bloom, we march....

SHECEBRA Then, I will anoint your luck.

HANNIBAL Here, Shecebra....

SOUND DASH OF HARP FADING AWAY TO TRUMPET CALLS. OUT.

HANNIBAL Trade those men for slaves who will fight better.

Damned if I shall wait any longer.

Send three thousand more home

And tell the others they can go too

If they wish to;

Nothing to keep them here.

HANNO Only numbers are diminished, Hannibal.

The Africans won't go.

HANNIBAL Neither will the Spaniards

When farther from home.

Close it is too warm.

I remember well being sent away,
A young fool, it did me good, though
Painful in the beginning. A man's wants
Diminish, and the few that are left him,
Grow larger, more clearly defined.
I have only one now.

HANNO To witness Rome's defeat.

HANNIBAL Destruction.

HANNO By the gods, let's drink on it.

MAHERBAL We'll drink blood when the time comes.

HANNO And eat the fat Italian women, eh?

HANNIBAL Where's my brother?

HANNO Mago?

HANNIBAL No, Hasdrubal.

HANNO With the whores in the village.

HANNIBAL Damn him, send him up here.

HANNO Right.

MESSENGER Romans, sire.

HANNIBAL What?

MESSENGER Envoys from Rome. They ask to see you.

HANNO Ah, the Senate is perturbed. (HE SIMULATES AN ENGLISH ACCENT)

HANNIBAL The devils come too late, Saguntum is already ours.
But bring them in.

MESSENGER Yes, sire.

HANNIBAL We'll give them a good talking to, eh Hanno?

HANNO Yes, yes, do.

MESSENGER The Romans, sire.

HANNIBAL Come in, Romans.

ROMAN I see we come too late, Hannibal.

HANNIBAL Too late? Too late for what?

ROMAN Saguntum has fallen.

HANNIBAL Saguntum has fallen. Weeks ago.

ROMAN I am sorry for it, and for you, Hannibal, and for Carthage. Saguntum was our ally, by the treaty not to be touched. That treaty, the tie of amity between Rome and Carthage has been severed.

HANN The string is cut.

ROMAN You hold the broken end, Hannibal. (PAUSE)
What do you want?

HANN To destroy Rome.

ROMAN The dream of a madman,
Am ash in your eye;
You cannot destroy what is indestructible.

HANN You say so.

ROMAN Not in our time, nor by you, Hannibal.
We believe in the gods.
Yours are names.

HANN And you think you have the strength of gods.

ROMAN Of men who obey the gods.

HANN I have never heard of them.

ROMAN You never shall
For ours is the future. They
Mean it for us.

HANN You look into mirrors
And there are your gods.
But the mirror distorts; you nurtured them...

ROMAN Out of the earth,
Our belief in ourselves, and something higher.

HANN Out of fine imaginations rather,
And an eye for the opportunity
To bridge the uncertainty of time and our being
By the perfect pattern of religion.
Thus, you carry a reflection of the perfect
Around all day, and think that it applies to you.
Yours is the unconscious, brute design
Which I have set myself
To destroy because it claims

Superior significance, threatening us all.

ROMAN Yours is the madness of imagination
Gone awry in the yellow glimmer
Of its own heedless pride,
Such pride, I may say, that
Must bend before our anger.

HANN Fah! Get away from me.
Tell your masters that
There is one who does not quake
Before the foolish fancy they
Think is destiny.

ROMAN And I shall,
For you are past warning. (EXIT)

HANNO I'd like a blowgun, now.

HANN Let them go. We'll meet again.
Is that Hasdrubal coming?

HANNO So it is. Come in here, Hasdrubal.

MAHERBAL The kitten the women play with.

HANN Would that he'd grow nails.

HASDRUBAL Oh Lola and Lala. Lovely names. Lovely ladies. We played..

HANNO Ho! Ho!

MAHERBAL Drunk in the midday!

HAS Indeed. What of it, fierce one?
Turning night into day is the privilege of rank.

HANNO Rank fun.

HANN Rank folly, Hanno. Could we leave Spain in better hands?

HAS None, dear brother. Go off on your chase. I'll hand
on to Spain, Spain to me.

HANNO And they'll go on a spree.

HANN Slave, water. Hah! Now, Hasdrubal....

SOUND SPLASHING OF WATER. SPLUTTERING.

HAS You vile monster. I'll put all your heads on pikes
in the sun. Damned disreputable low life.

HANNO Ha! Ha! Ha! You've drowned his high spirits, Hannibal.

HANN Ah well, he'll manage Spain magnificently....while we're

gone, that is. He enjoys this act because...should
I say it?...this brother whom I love....

HAS Away, bawd....

HANN And who loves me....

HAS Like death....

HANN Is less than me....So, he gets drunk and is lecherous.
Right, Hasdrubal? And why any of this, I don't know.

HANNO Ah well, I know, Hannibal.

HANN What, friend?

HAS He loves life and you don't.

HANN Let us leave it.

Tomorrow, we part. Us to the high hills, the
wilderness, and miracles.

Let us consider that Hasdrubal has just been drinking to us.
When is Mago to arrive?

HANNO Tomorrow, also.

HANN Then we are off.

The soldiers that are left us are all that I want that
want to win.

Soon, the Imperial eagles will scream in the wind. Goodnight.
(THEY LEAVE SAYING THEIR GOODNIGHTS.)

HANNIBAL (LEFT ALONE)

Action, action....action.

As the dying man craves water

I crave action, not power,

Or wealth, and happiness is all action,

Love itself being but the moment between acts,

The pause for breath;

To cut down the stars I'd give

My hands and eyes, your gestures, lips,

Your love, Shecebra;

I'd give my life and all the ecstasy after death

To lug the moon around the plain,

Just once, and losing breath,

Pass off like fire. Deadly, deadly
Hate. All that I am is one direction
Racing down the rolling hill, Destruction,
Like the rock that loves to fall
And crush the traveller below;
The sun is in the sky and stings my day;
Sometime, I'll stretch the ribbons
Of my heart on earth and stamp
This swimming sickness back to health.
For what is Rome but an institution,
A law to itself like me or anyone,
That holds a sphere until such time
As it is jarred to fall dizzily far.
No one knows how long the sun has.
I hate, I fear, I love --- That's life,
An alternation of seasons, and then I'm a moonbeam
Seducing leaves. We're all damned.
The force that tingles in the blood
Loosens our sails to flap
A panting moment on the bed or catch
At flashing phantoms overhead.
Our freedom is the jaw between the teeth;
Pass through and enter into death;
Darkness closes and a loose digestion
Sucks away at our huge intention.
Freedom is the will to Act.
Look! It's ~~the~~ lack of breath.

SOUND

THEME TO TRUMPET OF ELEPHANTS. CURSING OF MEN.
NEIGHING OF HORSES. AN ARMY IS ON THE MARCH.

DAVIUS

We went
And with the going
Left our lives behind,
Aye, there are crags in the Pyhrenees too,
And forty elephants we had
To drag and grunt across its broken wastes.
Those were men then, Junes;
Why did they go?
For the loot and the love of war,

No reason I would say for bravery....

Until in the green wilderness of Gaul

We lost the sun.

SOUND

FADE IN SOUND OF MEN MOVING THROUGH HEAVY BRUSH

SOLDIER 1

There's not a man who could love himself as much as Hannibal to bring us in here.

SOLDIER 2

This is but the beginning. Don't get excited.

SOLD 1

Excited! I'm perspired.

SOLD 3

Aye...

SOLD 2

Hold your crank for the mountains.

There you'll need your breath.

SOLD 3

And when do we come to 'em?

SOLD 1

In time, in good time.

SOLD 3

I've had enough already

SOLD 2

Ho! Listen to 'im.

SOLD 4

Wait'll one of these Gauls jumps him, eh?

SOLD 1

I heard they're painted red and blue.

SOLD 2

They are.

SOLD 3

They're but flesh and blood.

SOLD 1

So are we, God knows.

SOLD 4

Or were, but I'm fast losing what flesh and blood I had.

SOLD 1

All I can say is, there better be a bunch of grapes at the other end.

SOLD 4

Grapes, I should say....

SOLD 2

Sssst, listen.

VOICE

Hannibal!

HANNIBAL

{COMING CLOSER} Alright, man, alright.

HANNO

In the glade ahead, a regular army of Gauls.

HANN

Hmmm. If he's not misshapen by these twigs, there is Cervatorix himself.

HANNO

The old dog?

HANN

Go to him. Tell him that I wish to speak to him. I will meet him in the open, alone.

HANNO Right.

(WHILE HANNO GOES FORWARD THE SOLDIERS CONTINUE MUTTERING)

SOLDIER 1 Didn't I tell you? Red and blue they are.

SOLD 2 Well, little one.....?

SOLD 4 Only flesh and blood, hey? They'll carve yours from you, twitter mouth.

SOLD 2 I expect we'll see action soon.

SOLD 1 I hope not. You won't get richer fighting these fellows.

SOLD 4 Why, it'll loosen our joints.

SOLD 1 You mean, sever them.

SOLD 2 Watch, Hannibal approaches the old one.

HANNIBAL Cervatorix, great King, I come as a friend, I have gifts for you. (ASIDE) Lay them out, Hanno.

CERVATORIX (SPEAKING IN AN UNCERTAIN ACCENT) I had heard of you, Hannibal, but not of your generosity.

HANN I am generous to those I believe will help my cause.

CERV You do not waste words.

HANN Nor action.

CERV Well said again.

We Gauls like men of action.

HANN The Romans, also, are men of action.

CERV But not men of few words.

HANN Hah! Together, friend, we shall burn Rome.

CERV Having suffered Roman arrogance,
We, too, would enjoy the fire. But...

HANN Yes?

CERV You forget the mountains.

HANN They have been climbed before, Cervatorix.

CERV Never by an army.

HANN Such is my army that I hold no respect for mountains.

CERV Swiftly ahead of you the word has worn the air like wings of these huge....

HANN Elephants.....

CERVWhich terrify men. They will die in the peaks.

HANN No, Cervatorix, they will climb.

(A PAUSE)

CERV I see a man before me

Who knows no gulf between his pride and the power he craves;

Great man, you may slip between those walls

And fall forever.

HANN Then you refuse me.

CERV I wish to help you, Hannibal;

But I am, though a great king,

King, they say, only of a savage people.

HANN You are either with me, or you look the other way.

CERV The wolf cries in the forest to the spaniel. I will help you to the edge of my dominion. Beyond lies a land desperate within itself. But lay such gifts upon it, and you will find a noisy welcome. Then Tostilang. Fear him, Hannibal, for he rules many tribes. There you must cross the River Rhone. I have never seen it, but they say, beneath its ripples hangs a god of death, black as the mud he spews.....

HANN (ANXIOUS TO GET AWAY) Thanks, Cervatorix, I shall not forget.

CERV Farewell, great one. I hope not forever.

HANN Sound the march, Hanno.

SOUND TRUMPETS.

CERV (SHOUTS) May you triumph and live on!

HANNO So these are the Gauls.

HANNIBAL Malicious men. How are our soldiers?

HANNO As usual, cursing.

HANN Good. While they curse we are strong.

HANNO What is your plan?

HANN Unhatched.

HANNO I should have known better than to ask.

HANN The Gauls will not fight.

HANNO You think not?

HANN Not openly. They are afraid of the elephants.

HANNO That is true. (PAUSE) Ha! Ha! I wonder what they are thinking in Rome?

HANN Not yet disturbed. They will not believe we can cross the Alps, until we have crossed them.

HANNO That will be a reception.

HANN It shall.

(SHOUTS) Forward, soldiers!!

Ahead are riches higher than the mountains of the sun!!

SOUND A SHARP SWEEP OF THE HARP SHADING TO SOFT LAUGHTER

SERGENTIUS (A SENATOR) Ha Ha Ha! Well, it was a good season.....

Why -- Marcus -- are you alone?

MARCUS Yes..

SERGENTIUS Let us walk up to the Capitol, then. We have an hour before the session begins ... How was it with you?

MARCUS Well. When I last saw my villa between the blue hills and the blue sea, white with peace, I could scarcely bring myself to leave it.

SERG I feel the same way. There is nothing like the country. I must admit, however, to a feeling of some excitement on my return to Rome.

There are rumours on the air....

MARC Yes?

SERG Have you not heard?

MARC My dear fellow, I only just arrived. But what of these rumours?

SERG Hannibal is on the march.

MARC Hannibal?

SERG Have you not heard of him? Hamilcar's son.

MARC The Barca!

SERG The same.

MARC They are a wolfish family and ought to be drowned.

SERG I agree. (A PAUSE)

MARC But.....my dear fellow, where are they going to march to?

SERG It just occurred to you? (WITH LAUGHTER) Yes, Marcus, friend, that is the question....where are they going to march to?

MARC To Rome, I suppose.

SERG So it is said.

MARC Over the Alps, no doubt? Is the man out of his mind?

SERG He's but a boy on an elephant.

MARC An elephant of a dream, I should say....Hello, Publius.

PUBLIUS Gentlemen...

SERG We had not expected you this early.....

MARC Sergentius was just telling me of Hannibal. Is it true?

PUBLIUS Yes, it is true. I have ^{but}~~not~~ returned from Massilia.

SERG Hmmmm.

MARC But it makes no difference? He will find the Alps a trifle high?

PUB Perhaps...

MARC Hmmmm. What a curious man, this Hannibal.

SERG What are you going to tell the Senate, Publius....?

PUB The truth.

SERG Publius, I would not push too many matters of expense.

PUB How was the season?

SERG Good, the crops were good this year as all the season beneficial.....

MARC But no rise in spending, Publius, for rise in spending means rise in taxes, you know.

SERG They are high enough already, are they not?

MARC I think we are in favour of quiet men for consuls this year.

PUB Gentlemen, I am not arguing with you.

SERG No, Publius, we hope not, but you are a military man and do not understand the situation we countrymen find ourselves in.

MARC You frown, Publius?

MARC I fear for the future of this good state, that, squeezed between the fingers of your avarice must cough up pennies like blood into your palms. So Rome is propped by swollen men...

But I will report the truth and then I hope to see a general bloodletting.

MARC Not on these streets.

PUB Here as in the field of dying men.

I have heard ill omens.

MARC Where?

PUB Sempronius will be consul...

SERG Then, good, for he is a demagogue and will listen to us.

PUB That is the danger.

MARC You are on the wrong side, Publius....

PUB I am on Rome's side.

SERG Mighty words, Publius What is this commotion?

SOUND STREET CRIES

SERG There's Paulus. Catch him. What is it, Paulus?

PAULUS An ill omen.

SERG Another?

PAUL On the capitoline, the statue of Mars fell earthward...

MARC What!!!?

PAUL Blood swelled from it, turning the Tiber red.

SERG It was the sunset.

PAUL Nonetheless, the mob has caught the threat, It has the rabbit in its throat....

SERG Due observances will quieten it.

PAUL They have heard the news of Hannibal.

MARC Ohhhhh....

PAUL The storm last night was like a blast from heaven... They think the gods are angry.

SERG To the Capitol, then. We will do what must be done to muffle this sound...

SOUND (VOICES FADE IN HUBBUB ON THE STREETS)

SOUND

FADE OUT TO

SENATOR 1

Senators of Rome!

With Publius Cornelius arrives the news that Hannibal has crossed the Rhone River and is about to assault the peaks of the Italian Alps!

SOUND

HOOTS AND LAUGHTER

SENATOR 2

I suggest that Hannibal and his army will find a cold and early grave. What do you say, Publius Cornelius?

PUBLIUS

Hannibal is a resourceful man.

You said, I remember it, that Hannibal could not cross the wilderness of Gaul. He has done so.

After 800 miles of marching, he came upon the Gauls of Tostilang, who, on the farther bank of the River Rhone shook 40,000 spears, chanting the rythm of his death. So Hannibal sent Mago, his brother, to cross higher up and come from behind. Then, on a signal of smoke, Hannibal stormed the flood encrusted water with rafts as wide as plazas from which the elephants, trumpeting fearfully, charged the Gauls and broke them into frenzied balls. Afterwards, he marched towards the snow white castles of the Alps, no more impeded.

(A PAUSE)

SENATOR 2

But the Alps, man, the Alps are mightier than any man or army of men!

SENATOR 3

It is madness to consider it!

PUB

I will not argue.

I tell you only what I know.

The rest is on the shoulders of the gods.

But one thing I warn you of:

Hannibal may be hateful. Do not underestimate him.

Easy it may be to squirm away from pinching fears

By shrinking the antagonist by comparison

But though the mind can conjure anything

It cannot kill the bleeding injury.
Would you let a monster enter the city
While you were rolling grapes between your fingers?
We would soon be dancing skeletons in heaven,
Leaving our villas to our more sensible slaves.
It is like making penury a principle of business
To make untruth a rule of statehood.
Only when we turn away from it is this truth dangerous.
Then it becomes the loathed Charybdis.
Therefore consider.
Consider what a man with a will has done,
What he may do,
Remember Theseus and the Cretan bulls,
Remember Odysseus in the gulf of Cerberus --
Remember the hell he went through before
He wrought with his iron in the halls
Of Ithaca.

So the fury may rent

Our fatness, unless we fit our minds as our thighs
To action.

(A PAUSE)

SEMPRONIUS

This is the military mind that feeds on the quick
disaster. But I, for one, sir, will not allow judgment
to be tossed on this hysteria. Nor do I underestimate
this dog, Hannibal, when I say that it is nonsense to
think of an invasion of Italy by way of the Alps.
Consider, says Publius Cornelius, and I consider.
But not to see misty Odysseus fighting monsters. No.
I see an army of mutinous Spaniards, renegade Gauls,
voluptuous negroes --- a motley, looting, undisciplined
crew, stark eyed before the aspect of those mountains.
Consider, says Publius Cornelius, the resourcefulness
of this man, Hannibal. And I consider. I see this
adventurous rabble, bribed by Hannibal's promises of

plenty trying the strength of those hills. And I see the encircling vultures and I think there is something stinking in the mountains. Face the facts, says Publius Cornelius, do not turn from the truth. So I stretch my mind to consider the impossible. I see a man on a bony elephant, and a maimed, crippled, starved dozen hobbling after. This is the terrible truth we have to face! This is the crafty Hannibal with the mighty army! This is the fate we must take time to consider! But, consider our fate, says Publius Cornelius. And here I surrender.

SOUND

CHEERING

SERGEIUS

(QUIETLY TO MARCUS) I think, Marcus, that Sempronius will be consul.

MARCUS

I think so. Though Publius may hold the other consulship, Sempronius will temper him.

SERGEIUS

And now, wary Fabius stands.

FABIUS

Both our contestants are swung beyond judgment by the force of their opinions, leave good sense to experiment with noise, and, being opposite, stand apart from truth in order to wave their swords. And whistling wind is never source of strength, but guides ambitious sails to gulled oblivion. Therefore, know that neither is or is not right, dealing with suppositions about the future, which is unknowableexcept to gods.

What is obvious is that we should not dispose ourselves in any one direction, nor follow any one opinion. It would be disservice to our state and sense. Let us prepare for all eventualities; not sitting like dumb men in the market, nor charging mists with pointed spears; but holding ourselves ready in mind and muscle, for whatever foe, though

there be no foe at all.

I suggest an immediate program:

First, to propitiate the gods with due observances.

Second, to advance two legions more among our
Northern half warm allies.

Third, to send a force to attack in Spain, the base and
husband of all Hannibal's activities.....(FADE)

(FADE IN)

OPHRIDIA

And then he said....?

PUBLIUS

No more of importance, Ophridia.

OPHR

And you are consul?

PUB

With Sempronius.

OPHR

But you are consul.

Did you know, our son has returned?

PUB

No. Where is he?

OPHR

He is an officer now, and wears it proudly.

Oh he is sweet to see!

PUB

Bring him to me.

OPHR

He's off with his Helena.... Come now, take off
that serious look, dear Publius, and let's play.

PUB

If it were only time for play....

OPHR

You look better now, without that cloak.

PUB

It's a desperate season, Ophridia,
I have dreadful thoughts.

OPHR

Oh, you have been away too long....

PUB

How black those clouds are!

OPHR

Do not look out.

PUB

I think that man will climb the Alps.

OPHR

(SHE HAS TAKEN DOWN A HARP AND BEGUN TO PLAY)

Who, Publius?

PUB

A lean devil. I dreamt that I was fighting him, hand

to hand, wild with blood. Where is he?

OPHR (A LITTLE STARTLED) Who?

PUB Our boy, Scipio.

OPHR He will be here soon.

PUB He may not be here long.....

Ophridia, or any of us. Well, let us play.
Rome must bear the engines of her own cupidity.

MUSIC OF THEME CARRYING OVER TO

YOUNG DAVIUS Hannibal, Hannibal rise ... look to the South.
the Alps!

HANNIBAL There, white as crystal, within the pale blue
Arc of Heaven, Ariadne lies in her childless misery.
Oh Goddess of clouds and snows and stars,
We clasp you with our nighttimes
Hopes and fears, regrets and jealousies,
Until, transforming us, you give us wings
To thunder dawn's explosions through destroying skies
Spreading the white light of our uncommon love.
.....How are the men, Davius?

Y. DAVIUS Powdered by snow.

HANN Davius, this is a miracle.
See how the sun's eyes burn above his bride
Who licks his tears to ice and screws his heart
Into the voiceless deeds and windy regions of the mind.
So love, is frozen into the miracles of time:
Statues, states, and messages,
And we go conquering.

Y. DAVIUS It makes one fearful.

HANN It should make you glad.
Up! Up! Everyone!
Bind the trumpets to the sun!
We climb these steps to victory!
Up! Kick them up,
Davus! Hanno! (QUICK FADE)

DAVIUS He stood before us on those slopes that seemed to
lead to heaven,

His plumes as gorgeous as the sun,
Straight and firm he was, eyes black as the river.
I saw him, as it were, for the first time,
And much has entered my heart since then,
But nothing to dislodge that memory.
We are children until such moments,
And then we are something else;
Much later are we men.

(FADE)

(A PAUSE)

HANNIBAL (ADDRESSING THE ARMY)

Soldiers!

You who were with me at Saguntum,
Who laughed among the spears Gaul shook at you, who
among the peaks of the Pyrenees were not astounded
beyond the measure of your manhood --

Are you afraid now?

The Alps are less formidable than your fears which
bend only cowards.

The path is here; it is before us. It has been
trod before by women and children.

It cannot stop men who have a prize to win and
must only strive to win it.

The fat plains of Italy await.

The final rich harvest that is Rome is ours for the
taking.

There is a clamour in the blood that shouts yes!

And to any other question: No!

Our foe is not this stone.

Here is a rampart of a kind
which every man must face.

It is his fear,
which every man must climb.

We are chilled at the aspect of these still and

The cursed guides led us astray...!

Mountain men, sinewy like goats, they were,

With muttering eyes.

(FADE)

HANNIBAL What does he say?

HANNO He points up to the chasm yonder. I don't like it.

HANN I see no turning back.

HANNO I don't like it. It's a trick.

HANN Yes, it is a trick. But we'll untrick them. Mago.

MAGO Yes, dear brother.

HANN Fall back with the rear file as we push on. I will
halt at the mouth of the chasm yonder. Work your
way up to the ridge above us. I think you'll catch
a swarm of bearded men with poised rocks. They love
the game.

MAGO We'll cut their beard, Hannibal.

HANN Get going, and a good trimmingNow, Hanno, shall
we move on. I'll prick this guide in front of us.

(FADE)

SOLDIER 1 (MUTTERING) By the gods! We're going into that chasm.

SOLDIER 2 It's as black as the pit of my wife's mouth.

A SHOUT Hold!

SOLD 1 Now, what?

SOLD 2 This'll go on forever.

SOLD 3 Watch it! Above us! Avalanche!!!

SOUND HIS VOICE IS LOST IN ROAR OF AVALANCHE MINGLED WITH
SCREAMS.

HANNIBAL Hanno! Did it get you?

HANNO Hell no. Not yet anyway.

HANN It didn't spread, thank the gods!
... Did it catch the elephants?

HANNO Three of them jumped over the edge when they saw the
rock coming....Two more were bowled over.

HANNIBAL Sergeant, how's the luggage?
SERGEANT Six horses gone, sir, baggage and all. Bruises otherwise.
Here come the little beggars now!
HANNO Leaping over the stones like goats....
HANN With Mago after them. No fear, Hanno, they've not
broken us. Give them a quiverful.
HANNO Hold fire! Wait till they're down on us. (PAUSE) Now!

(FADE)

DAVIUS It was but the beginning.
We had neither peace nor rest.
Stumbling, half frozen,
We moved like sleeping men around the barrels of the
mountains.
Again and again the little men swept down on us,
Until we got above them, on the wind swept heights,
Encountering the first of winter's storms ...
And then on our knees we moved,
No hope or regret of the past,
Those fat cubs of summer,
No sleep but a frozen rest
Like the hardness of bone, statuesque;
Hearts once swollen with hope, now
Contracted in death.
Wives and mothers of our brave land,
Whispering like the wind;
I have seen them, in my dreams,
On long campaigns, when the hard
Line of the horizon fastened the sky,
I have seen them in the winter sky,
Dumb shapes, disfiguring the land,
Whispering of the palms of our homeland,
And the green riverbanks, and the surging sea,
Of the city, white in the moonlight, and we

Holding hands, of children's little laughter.....

Then are a man's eyes hot with tears

That the snow strikes, but cannot freeze.

(PAUSE)

HANNIBAL (FROM A DISTANCE) Hanno!

HANNO I am here.

HANN (CLOSE NOW) Wrapped in white, I see.

HANNO A damn cold cloth.

HANN Hanno, where is our guide? Is that him beside you?

HANNO This is a swinish Gaul. The Swiss I neither know nor care.

HANN Are you in a bad way, Hanno?

HANNO No more than usual. You know I always imagine the worst. If I can just follow in your tracks.....

HANN That goddamned guide has deserted us.

HANNO I would like an umbrella for the stones, then.

HANN No fear of that now.

HANNO Down below, he'll signal his pals. So we'll just get out of this den of ice and a mountain of granite will be rolled over us.

HANN I thought I'd get above the storm. But it has no top. We'll camp here for the night.

HANNO I'll give the order. Sergeant!

SOUND FOLLOWING HIS MUFFLED VOICE THE SLOW WAIL OF A TRUMPET.

HANN I think the snow is stopping.

HANNO And so, an icy night

With icy wings.

And a thousand dead in the night.

Even our snores frozen in air.

I would almost look forward to it myself

But of course I don't dare.

HANN You will forget all this, Hanno, among soft fields, tambourines, and clapping feet.

HANNO Jokes! You always do that you know.

Joke with me at the worst times,

Under the flying spears, in the blood wet rain,

Just when I'm getting morose.

But, seriously, this time I don't see how
you're going to get us out of this mess.

HANN

We've had it as hard before.

Remember the Cucumpo.

HANNO

But this enemy won't retreat. He's got frozen blood.

HANN

He can be surmounted like the rest. Come on,
let's get some sleep.

(FADE TO)

SOUND

WHINING NOISE OF BLIZZARD. FADE OUT THROUGH FIRST
TWO LINES.

DAVIUS

Did we make it in the end?

I'm not sure. Many died.

And on their feet too, as if in battle,

Some with hands to their lips as if holding cups,

And when we got down to the valleys

The mountain men tore rocks from the cliffs

And flung them on us.

And there wasn't a straggler didn't get the long
knife in his back.

But we, oh out of the night of our eyes

Made out a dawn of trees in the end.

It was far from us, in the fluttering dark wind,

Like the breathing of someone long lost whom

You hear in your sleep.

There it was. Italy. Far even to the glistening
eagles eyes,

A purple mist below in the wind,

A rose coloured leaf on the dawn.

We had no voice for cheers

But our tears were noisy.

MAHERBAL

Hannibal!

HANNIBAL

And now the lesson
To learn in battle,
Lesson of spears,
Now, foot-swinging through the bird frightened air
Let us fill the valley with faces,
The floors of Rome with fear
And we will lighten their places
With the sword swinging near.

I have felt my way here
Through the dark forest,
Over the gleaming river,
Leapt the rock cage.
Now, for the human rage!

END OF PART 1.

MUSIC

THEME TO

PUBLIUS

Scipio?

SCIPIO

Yes, father.

PUB

It's a clear night. You should have good sail for Spain.

SCIPIO

I think so.

PUB

Time to face a brutal test,
There's Hannibal up there
Like the mountain god, invincible,
And we must conquer him
Though we're hardly men, weak-eyed,
Weak sinewed, talking-silly, opposed
On principle, wrangling women.
Who have you been with, Helena?

SCIPIO

Yes.

PUB

I suppose you made promises?

SCIPIO

Well, we.....

PUB

You had no right, Scipio,
No right on the brink of war.

SCIPIO

Surely, Hannibal.....

PUB

It's a bitter story I have to tell, Scipio.

I returned from a meeting, just now,
And passed through the square.
The fat Sempronius was on the shoulders
Of the mob, and they were cheering him.
But when they saw me -- I might
Have been a snake -- they drew
Back and growled, and then, as I showed no sign,
Grew derisive. One plucked my coat.
--I saw another lift a stone.

SCIPIO

How dare they!

PUB

I was not afraid of them, showed only calm,
And so passed by in peace.
Such men are brave to fear alone.
But I was afraid in a different way
For theirs are the itching fingers that would scratch
Rome's eyes, tear down her walls, and scrawl
Obscenities on the shoulders of gods.

SCIPIO

By Jupiter, they should all be whipped.

PUB

When we reconnoitred north of Massilia
I had a chance to see this Hannibal in action.
He moves with cunning speed:
Where he intends to go you never know
Until it's too late, and then the blow
Has the power of fate. He has complete control,
Because his men, as fierce as he, love him as a god.

SCIPIO

I'm afraid he will stop our word making.

PUB

He mocks words.
He does what others dream about.
There lies his power.
Not a man but a maniac we face,
Because he sees his dreams as the reality....

SCIPIO

Still, he is a man and must fall.

PUB

Not until he wakes from his dream, until then
He is more than man, and his men are more than we.

For you see this mob,
This divided Rome,
And Mars, dissolved, on the Capitoline....
Consider this mob with helmets on,
This insolent, cross, depravity, this Roman populace...
Can you see them battling?
Battling Hannibal's men
Whose love is hate,
Rape, plunder, and red muck of battle?
My god, son, is it a wonder
I wonder, a marvel
I fear the surge of arms?
What will they do, this mob, with helmets on?
I have faced before
The eager spear
That wants to be warm
With human gore,
Heard the war cry ringing on the shields,
Stamp and sweat of horses maddened by the whips,
Blood on their thighs in the thickening grass,
Brave men down in the whispering place,
Feeling the black ooze welling to their eyes,
Seen the gray plumes, shake of reins, short, swift,
Are of the altering blades...
Surge, sigh, rush of war
Like the sea passing over.....
I tell you that for this you must be like the hound or the boar,
Caring for nothing until the fight is over.
.....But Rome's men,
Fat, easy, pleasure loving,
What will they do....will they stand, or run?

SCIPPIO We Romans are too proud to run very far.
PUB Take it as a testament Scipio, boy!
Rome is too proud to run,
Lacking cunning, courage, and even control
Rome is too high to fall.
OPHRIDIA (AT A DISTANCE) Publius?
PUB Good-bye, Scipio. You know yourself.
But steel yourself with this intent,
That if you look down death's endless throat
You do not fear its foreign accent...
SCIPPIO Good-bye, father.
OPHR Publius, was that Scipio?
PUB He will bid you farewell in the morning.
OPHR Publius, come in. This is our last night.
PUB Yes.
OPHR I feel that my life is slipping away with you.
PUB I will be back soon, Ophridia,
Don't fear for me.
Put your hopes in the boy, Scipio.
In his quiet way he's got the look of a warrior.
OPHR Are you men born to die in battle?
PUB No bitterness, Ophridia.
OPHR I know.
PUB It's our last moon for awhile.
OPHR Yes....
PUB I must leave early.
OPHR So soon to be in the fray?
PUB This is where we first made love. Remember?
OPHR Oh, Publius, dear...
PUB Remember?
OPHR Of course...
PUB And here I laughed as a child
When our old nurse, Andromache,

Tickled me behind the knees.
Here, I strung my bow,
And went out on the fatal chase...
After rabbits in the park....
In the Springtime, sleeping here,
I looked out between the branches
To the early moon, and felt the muscles
Growing along my legs and arms,
And every morning, looked for the beard
That seemed so long in coming,
And my voice deepened like the baying hounds...
And here, my mother
Told me that I was to become a leader among men,
A soldier of Rome, and taking on the pride
Of manhood long before I became a man
I sailed with those men of iron hearts
And fought for Rome in many lands,
And grew in stature and in thought.
And here, Ophridia, I brought you
When the branches swelled with early Spring,
My bride -- to ease the aching heart of love
And found a family.
We have had our happiness, Ophridia.
Pray for the young men
Who still have their lives ahead of them.
I see you as you always were,
One of those young men.....
But, Publius, do be careful out there,
Do not stand too far in front of the army
Lest an arrow find you.
I know that you must do your duty,
But not carelessly.
You must live to give us victory.

OPHR

PUB Ophridia, we will come home with garlands on our
heads dragging Hannibal after -- and be together again,
.....Good-bye.....dearest one.

OPHR ...Publius...

SOUND RECEDING FOOTSTEPS

OPHR And he has gone. And next, my son.
Oh, Jupiter, fill my heart with some kind of hell,
Some fantasy of joy
That I may be light of foot
With a light in my eye
And mince a little
And manage with a smile to say, farewell.
Farewell. Farewell. To all my happiness
I must say with happiness, farewell.
Farewell, my son. I must say
And not cry, Good-bye.
Son, you are beautiful and gay,
But go, quickly now, and die.

SOUND DISTANT MARCHING FEET AND CHEERING

OPHR This is the fate of all we women,
That in the midst of the cheering
Our Throats should stick with grief,
Because we know how slight life is, though how cunning.
New sounds, signs, came in upon us.
Rome shivers, breaks the bonds of her time,
Takes the place of a world.
But the other tale,
The one of the men and women,
Will never be told.

Well, from the issues of these battles
May a new dawn grow bold,
And Rome win back her heaven!

MUSIC SMALL AND BEAUTIFUL ENDING WITH A FEW DISTANT
FLOURISHES OF TRUMPET

SOUND A HORSE GALLOPING OVER HARD GROUND COMES CLOSE AND STOPS

MAGO Hannibal, brother, do you know the Romans are at the
 river mouth in front.

HANNIBAL Far?

MAGO Five miles.

HANN Warned of our approach?

MAGO They're waiting for us.

HANN Good, Mago, my dear brother. Thank you for this news.
 Hold my hand. You are going to be in this. Do you
 welcome it?

MAGO Welcome it! I need it. I love it. Action is my bride,
 I the lustful groom.
 I've climbed these mountains to meet her, waited these
 months, grown pale and ragged for want of her: not even
 you, Hannibal, can hold me from this embrace.

HANN Why, Mago! Your dear brother! But don't strangle her.
 And watch that your passion does not....

MAGO Oh Hannibal you advise me..I'm a calculating lover.

HANN Then here's a calculation that will draw her. This
 army now, go and bother it, give it small advantages,
 And when it comes, cut at its advance, but not to stop
 it. Let it chase you to the meadow opposite. There, we'll
 hold our tryst. There's a sunken marsh behind it, to one
 side. Hide there with five hundred men. Draw the reeds
 around you.
 We'll let them advance on us, and engage. But when
 you see a puff of smoke, that's your signal to make
 appearance on their rear and do assault.

MAGO I'll woo her to the ground, dear brother!

SOUND HORSE GALLOPS OFF TO

MUSIC BRIDGE TO

SOLDIER 1 Look at 'em!

SOLD 2 Enough for one day.

SOLD 3 Queer to think that I crossed those peaks and here
 we are. I thought I was a dead man.

SOLD 4 And I too.

SOLD 3 After awhile, up there, I stopped thinking, or caring,
 y'know?

SOLD 4 We were all like that. It was like a dream.

SOLD 3 But I'm out now -- and awake -- and I still don't care.
 Those Romans now. I'm not a bit afraid. I thought we'd
 never stand up to them that had such a name. I thought
 my liver would turn at the sight of them. But now I
 think they're children. I don't think we'll have any
 trouble at all...

SOLD 4 No, they seem like children.
 We climbed those peaks, so what's a Roman army....

SOLD 2 Here they come!

SOLD 3 It's that man there, you know. It's Hannibal. He'd
 do anything...

(FADE)

HANNO Hannibal, the men have no fear in them.

HANN Not they.
 Not on this day.
 (HE SHOUTS) See, that Roman standard in the sun!
 A talent for the man who cuts it down!
 Now, the first volley, Hanno.

SOUND TRUMPETS

HANN Away!!!

SOUND TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS. SHOUTS.

HANN Second!

SOUND TRUMPETS

HANN Away!!!

SOUND TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS ETC.

HANN Third!

SOUND TRUMPETS

SOUND TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS ETC.

HANN Maherbal, let them get in close.

MAHERBAL To my swords point, Hannibal.

SOUND TUMULT OF AN ARMY IN HAND TO HAND COMBAT. SHOUTS.
GROANS OF THE DYING. CLANK OF ARMS. ALL MERGED.
ONLY HANNIBAL'S VOICE IS DISTINCT.
SUSTAIN.

HANNIBAL Drive them!
Back to the Tiber, Romans!
Drive them, soldiers!
Where is the brave Cornelius, Romans?
Has he deserted you?
Push! Push!
Defeat is in your mouths, Romans, in your ears,
and in your souls.
Push, soldiers. Close the ranks there!

HANNO Hannibal! Hannibal!

HANN Where is this Roman army that we heard about?
Go back, mother's boys!
Back to Rome!

HANNO Hannibal!

HANN Yes, Hanno, it is time.
Our left flank is hard pushed, and there's no
helping it with their numbers.
Give the signal for Mago to attack.

HANNO Gladly.

HANN Well, here's a Roman officer broken through.
Leave him, men. I'll take him.

BBBB Here, dog.....

ROMAN So you are Hannibal.

HANN I am. But you'll forget it.

SOUND THEY FIGHT. GRUNTS AND CLANKS OF ARMS.

SOUND TRUMPETS

SOUND A LOUDER ROAR IS HEARD AS MAGO AND MEN ATTACK
THE ROMAN REAR.

ROMAN 1 Hannibal is attacking us from the rear!

ROM 2 We're lost.

ROM 3 Our general is down...

ROM 1 Sound the retreat!

ROM 3 The retreat!!

SOUND TRUMPET HASTILY BLOWN. DIN DIES AWAY.
FADE TO SILENCE.

SOLDIER (EMBARASSED) (CLEARS HIS THROAT)
Ahem.mmm. The Roman standard, great Hannibal.....
It was (ahem) I who took it.

HANNIBAL Thank you. Tell us, for this is a feat worthy of
words, soldier, how you took it.

SOLDIER Well, sir.....I.....

HANN I remember seeing the first standard bearer drop with
an arrow in his throat. I saw another Roman pick it up.
And then, we engaged.

SOLD Well, you see my wound, sir --

HANN Yes, through the thigh.

SOLD I thought I was more hurt than I was, sir.

HANN Ah, I see. You were not on your feet then. You had
been struck and lay groaning.

SOLD (QUICKLY) No, not groaning, sir.
(THE MEN AROUND HANNIBAL CHUCKLE)

HANN Laying quietly, then.

SOLD Yes. (IN A SMALL VOICE) I thought I was ^{sore}~~sure~~ hurt.

HANN Go on.

SOLD (SLIGHTLY ENCOURAGED) Well, then, I looked up. There
were a lot of men around me, being in the thick of it,
you know. Then I felt a foot on me, and looked up.

It was a Roman. I saw that he was carrying standard.
So, I thought then.....

HANN Of the talent.

SOLD Not only that, sir.

HANN So you came suddenly to life, jumped up....

SOLD Yes, that's it.

HANN Bounced the Roman bearer.....

SOLD Yes, you see...

HANN Grabbed the standard.....

SOLD That's right, sir.

HANN And made a dash back to your own lines.

SOLD It took.....a bit of fighting, sir.

HANN I'm sure it did. And I've never heard of a more ingenious way of capturing a standard.

SOLD Well.....thank you, sir.

HANN Here is your reward, the talent I promised.

SOLD Oh.....

HANN Which you will give to #3 Squadron who were the first in battle.
They became the first in battle not by lying along the ground, but by the use of arms....
(HANNIBAL DRAWS HIS SWORD)
Like this you see...

SOLD Please, sir, don't.....

HANN (AND CHASES HIM BACK INTO THE RANKS)
By plying their arms. Like this.

SOUND A RESOUNDING WALLOP

SOLD Help, oh! Help!

HANN But with the edge not the flat of their swords.
(THE ARMY LAUGHS)

HANN I think he'll be a more upstanding soldier now.

HANNO Here is the wine, Hannibal.

HANN And now our first victory is over. Let us drink to it.
The battle of the Trebia.
To the wine, then, and the feast, soldiers!
Fatten your sides this once,
For who knows what tomorrow changes!

HANNO That victory was almost too easy, Hannibal.

HANN I know.

HANNO At least a third of the Roman army slipped away from
the left flank.

HANN And many more.
Well. We start immediately south. We'll give them no rest.
Bring forth the prisoners.
Perhaps we'll find into what hole their great army slipped.

SOUND LAUGHTER. SOUNDS OF RIOT AND MUSIC LEADING UP TO DRUM
BEAT MENACING DISTINCT. OUT. A PAUSE.

HANNO No sign, yet.

HANN You will hear them presently. They are heavily armed
and have no stealth.

SCOUND QUIET FOOTSTEPS

HANN Ah, Mago. Are the men in position?

MAGO Everything is ready.

HANNO A cold, foggy dawn. It is perfect.

HANN I will raise my hand, rise then.
When I give the signal, charge. If luck holds we should
catch their long column between the ridge and the lake
and slaughter them like pigs.

HANNO How did you figure they would come this way?

HANN I know their minds. They thought we were on the other
side of the lake. By skirting it they thought to come
behind us. I know Cornelius' type.

HANNO Yes, he's with them, isn't he?

HANN He's a good soldier.
But the command is split. Sempronius commands too.
On separate days.

HANNO Sempronius?

HANN A politician and a demagogue. You know the kind,
we have them in Carthage, too.

MAGO Ssssst!
PAUSE

SOUND FAINT CLINK OF ARMS

HANNO (WHISPERING) They're not thirty yards from us.

SOUND DISTANT CONVERSATION. A LAUGH.

HANNO Now?

HANN Wait!

SOUND CONTINUES LOUDER BG.

HANNO I can see the lead man. Cornelius?

HANN I don't know. Wait till the head of the column passes us.
(PAUSE)

HANN Now. Upon them, Carthage!!!

SOUND A CHORUS OF YELLS

ROMAN 1 Great Jupiter, save us!!!

ROM 2 Die where you stand, Romans! Do not surrender!

SOUND OF BATTLE DIES AWAY GRADUALLY TO

MUSIC BRIDGE TO NARRATOR'S THEME. HOLD BG TO END OF SIXTH LINE.

DAVIUS The Romans had no chance at Trasimene,
Nor at Trebia;
Hannibal was too clever,
Surpassed their cunning at every turn,
Always chose the terms of battle
And knew beforehand that he would win.
Has any man outshone him?
All that Scipio knew was learnt from Hannibal.

And so we fought and marched our way southward.
Cornelius and Sempronius had both escaped at Trasimene,
But the Roman army by its losses was in grievous state.
In Rome, every boy ^{who} ~~that~~ could hold a spear was marshalled
And old men who had fought Carthage in the days of Hamilcar
Were pressed to fight again.
There was much libation and praying to the gods.
Rome showed her strength and the allies stood by her.
But many a mother moved in mourning
And every month when the lists came in
There was wailing in the houses.
A winter passed. Spring came in,
And a new Roman army took the field,
More powerful and with a sterner confidence
Than before, knowing it had to win.
And now, Fabius, the wary,
Took the field as dictator,
A special rank and power in recognition of emergency,
Took the field himself with
Publius ~~and~~ Cornelius and Sempronius
And marched northwards, there where we awaited him.

SOUND

MUMBLING OF VOICES.

MAGO

Where is my brother, Hannibal?

HANNO

He is inspecting the troops again.

MAGO

Again?

HANNO

Again.

MAGO

This is unlike him.

HANNO

Oh he's in a fret, I'll tell you.

MAHERBAL

He's not himself.

HANNO

He stamps around like a sore lion.

MAGO

What's the cause?

HANNO

Fah! Maybe the rain, maybe the Spring. He's like a

lovesick boy. Instead of sleeping, tramps around the camp at night, kicking the fires. It's been hard living with him.

MAGO Young Davius should know.

HANNO Perhaps, but I think he does not know himself. He gave me hell because he said I was too friendly with the men. That's strange, coming from him.

MAHERBAL He's not his cheery self. What we need is action -- a good battle would bring him out of it.

HANNO Or a good woman. What brought you up here Mago?

MAGO The romans are on the march.

MAHERBAL Hah! Good.

HANNO What do they look like?

MAGO Tougher than they have looked, and more numerous.

HANNO It won't be so easy this time.

MAHERBAL Hannibal will like this.

HANNO Yes, he swears he must take Rome this summer.

MAGO That's a worthy thought.

MAHERBAL If anyone can do it, he can, isn't that so?

(PAUSE)

MAGO The allies?

HANNO None have come over to us yet.

MAGO They do stick by Rome, don't they?

HANNO They do, the bastards.

MAGO Maybe this time....if we defeat the Romans again...

HANNO Here comes Hannibal now. Look at his scowl.

MAGO That is a countenance. What's the matter, Hannibal, lost your brother?

HANN Good to see you, brother. It's about time, I may say.

MAGO You've got a face that would scare a legion.

HANN Certainly our soldiers won't. They look like crows. We've lost two thousand this month from the fever. And exactly one elephant left.

MAGO Is that all that troubles you?

HANN No. (PAUSE) Well, are the Romans moving?
MAGO Yes. In three columns. About fifteen hundred horse.
Must be 80,000 foot.
HANNO WHISTLES
HANN In fighting shape, this time?
MAGO As straight faced as their shields. They mean to win.
HANN So do we.
MAGO Fabius leads.... with Cornelius and Sempronius.
HANN We shall test this Fabius.
MAGO They're beating up the road with dust. It moves
straight this way.
HANN Brother, this makes me feel like wine. Fill the
cups Hanno. And we'll drink to Cannae.
MAGO Who's Cannae?
HANN Ha, ha, Mago, you're good. Cannae is a place. The
place where we will set these Romans on their heels.
MAGO Well then.....to Cannae.
ALL Cannae!!
MUSIC BRIDGE TO NARRATOR
DAVIUS Well, Junes, Cannae was a place,
It was a day too --
A day I'll not forget
Nor Rome, nor the world,
A day of death.
A windy day, too.
With the dust flying straight
Into the Roman noses.
Hannibal had picked the spot
And lured the Romans to it.
I think Fabius was against the battle
But the people of Rome demanded victory
And Sempronius, the demagogue,
Thinking of political advantage
Insisted on it

(FADE)

FABIUS Well, gentlemen, how are your commands?

PUBLIUS In good shape, Fabius.

SEMPRONIUS Ready for action, Fabius.

FABIUS I don't like it. Hannibal has chosen his ground well. We outnumber him, supposedly are in braver spirits. But he's picked the ground well. He knows that the sun will be in our faces.

SEMPRONIUS Maybe the glint of our arms will dazzle him.

FABIUS I've been quite plain, Sempronius, from the beginning. Our allies are neither with us, nor against us. They sit quietly to see which way the battle goes. As long as we have strength they will follow us. If we lose they may follow Hannibal. Then.....Rome falls.

SEMPR How can we lose? Never before have we had such an army. The Carthaginians are weakened by disease. In all our skirmishes we have had the best of them.

PUB That is an old trick, Sempronius, so we will think them weak.

FABIUS What is your opinion, Publius?

PUB I do not think that we should attack tomorrow.

SEMPR Ah!!

PUB The ground is unsuitable, as you say and, we may be sure, Hannibal has a careful plan in mind. Look how he manoeuvred us into this position. Well, we must meet craft with craft. I say: face him out. Let him attack if he wants to. Under no circumstances should we do battle on his terms. Surely the Trebia has taught us that much.

SEMPR You call yourselves Romans! By Jupiter, I tell you, Rome has lost her men. The people want a Roman victory and we must give it them. Tomorrow. I will carry the standard myself.

How can we sit here like dumb men in the market, fidgetting,

fretting, waiting always for Hannibal to do something. He must laugh at us. "Romans", he must say, "See, these Romans, they are clay. I knead them, thus, between my fingers. Thus I scatter them".

Is that what we sit here for today? To be made fools of by barbarians? No. Tomorrow we must fight -- or else go back to our farming and lose the name of Roman.

FABIUS

While you pause for breath, Sempronius, I must say, you are acting the child. Do you think that we like inaction -- that we do not wish to defeat this Hannibal as quickly as possible? But it is not by market speeches that we shall do so. Do you not see....

SEMPR

I have seen and heard. I leave you. Child you called me. I think that term may be misapplied. I think it should refer to men who have lost their manhood, who refuse to recognize responsibility, who have lost the capacity for decision. If you do not fight tomorrow you betray your name, and Rome's. Chew on that. Good night.

PUBLIUS

The fool.

FABIUS

I'm afraid he may entangle us tomorrow. He'll do something rash.

(PAUSE)

PUB

Well, there's no more for me to say tonight. We must have faith in Roman arms.

FABIUS

I don't know what I would do without you, Publius. You are the true leader here, the heart and spirit of our cause.

PUB

I was brought up to serve Rome.

FABIUS

How's your boy?

PUB

He is doing marvels in Spain. Already leads a legion.

FABIUS

A mere boy!

PUB

Yes, but unlike Sempronius, wise here.

(THEY LAUGH)

PUB

May the gods be with us tomorrow, whatever happens.

(FADE)

DAVIUS It was said too
That all that night
Hannibal walked the dark...
I do not know...
But I awoke in the hour before dawn
To see his grey form
Stalking among the tents.
I watched him for awhile
Hunched with cold
And then took the wine skin to him...
YOUNG DAVIUS (WHISPERING) Hannibal!!
HANNIBAL Ah, Davius, thank you.
Y. DAVIUS Have you been up all night?
HANN With the stars.
Y. DAVIUS Tomorrow is the day.
HANN Tomorrow is the day.
Y. DAVIUS And will we win?
HANN We will be glorious.
We will show those stars
That their fixed position
Is their tragedy,
That only action lives
And death is the time before and afterwards.
How else would we know?
Y. DAVIUS Know?
HANN That we lived.
We only know that we live by what we do,
As we only know
The stars by their light,
Spring by its warmth,
Fear by its flight.
When we stop moving we are dead.
Y. DAVIUS You think deeply.

HANN The mind moves too,
In sleep, through a dream's dramas,
Awake, shaping an hour's senselessness,
which, directed, can defeat all things.

Y. DAVIUS What is your mind's direction?

HANN It has one.

Y. DAVIUS Rome's destruction?

HANN Go to bed.

You make me mad.

Y. DAVIUS Pardon, sir?

HANN Go!

 He parrots me.

What was it an old man said:

Only in love we live.

And I: only in action.

A moving principle: and I suppose

There are as many of these principles

As bodies in heaven.

Rome's destruction, he said. Destruction.

An agony to awaken to, that,

That I only live to destroy.

 Outside Saguntum I knew it,

When that old fool yelled at me -

Rome will avenge us, he said.

I tore their city down

And slaughtered their children,

Because they had stood up to me,

Obstructing my joy.

But I knew, in my soul, I knew

That I had only one direction, to destroy:

And that is no direction.

I want to destroy Rome, I said, but Rome is a toy

Of creation, and what if I destroy it?

It may grow again, anywhere, anytime,
You lop off a plant and it grows again,
Or there may be another Rome, somewhere
Else, under another name.....

The job is endless, a chopping
At stalks whose roots lie

Too deep to die. Am I

The demon gardener, raging among the weeds?
A man possessed of hatred for ~~the~~^{the} growing scene?

And why? Is Springtime my necessity,
That I must tear its pears and smudge its green?

There's nothing at all behind me,
Nothing at all, but the chill wind....

When I was a child
My father took me to the Temple of...Temple of...
High was it and strong,
His chin sunk on his chest,
And I felt a wind
As from a great space
Moving among the worshippers;
My father took me to Astarte's altar,
White, inlaid with gold,
And stood me in the place,
His hand on my shoulder.

"This boy who swears
Eternal hatred on Rome,
That he shall destroy it..."

And I did not look
At his face.

Sleep! Sleep!
For I will destroy them tomorrow
If I do nothing more. Never anything ever!!!

MUSIC

RISING TO

HANNIBAL

(WITHOUT EMOTION)

You know our plan.

I mentioned it

And here repeat it.

Heed well.

In our centre we place

First the Baldric slingers,

Archerers, behind, a line of

Light troops. And thirdly

Our best Spanish Infantry.

On our wings as foot the Gauls

And Libyans because they are surest

In attack. And beyond each wing

The flower of our Corps, Numidian cavalry.

Always the Romans use the wedge formation

In attack, to break through centrally --

There, our toughness lies --

There, we do not break --

But bend -- making a semi-circle, so,

And then we throw around the whole

A net of cavalry. Thus, we have them.

(PAUSE)

MAHERBAL

It's daring.

MAGO

I'm for it. Where do I command?

HANN

You should know. On the wings.

MAHERBAL

And I?

HANN

At centre. You're the toughness that will not be broken.

HANNO

But, damn it, how do we know the Romans will attack?

HANN

You, Hanno, will make sure of that. Like me, you're
crafty.

Do you know the Roman generals?

HANNO Fabius, Publius Cornelius, and Sempronius. So?

HANN Sempronius is a politician.
He is thinking of his return to Rome,
The victory wreath flung around his head,
The man who broke the enemy at Cannae.
Cornelius, no. He is experienced and we cannot fool him.
Take five hundred men, Hanno,
Attack Sempronius' lines,
Knock out his outposts if you can --
Insult his soldiers, and trust
That Sempronius will take the initiative.
So, he commits the whole army to attack.

HANNO Ah. As good as done. When do we start?

HANN After breakfast.

MUSIC BRIDGE TO

ROMAN 1 They make a queer looking army, these Carthaginians.

ROMAN 2 They do. I don't think there's a man that's dressed alike.
Some with long shields and short swords, some with long
swords and short shields. Some with armour and some
naked to the girdle. Some with knotted hair at their
necks, some with it in rags down to their shoulders.
Some pale, some brown, some black, and some red. Like
a travelling show.

ROMAN 3 A fierce show, that.

ROM 2 I don't think it. They've never had a real battle with
us. What they've won they've won by craft and noise.

ROM 1 Seeing us, they must be terrified.

ROM 3 As much as we, I guess.

ROM 1 Speak for yourself. I'm not.

ROM 2 Do you really think there'll be a fight today?

ROM 1 Didn't you hear our general -- Sempronius?
He said: this will be Rome's greatest day.

ROMAN 3 I don't think Publius Cornelius liked it.

ROMAN 1 Cornelius? Fah!

He has no weight. He's scared of his shadow.

Don't worry. Sempronius will handle him.

ROMAN 2 They say Cornelius has fought many battles.

ROMAN 1 One too many. He's senile now. No. Sempronius knows best. He's one of us. He speaks our language.

ROMAN 3 Well, I hope so.

ROMAN 1 Look! Here they come now. Libyans.

ROMAN 2 There must be a thousand of them!

ROMAN 3 I wonder what they're up to...

ROMAN 1 No good, you may be sure. Ah, and here comes Sempronius to lead us.

SEMPRONIUS Men, I'm just one of you -- a Roman! And I've had enough of sitting in my tent. I want action. My sword is restless. It wants to set itself in Carthaginian flesh. All Rome awaits us -- the word from Cannae -- victory. They've begun to wonder whether there were any true Romans left -- and I mean men that could fight all day and take a wench to bed on the same night.

(LIGHT LAUGHTER)

Sure, boys. But let's leave the wenches and the wine till afterwards. It's not what I want right now. I want blood on my hands. What do you say?

(CHORUS OF ASSENT)

Alright, wait for the signal -- from me.

SOUND HE GALLOPS AWAY.

ROMAN 1 The Carthaginians are getting close.

ROMAN 2 By Jupiter.....!

ROMAN 3 They're throwing stones at our outposts!

HANNO (SHOUTING FROM A DISTANCE) Say, Romans, haven't you warmed the ground enough?

ROMAN 1 The bastard!

HANNO Aren't you afraid of getting cramps, Romans, being so close to the ground all this time? Come on out and play. Or are you afraid that we'll be too rough?...

ROMAN 2 My God the....

ROMAN 1 I'll get him !

HANNO Come, come...

I thought there were Romans in this camp. But I must be mistaken. These are boys. At least they do not act like men !

ROMAN 1 (SHOUTING BACK) You'll see, Carthage! Soon enough, you'll see.

ROMAN 2 Sempronius sets his horse and does not answer.

ROMAN 3 No, he's watching us.

ROMAN 2 Smiling !

ROMAN 1 He wants to see what we'll do ! That's obvious.

HANNO We thought we were coming to a war, Romans ! But we have found no warriors.....(HE LAUGHS)

ROMAN 1 No? Well, I'll do !

ROMAN 2 And I !

ROMAN 3 And I too !

ROMAN 4 And I !

ROMAN 5 We'll show them who are warriors !

MERGES INTO GENERAL SHOUT.

ROMAN 1 Sempronius lifts his arm ! Great Sempronius ! He points ahead ! ----- Come on, lets go ----- Onward Rome, to victory !!!

SOUND A ROAR OUT OF THOUSANDS OF THROATS.

FADE.

OFFICER Look, Cornelius !

PUBLIUS By heaven, they're being sucked into Hannibal's net. You know what this means. We are committed to the attack. Follow, then, and keep your lines. And watch my signals. We are in the centre and must crack the nut. Sound the advance.

SOUND

TRUMPET

PUBLIUS

(TO HIMSELF)

And now, great Hannibal, the test.
We are the opponents, you and I,
Who are doomed to conquer,
I through love, and you through hate,
I to build a world, you to break it's rest.

(ALoud) Alright men !

Show them the stuff you're made of.
You fought for the soil and won it,
And farmed its wealth and built
The city with your hands.
Show how you can defend it.
Your father's blood is yours.
Your sons will remember this day,
And the gods look down,
As all Rome cries:
Forward, forever and always !!!

SOUND

A BLARE OF TRUMPETS. TERRIFIC ROAR OF ASSENT.
FADE TO SOUND OF SHOUTING AND TUMULT OF ARMS HELD
BG TO END OF JONES' LINE "ALRIGHT".

DAVIUS

Ah! --

JONES

Are you alright, Davius? Alright?

DAVIUS

Yes, alright. I live for awhile,
I heard the echoing shouts,
The Romans coming, that was all,
The impact of two great armies,
And then.....
Oh I grew old in that brief sphere,
I saw death.....
I saw its face.....

JONES

What happened?

DAVIUS

It went as Hannibal planned it --
Perfectly -- the Romans netted
And slaughtered like wolves
As they fought
Ringed round

The shrieking and the blood. Oh !

(A SECONDS PAUSE)

It was through Publius Cornelius
That Rome won the day.....

JUNES

Rome !

DAVIUS

We won the field

But Rome won the day.

It was Publius Cornelius.

He stood

Towering above the battle,

Heaving his bright sword around him,

He seemed transformed,

Out of ordinary man

To a man that might have been --

A giant -- out of some other time.

And no one could get near him --

He killed our men like flies,

Though they ringed him round

And poked at him with spears

As if at a lion -- at last Hannibal,

With Hanno, came near and stood beyond the ring.

SOUND

TUMULT OF BATTLE. DOWN BG.

HANNO

I've never seen such a man,

Hannibal. He's made of iron.

Look at his eyes. It's as if

A god possessed him.

We cannot kill him.

HANNIBAL

Cannot kill him? We shall see.

(SHOUTS) Roman ! You are brave.

Now tell us before we kill you

-- what your name is?

DAVIUS

(AS IF HE WERE THERE. IN A HALF WHISPER)

The Roman paused in the midst of the fighting
as did the Carthaginians and looked straight at
Hannibal, breathing hard, but tall and proud.

PUBLIUS I am a Roman, Hannibal.

HANNIBAL You have the look of a leader, too.
Surrender, Roman, and I will give you life
Far greater than you ever knew.

PUB To be a Roman is enough.

HANN Not enough when Rome lies earthward.

PUB You will never take Rome.
I know you, Hannibal.
It will seem strange to you
But I know you as a son.
You will not take Rome
Because before this day is done
You will have seen what Rome is,
Not the mailed, arrogant power
That you imagined it was,
But it hangs upon a thread,
But a thread that you, Hannibal,
Nor no man can cut asunder --
Some day you may know what that thread is.

HANN This sounds anything but Roman.

PUB So you have won this field,
You will win no longer.
Your brother, Hasdrubal's head,
Will be tossed in upon you,
Your men, some day, will curse
The time you lived on
For you have cast a doom upon them.....

HANN Is that all?

PUB And your curse is
That whatever you do will make Rome stronger,
Because all your acts,
Cunning, noise, are in a void,
Like the flailing feather.
Having no love, you can build no other.

HANN I will see you face down in the mud.

PUB And at the bottom of your pit is.....fear.

HANN Fear?

PUB Fear of nothingness -- it is against this fear that you have built your life.

HANN Who are you to speak like the god of thunder?
Never mind the future,
It is the present that deals.
Your army is destroyed !
Rome stands naked before us --
All Italy is ours.
Get aside there,
We will see who is stronger.

PUB Then fight, poor Hannibal.

HANN Very gladly, stranger.
With my bare sword
I'll bare the bones of you.

PUB And I will bear another truth to you.

SOUND OF TWO MEN FIGHTING. CLANK OF ARMOUR AND SWORDS. GRUNTS.

HANN There ! Ahhh. Now I've got you.
Here it is, Roman, under your throat.
The truth you fear.

PUB Not at all, Hannibal. That's nothing to fear.

HANN Then.....there!! It has you.

SOUND A GASP

HANN Now speak ! Let the eloquence of your blood foretell the future.

PUB (DYING) Good-bye, Ophridia; Good-bye, Scipio.
Never mind. Rome is greater than all these dyings.
As long as we believe, so long she'll believe in us.
(HE DIES)
PAUSE.

HANNO Well, that's the end of him. Good work, Hannibal.

HANN (BREATHING HARD) Who is he?

HANNO I don't know.

HANN Find out, quickly. Fetch a prisoner.

HANNO Right away.

HANN Now.....take off his helmet.

Y. DAVIUS Yes, sir.

(PAUSE FOR AN AWESTRUCK MOMENT)

Y. DAVIUS Why -- he's an old man....

SOUND A DRUM BEAT LIKE THE MISSING OF A HEART BEAT.

DAVIUS I was near Hannibal, Junes.

I was beside him --

He shook as if from a blow,

Leaning over, lips white,

And moving, forming words

That no one else could hear....

HANN (IN A BARE WHISPER) Why, there's my father --

(A BRIEF DAZED MOMENT)

HANNO Ah. here's your man, Hannibal. Well, Roman, who is this dead officer?

ROMAN The flower of Rome, our Publius Cornelius.

HANNO Well! See who you've killed, Hannibal?

HANN It doesn't matter.

What difference could it possibly make.....?

HANNO I thought you

MUSIC DARK AND SWIRLING DROWNS THE REST OF HIS SENTENCE OUT.

DAVIUS Hannibal was a dreamer,

That was something we never understood,

He walked into his tent and never reappeared,

Though the slaughter went on into the night,

And we built fires and in the light,

Saw what a Roman army was,

A small ring of men, red streaked,

Still fighting...no more than a dozen odd.

We won the field, but they won the day,

A day on which Rome could build her Empire,

With a smile in her eyes,

We lay down to sleep that night

Where we had fought,

But we knew it.

And Hannibal knew it, and something else besides.

MUSIC

FADE IN WITH SLOW MUSIC. A SWEEP OF A HARP. A RATHER
DISJOINTED SAD GATHERING OF ALL THE THEMES OF THE PLAY
THEN SOFTLY BG CLEAR MELODY BEHIND OPHRIDIA'S SPEECH.

OPHRIDIA'S

VOICE

Oh gods, save us now

From the evil of this foe.

That we must rise and rise

Above him and defeat him now, we know.

I am Ophridia. I had a husband.

And he is dead. And on his ashes rise

The greatness that is Rome

Forever. And therefore do we go,

Women, old men, and children

Out on the wall in our iron woe,

To fight till the last of all

Rome's blood is taken in the gutter's flow,

Down to the old Tiber River

To sink in the soil and there revive her.

Enough of mourning.

I end it here.

Not tears of salt, but blood must show!

AN OLD MAN

We are all with you, Ophridia.

I fought these Carthaginians

In Sicily once. And I don't mind

Fighting them again,

Though I'm only an old man

Like all these here except for boys.

We will all go.

I'll take my rusted sword

And wear it in my hand

As I used to do.
And if there's wine, well, I say
Let's have it.
This is a job we should do cheerily.

SOUND

CHORUS OF ASSENT

MUSIC

BRIDGE TO

DAVIUS

And so they did,
Mounted their walls like soldiers --
And so you would have guessed them --
But we knew --
And Hannibal knew.

From the carnage of Cannae
We moved southwards.
Hannibal tried to win
The allies to him, took the third
Town of Italy,
Trying to cajole the Roman allies,
But without success.
Hannibal seemed to have lost direction,
Skirted Rome to clamber in the Umbrian hills,
Retraced his steps and finally
Gave the order to move on Rome.

We camped three miles
From its walls:
Still he did not give the order to attack,
But sat in his tent,
Or stood alone on the plain
For hours.....

(FADE)

HANNIBAL

Italy is mine.
I have it in my hand,

But there is Rome,
And I may win it.
But if I don't?
Father, I dreamt a dream
In which all the voices of the past
Were mocking me --
Shecebra too --. Italy is yours
They said, not Rome. But Rome is mine
If Italy encircles it. Not Rome?
I could take it in a flash.
It's men ^{are} ~~and~~ women, children,
And vultures stand on its walls, watching ---
But the air is amazing,
And you have dimmed in me,
Father -- the hatred that you stamped on me
Has passed like the bat's wing,
And I remember the boy I was
When, carefree,
One Hannibal among many,
I played along the hills of Carthage;
Sometimes with my mother,
I have lost my personal hatred,
Lost it at Cannae
When I saw Cornelius dying,
The image of my father,
With, Rome, upon his lips
As though he were speaking to a lover.
And it is this slender thread of love,
As deeply laced in us
As the roots of the lingering tree in the garden,
I cannot snap, for there is life itself...

Oh, Hannibal,
What is your opponent?
You have none
And a strange lassitude besets
Your heart.....

MUSIC

BRIDGE TO

DAVIUS

We caught a girl
And gave her to him,
As beautiful as any we had seen in Italy,
Thinking that that was the trouble,
Or else some queer disease,
Which time alone could weary.
And he forgot the camp,
And played with her like a child.
And drank much wine.
And three months we sat by those walls,
Until at last he came among us
Making as if he had never been away,
And took command again.

(FADE)

HANNIBAL

Come, come, Hanno, music. Where are your women.

HANNO

The villages are empty, Hannibal, even of women.

HANN

But Rome is not.

HANNO

Rome is filled with little else but women.

MAGO

When do we attack?

HANN

Hah! Hear him, Hanno. When do we attack, when do we attack? As long as I produce attacks, he is happy to be my brother.

MAGO

No use sitting here.

HANNO

I agree, Hannibal.

MAHERBAL

And I. We've been waiting three months.

MAGO

We have but three miles to go, and Rome is taken.

HANNO

I would like to get it over with.

HANN A drunken, melancholy crew, if ever I saw one....
Of course we'll take Rome,
And you shall each have a villa
On the blue Mediterranean.
Rome's naked to us.....but

MAGO Well.....what?

HANN First, I must make sure what her allies are going to do.

MAGO If we take Rome, why they have little choice.

HANN And if we are rebuffed? what then?

MAGO How can we be? The city's manned with women and children.

HANNO And old men.

MAGO Yes. How can we be?

HANN Remember Saguntum, brother?

MAGO Certainly.

HANN We thought it would be easy then.
And we were eight months at it....
And there, by the end, there was
Little else but women and children.

MAGO That has nothing....

HANN Little else!
We may be delayed at Rome,
And the allies, while our back was turned,
Our front busy, might very well
Form a confederation against us....

MAGO The allies are flies!!

HANN But, if we make sure of them,
If we now make certain by the
Means of arms, of their support,
What can Rome do
Deprived of props, but fall.

HANNO That has a kind of wisdom in it.

HANN What do you say, Maherbal?
You are the oldest and perhaps wisest of us.

MAHERBAL I have the feeling here, inside me,
That says, attack. Attack now
While the attackings good....

MAGO Yes!

MAHERBAL And yet....only women follow
Their feeling. We must obey
Our judgment. Therefore,
Since your judgment has always proved good
Before, Hannibal, I support it now, too--
Though not without reluctance.

HANNIBAL Well. And you, Mago, speak up.

MAGO What good would it do?
The verdict's cast.
But I think, brother, otherwise.
The plum is in our grasp
And you do not pluck it...
Well...for that....oh good night.

MAHERBAL I'd better be going too.
I've got some things to do.

HANNO And I.

HANN Stay, Hanno!

(PAUSE)

HANNO Well.

HANN What do you say?

(PAUSE)

HANNO I will say: what are you afraid of, Hannibal?

HANN That has a familiar ring.

HANNO You have destroyed the Roman army,
You are now camped
Three miles from Rome --
You have always hated it,
You have always said you would destroy it.
And I have followed you,
Believing that you would.

For I, too, hate Rome, Hannibal.
My father's eyes were burnt,
His tongue cut out by Romans. ---
I hate them
And so do you.
Or always said you did.
But now.....you turn away,
And I don't understand.
And I can only think it is some kind
Of fear -- of which I am ignorant.

(PAUSE)

HANN

Leave my tent
If that is all.
Fear! Do I look afraid.....
We've fought for years together...
Have I ever shown fear...?
Of what am I afraid?

HANNO

Good night to you, Hannibal.
I don't know.
The bruise is on the worm
But does not show.....

(EXIT)

HANNIBAL

Fear? This fear again!
What am I, a child?
Fear of what?
The gods, fate, death....?
No, not these,
None of these,
I know them all --
Each one is a disease --
Fear? Afraid?
If all the fiends and devils of the world

Howled in my face I would not quake...

Oh, Hannibal, Hannibal ---

What have I done...?

Opened a door which I cannot shut,
Torn down the house that was my home
And the woman that lived there
I have drowned....

The last hill I cannot climb.
The last breath I cannot take,
Fearing the breathlessness beyond.....

It was not Rome

It was not Rome that stopped me
They will say -- but a silly fear,
The silly fear that I was at the end,
That, after Rome, there would be nothing more
For me to conquer!!!

MUSIC

CRASHING DOWN TO THE PLAIN

(A PAUSE)

JUNES

Go on.

DAVIUS

There is nothing more, really.

Oh, he was a dogged, able man.
For fourteen years he fought on in Italy,
In a kind of frenzy, uselessly,
Until his brother, Hasdrubal's head,
Was tossed upon his camp,
The only reinforcement that Hannibal ever got from him;
And later, in Africa, where Scipio,
Publius Cornelius' son, defeated him.
All his life he fought against Rome
That once he had held
Within his palm.

We are built in a strange way, Junes,
But with a kind of logic.

Fate winds its thread around us
And does not tell us what the garment is
Until on the last moment....
Just as we never knew, until the end,
That Hannibal was a superstitious man,
And a coward.

(PAUSE)

JUNES

What was his end?

DAVIUS

A speech to the stars
And poison in a little room.

JUNES

Oh.

DAVIUS

Perhaps when he knew that he was not
What he believed....I do not know...
He could have taken Rome.
Maybe the gods interfered.
I do not know...
Unless it be...
That a man must have a god
Behind his back
Must have the dust of love
Within his heart
I do not know
I am an old man
I have seen too much
Too much to believe anymore....

JUNES

You are shivering again.

DAVIUS

My life has spilled over into death.
Hannibal. His whole life was a vision
That he could not find --
A phantom passage in the meadow
Of his mind --

It's the same with all of us
In a way.
We never catch the phantom
Though we chase it till our knees gripe
And the air clogs in our throats. Well,
What do we expect?
But the vision was there, wasn't it? The possibility
Always there. Nights young again,
Spring's tendrils fasten us,
Frogs move in the grass
And the moon whitens our faces.
With the birds we fly
Back to the same summer.

MUSIC ONE BEAT OF A DRUM. ANOTHER.

HANNIBAL'S

VOICE.....(FROM A DISTANCE. HIGH PITCHED. EMPHATIC).

I fought for a world
And lost it,
Such is the power of hate,
For I must tell you
It is death that crazes in the madman's brain,
The death that turns the open leaves to brown.
Mad, mad, I am mad.
No other world is there to conquer
Having lost this one --
To bank all upon a dream
Is to put a tooth into the rind of the wind,....
Yet to lose all,
That is a marvellous thing --
Let gods tell other stories.
And now, Shecebra, I have one act left.

Turn and look out to the blue noon,
See those trees, how they burn in the sun.
So we are all scorched of our deeds
And sucked up to the heaven we love.
Shecebra....
The deed is done.

MUSIC

TO END.

ANNOUNCER

Return to:
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