

ALEXANDER

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BUDGET DRAFT #1
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CLOSE UP ON THE QUIET PUZZLED FACE OF A TEN YEAR OLD BOY.

He looks directly at us, eyes slightly squinting at what must be an awesome and overwhelming thing.

ANGLE ON: AN OLDER MAN, looking down on this boy with a wise and patient smile. Behind this is some anticipation as well. He is waiting to see what the boy's reaction will be.

Both are dressed in the robes of Egyptian royalty. The old man wears the crown of Pharaoh and an impressive ring on his right hand.

BACK TO THE BOY NOW, still looking directly ahead, until finally his eyes wander a little bit above and then below, left and then right, studying something of some great size.

ANGLE ON: The object in question.

A GREAT AND GLORIOUS TOMB, one that many others will attempt to rival in the coming millennia. None will succeed. Not Caesar, not Charlemagne, not Napoleon. It is a tomb of jewels and gold, of fine craftsmanship and hard labor, of passion and of consequence.

It is the tomb of Alexander the Great.

BACK TO THE BOY, who is now looking up at his father with that same puzzled look.

The Boy is Ptolemy II and his father is the last of the companions - a blood brother, if you will, to the late Alexander. The years have taken their toll and Ptolemy's body is a road map - a living history of Alexander's travels. His hair is long and grey, his tall body slightly stooped, his skin aged like leather from a thousand desert marches and fifty years of unmixing wine. And something deep within his eyes that seem to look back across a century or more, there is just a hint of something slipping. A tiny tremor in one man's reality.

Scars snake along his body like the causeways that seven generations from this moment will carry the Roman empire to Egypt's front door. But today, Egypt is at one of the more powerful moments in its eminent history. Today, Ptolemy and his son sit securely on one of the greatest thrones in the hemisphere. Today, we have time for a lesson.

PTOLEMY II
Father, who was Alexander?

PTOLEMY
Alexander is my king.

PTOLEMY II

Your king.

PTOLEMY

Yes.

PTOLEMY II

Was he not a man?

PTOLEMY

He is a man. But he has been many things in his time.

PTOLEMY II

And is he not dead?

PTOLEMY

Only this much of him.

The Boy's nose wrinkles a little.

PTOLEMY (cont'd)

What is it you do not understand, my son?

PTOLEMY II

Alexander was Pharaoh?

PTOLEMY

Ohhhh, he is much more than Pharaoh. He is Lord of All Asia, Ruler of Greece, king of Macedon. He is Alexander the Great, my son. The first to be called by such a name.

Ptolemy II looks again at the tomb of Alexander and cocks his head to the side. He thinks for a moment. The father lets him take his time. Finally:

PTOLEMY II

Why did they call him this, Father? Why was he Alexander the Great?

OLYMPIAS (O.S.)

You are the son of God.

Still on the face of Ptolemy II, we now see that the two hands gripping the boy's shoulders are not the gnarled hands of his father, but the strong and vital hands of a woman.

INT. OLYMPIAS' CHAMBERS - DAY

Turning further, we realize young Ptolemy has projected himself into the story we are settling down to witness.

He is no longer the son of our narrator, but YOUNG ALEXANDER, son of Philip of Macedon and OLYMPIAS.

And we are no longer in the room that houses the tomb of Alexander the Great, but instead, in the chamber of Olympias herself.

Resplendent by the standards of Macedon, humble by the contemporary concept of royalty, the chamber of Olympias is by any standards, somewhat eerie.

The air here is thick with the smoke of incense burning on a brazier in the center of the room. The dim light filters in through fabric hung over the windows, and a pet SNAKE slithers along a stand. Alexander seems a little uncomfortable with his surroundings, let alone the words of his mother.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

Zeus has his children, my son. Heracles had a mortal mother but was fathered by the god himself.

ALEXANDER

I do not understand.

OLYMPIAS

What is it you do not understand?

ALEXANDER

Philip is my father.

OLYMPIAS

Do you doubt me?

ALEXANDER

I am nothing if not Macedonian.

OLYMPIAS

We are destined for greater glory, you and I. One day, the brightness of our achievements will eclipse your Philip.

ALEXANDER

Will I be king, mother?

OLYMPIAS

You will be fearless, you will be merciless, you will be invincible. Whole nations will be blinded but to look upon you, the earth will tremble at your approach. Yours is the destiny of Zeus - just as his is the destiny of...

PHILIP (O.S.)

ALEXANDER.

Alexander and Olympias both reel to see PHILIP standing in the doorway, a look of absolute rage on his face.

Weathered beyond his forty years, a nasty scar covering his missing right eye, the king of Macedon still exudes strength.

PHILIP (cont'd)

Leave your mother.

Alexander starts to leave.

OLYMPIAS

(staring at Philip)

Stay.

Alexander hesitates.

PHILIP

Alexander. I asked you to leave the room.

Alexander hesitates, looking to Olympias.

PHILIP (cont'd)

LISTEN TO YOUR FATHER.

Olympias considers.

OLYMPIAS

Listen to your...father.

Alexander leaves the room as his parents eye one another. His gait is quick and nervous.

PHILIP

You've already worked your charms on one of my heirs, Olympias. I won't let you turn the other against me.

Alexander swallows, listening intently from beyond the doorway. Olympias stares at Philip.

OLYMPIAS

Your beloved dancing girl was a whore, Philip. Don't blame me for her half-witted offspring.

PHILIP

It was not bad blood that poisoned the child in his cradle.

OLYMPIAS

You've taken great pains to avoid
accusation. Why weaken now?

Philip physically halts himself from lunging. Olympias smiles
defiantly.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

Would his grace dare to raise a hand to
me? Would this be the way to win the boy's
favor?

PHILIP

You are not the only woman in Macedon
capable of bearing the king sons.

Olympias bows with mock abeyance.

OLYMPIAS

No, to be certain. Merely the only woman
capable of exalting the king's blood.

Philip leaves the room.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CITY - DAY

The palace doors are pushed open before the king and
Alexander. TWO BODYGUARDS see Philip and fall in line behind
him and his son.

Macedonia's capital city dramatically appears before them.
There is a strong Greek influence in dress and architecture.
FARMERS lead goats and mules through town. VENDORS sell their
wares in an open market. SOLDIERS are a common sight. Macedon
is a strong and bountiful country on the eve of its greatest
age. It feels as though the very land can sense the coming
tide.

Alexander and Philip march through the lively streets of the
royal city, its citizens informally nodding to their popular
king.

Still enraged from his encounter with Olympias, the king
walks quickly. Alexander struggles to keep up.

PHILIP

It is for your sake alone, Alexander, that
I haven't sent that woman.... Do not be
seduced by your mother.

ALEXANDER

Yes, father.

PHILIP

The son of Zeus indeed. Sacrilege in the house of the king. A plague she'll bring upon us with her blasphemy.

Philip stops, dropping to one knee with his hands on Alexander's shoulders.

PHILIP (cont'd)

I'll have no talk of divine destiny. You are the son of the king. Your child will be your destiny just as you are mine. In you, the glory of Philip will live on. That is your only fate, do you hear? Your heart belongs to Macedon.

Philip has accentuated his last words with too forceful a shake. He's managed to frighten the boy and realizes it. He lets Alexander go, dotingly straightening the boy's tunic and trying his best to smile.

PHILIP (cont'd)

You've grown to be a fine young man, Alexander. The time has come for you to take a great step toward becoming king. Today, I want you to join me at assembly with the general staff.

Philip offers this up as though it were something wonderful. Alexander accepts it like bad medicine.

PHILIP (cont'd)

What? What is it?

ALEXANDER

Father said the day would be mine.

PHILIP

And so it is.

Alexander pouts grandly. Philip becomes angry.

PHILIP (cont'd)

Is this the face of a king? A conqueror? I WILL NOT HAVE IT.

But Philip realizes in his flair of temper that he is once again alienating. He regroups.

PHILIP (cont'd)

I'm sorry. You are right. The day is yours, my boy. What would you like to do?

Alexander looks up at his father, a smile coming to his face.

EXT. HORSE FAIR

A colorful field bustles with HORSES, STABLE HANDS, and TRAINERS. The sun shines brightly.

A HORSE AND RIDER RACE BY. Alexander watches from the CROWDED sidelines. But he is not as happy as one might expect. The reason?

PULL OUT SLOWLY TO REVEAL: Just behind the prince, Philip and his staff are in hot debate. They are tough looking, bearded, Macedonian soldiers.

We meet PARMENIO, cool and savvy, silent and wary, Philip's premiere general; CLEANDER, always cautious, as much a statesman as he is a soldier; ATTALUS, hardheaded, cocky, and often hostile; and PAUSANIAS, a close companion of Philip and younger than the rest. The aristocratic Macedonian soldiers wear broad-brimmed hats and purple cloaks.

PHILIP

And what is the latest from our northern frontiers?

ATTALUS

The border tribes have sworn allegiance. I doubt they'll be giving us much trouble.

PHILIP

And to the south?

CLEANDER

If we aren't careful, our expansion could provoke a Greek alliance.

ATTALUS

There isn't an army on earth capable of withstanding the assault of our Companions.

PAUSANIAS

But perhaps Attalus gets a bit zealous in his enthusiasm.

ATTALUS

I will not debate strategy with the concubine of the king.

Infuriated, Pausanias steps toward Attalus but is held back by a quick gesture from Philip.

PHILIP

And to the east?

There is a slight, uncertain pause - no one knowing how to respond.

CLEANDER

To the east, Philip?

PHILIP

What of our situation to the east?

The imposing Parmenio raises an eyebrow.

Another moment of confusion. Attalus speaks as though reminding Philip of an obvious fact briefly forgotten.

ATTALUS

The...Persian empire.

Alexander notices the conversation for the first time.

CLEANDER

Surely, Philip doesn't mean to suggest...

But Philip's eyes show that he isn't joking. Even the overconfident Attalus is stunned by the thought.

ATTALUS

You can't be serious.

PHILIP

Cross into Asia, snatch the coast from the clutches of Persia, and Philip will be master of both sides of the Aegean.

THE SCREAM OF SOME TERRIBLE ANIMAL. All turn in time to see A HORSE REAR.

Alexander, Philip, and his staff see BUCEPHALAS, an out-of-control, black horse with a white forehead. The menacing animal stands on his hind legs, kicking at trainers, and sending ONE POOR STABLE HAND flying.

All of the generals are amused by the sudden brutal comedy of the trainers in the ring as the horse breaks free of them, first in escape and then in pursuit. This is a vengeful animal, filled with spite and quite possibly madness.

Philip shakes his head at the scene. Alexander's eyes are fixed on the horse.

PHILIP

A horse like that would lead a soldier to his death.

ALEXANDER

May I try, father?

The king is amused by his son's audacity. He turns to his CHUCKLING staff.

Phillip considers things for a moment and winks at Attalus. Then he turns to his boy.

PHILIP

Mount that horse, and you can have him.

Alexander steps forward with determination. Phillip glances at his generals and smiles, waiting for his son to buckle with fear and come back running.

The stable hands make way for the prince. He strides into the paddock with them and shoos them all away. Confused, they look back at the king who gestures for them to make way.

The trainers all clear out to one side of the paddock and watch the little boy.

Philip and his generals are quiet now, waiting. Parmenio steps forward, ready to run for the boy in an instant.

PHILIP (cont'd)

If he is to be king, Parmenio, let him now know the price of ignorance and the taste of fear.

At a safe distance from the horse, Alexander stops.

The animal, with no other target, now faces the prince.

And this thing is a terror. A face filled with a rage and cunning like no other on earth. A body rippling with muscle and madness. An OX HEAD branded on his flank. The eyes are black and focused, the nose all but billowing smoke.

God's wrath is born in the shape of Bucephalas.

A sharp hoof paws with menace at the soft dirt before him.

Parmenio tenses. Philip cannot show what fear he may have.

Slowly, Alexander circles the horse. Bucephalas turns with the prince, always maintaining eye contact, ready to shred the boy with his hooves.

When Alexander is positioned between the horse and Philip, he stops again. Bucephalas eyes the prince.

A moment passes. The horse, still the physical embodiment of terror, seems to calm in some indescribable way. Without becoming docile, he has become inert.

Philip, seeing that the horse has calmed when facing his way, seems to swell slightly with pride. Surely this animal has been humbled by the sight of the king. He looks back at Attalus whose smile supports his ego.

Alexander edges toward the horse. The assembled spectators grow increasingly nervous, straining to watch the scene.

Bucephalas SNORTS, scratching the ground with his hoof. The prince creeps forward still. When he finally reaches out his hand, gently grabbing the horse's reins, there is a SIGH OF RELIEF from the spectators and SCATTERED APPLAUSE.

Alexander pats the seemingly transformed Bucephalas.

The prince turns toward a surprised Philip.

ALEXANDER

He's afraid of his own shadow. I merely turned him toward the sun.

A bit unsettled, Philip turns around.

LOOMING BEHIND HIM IS THE EARLY MORNING SUN, white and blinding.

Philip, slightly embarrassed, turns back to Alexander in time to see the boy riding Bucephalas as if they have been together all their lives.

The crowd CHEERS. Philip is increasingly concerned as Alexander gallops straight toward the fence and the gathered spectators beyond.

The crowd grows nervous. People begin to back up, clearing a path for the oncoming prince. Philip steps forward to halt his son. A smiling Alexander continues to bear down on the panicking spectators.

THE CROWD BOLTS IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

PHILIP

ALEXANDER.

The young prince leaps over the wood fence. With inches to spare, the now SCREAMING crowd parts before him - mothers pulling crying children from the horse's path. And Alexander and Bucephalas gallop into the distance.

Philip stares after his departing son.

EXT. COUNTRY - VARIOUS

A series of shots show Alexander and Bucephalas racing through fields, crossing brooks, and riding swiftly through the woods.

Finally, the two climbing the summit of a high hillside. They reach the peak and stop, taking in the plains below, the lower country of Macedon and its royal city.

Alexander watches the dark clouds of a thunderstorm gathering in the distance. A BOLT OF LIGHTNING CRACKS THE HEAVENS, and he pats his horse, his companion, his kindred.

The mighty back that will carry him for the next twenty years.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A PATCH OF THICKET, the sound of birds. Then silence.

SUDDENLY: A GIANT WILD BOAR, savage, rabid with rage and fear, SMASHES THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH.

A few paces behind follow Alexander and his contemporary, HEPHAESTIAN. The boys carry short javelins at the ready, laughing and screaming as they chase their quarry.

Up ahead, the large boar disappears into the brush.

Alexander nods to Hephaestian, and the two wordlessly split up. Hephaestian runs to the right and Alexander to the left.

The boar SQUEALS up ahead, and we stay with Alexander, who now races through the woods alone. We hear his quick breaths and rapid steps.

Alexander emerges into an opening in the trees. There is no sign of the animal, no sign of Hephaestian. The woods are strangely silent. Alexander is tense, on guard, sweating and panting. The prince's eyes dart this way and that, scanning the underbrush.

A TWIG SNAPS. Alexander focuses in that direction. Nothing moves. He whispers...

ALEXANDER

Hephaestian?

No response. He licks his lips.

ALEXANDER

Hephaestian?

Still, no response. Convinced he was hearing things, Alexander breathes a sigh of relief. Then:

THE SNARLING BOAR CHARGES INTO VIEW, directly at the prince. Alexander quickly plants his feet.

ALEXANDER

HEPHAESTIAN.

SUDDENLY, a screaming Hephaestian charges forward from Alexander's right where he has been hiding all along.

HE STABS THE BOAR IN THE SIDE - most likely saving the prince's life.

Alexander attacks with his javelin, stabbing the enraged animal. Impaled and ROARING WITH PAIN, the boar still lunges at Alexander. The boys drive their javelins further into the beast until finally it is still.

Hephaestian continues to furiously stab the dead animal, his eyes tearing with rage and fear.

Alexander has to physically restrain his friend, and the boys collapse by the fallen boar. They are covered in blood. The energy is charged. They share a nervous LAUGH as Hephaestian pulls out a knife and begins gutting the animal. Alexander joins him and in a moment, they are up to their elbows in the belly of the beast.

Slowly, they catch their breath and the laughter fades to something else. They turn their eyes to one another.

PAUSE.

The prince reaches out a blood-soaked hand and affectionately touches the cheek of Hephaestian. The two boys are frozen in a rite of passage, a moment of discovery...

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

A map of the known world is unrolled before us - starting with the Mediterranean world. Macedon sits to the north of Greece. As the map continues to unroll, we cross the Aegean sea to the shores of Asia Minor, today's Turkey.

Still, the map unrolls before us. To the east lies a mass of land SOME FORTY TIMES THE SIZE OF Macedon.

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE - stretching from Turkey to the borders of India, an area roughly the size of the United States.

ARISTOTLE and his PUPILS surround the map.

ARISTOTLE

The man who has no need of others has no part in our society. Like a beast or a god, he stands alone. There is only one way to insure the pursuit of truth, virtue, and happiness.

HEPHAESTIAN

The city-state.

ARISTOTLE

Very good. The highest form of society. The potential of the acorn realized in the oak. If Macedon could achieve unity throughout the Greek world, then what civilization could stand before our philosophy?

ALEXANDER

The Persian Empire.

Aristotle has to take pause at this.

ARISTOTLE

Indeed a formidable foe. But do not equate size with sophistication. The Persians are the slaves of a tyrant, not the citizens of a king.

Alexander and the youths are fascinated.

PUPIL #1

My grandfather told me that if they catch you in battle, they will cut off your hands.

PUPIL #2

My mother says there's more gold in the Great King's throne than in all of Athens.

PUPIL #3

These Persians actually cover their legs in clothing.

The students GASP in horror - as if it has been suggested that the Persians eat their young.

ALEXANDER

Barbarians.

Aristotle turns to Alexander and studies the boy.

ARISTOTLE

Only when you respect a foe can you see
his heart and know his weakness.

Alexander continues to stare at the map. He points to a range
of mountains in what is today's Afghanistan.

To them, the mountains sit on the borders of India, the far
edge of the known world.

ALEXANDER

And what mountains are these, Aristotle?

ARISTOTLE

The Hindu Kush - higher than Mount Olympus
itself.

PUPIL #1

No.

ARISTOTLE

Oh, yes, my child. And if one could ever
climb that high, reach those towering
heights, turn west, and glimpse the
Mediterranean. Turn east...and see the
very ends of the earth itself.

The stunned pupils consider this. Alexander is awed by the
thought. He stares with wonder at the map.

ALEXANDER'S POV - ON MAP

PHILIP (V.O.)

Do I ask the impossible?

INT. PHILIP'S CHAMBERS - DAY

As we pull away from the map, we see Philip and his staff -
Cleander, Attalus, and Parmenio. As usual, Pausanias stands
by the king.

ATTALUS

(referring to map)

The Persian forces are staggering. To
cross into Asia with the armies of Athens
and Thebes bristling at our heels...

PAUSANIAS

We'd be hard-pressed to find enough men
for such an undertaking.

Parmenio considers.

PARMENIO

If Philip could utilize the forces of
Greece...

All eyes on Parmenio.

PHILIP

What do you suggest, my friend?

PARMENIO

An alliance.

Philip is intrigued. Attalus clearly skeptical.

PARMENIO (cont'd)

Shore up our positions on the frontiers.
Persuade Greece of our good intentions. If
Philip could stir ancient hatred - a war
of revenge to win back the lands of Troy.

PHILIP

A crusade...

PARMENIO

Unite the cities of Greece and Macedon in
a common peace -

Attalus LAUGHS outright.

ATTALUS

Unite the Greeks.

PARMENIO

Unite Greece against Persia. Before Greece
unites against Philip.

The king studies his trusted general and smiles.

PHILIP

Can it be done?

Parmenio merely shrugs.

PARMENIO

Anything is possible, Philip. The question
is not the prize, but the price.

The king considers.

PHILIP

We will unite Greece and Macedon in a
common peace if we have to cut every Greek
throat to do it. Against Persia I will win
my glory.

Philip studies the map before him. Looking very much like his son in the previous scene, he loses himself in thought.

ARISTOTLE (V.O.)

On kingship...

EXT. COUNTRY - NIGHT

Aristotle and Alexander stroll through the woods. Aristotle holds his copy of THE ILIAD of Homer.

They come to a high hill top. The stars in the Milky Way galaxy are everywhere. Macedon stretches out below them.

ARISTOTLE

There are but two manner of men who rule.
The tyrant and the king. A king lives only
for his people, a tyrant, only for
himself. Which will you be?

Alexander stiffens proudly.

ALEXANDER

I would want to be a king.

Aristotle smiles, then:

ARISTOTLE

Man's principal instinct is survival.
First - preservation of the self, second -
the family, and third - his fellow man.
Thus, we seldom give thought to the effect
of our actions on humanity.

ALEXANDER

So my greatest enemy as king is to be my
own heart?

ARISTOTLE

At times, you must indeed defy all your
heart desires. A king must so rise above
his subjects.... Prove himself outstanding
above all others.

ALEXANDER

I understand.

ARISTOTLE

No you do not. Only as king, bearing the
weight of the crown and the unthinkable
temptation of power absolute will you
know.

ARISTOTLE (cont'd)

Only then, when you have conquered your heart and given yourself fully to the service of your people, can you truly call yourself a just and righteous giver of law.

ALEXANDER

What then of glory?

Aristotle refers to THE ILIAD.

ARISTOTLE

Achilles had two fates open to him. If he chose to return home, his life would be long, but his immortal glory would be lost. If he chose to win glory in battle at Troy, death would come quickly, but his fame would be everlasting.

ALEXANDER

- So you suggest the short, but glorious, life?

ARISTOTLE

But beware the wrath of the gods, my boy. Seek with great effort their favor. The path to glory is narrow - the road to tyranny wide. Should you find yourself on the latter, they will strike you down and lay waste to all you have wrought. Rule of law before the rule of passion. High spirit and anger are shown only to men greater than you, and no man on earth is your equal.

The young prince nods

ARISTOTLE (cont'd)

Glory is to be found not only in battle. There is glory in reason. Glory in restraint.

Alexander smiles.

ALEXANDER

Thus, the glory of Macedon will be the glory of Alexander.

ARISTOTLE

Very good, my boy. Very good.

But just as he is certain the lesson has been learned:

ALEXANDER

But tell me, Aristotle, of my everlasting fame.

Aristotle thinks for a moment and then, with some apprehension, he hands his pupil THE ILIAD, a gift.

ARISTOTLE

Troy, Alexander. We must all find our own Troy.

Alexander is moved by the gesture. He looks at THE ILIAD, as though it were from Homer himself.

INT. PALACE - DAY

Alexander walks with great purpose for such a small boy. He is flanked by Philip's officers, Parmenio and Attalus.

He comes to a curtained doorway and pushes through it to reveal:

INT. DINING ROOM

ARTABAZUS, an older, Persian satrap, is tall, poised, and wears the dress of Persian nobility -

BRIGHTLY COLORED ROBES AND PANTS. Alien fashion to the more Greek-inspired Macedonians. Beside him stands another PERSIAN ARISTOCRAT.

We are in a plush and well set dining room, prepared for a feast.

Alexander, Parmenio, and Attalus stop before the visitors.

PARMENIO

You are welcome to Macedonia, Artabazus.
The king sends his warmest regards.

ARTABAZUS

Will he not be joining us?

PARMENIO

Philip regrets his absence. The affairs of state take precedence. He sends in his stead the crown prince, Alexander.

ARTABAZUS

And where is this Alexander?

Attalus smiles and nods at Alexander.

Artabazus looks down at the boy. The Persians know they are being slighted.

Parmenio motions to the table.

PARMENIO

Philip humbly asks that you consider
Macedon your home.

Artabazus cannot hide the venom in his voice.

ARTABAZUS

And we humbly thank his generosity.

They sit, reclining comfortably on couches, and sample the food and wine.

PARMENIO

Is there anything else you require? A
companion, perhaps, to show you the sights
of our city?

Attalus smiles knowingly at the Persians.

ATTALUS

Perhaps a...Greek companion?

ARTABAZUS

That is not my taste.

ATTALUS

Then a goat, perhaps?

Parmenio shoots Attalus a look.

Artabazus glares at Attalus, but the Aristocrat is quick to intercede.

PERSIAN ARISTOCRAT

Surely your king and his court appreciate
my lord's position in Asia Minor.

ATTALUS

It was my understanding that the position
of Artabazus was tenuous at best.

ARTABAZUS

The favor of our Great King waxes and
waned. Rest assured, one day we shall
again enjoy his munificence.

ATTALUS

With what bribe?

ARTABAZUS SLAMS HIS HAND ON THE TABLE, standing in a furious rage.

ARTABAZUS

I did not travel the distance from Asia Minor to sit at dinner with an impudent bastard and this infant prince -

ALEXANDER

I'm told your country is quite beautiful.

Put off by the comment, Artabazus looks down at Alexander, then proudly answers.

ARTABAZUS

Quite.

And as he returns to fire at Attalus.

ALEXANDER

The great palace of Persepolis -

ARTABAZUS

Makes your Philip's palace a mere -

ALEXANDER

I have heard of it's towering columns and magnificent treasure -

ARTABAZUS

It certainly -

ALEXANDER

The invincible walled city of Babylon...

ARTABAZUS

Yes, it -

ALEXANDER

The breathtaking pyramids of Egypt...

Artabazus is truly annoyed now.

ARTABAZUS

Indeed. The Persian empire is a land of many wonders.

ALEXANDER

Even the Royal Road that stretches from one corner of the world to the next.

PERSIAN ARISTOCRAT

Long enough at least to kindle the imaginations of little boys.

The Persians chuckle. Alexander smiles most innocently.

ALEXANDER

What is the length of road to Babylon?

ARTABAZUS

Longer than all the roads of Greece and
Macedon combined.

More patronizing chuckles.

ALEXANDER

Five thousand? Six thousand stades?

Now the Persian grows cautious, glancing at Parmenio and
Attalus, who eye the boy curiously.

ARTABAZUS

The exact length escapes me.

ALEXANDER

And are they of good quality, these roads?

Artabazus forgets Attalus altogether now and looks at the boy
- puzzled, steady.

ARTABAZUS

Of excellent quality.

ALEXANDER

Of substantial width?

ARTABAZUS

(To Attalus)

Wide enough to carry the flames of
destruction to all edges of the empire.

ALEXANDER

And will they carry these flames in both
directions?

All are silent.

Artabazus studies the prince. He is unnerved by the eerie
quality of Alexander's innocent stare. He no longer addresses
him as a boy.

ARTABAZUS

Once the fire is lit, my child, who's to
say what will burn?

EXT. COUNTRY - DAY

The outskirts of the Macedonian kingdom.

A messenger sets to light A SIGNAL FIRE on a high hillside.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - ELSEWHERE

A SIGNALMAN, wrapped in thick furs in the cold winds atop a low mountain, sees the fire in the distance. He turns and heaves a burning torch on a huge pyre of dead wood.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOPS ACROSS MACEDON

Racing over the countryside, we follow a series of these fire signals from mountain top to mountain top - traveling across the whole of Philip's kingdom until finally:

HIGH HILLSIDE

The very hill where Alexander and Bucephalas last rode.

The Signalman at the top of this hill sees the last fire off in the distance and he turns, waving madly a flaming torch over his head.

MOVE AROUND HIM TO REVEAL: A light winking back at him from the city walls of Macedon's royal seat.

EXT. ROAD TO GREECE - MORNING

THE FACE OF ALEXANDER - NOW HAVING GROWN INTO A YOUNG MAN. His face is in profile, wind in his hair - it is as if this were the image used to make all the coins in the ancient world.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Bucephalas carries him in a brisk trot.

As we continue to pull back we see that Alexander is flanked by THE COMPANIONS - his boyhood friends, the young men who will follow him for a lifetime.

HEPHAESTIAN, grown now into a stunning specimen, is to his right.

PTOLEMY, our narrator, here a soldier in his early thirties to his left.

PERDICCAS slightly older than the prince, is to his left. Brash, brazen, eager - as stone ready as Alexander.

And finally, PEUCESTAS. Clearly the youngest of the four, he proudly bears THE PRINCE'S SHIELD.

Beyond the young friends rides the Macedonian COMPANION CAVALRY. The horsemen ride on traditional saddles without stirrups. They are in tight formation.

The five young lions ride briskly past a column of soldiers to their right.

A swift, disciplined INFANTRY sing the Macedonian WAR SONG. Armed with sharp, sixteen foot spears, the battalions bristle like a massive porcupines.

Alexander and his companions are charged with excitement. It is clear that this is no parade.

They ride with an army made ready for war.

AS THEY PASS THE VERY FRONT OF THE COLUMN:

VOICE (O.S.)

ALEXANDER.

Alexander halts as his friends ride on without him. He watches them go and then turns back to join Philip who is looking at him sternly.

PHILIP

You can ride with your father, today -

ALEXANDER

But -

PHILIP

This is no exercise - this is war, and these are not hill people we fight, but Greeks. There will time enough to run like mad in battle when your arm is hacked off and you're looking for a nurse.

ALEXANDER

Yes father.

PHILIP

Now, what is your focus?

ALEXANDER

Find where your opponent gathers his force and you have discovered his weakness.

PHILIP

Very good. And how do we expose the weakness?

ALEXANDER

Use infantry to open a gap in his line, then strike with cavalry. The cavalry is my hammer.

PHILIP

(nodding)

Now, I will feign a retreat, draw the rest of the Greeks in my direction and leave them open for your assault -

When Philip turns, he sees Alexander is looking up ahead, trying to find his friends.

Philip suddenly halts his horse and ROUGHLY GRABS HIS SON. Startled, Alexander looks him in the eye.

PHILIP

Stay with me, boy. This will be no border skirmish.

ALEXANDER

I will not disappoint.

PHILIP

The soldiers you oppose are not to be taken lightly. Theirs is a ferocity like no other - sworn to die by one another's side rather than retreat.

ALEXANDER

Who are these men?

PHILIP

The Sacred Band of Thebes.

EXT. CHAERONEA - DAY

THE SACRED BAND OF THEBES stand at attention. They are completely still, paired in twos, staring forward.

Each man holds his sword in front of him, the blade mere inches from the brow. Their COMMANDER follows a cadence of sorts in Greek. At the end of every chant, they respond in unison - harmonic.

Finally, the Commander shouts and sheaths his sword. The Sacred Band follows suit. The swords drive home in one sound - so uniform, it mocks perfection.

To finish the ceremony, each man turns to his partner. The cadence breaks, and with as much ease as automatons can muster, they embrace and kiss.

PULL OUT FROM THE BAND TO REVEAL: THE ATHENIAN ARMY on either side, a confused rabble of SHOUTING men. Their MOUNTING ROAR mixes with the high-pitched MACEDONIAN WAR CRY and...

EXT. CHAERONEA - BATTLE - LATER

MACEDONIAN AND GREEK INFANTRY LINES CRASH TOGETHER. Sixteen foot Macedonian spears SNAP on impact. Strained soldiers lock in battle.

Unlike the common perception of infantry battle, this is not the clash of two warring mobs. Instead, the two, tight infantry lines meet flush, pushing back and forth in what is essentially a mile-long, armored shoving match.

Within the line, soldiers look for gaps in the opposition's defense. Swords jab at shields and breastplates, occasionally finding the flesh beyond.

GROANING, SCREAMING, THE CLASH OF ARMOR, AND THE TEARING OF FLESH. THE NOISE IS DEAFENING.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE CHAERONEA - LATER

The field below is littered with the dead and dying.

A doctor bandages Philip's leg. Filthy from battle, Attalus approaches.

PHILIP

Where is Parmenio?

ATTALUS

He comes this way.

Attalus dismounts and stands over his king. He is winded, but obviously in good spirits.

ATTALUS (cont'd)

Never have I seen an army flee the field so quickly.

PHILIP

Athens is convinced Macedon will be crashing through her gates at any moment.

The two friends smile, careful not to be premature in their celebration.

Just then, Parmenio rides up, flanked by his second officer, Cleander. Pausanias rides from the other direction, arriving just as Parmenio and Cleander dismount.

PHILIP (cont'd)

What news, Parmenio?

PARMENIO

Athens and Thebes have both offered surrender and sworn loyalty to Philip.

Philip turns to Pausanias who wears the only grim face in the lot.

PHILIP

What of my son and the Sacred Band?

PAUSANIAS

Philip should see with his own eyes.

PHILIP

Nonsense. What of my son?

PAUSANIAS

Philip should come and see.

EXT. ELSEWHERE ON FIELD

Philip and his companions ride push past the upright spears of a staring, silent Macedonian army. As the king slows to a halt, we focus on his face. He is horrified by the scene before him. A scene we cannot yet see.

The king turns slowly to his right.

ANGLE ON: Alexander. The trembling prince is covered - literally drenched - in blood. His eyes stare blankly into the distance. A sword dangles from his hand.

Off Alexander's face:

VOICE (O.S.)

Philip?

Philip turns his head around with a start, and we are surprised to find him WITH BOTH EYES INTACT.

EXT. POTIDAEA - FLASHBACK - SUNSET

A young Attalus stands before him. Young Philip is on a hill, much like the one overlooking Chaeronea. Macedonian troops encircle the king. In the distance, the town they have recently stormed.

PHILIP

What news?

ATTALUS

The day is ours. Parmenio has crushed the Illyrians.

As Philip smiles.

ATTALUS (cont'd)

And news from Macedon. The king's entry
for the horse-race at the Olympic games
has taken first.

Philip's smile broadens. Attalus now smiles with him for the
last bit of news.

ATTALUS (cont'd)

And the queen. The queen has given birth
to a son... Alexander.

Now Philip's face is filled with new sort of happiness, one
that a smile cannot express. He is merely blank and
overwhelmed.

Philip turns to his seer, ARISTANDER, a gnarled man of
indeterminate age.

PHILIP

Surely so much wealth cannot befall one
man. I pray for some misfortune to offset
catastrophe.

ARISTANDER

A son whose birth is accompanied with such
successes cannot fail to be invincible.

Almost drunk with happiness, the king turns to his men.

PHILIP

THE QUEEN HAS GIVEN ME A SON - GIVEN ALL
OF YOU A PRINCE. GIVEN MACEDON HER
DESTINY. ALL HAIL ALEXANDER.

A SINGLE SOLDIER IN THE RANKS raises his spear and bangs it
on his shield in a slow rhythm. The Soldier beside him
follows suit, then another, and another. Soon every soldier
is banging his shield, the rhythm increasing to a DEAFENING
CACOPHONY in tribute to the prince.

CLOSE UP ON: Philip. As the sound and rhythm grow louder
still, his face seems to change. The look of stunned joy
starts to melt into a look of realization. A realization that
is shared by every father with the birth of his son. A
realization that all men expect, but for which none can ever
prepare.

Mortality.

The soldiers halt their clanging in unison and shout in one,
earsplitting voice:

SOLDIERS

ALEXANDER.

ANGLE ON: Philip. Now old and disfigured as he was a moment ago. Perhaps a little older.

EXT. CHAERONEA - PRESENT

Philip turns once again to look at his son.

Now, Alexander does not stare off into the distance. His eyes lock with Philip. It is piercing glare, burning with something terrible, something unspeakable. Eyes that have seen a lifetime in the passing of an afternoon.

They stand there for the longest time until Alexander, on trembling legs, turns and walks away. The army clears a path as the prince disappears through its ranks.

Philip turns his eyes back to the field.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: The Sacred Band of Thebes lies before him, wiped out to a man.

They have fallen to the ground in twos, much like they stood before the battle. Looking at one pair of fallen soldiers, Philip sees their hands clasped tightly in death.

The carnage of Alexander.

ATTALUS (O.S.)

Philip?

Philip turns. Attalus again stands before him, this time as old as he should be, his eyes filled with worry for the king.

Philip wipes a tear from his eye.

PHILIP

The path to Asia is open. Our crusade is at hand.

THE SOUND OF ONE MAN SCREAMING.

INT. HOSPITAL TENT - DAY

DOCTORS work to saw off the badly mutilated leg of A WOUNDED SOLDIER, still conscious and fighting to keep it.

Alexander is a few feet away, watching, expressionless. He turns and walks through the expanse of a large tent.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Twenty to thirty wounded Macedonians lying on the ground. Most of them young, all of them wiser. Other soldiers do what they can to comfort them.

Alexander kneels beside AMYNTAS, a young soldier with a savage gash running down his face. He holds a crude dressing in against the wound, waiting for assistance.

When he sees Alexander, he stiffens, trying to look sharp.

ALEXANDER

What is your name?

AMYNTAS

Amyntas, my prince.

ALEXANDER

You fought well, today, Amyntas.

Amyntas trembles from the pain.

AMYNTAS

It was my first battle.

ALEXANDER

It was a first for many of us.

AMYNTAS

I only pray I can better serve my prince another day.

Alexander smiles, but seems on the verge of tears.

ALEXANDER

You have done all you need ever do for Macedon. Rest easy, Amyntas. Rest easy.

Alexander stands and walks under the length of the canopy, smiling at all of the brave wounded, trying his best to look as though everything were fine.

At the end of the tent, Alexander stops. He looks down and locks eyes with ANOTHER SOLDIER, this one with his hand clutched tightly to his gut, holding in his insides.

It is a moment before Alexander realizes THE SOLDIER IS DEAD. They stare at one another still.

Perdiccas walks up to Alexander. Still charged from the battle, he carries a jug of wine. A grimy, smiling, Hephaestian walks beside him.

PERDICCAS

It is the first of many days for you,
little king.

A dazed Alexander turns to his friends.

PERDICCAS (cont'd)

Did you see the look on their faces,
Hephaestian, when they saw our Alexander
racing after them? Sword raised in the
air. Eyes blazing with glory.

HEPHAESTIAN

I think our Macedonians were more
surprised than anyone.

Hephaestian notices that something is wrong. Oblivious,
Perdiccas raises his jug of wine.

PERDICCAS

To the Greeks. Let us pay honor to the men
who died for our glory.

ALEXANDER

Indeed, Perdiccas. Let us pay honor. I pay
honor to the men I killed today for
Macedon. But what will I pay for those who
died for me?

Alexander turns and walks away, tears streaming down his
intent face.

EXT. COUNTRY - DAWN

FIRE SIGNALS.

We follow the signals from mountain top to mountain top,
again covering the whole of Macedon. This time, however, the
signals continue into Asia.

We follow the signals across the Persian empire - over
valleys, rivers, deserts. The scope of the empire is
astoundingly immense - Macedon dwarfed by comparison. By the
time we are in Persia, the sun is setting.

INT. DARIUS' PALACE - DUSK

We travel quickly through the rooms and hallways of the
palace - one doorway after another.

Each room further reveals the excessive style of Persian
court. We see EUNUCHS lining the walls, CONCUBINES;
COURTIERS, PRIESTS, and GREAT WEALTH.

The incredible opulence is in sharp contrast to the relatively crude trappings of Macedonian royalty. There are many styles of dress - some wear tunics, others wear pants.

The final set of doors opens to reveal:

INT. THRONE ROOM OF THE GREAT KING DARIUS

A dazzling sight indeed.

From over his shoulder, THE GREAT KING DARIUS sits with his face in shadow, AN ORNATE RING on his right hand.

The messenger crosses the massive expanse of the throne room, and throws himself prostrate before the king, not daring to look him in the eye.

MESSENGER

Your majesty, Philip has declared war against you.

DARIUS

Philip.... Who is Philip?

INT. BANQUET HALL - MACEDON - NIGHT

Philip inelegantly knocks back a drinking horn of wine and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. The king watches a party from the sidelines. Attalus stands beside him.

Philip's close companion, Pausanias, is particularly drunk and dances to WILD MUSIC in the center of the room. He is surrounded by other inebriated, DANCING SOLDIERS.

Philip eyes a young, HANDSOME SOLDIER, who stands on the sidelines. The Handsome Soldier smiles at the king.

Attalus notices the exchange between the two men and smiles.

Philip looks at his companion, Pausanias, dancing and drunk. He looks back at the Handsome Soldier that has caught his eye.

Philip looks at Attalus. Attalus nods.

One last glance toward Pausanias, and Philip leaves the party. The Handsome Soldier looks around the room to see if anyone is watching, then follows the king.

Having assured that Philip has indeed left with the Handsome Soldier, Attalus turns toward the dancing Pausanias, smiles, empties his goblet, and tosses it to the floor.

With his characteristic shark-like glare, he enters the dancing fray, maneuvering his way toward Pausanias.

As he moves, he allows himself to slowly give in to the music. A spring in his step becomes a lilt, becomes a dance, becomes a drunken good time.

Soon, he is dancing behind Pausanias, as caught up in the festivities as anyone. He looks at other soldiers who have surrounded Pausanias. Music, wine, laughter...

Attalus takes a jug of wine from one of the soldiers and pours it first into Pausanias' goblet, and then over his head. Pausanias does not seem to care.

Following Attalus' lead, the surrounding soldiers lift Pausanias into the air. As Pausanias is laid out on over the soldiers' heads, he laughs, cries out in celebration, raises his hands in the air, and drinks wine...

He has become the center of the party. He could not be happier.

SUDDENLY, Attalus and the others HOIST PAUSANIAS, TURN HIM AROUND, AND SLAM HIM ON A TABLE.

The MUSIC STOPS. Pausanias is bent over, facing the table. Attalus has positioned himself behind him.

SUDDENLY SOBER, PAUSANIAS screams IN PAIN. As he does so, a line of soldiers begins forming behind Attalus...

INT. STABLES - LATER

MUSIC AND SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION can be heard in the distance. The stable doors burst open and two soldiers toss a brutally savaged Pausanias on a pile of hay and manure.

The soldiers LAUGH as they depart. Pausanias groans. He painfully lifts his head, slowly opening his eyes. He tries to get up, but cannot.

Groaning, he looks up to see shapes moving in the shadows. Shapes that do not seem to be horses.

FIVE STABLE HANDS come slowly out from wherever they were hiding, approaching him carefully, curiously.

Pausanias looks up at them, tears streaming down his face. They look at this bloody mess, wondering what to do.

Finally, one of them decides.

The FIRST STABLE HAND undoes his belt as he approaches.

Again, Pausanias CRIES OUT...

INT. PHILIP'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Philip stares out the window.

A battered Pausanias stands behind him.

PAUSANIAS

Do you question my abuse?

PHILIP

I seem to recall that you, too, had quite a bit of wine, Pausanias.

Pausanias can't quite believe Philip's implications.

PAUSANIAS

Can Philip imply that I could have provoked -

PHILIP

The men will have their fun.

PAUSANIAS

AND THIS IS FUN?

Pausanias rips off his tunic, revealing a savagely beaten, bruised body. Philip studies him.

PHILIP

Don't humiliate yourself more than you already have.

PAUSANIAS

That son-of-a-bitch Attalus has done this to me. I demand retribution. What are you going to do?

Philip smiles.

PHILIP

I'm going to marry his niece.

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

LOUD DRUMMING.

Olympias stands in a temple - TWO ROWS OF WOMEN form an aisle before her. They are adorned in wreathes of poplar. Torches line the walls, bunches of grapes scattered about the floor.

All eyes on the queen, escorted forward by TWO INITIATES.

Olympias steps tentatively forward. A WOMAN FROM THE CROWD LASHES the queen's back with a short rod, drawing blood.

Olympias winces. She takes a moment, swallows, then continues forward, nervously scanning the surrounding faces.

A SECOND ROD LASHES THE QUEEN'S BACK. Olympias shudders, closing her eyes, pressing onward.

A THIRD ROD LASHES THE QUEEN, then a forth, then a fifth.

Olympias accepts the blows, swaying to the drums, stepping through the gauntlet, sweating from the pain, lips quivering...and just a hint of pleasure.

Her eyes crack open. THE MASK OF A BULL stares blankly back. The temple reels. Flames from the torches dance in the night.

Olympias reaches the altar - her tattered gown stained with blood.

She grasps a ceremonial bowl filled with wine and approaches the statue of the god, Dionysus. The other women are crowded about her.

Olympias raises the bowl above her head, closes her eyes, and slowly pours the wine onto her face and body.

ACROSS THE ROOM: A blade draws blood from the white throat of a sacrificial goat. THE SACRIFICER wipes her bloody hands on her face, through her hair.

Eyes closed and hands in the air, Olympias moves trancelike to the drums. Surrounding women move to the music, grope at the queen. The drumming and women grow increasingly frantic - eyes closed, guzzling wine, shaking with ecstasy, tearing at their clothing.

THE MUSIC REACHES A NEW HEIGHT. The women flail to the frantic drums. Some kiss one another, touch themselves...

A FLEETING IMAGE: the Sacrificer devouring the raw flesh of the dead goat.

In the center of the fray, Olympias stretches her fingers to the heavens as SNAKES wind sensuously about her limbs.

INT. OLYMPIAS' CHAMBERS - DAY

Olympias lies face down on a table. A MAIDSERVANT tends the queen's sore back, covered in nasty welts.

To the side, Alexander eyes his mother's quiet fury with concern.

OLYMPIAS

He is nothing without me. My father's line sprang from Achilles. My mother's from the royalty of Troy. His ancestors were backwoods highlanders while mine were -

ALEXANDER

Philip has many wives, mother. There's no reason to assume this one is any different-

OLYMPIAS

She is full blooded Macedonian. I know this man. I know how he thinks. Cleopatra will be his queen.

ALEXANDER

Let him marry. Your position is safe. As long as I am prince...

OLYMPIAS

She will bear him sons.

Thrown by the implications of the remark, Alexander studies his mother. The Maidservant is clearly uncomfortable.

ALEXANDER

He will need me in Asia -

OLYMPIAS

He will leave you behind. What great or brilliant achievement will be left for Alexander to show the world?

Alexander shakes his head, turns away. The queen rises.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

He is not destined for Asia. Philip is not Alexander.

She puts a hand on his shoulder, her lips not an inch from his ear.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

Why, if you were king...

Alexander spins, staring at Olympias, shocked by her implications.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

If you were king. Not one day. Not some day. If you were king - now - my son...

Alexander looks east again, deep in thought.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)
Who would there be to stand between
Alexander and his glory?

ALEXANDER
And what if I did not want glory?

OLYMPIAS
What if the sun did not want the dawn?

ALEXANDER
Some things demand too high a price.

OLYMPIAS
No price too high.

Alexander looks at his mother in a way he never has before.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)
Those who lose their use do not last long
in your beloved Macedon.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Philip and the young, beautiful, CLEOPATRA, kiss passionately. They are seated at a banquet table. The sound of an APPRECIATIVE CROWD.

The couple parts to reveal: Alexander standing in the doorway. He is flanked by his close associates - Hephaestian, Perdikkas, and the younger Peucestas.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: a long table overflowing with food and wine. Philip and his new bride sit with the king's companions - Attalus, Cleander, and Parmenio.

Beside Parmenio sits his son PHILOTAS, and Philotas' friend, COENUS, an officer in his late thirties. Philotas wears the colors of a cavalry commander. It is clear throughout the scene that he has no love for Alexander.

Toward the end of the table a slightly bruised, dour Pausanias doesn't touch his food. His eyes are locked on the prince.

Alexander and his companions take their seats beside their friend, Ptolemy. The mood, tense.

It is the old and the new. Philip and his staff with the traditional beards, thick and grey - Alexander and his companions, clean-shaven.

Philip eyes his son but chooses to ignore him. He raises his goblet. The others follow suit.

PHILIP

Parmenio, Attalus. Tonight we also drink to your departure. When a crossing into Asia is secure, I will follow with Philotas and the Companions. Never has a son of Macedon led so admirably.

An obvious dig at Alexander. Parmenio looks at the king, proudly patting his son, Philotas, on the back.

Philotas turns to the prince, smugly raising his eye brows.

They drink. All but Alexander and his entourage.

PTOLEMY

And what of the prince?

A silence descends on the room. Philip turns to his son. Alexander eyes him hopefully.

PHILIP

Alexander will serve me best in Macedon.

The prince is devastated, momentarily speechless.

ALEXANDER

Father...

Philip turns to his officers.

PHILIP

The young think they are invincible.

His men LAUGH. Alexander is embarrassed.

PHILIP (cont'd)

You have turned into quite a prince, Alexander, but if I am to be occupied abroad -

ALEXANDER

I am as capable as any man here -

PHILOTAS

HA.

Parmenio shoots his son a look. Alexander tries to ignore him.

ALEXANDER

How am I to win glory in battle if you won't even trust me to -

But Philip is getting angry at being challenged in front of his men.

PHILIP

The first lesson of any soldier is knowing how to take an order.

ALEXANDER

And the first lesson of any commander is knowing how to best utilize his troops.

All eyes on the king. No one talks to Philip like this.

Parmenio watches the exchange as though ready to leap in the event of violence.

PHILOTAS

Could it be the prince can see the depths of humility from the heights of audacity?

The whole of the staff LAUGHS.

PARMENIO

Forgive my son, Philip. His anger is for the Persians, not the prince.

PHILIP

If the prince can confront the king, than Philotas can confront the prince.

Philip continues to lock eyes with his son.

ALEXANDER

Was Philip not pleased with my victory?

PHILIP

Your victory was it? And do you claim the day for yourself?

ALEXANDER

The Sacred Band is no more. Did the Greeks offer any other fighters on the field?

Philip grows increasingly serious.

PHILIP

Your mother has made too much of you. I strain to see myself in your shape.

Alexander swallows, crushed. Attalus stands, raising his goblet.

ATTALUS

To a new queen...and legitimate heirs to the throne.

PHILOTAS

HEAR HEAR.

Parmenio glares at his son, shaking his head. Cleopatra nervously stares at the ground.

Enraged, the prince rises to his feet. He holds out his goblet of wine, then turns it - LETTING THE RED WINE POUR ONTO THE FLOOR.

No one knows quite how to react.

Hephaestian quickly stands, raises his goblet, and pours his wine to the floor. Perdiccas follows suit, then Peucestas, and finally Ptolemy.

Philip and the older officers study the young, defiant faces.

ALEXANDER

Does Attalus call me a bastard?

Attalus mutters something we cannot hear to a FAT MACEDONIAN STATESMAN sitting beside him. The Fat Statesman LAUGHS.

Losing all control, Alexander throws his goblet at Attalus' head. It barely misses. Attalus returns the favor. And in a flash, PHILIP IS ON HIS FEET, SWORD DRAWN.

There is a tense moment when all present are unaware of exactly whom Philip intends to threaten. Then:

PHILIP LUNGES FOR HIS SON.

Drunk and dependent on a lame right leg that was injured in battle, Philip trips over a stool and CRASHES to the floor.

The whole of the court falls silent. Philip lies splayed out on his face at his son's feet. Alexander swells.

ALEXANDER

Look, all of you, at the king. The man who proposes to cross from Europe to Asia can't even make it from one couch to the next.

Alexander and his companions disappear into the night. Ptolemy quickly follows.

Parmenio and his son, Philotas, quietly observe the scene.

The abused Pausanias can only smile.

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

Alexander's companions try to keep up with the angry prince.

ALEXANDER

That viper whispers venom in my father's ear. I will lie in the reeds. I will not make a sound. I will not move a muscle. And only when the time is ripe, will I strike with such awesome speed, such brute force, his vision will blur, his fingers will numb. With death about him, the wretch won't even have time to gasp.

Alexander mounts Bucephalas and gallops into the night.

EXT. MACEDON - DAY

A CRYING INFANT. Philip holds the baby in the air. His new wife, Cleopatra, is beside him. The happy family is surrounded by the king's COURT. The crowd APPLAUDS.

With Hephaestian beside him, an alienated Alexander looks across the room and finds his mother staring at him.

Olympias smiles eerily.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

The stone masks of tragedy and comedy mark the entrance to an open theatre. Inside, the seats are packed with people.

Hidden behind a large curtain, SOME MASSIVE ARTIFICE stands upstage.

Philip enters to the CHEERS OF HIS SUBJECTS. Among the entourage that follows is Alexander. He carefully sidles up behind his father, staying in step.

ALEXANDER

A word, father.

Philip still smiles and waves, maintaining his public facade as he speaks.

PHILIP

Not now.

ALEXANDER

The prince humbly begs the king's favor. I would carry water to be part of the invasion.

PHILIP

Then I shall see if we are in need of a water-boy.

Philip steps away from Alexander now, coming to the center of the stage in front of the curtain. The applause dies down so that he can speak.

Alexander stops in his tracks. Dejected, he turns to leave the theater.

PHILIP

I dedicate these statues of the gods to our Greek cousins, who join us in our endeavor to reclaim the Aegean.

Philip nods to some Greek delegates. The crowd APPLAUDS. The king gestures to TWO COURTIERs, who unveil:

THIRTEEN STATUES. TWELVE OF WHICH ARE THE OLYMPIC GODS IN THEIR PANTHEON.

THE THIRTEENTH IS OF PHILIP HIMSELF.

The crowd APPLAUDS in the most uncomfortable way, not knowing what to make of this.

PHILIP CONTINUES TO ENJOY THE APPLAUSE. He smiles at his nearby wife and child, raising his arms in the air, waving.

SUDDENLY, A HOODED FIGURE lunges forward AND STABS THE KING.

Philip CRIES OUT. The audience is stunned, strangely silent.

They watch the following events as though watching a Greek tragedy. Philip clutches the attacker as he is stabbed repeatedly, sliding to the ground. He looks at the face of his assailant.

IT IS PAUSANIAS.

The two exchange a look, then a bloody Pausanias darts from the theatre.

Alexander rushes back and catches his father - easing him to the floor.

As Pausanias flees the theater, Alexander glances at his comrades, Perdikkas and Ptolemy, and the two are in quick pursuit of the assassin.

The Fat Macedonian Statesman we met at the wedding rushes to the center of the stage and sees Philip, clearly dead.

MACEDONIAN STATESMAN
THE KING IS DEAD. CALL OUT THE GUARD.

The silence and spell are broken. In an instant, the theatre is filled with armed Macedonians. We hear CRIES from the crowd, general commotion. "The king is dead." We see Cleopatra and her WAILING infant.

In the confusion, Parmenio's son, Philotas, is the only person who watches the prince. HE WATCHES HIM CLOSELY:

Alexander lays down the body of his father and stands. Looking at Philip, he wipes off his bloody hands on his tunic.

Behind the prince, the silent, frozen face of Philip's statue looks down at him from his place among the gods.

EXT. CITY WALLS - DAY

From behind, we see Alexander wearing Philip's crown.

A VETERAN OFFICER leads Alexander through the THRONGS of the Macedonian army. As usual, Alexander is surrounded by his entourage of young, beardless Macedonians. Hephaestian stands solidly to his right, whispering into his companion's ear. The new king is obviously shaken.

Alexander, his friends, and the Veteran Officer, come to a stop in a clearing in the crowd. The Veteran addresses the troops.

VETERAN OFFICER

If there is a man among us who objects to this succession, let him speak.

Silence. Alexander waits out the tense moment, scanning the crowd.

Philotas and his friend, Coenus, watch the scene. Philotas waits for someone to speak out against Alexander, but all are silent, as though tacitly condoning the death of Philip.

Philotas seems about to speak, but he is stopped by the fixed gaze of Hephaestian.

Finally, Alexander tentatively steps forward. He has broken into a nervous sweat. Hephaestian watches him with concern. When the king finds his voice, it is weak.

ALEXANDER

The blood of Philip...

Alexander struggles for words. Hephaestian eyes him nervously. The men stare blankly back at him, impossible to read.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

The blood of my father...is the blood in my veins...is the blood of Macedon. My brothers, I swear...

Alexander scans the still crowd.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

I will exact revenge on this crime against us. The king has changed only in name.

Alexander looks to his silent army.

Finally, A SINGLE SOLDIER begins slowly BEATING HIS SHIELD WITH HIS SPEAR. Before long, another follows suit. Then another.

Alexander, still in a state of shock, needs air. His friends escort him through the throng, Hephaestian leading the way.

As the king passes, THE ENTIRE ARMY CLASHES THEIR SHIELDS IN APPROVAL.

Reaching the edge of the crowd, Alexander removes his crown. Hephaestian notices the strain in his face.

HEPHAESTIAN

Never let them see.

As the king walks, his companions fall in step.

PTOLEMY

The next few weeks will be your most vulnerable.

PERDICCAS

Parmenio and Attalus have half the army on the Asian border.

HEPHAESTIAN

And Philotas is here with the other.

ALEXANDER

Parmenio is loyal to the crown and his son is loyal to him.

PERDICCAS

Parmenio is loyal to Philip. He and the crown are no longer the same.

ALEXANDER

I have in mind a way for the general to prove his loyalty.

PERDICCAS

Parmenio is not our immediate concern. There are enemies closer to home. We must act and act swiftly.

HEPHAESTIAN

No king of Macedon has died peacefully in bed.

The king considers.

ALEXANDER

If there is a plot against me, let it be revealed, but it is the law that will protect me, not suspicion.

PTOLEMY

The law makes a luxury of precious time.

ALEXANDER

I give you wide berth in finding whatever plot you can, but a plot there must be. Am I understood?

PERDICCAS

You are.

PTOLEMY

Fear not, Alexander. We shall see to it that you sleep tonight and wake tomorrow with still a head to fill that crown.

Alexander and Hephaestian depart.

As Ptolemy and Perdiccas share a knowing glance filled with darkness and duty...

WE HEAR THE BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM OF A WOMAN.

INT. PALACE - DAY

Olympias walks casually, calmly, around a kneeling Cleopatra, Philip's latest wife.

Olympias holds a bloody dagger in her right hand, and a horrified Cleopatra clutches the bloody body of her dead infant.

OLYMPIAS

My son did not specify your fate.

Olympias lets a rope fall to the floor. Cleopatra looks at it as she cries.

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

Tax me with the decision, and I will not be kind.

Olympias exits.

EXT. GALLOWS - DAY

Five bound prisoners, suspected accomplices in Philip's assassination, are lined at the gallows, nooses around their necks.

TILT UP TO REVEAL: five slack ropes. We hear a SWOOSH, and the five ropes tighten.

INT. PALACE - NIGHT

Ptolemy and Perdiccas stand still in a long shadow.

The Fat Macedonian Statesman walks through the palace in the early evening.

In an instant, Ptolemy and Perdiccas are upon him. A TANGLE OF BODIES, A BLADE CROSSES THE OLD MAN'S THROAT, and is dragged into the darkness.

EXT. THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN

A hooded figure places a simple crown on the exposed corpse of Pausanias, nailed to a gibbet.

Looking up at the dead soldier, the figure removes her hood to reveal: OLYMPIAS, HONORING THE ASSASSIN.

EXT. TENT - ASIAN BORDER - DAY

Philip's officers, Parmenio and Cleander, watch the approach of a horseman. The horseman halts his steed and dismounts.

It is Ptolemy.

Ptolemy hands Parmenio two letters. As the general reads one of the letters, he frowns, nods his head, and glances at a concerned Cleander.

INT. TENT - ASIAN BORDER

Parmenio approaches Attalus, handing him a letter.

Attalus opens the dispatch and begins reading. As he does so, PARMENIO DRAWS A KNIFE AND STABS HIS FRIEND IN THE BACK.

Attalus gasps, slides to the ground. A solemn Parmenio watches his companion die.

INT. PALACE - MACEDON

An empty room. An open window. The whole of Macedon beyond.

Cleopatra's body, hanging from the end of a rope, is all that obstructs our view.

INT. OLYMPIAS' CHAMBERS - DAY

OLYMPIAS' P.O.V. - THROUGH HER WINDOW.

A FESTIVAL. A NAKED ATHLETE throws a discus, ACTORS speak the words of Euripides, and MUSICIANS PLAY THEIR INSTRUMENTS.

Olympias at her window. Alexander stands beside her, his eyes focused on the distant east. He wears a magnificent suit of polished armor for some high occasion.

OLYMPIAS

Take a wife, my son. You could be gone months, maybe even a year. Marching to war without begetting an heir -

ALEXANDER

Mother.

OLYMPIAS

You tempt the fates.

ALEXANDER

What woman could I find to replace you?

Olympias smiles. Alexander kisses his mother's cheek.

OLYMPIAS

What would become of Olympias if you were to fall in the field?

ALEXANDER

Is this the same Olympias that once claimed me to be the son of Zeus?

With tears in her eyes, Olympias looks at her son, no longer the boy she raised. She brushes back his hair.

OLYMPIAS

Do not be too generous with your friend.

ALEXANDER

Where would I be without Hephaestian?

OLYMPIAS

Remember you are not just a man. Not just a king.

ALEXANDER

All right, mother. All right.

OLYMPIAS

Remember, my child, as you set forth to find your destiny, it is through me that -

ALEXANDER

No talk of destiny today. No fortunes of glory. Let us have for once in our lives a simple good-bye. A mere and mortal mother to her one and humble son.

And for the first time, maybe the last, Olympias is utterly speechless. Alexander watches as she searches for words. He decides to help her.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

I love you...

Yet still she grapples for her voice. Finally, Alexander kisses her forehead and walks out the door.

Olympias turns again to the window, viewing the festival.

OLYMPIAS

You will be fearless, you will be merciless, you will be invincible. Nations will be blinded but to look upon you, the earth will tremble at your approach. Yours is the destiny of Zeus - just as... his... is - I...

And a single tear rolls down the hardened face of the indomitable Olympias, and she whispers...

OLYMPIAS (cont'd)

I love you, my son. I love you, Alexander.

EXT. PALACE

DOWN AND AWAY FROM HER WINDOW TO THE GROUNDS BELOW:

Alexander exits the palace. He is greeted by a smiling Hephaestian. The king rests his arm on the shoulders of his friend, and the two companions continue walking.

In the midst of the festivities, Alexander and Hephaestian are greeted by Aristotle, who smiles at his former pupils.

ARISTOTLE

Remember what I've taught you. You will accomplish much. The world will soon forget your humble tutor.

Alexander warmly takes the hands of his teacher.

ALEXANDER

Take care, old friend.

A saddened tutor watches the king and Hephaestian continue forward.

They approach a CROWD OF REVELERS that includes many of Alexander's friends - Perdiccas, Ptolemy, and Peucestas. The king is delighted to see them. The crowd follows him. The air is charged with excitement.

PTOLEMY

Alexander: Word has it that the statue of Orpheus has started to sweat.

PERDICCAS

Profusely.

The crowd LAUGHS as Alexander considers the story. In the gathering, he notices the old seer, Aristander.

ALEXANDER

Aristander, what is the meaning of the omen?

ARISTANDER

The meaning is plain for those who see. The king's exploits will give the poets much work.

The surrounding crowd APPLAUDS. The king continues forward with his companions - one arm across the shoulders of Hephaestian, the other across the shoulders of Ptolemy.

ALEXANDER

Come. They begin without us.

Alexander and his friends approach a very large banquet tent. They enter.

INT. TENT

The noisy banquet has already begun. Torches are lit. Boars roast over open fires. And of course, there is plenty of wine.

Parmenio, approaches with his loyal staff - Philotas, Coenus, Cleander, and the old war-horse, CLEITUS, a stoic, veteran officer who we have not yet met. The general is an impressive sight. He walks with confidence and is enthusiastically greeted by nearby soldiers.

The king and Parmenio meet for the first time since Philip's death.

ALEXANDER

Parmenio. When did you return?

PARMENIO

We have only just. My deepest sympathies. I regret that I was not at your father's side.

Both Parmenio and Alexander are clearly cautious - tense.

Also evident once again is the clear generational difference between Alexander, his entourage, and Philip's veterans. Parmenio himself is now sixty years old.

CLEANDER

Perhaps Alexander should reconsider the invasion. In light of Philip's.... Our campaign is at a standstill.

PHILOTAS

The treasury is desperately low.

CLEANDER

The troops in dire need of training. Tell him, Parmenio.

All turn to Parmenio. The old general eyes the situation, assessing the emotional state of the king.

PARMENIO

Alexander will need a staff worthy of the undertaking.

Counting on Parmenio's support, the older officers are a bit surprised by the response.

Alexander studies Parmenio.

ALEXANDER

Parmenio will be my second.

Alexander's companions are now the ones shocked. HEPHAESTIAN IS CAUGHT PARTICULARLY OFF GUARD. He stares at the king.

PERDICCAS

With all due respect, Alexander, is
Parmenio still able to fight the campaign
he is asked to design?

ALEXANDER

Who else but he can keep fifty thousand
stomachs full while fighting on foreign
soil?

PARMENIO

Might I have leave to suggest a staff?

The king feels as though he's being pushed but concedes.

ALEXANDER

As you wish.

As the conversation continues, Alexander stares at Parmenio
and Parmenio back at him. There is some great mischief afoot
and neither can be sure from whom it comes greater.

PARMENIO

Cleander will be my second. Cleitus
will continue to lead the Royal Squadron.
Coenus will retain his infantry command.
And Philotas will head the whole of the
Companions.

But this is too much for Hephaestian:

HEPHAESTIAN

Philotas -

Alexander silences him with a hand.

ALEXANDER

So be it.

PERDICCAS

Is it wise to -

ALEXANDER

Philotas is a boor, but clearly the most
capable in the Companions.

Philotas is mixed about the back-handed compliment. He
decides to bow and sneer at the same time.

HEPHAESTIAN

The men hate him.

PHILOTAS

It is my understanding they are all
welcome to love Hephaestian.

Hephaestian lets a hand fall to his sword.

Parmenio and Coenus pull Philotas back by the shoulder with
some resistance. Hephaestian and Philotas try to stare one
another down.

Ptolemy pulls Hephaestian away, and everyone moves toward the
front of the tent.

Parmenio and Alexander are left alone. They eye one another -
the moment more awkward than threatening.

ALEXANDER

I can only assume how having an army can
be so much like having children.

PARMENIO

You'll find the army says the same of
their commanders.

ALEXANDER

Come now, the men worship their Parmenio.

PARMENIO

They were fairly fond of Attalus, too.

Alexander studies him.

ALEXANDER

But not so much as to protest.

PARMENIO

Thus there is a lesson to be learned. It
would seem the favor of the army outweighs
even the favor of Zeus.

Alexander looks straight into Parmenio's eyes. Then:

Alexander leaps to a table top in the center of the tent.
Goblets, plates, and other tableware CRASH to the ground.

The soldiers quiet.

ALEXANDER

In the time of heroes, when Paris returned
to Troy with beautiful Helen, the Greeks
united forces and crossed the wine dark
sea to battle on Asian soil. It would be
ten years before the mighty Achilles at
last brought Troy to her knees.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

More than a century ago, the Persians drove us into this ancient struggle once again, tearing through Macedon and Greece, sacking Athens herself. Fortune has granted us the opportunity to right the scales. This Great Tyrant Darius drowns in opulence, grows fat in royal Persepolis. His broken subjects grovel before him as if he were Zeus himself. Revenge is ours. The time of heroes is again upon us. Macedon is ablaze with glory. And once more, Troy...is waiting... TO BE SACKED.

A FRENZIED ROAR. THE MACEDONIANS JUMP TO THEIR FEET, shouting to their Alexander, cheering their king and raising goblets of wine.

The cheering is extremely loud, and soon the men are chanting the name of their king: "Alexander, Alexander, Alexander...." The intensity of their emotion is disquieting.

As the king takes in the adulation, he glances across the tent to Parmenio. Cleander leans into the general's ear.

CLEANDER

They cheer as if they'd follow him to the heavens and back.

PARMENIO

Let us hope for our sake it is not quite so far.

EXT. BEACH-HEAD - DAY

A SPEAR FALLS FROM ABOVE AND STABS THE MOIST SAND.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Alexander walks out of the water, followed by Hephaestian and the whole of the Macedonian army. He takes his place next to the spear that has marked the spot on which he has landed finally at the foot of the Persian empire.

ALEXANDER

I ACCEPT FROM THE GODS THIS ASIA - WON BY THE SPEAR.

He turns to Hephaestian.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

What would Philip have done first, do you think - had he at last arrived?

Hephaestian smiles.

EXT. ILIUM - DAY

Ancient ruins - the crumbled walls of a once great city. Alexander crouches, touching the ivy covered stone. A strong wind blows from the sea, which can be seen in the distance. Hephaestian stands beside him.

From the top of the rubble, Peucestas motions for them to follow, then disappears from view.

Alexander and Hephaestian are in quick pursuit of their friend.

Peucestas races through the maze of fallen stone.

Alexander and Hephaestian struggle to keep up, laughing as they do.

Riderless, Bucephalas follows like one of the companions.

Alexander and Hephaestian round a corner and find Peucestas beside an old, crumbling tomb.

Alexander approaches the tomb and peers in. Inside, it is dark and dusty. The king glances at his friends, then cautiously enters.

INT. TOMB

Through the dim light, Alexander edges his way forward. He is followed by Hephaestian and Peucestas. The floor is littered with stones and artifacts. The king makes his way to the back of the tomb.

Behind the marker, the king notices AN ANCIENT SUIT OF ARMOR, a rusted, ornate shield, and a helmet adorned with white wings. Peucestas stares at the wonderful panoply.

ALEXANDER

And so, Aristotle, I have come at last to Troy.

Alexander lets a finger trace the rusted armor before him.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Could this be the tomb of Achilles and his beloved Patrokles? Could this be the very armor he wore?

Alexander turns to look at Hephaestian, who stares in reverence.

HEPHAESTIAN

What use would a man have of armor that he were invincible?

INT. TOMB - LATER

Outside the tomb, Hephaestian and Peucestas are just rounding the corner vanishing from sight. We can still hear their LAUGHTER.

MOVE AROUND SLOWLY TO: The marker at the back of the tomb. The ancient armor of Achilles has vanished. In its place, we find the old armor of Alexander...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - GRANICUS - DAY

WEARING THE SPLENDID, RECENTLY POLISHED, ARMOR FROM TROY, ALEXANDER RIDES BUCEPHALAS IN THE THICK OF A FIERCE BATTLE.

Riding behind, Peucestas holds the INCREDIBLY ORNATE SHIELD.

A mounted PERSIAN NOBLEMAN charges the king.

Alexander's ridiculous winged helmet falls in front of his eyes, and he quickly pushes it back.

The Persian throws a javelin at Alexander, piercing the king's shield. Alexander pulls out the javelin and rushes forward.

With his own spear, Alexander drives into the breastplate of the Persian. The Persian DRAWS HIS SWORD AND SLICES THE SPEAR.

Still holding the broken end, Alexander jabs it at the face of the Persian and hurls the Nobleman to the ground.

As both men tumble from their horses, a SECOND PERSIAN rides up with drawn sabre and STRIKES ALEXANDER IN THE HEAD, slicing the helmet and actually reaching bone. Blood gushes out in a torrent from under his helmet, blinding him in one eye.

Dazed, Alexander is nevertheless able to draw his sword and kill his new opponent. While he is doing so, A THIRD PERSIAN arrives behind Alexander with raised sword.

Before he can deliver what would certainly be a mortal blow...

PHILIP'S VETERAN, CLEITUS, RIDES FORWARD WITH AN ALMOST BORED EXPRESSION AND SEVERS THE PERSIAN'S ARM with one powerful sweep of his sword.

A bloody Alexander turns to see the figure of Cleitus, perched on his horse, then passes out, his slightly large helmet again falling in front of his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK AS THE BATTLE RAGES.

Slowly, the ROAR OF BATTLE becomes the ROAR OF CELEBRATION...

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - GRANICUS - LATE AFTERNOON

A bandaged Alexander. The red running down his face is now wine being poured over him by his soldiers.

The Macedonians SING THEIR VICTORY SONG, drink wine, and carry the king on their shoulders. Alexander turns to find:

A laughing Parmenio. The old general is also hoisted onto the shoulders of the CHEERING men.

Beyond Parmenio, the king sees Philotas, pushing determinedly through the throng - clearly apart from the celebration.

EXT. ELSEWHERE IN CAMP

CRATERUS, a tough, Macedonian soldier in his mid-thirties, drinks water from a leather flask. He sits with a group of eating SOLDIERS.

Among them are PEITHON, an old veteran, and LEONNATUS, a mere boy and the only non-veteran in the bunch.

PEITHON

The fury of our king makes me fight like I was eighteen again.

LEONNATUS

Don't forget your age, friend. Nothing's so pitiful as an old man torn by the bronze and clawing at the dust.

Philotas approaches Craterus from behind.

PHILOTAS

ON YOUR FEET.

Craterus notices Philotas, but refuses to turn around.

CRATERUS

When I'm done eating.

PHILOTAS

You broke ranks and risked all the men around you. NOW ON YOUR FEET.

CRATERUS

Is it a hazard to kill Persian soldiers?
Or merely a hazard to kill more than my
commander?

The veterans LAUGH. Philotas is infuriated.

PHILOTAS

I'll have you whipped for your insolence -

CRATERUS

Leave it to Philotas to have others do his
fighting.

Philotas draws his sword. Craterus rises and for the first
time, faces Philotas. Craterus is a rock, his stare steady
and confident.

PHILOTAS RAISES HIS SWORD TO STRIKE THE UNMOVING CRATERUS.

VOICE (O.S.)

What is your name, soldier?

Craterus, Philotas and the veterans turn to find their king
looking on. Alexander focuses on the bold soldier before him.

CRATERUS

Craterus.

ALEXANDER

You've earned yourself an infantry
command, Craterus.

Alexander rides off. The veterans eye one another, amazed by
the king's decision.

Philotas watches him go, then looks hard at Craterus.

INT. PALACE - PERSIA - DAY

A set of enormous curtains are flung open before us, and we
enter an incredible hall filled with PERSIAN SUBJECTS.

SILENCE, SUDDEN.

THE SUBJECTS DROP TO THE FLOOR, heads bowed, hands
outstretched, paying honors to their Great King.

Darius approaches a BOWED SUBJECT and offers his hand. As the
Subject takes the hand of the Great King and rises to his
feet, we see it is Artabazus, the Persian aristocrat we met
in Macedon.

According to custom, Darius kisses Artabazus once on each cheek - THE ROYAL KISS OF FRIENDSHIP.

ARTABAZUS

Your majesty, the Macedonian has crossed the Aegean and defeated our forces on the coast.

DARIUS

Then mobilize the fleet and destroy him. I will hear no more of this Philip.

ARTABAZUS

Alexander, sire. Philip has been killed. His son marches against you.

The Great King considers the words.

DARIUS

Did you know this Alexander?

ARTABAZUS

As a boy, my lord, he was most impressive.

INT. TENT - GORDIUM - MONTHS LATER - DAY

A map of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. A FINGER POINTS TO GORDIUM, AT THE CENTER OF ASIA MINOR.

CLEANDER (O.S)

We are here.

The finger belongs to Parmenio's veteran officer, Cleander. Alexander meets with his staff - the king's friends are on one side of a table, Parmenio's faction on the other.

CLEANDER

As we move east, the Persian fleet undoes our work, taking back the Aegean one port at time. Turn around, and we can still consolidate everything we've won.

PARMENIO

Darius will control the rest of Asia Minor, but Macedon will be master of both sides of the Aegean.

Alexander never moves. The men wait. Then:

PHILOTAS

If we move forward with the campaign, we'll lose the Aegean, the Hellespont - possibly Macedon herself.

PERDICCAS

Abandoning the campaign will only give
Darius time to win back the lands we've
taken.

Alexander is silent. With his arms folded, Parmenio studies
the king.

PHILOTAS

How can secure the sea without a fleet?

HEPHAESTIAN

Our navy wasn't worth the cost of keeping
her afloat.

Before Philotas can respond, Alexander turns to Ptolemy.

ALEXANDER

What says Ptolemy?

PTOLEMY

The ancient prophecy claims, he who undoes
the knot at Gordium, will be lord of Asia.

Philotas LAUGHS in sheer mockery.

PHILOTAS

And if Ptolemy could undo my belt -

PARMENIO

Philotas.

PHILOTAS

Forgive me father, but if we are here to
discuss war, let us discuss it as soldiers
- not as Aristander with his hands in the
open belly of a goat. The Gordian knot
indeed.

(To Ptolemy)

It will be your belly in knots when the
Persians send half a million men to re-tie
it for Darius.

ALEXANDER

Philotas is nothing if not practical.
Craterus?

Craterus is surprised by the attention.

CRATERUS

I'm no strategist.

ALEXANDER

Your instinct.

Craterus looks around the room.

CRATERUS

It seems to me a fleet needs a port. Take
the land, and we beat them at sea.

All are quiet. Alexander nods his head. Even Parmenio seems
impressed by the soldier's logic.

PHILOTAS

We'll have to capture every port between
here and Egypt. Including Tyre.

Cleander shakes his head at the thought.

CLEANDER

Tyre.

Alexander turns back to Ptolemy.

ALEXANDER

The Gordian knot, you say?

PHILOTAS

This is what we get from our king.
Secure the impossible with an old wives
tale?

Alexander looks at Philotas, about tired of his mouth.

COENUS

Philotas is merely pointing out -

CRATERUS

Philotas might watch his tone.

Philotas glares at Craterus.

PHILOTAS

You forget who is subordinate, soldier.

HEPHAESTIAN

And you forget who is king.

PERDICCAS

Why disregard a prophecy when the glory of
Macedon is at hand -

PARMENIO

The glory of Macedon?...or Alexander?

SILENCE. Alexander stares at the general. Parmenio returns
his look. Everyone in turn watches the standoff.

ALEXANDER

Undo the knot, and we take the coast. If we must hack our way to Egypt, so be it.

Alexander's contingent smile with eagerness and file out of the tent. Parmenio's men leave sullen and heavy.

PARMENIO

Lord of all Asia, is it?

ALEXANDER

We put our decision in the hands of Zeus.

PARMENIO

Very well.

As Parmenio goes to leave. Alexander's voice stops him.

ALEXANDER

Parmenio. It is the duty of any good general to advise his commander - to explore every possibility no matter how extreme. I have - and always will - welcome your opinion.

Alexander steps close to him now.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

But if ever again you offer in my presence the notion that I lead not for country but merely for king, I will bear the breaking of my heart as I cut you down. Everything I do, I do for Macedon.

Alexander exits, leaving Parmenio to consider his words.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - DAY

Alexander and Ptolemy march toward the temple. The other soldiers follow.

ALEXANDER

I hope you know what you're doing.

PTOLEMY

I hope you're good with knots.

EXT. TEMPLE OF ZEUS - DAY

The entire army watches anxiously.

INT. TEMPLE OF ZEUS

THE GORDIAN KNOT. The rope is attached to an ancient chariot. It is a Turk's-head knot that leaves no visible loose ends.

Alexander studies the complicated knot. His seer, Aristander, stands behind.

After much consternation, Alexander and his companions grow increasingly nervous. The king glances at Ptolemy, but the man who got him into this mess can only shrug.

Parmenio stands with Cleander and Philotas. He hides the satisfaction of seeing this rash young king so befuddled.

Alexander's frustration reaches its limit.

SUDDENLY, HE DRAWS HIS SWORD, AND RAISES IT IN ANGER ABOVE HIS HEAD.

But he freezes. His eyes lock on something, and a curious look crosses his face.

Alexander lowers his sword and reaches out with his hand.

Almost obscured by the knot is a pin that holds the yolk of the wagon to the pole. Alexander pulls it free with ease and the yoke of the wagon falls to the floor.

He turns and looks at his men, who do not know how to react. It is an awkward moment for everyone.

Alexander shrugs.

ALEXANDER

What does it matter how?

Alexander walks from the temple. We remain. OUTSIDE, we hear some announcement. THE ARMY CHEERS.

Philotas and Coenus eyes the entrance of the temple:

COENUS

"And so Achilles followed spear."

PHILOTAS

"Strong madness gripping his heart and violent after his glory."

EXT. GATES OF BABYLON - DAY

TO THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS AND THE CHEERS OF CITIZENS, A PERSIAN ARMY MARCHES FORTH FROM THE GATES OF BABYLON.

PRIESTLY MAGI lead the way, chanting a traditional hymn. They are followed by three hundred and sixty-five WEARERS OF THE PURPLE, Median white horses drawing the chariot of Ahura-Mazda, the king's IMMORTAL GUARDS, and finally:

THE WONDROUS GOLD CHARIOT OF THE GREAT KING HIMSELF - CARVED WITH INTRICATE DETAIL, SPARKLING IN THE SUN.

Darius is adorned in a white tunic, edged with purple. A cloak, embroidered with golden hawks, is draped from his shoulders. A large scimitar hangs from his belt.

The face of the Great King is silhouetted against the sun.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - ISSUS - DAY

CLOSE UP ON: The astonished face of Alexander.

ALEXANDER

So close?

Parmenio, Philotas, and Craterus focus on the king. Behind them, the army's mobile hospital bustles with activity.

PHILOTAS

So much for the coast.

CRATERUS

He moves across Syria. His numbers have the advantage on the open plain.

ALEXANDER

Then we'll march south to engage him as he crosses the mountains.

PARMENIO

There are two passes he can take - one to the north. From Issus we can face him from whichever pass he chooses - protect our lines of supply.

Alexander considers his options. It is the most nervous we've see him. He glances at Craterus, who nods reassuringly.

ALEXANDER

He'll move south.

PARMENIO

You have no way of knowing -

ALEXANDER

I won't bide my time at Issus when we can gain the advantage of surprise. Leave the wounded behind. We march at once.

Alexander marches off.

Parmenio nods, gravely accepting the decision. Philotas shakes his head.

EXT. CAMP - ELSEWHERE

Alexander approaches a wounded soldier reclining on a stretcher, his head bandaged.

It is Amyntas, the same wounded soldier we met in Greece. Amyntas looks up at his smiling king.

ALEXANDER

Wounded again, Amyntas?

AMYNTAS

Nothing that a few weeks' rest won't mend.

ALEXANDER

I'm afraid you'll miss our scrap with Darius.

AMYNTAS

Darius? I'd fight on crutches for a chance at him.

Alexander LAUGHS.

ALEXANDER

I'll see if I can get in a stroke for you. Take care, my friend.

EXT. COAST - DAY

Macedonian soldiers file past, ascending into the hills.

To the left, the Mediterranean sparkles in the sun. The long line of the trailing army extends into the distance.

We gaze up at the sun - a single dark cloud threatens to obscure.

EXT. ISSUS

The young, wounded Amyntas sleeps peacefully in the sun.

An ominous shadow creeps across his face.

Amyntas opens his eyes. He raises a hand to shade his eyes and see who stands above him. His pupils widen in fear.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

BITTER COLD RAIN.

MOVE ALONG THE COLUMN OF THE WEARY MACEDONIAN ARMY.

Peithon and Leonnatus, the older and younger infantry soldiers met earlier, slog their way through the rugged mountain pass with the rest of the army.

Leonnatus is clearly shaking.

PEITHON

Steady, Leonnatus.

LEONNATUS

It's merely the cold.

PEITHON

And I am sure you are wet merely from the rain. Darius is a man like any of us.

LEONNATUS

It is not the man I fear as much as the many. I'm told the forces of the Great King loose enough arrows to blot out the sun.

Peithon places a reassuring hand on the young soldier and smiles.

PEITHON

Then we'll be fighting in the shade.

JUST THEN, A SOUND OF ALARM. MEN SHOUTING FROM THE REAR FOR ALEXANDER.

Peithon and Leonnatus look back at the commotion just as Alexander rides past them toward the back of the line.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - ELSEWHERE

Alexander arrives at the back of the column and dismounts. He stares in horror at the sight before him.

Amyntas stands with his back to us, trembling, pale.

He collapses.

Alexander takes Amyntas in his arms and gently lowers him to the muddy ground.

ALEXANDER

What have they done to you, my friend?

AMYNTAS

To all of us. To all of the wounded.

LOOK DOWN AT HIS HANDS TO REVEAL: HIS HANDS HAVE BEEN HACKED OFF. The stumps seared with pitch.

AMYNTAS

They have taken the northern pass. He and his army wait behind you at Issus.

The king is dumbfounded. Amyntas drifts into unconsciousness.

The king's companions stare at Alexander.

Philotas looks at his father, Parmenio, and shakes his head bitterly.

Alexander holds Amyntas in his arms, trembling with rage and frustration. When he looks up, his eyes are awash with furious determination.

EXT. ISSUS - DAWN

THE RIGID, BEARDED FACE OF THE GREAT KING DARIUS.

He stands in a shining, armored war chariot with his army arrayed in battle formation on the far side of the Payas River.

Darius is surrounded by his Immortal Guard. They stand stiffly at attention, spears upright, bows over their left shoulders, beards cut short, and colorful gold and purple uniforms with a wide variety of decoration.

The sun rises on a narrow plain between the sea and mountains.

EXT. ISSUS - HIGH GROUND

Alexander, Parmenio and their contingents all look down at the breathtaking size of Darius' army.

It appears to be well over ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN.

With the image of Amyntas still smouldering in his mind, the king is undaunted.

ALEXANDER

How good of the Great King to bring all of Persia to greet us.

PARMENIO

To be sure, I expected more.

EXT. MACEDONIAN LINE - LATER

The whole of the Macedonian army - infantry and cavalry shimmering with armor, bristling with spears, stare at the long line of Persians opposite them several hundred yards away.

THE WHOLE OF THE FIELD IS FROZEN STILL.

Alexander trots out in front of them on Bucephalas to inspect the field. He stands in full view, alone, some hundred feet ahead of his men. Bucephalas jerks the reins, seemingly as anxious to fight as the king.

Alexander looks far across the breathtaking mass of Persians that stand like a wall between the mountains and the sea.

Far in the distance, on slightly higher ground, he can make out the glimmering spectacle that is the Chariot of The Great King Darius.

He smiles. He draws his sword and raises it in the air, turning back to his waiting men.

ALEXANDER
MACEDONIANS... ALEXANDER REQUESTS
PERMISSION TO ADVANCE.

Without hesitation, A DEAFENING ROAR FROM THE MEN.

They are still cheering when Alexander turns Bucephalas toward the Persians and attacks without ordering the charge.

THE MACEDONIANS SCRAMBLE TO RUN AFTER THEM.

EXT. ISSUS - FRONT LINE

ALEXANDER FLIES HEADLONG INTO THE LINE OF WAITING PERSIANS who envelop him - some literally turning in on themselves to surround him.

They are so zealous in their want to kill the king, they forget the hordes of Macedonians crashing down behind them.

Singing the WAR SONG, Craterus races forward with the infantry, spears fanning forward, positioning for battle.

SEVERAL HUNDRED PERSIANS DIE IN THE FIRST WAVE, stabbed in the back as they try to get to Alexander.

Macedonian and Persian infantry lines lock in battle. Pushing, pulling, men stabbing desperately with their spears. Armed with a dagger and sword, Ptolemy carves up the field.

THE FRIGHTENING SOUNDS OF BATTLE.

EXT. ISSUS - PERSIAN CENTER

To the rear of his force, Darius confidently surveys the engagement from his war chariot. He turns slightly to his left and sees:

Alexander on Bucephalas, at some distance, clearing a path before him with his sword.

EXT. ISSUS - FRONT LINE

The Macedonian Royal Squadron struggles to keep up - Cleitus, Hephaestian, and the king's shield bearer, Peucestas.

EXT. ISSUS - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius, eyes fixed on the determined Macedonian king. He glances right and sees:

MASSES OF PERSIAN CAVALRY - ineffectively bunched up. Unable to utilize their numbers on such a narrow front, the soldiers toward the rear are completely removed from the fight.

Artabazus, the older Persian aristocrat we've met before, quickly approaches on horse.

ARTABAZUS

Your majesty.

The Great King stares forward.

DARIUS

Speak.

ARTABAZUS

My lord, the battle works against us.

DARIUS

We outnumber the boy two to one.

ARTABAZUS

The ground is not suited to the immensity of our force.

DARIUS

Do you expect me to accept defeat from this dog?

ARTABAZUS

Not defeat, my lord. Only a minor setback. Another day...

Darius continues to survey the battle before him, considering his options.

He grits his teeth in frustration.

DARIUS

See to it the royal family is escorted to safety. Like a ram, we withdraw only to butt the harder.

EXT. ISSUS - BACK OF PERSIAN LINE

A SINGLE PERSIAN INFANTRY SOLDIER turns back to see the Great King and his mounted guard fleeing the field.

EXT. ISSUS - MACEDONIAN RIGHT

Alexander pauses to catch his breath. Staring hungrily after his prey, he witnesses the effect of Darius' retreat:

THE PERSIAN FORCES ARE COLLAPSING IN THE WAKE OF THEIR GREAT KING. They scatter before the steady, disciplined Macedonian infantry.

An exhausted Parmenio and Philotas ride up and watch the retreat beside their king.

A CACKLING Perdiccas races past like a wild man, hungry for blood. The loyal Peucestas follows behind. And Alexander and Bucephalas are off in a flash.

Hephaestian and Ptolemy take up the chase as well. Beside his friend Philotas, Coenus watches them race forward and decides to join the hunt.

They leave behind the carnage that follows an army in retreat. The Macedonians hack the Persians to pieces as they run.

The sun is beginning to set.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DUSK

Darius pushes forward. A fresh horse awaits the Persian king, and he effortlessly abandons his chariot and continues his retreat.

Still followed by a small band of followers, Darius strips off his royal robe, shield, and bow and disappears into the countryside.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

In the dark, Alexander picks up the royal robe recently discarded by the Great King. He is surrounded by his mounted entourage.

A weary Hephaestian approaches with another group of riders and dismounts.

ALEXANDER

I smell him.

Incensed, he moves toward his horse, ready to continue the pursuit. Hephaestian physically prevents him.

HEPHAESTIAN

We've lost him.

Alexander moves for his horse.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

The chase is done.

Hephaestian restrains Alexander from behind, and the king finally stops fighting. They are exhausted. Deep breaths.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

For now, my friend, the chase is done.

Alexander looks at the royal robe in his hands. He is a bit unsettled by the significance of the emblem.

ALEXANDER

My sword trembles with the rage of generations. My bones ache with centuries of anticipated revenge. I cannot rest, I cannot falter. I will not pause for food nor water, nor mountain nor sea.

He screams out into the night after the fleeing king.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH LAND BETWEEN THE
EDGE OF MY SWORD AND THE EDGE OF THE EARTH
WHERE YOU CAN HIDE - AND I SHALL RIP EVERY
ROCK FROM THE SOIL UNTIL I FIND YOU. I
WILL HUNT DOWN THE COWARD DARIUS AND DRINK
THE BLOOD FROM HIS SKULL. DO YOU HEAR ME?
I WILL FIND YOU. RUN WHILE YOU CAN.

EXT. PLAINS - NIGHT

Darius and his men make their escape as Alexander's words follow them in a faded echo...

ALEXANDER (O.S.)
 RUN WHILE YOU CAN.

We focus on the stone face of the Great King.

EXT. BANQUET TENT - NIGHT

Hephaestian walks purposefully through a celebrating Macedonian camp. He approaches a large tent and enters.

We are left outside with a small group of MACEDONIAN SOLDIERS and PERSIAN COURTESANS. They sit about a fire, drinking.

Peithon and Leonnatus are included in the group. AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN in her forties sits on Peithon's lap.

CELEBRATING SOLDIER
 A year and a half on the road is enough to
 have me eyeing the legs of Peithon.

LAUGHTER from Leonnatus and the men. Peithon accepts the friendly ribbing in stride.

PEITHON
 Sorry, friends...

Looking into the eyes of his MISTRESS.

PEITHON (cont'd)
 I think this one's just stolen my heart.

Peithon's Mistress returns his smile, and they kiss passionately.

As the men HOOT AND HOLLER, Alexander and Hephaestian quickly exit the banquet tent and continue into the night...

INT. TENT

The flaps of an enormous tent fling open. Alexander and Hephaestian walk to find:

The rest of his companions stare at him with varying degrees of surprise. Alexander looks beyond and sees:

The royal family. SYSIGAMBIS, the queen mother, sits in a chair. DARIUS' WIFE stands behind her, surrounded by DARIUS' TWO CHILDREN, a boy and girl.

Parmenio, Craterus, Philotas, enter the tent. They are as surprised as Alexander by the discovery.

Alexander approaches the boy and gently lifts his head.

ALEXANDER

What kind of king abandons his own family?
Alexander will treat you with the respect
your status deserves.

The elderly Sisygambis rises, crosses slowly to Hephaestian,
and throws herself at his feet.

HEPHAESTIAN

My lady, this is the king.

Sisygambis realizes her mistake, and Hephaestian is
embarrassed by the confusion. No one is certain how Alexander
will react, but the king brushes it aside.

ALEXANDER

Never mind, mother. He, too, is Alexander.

Alexander helps the woman to her feet and escorts the Queen
Mother to her family.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Nothing remains, but to crown our labors
with the sovereignty of Asia.

Alexander turns to a resigned Parmenio.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

We've delayed enough. Take the coast,
control the sea, and we will face this
tyrant again.

EXT. TYRIAN SHORE - DAY

THE IMPOSING CITY OF TYRE is a rock island half a mile off
shore. The great temple of Heracles is situated at its
heights. The sides of the island are sheer cliffs, dropping
straight into the sea.

From the shore, Alexander and his staff study the daunting
natural fortress. Even the king is a bit stunned. A GOAT
stands off to the side.

TYRIAN EMBASSIES stand before Alexander bearing gifts.

TYRIAN EMBASSY

The citizens of Tyre pledge an alliance
with Macedon. We wish a peace with the
mighty Alexander.

PTOLEMY

Peace you shall have.

The Embassy nods. But Alexander has that look of mischief in his eye.

HEPHAESTIAN

As a descendant of Heracles, it will give Alexander great pleasure to visit your island and sacrifice in the god's greatest temple.

The embassies grow nervous, glancing at one another. An OLDER EMBASSY steps forward.

OLDER EMBASSY

I'm afraid the right is reserved only for our accepted king. Until the war between Macedon and Persia is decided, we will admit neither onto our island.

TYRIAN EMBASSY

Perhaps the temple down the coast will suit Alexander's needs.

CRATERUS

Perhaps news of our victory against Darius has not yet reached Tyre.

PERDICCAS

Tell your citizens that if Alexander is denied entrance to your city, he will tear down your island fortress one stone at a time.

The Older Embassy smiles. Even a doubtful Alexander raises an eyebrow at the ever zealous Perdiccas.

OLDER EMBASSY

No one has ever taken Tyre, my lord.
Without a fleet, no one has even tried.

The king considers. The goat BLEATS.

EXT. UNDERWATER

A large boulder CRASHES into the sea. We follow the rock as it silently falls through the water, at last coming to rest at the bottom of the sea.

EXT. SHORE - LATER

SEVEN MUSCULAR MACEDONIAN SOLDIERS struggle to pry and push a very large rock into the sea. They are obviously having difficulty.

ARISTOTLE (V.O.)

My dear Alexander. I try to imagine the wonder of discovering the world that opens before you.

Frustrated with the situation, Alexander jumps down and gives his soldiers a hand. Seeing that their king isn't afraid to get his hands dirty, other soldiers jump down to lend their support.

Soon, there is a small crowd grunting and groaning as they strain to budge the immovable rock.

ARISTOTLE (V.O.)

It's as if a race of men, living underground in rich and beautiful dwellings, suddenly emerged into this world in which we dwell.

From the sidelines, Ptolemy gives Hephaestian an uncertain glance. Then they look forward.

As we follow their eyes, we see: AN INCREDIBLE JETTY, two hundred feet across and stretching half distance toward Tyre. The jetty is constructed of thousands of very large boulders and wood planks.

EXT. TYRE - BATTLEMENTS

TWO TYRIAN GUARDS watch the painstakingly slow construction and LAUGH.

INT. ARISTOTLE'S CHAMBERS - MACEDON - NIGHT

Aristotle writes a letter by candlelight.

ARISTOTLE (V.O.)

Would they not be dumbfounded by the sudden sight of the earth and sea and sky, the expanse of cloudy heaven, the violence of the winds, the glorious sun in all its splendor, and the equal wonders of night?

EXT. TYRIAN SHORE - SEVEN MONTHS LATER - DAY

Alexander's companions stare forward. Returning to the city, Parmenio, Cleander, Philotas, and Coenus ride to a halt before a contingent of Macedonian cavalry. Shaking their heads, the astonished Macedonians take in the work of their king.

The jetty is complete. A hundred feet short of the city we see what must have been two massive wooden towers on the jetty, now burned and crumpled.

The savaged hulls of Tyrian ships are still smoking in the water.

Tyre herself, surrounded with the debris of battle, is a smoking ruin.

And a lone Alexander crosses the jetty, goat in tow.

EXT. TEMPLE OF HERACLES - TYRE

Through the smoking ruins and CRIES OF ANGUISH, Alexander, splattered with blood, carries a sacrificial goat. DEAD TYRIAN CITIZENS litter the streets and the road is lined with MEN BEING CRUCIFIED. Alexander walks through the carnage with a glint in his eye.

The king approaches the famous temple of Heracles. The once glorious structure is now in flames. Frightened Tyrians, seeking sanctuary at the temple, stare at the Macedonian.

INT. TEMPLE OF HERACLES

Determined to perform his sacrifice, Alexander stops before the warrior image of the god. Heracles is powerful, muscular - a fitting symbol for the king.

ARISTOTLE (V.O.)

Overwhelmed by these sights, would they
not believe that gods did indeed exist and
that these things are the work of their
hands?

Alexander grips the horns of his goat, unsheathes his sword, and we see...

EXT. EGYPT - DAY

The blade of Alexander's sword against blue sky, sparkling in the sun. A CROWD ROARS.

Before the king, we see CHEERING EGYPTIANS and the symbols of their country: THE TOWERING TEMPLES, THE PYRAMIDS, THE AS YET UNRAVAGED FACE OF THE SPHINX.

As the Macedonians march forward, they are thronged by the celebrating Egyptians.

Alexander, Parmenio, and the king's close friends are completely amazed by the scene. They LAUGH as they march through the adoring crowd...

EXT. EGYPT - PLAIN - DAY

Alexander in a plain between lake and sea. The king holds a sack of chalk. He walks quickly forward, spilling the grain in an even line along the ground.

A CITY-PLANNER struggles to keep up, taking notes.

ALEXANDER

I want the walls in the shape of a
Macedonian cloak.

CITY-PLANNER

That will be difficult.

The king excitedly moves forward, now spilling the grain in a different direction.

ALEXANDER

And the market by the river.

CITY-PLANNER

The sea would be best. I will find a
suitable location -

ALEXANDER

Temples to both Macedonian and Egyptian
deities -

CITY-PLANNER

I assure you I am most qualified to -

The king stops, pointing to the distance.

ALEXANDER

And on that ridge a magnificent palace,
where a king might view the city and all
its inhabitants.

CITY-PLANNER

If Alexander would leave the planning to
the planners.

Alexander studies his frustrated planner, smiles, then
continues forward.

LATER

Still taking notes, the City-Planner follows a line of grain
stretching across the ground. Tossed to the side of the line
is an empty sack.

The line turns ninety degrees, and the City-Planner follows it on its winding path. Off to the right, another sack. Still, he moves forward.

Finally, the City-Planner finds a tired Alexander standing at the end of the long line of grain. Holding the final, half-empty grain sack, the king surveys his work. The sun is low in the sky.

The City-Planner hands the king his notebook. Alexander studies the notes: THE CRUDE, PRELIMINARY SKETCHES OF A MAGNIFICENT CITY.

The king grins, resting his arm across the shoulders of the City-Planner.

ALEXANDER

It will be my greatest of Alexandrias.

They look once more to the plain, take in the vague outline of an enormous city, then turn and walk away.

We hold on the plain. All at once, AN ENORMOUS FLOCK OF BIRDS DESCENDS FROM THE SKY.

The birds settle on the plain, feasting on the grain the king has left behind...

INT. PALACE - EGYPT - DAY

Ptolemy, Perdikkas, Peucestas and Craterus, Alexander's most trusted core, enjoy a moment of splendid relaxation. They recline, drinking wine, eating exotic Egyptian food and flirting with the even more EXOTIC WOMEN.

Aristander the seer is here as well.

Alexander and Hephaestian stand off in the corner, talking quietly.

ALEXANDER

You don't look well, Hephaestian. Would you have preferred we come to Egypt as conquerors rather than liberators?

HEPHAESTIAN

I would cede all of Egypt for a day's hunting with my friend.

ALEXANDER

A long and quiet life brings no glory.

HEPHAESTIAN

The quest for glory requires a command.

ALEXANDER

What is this?

But Hephaestian looks away, sipping his wine.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Have I slighted my friend in some way?

HEPHAESTIAN

A good commander knows how to best utilize his troops.

ALEXANDER

Is there talk among my companions?

HEPHAESTIAN

These words are my own.

In the blink of an eye, Alexander's mood swings to anger.

ALEXANDER

Speak then, Hephaestian. Tell me your mind.

Half-teasing, Hephaestian tries to deflate the king's anger.

HEPHAESTIAN

Do I speak to my companion or this Lord of All Asia?

And with that ALEXANDER SMASHES HIS GOBLET TO THE FLOOR.

Everyone in the room freezes - confused by the change in their king. He addresses them all.

ALEXANDER

HAVE I NOT TAKEN HALF THE WORLD AND LAID IT AT YOUR FEET? How have I offended you, my companions?

PERDICCAS

Offended, Alexander?

ALEXANDER

Hephaestian would say that I grow aloof. What has been the indication?

The companions all look now at Hephaestian who is utterly humiliated by the misunderstanding. He is helpless to defend himself.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Is it the so-called favor I have shown for Parmenio and his son?

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Would you have me cut them down and spoil the favor of the army? Spite them though you will, are they not competent commanders?

All of the companions mutter in one way or another: "Yes, Alexander."

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Have they not both been loyal servants to the king?

No answer this time.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

WELL?

There is a very uncomfortable silence in the room. The companions glance at one another.

Alexander is suddenly aware he is not as close to the core as he once thought.

Aristander eyes the situation warily. Finally:

CRATERUS

Alexander will not be safe as long as Philotas and his father are in command of Macedonian arms.

PERDICCAS

Their posts are the right of those loyal to the king's cause.

PTOLEMY

Parmenio and his son hold much power -

ALEXANDER

Exactly. I can do nothing with camp gossip.

CRATERUS

For now, it might be best to keep them under observation.

Alexander considers, his mood coming back under reign.

ALEXANDER

Do so.

Craterus nods. Hephaestian notices the exchange with a twinge of jealousy.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

And from this moment on, I will have no dissention. To those in this room, I am king in title only. I would die to know I sat on the throne a man alone.

And Alexander says these last words with some venom to Hephaestian. Hephaestian looks away, only to find the others glaring at him as well.

VOICE (O.S.)

Alexander.

ALEXANDER

What is it?

A NERVOUS SOLDIER stands in the doorway, having possibly heard the king's outburst.

NERVOUS SOLDIER

An envoy from Darius to see you with the Great King's terms.

ALEXANDER

Send him.

THE ENVOY enters the room. He is proud and arrogant, his mouth fixed in a permanent sneer.

ENVOY

I have come for the ruler of Macedon.

ALEXANDER

He stands before you.

The Envoy looks down his nose at the Macedonian king.

ENVOY

I am sent from my master, Lord of Asia, Great King of the most powerful empire -

Alexander SLAPS THE ENVOY. He falls to the floor, lying prostrate at the king's feet.

The companions CHUCKLE, letting the mood elevate at last. All but Hephaestian, at least.

Alexander sits on a nearby couch as though on a throne. The Envoy musters what self-respect he has left.

ENVOY (cont'd)

From the goodness of his heart, the Great King offers the whole of Asia Minor, a ransom of twenty thousand talents for the royal family, and the hand of his daughter in marriage.

ALEXANDER

Tell Darius he offers a wife I can marry and a dowry I have already won.

Another CHUCKLE from the companions, the dour mood almost fully evaporated,

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

I will not be content until your majesty's Persepolis houses Macedonian soldiers.

ENVOY

The Great King warns that his empire is vast. If you emerge vulnerable onto our steppes, you will know its immensity.

With that ALEXANDER LEAPS TO HIS FEET. The move is so sudden, that the Envoy scrambles to his feet and runs panicked from the room. Alexander points after him.

ALEXANDER

The Persian war dance.

LAUGHTER. Alexander calls after the Envoy.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

ASIA CANNOT SUPPORT TWO KINGS ANYMORE THAN THE EARTH CAN SUPPORT TWO SUNS.

ABSOLUTE HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER NOW. Even Hephaestian has to smile. They laugh so hard it is a moment before they hear the SHOUTS FROM OUTSIDE.

Suddenly, the companions fall silent.

THOUSANDS OF VOICES CAN BE HEARD IN THE STREETS.

It is an eerie moment.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Why do they shout?

ARISTANDER

They're calling for you. For their Pharaoh. The son of Ammon.

ALEXANDER

Well, let them have me.

Alexander walks to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY

Alexander looks down on a THRONG choking the streets.

When they see him, THE CROWD FALLS SILENT.

PAUSE.

He lifts his hand, and we hear a THUNDEROUS ROAR.

Alexander lowers his hand and the crowd quiets. He smiles and turns to his smiling companions. They raise their goblets of wine.

Alexander raises his hand again and again the crowd erupts. Finally, he is raising and lowering his hand - controlling the screaming as though conducting the frenzy below.

He finally walks back into the room.

ALEXANDER

The son of Ammon, am I?

ARISTANDER

According to custom.

ALEXANDER

Then am I to have a new father? Who is this Ammon, Aristander? Some local god?

The companions LAUGH, but Aristander remains serious.

ARISTANDER

Alexander, Ammon...is Zeus.

Alexander is taken aback by the words. His eyes glaze briefly, fixed on some distant memory. He turns to his smiling friends.

ALEXANDER

I'd scarcely wish to spoil my good fortunes with blasphemy.

Ptolemy lights up, seizing the tail of an idea.

PTOLEMY

Let us consider this, Alexander.

ALEXANDER

Please, Ptolemy, no more invention.

Hephaestian sees where Ptolemy is headed and steps in.

HEPHAESTIAN

Ptolemy may have a point. Who are these people more likely to follow - Alexander, son of a man? Son of Philip? A tyrant? Or Alexander...son of Zeus?

Alexander is half enticed by the words, but he shakes them off.

ALEXANDER

Must I abandon one for the other?

Hephaestian does not answer. Perdiccas LAUGHS derisively. Ptolemy silently watches the king.

ARISTANDER

A newly instated Pharaoh would journey to the Siwah Oasis and consult the high priest.

CRATERUS

That would take two weeks through the desert at least.

Hephaestian seizes this moment.

HEPHAESTIAN

Go there, Alexander. Let the Oracle confirm to the people of Egypt that you are indeed the son of Ammon.

Alexander is drunk on many thoughts now, staring off into nothing.

PTOLEMY

If only to reap the rewards, we must surely play the part.

The king considers.

LONG PAUSE. As though pushed by some invisible hand, he returns to the balcony. The crowd ROARS at his reemergence.

He loses himself in their SHOUTS of adulation - chanting the king's name. Their adoration seems to have suddenly taken on a far deeper meaning.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A night march toward Siwah.

Alexander's army marches across a dried sea bed, littered with sun-bleached shells, reflecting brightly in the light of the full moon.

The column of Alexander's escort marches quickly, energized by the success of their campaign. The voices of soldiers in the front of the column are singing.

In the middle of the line, Alexander rides alone.

Hephaestian joins him, approaching with caution.

ALEXANDER

I'm sorry, my friend.

HEPHAESTIAN

Whatever for?

But it is clear they both know exactly.

ALEXANDER

For being my father today.

HEPHAESTIAN

The oracle will find Pharoah a new father.

Alexander LAUGHS.

ALEXANDER

Don't make rite from ritual. I'm no son of Ammon.

HEPHAESTIAN

No?

ALEXANDER

Sex and sleep make me know that I am mortal.

They share a look. Hephaestian betrays an understanding smile.

HEPHAESTIAN

In every sip of wine, he tastes only the sweetness of decay.

Alexander nods.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

And yet was not Achilles the son of
divinity? Did he not carve himself
everlasting fame on the bloody plains of
Troy? Are there to be no more heroes? Are
we to assume the gods have fled the
universe? Has Zeus abandoned his throne?
Does chaos now reign in the hearts of men?
Or can we assume that there are still
those children who walk the earth - sown
by the immortals - infused with some god-
like spark, hovering between what is
mortal...and what is divine?

Alexander, Hephaestian, and the column retreat into the
distance.

In the eerie blue-white light of the moon, the sparkling
shells and distant horizon blur with the sky, giving the
impression to those who allow it that the army marches not to
the oasis, but out into the very heavens.

EXT. SIWAH - DAY

Alexander is led to the temple by a surrounding crowd of
NATIVE INHABITANTS.

The Macedonian soldiers stand camp around the temple, resting
after an exhausting march.

On the temple stairs, Alexander is greeted by the HIGH
PRIEST.

HIGH PRIEST

Son of Ammon, Lord of the Two Lands, what
does your heart desire?

ALEXANDER

To defeat Darius.

HIGH PRIEST

Son of Ammon, Lord of the Two Lands, what
does your heart desire?

ALEXANDER

To be Lord of All Asia.

HIGH PRIEST

Son of Ammon, Lord of the Two lands...what
does your heart desire?

The High Priest turns and walks toward the temple entrance.

Alexander looks at Ptolemy. But once again, Ptolemy can only shrug. Alexander shakes his head at his friend, glances at Hephaestian, then nervously follows the High Priest.

Hephaestian moves to follow, but he is held back by Ptolemy.

Aristander watches with interest.

Alexander reaches the entrance. Before him hangs AN INTRICATE TAPESTRY - ADORNED WITH THE IMAGE OF THE GOD, AMMON: A HUMAN FIGURE IN A PURPLE ROBE WITH TWO RAM'S HORNS.

Alexander studies the compelling figure, then vanishes into the darkness beyond.

EXT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

Macedonian soldiers sleep in the night - Hephaestian and Aristander among them.

Ptolemy sits, eyes open, the only one awake. He hears the GROWLS OF LARGE CATS and the CRIES OF EXOTIC BIRDS.

Lions can occasionally be glimpsed in the brush nearby. Ptolemy glances up at the silent temple.

There is no sign of Alexander.

EXT. TEMPLE - MORNING

Ptolemy sleeps. A shadow crosses his face, and he opens his eyes. Alexander stands before him. Ptolemy looks inquiringly at his king.

Alexander can only shake his head - a man weighted by a heavy burden.

Hephaestian and Aristander wake.

HEPHAESTIAN

And what, pray tell, does the heart of Alexander desire?

But the king cannot answer. He approaches Bucephalas, who nods at Alexander.

ALEXANDER

We must away to Memphis. Then east through Asia. We have given Darius time enough to marshal the force of his empire.

And Alexander is already on his horse.

ARISTANDER

But what is it, Alexander? What did the oracle tell you?

Hephaestian and Ptolemy watch the king depart, then look at one another with concern.

INT. TENT - MACEDONIAN CAMP - NIGHT

A crudely drawn map of the field at Gaugamela.

The Macedonian army is a sizeable patch of blocks and lines, representing the divisions of infantry. The cavalry is denoted by triangular wedges.

On the opposite side of the map is a much larger - in fact incredibly large - series of markings which denote the Persians.

Alexander and Parmenio, each with their companions, stand around the map. Parmenio points to the Persian line.

PARMENIO

At best, we are outnumbered ten to one.
And Darius has an open field this time.
Our only hope to survive is to attack at night.

Alexander considers. Everyone waits anxiously for his answer.

ALEXANDER

We attack in the day.

Dissentation from Parmenio's men. Even Alexander's companions are a unnerved.

PARMENIO

I humbly ask of the king at what point I can fulfill my purpose here?

ALEXANDER

I did not cross half of Asia to unseat this coward as he would me.

PHILOTAS

Perhaps the son of Ammon has slept one too many nights with the Iliad under his pillow.

Alexander stares at Philotas.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

We'll all be dead in the morning. I may as well speak my peace tonight.

PARMENIO

The troops are assembled, Alexander.
Rested and ready. Now is the time.

ALEXANDER

The order is given, Parmenio.

Parmenio considers his next words carefully, finally
swallowing and then:

PARMENIO

I... I beg of you, Alexander.

ALEXANDER

Craterus.

All eyes turn toward the quiet commander.

CRATERUS

We are soldiers, my king. Loyal to his
majesty's every command. We will follow
you through the shadow of death if it is
your wish. But... with my deepest
respects... Alexander... Consider for once
wisdom over glory.

ALEXANDER

I will not steal my country's victory.

Alexander exits. Hephaestian follows.

The mood in the tent is dour on both sides.

PHILOTAS

Eat well all of you tonight. Tomorrow we
dine in Hades.

EXT. THE EDGES OF CAMP

FOLLOW ALEXANDER AND HEPHAESTIAN across the camp to a small
rise at the edge. They are overwhelmed by the view before
them, their faces aglow with a flickering, orange light.

ALEXANDER

We can still turn round.

HEPHAESTIAN

Alexander -

ALEXANDER

Fall back to Asia Minor. Raise a larger
force.

Alexander pauses, looking into the distance, lost in thought.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
One day's hunting with my friend.

Hephaestian studies him.

HEPHAESTIAN
Our battle is here.

Alexander touches Hephaestian's face, much as he did as a boy
over the body of a gutted boar.

ALEXANDER
Parmenio is right. I ask the men to do the
impossible.

Hephaestian touches Alexander's arm.

HEPHAESTIAN
Perhaps.

The king stares at his friend.

ALEXANDER
I know in the bottom of my heart that we
cannot succeed.

HEPHAESTIAN
Perhaps.

ALEXANDER
Would you stop me if I went too far?

HEPHAESTIAN
Never.

They embrace.

ALEXANDER
Sometimes Alexander is even too much for
Alexander.

CRANE UP TO REVEAL: THE CAMP FIRES OF THE PERSIAN ARMY,
stretching to the horizon, making the nighttime day. Four
Hundred and fifty thousand men to Alexander's fifty.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LINE - DAWN

A beautiful sunrise.

The Macedonian army stands in formation, ready to march. The
camp is deathly quiet. Peucestas, holding the shield from
Troy, sleeps on his steed.

A concerned Ptolemy quickly rides up. He looks to the waking Peucestas and shrugs. Peucestas can only shake his head in response.

Frustrated, Ptolemy looks down the line toward a mounted Perdiccas. Ptolemy raises his arms in the air inquiringly, then lets them drop.

DOWN THE LINE, Perdiccas watches Ptolemy. Unable to give him an answer, Perdiccas merely returns the empty gesture.

FURTHER DOWN THE LINE, Craterus walks past a contingent of Macedonian cavalry. Approaching a horse, he mounts the animal and looks expectantly to Hephaestian, who stands beside him.

Here, too, Hephaestian can only shrug.

STILL FURTHER DOWN THE LINE, Parmenio rides past a fence of Macedonian spears, infantry at the ready.

He stops and inspects the Persian line in the distance, fully armored and stone still, covering the field like black grass as far as the eye can see.

Slowly, the old general becomes aware of AN ODD SOUND, A FAINT RATTLE.

Confused, he looks around, listening, finally turning to his troops. He realizes that the men shake with fear.

ANGLE ON: Peithon and Leonnatus are here in the ranks. Leonnatus is visibly terrified, while his older friend is expressionless.

Leonnatus can take the tension no longer. He lets out a sharp gasp before catching himself. He bows his head, eyes shut tight, trying to control his tears.

Peithon looks at the boy and nudges him with his shoulder. Leonnatus looks at his friend. Peithon glances down with his eyes, directing Leonnatus' attention to the ground.

LOOK DOWN TO PEITHON'S FEET. He has lost control of his bladder. A stream of urine flows freely over his sandals.

Leonnatus laughs as he cries.

ANGLE ON: Philotas approaches Parmenio on horse.

PARMENIO

Where is Alexander?

PHILOTAS

Still in his tent. Our invincible king is
afraid to battle.

Parmenio shakes his head at his son and rides toward the
king's tent.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - DAY

He dismounts and approaches the entrance - TWO MACEDONIAN
GUARDS on either side.

PARMENIO

Alexander.

No response.

PARMENIO (cont'd)

Alexander.

Still, nothing. He enters the tent.

INT. TENT

Parmenio enters to find: ALEXANDER FAST ASLEEP. The general
reaches out to wake the king, but stops. He studies the
young, boyish face. There is almost an affection in his
gaze...

Alexander opens his eyes, sudden. Parmenio pauses,
uncomfortable.

PARMENIO

I saw Philip in your features.

Alexander sits up on the edge of his bed, somewhat tired. He
rubs his eyes, collecting himself, caught off guard.

ALEXANDER

Philip's dead.

The king rises, crossing the tent.

PARMENIO

It's time.

ALEXANDER

Yes.

He puts on his armor.

PARMENIO

For the last time, I ask you to rethink
the day.

ALEXANDER
I've had a dream. We're going to win.

PARMENIO
A dream is all you have.

ALEXANDER
Oh, no. I also have a plan.

Alexander grabs his sword and exits.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
If I die, it is but one Macedonian. If
Darius dies, the throat of the Persian
army has been cut.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LINE

Alexander gallops past his standing army. Throughout the following sequence, Peucestas follows closely behind the king with the Trojan shield.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
Darius thinks he can destroy us with mere
numbers. But if Issus taught us anything,
it is that the Great King is the very life
of his army.

EXT. MACEDONIAN LINE - ELSEWHERE

Darius and his army stand in the distance.

PERDICCAS (V.O.)
(Chuckling)
You've gone mad.

Alexander walks into frame.

ALEXANDER
Can it be done?

Perdiccas paces, thinking intently with a mischievous smile on his face.

PERDICCAS
The Persians gather their strongest forces
about their king.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN LINE - CENTER

In the center of the Persian line, Darius sits in his glittering chariot. A daunting force of infantry and war chariots stand before him.

PERDICCAS (V.O.)

The trick is to clear a path between yourself and him before our wings collapse and we are surrounded.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LINE

Using a sword to represent the Persians and a dagger for the Macedonians, Hephaestian demonstrates his plan. Alexander listens beside him.

HEPHAESTIAN

Advance on an angle, cavalry on both flanks. Darius' line will be thrown into confusion. When he orders the bulk of his cavalry to our wings in an effort to envelop us he will leave himself exposed.

ALEXANDER

And this is my problem. How can our cavalry hold so long against numbers so great?

Hephaestian shakes his head in frustration.

HEPHAESTIAN

To stand before the walls of Troy without our wooden horse.

Alexander's face slowly lights with the beginnings of an idea. He looks to his friend, nods his head, and grins like a little boy.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - EXTREME AERIAL P.O.V.

FROM FAR ABOVE, we see Alexander's Army moving into position. The Macedonians face Darius on an angle, and a line of Macedonian infantry moves to protect their rear.

PTOLEMY (V.O.)

Provided that works, when you see that gap in the Persian line, turn our Companion Cavalry inward, lead a charge up the center...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LINE

A diagram in the sand of the Persian and Macedonian lines that crudely matches the image we have just seen.

In the center of the Persian line, Ptolemy stabs an "X" with a stick.

PTOLEMY

...and kill Darius.

Alexander looks to Ptolemy and smiles.

CRATERUS (V.O.)

Had we attacked at night, we could not have seen him.

EXT. MACEDONIAN LINE - ELSEWHERE

Craterus stares intently at his king, nodding, understanding.

Alexander is so pleased with his officer that he pulls him forward and kisses him on the cheek.

ALEXANDER

You have the ear of the infantry, my friend. It is you who must tell them. However grim it may appear, however lost the battle may seem, they must know to stand firm. Tell them the king himself has sent you to say we will win the day.

Craterus nods hesitantly and mounts his horse. As Alexander turns to leave, Craterus calls after him.

CRATERUS

Alexander.

Alexander turns.

CRATERUS

Am I telling the truth?

Alexander thinks for a moment and smiles.

ALEXANDER

You are, my friend.

CRATERUS

It shall be done.

And he is gone. Alexander watches him go, moved by the faith of his Companion.

PHILOTAS (V.O.)

He'll certainly attempt to surround us.

EXT. MACEDONIAN LINE - ELSEWHERE

ALEXANDER

We must encourage him to do so.

Parmenio, Cleander, and Philotas surround the king. Their mood, dour.

PARMENIO

Our own cavalry will not hold against his numbers. You ask Cleander and me to bear the brunt of this assault while you and the Companions wait for an opportunity that may never arise -

ALEXANDER

Our cavalry will hold.

PARMENIO

A matter of moments. No more.

ALEXANDER

If we do as I have said, our cavalry will hold.

Parmenio is unconvinced.

CLEANDER

And what if Alexander does not spear Darius before the Persian hordes overwhelm?

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius and his immense force begin their ominous advance.

They literally blacken the landscape with their approach.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

Form a bristling square, and like a netted boar, we fight to death.

EXT. MACEDONIAN LINE

Philotas, Cleander and Parmenio watch their king galloping into the distance.

The officers look at one another, at once impressed and terrified.

PHILOTAS

This is his plan.

EXT. ELSEWHERE ON FIELD

The old seer, Aristander, stands with a sacrificial goat.

ARISTANDER

And to which god will Alexander offer
sacrifice?

The king approaches Peucestas who holds the Trojan shield at the ready. Alexander slings it to his arm as he crosses to mount Bucephalus. The Macedonians advance behind.

ALEXANDER

To Fear, my friend. Today, we sacrifice to
Fear.

Alexander mounts Bucephalus and is off in a flash.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN LEFT FLANK

BESSUS, a large, imposing cavalry commander, advances with an enormous force of Persian cavalry.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN RIGHT FLANK

MAZAEUS, another Persian cavalry commander, advances with an equally large force on Darius' left.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius takes in the small Macedonian force before him...and nods his head.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN FAR RIGHT FLANK

Cleander advances with his cavalry. The various squadrons follow in a neat, orderly cadence.

Cleander glances left and sees...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Alexander advances with the Companion Cavalry.

Cleitus, Hephaestian, and Peucestas are in Alexander's squadron. Philotas heads the rest of the Companions.

The king glances to his left, down his diagonal infantry line, and sees...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LEFT FLANK

Parmenio cautiously advances with his own cavalry on the Macedonian left.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN LEFT FLANK

Bessus and his awesome cavalry force are picking up speed.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN FAR RIGHT FLANK

Opposite Bessus, Cleander's horses are brought to a slow trot. Patient, measured...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

ALEXANDER NOW BRINGS HIS COMPANION CAVALRY TO A COMPLETE HALT, pulling his most effective units out of the battle.

To his left, his infantry continues forward, then stops as well.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN LEFT FLANK

WITH A FIERCE SCREAM, BESSUS SOUNDS THE CHARGE, kicks at his horse, and gallops forward.

THE MASSIVE PERSIAN CAVALRY FORCE FOLLOWS WITH A ROAR. THOUSANDS OF HOOVES KICKING UP DUST AND THUNDER.

The battle of Gaugamela has begun...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN FAR RIGHT FLANK

Cleander, slightly daunted by the now swarming left flank of the Persian army, urges his horse a little faster.

The squadron follows as if one body.

ANGLE ON: A COMMON CAVALRYMAN in the center of Cleander's command.

SLOWLY PAN DOWN HIS BODY, PAST HIS LEG TO THE GALLOPING HOOVES OF HIS HORSE.

Through the almost blinding dust, we catch a glimpse of a glint of metal, then...something...

A PAIR OF RUNNING FEET, KEEPING TIME WITH THE HORSE.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius watches Bessus charge on his left, then turns to his right...

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN RIGHT FLANK

Now the Persian commander, Mazaeus, and his incredible cavalry force are charging forward.

They set their sights on the meager forces of Parmenio.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LEFT FLANK

The Macedonian Cavalry here are quiet, intent, licking the sweat from their lips. They now hold their ground, waiting. Eyes occasionally glance at the rigid and motionless Parmenio.

He smiles slightly at the seemingly endless wave of men crashing down on him.

As the Persian cavalry gets even closer, the general raises his hand in the air.

THE ADVANCING PERSIANS SCREAM IN ONE BLOODY CRY OF HORRIFYING RAGE.

A few Macedonian soldiers flinch at the sound.

THE PERSIANS DOUBLE THEIR SPEED AND COME FLAILING.

Parmenio does not move so much as a muscle.

The Persian cavalry are literally fifty yards away, SPEARS HIGH, AIMED AT THE MOTIONLESS RIDERS ON THEIR MOUNTS.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Alexander and his cavalry anxiously wait out the battle.

The king glances to his far right and nods to Cleander, who advances with his own cavalry force. Cleander nods back.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN LEFT FLANK

Bessus and his cavalry bear down on Cleander on the Macedonian's far right flank.

SOUNDS OF PERSIANS LAUGHING AND YELLING.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

With both of his flanks closing in for the kill, Darius smiles in anticipation of the coming slaughter.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN FAR RIGHT FLANK

Cleander can literally see the eyes of the charging Persian left. A mass of raised swords coming at him.

He glances back to the YOUNG CAVALRYMAN behind him and to his right. HE NODS. The Cavalryman nods back.

The Persians SCREAM with bloodthirsty anticipation...

SUDDENLY, CLEANDER BREAKS SHARPLY LEFT WHILE THE CAVALRYMAN BEHIND HIM BREAKS RIGHT.

THE WHOLE OF CLEANDER'S SQUADRON SPLITS OPEN - half to the left and half to the right -

REVEALING THE MASS OF INFANTRY HIDING WITHIN.

The Persian left is stunned, readjusting their eyes from the high-positioned riders to the LOW AND STEADY FAST MACEDONIAN INFANTRY.

A NEW CRY CAN BE HEARD, more terrifying than the Persians. IT IS THE WAR CRY OF THE MACEDONIANS - so shrill, so penetrating, the Persians are frozen in that one last terrible fraction of an instant, unable to halt their charging steeds.

THE MACEDONIAN INFANTRY rushes under the spears of the Persians and slaughter them in a wave of clashing flesh and metal.

PERSIAN HORSES REAR AT THIS WALL OF SPEARS.

Persian cavalry in the rear ranks collide with the suddenly halting horses in front. Horses throw their mounts by the hundreds, trampling their riders - other riders accidentally impale the men in front of them.

The Persian cavalry with all their numbers is a pile-up of total calamity. Complete carnage.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LEFT FLANK

The Persians nearly upon him, PARMENIO DROPS HIS HAND.

In perfect unison the wall of horses that stand sideways - forming the Macedonian left - all turn and face forward, leaving wide gaps between them.

TO MAKE WAY FOR THE HORDES OF INFANTRY BEHIND THEM.

Much like the Persian left, the right flank is caught completely off guard.

THE PERSIAN CAVALRY ARE OVERWHELMED BY THE MASS OF ENGAGING INFANTRY.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius observes the battle raging on his wings, lifts his hand in the air...and lets it drop to the ground.

ANGLE ON: THOUSANDS OF PERSIAN ARCHERS RELEASING ARROWS INTO THE SKY.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN REAR

THOUSANDS OF ARROWS FILLING THE SKY LIKE LOCUSTS - LITTERALLY BLOTTING OUT THE SUN.

The Macedonian Rear Guard turn to escape the onslaught...ONLY TO BE BURIED IN A HAIL OF ARROWS.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN CENTER

From the Macedonian front infantry line, we see another round of arrows loosed by Darius' archers.

In one swift motion, the Macedonian heavy infantry RAISE THEIR SHIELDS OVER THE HEADS, protecting themselves on all sides.

As this next tidal wave of arrows bounces harmlessly off the Macedonian shields, the protected infantry marches forward like some sort of ancient tank.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius once more waves his arm - a furious tempest conducting the elements.

ANGLE ON: A MASSIVE LINE OF PERSIAN WAR CHARIOTS BARRELLING FORWARD, WHEELS BRISTLING WITH SHARPENED BLADES.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN CENTER

THE MACEDONIAN INFANTRY QUICKLY CHANGES FORMATIONS. We see feet moving in sync, sixteen foot spears moving in unison - highly complicated, parade drill maneuvers. By the time they are finished:

THE RANKS OF THE MACEDONIAN INFANTRY ARE PARTING IN ONE FLUID MOVEMENT.

Unable to change directions, the chariots head straight into the open lanes. One unfortunate CHARIOT DRIVER is met head on by three sixteen foot sarissas emerging from the dust.

ANGLE ON: A solid cloud of dust. SIX PERSIAN CHARIOTS EMERGE GHOSTLIKE FROM THE GLOOM - ALL DRIVERS EITHER DEAD OR MISSING.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Seeing that his infantry has dealt with Darius' chariots, ALEXANDER NOW RAISES HIS HAND. HE AND HIS SQUADRON OF CAVALRY TURN.

Philotas and the rest of the Companions turn with him, all facing the center of the Persian line.

Alexander's Companions are a calm in the storm - the battle raging on both sides. Hephaestian and Peucestas nervously glance to their stressed wings.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius surveys the battle. Though his chariots are no longer before the Persian center, the Great King is still well protected.

Before him stands a formidable force of Persian infantry.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN FAR RIGHT FLANK

Cleander and his mixed force of infantry and cavalry are in a bloody battle with Bessus and the Persian left cavalry wing.

The scene still resembles a massive highway pile-up.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Alexander, his hand still raised in the air, stares forward - unmoving.

The soldiers about him grow increasingly nervous regarding the state of the Macedonian flanks. They look to Alexander, but he is focused on:

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

Darius now raises both arms in the air. He looks to the Macedonian left and sees:

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN LEFT

Parmenio and his forces are locked in fierce combat with the Persian cavalry on Darius' right.

A HUGE DUST CLOUD HAS ENGULFED THE FIELD.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Alexander's eyes are still on the Persian center.

At the head of the Companions, Philotas grows obviously frustrated with Alexander's refusal to order a charge.

But the king and Bucephalas are stone.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - PERSIAN CENTER

With both hands raised in the air, Darius considers the field, then lets both hands drop toward the ground.

THE INFANTRY IN FRONT OF THE GREAT KING'S CENTER NOW ADVANCE - half moving to his left, the other half to his right.

A PATH TO DARIUS AND HIS CHARIOT SEEMS TO FINALLY BE OPENING.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONIAN RIGHT FLANK

Alexander spots the weakness in Darius' line - the moment he's been waiting for. He glances toward Cleitus, but the old war-horse offers only a bored shrug.

Alexander smiles, lets his arm drop toward the ground, and commences his charge.

Cleitus and the Royal Squadron are right behind the king at full gallop. Hephaestian and Peucestas laugh in amazement, anxiously fixed on the Persian line.

Behind the Royal Squadron, Philotas and the entire Companion Cavalry race forward.

AERIAL P.O.V.

THE COMPANION SQUADRONS ALL MELD INTO ONE ENORMOUS WEDGE FORMATION - DIRECTLY CHARGING THE PERSIAN CENTER.

With Alexander and Cleitus at its head, the Royal Squadron glides elegantly through the field. Its incredibly tight, triangular formation adjusts to its leader like a flock of birds.

The center of the Macedonian infantry struggle to keep up with the Companions and preserve the integrity of their line. Having advanced on an angle, the entire Macedonian line now pivots like one gigantic hammer.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - CENTER

Darius watches with an icy expression as his left and right flanks are mangled. It is a moment before he looks straight ahead to see:

ALEXANDER AND THE WHOLE OF THE CAVALRY COMING RIGHT FOR HIM.

Time seems to slow as Alexander and Darius make eye contact. Looking into the eyes of his rival, Darius realizes that the fury of this Macedonian is unstoppable.

He looks around him, perhaps with a last thought as to how to engage.

His numbers here in the center have dwindled considerably. Alexander's plan has worked better than anyone ever would have expected.

And with that, DARIUS ABANDONS IN HIS CHARIOT AND FLEES.

Alexander desperately presses forward, but the remaining Persian infantry still stand between the frustrated king and the fleeing Darius.

THEN, ALL AT ONCE, A SUDDEN ROAR - A WHOLE NEW FRENZY BEGINS as Craterus, Perdicas, Ptolemy, and Coenus arrive with the steady Macedonian infantry, hacking through the crumbling Persian line, forcing a path toward the Great King himself.

With the last of the Persian infantry now parting before him, Alexander fixes his sights on the fleeing Darius, raises his arm, and just as he is ready to sound another charge...

ALEXANDER
MACEDONIANS...

The king is interrupted by a shout:

PHILOTAS
ALEXANDER.

In the confusion of battle, Alexander finds Philotas staring back at him. The officer has a vulnerable, pleading quality that we haven't yet seen in him.

Alexander turns to his left wing and sees: Parmenio and his cavalry at last overwhelmed by the immensity of the Persian force.

Alexander glances once more at Darius, then back at Parmenio.

PAINFUL PAUSE.

ALEXANDER CHARGES TO AID PARMENIO.

Philotas and the Companions quickly follow.

EXT. GAUGAMELA - MACEDONAIN LEFT FLANK

Parmenio is in a desperate fight with a PERSIAN CAVALRY SOLDIER. Just as the Persian Soldier raises his sword against the tiring general...

CLEITUS CHARGES INTO VIEW, decapitating Parmenio's opponent with one mighty blow.

ANGLE ON: ALEXANDER DEFLECTING A SERIES OF BLOWS.

The king is in the thick of dusty battle, sword raised in the air, hacking at Persian cavalry on every side, his skill as a soldier melting into frenzy until he is chopping madly in every direction. He wheels once more on Bucephalas, and:

CLANK. Alexander's sword directly strikes the sword of a new adversary. Only this time, the man at the other end of the sword is:

Parmenio, out of breath, staring back at the king. The two hold this pose, taking one another in. Parmenio is the first to crack a smile.

PARMENIO

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO GET THE
BASTARD.

Alexander smiles and is once again in pursuit of the Great King.

His companions and a contingent of cavalry follow. We see Hephaestian, Ptolemy, Craterus, Perdikkas, and right beside Alexander: A SMILING PHILOTAS - racing with the rest.

Coenus kicks the ribs of his horse and excitedly follows the companions.

Parmenio laughs, watching in disbelief as the Persian forces flee before him. Cleander rides forward from the right flank and stands beside the general, amazed, exhausted.

The two old men sit back and watch as these boys chase after their quarry. These boys who are so caught up in the fight that they have perhaps not yet realized that they have crushed the Persian empire.

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE GAUGAMELA - LATER

Darius, now on a simple horse, reaches the top of a high hillside. He stops to look back down over the catastrophe that is Gaugamela.

Bessus, Artabazus, and other members of the PERSIAN STAFF catch up with him. All are spent. Darius's commanders look at him, not daring to speak.

As the battle rages in the distance - the screams of Persians butchered in retreat - the commanders see the giant wedge of Alexander's cavalry moving relentlessly toward them like some vengeful, unstoppable bird of prey.

Without a word, Darius makes his escape.

The Persian Staff glance at one another - a look of darkness and duty - then ride after their king.

Artabazus eyes them suspiciously, then rides forward as well. He is followed by SCATTERED PERSIAN SOLDIERS.

PAN SLOWLY ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD OF GAUGAMELA. The remains of the last day of the Persian Empire and the dawning of Macedon's glory.

End on the sun, burning high in the noon-day sky, watching patiently the changing of power.

EXT. ROAD TO DARIUS - DESERT - DAY

The sun high in the sky. Alexander and his parched, dusty troops press forward.

ONE TIRED SOLDIER falls out from exhaustion, his spent horse collapsing beneath him...

LATER

Alexander and his thinned ranks race directly toward us. They are silhouetted by an enormous, red sun that sets behind them.

The sun disappears over the horizon...

Beneath a canopy of stars, Alexander and his troops gallop quickly by.

MOVE AROUND SLOWLY TO: The Macedonian cavalry chasing the now rising sun...

EXT. PERSIAN CAMP - DAY

A SINGLE PERSIAN GUARD, stands a hundred yards beyond the camp of the tattered remnants of the Persian army.

Instinctively, he looks behind, his eyes seeing something in the distance: A THIN COLUMN OF DUST. THE DISTANT SOUND OF GALLOPING HOOVES.

Slowly at first and then very quickly, the Guard turns and runs ahead toward the camp.

GUARD
THE MACEDONIAN. THE MACEDONIAN.

EXT. PERSIAN CAMP - LATER

With a mere sixty men, Alexander storms across the place where the Guard stood moments before. He is driven like never before, Bucephalas' hooves pounding the hot earth like THUNDER.

Ahead of them, the Persian forces run as fast as they can to escape him, leaving their camp behind.

Bessus flees with a small escort. Alexander is too incensed to notice.

ALEXANDER
FIND DARIUS.

The Macedonians scatter.

EXT. PERSIAN CAMP - ELSEWHERE

In a frantic search, ONE SOLDIER sees an old wagon stopped by a stream. At the front of the wagon, TWO WOUNDED OXEN, impaled with javelins, can move no further.

The Soldier approaches the wagon and looks inside. His face carries many mixed expressions...

EXT. CAMP - LATER

DARIUS' BLOODY, STABBED BODY is dragged disrespectfully across the ground by Macedonian soldiers.

When Perdiccas gives the word, the soldiers drop the body drop to the ground.

Through the dust, Alexander approaches. He marches past Artabazus and a number of Persian Soldiers.

The Macedonians surrounding Darius kick and spit at his lifeless form.

PERDICCAS
It seems Darius' own men have deprived us
of our revenge.

Horried by the pitiful sight before him, Alexander suddenly rushes forward, shoving aside Perdiccas and his soldiers.

ALEXANDER
DON'T TOUCH HIM.

Alexander kneels beside Darius, tears of rage in his eyes.

A frustrated Perdicas and the confused Macedonians watch their solemn king REMOVE HIS CLOAK AND PLACE IT GENTLY OVER THE BODY OF DARIUS.

Philotas mutters in disbelief.

PHILOTAS
Is this not the same barbarian we have
crossed a continent to destroy?

Alexander's eyes run wild with tears.

From high up, we see the covered body of Darius, Alexander kneeling before him, the exhausted Macedonians standing silently about him, and the lost Persians surrounding the scene...

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. OUTSIDE BABYLON WALLS - DAY

THE MASSIVE, BRICK WALLS THAT SURROUND THE CITY OF BABYLON.

Before the city, we follow along an odd procession. The column includes TREASURE, HORSES, CATTLE, LIONS, LEOPARDS, PRIESTS, etc....

At its head is Mazaeus, the governor of Babylon, standing beside an empty chariot.

MAZAEUS
The earth trembles at your approach, and
already the foundations of empire crumble
to dust. I offer Alexander...Babylon.

Sitting atop Bucephalas, the king unsheathes his sword and raises it into the air. A mirror image of the Alexander we saw before screaming throngs in Egypt.

THE GIANT DOORS OF THE CITY ARE PUSHED OPEN.

EXT. INSIDE BABYLON WALLS

COMPLETE SILENCE IN THE CITY.

When Alexander passes through the gates, EVERY LIVING THING IN SIGHT FALLS TO THE GROUND IN UNISON. The whole of Babylon lies with their faces in the dirt, hands and feet outstretched in a position of total supplication.

Alexander and his companions proceed through the eerie silence. For once, Alexander himself doesn't quite know what to do next.

Perdiccas whispers to Hephaestian.

PERDICCAS

What are they doing? .

HEPHAESTIAN

Proskynesis. It's how the Persians pay honors to their king.

Most of Alexander's soldiers are uncomfortable with the scene. Philotas watches with disgust, mutters to Coenus:

PHILOTAS

Slaves.

Alexander notes the empty chariot before him, turns to Parmenio.

PARMENIO

If the king keeps his wits about him, we might manage this yet.

Alexander takes in the incredible city. He sees an ENORMOUS PALACE up on a ridge, then notices THE UNFORTUNATE, CRUMBED STATE OF BABYLON'S TEMPLES. He looks down at Mazaeus, who walks beside him.

ALEXANDER

Darius kept his palace well. Why have the Babylonian temples been so neglected?

MAZAEUS

Since Babylon fell under Persian rule...

INT. TREASURY - LATER

THE DAZZLING TREASURE OF THE GREAT KING.

MOUNTAINS OF GOLD, JEWELS, every treasure imaginable. The display of wealth is astounding. Alexander and his officers are speechless. Even Parmenio is taken aback.

LONG PAUSE. Alexander has to find his voice in the face of all that he has won.

Mazaeus follows at Alexander's heels, as though ashamed of the hoard that has been kept here. Alexander turns to him, and Mazaeus averts his eyes.

ALEXANDER

Give whatever is needed to the priests.
The temples that have decayed under
Persian rule will prosper under
Alexander's.

EXT. TREASURY - NIGHT

Alexander's troops fill the streets of the city in triumph.
Filled to the gills with wine, they shake the very
foundations of the city with their celebration.

SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF A TRUMPET. It blows half a dozen times
before all the men in the street are quiet.

All eyes look up and see Craterus on a balcony high above
them.

CRATERUS

I come with more greetings and praise from
the king. ALL HAIL ALEXANDER.

A ROAR FROM THE CROWD OF SOLDIERS, NOW IN A DRUNKEN FRENZY.
Craterus waits for them to silence.

CRATERUS (cont'd)

My Brothers, you have vanquished the
greatest foe Macedon will ever know. The
king sends me with a small token of his
appreciation for the invincible Macedonian
conquerors. FOR YOU, MY BROTHERS, FOR YOU.

AND WITH THAT, the windows to Craterus' left and right fly
open.

One in each window we see Hephaestian, Ptolemy, Perdikkas,
and Peucestas hoisting large baskets up onto the window
sills.

THEY DUMP THEM OVER, POURING THOUSANDS OF GOLD COINS INTO THE
STREETS.

A NEAR RIOT ERUPTS as the soldiers CHEER and scramble for
what coins they can grab.

As they scoop up the first wave, another showers down on top
of them and the soldiers roar again.

In the melee, Leonnatus dumps a helmet full of gold coins
over the head of his old friend. Peithon LAUGHS AND HOLLERS
as the coins fall about him.

ANGLE ON: ANOTHER WINDOW, down the street with a bird's eye
view of the action.

INT. A SMALL DINING ROOM

Parmenio, Cleander, Coenus and Cleitus are here, drinking after what appears to be a huge meal. The mood in the room is quiet, pensive...

Philotas drinks directly from the jug, already smashed.

PHILOTAS

If the king is going to buy the troops' hearts, he could at least do them the honor of paying with his own hand.

PARMENIO

Let the king rest, Philotas. And while he does, so rest your tongue.

COENUS

I thought on this of all nights even you could celebrate, my friend.

PHILOTAS

I'll celebrate in Macedon.

And Philotas staggers out the door. Parmenio shakes his head.

COENUS

To look at you, Parmenio, I have to wonder from where your son's temper has come.

PARMENIO

Of that, I have no idea, but there are few places it can lead.

CLEANDER

You take care to look out for your friend, Coenus. The unspoken spoil of victory is politics. And the unspoken spoil of politics is treachery

Coenus LAUGHS nervously. He is met with concerned looks from Cleander and the ever silent Cleitus.

Parmenio stares into his goblet of wine.

PARMENIO

The closer one stands to a conqueror, the softer one must tread.

INT. THRONE ROOM

Two feet dangle in the air, not quite reaching a foot stool.

TILT UP TO REVEAL: Alexander, seated in the magnificent throne of Darius. He sits alone, deep in thought, studying the RING OF DARIUS, now securely on his own finger. The room is strangely quiet. Torches line the walls.

Hephaestian enters. He approaches the king.

ALEXANDER

So this, it would seem, is to be king.

Hephaestian smiles. He produces A SMALL GOLDEN CROWN and drops it in the lap of Alexander. The king studies it.

HEPHAESTIAN

The treasury is full of them. It was hard to pick just which one should suit the Lord of All Asia.

As Alexander examines the crown.

ALEXANDER

It sounded such a worthy title back in Gordium.

HEPHAESTIAN

And now it is not?

ALEXANDER

I expected some measure of...satisfaction, I suppose.

HEPHAESTIAN

Not when you have merely crossed the threshold.

Alexander jumps off the throne, waving away the comment.

ALEXANDER

You tamper with good fortune, Hephaestian.

HEPHAESTIAN

No, you tamper with the will of Zeus. Would you really turn back now?

Alexander does not answer.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

This is not Alexander. This is the son of Philip.

Alexander spins and glares at him.

ALEXANDER

Have I not laid his ghost to rest?

Hephaestian comes face to face with his friend.

HEPHAESTIAN

You have exceeded Philip's dream, but you
have yet to achieve your own. Satisfaction
was the prize of Philip. Not
Achilles...nor his Patrokles.

But Alexander's mind is off in some far away place, his head
turned characteristically up and to the left.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

I know you. I know your heart...there is
something greater still for which you
yearn. Some vision your eyes must behold.

ALEXANDER

And what of Macedon?

HEPHAESTIAN

There is nothing for us in Macedon. Only
long life for the living.

ALEXANDER

Yes...

HEPHAESTIAN

Two fates are yours.

The words speak deeply to Alexander. His voice is faint and
distant.

ALEXANDER

And if I should take the shorter, where
would be my Hephaestian?

HEPHAESTIAN

There to greet his majesty. I am here but
to follow my king, my companion.

Alexander turns finally to look Hephaestian in the eye.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

There can and never will be satisfaction,
Alexander. This we both know...

As the two friends study one another, we focus on...

INT. TREASURY

A BURNING TORCH FASTENED TO THE WALL.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: Ptolemy, Perdiccas, Peucestas and Craterus all sit atop mountains of gold, tired and half-witted from gallons of wine. They lazily drown in the opulence of the empire, belching and laughing.

Craterus stands and casually relieves himself on a pile of rubies.

CRATERUS

I tell you one thing. Gaugamela will be nothing next to lugging home my wages.

Peucestas LAUGHS.

PTOLEMY

A modicum of good taste, Craterus. You are Persian nobility now.

CRATERUS

Nobility indeed. Is this not how nobility raises the tax?

Now Craterus is pissing all over the heap of treasure in front of him. The others LAUGH.

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, but were not it for you, Craterus, there would be no joy in the Companions.

EVERYONE TURNS to the door. Philotas, as drunk as they are, stands on wobbly legs.

PHILOTAS

For what is the king's court without its jester?

Everyone stands, waiting for Craterus to respond. The wily soldier merely smiles.

CRATERUS

It's all right, friends. Philotas merely speaks his mind, which takes but a moment to empty.

PHILOTAS

Speak my mind, do you say? Speak my mind? Is that still safe custom with the little king now "Lord of All Asia"?

PERDICCAS

Philotas still hasn't learned to hold his -

PHILOTAS

My point is made.

Philotas walks in and sits down on a comfortable coffer, spilling over with silver.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

Please, don't let me interrupt. I have come to hear the companions sing the song of Alexander. Play on.

Everyone looks at him with murder in their eyes.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

Has the well of praise run dry? Should we sing then a dirge for the city of Tyre or her children now slaves? Whose thousands dead cost a mere fifty of Ammon's great army.

PTOLEMY

Poor, lonely Philotas. I saw no fill of blood for you then. Why do you cry so now? A eunuch at the orgy, you are.

PERDICCAS

Had you earned your place at the king's side by merit rather than birth, you would not wail like a woman.

PHILOTAS

Yes, I weep for my fading popularity. Just as I weep for my cowardice and my failure in battle. It's one thing to offer your life blindly to a man you imagine a friend. I offer mine to a tyrant I despise.

Peucestas reaches for his sword. IN A FLASH, PHILOTAS HAS HIS OUT AND POINTED TO RECEIVE THE ATTACK. Even drunk, Philotas is lightning quick.

Peucestas stands still, waiting.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

I am the only man here who has fought unflinching for the glory of Macedon and Macedon alone.

PERDICCAS

Alexander thinks of nothing but -

PHILOTAS

OF NOTHING BUT ALEXANDER. Look around you. See what your toils have sprung. Do you think this gold will find its home in Macedon?

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

It will rebuild the temples of these Persian slaves. It will line the pockets of foreign Mercenaries. It will build a road between here and your oblivion and blindly you will go.

Philotas stands.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

Babylon was three years east and now Macedon is but a few months west. Still, there are many lives yet between this place and home.

Philotas staggers out of the treasury.

Ptolemy turns to the others. Craterus nods gravely.

As the companions seal some sort of tacit, secret oath, we hear SHOUTS AND COMMOTION from outside.

They rush to the windows. In the distance, the night is aglow with AN INCREDIBLE INFERNO.

EXT. PALACE

Parmenio storms toward a BLAZING PALACE. The old general passes THROGS of terrified Babylonians and drinking Macedonians.

From the RAGING FIRE up ahead, Alexander walks purposefully forward. He seems strangely unaffected by the fire behind him.

Parmenio immediately reads the situation. He stops before Alexander - glaring. The king stops.

PARMENIO

One doesn't destroy one's own property.

Alexander considers him, then continues forward. Parmenio grabs him roughly by the arm. Their eyes lock.

PARMENIO (cont'd)

Philip was more than a warrior, he was a diplomat. With the destruction of this palace, Alexander has insured that Persian resistance will continue. And only a fool fights for that which can be taken peacefully. My apologies, it seems I mistook you for a king.

Parmenio marches off.

Alexander considers his words. Behind the king, the fire rages with unsettling ferocity.

EXT. GATES OF BABYLON - SUNRISE

The Macedonian army prepares to march. A clear, but particularly WINDY, day. MANY SOLDIERS SAY GOOD-BYE TO THEIR MISTRESSES.

PEITHON, our old veteran, embraces his Mistress, the Persian woman we met earlier.

Leonnatus stands impatiently nearby, watching the bulk of the army starting to leave.

Peithon's Mistress begins crying.

PEITHON

No tears for me, love. A smile would better be the face that beckons my return.

They kiss longingly.

Then she pushes him away. The old soldier lifts his pack, and joins his young friend and the marching army.

Peithon glances back, eyes lingering on his Mistress. Leonnatus pats him on the back.

His Mistress sadly watches him leave. She does not wave, does not cry. She is stone.

As the army leaves Babylon, other soldiers look back at their Mistresses, who silently wave from atop city walls.

EXT. ELSEWHERE OUTSIDE BABYLON

Philotas and Coenus, on horses, approach Parmenio and Cleander. The mood is tense, nervous.

Philotas fumes. He looks back and sees Alexander approaching. Eyes ablaze, Philotas turns back to his father. The two share a moment of silent frustration.

Parmenio jerks his head - motioning for Philotas to move on.

Philotas glances back at Alexander, spits at the approaching king, then rides off in a silent rage.

Coenus nods worriedly to Parmenio and Cleander, then rides after Philotas.

Alexander stops before Parmenio. Cleander steps back.

The general forces himself to look up at the king. He notices that Bucephalas wears a PERSIAN HARNESS, then looks Alexander in the eye.

PARMENIO

I was your father's general when your mother was still a child. I helped him secure the throne of Macedon when you were in her belly. And it was out of loyalty to Philip that I have continued the campaign he began. In the name of your father, Alexander -

ALEXANDER

Why, when I am disputed is it Philip -

PARMENIO

IN THE NAME OF PHILIP, WHO WAS SO COWARDLY CUT DOWN -

ALEXANDER

DO YOU DARE IMPLY -

PARMENIO

I IMPLY NOTHING.

The two try one last time to stare one another down. Finally, Parmenio calms himself.

PARMENIO

Parmenio merely requests to continue his duties as second-in-command of the campaign he has made possible.

ALEXANDER

There is work enough here keeping the army supplied. See the country is pacified and the royal treasure moved to Media.

Parmenio nods - a loyal soldier to his core.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

You've earned your rest, old man. Take it with the dignity of a soldier.

Parmenio fights back what may be anger, maybe tears. When he speaks now, he is almost fatherly.

PARMENIO

If supplies are short, you can always divide forces. Don't force the land to support more than it can bare.

ALEXANDER

I know.

PARMENIO

And don't let the men get weighed down with treasure. Remember the words of... Remember. Mobility and speed are everything.

ALEXANDER

I will remember.

Alexander turns Bucephalas after the army.

PARMENIO

Alexander.

The king stops, waiting. Parmenio struggles for words.

PARMENIO (cont'd)

I... Be careful, my king.

Alexander studies his officer.

ALEXANDER

If Philip were alive, he'd have nothing but praise for his general.

And for the first time, the great general's voice wavers.

PARMENIO

And for his son.

Moved by the remark, the king rides quickly forward.

Parmenio watches him go, an old man left behind.

THE SOUND OF ROARING WIND.

EXT. BABYLONIAN PLAIN

DUST STORM.

The incredible force of the wind forces Peithon and Leonnatus to lean forward at a seemingly impossible angle.

LEONNATUS

A few months you say?

PEITHON

Maybe six. No more. Climb the Hindu Kush and reach the edge of the earth. We'll be back in Macedon before year's end.

LEONNATUS

They have a saying in Khorassan, friend.
The staging posts of the Royal Road are as
endless as the chatter of women...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: The Macedonian column stumbling forward.
The dust blurs all distinction between earth and sky.

INT. KING'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Alexander in his bath, head back, eyes closed. Torchlight.

A beautiful PERSIAN BOY shaves the king - the blade fractions
of an inch from Alexander's vulnerable throat.

Craterus and Hephaestian stand on either side of CEBALINUS, a
young, very nervous, Macedonian soldier.

Perdiccas, Ptolemy, and Coenus are also present. Their mood
is tense, urgent.

CEBALINUS

I speak the truth.

Alexander calmly considers the words, eyes closed.

ALEXANDER

A plot? Who?

CEBALINUS

Dymnas, Demetrius. Certain members of the
bodyguard.

PTOLEMY

The bodyguard. Are you sure?

CEBALINUS

I WISH IT WERE NOT SO.

ALEXANDER

When did you learn of this?

CEBALINUS

Two days ago.

CRATERUS

TWO DAYS?

In a flash, Craterus draws a dagger, ready to cut Cebalinus'
throat.

ALEXANDER

HOLD.

Cebalinus is terrified. Craterus releases him, eying him suspiciously.

ALEXANDER

Why did you hesitate before bringing forth this information?

CEBALINUS

But I didn't hesitate, Alexander. I immediately brought word to my commander.

The companions are stunned. They quickly glance at one another, then back at Cebalinus.

The king opens his eyes for the first time in the scene.

ALEXANDER

Your commander?

VOICE FROM CROWD (O.S.)

May I say a word in my defense?

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - DAY

PHILOTAS STANDS BEFORE THE ARMY IN ASSEMBLY.

He wears a thread bare cloak. He has been beaten savagely.

Alexander and his companions stand before the troops.

Cebalinus stands off to the side. As do a group of bound PRISONERS - eyes fixed on the ground.

Craterus addresses the troops, holding up a piece of parchment.

CRATERUS

...And a signed, written confession. You have heard the evidence -

PHILOTAS

MAY I SPEAK?

All eyes look to Alexander. The king considers.

ALEXANDER

Let him.

Philotas - barely able to stand - begins his defense. As he speaks, ALEXANDER TURNS AND WALKS AWAY.

PHILOTAS

It is true I heard accusations of treason.
And while, in retrospect, I should have
spoken, I doubted the words and didn't
wish to trouble the king with the
ramblings of a common soldier.

SOLDIER #1

Perhaps Philotas should have taken the
common soldier more seriously.

ANGRY SHOUTS OF AGREEMENT FROM THE MOB.

PHILOTAS

My family has fought by the crown for
generations. No one can question what my
father and myself have done for Macedon.

Scattered soldiers in the crowd nod, having to agree.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

I make no claim to love Alexander. I have
not once hidden my opposition to the king.
But can each and every one of you say that
I am alone in my want to return home?

This strikes a chord in a great many men. The mood of the
crowd is shifting, and Philotas takes further advantage of
Alexander's absence.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

If this is my crime, then I am guilty, and
if I stand solitary in my guilt, then let
me die. But Darius is dead, and still we
march on. I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DESIGNS ON
THE THRONE. I HAVE SEEN THE KING'S CALLING
AND I DON'T WANT IT.

PAUSE. Philotas gathers himself.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

The accusation is ludicrous. My situation
would be comical if it weren't so
horrifying.

There is a moment of silence, then another voice from the
crowd.

SOLDIER #2

Perhaps Philotas speaks the truth.

SOLDIER #3

Yes, perhaps he truly doubted the words of
the informer.

PAUSE. MURMURS of agreement.

SOLDIER #4

Have you all forgotten of whom you speak?
Never has an officer put himself so far
above his men.

SOLDIER #5

Never have we served such arrogance.

SOLDIER #1

He has admitted that he knew of the plot.
He has admitted that he kept it from the
king. Let the traitor die.

THE ARMY BEGINS CLASHING THEIR SPEARS AGAINST THEIR SHIELDS.
As the noise grows louder, PHILOTAS SHOUTS AT THE ANGRY
CROWD.

PHILOTAS

BEASTS. HILL PEOPLE. BARBARIANS. I HAVE
FOUGHT BESIDE YOU. LEAD YOU TO VICTORY.
WHO AMONG YOU CAN CLAIM MY LOYALTY TO THE
THRONE? ALEXANDER? PHARAOH? SON OF AMMON?
DRAGGING YOU ACROSS THIS WASTELAND ON A
QUEST FOR FOLLY -

A STONE HITS HIM HARD IN THE FACE, DRAWING BLOOD. He looks
up, searching for the thrower of the rock, and finds...

HIS FRIEND COENUS, staring blankly back at him. Philotas
holds his gaze as he speaks.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

Good soldiers we are, and good soldiers we
follow. But remember the words of the
spited Philotas -

ANOTHER STONE HITS HIM HARD IN THE FACE. He swallows his
pain.

PHILOTAS (cont'd)

There comes a burden in being the son of
Zeus. And a price to pay for those zealots
behind.

Then another. And another. Soon the entire army is stoning
the prisoner.

Craterus, Hephaestian, and Perdicas silently watch the
execution. Coenus painfully turns his back on the scene.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Alexander sits writing beneath THE HUGE, EGYPTIAN TAPESTRY FROM THE TEMPLE OF AMMON. His expression is grim.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

While his passions the king had so evenly
read/ and fought endless the black war of
reason/ there still came no comfort, nor
rest, nor deep sleep/ as he tarried the
shadow of treason.

CLOSE UP ON: THE LETTER FINISHED AND FOLDED. Alexander's hand inscribes the parchment with the royal symbol.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Alexander hands three letters to Ptolemy.

Ptolemy and TWO NATIVE GUIDES mount camels and race off into the desert, swallowed quickly by the blackness.

Alexander watches them go for a moment before slowly turning back to his tent.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

This place his accuser had come now to
lie/ A place he called Anticipation/ And
while time was but one of the foes he did
fear/ was there less a formidable nation?

EXT. PALACE - MEDIA - SUNSET

Ptolemy dismounts and hands a letter to a concerned Cleander.

Cleander reads the letter, his face slowly falling. Finally, he looks at Ptolemy and nods. He takes the other two letters and walks away.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

The echoing voice crossed his kingdom and
years/ And he drew from this well once a
warning/ That the fervor of kings was the
peril of man/ and to serve of one's self
would bring mourning.

INT. PALACE

Cleander hands Parmenio the two letters. One with a simple seal we do not recognize, the other with the Symbol of Alexander.

Parmenio puts the letter from Alexander on the table, turns away, and opens the other.

HOLD ON ALEXANDER'S LETTER FOR A MOMENT...

Then back to Parmenio who smiles as he reads.

SUDDENLY, HE STOPS. His smile fades as he looks at the other letter. The old general is too wily to not know what's coming.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

With the heart of the king been made
tempered and reigned/ And his soul turned
the coldest of seasons/ Could then these
be the seeds of great tyranny sprung/ not
out of his passion... but reason?

Parmenio, a soldier to the end, closes his eyes, sits up straight in his chair, and accepts his fate.

CLEANDER STABS HIS COMMANDER IN THE BACK.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

The king sits alone, a hand to his temple, his eyes distant.

He stares across the tent at the tapestry of Ammon.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Hephaestian storms up to Alexander's tent, clearly agitated.

When he reaches the opening, The STAFF GUARDS lower their spears to bar him entrance. This further enrages Hephaestian.

The Guards merely stare.

HEPHAESTIAN

ALEXANDER?

ALEXANDER (O.S.)

Let him come.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

Hephaestian enters to find Alexander standing in what is now a half-Macedonian, half-Persian tent.

Though not on the level of Darius' luxury, the tent is nevertheless a rather gaudy display of opulence next to Alexander's usual simplicity.

Hephaestian takes it all in for a quiet moment, not knowing how to react. Finally, he sits, defeated.

He looks across the tent to find Alexander lying under a canopy of fine cloth, veiled in shadow. We cannot see his face.

HEPHAESTIAN
Parmenio's troops are rioting.

ALEXANDER
Ptolemy will quell them.

HEPHAESTIAN
What has become of us, my friend? What is it we do?

ALEXANDER
It was you who said push on. Not I.

HEPHAESTIAN
I spoke your mind.

ALEXANDER
And at last you speak your own.

Out of the darkness of the canopy, THE CROWN OF ALEXANDER flies through the air and lands on the floor in front of Hephaestian.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Feel its weight and speak to me then.

Hephaestian stares at the crown, speechless. LONG PAUSE.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
I have decided to marry.

Hephaestian tightly closes his eyes, as though in great pain. He strains to keep his voice steady.

HEPHAESTIAN
Who?

ALEXANDER
Roxane. Daughter of Oxyartes.

HEPHAESTIAN
He is a pig.

ALEXANDER
He is a king.

HEPHAESTIAN
Whose palace is a cave.

ALEXANDER
It is a diplomatic attachment,
Hephaestian. Nothing more.

HEPHAESTIAN
You'd have your men bow to a Persian
queen.

ALEXANDER
Your concern is not the men.

HEPHAESTIAN
IT'S AN OFFENSE TO ALL OF MACEDON.

ALEXANDER
And what is Macedon to Hephaestian?

HEPHAESTIAN
What is Alexander to Macedon?

ALEXANDER
Macedon is no more.

A tear now springs from Hephaestian's eye.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Persia is no more. They are bound now
merely as the seat of what will be one
whole and mighty empire.

Hephaestian stands to leave. As he is about to exit:

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Do not turn your back to me.

Hephaestian freezes, shocked at his friend's tone. He turns.

HEPHAESTIAN
Will you make leaving as hard as coming?

Alexander sits up. For the first time, we see his face emerge from the shadows. He looks a bit haggard, his skin gray. But his eyes are like fire.

ALEXANDER
How are the men to respect me if my own
companion does not?

HEPHAESTIAN
Do you suggest -

ALEXANDER
How will the Persians follow when my
Macedonians resist?

And Hephaestian has had enough. His tone is nothing if not mocking.

HEPHAESTIAN

I am sorry, your majesty. I had no idea how much I offended. I have always suspected I was a wretch. I have no function, no purpose. I cannot lead in battle, nor can I advise. I am but a sad and simple man who has offered nothing to my master. Forgive me, Lord of All Asia. Have mercy, for I am not worthy. I have nothing to give but my life for the Persian royal kiss.

And Hephaestian bows grandly, making a mockery of the Persian custom and his friend as well. He waits.

Alexander simply glares. Hephaestian looks up. He reaches down and takes the crown at his feet.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

As I thought. I am as of yet an outcast. I will strive so much the harder to win the favor of my king.

He throws the crown back to Alexander. It lands in front of him on the bed.

Hephaestian leaves. Alexander follows him with his eyes.

INT. BANQUET TENT - NIGHT

LOUD, CELEBRANT MUSIC. The tent is opulently furnished. The Macedonians look uncomfortable in the Persian surroundings.

Artabazus and his small group of segregated PERSIAN ARISTOCRATS eye the situation nervously from one side of the room.

As the MUSIC SHIFTS, Peucestas, the king's shield-bearer, enters the tent. HE WEARS THE SCARLET CLOAK OF PERSIAN NOBILITY.

All eyes locked on the shield-bearer. As Peucestas steps forward, the king's close companions follow shortly behind - ALL WEARING SCARLET CLOAKS.

The older, more conservative, soldiers are clearly not happy with the situation.

Of the king's close circle, Coenus and Craterus seem a bit self-conscious. Peucestas, Perdicas, and Ptolemy wear the cloaks with pride.

Alexander himself enters the tent - PROUDLY WEARING THE PERSIAN ROBE AND SASH OF DARIUS.

The older Macedonians watch open-mouthed as their king walks toward the front of the tent. Their attention is brought quickly back to the tent's entrance:

A VEILED BRIDE is last to enter. She is led by ATTENDANTS toward the waiting king.

The Bride is brought face to face with Alexander. He reaches up and removes her veil.

Breathtaking.

Alexander and his Macedonians are stunned by the extraordinary beauty of ROXANE.

Hephaestian watches from the sidelines, very much alone.

LATER

Alexander's sword cleanly slices through a loaf of bread.

UNCERTAIN CHEERS AND APPLAUSE.

The ceremony is complete. The king smiles at Roxane. She nods in return. The newly weds turn to face their audience.

A RECEIVING LINE HAS FORMED - a mix of Macedonian and Persian soldiers. At the head of the line, Alexander is met by OXYARTES and other Persian Aristocrats.

ROXANE'S FATHER LOWERS HIMSELF TO HIS KNEES AND BOWS FORWARD. According to Persian custom, Alexander offers his hand and guides him to his feet.

ALEXANDER

Your daughter's beauty has the envy of all women, and now her husband the envy of all Asia.

Alexander gives him the Persian Royal Kiss of friendship - one on each cheek. Oxyartes nods, then continues forward.

In the crowd, Hephaestian shakes his head, recalling his last encounter with the king.

Alexander escorts another Persian Aristocrat to his feet and again exchanges the Royal Kiss.

Next in line is Peucestas - the most comfortably Persianized of the companions and most fervently devoted to Alexander.

The king smiles, reaching out to his friend -

BUT PEUCESTAS, TOO, FALLS TO THE GROUND.

SILENCE. All eyes on the king, who is perhaps more surprised than anyone.

Hephaestian bows his head at the monster he has unwittingly created.

Alexander seriously considers his bowed Macedonian friend. He takes Peucestas' hand, raises him to his feet, and gives him the Royal Kiss.

Even some of Alexander's officers don't know how to react to this one. Craterus, Perdikkas, and Coenus are uncomfortable. Ptolemy, standing by the king, eyes the troops nervously.

Alexander, expecting more of the same treatment, turns to a slightly drunk Cleitus the Black, who is next in line. Philip's veteran officer, however, is hesitant.

CLEITUS

Society has its boundaries. There are barriers that cannot be crossed. While being the son of Ammon and parading about in barbarian costume is one thing, actual divinity quite another. To Macedonian and Greek alike, the honor of this gesture is reserved for a god.

ALEXANDER

What is divine worship in Athens is merely court custom in Persia.... We are a long way from Macedon.

CLEITUS

Wherever there is Cleitus, there is Macedon.

ALEXANDER

If Cleitus refuses to bow, then Alexander refuses the royal kiss of friendship.

CLEITUS

Well then, here I go, the poorer by a kiss.

A group of Philip's veterans BURSTS INTO APPLAUSE.

As a smiling Cleitus eyes his king, A YOUNG SOLDIER turns on the older veterans.

YOUNG SOLDIER
HAVE YOU NO SHAME?

The veterans quiet. The Young Soldier glares.

YOUNG SOLDIER (cont'd)
What king can claim the success of our
Alexander? The great Cyrus? The feeble
Darius? Why even our Philip is nothing
compared to a man whose work rivals that
of Dionysus himself.

SHOUTS OF AGREEMENT FROM SOME OF THE OTHER YOUNGER SOLDIERS.

YOUNG SOLDIER (cont'd)
WHO BUT A GOD COULD CHALLENGE HIS
SUPREMACY?

He is overwhelmed by the CHEERING YOUNGER SOLDIERS. Though
pleased by the words, even Alexander is taken aback by such
high praise. Amidst the CRIES OF ADORATION, one voice is
heard:

CLEITUS
BLASPHEMY.

All turn to an emboldened Cleitus.

CLEITUS (cont'd)
The so-called achievements of the king
have been the work of the Macedonian army
as a whole.

PERDICCAS
And where would your army be without
Alexander? Where would your army be if
Philip were still commanding?

CLEITUS
I would easily rate the success of Philip
higher than securing the savage throne of
a savage people. Why if it wasn't for the
work of Parmenio -

HEPHAESTIAN
Do you dare claim that Parmenio could have
placed the world's riches at your feet?

ALEXANDER
The cowardice of the veterans would have
us lording it still in the rags of
Macedonian royalty.

CLEITUS

Was it my cowardice that saved your skull in Asia Minor? It is by the blood of the army that you have risen so high. Are we to all share the fate of Attalus?

ALEXANDER

So, that's how you talk of me behind my back, is it? That's what causes this bad blood between the brothers of Macedon?

Sensing trouble, Perdiccas deftly removes the king's sword.

CLEITUS

Those who died are fortunate. They never lived to see countrymen supplicate to Persians before having an audience with their own king.

Alexander turns to Oxyartes, quietly murmuring:

ALEXANDER

Don't you think Persians walk among Macedonians like gods among wild beasts?

Oxyartes LAUGHS. Though Cleitus hasn't heard the remark, he is more enraged than ever.

CLEITUS

Alexander should either talk for all to hear, or else not invite men to supper who freely speak their minds. Better to consort with slaves who will grovel before your white robe and Persian sash.

Alexander hurls an apple at Cleitus and frantically searches for his sword.

ALEXANDER

MY SWORD.

CRATERUS

Alexander -

ALEXANDER

FETCH ME MY SWORD. I WILL CUT DOWN THIS WRETCH -

The king sees Perdiccas with his sword and rushes toward him in a fury. The companions restrain Alexander, slightly at first. As he resists, the struggle grows more intense.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Treason. A plot against the king. Am I to
be betrayed like Darius?

Ptolemy and others manage to drag a shouting Cleitus from the
tent.

CLEITUS (O.S)
Let him come for me. Am I no longer
free to speak my mind?

Coenus eyes the scene nervously.

ALEXANDER
Call out the guard. Sound the alarm.
Traitors against the king.

When the TRUMPETER hesitates, Alexander breaks free and
knocks him down.

Cleitus now rushes back into the tent.

CLEITUS
"ALAS WHAT EVIL GOVERNMENT IN HELLAS."

Everyone is silent. Sudden.

CLEITUS (cont'd)
"When the public raises a memorial to war/
Do those who really labored get
the credit?"

Alexander joins Cleitus in speaking the words then finishes
the quotation alone.

ALEXANDER
"Do those who really labored get the
credit?/ Oh, no. Some general takes the
prestige -/ Who brandished but one spear
among the thousand,/ Did one man's work,
and sees a world of praise./ These self-
aggrandized fathers of their country/
Think themselves above the people. WHY
THEY'RE NOTHING."

The crowd waits silently.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Will you turn the words of Euripides
against me too, Cleitus?

Cleitus spits at his king.

Infuriated, ALEXANDER GRABS A SPEAR FROM ONE OF THE GUARDS, SPRINGS FORWARD, AND RUNS CLEITUS THROUGH.

The veteran falls forward into Alexander's arms. The two drop to the ground as Cleitus quickly dies.

Alexander shakes the officer, desperately trying to revive him, his rage vanishing into horror at what he has done.

In a daze, the king grabs a spear and points it toward his own stomach.

Hephaestian quickly pulls the implement from Alexander's grasp.

The king rocks Cleitus in his arms. The surrounding troops are silent.

Perdiccas, Ptolemy, Craterus, and Peucestas can only stare at the ground.

Stonefaced, Coenus watches the scene.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - BACTRIA - NIGHT

Macedonian soldiers gathered solemnly about a CRACKLING FIRE. They are in heated debate - the young and the old.

The group includes Peithon and his young friend, Leonnatus.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #1

I don't care what your rank, you cannot challenge the king.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #2

Cleitus spoke his mind. It is the right of the king's companions.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #3

But not to insult the throne?

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #2

A Macedonian throne. Or Persian?

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #4

Cleitus was drunk. That was his crime. Thirty years service to Macedon, and for one night of revelry, he paid with his life... As Parmenio paid with his.

The last comment provokes strong MURMURS OF DISSENT.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #1
PARMENIO WAS A TRAITOR. HE CONSPIRED WITH
HIS SON.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #5
I wouldn't think it past the old rope.

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #1
The king had no choice. To leave Parmenio
with half the army -

MACEDONIAN SOLDIER #4
If Parmenio plotted against Alexander, who
is to be trusted?

PEITHON
And if he did not, what is to be done?

The troops silently consider the question.

LEONNATUS
The debate is moot. Alexander is above the
laws of men.

EXT. ELSEWHERE IN CAMP - BACTRIA

With a jug of wine in one hand, and two goblets in the other,
Hephaestian stumbles drunkenly forward.

SUDDENLY, from behind a wagon, he is roughly pulled from the
street and slammed against the side of the wagon.

The king's closest companion finds himself face to face with
Craterus. Coenus and Perdiccas are nearby. The scene is
close, hushed, tense..

CRATERUS
He needs to stop.

HEPHAESTIAN
I don't know what you're talking about.

CRATERUS
He goes too far. Success is well and good,
but there is a time for return. For
thoughts of home.

HEPHAESTIAN
So, tell him yourself.

COENUS
There is no one closer than you,
Hephaestian.

HEPHAESTIAN

When it comes to his ambitions, he'll
listen to no one.

PERDICCAS

It's for his own good.

HEPHAESTIAN

I won't stand between the king and his
glory.

CRATERUS

I know these men. I can smell a mutiny.
We're only protecting the king from
himself.

A tense silence. The companions eye one another.

HEPHAESTIAN

The soldiers have declared the murder of
Cleitus just.

The companions are stunned. Hephaestian smiles, feeling
control of the moment for once.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

It seems Alexander knows his men better
than Craterus.

Hephaestian roughly shoves Craterus away.

CRATERUS

Would you follow him to his death?

HEPHAESTIAN

If it is required.

CRATERUS

Would you follow him to his ruin?

But this, Hephaestian cannot answer. He turns and walks away.

The companions watch him go.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

Hephaestian pushes quickly toward the king's tent.

As he is about to enter, THE STAFF GUARDS LOWER THEIR SPEARS,
blocking him.

LONG PAUSE. Hephaestian does not bother to call out to
Alexander this time, knowing full well what the answer will
be.

After an awkward moment, he turns and walks away, dropping the two goblets in the sand.

At a good distance from the tent, Hephaestian stops and looks up at the stars that fill the clear night.

He takes a deep and shaky breath, then pulls a long swig from his jug of wine.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

Alexander paces. Roxane lies seductively in bed.

ALEXANDER

What son of Zeus can claim more? The knot at Gordium. Prophecy in Egypt. Do they so quickly forget my victory on the plains of Asia?

The king sits on his bed. Roxane sits closely beside him.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Clearly, some hand guides me forward. And what have I asked in return? Of what horrible crime am I guilty? A mere gesture. Meaningless ceremony.

Roxane kisses him about the neck and shoulders.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Divine worship indeed. The son of Zeus is not Zeus himself. I ask not for divinity. Never have I claimed divinity. Nor have I the faintest notion of how one could even achieve divinity.

Frustrated, Roxane stops - her tone matter-of-fact:

ROXANE

By doing that which is impossible.

The words strike Alexander like a lightning bolt. He turns to Roxane and sees her for the first time in the scene.

He pushes her back and climbs on top...

EXT. THE BASE OF THE HINDU KUSH - DAY

TOWERING MOUNTAINS COVERED IN SNOW.

TILT DOWN TO REVEAL: Alexander, flanked by his companions, before his army.

ALEXANDER

From the heights of the Hindu Kush, look west and lay your weary eyes on the Mediterranean, perhaps even Macedon herself. To the east, see what no Macedonian has seen - the very edge of the earth. Destiny calls forth the men of Macedon. What, my friends, is your reply?

A hushed silence. Then one voice from the crowd.

PERDICCAS

Lead us, Alexander. Lead us wherever you will.

A reluctant CHEER from the men. As the army continues forward, Perdiccas cautiously approaches Alexander.

The king turns to find his friend staring at him. Perdiccas and Alexander behold one another for the first time since the death of Cleitus.

Perdiccas smiles, attempting to diffuse the tension. But Alexander remains serious.

ALEXANDER

You were right to try and stop me in my fury against Cleitus...

Perdiccas nods, accepting what he thinks to be an apology.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

But you were wrong to take the king's sword. You will always be my friend, Perdiccas. But you will never again be my companion.

Perdiccas swallows, crushed. The king moves on.

EXT. HINDU KUSH - DAWN

HARSH DRIVING WIND - the first signs of snow. The mountains are treacherous and slippery. The column is slowed nearly to a crawl.

Sunrise in the mountains - flaming red clouds, pink mountain rock, and the snow shining blue and violet.

Alexander and Hephaestian peer toward a rock half a mile high.

HEPHAESTIAN

The rock where Prometheus was bound for defying the will of Zeus.

EXT. HINDU KUSH - DAY

THE WIND IS VIOLENT NOW.

All are wrapped in heavy animal skins.

Ragged Macedonian soldiers trudge through blinding snow. One exhausted soldier wanders off the path and collapses.

DAYS LATER

SCREAMING, UNYIELDING WIND. Soldiers struggle up the rocks and snow on their bound, frostbitten hands and knees.

EXT. THE HEIGHT OF THE PASS

Alexander and six of his battered companions slowly rise to their feet (Craterus, Perdicas, Hephaestian, Peucestas, Coenus, and Ptolemy).

THE SUN IS BLINDING. THE WIND SAVAGE. DARK CLOUDS IN THE DISTANCE.

The men look back in the direction from which they came. The mountains stretch before them. They are so high they can almost see the curve of the earth.

They peer back to the west, eyes desperately searching for that precious glimpse of home promised to them by Aristotle all those years ago.

AFTER A LONG AND LONELY MOMENT, they realize the great tutor was wrong. And in that moment, these men now thirty years old, realize for the first time that to which so few have been privy from this height to which so few have risen:

The true size of the earth and the breadth of their domain.

They glance at one another in awe...

CRATERUS

So this is the world we have conquered.

CLOSE UP ON: ALEXANDER. As his six companions face west, he slowly turns...

And fixes his eyes on the east.

And this thing - this thing Alexander has waited all his life, conquered all of Persia, suffered invincible pains to see - is not there.

The very edge of the earth is nowhere in sight.

Slowly, Alexander unwraps the rags that cover his head and face. Slowly, he bears his windburned face to the cruel and merciless elements.

And he smiles - ever so slightly. He smiles as he did a boy of fourteen on the back of the mighty Bucephalas, as a young man of twenty-four before the screaming hordes of Egypt.

Hephaestian looks his friend with trepidation.

ALEXANDER

Impossible.

We watch the seven men - five of them staring homeward, one of them looking intently at their king, and Alexander fixed on the east, perhaps still straining to glimpse the very ends of the earth.

From high up, they seem very, very small.

EXT. THE ADVANCING ARMY - DAWN

With the Hindu Kush in the distance behind them, the army marches still further east.

LEONNATUS (O.S.)

Gold is dug by giant ants and guarded by griffins, women weave clothing from wool-bearing trees...

The young Leonnatus marches with Peithon.

LEONNATUS

...and people live for hundreds of years.

Peithon smiles skeptically.

PEITHON

Among unicorns with red heads and blue eyes.

LEONNATUS

India is a land of many wonders, friend.

PEITHON

Some wonders I can do without.

EXT. JHELUM - DAY

A SAVAGE, DRIVING RAIN. THE MONSOONS OF INDIA.

Alexander on the back of Bucephalas, head down, the pelting rain nearly moving horizontal to the ground.

The army trudges behind him, morale at an all time low. The mud here is deep, pulling mercilessly at the horses' hooves and sucking the infantry down to their knees.

THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.

Alexander comes to the edge of a ROARING RIVER, choked and rising quickly. It is easily fifty yards across.

SUDDENLY, Bucephalas jerks his head, nervously tamping the ground with his hooves. Alexander tries to calm him, but to no avail. He is surprised to see this steady animal so unsettled.

Alexander peers through the rain and fog to the other side of the river -

DEAFENING CRACK OF LIGHTNING, and -

EXT. JHELUM - FAR SIDE OF RIVER

REVEAL HUGE DOMED STRUCTURES - at least eighty of them - VAGUE SHAPES lining the opposite bank.

EXT. JHELUM - NEAR SIDE OF RIVER

THE MACEDONIAN HORSES ARE PANICKED NOW - the trusted backbone of the Macedonian army in chaos.

BUCEPHALAS rears slightly, LETTING OUT A FRIGHTFUL SCREAM. THE SOUND OF TERRIFIED HORSES GIVES WAY TO DRIVING RAIN AND LIGHTNING as we:

DISSOLVE TO THE BATTLE OF TAXILA.

EXT. RIVER - LATER

HUNDREDS OF MACEDONIAN INFANTRY attempt to cross the RAGING JHELUM RIVER.

Straining against the irresistible current, the soldiers form a chain, linking arms, clinging to one another for dear life.

LIGHTING STRIKES - OBLITERATING A DOZEN MEN IN THEIR ARMOR.

EXT. JHELUM - FAR SIDE OF RIVER

Struggling into formation, the MACEDONIAN INFANTRY trudge out of the river, heads bowed, armed with huge, curved scimitars, fighting to keep their feet from sinking in the muck and mud.

THEN, A HORRIBLE SUCKING SOUND, LIKE GIANT FOOTSTEPS.

The Macedonians shudder. ONE INFANTRY SOLDIER shakes his head in complete terror at the unknown monsters before him...

Emerging from the gloom: AN ELEPHANT STEPS FORWARD, UNLEASHING AN EARTHSHATTERING ROAR.

Atop the strange beast sits PORUS, the seven foot tall king of India.

Behind Porus, ELEPHANTS ADVANCE STEADILY FORWARD LIKE TANKS, mounted by RIDERS, flanked by THOUSANDS OF INDIAN INFANTRY.

Faltering slightly at the scene before them, the dauntless Macedonian infantry gathers courage and presses the attack.

The Elephants make easy work of the Macedonians, goring them with their tusks, trampling them with their feet.

ONE MACEDONIAN INFANTRYMAN is lifted into the air by a trunk and dashed to the ground.

The few who actually reach the Elephants hack at their thick, leathery legs with axes.

ONE SCIMITAR SWINGS HIGH, SPLITTING OPEN AN ELEPHANT'S BELLY.

THE ELEPHANTS PANIC AND BEGIN BACKING UP, their riders unable to control them. As they retreat, the Elephants trample their own army - LETTING OUT A HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLE OF DISTRESS.

The Macedonians follow as best they can, but they are exhausted. They only have the strength to kill the wounded left behind.

Taxila is battle devoid of all glory - a bloody brawl as men grapple to kill one another for reasons they cannot explain.

EXT. TAXILA BATTLEFIELD - LATER

A DEAD ELEPHANT - a Macedonian impaled on its tusks, his sword sunk deep between the animal's eyes.

Alexander, covered in grime, pale and exhausted, slugs through the mud, taking in the field in a daze.

Without noticing, the king passes our old veteran, Peithon, kneeling in the mud.

The old soldier wears a stunned expression. HE HOLDS THE DEAD BODY OF HIS YOUNG FRIEND, LEONNATUS.

The face of Leonnatus is still slightly flushed with color, seeming more alive than Peithon himself.

Alexander looks up to the sky, the rain having subsided.

Still the clouds blow violent and anxious in the sky. They part only briefly to allow glimpses of the sun, and even then, it is but a dull coin, obscured.

EXT. ELSEWHERE ON BATTLEFIELD

Alexander approaches a shocked and battered Porus, who stands over the body of his now gutted elephant. He weeps with a hand on the animal's head.

Alexander looks at the handsome, proud, figure before him, standing a full head and a half taller than him. Porus, though weak and thirsty, a wound in his shoulder, holds himself with great poise.

The two men look at one another for the longest time, the fight completely gone out of both.

ALEXANDER

How do you wish to be treated?

PORUS

Like a king.

Alexander studies his dignified opponent respectfully.

Just then, Ptolemy approaches. Alexander looks at his officer and immediately knows something is wrong.

EXT. ELSEWHERE ON FIELD

A solemn circle of Macedonian soldiers look down at the ground.

Alexander forcefully pushes his way to the center of the circle. The king's gaze is fixed on the ground. HE CRUMBLES TO HIS KNEES...

After a long and helpless stare at what lies before him, he CRIES, sobbing uncontrollably without a voice to speak his heart's anguish.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Alexander walks on shaky legs, his face carrying a stunned, mournful expression. His companions follow solemnly behind.

Among them is a trembling Coenus, pale and weak, sick with fever.

ANGLE ON: BUCEPHALAS CARTED IN A DECORATED WAGON.

The relentless rain starts once again.

Behind the dead horse, the Macedonian army stretches endlessly into the distance.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

A FOREST IN DEEPEST INDIA. THE CHATTER OF APES AND THE CRIES OF EXOTIC BIRDS. COLLAPSED SOLDIERS sleep around smouldering camp fires.

On fire is particularly active. We hear it CRACKLE and HISS and follow its flames and ashes into the low canopy of branches overhead, the light rising TO REVEAL:

A long, wooden box, suspended in the tree.

THE FLAMES AND SPARK BRUSH against the lower corner of the wooden box until the box itself catches fire. SOON, THE BOX AND SURROUNDING BRANCHES ARE ENGULFED IN FLAMES.

As we follow the fire, we find another long, wooden box, identical to the first. The second box bursts into flames and a charred branch falls to the ground, waking a SLEEPING SOLDIER.

He notices the flames and jumps to his feet.

SLEEPING SOLDIER

Fire...FIRE.

AS THE FIRE RAGES OVERHEAD, THE WAKING SOLDIERS DASH FOR SAFETY AND SHOUT WARNINGS.

Soon, the surrounding woods are engulfed in flames.

In the middle of this inferno, Alexander, Ptolemy, and Hephaestian step forward, staring into the trees, mesmerized by hundreds of the same perplexing wooden boxes burning overhead.

ALEXANDER

What are they?

As he says the words, one of the boxes collapses, revealing: THE BURNING BONES OF A HUMAN SKELETON.

PTOLEMY

Not good.

Some alien culture seems to have made custom out of burying their dead in the trees. The soldiers see it only as an omen as they focus on a burning skull...

EXT. BEAS RIVER - DAY

The horrified face of a MACEDONIAN SOLDIER.

PAN TO REVEAL: The rest of Alexander's shocked troops as they stare forward. They are exhausted and filthy - their nerves shot.

Following their eyes, we look at THE RUSHING BEAS RIVER, tearing away and swallowing huge chunks of the bank.

Beyond the river, the Ganges plain stretches hundreds of miles into the distance.

Beyond the plain, THE TOWERING HIMALAYAS.

Alexander is as stunned as his men. As he takes in the geography before him, we hear a CLANG.

A VETERAN SOLDIER HAS THROWN DOWN HIS SWORD.

There is a long moment of silence before another soldier does the same. Then another. And another. Soon, hundreds, then thousands wordlessly throw their swords to the ground before them.

Alexander's staff, glancing up and down the ranks, grow increasingly nervous.

Mesmerized, Alexander is unable to tear his gaze from the mountains before him. We see his face and listen to THE CLATTER OF FALLING WEAPONS.

Then silence.

Alexander finally turns, dreading the faces that he is about to encounter.

And here they are. Tens of thousands of men in silent mutiny, all agreed in their exhaustion and anger that this has gone far enough.

Alexander seems to realize this, but accept it he will not.

ALEXANDER

After so much hardship. So much glory. Are we to turn back now? Are we to risk losing all we have so valiantly won?

But he is met with only silence.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

The end of our journey is at hand. The rivers before us are not uncrossable.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

No army on earth that can withstand us.
The edge of the world...

But even Alexander has trouble believing his speeches today.
He rallies one last time.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

THIS IS NOT HOW IT CAN END. I AM NOT A MAN
YET SPENT. MY BODY IS COVERED FROM HEAD TO
FOOT WITH WOUNDS - NOT ONE OF THEM ON MY
BACK. NONE OF YOU HAS DIED IN RETREAT
WHILE SERVING ALEXANDER. WHO WILL GO WITH
ME?

And he is met with the deepest silence yet. For the army, at
least, the campaign is over.

Alexander studies his silent, imploring troops.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Then I go on without you.

Finally, Coenus, the man who would not speak for his friend
Philotas, steps up to speak for the whole of the army. He is
haggard and pale, sick to the point of collapsing. He clears
his throat with a rattling cough and then:

COENUS

We have one desire, and one desire only -
to go home. After eight long years, to see
our Macedon. If there is one thing above
all others a successful man should know,
it is when to stop.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP

A brooding silence pervades camp. The men sit on the ground,
surrounding Alexander's tent, facing the king himself from
all sides.

Every face is stone.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

The king paces, finally turning to walk into his tent. Taking
one last glance over his shoulder, he disappears.

EXT. CAMP - SUNSET

As the sun sets, fires are lit. Still, the men are quiet and
do very little.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Alexander sits, staring at the tapestry of Ammon. Through it, really. He trembles ever so slightly, every muscle in his body tense, as though working his will against the will of thousands.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

No fires, no songs, no food and no drink. The men sit just as Alexander does, their wills as determined as the king's.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - DAY

Alexander rises from his bed, naked. He walks to the flap of his tent and steps out.

EXT. TENT

The whole of the army is right where he left them. It is as if no one has moved.

They sit in silent vigil, staring at Alexander, waiting for the answer they want.

EXT. ELSEWHERE IN CAMP - DUSK

The companions stand together at the edge of the camp, watching.

Craterus glances at Hephaestian. Then Perdiccas looks at him, and finally Ptolemy. Only Peucestas seems to hold some sympathy.

Hephaestian looks at them all with a look of surprise. Could it be they blame him?

They do.

Hephaestian, unable to face them, quickly walks away.

EXT. CAMP - DAWN

The sun rises on a still camp.

In his Persian robe and sash, Alexander marches through camp with his staff.

As he is walks toward the river, slowly, the men stand and follow.

EXT. RIVER

Alexander stands before a sacrificed goat. He turns to Aristander. The old seer seems afraid to go near the animal.

The army watches - anxious but calm.

ALEXANDER

READ.

Aristander steps forward to read the omens, sticking his hands in the animal's belly. After careful consideration, he looks at the king.

ARISTANDER

The omens are not favorable. The gods are against crossing.

Alexander considers the words. He looks at his companions. He looks at the expectant army standing before him.

PEUCESTAS

Lead us forward. There are those who will follow.

But the rest of the men merely stare silently at their king.

ALEXANDER

We shall erect twelve altars to the Olympian deities. We shall construct chairs, beds, and fortifications of such enormity that for generations to come, our enemies will remember us as giants. And we shall build a pillar, an obelisk, reaching to the heavens. And it will bear the words: Alexander...stopped...here.

There is a moment of stunned silence, then all at once, the ROAR OF THE MEN - LAUGHING, CRYING.

But it is not a cheer for Alexander this time. It is a cheer for themselves. No one moves to rally around him, or hoist him in the air. Alone, Alexander turns and walks broken back to his tent.

A DOCTOR administers last rites to a deceased soldier. According to Macedonian custom, the Doctor places a coin between the teeth of the dead man.

The king approaches from behind. He looks at the face of the unmoving soldier:

It is Coenus. Alexander is too weak for expressions.

The solemn king continues forward.

INT. TENT - LATER

Alexander and his officers - Ptolemy, Hephaestian, Craterus, and Perdikkas. Craterus stands before a map of the empire.

A RED LINE DENOTES THE ROUTE THEY HAVE TAKEN in a near straight line across the continent.

Alexander's finger drifts from this line straight down the map, then tracing a long curve along the southern coast of Asia. An entirely new and even longer trek eastward.

ALEXANDER

We will advance south, down the Indus, and return to Babylon by exploring the rim of the empire.

The officers are exhausted by the prospect. Alexander continues, pointing to a spot near the coast.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Once here, we will divide the army. Craterus will escort our veterans through the interior and back to Macedon.

Craterus nods.

PERDICCAS

And the rest of us?

Alexander takes a moment before continuing.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

The rest of us will march along the coast.

Stunned silence.

PTOLEMY

Gedrosia.

ALEXANDER

What of it?

But Ptolemy knows better at this point than to argue with the king.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

We will determine if ocean surrounds the land and open a trade route to the east.

Alexander senses the hesitancy of his staff.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

What? You are still the king's companions
- speak your minds.

CRATERUS

Dividing the Army.

ALEXANDER

The coast will not support our entire
force, Craterus.

PTOLEMY

Gedrosia.

ALEXANDER

An exploration. A mere jaunt.

PERDICCAS

It might have been a jaunt before it was a
desert. Back when Achilles -

ALEXANDER

What does Perdiccas suggest?

But the men no longer have the king's ear. Perdiccas lowers
his head in the hopes of avoiding yet another conflict.
Craterus speaks for the rest.

CRATERUS

The coast is crawling with hostiles. We'll
have to fight our way through India just
to get there.

Alexander feels he is being challenged.

ALEXANDER

I said I'd return.

The king approaches the map and traces his intended route
with the tip of his sword. The bottom of the map falls away.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

What does it matter how?

EXT. MULTAN - DAY

A CITY UNDER FULL-ON SIEGE. The Macedonians assault a steep
citadel in the city's center.

The defenders are numerous, and a number of Macedonians are
killed by arrows and stones. Expecting an easy march back to
Macedon, the troops are demoralized and exhausted.

Alexander, in the midst of the battle, is more insistent than ever.

ALEXANDER

LADDERS.

The order is ECHOED by nearby soldiers, and a ladder is quickly retrieved.

Alexander steadies the ladder for his nearby troops.

Peucestas and the panting, bloody soldiers look up at the defenders and hesitate.

The king is furious.

ALEXANDER

ARE THESE MY MACEDONIANS? THESE COWARDS.
THESE WOMEN.

Peucestas can only stare at the ground.

ALEXANDER

Must Alexander do everything for you?

DISGUSTED, THE KING RACES UP THE LADDER, holding his shield over his head for protection.

Once on top of the battlements, Alexander quickly dispatches any enemy soldiers blocking his way. He is now alone, on top of the wall, his armor gleaming, a perfect target for Malli archers.

The Macedonians below watch in horror.

One last glance at his men, and with insane bravado, ALEXANDER LEAPS DOWN ON THE INSIDE OF THE WALLS OF THE CITADEL.

EXT. CITY

SUDDENLY GALVANIZED, Peucestas, carrying the shield from Troy quickly rushes up the ladders and join Alexander on the other side of the wall.

In a frantic effort to help their king, the rest of the soldiers attempt the ladders.

THEY CRUMBLE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF SO MANY MEN.

THE SOLDIERS ARE WHIPPED INTO A RABID FRENZY.

EXT. CITY

The Macedonians furiously batter the gates and struggle over the walls any way they can - even climbing on top of one another.

SUDDENLY, THE SCREAMING ARMY BURST THROUGH THE GATES AND OVERWHELM THE WALLS.

INT. CITY

Alexander lies on the ground, an arrow deep in the right side of his chest, blood gushing uncontrollably.

ONLY LITTLE PEUCESTAS still stands, desperately protecting Alexander with the Trojan shield. He furiously fights off the encroaching assailants - dozens of them who have left the assaulted walls to kill the king. The single-handed effort of Alexander's childhood friend is nothing less than heroic.

A SWEEPING WALL OF MEN AND WEAPONS. The Macedonians are enraged, and the Malli are butchered with a ferocity we have not yet seen.

AS THE BATTLE RAGES, ALEXANDER'S COLLAPSED BODY IS LIFTED OVER THE WALL TO SAFETY - CARRIED GENTLY ON THE SACRED SHIELD OF TROY.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT - UP RIVER - NIGHT

The army encamped around the tent waiting for some word.

Ptolemy approaches the tent from the thick of the crowd.

A dour Hephaestian leaves the tent. Ptolemy looks at him inquiringly, but Hephaestian can only shake his head.

INT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

As Ptolemy enters the tent, he notices a seated Roxane maintaining a silent vigil to his left. She turns to him, her stare even and calm.

Ptolemy sees Perdiccas, Craterus, and Peucestas talking quietly in the corner. He quietly approaches the bed of his king.

Alexander himself shows almost no signs of life. The wound in his chest has been dressed, but still he is losing blood.

Ptolemy whispers...

PTOLEMY

Alexander.

Silence. The king doesn't move.

PTOLEMY (cont'd)

Alexander.

Still, no response. Ptolemy glances at the other men, out of earshot.

PTOLEMY (cont'd)

Ammon.

The king opens his eyes slightly, as if he is about to respond, then quickly slips back into unconsciousness.

Ptolemy nods, turns away, and crosses the tent to the others.

PTOLEMY (cont'd)

What do you plan to do?

CRATERUS

We don't have much choice. The army's exhausted. If we head due west, we can take an easy march back through the interior.

PTOLEMY

We head south.

CRATERUS

We can't keep fighting through India -

PTOLEMY

The king specifically stated -

CRATERUS

The king would not listen to reason. He's punishing the men. How many more battles must we fight between here and Macedon?

The men are thrown by the implications of the remark. Ptolemy is clearly not yet ready to accept the possibility of Alexander's demise.

PTOLEMY

I've been down river. The army's convinced he's already gone. They talk of making their own way back. Disbanding completely.

CRATERUS

Someone will have to take command.

PERDICCAS

Who?

Awkward silence. No one quite sure how to proceed.

CRATERUS

Well, certainly not Hephaestian.

Perdiccas eyes him.

PERDICCAS

If Craterus means to suggest...

CRATERUS

The men trust me. I've got the loyalty of the veterans.

PERDICCAS

And I've fought my whole life by the king's side -

CRATERUS

Hardly a qualification -

PERDICCAS

It is only right -

PTOLEMY

THE KING IS NOT DEAD. If Alexander dies, the army dies. And if the army dies...none of us are going to make it home.

PERDICCAS

Then what do you propose we do?

Off Ptolemy's ever grim expression:

EXT. CAMP - UP RIVER - DAWN

THE SUN PEEKS OVER THE HORIZON IN THE EAST.

Alexander is carried gently by his companions to the river below.

EXT. RIVER - BARGE

Alexander's body is placed on a couch on a simple barge under a gauze canopy.

The companions carefully prop him up, doing their best to make the king look as though he merely reclines comfortably.

EXT. RIVER - LATER

The barge moves slowly down river. Craterus and Perdiccas stand at the bow, looking forward.

Ptolemy sits beside Alexander. A solemn Peucestas sits not too far off. The king doesn't move and, for all we know, might already be dead.

ANGLE ON: A bend in the river up ahead. Craterus turns back.

CRATERUS

Ptolemy...

AND THE BARGE ROUNDS THE BEND, REVEALING: THE ARMY, waiting in silence on either side of the river.

EXT. BASE CAMP - RIVER BANK - DOWN RIVER

Hephaestian and Aristander stand among the throngs of anxious soldiers.

They glance at one another nervously.

EXT. BARGE

The barge moves quietly down river. Alexander is still unmoving. Ptolemy even checks to see if he is breathing.

The awning covering Alexander is drawn back. The sun shines brightly on the closed eyes and still face of the king.

EXT. BANK

The army now sees the motionless form laid out toward the ship's bow. Straining to see some sign of life, the men are skeptical, not fooled by the attempt to make the king look better off than he is.

ANGLE ON: HEPHAESTIAN. A TIRED SOLDIER beside him shakes his head and gathers his belongings. He turns and pushes his way through the crowd.

Hephaestian reaches to stop him, but the Soldier scowls and pulls away, abandoning his commander and all hope with him.

As the Soldier walks away, others make up their minds.

Soon, the densely packed crowds on both sides of the bank begin to loosen and dissolve.

THE ARMY IS LEAVING.

Hephaestian turns and stares desperately at the body of the king on the barge.

EXT. BARGE

The barge moves closer. Perdiccas and Craterus still peer ahead. They see the army disbanding before them and grow increasingly nervous.

Finally, Craterus turns to Ptolemy.

CRATERUS

Do something.

Ptolemy considers, then leans in and whispers urgently in Alexander's ear. We cannot hear his words.

EXT. BANK

NEARLY EVERY MAN COLLECTING HIMSELF TO LEAVE.

EXT. BARGE

Weakly, Alexander barely cracks open his eyes, letting in the blinding sun.

EXT. BANK

A core of the army, refusing to accept the death of their king, continues to gaze at the approaching barge.

EXT. BARGE

Craterus and Perdiccas face forward. Ptolemy, now at a complete loss, finally gives up his futile attempt to communicate with the king.

He turns away, looks down, resting his head on his hands.

Peucestas and Craterus weep.

EXT. BARGE

When all hope seems lost, we focus on the still king. His eyes twitch. His head moves slightly, almost imperceptibly.

Then slowly, tentatively, he moves his hand. First a finger. Then another.

Slowly, the king raises his hand into the air, fingers outstretched, struggling to cover the rising sun.

EXT. BANK

THE MEN WHO HAVE REMAINED SEE ALEXANDER'S HAND RAISED HIGH INTO THE AIR.

THEY SCREAM AS THOUGH THEIR HEARTS WILL BURST.

Hephaestian looks up and sees the king's outstretched hand. He's astonished - tears flowing and laughing. He hugs Aristander.

Those who had turned to walk away hear the racket and look back.

A MASS OF MEN RUSH TOWARD THE BANK to get a closer look with their disbelieving eyes.

EXT. BARGE

The companions bathe in the thunderous cheers from the crowd. It is a sound they have not heard for some time. A sound filled with love for the much maligned king.

Alexander continues to hold his hand toward the sun.

Ptolemy's tightened fist strikes at his thigh, relieved.

The troops raise their hands to Alexander, both arms of each soldier stretching toward their king.

Alexander falls back. Exhausted. Eyes closed. A faint smile on his lips.

PAN OVER TO: THE WATER, sparkling ripples reflect the all-seeing eye of the shining sun.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - INDUS - DAY

Alongside the Indus, a bandaged Alexander stands before his gathered troops. The king and his companions wear the RED ROBES OF PERSIAN NOBILITY.

DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF ALEXANDER, SEPARATE FROM THE REST, are ten thousand of the oldest and most traditional Macedonian VETERANS. They stand at attention expecting some great ceremony. Craterus stands beside them.

ALEXANDER

My veterans - long and lasting servants of the king. You have fought well, fought long, and made the world over shake with fear at your approach. The time has come for you to at last return to Macedon.

There is a moment of stunned silence, then an OLDER VOICE from the crowd.

OLDER VET #1

It is an insult.

OLDER VET #2

Would you wear men out with years of
devoted service and then toss them aside?

A few voices approve the sentiment.

ALEXANDER

Toss them aside?

OLDER VET #3

Does the king think us no longer capable
of holding our own in battle?

These words are greeted with more murmurs of approval from
the troops.

OLDER VET #4

Are we not still the unflinching phalanx
that won Alexander his empire?

ALEXANDER

Was it not for your beloved Macedon that
we turned around?

OLDER VET #4

At least then, we were needed by our king.
At least then, we could still hold our
heads with pride.

MORE SHOUTS OF APPROVAL.

YOUNGER SOLDIER #1

And what is to become of us when the
others depart? Are we to lose our-
selves in an army of barbarians? Are we to
take orders from the Persian cousins of
Darius?

YOUNGER SOLDIER #2

SEND US ALL HOME.

MANY ECHO THE WORDS.

OLDER VET #1

GO CONQUER THE WORLD WITH YOUR PERSIAN WAR-
DANCERS.

THE SENTIMENT IS SECONDED.

OLDER VET #3

WITH HIS FATHER AMMON, YOU MEAN.

OLDER VET #4

YES. GO CONQUER THE WORLD WITH YOUR FATHER
AMMON. SEE HOW MANY LANDS ALEXANDER CAN
TAKE WITH HIM.

The cry is taken up by the troops, who have now added
outright LAUGHTER to their insults.

FURIOUS, ALEXANDER LEAPS FROM HIS DAIS. He is followed by his
officers and guard. The king immediately pulls the chief
instigators from the crowd.

ALEXANDER

TAKE THIS MUTINOUS FILTH FROM MY SIGHT AND
EXECUTE THEM AT ONCE.

The men are dragged off, and the crowd is deadly silent.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

YOU WERE NOTHING...BEFORE MY FATHER PHILIP
LIFTED YOU UP. A TRIBE OF VAGABONDS,
ADORNED IN SHEEPSKINS. UNDER MY COMMAND
YOU HAVE TAKEN THE PYRAMIDS. REVELED IN
BABYLON. AND CLIMBED THE KUSH. I HAVE
LIFTED NOTHING LESS THAN THE BURDEN OF
ATLAS HIMSELF AND PLACED IT GENTLY BEFORE
THE TERRIFIC MIGHT OF THE MACEDONIAN SWORD
- AND YOU REPAY ME WITH COWARDICE. YOU
THANK ME WITH MUTINY. IF YOU ALL WANT SO
DESPERATELY TO LEAVE, THEN GO. PLEASE. GET
OUT OF MY SIGHT.

OLDER VET #5

NO.

OLDER VET #4

WE WON'T LEAVE. WE'RE THE KING'S ARMY.

ALEXANDER

I WILL FORM PERSIAN UNITS IN MACEDONIAN
FASHION. THEY KNOW HOW TO TREAT A KING.

Alexander storms off.

YOUNGER SOLDIER #3

YOU CAN'T DO IT.

OLDER VET #5

WE WON'T ALLOW IT.

THE SOLDIERS WAIL IN PROTEST. Finally, the king turns,
rushing back at them.

ALEXANDER
 WHAT? WHAT IS IT, THEN? WHAT DO YOU WANT
 FROM ME?

And a WEATHERED VETERAN steps out of the crowd.

OLDER VET #4
 Alexander. If you have any sympathy left
 in your heart - do not make these
 Persians your kinsmen. Do not allow them
 the royal kiss of friendship that the
 common Macedonian soldier has yet to
 receive.

By now, most of the troops, including Alexander, have tears
 in their eyes.

ALEXANDER
 Is this what stands between us? A kiss?
 You return not as the discarded rabble of
 the king's army, but as heroes, who no
 Persian soldiers will ever replace.
 You are all as my kinsmen. My brothers.
 You are all welcome to the kiss of
 friendship. For my beloved veterans, it is
 a right.

The veteran spokesman steps forward and exchanges the royal
 kiss of friendship with Alexander.

One by one, the veterans surround their king as Alexander
 exchanges the kiss of friendship with his weeping troops.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP - DAY

At long last, the vets are prepared to march home. They stand
 in formation. Alexander stands with Craterus. He looks at his
 first officer with affection.

Though not particularly old, Craterus is slightly ill and
 beginning to show his mileage.

CRATERUS
 What will you do now?

Alexander shrugs.

ALEXANDER
 We've been too long from the heart of the
 empire. I'll continue along the coast to
 Babylon -

CRATERUS
 That's not what I mean and you know it.

Alexander feigns a curious expression. Craterus smiles.

CRATERUS (cont'd)

Does the king wish me to think he will
idle away forever in Babylon? What is it I
see plotting behind those eyes?

Alexander smiles. He whispers:

ALEXANDER

Arabia.

Craterus CHUCKLES, rolling his eyes up to the heavens.

CRATERUS

Is there no world large enough to contain
his ambitions?

Alexander cannot help himself.

ALEXANDER

I'm told it's immense, as big as India. In
two years I can circumvent the whole of...

Alexander realizes how he sounds.

Craterus is LAUGHING DEEPLY NOW. He humors the king.

CRATERUS

And what do you know of these Arabs?

ALEXANDER

Savages who worship only two gods.

CRATERUS

Alexander will make a third in their
pantheon.

And with that, his laughter trails off and an awkward silence
falls over them. Then:

ALEXANDER

I... I did not know how to tell you,
Craterus. I would never wish you to think -

CRATERUS

My nine years with his majesty have been
enough.

Alexander saddens.

ALEXANDER

You have served this great army well, my
friend.

Craterus nods, finally stiffening his weary back and standing at attention.

CRATERUS

You need but to call upon me, and I will cross the whole of the world, forever the servant of my king.

ALEXANDER

For now, take yourself home. And with greetings from Alexander.

CRATERUS

I will.

ALEXANDER

No need to rush, friend.

There is an uncomfortable moment of silence. THEN THE TWO EMBRACE. They hold one another tightly, expressing the words they cannot find.

Craterus leaves to join the vets.

Alexander sadly watches them depart.

EXT. COAST - DAY

Our old friend, Peithon, a YOUNG PERSIAN and an OLD PERSIAN dig a very deep hole. At the bottom of the hole, Peithon strikes water. He climbs out of the way as the water rushes in.

Nearby, Alexander, still bandaged from his wound, stares out at the ocean. The land is alarmingly barren.

Hephaestian approaches.

HEPHAESTIAN

We've gone through what little the land offers.

ALEXANDER

If we head inland, we'll be fine.

But Hephaestian is not convinced. Alexander studies his friend, looking him straight in the eye.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

All will be well, my friend. Not to worry.

The king touches Hephaestian on the cheek.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Where would I be without my Hephaestian?

This strikes deep with Hephaestian. A tear rolls down the companion's face.

HEPHAESTIAN

No food behind us, desert ahead. Why do we do this?

ALEXANDER

Because it can be done.

HEPHAESTIAN

We can be immortal only to the extent it is allowed.

ALEXANDER

Allowed? By whom, Hephaestian? The army? My companions?

HEPHAESTIAN

I -

Alexander points to the still healing wound in his chest left by the arrow.

ALEXANDER

How much blood must I give?

Hephaestian stares at his friend, unable to respond.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

With my destiny in sight you all betrayed me, and yet my flesh is not enough. I make way west to home and you haggle as to how? What suffering can there be in our return, I ask, that outweighs my dissolution? My companion would be waiting there, you said. There can be no satisfaction. You failed to tell me that would come as black betrayal.

HEPHAESTIAN

I know there in you somewhere is the boy I came to love. I know that by my doing made him so.

Alexander turns his back on Hephaestian, looking to the ocean.

HEPHAESTIAN (cont'd)

A world you crossed to conquer, for what answer I forget, but I know now it's not out there where you seek. So elusive is this Ammon, so evasive is your dream - with it standing deathly still you pass it by.

And Hephaestian walks away, leaving Alexander to consider or ignore.

EXT. INLAND

THE BLINDING HOT SUN.

The Three Well Diggers search for water. This time, they find only sand.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

The men stumble through the desolate landscape. Some fall out from heatstroke.

The sun beats mercilessly down on the ragged troops.

The barren gravel gives way to shifting sands. A frightened soldier CRIES OUT in anguish, clutching his hand. A SNAKE disappears into the sand.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

AGAIN THE SUN. LARGER, as if closer to the surface of the earth. As if reaching for Alexander.

The army marches through the dust and heat. The landscape continues to give way to an ocean of shifting dunes.

The men and pack animals struggle through the sand as though struggling through snowdrifts.

As the pack animals die, the increasingly hungry troops eat them raw.

Overheated and thirsty, a soldier lapses into an uncontrollable shaking fit which ends in death.

As the army struggles forward, we focus on the THOUSANDS OF DYING STRAGGLERS that fall out behind - a huge serpent shedding its scales one by one.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

THE THREE WELL DIGGERS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. ALONE. They stand around a puddle of muddy water.

The water is scooped into a helmet - just enough to fill it. All of this for the whole of the army.

Peithon and the two Persians look at one another, then at the helmet. There is an unspoken moment of conspiracy as they debate drinking it themselves...

EXT. CAMP - DAY

The army bakes in the noonday sun, immobile, unable to go on.

FOLLOW THE HELMET FULL OF WATER as it is carried by the Young Persian Well Digger through the camp.

As he passes the soldiers who sit on the ground, they stand and turn, defeatedly watching the helmet go by on its way to the king's tent.

EXT. ALEXANDER'S TENT

The dehydrated, tattered king staggers out with his companions to greet the Young Persian.

The Persian bows and hands him the helmet, backing away with his eyes averted.

Alexander studies the water, then looks at his troops, who have gathered about him.

ANGLE ON: TENS OF THOUSANDS OF THIRSTY MEN who would kill for just one sip.

THE KING EMPTIES THE HELMET INTO THE SAND.

EXT. CAMP - ELSEWHERE

TWO SUNBURNED SOLDIERS glance at one another, stunned by the gesture. One nods to the other and they stand.

Slowly, others around them do the same.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

THE ARMY PUSHES ON.

EXT. COAST - MORNING

Hand over a hand, The Young Persian Well Digger pulls on a lengthy rope.

Finally, he draws from a hole a bucket. He reaches in and pulls out a handful of clear, fresh water, splashing it on his face.

HE STANDS AND THROWS THE BUCKET IN THE AIR.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: THE WHOLE OF ALEXANDER'S FORCE
SURROUNDING THE WELL.

They push in, each in a struggle to get his taste.

CLOSE UP ON: ALEXANDER. He sits on a horse in the distance.
His eyes are locked defiantly - spitefully - on the sun that
sets in the west.

INT. HEPHAESTIAN'S QUARTERS

Hephaestian in bed. He is feverish, slightly delirious, drunk
beyond all comprehension.

He holds up a jug of wine and drains the last drops from it,
letting it slip from his hand.

IT FALLS AND CRASHES ON THE FLOOR.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: It is one of two dozen such empty jugs.

A CONCERNED ATTENDANT races from the room.

INT. HEPHAESTIAN'S QUARTERS - LATER

A Doctor wipes the brow of Hephaestian, who is now sweating
profusely - his breathing quick and shallow.

The nearby Attendant looks to the worried Doctor. Hephaestian
jerks fitfully.

The Doctor grows increasingly nervous, his hands trembling.
Soon, he is using the cloth to wipe his own forehead.

EXT. MACEDONIAN CAMP

Alexander races through camp toward Hephaestian's pavilion.

The king runs with a desperate intensity - pushing himself
faster and faster. He runs as if possessed, straining with
all his might, royal garments tossed by the wayside.

INT. HEPHAESTIAN'S QUARTERS

HEPHAESTIAN GASPS AND IS STILL.

The Doctor shakes his head. He closes the eyes of his
patient, then carefully places a coin in Hephaestian's mouth.

SUDDENLY, Alexander bursts into the room. Ptolemy follows
closely behind. The king takes in the scene and immediately
knows what has happened.

Alexander is completely stunned.

Ptolemy gravely escorts the worried Doctor from the room.

The king slowly approaches the bed and looks at the body of Hephaestian. He touches the cheek of his companion, then runs his fingers across Hephaestian's chest. He is too devastated to cry.

ALEXANDER

"[Achilles] laid his manslaughtering hands
across the chest of his dear friend."

Alexander gathers Hephaestian into his arms, rocking his body like a small child. We focus on the king's lost face.

Alexander slowly draws a DAGGER. He grips the weapon tightly and contemplates the sharp blade.

EXT. HEPHAESTIAN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Alexander emerges from Hephaestian's tent, cradling his companion in his arms. THE KING'S HAIR IS JAGGED AND SHORT. His face is blank with shock, perhaps madness.

Macedonian soldiers make way for the king, opening up a wide circle. The remaining companions watch their king with deep concern.

Alexander crumbles to his knees, laying his close friend on the ground. He gently taps Hephaestian on the cheek. No response. He taps again. Still nothing.

Soon, he is shaking Hephaestian by the shoulders, increasingly more insistent, as if desperately trying to wake him.

Finally, he looks up to the sun, pleading.

ALEXANDER

Help me.

THE SUN SHINES BLINDLY BACK. The king raises his voice at the heavens themselves.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

After all I have done. All I have done in
your name. My wounds were deeper than
this. This... this is all I ask of you...

Still no answer from the SHINING SUN. The body of Hephaestian lies inert on the ground.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
This cannot be...

The king stares broken at the lifeless form before him, then rises to his feet, shouting to the silent sun:

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
CAN IT BE YOU ARE BUT FIRE IN THE HEAVENS?
CAN IT BE THERE WAS ONLY ALEXANDER? SHOW
ME I HAVE NOT SERVED A SILENT WITNESS.
WHERE IS YOUR FAVOR NOW?

AND ALEXANDER SCREAMS A BLOODY HOWL AT THE HEAVENS. Then turning furiously on this troops:

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
Nothing... Nothing...

Silence. Alexander glares at his army.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
I will burn his every temple, deny his
alter sacrifice. I will no more fear the
darkness, nor dare avert my eyes. LET NO
ONE SPEAK OF ZEUS, LET NO ONE UTTER HIS
NAME.

Slowly, one by one, the soldiers turn their backs on their king...and walk away.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
THERE IS NO LORD CALLED AMMON. THERE IS NO
SUN.

Alexander watches them leave, shocked, helpless. His officers can do nothing.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)
The gods, so it would seem, are exalted in
despair.

He crumbles to the ground, gathers Hephaestian into his arms, and finally:

TEARS - all at once. A SOBBING king cradles his companion. The silent army continues to disperse.

From extremely high up, we watch them.

EXT. A FIELD OUTSIDE CAMP - DAY

HEPHAESTIAN'S BODY at the top of an immense pyre, a hundred feet high laden with riches, armor, weapons... A glittering monument to the fallen companion.

Alexander holds a torch before the pyre. The silent army surrounds the magnificent structure at a distance.

ALEXANDER

"Thus it is destiny for both of us to stain the same soil here in Troy...in this place the earth will receive me."

Alexander tosses the torch, and the monument quickly catches.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

"I will not forget him, never so long as I remain among the living and my knees have their spring beneath me./ And though the dead forget the dead in the house of Hades,/ even there I shall remember my beloved companion."

THE PYRE IS ENGULFED IN FLAMES, reflected in the eyes of the king.

He turns and walks away. The army parts before him, RAISES THE WAR CRY, AND CLASHES THEIR SPEARS AGAINST THEIR SHIELDS.

EXT. BABYLON - MORNING

The sun rises over the great Persian city - now the heart of Alexander's Empire.

Outside the city, FARMERS tend their lush fields.

Far away from all other people, A LITTLE BOY pulls at thatch with a crude rake, bailing straw.

EXT. BABYLON WALLS - DAY

THE TEMPLES OF BABYLON that Alexander vowed to restore have decayed substantially.

INT. MAZAEUS'S CHAMBER

Mazaeus, the governor of Babylon entrusted with the restoration, rises from his bed and dons a plush robe.

SEVERAL SERVANTS scurry into the room to attend him.

HIS WIFE sits nearby, TWO SERVANTS combing her hair.

INT. BABYLONIAN TEMPLE

FIVE BABYLONIAN PRIESTS are in the crumbling temple, preparing for the morning sacrifice. Their backs are to us as they light incense on a large but tarnished brazier.

When they turn, we see that each of them is adorned in heavy jewelry made of the finest gold and the reddest rubies.

INT. TREASURY

The place where the companions had once celebrated their king's victories. Where once had been a mountain of treasure the likes of which no Macedonian had ever seen.

It is now drastically depleted. A few mere trunks of silver half filled.

EXT. BABYLON

Back to the Little Boy, bailing hay in the fields.

CRANE UP ABOVE HIM TO REVEAL: A PILLAR OF DUST ON THE HORIZON.

As the Little Boy turns to rake the straw behind him, HE FREEZES. Peering into the distance, he squints his eyes...

He drops his rake and runs like mad for the city, waving his arms at the other Farmers far away in the fields.

INT. PEITHON'S MISTRESS' CHAMBER

The Mistress that Peithon left behind rises in her humble chamber, getting ready for the day.

She has aged some, but not enough to betray the eight years her man has been gone.

INT. MAZAEUS'S CHAMBER

Mazaeus and his Wife enjoy a lavish breakfast.

EXT. BABYLON

The Young Boy is now surrounded by older Farmers, running in from the fields to see what is wrong.

THE BOY POINTS TO THE EAST.

AND ALL THE FARMERS RUN FOR THE CITY.

EXT. ATOP BABYLON'S WALLS

A TIRED GUARD, stretches as he stands from a nap. He looks over the wall and sees:

THE FARMERS RUNNING IN FROM THE FIELDS. He looks out to the east at something that catches his eye, then quickly reaches for THE ALARM BELL, ringing it with all his might.

EXT. BABYLON

ALEXANDER in full Persian dress, wields a golden scepter, and stands in a chariot drawn by white horses.

AND THE ARMY, come home at last.

They are now the army of the Great King. We see the king's companions - Ptolemy, Perdikkas, and Peucestas. We also see various Persian contingents - the Immortals, the Wearers of the Purple, Roxane, etc.... The force resembles the army of Darius as he set out to battle Alexander. The impressive display includes a squadron of royal elephants.

EXT. INSIDE BABYLON WALLS

Mazaeus hears a COMMOTION outside and crosses to the window.

THE STREETS OF BABYLON ARE FLOODED WITH PEOPLE, RUNNING TOWARD THE GATES.

EXT. BABYLON WALLS

Approaching Babylon, Peucestas rallies the army - some fifty thousand strong. THEY RAISE THEIR SPEARS, SWORDS, OR SHIELDS IN ONE UNIFIED SALUTE.

THE GATES BURST OPEN AND ALEXANDER'S ARMY IS GREETED BY A TIDE OF JUBILANT BABYLONIANS and those Macedonians they left behind.

The Army and the remaining companions are mobbed in a hero's welcome.

PEITHON'S MISTRESS DESPERATELY SEARCHES THE CROWD, FEARING THE WORST.

INT. MAZAEUS'S CHAMBER

Mazaeus turns to his Wife. The two of them look at one another in horror, never having expected this day to come.

EXT. BABYLON WALLS

Peithon approaches the Mistress he left so long ago. They embrace one another, a frozen couple in the rushing throng around them. They weep for joy.

Amidst the throng, oblivious to the hundreds that stand around his chariot - waving, throwing flowers, struggling to get close enough to touch him - is Alexander.

Cold, expressionless, empty.

A man alone among thousands, staring face to face with the rising sun. The sun that took his companion. The sun that rises in the east above some distant destination he never reached.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

The Great King Alexander is seated on a gold throne. ROYAL ATTENDANTS line the walls.

A WESTERN EMBASSY approaches and prostrates himself on the floor.

Alexander grows increasingly weary. Ptolemy announces the Embassy.

PTOLEMY

Alexander, the Roman representative approaches.

ALEXANDER

Roman? What's a Roman?

A concerned Ptolemy eyes the king.

INT. BANQUET HALL - BABYLON - NIGHT

A BANQUET IN FULL SWING. Men and women drink excessively. The hall is opulently furnished.

The men are happy to be back in some familiar surroundings, almost home. It is the best spirits we have seen them in some time.

SUDDENLY, A LOUD CRASH.

Then silence. All eyes look to see Alexander, who has entered the hall. He stands on a table.

THE KING IS DRESSED IN THE GUISE OF AMMON - purple robes and ram's horns.

He drops an empty jug of wine to the floor, wipes the sweat from his brow, and stands unsteadily before his wary men. It is a long, uncomfortable face off.

A few DERISIVE SNICKERS break the silence. The atmosphere is tense. The king's companions cautiously eye the mood of the soldiers. The men have clearly had enough. They shake their heads at their king.

Alexander watches uneasily from the table...THEN COLLAPSES.

INT. KING'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Alexander lies in bed - feverish, occasionally mumbling incoherently.

Roxane - NOW NOTICEABLY PREGNANT - sits against the wall, wiping the king's brow when necessary.

Through his delirium, the king stares at THE EGYPTIAN TAPESTRY AND THE FIGURE OF AMMON.

LATER

Alexander's fever worsens. Roxane is again by his side. She grows increasingly worried as Alexander tosses back and forth in bed, his temperature rising.

As Roxane tends to the king, she notices something beneath Alexander's pillow.

She pulls out a worn scroll of THE ILIAD - the same scroll that Aristotle gave to Alexander as a boy.

Roxane is startled by the sound of someone in the doorway. Quickly turning, she finds...

Perdiccas, who walks in and stands over the king.

Alexander struggles to open his eyes. He removes his ring and hands it to Perdiccas.

ALEXANDER

(whisper)

You must look after things until I am recovered.

Forever seeking his king's approval, Perdiccas now fights back tears. He considers the ring in the palm of his hand and closes his fist.

Roxane studies him.

EXT. KING'S QUARTERS - DAWN

The Macedonian soldiers quietly surround the king's quarters.

Perdiccas and the other officers face the troops.

Our old friend, Peithon, steps forward.

PEITHON

We demand to see the king.

PERDICCAS

Impossible. The king is very ill.

PEITHON

We won't leave until we've seen our Alexander.

PERDICCAS

I say again, the king will admit no one.

PEITHON

Are those the words of the king? Or the words of Perdiccas?

PERDICCAS

As your acting commander, I order you back to camp.

INT. KING'S QUARTERS - DAY

The king lies very still on the bed, unable to talk. We hear a steady, DULL POUNDING. The walls shake with each thud.

Perdiccas, Ptolemy and Peucestas RUSH INTO THE ROOM, swords drawn in time to see:

A SLEDGE HAMMER SMASHES THROUGH THE OPPOSITE WALL, letting in daylight.

The work continues until a second doorway has been opened in the room.

One by one, Alexander's army files past their king. We recognize many of the faces as they pass - those who have opposed him, those have followed unquestioning.

Alexander can barely acknowledge them, but he greets them with his eyes as they pass.

EXT. KING'S QUARTERS - DUSK

A line of fifty-thousand men waits patiently for their turn to follow through the broken wall to say farewell to their king.

INT. KING'S QUARTERS

And as the many soldiers walk slowly past, Alexander suddenly smiles warmly at one of the men, his face coming to life one last time.

ALEXANDER'S P.O.V.

Hephaestian stands before him, smiling back.

BACK TO ALEXANDER. The king looks curiously at his friend, suddenly wondering how he got here.

BACK TO HEPHAESTIAN. As the king's companion files past, Alexander notices other familiar, departed faces. He sees Coenus, Cleitus, Philotas, Parmenio, Attalus...

The ghosts that haunt the king's memory look directly at Alexander, and they all smile as they pass. Smiles of friendship, of family, of forgiveness...

Last in the line of ghosts is Philip.

BACK TO ALEXANDER, solemnly taking in the image of his father.

BACK TO PHILIP - only now, the ghost of Philip has vanished. In his place, we find Peithon, looking at the king with a saddened smile. He is the last Macedonian in the long column of soldiers.

Alexander smiles back with a look that says he does not recognize this man. Why would he? They have never once met. The king watches him until Peithon, and the army, are gone.

INT. KING'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Alexander lies still, his breathing shallow.

All that remain are the last of the close companions, who stand slightly off to the side.

Perdiccas glances at the ring on his finger that signifies his power.

Peucestas, clearly the most Persianized of the group, has grown into a fine and sturdy man. Stoic to the last, he refuses to cry.

And Ptolemy, ever the bearer of grim tidings and orders of execution. And perhaps the only one of the companions who can call himself truly a believer.

Ptolemy looks at Perdiccas and nods.

Perdiccas sighs nervously, looks once more at the ring on his finger, and slowly approaches Alexander. He leans over the king, hesitates, then speaks:

PERDICCAS

Alexander. Who should lead us when you are gone? To whom goes the empire?

Alexander reaches for Perdiccas with his last ounce of strength, pulling his companion closer to him, whispering in his ear. Ptolemy and Peucestas strain to hear his words.

Perdiccas listens intently to the king. Slowly, his face drops.

Alexander lets go and flops back on the bed, smiling slightly. Perdiccas straightens himself, completely dismayed. He walks back to the other companions with some great burden.

LONG PAUSE. Perdiccas glances back at his king.

PEUCESTAS

What did he say? To whom goes the empire?

Perdiccas looks at the surrounding officers.

PERDICCAS

To the strongest.

And then the heaviest of moments. These three men who are all that remain of the many commanders on the campaign. These three men that crossed twelve-thousand miles and conquered the known world. These men who have been friends, brothers, companions - the whole of their lives -

Are companions no more.

They look at one another now as strangers.

Peucestas is the first to move, walking backward slowly toward the door and then dashing into the night.

Ptolemy and Perdiccas - two old friends - simply look at one another without expression.

Perdiccas looks at the ring on his finger and leaves without so much as a nod.

And now Ptolemy, for the first time in his memory, is alone with Alexander. He walks across the room and stands over his companion, gazing quietly at the king.

CLOSE UP ON: ALEXANDER'S SMILING FACE - one that may finally indeed betray no trace of life.

AND BACK TO PTOLEMY: It is a moment before we realize the man who now stands here is old.

And that his gaze no longer falls on the body of the king, but on his tomb...

INT. TOMB OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT - DAY

Ptolemy's old and tearing eyes are still looking across the years when a voice calls him back.

PTOLEMY II

And what became of his empire? .

PTOLEMY

War. Endless war. The army that no nation on earth could withstand, fell on its own sword. Craterus, Perdiccas, Peucestas - all of them gone. I am all that remains. I am the last of the companions.

Ptolemy's boy looks at the tomb, considering the weighty tale. Finally, his puzzled expression returns.

PTOLEMY (cont'd)

What is it you do not understand?

PTOLEMY II

You say that Alexander is your king.

PTOLEMY

Yes.

PTOLEMY II

And that he is the son of God?

PTOLEMY

Yes.

PTOLEMY II

But you are Pharaoh.

PTOLEMY

Yes.

PTOLEMY II

And so you are the son of God.

PTOLEMY

That's what people say.

He waits for his boy to make some sense of this, but:

PTOLEMY II

I do not understand.

PTOLEMY

Well, I am Pharaoh - and people say that I am the son of God. Someday, you will be Pharaoh, and people will say that you are the son of God.

Ptolemy's boy considers the words and again, his face tightens with confusion.

PTOLEMY II

Am I...the son of God, father? .

And in contrast to what was once said to Alexander by his mother so many years ago, Ptolemy wisely decides to say nothing, for no answer he could give would be proper for a boy who would be king.

Instead, Ptolemy puts a hand on his son's shoulder. The ring on the old man's finger is the same ring that was once worn by Alexander himself.

PTOLEMY

Come now. It is time.

And Ptolemy walks with his son to the end of the vast hall that houses the tomb of Alexander, toward a door that opens to the outside and the blinding white sun beyond.

And at the door, Ptolemy stops, nodding for his son to step out alone into what awaits him.

We follow him from behind as the small door gives way to the wide open courtyard below the tomb at the bottom of a long flight of stairs.

Where ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SUBJECTS wait in silence to see the son of their Pharaoh. The one day son of their God.

Beyond them is the skyline of Alexandria - the city that Alexander planned so many years ago. Though clearly resembling the sketch that had been made for him, it surpasses anything even he could have imagined.

Still behind Ptolemy II, we wait, as do the frozen masses below.

And the boy raises his hand.

The ROAR that follows is unimaginable. Jubilant screaming over and over of the little boy's name.

From the edges of surrounding buildings, startled BIRDS take flight, passing over the chanting crowd.

MOVE SLOWLY AROUND PTOLEMY II - Until we at last end tight on his face.

He is no longer puzzled. At last he understands.

And his face is marked with an expression not unlike a young boy on the back of an unbreakable horse - a young man having defeated an unbeatable foe.

A Great King having climbed an impossible height - searching
in vain for the ends of his empire. .

BLACK.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES

- Alexander:** Crown prince and king of Macedon, Great King of Persia.
- Amyntas:** Young, wounded Macedonian soldier.
- Aristander:** Macedonian seer.
- Aristotle:** Tutor of Alexander.
- Attalus:** Officer of Philip.
- Bessus:** Bactrian commander, self-proclaimed Great King of Persia.
- Cebalinus:** Young Macedonian soldier.
- Cleander:** Officer of Philip, second to Parmenio.
- Cleitus:** Philip's officer, commander of Alexander's Royal Cavalry Squadron.
- Coenus:** Officer of Philip and Alexander, friend of Philotas.
- Craterus:** Companion of Alexander and his most able officer.
- Darius:** Great King of Persia.
- Hephaestian:** Close companion of Alexander, second-in-command of his empire.
- Leonnatus:** Young Macedonian soldier, friend of Peithon.
- Masaeus:** Persian cavalry commander, satrap of Babylon.
- Olympias:** Mother of Alexander, queen of Macedon.
- Parmenio:** Philip's most capable general, second-in-command of Alexander's expedition to Asia.
- Pausanias:** Philip's officer and close companion.
- Peithon:** Older soldier, friend of Leonnatus.
- Perdiccas:** Childhood friend and officer of Alexander.
- Peucestas:** Childhood friend of Alexander and his shield-bearer.
- Philip:** Father of Alexander, king of Macedon.
- Philotas:** Son of Parmenio, Cavalry Commander.
- Ptolemy:** Childhood friend and officer of Alexander, Pharaoh of Egypt.