

BARABBAS

Written by

Parker Jamison

&

Paul Kimball

PaulKimball.Film@gmail.com
ParkerJamisonFilm@gmail.com
303.589.1983

OVER BLACK:

In 63 B.C., Rome conquered the region of Judea, bringing the state of Israel into its ever-expanding empire.

Following a failed Jewish rebellion, a Roman governor named Pontius Pilate was given power over the province.

By the year 30 A.D., anti-Roman sentiment was festering among the Israelites.

Whispers grew of a savior who would deliver them from their oppressors...

EXT. AQUEDUCT CONSTRUCTION - DAY - ISRAEL

Searing late afternoon sunlight casts long shadows on an arid landscape. A half-built aqueduct rises from the earth. At its ragged end, three dozen WORKMEN labor over stones, winches, and scaffolding.

A boy of 12, BENJAMIN, dashes through the construction, clutching a wineskin.

He scampers over massive uncut rocks.

Runs past ARCHITECTS arguing over a table.

By MASONS cutting stone.

Scales the wooden scaffolding, slipping by LABORERS who haul up slings filled with bricks.

He reaches the top, catching his breath, and holds the wineskin out to a MAN standing atop the high stone structure.

JOSHUA BARABBAS (30) rests the head of his sledgehammer on the rock. All alpha power and dense muscles, he's a man sure of his work. His face is streaked with sweat and grime.

With a grateful wink, he takes the wineskin from Benjamin, who gazes up at this man with awe.

A booming call rings through the construction site.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

Ready for the Sabbath! All men to ground! Ready yourselves for the Sabbath!

Tools clank. Workers descend. Engineers pack up.

Barabbas slings the sledgehammer over his shoulder, handing the wineskin back to Benjamin.

BARABBAS

Time to go.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A dusty road snakes away from the outskirts of a city. Far from its walls, a handful of STONEMASONS trek along the dirt way, tool satchels slung over shoulders. In a high mood, they jostle about, their voices carrying over the desolate surroundings.

Barabbas carries his sledgehammer. Benjamin tags along with eager, nervous enthusiasm.

BARABBAS

(to Benjamin)

Don't listen to my brother. Of course we'll be home by sundown.

Barabbas shoots a look at DAVID (26), who feigns ignorance. David is a leaner version of his brother with a softer face, but there's a devilish twinkle in his eyes.

BENJAMIN

I'm not worried.

DAVID

May the Pharisees flog us all if we betray the Sabbath!

NATHANIEL (30), a bouncy, cheerful giant with an open face, grins at David.

NATHANIEL

David, they would have to skin you alive for all the times you've violated the Sabbath.

DAVID

What a good-looking man skin they would have then!

They round the top of a hillock to stop short.

A half-naked man sags from a cross, bloody and gasping. Nails driven through his forearms. Feet bound to the post.

Two dozen paces from the stonemasons, a jovial PATROL of ROMAN SOLDIERS lounges around a small campfire.

BARABBAS
 (to Benjamin)
 Keep your eyes ahead.

DAVID
 No, Benjamin, go ahead and look.
 Remember who put him there.

Benjamin, torn, tries to steel himself like a man.

From an adjacent road, a SHEPHERD herds a small flock of lambs and sheep toward the city. The soldiers spot him.

One of them, a ROMAN THUG, leaps to his feet and approaches the shepherd.

ROMAN THUG
 You, shepherd!

The shepherd stops, immediately on edge.

ROMAN THUG (CONT'D)
 We're hungry after a long day
 keeping the peace. You walk around
 with all this food...you'd be
 honored to share it with Romans.

The shepherd looks at his flock, stunned.

SHEPHERD
 You'd like to buy a sheep?

ROMAN THUG
 I want you to give one to me.

Barabbas, Nathaniel, David, and Benjamin watch with dread.

SHEPHERD
 But...these are going to temple for
 the Sabbath, to be sold as
 offerings.

ROMAN THUG
 Except the one you're going to
 offer us for dinner.

He steps closer, his smile malicious. The shepherd fidgets, trying to hold his ground.

SHEPHERD
 I could...I could sell one to you
 for half worth.

The Roman Thug shakes his head. A step closer.

ROMAN THUG

You Hebrew parasite. I gave you the chance to be welcoming, and you try to cheat us. Don't you know that this land belongs to Rome? And everything on it?

The shepherd's eyes go wide. The Roman Thug seizes one of the lambs, who bleats horribly. He passes it off to another Roman soldier, who takes it to the camp.

ROMAN THUG (CONT'D)

These others will be killed tomorrow?

SHEPHERD

They're to be sacrificed, at the temple.

ROMAN THUG

For Jewish sins?

The shepherd nods.

ROMAN THUG (CONT'D)

How 'bout we start now?

He draws his sword, grabs the head of a sheep, and plunges his sword into its neck.

Blood spurts across the white fleece as the animal crumples. The rest of the sheep skitter in fear. Their shepherd pales.

ROMAN THUG (CONT'D)

Ah, but maybe one is not enough for your people.

He slashes down at another sheep, hacking it to the ground, grinning with frenzy. The soldiers laugh in disbelief.

The Roman Thug swings with abandon, wading through the terrified flock as they try to stay together. The shepherd cringes, helpless to the slaughter.

Nathaniel lets loose a wolf-like HOWL. The sheep stampede in fright, galloping away from the sound. The Roman Thug whips around to see the stonemasons.

Barabbas takes a step forward, sledgehammer relaxed against his shoulder.

BARABBAS

You just missed the wolf.

The Roman Thug sizes up the muscular Israelite standing calm before him.

He steps closer to the stonemasons. A nervous Nathaniel and David flank Barabbas. The other Roman soldiers rise to their feet, hands grazing their weapons.

ROMAN THUG

Give me your name.

Beat.

BARABBAS

Joshua Barabbas.

ROMAN THUG

Barabbas. You've run off the rest of our dinner.

(looking to the
sledgehammer)

And you carry a weapon.

BARABBAS

A stonemason's hammer.

ROMAN THUG

We've crucified men for less.

He nods to the dying man on the cross.

BARABBAS

Your bravery adorns every road in Israel.

The Roman Thug looks at Nathaniel and David, standing by, struggling to hold their nerve. He puts his face within inches of Barabbas, who won't meet his eyes.

ROMAN THUG

Maybe we'll come and find you when we have enough wood for three crosses.

He spots the terrified Benjamin behind them.

ROMAN THUG (CONT'D)

Oh...four crosses.

He spits on Barabbas' feet. Barabbas looks away. David twitches with fury. The Roman Thug smirks, twirls his bloody sword, and walks back to camp, out of earshot.

The stonemasons let out a breath of relief.

NATHANIEL
 (under his breath)
 A little warning next time?

BARABBAS
 (shoving him)
 You're the one who howled like a
 madman.

Eyes averted, they pass wide of the Romans, skirting the massacre of red and white on the road. They come upon the shepherd, who's trying to regroup and calm the remains of his tattered flock.

The stonemasons help guide sheep back onto the road.

SHEPHERD
 Thank you.

Barabbas nods. The shepherd hurries off with his flock.

DAVID
 (looking back at Romans)
 Pagan beasts.

A pitiful bleating catches their ears. A lamb lies crying in the dirt, wounded near the carcass of a grown sheep. Nathaniel kneels down.

NATHANIEL
 What shepherd leaves one behind?

He picks up the lamb, cradling it in his thick arms.

BARABBAS
 Nathaniel...another pet?

NATHANIEL
 I can't just leave him here.

DAVID
 How long until you eat him?

NATHANIEL
 Don't scare him! This one is a good
 omen. I can feel it.

David rolls his eyes. Barabbas shakes his head, amused. They head for the city.

EXT. TEMPLE MARKET - MORNING

Vendors set up on the outskirts of the temple sell animals for sacrifice. Doves in cages, bleating goats, nervous lambs. Money swaps hands.

Barabbas and David stand with their mother, RACHEL (late 40s), a dusky, steely beauty. Nathaniel fidgets beside them.

RACHEL
(to Barabbas)
I spoke with Leah's parents today,
Joshua.

Barabbas frowns. He glances over at a pretty young girl, LEAH (20s), who's eying him discreetly a dozen yards away.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
She's lovely, don't you think?

BARABBAS
Ah, mother...I would not abandon
you for Helen of Troy.

RACHEL
Beauty sways men to destruction.
Choose wisely.

Rachel brushes a lock of hair back from his forehead. He pulls away. Nathaniel chortles.

DAVID
A wife for Joshua! I might be of
assistance.

RACHEL
(to David)
Don't think I haven't noticed your
eyes on Hadasseh. You're next.

Nathaniel points right at him, amused. David's smile falters.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Remember supper. Nathaniel, please
give my best to your mother.

NATHANIEL
I will, thank you.

She touches David's shoulder and moves off into the crowd.

DAVID
I have my orders. Off to buy some
birds!

David trots off through the stalls. Barabbas and Nathaniel mill through the crowds, browsing.

NATHANIEL

Are you looking for more of a chicken-sized sacrifice or a goat?

BARABBAS

Not a goat. Impossible creatures.

NATHANIEL

How 'bout we sacrifice a moneychanger instead?

He gestures to a table where a MONEYCHANGER smooth-talks a young couple in front of a table laden with coins.

BARABBAS

I'm sure the Lord would understand.

A commotion interrupts them from the far side of the market. Shouts. Crashes. The clatter of small hooves.

A GOAT bursts through a stall, toppling a cart and bringing a tent crashing down. The animal darts away, lead-line trailing, barging past customers. Vendors shout in anger.

Barabbas lunges for the lead-line as the goat charges past. Just as he snags it, the goat lurches. It yanks him off balance, into a stack of crates. He crashes to the dirt.

Nathaniel roars with laughter.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Of course it was a goat...

A WOMAN rushes up, out of breath, to stand above Barabbas.

WOMAN

You got him!

He starts at the sound of her voice. Looks up.

The Woman is TAYA (27), whose face is all gentle curves and large, dark eyes. At the sight of her, his stomach flips. He scrambles to his feet.

BARABBAS

(handing the rope to Taya)
All yours.

They lock eyes, and the rest of the market falls away.

NATHANIEL

Taya! What a lovely goat.

TAYA

No, he's not.

The goat fights against the rope.

TAYA (CONT'D)

(to Barabbas)

Good Sabbath, Joshua. And thank you.

Taya's smile toward Barabbas is a loaded mix of raw attraction and bristling resistance.

BARABBAS

Good Sabbath, Taya.

NATHANIEL

Where's your husband this morning?

TAYA

Levi visits with the Pharisees.

The goat is chewing its way up the rope.

TAYA (CONT'D)

You still labor at the aqueduct?

BARABBAS

Every day. Why?

TAYA

I've heard that funds are running short. That Pontius Pilate needs extra coin to finish it.

BARABBAS

As long as the Romans pay, we work.

The goat pulls insistently against Taya.

TAYA

I should be off with this trouble-maker. Good Sabbath to you.

BARABBAS

Good Sabbath.

NATHANIEL

Say hello to Levi!

Barabbas watches her leave, leading the stubborn goat.

David pops up behind them, holding a chicken and a dove in a cage. Pleased with himself.

DAVID

One for our sins, one for our bellies.

BARABBAS

You didn't steal these ones?

DAVID

I did not! Why are you covered in dirt?

INT. TEMPLE - MORNING

The inner sanctum is dark, reverently quiet. In the center, a stone altar. Standing over it is MELECH (40s), his brutish build concealing a hard shrewdness. He wears priest's robes, a knife lifted in one hand. Blood trickles in rivulets down the altar slab from the still form of a lamb.

MELECH

Lord, take this offering of blood in place of our own. For the wages of sin is death. We offer this lamb as a sacrifice in our place.

Barabbas and David step into the sanctum with their birds. The priest turns to them.

MELECH (CONT'D)

Barabbas brothers. Good Sabbath. You've brought a sacrifice?

David holds up the cage.

BARABBAS

Good Sabbath, Melech.

Melech wipes the blade on a nearby towel as an altar boy removes the limp carcass of the lamb.

MELECH

I hear you had some trouble with a Roman squadron yesterday.

BARABBAS

They had trouble with some sheep. We were just passing.

Melech steps down toward them.

MELECH

Shame. We need more Israelites to stand up to them...passionate believers in our liberation.

DAVID

Oh, we all hate them, but so few of us have armies at our command.

BARABBAS

We all await deliverance.

Melech regards him for a moment, gauging.

MELECH

Yes. Though some of us believe that the way must be paved. By sword or spear. Or hammer, as tools may provide.

Barabbas raises a skeptical brow and laughs. The chicken squawks horribly in the cage.

BARABBAS

(dismissive)

Speak to better men. We're builders, not fighters.

Melech lifts his hands as though conceding.

MELECH

No better men I could speak to, be that as it may. Now, let us see to your sins.

He grabs one of the chickens, who screeches as it's pulled from the cage.

EXT. AQUEDUCT CONSTRUCTION - DAY - ISRAEL

On the ground, Barabbas cracks a mallet against a chisel. Rock pieces splinter off. Nathaniel crouches to measure the stone.

NATHANIEL

Take down the left edge.

Barabbas wipes the sweat from his face.

BARABBAS

You must be getting old. Your eyesight isn't what it used to be.

(MORE)

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
 (yelling to the work
 tables)
 Eleazar! Can we have a drink?

A mischievous scruff of a guy, ELEAZAR (20s), snatches a wineskin from the table and bounds over to them.

ELEAZAR
 This is going to be the best wine
 you've ever tasted.

Barabbas swigs it. He's impressed.

BARABBAS
 Whose wine is this?

ELEAZAR
 From the wedding in Cana. Someone
 said it was from a carpenter.

NATHANIEL
 (laughing)
 Wine from sawdust? You've had too
 much to drink or not enough...

A shout from the far side of the construction site snaps their heads about. Barabbas, Nathaniel and Eleazar take off in the direction of the sound.

They sprint over to a small gathering of the stonemasons, where agitated voices are rising. David is in the midst.

BARABBAS
 What's going on?

DAVID
 Romans at the temple.

A scrappy mason in the midst of the group, JAMES (20), a solid granite type, turns to Barabbas, panting from exertion.

JAMES
 They came with thirty soldiers,
 well-armed. They mean to sack the
 temple.

Confused outrage bristles the stonemasons. Barabbas' eyes flash to dangerous life.

BARABBAS
 Their cursed aqueduct can wait.

He leads the furious tide of stonemasons in the direction of the city.

EXT. TEMPLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Barabbas, David, Nathaniel, James, Eleazar and the rest of the stonemasons ply their way through the crowd as anger roils all around them.

At the entrance to the temple, Roman soldiers form a human wall, keeping the furious Israelites at bay. A handful of soldiers move in and out, carrying bags that they're loading on a dozen horses.

The masons bull their way to the front, where an ISRAELITE MAN shouts.

ISRAELITE MAN

Thieves! Robbing the temple to pay
for their empire.

Barabbas sets his face with grim fury, but these words fall on David and Nathaniel's ears like a match to kindling.

DAVID

The aqueduct that we build?

BARABBAS

They'd pay us with our own coin.

Nearby, an olive-skinned man of god-like physique and wary demeanor watches the stonemasons as their blood rises. This is AMMON (30), an Egyptian warrior. Hawk-like gaze.

Nathaniel and David barge through to the line of guards.

DAVID

(to Roman soldiers)

You pigs of Rome! You steal from
the Lord's house!

Barabbas knows these words are fire. He stares at the soldiers, who remain stone-faced.

Nathaniel, emboldened by David's furor, has picked out the Roman soldier in command, MARCELLUS (30s), who stands behind the riot guard.

NATHANIEL

(to Marcellus)

You rob God's people! Your mother
must have been fucked by swine.

Marcellus signals to his guards. Nathaniel is about to shout again when the butt of a spear crashes into his jaw.

David leaps to attack the Roman responsible, but he's instantly struck down. A second soldier steps forward and crushes the hilt of his sword against David's skull.

Barabbas is on him like a bear enraged. He rips the sword from the Roman's hand while the soldiers descend. He swings the hilt hard, knocking out one of them.

The rest of the stonemasons launch themselves into the fray. The crowd far outnumbers the Roman contingent. They know it.

Barabbas stands over David's groggy form, battling the Romans who have no space within the surging crowd to draw spears. His fury and brute force overwhelms, knocking one soldier after another back, though not landing any killing blows.

He snatches a fallen spear from the ground and sees the damage he's caused.

There's a sudden storm of hooves behind him. He turns.

A blade is sweeping toward his face.

He flies back to avoid losing his head, stumbles over David.

The helmeted horseman jumps to the ground, landing like a cat, and launches himself at Barabbas.

Barabbas flings the spear up to block but it's hacked in half. He swings his own sword but is no match for the Roman horseman, who sidesteps and kicks him off balance.

The Roman stomps Barabbas' sword to the ground. He sets the tip of his own blade against Barabbas' wrist, pinning him.

Barabbas stares up.

This is GAIUS VINICIUS SCARO (34), a Roman centurion. All cool efficiency, tall, with lean muscles and fierce blue eyes now burning through Barabbas.

SCARO

What a foolish idea.

The melee stilled, soldiers descend on Barabbas and yank him to his feet.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Who started this?

FOOTSOLDIER

Centurion Scaro, it was one of the masons.

SCARO

Which one?

The footsoldier pulls a bloodied Nathaniel to his feet. Scaro's stare is piercing.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Fetch beams and nails. And bring those three.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Soldiers shove Barabbas and David down into the dust. Their hands are bound, their faces bloody.

Scaro stands beside his horse, watching his men construct a giant wooden cross on the ground. They tie long ropes to each of the arms.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Ready, Centurion.

SCARO

Crucify him.

Nathaniel, kneeling and caked in blood, groans a deep agony.

BARABBAS

No!

Barabbas and David wrestle in vain against their restraints as the soldiers haul Nathaniel to the cross.

He writhes, howling as they spread his arms wide on the beam and tie him to it. One soldier holds an iron spike against Nathaniel's forearm.

Barabbas roars, straining to get to his friend. The strike of hammer on spike is drowned by Nathaniel's screams.

DAVID

Nathaniel!

David wrenches against his bindings until his wrists bleed.

Scaro steps in front of them and removes his helmet. Stares down at Barabbas.

SCARO

Remember this.

With a powerful backhand, he cracks the helmet across Barabbas' jaw, knocking him unconscious.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Barabbas cracks open his eyes. Blood mats his hair and patches his face. He's propped against a post, and realizes his wrists are tied to David's.

The Romans are nowhere to be seen. Fearing the worst, Barabbas looks up.

Nathaniel hangs above them, stripped naked, nailed to the cross.

Barabbas presses his eyes shut.

A wagon pulls up and stops on the road, but Barabbas doesn't care to open his eyes.

LEVI (29) and two other men leave the wagon, crouch by the brothers, and cut their bindings.

INT. LEVI'S HOUSE - EVENING

Barabbas, lying on a bedroll, grimaces. Taya, bent over him, gently cleans his wounds of dust and blood.

Their gazes catch, drift, and touch again.

Behind them, Levi helps prop up a flinching David in order to serve him some drinking water.

LEVI

I'm sorry about Nathaniel. I grieve for your friend.

DAVID

It was my fault...

Barabbas lurches to posture up.

BARABBAS

It was not your fault! It was the centurion who put him to the cross.

TAYA

You rushed to help your friend. He would have done the same for you.

David shakes his head, miserable.

Taya turns her attention back to Barabbas. She clasps the back of his neck to bring his head closer, pressing a wet cloth to his temple. It's daringly intimate.

Their eyes meet each others' with dangerous intensity.

The front door swings open. Filling the frame against the darkness is Melech.

MELECH

Thanks be to the Lord, you men are unharmed.

BARABBAS

This looks unharmed to you?

He sits up to face the priest.

LEVI

Melech! An honor to have you in our home.

MELECH

The honor is mine to visit the home of a righteous man, Levi. You've taken in these brave resistors, and for that, our people thank you.

Taya's expression betrays wary dislike.

DAVID

Visit Nathaniel's mother, then.

MELECH

That, I shall. A grieving widow now lost a son, and he will not be forgotten. Honor him by not letting his death go in vain.

Barabbas and David regard him skeptically.

BARABBAS

Your words are always sweet with ambitions, aren't they?

MELECH

Nathaniel stood against tyrants and was murdered, while Roman soldiers plundered the house of the Lord.

DAVID

We know. We were there.

MELECH

This desecration cannot go unpunished!

BARABBAS

Then God will punish it.

MELECH

The Lord directs his people. Today
I saw the power of one man leading
those people...a force of
righteousness.

Barabbas gets to his feet, flinching. Taya stands beside him.

BARABBAS

Flattering words, priest, but I'm
not the Messiah.

MELECH

For years, we've watched our
enemies bathe this land in blood
and darkness. They put our honor to
the sword, our people to the
cross...stealing from us in all
their lavish arrogance. Do we not
deserve freedom? Do we not desire
that our sons grow up as free men?

BARABBAS

(scowling)

We're stonemasons, not soldiers.

MELECH

You have the strength of five men,
and the respect of our city. Can
you return to your work tomorrow,
knowing that you build for the
Romans who murdered your friend,
who will pay you with money they
stole from the Lord?

This stings Barabbas to anger, but he cannot refute it.

BARABBAS

You want an uprising? You need a
general - a soldier at the least!

A beat.

DAVID

Melech is right about this...you
know men would follow you.

LEVI

(to Barabbas)

They would.

TAYA
(to Melech)
How can you ask him to take up this
mantle? Why do you not lead?

Melech regards her impudence with distaste.

MELECH
My gift is a tongue that honors the
Lord, reminding people of His
commands. I cannot fight the way
Barabbas did today.

BARABBAS
I will not bring more death to our
people.

MELECH
(nods)
I'll take my leave as you rest and
heal. Good night.

He turns and disappears into the night.

Barabbas turns back to his wounds. A fire gleams in David's
eyes.

DAVID
You know this is not over.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY - ISRAEL

A somber heaviness hangs over the site. The stonemasons are
quiet, diligently going about their work.

Barabbas works on the scaffolding of the arch, chipping away
at the mortar.

David cuts stone a short distance from the arch. On the other
side of it, a Roman patrol mills about, on edge.

David glances up at Barabbas, catching his eye quickly. A few
other stonemasons exchange uneasy glances. David sets down
his tools.

He walks a ways and bends down, collecting a handful of
stones. David steps up from alongside the work encampment. He
takes aim at the nearest Roman soldier, and hurls a rock.

It hits the dust at the soldier's feet. He glances up.
Another stone clangs off his helmet.

ROMAN SOLDIER #1

What -

The soldier catches sight of David launching another rock into the air.

ROMAN SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)

You!

The soldier has to dodge this one. He's livid.

ROMAN SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)

Get off!

David holds steady, picking up more stones to throw. The soldier grabs a compatriot and starts after him. David backs up, but keeps lobbing rocks at them, enraging the Romans.

They chase him behind a work encampment, out of sight of the rest of the patrol.

BEHIND THE WORK CAMP:

The two Roman soldiers charge into a tent, trapping David. He turns, strangely unafraid.

Zechariah (20s) and Eleazar step out into the tent behind them, and two sledgehammers crash into the soldiers' faces.

UNDER THE ARCH:

The rest of the soldiers scuff about, awaiting the return of the errant two.

They spot one of the soldiers appearing at a distance, holding his spear. He beckons for assistance, then disappears.

Two of the Romans glance at each other, then go out to help.

ON THE SCAFFOLDING:

Barabbas watches the next pair of soldiers pass under the aqueduct, heading for the work tents. He puts down the chisel and picks up the giant sledgehammer beside him.

From the work camp, three of the soldiers emerge, walking back to the aqueduct.

UNDER THE ARCH:

The rest of the patrol sees them coming. One yells to the returning trio.

ROMAN SOLDIER #2
Aren't you missing someone?

No response. They're approaching the aqueduct. The soldier who called to them feels a prick of uneasiness.

ROMAN SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
Quintus?

Only a few yards away, the middle guard of the trio pulls off his helmet. It's David.

ROMAN SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
Soldiers! Formation!

The patrol tightens in alarmed confusion, instinctively flanking front and back. Their weapons bristle with aggression, and their number overwhelms the three stonemasons wearing Roman armor.

The patrol is directly below the arch.

ON THE SCAFFOLDING:

Barabbas hefts the sledgehammer. With every fiber of his might, he brings it crashing down on the stone in the center.

UNDER THE ARCH:

The Romans look up. David, Eleazar and Zechariah in uniform hurl their spears at the distracted patrol.

ON THE SCAFFOLDING:

One more barbaric strike from Barabbas. The keystone drops out. The giant arch collapses.

Barabbas leaps to the next scaffolding tower as the structure he was standing on crashes down.

UNDER THE ARCH:

David and the masons jump away in time to avoid the collapse of the giant stones.

The screams of the soldiers below gargle out. Dust plumes the air. Blood webs the dirt. Silence.

Barabbas jumps down to join the others. The stonemasons gather to survey the damage.

One of the soldiers, a mangled leg bristling bone and blood, is dragging himself away from his crushed compatriots.

Barabbas snatches a spear from beside the rubble. He stands over the struggling Roman. He listens to the man's gasps of pain, and hesitates.

DAVID

Finish him!

Barabbas takes a breath...and plunges the spear through the soldier's back.

A wail of pain dies in the Roman's throat. Barabbas stares down at him for a moment.

Something catches his eye.

On the other side of the rubble, a Roman soldier sits astride a horse, stunned. He locks eyes with Barabbas.

The soldier snaps first, wheeling his mount around.

Barabbas wrenches the spear out and leaps forward. The soldier kicks his horse into a frantic gallop.

Barabbas scrambles up the huge stone pile and launches the spear. It falls wide. The horse and rider disappear in a cloud of dust.

The masons stare after him.

BARABBAS

We're finished. It's not an accident anymore.

Grim silence. Barabbas turns back to the stonemasons. David is ashen-faced.

DAVID

They'll crucify us.

BARABBAS

(to all)

If you return home to say goodbye, they'll find you. They'll find your families. Run...live another day.

The stonemasons shift, shocked, uneasy. Barabbas jumps down from the rubble.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

David and I go to the mountains.
Any man who comes with us - choose now.

He doesn't wait for a response. Barabbas strides to the work encampment, David following close.

DAVID

To the mountains? Just leave our
Mother?

BARABBAS

We can do nothing for her if we're
nailed to a cross. We go or we die.

EXT. CITY GATES - AFTERNOON

Dozens of Israelites mill about in groups. RACHEL stands with a handful of women, shawls covering their heads.

A horse barrels through the crowd, galloping with reckless speed. A dust-covered Roman soldier sits astride.

They stare after the soldier as he disappears into the city.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - AFTERNOON

Barabbas and David lead the two dozen stonemasons. Carrying sacks, wineskins, and tools, they climb. The valley stretches in the distance, the aqueduct only a sliver behind them. The city is faint on the horizon.

EXT. CITY GATES - AFTERNOON

From within the city, a YOUNG MAN sprints toward Rachel and her companions. He slows, catching his breath as he reaches the bewildered women.

He looks at Rachel, and words tumble from his mouth.

The women listen, stunned. Rachel goes weak, her face falling with a mother's dread.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - CAMPFIRE - EVENING

The fire crackles brightly. Barabbas sits with David and Eleazar. The rest of the stonemasons, including James and Zechariah, pass around a wineskin.

JAMES

There's a spring nearby. We'll have
water.

ELEAZAR

At best, we have enough food for two days. We'll need to hunt.

DAVID

Does any man have weapons?

Murmurs and headshakes. Barabbas glances at David.

BARABBAS

We made ourselves enemies today. Enemies of the Roman Empire are enemies until death.

He lets it sink in.

DAVID

So we hide in the mountains until we die?

ELEAZAR

We could leave Israel.

JAMES

Never see our families again?

BARABBAS

We all leave something behind. But if we are enemies of Rome, let us fight against Rome.

There's a stirring. Nerves, excitement, potential.

ZECHARIAH

You think we'd fare better than Spartacus and his armies? We're trained for tools, not weapons.

BARABBAS

You're right. We aren't soldiers, or gladiators. We don't march on the heart of Rome. We protect *our* land, *our* people. We strike and melt away. Never in the same place twice. Never an army to meet on the battlefield.

He stares into the flames, realizing his own words.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Assassins.

He stands.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

This is for every man to decide for himself. Decide tonight. If you want no part of this, leave in the morning.

Barabbas retires into the darkness.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Zechariah and another stonemason struggle to stay awake by the meager fire. The rest of the camp sleeps in darkness, some in caves.

A black figure slips through the sparse trees, unseen. Closing in on the tired sentries.

Zechariah jumps up, scrubbing at his face.

ZECHARIAH

Too much wine.
(kicking sentry's feet)
Stay awake.

He steps off behind a ridge. The other sentry waits. Yawns.

He never sees the python-like arms that emerge from the darkness behind him. They squeeze his neck until his frantic, soundless spasms go slack. Then gently lay him down.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas sleeps on the ground, using a cloth sack for a pillow.

The tip of a knife presses against his throat.

Barabbas' eyes snap open. The dark silhouette of Ammon the Egyptian leans over him.

AMMON

You know nothing of assassins.

His low voice wakes David, lying a few feet off. He sees the figure crouched over his brother, and jumps.

Before he can reach Barabbas, Ammon pulls a sword and sets it to David's chest, stopping him in his tracks.

BARABBAS

David! Don't.

David stays still.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
 (to Ammon)
 Use that blade or remove it.

Ammon doesn't move for a moment. Then he stands up, taking the knife from Barabbas' throat. He lowers the sword from David's chest. Barabbas gets to his feet.

AMMON
 Your guards are shit.

BARABBAS
 Thank you. Why do you care?

AMMON
 We have something in common. We
 kill Romans.

BARABBAS
 You followed us?

AMMON
 From the aqueduct. From the day you
 fought at the temple. If I had been
 a Roman, you would all be dead.

Barabbas shifts in irritation, knowing it to be true. Ammon sheathes his blades.

AMMON (CONT'D)
 I'm an Egyptian. We have as much
 reason to hate the Romans as you.

DAVID
 So what in hell are you doing here?

AMMON
 Taking an opportunity. You are no
 soldiers, no assassins. Yet...

A knowing smile touches his lips.

EXT. BARABBAS HOME - DAY

A group of neighbors is gathered outside. Levi and Taya stand with Rachel. IDAN (50s), wearing the ornate robes of Chief Priest, argues with Melech.

IDAN
 Retribution will come at God's
 hand!

MELECH

Has it not already? When does it
end?

IDAN

If you incited those men to
bloodshed, Melech-

MELECH

Men make their own choices, Idan.
They made theirs. Now what is ours?
To abandon them in fear?

IDAN

We await the Messiah and the
deliverance he will surely bring.

MELECH

And some of us pave the way for the
Messiah by fighting for his
arrival.

An anguished Rachel interjects.

RACHEL

My sons have no war to fight. We're
pious people. They saw their friend
crucified. Fool-headed young men
wanted revenge.

MELECH

They took a path, Rachel. They're
not so young, and not so foolish.

The heavy ring of hooves grabs their attention.

A dozen Romans pull up their horses and dismount. Scaro
leads. He walks straight to them, cool and calm.

SCARO

Where are the parents of Joshua and
David Barabbas?

Dread fills the gathered. No one speaks.

Rachel steps forward.

RACHEL

I am their mother. Widowed.

SCARO

What is your name?

RACHEL

Rachel.

SCARO

(loudly, to the crowd)
I am Gaius Vinicius Scaro, and I am
here at the bidding of Rome.

Rachel grips her shawl tighter in fear.

SCARO (CONT'D)

(to Rachel)
Where are your sons?

RACHEL

I do not know.

Scaro stares at her.

SCARO

Unfortunate for you.

He back-hands her hard across the face.

Rachel cries out as the force splits her cheek with a rivulet of blood. He hits her again.

The crowd surges in outrage. The soldiers step into formation to keep them at bay.

Scaro draws his sword, stalking, staring down the enraged Israelites as Rachel trembles with dread, holding her cheek.

The Romans have to flank them to keep the Israelites from getting to Rachel. Levi holds Taya back. The men are shouting.

Scaro steps behind Rachel. With the tip of his sword, he pulls the shawl from her head. It lands in the dirt. He stares at the back of her head.

Shoves her to her knees.

Bending down, Scaro laces his fingers through Rachel's long hair, and yanks it upward. Exposing her neck. She struggles against tears of humiliated pain.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Your sons have brought this upon
you. Upon all of Israel.

Keeping her hair taut, Scaro slices his blade across it, close to the scalp. The force jerks her head back.

Scaro hurls the severed locks away. He shoves Rachel into the dust and stands over her, domineering. He stares at the horrified crowd.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Should you choose to aide those murderers, you will find nothing but humiliation and death. There will be no hope for you.

He sheathes his sword, steps away, and swings up onto his horse. His soldiers follow. They ride off, leaving Rachel in the dust, and the Israelites shaking.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The men are all gathered around Ammon, who spreads a parcel on the ground. He unrolls it with the stick he carries to reveal a dozen swords and half a dozen knives.

AMMON

These must be earned. You are all children. Children use sticks.

The men grumble. Ammon silences them in a flash, leaping to his feet and thrusting his own stick against Eleazar's stomach. Eleazar stumbles backward.

AMMON (CONT'D)

Children.

INT. BARABBAS HOME - DAY

Rachel, hair chopped ragged, sits in her kitchen, holding a cloth to her cheek. Taya pushes a plate of bread and dates toward her. She shakes her head.

TAYA

(gently)

We didn't know what they were going to do.

RACHEL

Perhaps we could have all seen it coming.

TAYA

I'm sure they're safe, wherever they've gone. They know our lands.

Rachel considers in silence.

RACHEL
I know where they've gone.

MELECH (O.S.)
Your sons?

The two women startle. Melech stands proudly in the entryway.

MELECH (CONT'D)
Pardon my unexpected arrival. I
only wished to see how you are,
Rachel.

This rubs Taya the wrong way. Rachel nods politely.

MELECH (CONT'D)
You were saying you know your sons
are safe? That you're sure of their
location?

RACHEL
As sure as a mother can be. They
would go to the mountains...where
their father took them when they
were boys. To the altar caves.

MELECH
Are they well hidden?

RACHEL
(nodding)
It's difficult to reach.
(full mothering mode)
They'll need food! And warm
clothing for the nights. I'll take
them supplies.

MELECH
The Romans will be watching you.

Taya puts an arm about Rachel's shoulders.

TAYA
I'll ask Levi. I know he'd help
them.

MELECH
He would, indeed. A good man. I'll
go myself to speak with him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

David and Zechariah spar with sticks. Ammon and Barabbas spar beside them. David beats his partner. Barabbas is soundly beaten by Ammon.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

James crafts a bow. Another stonemason, Matthew, hammers away at arrowheads.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

David notches a bow and pulls it taut. The string snaps in his face. He howls, holding his face and stomping in pain. Barabbas and Eleazar burst out laughing. He hurls the bow at them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Ammon uses Eleazar to demonstrate vulnerable points on the neck and body to the rest of the stonemasons.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The stonemasons throw spears for distance, competing.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The stonemasons sit around the fire, roasting sections of meat, in good spirits.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Ammon hands the first blade of the parcel to Barabbas, who hefts the weight of it comfortably.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Ammon treads the mountainside, wary, searching. He stops to listen. David leaps out from the thick brush beside Ammon, slashing down at his prey.

The Egyptian barely dodges it, but counters with ease. While he fends off David, Barabbas appears as if from nowhere, his sword pressing against Ammon's neck.

Barabbas grins. Ammon frowns.

BARABBAS
I learn fast.

He withdraws his blade.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
(to Ammon)
Where did you learn to use your
blades?

AMMON
An old man in the pharaoh's guard.

DAVID
(impressed)
You were the pharaoh's bodyguard?

AMMON
My father. Until Caesar came.

A beat.

DAVID
Do you really worship cats?

AMMON
Cats believe they are gods. Perhaps
they know something you do not?

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Barabbas, David, and James sit with Ammon around the fire.

DAVID
How many soldiers at the outpost to
the north?

JAMES
At least two thousand, but a patrol
moves through the valley each
month. Not more than a hundred.

BARABBAS
We need their weapons. We start
small...take out a minor patrol.
Work our way through their ranks.

A shout in the distance snaps their heads up.

Zechariah rushes into the firelight as they leap to their
feet.

ZECHARIAH
A caravan comes this way!

BARABBAS
Shepherds?

ZECHARIAH
Five men. No sheep. Coming slowly,
but coming straight for us.

David drops down to bank the fire. Darkness overtakes them.
Barabbas and Ammon move like shadows following Zechariah.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Five figures trudge the mountainside, lugging heavy packs.
Barabbas' voice booms out of the darkness from higher ground.

BARABBAS
Stop there!

They stop, scanning the barely moonlit woods before them. It
is Levi who leads the pack.

LEVI
Barabbas?

No answer.

LEVI (CONT'D)
It's Levi...I bring supplies.

BARABBAS
How did you find us?

LEVI
Your mother directed us.

Barabbas steps out in front of him, an imposing silhouette.

BARABBAS
How is my mother?

LEVI
(hesitating)
She is well.

BARABBAS
Welcome to the mountain of the
rebels.

INT. TEMPLE - NIGHT

Melech, Idan, and a dozen other PRIESTS and PHARISEES are gathered in serious council.

One of the ELDER Pharisees stands in the middle.

ELDER

We cannot consort with radicals.

Murmurs of agreement.

ELDER (CONT'D)

The stonemasons have all but declared open war on the Romans, and punishment will be severe. We can't endanger our people by supporting them. I vote no to sending supplies.

The elder sits down, triumphant.

Melech stands, barely containing his passion.

MELECH

Don't you see how the Romans have taken our pride from us? That we would rather let our sons be nailed to crosses on every road in Israel, than speak against the tyrants who crush us underfoot? Is it not written in the Laws of Moses, 'show no pity: life for life, eye for eye'?

Ripples of accordance.

MELECH (CONT'D)

It is time to show no pity...no mercy for our enemies. Those men had the courage to strike, to declare death for the Romans...to free Israel by any means necessary. Their blood has watered our lands...we owe them our help.

He sits to a smattering of applause. Idan stands, and a hush falls over the assembly.

IDAN

This was no declaration of war. This was a foolish act of angry young men. To aid them would place our people in grave danger.

(MORE)

IDAN (CONT'D)

We must not subject ourselves to that. We pray and we keep ourselves in wisdom. 'Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.' We follow the commands of our Lord.

Idan's authoritative firmness and calm win the room.

The elder rises again.

ELDER

Now we cast a vote. To supply the rebel masons...

Only four men aside from Melech raise their hands.

IDAN

Then we speak of this no more. The Lord be with you in peace.

Melech seethes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

Levi and two of his COMPANIONS pick up their satchels, readying to leave. Barabbas and David stand with them.

LEVI

Jairus and Timothy stay with you.

BARABBAS

Many thanks.

LEVI

Word of this spreads. You won't have trouble adding to your number.

DAVID

We need them. Send any man who wishes to fight.

BARABBAS

As long as no one is followed. Our power here is stealth...oh, and Levi...look after our mother.

LEVI

I will.

He turns with his companions and descends down the mountain.

BARABBAS
(to David)
God favors us, brother.

DAVID
Maybe he feels bad for making you
such an ugly bastard.

Barabbas tackles him into a headlock.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

Barabbas and Ammon crouch on a ledge, concealed behind some brush. A Roman patrol marches below them. Ammon holds a bow, Barabbas a sword.

AMMON
You are ready.

Barabbas catches a glimpse of David and Eleazar on the other side of the pass, waiting.

BARABBAS
Now.

In a flash, Ammon notches his bow and fires. A soldier gurgles and collapses. A wave of arrows rains down from both sides of the pass.

Shouts. The patrol scrambles their shields into formation.

Barabbas stands, gesturing to the men on the opposite side.

An ominous rumbling gives way to two massive boulders rolling downward from either side of the pass. The giant stones smash into the patrol's phalanx, crushing the soldiers below.

Chaos.

Barabbas leads the charge. The rest of the stonemasons pour down on the patrol. Slashing, spearing, hacking. Barabbas fights like a barbarian, fearsome and brutal. Ammon slices through soldiers with precision. David is quick and athletic.

Stunned and wounded, the Romans do not last long. As the melee dies down, Barabbas looks quickly for his brother. David is unharmed.

Barabbas stands over the wreckage, spattered with blood. Elated.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
God smiles on us today!

He raises his sword. The stonemasons roar in triumph.

DAVID
Strip the armor, take the weapons,
bury the bodies!

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - ARMORY - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

Eleazar presents the collected inventory to Barabbas like a proud father. Dozens of spears, darts, javelins, swords and bows. Helmets, greaves, chainmail tunics, and belts.

ELEAZAR
We can outfit two dozen.

BARABBAS
Good work, Eleazar.

From the center of camp, Zechariah yells.

ZECHARIAH
Barabbas! More recruits!

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas strides across camp with Zechariah.

ZECHARIAH
How many this time?

ZECHARIAH (CONT'D)
Fourteen.

BARABBAS
Have Ammon test them.

ZECHARIAH
Barabbas...I want to go back.

Barabbas stops to stare at him.

ZECHARIAH (CONT'D)
Only for a few days. I want to see
my family, my wife.

BARABBAS
You don't think we all have loved
ones? Out of the question,
Zechariah. You would endanger every
man here.

Zechariah fumes behind Barabbas, but follows.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - TRAINING GROUND - DAY

Ammon spars with a fresh RECRUIT while instructing the rest of the onlookers.

AMMON

Keep your balance! Or I use it to
kill you.

Barabbas watches from a short distance. David steps up next to him, sipping from a wineskin. He passes it to his brother, who takes it and drinks.

BARABBAS

These are not enough. Winter comes,
and we need more men.

DAVID

These are greener than shit from a
donkey's ass.

One of the recruits, LUKE, catches sight of the brothers.

LUKE

Are you Joshua Barabbas?

BARABBAS

I am. This is my brother, David.

LUKE

Proud to join you.

Barabbas nods.

LUKE (CONT'D)

We thought it was you who stormed
the temple market last Sabbath.

Barabbas and David exchange glances.

BARABBAS

Not us. We attack Romans, not Jews.

LUKE

I thought his name was...Joshua?
Jesus? He threw the tables over.

DAVID

Money-changers' tables? Can't
imagine why...maybe he didn't like
being cheated?

LUKE

He was shouting about the temple
being his father's house...

This intrigues David. Barabbas shrugs.

BARABBAS

Orphans these days...can't be any
crazier than John the Baptist.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A ROMAN PATROL marches in formation. Thick wool and heavy armor protect against the cold. Two OFFICERS on horseback lead the procession. One FOOTSOLDIER carries a standard high.

They approach a Roman encampment by the roadside. Those soldiers mill about, relaxed, some warming themselves by the fires.

One of the men standing guard turns back to shout into camp.

ROMAN GUARD

Patrol arriving!

EXT. ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

From a grand tent that looks poorly constructed, the helmeted COMMANDER steps out to meet the patrol.

The two mounted OFFICERS ride into camp, toward the tent.

The LEAD SCOUT dismounts -

LEAD SCOUT

I didn't know we had an outpost
here.

- he glances at the commander's sloppy tent.

COMMANDER

You don't.

He draws his sword and plunges it into the belly of the lead scout. The commander is BARABBAS.

The camp explodes with slaughter. The REBELS in Roman disguise seize, spear, and stab as they flank the patrol.

David, atop a horse, slashes down at unwitting soldiers. Barabbas rampages like a deadly beast, blades in both hands.

A half-armored YOUNG SOLDIER stumbles before him, losing grip on his sword. Barabbas looms over him. The young Roman stares up in horror.

YOUNG SOLDIER
Please. Mercy.

Barabbas hesitates for a moment, then slashes his throat.

The fight rages. Until the gargled cries of the dying are the last sounds. Barabbas stands by the center bonfire, removes his helmet. He surveys the efficient massacre.

BARABBAS
(yelling)
And so let it be for any man who
would stand on the throat of
Israel!

The war cries of the men echo into the distance.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

On the crest above the river, a bored mule stands hitched to a packed wagon. Taya sits aboard, looking over a crude map drawn on parchment.

In the stream below, Benjamin scrubs water onto his face.

BENJAMIN
So cold!

TAYA
Benjamin, we're on a mission of
great risk. What's a bit of cold
water?

BENJAMIN
All the Romans will be searching
for the rebels. Why would they be
on the roads?

The sound of boots, hooves, and the clinking of armor snatches their attention. Taya whips around to see a Roman patrol approaching.

Fear grips them. Taya shoves the map behind her seat, stuffing it behind a canvas cover. Benjamin scrambles up the embankment as the patrol surrounds them.

Scaro steps his horse forward.

SCARO

Good day.

TAYA

Good day.

SCARO

(looking over the wagon)
Have you passed anyone else on the
road?

BENJAMIN

A few other travelers, some
merchants. Not many others.

Beat.

SCARO

(to Taya)
Have I seen you before?

Taya squints up at him.

TAYA

Perhaps?

Scaro regards Taya and Benjamin with a hard gaze. He
dismounts and approaches the wagon.

SCARO

You are not her husband.

BENJAMIN

(nervous)
No, I'm her brother.

SCARO

Why is it you travel with so much?

Scaro pulls back the covering and jabs at the cargo. The map
protrudes only a few feet away.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Enough here for...an army.

TAYA

We travel to our aunt and uncle in
Nazareth. They're quite sick, so we
take all the generosity we could
fit into a single wagon.

He scans the contents, his eyes just missing the parchment
map. Taya steels her nerves.

When his penetrating gaze reaches her, she doesn't flinch. But her heart is beating in her throat.

SCARO

You're far from Nazareth. Where will you stay the night?

TAYA

There's an inn halfway where we've spent the night before.

Scaro turns his attention to Benjamin. Looks him up and down. The boy holds his head high.

SCARO

Do not stray from the road.

Benjamin nods furiously. Scaro throws a leery glance at Taya, then turns to mount his horse. Taya returns his stare with unabashed innocence.

Scaro kicks his horse forward, leading his men away. Taya and Benjamin breathe in relief.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - FOREST - DAY

David and Eleazar trek through the woods, carrying a small deer between them. They spot a lone wagon approaching their direction. David motions for stealth.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

David steps out a dozen paces in front of the wagon, spooking the mule.

Benjamin pulls the wagon to a startled halt.

DAVID

You seem to be lost.

Taya stares at the hardened, bearded man at a distance.

TAYA

David?

DAVID

(shocked)

Taya.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Barabbas, Ammon, and James huddle over a makeshift diorama, pointing and gesturing as they move pieces about.

They look up when they hear shouts of excitement over the arrival of the supplies wagon.

BARABBAS

About time!

Barabbas walks up behind the wagon.

David jumps down from the back. By his expression, he clearly has something to tell Barabbas.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

What is it?

DAVID

Levi couldn't come.

Taya steps down from the front, looks back at the brothers. Barabbas stares at her, stunned.

TAYA

Hello, Joshua.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Across the camp, a dozen fires burn against the night. Roasting spits gleam with meats of all sizes. Men lean in for warmth.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - NIGHT

Barabbas, Taya, David, Ammon, James, Eleazar, Zechariah and Benjamin eat and talk by the firelight.

Ammon turns and spits out the seed of a pomegranate. Suddenly remembering the company, he looks at Taya, sheepishly wiping his chin.

AMMON

I'm sorry.

Taya gives him a disapproving look. She takes a bite out of her own pomegranate, swishes it in her mouth, and spits a seed quite farther than Ammon did.

The men laugh in shock. Taya grins. She and Barabbas steal a glance.

TAYA

Skill.

DAVID

Oh no, she didn't! If our father taught us one thing, it's how to properly spit...

David reaches forward, jokingly trying to grab the pomegranate from her. Taya keeps it out of reach, laughing. David relents, sitting back down with an impressed grin.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Anyone spoken to the new man, Jedidiah?

Heads shake.

DAVID (CONT'D)

He's telling stories of a traveling teacher who does miracles. The same man who sacked the moneylenders at the temple.

TAYA

I've heard of him.

BARABBAS

Don't we share a name? Joshua? Yeshua? Jesus?

DAVID

He teaches things I've never heard before...he says the meek are blessed, and that the earth is theirs to inherit.

James snorts in derision.

DAVID (CONT'D)

He said it, not me. He said to turn your cheek to your enemy...love them and pray for them. To go two miles with someone if they ask you to go one...

BARABBAS

So, enslave yourself to anyone who simply asks? Someone should tell the Romans how much easier it would be...

The others chuckle. David squirms.

DAVID
Wild, I know.

BARABBAS
He seems mad. Keep your distance.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - BARABBAS' CAVE - NIGHT

Barabbas steps through the door flap that shields the cave, holding it open for Taya to follow.

BARABBAS
This is yours as long as you're here. I'll share with David.

Taya looks over the well-furnished area.

TAYA
These are Roman furnishings?

Barabbas shifts, aware of the closeness.

BARABBAS
They were. You have water and a washbasin there. A wineskin and some fruit in case you're hungry.

TAYA
Thank you.

Her eyes melt him.

BARABBAS
You're welcome.

Without breaking her gaze, she slips her shawl down to uncover her hair. A faint smile.

TAYA
Goodnight.

Rattled, he moves abruptly to leave.

BARABBAS
Goodnight.

He disappears out the door flap. Taya replays it all in her head with excitement and self-reproach.

EXT. LEVI'S WORKSHOP - EVENING

A dozen tradesmen unload goods at Levi's door. Barrels, baskets, satchels, wineskins, and jars.

Levi directs the men where to place it all. Melech stands apart, supervising.

MELECH

Levi, your brother-in-law Benjamin has the nails?

LEVI

Two hundred. Plenty.

Levi moves alongside him, looks at the collection.

LEVI (CONT'D)

You can't take this much in one trip, not without suspicion. The Romans are making it harder...I wish I hadn't agreed to let Taya go. Benjamin is not escort enough.

MELECH

Have faith she's alive...or the Romans would have paraded her body back to the city for show.

A voice from behind startles him.

IDAN

So, it is true.

Melech spins around. The others come to attention. Idan, his fury chilling, stands with three Pharisees.

IDAN (CONT'D)

You have defied the decision of the council. You have disobeyed the strict order to withhold support for the rebels.

The men gathered exchanged bewildered glances.

MELECH

Idan, I -

IDAN

Enough! You are a thorn in our side. A young fool whose pride comes before his obedience.

Melech's humiliation builds and burns.

IDAN (CONT'D)
 (to all)
 What has he told you all? That the
 council approved of this?

The tradesmen seem bewildered, but some of them nod. Idan
 levels Melech with a blistering glare.

IDAN (CONT'D)
 He's lied for his own violent ends.

MELECH
 You would turn your backs on men
 who fight for us!

IDAN
 (to all)
 I'm sorry that you have been
 deceived. The council has condemned
 this action. Go your own ways now,
 in peace and with honor.

All but two of the men, and Levi, skulk off into the dark.
 Melech strains to contain his rage. Idan dismisses him with a
 glance.

IDAN (CONT'D)
 Pitiful.

He and the Pharisees disappear into the night.

MELECH
 (to Levi)
 If they won't support the
 rebellion, I'll find help
 elsewhere.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY

David dresses a deer carcass while Benjamin looks on. They
 see Barabbas and Taya returning from a walk, with eyes only
 for each other.

BENJAMIN
 They've always looked like that
 together, haven't they?

David glances at their siblings, apprehensive.

DAVID
 My brother was not wealthy enough
 for your father's consent.
 (a beat)
 (MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
 But you couldn't ask for a finer
 man than Levi.

As Barabbas and Taya approach, the sounds of hooves snap them to attention.

Two SCOUTS, on horseback canter up and pull to a halt. One of them is James.

JAMES
 Barabbas! Romans, not a mile from
 here.

BARABBAS
 How many?

JAMES
 Three hundred, coming up the east
 road.

DAVID
 (to Barabbas)
 Do we have the numbers to attack?

James clearly has something to add. Barabbas notices.

BARABBAS
 What is it?

JAMES
 The centurion who killed
 Nathaniel...he leads them.

Barabbas' eyes light with ferocity...Taya's with fear.

BARABBAS
 You're sure?

James nods.

BENJAMIN
 What he did to your mother -

TAYA
 Benjamin!

Too late. Barabbas and David are stricken with alarm.

BARABBAS
 What? What about our mother?

Benjamin hesitates. Taya knows it is lost. Barabbas grabs him by the collar with frightening brutishness.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Tell me!

TAYA

Joshua!

BARABBAS

(growling at Taya)

What do you know about this?

TAYA

The centurion named Scaro found her after you left...beat her, and chopped off her hair in front of the town.

Rage rises in Barabbas.

TAYA (CONT'D)

But she is alive!

BARABBAS

Levi knew? Why did your husband lie to me?

TAYA

Your mother made us promise not to reveal it.

She shoots Benjamin a dark look.

DAVID

How could you not tell us?

TAYA

She doesn't want vengeance!

BARABBAS

(snarling)

It isn't vengeance. It's justice.

Barabbas shoves Benjamin away.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Ready every man in camp!

Benjamin steps forward, but David stabs a finger into his chest, stopping him short.

DAVID

Men. Not boys.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas and David storm toward the caves. David peels off to his own. James comes running up after Barabbas.

JAMES

Barabbas! They are three times our number!

BARABBAS

What of it?

JAMES

We are not an army. You said we'd never meet Romans in open battle.

BARABBAS

Plans have changed.

EXT. VALLEY CREST - DAY

Barabbas, clutching a spear, sits atop a great horse. At his sides, also mounted, are David, Ammon, Eleazar, and Zechariah. Behind them are nearly a hundred men.

They survey the valley below. Three hundred Roman soldiers march toward them, a quarter of a mile away. They're led by a handful of men on horseback.

There's one mounted officer with an especially adorned plumage and armored cuirass.

DAVID

It must be him. The centurion.

BARABBAS

He's mine.

DAVID

As much mine as he is yours.

BARABBAS

I'm the elder. Birthrights.

David scowls.

AMMON

He is deadly, Barabbas. Do not forget.

BARABBAS

Now I am deadly as well.
(steeling himself)
(MORE)

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Men! Today, you do not fight for yourselves. For we are dust, and to dust we return. This day...you fight for your brothers beside you.

A shiver ripples through the men.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

You fight for your wives, who tend your homes and await your victory. You fight for your children, to never know the boot of a Roman, or a nail through their hand...that they may live as free men in a free Israel! For Israel!

ALL

For Israel!

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

The valley is still as Scaro and his men march forward. The clinking of armor fills the air. ATILIUS (40s), a battle-worn soldier, rides next to Scaro.

ATILIUS

Centurion Scaro, are you truly hoping for a sign of the rebels out here?

Scaro continues to face forward. The low roar of yelling voices hits his ears.

SCARO

Hope has nothing to do with it.

Over the valley crest rides Barabbas, David, Ammon, Eleazar, and Zechariah on horseback. Behind them charge eighty rebels on foot, armed and full of ferocity.

Scaro spins his horse to face his infantry.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Men, ready for battle! Narrow center formation!

As fluid as a running stream, the Romans slide into attack formation. Soldiers draw swords and divide down the center while a handful of spearmen and a dozen archers run to the center.

SCARO (CONT'D)

Archers, fire at will.

Barabbas and the other rebels continue their charge as the Roman archers let their arrows fly. A number of them zip by Barabbas and the other mounted rebels, ripping into the men behind them.

BARABBAS

Hold fast, men!

Barabbas and the other rebel horsemen dig their heels into their mounts, hurtling at the Roman line.

SCARO

Javelins! Release!

The line of soldiers heave their javelins at the rebels barreling towards them. Ammon raises his shield just in time to deflect one. Eleazar's horse takes a javelin to the chest and crashes to the ground.

Barabbas turns to see Eleazar stand, shaken but not injured, to rejoin the charge on foot. He turns back around and aims his horse at the Romans.

Behind the archers, Atilius sits next to Scaro and the other cavalry.

ATILIUS

Centurion, shall we advance?

SCARO

Very soon.

ATILIUS

We should -

An arrow sprouts from Atilius's neck.

Scaro whips his horse to the right to see twenty rebel archers emerging from behind trees and rocks - their arrows flying toward him.

SCARO

(to himself)

Clever.

(to his soldiers)

They flank from the right!

The Romans scramble formation to defend themselves on both fronts. Scaro draws his blade and sets upon the rebels.

It is too late. Barabbas and the other mounted rebels crash into the Romans' front line. Infantry are crushed beneath horse's hooves.

The rebel archers draw swords and rush in. The rebels on foot launch themselves into the battle.

Barabbas, David, Ammon, and Zechariah slash down from horseback. Scaro and the mounted Romans close in on them.

Rebels and soldiers bleed, slice, scream, hack, stab, and collapse. Horses crash to the ground.

Barabbas' mount takes a spear to the flank. He leaps clear as the horse shrieks and falls. Destroys the Roman spearmen responsible.

He spots Scaro on the other side of the battle, hacking down rebels from his mount.

All else falls away.

Barabbas yanks the spear from his horse's flank and takes aim at Scaro. Heaves it with all his might. It sails over the battle, impaling Scaro's horse.

The horse spasms and crashes to the ground. Scaro scrambles free, bounding to his feet in time to block Eleazar's blade. The two lock into vicious combat.

Nearby, Ammon fights two Romans at once. He dual-wields swords, his movement like a deadly dance.

Barabbas wants Scaro for himself. He rampages through Romans on his way to the centurion.

Eleazar is good, but Scaro is better. Block, parry, slash. Then Scaro beats Eleazar's block and pivots fast.

His sword slices deep into Eleazar's neck.

BARABBAS

No!

David cuts through a Roman in time to see Eleazar fall. A howling fury grips him.

Barabbas cuts down another Roman, now only paces away from Scaro.

Scaro turns. The two lock eyes.

Scaro picks up a shield from the ground. The surrounding battle seems to fade away as Barabbas lifts his sword and charges.

Scaro throws up a block, but the surprising power of Barabbas' swing knocks him backward.

Excited for the challenge, Scaro cracks a smile. He returns the attack with equal force. The two begin to spar furiously.

David downs another Roman. A stone's throw away he sees Barabbas locked in battle with Scaro. He turns in place, surveying the devastation. Nearby Zechariah is struggling against a BURLY ROMAN.

Zechariah falls to the ground. His opponent raises his sword. From behind, a blade slices forward. The soldier's head flies from his body.

David stands there, spattered in blood, a torrent of raw emotions.

Barabbas is locked in combat with Scaro. Barabbas is bigger and stronger, but the centurion quicker and more skillful. Against the cool discipline of the Roman, every strike from the Israelite is brutal rage.

Close by, Ammon is surrounded by enemies. Four Romans circle him, their spears and swords at the ready.

AMMON

Today is not that day.

The soldiers attack. It takes everything Ammon has to keep them at bay.

Barabbas' blade finds an opening, cutting Scaro's arm. The centurion twists away.

SCARO

You fight like you think you'll
actually win, stonemason.

Scaro unsheathes a dagger from his hip. With a blade in each hand now, he is profoundly dangerous.

Scaro launches at Barabbas, and his whole fighting style is transformed. He almost moves with the grace of Ammon. Barabbas and his blade are confused. He is able to block Scaro's sword but the dagger slashes too quickly.

One. Two. Three times Scaro's short blade slices into Barabbas' flesh. The wounds are deep.

A mighty blow from Scaro's sword follows quickly after his dagger. Barabbas is caught off balance. The strike collides with Barabbas' sword, sending it spinning from his grip.

Barabbas stumbles to his knees, blood streaming.

SCARO (CONT'D)

It is finished.

Scaro sheathes his dagger and with both hands raises his sword. With mighty strength he brings it down on Barabbas.

CLANG! Ammon's swords crash against Scaro's blade. The force of the collision throws Scaro sideways to the ground.

He leaps to his feet.

Barabbas, bleeding and in shock, scrambles in the dirt to reach the nearest sword.

Ammon and Scaro clash.

Deadly blades against dangerous soldier. Lethal flurries, violent gracefulness, murderous barrages of steel and sinew. They are well-matched.

As they battle each other, a Roman soldier approaches Ammon from behind.

Barabbas, wounded but alert, sees the soldier closing in on Ammon. Desperate for a weapon now, he spots a javelin a few paces away.

Ammon, his full attention on Scaro, is oblivious to the danger behind him.

The weakened Barabbas dives for the javelin.

The Roman soldier pulls his sword back for a killing blow.

With the last of his strength, Barabbas snatches the javelin, turns, and heaves it.

The javelin splits the Roman soldier through the ribs, stopping him in his tracks. The body falls.

Barabbas falls back on the battlefield, his strength spent, his world spinning. His blood soaks the dirt.

The sound of hooves thumps in his ears.

David and Zechariah ride up on horses. They jump to the ground and haul Barabbas up onto David's horse.

ZECHARIAH

David, we must retreat! We're
beaten here!

David takes but a second to survey the carnage around him.

DAVID

Fall back!

He leaps onto his horse behind a slumped-over Barabbas. Zechariah mounts his own horse.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Fall back!

Ammon hears the call to retreat. A contingent of soldiers has spotted their centurion battling with the Egyptian. They close in.

Ammon dodges a swinging blade from Scaro, then kicks out at the Roman's chest, knocking him backward. Ammon slips away from the oncoming soldiers, sprinting over to David and Zechariah.

Zechariah gives him a hand up onto his horse. This battle is over.

The rebels on foot run for the hills. The Romans are too battered to give chase.

David, Barabbas, Ammon, and Zechariah ride toward the mountains.

David stops his horse at the valley crest. He looks back to the battlefield. Blood and bodies paint the earth.

Scaro sheathes his blades. He stares up at the valley crest.

David turns his horse and rides off into the wilderness.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

Scattered throughout camp, the rebels lick their wounds.

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - BARABBAS' TENT - NIGHT

Barabbas slouches on his cot, exhausted and bloody. David pulls off his own armor.

Taya sets a bowl of steaming water down by Barabbas. She helps him unbuckle his armor.

DAVID

They were too many!

BARABBAS

They are always too many! We still fight. We have to move camp, before they regroup and return.

He winces as Taya helps him slip his armor off. She pulls a soaked rag from the hot water, wrings it, and presses it to a gash on Barabbas' shoulder.

DAVID

We'll have to send word into town.

TAYA

Send Benjamin with one of your own men. He's too young to be suspect.

BARABBAS

You must go, also...too dangerous here.

She grabs another rag to wipe blood from his arm.

TAYA

You need stitches, and your men need tending. Tell me there's someone here who can do that better than me.

Her eyes are full of purpose.

BARABBAS

You've done enough for us already.

TAYA

And I'll do more before I leave.

BARABBAS

(to David)

We move before dawn.

David nods, passes his brother on the way out of the tent. Barabbas grabs his arm.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

DAVID

Just some cuts and scrapes. Nothing like your sorry ass.

Barabbas gives him a weak shove out. Turns back to Taya. She kneels tall in front of him, wringing out a steaming rag. Her gaze on him is too intense.

BARABBAS

Thank you.

TAYA

How long can you do this?

BARABBAS

Fight for Israel? Until we're free.

TAYA

And if you had killed Scaro today,
would you really spend the rest of
your life at war?

He scowls.

BARABBAS

You look down on all of this.

TAYA

I only say this cannot last, Joshua
Barabbas. Whatever virtue drives
you...it mingles with dark things.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

Barabbas moves gingerly across camp.

The faint sound of stifled crying catches him. He peers into
the darkness to see David sitting against a tree. Barabbas
turns toward him.

David hears someone approaching and quickly swallows his
tears.

Barabbas crouches beside his brother. They share the quiet.

Barabbas puts a hand on his shoulder. David weeps bitterly.

BARABBAS

Eleazar was a good man.

He leaves his brother to grieve.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAVES ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

The camp is packed. Carts, horses, and men's backs are packed
with weapons, provisions, tents, and tools. They stream
north, leaving little trace of their encampment.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Barabbas, on horseback next to Ammon, loses himself in staring at Taya, who rides in a wagon a dozen paces ahead.

AMMON

You need a wife.

Barabbas snaps to attention.

AMMON (CONT'D)

One of your own.

BARABBAS

(dismissive)

I need another chance to put my sword through Scaro's chest.

INT. PONTIUS PILATE'S PALACE - DAY

Scaro marches into the council room, helmet tucked under one arm. He stands at attention below a large dais.

PONTIUS PILATE (40s), a well-groomed dignitary with an air of open calm, hands a scroll back to his assistant. He looks down at Scaro.

PONTIUS PILATE

So, if you are standing here alive after meeting the rebels in open battle, then they must all be dead.

SCARO

No, prefect.

PONTIUS PILATE

Difficulty is to be understood. Failure is not.

Pilate's stare burns Scaro's pride.

SCARO

Yes, prefect.

PONTIUS PILATE

Centurion Scaro, if you do not wish to be stripped of your post in disgrace and sent to an outpost in Germania, I suggest your next meeting with these rebels is their last.

Scaro bows his head.

SCARO

I understand.

PONTIUS PILATE

There is too much unrest among the Jews. Now they complain about some traveling teacher from Nazareth claiming to be God. As if I want anything to do with that.

He shakes his head, then refocuses.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

Do not let this be your downfall.
That's all.

He nods permission to leave. Scaro dips his head in respect.

SCARO

Prefect Pilate.

He turns.

PONTIUS PILATE

Oh, centurion.

Scaro stops, turns back.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

Who's their leader?

SCARO

A man named Barabbas.

PONTIUS PILATE

Keep him alive. He will see justice.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The rebels pitch their new camp. Sledges pound tent spikes into the ground. Canvases are raised for shelter. Axes split logs for wood.

On the edge of camp, David tucks a wineskin into a wagon. Benjamin clutches the reins, seated at the helm. A wiry man, TIMOTHY, sits next to him.

DAVID

Don't stop or divert for anything.
Go east before you turn south, to
throw off the trail.

Benjamin nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Timothy is armed enough to keep both of you safe from thieves, but no match against a Roman patrol. Lord be with you.

He steps back. Taya steps up, conflicted.

TAYA

Benjamin, I will be home soon. Don't worry for me.

She nods back to David, Barabbas, who watches with a commander's gaze, and Ammon, the quiet sphinx beside him.

BENJAMIN

I'll tell Levi.

He ducks down so Taya can kiss him on the cheek.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - NIGHT

A council meeting. Barabbas sits with David, Ammon, Zechariah, James, and Luke.

BARABBAS

The Romans have us bested on level ground, on foot. We lost too many men, and they're sending out more reinforcements with every month.

JAMES

We've seized enough coin to pay for mercenaries.

BARABBAS

No. No mercenaries.

LUKE

Let me go recruit in the north. There are fewer Romans up there.

ZECHARIAH

In Nazareth? If you can find anyone worthy of holding a spear in that land...

DAVID

We need men. Even Nazarenes.

ZECHARIAH

What do we promise them? A life in the mountains, against the law, forsaking all family and home? High risk of death?

BARABBAS

(sternly)

We tell them the truth. We fight for the deliverance the Lord promised to our people.

Zechariah stares down Barabbas for a second, then looks away.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

We can't stay in the mountains forever. They will have us trapped here.

JAMES

Where do we go?

BARABBAS

We take the nearest outpost.

A ripple of shock goes through the men. Ammon smiles. Barabbas picks up a stick and draws in the sand to demonstrate.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

We'll need at least a hundred more men. Then we move north to Bethsaida, take the Roman fort. That gives us control of that region. Pontius Pilate will have to send troops a greater distance even to reach us, exposing them to ambush through the badlands.

JAMES

(nodding confidently)

Let's build an army.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Ammon, eating figs, saunters up to Barabbas, who's working over some leather armor with a chunk of lard.

AMMON

Fig?

Barabbas grabs two from Ammon's outstretched hand.

AMMON (CONT'D)

Luke should return soon with new recruits.

BARABBAS

We need them yesterday.

Out of nowhere, a NAKED REBEL strolls by them. He gives a sheepish glance their way, nodding in deference.

He walks on.

Barabbas raises a brow at Ammon.

AMMON

He made a bet with James.

BARABBAS

Well, that was his first mistake.

The Egyptian eyes his friend's bandages.

AMMON

Your wounds must be cleaned. Your bandages changed.

BARABBAS

I feel strong. No disease in them.

AMMON

If you feel disease, it's too late. Change them so you do not. Your lady guest is helping the men.

Ammon points over his shoulder to where Taya is tending to a gathering of wounded men.

The sight of her still rivets Barabbas. Ammon chuckles. Barabbas looks at him, knowing he's been caught. He throws the chunk of lard at the Egyptian. Ammon snatches it out of the air and throws it back at him.

BARABBAS

I think we'd be brothers in paradise, Ammon.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Finished treating the men, Taya gathers the discarded bandages.

Barabbas appears behind her.

BARABBAS

Have time for one more?

She startles.

TAYA

I was going to find you.

Taya tosses the old wrappings in the fire.

BARABBAS

I shouldn't need these much longer.

Her hands are gentle but move with assurance. Barabbas watches her face as she unwraps him. She feels his gaze but does not waver.

TAYA

Sit. I have to clean these.

Barabbas lowers himself onto a log. Taya grabs clean rags and hot water from the pot. She sets about cleaning his wounds. Barabbas grimaces at the heat of the water.

TAYA (CONT'D)

Do you think about what you've forsaken?

BARABBAS

(quietly)

Don't you ever dream of being free?

TAYA

Of course, but if it means throwing away everything...you don't want a family?

She dares a glance at his eyes.

BARABBAS

I used to dream of a house by the sea...big enough for the children my wife and I would have...three boys, two girls. They'd play in the surf. I'd teach them to fish, too, so they could bring home dinner for their mother.

TAYA

You can fish?

BARABBAS

(offended)

Yes, I can fish!

She grins, but hurries to dress his injuries with fresh wrappings. The torture of being so close is only growing.

James trots up to the edge of the area.

JAMES

Barabbas! We have new recruits. And a familiar face...

From behind him, Melech appears. Taya and Barabbas instinctively separate.

BARABBAS

Melech!

The glance that passes between him and Taya is fleeting, but charged. Melech has the eyes of a snake, missing nothing. He sees it.

MELECH

I hope even a priest might be welcome here.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

Barabbas tours Melech through the camp.

BARABBAS

Our ranks have grown, but we need more men.

MELECH

Our own people have offered nothing, for they still fear the fist of Rome above all...but there are others willing, Barabbas. I've been speaking with the leaders of our neighboring cities. Four of them would send men, supplies, weapons to your cause if...

BARABBAS

...if?

MELECH

They need proof you can offer victory.

BARABBAS

(irritated)

What more proof could they ask for?

MELECH

Bring down Pontius Pilate.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - EVENING

Barabbas and Melech sit alone.

MELECH

He's the voice of Rome here in Israel. To silence him would send a most deafening message.

BARABBAS

It would also bring the full wrath of the Caesars down on our people.

MELECH

Their wrath is already upon us! It is now that we fight back. Cut off this serpent's head, and the body withers behind it.

Barabbas considers this for a moment.

BARABBAS

Will the four cities then support our cause?

MELECH

On my word as a man of the Lord. They've pledged it.
(conspiratorially)
But I must tell you this truth...some seek to destroy you from the inside. To report on men's families and turn you over to the Romans for a profit.

BARABBAS

(angered)
Who does these things?

MELECH

(feigning distress)
It's heavy on my heart to bring you this news, but a man of standing from our own city has set himself against you. A priest, dear to me as my own brother...

BARABBAS

Idan?

MELECH

(nods)

His proximity to your mother endangers your family. I fear it was he who reported your name to the centurion in the first place.

Incoherent rage rises in Barabbas.

MELECH (CONT'D)

He's tried to cut off the line of supplies to camp. He shows the belly of a coward for political gain.

BARABBAS

You bring me this news - why? To rouse my anger? To bring me home?

MELECH

Because you must know. You're not just fighting the Romans. You're a good man, Barabbas, but politics are deadlier than war.

Barabbas stares at him, fully comprehending.

BARABBAS

You wish me to kill Idan.

MELECH

I do not wish it! I tell you this with the heaviest of hearts.

BARABBAS

He's an Israelite.

MELECH

He's your enemy, as surely as the centurion is.

BARABBAS

(wary)

Where is your proof?

MELECH

Barabbas! He stopped me himself from bringing you further help.

BARABBAS

(shaking his head)

You speculate...dangerously. I do not raise my sword against Israelites.

(MORE)

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

I only fight my true enemy...and he wears the red of Rome.

MELECH

The snakes on your own land are deadlier than the lions in the wilderness. If you want to bring this land to deliverance, you must purge it of the threats within.

Barabbas gets to his feet, scornfully dismissive.

BARABBAS

You come here to lecture me on politics? Be careful, old man. I'm not your pawn. I will not play your games.

He turns on his heel, leaving Melech alone, cheeks flushed red with wounded pride.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

In the light of the torches, a crop of new recruits gathers with bright eyes. Barabbas stands before them.

BARABBAS

They are only Rome. We are Israel, growing stronger each day with the Lord at our backs. Welcome to the uprising. Now, break bread with us.

The reaction from the men, old and new, is heady and eager.

Barabbas steps away. David jogs after him.

DAVID

They look thrilled.

Barabbas glances back at the recruits as they line up for rations.

BARABBAS

We need at least a hundred more.

They head to the fire where Taya, Ammon, and James await.

Barabbas locks eyes with Taya at a distance. Her smile is faint, only for him.

David stops his big brother, a grave look on his face.

DAVID
 (low voice)
 Joshua, don't play this game.

BARABBAS
 What game?

DAVID
 She's another man's wife.

BARABBAS
 We've violated no commandment.

DAVID
 You play with fire. So does she.
 Don't make an adulteress out of
 her, brother. You know the
 punishment she would face.

BARABBAS
 She's under my protection.

Barabbas brushes past him.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - ARMORY - EVENING

Zechariah struggles with an armful of leather cuirasses,
 fresh from being treated with lard rubbing.

Melech steps near just as Zechariah drops one. The Pharisee
 picks it up.

ZECHARIAH
 Thanks.

MELECH
 You work tirelessly.

Zechariah dumps the cuirasses on an empty table.

ZECHARIAH
 In between fighting and...fighting.

MELECH
 How many men here wanted to be
 soldiers, or had it thrust upon
 them?

Melech admires the armory.

ZECHARIAH
 We fight because we must.

He levels a direct stare at Zechariah.

MELECH

Barabbas has started a bold rebellion, but he is naive.

Zechariah eyes him warily.

MELECH (CONT'D)

He is, uh, distracted as of late, no? Feminine company can do that to a man. Perhaps it has shown his true colors of meekness.

ZECHARIAH

Hot words, priest.

MELECH

Zechariah, Israel deserves such words. And such men as yourself, who would do whatever it takes to make a free land out of a rebel camp.

Zechariah is skeptical, though intrigued.

ZECHARIAH

(scoffing)

What would you have me do, challenge Barabbas in open combat?

MELECH

Certainly not. Yet if the moment presents itself, judge his heart. If you find it weak, you will have done your people a great service.

Zechariah thinks on this. Melech touches one of the sharpest blades in admiration.

MELECH (CONT'D)

Your reward would be great, on earth as in heaven.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Barabbas stands with Ammon, watching Melech and a COMPANION depart on pack mules.

AMMON

He's a dark soul.

BARABBAS

(troubled)

Let him pour his poisonous honey
elsewhere.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

A stone-faced Barabbas steps into a small clearing lit by torch. Strung up between two trees is a TORTURED ROMAN SOLDIER. He's sagging in exhausted agony, beaten and bloody. A nasty array of tools gleams slick in the flickering light.

Two rebels stand guard, nodding to Barabbas. Ammon wipes blood from his hands.

BARABBAS

Are you finished?

AMMON

Everyone must talk in the end.
Pontius Pilate travels the southern
road next week. Two hundred
soldiers with him. They go to
Jerusalem for the season.

BARABBAS

You're certain he tells the truth?

Ammon looks at his friend, *certain*.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Then we move next week.

The tortured soldier groans. There are tears slipping from his eyes.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Finish him.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - BARABBAS' TENT - EVENING

Barabbas strides to his tent, pulling off leather armor. He pushes back his long hair that's gotten caught in one of the buckles.

Taya, crossing through the tents with a cloth for mending, stops beside him.

TAYA

You need your hair cut.

He attempts to be cocky, but it comes off as sheepish.

BARABBAS

You don't think I can be Samson if
I keep it long?

TAYA

Samson was a fool, so let's take
care of that resemblance...

EXT. MOUNTAIN STREAM - EVENING

A torch staked into the ground glows in the dimness. Taya laughs as Barabbas soaks his entire head in the water, then throws back his wet hair and shivers.

He sits on a rock while she wields a pair of shears.

TAYA

Shall I cut it short as a Roman's?

BARABBAS

Perhaps you should. That's a ruse
that's worked before.

TAYA

Let's see if I can...

She sets to work on his hair.

BARABBAS

Why didn't you go back with Melech?

TAYA

I'd rather travel with a snake in
my sandal.

Barabbas considers. His long locks fall away as she works. In the tension of silence, he basks in her touch.

BARABBAS

Why don't you return at all?

Taya hesitates. She works her fingers across his scalp. He has to steel himself against melting.

TAYA

I should. I need to.

BARABBAS

I'm not asking you to.

She brushes his hair out with her hands, walks around to stand in front of him, checking the cut. Avoiding his eyes.

TAYA

Do you wish you had a wife to
return to?

BARABBAS

No.

Barabbas rises to his feet. A charge fills the bare space
between them.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

There's no one back there I want.

They're both painfully aware of their bodies, of their
breathing.

TAYA

Joshua, I never -

He raises a hand to stroke her neck. She struggles for words.

TAYA (CONT'D)

- never wanted to marry him.

She lifts her eyes, and something bursts inside each of them.

Barabbas scoops her up into a kiss. It's deep and desperate
and fierce. A decade of wanting.

The shears clatter to the ground. Taya clutches at Barabbas,
pulling his tunic. He grasps at her robes, seeking skin.

They stumble back toward a patch of clear ground. Barabbas
sinks to his knees and looks up at her, completely undone.
Taya cradles his face, then kneels with him.

She pulls him on top of her, kissing him with earnest need.

EXT. LEVI'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Levi instructs Benjamin at the edge of the workshop.

LEVI

Tell the baker to double the supply
from last time. We need fourteen
sacks of wheat, ready tomorrow by
sunset.

The rumble of approaching hooves draws their attention. A
patrol of Roman soldiers approaches. Scaro leads them. He
looks directly toward the workshop.

Levi kicks into emergency mode.

LEVI (CONT'D)
 Tell no one of this. Go now.
 Through the front!

Benjamin nods, frantic, and dashes off, out of sight from the soldiers closing in. Not a moment too soon.

Scaro pulls up his horse in front of Levi, who stands his ground.

SCARO
 You are Levi?

LEVI
 Yes.

Scaro dismounts.

SCARO
 You have some very large orders
 going around town.

Scaro wanders into the workshop.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 Almost as if you were trying to
 feed an army!

Levi tries to still his nerves.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 Your wife is away visiting a sick
 family member...no children. Who
 could all of that food be for?

Scaro picks up a long hammered nail from a pile on the table.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 Levi the nailmaker. You know we use
 these to nail our enemies to the
 cross?

LEVI
 Yes.

SCARO
 Just the right length to pierce a
 man's forearm. Just the right width
 to make the hardest men scream.

He hefts the nail in one hand, and pins Levi with a glare. Levi does not flinch, though his heart thuds in his stomach.

Scaro steps closer.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 Where is Barabbas?

LEVI
 I do not know.

The Roman stares at Levi in the silence.

SCARO
 Have you ever been up close at a
 crucifixion?

Scaro lifts Levi's arm out to one side and places the tip of
 the nail against his wrist.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 This is where we drive it through.
 Enough sinew and bone to hold your
 weight for days.

Scaro taps the nail a few times, then lets Levi's arm drop.
 He's sweating.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 Would you die for Barabbas? Is he
 worth your life...or your wife's?
 If you are helping the rebels, this
 is your only chance to avoid death.

Scaro rams the nail down into the wood of the table. It
 sticks upright. He strides to his horse and swings himself up
 with grace.

SCARO (CONT'D)
 One of you will hang on a cross.
 You choose.

The Romans thunder off.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - NIGHT

Bowls of food in hand, the men jostle for places around the
 campfires. Ammon and Taya sit next to James. Barabbas stands.

BARABBAS
 To our new recruits, eat and
 recover from your journey. In a
 matter of days, Pontius Pilate
 himself travels to Jerusalem...but
 he will not make it there alive.

A nervous thrill surges through the men.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
 We strike him down, and they will
 hear us roar, all the way to Rome!

A thunderous cry of furor rises up into the night. Barabbas smiles and steps away to sit with Taya.

David barrels into the flickering light.

DAVID
 (yelling)
 Good men! We have someone here
 who's come to speak to all of us.

He beckons a fresh-faced THADDEUS (19) to come forward. Thaddeus stands before them, agitated with excitement.

THADDEUS
 I've come to tell of the good news!
 God is bringing liberty to the
 captives and the oppressed -

The men are intrigued -

THADDEUS (CONT'D)
 - and sight to the blind.

- then annoyed.

THADDEUS (CONT'D)
 Blessed are those who are hungry,
 for they will be full.

Snickers.

THADDEUS (CONT'D)
 Blessed are those who are hated,
 for your reward is great in heaven.

One of the rebels laughs to his comrade.

REBEL 1
 We must be kings in heaven!

Thaddeus tries to keep composed. Barabbas listens, aloof.

THADDEUS
 It is not the sick that need
 doctors. I mean, it is not the well
 that need doctors, only the sick.
 So, it is not the righteous that I
 speak to.

David cringes on his behalf. Thaddeus scrambles.

THADDEUS (CONT'D)

The kingdom of heaven is like a pearl of great value. If a merchant is looking for pearls, if he is wise, he sees this pearl, goes and sells everything he owns, and buys the pearl.

His passion does not transmit.

SWARTHY REBEL

So, now he has one pearl and nothing else?

THADDEUS

Yes, but that pearl is everything! Worth everything! That's why it is like the kingdom of heaven.

David listens keenly.

THADDEUS (CONT'D)

And we must all be forgiving! To forgive our enemies as well as our friends.

Thin ice.

THADDEUS (CONT'D)

For we have been forgiven much by the Lord. If a money lender has two debtors, one who owes him fifty denarii and the other who owes him a hundred denarii, and he forgives both of them, who has more to be thankful for?

JAMES

That's stupid. Why would a money lender forgive his debtors?

THADDEUS

Because he was loving and they could not pay the debt.

Laughs.

JAMES

No money lender I know of.

THADDEUS

This is a money lender greater than any you have ever known!

Thaddeus' youthful fervor amuses Barabbas.

BARABBAS

Thaddeus? It seems you've had a long trip. You should eat your dinner and rest your voice.

He's stung, but the chuckles seal his fate.

THADDEUS

Thank you for letting me speak...and for being generous with your food.

Barabbas nods as he goes to eat. David, lost in thought, watches Thaddeus slip off.

Taya sneaks a glance at Barabbas. It's warm and hungry and full of delight. He catches her eyes and has to stop himself from smiling.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - NIGHT

The camp sleeps in darkness.

By the dim flicker of the last fire, David sits across from Thaddeus. He listens with rapt attention as the young man speaks with animated conviction.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Zechariah, standing sentry, watches David and Thaddeus at a distance, their voices just soft murmurs in the darkness.

He glances to the tents, to Barabbas' tent. Dim light glows from its seams.

INT. BARABBAS' TENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas, chest bare and eyes burning with want, sits back onto the bed lined with furs.

Taya stands over him. She pulls the shawl from her head. Lush hair tumbles to her shoulders.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

Urgent voices rise in the darkness. Zechariah gets to his feet, wary. He clutches the sword at his waist. The voices come closer, louder.

A trio of arguing men burst into the firelight. Two are trying to restrain one. That one is Benjamin, loud and frantic.

BENJAMIN

I need to find my sister! Where is Taya?

INT. BARABBAS' TENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Taya startles. She hears her brother calling her name outside. Barabbas looks toward the tent flap in alarm.

TAYA

(under her breath)
Benjamin.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Zechariah deals with Benjamin.

ZECHARIAH

What's wrong? What news?

BENJAMIN

Where's my sister?

Benjamin's back is to the tents. Zechariah glances toward Barabbas' dwelling.

ZECHARIAH

Don't wake up the whole camp, boy.
She's here.

Taya bursts from Barabbas' tent, fixing her robes and covering her hair.

TAYA

Benjamin!

He wheels around.

TAYA (CONT'D)

What is it?

BENJAMIN

It's Levi. The Romans know he helps the rebels.

TAYA

Is he safe?

BENJAMIN

He was when I left. They sacked his shop, but he didn't give up the camp.

Taya's guilt rises like bile.

Barabbas emerges behind them like an irate lion. Zechariah sees him, realizing all suspicions have just been confirmed.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Barabbas! The centurion found out Levi. He threatens to crucify him unless he gives you up.

Taya's eyes bore into Barabbas. He refuses to meet her gaze.

BARABBAS

If Levi is alive, the Roman has not found him out. He only suspects.

TAYA

Benjamin, rest yourself. Get water and food. We'll go in the morning. Zechariah, would you help him?

Zechariah nods, and leads Benjamin away.

Taya looks at Barabbas, and this time he meets her eyes. Dread fills them both.

INT. BARABBAS' TENT - NIGHT (LATER)

Stressed, Taya packs supplies into a satchel. Barabbas paces the far end of the tent.

TAYA

(whispers to self)
Lord, do not punish Levi for my sins.

BARABBAS

Taya, you can't leave tonight. Calm down.

TAYA

I've been here living as if he was dead!

BARABBAS

Taya!

He closes in on her, grabs her to stop the frantic packing. Now it's she who cannot look at him.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

You can't go anywhere without rest.

She sinks in his grip.

TAYA

I don't want to leave you...and for that, I know that I'm truly wretched.

She wraps her arms around his neck as though for dear life.

Barabbas clutches her tight, breathes her in.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

A small wagon has been packed with supplies. Barabbas covers a hidden cache of blades tucked behind the seat. David holds the mule. Ammon stands nearby.

Taya and Benjamin climb up into the wagon. Barabbas motions to the weapons.

BARABBAS

In case you need them. Stop for nothing. When you get back to town, speak of this to no one but Levi himself. Not even our mother.

Benjamin nods nervously. Taya is holding it together.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

(to Taya)

I pray for his safety. And yours.

Zechariah jumps up into the back of the wagon, settling down into the supplies.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

(to Zechariah)

Get them home safely.

Zechariah nods.

TAYA

(to Barabbas)

Thank you.

Benjamin spurs on the mule. The wagon rolls out of camp. Barabbas stands with David and Ammon, watching.

Taya turns her head halfway, wanting to look back, but does not.

Barabbas steels himself, turning to David and Ammon.

BARABBAS

There's much to be done. To march on Pilate, we need to be better prepared than we've ever been.

David hesitates.

DAVID

You'll have to fill my place for a short while. I'm going with Thaddeus.

BARABBAS

What?

DAVID

His teacher speaks to crowds not far from here. I'm going to hear him.

Barabbas could not be more stunned. Even Ammon's brows raise.

BARABBAS

The one who wants everyone to forgive their enemies? Are you completely mad?

DAVID

I'm going, brother.

This raises Barabbas' anger.

BARABBAS

David, we need you here now. What we're about to seize our greatest victory.

David's resolution is calm.

DAVID

You can't sway me from this. I'll return soon.

He leaves Barabbas and Ammon staring after him.

BARABBAS

(to Ammon)

Do you also leave?

AMMON
Not until you do.

Barabbas looks after David.

BARABBAS
Why do you fight, Ammon?

Beat.

AMMON
Because I hate.

A long beat.

AMMON (CONT'D)
It's the fire that warms our blood.

This strikes something deep within Barabbas. He watches his brother disappear into the camp.

EXT. LEVI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The wagon draws to a halt. Taya jumps down while Benjamin ties the mule to a post. Zechariah climbs out of the back, glancing around for signs of danger.

INT. LEVI'S HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Taya bursts through the door.

Levi, unfastening his sandals at the side of the bed, jerks his head up.

TAYA
Levi.

She melts with relief, running to his arms.

EXT. LEVI'S HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Zechariah peers into the house to glimpse their reunion.

ZECHARIAH
(to Benjamin)
Safely back to her faithful
husband. I'll be going.

BENJAMIN
Where? Surely you can't travel all
the way back to the camp tonight.

ZECHARIAH

I've got an important meeting.
Don't you worry.

He grabs the hidden blades from under the wagon seat.

ZECHARIAH (CONT'D)

Be good.

Zechariah slips off into the night.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Thousands flood the rocky hillside, all looking eagerly upward, settling in to sit.

David and Thaddeus mingle into the crowd.

DAVID

So many people!

THADDEUS

The common people love him. They
stay to hear him as long as he will
teach.

The two of them sit.

In the distance, a MAN appears at the top of the hill. The crowd goes quiet.

EXT. HILLSIDE - AFTERNOON (HOURS LATER)

The afternoon sun sits low in the sky. The Man steps back from the peak of the hill. The people shuffle and murmur amongst themselves.

DAVID

(to Thaddeus)

Is he stopping?

THADDEUS

I think we break for food. These
people seem hungry. Surely many
traveled a long way without a meal.

DAVID

I brought no food.

THADDEUS

Nor did I.

They glance around.

DAVID

It seems that no one else did,
either.

THADDEUS

(hopeful)
The day is not over...

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

Barabbas surveys the armory lineup. Blades glisten in the light of his torch.

He reaches out to touch the steel of a sword.

EXT. LEVI'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Levi labors at the anvil, pounding a slim iron rod.

Melech appears at the edge of the workshop, a grave look on his face.

MELECH

Levi.

The nailmaker looks up.

LEVI

Melech! A pleasant visit.

Melech dips his head.

MELECH

I'm afraid this is not. May we
speak inside?

Levi's confused, but lays down his tools.

They step into the workshop.

EXT. LEVI'S HOUSE - DAY

Taya carries a yoke on her shoulders bearing two pails of water.

Reaching the door, she sets down the yoke and detaches one of the pails.

She opens the door.

INT. LEVI'S HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Taya hauls the water pail inside. And stops.

Half a dozen Pharisees fill the small house. Next to a seated Levi, Melech rises to his feet.

TAYA

I didn't know we'd have guests this evening. I would have made food.

She sets down the pail and looks at Levi. His eyes are fixed on some indistinct point, and he's seething.

MELECH

We are not here as guests. We're here on behalf of the law.

It's then she spots Zechariah in the back. Horror fills the pit of her stomach.

MELECH (CONT'D)

Adulteress.

She looks to her husband, frantic.

TAYA

Levi!

MELECH

Do you deny your sin?

Taya ignores him, rushing to Levi's feet.

TAYA

Levi, please look at me.

When he does, his eyes are filled with such hatred that she recoils.

LEVI

You are no longer my wife. Your sin will be dealt with.

He stands, shrugging her off.

TAYA

Levi! Please!

Melech motions for two of the men to grab her. She struggles in vain, desperate for Levi's forgiveness.

MELECH

You have sinned greatly. You will face the testimony against you. If you are found guilty, you'll suffer the full punishment under our law. Death by stoning.

He speaks close to her face for malicious effect.

MELECH (CONT'D)

And this very day, you'll get what you deserve.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - TRAINING GROUND - MORNING

Barabbas and Ammon spar with swords. They move with ferocity and savvy, graceful anticipation and deadly intent.

When Barabbas lunges for a strike into Ammon's chest, he pulls the point just inches from contact.

Ammon freezes, caught. With a smirk, Barabbas lowers his blade.

AMMON

Do not be so arrogant. I wear no armor.

BARABBAS

(grinning)

On the day, this blade will go through armor.

A shout from the direction of camp grabs their attention.

JAMES stumbles into the training ground at full speed.

JAMES

Barabbas! Taya has been tried for adultery! Word just came from town - Melech led the charges, brought against her by her husband.

Barabbas launches his huge frame before James can even draw a breath. Ammon is close after him.

Barabbas leaps atop his horse. Ammon mounts one nearby, and they tear out of camp at a gallop.

EXT. TOWN WALLS - STONING PIT - DAY

A somber CROWD of Israelites has gathered outside the town. Levi stands near the front, miserable with fury and pain.

A pit gapes before them, nearly as deep as a man is high. Stones are piled nearby, both massive and fist-sized.

From the town gate, two MEN lead Taya. She wears nothing but a simple robe. Feet bare. Hands bound. Her eyes, red from weeping, look to the distance.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Barabbas rides his horse like a man possessed, Ammon following his lead. They blow past a caravan of travelers.

EXT. TOWN WALLS - STONING PIT - DAY

The men pull Taya to face the crowd. Shock, revulsion, anger, and grief ripple through the Israelites. Levi can't bear to look at his wife.

Melech steps forward.

MELECH

This woman has been found guilty of
adultery! We gather here to do
God's will. He is just.

Tears roll down Taya's cheeks. She lifts her gaze to the mountains.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Barabbas and Ammon race against the sun -

EXT. TOWN WALLS - STONING PIT - DAY

Taya is shoved down into the pit, lands hard against the dirt. Choking back sobs. She clammers to her knees.

The crowd gathers at the edge of the pit above her.

She looks up with a tear-streaked face...and stands...

A stone flies. Cracks against her temple.

EXT. TOWN WALLS - DAY

Barabbas and Ammon pull up to the deserted outskirts in a cloud of dust, their mounts frothing at the mouth.

Barabbas sees something. Slows his horse. As they approach, dread creeps through him.

The stoning pit is ahead of them.

Leaping from his horse, Barabbas runs to it.

He sees over the edge into the pit.

And his legs give out beneath him. He hits the dirt.

Ammon rushes up behind Barabbas. What he sees sinks even his warrior complexion.

She is there. Rocks cover much of her body. Almost unrecognizable. Blood mats her hair.

A wail wrenches from the pit of Barabbas' gut. He chokes on it.

Ammon stands, still and silent beside his friend as he gags.

Barabbas lifts his eyes toward the town.

He rises from the dust. Shaking with rage.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - LATE AFTERNOON

The synagogue is nearly empty but for a handful of MEN. In the back, Melech pours silver coins into a pouch. He hands it to Zechariah.

MELECH

You bring honor to your people.

Troubled, Zechariah tucks the pouch into his tunic.

MELECH (CONT'D)

You've done what is right in the eyes of the Lord. He requires righteous men to lead his people, men who will do what it takes. God will continue to bless us.

ZECHARIAH

I'm not afraid of Barabbas. He acts like a king, fornicating with another man's wife while the rest of us toil away in those godforsaken mountains.

A commotion at the entrance. Like a rampaging bull, Barabbas barges in. When he sees Melech and Zechariah, murder fills his eyes.

Ammon appears behind him, hands resting on the hilts of his blades.

BARABBAS

(to Zechariah)

You!

Zechariah quakes in place. The others in the synagogue are alarmed.

Barabbas storms toward them.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

(to Zechariah)

You laid charge against her! You put to her death!

MELECH

You brought this on her!

This stops Barabbas in his tracks.

MELECH (CONT'D)

You knew the punishment. You distracted yourself to trifle with an adulteress. She's dead by her own hand...and yours.

Melech's words pierce a new fury in him.

He lunges forward, snatching the sword from his belt, and buries the steel in Zechariah's gut.

Barabbas rips it out. Zechariah collapses. The men gathered gasp in horror.

Grabbing the back-peddling Melech by the tunic, Barabbas yanks him close.

BARABBAS

You fucking serpent. You will burn in the deepest pits of hell.

MELECH

Not I.

Barabbas plunges his sword through Melech's chest. The priest gurgles. By the time he drops to the ground, he's dead.

Barabbas turns back to the door, bloodlust high.

BARABBAS

Levi.

INT. LEVI'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Levi slouches in a chair, stunned. Trying to process. Feel. He buries his face in his hands and begins to weep.

His door crashes open. Barabbas fills the frame of it like a terrible demon.

Levi looks up at him with raw surrender. Barabbas' own face is filled with pain, but his sword is dipped in blood.

LEVI

I did not want this.

Barabbas bursts forward.

BARABBAS

Why did you do it?

LEVI

(furious)

Why did *I* do this? Why did *you* do this! She was my wife!

This rattles Barabbas to the core. He shakes his head, re-focusing. Her death. His revenge.

BARABBAS

You put her to death!

Levi sinks, his energy spent.

LEVI

(glancing at the sword)

I wish...I would take her back.

His grief disgusts Barabbas. Levi looks up at him with tearing eyes.

Barabbas trembles.

Then drives his blade through Levi's neck. Again. And again, shredding the flesh under spouts of blood. Rage unleashed.

Ammon appears at the door.

AMMON
Barabbas, we must go.

Barabbas pulls back his sword. He's splattered with blood.

AMMON (CONT'D)
Now.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - DAY

David strides through camp. He's weary and covered in dust, but his eyes glow.

The place is eerily subdued. More than a few of the rebels eye David from a distance.

Foreboding seeps into his high mood.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - TENTS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

David spots James amidst the tents.

DAVID
James!

He turns to see David approaching. Seeing the look on James' face, David goes on high alert.

DAVID (CONT'D)
What's happened? Where's my brother?

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Barabbas and Ammon plod their weary horses into camp. Dozens of the REBELS rush out to greet their leader's return.

They stand back when they catch sight of him.

David runs up. When he sees his brother splattered in blood, horror floods his gut.

DAVID
Joshua.

Barabbas and Ammon dismount. Many of the men back off, slipping away into the camp.

DAVID (CONT'D)
What have you done?

Ignoring him, Barabbas stalks past his brother. David will not be put off.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Whose blood is this?

Barabbas gulps from a pail of water.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Joshua!

He drops the bucket, splashing water at their feet, and turns to David in fury.

BARABBAS
It's the blood of a priest, a
nailmaker, and a spy! They begged
for life, but I had none to give
them...for I have no mercy.

David stares. For all the battles he's seen at his brother's side, he's never known this man.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
We bring a storm to Pontius Pilate.
All who oppose us, Roman or Jew,
will face hell at our blades.

David steps back.

DAVID
I do not go with you.

BARABBAS
What?

DAVID
I do not go with you, brother. This
revenge is no longer my cause. I've
seen something else...

BARABBAS
You think this is revenge?

DAVID
It burned my heart, also.

BARABBAS

You go to hear a mad rabbi preach
about forgiving your enemies, and
you come back here to lecture me?
What do you know?

DAVID

You're my brother...but here is
where we part ways.

David's calm infuriates Barabbas.

BARABBAS

You coward!

He shoves David hard.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

You're afraid to do what has to be
done!

David stands upright. Barabbas storms into him. This time the
blow sends his smaller brother stumbling.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

You think you're better than us
now!

David will not fight back. Barabbas finds it enraging. He
kicks David.

Dozens of the rebels have appeared to see the commotion.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

You can't even fight me! You're
nothing but a coward and a traitor!

David tries to stand, but Barabbas grabs him by the tunic and
slams him to the ground.

Barabbas snarls into his face.

David looks into his big brother's hateful eyes without fear.

DAVID

You are my brother. But I will not
join you in this.

Barabbas snaps. Punches David so hard his head bounces off
the ground.

Then storms away.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - NIGHT

Barabbas stares into the flames. He strokes his short hair, the hair Taya cut for him. He sits by himself, though Ammon sharpens his blades nearby.

James approaches with hesitation.

JAMES

Barabbas.

Nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Barabbas -

BARABBAS

Are the men ready to march tomorrow?

James glances at Ammon and his blades.

JAMES

There is division in camp. Many of the men are...troubled that you've killed Israelites.

BARABBAS

Did you tell them they deserved it?

JAMES

They don't...see it as you do. They ready themselves to leave.

He braces for an outburst. Nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We lose nearly a third. Many leave tonight. Do you still wish to march on Pilate?

BARABBAS

Yes.

James cannot get away fast enough.

Ammon looks at Barabbas, who stares into the fire.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Do not feel obliged to stay.

AMMON

We are brothers. I stay.

Barabbas looks at him, and nods.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN

The camp sleeps in the blue-grey light of early morning. Two campfires still flicker against the frost.

INT. BARABBAS' TENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas sleeps, Taya's headscarf clutched against his cheek.

EXT. WOODS - PRE-DAWN

Glimpses of Roman uniforms flit through the dense forest.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Sleepy SENTRIES shift against the cold.

One TIRED SENTRY at the edge of the camp lifts his eyes to the woods ahead. Was that a deer? He peers harder.

Something moves. Something bigger than a deer.

He steps forward, gripping his spear on high alert.

The thing in the woods shifts again. Then something else moves a few yards away.

The sentry steps back, opens his mouth to shout into camp.

A javelin splits his chest.

He drops with a strangled wail that catches the attention of the next sentry over. Confused, he steps to his fallen peer.

The forest explodes with ROMANS.

Startled shouts from the sentries die quickly as a hail of spears and blades descends on them.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas bursts from his tent, sword in hand, wrapping Taya's headscarf about his arm.

The camp is under heavy attack, everyone caught unaware.

Barabbas charges toward the heart of the battle, snatching a spear from a fallen man as he goes.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Astride a huge horse, Scaro storms through the REBEL soldiers, cutting them down with frightening precision.

Wheeling away, he searches the frenzied campsite for his target.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Like a pure beast of battle, Barabbas savages all Romans in his path.

Hacking, stabbing, slicing, whirling, he closes in on Ammon, who's heavily outnumbered but fighting like a demon.

When the Egyptian kills the last enemy before him, he wheels around to face the next. Instead crosses blades with Barabbas. Their eyes glow with battle rage.

BARABBAS

Not me, brother.

AMMON

The centurion...he'll seek you out.

Barabbas glances toward the campfires, where a dozen Romans on horseback crash through soldiers of both sides. Scaro is among them.

BARABBAS

He dies today.

Barabbas wrenches away, storming toward the center of camp.

The Romans outnumber the newly thinned rebel camp. The Israelites are falling too quickly, massacred by the element of surprise.

Barabbas locks into combat with a Roman as big as he is. They set upon each other ferociously. Just as Barabbas is getting the better of the man, he's caught from behind.

A FOOTSOLDIER slices into his shoulder. He howls, spinning to hack down his assailant.

BY THE ARMORY:

James, wielding a sword and spear, fights against three Romans. He's losing.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Scaro splits a rebel's skull with a massive blow. Wrenching his blade free, he pivots, still searching the campsite. Blood and bodies are beginning to drench the ground.

Frustrated, he howls at the top of his lungs.

SCARO
Joshua Barabbas!

His yell startles some of the nearby soldiers.

SCARO (CONT'D)
Joshua Barabbas!

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Barabbas dispatches the sturdy Roman before him, and looks to the sound of Scaro's shouting. He rages toward the centurion.

Ammon sees Barabbas heading toward the mounted soldiers. He battles with renewed focus to get to his friend.

AT THE ARMORY:

James suffers a killing blow. He falls under a storm of Roman blades.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - FIRE - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Scaro glimpses an approaching Barabbas in the fray. He spurs his horse forward.

EXT. WOODED ENCAMPMENT - PRE-DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

Ammon surges forward to fight beside his friend. Barabbas senses his presence, is strengthened by it. They fight in devastating tandem, cutting down Romans as they advance.

The combat grows denser, the quarters tighter. They suffer cuts and stabs enough to make their skin slick with blood.

They do not relent.

Scaro, only yards away, points the tip of his sword at them.

SCARO

Barabbas!

The officers on horseback take their cue. They flank the pair.

Barabbas has tunnel vision, seeing only his target. Ammon realizes the danger and seeks to protect his friend's back. The Romans close in from the rear.

All around them, the rebels are decimated. Broken bodies warm the frosted ground. Weapons scatter in pools of steaming blood.

Fighting like a man possessed, though vastly outnumbered, Barabbas cleaves through any man who stands in his way. With Ammon at his back, they're a two-headed Hydra.

Until Ammon takes a sword in the side. He cries out, rips it from his flesh, and kills the soldier who wielded it. But the damage is done.

BARABBAS

Ammon! Stay with me, brother!

They battle. Barabbas wields two blades. Ammon slashes through flesh with his sword, then throws a knife with murderous accuracy.

High on his mount, flanked by his own men, Scaro grabs a spear from the nearest soldier. He hefts it, aims, and launches it.

The deadly shaft flies over Barabbas' shoulder, missing by a hairsbreadth. Stunned, he stares up at Scaro. Rather than the look of a man who missed his target, the centurion looks like a cat that swallowed a canary.

Barabbas spins around.

Ammon is on his knees, stumbling in vain in an attempt to rise.

The spear has found its way straight through the Egyptian's back. The iron tip protrudes from his chest.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

No!

He leaps forward to protect Ammon's fallen form, but now he is well and truly surrounded.

Someone cracks him in the skull with full force. He staggers, and they descend.

Taya's headscarf comes loose from his arm, landing amidst the blood and dirt. Barabbas clutches for it, but it's trampled.

The Romans pour over him. He stabs and cuts with all his rage until they've subdued his every limb with a dozen soldiers.

Scaro steps his horse over the bodies of the dead.

Barabbas snarls up at him.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Fight me!

Scaro's face is cool reserve, but his eyes gleam with triumph.

Barabbas strains against the soldiers with terrifying strength.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Fight me! Fucking coward! Fight me!

SCARO

You are an enemy of the Roman empire, and you will face its justice.

Barabbas roars, impotent.

SCARO (CONT'D)

You know your own people handed you over to us...

He wheels his horse away.

SCARO (CONT'D)

(to Roman officer)
Bind him. Very tightly.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Barabbas, bound and filthy, caked with old blood, slumps in the back of a caged cart, alone. He stares out at the stretch of arid land. His land.

INT. PONTIUS PILATE'S PALACE - DAY

Barabbas stands, in chains, between two soldiers. His rage still burns hot.

SCRIBES and OFFICIALS fill the cavernous room. Rachel suffers in silence as her son stands shackled.

Pontius Pilate sits atop the dais, decked in simple but regal robes. He consults a scroll.

PONTIUS PILATE

Joshua Barabbas. You stand accused of treason against the Roman empire. Massive theft of property belonging to the Roman empire. Inciting a rebellion. Conspiracy to commit murder. The murder of countless Roman officers and soldiers. And then, the murder of three of your own people, which will be counted in the charges against you, for justice within my region extends to all.

He sets the scroll aside. Regards the ragged, angry man before him.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

Before we call forth witnesses, do you have anything to declare at the reading of these charges?

Barabbas yanks against the chains. Yanks harder. Again. And again. Each faster than the one before.

The loud, urgent clanking unnerves the hall. Pilate motions to the guards. It takes four of them to wrestle Barabbas into silence.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

So, nothing, then?

Barabbas spits copious fluids onto the floor.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

Very well. We begin.

COURT OFFICIAL

Centurion Gaius Vinicius Scaro, come forth and state your claim.

Scaro strides forward in newly polished armor, the picture of a soldier. He stands before Pilate.

SCARO

Centurion Gaius Vinicius Scaro, prefect. Here to bear witness against the accused rebel, Joshua Barabbas.

Pilate nods.

Barabbas does not hear his testimony through his helpless fury.

The room blurs, sound distorts, as more soldiers come forward.

Then Idan the Chief Priest takes to the dais. Barabbas will not look at him.

It is when Benjamin is called that Barabbas looks up, shaken from his haze.

He stares at the boy, now a young man really, as he stands before Pilate.

He begins to speak, but Barabbas cannot hear him. When Benjamin stares at him, the tears of hatred in his eyes pierce Barabbas.

Barabbas steels himself, turns his shame and pain to anger.

LATER:

The witnesses have finished. Barabbas has barely moved a muscle.

PONTIUS PILATE

Joshua Barabbas, you are found guilty on all counts of these crimes for which you stand accused. As Pontius Pilate, charged with enforcing justice, I sentence you to death by crucifixion, at a date which I deem appropriate.

Nothing from Barabbas. A ripple of horror and satisfaction from within the hall. Rachel stifles a cry.

PONTIUS PILATE (CONT'D)

(to guards)
Put him away.

The guards lay hands on Barabbas.

INT. CELL - DAY

One of the GUARDS kicks Barabbas hard into the cell. He crashes against the stone of the tiny enclosure. An undersized bench juts out from the wall.

The guards lock the door.

GUARD
Await your death, Hebrew.

Barabbas paces, but the space is too small. He explodes, pounding his fists against the stone until they bleed.

INT. CELL - NIGHT (DAYS LATER)

Barabbas, stubble turning to beard, sits with his back against the wall. He hears a guard in the hallway.

BARABBAS
When do I die?

No answer.

BARABBAS (CONT'D)
When do I die!

INT. CELL - DAY (WEEKS LATER)

His hair growing full, his cheeks grown gaunt, Barabbas scratches a chip of rock against the wall.

LATER:

He wolfs down meager soup and bread rations.

INT. CELL - DAY (3 MONTHS LATER)

The guard stops at the bars, peering in at the shaggy Barabbas.

GUARD
It's Passover, Hebrew.

Barabbas looks at him.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Could you find enough lambs in
Judea to sacrifice for your crimes?

Barabbas looks away.

INT. CELL - DAY

Barabbas rouses from sleep. The muffled sounds of commotion outside, above him. He gets to his feet and peers out the cell bars. No guards in sight.

He listens. It sounds like a whole crowd of voices. He sits back down.

LATER:

Two guards appear at the cell door to unlock it.

GUARD 1
Barabbas! On your feet.

Barabbas does not move, his stare defiant.

The Romans barge in and seize him. They pull and push him out of the small cell.

INT. JAIL - DAY

The guards drag Barabbas past a handful of empty cells.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Barabbas and the guards head up a narrow, dark set of stairs.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

The brightness of daylight stuns Barabbas, who shies from it. The guards pull him up onto the dais to face the courtyard. It's packed with Israelites who look feverishly worked up, yelling and shouting incoherently toward the dais. Idan is among them.

Confused, Barabbas looks for a cross nearby, if it is his day to die. No sign of one. He surveys the crowd. When he catches sight of one face, he stops.

It's David.

He's looking up at his older brother like his heart is breaking. Like he knows something that Barabbas does not.

Pontius Pilate steps forward to quiet the crowd. Behind him, unseen by Barabbas, Scaro stands at attention.

Then Barabbas sees a Man standing on the other side of the dais. He wears chains and fresh bruises, but not the filth of captivity. This is JESUS.

The jeering of the crowd seems to be directed at him. Most astonishingly, he is calm in the face of it.

PONTIUS PILATE
 (to the crowd)
 Which of these two men do you wish
 for me to release to you?

Barabbas stares at him, stunned, thinking he just imagined Pilate's words.

The crowd roars back -

CROWD
 Barabbas! Free Barabbas!

He looks across the crowd, bewildered. The faces of many who had helped him to his death sentence months before, shouting for his release.

He looks at David. His brother is silent.

PONTIUS PILATE
 What should I do then, with the man
 you call King of the Jews?

CROWD
 Crucify him!

Barabbas glances at Jesus. He is still, though he gazes down at the crowd with sadness.

PONTIUS PILATE
 Why? I have found him guilty of
 nothing. What crime has he
 committed?

This only seems to enrage the crowd. They roar even louder.

CROWD
 Crucify him! Crucify him!

Barabbas is overwhelmed. He looks at his brother again, but David gazes up at the other prisoner, grief filling his eyes.

A grieving rage washes through Barabbas as he watches David.

Pilate steps back from the edge of the dais with a heavy heart. A rocked expression on his face.

PONTIUS PILATE
 (to Roman guards)
 Free the prisoner Barabbas.

One guard kneels to remove the chains from his ankles. The other unlocks the chains about his wrists.

Scaro gapes, gripping his sword tighter, clenching his jaw.

Barabbas glances across the dais. For only a second, he locks eyes with Jesus.

There is a sorrow in his gaze like Barabbas has never seen before.

GUARD 2

Go on, then.

Barabbas stumbles down the stairs of the dais. The crowd rages around him as they disperse to follow the prisoner to be crucified.

ON THE DAIS: Scaro, his eyes on the departing Barabbas, pulls aside a WIRY SOLDIER.

SCARO

(quietly)

Do not let that one out of your sight. Rome may have pardoned him, but I have not. I want his head.

The wiry soldier nods, and slips away.

ON THE GROUND: Barabbas pushes his way to the gate.

A hand claps him from behind. Barabbas turns, ready to strike.

It's David.

DAVID

Joshua.

Relieved to see his brother free, yet full of pain.

Barabbas recoils.

BARABBAS

You did not speak my name to be free. Ashamed of your own deeds?

DAVID

I would rather go to the cross for you than sentence an innocent man to die by my words.

Barabbas stares at David as though he hardly recognizes the man before him.

BARABBAS

My true brother is dead.

He wrenches away from David, pushing against the crowd.

EXT. PRAETORIUM OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Barabbas sifts through the flocks of people lining the streets. Passing a bread stall unattended, he grabs a loaf and tears into it as he walks.

The cracking of a whip against flesh snaps in the distance. Faint laughter.

The wiry soldier weasels through the crowds, watching.

EXT. WATER WELL - DAY

Barabbas draws a full pail from the well. Stripping off his tunic, he dumps the water over himself. Drenched, he grabs a nearby scrap of cloth and begins to scrub the grime from his skin, violently.

EXT. CITY HOME - DAY

Snatching a fresh tunic from an abandoned basket of laundry just outside a doorway, Barabbas pulls it on.

A flicker of red and silver catches his eye. From the street where he came, he spots the wiry soldier slipping out of the crowd, heading against the flow of the procession.

Straight for him.

Barabbas bolts.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The streets are lined with people. Barabbas shies away from them like a feral dog, skulking, keeping to the back alleys.

He glimpses bare feet staggering across the stone. The bent and bloody figure of Jesus. He hauls an enormous cross on his back.

Jesus stumbles, collapsing to the ground under the weight of it. Blood has stained his robes red. He wears a crown of thorns. His face is spattered with blood.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The wiry soldier has lost sight of his prey. He pushes through the rowdy mobs, looking frantically for Barabbas.

EXT. CITY GATES - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The soldiers escorting Jesus shout at him, yanking him back to his feet. Jesus tries to pick up the cross, but cannot hold it. He falls.

Revulsed, Barabbas starts to turn away, when Scaro appears on horseback.

At the sight of him, Barabbas lights with purpose.

Scaro points to a man Barabbas' own size from the crowds. The soldiers seize him, force him to pick up the cross. Jesus lurches to his feet. They carry forward.

Barabbas races to keep Scaro in sight, turning over his shoulder to make sure he's lost the wiry soldier.

EXT. CITY GATE - DAY

The crowds cheer on the grisly procession. A few protest, jeering the soldiers. They keep the unruly in line. Barabbas pays no mind. He has deadly eyes only for Scaro.

The centurion marshals the Roman escort through the raucous crowds and out beyond the city walls.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

The procession trudges upward over stone and grass. Barabbas hangs back, not wanting to be spotted in the open. He watches Scaro guide his horse to the top of the hill.

Barabbas retreats to the stony slopes behind it. To wait.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Barabbas paces a rocky outcropping, watching. Three crosses rise on the distant hill.

LATER:

Barabbas is sitting, hefting a large rock in his hand. The sky begins to darken overhead.

He looks upward in confusion. A most unnatural darkness.

LATER:

Barabbas stalks over the rocks, impatient.

He pauses. A fleeting thought holds him, only for a moment, as he walks free and other men die.

He spots Scaro for assurance. The centurion stands now at the base of the crosses.

A wailing cry pierces the air. It comes from the hill.

A chill passes over Barabbas.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Scaro gazes upward at the cross in the center.

He is transfixed, stunned.

Eyes shine, mouth agape.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The earth below Barabbas tremors. Then shakes. Then shifts violently. It drops Barabbas to one knee. He braces until the quake dissipates.

Getting back to his feet, he sees Scaro descending the hill, on foot and alone. Headed away from the city, toward Barabbas.

Barabbas sinks behind a rock outcropping.

EXT. HILL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The fully-armored Scaro wanders forward, in a daze. He has seen something at this crucifixion that he has never seen at another.

His head spins. Oblivious to his surroundings.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

David, his face streaked with tears, eyes Scaro descending to the lower hills.

BARABBAS

No!

Scaro glances up, barely paying him mind.

SCARO

(to David)

You have killed many.

BARABBAS

Do not kill him, Scaro!

SCARO

It is nothing less than what he
deserves.

Barabbas lets loose a roar of powerless anguish and hatred.

Scaro stares down at his helpless opponent from sword's
length.

SCARO (CONT'D)

(to David)

Who was that man we put to death?

David looks up to meet his eyes.

DAVID

Who do you say that he was?

The question sears through Scaro.

Barabbas stares at this interaction, alarmed, confused.

Scaro steps back. Lowers his sword. Staring at David.

He looks at Barabbas, who seethes with coiled anger.

Scaro pulls off his helmet. His eyes shine. He is
overwhelmed.

He drops his sword to the ground.

David rises to his feet. He and Barabbas watch in amazement.

Scaro lets his helmet clatter on the stone. He pulls off his
armored breastplate. It thuds against the hillside. Confusion
paralyzes Barabbas.

Scaro looks at David, then turns his back to the brothers and
begins to leave.

Barabbas seizes into action. He snatches up the sword.

Hearing it, Scaro stops. He turns over his shoulder as if to look, but does not.

Frantic and bewildered, Barabbas looks to David. David says nothing, but his eyes are full of understanding.

Scaro walks away.

Blistering thoughts tear at Barabbas. His moment of opportunity is slipping away. Yet he seems rooted to the spot.

A guttural howl wrenches from his gut. He draws up the sword, and drives it down with all of his might into the center of the breastplate. It pierces the armor above the heart.

Barabbas collapses to his knees, still gripping the embedded sword. Everything he had is spent.

David kneels beside his brother. He places a hand on the sword hilt, clasping Barabbas' to it.

In the distance, three crosses loom against the darkened sky.

THE END