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Antiochus cautiously rubbed his unshaven cheek, stretched his tall frame and arms to the point of pain, and yawned so widely he heard his jaw snap. He had slept soundly but wanted to become fully and quickly awake. His father, the king, had taught him early in life that danger too often accompanied slumber.

He saw that the two Romans were talking, and he wished he understood more of the Latin tongue.

Lucius Sempronius, the centurion who had been his guard and companion since Ephesus, had turned out to be a friendly sort.

Antiochus was not ready to judge Titus Popilius. He had met him the day before and knew only that he was a legate with some special responsibility to the Roman senate. Antiochus had noted that a smile came neither easily nor quickly to the face of Titus.

Antiochus loved life and smiled often. In fact, he

laughed as he coughed up his morning phlegm. He remembered the good times in Ephesus, after Lucius was convinced that Antiochus would not run away. Lucius spoke fluent Greek, which helped break down the barrier between captor and captive. The Ephesian wine and women were of excellent vintage.

Antiochus glanced at Titus and decided he would never make a good drinking companion.

"The Seleucid is wide awake," said Titus.

"The prince usually sleeps deeply and awakens slowly," Lucius commented, with a smile.

"He sleeps like a baby, I suppose! Well, he isn't today." Titus spat to the ground. "Look at him, Lucius. He stands there grinning like a Greek god, blond as an Etruscan. He will give us trouble. The man is too arrogant, too impertinent."

"He is a prince, legate."

"He is a prisoner. A hostage, centurion, along with the nineteen others you brought with you."

"He's not a bad fellow," said Lucius. "He's a bit wild for his age, of course. He likes his wine, and he has an eye for every passing feminine *stola*. But he is a clever lad. He observes everything. He's not afraid to ask questions, and he remembers answers."

"I doubt whether the Roman senate plans to provide an education for its hostage. You must admit that he is a poor substitute for Hannibal."

The centurion nodded in agreement.

Antiochus understood only an occasional word, but he immediately recognized the name of Hannibal and was amused.

"That crafty old viper!" The legate cursed softly

and kicked at the pavement. "We'll find him yet and deliver him to Rome."

The prince was ready to wager that Hannibal would never be captured. The aging general from Carthage had made a pact with Antiochus the Great. They had helped each other. The prince expected his father, for whom he was named, to keep his word.

In fact, the younger Antiochus believed that Hannibal would soon be forgotten. After all, Rome was being amply rewarded for its victory over the Seleucids. Although Hannibal had escaped, several of Rome's paramount enemies had been captured and executed. A fortune in gold would be paid by Antiochus's family over the next dozen years; grain was already being shipped to fill Roman stomachs. Furthermore, the prince knew he was in Rome to insure that his father would indeed abide by the treaty signed with Rome at Apamea.

"Do you see how he smirks, centurion?" Titus commented. "Like a pompous ass. No, not an ass—like some playful, unhousebroken puppy." The legate chewed his lower lip as he gazed at Antiochus. "I don't approve of hostages, centurion. Our usual way is the best way. When you take a prisoner, either kill him or make him your slave. Don't create trouble for yourself by making him a hostage."

"He is a nobleman—a prince, sire," said Lucius.

"Indeed. My father, the senator, has counseled me to remember that fact." Titus sighed in exasperation. "We have killed kings, and we have enslaved their sons. Why is this barbarian to become the ward of the senate?"

“Perhaps, legate, because his father defeated Egypt.”

“And who defeated the prince’s father?” Titus asked.

The centurion chuckled in appreciation.

“And Rome, today, will have its circus,” Lucius continued. “I wonder how our pompous prince will fare in the triumph?”

“He knows none of the details, sire.”

“And that is best for now.” Titus allowed himself a fleeting smirk. “Is the animal cage prepared?”

“Indeed, legate.”

“Good.” Titus smiled briefly but broadly. “Feed our prisoner well. It will be a long day, and he won’t be eating again until nightfall.”

Antiochus watched the legate acknowledge the centurion’s salute, smartly turn, and march away. He wondered when he would get to see this city called the “Eternal.” He had not come to see stables and courtyards such as this; there were better stables and courtyards in Antioch. Perhaps now that the legate had gone Lucius would show him the marvelous sights of Rome.

At the time the hostage prince was boarding the twin-decked galley in Ephesus for Rome, a Jewish priest, fifteen hundred miles to the east, performed his ritual of grief.

Mattathias knelt in the ashes and debris of his former home in Jerusalem, conscious of a warmth that remained weeks after the conflagration. He had ripped his outer garment, as the ritual required. Scooping up ashes, he dumped them over his head, rubbing the residue onto his forehead and face.

He wept as he prayed:

“O LORD, God of vengeance;
God of vengeance, shine forth!”

Mattathias rocked in a chanting rhythm and then threw himself upon the ground. Vengeance. That was the petition of his whole being.

“How long shall the wicked, O LORD,
How long shall the wicked exult?
They pour forth words, they speak arrogantly;
All who do wickedness vaunt themselves
They crush Thy people, O LORD,
And afflict Thy heritage.
They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the orphans.
And they have said, ‘The LORD does not see,
nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.’ ”*

Jerusalem seemed always to be in the way of Persians or Greeks or Egyptians or Syrians. And again it was a place of desolation.

Jerusalem had long ago ceased to be free, but no longer would it be subject to the Ptolemies and to Egypt. No longer would Jewish pilgrims come to worship in the Temple from the great city of Alexandria, where scholars had translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

Now there would be a new master. Jerusalem had become part of Antioch of Syria. Instead of a Ptol-

*Psalm 94:1,3-7.

emy king, there would be a Seleucid monarch. Mattathias sighed as he pondered how these heathen Gentiles fought among themselves.

After Alexander had died—the great emperor who had built Alexandria, whose city and library Mattathias knew he would never see—Alexander's generals split up the empire and their descendants now fought each other.

The king of Antioch was named Antiochus—"Antiochus the Great" it was said he called himself. Construction materials to rebuild the city had been promised, especially timbers for the Temple. They would be needed.

The priest would miss seeing the pilgrims from Alexandria, but new visitors might come, this time from Babylon. Jerusalem was no longer a Judean city; the Jews were a minority in their ancient land and shared King David's capital with Ammonite and Phoenician and Greek. Mattathias believed that more Jews should come to live in the land of the covenant, yet he knew that the Jews themselves were divided, perpetuating the sins of their fathers, following after false gods, forgetting Adonai and the Torah.

Mattathias prayed that another Ezra or a Daniel might arise. Daniel! Now he would be a man for such a time as this, a Hebrew who lived among the heathen, a Hebrew faithful to Adonai. The priest would seek out the scroll of Daniel's prophecy. He would read it to his sons.

Mattathias stood up, brushing off the ashes, fearful that his appearance would displease his wife and would likely frighten his two sons. They had

found shelter in a small cave on the road toward Bethlehem—David's city—and the family would remain there until Mattathias could rebuild his house in Jerusalem. As he walked southward from the city, Mattathias thanked God for his two sons and prayed that Adonai would bless him with more sons. Many worthy sons of Israel would be needed in this day of spreading evil.

He began to sing, quietly at first, again remembering the words of the psalm.

“But the LORD has been my stronghold,
And my God, the rock of my refuge!”

His chanting became louder. Mattathias hoped the whole world would hear and heed Adonai, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“And He has brought back their wickedness
upon them,
And will destroy them in their evil;
The LORD our God will destroy them.”*

The tears were gone, and his gait was strong. He was Mattathias, the son of John, who was the son of Simeon, who was the son of Hasmon. He was a priest of the line of Joarib. He was honored to serve the high priest, Onias. Mattathias quickened his pace, eager now to see his family.

*Psalm 94:22-23.

2

Antiochus ate his breakfast slowly, deliberately, and with enjoyment. The other prisoners from Syria had finished long ago and had left. The prince lingered, and Lucius seemed content to wait and remain silent.

"You have eaten enough for two of my best warriors!" Lucius exclaimed after Antiochus was finished. "Let us be gone."

The courtyard was filled with soldiers and slaves brushing and harnessing animals, dragging carts and chariots, and adding to the clamor with their earthy vulgarities.

"I thought you said traffic was banned in Rome during the daytime," said the prince.

"There will be much traffic today," Lucius replied. "I told you there would be a parade—a triumph."

They pushed their way past people and vehicles and animals.

"This is where we stop, Antiochus," Lucius said.

They stood in front of a conveyance that seemed strangely familiar. The prince then remembered that he had seen such vehicles all along the 350 miles of the Appian Way, almost from the marble steps leading to the harbor of Brundisium. The conveyance was a cage on wheels. There had been many of these on the road, transporting animals from Africa to the sports arenas of Rome.

"Climb in!" Lucius commanded.

The prince did not move. He was not sure he had understood, but he was certain now from Lucius's sour breath that the centurion had been drinking. Lucius loved wine and drank it copiously but cautiously. But he always drank at the end of the day, not at its beginning.

"Get inside the cage!" the centurion repeated.

The prince could not believe his ears.

"It's for animals, Lucius! It stinks!" shouted Antiochus.

"It's been washed. Get inside!"

"This is an insult, centurion. I am a prince." Antiochus towered over the shorter Roman soldier.

"Both statements are true, Your Excellency," Lucius said with irony. "The cage was meant for Hannibal, but you are to be his substitute."

"I am not Hannibal. I am a prince of a royal family."

"Think of it as an opportunity, Antiochus!" Lucius laughed. "Few men could take the place of the great Hannibal, the general who almost captured Rome."

"I will not be caged like some wild beast." The prince spoke quietly but firmly, rigid with anger,

aware that others were now watching.

Lucius struck the leg of Antiochus with a whip, and the prince winced at the pain.

"You will do as you are told!" Lucius said vehemently, although slurring his words. "I am told what to do. And now I command you. It is the Roman way." The centurion grinned with irony. "This is our day of victory, of our triumph. It is a holiday for Romans—a day to cheer our armies, to gasp and pant at the sight of captured treasures and slaves. It is a day to jeer and insult the chief captive of them all."

"So that is why I am here?"

"If they cannot have Hannibal, at least they will have a prince."

Lucius held the door of the opened cage. The prince stood his ground.

"Antiochus, you could be marching with the slaves. Or you could be hanging from a cross somewhere." Lucius had softened his voice and tone. "You are neither dead nor a slave because you are a royal hostage." He pointed to the cart. "Get in, lad. It will soon be over."

The prince found it difficult to crawl into the small space. He could not sit fully upright. Neither was there room to stretch out. So he sat with knees upraised and head bowed. Lucius fastened the gate and called his guards to harness the four horses that would pull the wagon.

Outside the barracks and beyond the opened gates, for as far as he was able to see, Antiochus saw chariots and soldiers beginning to bring order out of the chaos of preparation.

He heard shouts and cheers in the distance, so he assumed that the parade had already begun. His father had had such a parade after his victory over Egypt, and it had lasted an entire day and well into the night. The prince wondered if the Romans would display any elephants.

The armed forces of Antioch were famous for their elephants. The elephant was the official symbol of the realm, and the Romans ordered all of Antioch's elephants destroyed after the battle at Magnesia.

"Centurion!" Antiochus shouted. "Do we honor the Scipio brothers today?"

"We honor Quintus Fabius Labeo," Lucius replied. "The praetor of Rome. The Scipios have not yet returned."

The prince did not understand Roman politics, although he was now familiar with the words *res publica*—"public affairs"—from which the Romans created something they called a "republic." One of the Scipios had chased Hannibal across north Africa. The other had defeated Antiochus's father. One was a consul of Rome, the highest office in the land. Why were the military heroes being denied their triumph and a magistrate, a praetor, honored in their stead?

Antiochus shook his head and tried to make himself more comfortable. Somehow he had to find a way to retain his dignity. Now that they were moving into the parade, the prince was determined not to be just another animal on display.

He decided that he would think of other things

and places. His body was a hostage, but his mind was not.

The prince thought of Antioch. He had not yet seen enough of Rome to make comparisons, but Antioch was no small city. He remembered the Orontes River, the mountains to the east, and the fertile plain leading to the sea on the west. He pictured the new island palace his father had built and, in his mind, again walked through its corridors and rooms. A muscular man of twenty-two, especially a prince, should not weep, certainly not in public. Nevertheless, there was a sadness, a plain-tiveness, in remembering his home.

Antiochus was becoming nauseated from the stench of the cage as well as the rocking motion of the cart. He felt he was back on the sea, sailing from Ephesus to Brundisium.

The hostages had marched up the Italian boot in eight days, walking the famous road built by Appius. Antiochus found it difficult to remember that that had occurred only last week. The traffic, bridges, mileposts, and the varied but solid construction of the road itself had merged into a blur. *Building roads is what the Romans do best, the prince mused in his rocking cage. They are also good at winning important battles.*

His father should never have challenged Pergamum and Rome. His father should have been content with governing Syria and Egypt and Persia. Now that Judea was also in Syrian hands, Antioch controlled the eastern shores of the Great Sea. It could have been enough. Now everything had changed,

and the prince was its symbol, a royal animal paraded in a Roman cage.

"Death to Hannibal!" The cry was picked up by hundreds of voices and reverberated as an echo, heard, perhaps, all the way to the Forum where this humiliation would end.

Antiochus bowed soberly, taunting the crowds. He smiled ruefully, enjoying the joke being played upon these Romans who lived for their bread and circuses. He was not Hannibal! No man on earth could impersonate the Carthaginian.

Antiochus forced his thoughts back to Antioch and that fateful night when he first met Hannibal.

The banquet had followed the parade honoring his father's victory over Egypt.

The banquet was a sumptuous one. Dozens of guests consumed geese, shellfish, pork, and mutton. There had been green vegetables, a squash for which Antioch was well known, barley pilaf, bread, and olive oil. And, of course, there were wine and fruits in profusion.

As the grapes and plums were distributed to end the repast, the king motioned for silence and stood to speak.

"Tonight we celebrate the thirty-first year of my reign," he announced. The silence was broken by wild applause. No king of the Seleucids had governed for so long a time.

"The gods have been generous to us," the king continued. "We have reclaimed almost all of the kingdom that had been lost. Our realm extends to

Parthia and Armenia. Again we claim Judea and find ourselves at the very gates of Egypt. *El Beka*—the great Syrian Basin—belongs again to the Seleucids!” And again there was an ovation.

“What remains for us to accomplish is to look westward, toward Pergamum and Macedonia, northward to Galatia. Only then will the house of the Seleucids again be rich and secure.”

Shouts of approval were mixed with the applause, but young Antiochus now remembered that even then he had some premonition that his father was being careless or indiscreet. However, surprises of a more serious nature were to follow.

“We have decided on how we shall proceed,” the king announced. “First, our southern border with Egypt must be secured.” The older Antiochus paused. “It is our wish that our daughter, Cleopatra, marry Ptolemy Epiphanes.”

For a few moments there was absolute silence. Young Antiochus was himself astounded.

Although the Ptolemies were as Greek in origin as the Seleucids—tracing their heritage back to the conquests of Alexander—the kings of Egypt had long been rivals and enemies of Antioch. Only a few years before, the Egyptian general Scopas had been roundly defeated at Panion, the source of the river Jordan. Within recent weeks, Egypt had again been defeated, this time in Gaza. Surely such humiliations would not easily nor soon be forgotten.

“I am pleased to announce that the pharaoh of Egypt has accepted this offer of marriage and has done so eagerly.”

As he listened to the cheers and laughter and

applause, the prince wondered how such a diplomatic triumph had come about.

“As a gift to my daughter and future son-in-law,” the royal voice droned on, “I shall return the taxes from Judea to the coffers of Egypt. The land remains with us. Only the taxes will be returned, and only for a period of ten years. But Cleopatra knows that this is no small dowry!”

There was some murmuring—probably from the *satraps* and the *strategoï*—the governors and the tax collectors of the provinces—who would not relish relinquishing a single coin of tax revenue to a foreign power, unless somehow some of that revenue could find its way into their own purses. Ptolemy Epiphanes would certainly be pleased. Antiochus relished the sound of that name. Epiphanes. “God Manifest.”

The king pounded the table for attention.

“There will be one other royal marriage.”

The prince noticed that his stepmother, Euboia, stared at his father with a hard, almost cruel gaze. He did not know her well since she was young and beautiful and often journeyed with his father.

“My son will marry Laodice!” declared the king. A few heads turned toward him, but Antiochus shook his head.

“I speak of my son and heir, Seleucus!” his father announced.

The guests were standing, voicing their approval.

The idea of his sister marrying his brother did not shock the prince. Such intermarriage was common within royal families, and he agreed it was the best way of insuring the purity of the dynastic line.

Besides, there was no novelty to it. Laodice had already been married to one of his brothers, a brother now dead.

That brother had been the first-born, also named "Antiochus" after his father. For a time he was known as a co-ruler with his father. Perhaps he was too well liked by his subjects. Perhaps he was too ambitious. For reasons that were still secret and mysterious, his oldest brother had been murdered. His sister, Laodice, was married and widowed before she had reached her seventeenth year. The prince was given the name of his dead brother and asked no questions.

Laodice, his widowed sister, smiled demurely as she was escorted to stand beside Seleucus.

Antiochus studied the faces of all three of his sisters. Cleopatra, the oldest, would soon marry a mere boy just out of puberty, the present pharaoh of Egypt. Laodice was a year older than Seleucus, seven years older than he. She was as decisive and strong-willed as their father and probably wished she could be heir to the throne. Antiochus was a year younger than himself—quiet and often sad, but always the dutiful daughter. Many people thought they were twins. He wondered if that was why his dead mother wanted them called Antiochus and Antiochis.

He remembered his stepmother, Euboia. She looked as young as any of his sisters, and he thought she hated each of them. Now she stood with the others but did not applaud.

It all seemed to have happened so long ago. Theirs was a strange and complicated family, and the prince

wondered how many of them would ever be together in one place again.

As he continued to reminisce, the younger Antiochus recalled that his father waved everyone to silence.

"There is one more announcement tonight," he said. "Perhaps the best is reserved for the last. We have an honored guest. The whole inhabited earth knows about this man. If he is not loved by all, he is feared by all. My friends, welcome Hannibal. The great and famous Hannibal of Carthage!"

Pandemonium erupted. The palace shook from the shouting and stamping of feet. The noise continued uninterrupted for several minutes. The prince had never heard or seen anything to match it in the Grand Hall of the palace.

Hannibal was known by reputation—or legend—to everyone in the room. He was the man who had nearly defeated the Romans. He had camped with his army just outside the gates of Rome itself.

The young prince tried to recall everything he had ever learned about this man who approached the king from the shadows, a distinguished-looking, white-bearded, balding grandfather who talked with the energy of one of his grandsons.

Hannibal's name was a contraction of *Hanni-ba'al*, which meant something like "the grace of Baal." The people of Carthage worshiped at least two deities. One of them, obviously, was the fertility god Baal. The other was Molech, to whom children were sacrificed, the god of fire, a god of the Canaanites to whom altars were built wherever the Phoenicians sailed their ships.

Hannibal belonged to a tribe called the *Poeni* and spoke a language known as *Punic*. Carthage, in north Africa, had been their capital.

Hannibal's father first fought the Romans in Sicily, the first of the Punic wars. Battles then followed in Africa and Spain. Hannibal crossed the Pyrenees and the Alps with his men and famous elephants. He captured the Po River Valley in the northernmost part of *Latium*. He came within three miles of Rome.

Publius Cornelius Scipio finally defeated Hannibal and his troops, winning the name of *Africanus* and the admiration of Rome. Hannibal paid the indemnities but would not surrender his person. Somehow he had eluded the Romans, who now hated him more than any other living man. Somehow Hannibal had escaped into an exile that had brought him to Antioch.

The reason for Hannibal's presence in Antioch became clearer the next day.

Those present at the war council were Demetrianus, chief of the land forces; Polyxenidas, head of the royal navy; Tryphon, the treasurer of the kingdom and father of Heliodorus, a rival of the young prince. Antipater, chief counselor and cousin of the king, was there.

Seleucus and the younger Antiochus were also invited.

The king again made clear that he wanted to fight his enemies in the West.

"The empire once extended itself from Parthia to the Hellespont," he declared. "I will not go to my

grave until those places again mark the width of our realm."

"You will have to fight Eumenes of Pergamum," said Seleucus. Antiochus was surprised but pleased that his brother wasted no words and came so quickly to the heart of the matter.

"Pergamum is only one kingdom among many," said the king.

"True enough, sire," said Seleucus. "Between us and the Hellespont and ancient Troy lie the kingdoms of Phrygia, Mysia, Bithynia, Galatia, and Pergamum."

"All of which were once part of the Seleucid kingdom," retorted the king.

"But Pergamum, Father, is the strongest of them all," Seleucus persisted, "with strong ties to Rome."

"Hannibal has already told me this," said the king. "Tell them what you told me," he commanded the old general.

"Rome would like an excuse to help its ally. Already it meddles in Macedonia, even to the Hellespont. Rome knocks upon the door of Asia. I have said to your monarch: these Romans will not be content until they surround the Mediterranean Sea."

Members of the council were unconvinced.

"Some senators already call it *Mare Nostrum*," Hannibal continued, speaking the Latin words. "In Greek, that means 'Our Sea.'"

"Is it not clear to all of you why the Romans chased our friend Hannibal across Africa to Spain?" asked the king. "Has Rome given up any of the shores it has captured, anywhere?"

The prince could think of none.