

GODS OF THE JUNGLE

10 PAGE EXCERPT

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OVER BLACK...

SUPER: "A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal, as gently as we awake from dreams." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

FADE IN:

EXT. EBONY WOOD FOREST - DAWN

A brightly colored mask with lion fang trim is fixed in the midst of endless ebony wood.

Calm before the storm.

Suddenly, GENERAL NATHANIEL OSBORNE (50'S), battered and bloody, face white as a ghost, runs through the jungle with a golden crown in hand. The left side of his face is mauled. Left ear missing.

A predator chases after him... A fast predator.

General Osborne constantly glances back. He grips the crown with all his might.

The jungle floor is covered in fallen ebony trees.

General Osborne hurdles and climbs over the fallen wood. Past a FIGURE wearing the brightly colored mask.

The predator gains.

General Osborne trips and goes airborne.

A tree trunk brings General Osborne to a sudden halt.

The crown rolls a few feet away.

General Osborne slowly comes to. Grabs the crown. Holds it close.

A shadow approaches General Osborne. He looks up in sheer horror. Offers the crown.

GENERAL OSBORNE

Take it. It's yours.

The shadow draws near. General Osborne weeps.

GENERAL OSBORNE (CONT'D)

I beg you... Have mercy.

Darkness consumes General Osborne.

AGONIZING SCREAMS echo throughout the jungle.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

SUPER: ENGLAND... 1795

Gray skies.

The hard, dusty road of the market place plays host to thousands of RIOTERS.

The crowd swarms an aristocratic building.

RIOTERS
Give us our bread!

The mob grows even more rowdy.

RIOTERS (CONT'D)
We need water!

CONSTABLES arrive.

RIOTERS (CONT'D)
Bloody Bow Street Runners!

The officers use brutal force to clear the crowd.

INT. AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

High above the market place, WILLIAM BLUE (55), overweight and snide, sips bourbon as he watches the riot from his tower.

The office is magnificent. Several African big game heads are mounted on the wall.

A full bar, fire place and an oversized globe next to a large desk.

Seated at the desk, on a leopard skin throne, is EMMET LOCKHEART (50), a thinner man with a well kept mustache. He uses a monocle to focus on a map.

WILLIAM BLUE
Savages.

William downs his drink and sets the cup on the window sill. He saunters towards the globe.

EMMET LOCKHEART

What do expect, William? It's been over a year since last the rain.

WILLIAM BLUE

Drought or no, I have no mercy for these beggars.

EMMET LOCKHEART

It's all they know.

William spins the globe.

WILLIAM BLUE

And what do you know?

Emmet removes his monocle.

The globe comes to a halt -- Africa faces Emmet. He smirks.

EMMET LOCKHEART

I spoke with our friend in the Reds.

WILLIAM BLUE

And?

EMMET LOCKHEART

You must try to relax, William. You'll catch a stroke and end up under hatches.

William grows impatient. Emmet grins.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

They've lent us their finest bit of red... For a respectable fee... The sea-crabs are preparing for departure as we speak.

WILLIAM BLUE

Good man, Emmet. We'll have ten river boats waiting for them when they disembark. Ten more waiting for them when they return. I can not wai--

Emmet clears his throat.

A beat.

EMMET LOCKHEART

It's a small lot. A pluck bunch.

WILLIAM BLUE

A few men won't do. They'll never be able to bring it all back.

EMMET LOCKHEART

Precisely. They don't bring it back at all.

William is confused.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

Hear this.

Emmet stands and makes his way to the bar.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

A few go. They move quick, locate it. All the while someone is making a map. Once they return, you, I and a hundred caterpillars will return for it.

William thinks. Nods head in approval.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

We can't afford to lose as many men as last time.

WILLIAM BLUE

Truly...

William spins the globe. Emmet pours himself a drink.

WILLIAM BLUE (CONT'D)

So, where do we find the mapmaker? I'm not giving another bloody penny to The Coats.

Emmet sips his highball.

EMMET LOCKHEART

Just leave that to me.

The globe stops with England in center frame.

INT. AMBROSE'S HOME - DAY

Hand drawn map of England.

A pencil moves diligently across a hemp slate. A cartographer at work.

Sitting in a dusty and dimly lit room is the perfectionist, AMBROSE KEEN (28), dark hair, green eyes and a benevolent aura. Deep down at the core he's brave, longing for a chance to escape, but on the surface he's timid.

Ambrose is immersed in his work. His hand never stops moving.

The home itself is only one room.

A tiny bed, book shelf, and fireplace take up one half the space. The other half is mainly kitchen, but every inch of wall is covered with some sort of hand drawn map.

Ambrose stops sketching. Sets pencil down. Blows off the excess led. He assesses his work and smiles with a great sense of accomplishment.

The map is quite good.

Ambrose rolls the map and slips it into a leather map holder. He secures the harness over his shoulder and exits the home.

INT. CLIENT'S HOME - OFFICE - LATER

Prodigious study.

Ambrose seems tiny in an enormous chair across a large desk.

In an even bigger chair, at the other end of the desk, is the aging, rosy cheeked CLIENT. He holds the map in his fat hands and scrutinizes the work.

Ambrose twiddles his thumbs. He glances out the window -- A brightly colored mask with lion fang trim stares at him from outside.

As soon as Ambrose blinks it's gone. Ambrose processes and continues to gaze out the window.

Finally...

CLIENT

Amateur.

The client tosses a few coins on the desk. Ambrose eyes the money.

AMBROSE

Two shillings? I believe we agreed two pounds.

CLIENT

And I believe I asked for a map.

Ambrose glances at his map. It's a masterpiece.

AMBROSE

This won't last me a fortnight.

The client has moved on to more important issues. He jots away at his desk.

CLIENT

It's tough out there for all of us.
It is a drought, you know.

Ambrose scans the monumental room. The client glances up, clearly irritated, and points.

CLIENT (CONT'D)

The door.

The client stares at Ambrose until he gets up and exits.

EXT. MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Dark sky. Morale is low. FAMILIES live on the streets amongst the BEGGARS.

Ambrose makes his way down the road.

A GYPSY (30's), reaches up towards the sky. Her lips move quickly. Her hands do the same. Prayers.

Ambrose looks up.

A great nimbus forms in the sky above.

Ambrose turns back to the gypsy. She stares into the heavens and smiles.

Ambrose takes it all in and moves on.

VENDORS line the sides of the streets. Fruits and vegetables are malnourished.

Ambrose shops, moving from vendor to vendor. He stops at a bread stand and takes a whiff.

A CHILD'S CRY catches Ambrose's attention.

A HOMELESS WOMAN (30), her BOY (10) and GIRL (6) attempt to stay warm. They are clearly starved.

Ambrose eyeballs the warm bread but instead approaches the family. He hands the girl 5 coins.

The woman smiles warmly at Ambrose.

INT. BOOK STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Rows of rickety shelves hold poorly stacked books in the tight quarters. The STORE OWNER (60's) is passed out behind the counter.

Ambrose enters. His face lights up as he ventures into canyons of literature.

Ambrose scans the shelves. A book of Africa. He flips through the pages.

Illustrations of the animals and the topography mesmerize Ambrose.

As Ambrose peruses he recognizes the brightly colored mask with lion teeth trim: *WITCH DOCTOR MASK*.

Ambrose slams the book shut and heads to the teller.

The store owner SNORES loudly. His feet up on the counter.

Ambrose clears his throat but it's no use.

AMBROSE

Excuse me? Sir?

Nothing.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Sir!

Ambrose scans the store -- Nobody around. His eyes shift to the door... The book... The snoring store owner. Decision.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Hello?!

Finally, Ambrose lifts the store owner's foot in the air tipping him back.

The store owner jumps up in a fluster. After a moment he comes to.

STORE OWNER

Jesus, boy. A little consideration next time.

AMBROSE

My apologies.

The store owner snatches the book out of Ambrose's hands.

STORE OWNER

Ten pence.

Ambrose removes 5 coins.

AMBROSE

I only have five.

STORE OWNER

Then you're short. Piss off.

The store owner throws the book on the ground behind him. A cloud of dust rises from the unkept floor.

Ambrose remains planted as the store owner doses off.

EXT. BOOK STORE - CONTINUOUS

Ambrose exits the store empty handed. Disappointment tattooed on his face. He rambles down the street in defeat.

INT. AMBROSE'S HOME - DUSK

Cold and dark.

The door opens. Ambrose steps in.

Strikes a match.

Makes a fire.

A pot of broth on the stove. The broth contains only a few pieces of cabbage.

Ambrose sits at the table trying desperately to finish the horrendous meal.

The broth goes down the drain.

Ambrose scans through titles on the bookshelf. His eyes move quickly. They stop and widen.

The book: *MAPS OF THE WORLD*.

Ambrose flips through the pages. Stops on Africa. He studies the map. His finger runs across the mountain ranges and rivers.

RAIN FALL breaks the silence.

All of the sudden, CRIES OF JOY echo throughout the streets.
Ambrose sets the book down and opens his door.

EXT. STREET - SAME

Thundershower. TOWNSPEOPLE are hysterical. They jump, dance and roll around in the mud.

Ambrose watches and smiles. Gazes up at the sky.

Lightning strikes.

Ambrose observes the gypsy. She kneels in the street and reaches for the sky mouthing her prayers.

Ambrose watches her in wonder.

The gypsy glances at Ambrose and smiles.

Ambrose returns the gesture but quickly retreats inside.

AMBROSE'S HOME

Ambrose tends the dying fire. He steps back to the book. Just as he is about to sit down there is a KNOCK on the door.

Ambrose is puzzled.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Ambrose gets to his feet and approaches the door.

BANG!

Ambrose is startled.

AMBROSE

Yes?

EMMET LOCKHEART (O.S.)

Mister Keen?

AMBROSE

Yes?

EMMET LOCKHEART (O.S.)

I was wondering if I might have a word.

Ambrose cracks the door and peeks out.

Emmet is dressed nicely enough but not for the weather. He is drenched.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)
Inside if you don't mind. It's
pissing down out here.

Emmet pushes his way inside and shakes himself dry extinguishing most of the fire.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)
We've waited almost a full year for
rain, and already I can hardly wait
for it to be over.

Ambrose hurries to the fireplace to keep the flame alive.

Emmet admires the wall of maps.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)
You are Ambrose Keen.

Ambrose keeps a close eye on Emmet.

AMBROSE
Yes.

A beat.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
What can I help you with, sir?

Emmet turns to Ambrose. The fire burns brightly behind him.

EMMET LOCKHEART
You make maps?

Emmet swanks around the room. Rummages through Ambrose's personal items.

AMBROSE
Yes. Well, I try.

Emmet smiles.

EMMET LOCKHEART
There you have it.

Ambrose tries to keep up.

EMMET LOCKHEART (CONT'D)
Where have you worked? India? The
Americas?