

Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 1.7.ext1

Hannibal's dream too, however detestable to one of Roman blood, gave a sure prediction; not only his waking hours but even his very sleep was hostile to our empire. For he drank in a vision fitting his design and prayers. He thought a young man, taller than mortal form, had been sent to him by Jupiter to guide the invasion of Italy. Warned by him, Hannibal at first followed in his track without turning his eyes in any direction; but presently with the tendency of the human mind to want to scrutinize the forbidden he looked back and saw a reptile of immense size trampling in its headlong rush everything in its path; and behind the reptile rainstorms bursting amid mighty thunderclaps and light enveloped in murky shades. Amazed, he asked what sort of prodigy was this and what it portended. Then said the guide: "You see the devastation of Italy. So hold your peace and leave the rest to the silent fates." (trans. Shackleton Bailey)

Silius Italicus, *Punica* 3.163-213

Then the Almighty Father, purposing to test the Roman people by peril, to raise their fame to heaven by victory in fierce warfare, and to repeat their ancient ordeal, urged on Hannibal's design by breaking his peaceful rest and sending terrors to disturb his sleep. Quickly the god of Cyllene, flying through the dewy darkness of the night, carried the message of his sire. At once he accosted Hannibal, where he lay at ease in untroubled sleep, and upbraided him with sharp reproof: "Ruler of Libya, it becomes not a leader to pass the whole night in slumber: war prospers when the commander wakes. You will see ships swarm forth ere long to plough the sea, and Roman warriors speeding all over the deep, while you, slow to begin, stand idle in the land of Spain. Is it glory enough for you, and a memorable feat of arms, to have overthrown Greek Saguntum with so great an effort? Arise! and if aught in your heart is capable of bold action, then go quickly along with me and accompany my summons (I forbid you to look back: such is the command of Jupiter) and I will set you victorious before the lofty walls of Rome."

And now he dreamed that Mercury laid a hand upon him and drew him in joy and haste to the land of Saturn, when he was startled by a sudden noise about him and a hissing of fierce tongues behind him that hurtled through the sky. Stricken with intense fear, he forgot the divine command, and looked behind him in his dismay. Behold! a black serpent, sweeping along in its huge embrace woods, and forest-trees torn from the hills, and rocks dragged along a pathless track, was hissing with deadly blast. Huge as the Serpent which moves with its coils round the Great and Little Bear and encompasses both constellations in its course, so huge it parts its jaws with cavernous yawn, and raises its crest to the height of rain-swept mountains. And the fury of the bursting heavens redoubled the noise and discharged a storm of rain mixed with hail. Terrified by this portent (for his sleep was not real sleep, and the power of night was waning, because the god whose rod dispels darkness had mingled night with day) Hannibal asked what this terrible monster was, and whither it was bearing that body which weighed down the earth, and what nations were demanded by its open jaws. The god who was born in the cold caverns of fostering Cyllene made reply: "You see the war you have prayed for: mighty wars follow in your train, and falling forests, and fierce storms in an angry sky, and slaughter of men, with mighty

destruction and doleful doom to the people of Ida. All this is your doing. As that huge serpent with scaly hide laid waste the mountains and hurled the uprooted forests over the plains and wetted the whole earth with its foaming slaver, so you, as huge, will rush down from the conquered Alps and wrap Italy in a black cloud of war; and with a noise like the serpent's you will shatter the walls of towns and root out cities and dash them to the ground." (trans. Duff)