

## Nepos' Hannibal as a Trickster<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Outline of Nepos' *Life of Hannibal*

- Chapters 1 and 2: Introduction and preliminary matters (including Hannibal in 195 BCE telling Antiochus the Great how he came to hate the Romans)
- Chapters 3–5: The Italian campaign (218–203 BCE)
- Chapters 6–7.6: Hannibal returns to Carthage; aftermath of the Second Punic War (202–196)
- Chapters 7.7–9: Initial events of Hannibal's exile (195–190)
- Chapters 10–12: Hannibal at the court of Prusias in Bithynia and related events (190–c. 183)
- Chapter 13: summing up

### 2. Nepos *Hannibal* 1.1

*Si verum est, quod nemo dubitat, ut populus Romanus omnes gentes virtute superarit, non est infitandum Hannibalem tanto praestitisse ceteros imperatores prudentia quanto populus Romanus antecedit fortitudine cunctas nationes.*

If it is true, as no one doubts, that the Roman people have surpassed all other nations in valor, it must be admitted that Hannibal excelled all other commanders in skill [*prudentia*] as much as the Roman people are superior to all nations in bravery.

### 3. Nepos *Hannibal* 5.1–2 (cf. Livy 22.16–17)

*Hac pugna pugnata Romam profectus est nullo resistente. In propinquis urbi montibus moratus est. Cum aliquot ibi dies castra habuisset et Capuam reverteretur, Q. Fabius Maximus, dictator Romanus, in agro Falerno ei se obiecit. 2 Hic clausus locorum angustiis noctu sine ullo detrimento exercitus se expedivit; Fabioque, callidissimo imperatori, dedit verba. Namque obducta nocte sarmenta in cornibus iuvenorum deligata incendit eiusque generis multitudinem magnam dispalatam immisit. Quo repentino obiecto visu tantum terrorem iniecit exercitui Romanorum, ut egredi extra vallum nemo sit ausus.*

After having fought that battle, Hannibal advanced upon Rome without resistance. He halted in the hills near the city. After he had remained in camp there for several days and was returning to Capua, the Roman dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus opposed himself to him in the Falernian region. But Hannibal, although caught in a defile, extricated himself by night without the loss of any of his men, and thus tricked Fabius, that most skillful of generals. For under cover of night, the Carthaginian bound dry branches to the horns of cattle and set fire to them, then sent a great number of animals in that condition to wander about in all directions. The sudden appearance of such a sight caused so great a panic in the Roman army that no one dared to go outside the entrenchments.

### 4. Nepos *Hannibal* 9.2–4

*Vidit autem vir omnium callidissimus in magno se fore periculo, nisi quid providisset, propter avaritiam Cretensium. Magnam enim secum pecuniam portabat, de qua sciebat exisse famam. Itaque capit tale consilium. Amphoras complures complet plumbo, summas operit auro et argento. Has praesentibus principibus deponit in templo Dianae, simulans se suas fortunas illorum fidei credere. His in errorem inductis statuas aeneas, quas secum portabat, omni sua pecunia complet easque in propatulo domi abicit.*

But being the cleverest of all men, he realized that he would be in great danger, unless he devised some means of escaping the avarice of the Cretans; for he was carrying with him a large sum of money,

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<sup>1</sup> Translations (sometimes with modifications) are taken from J. C. Rolfe's Loeb.

and he knew that news of this had leaked out. He therefore devised the following plan: he filled a number of large jars with lead and covered their tops with gold and silver. These, in the presence of the leading citizens, he deposited in the temple of Diana, pretending that he was entrusting his property to their protection. Having thus misled them, he filled some bronze statues that he was carrying with him with all his money and threw them carelessly down in the courtyard of his house.

### 5. Snakes on a Boat!: Summary of Nepos *Hannibal* 10.4–11.7

1. Have troops gather many venomous snakes in many clay pots
2. Figure out which ship Eumenes is traveling on by sending a messenger to the king
3. Attack fleet; employ snake grenades
4. Enemy flees in panic

### 6. Nepos *Hannibal* 12.3–5

*Hannibal enim uno loco se tenebat, in castello, quod ei a rege datum erat muneri, idque sic aedificarat, ut in omnibus partibus aedificii exitus haberet, scilicet verens, ne usu veniret, quod accidit. Huc cum legati Romanorum venissent ac multitudine domum eius circumdedissent, puer, ab ianua prospiciens, Hannibali dixit plures praeter consuetudinem armatos apparere. Qui imperavit ei ut omnes fores aedificii circumiret ac propere sibi nuntiaret num eodem modo undique obsideretur. Puer cum celeriter quid esset renuntiasset omnisque exitus occupatos ostendisset, sensit id non fortuito factum, sed se peti neque sibi diutius vitam esse retinendam.*

As a matter of fact, Hannibal kept himself in one place, in a stronghold which the king had given him, and he had so arranged it that he had exits in every part of the building, evidently being in fear of experiencing what actually happened. When the envoys of the Romans had come to the place and surrounded his house with a great body of troops, a slave looking out from one of the doors reported that an unusual number of armed men were in sight. Hannibal ordered him to go about to all the doors of the building and hasten to inform him whether he was beset in the same way on every side. The slave having quickly reported the facts and told him that all the exits were guarded, Hannibal knew that it was no accident; that it was he whom they were after and he must no longer think of preserving his life.

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