

WANUNI: RISE OF THE KING

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FADE IN:

Title Card: Katera - Desert Nation

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

SUNLIGHT blaring across sand dunes. Soon sounds of WAR CHANTING as CAMERA PANS footsteps in the sand.

KATERA NATIVES congregate at a ceremonial gathering. They have the exact same tribal TATTOOS on their backs.

A haunting SCREAMING, a sort of Yiddish coming from a skinny TRIBAL MAN in a trance, convulsion. He stands on a large rock platform.

The tribal king, DRION, (40) sits in a ornate chair made out of elephant bones. KATERA WARRIORS at least three hundred, stand to attention near the king. (There is no specific formation; they simply stand there with spears in their hands. Some are decorated with other tribal weapons.) As the King raises his hand, the chanting/screaming stops.

Drion holds a skull-like cup and drinks the blood on the inside. CAMERA PANS to an BLOOD-STAINED ROCK ALTAR. This is a sacrifice ceremony. The winds picks up a little as some of the other MOTHERS and CHILDREN look on, a bit saddened.

CEREMONIAL LEADER

Tribe of Katera. A sacrifice to Dradosh. What better way than to incur the power for Drion, our King.

The CHANTING stirs up again. In the front of the congregation is a MOTHER (35) holding a BABY (soon to be known as Udari). The mother looks at the baby, crying uncontrollably. A SLENDER MAN forcibly yanks the baby away from her.

The man gives the baby to the Ceremonial Leader who starts jiggling the baby around. Soon an OLDER TRIBAL WOMAN throws gold dust on the baby.

He points to Drion who still holds the cup, awaiting for blood from the sacrifice. The ceremonial leader takes hint and takes a dagger, raising it to the neck of the child. As the mother screams, one of the warriors slice her in the stomach, killing her. Some of the PEOPLE of the tribe look away as she is dragged away from the ceremonial site, her body leaving a trail in the dust.

CEREMONIAL LEADER (CONT'D)
 (to the baby; raising his
 hand to kill her)
 Daughter of Katera, honor your god.

The baby begins to cry as the leader angles to stab into her but suddenly, the passing wind has changed into a huge dreary windstorm.

CEREMONIAL LEADER (CONT'D)
 What is this?

The people, becoming swarmed by the dust, begin to panic and disperse, soon running towards the nearby caves.

The ceremonial leader looks at the confused king who is now being draped with a huge black cloak by an ATTENDANT. The ceremonial leader hands the baby (Udari) to the same warrior who cut her mother.

CEREMONIAL LEADER (CONT'D)
 Preserve the child until the storm
 passes.

The warrior takes the child and passes her to a TEENAGE GIRL. The girl begins for the caves, soon eventually stepping over the baby's dead mother. She was beautiful.

INT. ROYAL CAVE SAME

Drion marches into his cave while the ceremonial leader follows behind.

DRION
 (re: windstorm)
 Teyaba, are the gods of Katera not
 honored?

TEYABA
 Yes, Drion, my King. They are.
 Perhaps you need more sacrifices to
 appease them. This can and will
 draw upon the power of kings who
 have gone before you.

Drion gets in Teyaba's face, choking him.

DRION
 Who before me was ever greater?! I
 am more powerful than any.

Drion releases Teyaba's throat.

DRION (CONT'D)

I will invade the other lands and
make every kingdom my own.

TEYABA

You will be all powerful. You will
be blessed. You will be eternal.

DRION

(pointing outside)
Now get my sacrifices.

EXT. DESERT - SAME

The teenage girl, blasted with sand and set back by wind,
trudges towards the forest with the baby (Udari) in her arm.
Soon she falls down almost crushing the child. The child is
safe underneath her, almost smiling. The teenage girl shakes
her head, soon leaving the baby abandoned in the sand.

INT. NATIVE'S CAVE - SAME

Teyaba and a few soldiers storm inside a native's cave. A
FATHER with his two WIVES and a few CHILDREN. Teyaba looks at
another BABY GIRL.

TEYABA

Your daughter for the king.

The father gestures for his family to stay away:

FATHER

Lord Teyaba, the way of our people
is not one of killing and
sacrifice. You can't be sure that
these requests are from the gods.

Teyaba gestures for the soldiers to take the child by force
if necessary.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Please, my Lord. What god would ask
for my child?

TEYABA

The gods of King Drion!

One of the warriors drive a sword into the father, who limps
to the ground dying as the soldier takes the child. The
family nearby shudder in fear.

EXT. KATERA'S DESERT VILLAGE - SAME

SCREAMS from women and children as warriors snatch BABIES from their mothers and brothers. Mass killing as they slit the necks of the young mothers.

EXT. KATERA DESERT - SAME

The baby CRIES but a GROANING SOUND overpowers the cry. The baby is lying atop a BALOK (a flying stingray shaped animal).

The Balok rises to the sky, ascending in a hovering motion.

EXT. WANUNI MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - DAY

WANUNI PEOPLES skirt the incline (pathway) of a huge mountain range. This is their abode. Above a few Baloks with RIDERS soar above.

In the distance is a VALLEY.

EXT. WANUNI VALLEY - DAY

YOUNG BOYS race against each other, LAUGHING amongst themselves. One of the boys, TEMPO (4), hears the MOANS of a Balok in the bordering forest.

It is the same Balok from earlier. It's covered with dust and there is the baby (Udari). Tempo looks with suspicion.

LATER

Running towards the mountain settlement, Tempo leads the pack and runs right into the village's seer, GONJABI (70) who halts Tempo to a stop.

TEMPO

(rapidly)

Gonjabi, Gonjabi! Tempo has found a baby from the sky. A baby and a Bolak-- in the dust!

GONJABI

(very calm)

Quiet, Tempo. Quiet. Such blubbering offend Selah. Now, let peace give you utterance my boy.

TEMPO

Gonjabi. A baby has fell from the sky. Come see.

LATER

Gonjabi and Tempo look at Udari; she and the Bolak sleep.

GONJABI

Heee, I see. This is a sky baby?

TEMPO

(pointing to the TATTOO on
her back)

No Gonjabi, she is Katera; she is
filled with the desert.

GONJABI

Tempo, she is now a child of Selah.
And Selah have sent her to the
nation of Wanuni.

(a beat)

Keep quiet for now. I'll find the
king.

EXT. WANUNI MOUNTAIN VILLAGE DAY

Wanuni king, PIATI (45), walks up the mountain incline with a
Wanuni Philosopher, KAYPESH (55, dwarfed). They walk in an
opening of the mountain.

KAYPESH

How could a flower grow into an
apple? Or a bird into a tiger? It
can only express what's in its DNA.

PIATI

Kaypesh, I beg to differ. Being a
king is not the only thing in my
DNA. A king is more than just a
king. He is everyman. He is your
servant and your friend. Your
brother and your mother.

They two grin. Gonjabi approaches, interrupting the two men.
There is a sling on Gonjabi's back. He has something to say
but he kneels down before Piati.

GONJABI

My king, I will not rise until you
bless me.

Piati senses some urgency.

PIATI

You are blessed, Gonjabi. Rise and
speak.

Gonjabi rises.

GONJABI

King Piati, you know the fruit of
thy loins?

Looking at the Teyaba with a wry smile on his face:

PIATI

My loins are distinguishable.

GONJABI

My King, what about the fruit from
the loins of Selah?

On the back of Gonjabi rests baby (Udari) forcing her way through the slit of the sling. Piati looks at the child and begins to wipe the dust from her face.

PIATI

Who is this Gonjabi?

GONJABI

She is the child of Selah sent from
above.

FADE TO BLACK

Title Card: Year of the Sun

FADE IN:

EXT. WANUNI VALLEY DAY

An OLDER Gonjabi (85) stoops on the ground examining huge crags in the earth. He takes a group of ANIMAL BONES out of a small knapsack and rolls it like dice on the hard crusted earth. There is a look of alarm on his face.

He gets up, the sun shining behind him.

INT. WANUNI MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

The philosopher Kaypesh, (58) from the beginning, teaches a class. Wanuni's ROYAL CHILDREN (the "Kabila") sit on the floor, paying attention. Among the group are UDARI (15; "sky daughter") and KOFET (15). From behind, we see Udari's tribal tattoo - from the Ketara tribe. Also among them is an older Tempo (18) from the beginning.

Piati stands by the opening of this rocky conclave (room) without being seen.

KAYPESH (O.C.)

You are Wanuni, but also the children of the Kabila. Royal blood with a set purpose. Kofet, you are the son of the king. Udari, his daughter. In times to come, this kingdom shall be yours and you will give it to Selah.

UDARI

(rebelliously)

And if Selah has this kingdom, then what need is a king of Wanuni? He is nothing more than a servant.

Kofet whispers as Piata watches unbeknownst in the distance:

KOFET

Quiet sister.

KAYPESH

Selah is a great God, Udari, that chooses men to represent him.

UDARI

What man is good enough to represent Selah? Or rather, Selah to represent man?

PIATI (O.C.)

You defy Selah, Udari?!

Udari as well as the whole class kneel down as Piati approaches. In unison, all of the class:

CLASS

King Piati, we will not rise until you bless us.

UDARI

Forgive me, Father. I didn't mean to offend you.

PIATI

You're full of blatant offense for all Wanuni, your king, and Selah! You're a blasphemous child!

Tempo looks at Udari, feeling some pity for her. Kofet, instead, has a smirk on his face.

EXT. WANUNI VALLEY - DAY

Tempo, breathing hard, looks at the mountain, his eyes zoning on a small circle (hole-in-the-wall) in the mountain side.

The WANUNI BOYS, led by Kofet, run at top speed toward Tempo. Apparently, Tempo was the victor of that race.

KOFET

Your speed may take you further
than the others, but it is I who
shall always be close to your side.

The two boys exchange a smile and a brotherly handshake though soon Tempo looks up at the hole in the mountain.

INT. SELAH'S CAVE DAY

Small, prison-like cave filled with sunlight streaming through a single circle window.

Udari, kneeling on the floor, recites an incantation over and over. She looks through the window at the blue sky.

UDARI

Forgive me, Selah, for I have
offended. Forgive me, Selah, for I
have offended. Forgive me, Selah --

EXT. SELAH'S CAVE - DAY

Kaypesh and Udari's mother, NOMINTA, watch at Udari.

NOMINTA

What has she done now?

KAYPESH

Assert her will to know the truth.

NOMINTA

The truth about what?

KAYPESH

The truth about everything, Queen
Nominta.

NOMINTA

Hah, I see. She has somehow
inherited Piati's will.

They two grin at this.

EXT. WANUNI VALLEY DAY

Wanuni BOYS run towards the mountains in the distance while King Piata and Gonjabi, moving in the opposite position, walk towards the valley nearing the forest. They approach the spot where there are large, discernible CRAGS in the ground.

GONJABI

My king. What does your kingdom mean to you?

PIATI

Gonjabi, I rule with honesty and grace. And Wanuni has respected me for this. My kingdom means every good thing.

GONJABI

And your wife Nominta? And your children Kofet and Udari? And the royal Kabila? Your servants and your allies? And me? Your advisor?

PIATI

Gonjabi, speak what it is that is on your heart.

Gonjabi pulls bones out off his sack and flings them on the ground.

GONJABI

My king, today I saw the ending of your kingdom.

PIATI

I see. Go on.

He points to each bone, all of different shapes and sizes.

GONJABI

Here is the desert, Piati. Here, a king with a blood thirst for power. Here, the forest and Wanuni. Here, destruction.

PIATI

How long, Gonjabi? How long?

GONJABI

The time will be soon, my King.

Piatti whistles in the direction of the forest.

A group of Bolek's glide from the forest to where Piata and Gonjabi stand. Piata mounts one and kneels on it, taking the reins. He then waits for Gonjabi to get on the other Bolek.

GONJABI (CONT'D)

Wait, my king, would you not like to know if you shall live or die?

PIATI

My friend, Gonjabi. I do not care to know if I will survive. I simply want to know if I will *fight*.

Gonjabi sees that Piati understands the brevity of the premonition. There's no use in explaining more.

Piata kicks his Bolek like a horse and soars towards his village. Gonjabi SIGHS and pats one of the other Boleks.

INT. SELAH'S CAVE - DAY

Udari still makes incantations. Three small stones are thrown into the room. Udari stops to look at them. She turns around. It's Tempo with his handsome grin.

UDARI

You choose to desecrate Selah's cave?

TEMPO

No. Not more than you already have, Udari.

UDARI

That is not funny.

TEMPO

I say that with no laughter on my face.

She looks at him sternly and then goes back to praying.

TEMPO (CONT'D)

You can do better praying outside.

UDARI

(trying to stay focused)
I'm not allowed.

TEMPO

When has being 'not allowed' ever stopped you from doing what you want?