

WAGERS OF FATE

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Based on the book by
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TEASER

INT. PRINCE HECTOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The room is bathed in the pale glow of moonlight spilling through tall arched windows. PRINCE HECTOR, a boy on the cusp of manhood, lies restless in his bed. Beads of sweat glisten on his brow as his breath quickens.

DREAM SEQUENCE - INT. THRONE ROOM

Hector sits on an ornate throne, its grandeur symbolizing his ancestors' legacy. His hands clutch the armrests as three faceless figures close in, their strength growing, their intent relentless.

Hector's grip tightens, his knuckles white. The throne groans under the strain, threatening to splinter.

Hector's voice cracks, raw with desperation:

HECTOR
Father, Help.

Hector grips the armrests, his knuckles white, his whole body straining to stay seated.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
No!

The figures' strength grows, their silent intent overwhelming. The throne creaks under the pressure as Hector struggles to hold on.

INT. PRINCE HECTOR'S CHAMBER - BACK TO REALITY

Hector jolts upright, gasping for air. The echoes of the creaking throne still ring faintly in his ears. His body trembles, his skin damp with sweat, as moonlight streaks across the chamber in pale bands.

His wide eyes dart around the familiar room, the heavy silence pulling him back to the present.

After a long moment, his breathing slows. He whispers, his voice barely audible, filled with longing.

HECTOR
Father...

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

WAGERS OF FATE

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. NORTHERN ROAD - DAY

The northern landscape is cold and shrouded in a thin FOG, the ground wet and uneven. A BAND OF RIDERS cuts through the mist, their GOLDEN ARMOR glinting brilliantly in the pale sunlight. At their head rides EMPEROR DARRYL VARGASSIAN, a man of imposing stature, his regal demeanor evident in his every move.

Four IMPERIAL GUARDS flank him, their armor polished to a mirror shine, catching the surrounding world in distorted clarity.

The CLINK of bridles and the rhythmic STOMP of hooves accompany them as the fog begins to lift, unveiling the majestic MENDIA MOUNTAIN. Perched high upon its black rock summit is a massive CASTLE, its architecture bold and commanding. Below the castle sprawls HIGHCLIFF, the lively capital of the Northern Kingdom.

Darryl pulls a WATERSKIN from his saddlebag, strikes a casual yet commanding pose, and takes a deep drink. His eyes remain fixed on the view ahead, where two FLAGS ripple in the breeze atop the castle walls:

The HIPPOGRIFF beneath the GOLDEN SUN of the Vargassian Empire and the WHITE TIGER of the Northern Kingdom. As they descend toward the city, the bustling life of Highcliff comes into focus: SHOPS teeming with merchants, TRADERS hawking wares from distant lands, BLACKSMITHS hammering away, and GUARDS patrolling the streets.

The SOUTHERN JAIL looms in the distance, where PRISONERS in drab uniforms, shackled and under strict guard, toil to repair walls and sweep streets.

IMPERIAL GUARD #1
(eyeing the city)
Not exactly what I'd call a warm
welcome.

Darryl smirks but says nothing, his gaze locked on the grandeur of the Northern Kingdom as they approach the gates.

Beyond the gate, banners flutter in the wind, and the muffled din of the bustling city fades to silence as the EMPEROR and his retinue approach.

Awaiting them is LORD CASPER of the Leonberg family, mounted on a majestic WHITE TIGER. His presence is formidable, his armour a blend of imperial refinement and northern practicality.

Beside him stands COMMANDER AMOS, a weathered warrior whose stern expression mirrors the disciplined HORSEMEN flanking them.

As the Emperor draws near, Lord Casper dismounts with fluid grace. His men follow suit. The group kneels in unison, heads bowed in reverence.

LORD CASPER
Hail Emperor Darryl.
(he raises his head)
Welcome to Highcliff.

As per tradition, Lord Casper draws his elaborately crafted NORTHERN LONGSWORD, its blade shimmering with dwarven runes, and presents it to the Emperor, hilt first.

LORD CASPER (CONT'D)
My sword is yours, my lord.

Emperor Darryl accepts the blade, holding it aloft. He inspects its craftsmanship with an approving nod before, in a sudden flourish, brandishing it dramatically.

He swings it as if to STRIKE LORD CASPER—an almost playful threat that stops mere inches from Casper's neck.

The gathered guards and courtiers freeze in collective tension.

But Darryl's laughter cuts through the stillness.

EMPEROR DARRYL
Oh, Casper! Always the picture of
loyalty and bravery.

Casper remains unmoved, his composure unbroken.

LORD CASPER
I have nothing to reproach myself
for, my lord.
(MORE)

LORD CASPER (CONT'D)
I am honoured to serve the empire
with a quiet conscience.

Darryl lowers the sword, impressed by the man's steadfast demeanor.

EMPEROR DARRYL
Well then, where is that juicy
northern feast?

LORD CASPER
It shall be arranged, my lord.
(rising)
Allow me to show you to your
quarters and prepare the feast in
your honor.

Darryl nods, handing the sword back to Casper. The entourage moves toward the massive gates of Highcliff Castle. The gates CREAK open, revealing the bustling, lively streets of Highcliff. The air is thick with excitement, the atmosphere alive with music and the murmur of voices. The scene feels like a grand celebration that has been brewing for days.

EXT. HIGHCLIFF - NIGHT

The streets are filled with lanterns, banners, and the smells of roasting meats. Laughter, music, and the beat of drums fill the air as citizens in furs gather to feast.

A long table is piled with roasted boar, venison, bread, and stews, while wine flows freely. Children chase pigs around the square, their laughter echoing.

AMONG THE GATHERING, the sounds of loud cheers and chatter rise.

Suddenly, the sound of clashing metal fills the air.

CUT TO:

EXT. FEASTING AREA - NIGHT

A circle is formed near a raised stage, where Amos steps forward, drawing his sword. His voice rings out, commanding attention.

AMOS
(with a grin)
Let the sword dance begin!

The crowd quiets, all eyes on Amos as he readies himself. Behind him, FIVE OF THE NORTH'S BEST SWORDSMEN draw their blades, stepping forward with synchronized precision. Each is a master of the blade, their movements sharp and fluid. The tension rises.

The music shifts, becoming a rhythmic, pounding beat.

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

The duel begins.

Amos circles the first fighter. A flash of steel and a clash of swords as they engage, the sound of metal on metal echoing through the square. The crowd gasps and cheers with each strike, the dance almost hypnotic in its intensity. Amos moves with a smoothness that suggests a predator at work, his blade flashing in the dim light, cutting through the air like a master.

The next fighter steps forward, but Amos is faster. His sword arcs through the air, narrowly missing his opponent as he sidesteps with the grace of a dancer, then lands a blow that knocks the sword from the man's hand.

THE CROWD CHEERS WILDLY.

The final two duelists are quick, but Amos is quicker, using his agility and skill to outmaneuver them both in rapid succession. He twirls, spins, and strikes with the precision of a seasoned warrior. With a final flourish, he disarms the last man and points his sword upward in triumph.

THE CROWD BURSTS INTO APPLAUSE.

EXT. CENTER STAGE - NIGHT

The sound of clashing metal fades as the performers from the night's spectacle begin to take the stage. The music shifts into something slower, more dramatic. A SILENT OPERA BEGINS.

THREE ACTORS step forward, each representing one of the three warring kingdoms. The first wears a white tiger pelt, representing the North. The second dons golden armor, representing the Middle Kingdom. The third wears a pirate's garb, representing the Southern Kingdom.

They move with grace and strength, acting out a silent battle, swords clashing in slow, deliberate motions. Each warrior fights valiantly, but their power is clearly waning.

They stagger, weak and slow, each one barely able to stand as their attacks grow more desperate.

SUDDENLY, the ground shakes as a low growl rumbles from the shadows.

The three warriors, now struggling on their knees, gasp in surprise as a pack of orc-like figures emerges from the fog. These figures, large and menacing, move in silence, brandishing jagged axes. They advance slowly, stalking the weakened warriors, ready to strike the final blow.

A HORSE'S HOOVES RUMBLE LOUDLY ACROSS THE STAGE.

At the back of the stage, A SAVIOR emerges, riding a ROYAL HIPPOGRIFF—an imposing, majestic creature with gleaming feathers and sharp, intelligent eyes. The savior wears the VARGASSIAN CREST, the symbol of Theon Vargassian, the unifier of the three kingdoms.

The savior raises his sword high, its blade flashing in the moonlight as he charges toward the orcs, his mount galloping with the power of a storm. In a flurry of movement, the savior strikes down the orcs one by one, his sword flashing with lethal precision.

The orcs scream in terror as they flee toward the northern mountains, disappearing into the night.

The three warriors, still on their knees, look up at the savior in awe.

They bow their heads in submission, kneeling before him, their swords held low as a sign of allegiance.

The audience watches in rapt silence.

Emperor Darryl, sitting at the head of the audience, applauds loudly. His applause echoes through the hall, and the rest of the crowd follows suit, clapping and cheering in appreciation of the performance.

EXT. HIGHCLIFF CASTLE - NIGHT

The camera pulls back from the cheering crowd, capturing the grandeur of the scene as torches burn brightly, and the revelry continues into the night.

EXT. HIGHCLIFF - HUNTING GROUNDS - MORNING

The northern wilderness stretches endlessly—rolling plains dotted with frost-covered shrubs and bordered by dense, shadowy forests. The air is crisp, and the distant call of a hawk cuts through the stillness.

Emperor Darryl Vargassian rides at the head of a small hunting party. His movements are confident, his sharp eyes scanning the horizon with determination. Lord Casper Leonberg and Commander Amos follow close behind, flanked by a few IMPERIAL ARCHERS.

Darryl grips a finely crafted SPEAR, its tip gleaming in the pale sunlight.

EMPEROR DARRYL
(gesturing ahead)
This is the north at its finest.
Wild. Unforgiving. Just as it
should be.

LORD CASPER
(chuckling)
And its buffalo, my lord, are the
wildest of all. They've humbled
many a hunter.

Darryl glances back with a wry smile.

EMPEROR DARRYL
Then it's time they bow to their
Emperor.

Casper exchanges a subtle look with Commander Amos, who shrugs in silent agreement.

Suddenly, Darryl reins in his horse and signals for the group to halt.

EMPEROR DARRYL (CONT'D)
(quietly, pointing)
There.

In the distance, a MASSIVE NORTHERN BUFFALO grazes, its dark fur rippling in the breeze and its curved horns sharp as blades.

Darryl's excitement is palpable. Without waiting, he urges his horse forward.

COMMANDER AMOS
My lord, wait!

But Darryl is already riding hard, his spear ready.

LORD CASPER
(urgently)
Your Highness, let us flank it—

EMPEROR DARRYL
(looking over his
shoulder)
No, Casper! This one is mine!

His voice carries authority and fervor, leaving no room for debate.

Darryl closes the distance between himself and the buffalo, his horse thundering across the frost-bitten plain. The beast snorts and bolts, its powerful legs tearing up the ground.

Back in the hunting party, Casper spurs his horse to follow.

LORD CASPER
(to the others)
Stay close! protect his majesty!

Commander Amos and the archers race after them, their urgency growing as the gap between Darryl and the rest widens.

Ahead, the Emperor charges forward, a fiery determination in his eyes as the buffalo leads him farther into the wilderness.

EXT. NORTHERN WILDERNESS - CLIFF'S EDGE - DAY

The ground grows slick with patches of ICE, barely visible under the thin layer of snow. The buffalo, wild-eyed and desperate, barrels forward at full speed. Emperor Darryl pushes his horse harder, his spear poised for the perfect strike.

The beast veers suddenly, its hooves skidding as it approaches a deceptively smooth patch of ice near a CLIFF'S EDGE.

Darryl's horse falters, but his focus is singular—he doesn't see the danger ahead.

EMPEROR DARRYL
(almost triumphant)
You're mine now!

The buffalo slips, its massive frame crashing through the icy crust. The ground beneath it gives way, sending the beast plunging into the abyss.

A heartbeat later, Darryl's horse loses its footing, rearing wildly. Darryl's grip tightens, but it's too late. Both man and mount skid helplessly across the ice and disappear over the edge.

EXT. BASE OF THE CLIFF - MOMENTS LATER

The hunting party arrives, their faces pale with dread. Lord Casper and Commander Amos dismount and rush to the edge. Below, the Emperor's lifeless body lies sprawled in the snow, surrounded by jagged rocks. Nearby, the buffalo's hulking form lies still, its massive horns half-buried in the frozen earth.

Casper descends carefully, his expression heavy with grief. He kneels beside Darryl, his gauntleted hand trembling as he places it on the Emperor's chest.

Above, Amos looks on in shock.

COMMANDER AMOS

(astonished)

By the gods, what was he thinking?

LORD CASPER

(sighing heavily, shaking
his head)

Stubborn as always... and now it's
cost him his life.

A cold wind sweeps through the canyon, carrying away the last echoes of the chase.

EXT. SOLIRIS - DAY

The Imperial Capital of Soliris gleams under a brilliant sun. From above, the city resembles a radiant golden disc, encircled by lush green plains. Farmers toil in endless WHEAT FIELDS that ripple like liquid gold in the breeze, their scythes flashing as they cut and gather the ripe harvest.

The CIRCULAR WALLS of Soliris rise majestically, their sunburst engravings glowing faintly as if catching the light of the heavens. SENTINELS patrol the high battlements, their vigilant gazes sweeping across the horizon.

The city's vibrant streets bustle with merchants, playful children, and busy artisans, a shadow tempering the lively scene.

INT. IMPERIAL CASTLE - GRAND COUNCIL HALL - DAY

The murmur of VOICES reverberates in the grand chamber beneath the castle's vaulted ceilings. The tidings of Emperor Darryl's death have reached the court, and the atmosphere is electric with a mix of disquiet and veiled ambition.

COUNCILLORS in fine robes gather in groups, whispering. Their eyes shift to the empty throne at the head of the hall, a sign of the power up for grabs.

COUNCILLOR ZVEN

(whispering, urgent)

The Empire needs a ruler. The heir must take the throne now.

COUNCILLOR INGRID

(softly, with a thoughtful look)

Perhaps... but the throne deserves more than a grieving boy. He needs time to grow into it.

The conversations continue, hushed but fraught with tension. The grand hall seems to pulse with an unspoken battle for dominance.

INT. IMPERIAL CASTLE - PRINCESS AURELIA'S CHAMBER - DAY

In stark contrast to the tension below, PRINCESS AURELIA's chamber is a haven of warmth and innocence.

Sunlight filters through embroidered curtains, illuminating a collection of treasured keepsakes—delicate trinkets, drawings, and soft toys arranged with care.

Aurelia, sits cross-legged on a plush rug, her fingers absently tracing the well-worn surface of a stuffed toy resembling a mighty emperor. Its tiny crown is askew, and one button eye has loosened over the years.

She hums a soft, haunting melody, a lullaby her father used to sing to her. The sound carries an aching nostalgia, blending with the faint rustling of the trees outside.

Suddenly, the heavy door creaks open. Prince Hector enters, his tall figure casting a shadow across the room. His face is pale, his red-rimmed eyes betraying his struggle to maintain composure.

Aurelia looks up, her humming faltering as her gaze locks with Hector's. An unspoken dread washes over her.

The stuffed toy slips from her fingers.

AURELIA
(trembling, rushing to
him)
Hector... my brother.

She moves toward him quickly, hands clenched in nervous anticipation. He catches her, kneeling to meet her tearful gaze.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
(urgent)
What happened? What news?

Hector pauses, taking a breath as he gathers his emotions. His voice cracks as he speaks.

HECTOR
(softly, struggling)
Aurelia... Father... Emperor
Darryl... He... he fell while
hunting in the Highcliff woods.
He's gone.

Aurelia freezes, her face crumpling as the weight of Hector's words hits her. Tears spill down her cheeks, and she grabs onto him, desperate.

AURELIA
(weeping)
No... that can't be true. He can't
be gone...

Hector pulls her close, his arms trembling as he fights back tears, his face a mix of heartbreak and resolve.

HECTOR
(whispering)
I know, Aurelia. I know.
(he pulls back slightly,
meeting her eyes)
But I'm here. And I'll protect you.
Always.

Aurelia buries her face in his shoulder, her sobs quieting. Hector stares out the window, his expression hardening.

INT. IMPERIAL CASTLE - PRINCESS AURELIA'S CHAMBER -
CONTINUOUS

Hector pulls back, hands resting on Aurelia's shoulders. The grief on her face mirrors his, but he steadies his tone, like their father always did when comforting them.

HECTOR
(softly, steady)
I know it hurts, Aurelia. But
Father... he'd want us to stand
tall. For him. For each other. We
face this together.

Aurelia sniffles, her wide eyes glistening with fresh tears as she nods.

AURELIA
(voice trembling)
I'll try, Hector. I promise. But...
(she chokes up)
I'll miss him so much.

Her words hit Hector hard. For a moment, his composure falters. He blinks quickly, taking a deep breath before pulling her close again.

HECTOR
(whispering fiercely)
So will I. Every single day.
(he tightens his embrace)
But you're not alone. You'll never
be alone. I'll always be here for
you--no matter what.

Aurelia wipes her eyes on his tunic and looks up at him, a flicker of determination in her gaze.

AURELIA
(quietly)
You'll make a great Emperor,
Hector. Just like Father.

Hector freezes at her words, the weight of her trust hitting him. It's both comforting and overwhelming. He forces a small, brave smile.

HECTOR
(softly)
I'll do my best. For you. For him.

The castle bell tolls, breaking the silence. Aurelia flinches, gripping Hector's sleeve.

AURELIA
(fearful)
The bell... what does it mean?

Hector looks toward the window, where the sunlight now feels colder.

HECTOR
(whispering)
It's the announcement of the
Emperor's passing to the realm.

Tears well up in Aurelia's eyes again, but she bites her lip and straightens, drawing strength from Hector.

AURELIA
(resolute)
Then let them know the Emperor's
children won't break.

Hector glances at her, his pride in her courage clear despite the grief. He stands and offers his hand to help her up.

HECTOR
(steady)
Come on, Aurelia. We face this
together.

She takes his hand, steady in his grasp. They walk toward the door, framed by the golden light from the window, ready for whatever comes next.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - GRAND COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY

The GRAND COUNCIL CHAMBER of Soliris exudes imperial splendor, but tension fills the air. Court officials and noble advisors murmur as they take their seats. At the head of the table, EMPRESS YVELLAH ARAGESSE stands tall in crimson robes embroidered with the golden sun of the Empire. Beside her, GRAND MINISTER VALEFOR ARAGESSE watches the room with a sharp, unreadable gaze.

Yvellah raises a hand, commanding silence.

EMPRESS YVELLAH
(steady, but there's an
edge)
We're here because of a great loss.
Emperor Darryl, my consort, your
Emperor... he's gone.
(she pauses, glancing
around the room)
(MORE)

EMPRESS YVELLAH (CONT'D)
 But grief can't blind us to our
 duty. We're custodians of this
 Empire. We have to stay united,
 especially now.

A murmur spreads through the room. A few councillors exchange
 looks, some hesitant, others more certain.

GRAND MINISTER VALEFOR
 (stern, stepping up)
 Her Majesty's right. The Empire
 needs leadership, and it needs it
 now.
 (he narrows his eyes)
 This isn't just a transition. The
 Emperor's death leaves a hole, and
 there are people—inside and outside
 our borders—who won't wait to take
 advantage of it.
 (he leans in, voice
 dropping)
 We need action, and we need it
 fast, before this Empire starts to
 tear itself apart.

LORD ALBERT LIGHTBURN
 (stands up, calm but firm)
 And what exactly do you suggest,
 Grand Minister? Hand over power to
 the Aragesse?

The room goes quiet, all eyes now on ALBERT LIGHTBURN. His
 voice is measured, but there's an unmistakable challenge in
 it.

ALBERT LIGHTBURN
 Prince Hector is the rightful heir.
 He's the one who carries the
 Vargassian legacy, not any one
 house.

EMPRESS YVELLAH
 (cutting in, keeping cool)
 Master Lightburn, no one's
 questioning Hector's right to the
 throne. But he's still a child. A
 boy who's not ready for this. The
 Empire can't wait for him to grow
 up.

GRAND MINISTER VALEFOR
 (nods)
 Exactly. A regency is inevitable.
 (MORE)

GRAND MINISTER VALEFOR (CONT'D)
The only question is, who leads it
until Hector is ready to take over?

The room shifts as everyone absorbs the gravity of Valefor's words. The tension thickens.

LORD ALBERT LIGHTBURN
(stern, stepping forward)
A regency, yes. But it can't be
controlled by any one family. The
people won't accept it if the
Aragesse are pulling all the
strings while Hector's left to sit
on the sidelines.
(he looks around the room)
This council needs to make sure the
regency honors the Empire's legacy,
not anyone's personal ambitions.

A few councillors nod, though others remain silent, wary of
angering the Empress.

EMPRESS YVELLAH
(icy, challenging)
You talk like we're acting for our
own benefit, Albert. Everything we
do is for the Empire's stability.
Do you think the Aragesse are
disloyal?

LORD ALBERT LIGHTBURN
(holding her gaze)
Loyalty isn't the issue—it's the
perception. If the people start
believing the Aragesse are pulling
the strings, they'll question
everything. That kind of unrest...
it'll tear this Empire apart. And
that's a far greater threat than
any foreign enemy.

GRAND MINISTER VALEFOR
(voice sharp, stepping
closer)
Master Lightburn, you're treading
dangerously close to disrespect.
(he leans in, towering
over Albert)
The Aragesse have sacrificed a lot
for this Empire. Don't forget that.

Albert stands firm, unwavering.

LORD ALBERT LIGHTBURN
I haven't forgotten anything, Grand
Minister. Least of all my duty to
the late Emperor—and to his son.

The room goes silent. Yvella raises her hand, her voice
cutting through the tension.

EMPRESS YVELLAH
(stepping forward,
commanding)
Enough.
(she stands tall)
We're not making any decisions
today. This council will reconvene
once every voice is heard and we've
made a clear path forward.

Valefor steps back, clearly displeased. Albert gives a slight
nod but doesn't look away, his eyes lingering on Yvella and
her cousin.

INT. PALACE CORRIDORS - LATER

Albert walks down the stone corridor, his face grim, the
weight of what's to come settling in. A young messenger steps
from the shadows, holding a sealed letter.

MESSENGER
(quietly)
My lord, this arrived for you.

Albert takes the letter, his brow furrowing as he scans it.
His jaw tightens.

ALBERT LIGHTBURN
(under his breath, coldly)
So, the game begins.

He tucks the letter away, his pace unbroken as he strides
down the corridor, each step filled with determination.

EXT. VERDEN CITY - DAY

The camera sweeps over Verden, smoke rising from distant
fires. The streets, once bustling, are now filled with angry
protestors and makeshift barricades.

A group of hungry citizens huddle together, a child holding
out an empty bowl. The bakery nearby has burning loaves,
ignored by the crowd.

The silent arc-rights loom in the background, abandoned.

A horse-drawn cart moves through the chaos, its driver unaware of the tension as shouting erupts down the street.

CUT TO:

INT. GOVERNOR DYLAN'S MANSION - HALL OF MEETINGS

Governor Audric Dylan's mansion contrasts sharply with the chaos outside. The opulent hall, adorned with tapestries of Verden's glory, feels like a gilded cage.

At the central table, Percipient Broderick, sharp-eyed and grim, stands with Captain Bart, a hulking figure, and several officers. They turn as Governor Dylan enters, sighing heavily, burdened by his office.

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(weary but resolute)

What's the situation, Broderick?

PERCIPIENT BRODERICK

It's getting worse, Governor. The riots have intensified since Emperor Darryl's death. The Brotherhood of Monks in the Eastern Outskirts have risen up against the taxes. The people can't take much more.

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(cutting him off)

I know the taxes are hard, but they're necessary to feed our army. I'm not worried about the commoners—I'm more concerned about the bandits and the rebels, who'll see this as an opportunity to strike.

PERCIPIENT BRODERICK

(skeptical)

How long can we keep pushing the people like this? If they rise up now, it'll only get worse.

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(flustered)

So what, Broderick? Should I start handing food back to them? Disband the army and let the bandits run wild?

(MORE)

GOVERNOR DYLAN (CONT'D)

(turning sharply)

The Empress-Mother Yvella and her wretched cousin Valefor are just waiting for an excuse to seize control. They'll pin all of this on me and claim Verden for themselves. I can feel them circling, waiting for me to stumble.

PERCIPIENT BRODERICK

(somber)

So what's your plan, Governor? What do we do now?

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(sighing deeply)

I've sent an emissary to the capital. We need help from the heart of the Empire. They can't just leave us to fend for ourselves. We won't survive this alone.

PERCIPIENT BRODERICK

(raising an eyebrow)

Aid? What kind of aid are we expecting, Governor?

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(impatient)

Reinforcements, supplies—anything to stop this madness. The capital has to send help, or Verden will fall into chaos.

CAPTAIN BART

(calm, firm)

Hold on, Broderick. I've already sent a squad with the emissary. They'll make sure he gets there safely.

PERCIPIENT BRODERICK

(frowning)

That's half our cavalry, Bart. If we lose them...

GOVERNOR DYLAN

(quickly, anxious)

The emissary's safety is crucial. I've sent our best. We can't afford failure, not with everything on the line.

Before they can continue, a standard guard bursts into the room, breathless and wide-eyed.

STANDARD GUARD
(urgently)
Governor! You need to come—now! The streets... you have to see this.

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDEN CITY STREETS - DAY

The group rushes outside into the chaos. The streets are filled with shouting and clashing, a far cry from the city's former prosperity.

Horses and riders, battered and bloodied, gallop through the gates, some limping or near collapse.

They spot a half-burned carriage being dragged by a weak horse. The top is missing, and a blood-stained box sits ominously inside.

Governor Dylan's face hardens as he steps forward, gently calming the horse before approaching the box.

GOVERNOR DYLAN
(speaking softly, to himself)
No... this isn't real. This can't be real!

He lifts the lid of the box, and a wave of red hornets bursts out, swirling around him. He drops the box instinctively, stepping back.

The head of the emissary falls from the box, rolling in front of the horse.

GOVERNOR DYLAN (CONT'D)
(whispers, horrified)
Who is it?

CAPTAIN BART
(voice trembling)
It's him, sir... the emissary... it's your emissary!

The governor takes a shaky breath, trying to steady himself, his hands trembling. The weight of the message—the blood on the box, the hornets, the severed head—presses down on him.

GOVERNOR DYLAN
(astonished)
No... impossible. This can't be
happening. Not now!

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDEN CITY - BURNING STREETS

As the camera pulls back, the city teeters on the edge of collapse. Rioters, emboldened by the governor's fall, continue their rampage. Verden descends into chaos, with the looming shadows of political scheming from the capital hanging heavy over the city. In the distance, the first waves of soldiers emerge from the eastern outskirts.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE EAST - DAY

The camera moves through the Temple of the East in Verden, sunlight filtering through narrow windows, casting long shadows. The rhythmic sound of drums grows louder as seven young monks clap in unison, their movements syncing with the earth's pulse.

The high ceiling is adorned with carvings of ancient gods and warriors. At the altar stands HIGH PRIESTESS HERGENIA, her silvering hair flowing around her shoulders like a crown. Dressed in a scarlet cape, she moves with commanding presence, her expression solemn. Three lieutenants stand before her, equally grave.

LUCAS, a slender but powerful archer, is positioned with his back straight, holding a bow carved from yew—its smooth wood reflecting the dim light. Beside him stands REGANE, a fierce, nimble fencer, her sword a sleek blade that catches the glint of light. BERTRAND, a towering figure with a massive steel axe strapped to his back, exudes strength and intimidation. They stand in perfect formation, awaiting their blessing.

Hergenia chants as she lifts a vessel of hot blood, marking each warrior's forehead with purpose. Her glowing hands seal their fate.

Lucas grips his bow, his breath quickening under the ritual's weight. Regane feels strength surge through her, her sword gleaming. Bertrand, marked in blood, stands tall, a protector and destroyer in one.

The last mark is drawn.

A ROAR OF APPROVAL erupts from the rebels standing behind them, a wild, unified chorus. A voice shouts, "For victory!" Another follows, "For the people!" The noise swells—the clapping of hands, the relentless beating of drums, all merging into a primal battle cry.

EXT. EASTERN FRONT - DAY

The battlefield erupts in chaos. The Red Hornets, led by High Priestess Hergenia in crimson, clash fiercely with Governor Audric Dylan's loyalists. Arrows fly, swords clash, and the ground trembles with the sounds of war.

Hergenia stands at the center, chanting. Her power manifests in beams of light, healing her soldiers and turning the tide in their favor.

The Red Hornets charge toward Governor Dylan's mansion, their banners snapping in the wind. Broderick and Captain Bart lead the loyalists' defense, but they're overwhelmed by the rebels' numbers.

Amid the battle, the gates of the mansion burst open with a crash. The rebels flood in, the scent of smoke and blood thick in the air.

Governor Dylan, bloodied but defiant, faces the approaching rebels. Broderick and Captain Bart fight to protect him, but they are overpowered. Dylan is captured, his pride unbroken.

Hergenia steps forward, her eyes glowing with power. She places a hand on Dylan's forehead, sealing his fate with a quiet, assured motion.

The rebels cheer, exchanging looks of grim satisfaction. The camera focuses on Dylan's head impaled on a pike—a gruesome trophy.

The streets fill with celebration, but Hergenia stands apart, watching the victory without joy. Her face hardens as she turns her gaze forward, the war far from over.

The screen fades to black, the distant cheers echoing as Hergenia's determination lingers. The journey is just beginning.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The camera opens in the grand imperial court, the weight of the moment pressing down on the space. Empress Yvella Aragesse sits upon her throne, her regal robes of golden silk catching the faint light.

Her eyes are hard, her lips drawn tight in a controlled fury. She rises slowly, her grip tightening on the arms of her throne.

A messenger steps forward, his face pale, eyes wide with the urgency of his news.

MESSENGER

(breathless)

Your Majesty... Governor Audric
Dylon has been executed. The Red
Hornets... they've overtaken the
eastern province. There's chaos in
the streets.

Yvella's expression darkens, her fury bubbling to the surface as she takes a step forward.

YVELLAH

(voice cold, full of
venom)

How dare they... defy me? They must
hear of our wrath. They must be
made an example of.

(snarling)

The scum... We will not let this
insult stand.

Her voice echoes in the silent court, each word laced with retribution. The courtiers exchange nervous glances, too frightened to speak.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)

(furiously)

Send for Lord Thomas Aragesse. He's
the only one who can restore what's
left of our honour.

CUT TO:

INT. THRONE ROOM - LATER

The room is now bustling with the sounds of armor clinking and guards shifting as Lord Thomas Aragesse, the Empress's trusted commander, approaches. Lord Thomas, an imposing figure draped in dark armor with the sigil of the Aragesse house emblazoned on his chest, steps forward with measured steps.

He drops to one knee before the Empress, his expression composed, despite the tension in the air.

LORD THOMAS
(deep bow, voice steady)
Your Majesty, your will is my
command.

The Empress regards him for a moment, her eyes cold and calculating. She raises a hand, gesturing for him to rise.

YVELLAH
(urgent, firm)
Arise, Lord Thomas. I have a task
for you—one that cannot wait. Lead
the Imperial Guard to Verden. Crush
the Red Hornets and show them the
Empire's might.

LORD THOMAS
(voice resolute)
As you command, Your Majesty. The
rebels will answer for their
crimes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PASS OF SERPIA - DAY

A thick fog envelops the mountain pass, muffling the sounds of the advancing imperial army. The soldiers, clad in shining armor, march in tense silence, their eyes scanning the eerie mist. At the front, Lord Thomas Aragesse strides confidently, but there's a flicker of unease in his gaze. He knows something's wrong, but he can't quite place it.

LORD THOMAS
(commanding, voice steady
but hinting at urgency)
Keep moving, men. Stay sharp.

The soldiers push forward, their breath visible in the cold air, their swords and shields gleaming faintly in the grey light. The tension builds. Then, without warning, the ground trembles with the sound of stones tumbling from the mountain cliffs. A loud crack echoes as massive boulders begin rolling down, blocking their path.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
(shouting, eyes widening)
Take cover—now!

The imperial soldiers scramble to find shelter, but it's too late. From the fog, the Red Hornets materialize like phantoms.

They strike fast—arrows cutting through the air with deadly accuracy. Lucas, perched high above, commands his archers to fire, and the arrows rain down like a storm.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
(urgently, drawing his
sword)
Close ranks—slowly, slowly! Stay
together!

But it's already too late. Panic begins to spread among the imperial soldiers. With each volley, men fall—arrows piercing their armor, their bodies crumpling to the ground.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
(shouting, trying to
regain control)
Don't break formation—hold steady!

But the soldiers, now desperate, break and scatter, their discipline lost in the chaos. They run in a frenzy, trying to avoid the arrows that continue to rain down on them. Lucas, with unerring precision, picks them off one by one, his archers firing with deadly accuracy.

The camera cuts to a young soldier, his eyes wide with fear as an arrow pierces his chest. He staggers, gasping for breath, and collapses to the ground. His last words are a terrified whisper:

YOUNG SOLDIER
(weakly, in disbelief)
They're everywhere... we're
surrounded...

LORD THOMAS
(gritting his teeth, his
voice low, regretful)
We can't outrun them... they're too
fast...

The soldiers have turned to panicked civilians, scattered and vulnerable. The Red Hornets strike with ruthless precision, appearing from the fog, attacking, and retreating as if the battle was never theirs.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
(voice strained, trying to
rally his men)
Regroup! Fall back! Retreat!

The command is lost in the chaos. Lord Thomas watches helplessly as his soldiers are cut down.

Lucas and his archers unleash a barrage of arrows, mowing down the fleeing troops.

The camera zooms in on Lord Thomas's face. Frustration and helplessness fill his eyes as he realizes the battle is slipping away. He grits his teeth, regret clear.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (whispering to himself,
 voice trembling with
 regret)
 I... I pushed them too hard. I was
 blinded by my own pride...

The camera pulls back to reveal the battlefield. The imperial soldiers lie scattered, their bodies and armor broken. The victorious Red Hornets, their crimson garb flashing in the fog, survey the scene, having dealt a crushing blow to Lord Thomas's forces.

LORD THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (quietly, voice filled
 with sorrow)
 We failed... we're finished...

Lord Thomas stands amidst the carnage, his face etched with sorrow and guilt. He has failed the Empress and his men, whose lives were lost in a doomed battle. The fog thickens, the wind howls, and the camera pulls back to reveal the empty pass, once a path to victory, now a tomb for the imperial army. The Red Hornets, victorious, fade back into the mist, leaving behind only destruction and the faint echo of battle.

INT. IMPERIAL THRONE ROOM, SOLIRIS - NIGHT

The golden doors creak open. Two soldiers, nervous, place a large wooden box before the Empress.

Yvella opens it, her face filled with hope, but it turns to horror as she finds Lord Thomas Aragesse's severed head inside, surrounded by buzzing red hornets.

She recoils, fury burning in her eyes.

YVELLAH
 (shouting, voice filled
 with fury)
 This is an insult to the Empire!

The room grows colder as her rage fills it, her hands shaking. She speaks again, her lips trembling.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(calm but dangerous)
We will not rest until they're
brought to justice.

She pauses, taking a sharp breath, her anger simmering
beneath the surface.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(quietly, almost to
herself)
Cursed traitors...

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

The marble halls echo with sharp footsteps as Empress Yvella
walks briskly, her face taut with frustration. Minister
Valefor strides beside her, both weighed down by the failure
hanging in the air.

As they approach the throne chamber, Yvella's expression
twists with mounting frustration.

YVELLAH
(muttering, voice heavy
with disbelief)
I can't believe we've come to this.

She pauses, rubbing her temples. Valefor stays quiet for a
moment before speaking.

VALEFOR
(softly, reassuring)
Your Majesty, we must act fast.
General Casper Leonberg is our man
he's a battle-hardened man, a true
servant of the Empire.

Yvella slows her pace, considering her decision. She stops
and turns to face him.

YVELLAH
(sighing, voice cautious)
True. But the Tiger of the North...
his reputation precedes him. We
have to tread carefully.
(pauses, choosing her
words)
It's a gamble bringing a tiger into
a den of lambs.

Valefor nods, his face hardening. Both know the stakes. Relying on Leonberg could either secure their victory or risk everything. They share a silent understanding before continuing down the hallway. Their footsteps echo as they near the audience chamber, where General Casper Leonberg waits.

INT. THRONE ROOM - LATER

The doors to the throne room creak open, and a guard stands at attention, his hand held high in salute. A low, resonant horn sounds from outside, its long, drawn-out note signaling the arrival of the summoned general.

EXT. GATES OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

General Casper Leonberg approaches the gates of the capital city, leading a hundred mounted raiders. The sight of their gleaming armor and unyielding resolve seems to command even the stone walls to bow in deference. His plate armor, polished to a mirror-like sheen, reflects not just the light but the weight of decades spent honing his battle-hardened strength.

As the gates are opened by the imperial guard, the soldiers are quick to move aside, clearing the path for the formidable general. The blaring horn fades behind him as he rides toward the palace entrance, the sound of his hooves echoing through the streets in a rhythmic cadence.

INT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The doors of the throne room groan open once more, announcing his arrival. The clanking of General Casper's armor reverberates through the stone floors as he strides in, every step heavy with authority. He is a man who has earned his name, and it is clear in his demeanor—every inch a warrior. The Empress stands, her eyes fixed on him, studying the man who has come to answer her call.

A GUARD steps forward to receive his weapon, extending his hands respectfully.

A GUARD
(gruffly, but with
respect)
My General, may I have your sword?

Without a word, General Casper unstraps his long, gleaming sword from his waist, the hilt worn from years of use.

He hands it over without hesitation, his eyes momentarily meeting the guard's, an unspoken acknowledgment passing between them.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

The grand doors of the throne room groan open, revealing General Casper Leonberg. His armored boots echo as he strides in, his polished plate catching the faint light. He halts before the throne and bows his head deeply.

GENERAL CASPER
(steady, respectful)
Your Imperial Majesty. Grand
Minister.

Empress Yvella, poised on her throne, regards him with a cool, piercing gaze. Her posture is impeccable, her tone smooth but edged with restrained tension.

YVELLAH
(calm, with icy authority)
General Casper, your presence
honors us.

Casper lifts his head, his eyes meeting hers. The charged silence between them hangs heavy, the unspoken weight palpable.

GENERAL CASPER
(cautiously)
May I ask why I've been summoned to
the capital, Your Majesty?

Minister Valefor, standing at Yvella's side, steps forward. His expression is stern, his voice carrying the sharpness of a blade.

VALEFOR
(firm, with a hint of
accusation)
Disturbing reports have reached
us--rumors of treason in the North,
among your ranks.

The Empress's fingers tap lightly against the armrest of her throne, her gaze unyielding. Casper's jaw tightens, his posture rigid.

GENERAL CASPER
(calm, but with quiet
steel)
(MORE)

GENERAL CASPER (CONT'D)
Treason is a grave charge, Grand
Minister.

Valefor presses on, unflinching.

VALEFOR
(pressing, deliberate)
Indeed. The Empire requires your
full cooperation to resolve this
matter and prove your allegiance.

Casper takes a measured breath, his eyes flicking to Yvella. She remains silent, her cold stare unrelenting.

GENERAL CASPER
(resolute, unwavering)
I've served the Empire faithfully
my entire life. My troops and I
stand loyal. I'll do whatever it
takes to clear this shadow over our
name.

Yvella studies him, her expression unreadable. Casper's measured tone hides the turmoil brewing inside, his mind racing to calculate his next move.

The room buzzes with silent tension, a battle of wits already in motion.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is shadowed, with stern-faced judges on an elevated platform, watching General Casper Leonberg in the center. His polished armor catches the light, but his face remains calm and unreadable.

The judges press harder, their voices rising like a tide of accusations.

JUDGE 1
(insistent, leaning
forward)
General, can you deny the reports
of your troops trading supplies
with enemy outposts?

JUDGE 2
(sharply, accusatory)
Or that your loyalty to the Empire
has... wavered?

Casper straightens, his tone measured and unwavering.

GENERAL CASPER
(calmly, with an edge)
I deny any actions that compromise
the Empire's security. My soldiers
have held the Northern lines, even
when the odds were dire.

The courtroom murmurs. The tension thickens.

JUDGE 3
(slyly, a cruel smile
forming)
Yet even the most steadfast
warriors have their price. What's
yours, General?

A flicker of irritation crosses Casper's face, but he
smothers it quickly.

GENERAL CASPER
(with controlled calm)
My loyalty is to the Empire, not to
whispers.

The judges exchange glances, dissatisfied. Before they can
strike again, the grand doors swing open with a resounding
boom.

Yvella strides in, her scarlet robes flowing behind her, her
expression icy and commanding. The murmurs die instantly as
all eyes snap to her.

YVELLAH
(cutting, with absolute authority)
Enough.

The room falls silent. Her footsteps echo as she approaches,
her gaze like a blade slicing through the tension.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(to the judges, sharp and
deliberate)
This farce ends now. General Casper
is under my protection.

The judges stiffen, caught off guard. One begins to stammer a
protest.

JUDGE 1
(weakly)
Your Majesty, surely the
accusations—

YVELLAH
(cutting him off, her tone
freezing)
Surely you forget who commands this
Empire.

She eyes the judges, daring them to challenge her, then turns to Casper, her look softening just enough to be disarming.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(calm, with quiet
precision)
General, you will be escorted to
the honorary lodges. I trust you'll
remain... available for further
discussion.

Casper nods slightly, his composure intact, though a flicker of suspicion crosses his eyes.

As the room clears, Yvellah exits with Valefor close behind, her tone cold and calculated.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(quietly, to Valefor)
Let him believe I've spared him.
This tiger won't stay wild for
long—I'll make sure he's
domesticated.

Valefor's lips curve into a subtle smile, his head dipping in silent agreement.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - CORRIDORS - LATER

General Casper walks through the palace, escorted by guards. The lodges await, but his mind is on the danger ahead, knowing the Empress's move is just a temporary mask.

He casts one final look back at the courtroom doors, knowing the true game is just beginning.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The camera flashes back to General Casper's past. Hooves pound on earth under dim moonlight as he and his elite raiders head south toward Soliris.

GENERAL CASPER (V.O.)

(his voice low,
calculating, with a hint
of bitterness)

In this world, the strong are
always the ones who write history.
And I intend to be the author of
this Empire's new chapter.

Casper, wearing armor with a northern insignia, leads a hundred battle-hardened raiders. They ride with purpose, the calm masking their readiness. Meanwhile, Commander Amos guides two thousand light cavalry through the dense forest east of the capital, careful to avoid detection by the Empire's scouts.

GENERAL CASPER (V.O.)

To approach Soliris openly would be
suicide. But with the right timing,
with the right subterfuge... it can
be done.

As Casper rides on, the screen flickers with glimpses of scouts from the capital, unaware of the movements of the northern army. Casper, knowing the capital's heavy guard, sent Amos to scout ahead on a easterly route. The strategy, calculated, cunning—a trap to catch the Empire by surprise.

The scene shifts to dark woods, where Amos' knights ride quietly under the moon, cloaked in red, the color of the Red Hornets. Amos' voice breaks the silence as they ready to strike.

COMMANDER AMOS

(whispering, urgency in
his voice)

Remember, we are the Red Hornets
tonight. They won't know the
difference.

EXT. SOLIRIS EASTERN GATE - NIGHT

The eastern gate of Soliris looms against the dark sky, its massive wooden doors reinforced with thick iron bars. Torches flicker in the breeze, casting long shadows on the cobblestone road.

A faint rustle grows louder—boots on stone, purposeful yet eerily quiet. The 100 Northern infiltrators, cloaked in deep crimson, emerge from the shadows like ghosts, their movements precise and disciplined. These warriors, stealthily brought into the city earlier by Casper, are no mere escort.

They are a Trojan horse—hidden in plain sight, their true mission concealed beneath a guise of servitude.

The city guards stand at their posts, chatting idly, unaware of the storm approaching on foot.

The infiltrators fan out silently as they draw closer. A quick series of hand signals from their leader sets the plan into motion.

The crimson-cloaked warriors move like shadows, blending into the dim streets. Their cloaks sway gently in the breeze, mimicking the Red Hornets' signature style. Each movement is precise, designed to avoid suspicion as they approach the gate.

The guards barely glance at them as they pass, unaware of the hidden weapons beneath the cloaks.

At the gate, the deception ends. Blades flash, cutting through the night with deadly precision. The guards fall silently, their blood pooling at their feet.

EXT. EASTERN GATE - CONTINUOUS

The last of the guards falls, and the northern warriors stand, their crimson cloaks now drenched in the dim light. They work swiftly to unlock the gates, their movements coordinated and efficient.

The leader nods to the others, and they step back, allowing the gates to creak open, revealing the darkness of the city beyond.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE EASTERN GATE - NIGHT

The signal flare shoots into the night sky, casting a red glow over the capital as the gates open. The warriors, having finished their work, step aside. In the distance, a new wave of red-cloaked soldiers emerges from the shadows.

At the forefront is Amos, his face masked, eyes fixed on the open gates. His raiders, all in red, move into the city in perfect formation, swift and purposeful.

AMOS

(whispering, to his men)

The gates are ours. Let's move.

Amos's troops enter the capital, melding seamlessly with the Northern riders now inside, their red cloaks blending into the night, a deadly tide of soldiers flooding the streets.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Casper Leonberg stands near the window, watching the distant glow of the flare rise over the city. A slight smile curves at the corner of his lips. He takes a slow, deliberate breath, savoring the moment. His plan is unfolding precisely as he had orchestrated.

GENERAL CASPER
(quietly, to himself)
Let the city burn.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - NIGHT

The night is thick with tension as Empress Yvella stumbles, her breath ragged, overpowered by a group of soldiers cloaked in red. The crimson-clad assailants move like a storm, their faces cold with intent.

Yvella's scream cuts through the silence of the palace, a cry of disbelief and fear.

YVELLAH
(screaming, desperate)
What treachery is this? Who dares
lay a hand on the ruler of the
Empire?

But her words fall flat, swallowed by the suffocating weight of betrayal. Her cries echo through the corridors, but no one comes. No one can save her now.

The soldiers strike with brutal precision, one after another. Valefor lies dead beside her, blood soaking the stone floor, his lifeless eyes staring up at the heavens. His final loyalty means nothing now.

Yvella struggles, blood trickling from a wound on her side. Her body grows weaker, her breath sharp and quick, vision blurring.

She collapses to the cold stone, trembling under the weight of her fading strength. Her breath grows shallow as she clutches her chest, fighting against the pull of death.

The room grows silent, the oppressive quiet wrapping around her. Her vision blurs, the edges of the world softening.

A flash of memory—Hector as a child, smiling up at her, his laugh echoing in her ears. Then, the image shifts—Hector, now distant, his face a mask of resentment and pain.

She sees him turn away, that final moment when she could have reached out, but chose not to.

Her eyes widen, and the realization strikes like a dagger to her chest. Her voice trembles, barely audible, the words slipping out between ragged breaths.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(whispering, regretful)
I... I was never there for you,
Hector...

Her fingers tremble as she presses them to her chest, blood mixing with her tears. Her face contorts with regret, the weight of her actions consuming her. Her breath hitches, the pain unbearable as she remembers choosing ambition over him, using him in her schemes, keeping him distant while the world fell apart.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(sobbing quietly)
I failed you... I failed you...

She lurches forward, hands reaching out. Her vision blurs, and her body shakes. Her eyes search for salvation, but the shadows mock her hope. A faint gurgle rises in her throat, then fades. She looks down at her waist, where blood seeps through her torn garments.

YVELLAH (CONT'D)
(whispering, voice
faltering)
I'm sorry... Hector...

A tear mixes with blood on her cheek. Her hand twitches, then stills. Her breath fades, the last ember of hope gone. The soldiers step back as the doors open, signaling a new reign.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Casper stands by the window, his face lit by distant torches and moonlight. Below, the city trembles in fear. Through the window, he watches Amos and his troops in crimson cloaks storm the Eastern Gate, disappearing into the night. The Imperial Guards stand paralyzed, and citizens watch in terror.

To all who witness, it is undeniable—the Red Hornets have struck.

Casper's lips curl into a faint, calculating smile, his expression betraying no guilt, only quiet satisfaction.

GENERAL CASPER
 (quietly, to himself)
 The traitors will pay for what
 they've done.

He steps back from the window with a satisfied smile.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - NIGHT

Casper steps from the shadows, sword raised high, its blade catching the first light of dawn. The people of Soliris, confused and fearful, begin to stir as they see him atop the palace steps.

GENERAL CASPER
 (roaring, loud enough for
 the entire city to hear)
 People of Soliris, hear me! The Red
 Hornets have attacked and killed
 our beloved Empress! We must band
 together and defend our capital
 from these beasts!

The camera pulls back to reveal the confused and frightened people of the capital rallying to Casper's side. His voice echoes through the city streets.

GENERAL CASPER (CONT'D)
 (raising his sword, his
 voice full of conviction)
 Join me! Together, we will reclaim
 this Empire from the ashes.

The camera zooms in on the faces of the citizens—uncertain at first, but as Casper's voice reaches them, their hesitations begin to melt.

CITIZEN #1
 (whispers, eyes wide with
 awe)
 Casper... Casper, the savior...

The imperial soldiers rally behind him, their voices booming with fervor. A chorus of devotion rises from the streets as Casper stands tall, victorious, his sword gleaming.

SOLDIERS
 (shouting in unison)
 Hooray for General Casper! The
 valiant!

EXT. CITY OF SOLIRIS - NIGHT

The city of Soliris erupts in cheers, a scene of chaos turned into a victory cry. The camera pulls back to reveal General Casper Leonberg at the center of it all—his path now clear, his power secured.

As the city roars his name, the camera lingers on his face, a determined smile forming as he surveys the result of his manipulation, the Empire now his to command.

GENERAL CASPER
(whispering, almost to
himself)
The empire is mine.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The camera opens to a dim hallway, distant battle sounds echoing. Three knights in blue armor walk purposefully, their faces hidden beneath shadowy capes, their steps heavy and urgent.

KNIGHT LEADER
(voice low, urgent)
Keep moving forward. We cannot let
the prince fall into Casper's
hands.

The camera follows the trio as they push through imperial soldiers, clashing metal filling the air. Each blow is powerful, their faces determined and focused.

INT. PALACE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They round a corner and are suddenly confronted by a group of Casper's soldiers. The knights' leader steps forward, his sword raised, his eyes flashing with intensity.

KNIGHT LEADER
(quickly, with authority)
We've been sent by Amos to help
secure the palace.

The guards hesitate, suspicion in their eyes, but it's only for a moment. One of the guards growls in response.

GUARD
(snarling)
Alerte! Intruders!

Without waiting, the guards charge. The knights fight back, swords clashing with armor in a brutal struggle. Blood spills as the sound of metal rings through the hall.

INT. PALACE - NEAR THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The knights' leader barks an order as they push forward.

KNIGHT LEADER
(yelling)
Hold your positions! Close the
rank, fight back!

The knights move with deadly precision. ILANA, the elf, strikes swiftly, taking down enemies before they can react. BROKK, the dwarf, fights with brutal force, his hammer smashing through foes. GARETH, the charismatic leader, wields his sword with deadly accuracy.

The camera shifts between the knights' coordinated assault and the soldiers' desperate struggle to hold the line. The knights press on, determined, until they reach the prince's private chambers, where two imperial guards stand.

In a fluid move, the knights disable one guard and knock out the other. The door to the prince's room crashes open, and the three knights step inside.

INT. PRINCE'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The young prince, Prince Hector, awakens with a start. His face is filled with fear and confusion as he stares at the three knights who have suddenly appeared from the shadows.

HECTOR
(shaken, voice trembling)
Who are you?

ILANA
(calmly, with authority)
We are the Knights of Destiny, my
Prince.
(her eyes are filled with
conviction)
We've been sent by the Great
Guardian of Destiny to save you. If
you stay here, you will surely die.
Follow us if you want to live.

The prince, though hesitant, feels the weight of her words. Something about her voice, her calm demeanor, resonates with him. After a tense pause, he nods slowly.

The knights lead the prince through a secret passageway, their swords drawn and their senses heightened as they hear the sounds of battle growing closer. The camera moves between their determined faces and the creeping tension of the night.

EXT. PALACE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

As the knights and the prince make their way out of the palace, they encounter three more of Casper's soldiers patrolling the area. Gareth, with his expert swordsmanship, and Brokk, wielding his brute strength, swiftly cut through the opposition. The camera shifts rapidly between the knights' fierce battle, the clash of swords, and the prince's anxious expression.

EXT. PALACE WESTERN GATE - NIGHT

As they near the palace' western gate, the prince suddenly stops, his face filled with guilt and worry. He turns to the knights.

HECTOR
(panicked, voice shaking)
My sister, Aurelia... I've left her
behind!

He begins to dash back toward the palace. But Gareth, his eyes filled with concern, grabs him by the arm.

GARETH
(stern, yet compassionate)
Your sister will not survive if we
don't get you to safety now.

The camera zooms in on Hector's face, revealing his inner turmoil. Before he can protest, Gareth makes a swift, precise move, striking the prince just behind the neck with the flat of his blade—paralyzing him instantly.

HECTOR
(fainting)
Why...?

GARETH
(in a low voice, almost
regretful)
You'll thank me later, my Prince.

Gareth hoists the prince onto his shoulder with practiced ease, carrying him as Ilana and Brokk follow close behind. The knights vanish into the shadows, their mission clear and unwavering: keep the prince alive at all costs.

INT. PALACE - HECTOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

General Casper bursts into Hector's chamber, his face twisted with fury. He storms across the room, his eyes darting around, scanning for any sign of Hector.

GENERAL CASPER
(angry, pacing)
Who the hell's messing with my
plans?!

His gaze lands on the empty bed, the signs of a struggle clear. His frustration grows as he tears through the room.

GENERAL CASPER (CONT'D)
(gritting his teeth)
Who took him?! Who the hell's been
in my way?!

He storms toward the door, rage in every step, his mind already racing with possibilities.

GENERAL CASPER (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself,
almost growling)
It's that damn Admiral Mortimer of
the south, isn't it? Or... Hergenia?
No. This smells like a traitor's
work.

Casper slams the door open as he exits, his footsteps echoing in the silent room. The camera lingers on the empty chamber, the weight of his failure hanging heavy in the air.

INT. COUNCIL OF SAGES CHAMBER - DAY

Casper stands before the Council of Sages, his face hard and unreadable. The chamber is grand, its ancient stone pillars towering around him. The Sages sit in a circle at the long table, their eyes sharp as they focus on him.

CASPER
(voice firm, with
authority)
Lords, the fate of our empire hangs
by a thread.
(MORE)

CASPER (CONT'D)
Prince Hector's disappearance has shaken us to the core. I understand the rules: we cannot name another heir until his body is found. But in these uncertain times, we cannot afford to leave the throne unclaimed.

The Sages exchange glances, murmuring among themselves.

SAGE 1
(intoning, almost bored)
Get to the point, General.

Casper takes a deep breath, his eyes narrowing slightly as he locks onto the Sages.

CASPER
(calm, calculated)
I suggest that we name Princess Aurelia, Hector's sister, as the new heir. She has royal blood and a legitimate claim to the throne.

A low murmur spreads through the room. Some nod in agreement, others look uneasy. JUDGE EDMUND, the dean of the council, raises his hand, cutting through the noise.

JUDGE EDMUND
(stern, with authority)
And the regency, General? Who will rule in her stead until she comes of age?

Casper's lips curl into a thin smile, his eyes glinting with ambition.

CASPER
(quick, confident)
I humbly suggest myself. As a loyal servant of the crown, I would be honored to serve as regent until Aurelia is ready to take the throne. You have my word—only the empire's best interests are at heart.

The Sages exchange looks, some skeptical, others intrigued. Sage 2 speaks up, hesitant.

SAGE 2
(skeptical, unsure)
We need to be careful, General.

Judge Edmund leans forward, his voice heavy with tradition.

JUDGE EDMUND

(sternly, unwavering)

The title of Crown Prince cannot be transgressed. Until Prince Hector is found or officially declared deceased, the throne remains vacant. We cannot disregard the laws and traditions of our empire. It is not within our authority to name a new ruler without a legitimate claim.

Casper clenches his jaw, the frustration barely contained.

CASPER

(urgently, sharp)

But the void cannot be left unfilled. The people are restless. They need a leader now. We cannot let the throne sit empty any longer.

Judge Edmund sighs, his expression sympathetic but resolute.

JUDGE EDMUND

(soft but firm)

We understand your concerns, General. But we must follow the law. The rightful heir must be found—or declared dead—before we can take further action. We cannot make exceptions.

Casper's fists tighten at his sides, his mind racing with options. He knows he's running out of time. After a long pause, he gives a curt nod and turns to leave.

CASPER

(forcing a smile)

Then we wait. But mark my words, the longer we wait, the harder it will be to keep control.

He strides out, his cloak sweeping dramatically behind him, leaving the Sages in heavy silence.

INT. CASPER'S ROOM - EVENING

Casper lies asleep in his dimly lit room. A DAGGER peeks out from under his pillow, a silent testament to his unease.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

FAINT WHISPERS grow louder. Casper stirs as the sound of FOOTSTEPS and VOICES escalate, urgent and menacing.

VOICES (O.S.)

Over here, over here...Kill the
traitor!

The door BURSTS OPEN with a deafening crash. Four IMPERIAL GUARDS storm in, weapons drawn, encircling Casper.

Prince Hector strides in, his royal cape swaying and his SWORD gleaming. He approaches Casper with a sinister smirk.

HECTOR

You didn't see this one coming...
did you?

Casper, stunned, scrambles to grab the dagger under his pillow, but it's too late. He raises his hand in a futile attempt to block Hector's sword.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

(raising his sword)
You lose.

The blade arcs down. Casper's face twists in terror.

CASPER

No... No... this can't be real!

Just as the blade is about to strike, the scene SHATTERS.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE:

INT. CASPER'S ROOM - EVENING

Casper bolts upright, gasping for air. Sweat drips from his forehead. Instinctively, he touches his neck, ensuring his head is still attached.

He exhales in relief and collapses back onto his bed, staring at the ceiling. The CAMERA PANS UP, framing him from above as he lies motionless, lost in thought.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

The throne room is lit, heavy with incense. Casper lounges on the throne, swirling a goblet of wine, his fingers running through the WHITE TIGER's fur. The tiger's glowing blue eyes and contented rumble exude power and loyalty.

Casper's thoughts drift to Princess Aurelia, Prince Hector, and his plans. If Hector can't be alive, he'll ensure his death to solidify his own ambitions.

The heavy doors creak open, and ABIGOR, the dark knight in red and black armor, strides in, his horned helmet gleaming ominously.

Casper looks up, a sly smile curling at his lips as he raises his goblet in greeting.

CASPER

(smiling)

General Abigor, welcome. I trust your journey was... to your liking?

ABIGOR

(voice low and cold)

As expected, my lord. I have come to answer your call.

CASPER

(voice dark with intent)

I have a task for you, one that requires your... talents. Prince Hector has proven elusive, slipping past my grasp. He's a problem, and you're going to solve it for me.

Abigor steps closer, his gaze unwavering.

CASPER (CONT'D)

This--this is the trail you'll follow. The boy's scent still lingers on this cloth. Hunt him down to the ends of the earth if you must.

He tosses the cloth toward Abigor, who quickly sniffs it. A smirk forms as he recognizes the task at hand.

CASPER (CONT'D)

(eyes glinting with malice)

Bring me his head.

Casper tosses a small leather pouch filled with gold coins at Abigor's feet, the sound of clinking gold filling the silent room.

CASPER (CONT'D)
Do as I say, and you'll be rewarded
for your sweat.

Abigor's eyes gleam with hunger as he picks up the pouch, securing it with a sinister smile.

ABIGOR
(voice menacing)
Consider it done, my lord.

Without another word, Abigor turns and walks toward the door, the cloak of darkness enveloping him as he leaves.

Casper leans back in his throne, feeling the thrill of control surge through him. The white tiger at his side lets out a low, rumbling purr, sensing its master's satisfaction.

CASPER
(under his breath)
Let the hunt begin...

INT. AURELIA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT - LATER

Aurelia sits at her vanity, staring into the mirror. Four maids surround her—one brushes her hair while the others work quietly and efficiently, preparing for an upcoming event. Though she looks at her reflection, her mind is elsewhere, preoccupied with thoughts of her brother, Hector.

The door opens. General Casper strides in, a commanding presence.

CASPER
May I?

The maids glance at him, quickly understanding his intent. They curtsy and leave the room in silence.

CASPER (CONT'D)
I hope you're ready for tomorrow,
Princess. If Darryl were here, he'd
be proud of your decision—I mean,
preserving his legacy.

Aurelia's eyes narrow. Her voice is sharp, cold.

AURELIA

How dare you speak of my father?
If he were here, he'd put you in
your place—under his feet.

Casper's polite mask shatters. His face twists in rage. In a sudden movement, he grabs Aurelia by the throat and slams her against the wall. His voice is low and venomous.

CASPER

Well, guess what, you little brat—
he's dead and buried. And the dead?
They'll never come to your aid.

Aurelia struggles to breathe, her voice a strained whisper.

AURELIA

My brother will come for you.
And when he does, you'll regret
this.

Casper tightens his grip, his tone dripping with menace.

CASPER

If you don't play along tomorrow at
the ceremony, I'll make sure to
find him. Find him and end him.

Aurelia's eyes widen in fear of losing her brother. She refuses to let them fall.

Noticing her silence as a sign of submission, Casper releases her roughly, and she collapses to her knees. He storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

AURELIA'S CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Alone, Aurelia lets her tears fall. She curls into herself, trembling, her composure shattered.

Her gaze drifts to the window. The full moon glows, its light spilling across the room. Aurelia stares at it, her face caught between despair and hope.

EXT. VAST GREEN PLAINS - NIGHT

The full moon shines bright, dominating the vast sky. The camera pans down to a small camp nestled in the middle of the endless plains.

A campfire crackles in the center. Gareth stirs a pot of beans, pretending he's a gourmet chef.

Nearby, Ilana plays a haunting melody on an elven flute. Brokk reclines, drawing deep puffs from his dwarven pipe, relishing the tune.

The camera lingers on Hector, lying on his back. He stares up at the full moon, his face shadowed with guilt. His voice is barely above a whisper.

HECTOR

Stay strong, sister. Stay strong...
I'll be back.

The music fades, leaving only the crackling fire and the sound of the night.

INT. GRAND THRONE ROOM - DAY

The throne room is resplendent, a gilded cathedral of imperial might. Golden chandeliers cast a warm glow over the towering marble pillars and the tapestries depicting the glorious history of the Vargassian Empire. Courtiers in regal attire fill the room, their whispers of intrigue silenced as the ceremony reaches its crescendo.

At the center stands General Casper Leonberg, his imposing figure clad in ceremonial armor, the steel polished to a mirror shine. His hand rests confidently on the hilt of his sword. By his side, Princess Aurelia, poised and elegant, her golden hair adorned with a delicate crown of sapphires, looks every bit the dutiful bride-to-be.

The HIGH PRIEST, an elderly figure draped in flowing white robes, finishes reciting the vows, raising his staff to bless the union.

HIGH PRIEST

May this union bring strength to
the Empire and honor to the
Vargassian name.

The courtiers erupt into polite applause, though the air remains heavy with unspoken tension.

CASPER

(stepping forward, his
voice commanding)

In the name of the Vargassian
Empire, I vow to protect our court,
to avenge the fallen Empress
Yvella, and to reclaim Verden from
the grip of rebellion.

The room falls silent as his words reverberate, each syllable carrying the weight of destiny. Casper's steel-gray eyes sweep across the hall, daring anyone to doubt his resolve.

CASPER (CONT'D)
(continuing, fierce)
I will personally lead our armies
to crush the Red Hornets and
restore the honor of the Vargassian
name. The enemies of our Empire
will learn the price of defiance.

The courtiers exchange uneasy glances, the magnitude of his declaration sinking in. Princess Aurelia, standing at his side, maintains her composure, her features as serene and controlled as a marble statue. Yet, a flicker of unease passes across her face, betraying the storm of emotions she conceals.

As Casper finishes his declaration, the gathered nobles bow in reverence, their loyalty seemingly assured. Aurelia lowers her gaze briefly, her fingers tightening around the ceremonial fan in her hands. The chill in her stomach grows colder with every word Casper speaks.

Suddenly, Aurelia collapses, her body going limp. The room falls silent.

Casper, unfazed, quickly raises his glass in a quick, reflexive diversion to shift attention away from the incident.

CASPER (CONT'D)
(loudly, with authority)
A toast!

As the guests awkwardly lift their glasses, a group of courtesans swiftly moves behind Casper. Without drawing attention, they make Aurelia disappear into the shadows, her absence unnoticed in the distraction.

INT. WAR ROOM - DAY

The war room is plain but purposeful. A heavy oak table holds maps and carved markers. Casper stands at its head, his presence commanding. Around him, his OFFICERS—tough, battle-worn men—wait in silence.

Casper's voice is steady, clear, and firm.

CASPER

The Red Hornets have defied the empire for too long. Verden is their heart, and we will strike it.

The officers listen intently, nodding.

CASPER (CONT'D)

Commander Amos, here with us, will lead the White Tigers, currently camped at Highcliff, with 5,000 heavy cavalry. They'll secure our rear and block any rebels trying to ambush us at Pass Serpia.

He moves a marker on the map to Highcliff.

COMMANDER AMOS

(grim)

It will be done, General.

CASPER

Good. The rest of the army marches to Verden. Light cavalry, archers, pikemen. Surround the city. Give them no escape.

CAPTAIN TYRION

(concerned)

Their walls are strong.

CASPER

(steady)

Walls don't matter if their spirits break first. We strike hard and fast.

A moment of silence. The weight of his words sinks in.

CASPER (CONT'D)

At dawn, we move. Let this rebellion end where it began.

The officers salute, armored fists to their chests. Casper's gaze lingers on the map, fixed on Verden.

INT. HERGENIA'S SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Beneath the city of Verden, the sanctuary lies under a crumbling temple. Flickering torches light the cavernous room, casting long shadows.

Lucas sits at a table covered in maps, flanked by Regane the Fencer and Bertrand the Axe. The weight of their rebellion hangs heavy.

Hergenia, in dark robes traced with silver, watches from the altar, her presence imposing.

HERGENIA

(low and resolute)

Verden may seem like a haven, but do not be deceived. Casper's forces edge closer, and his grip tightens on the empire. The rebellion hinges on our next move.

LUCAS

(tapping the map)

Our sources confirm the White Tigers are moving from Highcliff to join Casper's main force. If they reach Verden, the city falls.

REGANE

Then we don't give them the chance. We strike first—take out their cavalry before they even see us coming.

BERTRAND

We can't take them head-on—it'd be suicide. We need to strike fast, hit and run, use the terrain to our advantage.

LUCAS

(nods, tracing the route with his finger)

Silverglade Woods. It's treacherous, and there's a stream where they'll have to stop to water their horses. Perfect for an ambush.

REGANE

(smiling confidently)

And when they do, we'll be waiting. They won't know what hit them.

Hergenia steps closer to the table, her hands hovering over the map.

HERGENIA

The White Tigers are Casper's pride—his sword and shield.

(MORE)

HERGENIA (CONT'D)
If we take them out, we not only
cripple his forces but strike fear
into the heart of his campaign.

She looks at each of them with a piercing gaze.

HERGENIA (CONT'D)
(voice softening, but
firm)
But you must be swift and ruthless.
For every moment they linger,
Verden edges closer to ruin.

Bertrand steps into the torchlight, his axe gleaming

BERTRAND
They'll regret stepping foot on our
land.

HERGENIA
Do not underestimate them,
Bertrand. Casper's men are
disciplined, relentless. This
victory must not come at the cost
of your lives.

REGANE
We know the risks, High Priestess.
But Verden is worth it.

LUCAS
Then we move at dawn. The longer we
wait, the stronger they become.

Hergenia places a hand on the altar, voice steady and firm

HERGENIA
May your blades be swift, your
hearts unwavering, and your resolve
unbreakable.

The camera lingers on the trio of rebels as they exchange
determined glances, then pulls back to show the entire
sanctuary. The torches flicker, casting shadows onto the
mosaic floor, their footsteps echoing through the hollow
chamber.

HERGENIA (CONT'D)
For Verden, for freedom... may the
gods watch over them.

EXT. STREAM BY SILVERGLADE WOODS - SUNSET

The babbling stream cuts through the golden light of the setting sun, its surface catching the fiery hues of dusk. The Northern cavalry rides into view, their armor glinting as they approach the water's edge. Horses, weary from the journey, stamp their hooves and dip their heads to drink.

Hidden in the brush and hills surrounding the stream, Lucas signals his men with a silent hand gesture. The Red Hornets, clad in mismatched armor and wielding makeshift weapons, lie in wait, their eyes glinting with anticipation.

Suddenly, Lucas raises his bow. A single arrow slices through the air, piercing the quiet moment and striking a soldier in the chest.

LUCAS
(commanding roar)
Now! Charge!

The Red Hornets surge from their hiding places, descending upon the enemy cavalry like a violent storm. The scene explodes into chaos: Clashing steel echoes across the valley. Horses rear, neighing in terror as soldiers tumble from their saddles. Arrows rain down, pinning cavalymen to the ground.

Lucas moves through the fray with precision, his bow finding its mark time and again. Regane, her fiery hair streaked with sweat and blood, dances between opponents, her rapiers flashing in the fading light. Bertrand bellows a war cry, his massive axe cleaving through shields and armor with brutal efficiency.

The tide of battle turns quickly. The once-formidable cavalry breaks under the relentless assault.

INT. AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE - DUSK

The battlefield is littered with bodies, the stream running red with blood. Among the captives, a man wearing a tiger-shaped helmet and a white tiger pelt draped over his shoulders is dragged before Lucas.

Lucas eyes him coldly, his voice sharp and commanding.

LUCAS
This isn't Amos. Who are you?
Speak.

The prisoner hesitates, then slowly removes his helmet, revealing a gaunt, weathered face.

PRISONER
(softly, trembling)
We're not knights. Prisoners of
Highcliff. They forced us into
their colors. Amos... he promised
us freedom if we did our part.

Lucas's grip tightens on his bow, his eyes narrowing with cold anger.

LUCAS
Freedom? He sent you here to die.

The prisoner nods, guilt and despair written all over his face.

PRISONER
We didn't have a choice. Amos left
Highcliff days ago.

Lucas steps back, a flash of realization crossing his face. His jaw clenches as anger simmers beneath his calm demeanor.

LUCAS
(to himself)
Damn you, Casper. You saw this
coming.

Regane steps forward, her voice steady, but with an edge of uncertainty.

REGANE
So what now?

Lucas turns to her, his resolve firm.

LUCAS
We take Highcliff. If it's
undefended, it's ours.

EXT. HIGHCLIFF FORTRESS - NIGHT

Highcliff looms against the night sky, a fortress of towering stone walls and iron gates. As Lucas and his riders approach, the flickering glow of torches reveals the trench encircling the fortress, filled with straw and glistening oil.

Lucas surveys the defenses, his sharp eyes noting archers perched atop the walls, arrows nocked and ready.

LUCAS
(grimly)
A moat of fire. Clever.

Regane scoffs, her tone biting.

REGANE
Clever enough to cost us half our
men if we charge.

Bertrand, standing nearby, grips his axe tightly.

BERTRAND
We could fill the trench, but it'll
take time—and blood.

Lucas shakes his head, frustration clear.

LUCAS
No. We'll lay siege. Cut off their
supplies, starve them out.
Highcliff will fall, but not at the
cost of our army.

INT. LUCAS' TENT - LATE NIGHT

Maps and battle plans clutter the table. Lucas leans over them, his face illuminated by the dim glow of a lantern. A messenger bursts in, panting.

MESSENGER
Captain! A message from Verden.
Casper marches for the city. High
Priestess Hergenian... she's in
danger.

Lucas freezes, the weight of the news hitting him like a blow.

LUCAS
(to himself)
It's a trap.

Regane and Bertrand enter, their expressions questioning. Lucas meets their eyes, his voice steady but heavy.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
This... it's all a ploy to lure us
away from Verden.

REGANE
(alarmed)
Then we go back. We can't let
Hergenian fall.

Lucas gives a resolute nod, his voice firm.

LUCAS

Prepare the men. We move out
now—straight for the Pass of
Serpia. We can't let them get there
first. We have to stop them.

EXT. WILDERNESS TRAIL - PRE-DAWN

The Red Hornets ride hard, their horses thundering across the rugged trail, hooves pounding the earth with urgent speed. Torches flicker, casting frantic light over their faces as they race through the wilderness.

Lucas leads the charge, his expression resolute, eyes fixed on the horizon. The wind howls around them, but their focus is unwavering.

As the first light of dawn breaks over the horizon, the camera lingers on Lucas, his face a mix of determination and doubt—knowing they must reach the Pass of Serpia before it's too late.

EXT. PASS OF SERPIA - DAWN

The narrow pass winds between jagged cliffs, its rocky walls stretching high and casting long shadows in the early morning light. The Red Hornets, fatigued from their long ride, move forward in tense silence.

Lucas leads at the front, his face tight with focus, eyes scanning the path ahead. Behind him, Regane and Bertrand exchange wary glances.

Suddenly, the stillness is broken by a war horn, its blaring sound echoing off the cliffs.

LUCAS

(realizing too late)
Ambush!

EXT. CHAOS IN THE PASS - CONTINUOUS

From the cliffs above, the White Tigers spring their ambush. The heavy cavalry charges down the narrow pass, their armored horses thundering toward the Red Hornets. Spears are thrown from the high ground, aimed with precision, skewering several riders.

The Red Hornets are thrown into disarray, their lines broken by the sheer power of the assault.

AMONG THE CLIFFS

AMOS, clad in pristine silver armor with a tiger-pelt draped across his shoulders, watches the chaos unfold below with cold precision.

AMOS
(to his captains)
Drive them into the choke point. No survivors.

The White Tigers descend from the cliffs in a well-coordinated wave. Their horses barrel down the pass with terrifying speed, their riders cutting through the Red Hornets' ranks like a storm. The Red Hornets' thin formation crumbles as they struggle to withstand the cavalry charge.

LUCAS' PERSPECTIVE

The scene is chaos—a clash of swords, the thundering of hooves, and anguished cries. The Red Hornets' defensive lines collapse under the weight of the White Tigers' charge. Lucas slashes at a Tiger charging him but is forced to retreat as more riders come at him.

LUCAS
(to himself, grimacing)
How could I have been so blind?

He looks to Regane, who's surrounded by two Tigers, her rapiers flashing as she parries their attacks. Bertrand, bloodied but resolute, swings his axe in wide arcs, fending off the advancing knights.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
(shouting over the chaos)
Regroup! Hold your ground!

But the Red Hornets are overwhelmed. Horses scream as they are trampled, and men fall in droves, unable to match the might of the White Tigers' disciplined charge. Lucas' face hardens, seeing the battle slipping away.

INT. EDGE OF THE PASS - LATER

The Red Hornets are surrounded, their banner trampled into the dirt. Lucas and the few remaining rebels form a desperate defensive circle.

Amos strides into the clearing, his sword drawn but unstained. He surveys the bloodied battlefield with detached calculation.

AMOS
(to his troops)
End this. No prisoners.

White Tiger knights advance, mercilessly striking down the last survivors. Lucas deflects a blow, slashing at his opponent, but exhaustion is written on his face.

LUCAS
(to Regane and Bertrand)
Fall back! Get to the woods!

REGANE
(defiantly)
Not without you!

LUCAS
Go! That's an order!

Reluctantly, Regane and Bertrand disengage, retreating into the shadows of the forest. Lucas stays behind, covering their escape.

EXT. AMOS' POSITION - CONTINUOUS

Amos watches as the last of the Red Hornets scatter.

AMOS
(to his men)
Pursue them. Burn the forest if you must.

One of his captains hesitates.

CAPTAIN
But, but...

AMOS
(cutting him off, icy)
No mercy. Finish them.

The White Tigers charge after the retreating rebels, torches lit. Amos stands over the bodies of the fallen, his expression unmoved.

AMOS (CONT'D)
(to himself, low)
The Revolution ends here.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - SUNSET

Regane and Bertrand, bloodied and battered, stumble into the cover of the woods. The distant glow of torches and the shouts of pursuing soldiers grow faint as they disappear deeper into the shadows.

Regane leans against a tree, breathing hard.

REGANE (TO BERTRAND)
We're not safe yet.

Bertrand nods grimly, his axe resting on his shoulder.

BERTRAND
Lucas...

Regane cuts him off, her voice tight with grief.

REGANE
He'll find a way. He always does.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD AT THE PASS - LATER

Lucas, bloodied but alive, crawls among the fallen. He clutches his side, breathing heavily. Above him, the stars glimmer faintly in the clear night sky.

He stares at the carnage around him, his face a mask of pain and regret.

LUCAS
(to himself, a vow)
This isn't the end.

EXT. TRAVELING WESTWARD - DAY

Five sunsets west of Soliris, Prince Hector, Ilana the elven archer, Brokk the daring dwarf, and Gareth the golden-haired knight cross the green plains.

BROKK
(grabbing his stomach,
groaning)
Oh boy, I'm so hungry I could eat a
nasty northern orc... without
seasoning!

GARETH
(sighing, exasperated)
Of course.
(MORE)

GARETH (CONT'D)

A dwarf with a hammer in one hand
and a belly in the other. Can't
think of anything but food.

BROKK

(offended, scowling)
Stop mocking me, Gareth. I've been
eating your bland beans for two
weeks. I'm sick of them!

ILANA

(looking up, calm)
There's a village up ahead.
Prandiom. We can rest there, maybe
find something other than beans,
and head out at dawn for the
enchanted forests.

BROKK

(grinning, rubbing his
hands together)
Now that's what I'm talking about!
A proper meal.

HECTOR

(smiling)
Let's just hope the villagers have
better taste than you, Brokk.

EXT. VILLAGE OF PRANDIOM - EVENING

The village of Prandiom sprawls lazily across a vibrant green plain, its thatched-roof cottages leaning at angles that suggest a long-standing truce with gravity. Smoke curls from crooked chimneys, mingling with the amber hues of the setting sun.

It's a bustling little world where pigs rule as much as the people. Mud-streaked children squeal with laughter as they chase piglets through the dusty lanes. A burly blacksmith, wiping soot from his brow, pauses to scratch behind the ears of a massive sow lounging in front of his forge.

Nearby, a farmer cheerfully argues with his wife over whether their prized boar deserves its own place at the dinner table—or just on the plate.

A rotund innkeeper emerges from his tavern, waving at a group of merchants unloading goods. A plump pig trots after him, snorting contentedly.

Evening meals are already underway, the savory aroma of roasted pork wafting through the air, mixing with the sound of cheerful banter and the occasional grunt from an unimpressed pig. A drunken bard strums a lute outside the tavern, his song slurring into odes to both ale and bacon.

The scene oozes rustic charm, and as the group approaches, the village seems to wrap itself around them with the warmth of a well-worn quilt—muddy, a little chaotic, but utterly welcoming.

Brokk's stomach growls loudly, cutting through the tranquil evening. His eyes brighten at the sight of a tavern ahead, its wooden sign swaying in the breeze, the door swinging open to reveal a warm, inviting glow inside.

BROKK
(stomach growling,
grinning)
There it is!

He starts moving faster, almost running.

GARETH
(raising an eyebrow)
Can't wait, can you?

ILANA
(laughing)
Don't make the innkeeper think
you're possessed.

As they approach the tavern, the sounds of the village fade, replaced by the smell of roasted meat and freshly baked bread. Inside, the atmosphere is lively, filled with villagers chatting over mugs of ale, laughter filling the air.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The innkeeper, a plump, rosy-cheeked woman with skin so pink she could be mistaken for one of her own prized pigs, greets them with a warm, toothy smile. Her apron is smeared with flour and a hint of stew, a testament to her role as both hostess and chef.

With a bustling energy, she swiftly ushers the group to a sturdy wooden table near the hearth, her laughter ringing out like the village's unofficial welcome bell. In no time, she places steaming bowls of rich, savory stew and frothy mugs of ale before them.

Brokk, unable to restrain himself, dives in with gusto, his enthusiasm for the meal matched only by the innkeeper's amused chuckle.

BROKK
(savoring the meal,
belching loudly)
Now this is a feast!

GARETH
(rolling his eyes)
You've got the manners of a troll,
Brokk.

BROKK
(grinning, wiping his
mouth)
And the appetite of one too!

ILANA
(chuckling softly)
Let's not fight over it. We should
be grateful for their hospitality.

Hector sits silently, gazing out the window at the setting sun, his face thoughtful.

HECTOR
(softly, to himself)
I can't help but think of my
father... It feels like only
yesterday we were training
together.

ILANA
(placing a hand on his
shoulder)
He would be proud of you, Hector.
Of all of you.

GARETH
(grinning, eager to shift
the mood)
Speaking of hunting... Ilana,
remember that boar we tracked
through the woods? It was as big as
a horse!

ILANA
(smiling)
I remember. But I seem to recall I
was the one who finished it off.

GARETH
(playfully)
I beg to differ. My arrow brought
it down, not your sword.

BROKK
(raising his mug)
To a fine meal, a full belly, and
good friends!

They all clink their mugs together, except for Hector, who remains lost in thought, staring out the window. The others exchange quiet glances but let him be.

EXT. MYSTY PLAINS LEADING TO THE ENCHANTED FOREST - DAWN

The group moves through the mysty plains, the faint light of dawn creeping across the horizon.

BROKK
(grumbling with a mock-
serious tone)
I swear, if I step in one more
puddle, I'll start charging for the
mud baths.

GARETH
(bored)
Stop whining, dwarf! You're always
finding something to complain
about. Honestly, I don't know how
anyone back in your village could
stand it.

Brokk halts, his face darkening at the mention of his village.

BROKK
(homesick)
My village... Since I was banished
for choosing to become a Knight of
Destiny, I have no village, no
family.

Gareth, realizing his words cut deeper than intended, slows his pace. He claps Brokk on the shoulder, a friendly gesture.

GARETH
(comforting)
You've got family now. It's us.

ILANA

Exactly. We're all here for you,
Brokk.

Brokk forces a small smile, his eyes betraying the weight of memories, the family and village he sacrificed to honor Tatum as a Knight of Destiny. The other three begin walking ahead. After a moment, Brokk takes a deep breath and follows.

EXT. MYSTY PLAINS - LATER

The group walks quietly, their breath visible in the cold. Mist curls around them. A birdcall echoes, then suddenly stops.

Ilana's gaze suddenly sharpens as she looks into the distance. Her face tightens with concern.

ILANA

(urgent, low voice)
We're being followed... Something
dark... Something evil...

The air around them seems to shift, a coldness settling in. Ilana's senses flare, and her body goes rigid.

ILANA (CONT'D)

(firmly)
Run. Now. We're being hunted.

Gareth immediately shifts into a defensive stance, his hand on his weapon. Brokk, sensing the change in atmosphere, grows serious.

BROKK

(gruffly, glancing around)
What's hunting us? A dragon? A
hungry tree?

ILANA

(sharply)
Something worse.

In the distance, a mercenary from the Rabid Hyenas emerges from the mist, riding a massive hyena as he scouts for his horde. The scout is fierce, his eyes gleaming with malice.

GARETH

(commanding)
Take the Prince to safety. I'll
hold this beast off and buy you
time. Hurry up!

Hector, Ilana, and Brokk turn and sprint towards the Enchanted forest, leaving Gareth behind to face the oncoming danger.

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - DAY

Mist clings to their boots, swallowing the forest floor as they move deeper. Towering trees loom above, their twisted branches forming a thick canopy that blocks the light.

The air is cool and heavy with the scent of moss and damp earth.

Ilana leads the way, her steps silent. Her sharp eyes scan the shifting shadows, pausing as if sensing something just beyond sight.

ILANA

(softly)

Stay close, Hector. We can't afford to lose each other in this fog.

She pulls a coil of rope from her pack, expertly wrapping it around Hector's waist. He watches her, a flicker of trust in his eyes, but there's a shadow of doubt as the mist seems to grow heavier.

HECTOR

(looking around)

It's so thick... feels like we're walking in circles.

Ilana doesn't respond immediately, her attention focused on the path ahead. She leads him through the dense mist, her movements confident despite the oppressive fog.

After what feels like an eternity, the forest begins to change. The trees, once twisted and gnarled, slowly give way to something different – a clearing, though the fog lingers heavily in the air. The sound of distant, ethereal chimes fills the space, almost like a soft hum from the earth itself.

Then, they see it.

A massive copper portal stands at the edge of the clearing, its surface smooth yet marked with intricate glowing runes. They pulse faintly, casting a soft, otherworldly light across the mist. The word "Destiny" is etched in a flowing script, the calligraphy almost alive, shimmering in hues of gold and silver. The portal stands imposingly, radiating an energy both ancient and powerful.

Hector steps forward, mesmerized by the sight, but Ilana holds him back, a hand on his arm.

ILANA

(somberly)

Don't be deceived. This isn't just
a doorway—it's the threshold of a
god's will.

Her voice is barely above a whisper, but it carries weight. She steps forward cautiously, her fingers brushing against the runes. As her skin makes contact, the air around them seems to tremble, and a resplendent radiance bursts forth from the portal. The light is blinding, forcing Hector to shield his eyes.

The fog around them intensifies even more before swirling into the portal, as if the mist itself is drawn into the vast unknown beyond. The copper door groans, shifting slightly, as the runes flash brighter and then swing wide open.

HECTOR

(in awe, eyes wide)

What is this place?

ILANA

(with reverence)

The Temple of Destiny.

INT. TEMPLE OF DESTINY - DAY

Inside the temple, the atmosphere is heavy with history. The corridor leads them to a large gate, where COMMANDER MARCUS, a muscular man in his forties, stands with a retinue of twenty guards. Their armor gleams with an ethereal coral-blue hue, their helmets adorned with white wings at the ears.

MARCUS

(gruffly, his voice
commanding attention)

Where is Gareth?

ILANA

(somberly)

He stayed behind. We were being
pursued.

MARCUS

(nodding grimly)

I see. Follow me. The Great
Guardian Kirios awaits your
arrival.

As they move deeper into the temple, Hector gazes at the grandeur of the structure – the towering pillars, the ancient carvings, and the scent of wisdom that fills the air. The Temple of Destiny is a fortress of knowledge and power, its purpose intertwined with the very survival of the empire.

They reach a chamber where KIRIOS, the Great Guardian of Destiny, awaits. His presence is imposing yet peaceful, radiating an aura of ancient wisdom. As Hector steps into the room, his gaze is drawn upward to the dome ceiling, where a remarkable constellation of 108 stars twinkles as though they were real, casting a serene glow across the chamber. Kirios stands poised, his hand raised with quiet authority, the index finger adorned with a ring—an intricate band set with a blue-shining emerald. The gemstone gleams with an otherworldly light, symbolizing the Ring of Wisdom.

KIRIOS
(softly, beckoning Hector
closer)
May Tantum be praised. Come closer,
my child.

He pauses, his steady gaze locking on Hector.

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
Look into these eyes—innocent and
resolute, like Theon Vargassian.

Kirios hums softly, a sound like a faint memory, his age showing as he gathers his thoughts. After a moment, he continues.

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
It seems the time has come. We have
found the Chosen One.

He straightens, his tone shifting to one of quiet authority.

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
The prophecy speaks of a savior
from the imperial bloodline, aided
by 107 other warriors—special,
shining like stars, chosen to stand
by your side. You must discover and
gather them from all corners of the
realm.

Kirios' gaze sharpens as he raises his fist, his tone intensifying.

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
With their power, you will defeat
the darkness.
(MORE)

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
The balance between good and evil
must be preserved. This is Tantum's
will.

Hector listens intently, his eyes widening as the weight of
his destiny presses upon him.

KIRIOS (CONT'D)
(solemnly)
Before your journey begins, you
must prove your worth. Be prepared
for what's coming. Right now, you
are but an innocent lamb. You will
have to awaken the hippogriff
within you.

At Kirios' side, ALEX, a serene man with a wise countenance,
steps forward.

ALEX
(calmly, with quiet
authority)
I'm Alex, Kirios' trusted aide.
This Temple has guided generations
of those chosen by Tantum. Your
ancestor, Theon Vargassian, the
unifier of the three kingdoms, was
the first.

He pauses, meeting Hector's gaze.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Now it falls upon your shoulders to
restore the empire.

His tone softens, reassuring.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I will oversee your
training—shaping you into a true
warrior and a leader of men. Only
then will you be ready to face the
trials and begin your quest to
gather the other 107 stars.

HECTOR
(curiously)
What trials?

ALEX
Defeat Gareth in combat, outshoot
Ilana in archery, and best me in a
game of chess. Only then will you
be ready.

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - NIGHT

A thick mist blankets the ancient forest, curling around towering trees like ghostly tendrils. The moonlight barely cuts through the fog, casting an eerie glow over the twisted roots and underbrush. The air is thick with anticipation.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST - NIGHT

Gareth, bloodied and battered, stumbles forward, his breaths ragged and shallow. His armor is torn, a deep gash on his shoulder bleeding profusely. The forest ahead looms dark and ominous, its twisted trees casting eerie shadows under the moonlight.

Behind him, a Rabid Hyena closes in—a monstrous beast with glowing red eyes, its claws tearing into the earth as it gallops with terrifying speed. Its rider, an evil mercenary, looms atop the creature, clad in dark, jagged armor etched with cruel symbols. The mercenary grips a jagged spear, his face obscured by a wolfish helmet that glints under the moon.

EVIL MERCENARY

(taunting)

You can't outrun the Rabid Hyenas,
knight. No one escapes us.

Gareth stumbles, his legs giving out beneath him as he collapses into the dense underbrush. He clenches his jaw, struggling to crawl forward, but his strength is failing.

The mercenary pulls on the reins of the hyena, bringing it to a halt just at the edge of the forest. The beast snarls, saliva dripping from its jagged maw as it paws at the ground, eager to pounce.

EVIL MERCENARY (CONT'D)

(low, menacing)

Run all you want. It won't save
you.

The mercenary spurs the hyena forward into the forest, the beast snarling as it bounds through the trees. Just as it leaps toward Gareth, the sky splits apart with a blinding flash of light.

A bolt of celestial lightning descends, striking the mercenary and his mount with an otherworldly crack. The hyena lets out a piercing shriek as it disintegrates into ash mid-leap.

The mercenary, caught in the blinding blaze, roars in fury as his armor melts and his body is consumed, leaving nothing but a charred, smoking crater.

The earth trembles, the echoes of the strike reverberating through the forest. The air crackles with energy as the light fades, leaving Gareth lying motionless, bathed in the faint glow of the moonlight.

The forest grows silent once more, save for the soft rustle of leaves in the night breeze.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - A FEW STEPS AWAY - NIGHT

From the swirling shadows, Abigor the Cursed emerges—a towering figure clad in ornate black and crimson armor, his two-horned helmet glinting ominously in the moonlight. His very presence exudes malice, his glowing eyes burning with hatred. Behind him, the Rabid Hyenas Mercenary Legion materializes, a horde of hooded assassins riding massive, snarling hyenas. Their weapons shimmer menacingly as they move with predatory precision.

ABIGOR
(sneering, bitter)
That old fool Kirios. His spells
shield this wretched forest... for
now. We cannot touch the Vargassian
Prince yet. But soon...

He halts, tilting his head toward the heavens, the moonlight glinting off his cruel armor.

ABIGOR (CONT'D)
(growling)
The day will come when I'll crush
the Knights of Destiny and drown
their legacy in blood.

The hyenas respond with bone-chilling howls that reverberate through the misty forest.

Abigor's gaze shifts, falling on Gareth, sprawled unconscious among the roots. His battered form looks fragile under the imposing shadow of the cursed warrior.

ABIGOR (CONT'D)
(mocking, with icy
cruelty)
A knight of destiny? This... this
is their champion? Pathetic.

He steps closer, his armored boots crunching on brittle leaves. His gauntleted fingers flex as though eager to deliver a final, devastating blow. But as he raises his hand, a strange, oppressive force descends upon the clearing—a silent, unseen warning.

Abigor freezes, his sneer twisting into a snarl of frustration.

ABIGOR
(hissing, begrudgingly)
Your time will come, Knight. And
when it does... you will beg for
mercy.

FLASHBACK - EXT. TEMPLE OF DESTINY - DAY

A brief, distorted vision of the past flashes before Abigor's eyes: Abigor standing beside Kirios, once a trusted aide, his face full of ambition and longing. Beside him, the young Alex, a promising orphan with eyes full of ambition, stands close to the Great Guardian.

ABIGOR (V.O.)
(dark, bitter)
I was his right hand. I was his
future. But then, there was Alex.
That... that orphan, with the
talents I could never match. How
could he be the one chosen to
inherit Kirios' title?

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST - NIGHT

Abigor's eyes flicker with rage. His fingers curl into fists, and his voice trembles with fury.

ABIGOR
(viciously)
I should have been the one. Kirios
chose him... him... instead of me.

He turns, his eyes narrowing at the thought of Alex and the status he now wields — the position that should have been Abigor's. His breath hisses through his teeth as he looks down at Gareth once more, his eyes cold with a mixture of disdain and regret.

ABIGOR (CONT'D)
(grimly, under his breath)
The Ring of Wisdom holds Kirios'
power. Once it's mine, nothing will
stop me.
(hesitates, then smirks darkly)
The old man's strength wanes... I
can feel it.

FLASHBACK - INT. TEMPLE OF DESTINY - NIGHT

The sacred hall is dimly illuminated by flickering torches and the faint glow of magical runes etched into the walls. YOUNG ALEX, feverish and pale, lies on a stone slab, his breath shallow. Kirios kneels beside him, calm yet focused, as the ELVEN HEALER works tirelessly to purge the poison.

Suddenly, a commotion erupts at the entrance. Two KNIGHTS OF DESTINY drag a struggling figure into the chamber. It's Abigor, unarmored and disheveled, his robes torn and his face contorted with desperation.

The knights throw him to the floor. Abigor scrambles to his knees, glaring at Kirios, who stands slowly, his imposing presence filling the room.

KIRIOS
(coldly, addressing the
knights)
Take him outside.

The knights nod, lifting Abigor roughly by the arms. He thrashes, his eyes darting to Alex's still form on the slab.

Abigor's face twists in frustration, his lips moving soundlessly as though pleading for forgiveness or mercy—but none is given.

EXT. TEMPLE OF DESTINY - NIGHT

The heavy temple doors creak open, and the knights throw Abigor into the cold, wet mud outside. He falls hard, his hands clawing at the earth.

Kirios steps into the doorway, his silhouette framed by the light of the temple behind him. His expression is stoic, but his gaze is unyielding.

Abigor looks up at Kirios, his face streaked with mud and tears.

The doors close with a resounding boom, cutting him off from the warmth and light of the temple. Abigor sits there for a moment, trembling in the rain, his eyes burning with humiliation and growing resentment.

EXT. DARK TEMPLE - NIGHT

The storm rages on, rain falling in heavy sheets. The dark temple stands ominously against the stormy sky, its jagged spires clawing at the heavens. The oppressive air is suffused with malevolence, every breath thick with dread.

Abigor, drenched and battered, trudges toward the temple gates. His ragged scholar's cloak clings to him, torn and soaked. His face is pale, gaunt, and hollowed by exhaustion and despair.

The gates creak open, revealing an endless corridor lit by violet flames. Shadows dance along the walls, seeming to twist and mock him as he steps inside.

INT. DARK TEMPLE - ENDLESS CORRIDOR

The corridor stretches infinitely, the flickering light of the violet braziers casting eerie shadows. On either side, templars clad in violet cloaks chant in guttural harmony, their voices rising and falling like a sinister tide. Their faces are hidden beneath deep hoods, their hands clasped in silent devotion.

At the far end of the hall sits the High Priest, his throne-like seat elevated above the rest. His form is shrouded in heavy robes, his hood obscuring his features save for the faint glint of a jeweled ring on his outstretched hand.

Abigor stumbles forward, each step heavier than the last, until he kneels at the base of the dais. His trembling hands clutch at his sides, his drenched robes pooling on the cold stone floor.

The High Priest extends his hand, the grotesque ring catching the faint light.

HIGH PRIEST

(voice low, resonant, and
commanding)

Kiss the mark of your destiny.
Abandon the light, and I shall gift
you the power to forge your
vengeance.

Abigor hesitates for the briefest of moments, then bows his head and presses his lips to the ring.

A sudden, violent surge of dark energy courses through him. His body seizes, his eyes flashing with unearthly light as shadows swirl around him like a living storm. The chanting crescendos, the templars raising their hands in exultation.

The transformation begins. Abigor's tattered scholar's robes are torn away by the swirling darkness, replaced piece by piece with his now-infamous black and red armor. The horned helmet forms last, descending onto his head like a crown of despair.

The chanting stops abruptly, leaving a deafening silence. Abigor rises slowly, his gaunt figure now a towering, armored warrior. His eyes burn with a cold, relentless purpose.

HIGH PRIEST (CONT'D)
(softly, with cruel
satisfaction)
Go forth, knight of shadow. Claim
your vengeance.

Abigor turns without a word and strides out of the hall.

EXT. DARK TEMPLE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The rain hammers down as Abigor emerges, now fully clad in his menacing armor. His giant hyena, its fiery red eyes blazing in the storm, waits for him, growling in anticipation.

Abigor mounts the beast with ease, gripping the reins tightly. Behind him, his horde of assassins, cloaked and armed, assemble in the shadows.

The hyena lets out a guttural roar as Abigor raises his newly forged sword. Lightning splits the sky, illuminating the group as they charge forward. The ground trembles beneath their advance, the camera following them as they ride toward the lens.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST - NIGHT

Abigor's expression turns darker, the winds shifting unnaturally around him. His face hardens as he lifts his hand to the ring on his finger, a twisted black stone gleaming ominously.

ABIGOR
(softly, to himself)
I will find a way to destroy them
all. Starting with the Vargassian
Prince.

He turns away from Gareth, his black-robed form melting into the mist, his assassins following without a word.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The camera lingers on Gareth's motionless form, his breath shallow. The crackling sound of lightning fades into the distance as the forest around him seems to pulse with energy. A mysterious glowing light flickers in the distance, signaling the proximity of the Temple of Destiny.

Gareth's eyes flutter open, the weight of the moment heavy on him. He struggles to his feet, wincing in pain, knowing that the fight is far from over. He glances back toward the mist-shrouded path where Abigor and his horde vanished.

GARETH
(weakly, to himself)
The darkness... it's coming for us.

The camera zooms out, revealing the foreboding shape of the Temple of Destiny in the distance, looming over the land like a bastion of hope, but a stark reminder that Abigor and his malice are never far behind.