

The Final Fight

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CRAGGY FIELD - DAY

The sun beats down on a shirtless young man, GAROK, standing in the middle of the field. Light glints, blood drips off his blade and onto his brown trousers. His bared chest, dripping with sweat, heaves with each breath. Before him lies a dead man, a gash across his chest. Blood stains the green grass crimson. A breeze kicks up. His hair blows out of his face as he looks to the nearby hilltop.

A bearded man wearing a bear pelt, ARTHRYM, reaches the crest. He carries a large spear and a shield adorned with a drawing of a bear as well as the symbol of his people, the Droghals. He sees Garok and the body. He gives a primal scream that echoes through the area before running down at the young man. As he makes his way down the hillside, the rest of his twenty-man warrior band rushes over, following his lead.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Times were simpler when he was younger. Roles were clearly defined. People knew right from wrong. The villains were the villains, and all villains needed killing. Thus achieved Garok his fame.

Arthrym and company circle around Garok. Silence as they lock eyes. Garok pivots to assess the situation. He stops, facing Arthrym.

GAROK

Take your people, and leave these lands. They are not for you.

Arthrym laughs. The rest laugh with him.

ARTHRYM

Then whose are they?

GAROK

Mine.

More laughter. Arthrym cuts it off. He spits on the ground.

ARTHRYM

This land belongs to the mighty,
not the weak.

Garok looks at the dead man.

GAROK

I am stronger than he.

Outcry from the crowd. Snarls. Growls. Arthrym sneers.
Another silence.

ARTHRYM

You have spilled the blood of my
kinsman. Now, you shall become his
brother.

Arthrym raises his spear. The men charge Garok.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The raiding Droghals fell upon
Garok. With their numbers, they
felt their victory was certain.

Garok's blade finds its way around the crowd, felling his
foes left and right. Dodge. Parry. Riposte. They outnumber
him, but he outmatches them.

Garok turns their attacks against themselves, tricking them
into striking each other while he lashes out at a third. His
steps are light, evasive. Soon, the crowd joins the dead man
on the ground.

Arthrym narrows his eyes. Garok removes his sword from the
last man. Arthrym bares his teeth.

Arthrym yells at Garok, unintelligible shrieking. He charges
toward Garok, lowering his spear. Garok steps aside, letting
the spear go past him. He strikes Arthrym's back with his
elbow, forcing him to take a knee.

Garok turns with his blade out, but Arthrym ducks under the
slash. He rolls and swipes his spear, knocking Garok onto
his back.

Arthrym stands up. He looms over Garok, pointing the spear
at his throat.

ARTHRYM

I expected more.

Garok's eyes flit to the right. Arthrym looks. Garok's blade
slices through the air. It meets the spear near the tip,
cutting through the strips that bind it together. Arthrym
drops the pole. He staggers back.

Garok stands up. He walks towards Arthrym. Arthrym stumbles
over a dead body. He kneels before Garok.

ARTHRYM

You have bested me. I shall leave
these lands, as you request.

GAROK

Not without your men.

Arthrym furrows his brow before his eyes widen with realization. His head jerks from side to side in panic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

While Garok defended his homelands,
the Droghals knew no mercy.

Garok takes a mighty swing at Arthrym, aiming to cleave him in twain.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

The axe separates the wood into two clean pieces. Garok, now older by forty years, works the axe out of the stump. He picks up another piece and puts it on the chopping block.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Those days have long since passed.
The world stopped needing Garok.
After all his work, he found
himself replaced with civility and
diplomacy.

Garok chops the wood. He gathers it up and starts carrying it back to a pile by his cabin door.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Of course, Garok was more than
happy to hang up his sword. He
accepted his obsolescence with a
quiet joy. His work was done.

Garok wipes the sweat from his brow. He shields his eyes and looks up at the sun. He walks around the side of his cabin, grabbing a bucket. He sets off into the surrounding forest, bucket and axe in tow.

EXT. FOREST STREAM - DAY

Garok fills the bucket from the stream. He bends down, collecting and drinking some water from his cupped hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That is not to say that he has lost
the way of the warrior.

Garok looks up. A boar drinks water across the stream. It too looks up. They lock eyes. Garok sets the bucket down. The boar snorts. Garok picks up his axe.

The stream flows past as the two size up the situation. The boar digs into the soil with its back legs. It squeals. Garok yells back.

The boar charges across the stream. Garok sidesteps the beast, swiping at it with the axe. A wound opens up along the boar's side. It snarls in pain. Garok leaps on its back and grapples with his foe.

The boar swings from left to right, trying to throw Garok. Garok keeps his grip, working his left arm around the boar's head.

GAROK

You fight well.

He readies the axe.

GAROK

But not well enough.

Garok ends the boar's fight. He hops off. He grabs the bucket of water and realizes he has too few hands to carry everything. He grumbles under his breath before burying his axe in the boar's hide. He struggles at first, but he manages to scoop it up and carry the water at the same time.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok stumbles towards the cabin, water sloshing from the bucket. He sits the bucket down by the door before pushing it open with his arms full of boar.

INT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

To the left of the door, a sword hangs on the wall above a table covered in empty jars, the insides dusted with spice remnants. A chain on a pulley swings in the air in front of a window on the left; below it, a ditch runs out underneath the wall, blocked by a stone.

Garok waddles to the table and places the boar on it. He wrenches the axe out of its back. He places his hands in the small of his back and stretches. He walks to the ditch. The stone looses into his hands. He places it by the table as he reaches under it to retrieve a large and stained hook.

He fixes the hook onto the chain and pierces the snout of the boar. He hoists the boar into the air, using the pulley to his advantage. He ties the excess chain to the table and places the stone atop it.

He takes the sword from the wall. He weighs it in his hands, gives it a trying swing. His eyes narrow as he examines its blade.

GAROK

You have been too good to me for
such work, my friend.

He hangs it back onto its rudimentary mount. He walks across the room, passing the fire pit in the center, to open a small box of tools and trinkets at the foot of his bed. A handle hides at the bottom of the box. Garok takes out a rusty dagger, running his thumb along the blade to test its sharpness.

A shadow passes over the blade. Garok turns his head to look out the window. Nothing. He sniffs the air. He approaches the window to look out.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

A quiet forest rests outside the window. Too quiet. Nothing seems out of the ordinary, but still...

INT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok moves across the floor back to his door. Keeping his dagger hand obscured, he opens it in a quick movement.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

The bucket keeps its faithful watch over the entrance. Garok looks around, inspecting all he can see. He keeps his head up while he picks up the bucket to carry it inside.

INT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok empties the bucket into the kettle. He takes it over to the boar and places it in the ditch. It comes to rest in a little notch worn in for it. He slices the boar's throat with the dagger, collecting much of the blood in the bucket.

He drags the dagger around the boar's head beneath the ears. He starts in on the first leg when he hears a crash outside, a rumbling sound of falling. He places the dagger on the table and stands tall. He takes the sword down from the wall, planning each move with care.

He approaches the door with caution. As he gets closer, movement can be heard outside. He pulls open the door and jumps out.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

A young man of about seventeen, LURZA, sprawls out over the ground, dirtying his white tunic and green leggings. Garok's woodpile, before stacked in order, spills out all around. Lurza writhes on the ground to reposition himself. Garok seizes the opportunity, stepping onto Lurza's right arm and pointing the sword at Lurza's throat. Garok screams questions.

Lurza trembles as Garok screams at him, putting his left hand up to show he bears no weapon. Their screaming overlaps.

GAROK
Who sent you? What are you
doing here? What do you
want with me? What are you
doing with my wood pile?

LURZA
I bear you no ill will,
Garok! Lower your blade, I
beg of you! Please! You're
hurting my arm! I didn't
mean to!

LURZA
Stop!

The two fall silent. Off in the forest, a hawk screeches.

GAROK
Why are you here?

LURZA
I want to learn from you.

GAROK
Why were you stalking around my
house?

LURZA
I wasn't sure if I was in the right
place!

Garok leans down and puts his face close to Lurza's.

GAROK
Are you going to restack this?

Garok gestures toward the scattered wood. Lurza looks at his right wrist, still under Garok's heel.

LURZA
I will if you let me.

Garok hesitates before releasing. Lurza rubs his wrist and sits up. He starts gathering the wood around him.

LURZA
Well, will you?

GAROK
Will I what?

LURZA
Teach me.

Garok tilts his head back and gives a hearty laugh.

GAROK
No.

LURZA
But you stopped the Droghals from
invading!

Garok waves his hand to dismiss the claim. Lurza stands up and starts replacing the wood.

LURZA
But you slew the great beast
Norphorval!

GAROK
Pah! I slew many beasts.

Lurza places the final piece with a thud. He faces Garok.

LURZA
But you're the last who can teach
me!

Garok pauses.

GAROK
Is that what they say?

LURZA
Yes. They say that all but one of
the great warriors have died.

GAROK
And for good reason!

He laughs.

GAROK
The world has no need of warriors
now, and anyone who wishes to be
one is a fool.

Garok stands in his doorway.

GAROK
And I have no time for fools.
Return to your village, boy.

Garok steps inside and closes the door. Lurza marches up and
knocks.

INT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok hangs up his sword and resumes skinning the boar as
though he cannot hear the pounding on the door. He hums a
little tune to himself. The knocking stops. Garok tilts his
head, listening close. Lurza appears in the window near
Garok.

LURZA
Master, I came all this way out
here to learn from you! I'll do
whatever it takes!

GAROK
Here's a quick lesson for you! Be
aware of your surroundings!

Garok knocks over the bucket of blood. It drains out through
the ditch to where Lurza stands. Lurza's face contorts as he
realizes the bloody mess his shoes and leggings have become.
Garok laughs.

GAROK

A little blood never hurt anyone!

Lurza disappears from the window. The door crashes inward. Garok spins around. Lurza stands in the frame, bloody below the ankles.

LURZA

At least talk to me for a while.
Answer my questions.

GAROK

I answer to no one. Return home, as
I have once bade you already.

Lurza drops his shoulders in defeat. He turns around. Garok raises an eyebrow.

GAROK

Did you come here unarmed?

LURZA

Yes, and I'm glad I did. I can't
think what you would've done if I
had something with me. You've made
it quite clear that you've nothing
to do with me, and I won't let you
belittle me anymore. Good day, and
goodbye.

Lurza steps out. Garok exhales through his nose. He looks out the window towards the sky.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

The sun lowers behind the trees. Night approaches with haste.

INT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok cups his hand to his mouth and yells.

GAROK

You are more foolish than I
thought! Get back here, boy!

Lurza rushes back in, his face full of anticipation.

GAROK

The woods here are dark, dangerous
at night. It is not safe for young
(MORE)

GAROK (cont'd)
boys like yourself to wander them
alone.

He looks to the empty jars on the table.

GAROK
Besides, my stock of spices has
dwindled. Fortunate for you, then!

Garok laughs, then sighs. He walks over to the still-open chest at the foot of his bed. He lifts the handle on the bottom of it. The first layer of tools and trinkets comes out with a minor struggle. Beneath it rests another sword, smaller and thinner than the one on the wall. Garok removes it and replaces the layer of box.

GAROK
This sword...

He approaches Lurza with it.

GAROK
This sword is the sword I learned
on. It is the sword my master
learned on. The blade is thin but
nimble. Use its agility to your
advantage when you need the upper
hand.

Garok slices the air.

GAROK
Should anything happen to it while
I help you back to your village, it
will be your head, trust me.

Garok smiles. Lurza stares at the blade.

GAROK
Go on. Take it.

Lurza grabs the hilt.

GAROK
How far is your village?

LURZA
I left just this morning, master.

Garok throws up his hands.

GAROK

I am not your master. I am not your teacher. You will not refer to me as such. I will see you to safety, and that is all.

LURZA

Sorry, mas--sorry.

GAROK

Let us leave before the night falls. You have food for your return?

LURZA

Well, I...

Lurza scratches his head.

LURZA

No.

GAROK

Then you will go hungry. Preparation and planning is key. Account for every circumstance.

Garok grabs a knapsack from under his bed. He grabs some damp fruit and vegetables out of the kettle and packs them away, biting into an apple as he does so. Lurza looks down at his feet.

GAROK

May our travels be swift and well-favored. Well, boy? Show me the way!

Garok slaps Lurza on the back hard enough to knock Lurza forward a step. Lurza reasserts himself and leads Garok out the door.

EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

Stars twinkle in the twilight above Garok and Lurza. Garok looks over at Lurza as they walk on through the forest. Lurza carries the sword with a loose grip. Garok shakes his head.

GAROK

Hold the blade as though you had the courage to use it. If you do not put your courage into your

(MORE)

GAROK (cont'd)
blade, your blade will not put its
fear into your foes.

Lurza's grip tightens.

LURZA
So, what makes these woods so bad
after dark? Just curious.

Garok stays silent. An owl hoots. Somewhere in the distance, a wolf howls. Nearby leaves rustle. Garok signals for an abrupt halt. Lurza looks around, straining to see something in the surrounding wood. Growling. Lurza struggles to determine the direction. Shrieking. Wailing. The leaves mask a storm of activity beyond them before all falls silent.

GAROK
Let us not tarry too long. The old
beasts may hide from the modern
eye, but they are not dead.

Lurza nods. They continue on their way, Lurza quickening his pace as they do.

EXT. VILLAGE RUINS - NIGHT

Fire lashes out at the night sky, destroying the wooden houses and thatched rooftops. Signs of a struggle abound: doors destroyed, windows smashed, weapons scattered on the ground. A few bodies sprawl out on the ground throughout the village square. The fire glints off Garok's eyes. He turns to Lurza, whose mouth gapes open.

GAROK
Do you have any idea what happened
here?

Lurza's eyes soak in the destruction.

LURZA
I just left this morning...

Garok looks in a window. Gold twinkles in the firelight.

GAROK
No Droghals did this.

Lurza starts off into the desecrated village. He reaches the center of the village square and starts jerking his head from left to right, assessing the damage. He runs off toward the right. Garok follows, readying his sword.

Lurza arrives at a crumbling house, its roof caved in and its walls partial. He stands in shock before it.

LURZA
Mother? Father?

Lurza drops his sword to the ground and runs inside. The blade clatters on the ground. Garok flinches. He kneels to pick it up.

GAROK
Never drop your sword like so. If your sword cannot trust you to wield it with care, you cannot trust it to take care of you.

Garok dusts it off.

GAROK
Especially swords that are not yours, boy!

Lurza pays no heed to Garok's admonitions as he shifts the rubble of the roof, searching. He cries out.

LURZA
They're not here!

GAROK
Why should they be?

LURZA
If I'd been here, maybe I--

Lurza falls to the ground, hiding his face. Garok puts a hand on Lurza's shoulder.

GAROK
Boy, I doubt your ability to protect yourself. It is a good sign your parents are not here. They are not numbered amongst the dead.

Lurza looks up. His eyes widen as he spots something behind Garok. Garok, noticing Lurza's surprise, turns around. An old woman, SHORA, stands outside the house.

LURZA
Shora!

SHORA
Hello, my little lad.

Shora gives a cough. She shuffles into the house.

SHORA

Of course, I must show deference to
the mighty Garok.

Shora bows her head. Garok stares at her. She looks back to
Lurza.

LURZA

What happened?

SHORA

Men came to the village from the
sun's home.

She steps back out of the rubble. She points to the east.

SHORA

From sun's home they came, riding
on horses of iron. Their hands
carried with them the flames of the
sun. Those who resisted fell before
their might. Those who conceded
were taken back to the land of the
sun.

She lifts her hands to the sky.

SHORA

It was written in the stars.

She lowers her hands.

SHORA

But, who lends credence to the
ramblings of a old witch?

LURZA

Why were you not taken?

Shora gives a wheeze.

SHORA

If you knew what was about to
happen, would you be in town?

Garok smirks. Lurza stands up and dusts off his legs.

LURZA

Please. You have to help me find my
people, my parents.

GAROK

I do not have to help you find anything.

Garok starts walking away. Lurza's eyes flare when he gets the idea.

LURZA

You can't leave yet! You swore!

Garok stops in his tracks.

LURZA

You swore that you would see me to safety.

He gestures to the destruction around.

LURZA

This is not safe.

Garok closes his eyes. He lowers his head and sighs.

GAROK

Do you know of another place where you could stay?

Lurza looks at Shora.

LURZA

You said they came from the sun's home, yes?

She nods.

LURZA

Yes, Garok. I know of a place.

Garok nods.

GAROK

Good. Then I suppose that I must see you there. And see you there I shall, but no further. Let us waste no time; you have already deprived an old man of his night's sleep.

Garok starts walking east. Lurza gives Shora a brief hug.

LURZA

Be safe, Shora.

SHORA

I am not the one who needs to worry
about safety, little lad.

Shora cackles and wanders off behind a house. Garok lies down on the ground. Lurza catches up to him.

Garok feels a groove in the ground where something has depressed it. He stands up and dusts himself off.

GAROK

Lead on, boy. I know not where
rests this other village.

Garok reaches into his sack and pulls out a potato. He bites into it as he gestures for Lurza to take the lead. Lurza sighs and steps forward.

EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

An owl watches Garok and Lurza as they pass. It ruffles its feathers and gives a cautionary hoot. Clouds pass over the half-empty moon, further darkening the forest. Lurza clears his throat.

LURZA

How was it, fighting those monsters
of legend?

GAROK

They were worthy foes. Their
deaths...a sad inevitability.

LURZA

Were you ever scared of them?

GAROK

No. There is far more to fear in
the minds of men than in the
blackest hearts of monsters.

They push ahead on the trail. Leaves rustle as the wind whistles through the trees.

LURZA

So, how did you pick up the
warrior's way?

Garok sighs.

GAROK

Boy, your dedication to conversation is as tiring as it is unwise. An open mouth invites danger. Take us to this village; we have little to discuss.

Lurza glances down at the ground as they march on.

LURZA

Sorry.

Garok closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He raises an eyebrow.

GAROK

How far remain we?

LURZA

Not far. Why?

GAROK

This village we approach may not be safe, though one suspects you knew. Perhaps yours is not a special case.

Garok again breathes in.

GAROK

Fire in the air. We must hurry.

They expedite their journey.

EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

Garok comes to an abrupt halt.

GAROK

Listen.

The sounds of the forest overwhelm them. Underneath, the strains of speech can be heard.

GAROK

Is the village near?

LURZA

No.

Garok lowers his shoulders into a more defensive position.

GAROK

Follow.

Garok pushes aside the forest growth keeping them to the trail, disappearing into the forest. Lurza follows.

EXT. CAMP OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

The thick brambles of the hillside glow orange thanks to a roaring bonfire nearby. Surrounding it, makeshift huts keep a watchful eye. People scurry from hut to hut; some idle to catch the fire's warmth. Banners on the shelters bear the symbols of the Droghals.

Lurza stumbles through the underbrush, teetering before catching his balance. Garok slices through with his sword, stepping into the light. His eyes widen.

GAROK

Droghals.

LURZA

What, here?

GAROK

Know well they do not to venture here. This learned they from my blade.

LURZA

Well, it's been a while. Maybe they need a reminder?

GAROK

The lessons I teach are never forgotten.

Garok creeps towards the camp, Lurza in tow. The light of the fire leaps off Garok's blade, illuminating it in the night.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Garok steps out of the shadows, his blade high. A moment of normalcy continues in the camp before an old man notices him. The old man points and yells before collapsing in a coughing fit.

The camp falls silent save the crackling of the fire. Garok and Lurza walk forward. The writhing mass of people bend around them, encapsulating the pair but keeping them at a distance. A DROGHAL WOMAN shields her child.

GAROK
Droghals. This land is not yours.
Why are you here?

Silence.

GAROK
Long ago did I spill the blood of
your fathers to protect these
lands. Tonight, you defile them
with your presence.

DROGHAL WOMAN
Please! We mean no harm!

Garok approaches her. She trembles as he leans into her face.

GAROK
Know this, cur. You and yours are
exempt from the wrath of my blade.

Garok steps back. He turns to a Droghal man.

GAROK
You, however, are not.

Garok raises his blade. The man cowers. Garok hesitates. Lurza observes each moment in detail.

GAROK
Do...

He lowers his sword.

GAROK
Do you know who I am?

No one responds. Garok's shoulders sag. A portly fellow wearing a black apron and jaunty cap, HONCH, steps out from behind the fire. An assortment of utensils hang from a utility belt around his waist.

HONCH
As I live and breathe! The mighty
Garok, come to join us at our camp.
Welcome!

Honch steps forward, his arms wide. Garok's brow furrows in confusion.

GAROK
Never thought I the day would come
for a warm Droghal reception.

Garok looks at the hat.

GAROK
From no less than a chieftain.

Honch smiles.

HONCH
Acting chieftain, I'm afraid.

His eyes drop. The smile wanes.

HONCH
Come, come, we've much to discuss!
The mighty Garok, here to save us!

Honch scampers off behind the bonfire. Garok shoots Lurza a look. Lurza shrugs. They follow.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Honch stirs a simmering cauldron of stew. Droghals clear the way for Garok and Lurza to advance. Around the smaller cooking fire rest smoothed seating stones in semi-circle.

HONCH
Sit; sit! Tell me what you know,
what you've seen.

Lurza takes a seat. Garok stands.

LURZA
We know little, o wise chieftain of
the Droghals.

Lurza bows his head. Honch stops stirring. He covers his face with his right hand. Lurza looks to Garok with a bewildered expression. Honch throws his head back and gives a belly laugh.

HONCH
You flatter me. I'm not the Grand
Chief, you know. I'm just a cook
wearing a nice hat. Ardiss, she's
the real leader of the Droghals
now. Please, just call me Honch.

Garok steps forward.

GAROK
Why come you to these lands?

HONCH
We didn't have a choice.

Honch samples the stew. He nods his head and removes a ladle from his belt. Droghals clamor around with bowls and pails as Honch doles out portions.

HONCH
Have you seen them? Those things?

Lurza leans forward, trying to catch a glimpse of how the stew looks. Garok furrows his brow. Honch puts his hand to his forehead.

HONCH
Where are my manners? I would be most humbled for the great Garok to eat of my stew!

Droghal women shove steaming bowls of stew into Garok and Lurza's hands. Lurza eats with the speed of a man starved. Garok sits the bowl on a stone.

GAROK
Tell of what drove you here.

Honch ladles out a small portion to a little old Droghal lady. The crowd dissipates, disappearing into their huts. Only Honch, Garok, and Lurza remain around the campfire.

Honch wipes his hands on his apron. He takes a seat.

HONCH
Three moons ago, men came from across the sea. We don't know where from, but our coast was under siege like that.

Honch snaps his fingers.

HONCH
With them came a raven-haired sorceress.

Honch leans forward, resting his chin on his clasped hands.

HONCH
We fought. Oh, we fought. They were unstoppable. Our weapons did nothing. They started capturing our
(MORE)

HONCH (cont'd)
towns, claiming our lands, our
people. Those who escaped their
grasp moved further and further
west, but they kept following.

The two fires crackle.

HONCH
Before we knew it, they had pushed
us out of our lands entirely. We
managed to elude them in the woods
here thus far, but...

Honch sighs.

HONCH
Every night, every day, I worry. I
worry we'll be found. I worry what
they'll do. Most of the men have
been taken already. We try to talk,
to reason, but our pleas fall on
deaf ears. Have they no hearts?
Have they no minds?

He clears his throat.

HONCH
But, my worries are over! Garok,
something drew you here to the
defense of the Droghal people!
Surely, you must help us!

Garok narrows his eyes.

GAROK
No such thing has occurred. I was
bound to this boy, to see him to
safety. You have been safe here for
some time. The concerns of your
lands and of your people, they are
not the concerns of me.

Garok looks to the now cold bowl of stew.

GAROK
You are lucky I forgive you this
trespass. Make yourselves unknown
to me, and I shall extend to you
the same courtesy. Good night.

Garok turns to leave. Honch and Lurza bolt out of their
seats.

HONCH
Garok, wait!

Lurza grabs Garok's arm.

GAROK
Boy, have you any sense at all, you
will know that you are making a
grave mistake.

Lurza releases.

HONCH
At least meet Ardiss. Perhaps she
will sway you.

GAROK
I have no time for the daughters of
chiefs; they hold no court with me.

Honch rolls his eyes.

HONCH
She's not the daughter of a chief;
she was the daughter of the Grand
Chief. The daughter of any ordinary
chief wouldn't have any power.
That's not how chiefs work. But,
the Grand Chief, that's something
different, and since we don't know
what's happened to him...

Honch raises his shoulders.

HONCH
That sort of in a way makes her the
acting Grand Chief of the Droghals.

Garok turns to face Honch.

GAROK
The Grand Chief. Here.

Garok inhales.

GAROK
Take me to her.

INT. ARDISS'S HUT - NIGHT

ARDISS, about Lurza's age and bedecked in white robes, sits in a small wooden throne. Before her, a small fire feeds heat through the hut. Pelts of various animals line the wall, and shiny baubles hang from the ceiling.

Honch moves the entrance curtain out of the way and leads Garok and Lurza inside. Lurza approaches the throne and kneels before her. Garok stands in the entrance.

Ardiss stands up. She moves past Lurza, paying no attention to him. She walks up to Garok.

ARDISS
You are Garok.

Garok stares.

ARDISS
You killed my uncle.

GAROK
I slew many men.

ARDISS
Why are you here?

GAROK
I could ask the same of you.

ARDISS
And you would be right to do so.

Ardiss reaches down and takes Garok's hand. She raises it up, kissing it before clasping it in both of hers.

ARDISS
Whatever this sorceress is doing concerns you, Garok. Heed my words. These men show no signs of stopping. They care not for the agreements once made. This is as much your struggle as it is ours.

Lurza stands up. He approaches Ardiss again and kneels once more.

LURZA
My lady, never before have I seen someone so fair.

Ardiss turns to look at him. Garok takes the opportunity to pull his hand away, wiping it off with the other as he does.

ARDISS

Thank you for your kind words. You may stand.

Lurza pops up.

GAROK

When the men come to my home, I shall fight them. Your wars and problems are not mine. Never have I been friend to the Droghals, and never shall I be.

He looks at Lurza.

GAROK

You have eaten of their stores. You have accepted their hospitality. This camp has been safe for some time. I have brought you to safety, and now I take my leave of you. Good night.

Garok steps out of the tent.

LURZA

Wait!

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Honch and Lurza run out of the hut in time to see Garok disappear into the surrounding forest. Honch puts his hand on Lurza's shoulder.

HONCH

You know, I didn't expect him to be so mean.

LURZA

Same here.

HONCH

You want anything else to eat?

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Garok ducks under a low-hanging branch. He looks up to the sky to orient himself. He closes his eyes.

GAROK (V.O.)

This sword is the sword I learned
on. It is the sword my master
learned on.

His eyes flare open. He inhales through his nose. He grumbles as he turns around to head back to the camp.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Honch and Lurza sit around, snacking on roasted pine nuts.

HONCH

And so there I was, in the village
bathing hut, chasing this lamb that
had decided it didn't want to be
our dinner, and in walks the chief.
Now, the chief was expecting to
take a bath, so he's not wearing
anything, and this lamb just runs
up and...

Honch starts laughing. Lurza joins. Honch falls silent. His face pales. Lurza keeps laughing. Honch stands up.

HONCH

No. Not tonight.

A tree splinters, tumbling over and onto a hut. Lurza stops laughing.

EXT. CAMP OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Screams fill the air. Garok steps out of the forest. The firelight illuminates the night, turning it to an artificial day. The huts burn. Droghals, their arms full of personal possessions, scatter into the forest.

Where the bonfire stood now stands a large man in a black leather outfit, ORGHAISS. Steel spikes jut out of the sides of his helmet. Long black hair flows out behind him. He observes the battle before him, his hands on his hips. A longsword hangs gleaming from his side.

Some soldiers in red uniforms march from hut to hut, alighting them with beams of light from their hands. Others in blue grab at the escaping Droghals, throwing those they capture to the ground and shackling them. The soldiers bear no expression on their faces; their blank looks as uniform as their gray skin and cloth outfits.

The Droghal woman Garok spared kneels on the ground. Blood runs down her face. She wails without sound, holding her child in her arms. No response. Soldiers grab and shackle her.

Orghaiss smirks. His head whips up, catching a glimpse of Garok.

Garok readies his blade and charges. Orghaiss gives a loud whistle and falls back. Soldiers carrying swords march in, creating a wall between Garok and Orghaiss.

Garok arrives at the wall. He slashes at the soldier in front of him. The uniform tears, but the soldier stands unfazed by the attack. He stares at Garok. Garok looks to his blade, confused. He jabs at the soldier's torso. His blade fails to pierce the soldier's skin, jarring Garok's arm. The soldier stares at Garok.

A second whistle. The soldier grabs Garok. Garok struggles, trying to break the soldier's grip on his sword-arm. He kicks at the soldier to no avail. The other soldiers encircle Garok.

A youthful cry rings out. Garok's eyes widen as the soldier's arm falls off. It keeps its grip on his arm. Black ooze spurts out, sizzling as it hits the soldier standing adjacent. The soldiers look in unison at their damaged companion. The soldier's head rolls off, revealing Lurza's face.

LURZA

The joints, Garok! The joints!

The soldiers rush in. Chaos. Garok and Lurza stand back to back, turning in a circle. Limbs fly off left and right as soldiers rush in to attack; black ooze fills the air with smoke.

A soldier charges at Garok. As he finishes slaying another soldier, he shoves his sword-arm towards the one charging him, stuffing the severed limb still attached into its face. The flesh bubbles and burns from the ooze, but the soldier does not falter. He raises his sword.

LURZA

Down!

Garok ducks down, and Lurza comes through with the beheading. Garok nods.

GAROK

Your blade surpasses mine tonight.

Soldier bodies surround the two, twitching on the ground.
The grass burns away under them, under the ooze.

GAROK

A sorceress's beguiling falls upon
our efforts; she has enchanted them
such that our swords cannot bite.

They look to the collapsing camp. Ardiss's hut explodes in
flame. Remaining soldiers gather around Orghaiss as he
carries Ardiss. She kicks and screams, but he does not
react.

LURZA

Ardiss!

She looks to Lurza.

ARDISS

Follow them! Do not let them do
this!

Orghaiss places her into a caged metal cart on treads. The
door slams shut. He whistles, and the company and crew
disappear into the forest.

Orghaiss looks back to Garok one last time. He gives a raspy
laugh before following his troops into the woods. Lurza
grabs Garok's arm, removing the soldier's and replacing it
with his own.

LURZA

We have to rescue her! Come on!

GAROK

We have to do no such thing. You
think not with your brain but with
your heart.

A clatter amongst the rubble of the camp. Garok and Lurza
ready their blades.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The snuffed-out campfire's embers glow with heat. Garok and
Lurza approach the flipped cauldron. Banging sounds from
within. Garok kicks it. As it flips over, it hits Honch in
the head, ringing out. Honch yelps in pain, grasping his
head.

HONCH

No! I quit! Take--oh, it's you.

Honch sighs with relief.

GAROK

How noble a chieftain you are.
Typical of Droghal scum.

Honch stands up and dusts himself off.

HONCH

Acting chieftain. What could I do?
Feed them to death?

Garok frowns.

GAROK

Any attempt of valor forgives an
act of cowardice.

Honch smiles.

HONCH

Is that all you're good for now,
old man? Pithy sayings and anger?

Garok scowls.

GAROK

How many men slew you in the battle
for your camp? Watch your words,
lest you lose your tongue.

Honch gets in Garok's face.

HONCH

Or what? You'll kill an unarmed
coward? Here's how I see it, Garok.
We asked for your help; we asked
you to defend us. If you have any
sense of honor at all, you'll
understand who the real coward is.

Garok fumes.

GAROK

Never have I been so insulted by
such filth. I returned merely to
reclaim what is mine.

Garok reaches for Lurza's sword. Lurza pulls it away.

LURZA

You'd leave me defenseless? Let me tell you how I see it.

Lurza gets in Garok's face, standing shoulder to shoulder with Honch.

LURZA

You swore to lead me to safety, and you broke that oath when you left me here. You want to know something? If you had agreed to help these people, lives would have been spared. Their blood is on your hands, Garok. Your hands. And if I hadn't shown up when you were still confused about your tactics, you'd probably be dead. Sounds to me almost like you owe me a life debt.

Lurza puts his finger in Garok's face.

LURZA

And you have the gall to tell me that you aren't going to help? That you aren't going to acknowledge the fact that these things are just going to keep pushing? Are you so blind that you think that this won't affect you? Forget you, Garok. So many have already. I'm going to save Ardiss. I'd have liked your help, but you clearly need to spend more time fading away into obscurity.

Honch looks at Lurza. He looks at Garok.

HONCH

Lurza, I didn't think you had that much air in you.

Honch laughs. Garok and Lurza stay silent. Honch's laugh peters out.

GAROK

Listen, boy. I do not know where you think you have the right to speak to me as such, but your impudence is running unchecked.

A roof collapses with a loud crash.

GAROK

However, I must admit that I am impressed.

Honch smiles.

GAROK

I must also admit that I am curious.

Lurza smiles.

GAROK

Lastly, I must admit that now, having fought once again, my muscles ache for more.

HONCH

So, you'll do it then? You'll help us save Ardiss?

LURZA

Us?

HONCH

I can't just hide under this pot for the rest of my life. Besides, you need a guide through the Droghal heartlands, and that's me.

GAROK

Your accompaniment is as unwanted as it is unnecessary. That said, I cannot stop you from following us.

LURZA

Well, come on! Let's go! They're getting away from us! Let's go right now!

HONCH

I'll grab supplies on the way! We've got to hurry! Who knows what they'll do to her?

Garok holds up a hand to silence them.

GAROK

We camp here tonight. Putting distance between ourselves and them will allow them to forget about us and provide us opportunities.

LURZA

But...

HONCH

But...

GAROK

I will hear your pleas in the morning. A well-rested warrior is a most deadly warrior.

Garok surveys the camp.

GAROK

Help me salvage some beds, and I will grant you their use.

Garok steps into a nearby burning hut and starts dragging out a bed. Honch and Lurza look at each other. They shrug and help Garok.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - DAY

Garok, Lurza, and Honch sit cross-legged by the dying embers of the campfire. Lurza and Honch eat out of bowls as Garok chews a carrot. He points it at Lurza.

GAROK

Have you any shimmering thoughts glistening in that empty head of yours?

LURZA

I, uh, well, we, we go save Ardiss, right? I don't know what you want me to say.

Garok chews and swallows.

GAROK

No.

HONCH

Obviously, we have to defeat the sorceress.

Garok takes another bite.

GAROK

No.

Lurza and Honch exchange a glance. Lurza sighs.

LURZA

Fine. What are we supposed to do?

Garok finishes the carrot before answering.

GAROK

We go and see what happens.
Planning is worthless. One cannot
tell the future.

LURZA

But you said that planning was key.

Garok pauses.

GAROK

I said no such thing.

LURZA

Yes, right before we left the
house. You yelled at me for not
having any food with me. You said
planning was key.

Honch smirks.

GAROK

That...is a different kind of
planning. One must always account
for the constant necessities of
travel.

Lurza's brow furrows before his eyes widen. He nods.

LURZA

You're saying that we should plan
when we need to plan and improvise
everywhere else.

Garok nods.

GAROK

That is right.

HONCH

That's nonsense; that doesn't mean
anything.

GAROK

Hence you have become a chef
instead of a warrior. Your mind has
been addled by too many years of
reciting recipes and too few
moments of actual thought.

Garok and Lurza laugh. Honch grumbles.

LURZA

What was that, Honch?

Honch throws his spoon into the bowl.

HONCH

I said we had best start packing if
we are going to head out today is
what I said.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Blue flames dance in sconces, illuminating the slate gray room. A darkened archway on the right wall leads to a large room. The rear wall opens into a series of arched windows looking out towards the sea. Facing away from these windows, a tall and ornate throne with a plush scarlet cushion sits at the end of a thin green carpet that leads down the center and out of the room.

The sorceress, ERATURE, paces by the windows. She stops to look out and breathe the cool ocean air. The wind ruffles the plumage of her sleek dress. Her bouffant black hair allows her violet eyes to shine against the pallor of her face.

Orghaiss barges through the door at the end of the room. He marches towards Erature, confining his strides to the carpet. He halts and kneels before the throne. They speak in their native tongue with subtitles.

ERATURE

Yes?

ORGHAISS

We have captured the one that they
call Ardiss.

ERATURE

She is their queen, yes?

ORGHAISS

We have come to that conclusion.

Erature turns towards him.

ERATURE

Good. If I can assuage her fears,
convince her cooperation, the
harvest will be more bountiful.

ORGHAISS

What shall we do with her,
mistress?

Erature twists a large jewelled ring on her left hand.

ERATURE

In the second under-sun. Make her accommodations suitable. She must be comfortable, familiar. Ask a few workers to help you design it, but give her a few of our amenities. Combine our world with hers. Show her how all could benefit from our collusion.

Erature nods.

ERATURE

Yes, that should work.

Orghaiss stands.

ORGHAISS

Your will be so, mistress.

Orghaiss rushes out of the room. Erature sits down on the throne. She twists her ring and sighs.

EXT. TRAVELING MONTAGE

A) Honch leads Garok and Lurza out of the forest, slapping them with branches as he does.

B) The three cross a stream. Honch loses his footing and falls into the water. Garok sighs.

C) They climb over a rocky hill. Garok squats, out of breath, and rests his hands on his knees. He points to a nearby escarpment.

GAROK

There camp we for the night.

LURZA

There? We could make it a little further.

Garok looks at him, panting.

GAROK
There we camp for the night.

EXT. ESCARPMENT - EVENING

The last vestiges of the falling sun illuminate the rock face of the escarpment. Garok rakes his hands across the ground, clearing an area which he surrounds with stones. He sits down and looks up at Lurza.

GAROK
Build us a fire.

Lurza looks around. Honch looks skyward, acting as though he did not hear Garok.

LURZA
What, me?

GAROK
Yes.

LURZA
Build a fire?

GAROK
That is what I said.

LURZA
I can't build a fire.

GAROK
You never will unless you start.

Lurza looks at the ground.

LURZA
I collect the kindling now, right?

GAROK
Tinder first.

LURZA
What's the difference between
tinder and kindling?

GAROK
You shall learn.

Lurza sighs and heads off towards the thrush. Garok looks to Honch.

GAROK
You are a chef, are you not?

HONCH
Yes.

GAROK
Have you your ingredients?

HONCH
Some, but most were--

GAROK
Then a hunter you must become.

HONCH
But you've got plenty of food in
that bag of yours!

GAROK
Yes. I have provided for myself.
You must do the same.

Honch looks to the nearby woods.

HONCH
Surely you're better suited for
such a task.

GAROK
I am. Such trivialities will not
stop me from having you do it,
however.

Garok laughs. Honch stares in disbelief before shuffling off
towards the woods, passing Lurza in the process. The weight
of the wood slows Lurza's gait.

HONCH
(under his breath)
Maybe you should have left him
where you found him.

LURZA
What?

HONCH
Nothing, nothing!

Honch disappears into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Thick underbrush rustles underfoot. Leaves crumble under Honch's footfalls. He grumbles as he pushes bushes out of the way.

HONCH

Sending me out into the
woods...night...show them...find
his own food...plenty of food in
that pack he had...can't believe--

He cuts off his muttering and jerks his head when he hears the flapping of wings. He looks around. Shining ahead, a white duck seems to glow in the dark night.

Honch takes great care to be as quiet as possible in his approach. He lunges for the duck, falling to the ground.

HONCH

Got you!

The duck sidesteps Honch's jump. It hops onto his back. Honch flips over. The duck waddles a short distance away. It gives Honch a condescending look. Honch licks his lips as he gets up.

HONCH

So, this is how you want to play?
Fine.

Honch runs at the duck. The duck stands its ground. Honch's foot catches a root. Honch goes airborne before a flowerbush catches him.

HONCH

You got lucky that time, duck.

The duck stares at Honch. Honch attempts to get out of the bush. Thorns tear at his clothes and skin. He creeps toward the duck.

HONCH

You are going to make me such a
nice stew. Yes, you are. Come here,
you little...

The duck, SNYSS, opens its mouth and begins to speak in a dignified tone.

SNYSS

All right. This has been enough.
Just stop right there.

Honch jerks backward, having never before encountered a talking duck. His momentum forces him to sit down at a quickened pace. Snyss jumps up on his lap.

SNYSS

I know not who you are. Given your dress, I say Droghal. Allow me then to speak more clearly. Eating me would be a rather poor decision.

Snyss sizes up Honch.

SNYSS

Besides, I should think you have had enough already. What is your purpose in these woods tonight?

HONCH

I, uh, the food, get, er, thing, uh, fire.

SNYSS

Right. I see you are a simple man. Is there someone with whom you are traveling to whom I may speak, someone who possesses the linguistic capability to parley with an old man?

Snyss looks under his right wing.

SNYSS

Or, one supposes, a rather young duck?

Snyss hops off Honch's lap and heads back the way Honch came. Honch shakes his head, stands up, and follows.

EXT. ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Garok sits by the fire with his eyes closed. Lurza tosses in another piece of wood, causing sparks to fly into the night sky. Garok's eyes open at the sound of rustling. He looks to the forest.

Snyss wanders out, trailed by Honch. Garok jumps up and unsheathes his sword. He springs at Snyss, slicing at the duck as he comes down. Snyss stays nonchalant and sidesteps the blade.

SNYSS

Oh, yes, I suppose that it would look to you that he has driven me out of the forest. Quite the contrary, I should say.

Garok looks at Honch. Honch shrugs, bewildered. Garok retreats his sword.

GAROK

Who sent you?

SNYSS

None but myself.

LURZA

Is no one else confused by this talking duck?

Honch see-saws his hand.

GAROK

You see a lot of things in your time.

HONCH

But this?

Garok shrugs. Snyss leans around Garok.

SNYSS

Is that a fire over there?

He waddles through Garok's legs towards the fire.

SNYSS

An odd question, I know. I am certainly aware that it is a fire, just as you are.

He looks back at Honch.

SNYSS

Hopefully aware. So strange a formality to ask such a question.

He stretches out his wings as would a man warming his hands. He rubs them together before returning them to their standard position. Lurza's mouth gapes open at the absurdity of the situation. Garok and Honch settle around the fire.

SNYSS

Your hesistance is understood. This is a peculiar situation for us all.

He looks from side to side.

SNYSS

You appear to be traveling, though your lack of preparation implies that you do so with haste.

Garok turns down the corners of his mouth. Snyss looks at Lurza.

SNYSS

You are too young.

He looks at Honch.

SNYSS

You are a fool.

He looks across the fire at Garok.

SNYSS

You are the leader of this ragged band. Particularly due to your reaction time to an intruding fowl. A warrior, one should think.

Snyss bows his head in deference. Garok smiles.

GAROK

Well met, duck.

Garok reaches into his sack. He rips off a leaf of lettuce and tosses it to Snyss.

HONCH

Why does the duck get to eat out of your bag?

Garok pauses as Snyss snaps up the lettuce.

GAROK

The duck respects me. I respect it in return.

Honch rolls his eyes.

SNYSS

All this talk of me with that annoying determiner has made me

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)
 realize that I have not yet
 introduced myself. From hence, you
 may refer to me as Snyss, hopefully
 distinguishing me from any other
 talking birds you have in tow.

Lurza draws in the dirt with a stick.

LURZA
 I hate to ask, but I have to know.
 How did you learn to talk?

Snyss laughs.

SNYSS
 It is not that I learned to talk,
 my boy, but rather that I am still
 learning to be a duck.

HONCH
 Am I the only one who thinks this
 is crazy? We are talking to a bird
 right now. That is our lives. An
 evil sorceress is imprisoning my
 people, and we're sitting here
 talking to a duck.

Snyss gives an amused quack.

SNYSS
 Ah, so you are familiar with her.

Honch and Lurza lean in. Garok remains nonplussed.

LURZA
 You know of the great
 sorceress?

HONCH
 What, do you and her have
 something in common?

Snyss scratches under his wing with his bill.

SNYSS
 To say that is to be guilty of an
 understatement.

Garok raises an eyebrow.

SNYSS
 After all, it is because of her
 that I have acquired such copious
 plumage.

HONCH

She turned you into a duck?

Snyss tilts his head at Honch.

SNYSS

Even the blind squirrel may chance upon a walnut from time to time. Yes, I was once her court sage before our desires separated.

LURZA

How so?

SNYSS

When we arrived here, I set out to understand the people, the lay of the land. She too, at first. Soon, she realized her power, and she began to exploit instead of protect.

HONCH

Do you know what she may be planning?

SNYSS

I was banished before it crystallized; however, this I know.

Snyss lowers his head and voice.

SNYSS

She seeks the Heart of Gelb.

Honch gasps. Garok and Lurza share a glance.

LURZA

Er, what does that mean exactly?

Honch puts his right hand on his chest and scoffs.

HONCH

You've never heard of the Heart of Gelb? Legend has it that it is a powerful magical artifact, hidden away in a lost temple somewhere in the land. It contains power beyond comprehension, they say!

SNYSS

Beyond your comprehension, perhaps. Erature has heard your legends, and

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)
 she believes that it will allow her
 to claim this power. Whether it
 exists is to be determined, but you
 may allow it to exist by believing
 in it.

Lurza furrows his brow.

LURZA
 I don't follow.

Garok sighs.

GAROK
 He is saying that, if the Heart
 contains no real power, her
 acquisition of it is at the least
 of symbolic importance.

Lurza's face lightens with realization.

SNYSS
 Further, I believe that any power
 it does contain could be the key to
 defeating her, if you so desire.

He looks at Honch.

SNYSS
 However, should it fall into her
 hands instead of yours...

LURZA
 If it's lost, there's no real issue
 then, right?

SNYSS
 Lost...

Snyss nibbles at the lettuce.

SNYSS
 That may be an overstatement.

HONCH
 You must be joking.

SNYSS
 By tracing the tales told about the
 Heart and about the temple, we were
 able to track it down to a very
 small area. However, only one

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)
 person in all of her court knows
 its true location. In fact...

He puffs out his chest for drama.

SNYSS
 I and I alone have seen the temple.

Honch and Lurza gasp. They turn to Garok. He nods and turns to Lurza.

GAROK
 To think that you wanted to plan!

Garok throws back his head and laughs. He cuts it short and snaps his head to Honch.

GAROK
 You, however, had but one task in
 the woods: to return with food.
 Instead, you returned with another
 mouth to feed! Perhaps you have
 spent so long away from the realm
 of manhood that its ways are
 foreign now.

Everyone laughs but Honch.

HONCH
 If you're so great, why don't you--

Garok throws a stone. It whizzes past Honch's head. A hiss. A snake falls out of a tree.

HONCH
 That seems to be it for tonight. I
 think I am going to bed now. Cook
 for yourselves. Good night.

Honch stands up and moves away from the fire. He starts laying out his bedroll.

INT. ARDISS'S PRISON - NIGHT

Ardiss sits at a wood desk, facing what appears to be a window. Waves crash on the beach. She rests her head on her right hand, drawing circles on the desk with her left. A strand of blonde curl dangles between her downcast blue eyes. She sighs.

Behind her, a plush bed rests atop a luxurious carpet. A small fire in the center of the room gives heat as well as an orange glow. The smoke billows up into a grated vent in the ceiling of her prison. Wall sconces project blue-green light to the ceiling. The steel door on the wall behind her slides open.

Erature walks in. She speaks in her native tongue. Ardiss turns to face Erature. Ardiss narrows her eyes and shakes her head.

ARDISS

What?

Erature raises her right hand and shakes her head. She holds her ring to her throat. It glows with a red light.

ERATURE

That should correct that. Are you doing well, princess?

Ardiss turns back to the window.

ARDISS

I am not a princess, whatever that may be. Do not refer to me as such.

Erature moves closer.

ERATURE

Of course. I merely wished to know if you were comfortable here. Your care is of the utmost importance to me.

ARDISS

It is...

She turns her head a little to the left.

ARDISS

It is different here.

ERATURE

Yes?

ARDISS

That is not to say that it is bad, only that it is...

She turns back to the window.

ARDISS
Different.

Erature smiles. She places her hand on Ardiss's shoulder.

ERATURE
It so pleases me to hear that. We can help each other, you and I. You understand that I only want the best for you and your people.

ARDISS
Is that why you have forced so many to labor?

ERATURE
The labor they provide is a price to pay for improvement. Anything they provide betters life for the all.

Ardiss scoffs.

ARDISS
I have not seen such betterment.

ERATURE
If you cooperate with us, we can show you the secrets of the world.

ARDISS
And lose what in the process? Our own secrets? Our lives, our lands, our loves?

She shrugs off Erature's hand.

ARDISS
Begone with your sorceress's ways. We have no need of you here.

Erature sneers. She presses her ring to the window, shutting it off. A blank stone wall remains.

ERATURE
If you will not cooperate, then we must simply do what we must. Good night.

Erature moves to the door.

ERATURE

Princess.

Eratore leaves. The door slides shut.

EXT. CRAGGY FIELD - DAY

The sun beats down on Garok, standing in the middle of the field. He slices his sword through the air.

GAROK

Here was once fought a great
battle. Green grass drew water from
the blood of many Droghals.

Garok points to the hillside.

GAROK

They came from there, rushing
toward me. They had numbers, but I
had skill.

Lurza watches with joy as Garok pantomimes the battle.

GAROK

Their leader was the last, as one
would expect from a man who
commands.

LURZA

What did he look like?

Garok looks up and to the right.

GAROK

He was a great tall man, taller
than any other. He was a great
mountain reaching up towards the
sky, my height half over. His legs
were broad; his knee, five hands
wide. He carried with him a massive
sword, and with his might, he could
fell an old tree in a single blow.

Garok sheathes his sword.

GAROK

Of course, all that muscle and size
made his back very open to
grappling. One cannot defeat what
one cannot touch.

Honch rolls his eyes.

HONCH

No, he wasn't; no, you didn't. No one cares. We're wasting daylight with your rambling, and it's not going anywhere helpful.

SNYSS

Given what I have seen, the size descriptions you have given do seem impossible.

Lurza taps Honch on the shoulder.

LURZA

Hey, I was listening.

Garok glances at the ground. Honch purses his lips and looks down.

HONCH

Sorry for interrupting you.

Garok throws his hands up.

GAROK

No, there is no time for the tales of an old warrior returning to his battlegrounds. Clearly, you are correct in saying that no one cared, and in no way was I trying to--

He looks at Lurza.

GAROK

What I am saying is that all stories have a purpose, but one must find that purpose for oneself.

LURZA

So, what happened?

GAROK

It is in the past. Nothing is gained by hearing it now.

Lurza looks at Honch.

LURZA

You see what you did?

HONCH

Oh, yes, it's my fault that I hurt Garok's non-existent feelings by reminding him we are in a hurry. Absolutely.

Snyss gives a loud quack.

SNYSS

If we are to spend the rest of the day bickering, we must at least do so as we walk.

Snyss walks off. The three follow, grumbling as they do.

EXT. RAZED HOUSE - EVENING

Garok, Lurza, and Honch unpack near the rubble of a house on the outskirts of a forest. Snyss rubs his bill against Garok's pack of food, trying to coax something into emerging.

HONCH

I'm just saying, what if they come back?

Garok cracks his neck.

GAROK

For what would they come back? What reason have they? What reason have you to worry? If they return, we shall deal with them.

Lurza dusts off his hands.

LURZA

Am I building the fire tonight?

Garok chuckles.

GAROK

Not tonight, for I must find some use for our Droghal companion here.

He looks at Honch. Lurza takes the opportunity to move away from the group.

GAROK

You have seen; surely you can do. After all, a chef must be able to build a fire. How else could he cook?

HONCH

I don't understand why you keep asking me to do things related to the thing I do as though I should be expected to do them.

Garok leans in to Honch's face.

GAROK

I do it because I expect you to do them.

Garok gestures toward Snyss.

GAROK

Take him with you. He may be able to provide a lesson or two.

Honch and Snyss amble towards the trees. Garok looks to Lurza. Lurza stands near the path, swinging his blade. He slows his swings before following them through into dramatic poses. Garok shakes his head as he walks over.

GAROK

Being a warrior is not about your appearance. Being a warrior is about what you contain within yourself.

Garok places his hand flat on Lurza's blade.

GAROK

Your stance is ill-suited. A single sweep could fell you. Stand not with your feet but with your legs.

Garok adopts a wide stance and takes his blade in both hands. Lurza mirrors him.

GAROK

Treat the blade as an extension of yourself. Let it use itself naturally.

Garok slices through the air in a smooth motion. Lurza tries the same, but his blade wobbles.

GAROK

All things take practice. Your arms will learn to be longer, just as your hand will learn to become the handle. Now, defend yourself!

Garok swings at Lurza. Lurza steps back. Garok pulls the swing, stopping it at Lurza's arm, but Lurza stumbles and falls over a rock. The blade slides through Lurza's shirt. Blood seeps in.

Garok kneels by Lurza.

GAROK

You must always be ready to be attacked. Do not lower your guard against anyone or anything.

He examines the wound. Lurza winces.

GAROK

The pain will subside. You will always bear this as a reminder to you. A reminder as to what, you must decide.

Lurza looks up.

LURZA

As a reminder to be aware of my surroundings.

Garok gives a half-smile.

GAROK

As one should.

LURZA

I see, master.

Garok's shoulders sag. He purses his lips. Lurza smiles.

GAROK

You have tricked me.

LURZA

I only let you do what you wanted, master.

GAROK

Do not refer to me as such.

Garok sulks back to his pack. He rummages through it, pulling out a jar of salve that he tosses to Lurza. Lurza's smile grows.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

A large screen descends from the ceiling, obscuring the oceanic view. Erature stands facing it. It flashes with light before showing the OVERLORD, a man in a charcoal business suit, his black hair in a sensible business cut. The suit fits him well, but it lacks the extravagance of Erature, perhaps something he purchased off the rack and had tailored. He sits in an inexpensive office chair in front of a fuzzy gray wall. They speak in their native tongue with subtitles throughout.

OVERLORD

Please make this quick. You must understand that it is incredibly late over here.

ERATURE

Of course, master.

OVERLORD

Well, will they or won't they?

Erature hisses.

ERATURE

We have tried to sate her desires, but the princess still refuses our help.

The Overlord sighs.

OVERLORD

Our hands are tied. We have to meet this quota. We can't let the people down like this.

ERATURE

What do you advise, o learned one?

OVERLORD

Just...

The Overlord rubs the bridge of his nose. He rifles through some papers on his desk.

OVERLORD

Use them to build the device and report back.

The screen turns off and rises back into the ceiling. Erature twists her ring as she looks out onto the ocean.

EXT. RAZED HOUSE - NIGHT

The group sits around a campfire. Honch stirs a pot that hangs over it, suspended by two wooden poles. He sprinkles a few mushrooms into it before sampling it with a wooden spoon.

HONCH

You know, Snyss, your log selection was uncanny.

SNYSS

It helps one to be closer to the ground, if only for such an occasion. Besides, I have had to learn how to utilize my strengths as a duck.

HONCH

Every log, though. Every log just full of mushrooms.

Honch stops stirring. He grabs a ladle off his belt.

HONCH

Dinner's ready.

Lurza grabs two bowls from a nearby stack. He places one before Snyss. Honch distributes stew to them.

HONCH

Garok, don't you want any?

Honch fills the ladle and holds it out.

HONCH

Smells really good...nice and warm.

Garok stares at Honch. He reaches into his sack to retrieve a carrot.

GAROK

No.

Honch swings his hands to his hips, sloshing stew around the fire. It sizzles as it makes contact.

HONCH

What, is my cooking not good enough? Are my ingredients not fresh enough? Why do you tell me to do things that I can't do all day and all night but then refuse the one thing I can actually do?

Garok takes a bite of carrot.

GAROK

I do not eat the food of Droghals.

Lurza swallows his mouthful of stew.

LURZA

Do you not like the spices they use
or...

Garok shakes his head.

GAROK

I am sure that it tastes fine. I
merely have no reason to trust a
Droghal chef.

Honch's mouth gapes open as he squints his eyes. He hangs
the ladle onto his belt and throws his hands up in
exasperation.

GAROK

I mean you no offense, Honch. One
must simply always be aware of such
things.

HONCH

What things? What things, Garok?
Tell me the things because I am
obviously not aware of the things!

Garok takes another bite of carrot.

GAROK

In times long past, I may have
slain your kin. Your offer could be
an elaborate ruse many years in the
making. I know not that you would
not poison me in revenge. It is
your way.

Honch flushes.

HONCH

The fact that you would think
that--the fact you think that I
would--I can't believe that you
think I would ruin a perfectly good
stew! That's what gets me the most!
I take pride in all my dishes, and
you--

Garok starts laughing.

HONCH

What? What is so funny?

Garok waves his hand.

GAROK

Never have I seen a Droghal claim to take pride in anything. It is like watching a dog try to walk on two legs.

Honch and Lurza look at each other. Snyss retracts his head from his bowl of stew and starts flapping his wings.

SNYSS

Garok, now, I think you are underestimating the Droghal people. I have not yet spent much time here, but they are certainly not as bad as you are making them out to be. That was rather insensitive, I must say.

Garok rolls his eyes.

GAROK

You must understand. The Droghals and I share a checkered past. I have no more reason to trust him than he does to trust me.

Honch sighs.

HONCH

Are you really so hung up on the past that you can't get over perceived slights from ages ago?

SNYSS

You really should consider people and things on an individual level, not one of generalities. Honch has only tried to please you, from what I have seen.

Garok smiles.

GAROK

As he rightfully should! He knows that I could fell him at a moment's notice.

Honch starts moving towards Garok. Lurza stands up and gets between them.

LURZA

Honch, why don't you sit down and eat your delicious stew that you made and haven't had any of yet?

Lurza turns to Garok.

LURZA

Garok, why don't you eat your carrots like you wanted in the first place and we won't disturb your dinner anymore?

Honch huffs and sits down. He gets a bowl for himself. Lurza takes a seat and continues eating.

SNYSS

Just so you know, I thought that was very well-handled, young man.

Lurza shrugs it off. Garok grumbles around his carrot.

EXT. RAZED HOUSE - DAY

Garok snores in his bedroll. A twig snaps. His eyes flare open as he bolts upright.

Crouching by the firepit, UNTWEND, a young man of about twenty-five with hollow cheeks and a gray outfit too big for his frame, stokes it with a stick. The embers still glow from the night before.

Garok leaps out of his bedroll and draws his sword.

UNTWEND

Hello, friend!

The blade shakes in Garok's hand. Snyss starts shaking his head, making a annoyed quacking sound.

SNYSS

What is going on? Who disturbs the slumber of the great Snyss?

He looks at Untwend, then to Garok.

SNYSS

At whom am I looking, and why should I care?

Untwend raises an eyebrow at Snyss before bows with a flourish.

UNTWEND

I am Untwend, poet to the stars. I must admit, I don't meet a lot of talking ducks. Your name for a song?

Snyss ruffles his feathers.

SNYSS

Oh, yes, you are exactly what we need, someone who talks a lot and contributes nothing.

Untwend raises his eyebrows.

UNTWEND

My instincts were not mistaken! You are surely adventurers!

Honch rolls over.

HONCH

Yeah, sure, why not.

Lurza stretches.

LURZA

Would you like to join us?

UNTWEND

Would I ever!

Garok sheathes his sword.

GAROK

Now, let us not be too hasty. Snyss has a point. Poets only serve to produce poetry.

Untwend raises a contentious finger.

UNTWEND

Ah, but that it is not so, for I am also a skilled musician!

Untwend removes a lute from his back.

SNYSS

Perfect. He babbles like a brook, drawing all the attention he can.

UNTWEND

Have I offended you in some way,
dear duck?

Snyss waddles over to Untwend and pokes him with his wing.

SNYSS

Listen here. We are on very serious
business, and we do not have time
for your little games.

GAROK

Snyss is right.

Lurza stands up.

LURZA

I don't see how another set of eyes
could be a problem. He seems nice.

Honch joins them.

HONCH

Yeah, Snyss, what happened to the
individual level?

SNYSS

This is...

Snyss's head darts left and right.

SNYSS

This is different.

Untwend strums a chord.

UNTWEND

But what good is an adventure if no
one gets to hear about it? I am in
your service to tell your story, to
record it for the ages. Your names
shall be on the lips of poets long
after your bodies have faded away.

Untwend looks at Garok.

UNTWEND

The ancient warrior...

Garok narrows his eyes. He looks at Lurza.

UNTWEND
The young apprentice...

He looks at Honch and Snyss.

UNTWEND
...and the rest. Look, just give me
a chance.

Garok looks at Lurza and Honch. They nod. Snyss shakes his head, crossing and uncrossing his wings. Garok sighs.

GAROK
Everyone deserves a chance.

Lurza and Honch smile. Snyss buries his head under his wing.

UNTWEND
You won't regret it! That much I
can promise!

GAROK
I had better not.

Garok starts putting away his bedroll.

GAROK
Let us not tarry.

INT. SNYSS'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Papers full of notes and illustrations carpet the floor. Robes, cast out of an armoire, spread across the canopy bed by the door. Erature stands over Snyss's desk, throwing papers behind her. Orghaiss stands in the doorway.

ERATURE
He wrote down everything! It's got
to be--

Erature picks up something in both hands.

ERATURE
You old fool.

She holds up a map showing a detailed coast with a sketchy mainland. Snyss's notes fill concentric circles on the mainland, culminating in a star with the word "HEART" next to it. Orghaiss enters and takes it.

ORGHAISS

I leave at once.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Garok eats out of his sack. The rest share in a stew. Silence befalls the group as they eat. Untwend looks around at everyone. The food keeps their attention. He clears his throat. No response.

Lurza looks up. Untwend's eyes widen in anticipation of conversation. Lurza looks back into his bowl.

UNTWEND

That's it; I can't take it anymore. Someone has to start talking, or I-I-I-I'm just going to start screaming. Silence is anathema to my very essence!

Everyone stares at Untwend. They resume eating in silence. Untwend, out of anxiety, starts tapping his hand on his leg. Lurza swallows his mouthful of stew.

LURZA

So, Garok. Why don't you care about rescuing Ardiss?

GAROK

I never said such a thing.

LURZA

I mean, back before we set out, you said that we shouldn't plan on rescuing Ardiss.

HONCH

Not this again.

GAROK

That is true.

LURZA

But, shouldn't we try to? Shouldn't we have set that as our main goal?

HONCH

No, that's secondary to defeating the sorceress. If we defeat the sorceress, we have to rescue her. That's not true in reverse.

SNYSS

Honch, your logical progression is astounding, given your mental limitations.

Garok and Snyss laugh.

LURZA

It just seemed like you didn't care about her is all, Garok.

Garok's eyes look to the left.

GAROK

It--

His eyes shift to the right.

GAROK

It is better not to act in haste about such matters in instances of peril.

Honch looks at Lurza. Lurza looks at Snyss. Snyss looks at Untwend. Untwend looks at Honch and nods.

GAROK

Stop that. It makes one feel as though you are conspiring. One should prepare for the worst, even if doing so means that one must keep those he saves at a distance.

Snyss waddles over to Garok and puts a wing on his leg.

SNYSS

All is well, Garok. You know that we are here for you if you have anything that you need to say.

Honch and Lurza restrain their laughter. Garok shakes off the wing.

GAROK

It is not a matter of laughing.

UNTWEND

Then it is a matter that should be discussed.

The fire lights up Garok's eyes. He turns his head away.

GAROK
It is in the past.

LURZA
You can't just bring something up
and then not talk about it. That's
not fair.

UNTWEND
You're telling me.

Garok throws his remaining vegetable into the sack.

GAROK
Fine. You all insist on such a
tale. It is clear I shall have no
rest until it is told.

Garok sighs.

HONCH
This is going to be good.

GAROK
I will ask you once to not
interrupt me.

He looks at Honch, then to Untwend.

GAROK
In the days of my youth, when I was
an apprentice, I...

Garok looks at the fire.

GAROK
I attached myself too hastily. In
the village of my master, there was
a girl my age.

Garok closes his eyes.

GAROK
She had flowing flaxen hair, and
her laughter sounded like bells on
a crisp morning. She was...

She dances in the flames before Garok, laughing. Garok
furrows his brow and shakes his head. She disappears in a
lick of flame.

GAROK

She was captured in a raid upon the town. The Droghals had not yet learned to avoid our lands.

He looks up at Honch.

GAROK

My master knew her worth to me. He used it as an opportunity to drive my passions for combat. We tracked them to their camp, and he started the assault.

He looks at Lurza.

GAROK

There was no parley, no negotiation. Our swords were drawn before we arrived.

Garok looks back the fire.

GAROK

Our assault on the camp left no one alive.

He looks at Untwend.

GAROK

No one. The Droghal chief, in seeing that my master and I would not provide a ransom or let him use her as a bartering chip, killed her as soon as we entered.

Silence falls over the camp. The fire crackles.

GAROK

The moral is to never act in haste.

Snyss scratches under a wing with his bill.

SNYSS

No, I think that story has another message.

Honch glances down.

HONCH

I'm sorry, Garok.

Garok turns back to his sack.

GAROK

Do not apologize to me. You were
but a wisp of thought in your
father's mind.

HONCH

To be fair, I mean, the chief had
to have had his reasons for
capturing her.

Garok turns his head and stares. Honch looks at Lurza. Lurza
shakes his head. Honch turns down the left corner of his
mouth.

HONCH

Sorry.

GAROK

To act in haste is a mistake I will
not make again.

UNTWEND

Nor to get attached, right?

GAROK

That was not the moral of the
story.

Garok dusts off a potato before biting into it.

EXT. TEMPLE ENTRANCE - DAY

The sun glints off the white limestone accents of the
temple's roof. The forest grows over its finest details,
obscuring the relief carved above its entrance. Columns
stand in a row; between them, tall statues of ancient
warriors reach towards the sky. They dwarf the group as they
walk past them.

UNTWEND

It's beautiful.

HONCH

You're telling me.

GAROK

The Droghals care not for their
traditions. To abandon a temple
shows great disrespect.

LURZA
Why was it abandoned?

HONCH
You know, I don't know.

They move through the dark archway into the temple.

INT. TEMPLE ANTECHAMBER - DAY

Phosphorescent stones embedded in reliefs of ancient warriors give the room a strange green tint.

SNYSS
If I am correct...

He turns to the group.

SNYSS
As I so often am, the Heart of Gelb rests at the end of this complex.

LURZA
Then why didn't you get it when you were here before?

SNYSS
Certain things exist for which my current form is--

He looks over his shoulder. A closed set of double doors rests at the other end of the antechamber. Two small and ornate doorknobs sit near the center.

SNYSS
Ill-suited.

Snyss waddles to the door. He crosses a pressure plate, but his weight fails to depress it all the way.

Garok narrows his eyes.

GAROK
The air is bad here.

HONCH
What does that even mean?

UNTWEND
He's saying that he's suspicious.

HONCH

What's there to be suspicious of?

Honch starts walking forward. He steps on a pressure plate. The floor beneath him and under Snyss gives way to a dark pit. Snyss starts quacking and flapping his wings to stay aloft. Honch teeters forward, pinwheeling his arms.

Garok steps forward and pulls Honch back. The floor returns. Honch almost hyperventilates; his face flush. Garok speaks through his teeth.

GAROK

A great many things are deserving of suspicion.

LURZA

Why would they trap a temple?

UNTWEND

Probably so that people couldn't just walk in here and steal stuff.

SNYSS

It seems to be working wonders. If someone could get over here and avoid that plate to open these doors, that would be utterly fantastic.

Lurza steps forward.

SNYSS

Yes, Lurza, you are light; we will make an explorer of you yet. Just watch your step on the way over here. That's a good lad.

Lurza watches the ground before taking each step. He creeps his way forward, stepping between the pressure plates before arriving at the doors. Snyss tries to clap his wings and stops when he realizes how ridiculous he looks. Lurza turns the doorknobs.

GAROK

Wait!

The door swings open with no difficulty. The pressure plates lower to be flush with the floor. A loud click echoes in the room. Everyone looks at Garok.

GAROK

He still should have checked for traps.

INT. HALL OF THE ANCIENT WARRIORS - DAY

Murals cover the walls of the room, showing great battles against terrible beasts in times long past. Ten alcoves line the room; within them stand sarcophagi carved with the gisants of severe-faced warriors dressed in their finest armor. Small slits above them, windows overgrown with ivy, let it a marginal amount of light.

HONCH

It all makes sense now.

LURZA

What?

SNYSS

This is no a temple, but a tomb.

HONCH

That's why people stopped coming. That's why they trapped it. This ground is sacred, and we're defiling it.

GAROK

If your people had cared so much, they would have guarded it better.

HONCH

Yes, so sorry for my ancestors not anticipating the extremely contrived circumstance that caused us to have to come here.

Lurza and Untwend move off by themselves to look at one of the sarcophagi.

AT THE SARCOPHAGUS

UNTWEND

Impeccable workmanship on this, really.

LURZA

Do you think they used to do this to all their dead?

UNTWEND

No, this had to have been someone important.

IN THE DOORWAY

Honch and Garok now stand toe-to-toe.

GAROK

If your people were more prepared for this invasion, I would not have to be here right now!

HONCH

Right, we were just supposed to live our lives in fear every day that we would get overrun by a sorceress who was driving us off our lands.

GAROK

I should not have to be the one to solve the problems of your ill-ready nation!

HONCH

Who are you calling ill-ready?

Snyss stands between their legs, trying to push them apart with his wings.

SNYSS

Gentlemen, gentlemen, please! Do not make our sacrilege any more apparent!

AT THE SARCOPHAGUS

UNTWEND

As they say, the sleeping dog never hears the thieves in his cellar.

Lurza furrows his brow.

LURZA

I've never heard anyone say that.

UNTWEND

It's a regional thing.

LURZA

Why does a dog have a cellar?

UNTWEND

That's not the point; the point
was--

The sarcophagus shakes. Lurza and Untwend turn to look at it.

IN THE DOORWAY

Honch and Garok still argue.

SNYSS

Sirs, if we could just make our way
to the end of the tomb, we could
easily finish our business here.

Lurza and Untwend run over. They grab Garok and Honch start yelling over top of each other.

LURZA

Garok! Garok! It moved! The
thing, it moved! We were
over by the thing and it
moved! It just shook like
this!

UNTWEND

Honch! Honch! The thing
started moving! Something's
alive in the thing over
there! We're surrounded by
them!

Lurza imitates the thing shaking. Garok and Honch look at each other in disbelief before turning back to the two.

HONCH

Yeah, sure, something's alive in
the tomb so old that people forgot
where it was.

GAROK

Boy, do you even listen to yourself
speak? You have spoken so many
words without saying anything at
all.

HONCH

(under breath)
That's hypocrisy.

SNYSS

(under breath)
You said it.

UNTWEND

(under breath)
You have no room to talk.

GAROK
 (under breath)
 Talking like this does not mean I
 cannot hear you.

HONCH
 Besides, I'm sure there's nothing
 to--

Specters slide out of the sarcophagi. They appear much like the carvings on their receptacles, but their complexions are mottled with necrosis. They wear full sets of armor, and each carries a sword or axe.

HONCH
 Worry about.

The ghosts glide towards the group.

LURZA
 What do we do?

GAROK
 I know not. Never before have I
 fought a spirit.

LURZA
 That's not helping!

Lurza charges at a ghost. He swings at it, but his blade passes through it to no effect. He looks up.

The ghost raises a battle axe above its head. It swings at Lurza.

A chord rings out. The blade stops short half an inch from Lurza's face.

The ghosts look at Untwend. His lute readied, he steps forward.

UNTWEND
 Great warriors! We come to pay you
 tribute!

HONCH
 (to Garok)
 What is he doing?

GAROK
 (to Honch)
 I have no idea.

Untwend strums another chord.

UNTWEND

(singing)

Mighty men from times long past,
Curséd here to sleep ever more,
You fought your lives to the last,
Now rest, rest tired eyes from war.

The ghosts lower their weapons. They approach Untwend.

UNTWEND

(singing)

Many battles not poor-spent,
For so many years have passed since
then,
Children born; loves came and went,
From the sacrifice of you ten.

The ghosts circle around him.

UNTWEND

(singing)

More than any, you deserve to
sleep,
Here in your dark, ancient tomb so
deep.

Untwend plays a short outro. He takes a bow.

UNTWEND

Thank you.

The ghosts look at each other. They pick up their weapons again. Untwend turns back to the group.

UNTWEND

Looks like I made a mistake.

He runs out of reach before they rend him. Lurza too joins the rest.

LURZA

Garok? Ideas?

Garok looks around.

GAROK

No.

Untwend grabs Honch.

UNTWEND

Honch, look!

Untwend points to the end of the hall. An ornate shrine sits there. A free-hanging effigy emerges from the wall to loom over it, depicting the head and shoulders of a portly Droghal wearing a crown.

UNTWEND

It's you!

The ghosts approach. Honch's eyes widen.

HONCH

That...

Honch steps forward. He puts his hands up.

HONCH

Halt, you silly spooks, you wretched wraiths, you foolish fiends, halt, I say!

The ghosts move closer before stopping. They look at each other. One ghost slides forward. He puts his face close to Honch's, examining the details.

Honch trembles. A bead of sweat rolls down his cheek. The ghost retreats. It kneels before Honch. The others follow suit.

LURZA

Do they think he's--

UNTWEND

Mmhmm.

Garok shakes his head.

HONCH

Your respect is overdue. Return, return to your tombs, and let me not see you again for another age!

The ghosts return to their sarcophagi. Honch returns to the group, putting a hand on Garok's shoulder.

HONCH

Guess not all problems can be solved with fighting, right?

Garok stays stoic.

SNYSS

We shall discuss your lineage later. Do you think that--

HONCH

Anything's possible, I guess.

Lurza and Untwend hug Honch. Garok rolls his eyes.

GAROK

Let us not forget our purpose with
all our congratulatory
back-patting. Swiftness behooves
us.

SNYSS

Garok is right.

Snyss makes his way towards the shrine. The others follow.

LURZA

So, when they say the Heart of
Gelb, what do they mean?

HONCH

Gelb was the first Grand Chief of
the Droghals. Many legends surround
his accomplishments.

AT THE SHRINE

SNYSS

Should be inside, yes.

Garok starts pushing off the lid.

UNTWEND

Why do they call it his--

The lid crashes to the floor. Dust floats out of the shrine.
A brilliant iridescent gem the size of a fist sits amongst
scattered bones.

HONCH

In all my years, I never thought I
would see this.

SNYSS

According to legend, an old
prophetess told Gelb in his youth
that, by remaining true to himself,
his word, and his people, his heart
would become more valuable than
anything else in the land.

HONCH

We all thought it was a parable,
just a story to tell ourselves to
become better.

SNYSS

So it was. I too thought its
meaning symbolic, but it would
appear the legends were far more
literal.

Lurza swallows.

LURZA

It's actually his heart then?

SNYSS

It would appear that way.

GAROK

And now, someone must take it.

They all look at each other.

GAROK

I nominate Honch.

HONCH

What? Why me?

GAROK

I believe you to be the only one
who would be able to treat it with
the proper respect.

Honch purses his lips.

HONCH

What happened to Droghals not
having any pride?

GAROK

Perhaps once you did. Perhaps that
is why you built this temple, why
your ancestral spirits were willing
to fight today. Perhaps again you
will.

He looks up to the statue of Gelb.

GAROK

Perhaps it is in your blood.

LURZA

What he's saying is that he's giving you a chance.

Honch smiles.

HONCH

Thank you.

He takes the Heart.

HONCH

Ooh, it's all warm and tingly.

He puts it in his satchel.

UNTWEND

Let's get out of here before anything else happens.

He looks up at the effigy.

SNYSS

For once, I believe us to be in agreement.

The group moves away from the shrine.

EXT. TEMPLE ENTRANCE - DAY

Honch shields his eyes from the bright sunshine as they walk out.

HONCH

When did it get so bright outside?

SNYSS

You know as well as I that it is merely a change in perception.

HONCH

It was a joke! A joke!

LURZA

We have the Heart, so now we get to save Ardiss, right?

SNYSS

It would seem that saving your princess would be the next logical course of action, yes.

HONCH

She is the daughter of a Grand Chief.

SNYSS

Yes, and where I am from, we would call that a princess.

Untwend steps out in front of them.

UNTWEND

We just had a really good moment in there, everybody. Let's not ruin it with a fight over semantics. I mean, we've got bigger stuff on our--

Orghaiss steps out from behind a pillar and beheads Untwend with his longsword. His body slumps to the ground in a heap.

LURZA

Untwend!

HONCH

Untwend!

Garok draws his sword.

ORGHAISS

Hand over the Heart, and keep your lives.

Lurza crouches by Untwend's corpse.

LURZA

You killed him! We're not giving you anything!

Lurza looks at Garok.

LURZA

That was right, right?

Garok nods.

ORGHAISS

The same shall be done to you if you fail to comply.

Orghaiss looks at Snyss.

ORGHAISS

We meet again, old man.

SNYSS

I must admit that you certainly
have the upper hand today.

LURZA

You two know each other?

SNYSS

Have you so swiftly forgotten that
I was, until recently, in her
retinue?

HONCH

That doesn't matter now. What are
we going to do?

GAROK

Protect the Heart.

Garok lunges at Orghaiss. He sidesteps the slash. Orghaiss
lofts his blade high with both hands and swings at Garok.
Garok tumbles, and the sword crashes down upon the tile of
the temple entrance. The tiles shatter under the immense
strength of the blow, and the sword embeds itself into the
ground.

GAROK

You will dull yourself that way.

Garok spins, his blade extended. Orghaiss's struggle to
retrieve his sword slows him for a moment, and Garok
connects as Orghaiss pulls back. The point scratches
Orghaiss's face, and viscous black liquid beings to bubble
out.

Garok looks at Lurza.

Orghaiss sneers. He walks backward.

ORGHAISS

You would do well in our service.
Have you considered it?

Garok keeps the distance tight.

GAROK

I serve no master.

Lurza looks up. He unsheathes his sword.

Orghaiss takes a horizontal swing at Garok, but Garok ducks
the blow. He takes the opportunity to thrust his sword at
Orghaiss's torso. His blade stops short, failing to pierce
Orghaiss at all.

Orghaiss gives a raspy, metallic laugh.

ORGHAISS

You cannot defeat us.

He takes another step back, stepping onto Untwend's body. He takes his eyes off Garok to look at the sudden change in terrain.

Lurza jumps up.

LURZA

You must always be aware of what is around you.

Lurza slashes at Orghaiss's left leg, severing it. Garok seizes the same opportunity to take off Orghaiss's right arm. Orghaiss's eyes widen as he topples over backwards, landing on his back over Untwend's corpse.

Snyss walks onto Orghaiss's torso.

SNYSS

One would think that the odds have shifted slightly. The upper hand--

He looks at his wings.

SNYSS

Wing is now mine.

He steps onto Orghaiss's face, avoiding the gnashing teeth. Orghaiss spits at him.

ORGHAISS

Your death awaits you in that tower, old man.

SNYSS

You would love to think that. It would completely justify how you military types always think with your swords before your brains. To you, every problem looks like a battle, and it just pains you so that we won today.

He looks to Garok.

SNYSS

If you take one piece of advice from this sage, let it be this. Do not leave him in this state.

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)

Erature is far more resourceful
than you can anticipate.
Personally, I would start with the
head.

He hops off. Garok and Lurza look at each other. They look
at Honch. Honch holds a cheese grater and a meat cleaver in
his hands. He shrugs.

HONCH

Got to help somehow, right?

Garok shrugs.

INT. HALL OF THE ANCIENT WARRIORS - DAY

Orghaiss's guttural yelling echoes through the ancient hall.

EXT. TEMPLE ENTRANCE - DAY

A pile of limbs sits before the temple steps. Orghaiss's
head rests atop it. The eyes bulge and dart around. The
mouth locks into a permanent sneer.

SNYSS

I would prefer some sort of
burning, but I do not think we
could make a fire hot enough.

LURZA

What is he?

SNYSS

No concern of yours, at least not
for the moment.

LURZA

I meant--

SNYSS

I know. We have spent too much time
here already. We must go.

Snyss starts waddling off.

HONCH

Easy there, Snyss. We have to care
for Untwend's body.

Snyss sighs.

SNYSS

Honch, Droghal funerary rites take upwards of seven nights. We simply do not have the time.

LURZA

Honch is right. We can't just leave him like this.

Garok cleans his blade.

GAROK

We have lost too much time today to contend with what is proper. He died the death of a warrior. It is a greater honor than he deserved.

Honch rolls his eyes.

HONCH

Just because Untwend didn't fit your little definition of a warrior doesn't mean that he wasn't important.

SNYSS

Was he? Was he?

Lurza and Honch look at each other.

LURZA

Yes. Without Untwend, we may have been massacred in there. We wouldn't have the Heart if not for Untwend.

SNYSS

I am certain we would have realized it ourselves.

HONCH

You just don't want to admit it because he annoyed you. You never liked him.

Snyss throws up his wings.

SNYSS

You are absolutely right. I suspect that it was he who lead Orghaiss here with his loud singing and lute-playing all the time! We have no idea who this man was or for

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)

whom he works. He could have been
in her employ, for all we know!

HONCH

But we're supposed to trust you,
the one who told us you worked with
her.

SNYSS

Yes! That is the reason why I told
you! Honesty paves the way to
success!

Garok sighs.

GAROK

Enough.

He stops wiping his blade and looks to Honch.

GAROK

Do what you must to care for him,
but we cannot afford a great
ordeal.

HONCH

Will do.

Honch and Lurza head over to get Untwend's corpse.

LURZA

We'll find a nice shady spot for
him.

The group heads into the forest. Snyss takes a look back.

Orghaiss's eyes shine red light. A faint beeping rings out.
The eyes fade out.

EXT. SHADY GROVE - DAY

The group stands over a shallow grave. Untwend's lute rests
atop it. Lurza and Honch bow their heads. Garok and Snyss
look at each other.

SNYSS

Come on then. We still have a long
journey ahead of us.

He waddles off. The group follows. Sun shines through the
trees and reflects off the strings of Untwend's lute.

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

A steel orb hangs in the center of the bare room, three clear rings descending below it. Under them rests an empty cylindrical glass chamber. A short podium covered in switches and dials stands near the chamber; behind it, a steel container with a viewing window stands tall. From the corners of the room, steel struts extend smaller orbs towards the central one.

No windows break the room's barren gray walls, giving no respite to the cold machinery within.

The door slides open. Erature leads Ardiss into the room.

ERATURE

Do you know what this does? Is it familiar to you?

Ardiss looks around.

ARDISS

No.

Erature chuckles.

ERATURE

Of course not. This device--

She gestures at the machine.

ERATURE

Is part of the glory of our people.

She holds her ring up to her lips and murmurs into it. Two soldiers bring in a DROGHAL BOY. They take him over to Erature. She hunches down to talk to him.

ERATURE

Hello, small one. How do you like your new home?

DROGHAL BOY

I miss my mom.

ERATURE

Answer the question.

DROGHAL BOY

It's alright, I guess.

Erature stands up and clasps her hands.

ERATURE

Splendid! You hear that, princess?
The boy loves what we have done.

The boy looks at Ardiss.

ERATURE

Little one, shouldn't you show
respect to your princess?

The soldiers grab his shoulders and throw him down at
Ardiss's feet. Ardiss kneels and takes the boy's face in her
hands. Tears well up in his eyes.

ARDISS

Do not be afraid. Be strong. They
may hurt you all over, but they
will never hurt you inside.

Erature laughs.

ERATURE

How sentimental.

She snaps her fingers. The soldiers pry the boy away from
Ardiss and seal him in the chamber.

ARDISS

What sorcery is this?

ERATURE

You will see soon enough.

She moves over to the podium.

ERATURE

All our wondrous power comes at a
price. It weakens us, saps away our
vital energy.

She starts pressing buttons.

ERATURE

We must always keep ourselves in
supply.

The corner orbs start thrumming with a violet energy.

Ardiss looks at the boy. He pounds on the glass, protesting
without sound.

ARDISS

What are you doing?

ERATURE

Nothing yet, princess, nothing yet.
We have developed ways to use our
powers to keep ourselves going, a
self-sustaining system.

Erature flicks one last switch.

ERATURE

However, magical energy cannot
simply be fabricated wholesale from
nothing. A source must be found,
and the energy must be extracted.

She pulls a lever. The corner orbs fire violet rays into the
central orb. It crackles and flares as the rings beneath it
begin to fill.

The boy looks up. The rings shoot a single stream of energy
downward, flooding the chamber and turning the room a deep
purple.

Ardiss's eyes widen.

The boy continues to pound on the glass. He matures from
childhood through adolescence, adulthood, and into
senescence. His clothes stretch and tear, turning to tatters
as the chamber fills with plumes of smoke.

Erature smiles. She raises the lever. The smoke dissipates,
leaving a few fragments of clothes amidst a pile of dust in
the chamber. She steps back to the steel container and looks
in.

ERATURE

The young always provide so much.

She looks to the soldiers.

ERATURE

Have that refined and brought to my
chambers. My light has grown dim,
ever since I fought with that
contemptible Snyss.

She turns to Ardiss.

ERATURE

The only problem is one of
efficiency.

ARDISS
Efficiency?

Ardiss lunges at Erature. The soldiers grab and restrain her. Erature clucks her tongue.

ERATURE
Had you complied, the process would have been far less painful. A wealth of energy could have been supplied by your people at far less a cost, and we would have shared our ways with you. We could have been friends, helping you to use your untapped resources.

ARDISS
My people want no part of your resources.

ERATURE
You have made that very clear. Take her away.

The guards drag a screaming Ardiss out of the room. Erature laughs.

EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY

The group brushes aside tree branches as Snyss leads them out onto a paved road.

HONCH
What's this?

SNYSS
Oh, and I thought we had come so far. This is a road, Honch. One travels upon it. This one will take us to Erature.

Honch huffs.

HONCH
I know what it is, but what have they done to it?

Snyss looks down.

SNYSS
Smoothed it a little.

GAROK
Why bother?

HONCH
Yeah, this isn't the Droghal way.

Snyss shrugs.

SNYSS
This is our way.

They start walking down it. Their footsteps echo as they proceed. Garok throws his hands up in the air.

GAROK
I don't know the sounds of my own feet!

SNYSS
A bit lower in register for you, Garok.

GAROK
I care little--I mean, I don't care anymore, Snyss. I'm tired. Just get us there.

They press on.

HONCH
This is so hard and hot. How do you walk on this?

SNYSS
We do not walk often, and what walking we do is relatively short.

LURZA
Then why cover your roads like this?

SNYSS
The even surface better allows--ah, I do not have enough time to explain.

Garok cocks his head.

GAROK
Your people don't often walk?

SNYSS

No.

GAROK

Do they march?

SNYSS

Only the--oh, dear.

The sound of footsteps clicking in time fills the air.

SNYSS

Hurry! Get off the road! They will
come over that hill soon enough!

The group jumps into the beaten-back brush, masking themselves. A squadron marching in unison alongside a rolling flatbed transport full of soldiers overtakes the hill. They continue down the road toward the group.

HONCH

Look at them; they're all moving
together. It's pretty impressive,
really.

Garok shushes Honch.

One of them stops moving with the rest. It starts hitching forward, only using its left leg. A soldier in a green uniform pulls it out of formation and leads it over into the ditch near the group.

The group hunkers down, but the cover does little to shield them.

The green soldier looks over the incapable one.

LURZA

(under breath)

Why don't they notice us?

SNYSS

They are not looking. This is just
a drill. Watch.

The green soldier tears off the other's blue uniform. He presses inward on the right side, and a panel opens in the soldier's chest, filled with dials, switches, and bulbs.

HONCH

They're not even people.

SNYSS

I am absolutely elated that you have finally realized that, Honch.

LURZA

What are they?

SNYSS

None of your concern.

LURZA

Is this what Orghaiss was?

SNYSS

Yes. No. He was a similar concept, but a different model.

GAROK

It doesn't matter what they are. They can be defeated just as he was.

SNYSS

It, really.

The green soldier closes the chest panel after tinkering around with a few dials. The blue soldier resumes marching forward. The end of the squadron passes the group.

SNYSS

Let us press on before they come back, shall we?

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Erature exits the machine room. The Overlord waits on the viewscreen. They speak in their native tongue with subtitles throughout.

ERATURE

The machine is operational, master.

OVERLORD

Wonderful. Start the process.

ERATURE

Yes, I shall, but--

The Overlord sighs.

OVERLORD

Why? Why do you always bring me
these buts and ifs and ors?

ERATURE

I apologize, master, but I believe
there is a way we could...

She waves her right hand in a small circle.

ERATURE

Expedite the harvest.

The Overlord leans back in his desk chair. He tents his
fingers.

OVERLORD

Go on.

Eratore smiles.

ERATURE

Our studies have shown that its
effect could be amplified by
placing an artifact sacred to the
natives within.

The Overlord sits back up.

OVERLORD

Use their belief to filter the
energy through a Lyree-Trook
multiplication matrix. Slow the
drain from the individual, but
extend the range beyond the
chamber. Approved. Do you have the
artifact?

ERATURE

I dispatched Orghaiss to retrieve
it yesterday. His swift return is
soon expected.

OVERLORD

How did you stumble upon this
little gem of an idea?

Eratore clears her throat.

ERATURE

Snyss.

The Overlord shakes his head.

OVERLORD

You dismiss his work too quickly.
Have him send me a report that
details exactly what he has
discovered. Perhaps there's more
use to those beasts than
harvesting.

Erature shifts her eyes.

ERATURE

That could prove problematic.

The Overlord sighs and slouches.

OVERLORD

What did you do?

ERATURE

We had a disagreement, Snyss and I.
An irreconcilable difference of
ethics. He has taken an extended
leave.

OVERLORD

I'll need a full report on the
incident from you then, and you can
expect a demerit in your file. You
didn't have to do anything. You
could have reported the matter to
me and had a sane person tell you
what to do. You have this absurd
flair for the dramatic. You have to
sensationalize everything you do.

ERATURE

I--

OVERLORD

It's all posturing. I just don't
understand you. Delusions of
grandeur are one thing, but--what
did you even do to Snyss? You
didn't kill him, did you?

ERATURE

No, I--

OVERLORD

I can be thankful for that then.
When will you learn that sometimes
you need to listen to other people,
Erature?

A light starts flashing on the side of the viewscreen, drawing Erature's focus.

ERATURE

Excuse me.

OVERLORD

You can't just cut me off! I'm in the middle of my big--

Erature waves her ring hand. The Overlord continues to rant as his image gets minimized and sent to the lower-right corner of the viewscreen. A new image fills the space.

Honch and Lurza with Garok and Snyss in silence about Untwend's body. The lower part of the vision is filled with Orghaiss's limbs. They move to collect it. Erature's eyes narrow. She dismisses the image, and the Overlord returns to prominence.

OVERLORD

Be important!

ERATURE

We may have a situation with the artifact, master. Orghaiss seems to have encountered some difficulty.

The Overlord rubs his temples with his right hand.

OVERLORD

Just take care of it. I don't care anymore. Report back when it's resolved.

The viewscreen goes black. Erature waves her hand again. Garok and Snyss follow the pallbearers into the forest. Snyss looks back, looking straight at Erature by doing so.

ERATURE

What game are you playing?

She sends the viewscreen away and lifts the ring to her mouth.

ERATURE

We have a recovery mission, highest order.

EXT. HILL - DAY

The group reaches the hill. Its steep incline forces Garok, Honch, and Lurza to lean in as they walk up. Snyss takes a few steps before toppling over onto his back.

SNYSS
Confound this form, with its short
legs and webbed feet!

The rest of the group forges ahead without concern for Snyss. Snyss looks at the top of the hill. He looks at his wings.

FURTHER UP THE HILL

Snyss flies past the panting Garok and heaving Honch, laughing. He lands atop the hill and looks back at them.

SNYSS
Marvelous! Simply marvelous!

Garok and Honch grumble under their breath. Snyss disappears over the top.

SNYSS (O.S.)
If it would be any incentive, you
will find our goal to be in sight!

Garok and Honch look at each other. Lurza accelerates, racing to the top. He disappears as well.

AT THE HILLTOP

Lurza and Snyss look off into the distance.

LURZA
Is this...

He trails off.

SNYSS
Yes, as are all our cities.

Garok and Honch reach the hilltop. Their eyes widen in astonishment.

HONCH
What have you done?

SNYSS
Light renovation.

A metropolis rests in the distance. Its ordered and geometric buildings, covered in vibrant and high-contrast colors, reach towards a central tower. Light glints off their stainless steel accents and inlays. A strange symmetry runs through it, owing to its slavish devotion to the geometric perfection of spheres and trapezoids.

The tower stretches into the clouds, a tall cylinder tapering towards the top. Buttresses run up its side, and its windowed walls reflect the light. The buttresses ascend the tower, terminating in arches that separate from the tower, pointing outward like a threatening finger. Steel latticework claws its way from the apex as though it were scratching open the sky.

SNYSS

You should see it when it gets dark.

LURZA

That's massive! We'll never find the sorceress in there!

Garok points to the top of the tower.

GAROK

The less burdened one's heart is with morality and ethics, the higher one soars to gloat and belittle the righteous.

Snyss chuckles.

SNYSS

I can just tell you that she is up there, you know. Lower air density allows a greater range for her power. Let us also not underestimate the symbology of the tower, allowing her to appear above and thereby better than the others. Further, the semiotic masculine richness of the tower provides her with...

Snyss's voice trails off as he waddles down the hill. The group follows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

The buildings loom over the group as they move through the city. Snyss's voice fades in.

SNYSS

...considers the architectural incorporation of such aesthetic ideals, one finds the form both attractive and conducive to magical properties.

Garok, Honch, and Lurza drag their feet. Honch looks at Garok and purses his lips.

HONCH

Are we there yet?

Snyss turns around.

SNYSS

Honch, you know that we are not. Are we within the tower?

HONCH

No.

SNYSS

Then why would you ask that?

GAROK

So you'd stop talking.

Honch smiles. Snyss asserts himself, holding his head more upright.

SNYSS

Be thankful she has not yet reached the point of mass surveillance. Her dedication to appearance is our advantage. A more pragmatic architect would have incorporated viewports into the designs.

HONCH

Why do you build so tall?

SNYSS

If she has maintained her plan, she has likely relocated much of the scattered Droghals to a more central location around the tower.

LURZA
Why would she do that?

Snyss looks to the left.

SNYSS
Reasons.

HONCH
Yes, and they are?

Snyss turns around.

SNYSS
For one, the device--

Snyss looks up. A small circle on the wall turns red.

SNYSS
This will be interesting.

HONCH
What?

Soldiers pour out of doorways, surrounding the group.

SNYSS
She has learned a few new tricks.

They grab Honch and Lurza before they can react. Garok draws his sword. He swings at a soldier, but the sword catches in a building. Garok pulls at it, trying to release it. He frees it and steps back. The curb catches him by surprise. Garok falls. Soldiers mob him, overpowering him. The soldiers march on.

INT. TOWER DUNGEON - DAY

The soldiers, take the group down into the dungeon. They toss the group into a holding cell, closing the door. A set of double-doors slide open at the end of the hall, and Erature steps out of a small, brightly-lit room. She leans over to one of the soldiers.

ERATURE
Begin preparations for a
celebratory feast.

The beggars rush into the small room, taking a single soldier with them. Soldiers lead the rest up stairs on both sides of the doors. Erature approaches the cell.

ERATURE

Snyss, Snyss, Snyss. How have you been? It seems like ages since I saw you last.

She laughs.

ERATURE

Old man, surely you remember that you were never to return. Do not play as though your addled mind has forgotten it.

Snyss bows his head and steps forward.

SNYSS

I come bearing a gift, Erature. A token of my appreciation, and a plea for your forgiveness.

Erature cocks her head and blinks twice.

ERATURE

Why do you address me in their vulgar tongue?

SNYSS

I want them to understand.

ERATURE

What?

SNYSS

In that Droghal's satchel--

He motions towards Honch with a wing.

SNYSS

You will find the Heart of Gelb, the very artifact you sent Orghaiss to recover and desire so much.

Erature's eyes widen.

HONCH

You traitor!

Honch lunges at Snyss. Erature waves her hand. Honch gets pulled back and pinned to the wall by silver magical energy; the same happens to Garok and Lurza. She continues to gesticulate, and the satchel opens. The Heart of Gelb lifts out of it.

LURZA

Snyss, what are you doing?

Garok shakes his head. Snyss turns to look at them.

SNYSS

I am most sorry, gentlemen, but I simply cannot bear to spend my existence in this wretched form.

He turns back to Erature.

SNYSS

You will return me for this, correct? Have I made appropriate amends?

ERATURE

We shall discuss the matter over the feast. With a little luck, your old friend Orghaiss will be there to discuss the matter as well.

SNYSS

(under breath)

I knew we should have burned it.

ERATURE

What was that?

SNYSS

Nothing; nothing. Have you done anything to my study?

ERATURE

No, the place is still the wreck you left it after you threw that fit about morality.

She opens the door, retrieving the Heart of Gelb. Snyss waddles out.

ERATURE

Come, come. I want to see you clean it up without hands.

She and Snyss approach the stairs. Snyss looks back at the cell. He raises his voice to make sure he gets heard.

SNYSS

Still three flights up and to the right, yes?

Erature furrows her brow.

ERATURE

We have not undertaken any major construction, no.

SNYSS

And if I were to visit Ardiss, where would I find her?

ERATURE

She resides in the under-sun beneath this one. Come.

They ascend the stairs. The magical binds release Garok, Lurza, and Honch.

HONCH

I'm going to kill him. I'm going to murder that bird.

Lurza puts a hand on Honch's shoulder.

LURZA

We all will, Honch. We all will.

Garok narrows his eyes.

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Erature pulls a lever, lowering the central orb. She places the Heart of Gelb in the center of the third ring. She resets the lever, raising it back up.

A panel on the podium illuminates in green lettering: it flashes the word "RECALIBRATING" and gives Erature a ghoulish glow. She throws her head back and laughs.

INT. PRISON - DAY

Garok stands in the center of the cell with his arms folded and his eyes closed. Honch stands in the back, beating his head on the wall.

LURZA

We can't just stand here and let her win!

Lurza beats on the cell bars. Garok opens his eyes.

GAROK

You break your hands on those bars, boy, and I'll break those bars with your head.

He lowers his fists.

LURZA

What are we going to do then?

Honch rifles around in his utensil utility belt, takes out a spoon, and starts digging at the stone wall. Garok tosses a look over his shoulder.

GAROK

There's not time for that.

Honch grumbles and puts the spoon away. Lurza crosses his arms to mirror Garok.

LURZA

You win, Garok! I'll just stand here and will the door to open!

Garok smirks.

GAROK

You're wasting a lot of effort for nothing.

LURZA

Is this the planning thing again?
Am I just supposed to wait and improvise?

Garok nods. Honch approaches the door.

HONCH

I can't wait.

Honch buckles over and clenches his stomach.

HONCH

Ooh, guards, I think I'm sick!
Help me!

GAROK

Do you really think anyone would care?

The silence in the hallway reinforces Garok's point. Honch squints at him before straightening up.

HONCH

Fine. We wait.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Garok stands center. Honch slouches in a corner while Lurza paces.
B) Garok stands center. Lurza lays on the floor, propping his legs up on the wall. Honch hops from foot to foot.
C) Garok stands center. Lurza kicks the wall. Honch plays his stomach like a drum.

The door opens. Everyone looks at each other.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Garok, Lurza, and Honch run out of the cell.

GAROK

You see?

Lurza sighs.

LURZA

Is now a planning time?

Garok tilts his head back and forth.

GAROK

I suppose.

LURZA

I'm going to go save Ardiss.

Garok nods.

GAROK

I'm going to go defeat the sorceress.

LURZA

Deal.

They look at Honch, who sharpens a carving knife.

HONCH

I'm going to roast some duck.

He smiles. The group rushes towards the stairs at the end of the hall.

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

The panel flashes "RECALIBRATED" as the orb returns to the center of the room. It inverts, pointing its rings upward. The ceiling opens to reveal the blue sky above.

The gem on Erature's ring blinks. She twists it. A vision of Orghaiss, reassembled and more robotic, appears in her hand. He kneels.

ORGHAISS

You have returned to me my being.
It is yours to take away.

Erature smiles.

ERATURE

That shall not be needed. Attend to the kitchen and see that the feast preparations are underway. We would be remiss to spoil such a wonderful time.

ORGHAISS

Your will is mine.

He stands. She twists the ring again. The vision disappears. She flips switches on the podium, and the corner orbs pulse with violet energy.

INT. SNYSS'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Snyss waddles back and forth on his desk, going through notes as best he can. A breeze blows in from an open window by the desk, rustling the hanging sheets. Snyss mumbles to himself.

SNYSS

Should be here. Been ransacked.
Likely how they found us.

A shadow looms in the doorway.

SNYSS

Must find deactivation protocol.
Must--

He throws his wings up in the air.

SNYSS

I cannot work in these conditions!

The shadow steps forward into the light of the room. A crazed grin spreads across Honch's face. He carries the carving knife in his left hand and a butcher knife in his right.

Snyss jerks his head up from his notes. Honch freezes. A moment passes. Snyss returns to digging through the materials on his desk.

SNYSS
Must be somewhere...

Honch inches forward. He steps on a sheet of paper. It crumples beneath his feet.

Snyss spins around and quacks.

SNYSS
Honch! What are you--

HONCH
A little spice, a few mushrooms,
yes, braised duck tonight.

SNYSS
Oh, you went mad. Wonderful.

Honch licks his lips. Honch swings with the butcher knife. Snyss darts out of the way and jumps to the bed. The knife buries itself in the desk.

SNYSS
Honch, no! I know you are not the
most capable of minds, but you have
to understand!

HONCH
I understand all right. I
understand that ducks are good for
eating. I understand that ducks are
not to be trusted.

He lunges at Snyss, but he slips on the papers. The knife flies out of his hand, embedding itself into the headboard about an inch above Snyss's head.

SNYSS
You could hurt yourself like this.
I hope you realize that I am still
on your side!

Honch looks up from the floor.

HONCH
And you call me the crazy one.

Honch starts getting up.

SNYSS
It was part of the bigger plan!

Honch starts working the butcher knife out of the desk.

HONCH
Fresh...duck.

Snyss looks to the window. He looks at Honch. He looks to the window. He looks at Honch.

Snyss flies out the window. Honch frees the knife.

SNYSS (O.S.)
When you are rational enough to
talk, I will be here!

Honch looks out the window.

EXT. TOWER LEDGE - DAY

Snyss sits on a stone ledge, looking at Honch.

INT. SNYSS'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Honch puts the knife between his teeth and climbs out the window.

INT. ARDISS'S PRISON - DAY

Ardiss reclines in her plush bed. The sounds of a scuffle come from outside. She sits up.

ARDISS
Who goes there?

LURZA (O.S.)
It is I, Lurza, my lady! I have
come to rescue you, and I have
arrived at last!

She moves to the door. She stands there.

ARDISS
Will you open the door then?

LURZA (O.S.)
Erm, give me a moment.

Beeping sounds echo from the hallway.

INT. ARDISS'S PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Dismembered soldiers leak fluid over the hallway floor. Lurza stands before the door, pressing buttons on a touchscreen.

LURZA
(under breath)
Come on, come on...

ARDISS (O.S.)
Are you using that square they touch?

LURZA
Yes, I'm touching the square!

ARDISS (O.S.)
Are you touching it right?

Lurza steps back.

LURZA
I'll just break the door down!
Stand back!

He draws his sword and lifts it above his head. He takes a step. The sword quivers. He falters, falling into a lean against the door.

ARDISS (O.S.)
I think you need to hit it harder than that! Also, it goes upwards!

Lurza rubs his forehead.

LURZA
Sorry, I just...

He closes his eyes.

LURZA
I got dizzy.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Garok climbs the stairs. He looks up. The stairs stretch forever. He grumbles under his breath and takes another step.

EXT. TOWER LEDGE - DAY

Honch inches along, pressing himself backwards against the tower with all his might. Snyss watches him progress.

SNYSS

Really? You are actually mad.

Honch's eyes bulge as he makes his way towards Snyss. He steps close. Snyss takes off, flying back and forth past Honch.

SNYSS

This is rather pleasant, you know.
I could do this all--

Snyss starts molting at an alarming rate. He flaps his wings as he plummets.

Honch looks from left to right. The wind whistles past.

Snyss jolts back up, his new plumage popping out. He lands on the ledge and takes a position that mirrors Honch, pressing his wings against the wall. He pants.

SNYSS

Let us not do that again.

Honch moves towards him.

SNYSS

What do you want from me? Do you
not understand that I released you?

Snyss pops into a nearby window. Honch makes his way in that direction.

INT. ARDISS'S PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Lurza, now middle-aged, beats on the door.

ARDISS (O.S.)

You are not getting anywhere with
that.

LURZA
I don't know what else to do!

Ardiss sighs.

ARDISS (O.S.)
Go back to the square they touch.

LURZA
What do you want me to do with it?

A moment.

ARDISS (O.S.)
Perhaps you have the wrong hands.
Were there any guards stationed
outside?

Lurza looks around at their bodies.

LURZA
A few, yes.

ARDISS (O.S.)
Take one of their hands and put it
on the touch-square.

Lurza picks up an arm. He flattens the palm and touches the screen. It lights up.

LURZA
It's making light now!

ARDISS (O.S.)
Good! Now, try sliding it upward.

Lurza motions the arm upward. The door opens. Lurza and Ardiss both gasp. They aged thirty years since they last saw each other.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Light streams in from the windows. Garok enters the doorway. He leans against it, his chest heaving. He composes himself before entering the room proper. He looks around and spots the entrance to the machine room.

He sticks to the wall, careful not to hit his head on any sconces. He makes his way along, coming up to the machine room entrance. He peers inside and draws his sword.

INT. TOWER KITCHEN - DAY

Snyss looks around.

SNYSS

This was a poor choice.

A kitchen island covered with ingredients with a large pot in the center stands in the middle of the chrome-plated kitchen. A hood hangs over it, shining red light down on the assorted vegetables and meats. Light glints off the reflective surfaces of the kitchen's many accessories.

A culinary unit stands behind the island, chopping carrots. It looks up and over at Snyss. Snyss shakes his head.

SNYSS

Sir, please.

The culinary unit approaches Snyss, its arms wide.

Honch swings into the kitchen. The culinary unit looks up from Snyss. It grabs Honch. Snyss seizes the opportunity to duck out, heading to the island.

Honch pushes the unit back against the island, knocking over the pot and pouring meat stock all over the island, the floor, and Snyss. The two turn about, and Honch steers the culinary unit towards the window.

A flicker of light behind its eyes. A spark of realization. It releases Honch to find purchase elsewhere, but it fails. The culinary unit tumbles out the window.

EXT. OCEAN ROCKS - DAY

The culinary unit crashes to the rocks below, shattering to pieces as the ocean sweeps it out.

INT. TOWER KITCHEN - DAY

Honch, taking the knife out from between his teeth, turns to face Snyss.

HONCH

I'm going to get you, duck.

He takes a step forward before halting. He looks around the room.

HONCH

Oh, baby.

He opens a few drawers and appliances.

HONCH

I don't even know what this is, but
I want it!

He looks at Snyss.

HONCH

You are getting cooked tonight!

He grabs at Snyss. Snyss flaps his wings and slides from side to side, slipping through the meat stock.

SNYSS

Away, you oaf! Don't you know
that--

Snyss quacks as Honch grabs him by the neck and raises the butcher's knife.

SNYSS

(strained)

--I opened the door?

The door slides open. Orghaiss fills the frame, rebuilt and reinforced. Shining steel reinforces the joints of his limbs. Snyss and Honch freeze, looking at him. His eyes flare. They look at each other.

SNYSS

(strained)

Friends?

HONCH

For now.

Orghaiss draws his sword. He slashes overhead, but the sword drags on the ceiling, slowing his blow. Honch darts out of the way, running to the other side of the island. Snyss goes on the offensive, flying into Orghaiss's face and kicking at him. The sword cleaves through the hood and sends vegetables everywhere.

Honch dashes around the island while Orghaiss grabs at Snyss. He tries to use the butcher knife on a knee-joint. The blade shatters.

SNYSS

They reinforced him! That will
never wo--

Snyss's words get garbled as Orghaiss grabs him by the neck and throws him aside. Snyss goes limp.

ORGHAISS

You shall see your friend die
before you, old man.

Orghaiss gives a horizontal swing. Honch backsteps, but he slips in the meat stock. Through no skill of his own, he manages to dodge. The sword slams into the wall.

Orghaiss steps over to Honch, looming over him.

ORGHAISS

It ends here.

SNYSS

For once, we agree.

Orghaiss looks. Snyss stands by a chrome box with a viewing window inside. Next to the window, a panel of knobs and buttons juts out.

Honch kicks Orghaiss. He loses balance and stumbles backwards. Honch jumps up and smashes his head into the box, shattering the viewing window. Snyss pecks at a button, and green energy throbs through the box.

Orghaiss starts yelling. Honch leans against him, keeping him detained even as Orghaiss drops his sword to try and push his way back.

SNYSS

At last, your rotund qualities
serve you well.

Honch pushes harder.

SNYSS

Superconductive heating elements
tend not to mix well with the sorts
of neural processing units utilized
here. The use of--

HONCH

I really don't care.

SNYSS

I know.

INT. HEATING BOX - DAY

Orghaiss yells as the fake flesh sears and peels away from his endoskeleton. Green energy arcs across his flaming pate. He slams his head up and down.

INT. TOWER KITCHEN - DAY

Snyss holds onto the box with his wings as if he were riding an animal.

SNYSS

Easy now; easy now!

INT. HEATING BOX - DAY

The arcs rush towards Orghaiss's eyes. They flare one final time before the lights behind them go out.

INT. TOWER KITCHEN - DAY

Orghaiss's body droops. Smoke pours out of the heating box. Snyss shakes his head.

SNYSS

It is a pity that I cannot say that this is a pity.

Snyss looks to the window.

SNYSS

We had best take care to toss him out. No risks.

He extends a wing to Honch.

SNYSS

Friend?

Honch grimaces.

SNYSS

Listen, you may not have seen it, but trust me when I say that you would not have escaped without me. What do you think opened that door?

(MORE)

SNYSS (cont'd)
 Garok's force of will? I sneaked
 into the control room and released
 you, you dolt!

Honch sighs.

HONCH
 Until this is over.

He shakes Snyss's wing.

INT. ARDISS'S PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Lurza kneels before Ardiss. She rolls her eyes and grabs his shoulder.

ARDISS
 Come on! We must stop her!

She looks at the severed arm.

ARDISS
 Bring that.

They rush to the double-doors at the end of the hallway, replicas of those on the floor above.

ARDISS
 I know not the sorcery behind them,
 but these doors will take us where
 we must go.

She takes the arm and presses it to a small panel by the doors. A ding. They slide open, revealing a small metal room.

LURZA
 Here?

Ardiss steps in.

ARDISS
 No. Watch.

INT. SMALL METAL ROOM - DAY

Lurza walks in as Ardiss uses the soldier's hand to press the top of a row of buttons. The doors close. Light muzak plays.

LURZA

If you want to know how this works,
I bet I know someone who could--

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Garok stalks into the room, his sword high. The flowing energy keeps Erature's attention at first.

ERATURE

Orghaiss?

She turns and sees Garok.

ERATURE

You are not Orghaiss.

Garok broadens himself into a battle stance.

GAROK

Sorceress, you shall meet your end
at the end of my blade.

Erature blinks. She laughs.

ERATURE

Do you really think that?

Garok steps forward. Erature looks at the panel.

ERATURE

Yes, any moment now.

She looks at Garok.

ERATURE

You see--

INT. METAL BOX - DAY

Lurza talks without sound to an uninterested Ardiss. The doors open.

ERATURE (V.O.)

The device targets those with the
most potential energy first.

The box stops. Lurza looks alarmed. The doors open.

ERATURE (V.O.)

It then moves on to targets with
less energy in reserve.

Honch appears with Snyss perched atop his head. His wrinkles indicate that the device has aged him by thirty-some years, making him look as old as Garok.

Everyone exchanges silent exclamations as they see each other. Ardiss hugs Honch. The doors close.

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Garok closes the distance between him and Erature.

ERATURE

It is simply more efficient that
way. You happen to be a target of
the lowest priority.

She steps towards him.

ERATURE

Old.

Another step.

ERATURE

Frail.

A third.

ERATURE

Weak.

Garok sneers. He charges at her. She points her ring at him. A tendril of violet energy comes down from the nearest orb and ensnares him. His face tightens. His sneer morphs into a grimace of pain. His eyes bulge.

Garok falls to his knee, keeping his sword from touching the ground. His arms tremble, and the sword clatters out of his hand. He struggles to keep himself upright.

ERATURE

There it is. Soon, all the energy
in this wretched land will be mine!

Erature cackles.

ERATURE

That does not preclude me from
having a little fun with a withered
shell in the meantime.

Erature gathers a growing ball of green energy between her hands as she gesticulates in front of her chest. Garok closes his eyes.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Ardiss, Lurza, Honch, and Snyss burst into the throne room. Ardiss and Snyss rush over towards the machine room entrance. Honch and Lurza follow them over.

INT. MACHINE ROOM - DAY

The rest of the group arrives on the scene as Erature releases the blast of energy. It flows around and over Garok, encapsulating him and seeping into his body.

The group watches, mortified. Garok's body collapses to the ground.

Lurza looks to Erature. He draws his sword and charges, screaming. She smiles.

GAROK (V.O.)

Never act in haste.

Lurza slows. A violet tendril snaps at where he would have been. Erature puts her hand to her forehead and stumbles backwards, falling onto the containment unit. She looks into it before opening a panel. She pulls out a cord with needles on the end. Snyss steps forward.

SNYSS

Do not do this!

She laughs.

ERATURE

Begone, old man, before you find
yourself in a worse state!

She slams the needles into her arm. Violet energy swirls around the cord before flowing into her body. She floats into the air. Her voice booms.

ERATURE

I have total control!

A horrible cracking. Her dress flares out as the thin, sharp legs of a spider creep out from under before reaching the floor. Black feathers burst out of her arms. A bulbous, hairy backside shows itself as the source of the legs as her feathers grow, making the arms similar to wings. Her eyes glow with energy. The dress explodes, revealing a feathery body that leads into the spider-like abdomen.

Erature's head, still hers, emits a croaking laugh.

SNYSS

Lurza, distract her!

Lurza rushes at her, sidestepping tendrils of energy and dodging blasts she fires at him.

SNYSS

Honch, hand me a knife. Ardiss, hide yourself.

Ardiss shakes her head.

ARDISS

I fight with you.

SNYSS

Fine, whatever. Honch!

Honch, stunned by the monstrous Erature, stands still. Snyss grumbles.

SNYSS

Have to do everything--

HONCH

What is it with you people and turning into birds?

Ardiss unhooks a knife from Honch's belt and puts it in Snyss's mouth. Snyss flies up to the top of the center orb and approaches the Heart of Gelb.

Lurza swings and slashes at Erature, ducking under and through her legs. She blasts magic at him without regard.

Ardiss kneels by Garok's body. She looks over at his sword.

Honch shakes his head. He rushes at Erature, but he gets trapped by a tendril.

Snyss tries to find leverage with his neck as he tries to pry out the Heart of Gelb with the knife. His feathers fluctuate as he molts over and over again due to his proximity to the orbs.

Erature jabs at Lurza with a leg. He reacts too late, and it scratches his side. He stumbles, and the legs pick him up. They carry him forward to the arms, and Erature pulls him before her.

ERATURE
(croaking)
Feed.

She leans forward, bringing her face to his.

Erature's ring hand flies off, severed at the wrist. She recoils and screams in pain. Ardiss stands before her, Garok's sword in her hands.

Snyss takes the knife out. Instead of prying, he stabs the knife into the Heart. The energy flow reverses, flowing outward from the orbs instead of inward towards the containment unit.

Erature's face sallows. Her form reverts back to its original state, the legs pulling back under, the feathers sucking back in. She drops Lurza.

The tendril releases Honch. He runs over to Ardiss and Lurza. Snyss flies down to join them.

Erature ages at an incredible rate as her energy flows through the cord she attached. Honch, Lurza, and Ardiss start returning to their proper appearances. Erature raises her stump at Snyss. She slumps to the floor and explodes into a cloud of dust.

Her ring hand, knocked over by the glass tube, flexes. The gem fades out.

LURZA
Hey, my gash disappeared!

He feels where the injury was.

SNYSS
Let me see.

A pair of aged hands tear the shirt more.

HONCH
Snyss, you're...

The hands stop moving. They turn upward. Snyss, an old man with kind eyes and a long beard, stands before the group. Dressed in a shimmering, poofy white robe with a feathered collar, he runs the hands down his front.

SNYSS
As expected. Her demise reverted
any withstanding effects.

He smiles. Tears well up.

SNYSS
That is not to say that I am any
less pleased.

Snyss gives everyone a hug before he gasps.

SNYSS
We must hurry!

He looks in the containment unit as everyone else looks at each other.

SNYSS
I need you to put Garok's body into
that tube over there.

LURZA
Why?

SNYSS
No time for questions!

Snyss flips switches and turns dials as they drag Garok's body into the enclosure.

SNYSS
Given conservation of magical
energy, her personal reservoir is
no longer in use, nor has it been
distributed.

The central orb turns over, pointing the rings down.

SNYSS
Further given that Garok's demise
was caused not by physical
injury...

He flips another switch. The orbs shake before the energy changes from violet to yellow. The tube starts filling with yellow smoke.

HONCH

Are you--

SNYSS

We shall see.

The containment unit empties. The smoke clears out of the chamber. The group looks on.

Garok, bent over and coughing, lives. The tube opens up. Everyone rushes over to help him. Garok regains his composure and looks around for danger.

GAROK

Where is my sword?

LURZA

It doesn't matter; it's over.

HONCH

We did it!

Ardiss hands Garok his sword. He nods at her.

GAROK

You have my gratitude.

Snyss stands in the entrance to the throne room, holding his arms out.

GAROK

Speak, monster, lest I run you through with my blade!

SNYSS

After all this time, I thought you would recognize me.

Garok squints.

GAROK

Snyss?

Garok smiles.

GAROK

Then it truly is over.

The group moves towards the throne room.

LURZA

You should've seen it! She turned into this weird monster and she was shooting magic out and--

HONCH

Snyss was up on top of the machine and he was just poofing feathers everywhere and--

GAROK

I was right then.

LURZA

Right about what?

GAROK

Nothing.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Snyss presses a button on the throne. The viewscreen lowers. The Overlord appears. They speak in their native tongue with subtitles throughout.

SNYSS

Snyss, reporting.

The Overlord moves his head, looking around the throne room.

OVERLORD

Snyss, I heard you were out of commission. Erature changed her mind?

Snyss glances towards the machine room.

SNYSS

One could say that, yes.

OVERLORD

I see.

The rest of the group enters the room.

OVERLORD

Who are they?

Snyss sweeps his arm towards them.

SNYSS
My friends.

OVERLORD
Are these the creatures she was
attempting to harvest?

SNYSS
Yes.

OVERLORD
Are they...

He waves his hand in a circular motion.

SNYSS
Quite.

OVERLORD
Let me speak to one of them.

AT THE ARCHWAY

LURZA
Who is that?

HONCH
Beats me.

AT THE VIEWSCREEN

SNYSS
Garok.

Snyss motions for Garok to join him. Garok steps up.

SNYSS
Sir, before you stands a prime
example of the people of this land.
He is one of the wisest, bravest
people I have had the pleasure of
meeting, and I am proud to call him
my friend.

Garok gives Snyss an uneasy look. The Overlord holds his pen
to his throat. It shines before he starts speaking in
Garok's tongue.

OVERLORD
Is it true? You slew Erature?

GAROK

No. The people with whom you wish to speak stand over there.

The Overlord looks at Honch.

HONCH

What?

OVERLORD

You lead this assault?

HONCH

No, he did!

He points at Garok.

GAROK

Had it not been for you, for Lurza, I would not be standing here. You are the responsible party.

The Overlord waves his hands.

OVERLORD

Whoever it is, you've done a commendable job. She's been one of the company's most volatile assets for years, but we just couldn't find a way to terminate her. It didn't help, of course, that she was good at her job. Further, in speaking to you, it's clear you possess sentience greater than our standard fare.

He sighs and starts writing.

OVERLORD

I cannot promise your safety forever, but you have won it for the now. Relish these years.

He looks at Snyss.

OVERLORD

You have a few moments to gather your belongings before I activate the tower's self-destruct protocol. Do hurry.

The viewscreen raises up.

SNYSS

We had best do as he says.

HONCH

Who was that?

SNYSS

Just as Erature oversaw me, he
oversaw her.

LURZA

He seemed nice enough.

Ardiss slaps Lurza.

ARDISS

That man is responsible for
everything that has happened! How
dare you!

LURZA

I just meant--

She raises her hand again. Garok steps in between them.

GAROK

The boy flaps his tongue too
loosely, I agree; however, he
raises a valid point.

Ardiss looks at Garok.

ARDISS

How can you--

GAROK

Evil is a matter of perspective.
What one does is more important
than what one is.

ARDISS

He told her what to do!

GAROK

But who told him? Just because they
are kin does not mean they are the
same. Do not presume to understand
the motives of the whole from the
actions of the one.

HONCH

Garok, it sounds like you have
something to say to me, right?

Garok looks Honch up and down.

GAROK
Judge on an individual basis.

Honch smiles.

HONCH
That's all I ask.

SNYSS
Can we please hurry?

EXT. TOWER STEPS - DAY

The group stands on the stone steps of the tower. Snyss carries a bag stuffed with books, papers, and robes. Lurza walks over to Ardiss.

LURZA
So, uh, my lady, I was wondering
if, uh, you might--

She walks away from him, running over to Honch. She hugs him again.

ARDISS
Honch, I owe you my life.

Honch gives a bashful shrug.

HONCH
I did what I had to do.

Ardiss kisses Honch. He blushes. She turns to Lurza.

ARDISS
Thank you for coming after me. I understand you may be confused, but...Honch has such a classical Droghal beauty about him, and to think that he, little but a chef, would risk it all to help save our people...

Ardiss kisses him again.

HONCH
What can I say, Lurza? Women love a man who can cook!

Lurza just shakes his head in disbelief. Garok pats him on the back before turning to Snyss.

GAROK

Will you return to your people?

Snyss looks around. Deactivated soldiers litter the streets.

SNYSS

I think not. I have a lot of
cleaning up to do here, you see.
Try to get it back to some amount
of normalcy, the way it used to be.

The ground starts shaking.

LURZA

Look out!

The group rushes into the street as the tower collapses onto itself. The roaring tides start sweeping it out into the sea, piece by piece. Garok shakes Snyss's hand.

GAROK

Then it is here we part. I wish you
the best.

ARDISS

If ever you need aid, you have but
to ask.

Honch hugs Garok. Garok stiffens at first, but he relaxes into returning it.

HONCH

Your name will live amongst our
people forever.

Garok smirks.

GAROK

As it should, my friend. As it
should.

Lurza turns to Snyss and mouths the word "friend" with a surprised face. Snyss shakes his head and raises his shoulders. Honch's face goes blank with shock.

Garok waves to the group. He walks down the center of the road.

LURZA

I'm going with him.

ARDISS
Then farewell, Lurza.

Honch hugs Lurza.

HONCH
If you're ever hungry, you know
where to come.

SNYSS
And, if you ever slake your thirst
for adventure, I could teach you a
few things.

Lurza smiles and nods. He takes off after Garok.

EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY

Garok and Lurza walk down the road. Lurza gestures as he
talks.

LURZA
Seriously, Garok! Ardiss took your
sword and chopped off her hand!

GAROK
You should have beaten her to that,
had you any sense in you.

LURZA
I was distracting the sorceress!

GAROK
It sounds like you were about to be
eaten.

Lurza waves it off.

LURZA
That was a minor setback.

Garok stops walking. He puts his hands on Lurza's shoulders.

GAROK
Listen, Lurza. You can't just
follow me forever.

LURZA
We make a good team! We could do--

GAROK

Stop. I promised to take you safely home. You no longer need my protection. Tell me, what did you do to fight the sorceress?

LURZA

Well, I--

GAROK

And what did I do?

LURZA

That's not fair; you were...

Lurza looks down.

GAROK

Exactly. I was not the hero in there. It was you. It was Honch, Snys, Ardiss. It was everyone...save me.

Garok looks up.

GAROK

My time is over. I have had my say. The time has come for the young to take the reins.

Garok unsheathes his sword.

GAROK

From what you tell me, you showed bravery in the face of death. That, Lurza, is what being a warrior is all about.

Garok presents his sword to Lurza.

GAROK

You have proven your worth. The time has come for you to go on your own adventures. Go your own path, and become a legend in your own right.

Garok smiles.

GAROK

Who knows? Perhaps some day in the future, some annoying little boy will seek you out and force you on an adventure.

They laugh. Lurza furrows his brow.

LURZA

Perhaps my parents still live in
the sorceress's buildings.

Lurza shakes his head.

LURZA

I can't possibly take your sword.

Garok shoves it forward.

GAROK

You can and will.

Lurza picks it up out of Garok's hands. Garok slips off his scabbard and drops it on the ground.

GAROK

Treat it well, and it will do the
same to you. May you remember me
only with respect.

Garok walks away. Lurza stands there, looking on.

LURZA

Wait!

Garok turns around.

LURZA

What did you see when you--when you
weren't fighting?

Garok nods.

GAROK

Enough.

Garok disappears into the forest. Tears stream down Lurza's face. He closes his eyes. He heads back down the road toward the city.

EXT. TRAVELING MONTAGE

A) The road turns to cobbles. Garok steps off the road and walks along the side.

SNYSS (V.O.)

Thus ended Garok's journey.

B) Garok pushes through the trees. He finds himself at Untwend's grave.

SNYSS (V.O.)

He found it came with some gains
and some losses.

C) Garok looks up at the escarpment where the group met Snyss.

SNYSS (V.O.)

Certainly, it had been a unique
experience. Not one he had ever
anticipated.

D) Garok looks around the razed Droghal encampment.

SNYSS (V.O.)

Some of his strongest beliefs were
challenged by the people he met...

E) Garok walks through the razed village.

SNYSS (V.O.)

Yet somehow, he invited the
struggle. Perhaps he had been
waiting for it all along.

EXT. GAROK'S CABIN - DAY

Garok arrives home. He slumps against the wall.

SNYSS (V.O.)

Of course, there was more energy in
Erature than had been in Garok, so
he would be able to enjoy a long
and healthy retirement. He has yet
again given up the way of the
warrior, and he will finally fade
away in peace.

He opens the door and walk in. The door slams behind him.

SNYSS (V.O.)

At least, so he thought.

The door opens. Garok, looking disgusted, carries the rotten
boar out and throws it into the woods. He walks back in and
slams the door.

SNYSS (V.O.)
A story for another day, perhaps.

FADE OUT.

THE END