THE ARMOR OF BELIAL

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MINE YARD - DAY

An overcast sky covers a line of MINE SLAVES. The line stretches toward an UNOBTRUSIVE TENT. In this line is a small FAMILY: VARGUS (a boy of about 14) and his FATHER (NARGOTH) and MOTHER (OREEN).

They do not talk to each other or anyone else in the line.

OVERSEERS, large, muscular men, walk up and down the line, coldly watching their charges.

Their armor is a hybrid of metal and leather resembling a combination of Medieval and Japanese constructions. They do not wear gloves, but each wears a menacing helmet. Each wears a belt around his waist to carry weapons. These carry clubs.

The line passes close to a GROUP OF PICK-AXES, leaned against a shed. The SLEEVE of a SLAVE brushes against one of the pick-axes, causing it to fall in the path of the line.

Oreen does not notice the pick-axe and trips over its handle, causing the rest of the stack to fall as well. She lets out a squeal as she falls, disturbing the unnerving silence of the line.

Nargoth leans down to help her up, silently. An OVERSEER walks quickly over to them.

OREEN (whispered)
I’m okay.

OVERSEER (loudly)
Woman Slave!

Everyone freezes. She rises to her feet and walks to the Overseer.

OVERSEER
Silence in the feed line is not an option.
OREEN
I tripped, Overseer.

OVERSEER
I did not command you to speak!

Oreen nods and tries to return to the line.

OVERSEER
I did not say you could leave!
You must be punished.

He brandishes a nasty looking club. She turns to him to bravely take her punishment. The Overseer leans in close to her.

OVERSEER
(low)
If you want leniency, we can arrange it.

He runs his hand up her leg under her dress. Oreen turns and slaps the Overseer.

OREEN
No!

The Overseer’s eyes flare.

OVERSEER
REBELLION!

Other Overseers charge over from all points. The Overseers brutally beat Oreen to the ground.

Nargoth watches sadly in silence. One hand is over Vargus’ mouth; the other holds Vargus’ body still as Vargus struggles to help his mother.

Oreen screams.

INT. VARGUS’ TENT – NIGHT

Vargus screams himself awake and sits up in bed. He is now 29. His wife, SIRENA, lies next to him. She sits up and touches his arm.
SIRENA
Vargus?

He gasps and turns to her.

SIRENA
Your mother again?

Vargus looks at her momentarily and nods. He gets out of bed and changes.

SIRENA
Do you want to talk about it?

Vargus pauses in his changing. He sighs.

VARGUS
Fifteen years, Sirena. Why does she keep coming back?

SIRENA
It was a wrongful death. I’d be the same way.

VARGUS
Why didn’t he do something, though? She was...

Vargus opens his mouth, but the word won’t come out.

VARGUS
...right in front of us.

SIRENA
What could he have done?

VARGUS
Something.

Sirena looks at him, just listening. Vargus shakes his head and turns away.

VARGUS
Never mind.

SIRENA
Come here.
Vargus sits on the bed. She wraps her arms around him. He looks at her. They kiss lightly.

SIRENA
Twelve years I’ve put up with you now. Don’t shut me out.

Vargus nods. She laughs and shakes him a little.

SIRENA
You hear me?

VARGUS
Yes, yes. Of course.

He looks at her and smiles.

SIRENA
You and me?

VARGUS
You and me.

The door to their room flies open. KIRNILA (their daughter of 10) and DELIF (their son of 8) charge into the room and jump onto the bed.

Vargus hugs them both to him.

VARGUS
Well good morning, Kirnila.

KIRNILA
Morning, Daddy.

VARGUS
How are you, Delif?

DELIF
Good.

VARGUS
Sleep well?

DELIF
Yeah.
Kirnila whispers loudly to Vargus.

**KIRNILA**
He said you’re always lazy and sleeping too late.

**VARGUS**
Grampa’s crazy.

Kirnila laughs.
NARGOTH
If daddy doesn’t listen to grampa, the Overseers will get upset, though.

VARGUS
Come on, the siren can’t be that clo-

A siren rings out. Nargoth smiles.

NARGOTH
I’ll leave you to get ready.
Come on, kids.

DELF
Yeah, come on, kids, get ready.

VARGUS
Go on.

Kirnila and Delif run out. Nargoth closes the door behind them.

SIRENA
They are cute.

VARGUS
Then why did we bring them into this?

EXT. MINE YARD - DAWN

Even 15 years later, OVERSEEERS look as they did when Vargus was 14. They stand in a line waiting for the slaves to report.

While some of the Overseers carry clubs, others have a short club with a black rubber handle with a button and adjustment knob and a shiny metal end called a REEZ WAND.

The siren continues to sound.

INT. VARGUS’ TENT - DAWN

Vargus and the family quickly shuffle out the door quickly. The children try talking to him, but he shushes them.
EXT. MINE YARD - DAWN

The line of SLAVES stretches from the FOOD TENT. Overseers watch over them closely. Not a word is spoken. Vargus and family move silently with everyone else.

INT. YURI MINES - DAY

Vargus and Nargoth move a cart down a track into a deep mine lined with slaves picking at the walls. They park the cart at a point where some yellow rocks have been piled.

Vargus and Nargoth pile the rocks into the cart. They continue onward into the mine. Nargoth looks sidelong at Vargus, walking silently.

    NARGOTH
    You’re quiet today.

    VARGUS
    Nothing to talk about.

    NARGOTH
    Come on. I’m not blind. What’s the deal?

    VARGUS
    It’s nothing.

Nargoth gives him a sidelong glance. He rolls his eyes.

    NARGOTH
    How about this mine then? Why Lord Sthennix has us here I’ll never know. We haven’t found enough Yuri to power anything in the fleet.

    VARGUS
    MmHm.

    NARGOTH
    We should move on.
They pass an Overseer with a Reez who simply nods to them as they pass. They nod in return and reach another small pile of yellow rocks. Vargus and Nargoth load them into the cart and continue onward.

NARGOTH
What are you thinking about?

VARGUS
Nothing.

NARGOTH
Everything well with Sirena and the kids?

VARGUS
They’re fine.

NARGOTH
You know, this whole cold and distant attitude has never worked for me.

VARGUS
Worked for you and mom.

NARGOTH
What’s that supposed to mean?

VARGUS
You remember: fifteen years ago? You stood by and watched her get butchered by Overseers.

NARGOTH
Where is this coming from?

VARGUS
Why? Why did you do it?

Nargoth looks away. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

NARGOTH
Do you know what would have happened if I spoke up for her?
Vargus looks at Nargoth but does not answer. In his eyes it is evident he knows, but does not want to accept the reason. They reach more rocks. They load them in the cart.

VARGUS
I’m sorry. It has been on my mind a lot lately.

NARGOTH
I knew something was.

VARGUS
Once upon a time, we were happy. We weren’t slaves, just workers. I hate this. Why did I have children only to force them into this life?

NARGOTH
Their fate is neither your fault, nor theirs. Don’t treat them like it is.

Vargus shrugs.

NARGOTH
Could be worse, you know.

VARGUS
How?

NARGOTH
You could be down here...

They look out to their final stop. Heat smolders through cracks in the rocks. Slaves with X’s tattooed on their arms work at this lowest level of the mines. Here, the Overseers walk with whips in hand, occasionally snapping it at a slave who pauses.

VARGUS
The lower level...

NARGOTH
I am glad your mother died rather than end up here. As close to hell as you can get without dying.
VARGUS
Makes our lives seem luxurious.

NARGOTH

They pick up the meager pile of rocks and start back to the surface.

NARGOTH
God forbid anyone end up down here.

EXT. MINE YARDS - DAY

Vargus and Nargoth emerge on the surface and walk to a large REFINERY MACHINE. They dump the rocks into the refinery.

EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU - DAY

High above the mine yard, someone stares at the mine yard through a SPY GLASS. He pulls the glass down to reveal TRISTAM, a dashing young man of about 25, dressed in earth toned clothing, like a medieval peasant. He looks intent and worried.

He quickly rises to his feet and runs to a small, ancient hut huddled in the rocks on the table of the plateau.

INT. ALATYR’S HUT - DAY

Tristam enters the hut and walks over to ALATYR, a very old, but sharp-eyed man. Alatyr’s manner of dress resembles a wizard with long robes, but no hat.

Alatyr has a large book on a stand. He reads the book silently only glancing up for a moment to acknowledge Tristam entering. The remainder of the hut shows minimal furnishings, but several books.

ALATYR
Well?
TRISTAM
The Cerebi slaves have settled in the Darunia Mines. That mine ran low on Yuri years ago, why move an entire village?

ALATYR
We both know he does not seek Yuri. It’s a front to find what Belial left behind.

Alatyr points to the page he is on in the book. Tristam walks around the pedestal and looks. The page shows a drawing of a man in glowing armor with his arm stretched straight up. An army is on the ground all around him. Tristam looks to Alatyr.

TRISTAM
You’ve told me the stories throughout my childhood. If he gets it, we can’t stop him.

ALATYR
We cannot stop him now; what will this change?

TRISTAM
Alatyr, so long as he does not have it, we have a chance of-

ALATYR
Of what? You are only now of age to assume your role and yet you do not have the wisdom to achieve it. When the time is right, he will be defeated.

TRISTAM
Defeated by who? Me?

ALATYR
I do not feel it is your fate to defeat Sthennix. You may face him, and you will have a part to play, but the final blow is not for you.
TRISTAM
If we are not to prevent him from taking Belial’s treasure, then why are we here?

ALATYR
Because when those who are powerful seek more power, their position has weakened.

TRISTAM
So is it time?

ALATYR
No, Tristam. I feel that the time is yet hence. Trust me as your father did. I will tell you when the time has come.

Tristam nods.

ALATYR
You’ve got to let this go.

TRISTAM
What?

ALATYR
This obsession with attacking Stennix. It will bring you no good.

TRISTAM
I have a right to what is mine.

ALATYR
And that is what he believed as well. Consider what is important and be patient.

Tristam sighs.
EXT. CHARON - DAY

The CHARON looks like an enormous sailing ship, but it flies through the air. At the forefront of the vessel is a large OBSERVATION WINDOW.

INT. CHARON THRONE ROOM - DAY

Behind the Observation Window is the throne room. A throne sits in the center of the room currently facing out the window. Someone sits in the throne but remains hidden from the main door.

The door opens and a Head Overseer, PRATOSH, enters. He walks up behind the throne and kneels. The VOICE OF STHENNIX issues low and sinister from behind the throne.

STHENNIX (O.S.)
What is it?

PRATOSH
My Lord Sthennix, we have relocated the Cerebi mining village to the Darunia Plateau.

STHENNIX (O.S.)
And what have they been told?

PRATOSH
Only to report anything unusual. No details.

STHENNIX (O.S.)
Very good. You may rise.

Pratosh rises. Sthennix turns the throne around to face him. Sthennix is a moderately built man in his 40’s with a cold glint in his eye and a sneer for a smile. He approaches Pratosh.

STHENNIX
My orders are to be followed exactly. The slave that finds the weapon is to be executed immediately. Is that understood?
PRATOSH
Yes, lord.

STHENNIX
If anything goes wrong, you will be punished.

PRATOSH
Yes, lord.

STHENNIX
We are nearly upon it, Pratosh. Years of searching. Years of lost slaves, and this is the place. It must be. Everything leads us here.

PRATOSH
But my lord, the tales are ancient, and sound too fantastic to be more than legend. How can you be sure it’s real?

STHENNIX
Because it is, Pratosh. I know it is. It must be. There is too much history on it. Too many entries in the annals of our world for it to be a mere fairy tale.

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord.

STHENNIX
This Armor of Belial is exactly what I need to secure myself forever. Now go.

Pratosh makes a quick bow and exits.

INT. CHARON - TRANSPORT BAY - DAY

The bay contains several odd-looking transports resembling modern Jet-skis. Pratosh walks to one of the Jet-ski transports. He powers it on and blasts out of the open hanger door.
EXT. OPEN SKY - DAY

Pratosh rides the transport from the Charon across a short distance several hundred feet above the planet’s surface to another waiting ship, the ECHEBUS.

The Echebus is similar in design to the Charon, but smaller. Behind Pratosh, the Charon turns and flies away.

Pratosh enters the transport bay on his transport. The Echebus moves toward a distant sea.

Move beyond the Echebus across a small rocky desert and down to the Darunia Mine Yard.

EXT. MINE YARD - DAY

The sun stands high overhead as the Echebus closes in on the town. The Slaves stand in the line for food. Vargus stands in line with Nargoth, Sirena, Kirnila, and Delif.

As they walk, Vargus notices a stack of pick-axes leaning against a tree next to the line. He focuses on them for a moment before shaking them off.

Suddenly, someone brushes against one of the axes, and it topples to the ground. To Vargus, this happens in slow motion. Helpless, he watches as a woman trips over the axe and falls to the ground. The other pick-axes fall in reply.

Her husband helps her to her feet, but not before an Overseer come by. Flashes of his mother overlay his vision as he watches history repeat itself.

OVERSEER
(soundless)
Woman Slave!

The woman walks to the Overseer and kneels. Through it all, the words don’t match the lip movement, so Vargus fails to hear what is actually being said.

OVERSEER
Silence in the feed line is not an option.
WOMAN
I am sorry, Overseer.

OVERSEER
I did not command you to speak!

The woman tries to return to the line.

OVERSEER
I did not say you could leave!
You must be punished.

He brandishes a nasty looking club. She turns to him, frightened. The Overseer leans in close to her. Vargus hears him.

OVERSEER
(sinister)
If you want leniency, we can arrange it.

He runs his hand up her leg under her dress. The woman jerks away from him, shocked. The Overseer raises his club.

OVERSEER
REBELLION!

Other Overseers respond in force and beat the woman. Vargus can contain himself no longer.

VARGUS
NO!

NARGOTH
(whispered)
Vargus! No!

Nargoth tries to grab Vargus and hold him, but Vargus breaks the line and pulls the Overseers off the woman, tossing them to the ground. He kneels. Gently he cradles the woman in his arms. The Overseers look momentarily stunned.

She is dead. Vargus pictures his mother in the place of the woman. He cries over her. Nargoth looks helplessly shocked along with Sirena and the children.
Vargus strokes the woman’s hair. The Overseers pull him up to his feet and toss him to the ground. They draw their clubs and beat him.

PRATOSH
Stop!

The Overseers stand away from him. Blood flows from Vargus’ nose and open wounds. Pratosh leans down to him.

PRATOSH
What did you accomplish today?
Nothing! Nothing except punishment for yourself. If you have people you need to say good-bye to, you should have thought of that before trying to be a hero.
(to Overseers)
Take him to the mines!

Overseers take Vargus to the mines. Sirena cries silently on Nargoth’s shoulder. Nargoth holds the children close to him, watching as his son is taken away, fighting back tears.

INT. DEEP MINES - DAY

Overseers lead Vargus into the Deep Mines, past the workers he saw earlier. The Deep Mines are extensive in size. Fissures among the workers lead straight down into glowing pits.

Overseers stand over the workers, occasionally whipping them. As Vargus passes, a worker cowers before a CRUEL OVERSEER. Cruel Overseer whips him several times.

CRUEL OVERSEER
Get to your feet!

COWERING WORKER
Please, Overseer. I need to rest.

CRUEL OVERSEER
Then rest!
Cruel Overseer kicks him into a glowing pit and laughs. Cowering Worker’s scream echoes throughout the mine, but no worker pays notice. Vargus’s Overseers lead him onward.

They force him up a stairway in the center of the large main compound. He walks to the center of a large open grated platform.

ZINDAH, the Deep Mines Overseer who is an oversized muscle-bound man carrying both a Reez Wand and a whip, smiles as he watches Vargus approach like one would smile for a delicious dinner.

Zindah is not dressed as the typical Overseer and is scarred almost beyond recognition.

Zindah points to two posts near the edge of the platform. The Overseers walk Vargus to the posts and chain one arm up leaving one free. He faces out looking across the expansive compound.

Zindah takes a branding iron from a smelter and walks up behind Vargus. He nods to the Overseer who holds Vargus’s free arm still. Vargus looks at it as Zindah burns an X into Vargus’ arm. Vargus howls in pain.

Overseers below howl with pleasure, cheering. The slaves pay no attention. Zindah nods to the Overseers who brought Vargus down. They chain up his newly branded arm and leave.

Zindah circles to stand directly behind of Vargus.

ZINDAH
Welcome to Hell, overworlder.

He whips Vargus. Vargus writhes in pain.

ZINDAH
Don’t worry. We can’t whip you all the time. Don’t want you numb to the pain.

He whips Vargus again. Vargus reacts just as strongly.

ZINDAH
What brings you here?

VARGUS
I-
Zindah whips again. Vargus gasps.

ZINDAH
I didn’t tell you to speak!

Zindah laughs.

ZINDAH
The rules are simple: don’t talk and
do as you’re told. You’ll never see
the surface or anyone on it again.

He leans in close to Vargus.

ZINDAH
(with mock sincerity)
Unless they too become our guests.
Understand?

He laughs again. Vargus turns his head slightly to look to
Zindah. Zindah notices Vargus isn’t moving. He whips him again.

ZINDAH
Answer me!

VARGUS
Yes!

Zindah whips again.

ZINDAH
We practice respect down here.
You will respond, ‘Yes sir.’

Zindah stands next to Vargus, looking at him. Vargus returns the
look.

ZINDAH
Well?

VARGUS
(weak)
Yes, sir.

Zindah whips him again.
ZINDAH
That’s because I don’t like new people.

Zindah releases the chains and kicks Vargus off the edge of the platform. He falls with a yell, landing hard on the ground.

He coughs hard as he struggles to his feet. An Overseer whips him on the back.

OVERSEER
You were not given permission to speak.

Zindah walks down the stairway and stands over Vargus.

ZINDAH
You’ve had enough rest. Get up!

Zindah kicks him. Vargus struggles to his feet. He takes a step forward and collapses. Zindah reaches down and lifts Vargus by his hair.

ZINDAH
Listen to me, slave. I’ve been down here a long time. Long enough for Lord Sthennix to allow me to do whatever it takes to make you lowlifes work. If you don’t want worse, you move!

Zindah pushes Vargus away. Vargus takes a few steps and stops. Zindah whips him.

ZINDAH
Get an axe!

Vargus looks over to a stack of pick-axes off to one side. Vargus takes one.

ZINDAH
And if we find you’re not working, you’ll feel it on your back. Either by whip or with this.
He takes the Reez Wand from its clip. He presses the button. Electric sparks fire around the metal end. He jabs Vargus with it. Vargus lights up and shrieks in pain.

Zindah laughs and walks away. An Overseer stands over him.

OVERSEER
Get up!

The Overseer whips. Vargus reacts marginally. He stands up.

OVERSEER
Let’s go.

The Overseer leads Vargus through the mines to a tunnel lit by a single candle. On the trek, they pass several prisoners weakly hammering at the wall with pick-axes. Vargus gives them cursory attention as he passes.

Here and there, glowing fissures have been cracked open in the walls. Prisoners are careful to avoid them as they move.

The Overseer stops at an open space in the wall. He points.

OVERSEER
You know what you’re looking for. Now find it!

Broken, Vargus chops at the wall with his axe. He is weak, so his picking has little strength behind it. The Overseer walks away. Vargus watches him go.

He pauses for a moment, resting on the end of the axe. He cries for a moment, finally acknowledging what he has been through. He looks at the wall, his eyes turning to anger.

With a roar, Vargus hits the wall with the axe.

VARGUS
How do you like that, dad?
Or maybe you’ll feel this.

He hits the wall again.

VARGUS
Won’t stand up for your wife-
WHACK!

VARGUS
-or your son.

WHACK!

VARGUS
How long until I see my children?

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

Vargus breathes heavily. A large dent is banged into the wall. A HALL PRISONER just down from Vargus stares him momentarily before suddenly going back to work on the wall.

An Overseer walks by - slowly. He looks at Vargus, who picks up the axe and gingerly taps at the hole he made. The Overseer walks onward.

Vargus watches him go.

VARGUS
Thanks a lot, dad. Appreciate your help. You’ll probably tell my son one day, ‘I had to stay silent to protect the rest of you.’ Silence this!

Vargus reels back and slams into the hole. The space behind the hole gives way. The momentum drags Vargus through the rapidly collapsing wall.

Hall Prisoner looks up in surprise.

INT. ARMOR HALLWAY – DAY

Vargus falls a short expanse, hitting the bottom about 8 feet down in a tall hallway. He coughs the dust from his face and rolls over. The hole he made is in the wall of this high-ceilinged area.

He stands and brushes himself off. A glow issues from one end of the hall; the other direction is dark.
Slowly, Vargus walks in the direction of the glow.

INT. DEEP MINES - DAY

Hall Prisoner walks up to the hole that Vargus made. He looks in briefly, and then runs off.

HALL PRISONER
Overseer!

An Overseer runs over to him.

HALL PRISONER
The new slave disappeared into the hole.

OVERSEER
Get back to work.

Hall Prisoner immediately returns to work. The Overseer runs through the compound and up the stairs to Zindah. He talks quickly into Zindah’s ear. Zindah stands up, looking as if he has the fear of God in him.

ZINDAH
Go to the surface. Find Pratosh.
Now!

INT. ARMOR HALLWAY - DAY

Vargus slowly finds his way to the end of the hall and the source of the glow.

Sitting upon a pedestal is a glowing shirt of armor: THE ARMOR OF BELIAL. It looks very lightweight, with sleeves spiked at the ends like claws, and short legging that might come down to the wearer’s knees.

Slowly, Vargus reaches out and touches the armor. Suddenly, the armor springs to life off the pedestal. Vargus jumps back and watches it in fear. The armor spins around the room and latches itself onto Vargus’ body. Vargus screams.
INT. DEEP MINES - DAY

Pratosh leads a detachment of Overseers toward the hole where Vargus disappeared. Vargus’ scream rings out. Pratosh stops for a moment. Worry crosses his face.

PRATOSH
Move!

Pratosh leads the detachment at a run for the opening. They let out a rope to climb down.

INT. ARMOR HALLWAY - DAY

Vargus claws at the armor to get it off. It is useless. Overseers pour into the hole. Vargus freezes as they approach him.

PRATOSH
Turn over the armor.

VARGUS
It won’t come off.

PRATOSH
Don’t toy with me, slave. Remove the armor.

VARGUS
It won’t come off. I can’t remove it.

Pratosh signals for Zindah and another stout Overseer to come forward. Vargus shrinks back as they come forward.

ZINDAH
You didn’t last long down here, did you, overworlder?

Zindah lunges with his Reez. It sparks wildly around Vargus, but has no effect!

Suddenly, Vargus lashes out. He slams one Overseer into a wall. Zindah makes a few swipes with his Reez, but Vargus slams him into the other wall.
PRATOSH

Get him!

As the other Overseers attack Vargus, Pratosh escapes back up into the mines.

One by one, Vargus swings at the Overseers, variously throwing them across the chamber into the walls. Two Overseers remain with their whips. They both swing their whips, wrapping Vargus’ arms.

They each pull in opposite directions. Vargus pulls the whips towards himself. The Overseers crash into each other.

Vargus looks around at the destruction he has caused. His face is alight with wonder. He looks to the rope and an almost evil smile crosses his face. He looks to the hole in the wall.

He climbs the rope with inhuman speed and ease and dashes into the mines.

INT. DEEP MINES - DAY

He emerges from the hole. Hall Prisoner looks at him for a moment, confused. Vargus walks to him and puts his hand on the prisoner’s shoulder.

VARGUS

You have nothing to fear anymore.

Hall Prisoner only stares. Vargus runs off. Hall Prisoner shakes his head. He continues to work on the wall.

HALL PRISONER

One of us is naïve...

Vargus smiles and runs through the candle-lit hall to the large compound. Overseers rush him. He tosses them aside like rag dolls.

One tries to clobber him from behind. Vargus grabs him and tosses him down one of the pits. The Overseers run out of the deep mines. Vargus chases them.
INT. YURI MINES - DAY

The Overseers flee from Vargus. He catches up to them one by one, and tosses them aside. His fellow slaves watch him as he passes, confused.

EXT. MINE YARD - DAY

Pratosh runs to the Jet-ski-like transport and flies up to the ECHEBUS - one of the two ships anchored overhead.

INT. ECHEBUS CONTROL DECK - DAY

Pratosh charges into the control room.

PRATOSH
Get us out of here!

EXT. MINE YARD - DAY

Vargus exits the mines. Overhead, he sees the Echebus turning away. He runs toward a transport. Overseer guarding the transports stand in his path.

They thrust with their Reez Wands. Electricity sparks through the armor, but Vargus moves forward, taking the wands from the Overseers. He moves the setting on the wands to their highest level and jabs them into the Overseers.

They convulse as the excess sparks bolt from their body. Vargus releases them. They collapse to the ground, smoking.

He gets on a transport and flies to the other ship, the RYNGARD.

INT. RYNGARD - DAY

Vargus parks the transport and attacks the surprised attendants, throwing them out of the ship.

He runs through the ship, throwing Overseers against the walls of the hallways. He reaches the command deck. The crew turns to him.
CAPTAIN
Who are you?

VARGUS
I’m taking your ship.

CAPTAIN
You can’t take my sh-

Vargus grabs the captain and tosses him through the side of the bridge. He falls to his death.

Vargus looks at the remaining bridge crew. Weak, compared to the formidable Overseers.

VARGUS
Get out.

The crew quickly leaves their stations, and exit the bridge.

EXT. PALACE - DAY

The ancient Palace of the Grontol Empire is impressive in both its architecture and security. High overhead patrol several ships. Transports scour the ground.

Beyond the rear walls of the palace is a large never-ending body of water. The flying ships rest in the water and are docked.

The Echebus flies toward the docks and lowers itself into the water. A gangplank lowers from the side of the ship. Pratosh exits the ship and walks along the dock towards the back entrance of the palace.

INT. PALACE THRONE ROOM - DAY

Pratosh is kneeling before Sthennix, head bowed. Sthennix stands over him, eyes blazing. The mood is intense.

STHENNIX
You found the armor.

PRATOSH
Yes, lord.
STHENNIX
And you did not kill the slave who found it?

PRATOSH
As I said, my lord, he donned the armor before we arrive. We could not.

STHENNIX
You know the penalty for failure.

PRATOSH
Yes, lord.

Sthennix takes a blade from his throne and holds it high over his head, poised to strike. Pratosh keeps his head bowed. Sthennix brings the blade down to within inches of Pratosh’s head.

STHENNIX
Pratosh.

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord Sthennix.

STHENNIX
I have changed my mind.

PRATOSH
Thank you, my lord.

STHENNIX
Stand up.

Pratosh rises.

STHENNIX
You may have ruined everything for me and for the kingdom, and for this, you deserve death.

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord.
STHENNIX
But I have a problem right now. There is a slave loose with my armor and I want it back. You need to get it for me.

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord.

STHENNIX
But you are banished until it is done.

PRATOSH
But, my lord, with enough troops, I could-

STHENNIX
Troops cannot take back the armor, only cunning. You are on your own. If you argue, I will kill you anyway.

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord. Thank you.

Pratosh leaves.

STHENNIX
Frintak!

Another Head Overseer, FRINTAK, enters.

FRINTAK
My lord.

STHENNIX
Frintak, find out everything you can about this slave. If he has the other ship from the village, destroy it; you can’t hurt the armor. See if there’s anything in that stupid little village we can use against him to get the armor back.
FRINTAK
Yes, my lord.

STHENNIX
Oh, yes. When you return to the village. Take twice the regular complement of Overseers with you. Let the world know what becomes of insulting Sthennix.

FRINTAK
With pleasure, my lord.

Frintak exits. In a rage, Sthennix swings his sword at his throne, chopping off the top of the seat. He throws his sword to the ground and sits in his lopped off throne.

STHENNIX
Overseer!

OVERSEER
My lord?

STHENNIX
Get me another throne.

OVERSEER
Right away, my lord.

EXT. PALACE

Pratosh mounts a transport. It hovers about 3-5 feet off the ground. Pratosh fires it up and blasts off.

He bolts through the modest garden growth and across an expansive desert. A forest looms in the background followed by a body of water and another forest.

EXT. MINE YARD - DAY

Vargus walks out of the mine toward the strangely silent group of his fellow villagers.
VARGUS
Why so silent, brothers and sisters?
We are free. Free from the tyranny of
Sthennix. We should rejoice!

NARGOTH
Rejoice? You don’t know what you’re
talking about. Lord Sthennix is not
some schoolboy. He killed the former
rulers of Grontol and took over. You
can’t seriously believe this little
rebellion of yours will hurt him any.

VARGUS
He won’t return. He’ll see we are
strong and not to be reckoned with.

OLD WOMAN
Lord Sthennix is stronger than you,
boy.

MAN 1
He’ll send more ships and overseers.

MAN 2
Our lives will get harder than they
were.

WOMAN 1
You’ve destroyed our lives!

VARGUS
No! I can fix it. I will go to the
palace and kill Sthennix.

The village gets suddenly silent. Vargus’ father takes his son
by the arm.

NARGOTH
Are you insane? I don’t know what
power you have, but if you go to
the palace, you will die.
VARGUS
What do you care? You stood by and watched mom die, and didn’t lift a finger. You watched them take me away and did nothing. I am the son of a coward, but I will not be the same way.

Nargoth slaps him.

NARGOTH
You don’t know what you’re talking about. You are an irrational child and will get us all killed.

Vargus grabs his father by the shirt and lifts him off the ground.

VARGUS
I’m going to take action to save us all and not think of my own safety all the time. Try it sometime, dad.

Vargus drops his father and storms away. Nargoth looks up at him.

NARGOTH
What about your family? Do they mean nothing to you?

Vargus turns to Nargoth.

VARGUS
Don’t you tell me how I feel about my family. I love them, and that’s why I’m doing this: so they can live in a world of freedom, not oppression.

NARGOTH
And those are your true motives?

Vargus looks at his father, silently. Nargoth points to Sirena and the children. Sirena’s face is etched with a world of concern.
NARGOTH
Look at them. Do you really understand what you’ve done?

Vargus looks at Sirena. Their eyes lock. Hers are worried and afraid. His are angry and defiant.

VARGUS
I have work to do.

Vargus turns to the transport and flies up to the ship. Sirena and the children go to Nargoth and kneel by him.

SIRENA
(to herself)
What happened to you and me?

NARGOTH
This is just him.

Sirena looks up as he flies away. A tear drips down her face.

SIRENA
He didn’t even say good-bye.

NARGOTH
I’m sorry.

EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU - DAY

Tristam watches from the overlook as Vargus boards the ship. He lowers the spyglass as the ship moves away from the village. Alatyr approaches from behind him.

TRISTAM
Whoever he is, he boarded the ship and is headed in the direction of the palace.

ALATYR
He must be out of his mind.

Tristam suddenly looks intently in the skies behind Alatyr. He holds up his spyglass and then lowers it.
TRISTAM
He’s not going to get very far.

Alatyr turns. In the skies behind him, another ship approaches.

INT. RYNGARD CONTROL DECK - DAY

Vargus stands at the wheel, controlling the ship. He looks forward to see the Echebus coming toward him.

    VARGUS
    Uh-oh.

INT. ECHEBUS CONTROL DECK - DAY

Frintak commands the Echebus as it nears the Ryngard.

    FRINTAK
    Gunner. Remove that ship from the skies.

    GUNNER
    Yes, sir.

EXT. ECHEBUS - DAY

Several cannons fire from the side of the Echebus, piercing the side of the Ryngard.

INT. RYNGARD - DAY

The hits jar Vargus, but he stands firm. He steers the ship away from the Echebus.

EXT. SKIES - DAY

The Ryngard moves below the Echebus and away from it. The Echebus circles around behind it. Another cannon fires blowing a hole in the rear of the ship. Smoke bellows out.
INT. RYNGARD - DAY

Lights flicker all over one of the panels in the bridge. Vargus turns the wheel of the ship.

    VARGUS
    That’s not good.

He exits the bridge.

EXT. SKIES - DAY

The Ryngard continues traveling forward with its smoky tail.

INT. ECHEBUS - DAY

The Gunner turns to Frintak.

    GUNNER
    One more and we can destroy her completely. Are you sure you want to?

    FRINTAK
    Those are Lord Sthennix’s orders. Bring her down.

    GUNNER
    Yes, sir.

The Gunner presses a button.

EXT. SKIES - DAY

Another volley fires from the Echebus. It tears into the backside of the Ryngard.

INT. RYNGARD ENGINE ROOM - DAY

The volley destroys the engine components. The yellow mineral, Yuri, spills out as the room erupts into flames.
EXT. RYNGARD DECK – DAY

Vargus exits the interior of the ship onto the main upper deck. The ship shudders and dips toward the ground. He sees smoke billowing out the rear.

Vargus looks over the edge of the ship. The ground rushes towards him.

INT. ECHEBUS – DAY

Frintak watches with the rest of the crew as the Ryngard goes down. It seems an almost solemn moment.

GUNNER
She was a good ship, sir.

FRINTAK
Yes, she was.

EXT. RYNGARD – DAY

Vargus pulls a side railing off leaving an opening. He stands at the opening, watching the ground come closer. The Ryngard hits the ground. Vargus leaps off.

EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU – DAY

The Ryngard splinters and crushes itself under its fallen weight. The already flaming engine room explodes, taking most of the ship with it. Its explosion reaches far into the sky.

INT. ECHEBUS CONTROL DECK – DAY

The crew rejoices.

FRINTAK
Now, let’s get what is rightfully Lord Sthennix’s.
EXT. MINE YARDS - DAY

Nargoth stands with Vargus’ family as the sounds of the explosion ripple past them. Smoke and fire can be seen over the edge of the plateau. Nargoth shakes his head. Sirena leans into him.

NARGOTH
I tried to warn him.

Sirena nods. She walks away from him.

NARGOTH
Don’t lose his memory.

SIRENA
Maybe he’s not dead. Maybe whatever he was wearing helped him.

NARGOTH
No one could survive that.

SIRENA
I have to believe he survived.

NARGOTH
But to what end?

SIRENA
I have to believe he can still do something.

She walks away. Nargoth looks injured. He looks back to the pluming smoke.

EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU - DAY

Still in the armor, Vargus crawls out of the wreckage of the Ryngard. He looks up as someone approaches him. He sees the shadow of a person before passing out. The armor falls off of him.

Tristam leans down and checks for a pulse. He looks up to Alatyr, who nods his head. Tristam lifts Vargus. Alatyr touches the armor…and nothing happens! He just carries it away.
INT. ALATYR’S HUT - DAY

Vargus awakens. He looks around for a moment, and sits up. His eyes grow wide. He touches his chest. He sits up quickly and looks around, panicked.

ALATYR
You realize what you did was very foolish.

VARGUS
Where is my armor?

ALATYR
Sthennix is not so easily defeated, or even weakened.

VARGUS
Answer me!

ALATYR
Why? Will you kill me?

VARGUS
I need to go.

ALATYR
What do you think you’ve accomplished?

VARGUS
I helped my people. The Overseers are gone.

ALATYR
Are they?

Vargus looks at Alatyr questioningly.

ALATYR
Follow me. I’ll show you how much you’ve helped.
EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU - DAY

Vargus follows Alatyr to the overlook where Tristam sits with his spyglass. Vargus’ eyes widen as he views the vista below. 5 ships float above over a hundred Overseers.

Tristam hands his spyglass to Vargus. Vargus looks through it.

INSERT SPYGLASS VIEW

His people are tortured. The Overseers no longer have clubs, but whips and Reez Wands as in the Deep Mines. The people are being relentlessly whipped and reezed. It is like the Deep Mines on the surface.

He turns the glass to a group heading towards a lift below one of the ships.

VARGUS
What is that?

He twists the glass to look closer. Overseers lead his family to a larger “lifeboat” transport!

END INSERT

Vargus brings the spyglass down. He scrambles over the top of the plateau. Tristam grabs him and pulls him back down.

TRISTAM
Have you lost your mind?

VARGUS
They are taking away my family!
Where are they taking them?

ALATYR
The palace, most likely.

TRISTAM
Sthennix will hold them as hostages until you turn over the armor.

Vargus stops struggling. He sits against the overlook, his head in his hands.
VARGUS
What have I done?

ALATYR
We know what you’ve done. ‘What will you do now?’ is the question.

Vargus looks up, hate fills his eyes.

VARGUS
I know what I’m going to do.

INT. ALATYR’S HUT – DAY

Vargus walks over to the armor and reaches for it. Alatyr’s voice stops him.

ALATYR
You’re going to use it?

VARGUS
Why shouldn’t I? It gives me the strength I need to fight.

TRISTAM
You don’t even know what it is.

VARGUS
I don’t care.

ALATYR
You should. Its evil will consume you.

VARGUS
What?

ALATYR
This is the Armor of Belial, named after a thief who commissioned a traveling mystic to fashion a weapon to make him powerful...
IMAGE: BELIAL, a bearded man who looks ragged and homeless, pays a strange looking old man and receives the armor from him. Upon touching the armor, it whips around him and attaches itself to him, as it did with Vargus.

ALATYR (V.O.)
And powerful he became. The armor drew upon Belial’s hate allowing him to use the armor against the reigning king of Grontol and take control of the kingdom.

IMAGE: Belial leads a band of thieves to the palace. Belial beats the guards out of the way while his entourage kills the stragglers. He barges into the throne room and kills the king and queen.

ALATYR (V.O.)
The people of Grontol banded together to try and defeat Belial. Among them was Illian, a man who was said to be above reproach...

IMAGE: Formations of men stand ready with crude weapons. ILLIAN hugs his wife and children, ready to leave.

ALATYR (V.O.)
It is said he left to protect his family before they could become victims of Belial’s cruelty.

IMAGE: Illian walks alongside a throng of men towards Belial’s army. A fierce battle ensues between the men and Belial’s army.

Belial, himself, dispatches more of the men than his army does. He finally come upon Illian and grabs him by the neck, holding him off the ground.

ALATYR (V.O.)
Illian said he thought only of his family in the moment when Belial held Illian’s life in his hands. He touched Belial’s armor...

IMAGE: Illian grasps at Belial, and touches his armor. Light flashes and the armor falls to the ground.
ALATYR (V.O.)
Belial was defeated.

IMAGE: Illian’s weight lowers him to the ground from Belial’s grasp. The men converge on Belial and kill him.

ALATYR (V.O.)
Illian himself carried the armor to its resting place in this plateau...

IMAGE: Illian carries the armor to the pedestal where Vargus found it. He places it on the pedestal and leaves down the long, dark hallway.

Alatyr stares intently at Vargus.

ALATYR
...where you found it. Love defeats hate. Don’t go down the path Belial did. He thought he was invincible. His dependence on the armor led to his doom. The hatred he fueled into it. The more hate you hold in your heart, the more powerful it becomes, but fighting out of hate is no way to win a battle.

VARGUS
I don’t have a choice.

Vargus touches the armor. It rises and affixes itself to him again.

VARGUS
My family is in danger, and I have to do what I can to save them.

A loud knock sounds on the door.

ALATYR
(whispered)
Very well. Get out of here!

TRISTAM
What’s happening?
ALATYR
We are discovered. I will detain them. Take him to the havens.

TRISTAM
What about you?

ALATYR
I’ll be fine. Just go.

The knock sounds again, almost cracking the wooden door. Tristam leads Vargus into a back room of the hut and closes the door. Alatyr hunches a little and opens the door.

ALATYR
Yes?

FRINTAK
Your presence here is neither registered nor permitted. Where is the slave?

ALATYR
I have lived here for many years. I know of no registration.

FRINTAK
A slave crashed near here. He has something very valuable. We believe he is here. What have you done with him?

ALATYR
I have never owned a slave. I live in peace with my surroundings.

Frintak picks up Alatyr by his collar.

FRINTAK
Don’t toy with me, old man. If you do not turn him over, you will die.

ALATYR
You may feel free to search my home. I have not seen a slave.
The Overseers crash through Alatyr’s hut. They enter the room where Tristam and Vargus had gone. It is empty.

**EXT. DARUNIA PLATEAU – DAY**

Vargus and Tristam traverse the rocks, keeping themselves hidden from the nearby ship.

**VARGUS**
I could’ve beaten all of them, you know.

**TRISTAM**
Of course you could’ve. That armor gives you inhuman strength. What you don’t seem to understand is the consequences of your actions.

**VARGUS**
What is wrong with defeating the Overseers?

**TRISTAM**
Because there will be more. When you defeat two Overseers, four will follow. They don’t end. They don’t give up.

**VARGUS**
Where do I find Sthennix?

**TRISTAM**
Wait a minute here.

Vargus stops and looks impatiently at Tristam.

**TRISTAM**
You have no idea what you’re talking about. Sthennix’s palace is impossibly guarded. We won’t be able to even get close to him.

**VARGUS**
I will be.
TRISTAM
To what end? What will you do when you find him? I understand you want to rescue your family, and I will help you the best I can with that. But to consider removing Stennix from power... I went against him six months ago. Good men died in that attempt. This won’t work.

VARGUS
We’re wasting time.

Vargus walks past Tristam. Tristam shakes his head and follows.

TRISTAM
You don’t even know where you’re going.

VARGUS
Then lead the way.

Tristam takes the lead. The pair walks beyond the rock formations and into an expanse of grasslands.

EXT. GRONTOL FIELDS - DAY

Day passes. Tristam and Vargus walk through the grasslands toward a large forest.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - DUSK

The sun is low as Vargus charges through the forest, walking very quickly. Tristam lags behind, out of breath.

TRISTAM
Vargus! Hey, hold up!

Vargus turns around impatiently.

VARGUS
Why?
TRISTAM
Because I’m supposed to be leading you and you’re making that very difficult.

VARGUS
Then you need to keep up.

TRISTAM
No, you need to slow down. You’re running all over the place acting like some kind of Juggernaut, destroying everything in your path. If you don’t slow down just a little, you won’t have the energy to get your family. The armor might sustain you, but it will kill you if you don’t slow up a little.

Vargus contemplates this for a moment, and then slows down. Tristam catches up and easily walks beside him.

VARGUS
I’m sorry.

TRISTAM
Forget it. It’s been a long day.

VARGUS
I know. Everything was fine this morning. I can hardly keep it all straight.

TRISTAM
I can see that.

VARGUS
Tell me something.

TRISTAM
Sure.

VARGUS
Why were you on that plateau?
TRISTAM
We were worried that Sthennix would go for the Armor of Belial.

VARGUS
Why does that matter to you?

Tristam turns to Vargus. Great pain resonates in his eyes.

TRISTAM
Sthennix killed my parents.

IMAGE: Sthennix, at 20 years younger, leads a band of men into the palace, relentlessly killing the guards as they entered.

TRISTAM (V.O.)
My parents were King Priam and Queen Thiama. Before Sthennix reached them, they gave me to their advisor, Alatyr, who took me away in the hopes of one day returning to reclaim our kingdom.

SERIES OF IMAGES

A) KING PRIAM and QUEEN THIAMA, both stately individuals in their 30’s, hand a 5-year-old Tristam to Alatyr, who looks very much the same as he does now.

B) Alatyr runs out a back exit from the throne room as Sthennix leads his guards into the room through the main entrance.

C) Sthennix’s men roughly push the King and Queen to the ground on their hands and knees. The men raise swords over their heads. The men bring the swords down!

END SERIES

Tristam looks off into the forest, forlorn.

TRISTAM
But I can’t do it.
VARGUS
So you just sit around all day waiting for what? To get your kingdom back? Have you done anything to reclaim it?

TRISTAM
I did once. I told you. We went against the palace. We lost.

VARGUS
You and who went against him?

TRISTAM
You’ll see. We’re going there.

VARGUS
Where?

TRISTAM
To the havens.

They continue to trudge through the massive forest.

Just behind them, Pratosh follows, hiding in the shadows.

VARGUS
So how big is this forest?

TRISTAM
It’s a day’s walk to get all the way through it. There’s also the crossing.

VARGUS
Crossing?

TRISTAM
Do you know why we have flying boats?

VARGUS
Never thought about it before. I’ve always moved around the same area with my family.
TRISTAM
Our world has more water than land.

EXT. GRONTOL - DUSK

Fly over the pair’s heads and over a small shipping village to an expansive stretch of water towards another land mass on the far side, with a matching forest and similar village.

TRISTAM (V.O.)
This forest is divided by an enormous stretch of water that must be either sailed on or flown over. Walking is not an option.

VARGUS (V.O.)
What then?

Fly over the forest to a large depression area that only contains rocky crags and empty desert. Carnivores peep out of caves burrowed underground and under rock formations.

TRISTAM (V.O.)
After we get through the forest, there is a large area between forest and the palace that is simply dead. A big desert of sand and rocks.

VARGUS (V.O.)
Great.

Finally, the majestic palace dominates the view with it well-manicured lands and ship docked in the water behind it. Fly through the roof to

INT. PALACE TORTURE CHAMBER - DUSK

Sthennix walks around Nargoth, who is shackled above an array of electrical spines. Beyond him, Sirena and the children are chained to the wall.
STHENNIX
Where would your son go?

NARGOTH
I don’t know what else I can tell you. He took one of the ships and flew away.

Sthennix raises a small handheld device and presses a button. Electricity blazes through the spines and into Nargoth’s body. He screams in pain.

STHENNIX
You would know him better than anyone. Who is he working with?

NARGOTH
No one.

STHENNIX
So he just happened to end up down there, find the armor, and make off with it?

NARGOTH
Yes.

Sthennix presses the button again. Nargoth writhes in agony.

STHENNIX
My patience is wearing thin.

He walks to Sirena and strokes her face. Nargoth looks on with anger.

STHENNIX
Perhaps if I use an alternative form of persuasion...

NARGOTH
I’m telling you everything I know!

STHENNIX
Are you?
Sthennix takes a Reez wand from an Overseer and jabs it into Sirena’s side. She arches her back and screams, light pulsing through her. The children scream and tears flow.

NARGOTH
Stop it!

Sthennix uses his mechanical box to buzz Nargoth through the spines again.

STHENNIX
You do not command me, slave!
Tell me what I want to know!

NARGOTH
I told him not to go. I told him it was a bad idea. I begged with him to just give this thing to you. I didn’t know what it was, but I knew it was going to bring trouble.

STHENNIX
And trouble it brought.

He hands the wand back to the Overseer and places the box on a stand.

STHENNIX
I’ll give you time to consider your position again.

Sthennix leaves with the Overseers. The family is alone. The lights go out leaving them in darkness.

SIRENA
Nargoth, what are we going to do?

NARGOTH
Pray that you were right.
EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

Tristam leads Vargus through a dense thicket. It opens into a small area where Tristam knocks on the base of an enormous tree.

He leans down to the base of the tree.

    TRISTAM
    (whispers)
    May Priam and Thiama rule forever.

A click sounds from inside the truck. Tristam stands and pulls open the side of the tree revealing a small room with a metal cylinder stretching from floor to ceiling.

    TRISTAM
    Come on.

Tristam steps into the tree. Almost reluctantly, Vargus does the same. Tristam closes the door.

Pratosh steps out of hiding and walks to the tree. He looks it up and down.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Vargus looks at Tristam.

    VARGUS
    Now what?

    TRISTAM
    You really need to learn patience.

The floor shakes. Tristam stands calm. Vargus looks at his feet.

    TRISTAM
    We’re moving down. Just relax.
    Stay near the middle.

Vargus nods and holds the center cylinder.
EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

Pratosh puts his ear to the tree. A faint crackle sounds. He feels around where the sides of the door were.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Vargus and Tristam continue to ride the elevator.

VARGUS
How deep are we going?

TRISTAM
Almost there, I believe.

VARGUS
You believe?

TRISTAM
I never left much.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

A large chamber with natural dirt walls. A metal cylinder stretches up a large hole in the ceiling. A HAVENS WORKER turns a crank near the cylinder. Two HAVENS SECURITY workers stand to one side watching the hole in the ceiling.

In short order, the platform emerges from the ceiling containing Vargus and Tristam. A woman around Tristam’s age, ERTAF, stands to one side, watching.

VARGUS
Wow.

TRISTAM
This took a while to build, but it is kind of impressive.

The platform comes to a rest on the ground. Ertaf steps forward as Tristam and Vargus step off the platform. Tristam and Ertaf hug.
ERTAF
Tristam. Welcome back. I’ve missed you.

TRISTAM
I’ve missed you too.

They kiss briefly.

TRISTAM
Vargus, this is my wife, Ertaf. I met her here in the havens after her village was completely routed by Overseers.

ERTAF
Only me and four others survived. I lost everyone.

TRISTAM
She fills in for me here while I’m gone. She can be very bossy sometimes.

VARGUS
I know how that can go.

Ertaf smacks Tristam in the arm.

ERTAF
You need to behave around your company. Introduce us, please.

TRISTAM
See? Bossy. Ertaf, this is Vargus. He’s a slave from the Darunia plateau that found the Armor of Belial.

Ertaf’s eyes grow wide.

ERTAF
Did he?

VARGUS
We’re heading to the palace.
Ertaf looks back to Tristam. Tristam shrugs.

TRISTAM
He’s lost his mind, but Alatyr said to take him. He did hold his own against every Overseer in his village...before they kidnapped his family anyway.

ERTAF
How big was your family?

VARGUS
My father, my wife, and two children. My mother was killed many years ago.

ERTAF
I’m sorry.

VARGUS
Don’t be. I’m getting them back.

The trio turns to walk through a doorway at the far end of the chamber.

ERTAF
So you’re going to take on Sthennix. you think you can succeed where hundreds failed?

VARGUS
I don’t have a choice.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

Pratosh locates the handle Tristam used. He pulls - hard. A snap sounds and the door opens to reveal a solid wall.

Pratosh feels of this wall. He takes a few steps back, looking at the wall. He smiles and runs back into the forest.
INT. THE HAVENS - NIGHT

Tristam, Vargus, and Ertaf walk down a claustrophobic hallway lit by candles.

ERTAF
We were beginning to worry about you and Alatyr. You’ve been out on Darunia for some time.

TRISTAM
Well, our mission there was complete as soon as Vargus, here, turned up.

ERTAF
And Alatyr?

TRISTAM
He had to head off some Overseers, but he should be here shortly.

ERTAF
You left him alone with Overseers?

TRISTAM
Didn’t have much of a choice. Do we still have the submersibles to get through the crossing?

Ertaf stops and looks at Tristam.

ERTAF
Are you crazy? Ever since Sthennix found out about that network, he built his own to patrol it. It doesn’t matter what you use - boat or submersible - you’ll never get across.

VARGUS
We’ve got to try.

TRISTAM
She’s right about the crossing. It’s very dangerous.
VARGUS
I’ll go alone.

TRISTAM
You couldn’t pilot a submersible.

VARGUS
Then teach me.

ERTAF
Our drivers trained for months before going out. They are very complicated machines.

TRISTAM
I’ll take him.

Ertaf looks at Tristam, surprised.

TRISTAM
I had already planned to. I knew we couldn’t spare anyone with that kind of risk out there.

ERTAF
Why must you continue to do this? You know what Alatyr has told you.

TRISTAM
Yes, over and over to let it go, but this is not something I can let go. You know what he’s up against.

ERTAF
I don’t want to lose you.

TRISTAM
You won’t. I promise.

Ertaf looks at him, worried. She shakes her head and walks again.

ERTAF
You really have lost your mind. Why don’t we wait?
VARGUS
My family can’t afford to wait.

TRISTAM
He’s right, Ertaf. He also has the armor, which just might give him the advantage we need.

ERTAF
You’re not proposing-

TRISTAM
No, we are still weakened from our last attempt.

VARGUS
How many people do you have here anyway?

ERTAF
See for yourself.

INT. HAVENS MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The trio passes out of the hall and into an enormous circular room at least two stories tall and over a hundred feet in diameter. Large columns stand near the center of the room stretching to the stone ceiling.

The room is populated by about fifty men, and about the same number of women and children. They don’t take up very much room in the large chamber.

Vargus stares at the magnitude of the room, mouth open. Ertaf and Tristam smile.

TRISTAM
Anyone can stay here. We’re safe from Sthennix.

VARGUS
How? How were you able to do this?
It wasn’t easy. The forest provided the cover we needed while we worked, and even though Sthennix knows we’re out here somewhere, he doesn’t know where we are or how to get in.

We’ve continued to expand as best we could even after I got here. But after our run against Sthennix six months ago, we haven’t had the need.

INT. GRONTOL PALACE - NIGHT
Pratosh kneels before Sthennix, who stands over him. Sthennix steps away from Pratosh and paces. He taps a finger against his chin.

STHENNIX
May Priam and Thiama rule forever... That’s what you heard?

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord.

STHENNIX
You found the hiding place of the insurrectionists. If anyone else had awakened me with anything else, I would have them killed immediately. You understand that, Pratosh?

PRATOSH
Yes, my lord. Does this information please you?

STHENNIX
Yes, it does.

PRATOSH
Am I forgiven?
Sthennix turns to Pratosh. His eyes grow cold.

STHENNIX
Your mission was to recover the armor. Do you have the armor?

PRATOSH
No, my lord, but it is-

Sthennix kicks Pratosh, knocking him to the ground.

STHENNIX
I did not ask for the location of my enemies. I asked for the Armor of Belial. If I do not get this, you will not be forgiven.

Pratosh struggles to get up. Sthennix reaches down and lifts him to his feet by his collar.

STHENNIX
Tell me why I shouldn’t kill you for this.

PRATOSH
I will get it. Please, give me some Overseers to raid the home of your enemies. The armor is there.

STHENNIX
You have permission to use an airship. If the Overseers will not follow you, that is no concern of mine. You will not be permitted to use my name to recruit them.

Sthennix tosses Pratosh down. Pratosh returns to a groveling position.

PRATOSH
But my lord, the armor is there. Should we not have a full compliment of-
STHENNIX
The slave is moving in this direction and I have his family. I have airships everywhere between here and there. I also have submersibles in the Crossing. I will find him with or without you.

PRATOSH
Thank you, my lord. You are generous and-

STHENNIX
Get out of my sight before I change my mind!

Pratosh scurries up and runs out the door. Sthennix rubs the bridge of his nose. An Overseer enters behind him.

STHENNIX
The idiot should know it takes me an hour to wake up.

OVERSEER
Yes, lord.

Sthennix exits.

INT. HAVENS - BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

The door opens and Tristam leads Vargus in. Tristam carries a candle and lights a candle sitting on a small table in the room.

The chamber is of modest size, built clearly more for function than space. It contains one single bed against one wall next to the candle’s table.

VARGUS
I need to keep going.

TRISTAM
If you keep going, you’ll die of exhaustion. I know your family is in trouble, and I will get you to the palace. You need to rest.
VARGUS
I can’t. I’ve got to keep going.

TRISTAM
If you give yourself the chance to relax, you’ll probably pass out.

VARGUS
I don’t think so.

TRISTAM
Try it.

Vargus looks at Tristam with a scowl. Finally, he nods.

VARGUS
Fine. Clearly, I won’t get anywhere without doing what you tell me to, but I’m not happy about it.

TRISTAM
That’s fine. As long as you sleep, you can feel however you want to feel.

Tristam exits, closing the door behind him. Vargus picks up the table with the candle and moves it in front of the door, wedging it under the door’s handle.

He sits on the bed and crosses his arms.

VARGUS
Pointless is what this is. Just pointless. Not even tired.

Vargus stares at the door a moment longer. His eyes droop. His heads drops. The armor falls off.

INT. HAVENS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tristam walks with Ertaf.
ERTAF
You should get some sleep too, you know?

TRISTAM
I’m doing fine. I saw what he did earlier, and he has to be exhausted.

ERTAF
Do you honestly trust him?

TRISTAM
No, but I also can’t keep him here either. I figure guiding him is the best way to keep an eye on him. Make sure he does what he says he’ll do.

Ertaf nods. Tristam looks at her, sidelong.

TRISTAM
Out with it.

ERTAF
I’m just scared.

They stop. Ertaf has tears in her eyes.

ERTAF
You know how hard it was when you took the men to the palace? You were gone for days. I didn’t know anything...

TRISTAM
We’re in dangerous times. You know that.

Ertaf scoffs.

ERTAF
And you keep reminding me of it.
TRISTAM
What do you want me to do? I can’t just stay here and do nothing.

ERTAF
You wouldn’t do nothing. You’re the king as far as everyone is concerned. I know Alatyr was your mentor, so he was bound to take you when he went out, but this stranger? He wants to go straight into the heart of danger and take you with him. He’s mad.

TRISTAM
He needs my help. He’s lost everyone. He’s just like you were.

ERTAF
I don’t care. I want you here.

TRISTAM
I’ve already committed to this.

ERTAF
Why won’t you just stay here with me for at least a little while? This isn’t fair to me.

Ertaf turns from him and keeps walking down the hall. Tristam sighs and catches up to her.

TRISTAM
What’s wrong? Really.

ERTAF
I’m pregnant.

Tristam pauses in his stride. Ertaf stops and turns to him.

ERTAF
That was my reaction too.

TRISTAM
That’s wonderful.
ERTAF
No, it’s not. Bring a child into this? What were we thinking?

TRISTAM
We didn’t plan it, Ertaf. It’s a ray of hope in all this darkness.

ERTAF
But you want to run off and get yourself killed for-

TRISTAM
—for someone else’s family. For someone else’s wife. For someone else’s children.

ERTAF
You need to stay here and take care of me. You’re not going for him and you know it.

Tristam approaches her and wraps his arms around her.

ERTAF
I don’t want our baby to grow up without a father.

TRISTAM
I know.

ERTAF
So do you think he can do it?

TRISTAM
I don’t know. The armor is very powerful. But if Sthennix gets the better of him, I fear for all our lives.

Tristam looks into Ertaf’s eyes. They kiss.

TRISTAM
Come on.
INT. HAVENS - WATER ROOM - NIGHT

Dark water splashes up against a stone dock. Several small thick oval shaped vessels sit atop the water. A man, WRENT, stands near the dock, watching Tristam and Ertaf enter.

Wrent is older and graying, but smiles brightly upon Tristam’s entrance.

WRENT
The king returns. Welcome back, young Tristam.
(to Ertaf)
My future queen.

ERTAF
Hello, Wrent.

TRISTAM
Good evening, Wrent. It’s kind of late to be out, isn’t it?

WRENT
When I heard you needed one of the submersibles, I had to meet you here myself.

Tristam steps up to Wrent and they hug.

WRENT
How are you?

TRISTAM
I’ve been better. Got a hothead with more strength than he can deal with needing to cross. Is the passage still secure?

Wrent nods.

WRENT
Even after the lockdown, Sthennix still doesn’t know where the entrance is. How many are going?

TRISTAM
Just myself and one passenger.
WRENT
Not expecting to return one of my babies?

ERTAF
I’m more concerned with mine, to be honest.

WRENT
I can understand that. I suppose I get too attached to mine, really. You lose everyone else, and you find something else to make a family. I guess I’m just a sentimental old fool.

TRISTAM
Nonsense. I like that you care.

Wrent walks over to one of the crafts in the water. He pulls a lever revealing a hatch on the top of the submersible.

WRENT
Take Jerna, here. She’s lived a good life, but out of them all, she’s the closest to retirement. Not that I’m ready to scrap her, you understand.

TRISTAM
I’ll take good care of her.

WRENT
That’s what I’m afraid of.

EXT. SKY OVER GRONTOL – NIGHT

The Echebus flies over the water expanse to the forest.

EXT. ECHEBUS DECK – NIGHT

Pratosh stands at the bow of the ship watching the forest pass under them. Near him is a tube with a funnel on one end. He picks it up and holds the funnel near his mouth.
PRATOSH
Hold here, Captain.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
Yes, sir.

INT. ECHEBUS - NIGHT

A group of Overseers stand near the transports on the lower transport deck. Pratosh enters and stands before them.

PRATOSH
I want to thank you all again for your faith in me this evening. Tonight, we will route Lord Sthennix’s most ruthless enemies. Spare as many as possible as prisoners in case we are unable to find the armor, which is our main goal. Are we understood?

OVERSEERS
Yes, sir!

PRATOSH
Let’s go then.

Pratosh and the Overseers variously mount their transports.

EXT. ECHEBUS - NIGHT

The transports shoot out of the bottom of the ship and head towards the thick, dark forest on the ground.

INT. HAVENS - TRISTAM and ERTAF’S ROOM - NIGHT

The couple lies in bed. He holds her in his arms. His eyes are still wide awake and staring at the ceiling. By contrast, she appears to be sleeping soundly and happily, smiling in her sleep.

Tristam closes his eyes.
INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

RONTU, a security guard, stands at the security station near the main elevator. Two other workers, FELDAH and LORS, sit idle at the station, which is primarily a table with some levers and a large book.

Through a small speaker at his station, a voice echoes through.

VOICE (V.O.)
Hello? Is anyone here?

Rontu turns to a tube running up through the ceiling. He opens a small cover and looks in.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

On the tree with the door, a knot imperceptibly turns. Pratosh stands near the tree with a cloak covering him.

PRATOSH
(whispered)
May Priam and Thiama rule forever.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

Rontu leans back. He turns to Lors.

RONTU
Lors, does anyone else use that password besides Tristam?

Lors traces his finger down a page of a book with hand-written pages. He looks at Rontu.

LORS
No, sir. Tristam is the only one who registered that password.

RONTU
Someone overheard him, then.
Inform Tristam. He’s resting with Ertaf in their quarters.
LORS
Yes, sir.

Lors gets up and runs out of the chamber. Rontu looks back through the periscope.

RONTU
(to Feldah)
Prepare to seal the emergency door.

Feldah nods and runs to the entry point to the rest of the Havens.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT
Pratosh raps on the tree.

PRATOSH
May Priam and Thiama rule forever.

He turns back.

PRATOSH
Time for plan B.

He throws down the cloak. The group of Overseers emerge from the forest behind him followed by a cart of a variety of tools. Several of them remove axes from the cart.

PRATOSH
Cut above the doorway. This tree is hollow. The wall probably disappears upward when the lift comes. I want to send it downward.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT
Rontu looks over to Feldah with panic in his eyes.

RONTU
Feldah, raise the platform to the mouth of the chamber.
Feldah runs to the lift crank and turns it. The platform rises toward the ceiling.

INT. HAVENS - TRISTAM and ERTAF’S ROOM - NIGHT

Tristam and Ertaf are asleep. KNOCK, KNOCK. Tristam stirs. The knocking continues. Tristam gets out of bed, stirring Ertaf.

ERTAF
What’s going on?

TRISTAM
I don’t know yet.

Tristam opens the door to find Lors.

LORS
Sorry to disturb you, but we’ve been located.

Tristam looks back to Ertaf, who is already walking towards him.

TRISTAM
Let’s go.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

A pair of Overseers sit in the braches of the tree, chopping at the middle. They break through the wall into the hollow within.

PRATOSH
Excellent.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

Tristam and Ertaf enter with Lors. Rontu looks up.

RONTU
We have a problem.

The platform reaches the passage hole in the ceiling. It forms a relatively neat seal.
TRISTAM
What is it?

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

The Overseers in the tree chop through the middle of the hollow cutting a rope that was suspending the door blocker. In the doorway, the blocker drops away. The top of the tree comes down.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

The door blocker crashes through the platform, splintering it. Tristam takes Ertaf and run for the hallway. The blocker hits the ground and rolls to one side. Feldah barely ducks out of the way in time.

The support for the platform buckles. Rontu looks up from behind the security station to find the platform cracking down his direction. He bolts out of the station as the platform crashes down to the ground sending a myriad of splinters everywhere.

As the dust settles, everyone gets up.

TRISTAM
Is everyone all right?

RONTU
I think so.

Through the cloud, they can make out ropes coming down from above. Tristam’s eyes grow wide.

TRISTAM
Everyone into the hall.

Everyone bolts

INTO THE HALLWAY

where they stop just outside the chamber.

TRISTAM
Just the three of you?
That’s it.

Get the other side, Rontu.

In the rock walls are embedded a pair of handles on either side. Tristam and Rontu each take a handle embedded into the rock walls of the hallway. Feldah and Lors take the other handles.

The four men pull and an enormous pair of doors emerges from within the rock structure. They bring the doors together. Rontu turns a series of knobs between the doors locking the two together.

That should slow them down.

(to the three men)
You three, go wake everyone up and prepare them to go into the caves.

The three disappear. Tristam and Ertaf walk down the hall behind them.

You need to keep the people in hiding until I come back.

Until you come back? You’re still going?

I have to get Vargus to the castle.

Admit this isn’t for Vargus or his family. This is for you. You think he can beat Sthennix, so everything else takes a number two position to what you want.

Ertaf, what do you want me to do?
ERTAF
Send someone else. Put me first this time.

TRISTAM
No one else knows that way like I do.

ERTAF
Just tell him where the palace is.

TRISTAM
He wouldn’t get through the Crossing.

ERTAF
Okay, fine. Just go.

They walk

INTO THE MAIN CHAMBER

where Ertaf breaks off from him and walks to a gathering group of people.

TRISTAM
Ertaf.

She stops and turns to him.

ERTAF
What is it?

TRISTAM
I love you.

ERTAF
Prove it sometime.

She walks to the mob and gestures to them to head toward an opening in the far wall. Tristam watches her for a long moment.

INT. HAVENS ACCESS CHAMBER - NIGHT

Pratosh and his band of Overseers walk towards the sealed door. Pratosh narrows his eyes.
PRATOSH
Break it down.

An Overseer walks back to the hole and hollers up.

LOWER OVERSEER
Hammers!

EXT. INDROS FOREST - NIGHT

An Overseer stands topside beside the entrance. The tree has been almost completely destroyed.

LOWER OVERSEER (O.S.)
Send hammers!

The Topside Overseer walks to a small transport covered with a variety of tools. He picks up a group of sledgehammers and carries them to the hole.

TOPSIDE OVERSEER
Stand clear!

He drops the hammers down the hole.

INT. GRONTOL CASTLE - DUNGEON - NIGHT

Nargoth and Sirena sit on opposite sides of a barred cell. Kirnila sleeps on Sirena’s lap. Delif sleeps on Nargoth’s. They each look exhausted, but no where near sleep.

SIRENA
What are they going to do to us?

NARGOTH
I wish I knew.

Nargoth sighs.

NARGOTH
Whatever they do to us, I hope they leave these little ones out of it. They’ve done nothing to anyone.
SIRENA
I know. It’s wrong for them to be here.

Nargoth nods. He looks at Sirena.

NARGOTH
I regret it, you know. Every day I wish I did it differently somehow.

SIRENA
What could you have done?

NARGOTH
Protected her. Caught her when she fell, so she wasn’t seen. Anything but what I did.

SIRENA
It was for your family.

NARGOTH
I was scared. We both know what would have happened if I’d done something after she was taken. But before... I could have done something before.

SIRENA
You can’t know what’s going to happen. No one can. You just have to make the most of every situation when you get to it.

NARGOTH
Like this one?

SIRENA
Well, we’re still alive.

The door opens. Alatyr is led in, his wrists chained together. Nargoth and Sirena watch silently as Overseers lead Alatyr to the adjoining cell. They unchain him and lock him in.

He looks after them and then turns to Nargoth and Sirena.
ALATYR
Good evening. What brings you here?

NARGOTH
You first.

ALATYR
They accuse me of housing a renegade, but upon finding no such renegade, they tell me I helped him.

SIRENA
What renegade?

ALATYR
Why should a young woman such as yourself be interested in this?

SIRENA
We are from Cerebi, a mining village currently near Darunia.

ALATYR
Are you?

SIRENA
My husband took an airship and it went down. Do you know of this?

Alatyr smiles and gets close to the division between their cells.

ALATYR
You know, they sometimes listen to prisoners talk hoping something will be revealed.

NARGOTH
We have no secrets.

ALATYR
Then what brings you here?
NARGOTH
My son stole something and betrayed
us by running away to fight our
Lord Sthennix. He died.

Alatyr speaks softly through the bars.

ALATYR
If this son is Vargus who wears the
armor of Belial, then no such death
occurred.

Sirena’s face lights up.

SIRENA
He’s alive.

ALATYR
Indeed. He is coming here with the
rightful king of Grontol, Tristam,
son of Priam. And if they hear me,
I do not care, for they cannot
stand against the wearer of the
armor.

Sirena leans against the wall of the cell, her face much
happier, and demeanor almost euphoric. A tear runs down her
face.

SIRENA
He’s alive. My husband is alive.

ALATYR
Alive, yes, but consumed. The armor
creates a single-mindedness of
purposes that makes the wearer
work to that end at all costs. He
wants to destroy Sthennix. He may
have lived through the crash, but
he could still die of exhaustion.

SIRENA
But he’s alive.

She closes her eyes.
INT. HAVENS - VARGUS’ ROOM - NIGHT

Vargus opens his eyes to someone pounding on his door. The door moves and hits against the candle table.

TRISTAM (O.S.)
Vargus! Get up, we’ve got to leave! Now!

Vargus looks around momentarily. His eyes widen, but he relaxes upon seeing the armor around him. He touches it. It wraps around him and attaches in place again.

He pulls the table out of the way.

TRISTAM
Why were you asleep still?

VARGUS
No one woke me up.

TRISTAM
We’ve got to get out of here. We’re under attack.

VARGUS
I can take care of them.

TRISTAM
Everyone will be fine. Let’s go.

VARGUS
I can finish them for you.

TRISTAM
Your family is waiting. Come on.

VARGUS
What about yours?

Tristam looks at him. Pain flickers in his eyes.

TRISTAM
Ertaf will be fine. She’ll be protected in the caves.
VARGUS
Are you telling me or telling you that?

TRISTAM
Never mind. Let’s move.

Tristam walks down the hall to the water room. Vargus glances back to the rhythmic thumping coming from the main chamber. He shakes his head and follows Tristam.

INT. HAVENS - MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

A loud crash sounds through the empty room. Dust plumes out from the hallway. In an instant, Overseers flood the room, armed with Reez wands.

Behind them, Pratosh enters. He looks around.

PRATOSH
Find them.

INT. HAVENS - WATER ROOM - NIGHT

Wrent stands on the dock waiting. Tristam enters quickly, followed by Vargus.

TRISTAM
Wrent, what are you still doing here? We ordered everyone into the caves.

WRENT
Just had to see you off.

TRISTAM
Wrent, this is my passenger, Vargus. He thinks he can beat Sthennix using that old artifact.

WRENT
Well, son, I wish you the best of luck. No one else has succeeded yet.
VARGUS
Thank you.

TRISTAM
(to Vargus)
Get in.

Vargus walks over to the submersible, Jerna, and crawls inside the elongated body. The hatch barely accommodates the armor.

WRENT
You might be more comfortable if you took off the armor.

Tristam touches Wrent on the shoulder and shakes his head.

WRENT
Oh, all right.

Tristam crawls in and looks to Wrent for a moment.

TRISTAM
Get under cover. Fast.

WRENT
Be careful.

Tristam closes the hatch and moments later, Jerna submerges. Wrent glances back for a moment. He walks to another of the submersibles and gets in.

Under the surface of the water, Wrent lowers the submersible to the bottom of the pool, many feet below the surface.

He looks to one side to see Jerna heading out the dark passage which will eventually reach the crossing.

INT. HAVENS - CAVES - NIGHT

Nearly two hundred people sit silently in a dimly lit cave. Sounds of men yelling echo through the walls. Everyone in the cave remains completely silent.
Ertaf leans to someone near her and whispers into his ear. She gets up as he passes the message along. One by one, the people rise to their feet without a sound.

Ertaf walks down the cave passage followed by the former residents of the Havens. Her guiding candle becomes a speck as she walks down the tunnel, leading her people to their only other means of escape.

EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

The sun threatens over the horizon. The expanse of water between the two large land masses appears calm and non-threatening.

Dropping beneath the water, the treacherousness of the journey is revealed as large submersibles move back and forth under the water.

Beneath an outcropping near the ocean floor, Tristam and Vargus emerge in their submersible. The lights at the front of the submersible shut off.

INT. JERNA - DAY

The seats in Jerna sit at a forward angle like an ergonomic chair, but the driver’s and rider’s chests are resting on a pad.

Tristam’s chair is outfitted with levers for his arms and legs to control the sub. The controls respond to his every move as if he and Jerna were one. Tristam is flipping switches, shutting down all the lights.

    **VARGUS**
    Is it much further?

    **TRISTAM**
    We just reached the crossing. We’re going to have to be careful to avoid being noticed.

    **VARGUS**
    That’s why you’re turning the lights off.
TRISTAM
That’s right.

VARGUS
And if we’re noticed?

TRISTAM
We go as fast as possible and hope we get close enough to the other side to swim for it.

VARGUS
That doesn’t sound encouraging.

TRISTAM
Wasn’t intended to be.

EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

Jerna continues its dark passage beneath the waves.

INT. THE HAVENS - CAVE ENTRY - DAY

An Overseer walks along a short passageway. He feels a wall in front of him and stops. He feels all over the wall, looking curious until his hand lands on a handle.

He turns to call over his shoulder.

OVERSEER
Over here!

Several Overseers appear followed by Pratosh.

PRATOSH
You better have something.

OVERSEER
It’s a hidden door.

Pratosh reaches forward and turns the handle. It turns but doesn’t open. He turns it several more time. A sound like a bolt pulling back sounds within the wall. Finally, the door comes free.
An Overseer steps through the entrance and immediately disappears from sight. With a scream he drops into a deep hole.

PRATOSH
Wait!

Pratosh swings his torch around the corner to show a small pathway leading around the hole.

PRATOSH
Yes, this is where they all went to. Follow me.

Pratosh walks along the path followed in single file by the Overseers.

INT. THE CAVES - DAY

Ertaf continues leading the group forward. Suddenly, she holds up her hand. Everyone stops.

She looks behind them and whispers.

ERTAF
(to RONTU, behind her)
Did you hear that?

RONTU
Like a scream?

ERTAF
Yes.

RONTU
They’ve found the passage.

ERTAF
We’ve got to reach the safe hole.
Pick up the pace.

Ertaf walks faster. Everyone follows.
PRATOSH AND THE OVERSEERS

find the main passage. An Overseer kneels down to find the tracks in the dirt.

OVERSEER
They’re in here somewhere.

PRATOSH
They’re resourceful. I’ll give them that. Let’s go.

Pratosh leads the Overseers through the passage at a quick trot.

ERTAF
turns to Rontu.

ERTAF
I think they picked up their pace.

RONTU
I noticed. How much further?

ERTAF
It’s just up here.

PRATOSH AND THE OVERSEERS
continue their steady pace through the passage.

ERTAF
stops at an indentation in the passage wall. She pushes on the indentation and the wall opens like a door.

ERTAF
Everyone in. Quick!

Everyone moves inside at a quickened pace.

INSIDE THE SAFE HOLE

Rontu takes his light to the center of an expansive stone room carved out of the rock. He waves the people in and guides them past him to the dark recesses of the room.
PRATOSH AND THE OVERSEERS

draw closer to the group.

ERTAF

looks down the passage with desperate eyes. Rocks clatter in the distance. Her breath quickens.

ERTAF
(whispers)
Hurry. Come on.

RONTU

continues to direct the people in the room which is filling quickly.

ERTAF

looks adown the passage again. Glints of light appears.

PRATOSH

looks up. A faint light shows ahead of them.

PRATOSH
There...

Their pace quickens.

ERTAF

guides in the last person in their party. She jumps in the door and closes in behind her. It seamlessly blends into the wall.

Darkness.

Moments later, Pratosh and the Overseers charge past.

INSIDE THE ROOM

Ertaf looks out a small slit showing the goings on outside the door. She sees the Overseers burn past without slowing. She sighs with relief.
EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

Under the Crossing, the Jerna continues slowly making its way under Sthennix’s large vehicles overhead.

INT. JERNA - DAY

Tristam holds steady at the controls. Vargus stares out the window, fascinated.

    TRISTAM
    We’re almost there.

    VARGUS
    Finally.

Tristam pulls back on the controls.

EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

Jerna ascends at an upward angle.

INT. GRONTOL ONE - DAY

The inside of one of the enemy submersibles holds two people at the front looking out the window. They sit at a panel that has controls for the submersible.

On all sides, there are windows that allow someone to walk upright like a sentry and peer through the windows to patrol the waters.

The captain of this vessel, PINTAR, sits watching out the front window. A sentry walks past on one side, looking out the windows.

    SENTRY
    Sir!

Pintar looks over.

    PINTAR
    What do you see?
SENTRY
There’s a small submersible heading for the surface. It looks like one of the insurrectionist models.

PINTAR
Arm the weapons.

EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY
The Grontol One approaches the Jerna silently from behind as the little craft continues its ascent.

EXT. INDROS FOREST - DAY
Pratosh and the Overseers emerge from a small cave. They look around for a moment, confused. Pratosh looks back and then to the Overseers.

PRATOSH
Find them. I don’t care if we need to knock on every inch of those caverns and search every inch of the forest.

OVERSEER
Where would we start?

PRATOSH
Half of you head into the forest. Search for tracks or any way they may have traveled. The rest of you, we’re going back to where we saw them last. If they’re in the caves, that’s where they disappeared.

Several Overseers disappear into the forest. The rest head back into the caves.
EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

Jerna ascends to the surface as the Grontol One holds behind it.

INT. JERNA - DAY

Tristam stares forward. Vargus looks bored.

VARGUS
And how much further now?

TRISTAM
Please be patient. We were a long way down.

Tristam suddenly looks up. He twists his head towards the rear windows.

TRISTAM
Look out those windows.

Vargus rolls his eyes and turns around.

Out the window, the Grontol One looms. Bubbles issue from a small hole in the front.

VARGUS
I think this is bad.

Tristam veers to the right.

EXT. CROSSING - DAY

A long thin spine like an arrow fires out of the Grontol One. The Jerna turns away just as the SUB-ARROW passes by.

INT. GRONTOL ONE - DAY

The Sentry looks out the window.

SENTRY
He’s running.
PINTAR
Give chase and give him another sub-arrow when we’re in line.

EXT. CROSSING - DAY
The large sub bears down on the Jerna and another sub-arrow shoots out. This one finds its mark.

INT. JERNA - DAY
The arrow punctures the hull and stops just next to Vargus. Vargus looks at it incredulous and then back to find water streaming in.

TRISTAM
Blast! We need to surface.
I just hope we can make it.

INT. GRONTOL ONE - DAY
The Sentry looks up.

SENTRY
It’s a hit!

PINTAR
Continue firing.

SENTRY
They’re trying to go up.

PINTAR
Don’t let them.

EXT. CROSSING - DAY
Several more sub-arrows fire off. Most miss the little sub, but another hits the side.
INT. JERNA - DAY

An arrow punctures the side right next to Vargus. The tip hits the side of the armor and stops.

    VARGUS
    Hey!

    TRISTAM
    Lucky you.

Another arrow hits nearer the front and catches Tristam’s leg. He howls in pain. Vargus crawls forward and pushes the smooth arrow out. Water pours in.

    TRISTAM
    We’ve taken too much water. We’re going down.

    VARGUS
    I’ll get us out.

    TRISTAM
    They’re watching us.

    VARGUS
    Not for long.

    TRISTAM
    You’ll never get that hatch open though. There’s a ton of water press-

Vargus pushes against the hatch, opening it. Water rushes in, full speed.

EXT. THE CROSSING - DAY

The Jerna drops quickly once the hatch is open.

INT. GRONTOL ONE - DAY

    SENTRY
    They’re going down fast now.
PINTAR
Good work everyone. Organize a party to go down and-

SENTRY
Wait. What is-?

A sub-arrow zips into the side of the Grontol One, passing through the stunned Sentry and implanting itself into the other side.

Another arrow zips through the floor, sticking there with its point directly between Pintar’s knees.

EXT. THE CROSSING – DAY

Vargus and Tristam tread water, watching the Grontol One turn and make its way to the surface.

Vargus gestures to Tristam indicating his back. Tristam holds on. Vargus swims very quickly through the water towards the surface.

The pair breaks the surface of the water. Tristam looks around. He points to a forested land mass 20 yards to the east.

TRISTAM
There.

VARGUS
Hang on.

Tristam hangs onto Vargus again. Vargus swims for the coast.

INT. THE HAVENS CAVES – DAY

Pratosh and the Overseers slowly make their way along a stretch of rock wall, knocking every few feet.

INSIDE THE ROOM

a knocking sound permeates the silence. The room is lit by only a few candles. Ertaf hands hers off to a nearby person. She walks to the door.
She places her ear to the door. The knocking stops. She looks back to the people and gestures to hide the lights. The light dims in the room.

Slowly, Ertaf opens a small panel in the door. She gasps and staggers back.

A PAIR OF EYES STARES BACK AT HER!

IN THE TUNNEL

Pratosh looks in the slot. He turns to the Overseers and nods to the door. Several of the Overseers produce the hammers they were carrying from earlier.

They pound incessantly with the hammers.

IN THE ROOM

the people scream in terror. Ertaf backs away from the door and stands next to Rontu.

ERTAF
Do you know what they’ll do to us?

RONTU
Nothing good.

The door gives way and the Overseers enter with Pratosh. There are only fifteen Overseers.

PRATOSH
You are all prisoners of the almighty Stennix. If you fully cooperate, your lives will be spared to the service of our lord.

Pratosh looks at the people huddled in the room, staring at him. His eyes settle on Ertaf and Rontu, both standing at the head of the group.

Pratosh walks to them and looks each of them in the eyes in turn. He looks between them for a moment before finally looking at Ertaf.
PRATOSH
And somehow, you are in charge of this pathetic group of outcasts.

RONTU
No, she’s not. I am!

Pratosh reels back and backhands Rontu, sending him across the floor.

PRATOSH
You little worm. You think I can’t tell the difference between a leader and a servant? She has the bearing of one in charge. You serve her.

He looks back to Ertaf and narrows his eyes.

PRATOSH
But you’re not really in charge, are you?

Ertaf makes no move to confirm or deny.

PRATOSH
Your true leader isn’t here. Who is it?

Still silence. Pratosh takes her face in his hand and squeezes her cheeks together.

PRATOSH
We can make this easy or we can make it painful.

Ertaf takes in a breath and spits in Pratosh’s face. He slaps her, sending her to the ground. Rontu rushes Pratosh, but an Overseer steps in and knocks Rontu to the ground.

ERTAF
(to Pratosh)
You’re outnumbered, Head Overseer. Do you have any idea how large we are?
PRATOSH
You would never attack us.

ERTAF
Wouldn’t we?

Behind her, the people rise.

ERTAF
You have only a few people with you. I have two hundred who will die to stop you from going back. Two hundred versus fifteen. That’s not exactly fair odds, but you’re not exactly one for fair play, are you?

Pratosh looks very worried. Rontu comes to his feet. The Overseers gather around Pratosh. The pull out their Reez Wands.

ERTAF
Your Reezes won’t do you any-

Pratosh draws his and shocks Ertaf with it. She reacts to the stun and loses her balance. Pratosh catches her and drags her away. The mob erupts and attacks the Overseers.

They hold the mob back long enough for Pratosh and a modest escort of two to run out of the room with Ertaf.

IN THE TUNNEL

Pratosh has her draped over his shoulder as the trio runs through the caves.

IN THE ROOM

the fighting is brief, and the Overseers are quickly overwhelmed. The mob beats them non-stop until they are no more. They take up the Reez Wands.

IN THE TUNNEL

Rontu emerges holding a Reez. He looks both ways holding a candle. Only the distant disappearing light of Pratosh shows. He and the mob take off after Pratosh.
EXT. INDRAST FOREST - DAY

Vargus crawls out of the water with Tristam and collapse at the edge of the forest on the eastern side of the Crossing. They are both gasping for breath.

VARGUS
So that was harder than I thought it was going to be.

TRISTAM
That was exactly as hard as I thought it was going to be.

VARGUS
So, we have to go through this forest, then a desert, right?

TRISTAM
Yeah. It’s still a ways off, but we’re almost there. Any idea what you’re going to do when you get there?

VARGUS
Just fight my way to him, I guess. What does he look like anyway?

Tristam looks at him, incredulous. He laughs.

TRISTAM
You’ve come all this way to kill a man, and you don’t even know what he looks like?

VARGUS
Never thought of it.

TRISTAM
Picture someone who is grumpy and never eats. That’s Sthennix. I saw him briefly when we attempted to raid the castle.
A large group of men fight a group of Overseers outside the castle gates. Tristam, beaten and bloodied, looks up to the top of the castle wall.

Sthennix stands there, staring at him with a look of death on his face.

TRISTAM
Just thinking of that stare brings a chill to me. He’s some kind of demon or something. Must be.

VARGUS
He’s just a man. Nothing more.

Vargus gets to his feet.

VARGUS
Let’s go.

Tristam struggles up.

TRISTAM
You know, we should rest. You put your body through hell just now.

VARGUS
I’ll rest later.

He walks away. Tristam shrugs and runs after him. They pause for a moment as an airship zips over their heads.

VARGUS
Wow. I didn’t know they went that fast.

TRISTAM
Me either.

Move up to follow the airship. Zip around one side to settle in through a window to
INT. ECHEBUS - BRIG - DAY

Ertaf is strapped to a wall in shackles. She looks tired. Several marks on her body show she’s been struck with a whip multiple times. Pratosh paces in front of her with the whip.

PRATOSH
Where did the man with the armor go? I know he was there.

Ertaf doesn’t move except to breath. Pratosh whips her again. She flinches but remains still. He walks over to her and lifts up her head by her hair.

PRATOSH
I know you think you’re being noble, but we’ll find him with or without your help.

An Overseer enters.

OVERSEER
We’re approaching the castle.

Pratosh turns to him.

PRATOSH
Have the medic examine her to make sure she’s all right. I don’t want her dying before we reach Stennix.

OVERSEER
Yes, sir.

Pratosh exits.

EXT. GRONTOL CASTLE - DAY

The Echebus circles the castle and lands in the water behind it.

INT. STHENNIX’S THRONE ROOM - DAY

An Overseer speaks into Stennix’s ear. He nods.
STHENNIX
Show him in.

The doors open and Pratosh strides in with Ertaf and two other Overseers holding her up by the arms. Pratosh stands before Sthennix and bows. The Overseers drops Ertaf. She collapses to the ground.

STHENNIX
What is this?

PRATOSH
This woman knows about the armor.

STHENNIX
Why did you not just bring me the information?

PRATOSH
She is very uncooperative.

STHENNIX
So you make her cooperate. If she won’t talk, you find something to make her talk.

PRATOSH
She won’t talk. I have nothing to use.

STHENNIX
Really? There’s always something.

Sthennix looks at Ertaf. She places her hand over her stomach for a moment. Sthennix looks at Pratosh.

STHENNIX
Tell me, Pratosh, have you paid attention to anything she does?

PRATOSH
Of course. What are you referring to?

STHENNIX
You know, actions that might point you in the direction of leverage?
Ertaf looks up, horror etched across her face.

STHENNIX
(to Overseers)
Pick her up.

PRATOSH
I don’t understand.

STHENNIX
Then pay attention.

The Overseers lift her from the ground and hold her upright. Stennix looks at her.

STHENNIX
Tell me about the armor.

Ertaf doesn’t answer. Stenhx opens his hand and places his fingers against her belly. Ertaf’s eyes change from defiance to fear.

STHENNIX
You talk or I push in and squeeze.

Ertaf looks at him. Stenhx pushes in slightly.

ERTAF
All right! Just don’t hurt my baby.

STHENNIX
I’m listening.

ERTAF
He left for the Crossing. Probably in the Indrast Forest by now.

STHENNIX
He’s still coming here?

Ertaf nods. Stenhx smiles and withdraws his hand. He pats the side of her face.
STHENNIX
See? Now that wasn’t so bad, was it?

Sthennix slugs her in the face. She goes down.

STHENNIX
You should have just said something sooner. I’ll make her suffer later.
For now, we have a job to do.

EXT. INDRAST FOREST - DAY

Vargus and Tristam approach the outskirts of the forest, beyond which lies a vast plain of rocks and sand.

VARGUS
How much further is the palace?

TRISTAM
Not much further.

They pass out of the forest and onto the plains.

A low hum sounds. Tristam stops. Vargus turns to him.

VARGUS
What is it?

TRISTAM
Oh no.

Four TROOP TRANSPORTS, essentially the Jet-ski transport with a long trailer built to accommodate a dozen Overseers, descend all around them. Four dozen Overseers leap out of the transports and circle the pair. Above, two ships hover.

They each assume a defensive stance, but they are clearly outnumbered. The Overseers variously draw clubs and Reez wands. Vargus looks giddy. Tristam looks scared to death.

TRISTAM
We’re trapped!
VARGUS
No we’re not.

TRISTAM
We have to stay togeth-

Vargus yells and springs into attack mode pummeling two Overseers into the ground almost instantly. Nearly every Overseer sets himself onto Vargus. Reez wands hit the armor to no effect.

Vargus swings his fists at lightning speed knocking back pairs of Overseers. The Overseers align themselves carefully to not be taken down by their fallen comrades.

Six Overseers place themselves against Tristam. They attack unarmed. Tristam doesn’t stand a chance. He swings his fists, but the blows are easily blocked.

Two of them drag him onto one of the transports, kicking and screaming.

TRISTAM
Vargus!

Vargus spins to find Tristam held down on a transport. While he is distracted, multiple Overseers take hold of him. Vargus brings around the arms they try to trap, throwing the Overseers into others.

As the transport with Tristam takes off, Vargus beats the Overseers off, throwing them to the ground. Behind him, instead of attacking, the Overseers disperse back to the transports, even carrying away their wounded.

Vargus turns to find the remaining three transports all flying up to the hovering ships.

VARGUS
Cowards! Come back and fight!

Vargus is alone.
INT. CHARON THRONE ROOM - DAY

Tristam is brought before Sthennix. A Head Overseer, Keldon, stands to one side. Sthennix looks at Tristam closely.

STHENNIX
You look familiar to me. Have we met?

TRISTAM
We haven’t, but you knew my parents.

STHENNIX
How?

TRISTAM
You killed them.

STHENNIX
Oh? I kill many people. What was so special about yours?

TRISTAM
You stole their kingdom.

Recognition dawns on Sthennix’s face.

STHENNIX
You’re Tristam?

TRISTAM
I am.

STHENNIX
You have your story backward my dear boy. I did not steal your parents’ kingdom. They destroyed my family first. I only returned to take retribution for the wrongs they did to me.

TRISTAM
My parents never hurt anyone. They were the most just rulers Grontol has ever known.
STHENNIX
They were unjust to me!

IMAGE: A 5-year-old Sthennix happily living with his mother and father. Sthennix walks down a hall of the palace, hand in hand with his parents. They speak in pantomime and smile.

STHENNIX (V.O.)
We were servants, living in the palace and working under your grandparents before your father came to power.

IMAGE: A stately old King raises his hand and ousts the happy family. A younger Alatyr stands at his side.

STHENNIX (V.O.)
Without cause, we were removed from the palace and forced on our own with no hope of survival.

IMAGE: Sthennix and his parents live in a small shack. Snows rages outside. Sthennix’s father walks into to the family and opens his hand to reveal a few small seed pods.

STHENNIX (V.O.)
Without food or warmth, we barely survived day to day.

IMAGE: Sthennix, now 10, stands over the graves of his parents.

STHENNIX (V.O.)
Until the elements took their toll, and they died before their time.

IMAGE: Sthennix stumbles across an impossible expanse of desert and collapses. Someone stands next to him. It is some kind of gypsy.

STHENNIX (V.O.)
I left the place where my parents died and searched for my own way at the age of ten. Finally, I came upon a nomadic group of people who took me in.
Tristam, still held in check by Overseers, shakes his head.

STHENNIX
It is those people who serve me now in my own reign.

TRISTAM
You think your family was removed without cause?

STHENNIX
No one should have to endure the fate my parents endured.

TRISTAM
Your parents were caught stealing from the palace treasury. They stole from the money sent to villages across Grontol. They were hurting the kingdom through their theft.

Sthennix reels back and strikes Tristam hard across the face.

STHENNIX
You will not speak of my parents in such a manner.

TRISTAM
It is the truth.

STHENNIX
Then tell me the truth. How do you know this slave?

TRISTAM
He wanted a guide, so I guided him. I noticed your Overseers captured me and them ran like frightened dogs. I thought you wanted the armor.

Sthennix laughs.
STHENNIX
I am not a fool. This slave must come to me on his own terms. This means I must be ready for him. He is below us right now, and when the time is right, I will pick him up, but the time must be right for him.

TRISTAM
So what do you want from me if you’ve got it all worked out?

STHENNIX
You are his guide. I knew this already. But what I want to know is the path he plans to take so I can follow him.

Tristam scoffs.

STHENNIX
I will not have some slave make a mockery of my palace. I must meet him before he arrives, and you will tell me where he is.

Tristam doesn’t answer. Sthennix gestures to Keldon. Keldon nods and walks off.

STHENNIX
You are strong. Much like your parents. But people like you have a very exploitable weakness.

Keldon returns leading Overseers who bring in Ertaf. Ertaf is much as she was earlier. She appears very weak.

Tristam’s expression moves from defiant to concerned. Sthennix smiles. He takes a Reez out.

TRISTAM
What have you done to her?
STHENNIX
I thought you might know her.
I believe the leverage is now mine.
Now, tell me where he is.

TRISTAM
I don’t know anything.

Sthennix uses the Reez on Ertaf. Ertaf screams in pain. She looks at Tristam.

ERTAF
I’m sorry.

TRISTAM
No, I am.

Sthennix zaps her again.

STHENNIX
Quiet!
(to Tristam)
Now, what path is he taking?

TRISTAM
Straight across the desert. I wanted to go around, but he planned the shortest route possible.

STHENNIX
Does he know what lurks in the desert?

Tristam nods.

TRISTAM
If I were with him, we would go around. Since he is alone, he will face them alone.

STHENNIX
Of course.

Sthennix uses the Reez on Tristam.
STHENNIX
That’s for your attitude.
Throw them in the brig with
the slave’s family.

Sthennix turns to Keldon.

STHENNIX
Get every airship over the desert.
When the slave is overwhelmed by
the carnivores, pick him up
immediately. He’ll have no choice
but to come on board.

KELDON
Yes, my lord.

EXT. GRONTOL DESERT – NIGHT
Vargus charges across the desert. A ship roars overhead. Vargus
ducks behind a rock crag to hide from it.

As it passes into the distance, he looks ahead and charges
onward.

A loud howl sounds over the desert. It sounds very close. Vargus
stops, staring ahead. Yellow eyes stare back at him.

Vargus steps backward. The eyes move toward him out of the
darkness. It is a large creature on four legs that stands about
three feet high resembling a wolf. Saliva drips from its
mouthful of canine teeth. This is known as a CARNIVORE.

Vargus smirks as it approaches him. His smile fades, however, as
more carnivores approach out of the darkness.

The first carnivore attacks! Vargus bats it away easily. The
others run for him. He runs away from them across the desert.
They chase him, running over each other in the process.

Vargus reaches a tall rock column. Ahead of him are more
carnivores. Dozens of them close in around him. He looks up the
column.
He leaps onto the column and scales the side of it. Below him the carnivores mount the column as well quickly climbing after him in droves.

He reaches the top and stands on the flat pinnacle, trapped. The carnivores swarm the top of the rock column. They attack Vargus several at a time.

He bats them off the top of the column, but the numbers take their toll and he becomes overwhelmed.

A ship flies overhead and stops above him. He breaks free of the onslaught and leaps to the open gangplank. Two men help him aboard.

INT. CHARON - NIGHT

Vargus stands in the lower deck of the ship and looks at his rescuers. They are Overseers! Vargus assumes a defensive stance. Keldon stands just beyond them.

    KELDON
    Welcome to the Charon.

    VARGUS
    Sthennix’s ship?

    KELDON
    Lord Sthennix awaits you in the throne room. We will take you to him.

Vargus looks at them for a moment. He nods his head.

Keldon leads Vargus through the internal hallways of the ship until they arrive outside an ornate door.

    KELDON
    He is within.

Vargus grasps the doorknob and opens the door.
INT. CHARON THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Sthennix sits upon his throne watching Vargus enter.

STHENNIX
Welcome, my dear Vargus. We’ve been waiting for you.

VARGUS
And I’ve been waiting to kill you.

STHENNIX
Really? How romantic. And how do you plan to do that?

VARGUS
You can’t stop me.

STHENNIX
Hm, no I can’t. That is a conundrum then, isn’t it. You seem to hold all the cards.

VARGUS
That’s right.

STHENNIX
Oh, wait a minute.

Sthennix gestures to Overseers at the sides of the room. Doors open and Nargoth, Sirena, and his children are brought out. Each is held at the point of a knife.

Vargus’ expression drops. He looks at Sthennix with hatred.

VARGUS
Release them.

STHENNIX
Why? You were going to kill me anyway. Not much of a bargaining tool at this point.

VARGUS
Let them go now.
STHENNIX
Let me give you a choice. You are unstoppable, and if you choose, you may kill me and free the entire kingdom of my rule. That would mean that you would be king if you wanted to be.

Vargus moves, but Sthennix stops him.

STHENNIX
However! One step closer, and your family will die before I do. Your other choice is to surrender the armor to me. Do this, and I promise that I will kill you for your insolence, but they will live out their natural lives, for what that’s worth.

Sthennix sits confidently in his throne.

STHENNIX
I am defenseless. The choice is yours. Kill me, and the kingdom is free, but your family dies. Let me live, and you die but your family lives.

Vargus turns away from him, clearly conflicted.

STHENNIX
Imagine. You can have everything you’ve ever wanted, at the cost of everything you ever had.

Vargus glares at Sthennix’s smiling face for a moment before his shoulders slump. The armor falls to the ground.
INT. CHARON - BRIG

Vargus sits in a cell with Tristam and Ertaf. He stares at the ground. Adjoining cells contain Vargus’ family as well as Alatyr. Nargoth looks through the bars of his cell to Vargus.

NARGOTH
Hey!

Vargus ignores him.

NARGOTH
Tell me, Vargus, is this what you saw for your family?

Vargus doesn’t move.

NARGOTH
You did it real good, didn’t you? I told you this was folly. I warned you what he would do. But you refused to listen.

TRISTAM
Hey, take it easy. He did his best. He saved your life, didn’t he?

NARGOTH
If you want to call it that. What life do I have now? I would rather he had killed Sthennix when he had the chance. At least I would not have died in vain.

VARGUS
I couldn’t do that.

NARGOTH
Why not?

VARGUS
Because I love you. I love my family.
NARGOTH
What love? Is this how you show your love?

VARGUS
What would you have me do? I sacrificed myself for you. Isn’t that enough?

NARGOTH
Wake up! Look at the bigger picture for just a moment. You’ve accomplished nothing! What was the point?

VARGUS
I just wanted to make things better.

NARGOTH
You failed. Now you’ve abandoned your family to be an example for Sthennix’s power. Well done.

VARGUS
I did not choose to be an example!

NARGOTH
You chose when you didn’t listen to me!

VARGUS
You would sacrifice your family?

NARGOTH
To save a world?

VARGUS
No, to save yourself! That’s what I would have done is save myself. No, I guess that’s what you would do, isn’t it? That’s what you did for mom.
NARGOTH
If I had saved your mother, we would both be dead. I didn’t sacrifice her to save myself. I sacrificed her to save you. What are you doing for your family?

Vargus looks away from him.

EXT. MINE YARD - FLASHBACK

The Overseers brutally beat Oreen to the ground.

Nargoth watches sadly in silence. One hand is over Vargus’ mouth; the other holds Vargus’ body still as Vargus struggles to help his mother.

BACK TO SCENE

Vargus looks at Nargoth.

NARGOTH
Sometimes the right decision isn’t the easiest. Yes, I let your mother go. But I sure didn’t want to.

Vargus nods.

VARGUS
I’m sorry. For everything. I didn’t mean for any of this to happen to any of you. All I wanted to do was give them a world they could actually live in without fear. I meant well.

NARGOTH
I know you did. But now everyone in our village is being worked twice as hard because of your decision. Do they deserve that?
VARGUS
No.

Vargus laughs.

VARGUS
After everything I put you through, you still try to get through to me.

NARGOTH
Of course. You’re still my son.

Vargus locks eyes with Nargoth. Nargoth smiles. Vargus does the same.

NARGOTH
Now you have to decide what you’re going to do next.

Vargus turns to everyone.

ALATYR
When those who are powerful seek more power, their position has weakened.

TRISTAM
It’s time?

ALATYR
It is, but not for us.

VARGUS
For me. I have to face him.

Alatyr nods.

ALATYR
Through your hatred, you had power, but through your love, you will have victory.
VARGUS
If I am to die, I will die
fighting for your lives. My
fate is decided. I have nothing
to lose.

The door to the brig clangs open and Pratosh enters with two
Overseers holding Reez wands. Vargus turns to them, watching
Pratosh approach.

PRATOSH
Get him out.

An Overseer opens the cell door. The other takes Vargus by the
arm and leads him out. Vargus comes willingly.

PRATOSH
You’ve caused me a lot of trouble,
slave. You know that?

Vargus shrugs. Pratosh decks him in the gut. Vargus doubles
over.

PRATOSH
I am going to enjoy Lord Sthennix
torturing you in front of your
village.

VARGUS
I’ll bet you’d rather do it.

PRATOSH
Would I? Oh, more than you know.

EXT. CHARON - DAY

The massive ship flies over the landscape coming to rest in the
air over the Cerebi village.

INT. CHARON - BRIDGE

The Bridge is a very small room. A HELMSMAN stands behind a
large ship steering wheel with some controls to either side of
him.
Two other PERSONNEL sit on the bridge as well: one at a panel for COMMUNICATIONS and another at a panel containing ENGINEERING READOUTS. The CAPTAIN stands behind them.

    CAPTAIN
    Come to one hundred yards over
    the Darunia Plateau.

    HELMSMAN
    Yes, sir.

EXT. CEREBI VILLAGE

The people stop what they’re doing and look up to air ship with wonder and fear.

INT. CHARON - BRIDGE

The Helmsman presses some button on his panels by the wheel.

    CAPTAIN
    Come to full stop.

    HELMSMAN
    Full stop, sir.

    CAPTAIN
    Secure the ship in this position.
    Hold for Lord Sthennix’s order
    to move.

    HELMSMAN
    Yes, sir. Now securing.

    CAPTAIN
    Maintain an open channel for
    Lord Sthennix.

    COMMUNICATIONS
    Channel available, sir.
EXT. CHARON - BALCONY

Sthennix strides to the edge of a balcony protruding from the side of the ship. He wears the Armor along with an obnoxious cape and several ornaments that would befit royalty.

He holds up his hands.

STHENNIX
My people! I will not mince words. A rebel emerged from among you. A rebel who made me increase security in your village. A rebel who was captured, and will be brought before you all so you may see what becomes of one who defies your lord.

INT. CHARON - BRIG

Vargus stands before Pratosh.

VARGUS
Why don’t you go ahead and take out your revenge now then?

PRATOSH
Come away from the doors.

Vargus steps away from the cell doors. An Overseer closes and locks his cell.

PRATOSH
I wouldn’t want you to have help.

VARGUS
Sure. No problem. Is this going to be a fair fight?

PRATOSH
Why not? You don’t stand a chance.

VARGUS
No?
Pratosh snickers.

PRATOSH

No.

Nargoth and Tristam approach the cell doors. They hold their arms just between the bars but don’t reach through.

Pratosh throws the first punch. He hits Vargus square in the face. Vargus stumbles back, throwing his arms out. He bumps into both Overseers, knocking them back into the cell doors.

Tristam and Nargoth each grab an Overseer, holding them firmly against the doors. Vargus falls to his knees, recovering.

Pratosh draws his Reez.

PRATOSH

That was foolish.

Alatyr and Sirena each reach through the bars and take the Overseers’ Reez Wands.

Pratosh lunges at Vargus with his wand. Vargus rolls out of the way. Pratosh swings again, but Vargus sidesteps him. With another swing, Vargus ducks under the blow and clobbers Pratosh full force with his shoulder in Pratosh’s gut.

Pratosh exhales hard and loses his grip on the Reez. They hit the floor.

The Overseers in Nargoth and Tristam’s grips struggle against them.

ALATYR

(to Tristam and Nargoth)
You’re going to have to let them go for a moment, or you will be hit too.

TRISTAM

I know.

NARGOTH

Now.
They release. Alatyr and Sirena lunge with the Reez Wands. One Overseer is hit and goes down unconscious. The other bounds away from the wall. He dives for Pratosh’s wand on the floor.

Vargus turns to watch. Pratosh looks dazed. The Overseer grabs Pratosh’s wand and runs for Vargus. Vargus leaps off of Pratosh. The Overseer hits the ground next to Pratosh.

**NARGOTH**

Vargus!

Nargoth tosses his wand towards Vargus. It clatters across the floor. The Overseer dives for the wand. Vargus does the same. The Overseer brings his wand over to Vargus. Vargus grabs the Overseer’s arm and holds it in place.

He turns his head to find the other wand right next to him. He holds the Overseer’s arm with one hand. He reaches with the other.

The Overseer brings his arm up and comes around a different direction. Vargus rolls and grabs the wand. The Overseer hits the ground.

Vargus jumps to his feet and holds the Reez in front of him. The Overseer does the same. Vargus circles until he stands directly in front of Tristam.

The Overseer lunges. Vargus steps to one side. Tristam reaches out and hits the Overseer with the wand. He convulses and goes down.

Vargus breathes heavily as if the battle is temporarily over. Suddenly, Pratosh grabs him from behind wrapping his arms underneath Vargus’ armpits and placing his hands on either side of Vargus’ head.

Vargus’ arms flail out to his sides. He loses his grip on the Reez.

**PRATOSH**

You think you are going to beat me? I would kill you now if Lord Sthennix did not want the honor himself.
EXT. CHARON - BALCONY

Sthennix continues his speech to the people.

Sthennix steps back into the ship.

INT. CHARON - BALCONY ANTEROOM

Sthennix ducks behind a curtain separating the balcony from the room. He walks to Keldon.

Sthennix
Where are Pratosh and the slave?

Keldon
He still hasn’t arrived, my lord.

Sthennix
I can see that. Go find him! Find out what is taking so long.

Keldon
Yes, my lord.

Keldon runs out of the room. Sthennix looks back to the balcony, but does not yet approach it.

INT. CHARON - BRIG

Vargus struggles fruitlessly against Pratosh’s hold.

Pratosh
Give it up. You’ve lost.

Vargus stops for a moment. He stomps hard on Pratosh’s foot. Pratosh releases his grip. Vargus swings around and decks
Pratosh in the face. Pratosh spins around and hits the floor. Vargus grabs a Reez Wand and zaps Pratosh.

Pratosh convulses for a moment, and then lies still. Vargus stumbles over to the Overseer with the keys. He takes the keys and unlocks the cell doors.

Sirena rushes out and throws her arms around him. They kiss.

VARGUS
I’ve learned that I loved you through my hatred of them. But now I understand what it is to truly love you. You and me again?

SIRENA
You and me.

Vargus turns to Nargoth who stands to one side, smiling.

VARGUS
Sorry, dad.

NARGOTH
I don’t know how you’ll do it, but I’m beginning to think you can.

VARGUS
Thanks, dad.

Vargus moves from Sirena to Nargoth for another hug.

TRISTAM
That was amazing. Whatever happens, I’m with you. What do you suggest?

VARGUS
Dad, Alatyr, Ertaf, and Sirena should take the children to the lifeboats and leave the ship.

ERTAF
I’m not leaving.
TRISTAM
Ertaf, go with them.

ERTAF
My place is with you.

TRISTAM
I don’t know what you’ve gone through, but if our child is to live, you need to rest.

He places his hand on her belly.

TRISTAM
This is the most important thing we have, and it must be protected at all costs.

He looks to the others behind her.

SIRENA
We’ll make sure she gets off safely.

NARGOTH
Don’t worry.

TRISTAM
Thank you.

VARGUS
Tristam, see if you can steer the ship away from the village.

NARGOTH
You’re going after Sthennix.

VARGUS
I have to. I started this. I’m going to finish it.

ALATYR
I think he will surprise you if his heart is in the right place.

Vargus smiles.
NARGOTH
Well, good luck, son.

VARGUS
Go on. I’ll see you soon.

SIRENA
Please be careful.

VARGUS
I will.

They embrace briefly. They kiss.

VARGUS
I’ll see you soon.

SIRENA
Promise?

VARGUS
Promise.

The kids hug his legs.

KIRNILA
Be careful, Daddy.

VARGUS
I will. Take care of Delif for me.

KIRNILA
I will.

Vargus looks at Delif. He smiles.

VARGUS
And you, little man. Take care of your mother.

DELIF
I will, daddy.

They break and everyone exits the brig.
Vargus and Tristam walk to the door behind them. Vargus hands Tristam a Reez wand.

VARGUS
You know where the control room is?

TRISTAM
Of course. I grew up on these ships. I know everything.

VARGUS
I’ll help you get the ship under our control. Then I’m going after him.

They exit.

INT. CHARON - HALLWAY

Keldon walks toward Vargus and Tristam. He freezes as he sees them. They charge him. He assumes a defensive stance, drawing his own Reez wand.

They stab at him with the wands, but he blocks Vargus with his wand while reaching under Tristam’s wand, disarming him. Keldon tosses Tristam’s wand down and decks Tristam in the face.

Vargus lunges again, but Keldon avoids the hit. He brings his Reez around to make contact, but Tristam leaps up and barrels into Keldon, knocking him against the wall.

Keldon head butts Tristam, sending him staggering backward. He lunges with his wand, but Vargus comes in with his. Keldon halts his lunge to block. Vargus’ Reez makes contact with Keldon’s, causing both men to drop their weapons.

Keldon hammers on Vargus. Vargus tries desperately to block Keldon’s blows, but Keldon has the upper hand. Keldon reels back for a crushing blow.

Keldon suddenly convulses. His eyes roll back into his head. He collapses revealing Tristam behind him with one of the Reez wands.
VARGUS
Well, that was easy.

TRISTAM
Oh sure. Real easy.

VARGUS
We beat him, didn’t we?

Tristam rolls his eyes. He hands Vargus a Reez. They move onward.

INT. CHARON - LIFEBOAT BAY

Alatyr, Ertaf, Nargoth, Sirena, and the children hide just outside the door to the bay. An Overseer stands guard at the lifeboats.

NARGOTH
I’m going to try and take him out.

SIRENA
Let me help you.

NARGOTH
How?

SIRENA
Two is better than one.

ALATYR
I think the three of us would stand a better chance.

NARGOTH
You can handle this, old man?

ALATYR
I am no weakling.

ERTAF
What about four?
SIRENA
No. You need to rest. Just watch the children.

ERTAF
I’m not useless because I’m pregnant.

SIRENA
No, but you are vulnerable to losing that baby.

ERTAF
If you insist...

SIRENA
I do.

NARGOTH
Let’s go.

The three of them charge into the room with a battle cry. The Overseer looks up at them. He appears so stunned that he doesn’t even raise the club.

Nargoth knocks him out of the landing bay. The Overseer screams as he falls to the ground.

NARGOTH
All aboard.

Ertaf and the children emerge and walk to the boat.

All but Nargoth get into a lifeboat. Nargoth presses a switch opening the bottom of the ship. He leaps into the lifeboat.

Alatyr presses a button at the controls and the lifeboat dips below the ship and jets off.

INT. CHARON - BRIDGE

The Bridge personnel remain at their posts. Engineering has a light flashing on his panel.
Sir, we’ve just had a lifeboat eject.

The Captain looks over his shoulder. He nods. He walks to Communications.

Inform Lord Stennix that-

Tristam and Vargus burst through the bridge door. The Captain turns to them. They take him down.

The others leap to their feet, but are no match for the Reez wands. While Vargus and Tristam zap Communications and Engineering, the Helmsman tries to have a go at them, successfully tossing Tristam’s Reez out of his hand.

Tristam struggles briefly with him, not giving Vargus a chance to reez the Helmsman without reezing Tristam too.

Tristam finally throws the Helmsman off of him. Vargus reezes him. Vargus helps Tristam to his feet.

Thanks.

Take the controls and get us out of here. We won’t give Stennix the pleasure of beating me in view of everyone.

But if you beat him...?

Vargus smiles and shrugs. He heads for the door.

Lock the door behind me.

Good luck.

Vargus exits. Tristam closes and locks the bridge door.
He stands behind the wheel. He presses a few buttons on the side panels, and then gives the wheel a hard turn.

EXT. CHARON

The mighty ship moves forward and then tilts sharply to one side in a turn.

INT. CHARON - BALCONY ANTEROOM

Sthennix falls to one side of the compartment.

INT. CHARON - HALLWAY

Vargus stumbles to one side of the hallway.

EXT. CHARON

The ship completes his steep banking 180 and sets off towards the palace.

EXT. CEREBI VILLAGE

The people watch the ship blast away.

    MAN 1
    Well, that was odd.

    WOMAN 1
    Maybe the rebel got away.

INT. CHARON - BALCONY ANTEROOM

Sthennix walks to the room door and throws it open. Behind the door stands Vargus. Sthennix surprise turns to rage.

He grabs for Vargus. Vargus ducks and jabs him with the Reez. Sthennix laughs and grabs the Reez, taking it away from Vargus.

He grabs Vargus by the neck and lifts him off the ground.
STHENNIX
After wearing the armor yourself, you thought this would work against me?

Sthennix throws the Reez into a corner. He tosses Vargus across the room as well towards the curtained balcony door. Sthennix approaches him.

STHENNIX
You know you can’t win against me.

VARGUS
I know I’ll try.

Vargus comes to his feet. Sthennix looks at him, incredulous.

VARGUS
I’m not giving up.

STHENNIX
You should.

Sthennix grabs Vargus again and tosses him through the curtain to the balcony.

EXT. CHARON - BALCONY

Vargus struggles to his feet as Sthennix walks through the curtain. The speed of their flight whips the wind through their hair.
STHENNIX
It’s a shame really. You could have bid farewell to your friends below. Now you will say hello to the carnivores.

Sthennix grabs Vargus again and holds him well over the edge of the balcony with one arm. Vargus struggles to break Sthennix’s grip, but to no avail.

STHENNIX
Any last words before you die?

Vargus stares at him for a moment. He closes his eyes.

QUICK SERIES OF IMAGES: Sirena ... Nargoth ... Oreen ... Village of Cerebi ... Oreen’s death ... Kirnila ... Delif...

The face of Sirena looks into his eyes...

SIRENA
You and me ... I love you.

BACK TO SCENE

Vargus reaches his hand out to Sthennix. Sthennix looks confused. Vargus’ fingers draw closer to the armor.

STHENNIX
Now what are you doing?

Vargus touches the armor. Light flashes and the armor falls off.

Sthennix looks down in shock. Moments later, his arm drops with Vargus. He loses his balance and heads over the balcony with Vargus’ dropping body.

Vargus grips the edge of the balcony. Sthennix grabs ahold of Vargus’ legs. Vargus looks down.

Below them, the Carnivores wander in the open desert.

STHENNIX
Please. Don’t let me go.

VARGUS
Your Overseers killed my mother.
Vargus kicks Sthennix in the face.

VARGUS
You’ve destroyed this kingdom.

Vargus kicks him again. Sthennix slips.

VARGUS
Fend...
(kick)
...for...
(kick)
...your...
(kick)
...self.

Vargus kicks once more, sending Sthennix falling to the desert below.

EXT. DESERT

Sthennix crashes to the ground. He rolls over. He screams in pain and reaches down to his legs which are bent over at unnatural angles.

He raises his voice to the retreating ship.

STHENNIX
Come back here! I’m ordering you to return!

He whimpers as he tries to get his legs in order.

Growls sound from around him. He turns his head about. The carnivores have found him. His eyes grow wide.

STHENNIX
No. No!

The carnivores attack! Sthennix’s screams penetrate the quiet desert landscape.
EXT. CHARON - BALCONY

Vargus scrambles onto the balcony and lies still for a moment, breathing heavily.

He turns over and sees the Armor lying on the balcony. He walks to it and kneels beside it.

Pensively, he reaches out for it. He touches it!

Nothing happens. He lifts the armor and holds it as he enters the ship.

EXT. PALACE - DAY

Confetti, fireworks, and streamers dominate the visage of the Grontol Palace. People line the walkways and courtyards. Crowds stand before a stone platform upon which sits a pair of thrones.

Alatyr stands beside a pedestal containing a crown. He looks out to the crowd.

From a door in the back steps Tristam, robed in royal clothes. He walks regally down the center of the crowd. Crooked in his arm is Ertaf, also dressed to the nines and very pregnant. She stops at the front of the crowd.

Tristam stops in front of Alatyr. He kneels before Alatyr, bowing his head. Alatyr holds the crown over Tristam’s head for a moment, and then lowers it. Tristam stands before Alatyr and turns to the crowd.

He holds out his hand to Ertaf. She walks forward and takes it.

ALATYR
Ladies and Gentlemen: the rightful rulers of Grontol, King Tristam and his Queen, Ertaf.

The crowd roars with approval. Tristam holds out his hands.

TRISTAM
My people, I would not be here today, but for the courage of one man. Vargus, come forth.
Vargus steps out of the crowd and walks to Tristam. Vargus bows before Tristam. Tristam stands him up.

TRISTAM
My friend, I would not be here but for you. I will not have you bow before me.

Tristam turns and holds a medal before the people.

TRISTAM
For exceptional bravery in the face of mortal danger. For service to the kingdom of Grontol. I bestow upon Vargus this highest honor.

He attaches the medal to Vargus’ tunic. He places his hand on Vargus shoulder. Vargus returns the gesture.

TRISTAM
Thank you.

Tristam gives Vargus a hug.

TRISTAM
And now, a personal request. I will need a Captain of the Guards I can trust. I would be honored if you would take this position. Of course, you and your family would have to live in the palace. I hope that’s all right.

Vargus smiles.

VARGUS
I would be honored, your majesty.

Vargus hugs Tristam. The crowd roars with approval again.
INT. TOMB

Tristam, dressed in royal robes, and Vargus, now dressed sharply as a guard captain, stand with torches following Alatyr through a long tunnel.

Alatyr carries the Armor of Belial to a stone coffin in the deep of the tomb. He lowers the armor into the coffin. Tristam and Vargus hand their torches to Alatyr.

They place the lid of the coffin over the armor, sealing it. Tristam and Vargus take back their torches.

ALATYR

Let the location of the armor be forgotten. Tell no one of it for the rest of your lives. Do not write it down or record it in any way.

TRISTAM

Its secret is safe.

VARGUS

For all time.

The three leave the tomb. Alatyr closes and locks a steel door behind him leading to the stone coffin.

As they walk through the cave away from the armor’s final resting place, the light slowly fades out.

THE END