

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
Grampa was attacking us.

Vargus and Sirena look to the door. Nargoth, 15 years older and graying steps into the doorway. Vargus stiffens.

NARGOTH
Sorry, they got away from me.

VARGUS
Morning, dad.

NARGOTH
Morning, son. Sirena.

SIRENA
How much time do we have left,
Nargoth?

NARGOTH
Not much. You two need to get
ready.

VARGUS
This is my house, and I'll
decide when we'll get ready.

NARGOTH
As much as I appreciate being
your guest, I have gray hairs
because I know when the siren
goes off.

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.

DELIF

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, OVERSEERS 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

Truly. No family. No friends. No
interaction. Worked to death.

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. Alatyrr's manner of dress resembles a wizard with
long robes, but no hat.

Alatyrr 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 Sthennix. 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 Alatyrr, who nods his head. Tristam lifts Vargus. Alatyrr 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 Alatyrr 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. Alatyrr 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 Alatyrr 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 Sthennix 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 heavens.

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 its 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?

TRISTAM

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.

ERTAF

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?

RONTU

That's it.

TRISTAM

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.

TRISTAM

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.

TRISTAM

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

ERTAF

Until you come back? You're still going?

TRISTAM

I have to get Vargus to the castle.

ERTAF

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.

TRISTAM

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 submerses. 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 Sthennix. 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. They 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.

EXT. GRONTOL CASTLE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

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.

BACK TO SCENE

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 Sthennix.

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 Sthennix'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. Sthennix looks at her.

STHENNIX
Tell me about the armor.

Ertaf doesn't answer. Sthennix 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. Sthennix 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. Sthennix 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 then 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. Alatyrr 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

...so you will know the power
I now possess. Soon, you will
see the rebel. Soon, you will
watch as he dies.

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.

ENGINEERING

Sir, we've just had a lifeboat
eject.

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

CAPTAIN

Inform Lord Sthennix 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.

TRISTAM

Thanks.

VARGUS

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

TRISTAM

But if you beat him...?

Vargus smiles and shrugs. He heads for the door.

VARGUS

Lock the door behind me.

TRISTAM

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.

STHENNIX

I admire your conviction, but it
is foolish.

Vargus tries to land a few blows, but Sthennix grabs him and tosses him off again. Vargus lands in a heap. Sthennix approaches him again. Vargus stands up.

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 Alatyrr through a long tunnel.

Alatyrr 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 Alatyrr.

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. Alatyrr 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