

The Heroes of Gheldrynn

By

George R. Powell

FOURTH DRAFT: 7/29/2019

Based upon "The Gheldrynn Chronicles" and characters
created by George R. Powell

This screenplay may not be
used or reproduced for any
purpose including educational
purpose without the express
permission of the author

setufirestorm@gmail.com

1 EXT. GRIS VALLEY - DAWN

A golden-red sun rises over the mountains, illuminating the mist-covered valley.

On the South side of the valley there is an encampment of warriors from many races, most prominently human and elves. On the North side of the valley lies a tall, dark, ragged castle nestled against the mountainous region behind it. Dank clouds begin to saturate the sky over the meadow.

Warriors stand idle, awaiting command.

Standing distinguished from the rest are two highly-decorated human Paladins: CAPTAIN LYLE, 60s, and a younger handsome Paladin MELLOS DE MADRIENNE, 30s.

As the wind blows across the valley as if to signify the sweeping tide of imminent battle, Mellos' and Lyle's expressions remain unchanged as they gaze across the landscape at the decrepit castle.

LYLE

I'm sorry it came to this. Lord Gris was once a respected Mage. Why would anyone, short of a madman, turn to necromancy?

MELLOS

(Bowing his head in contemplation)
I don't know.

LYLE

(Placing his gauntlet-plated hand on Mellos' shoulder)

Even if we walk different paths, Mellos, I am grateful that you have decided to aid us. I am still honored to have you fighting by our side.

Mellos looks to Lyle with a half-smile.

A voice sounds from behind them, belonging to the ruddy-looking human Rogue Assassin RODNEY ROCCOCO, 40s, tying his light-blond hair back into its usual ponytail.

RODNEY

You should be!
(Lyle and Mellos turn around)
If it weren't for us, you Pallies

would be screwed.

LYLE

(Passive-aggressively)

Yes, thank you for your commentary,
Mr. Roccoco.

RODNEY

(Facetiously)

Anytime, pops!

(Peers over the hill to glance at
the quiet valley)

So where're all the bad guys at?

Another softer male voice is heard as Elven Priest VESPAEN
ILLID, early 20s in appearance, approaches.

VESPAEN

It's likely Lord Gris is going to
summon them. We won't know how bad
it's gonna be until he does.

RODNEY

Well those aren't the kind of odds I
like to play, but it sure seems to be
the hand I always get.

MELLOS

Vespaen, we're going to need your
Prayer of Protection to break through
the enemy lines. How much time will
that give us?

VESPAEN

12 seconds, I'm afraid. Then it's
another 30 seconds of cooldown before
I can do it again.

MELLOS

(Sighs)

We'll need to make those 12 seconds
count, then. Piatt, how are you about
using your Fire magic?

A very-attractive female Elf Mage, PIATT ILLID, early 20s in
appearance, walks up as she answers.

PIATT

(Perky tone)

I could shoot fire all day, Mellos.
Since we're facing undead, a little

Fire should go a long way.

LYLE

So what's your plan?

MELLOS

If your men can keep his minions busy, we'll break through the lines and get into the keep. Taking down Lord Gris is our most important task. If we slay the summoner, all he summoned falls with him.

VESPAEN

(Seeing something off in the distance)

Look! Something's happening!

On the other side of the valley, the gate lowers, the sounds of large chains CLANGING while the heavy wooden portal comes down.

Standing alone, with an ominous looming presence, a tall thick man in a tattered black cloak, LORD GRIS, 50s, stares out of his keep at his opposition.

On the other side, the army stands ready, looking back at their single opponent.

Gris raises his arm, the black sleeve of his cloak flowing upward with it.

The ground RUMBLES, shaking the sand amongst the grass.

GRIS

(His voice booming)

AH, THE FILTHY MAGGOTS HAVE COME TO BE
CRUSHED BY THEIR FUTILITY! CREATURES
OF THE DEAD - RISE AND OBLIGE THEM!

Along with the RUMBLING, parts of the ground all across the valley begin to EXPLODE upward as skeletal hands peer out. Skeletal warriors begin to crawl from the holes in the ground to stand in an attack stance.

On the other side, the soldiers begin to fear what they are seeing, and start shaking and backing up.

LYLE

(In a commanding tone)

Stand fast, men!

Menacing spirits begin to materialize among the skeletal soldiers.

VESPAEN

(To himself)

How can one man have such power?

RODNEY

(to Mellos, over his shoulder)

...And none of our fine archers have sniped him yet because...?

Gris then points toward the army.

GRIS

(Booming)

PUT AN END TO THEM ALL!

With a loud mess of METALLIC CLANGING of armor and CLACKING of bone, the undead army races toward their foes.

LYLE

(Calling out in response)

Mages!

The mages step forward in unison. Holding their arms forward, a collective shield of flame throws across the front lines with a fiery WHOOF!

The mages simultaneously pull their arms back a bit, then thrust them violently back out. With a powerful BLAZE, the shields throw a massive wave of flame out onto the battlefield, creating a line of fire across the valley.

Some of the skeletons cross through the fire before the others stop. Those that went through the fire CRACKLE down into a stream of dust.

LYLE

(Commanding)

Priests!

A line of priests, both human and elf, step forward, each chanting prayers together as one.

The overcast clouds open overhead, allowing the sun's rays to shine down onto the battlefield. Angels and other celestial beings rain down from the sky and begin fighting the undead creatures below.

LYLE

(Realizing that its now or never)
 Let there be no fear amongst you!
 Velaaren is on our side! Chaaaaarge!

With a unified SHOUT, the army advances toward the undead, seemingly disregarding an almost imminent death.

The two sides clash in a mighty collision of sword CLANGING.

Lord Gris turns and walks nonchalantly back into his keep.

MELLOS

Are we ready?

VESPAEN

Yep! Just remember: the healer is squishy, so please try to keep them off me.

PIATT

Vesp, if you pull any of them, it's you're own dumb fault. Anyway, I'm ready.

RODNEY

(with a pleased grin on his face)
 Time to send some shit on a blind date with the fan!

Holding his sword, the Angelique, facing upward as he closes his eyes and rests his forehead upon the blade for a brief moment. Opening his eyes, a new determination can be seen shining from them

MELLOS

Go!

The four heroes dart toward the fray, hearing as the CLANGS of battle gradually draw closer and surround them.

MELLOS

Vespaen! Bubble, now!

Vespaen throws his arm up and a bubble of protection forms around the four of them as they continue to barge through the battle.

The open gate to the keep draws closer as they barrel through the crowd.

VESPAEN

We're almost at 12 seconds!

MELLOS

Alright! Here we go!

As they resume running, the bubble dissipates and Mellos and Rodney begin immediately slashing at all foes in their path. Piatt and Vespaen fire magic off to the sides ahead of them to help clear a path.

On the other side, the gate makes a CRANKING noise as the large wooden portal begins to life from the muddy ground.

RODNEY

Bastard's trying to close it on us!

MELLOS

We can still make it! Jump!

They leap for the door just barely in time to get onto it before it was out of reach.

Rolling down the angled door as it continues to lift, the four heroes arrive on the other side to an empty, mist-filled courtyard, the sounds of battle FADED from the other side of the towering castle walls.

2 EXT. GRIS KEEP - COURTYARD

Mellos leads the party cautiously across the thickly-misted courtyard, nothing but the sounds of their boots SQUISHING in the mud to be heard.

RODNEY

(being cheeky)

Okay, great! So....

(beat, while observing a vast,
empty, mist-filled courtyard)

...now what?

VESPAEN

(Pointing to an open mausoleum
across the yard)

There!

The mausoleum has a dark smoke rising out of its portal.

GRIS (V.O.)

(His voice carrying from inside)

It seems we have visitors. Gustafson,

do welcome them!

The sound of an angrily CHIRPING imp echoes as the creature comes closer and closer to the door. The heroes ready their weapons for anything, prepared to fight the demon.

Finally, after the momentary suspense, a short, half-foot tall imp, GUSTAFSON, skips out of the big stone doorway, snarling as he comes to a stop. As he looks up at the four heroes, his expression drops.

GUSTAFSON
(Intimidated)
....oh!hi!

PIATT
(Nodding, with a condescending
tone)
Wow...a little underwhelming there...

Vespaen reaches down and swipes the pint-sized demon from the ground.

GUSTAFSON
(reactively, as he's picked up)
Hey what the hell...?

VESPAEN
(To the imp, in an authoritative
tone)
Where is Lord Gris?!

GUSTAFSON
Hey, pal! Demon's have rights, too, ya
know!

VESPAEN
Where is he?!

GUSTAFSON
(with annoyed sarcasm)
Well gee whiz, if you were half as
smart as you THINK you are, you
might've figured he's in the direction
I just came from, ya dumb-ass!

MELLOS
Take us to him!

GUSTAFSON
Alright, alright. Geez!

(Sighs to himself)
 When did I become a damn tour guide?
 This was not in my contract.

Gustafson leads the heroes down into the mausoleum.

3 INT. GRIS KEEP - MAUSOLEUM

As they descend, the air grows colder and the sounds of a LOW GROWLING WIND come rushing up the stairs.

Once they are in the atrium, the stone tomb is dimly lit by the conjuration magic that Gris is performing.

VESPAEN
 (Whispers to Mellos)
 There he is.

GRIS
 (acknowledging their presence
 without turning around)
 I would have thought you, of all
 people, would understand this, Mellos.
 You and I have both been broken by the
 cruelty of fate.

RODNEY
 (interjecting)
 Who the hell hasn't?

GRIS
 (continuing his monologue to
 Mellos)
 How strong does your faith hold...?
 After they spit on you, trample your
 name, brand you as a worthless
 'Prodigal Son' after so many years of
 your devout service...
 (beat)
 ...Lyle and his Paladins threw you
 away, and yet you still fight for
 them...for a god who has forsaken you!

MELLOS
 This isn't about me, Gris. What are
 you really hoping to accomplish by
 this?

GRIS
 One cannot challenge a god. He can,

however, send a message. That - is
what I intend to do.

Gris pulls up on the sheet covering the mass laying upon the
altar to reveal a dead boy, around 8 years of age.

PIATT

(Covering her mouth)

Oh my...

Mellos stands strong, trying to hold his composure.

GRIS

You would think an omniscient being
would understand what it's like to
bring new life into the world, only to
watch it slowly suffer and decay while
you watch - knowing you can do nothing
to stop it.

(beat)

But then...how could such a god know
what it's like when he never had to
experience it himself?

MELLOS

(nodding indignantly)

I get it...killing more innocent
people will make him feel your pain,
won't it?

GRIS

(only slightly turning his head in
Mellos' direction)

An unjust means to a just end, I know.
I want Velaaren to watch his creation
bring about its own demise while he
sits, powerless, to stop it.

(beat)

I want him to see - with his own eyes -
that he is an unworthy god!

With those words, there is a LOW RUMBLE before the lids to
the sarcophagi BURST off with tremendous force all around the
atrium. Tattered skeletons begin to crawl out.

VESPAEN

(With great worry)

Um, Mellos??

PIATT
 (Alert and a bit complaining)
 Great! MORE undead!

RODNEY
 (Nonchalant)
 So what? Just wash your hands before
 you eat anything.

The skeletons begin to swarm around them as Gris draws a sword and readies for combat.

Piatt HURLS a ball of flame at one of the cluster groups of skeletons, EXPLODING and spraying bone fragments in all directions.

MELLOS
 Vesp! Use Holy Rain!

Just after uttering that last syllable, Gris lunges at Mellos and their sword CLANG as they meet. Mellos returns the attack with a SWIPE of his own, only to be parried by the dark magician.

Vespaen quickly clasps his hands together and begins a prayer.

VESPAEN
 (In a hasty prayer)
 Velaaren, grant me your purifying
 flame that I may lay these souls to
 rest!

Lifting his clasped hands up high, a beam of light BURSTS up to the ceiling. As soon as the light reaches the ceiling of the crypt, a bright fire begins spreading across the stone ceiling in a fluid-like motion.

Vespaen then spreads his arms apart, and in one swift gesture, pulls them back downward. The fire from the ceiling begins to SHOOT bolts of flame down onto the skeletons, turning them to dust as the fire makes contact with them.

As Piatt continues to throw flame balls at the straggling skeletons, Mellos' and Gris' one-on-one sword fight continues.

MELLOS
 (keeping himself ready to deflect
 attacks)
 Gris, this doesn't have to happen! We

can still end this without anyone else getting hurt!

GRIS

That's where you're wrong. I've already cast the forbidden spell and sealed my fate.

(beat)

There is no turning back for me now.

RODNEY

(standing, listening, behind one of the nearby pillars with a smoke-bomb vial in-hand)

Well shit, then. I'm sold!

Rodney tosses the vial onto the ground between Gris and Mellos, allowing smoke to fill the room. Mellos and Gris remain locked onto each other while the smoke envelops them both.

After a brief moment of silence, the silhouette of Gris begins to pierce through the fog as he progresses forward. Mellos, catching this from the corner of his eye, successfully parrying the attack, responding with moves of his own to disorient his foe.

Behind Gris, Rodney whooshes by in the shadows, and slices Gris' calves from behind. Gris lets out a SHOUT of pain and begins to collapse as Mellos uses the opening to swing his sword, SLASHING through Lord Gris' neck. A silhouette can be seen of Gris' body falling to the ground while the airborne head continues through the air.

After the meaty THUD of the necromancer's body hitting the stone floor, the remaining skeletons collapse into piles of dust on the floor.

Mellos stands over the body, the blood still dripping from his blade, staring painstruck by what he had to do.

Rodney approaches and puts a hand on his shoulder.

RODNEY

(trying to break the Paladin's trance)

Hey...

Mellos looks up at him.

RODNEY
 (in a solemn tone, respecting
 Mellos' emotional response)
 When somebody comes at you with a
 weapon, dumb bastard deserves what
 they get.

Piatt approaches.

PIATT
 (Attempting to lift his suddenly
 down spirits)
 You did the right thing.

Mellos' gaze turns upward at the deceased boy upon the altar.

MELLOS
 (Still in a sorrowful whisper)
 ...I hope so.

4 EXT. GRIS VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Outside, in the field, the army continues to fight until the
 ghosts and spirits dematerialize, the skeletons fall over and
 the bugs from the earth curl up and die.

Lyle looks up at the castle and smiles.

LYLE
 They've done it.
 (Louder)
 They've done it!

The army cheers victoriously as the CAMERA tilts upward into
 the sky.

CROSSFADE

5 EXT. WILDERNESS ROAD - EVENING

TITLE: "(Publishing Company) presents"

A farm meadow sits quietly amidst a vast open plain. The
 wheat fields brush with the tranquil breeze that washes over
 them.

TITLE: "A Production of (PRODUCTION COMPANY)"

Mellos, appearing as a silhouette against the light of the
 setting sun, rides his horse, alone on the road. The horse
 slowly ambles down the path, showing signs of exhaustion.

TITLE: "A (DIRECTOR) Film"

6 EXT. WILDERNESS ROAD - VELAAREN SHRINE - CONTINUOUS

Looking up and over him, at the road ahead, there appears to be a roadside shrine of Velaaren, guarded by two robed priests.

TITLE: "The Heroes of Gheldrynn"

Seeing Mellos closer up, he is hunched over on his horse, appearing severely dehydrated.

The priests see this and run up to aid him.

SHRINE PRIEST 1
Sir knight! Are you in need of anything?

MELLOS
(sounding clearly parched)
...Water.

Shrine Priest 2 runs over and grabs his canteen, bringing it over to the famished warrior. He helps Mellos by pouring the water into his mouth, realizing that the Paladin's strength is nearly gone.

After a long drink of water, Mellos speaks up.

MELLOS
(His voice crackled)
Is there an inn nearby?

SHRINE PRIEST 1
The Fanel Tavern is just up the road there. A quarter-mile. You may rest here a moment, if you wish, to seek Velaaren's blessing.

MELLOS
(His voice still crackled)
I thought Velaaren wanted nothing to do with 'Prodigal Sons'.

SHRINE PRIEST 2
Velaaren's answers all who call His name, no matter who they may be.

MELLOS

(responding with a respectful smile)

Thank you.

Weak and limping, Mellos makes his way to the all-familiar shrine of Velaaren. Trying to hold strong, he kneels before the sacred statue.

MELLOS

(Reverently yet drenched with a sense of shame)

It's been a long time since I last...spoke to you.

(Tears forming in his eyes)

I don't deserve to speak...I don't deserve for you to listen...

(The formed tears run down his dust-covered face)

If you would hear me...

(Losing a bit of composure)

...please forgive me...because I can't forgive myself...

His breathing intensifies as the inner pains seeps through the tears pouring from his eyes.

MELLOS

(His voice taking on a tortured tone)

I know that I failed you...and I'm the one who deserved your wrath...

(Hiding his face in shame as he weeps)

...I will make this right...

(Raising his head back up, his voice beginning to show signs of strength and determination)

...I swear it!

Mellos takes one last glance up at the statue before rising to his feet.

He returns to his horse that the two shrine priests were watching over and gets himself saddled up, gesturing his thanks to the priests for their aid before he trots away.

7 EXT. WILDERNESS ROAD - NEAR TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

As Mellos continues down the road, the two-story wooden shack of a tavern appears in view. The Paladin rides toward his

destination.

8 INT. FANEL TAVERN & INN

The tavern is filled with inebriated patrons LAUGHING and TALKING loudly as the wenches serve the ale.

At one table, Rodney Roccoco and three other shady fellows are playing a card game over drinks. The other three players give angry stares at Rodney, who is sitting across the table from them leaning back in his seat.

CARD PLAYER 2

What do ya got?

CARD PLAYER 1

Not a damn thing!

Card Player 1 looks suspiciously at Rodney.

CARD PLAYER 1

So, Roccoco...lemme guess: you win again, huh?

RODNEY

(Playfully)

Well look at you, being all observant!

Rodney lays his winning hand on the table. Card players 2 and 3 slam their cards down on the table in protest to their losing. Rodney leans forward to pull the coins toward him as Card Player 1 fixes his gaze on him.

CARD PLAYER 1

You think we're stupid, huh?

RODNEY

Well, you DO keep throwing money on the table.

CARD PLAYER 1

Think I don't see you lookin' over to your lady-friend over there for clues on our hands?

(beat, as he leans forward)

I got an idea: how 'bout you give us our money back...plus interest...before my boys carve an even bigger smile on that smug face of yours?

RODNEY

(Completely in phased by the threat)

Nah, that idea sucks. I have a better one: why don't you and your boy-toys bugger off outta here and hope that I'll be too busy to teach you all a proper lesson in who you're dealing with.

CARD PLAYER 1

You think we're afraid of you?

Without warning, Rodney WHIPS his hand hurling a throwing knife at Card Player 1 and it sticks deep into his arm.

CARD PLAYER 1

GAH!

Card Players 2 and 3 back away.

CARD PLAYER 1

(Pulling at the knife, in pain)
Gh....ghh....I can't get it out.

RODNEY

(Nonchalant)

Meh, keep it! They go on sale this weekend anyway.

The other two card players help Card Player 1 to his feet and slink out of the tavern just as Mellos enters.

RODNEY

(standing up, flagging him down)

Well shit! If it ain't the Man from Madrienne himself! How the hell are ya, brother?

Mellos lets out the first legitimate smile he has made for some time as he approaches Rodney. The two of them exchange a friendly hug before sitting down.

MELLOS

Alright, I guess. I've been on the move.

RODNEY

...Which is code for "wandering aimlessly". Did your old man, the Baron, not take you in back home?

MELLOS

(Sighing)

No, nothing like that. I've been wandering by choice.

RODNEY

Come on, man! We're the Heroes of Gheldrynn! You should be riding that wave, like me, and trying to get as many cats in the sack as you can, if you know what I mean.

MELLOS

(rolls his eyes, although still being amused)

...I really wish I didn't...

The bar wench, that had been aiding Rodney, approaches.

BAR WENCH

Good job tonight, Roddy! I know a way we can celebrate...

(beat, as she notices Mellos)

Your friend can join us. He's handsome.

MELLOS

(raising his hand, politely declining)

No thanks.

BAR WENCH

(amused, as she turns back to Rodney)

Oh, I see. He likes men, huh?

RODNEY

Nah, he's just a "reserved parking" kinda guy.

(beat)

Tell you what: why don't you run upstairs and I'll be up there in a minute.

BAR WENCH

(happily complying)

Okay. You boys do your catching up, but don't be up too late.

She makes her way up the nearby staircase before Rodney and Mellos get back to their conversation.

MELLOS

(seeming a bit grossed out)
 You DO realize she's half your
 age...at least?

RODNEY

(chuckling)
 Oh, I know. I figure if an old-timer
 like me can score somethin' like that -
 I gotta be doin' something right!

MELLOS

(in joking dissension with his
 friend's choices)
 Yeah, you sure know how to pick the
 easy ones.

RODNEY

Fair enough. Alright, spill it, kid:
 what's eatin' you?

MELLOS

(his exhaustion and sorrow
 beginning to show)
 I don't know. I just...don't have
 anything driving me anymore. I've been
 wandering, trying to find a purpose.

RODNEY

And lemme guess: you're coming up
 empty-handed.

Mellos looks up, piqued by that comment.

RODNEY

Look, Mellos: I'm sorry you had to
 spend most of your life being spoon-
 fed all this mythical bullshit about
 some god having some grand destiny for
 you...except on a pay-to-win model.
 (beat)
 You gotta make your own purpose...like
 me!

MELLOS

(sarcastically)
 You spend all of your time getting
 drunk and trying to screw virtually
 everything that walks.

RODNEY
 (shrugging)
 Hey, nobody's perfect!

The tavern door opens and in walks four decorated members of the Royal Guard. The bar wench breaks her demeanor and starts serving other tables as the guardsmen walk through the tavern, approaching Mellos and Rodney.

ROYAL GUARD 1
 Rodney Roccoco. Sir Mellos de
 Madrienne.

RODNEY
 Is it that arrest-quota time of the
 month already?

ROYAL GUARD 1
 By the order of His Majesty King
 Lysander, you are both summoned to the
 royal palace.

9 EXT. ROAD TO GHELDRYNN - LATER THAT DAY

All four heroes, Mellos, Rodney, Vespaen, and Piatt, are reunited and surrounded by Royal Guard escort, trotting down the road toward the great city of Gheldrynn.

Piatt rides her horse up to Mellos.

PIATT
 (Smiling warmly)
 Hey, Mellos. It's been some time,
 hasn't it?

MELLOS
 (Smiles in return)
 Yes it has. It's good to see you and
 Vesp again. Have the two of you been
 keeping busy?

PIATT
 (chuckling a bit)
 If you want to call it that, anyway.
 We've been doing a lot of traveling.
 How have you been?

MELLOS
 (A little contemplative)
 I guess I've been traveling, too.

Piatt allows her horse to slow a bit, backing her to her original spot next to Rodney.

RODNEY

If I didn't know any better, I'd think you wanted in his pants more than your husband does.

VESPAEN

(in the back)

Hey!

PIATT

You're such an asshole, Rodney! What manure cart did they have to turn over to find you?

RODNEY

(playing along, to continue trolling her)

I imagine it wasn't hard for them to find YOU. All they'd have to do is sit at the bar looking lonely and depressed.

PIATT

God, you're a pig!

Giving Piatt an amused smile, Rodney backs his horse off to talk to Vespaen.

VESPAEN

(with an annoyed sigh)

Why do you insist on winding her up?

RODNEY

(proud of himself)

'Cause her crank works when I turn it. At any rate, how are you and ol' Battle Tits holding up?

VESPAEN

Same as always. We travel together, but everything I say or do just makes her mad. I'm convinced she hates me.

RODNEY

Well no kidding! You're the husband of the hottest Mage in all of Gheldrynn, and you don't even have a desire for women in general.

(beat)
 You gotta understand that can be
 frustrating for her.

VESPAEN
 (correcting him)
 "Arranged" husband. I just wish Elven
 culture didn't arrange marriages. Why
 can't we just do what humans do, and
 marry for love?

RODNEY
 (with a raised eyebrow)
 You don't pay much attention to human
 marriages, do you?

10 EXT. CASTLE GHELDRYNN - COURTYARD

TITLE: "Castle Gheldrynn"

KING LYSANDER, 30s, stands in the courtyard along with a few
 guards. The heroes dismount their horses upon arrival.

The quartet bows respectfully as Lysander approaches.

KING LYSANDER
 Please rise, heroes. It is I who
 should be bowing to you.

They rise to their feet.

MELLOS
 Has something happened, Your Highness?

KING LYSANDER
 I'm afraid so, Sir Mellos. Right now,
 we don't know the extent of the threat
 yet, so I'm not wanting to cause a
 panic with the good people of
 Gheldrynn until we're certain.

MELLOS
 What's been going on?

They begin to walk the courtyard as they talk.

KING LYSANDER
 Over the past few weeks, I have
 received word from several settlements
 that they have fallen under attack.

MELLOS

Do we know who the attackers are?

KING LYSANDER

I'm afraid that's the most troubling part...it's their own children.

Mellos freezes in shock at the sound of this, almost as if it strikes a personal chord with him.

KING LYSANDER

Villagers are being slain, then...devoured...

Mellos appears too speechless to answer.

VESPAEN

I thought the door to Darkness was closed when we defeated Lord Gris.

KING LYSANDER

The Holy Order thought so as well, but there is no other explanation as to why these children are becoming possessed and murdering their own parents.

RODNEY

Well, not that we can talk about without getting sued, anyway.

PIATT

So what can we do?

KING LYSANDER

The Order believes that there is one who may be able to aid you in sealing away the Darkness. Captain Lyle wishes to brief you himself. You can find him at the church.

RODNEY

(Muttering sarcastically)
Oh joy of killjoys...the church...

11 INT. GHELDRYNN HOLY CHURCH - SANCTUARY

The great doors to the church open, allowing the natural light of the sun to peer into the candlelit sanctuary. The four heroes enter, gazing around at the marvelous sculptures and artwork strewn throughout the large room.

Suddenly a voice rings out. It is SIR LUCAS, late 30s, a rugged-looking Paladin in similar armor to Mellos but the clothing is a brown color.

LUCAS
Mellos de Madrienne!

The four heroes' attention is captured by his voice.

LUCAS
(Approaching them)
I must admit, I never expected to see you in the Church again.

MELLOS
(in a bitter tone)
Not if I had a choice in the matter...

LUCAS
Still bitter, I see. So what ARE you doing here, then?

RODNEY
(interjecting)
We're here to see Lyle. You know: older guy, red hair, tall, not a douche...

LUCAS
(Keeping a smug face)
Lyle is on his way. Just thought I'd come by and say hi to an old friend of mine...or what's left of him.

Lucas walks away and Rodney puts his hand on Mellos' shoulder.

RODNEY
Lemme guess: active-duty Paladins are celibate?

MELLOS
Yeah...why?

RODNEY
(with a cheeky smile)
Thought so!

PIATT
(having overheard that)
Do you ever NOT think with your

crotch?

RODNEY

I have my moments.

At that moment, another familiar voice is heard: Captain Lyle.

LYLE (O.S.)

(Happily)

Mellos!

Lyle walks up to the quartet and gives a brotherly hug to Mellos.

LYLE

It's been some time. How have you been?

MELLOS

(His voice sounding tired)

Doing what I can.

LYLE

I take it His Majesty informed you of the situation.

MELLOS

Yes.

LYLE

Come with me, if you would.

Lyle leads the heroes from the sanctuary into a private room.

12 INT. GHELDRYNN HOLY CHURCH - PRAYER ROOM

They enter an elegant prayer room where they are alone.

LYLE

(Closing the door behind them)

Understand that what I am about to tell you is not to be shared; there are some things that are not meant to leave the church.

They nod in response.

LYLE

Some of our intelligence reported stories of a sage living in the

mountains to the north, just before you reach the Elflands.

RODNEY

Why are they only "stories"?

LYLE

Because there is a dragon whose nest rests upon the peaks of those mountains, so no adventurers have dared to wander into that region.

PIATT

So does this guy control the dragon?

LYLE

No one knows, but the few who have ventured into those mountains never returned.

VESPAEN

So what does this sage know?

LYLE

We believe...this is the man that Lord Gris spoke to...in order to learn of the necromancy rituals.

Their eyes widen at the sound of those words.

LYLE

If this is the man that helped Gris to open the door to Darkness, this is the man who will know how to close it.

RODNEY

Now, why are you getting us involved? Don't you have enough men to take down a dragon, much less find one old fart in the mountains?

LYLE

(Taking a bit of defensive tone)
I'm not sure you heard, Mr. Roccoco, just how bad the situation is! Villages are falling all over the region and my men are the only force equipped to protect them. There is only so much we can do when we are spread so thin!

MELLOS

What is being done about the children?

LYLE

Hm?

MELLOS

(Elaborating)

The children who are becoming possessed?

LYLE

(Hesitant to answer)

We're...doing what we can. If any lives can be salvaged, we are doing all in our power to salvage them. But some of them...are too far gone.

PIATT

(Putting her hand over her mouth)

Oh god...

LYLE

Something about Elven blood that attracts the demons, and children are the most susceptible.

Mellos closes his eyes to hide his contemplative stare.

LYLE

(Walking over to Mellos, placing his hand on Mellos' shoulder)

Mellos...time is not a luxury we have.

Mellos SIGHS as he opens his eyes.

MELLOS

I understand.

LYLE

(Walking back to the center of the room)

The four of you are celebrated as the saviors of Gheldrynn. That is why I know we can count on you.

13 EXT. GHELDRYNN CITY CHURCH OF VELAAREN - MOMENTS LATER

The party prepares their saddles for the journey, placing the various pieces of equipment in the sacks dangling from their horses' sides.

As Mellos situates his pack, Lucas approaches.

LUCAS

Mellos!

Mellos turns his head to look at Lucas, and the sight of him brings a look of disgust to his face.

Lucas drops his pace, walking up nervously and raising his hand.

LUCAS

(Hesitant)

...good luck.

Without a word, Mellos gives him a scowling glare as he mounts his ride and kicks the horse into gear. Rodney, Vespaen, and Piatt follow behind him down the city road toward the gate.

Lucas watches them ride off as he stands in the dusty street outside the chapel.

LUCAS

(In a rhetoric tone)

May Velaaren take pity on you.

14 EXT. ROAD OUT OF GHELDRYNN - AFTERNOON

MONTAGE

The four heroes ride down the road, starting off their journey. The clouds move gradually through the sky as the sun works it's way toward the western horizon.

END MONTAGE

15 EXT. ON THE ROAD - EVENING

As the heroes ride, they slowly come to a halt. They look on in front of them: there is an overturned caravan with some of the belongings strewn around the immediate area. There are three dead bodies: a grown Elven man, an Elven woman, and a young Elven girl who appears to be 8 years old.

The four heroes hop off of their horses and ready their weapons as they approach to investigate.

VESPAEN

What happened here? Bandits?

RODNEY

(Sifting through the belongings)
Nope. Not bandits.

VESPAEN

How do you know?

RODNEY

'Cause a lot of this stuff they left behind is worth a pretty penny. Any bandit would've known that.

(Lifting some of the scattered stuff)

This....is something else.

As Rodney and Piatt rummage through the belongings, clearing them off the road and consolidating them to the side, by the carriage, Vespaen joins Mellos in examining the bodies.

MELLOS

(Touching the back of one body's neck)

They died sometime this afternoon. The bodies are still somewhat warm.

VESPAEN

(Sighs)

If we'd left earlier this afternoon, we might've been able to stop this.

Mellos turns the body over and they both step back from the sight.

VESPAEN

Those are....bite wounds? These elves were viciously attacked.

RODNEY (O.S.)

(as he approaches)

By one of their own kids, no doubt.

VESPAEN

(Slightly offended by the judgment)

And how are you so sure? How do you know if wasn't a pack of wolves?

RODNEY

(Walking over)

Two reasons:

(He crouches down)

First of all...

(Points to the body)
 Animals always go for the throat to
 kill their prey. And second...
 (Lifts one of the arms)
 ...all three of these bodies show
 little sign of struggle. No cuts. No
 bruises. Whatever attacked them was
 something...or someone...they were
 familiar with.

PIATT
 (From behind them)
 Wow, Rodney. I gotta hand it to you -
 you DO have your moments.

RODNEY
 (Standing back up)
 Judging by how fresh the bodies are,
 it's likely whoever did this is still
 around here somewhere.

MELLOS
 Right then. By the time we finish
 burying them, it will be nightfall.
 We'll set up camp here for the night.

RODNEY
 (Sarcastically as he helps round
 up the scattered belongings)
 Hm! Set up camp right by a ravaged
 cart and dead people. Why didn't I
 think of this genius plan?

16 EXT. ROADSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

Rodney, Mellos, and Vespaen sit around the fire as Piatt
 stands up against the tree behind them. The three surrounding
 the campfire are eating cooked meat that Rodney had earlier
 caught.

RODNEY
 So Piatt...sure you don't want some of
 this?

PIATT
 No thanks, Rodney.
 (A little disdain in her voice)
 I don't eat anything with a face.

RODNEY
 (Being facetious)
 Well... doesn't have it anymore...

PIATT
 (Turning around and going back
 into the tent)
 Hmph!

Rodney looks back to the campfire, smiling proudly that he successfully annoyed her.

VESPAEN
 She doesn't like meat.

RODNEY
 (Winking as he pulls out his
 whiskey flask)
 Maybe that's why she's so unhappy...

17 INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Piatt readies herself for sleep, taking off her added accessories. She removes a necklace that she keeps hidden underneath her outfit; the amulet on the end is an amethyst. She stares at the jewel for a brief moment.

FLASHBACK

A handsome elf Mage, KIERAN, 20s in appearance, hands the jewel necklace to Piatt with a warm smile on his face.

END FLASHBACK

Still staring at the necklace, Piatt releases a sorrowful sigh as she safely places it with her other belongings.

18 EXT. ROADSIDE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Mellos stands up.

MELLOS
 Well, I'm about ready to turn in for
 the night. Rodney, are you taking
 first shift?

RODNEY
 (Relaxed)
 Yessah. I might need to take a piss a
 little later, so hopefully the bad
 guys don't wait til then to raid.

MELLOS

(Chuckling)

Alright, thank you. I'll take over in a few hours.

Mellos retreats into the tent, leaving Rodney and Vespaen by the fire.

VESPAEN

(Looks to Rodney, who just took too big of a swig of whiskey and COUGHS a little)

Rodney...I know it's a little out of the blue, but.....thank you.

RODNEY

(Clearing his throat)

For what?

VESPAEN

For not judging me.

RODNEY

(Smiles)

Look, I've spent years killing people for a living. I wouldn't be in any position to judge you because you like Mellos.

VESPAEN

But still....it means a lot to me.

RODNEY

Well if I want any chance at you sweet-talkin' your god into letting me in, I gotta be nice to you.

The two exchange a laugh before Vespaen stands up.

VESPAEN

Good night Rodney.

RODNEY

(Holding his flask out as if to toast)

G'night, brother!

Vespaen enters the tent.

TIME LAPSE FADE

Rodney sits quietly at the fire, sipping from his flask and looking out at the dark meadow. He SIGHS from boredom.

As he puts his flask back into his black, leather tunic, there is the CRACKLE of a footstep in the meadow several feet away, in the dark field. Rodney stops in his tracks and listens.

Another CRACKLE.

As a cold breeze brushes through the tall grass surrounding the camp, Rodney slinks into the shadows and behind the tree.

Rodney watches in the cover of darkness.

A young elf boy, TYVIEN, 9 years old in appearance, emerges from the brush around the campfire, drawn to its light. The boy is clearly demonically possessed, as is evident in the way he stumbles and lurks around.

Possessed Tyvien examines the vacant campfire spot, feeling and sniffing around like a feral beast. He then appears to pick up Rodney's presence as his posture straightens and he looks around quickly, whipping his head in various directions.

POSSESSED TYVIEN

(In an almost shrill whisper)

I can smell you, human.

RODNEY

(Softly, to himself)

Hmph.

Possessed Tyvien puts his arms out like a reptilian predator and waves them around as if to sense his prey.

POSSESSED TYVIEN

I see you like the dark. Very well.

The Elven boy holds his hand over the campfire and magically causes the flames to die down and extinguish.

As the smoke from the campfire puffs out, the boy disappears from the site.

Rodney darts his eyes around, trying to spot the kid, but he appears to have silently vanished.

RODNEY
 (Whispers to himself)
 ...the hell?

Rodney turns around. Without warning, a jagged knife SINKS throughout his shoulder and sticks him to the tree behind him.

RODNEY
 (In reactionary pain)
 Shit! Gah, son of a bitch!

The child comes close to Rodney's pained face and examines him luridly, sniffing at him and licking his lips.

POSSESSED TYVIEN
 I'll save you for last.

As Rodney struggles to free himself from the tree by pulling at the knife sunk into him, the boy scurries off.

19 INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mellos, Vespaen, and Piatt are sound asleep.

The tent door flaps open silently, and possessed Tyvien enters, prowling around. He sees Piatt on the floor, nearest to him, and moves to examine her.

The boy runs his hand softly along her face. Piatt jerks her face away, still sleepy.

PIATT
 (Half-asleep)
 Rodney, I swear to Velaaren that
 better NOT be you.

Possessed Tyvien opens his mouth, letting out an anticipating EXHALE, which wakes Piatt up.

PIATT
 (Freaking out)
 AH! WHO ARE YOU?!

Vespaen and Mellos jump out of their rest.

VESPAEN
 HEY!!

Possessed Tyvien whips his head over to Vespaen, his mouth foaming with drool.

VESPAEN
 (Eyes widening)
 Oh crap!

The child pounces onto Vespaen, knocking him over. Tyvien holds the priest to the ground and tries to bite at his face. Vespaen uses his free arm to try and pry the kid off of him.

PIATT
 (Charging at Tyvien)
 GET OFF OF HIM!

Tyvien nails Piatt in the face with his elbow, knocking her onto her back.

VESPAEN
 (Struggling)
 Gah! Mellos! Get him off me!

Mellos is frozen in a state of horror, afraid to move against the child.

VESPAEN
 Mellos!

Realizing that he isn't getting through to Mellos, Vespaen successfully shoves the kid off. Tyvien looks up and sees Mellos' fear, and starts charging at him.

Just before he reaches Mellos, a roped hook WHIRLS over Tyvien from behind and grips him at the shoulder. With a sudden YANK, Tyvien is flown backwards.

RODNEY
 (Reeling the kid in on the hook)
 Get back here, ya little bastard!

With Tyvien now being pinned to the ground by Rodney, the rogue picks up the frying pan he used to cook earlier.

RODNEY
 (Clearly pissed off)
 Like to eat people, huh?
 (Starts clubbing the child with
 the pan)
 Try this new diet plan!

Mellos snaps out of his fearful trance.

MELLOS
 Rodney!

Vespaen runs up to Rodney, pleading to him.

VESPAEN
Rodney, stop!

Rodney pauses, giving Piatt a chance to pull the pan out of Rodney's hand.

PIATT
(Her hand over her face where she
was hit)
What the hell is wrong with you?!
You're a grown man beating a child
with a frying pan!

RODNEY
(Still pissed)
Well I'm sorry! My other weapons are
outside!

Vespaen examines the boy.

VESPAEN
He's unconscious. Good. It looks to me
like he has a lesser demon in him. We
should be able to exorcise it without
hurting him.

PIATT
(Looking to Rodney)
...any FURTHER, anyway!

VESPAEN
Mellos, can you help me?

As Mellos comes over to aid in the exorcism, peace finally
falls over the campsite.

FADE TO BLACK

20 EXT. ROADSIDE CAMP - MORNING

FADE IN

The smoke from the fire is very thin and slight. A morning
breeze waves over the brush.

21 INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mellos sleeps with Tyvien sleeping right by him. Vespaen is
curled on the floor of the tent, sleeping soundly. Piatt is

sleeping with the frying pan in her arms. Rodney is snoring next to Piatt, his hand on her left breast.

Rodney SNORTS in his sleep and his hand does a quick squeeze on Piatt's boob. This wakes her up when she realizes it. Her eyebrows furl angrily as she turns and BONGS Rodney in the face with the pan.

RODNEY

(Rudely awakened, putting his boob hand to his face)

OW, damnit! Can't you see I'm already hurt?!

PIATT

Apparently not nearly enough.

Everyone else wakes up, including Tyvien.

TYVIEN

(Fresh out of sleep)

Where am I?

(Sits up alert)

Who are all of you? Where's my mother and father? What's going on?

MELLOS

It's okay. We're not here to hurt you.

TYVIEN

(Rubbing his head and noticing the bandage on his shoulder)

My head hurts. What happened?

RODNEY

(Looking away to avoid guilt)

Um....

MELLOS

(Bending down to face him)

Your carriage was attacked by bandits. When we arrived, you were the only one left alive.

Tyvien's eyes begin welling with tears. Mellos, unable to watch the child cry, sheds tears of his own as he gives Tyvien a warm embrace, allowing the boy to weep. Vespaen and Piatt watch, looking away a bit, while Rodney scratches his head and nurses his own wounded arm.

MELLOS
 (Releasing the hug)
 What's your name?

TYVIEN
 (Wiping his eyes)
 Tyvien.

MELLOS
 Where are you from, Tyvien?

TYVIEN
 The Elflands. We went to Gheldrynn so
 my father could deliver our crops to
 the city market.
 (He sniffles)
 We were on our way back and thought we
 would visit my Aunt Gwenyth in
 Merigold. I don't remember what
 happened to us.

MELLOS
 (Smiles, trying to be strong for
 the boy)
 It's okay. We're heading toward the
 Elflands ourselves. Merigold's on the
 way if you want to come with us.

TYVIEN
 You would do that?

MELLOS
 Of course. My name is Mellos.

Mellos turns the boy around.

MELLOS
 This is Piatt, Vespaen, and Rodney.

The other three wave bow respectfully. Tyvien exchanges a
 respectful bow before his lowers his head in sorrow, still
 unable to express his grief.

MELLOS
 Why don't we pack up camp and get
 going?

They start gathering their belongings to put together.

22 EXT. ROAD TO MERIGOLD FOREST - EARLY AFTERNOON

The four heroes, and their new-found companion, trot down the road toward Merigold. Tyvien is riding with Mellos, and Piatt's horse approaches their side.

PIATT

(Sounding extra perky to try helping him out of his frozen, grievous state)

So Tyvien, what do you like to do for fun?

Tyvien looks up at her.

TYVIEN

(Hesitant to answer, and even when he does it sounds somber)

I like to do magic tricks.

PIATT

(Going along with it)

Magic tricks, huh? Even though we Elves can use real magic?

TYVIEN

(Starting to become successfully distracted)

Everybody knows that we can use real magic, which is why tricks are so much more fun when people know it's NOT real magic. Then they really want to know how it's done!

PIATT

(Smiling)

That's very neat!

TYVIEN

(His tone sounding more confident as he smiles too)

My mom used to say the same thing, though - about why bother with magic tricks. It's just fun to me.

VESPAEN

(Jumping in, having overheard)

And if you enjoy it, and it brings joy to the people you meet, then there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

TYVIEN

(Looking back at Vespaen)

You think so?

VESPAEN

Oh definitely! There's no more fulfilling feeling than knowing that you're offering people something that they needed that only you could give them.

Tyvien smiles in response.

RODNEY

(Out of nowhere)

You know what the best way to kill a fly is?

PIATT

Rodney, what are you even talking ab...

With a WHOOSH, she is interrupted by a throwing knife brushing right through her hair and into the brush ahead. A soft, meaty THUD is heard as a man in a hooded black cloak falls over dead, the knife burrowed in his face.

RODNEY

(Finishing his question)

You let them think you're unaware of their presence before you strike.

PIATT

(Angry and shaken)

Rodney, you wanna watch what the hell you're doing when you throw those?!

RODNEY

(Chuckling as he hops off his horse)

I did!

They dismount and go up to check the body, keeping young Tyvien behind them.

The dead man is wearing a black cloak with an elaborate symbol of a dark dragon.

VESPAEN

I've seen this symbol before, in priest training.

RODNEY

What is it?

VESPAEN

It's the symbol of the Shadow Guardian. He's part of the Darc'Aegan religion. It's supposedly a cult that practices Shadow magick. Funny to actually see that the cult really exists.

RODNEY

Why is that funny?

VESPAEN

Because the Shadow Guardian is only mentioned in myths. There's no scripture that proves he even exists.

RODNEY

So? That never stopped people before from worshiping something that doesn't exist.

Vespaen looks up at Rodney with an annoyed glare in response, who exchanges a cheeky smile in return.

PIATT

Whoever it was, they were watching us.

VESPAEN

Probably because we're seeking the sage. He's the last living person who knows anything of the old forbidden texts.

Just then, the RUMBLING of horses can be heard approaching. The heroes stand and watch as a battalion of paladins ride down the dirt road.

MELLOS

They're in attack formation.
Something's up.

Mellos runs toward the road, waving his hands to flag down Lucas, who is leading them.

Lucas comes to a halt.

LUCAS

We received word that Merigold is

under attack.

Tyvien's eyes widen.

MELLOS

Demons?

LUCAS

The dragon of the northern mountains.

The heroes look dumbfounded.

MELLOS

I thought the dragon kept to himself
up in the mountains.

LUCAS

Yeah?

(Pulls the reins to get the horse
ready to move)

So did we. Hya!

Lucas kicks his horse and charges off, leading his men.

VESPAEN

Something's wrong. Dragons never
attack settlements. Somebody's gotta
be behind this.

MELLOS

(Looking to Tyvien)

We're going. Saddle up, everyone. I'll
be damned if anyone else is gonna die
today.

With all in agreement, the heroes saddle up and ride with
haste.

23 EXT. MERIGOLD FOREST ROAD

They gallop into the misty woods, hearing the sounds of
swords CLANGING and men shouting drawing closer.

The reach a clearing in the forest road where Lucas and his
paladins are fighting harpies.

The heroes come to a stop by Lucas who is on the ground
dodging a Harpy's advance. She swings and claws at him, only
catching his plate armor before he slices her stomach and she
hits the ground with a meaty THUD.

Lucas looks to Mellos.

LUCAS

What are you doing?! Get to Merigold!
We'll hold off these monsters!

MELLOS

(In rapid agreement)
Right.

The heroes gallop off again as Lucas is engaged by another creature.

As the heroes gallop further toward the road, a handful of harpies follow after them.

MELLOS

(Yelling through the forest wind
rushing against his face)
Tyvien, whatever happens, stay down!

TYVIEN

(Ducking down as best he can)
Alright!

Harpy 1 SWOOPS down and claws at Piatt, who leans herself back to avoid the attack. Piatt then hurls a ball of flame at the beast, bringing her to the ground, dragging in the dirt for several feet.

Harpy 2 lands on Piatt's horse behind her and grabs her. The creature attempts to lift her off when two throwing knives WHIRL towards them and SINK into the harpy's two eyes. The lifeless body of the creature falls limp off of the horse.

RODNEY

(Yelling back to Piatt)
You're welcome!

Mellos pushes his horse to ride faster. Two harpies pursue.

Harpy 3 swoops in to attack. Mellows retaliates and elbows her in the jaw. In the split second that she is startled, Mellos SLAMS her with his balled-up fist, knocking her back. Angry, Harpy 3 comes up from behind and takes hold of Mellos' armor and begins to left him off his horse.

MELLOS

(Reacting)
Ghh!

Mellos hooks his boot on the saddle straps to keep himself attached to his ride. He raises his arms to try and shake the beast off of him.

Harpy 4 moves in from the front and tries to take hold of Tyvien, who pulls back trying to keep out of her reach.

When Harpy 4 comes in closer and grabs onto Tyvien's shirt and begins pulling him off the horse.

TYVIEN

(Trying to grab onto Mellos)

Nooooo!!!

MELLOS

(With a frantic fury in his voice)

GOD NO! LEAVE HIM ALONE!!!

Mellos' eyes glow white, followed by his hands. Harpy 3, who Mellos is holding onto, IGNITES in an eruption of flame and feathers.

VESPAEN

(Awestruck by what he just saw)

Woah!

Vespaen, Rodney, and Piatt come to a halt and watch with awe.

Mellos stops his horse as he struggles to get Harpy 4 off of Tyvien.

MELLOS

(Struggling)

LET....HIM....GO!

With those words, Mellos thrusts his hand at her, and a spear of light IMPALES her, throwing her forward. With his other hand, he holds it out suspended and holds her still in the air.

PIATT

(At a loss for words)

....how is this possible?

Mellos puts his hands together in a fist while the pained creature attempts to remove the giant spike of light from her breast. As Mellos' fists glow, Harpy 4 begins convulsing in mid-air.

Mellos then forces his fists apart. Simultaneously, Harpy 4 violently TEARS completely in half, her entrails raining down

on the ground below.

The other three heroes watch, completely quieted by the sight. Finally, Rodney breaks the ice.

RODNEY
 (with a slightly impressed, yet in
 inebricated look and tone)
well *Shit*!

Mellos sits on his horse, hunched over with his arms holding Tyvien close in a protective manner. As Piatt slowly draws closer, she sees tears pouring down his face.

PIATT
 (Concerned)
 Mellos? ...are you okay?

The paladin turns his head to face her. Despite the flushed appearance, Mellos puts on a strong face.

MELLOS
 (In almost a whisper)
 ...yeah.

VESPAEN
 (Approaching)
 How are you able to do magic? Humans
 can't.

MELLOS
 (Sitting back up)
 I'm a half-elf....from my father's
 side.

RODNEY
 (Smiles sarcastically)
 Must be why you're so pretty. Right,
 Vesp?

Vespaen shoots Rodney a slight glare.

Suddenly, a loud dragon ROAR echoes through the forest, alerting the heroes.

MELLOS
 (Wiping his face)
 Come on, we have to get to Merigold!

They kick their horses back into gallop, continuing toward the city.

24 EXT. CITY OF MERIGOLD

When the heroes arrive, there are buildings aflame, townspeople in the streets helping the wounded, and panic.

TYVIEN

(Looking at the ruins in horror)
Aunt Gwen!!!

The boy hops off Mellos' horse and darts toward an elven woman, GWENYTH, 30s in appearance, who is trying to help one of the wounded. Gwenyth turns at the sound of Tyvien's voice and runs toward him, picking him up in a thrilled embrace.

The heroes approach her as she places Tyvien back down on the ground.

TYVIEN

Aunt Gwen, these people helped me.

GWENYTH

Where' the rest of the family?

In response, Tyvien lowers his gaze toward the ground in grief. Seeing this, Gwenyth lets out an empathic sigh as she approaches the quartet.

GWENYTH

Thank you. All of you. When the city was being attacked, I worried something happened to him.

MELLOS

Is everyone here alright?

GWENYTH

The dragon carried off several of the townspeople. This has never happened before.

Gwenyth steps forward, but stumbles as if weak. Mellos catches her and helps her back up.

MELLOS

Are you hurt?

GWENYTH

Just a little bit, but I'll be fine. Don't worry about me.

MELLOS

Here. Let us help you. Vesp!

Vespaen approaches he and lays his hands on her minor wounds, bringing healing to them.

GWENYTH

Thank you.

The voice of one of the townspeople rings out.

WOUNDED CITIZEN (O.S.)

(Sounding frantic)

Heyyyy!

The attention of all standing nearby are diverted towards a man with tattered clothing stumbling down the mountain path. The heroes run up to aid the man.

The man collapses and Vespaen immediately bends down to assist him.

WOUNDED CITIZEN

(Sounding weakened)

Some of us managed to escape. The dragon left us at the nest and disappeared for a while. I haven't seen it come back since then.

RODNEY

(To Mellos)

This might be our chance.

WOUNDED CITIZEN

The nest is just at the mountain's peak up ahead.

Without skipping a beat, the heroes make their way toward the mountain path.

25 EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - MOMENTS LATER

The heroes ride up the mountain path until they reach a place where the path forks. Mellos dismounts.

MELLOS

Looks like there's two ways up. Piatt, come with me. Rodney and Vesp, take the other path.

The party splits up and heads their assigned ways.

26 EXT. DRAGON MOUNTAIN PEAK - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney and Vespaen arrive at the peak of the mountain to find a large nest with several injured people crawling around in pain.

VESPAEN

On my goodness. Rodney, come with me.

They move over to the nearest injured person and Vespaen kneels down to cast healing prayers on their wounds.

INJURED VILLAGER

(Through bouts of pain while being healed)

We haven't seen the dragon come back in over an hour. We don't know where it is.

RODNEY

(Pulling bandages out of Vesp's pack)

Works good for us. Just gotta keep moving.

27 EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH

Mellos and Piatt, during their hike, see a small hut on another connected mountain range.

MELLOS

There it is: the Sage's hut.

PIATT

All the way over there? He really didn't want to be found easily, did he?

28 EXT. DRAGON MOUNTAIN PEAK

Vespaen finishes healing and bandaging the last remaining villager.

RODNEY

Think you can make it?

WOUNDED CITIZEN 2

(Struggling to his feet)

Y....yeah. I'm very grateful to the both of you.

As the wounded citizen limps away, Rodney and Vespaen turn to each other.

RODNEY

What can I say. You did good, kid.

VESPAEN

(Not yet noticing the large, menacing shadow towering over them)

I like how you call me a "kid" when I'm 178 years older than you.

RODNEY

Yeah, well you've got no city miles on you yet.

Just then, they hear a loud, visceral GROWL which captures their attention as they both look up to see that the dragon has returned to the nest to see them both standing there.

The dragon lets out a brief ROAR.

VESPAEN

(Frozen in terror)

...Uhhhm....this is bad, isn't it?

RODNEY

(Eyes wide, he pats Vespaen on the shoulder)

I dunno, why don't you find out while I run?

29 EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Piatt and Mellos are making their way back to the fork to attempt to find Rodney and Vespaen.

Suddenly, they hear Vespaen CALLING OUT.

VESPAEN

(Running up to them, flailing)

Guys! Guys!

MELLOS

(Reaching out to calm him)

What? What is it?

VESPAEN

(Frantic)

The dragon...

(Swallows hastily)
...the dragon came back.

MELLOS
Where's Rodney?

Just as Mellos finishes the question, the dragon's shadow SWOOPS over them, and they all look up to see the beast flying away with Rodney in its talons. The rain begins pouring and lightning CRACKLING.

RODNEY
(Yelling as loud as he can)
SHIIIIIIIIIIIT!

PIATT
(Sarcastically nonchalant)
Oh look, there he is.

MELLOS
(watching, jaw-dropped)
Oh god, let's go!

PIATT
How?

VESPAEN
Like this!

Vespaen holds his arms out, his hands glowing. Suddenly a celestial unicorn appears.

VESPAEN
Everybody get on!

They mount the beast as it picks up off the ground and takes flight, the heroes aboard its back.

30 EXT. THE STORMY SKY

The unicorn soars through the rain under the dark clouds as a thunderbolt CLASHES in the air. The dragon is well in-sight but still a bit far.

MELLOS
(Yelling through the rain and wind)
We need to get closer!

Vespaen jerks the reins up and down to hasten the creature. The unicorn darts through the sky, catching up to the

humongous dragon that is still unaware of their presence.

They finally position themselves over the dragon and fly in unison with its speed.

PIATT

(Yelling through the wind while she shields her face)

So what now?

MELLOS

(Drawing closer to her so he doesn't have to yell)

Can you use Lightning Magic?

VESPAEN

She's a Fire Mage.

PIATT

(Her facial expression seeming solemn and contemplative)

Yes, I can.

Vespaen's pulls his head back in surprise.

MELLOS

Good. Keep it ready just in case.

VESPAEN

Well, whatever we're going to do, we need to do it quickly before this flying summon spell wears off.

PIATT

Wait, just in case of what?

Without an answer, Mellos draws his sword and leaps from the unicorn down onto the flying dragon, slicing through the falling rain on his way down.

With a meaty THUNK, the Paladin lands on the dragon's back, his sword sunk into its spine. The dragon lets out a YELP as it turns to barrel over itself.

MELLOS

(Quickly grabbing hold of his planted sword)

Woah!

PIATT
 (Yelling through the high winds)
 Mellos!

Mellos holds tightly onto the sword, his body suspending in air as the dragon spins through the winds trying to shake him off.

After a few spins, the beast straightens out its flight pattern, Mellos still barely holding on. He pulls a rope from his side pack and ties it around the sword's hilt and, holding tightly to the rope, begins scaling down the side of the flying beast.

Vespaen tugs on the unicorn's reins to make it speed up. They inch their way up the dragon's side until they are flying almost parallel with its head.

VESPAEN
 (To Piatt)
 Trying to keep a good visual on him.

Just then, the dragon glances to its side and sees the shining unicorn flying parallel with it and let's out a GRUNT.

Then, shifting its entire trajectory, the dragon swoops toward Vespaen and Piatt.

PIATT
 Vesp, pull away! PULL AWAY!

The dragon SPEWS a geyser of flame toward them just as Vespaen pulls the reins back, stopping the unicorn in time to avoid being hit.

Swooping upward, the dragon begins pursuing them back in the direction they came from.

VESPAEN
 (Looking backward while
 maintaining control of the
 ethereal beast)
 This is bad bad bad Bad Bad BAD...

PIATT
 (In a panic)
 Pick it up! Go faster!

VESPAEN
 Hold on to me!

Without even asking questions, Piatt immediately wraps her arms around Vespaen's midsection as he grips the reins tight and pulls back as hard as he can.

The unicorn performs a somersault. As soon as it is upside-down, Piatt and Vespaen lift off of the saddle, her holding onto him while he holds onto the reins.

PIATT
(Yelling in terror)
AHHHHHH! VESP!

The beast stabilizes itself behind the dragon, who is still flying straight forward now that the unicorn no longer obstructs its path. Vespaen and Piatt both descend back onto the unicorn's back.

PIATT
(slapping Vespaen's back)
I hate you, Vesp! I hate you! Don't
you ever do that again!

VESPAEN
(turning his head back to her)
Hang on.

Upon lowering himself to the creature's underbelly, Mellos sees Rodney firmly gripped, writhing around to get his arms loose.

RODNEY
(his ponytail blown loose, and his
hair flapping in his face)
I was just thinking it was about time
for you to rescue me!

MELLOS
Are you hurt?

RODNEY
(giving him a pained "...really?"
look)
I don't know. I haven't had time to
really examine my mangled body yet!

MELLOS
Okay. We're getting you out of here.

RODNEY
(wriggling some more)
Works for me!

Mellos looks up to Piatt and Vespaen and waves to get the mage's attention.

PIATT
 (to Vespaen)
 Is this going to work?

VESPAEN
 I'll bubble them first, then cast the spell.

Piatt nods.

Vespaen then, reaching his hand out towards the dragon, casts the Bubble of Protection spell to protect Mellos and Rodney, encasing them safely.

Piatt raises her hands. With a glow of magical power emitting from her palms, a violent CLASHING of thunder erupts around them. In a quick thrust, she throws her arms forward, and lightning bolts from her hands onto Mellos' buried sword.

The lightning travels throughout the blade and, being stuck in the dragon's back, begins to electrocute the beast's insides, stopping the dragon's heart from beating.

The beast lets out a HOWL of pain as it begins to lose altitude. The talons loosen their grip and Rodney starts falling out of its grasp before Mellos grabs onto his arm and holds on to him and the rope.

As the dragon nose dives, it starts taking the other two heroes with it down through the clouds. Vespaen and Piatt immediately get the unicorn to rush downward towards it.

PIATT
 What now?

VESPAEN
 I was hoping Mellos had a plan.

Piatt gives him a frightful stare.

VESPAEN
 Right now we have another problem...

PIATT
 (Like "Oh god now what?")
 What?!

The unicorn vanishes from beneath the two, and they quickly

find themselves in free fall.

PIATT
AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

The dragon begins falling faster than Mellos and Rodney, pulling them down until the sword finally comes loose from the beast's back as their bubble of protection dissipates. By this time, Vespaen and Piatt catch up to them and the four are in free fall together.

RODNEY
VESPAEN, BUBBLE US!

VESPAEN
(panicked)
I CAN'T! I'M ON COOLDOWN!

PIATT
(completely freaked out)
ARE YOU FUCKING SERIOUS?!

MELLOS
(trying to remain calm, difficult
as it is)
How much longer, Vesp?

VESPAEN
THREE MORE SECONDS!

RODNEY
Three more seconds and we'll be a
puddle of puke on the ground!

VESPAEN
(clenching his eyes shut)
TWO!

The ground rapidly approaches.

VESPAEN
.....ONE!

PIATT
GODDAMNIT, JUST DO IT!

At the very last second, Vespaen puts the bubble over the four of them, just in time for the bubble to absorb the fall and pop, allowing the heroes to land on the ground without sustaining damage.

31 EXT. GRASS FIELD - CONTINUOUS

After rolling around in the grass, shaken up by the fall, Piatt sits up.

PIATT

Seriously....you DO know we could've been killed right there!

VESPAEN

Well, we weren't, so please shut up!

Piatt turns to face her husband, dumbfounded.

PIATT

Did...you just tell me to shut up?

VESPAEN

(angrily)

You don't know how much I have to put up with, living with you! All you know how to do is complain and treat me like dirt! There's only so much of that I can take, you know!

PIATT

Uh...

VESPAEN

(cutting her off)

And for the record, I just SAVED our lives right there, so get off my case and stop acting like some crazy.....

(beat, he's searching for the right word)

....dingleberry!

PIATT

(not sure how to react)

..."dingleberry"?

RODNEY

(still in pain, but wanting to interject his sarcasm)

...Go easy on her now, Vesp.

VESPAEN

(standing up, holding his hand to his bruised waist as he stumbles away)

I'm going over here for a bit. Just

leave me alone!

Piatt continues her dumbfounded stare.

Rodney helps Mellos to his feet.

RODNEY
(to Mellos)
So where are we?

MELLOS
It's a few miles back to Merigold
City. How are you? Are you okay to
walk?

RODNEY
(trying to remain with a sense of
humor, despite being in pain)
I'm a bit sore, but I think I'll be
alright. If I drop dead, though, blame
the healer.

They begin their hike back to Merigold, with Piatt still a
bit confused about what just happened with Vespaen.

CROSSFADE

32 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - NIGHT

The rain begins to patter down softly as the moonlight
shimmers from the muddy ground. The tavern, one of the few
buildings still standing, seems to be busy with the cityfolk
who lost their homes.

33 INT. MERIGOLD TAVERN

The sound of drunkards bustling fills the room. The heroes
sit at a table together, trying to shake the adventure they
just had. Young Tyvien and Gwenyth sit on the other side of
the table from them.

Lucas and his paladin unit are getting drunk nearby and
celebrating the death of the dragon that they didn't even
contribute to despite the fact that they were originally
tasked with it.

Lucas stumbles over to the table where the heroes sit.

LUCAS
(drunk as a skunk)
Well, Mellos, I gotta hand it to you.

You guys did great!

RODNEY

Thanks. I'm glad to know that you appreciate us doing the job that YOU were paid to do.

LUCAS

Hey...I take a break where I can get 'em, you know?

RODNEY

That's great...very noble of you. I'm sure the bards and minstrels will be singing your praises to the end of time.

LUCAS

I ain't talkin' to you anyway, rogue. I'm talkin' to Mellos here.

Mellos sits quietly, his hands on the table making fists of anger.

RODNEY

Funny, 'cause it doesn't look like he's interested in talking to YOU!

LUCAS

I said I'm not talking to you, rogue!

(beat)

What's the matter, Mellos? Are you still hating me? You still blaming me?

Mellos begins to breathe heavily from his nose like a snake ready to strike. Rodney, acknowledging this, stands and puts his hand to Lucas' breastplate.

RODNEY

Look: take a walk, chum. Mellos is obviously looking very scary right now, and my guess is that you have a lot to do with that.

LUCAS

(peeping his head over Rodney's shoulder, still talking to his former friend)

So is that how it is? Even after all these years, you still can't accept responsibility for your own sin?

Mellos SWOOSHES his arm over and grabs a throwing knife from Rodney's belt.

RODNEY
(caught off-guard)
Shit!

Mellos then quickly flies into Lucas, pinning him up against the wooden wall with the knife to Lucas' throat.

MELLOS
(Whispering in Lucas' face with
bitter hatred)
Give me a reason to kill you, son of a
bitch!

The whole tavern quiets at the sight of this and turns to watch.

VESPAEN
(concerned and not wanting to make
things worse)
...Mellos?

PIATT
Mellos, please put it down.

The look of rage leaves Mellos' eyes and is quickly replaced with shame and defeat as he slinks off of the drunk paladin and falls back into his seat.

LUCAS
(brushing his neck to ensure he
was not cut)
So it IS like that, then. You've
reduced from an honorable holy warrior
to a 'Prodigal Son', taking in the
company of a murderer and a couple of
Elven rejects!

Lucas begins to storms out the tavern door.

VESPAEN
(weighing whether or not to feel
insulted)
..."Elven rejects"?

PIATT
Tyvien, honey? Stay here with your
aunt.
(looking ahead of herself with)

(annoyance in her eyes)
 ...I've got an ass to kick!

She gets out of her chair and makes her way out the door.

The tavern returns to their jabber as the heroes look back to each other. Mellos is sitting in his chair stunned with shame as Rodney moves to sit next to him.

A FLOOF of a fireball rages after Lucas as he speeds away on his horse, with Piatt yelling indiscernably at him as she continues to release magic at him..

RODNEY
 (trying to snap Mellos out of it,
 with Piatt's bedlam in the
 background)
 So what's the gameplan tomorrow,
 Mellos?

Mellos doesn't answer. His eyes just focus on the splinter-
 ridden table he's sitting at.

RODNEY
 Going to see the Sage? Is that still
 the plan?

Mellos finally looks up.

MELLOS
 Yeah.....sorry, Rodney. I mean yes.
 Excuse me, I need a moment.

Mellos stands and walks outside. After exchanging a glance to Vespaen, Rodney follows after him.

34 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - ALLEY

Mellos sits by a well just outside of an alley. Rodney sits next to him.

RODNEY
 Any faster with that draw, and I would
 have recommended you join the Thieve's
 Guild. That was pretty slick!

MELLOS
 (gives a half-hearted smile to
 appreciate Rodney's humor)
 Thanks.

RODNEY

So what's up with that Lucas guy?
Aside from the fact that he's a real
turd?

MELLOS

(looking down to the ground)
I don't want to talk about it.

RODNEY

Alright. I can respect that, brother.
(beat)
I know it's none of my business, but
you've got some heavy shit weighing
you down, and you really don't wanna
go your whole life never addressing
it.

MELLOS

...you have no idea...

RODNEY

Life's too short for that, Mellos.
It's just too damn short to let
sadness keep you away from the good
things.

Mellos' half-smile then turns into a genuine smile.

RODNEY

Look at me. I spent many of my growing-
up years on the street. I've seen some
messed up things. Been through a lot,
and you know what I learned?

MELLOS

What's that?

RODNEY

That life's a piece of shit, when you
look at it.

MELLOS

(like "oh great, thanks for the
pearls of wisdom there")
it just seems like, to you, life's a
laugh and death's a joke...

Rodney quietly shrugs.

RODNEY

It's true.

Mellos gives him a smirk.

RODNEY

You gotta have a sense of humor,
Mellos. If things go wrong, laugh it
off. Beats a miserable existence, any
day!

MELLOS

Look, I appreciate what you're trying
to do, Rodney. It's just....not that
simple. I did something...
(the look on his face turns pained)
....something I can never forgive
myself for...

RODNEY

(nodding)

You and me both, brother. And there's
a solution for that, too...

Rodney pulls out his whiskey flask, undoes the top, and offers Mellos a sip. The paladin, without wavering, accepts and take a big swig. He then lurches forward and begins COUGHING, extra booze dripping from his lips.

RODNEY

(patting him on the back)

There ya go.

(takes a swig and puts the rest
away)

We might need you to get your own
flask, though, 'cause you ain't
keepin' mine!

Mellos laughs between his cough while Rodney gets him to stand.

RODNEY

(as they walk back toward the
tavern)

Come on, let's get some rest. We have
a hike in the mountains tomorrow.

CROSSFADE

35 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD TO SAGE - DAY

The heroes walk down the mountain path headed toward the Sage's Hut.

CROSSFADE

36 EXT. SAGE'S HUT

The quartet arrive at the Sage's Hut. It's a quiet little mud hut atop the rocky way. The wind blows gently across the deadened leaves of the broken-off branches that make up the roof.

A scraggly-looking man, the SAGE, 70s, comes blindly wobbling out, dressed in tattered clothing, appearing very common and unassuming.

SAGE

I haven't had visitors in a long time.
Where have you all come from?

MELLOS

(stepping ahead of everyone else)
We've come to you from His Majesty
King Lysander of Gheldrynn. We need to
know how we can seal away the Darkness
that was unleashed on this land by
Lord Gris.

SAGE

Are you truly seeking a way to seal
away the Darkness, prodigal son? Or
are you perhaps seeking to add to it?

Rodney, Vespaen, and Piatt look at each other in confusion. Mellos, on the other hand, gets a look of apprehension, though he remains silent.

MELLOS

The land is being swallowed up by
demonic possessions, and monsters
attacking villages. This cannot be
allowed to continue for the people of
this land to live in peace.

SAGE

(after a bit of a pause)
...come with me.

The Sage leads them inside his hut.

37 INT. SAGE'S HUT

On the inside, they see an altar set up with candles, runes, and pages with scribbling on them strewn about.

The Sage walks over to his large grimoire laying upon a very worn wooden desk by his makeshift bed. Holding his hands over the desk, the book opens on its own and the pages flip over to one very specific page. The old man then places his finger on the page.

SAGE

Take the book, paladin.

Mellos lifts the book carefully, accounting for its age, and brings it to the altar. He quickly flips the book to a different spell he saw as the pages went past earlier. He then begins to stare intently at the spell as if preparing himself for what he's about to do.

The Sage walks around them as he speaks.

SAGE

The altar is ready for you to use. The spell I have given you is to cast away the Darkness by evoking the power of Velaaren.

RODNEY

Surprised it's that easy. So if this kind of knowledge is the key to our quest, why is it hidden here instead of being displayed safely in a church or magic school somewhere?

SAGE

Because, as Lord Gris clearly showed, there is much knowledge that can be abused.

(beat)

Now, lock your hands with one another in a circle and allow whichever of you is ordained to call upon Velaaren.

Everyone complies and locks their hands together in a circle.

VESPAEN

Should I read off the words, then?

MELLOS

(almost cutting him off)
I'll take care of it.

SAGE

Doesn't matter who reads the words so long as they are ordained by the church.

(beat)

I will wait outside for you to finish.

After the Sage goes outside into the night, the heroes look to each other as Mellos looks down at the book.

MELLOS

Everyone look up to the sky.

The other three do as instructed as Mellos looks down at the book. His eyes display a look of sadness and resolve as he continues the ritual.

MELLOS

Velaaren kolay deesa lay. Foreh su kolata seeloh nerateh.

Vespaen tilts his head back down, a look of grave concern on his face.

VESPAEN

...what? Mellos....this is...

Vespaen's voice is drowned out by a BOOMING dark, low voice that vibrates the hut.

DARK VOICE

YOU CALL UPON A POWER NOT MEANT FOR YOU, MORTAL!

Everyone's attention is immediately diverted from the ritual.

DARK VOICE

HAVE YOU NOT LEARNED THE LAST TIME?!

Mellos continues CHANTING, his voice drowned by a strong magical wind as it SWEEPS around their circle, illuminating the room with bright light.

PIATT

(yelling over the noise)
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

VESPAEN

(yelling back with a terrified
tone)

HE'S CASTING A LIFE TRADE SPELL!!

The torrential wind overwhelms them as they disappear entirely from sight. As soon as they dematerialize, the winds stop, leaving behind a dead silence.

38 EXT. SAGE'S HUT

The Sage sits on a worn wooden log outside by a campfire he had set. With the newly-set silence, he bows his head with a look of sadness in his vacant eyes.

Suddenly, four ominous figures exit the hut. They have the appearance and likeness of Mellos, Rodney, Vespaen, and Piatt but they are dressed in shadowy dark clothing and their eyes showing a dark glow. The four of them, DARK MELLOOS, DARK RODNEY, DARK VESPAEN, and DARK PIATT surround the Sage by the campfire.

SAGE

(seemingly to himself though he
knows he's in bad company)
It seems that even the noblest of
heroes can fall prey to selfish
ambitions. My heart has once again
been saddened.

DARK MELLOOS

Do you blame me? Would you not do the
same in my place?

SAGE

I would not have endangered the world
to regain that which I lost.

DARK PIATT

(snidely)
Why not? What good is the world,
anyway?

DARK VESPAEN

(circling around the campfire)
It's full of pain and
disappointment...the broken promises
of a god you can only hope hears your
pleas!

Dark Rodney's face gleams silently with a devilish smile as

he pulls a filthy, rusted dagger and puts it to the old man's throat.

SAGE

I only hope your counterparts find the redemption they need. Only then will there be hope for this world.

Dark Rodney lets out on last devious smile as his hand motions suggests that he's made the killing move.

CUT TO BLACK

39 EXT. SHADOWY PLAIN

The four actual heroes awaken in strange surroundings. The ground they lay upon is like black meadow grass, and the sky above them a parchment brown color with dark, translucent clouds waving across them.

RODNEY

Where the hell are we?

PIATT

(looking around in bewilderment)
I....really don't know...

Mellos glances around, a look of conviction on his face. Vespaen stands with his head tilted downward.

VESPAEN

(an angry growl in his voice)
...Mellos...

Mellos walks up to the Elven priest. Vespaen then starts hammering his fists onto Mellos' armor angrily.

VESPAEN

(furious but crying while he yells)
What were you thinking?! You want to kill yourself?! Is that what you want?! You want to die?!!!

Mellos stands quietly, his face turning to that of shame as he puts his hand on the back of Vespaen's head. The priest ceases his onslaught of pummeling and just sobs, his forehead pressed to the abdomen of the paladin's breastplate.

VESPAEN

(sobbing)
Why would you want to die? Why? Why

would you leave us all alone?!

Rodney and Piatt look at each other with confusion.

RODNEY

(to Mellos and Vespaen)

Okay, clearly we missed a couple episodes here. Care to fill us in?

PIATT

(filling in, staring in disbelief)

It was a Life Trade spell that Mellos was casting.

(beat)

He was trying to sacrifice himself to bring someone back.

Rodney squints his eyes.

MELLOS

(at a loss for words)

I.....I'm sorry.

RODNEY

"Sorry" ain't getting us out of this. Mind explaining to us what the hell is going on, since you got us into this with you?

PIATT

You were planning this all along, weren't you? You were in the ranks of the church, so you knew damn well about Darc'Aegan texts containing Life Trade spells, didn't you?

RODNEY

Wait....so who were you trying to bring back?

Mellos stares in shameful contemplation.

MELLOS

.....my son.

RODNEY

...your son.....you had a son? I didn't know that was allowed in the Order.

MELLOS

(with a grievous tone)

He was.....taken from me.

(beat)

He didn't deserve that.

(beat)

I would have done anything to take his place...

RODNEY

(as the sarcastic voice of reason)

Yeah, well, I'm sure Lord Gris felt the same way about his son. And now you've just done the same damn-fool thing he did.

PIATT

(in realization)

...which means...

VESPAEN

(finishing her sentence as he pulls his face from Mellos' breastplate)

...that right now, there are four dark counterparts of us in our realm.

(beat)

If you thought Lord Gris' power and presence was terrible, imagine that there are now four of us with equal power and equal hatred now loose to continue what Gris started.

RODNEY

Wait, "in our realm"? Come on, English, Doc!

VESPAEN

According to Darc'Aegan myth, we are now in the Shadow Realm, the place where Darkness resides. It's a plane of banishment for those who violate the laws of magic.

RODNEY

...As if that explanation made any more sense. So then, if we were "banished" here, why are there dark counterparts over in our realm?

VESPAEN

Because nothing, in the laws of magic, can be created or destroyed. We can only manipulate the energies that already exist. That's what arcane magic is all about!

RODNEY

Okay...and....dark counterparts?

VESPAEN

If we were to be banished from our own realm, something would have to take our place in an even exchange. Because this is a realm of Darkness, the Darc'Aegan texts say that the darkest corners of our personal nature are manifested here, and casting the magic of this realm results in banishment in which an even exchange is made.

RODNEY

(blank stare)

Uh huh....so.....long story short: we're stuck here!

VESPAEN

Well, the myth does say that there is a way to free oneself from this place...but the only record of anyone ever successfully doing so....was the write of the Darc'Aegan texts.

RODNEY

So what does "Darc'Aegan" mean, anyway? It's obviously centered around Darkness, as you say.

VESPAEN

(with a solemn look)

In our ancient Elven tongue, the words literally translate as: "Dark Embrace".

The three of them look at each other in a reverent curiosity of those words.

Finally, Mellos steps forward.

MELLOS

Come on, everyone. We're getting out

of here.

RODNEY

(in his usual sarcasm)

Sure, Mellos. Just lead the way toward wherever we see an "Exit" sign.

MELLOS

(still walking forward with a determination on his face)

We have to find the Shadow Guardian. He'll know how we can escape this place.

PIATT

(to Mellos)

Do you have any idea where you're going?

MELLOS

No, but staying here isn't getting us any further.

Suddenly, a small, grunt voice SHRIEKS.

GUSTAFSON

You guys! AH!

The heroes turn around to see Gris' little imp, Gustafson, stopped dead in his tracks and shivering in fear.

PIATT

Hey, you're that little imp Lord Gris had.

GUSTAFSON

And now I'm unemployed, thanks to you! I have little implings to feed, you know! How easy do you think THAT is on Shadow Guardian Assistance?

MELLOS

(interjecting)

Do you know where we can find the Shadow Guardian?

GUSTAFSON

Oh, let me see...of COURSE I know where to find him!

VESPAEN

Good, then you're going to take us there!

Gustafson gives Vespaen a "really?" stare.

GUSTAFSON

Yeah...sure... I live to friggin' serve...!

CROSSFADE TO MONTAGE

40 EXT. SHADOW REALM MONTAGE

- The heroes follow Gustafson through the Shadow Realm.

- They walk by what appear to be shadowed manifestations of people living in the other world. They appear miserable and sorrowful.

PIATT

Look at all these people....they seem...unhappy.

RODNEY

Whoever had happiness in their dark side?

PIATT

What about you? As an assassin, I would imagine you put your dark self forward.

RODNEY

....Only when I run out of whiskey.
(beat, as he reaches for his flask)
...speaking of which...

- They continue to trek across barren plains of black ground and brown sky.

- They finally reach a large stone temple.

41 EXT. SHADOW GUARDIAN TEMPLE

The heroes stand outside of a stone temple that towers over the nothingness that surrounds it.

GUSTAFSON

Here you go: the Shadow Guardian's temple. Is there anything else I can

do for you? Interest you in a dessert while we're at it?

RODNEY

(winking to the imp as he enters behind Mellos)

Wait out here for us, until we're done!

GUSTAFSON

Alright, fine! Geez!

The quartet enter the temple, leaving the imp standing impatiently outside.

42 INT. SHADOW GUARDIAN TEMPLE

The heroes slowly and cautiously walk through the empty atrium, completely devoid of any furnishings; it is one giant empty room with stone columns supporting the roof and a lone, dark open door toward the back.

VESPAEN

Where is he?

Suddenly, the same booming voice RESOUNDS in the atrium.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

I am here, with you.

MELLOS

Show yourself to us!

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

I have no need to take a form for you. I am the Shadow, and this is my domain.

MELLOS

You know why we're here, then?

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

You are here because your own selfishness bore consequences. You were tasked with restoring order and balance between our worlds, and instead you allowed your flesh mind to speak for your spirit and sought your own agenda, even calling upon a forbidden magic.

(beat)

And now you come to me seeking forgiveness for your sin and beseeching me so that I may send you back to your own world and close the doors of Darkness that mankind has opened.

RODNEY

(shrugging nonchalantly)
...Well, yeah, that pretty much sums it up.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

There is only one way to leave this place and undo what your kind has wrought upon your world: you must pass my trial.

VESPAEN

What do you need us to do?

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

(speaking slowly)
What you were originally sent to do: restore the balance of Shadow and Light. But to face your Shadow, you first must KNOW your Shadow. And that part of the trial begins in the next room.

(beat)

Once you have seen your own Darkness, you will be sent back to your world to embrace it. Only then will your Shadow return to this world and the balance be restored. Until you complete this task, you will belong to me and to my realm.

(beat)

It is only by embracing your Darkness that you find true redemption and make yourself whole, and I will shut the doors that one of your own had previously opened.

The heroes look to the dark room ahead of them with a dreadful anticipation. Eventually, they begin to walk toward the door until the four of them enter.

43 INT. GHELDRYNN HOLY CHURCH ILLUSION

They enter an illusion of the Gheldrynn Holy Church

sanctuary. There are many paladins lined up by the main aisle, in a respectful stance, holding their broadswords into the ground. A young FALSE MELLOS walks down the aisle.

MELLOS

This is....this was my initiation ceremony. When I joined the Order.

The crowd of priests standing to the side dissipates except for a FALSE VESPAEN and a handful of other priests standing around them.

VESPAEN(O.S.)

Hey, it's me! I was there, too.

The False Vespaen stares at Mellos with stars in his eyes.

FALSE VESPAEN (V.O.)

It's a shame Mellos is now becoming a paladin. I'll miss seeing him around here.

VESPAEN

(embarrassment beginning to overwhelm him)

...oh no...

FALSE VESPAEN (V.O.)

I'll miss his face...his smile...his beautiful brown eyes...ah, and who am I kidding? He has a nice butt, too.

Piatt shakes her head with a light chuckle. Rodney smiles as he nods. Mellos stands and stares with a light confusion in his face.

The FALSE PRIEST in front of False Vespaen turns his head.

FALSE PRIEST

Vesp! Quit poking me!

FALSE VESPAEN

I'm not touching you!

FALSE PRIEST

(turning his body around)

Well what do you keeping poking me with.....Oh My GOD! What in the world...?!

All of the other nearby priests turn to face them, with a

grossed-out look on their faces before everything goes dark again.

44 INT. GHELDRYNN HOLY CHURCH - PRAYER ROOM ILLUSION

The set fades back in with False Vespaen being brought before a FALSE HIGH PRIEST.

FALSE HIGH PRIEST

(in a judgmental, admonishing tone)

Vespaen Illid...you have been a priest here for many years. You have spent those years studying the texts and doctrine of our faith - the mandates of Velaaren.

(beat)

...And yet I find, from our other priests, that you have been in violation of our creeds for all this time. The law of Velaaren states that man is not meant to lie with other men.

FALSE VESPAEN

But I haven't, Great Father. I have kept myself pure.

FALSE HIGH PRIEST

Yet you lust for one. Your desire for Sir Mellos alone is as much a transgression as the act of lying with him!

False Vespaen hangs his head in quiet shame.

FALSE HIGH PRIEST

I am afraid this leaves me no choice. By the mandate of our doctrine, I must release you from the clergy. It grieves me, Vespaen, it really does...but I must remain faithful to my vows as you have not been faithful to yours.

FALSE VESPAEN

(with a defeated tone)

...I understand, Great Father.

FALSE HIGH PRIEST

You may keep your robes, as you have no other clothing to call your own,

but I must reclaim your armlet of service.

False Vespaen removes the golden bracelet from his arm and hands it over respectfully.

Everything grows dark again.

45 EXT. GHELDRYNN CITY STREETS ILLUSION - NIGHT

False Vespaen walks down the empty city street, his head hung low.

FALSE VESPAEN (V.O.)

I don't get it...where did I go wrong?
I can't help who I'm attracted to. How
can Velaaren make someone like this
and then punish him for what he
naturally is? How is that right?

(beat, then a tone change to
apologetic)

No, I can't let myself think like
that. Velaaren knows my thoughts. I
just wish...he wouldn't hold this
against me. Even if I find myself
desiring to be with Mellos, I've kept
myself pure to make up for it. Is that
not good enough, Velaaren...? What can
I do to be accepted by you? ...I feel
as though I've left the priesthood
with only questions and no answers...

False Vespaen walks by the real Vespaen, who is watching his old self with an honest empathy, even if it is combined with an immense level of embarrassment.

Rodney and Piatt watch with an empathy as well, and Mellos looks over to Vespaen with a sympathetic look.

Finally, all fades black again.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

A priest who questions the
priesthood...his own creed that he's
followed since his younger years. Such
a person is not uncommon in the
clergy.

(beat)

But I sense that there is another who
endured hardship with the school of
her upbringing as well.

Piatt looks up, her eyes a little wider.

46 EXT. MAGIC SCHOOL COURTYARD ILLUSION - DAY

FALSE PIATT is sitting on a bench in a beautiful garden courtyard, her face buried in a spell book. Then, a very handsome young Elven man with evenly-parted silky brown hair, FALSE KIERAN, 20s in appearance, sits next to her. He wears the same necklace that was earlier seen being hung up by Piatt in the tent before she'd gone to bed.

He sits next to her and they two of them appear to be talking and smiling although no words can be heard.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)
 (with an enamored tone)
 I loved seeing your face in the
 afternoons. Your beautiful green eyes.
 Your voice was always as soft as your
 touch. I only wish you were in my
 class.

The real Piatt watches with a sense of sad yearning in her eyes.

Everything fades to black.

47 EXT. MAGIC SCHOOL ROOF ILLUSION - SUNSET

False Piatt and False Kieran are on the roof, alone, looking around to make sure no one can see them up there, or what they're doing.

Again without hearing anything said, the two appear to talk and False Kieran begins showing Piatt how to use Lightning magic. She gives it a try, only to conjure small, diminutive bolts onto the stone roof. Kieran laughs at her struggle.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)
 (with a sense of endearment)
 We broke all the rules, you and I. The
 magic school forbade any mage to
 master more than one element, but we
 taught each other our own lessons
 anyway.
 (beat, then with a slight chuckle)
 You laughed at me for screwing it up,
 but I knew I'd be able to laugh at you
 when you'd have a hard time using Fire
 magic to heat a water kettle.

All fades black again.

48 EXT. MAGIC SCHOOL COURTYARD ILLUSION - NIGHT

False Piatt and False Kieran sit on the bench again, with the stars illuminating the courtyard next to magically-conjured lights in the nearby lampposts. False Piatt is leaned over, her head against his breast as he gently strokes her purple hair. He gives her his necklace with a golden orb charm on the end of it and encloses it in her palm.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)

I wish they would have arranged US to marry. I was happier with you, Kieran.

Everything begins to fade black again.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)

(with a grievous tone)

...why did they take you from me?

49 INT. MAGIC SCHOOL ATTIC ILLUSION

False Piatt and False Kieran are locked in individual cages in a large attic room which has some sort of magical altar set up. Two robed mages stand guard by the staircase leading back down into the school.

FALSE PIATT

(frightened)

Kieran...please talk to me.

FALSE KIERAN

(leaning back against the cage, a look of resignation on his face)

This was my fault.....I shouldn't have taught you my magic...They would have never found out, and you wouldn't be here like this.

FALSE PIATT

What are they going to do?

FALSE KIERAN

They're going to scar our minds...so we can't use any magic at all.

FALSE PIATT

(panicked)

Oh my god...

FALSE KIERAN

(looking at her, giving her a
strong smile)

Don't worry, Piatt...I won't let them
hurt you.

FOOTSTEPS can be heard as a line of specially-robed mages
come up the stairs in two single-file lines. False Piatt and
False Kieran both watch in fear.

Two of the mages walk over and open up the cages. As soon as
they exit the cages, the mages hold their hands behind their
back and escort them to the altar.

The FALSE ARCHMAGE stands before the altar and looks at the
accused.

FALSE ARCHMAGE

Kieran and Piatt...it has come to our
attention that the two of you have
broken the laws of our institution.
Magic is a very potent and very
volatile force to be wielded, which is
why we require our mages to wield it
responsibly.

(beat)

A mage with mastery over multiple
elements is a mage that is thirsty for
power. For this reason, it is
forbidden to study an element you were
not called upon to learn.

(beat)

For this reason, we must conduct the
scarring ritual to revoke your ability
to use magic.

FALSE KIERAN

Archmage! I'm the one responsible.
Please let me go first.

FALSE PIATT

(panicked)

Kieran, what're you doing?!

The mage behind Piatt restrains her tighter due to her
reaction.

FALSE ARCHMAGE

Very well, I will grant your request.
Please step forward.

The mage behind False Kieran walks him forward to the altar and presses the side of his head to the altar surface.

FALSE PIATT
 (crying out in desperation, the
 mage behind her pulling her back
 a few feet)
 Kieran, please! God...don't do this!

False Kieran, his head still pressed to the altar, tilts his head to look at her, a look of resignation on his face as he smiles.

FALSE KIERAN
 (in a soft tone)
 I love you, Piatt. Please forgive me
 for this.

False Piatt's eyes squint with fearful curiosity.

False Kieran, whose hands are being held behind his back, sends a small firebolt to the mage holding him down. The mage HOWLS in reaction to the heat as his robe is lit aflame.

FALSE ARCHMAGE
 Wh..? Stop him!

Without allowing delay, False Kieran whips around and fires a powerful lightning bolt at the floor by Piatt. The floor EXPLODES upward, knocking False Piatt and the mage behind her back. She tumbles toward the staircase. When she stands back up, she sees the mages restraining False Kieran.

FALSE KIERAN
 GO, PIATT! GET OUT OF HERE!

False Piatt begins to run down the stairs. False Kieran then conjures both fire and lightning in his fists, combines them, and fires them toward the ground at his feet.

A dome of fiery electricity splinters the room outward and dissipates when it BASHES the attic walls. The sound of the EXPLOSION causes False Piatt to stop in her tracks and look back.

Nothing above her but silence and a dark smoke pouring down the stairs from the room overhead.

The real Piatt watches, tears streaming down her face.

All goes black again.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)
 (crying as she says it)
 Why did you do it? Why did you
 sacrifice yourself...for me? I'm not
 worth it.....I'm not worth it...

Vespaen looks over to Piatt who is devastated. He walks over to her and tries to console her, but she does little to acknowledge him.

50 INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY ILLUSION

False Piatt and False Vespaen are getting married in front of a mixed crowd of relatives. No sounds are heard, except False Piatt's voice.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)
 (sorrowful)
 I wanted to cry...at my own wedding.
 This man wasn't you...he never could
 be you... How can I ever grow to love
 another...the way I loved you?

One last time for Piatt's trial, all fades black.

FALSE PIATT (V.O.)
 I've never felt so alone...

The party takes time to reflect on what just happened.

VESPAEN
 I'm sorry...I didn't know...

PIATT
 (surprisingly calm even if
 saddened)
 I never told anyone.

VESPAEN
 I know what it's like....to go through
 life knowing you'll never be able to
 be with the person you wanted to be
 with.

RODNEY
 (aloud, but to himself)
 Hell, so does every other married
 couple...

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

(to Piatt)

And so you let this poison you over the years. You allowed your loss to keep you from loving any other.

(beat)

It seems that none of you are a stranger to loss. I see that one of you took the matter of his loss into his own hands.

51 EXT. SMALL VILLAGE ILLUSION - MORNING

FALSE RODNEY appears as a 10 year old boy running through the farming village streets, chasing after chickens.

RODNEY

Hey, that's me! God, I remember having that much energy before.

False Rodney runs down the road toward a house standing out on a hill by a treeline.

Rodney's face drops.

RODNEY

...oh no....not this day...

52 EXT. YOUNG RODNEY'S HOUSE ILLUSION

The young boy arrives, running through the grass to get to the wooden house.

53 INT. YOUNG RODNEY'S HOUSE ILLUSION

When the boy enters the home, a look of horror strikes his face.

Both of his parents are hanging lifeless by nooses tied around the upper support of the house, and there are five men intruding in the house. Four of these men are henchmen and the fifth, standing supervising them, is the 30-year-old SNIDE MAN, a loan shark from the neighboring city.

FALSE SNIDE MAN

(turning to face the boy when he hears the footsteps)

Ah, Rodney. What are you doing here?
She said she sent you to her sister.

The boy is staring wide-eyed in shock and does not answer.

FALSE SNIDE MAN
 (looking around nervously)
 Nevermind. I'm sorry you had to see
 this. You weren't supposed to be here.

FALSE RODNEY
 Wh...what did you do...?

FALSE SNIDE MAN
 We've tried to...convince your father
 to give back what he owed us. He
 didn't.

False Snide Man kneels down and looks young False Rodney in
 the eyes.

FALSE SNIDE MAN
 Everyone learns, some sooner than
 later, that everything we do comes
 with consequences. Let this be a
 lesson for you.

FALSE HENCHMAN
 What is he doing here? Should we
 string him up, too?

FALSE SNIDE MAN
 (standing back up, still staring
 devilishly at young False Rodney)
 No, let the boy live. We did what we
 came to do. And it would serve this
 backwater community better if they
 knew that we collect our debts....one
 way or another.

The five men leave the house, leaving the shocked boy
 standing and watching his parents sway in the air.

Everything fades black.

FALSE RODNEY (V.0.)
 (in his adult voice)
 I never did forget that lesson. Kinda
 hard to imagine anyone would...given
 how I learned it.
 (beat)
 I never went back to that house ever
 again. I distanced myself as much as I
 could from that place...ran to the
 city. Grew up on the streets. Had to
 learn a lot of things the hard way.

54 INT. ASSASSIN'S GUILD ILLUSION

Teenage False Rodney is practicing his knife-throwing techniques, garbed in assassin's clothing.

FALSE RODNEY (V.0.)

I joined the Assassin's Guild when I was old enough. Figured my life wasn't going to amount to much anyway, so I might as well get the bastard back for what he did.

(beat)

...ohhhh, did I get him back!

CROSSFADE

55 INT. SNIDE MAN'S HOME ILLUSION

The False Snide Man, now in his 50s, is soaking in the bathtub of his fairly elegant bedroom.

He hears MUFFLED THUDS coming from the hall outside of his room. He turns his head to face the door.

The False Snide Man stands and wraps a towel around himself as he makes his way toward the door.

FALSE SNIDE MAN

(pressing his ear to the door)

...Brutus?

Suddenly, two knives SHINK through the door on both sides of his head, making him leap off his feet with surprise.

Then, the door BURSTS open and both bodyguards that were on the front-side of the door are pinned to it with the knives.

In walks False Rodney, now an adult. The False Snide Man backs away in fear until he falls over onto the floor. He then backs away from False Rodney toward the side of the tub he got out of.

FALSE SNIDE MAN

(fearful)

Who...who the hell are you?

False Rodney pulls out the decorated knife that was from his mother's kitchen when he was a kid. The False Snide Man recognizes the knife and looks at Rodney with wide eyes, quivering with fear.

FALSE RODNEY

Well let's see...someone once told me that 'everyone learns, some sooner than later, that everything we do comes with consequences', isn't that right? Well you seem like a learned man, so I guess this bears no explanation, right?

FALSE SNIDE MAN

(shivering)

P....please.....don't kill me.

FALSE RODNEY

(playing with the knife he's about to use)

I'm sure my father said the same thing while you're men were hanging him from the ceiling...and you have the GODDAMN nerve to think you deserve otherwise?!

Rodney makes a quick slash motion. Just as the knife makes contact, from the outside of the house, all that is heard is a quick attempt at a SCREAM that is abruptly cut off.

Everything fades black.

FALSE RODNEY (V.0.)

He was my first kill. Funny thing is...I don't remember feeling a damn bit of remorse about it. Son of a bitch got what was coming to him. I was just glad that, of all the people he'd murdered for business....it was me that got to bleed him out.

(beat)

Something happened after that day. The feeling of warm blood on my hands made the blood in my veins rush. It was a hell of a feeling, and I grew to like it. I started taking up more contracts with the Assassin's Guild until I outranked their top dogs. At that point, I was free to roam and accept contracts at will.

Everyone looks at Rodney, curious about what they've heard.

RODNEY

Well, I guess I walk closer to my dark side than you guys.

PIATT

That's awful, Rodney. How can you be so calm being reminded of such a thing?

RODNEY

One thing you learn on the streets: your past is your past. Ain't nobody in the present or the future who's going to care about your past, so why should you?

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

Because your past is part of what molds you into the person you become. Would you have discovered your secret bloodlust if that incident never happened to you as a child?

RODNEY

Well...I didn't go kicking cats around as a kid, so....I get your point.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

Sir Mellos de Madrienne...

Mellos looks around, his fears piqued by the addressing.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)

...Prodigal
Son...Transgressor...Infidel of his
Faith...or so you believe...

56 EXT. GHELDRYNN CITY STREETS ILLUSION - MORNING

FALSE MELLOOS walks through the busy streets.

There is a Elven woman, FALSE SYLVIA, 30s in appearance, who drops her laundry basket in the dusty, busy street. Mellos, looking in his 20s, dressed in more decorated Paladin's garments, spots her and stops in his tracks.

As she bends down to pick her clothing up from the dirt, Mellos bends down to assist her.

FALSE SYLVIA

(Standing back up with clothing in her arms)

Thank you, sir. You didn't really need to.

FALSE MELLOOS
 (Smiling as he places the clothes
 he picked up back in her basket)
 It's no trouble.
 (Beat)
 What's your name?

FALSE SYLVIA
 (Smiling back)
 Sylvia. I'm from the Market District
 here in Gheldrynn. Who are you?

FALSE MELLOOS
 My name is Mellos....Mellos de
 Madrienne.

FALSE SYLVIA
 I've been to Madrienne....it's a
 beautiful city. So....thank you for
 help, Mellos.

Everything fades black.

FALSE MELLOOS (V.O.)
 In that whole street, you were the
 most beautiful sight there was to see.
 I fell in love with you the moment I
 laid eyes on you.

57 EXT. MEADOW ILLUSION - MIDDAY

False Mellos and False Sylvia walk together talking, but no words are heard. It is evident from their conversation that they are spending time with each other and are very happy.

They arrive under a lone apple tree.

FALSE MELLOOS (V.O.)
 It was that day, under that very tree,
 that I asked for your hand in
 marriage.

The two move in and kiss one another, then all fades black.

58 EXT. HOLY ORDER CASTLE COURTYARD ILLUSION - MORNING

False Mellos walks with FALSE LUCAS in the courtyard.

FALSE LUCAS
 (laughing, but also concerned)
 You asked her to marry you?

FALSE MELLOS

(smiling)

Yes I did.

FALSE LUCAS

(his laugh becoming a bit more stern)

Don't get me wrong, Mellos: I want to see you happy as much as anyone else here, but it's against our Code for us to marry.

FALSE MELLOS

(as if thinking back to whether or not he should have said anything)

I know, Lucas. It's just...when we're together, I feel like Sylvia and I are the only two people in the world...and none of that Code stuff matters.

FALSE LUCAS

Heh, you're on the fast track to excommunication with talk like that.

(beat)

You know what, Mellos? You are probably the most unorthodox man I know, but you are damn good at what you do, and we've been friends since the dawn of time. Since you obviously can't marry yourself, I'll do it for you...but on ONE condition...

FALSE MELLOS

Okay...

FALSE LUCAS

...You need to make sure she lives outside the city, so no one here knows about you two. You can go visit her when we're in reserves, but we have to keep it a secret from the Order.

FALSE MELLOS

You'd do that for me?

FALSE LUCAS

(smiles)

What kind of friend would I be if I didn't?

Everything fades black.

FALSE MELLOES (V.O.)
 Believe it or not, Lucas stayed true
 to his promise.

59 EXT. GARDEN WEDDING ILLUSION - EVENING

False Lucas stands between False Mellos and False Sylvia,
 marrying the two of them. No words can be heard.

FALSE MELLOES (V.O.)
 It was one of the happiest days of my
 life. The day I looked at you, in that
 dress, with the rings on our
 hands...I'll never forget it.

CROSSFADE

60 INT. SYLVIA'S NEW HOME ILLUSION - SUNSET

False Mellos and False Sylvia make love to one another
 (tastefully shown), with the sun setting through the window
 behind them in their new home.

FALSE MELLOES (V.O.)
 We bought a house in Radcliffe. It was
 there that we made love for the first
 time.

Everything fades to black.

FALSE MELLOES (V.O.)
 Then something amazing happened...

A baby's CRY sounds through the blackness.

Visuals fading back into sight, Mellos takes the Elven
 newborn boy, FALSE SYLVETH, in his arms, smiling at the new
 life he held.

FALSE MELLOES (V.O.)
 ...I became a father.

The real Mellos' eyes gleam all over again as he experiences
 this moment again in front of his very eyes.

CROSSFADE

61 EXT. SYLVIA'S NEW HOME ILLUSION - OUTDOORS

False Mellos is showing young False Sylveth, now a young boy,
 how to use a bow and arrow, shooting at a target in a

haystack.

FALSE MELLOS (V.O.)
 (with a warm fondness in his voice)
 I took every chance I could to come
 see you. I felt more alive in the time
 I spent with you both than I ever have
 on the battlefield, fighting for the
 Holy Cause.

Everything fades black once again.

FALSE MELLOS (V.O.)
 (his voice becoming a pained
 whisper)
 ...And then it happened.

62 EXT. GHELDRYNN CITY STREETS ILLUSION - NIGHT

A loud CRASH of lightning brings the visuals in of the city streets of Gheldrynn at night, the rain pouring heavily onto the ground.

False Mellos and False Lucas are walking together, patrolling the city when a horseman gallops crazily toward them. False Lucas places his hand on his weapon just in case it's an attack.

When the horse reaches them, the rider nearly falls off. It's a panicked citizen from outside the city.

FALSE CITIZEN
 (frantic)
 P.p..p..please! You gotta...h...help
 us!

FALSE LUCAS
 (sternly)
 Calm down, sir! What happened?

FALSE CITIZEN
 A...a....a...Demon! It's attacking the
 city! It's....killing people
 and.....eating them!

FALSE MELLOS
 (taking the man's arm to keep him
 from falling backwards)
 Where is this happening?

FALSE CITIZEN
R..r..r.....Radcliffe!

Immediately, Mellos jaw fell open with shock.

FALSE MELLOOS
(looking at Mellos with a worried
look)
I'll get our horses ready!

MONTAGE

- False Mellos and False Lucas ride toward Radcliffe

63 EXT. RADCLIFFE STREETS ILLUSION

They both arrive at Radcliffe to see chaos and mayhem. Weapons ready in hand, they see dead bodies lying in the mud, parts of them eaten.

FALSE LUCAS
(looking down in horror and
disgust)
Can you believe this?! Demons
possessing children....it seems to
happen easier with those endowed with
magic.

Just then, SCREAMS are heard as people flee from a nearby corner of the city. False Mellos and False Lucas look over to see the possessed: a teenage False Sylveth.

False Mellos freezes in his tracks, shaking his head in disbelief with a look of horrified bewilderment on his face.

False Sylveth is feasting on a recent kill. As False Mellos draws closer, he calls out.

FALSE MELLOOS
(calling from a bit of a distance)
...SYLVETH?!

The demon-possessed boy stops in response. He slowly slinks upward and turns to face the one calling his name.

False Mellos steps forward, seeing the blood coating the boy's lower face.

FALSE MELLOOS
(mortified)
...oh god...

(he realizes that the body being eaten is Sylvia, Sylveth's own mother. His voice becomes more unstable and waving as tears stream down his face)
 ...oh no no no no no No No NO!
 SYLVETH!

FALSE LUCAS
 (yelling through the rain)
 YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO, MELLOS!

FALSE MELLOS
 WE CAN STILL SAVE HIM!

FALSE LUCAS
 LOOK AT HIS EYES! HE'S TOO FAR GONE!
 THIS ISN'T A LESSER DEMON WE'RE
 DEALING WITH. THE BOY IS LOST!

Not heeding False Lucas' words, False Mellos drops to his knees in the mud and reaches out, sword still in hand.

Suddenly, the boy's eyes clear up and he appears normal again.

FALSE MELLOS
 (a sound of hope returning slightly)
 SYLVETH? SYLVETH, COME TO ME!

FALSE SYLVETH
 (sounding normal as he slowly approaches his father)
 Dad? Dad, what's going on?

FALSE LUCAS
 (trying to talk sense)
 IT'S A TRICK, MELLOS! DON'T LET YOUR
 GUARD DOWN!!!

FALSE SYLVETH
 (now drawing close to False Mellos, his face filled with horror at the destruction and death around him)
 Dad...what is this? I'm scared.

FALSE MELLOOS

(putting on a fake smile to help
his son stay strong)

It's okay, son. Just come to me.

The boy's eyes suddenly turn black and he bares a mouth full of thin, long fangs.

FALSE LUCAS

(reactively)

MELLOOS!

The boy leaps toward False Mellos. In a reflex move, False Mellos pulls his sword up in defense, turning his face away while closing his eyes, and is pushed backward a bit.

There is a moment of quiet pause.

False Mellos slowly opens his eyes and looks forward. To his horror, his demon-possessed son is impaled on his sword, blood running from the wound and from the boy's mouth.

False Mellos can only stare in mortification, his mouth open and his face shivering, locked in a look of horror.

The possessed child then walks further into the blade toward his father until he reaches the cross guard of the sword, and wraps his arms around False Mellos in loving embrace. False Mellos keeps staring forward in shock, still shivering.

Finally, the boy's body goes limp in his embrace.

All sounds fade as mortified False Mellos embraces his dead son in return. Forgetting about the cold rain, he places his hand over the boy's head - holding it close to him as rocks his son's lifeless body back and forth and weeps uncontrollably. Even though no sounds can be heard, it is evident by the way his mouth stretches open that his harrowing cry-out into the darkened sky came from the depths of his very soul.

The real party stands and watches in silent posture. Piatt covers her mouth in shock and sympathy. Vespaen stands frozen with tears down his face as he watches with still eyes. Rodney is jawdropped while even the real Mellos is on his knees experiencing the agony all over again.

After a moment of grievous silence, False Lucas steps forward as False Mellos looks into his son's lifeless eyes.

FALSE LUCAS

(in a rigid, cold tone)

I told you you shouldn't marry. I told you it was against our Code. Now look....it seems Velaaren has chosen to punish your sin with the life of your firstborn.

False Mellos, still in shock, gently lays his son on the ground and rises to his feet.

Without warning, he lays a meaty PUNCH to False Lucas' face. The impact hits so hard that False Lucas is knocked off his feet and lands in the mud below.

He then picks up his son's body, taking the sword out of him and carries him onto his horse.

As False Mellos rides away, everything fades black one last time.

FALSE MELLO (V.O.)

(in the soft tone of a completely broken man)

A part of me died that night... All of my ambitions, my calling, my desire to press forward toward the will of Velaaren....none of that mattered anymore. All that mattered....was my son lying in lap as I rode away that night....lifeless...struck down by my own hand.

(beat)

I never returned to the Order. They wrote me off as a Prodigal Son...a name they gave to those who abandon their Holy service..... I didn't care anymore. There was only guilt...the shame for what I'd done.

(beat)

Velaaren...I don't expect you to forgive me...in fact, I don't even want you to. I deserve nothing from you...I don't even deserve my own life. I would give anything to give my son the life he truly deserved...

Mellos stands, exhausted with the agony of having to watch his son's death all over again, his face soaked with tears. Rodney gives him a brotherly hug.

RODNEY
I'm sorry brother.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)
What you have witnessed were the
events that molded the people you are
today. You hid these moments in the
Darkness...in my realm.

VESPAEN
(contemplative)
...I never really thought about it
like that...

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)
Most people from your world never do.
Moments they do not understand -
moments they fear to understand are
hidden here where they need not think
on them anymore.
(beat)
To become whole is to embrace your own
Light and your own Dark, your
strengths and your weaknesses, your
feats and your flaws. To set right
what you have set awry, you must find
your Shadow selves and embrace them
once again to send them back here and
to restore the balance you have
disrupted.

Everything around them starts to glow white as the Shadow
Guardian continues.

SHADOW GUARDIAN (V.O.)
Remember, you are mine until I release
you. Your redemption lies in
completing this task.

Everything is now completely enveloped in white light.

64 EXT. SAGE'S HUT - DAY

When all fades back in, the heroes are outside of the Sage's
Hut once again. They look around, slightly disoriented. The
Sage is not there, but there is a bloodstain in the stone by
where he was seated by the campfire.

The heroes run up to the bloodstained stone as Mellos
crouches down.

PIATT
 (concerned)
 What the hell happened here?

MELLOS
 (standing back up, a look of
 revelation on his face)
 ...We did.

RODNEY
 Looks like we need to get a lid on
 this, before it gets worse. So where
 do we start?

MELLOS
 Let's get back to Merigold and make
 sure everyone there is alright.
 Hopefully there will be word of our
 Shadow selves being somewhere around
 here.

65 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - MIDDAY

The party arrives at the city where they are still tending to
 their wounded from the dragon assault before.

Gwenyth catches a glance of them approaching.

GWENYTH
 (calling out to get his attention)
 Mellos!

She stands and jogs over to them.

MELLOS
 Is everything alright here?

GWENYTH
 We're still patching up the wounded.

MELLOS
 Were there four people that came down
 from the mountain earlier?

GWENYTH
 They came down. Our city guard called
 out to them, but they just took off.

MELLOS
 (whispering to himself)
 ...damn it!

GWENYTH

What's wrong?

MELLOS

(unsure if he should give away too
much information)

..it's...nothing...

GWENYTH

You all look like you've been through
a lot. You should all get some rest.

MELLOS

(panting with exhaustion)

We don't really have the time...

Rodney puts his hand on Mellos' shoulder, cutting him off.

RODNEY

She's right. We should rest up for the
night. Won't be any good against bad
guys if we're tired. We don't have any
leads for the moment, anyway.

66 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Mellos sits alone on a bench by the fountain which, despite
the damage it's sustained, still functions. A look of
contemplation is on his face as he rests his head on his hand
that's supporting him on his leg.

Vespaen joins him and sits next to him.

VESPAEN

(nervously)

I hope you're not scared of me now.

MELLOS

(smiles)

Why would I be?

VESPAEN

...I was afraid of what you'd say when
you found out...

MELLOS

Vesp, you know you don't have to hide
anything from me. Believe me, I
wouldn't be in the position to judge
you...especially after what I've
done...

VESPAEN

You keep blaming yourself for what a demon was responsible for. If you didn't defend yourself, you'd be both be dead.

MELLOS

(looking downward)

...Sometimes I wonder if that would have been better.

(beat)

Still...I wouldn't judge you even if I was in the position to. You have a very kind heart, Vespaen. You are the most pure-of-heart man I know...and quite honestly, that gives me hope. It tells me that there are still some genuinely good people in the world. People who want to bring change...people who have a very real love for others.

VESPAEN

Heh...but even then, I still have problems doubting.

MELLOS

(looks over to Vespaen)

Doubting your faith?

VESPAEN

No....doubting the church.

Mellos gets a look of curiosity on his face.

VESPAEN

Everything we were taught about Velaaren comes from texts that we can only prove were written by men. Look at me and you: we're both outcasts of the church - fallen from the faith in their eyes, yet our god-given abilities are still with us.

(beat)

I've just....begun to wonder if the Church really is full of it and doesn't even know the god they claim to serve.

Mellos gives one more smile to Vespaen before Gwenyth approaches.

GWENYTH

You two boys still up? You should get some rest.

VESPAEN

Okay. I'll head back inside.

(turns back to Mellos)

Just keep in mind there are people who care very much for you and want to see you happy again.

MELLOS

(smiling)

I appreciate that, Vesp. Thank you.

VESPAEN

(walking back to the inn)

See you in the morning.

Gwenyth sits down next to Mellos.

GWENYTH

You look like you've been through a lot.

MELLOS

We all have.

GWENYTH

Something terrible's happened, hasn't it?

MELLOS

(looks at her)

Nothing that we're not going to put a stop to.

GWENYTH

(looks downward)

You know...heroes like you...are hard to find these days. My husband...wanted to believe that heroes were still among us.

(sadness coming into her voice)

He was killed during a raid 12 years ago. There was a company of mercenaries in the city we lived in...none of them lifted a finger to fight back, because they weren't getting paid. They all ran away instead.

MELLOS

I'm sorry to hear that.

GWENYTH

Whatever it is that's happening, thank you for your service to us. It means a lot to all of us that there are heroes trying to restore hope for no reward.

MELLOS

(looking at her)

What else do we have to live for? We have no homes, no families...in my case, very little faith left. Even if I have nothing but Velaaren's wrath waiting for me on the other side, I want to at least do the best I can for everyone.

GWENYTH

(with a sympathetic smile)

That's really all anyone CAN do. Velaaren would have to honor such service, I would think.

MELLOS

(after a pause, and looking away from her, toward the ground)

What was it like?losing him?

GWENYTH

...I didn't leave the house for weeks. My sister had to move in with me during that time and bring me my meals so I wouldn't go hungry.

(beat)

But you know how I was able to pull through it?

Mellos looks at her anticipating her answer.

GWENYTH

My sister told me something. She said: 'The world is going to steal many things from you. It won't be fair, and it won't be right. And it's not going to ever have to answer for what it's taken from you.

(beat)

'So you can spend your life mourning for the things that will never be

returned and the injustice that's wronged you, or you can do what your husband would have wanted and pick yourself back up, and live a full and determined life.'

(beat)

...so what would they want you to do?

MELLOS

Hm?

GWENYTH

The person you lost...what do you think they'd want you to do?

MELLOS

...I dunno.... I never really thought about it.

GWENYTH

...And that was my sister's point. You miss them, but you get so lost in having sympathy for yourself that you forget about what they would want for you.

Mellos looks up at her, tears rolling down his face.

GWENYTH

(tears now going down her face as she smiles at him, reaching over to him with open arms)

Come here...

The two of them hug over each other's shoulders. After a moment of embrace, they let go and look back at each other again with empathetic glances.

GWENYTH

You're a good, honorable man, Mellos. You really shouldn't be so hard on yourself.

MELLOS

(in almost a whisper)

Thank you. It really means a lot to me to hear you say that.

GWENYTH

(standing up)

I'm going to miss you when you leave.

Please come back and see me again?

MELLOS

(smiling as he wipes the tears
from his face)

I promise.

Gwenyth walks back toward the inn, taking one last moment to glance back at him.

67 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - MORNING

The heroes stand in the square while the city militia leader stands before them.

MILITIA LEADER

We received word of the people you pursue. The party of them split up. The lone one has positioned himself at the Grand Temple of Faeladis where he has warded the entire grounds claiming that he awaits the coming of his "counterpart".

The party looks at each other.

MILITIA LEADER

The other three were seen heading toward the Magic School on the way north toward the Elflands. If you head toward the school and finish those three off, the Elflands will not be far away, and there the Temple residing just over the border.

MELLOS

Alright. Sounds like we have our work cut out for us.

RODNEY

'bout time, too. Audience hasn't seen some action for a little while now.

68 EXT. MAGIC SCHOOL - RAINY EVENING

The rain patters down on the field surrounding the grand magic school. The sky is coated in dark clouds as the heroes approach. The building appears to have sustained some damage recently, and the party takes caution.

PIATT

Just be careful in here. There's some unstable substances all around that could explode if we're not careful.

69 INT. MAGIC SCHOOL LOBBY

The main door opens with a loud CREAK. The party walks in cautiously, looking around as the thunder outside RUMBLES. Once the door closes, they notice that there is an odd silence. There are some bodies of dead mages all around on the floor.

VESPAEN

(somewhat horrified)

My goodness. Which one of us did this, you think?

PIATT

Well, one of them is my counterpart. Not sure who the other one is.

Piatt looks over toward the tower staircase to see a silhouette of someone running up as lightning FLASHES through the window.

PIATT

(pointing)

Up there!

The heroes start jogging over to the staircase and begin their ascent.

PIATT

I bet I know where they're going.

70 INT. MAGIC SCHOOL ATTIC

They slowly ascend the staircase until they reach the attic. They see Dark Piatt and Dark Vespaen in the remains of the attic where the altar of scarring once stood.

DARK PIATT

I knew you'd follow us up here. Stay where you are or I'll fry you where you stand!

PIATT

You do that and you might as well make your peace, since we're connected!

DARK PIATT

Maybe so, but the other three are fair game! Especially your fruit husband.

DARK VESPAEN

Hey! You don't wanna kill me, too, do you?!

DARK PIATT

What's the difference?! You've wanted Mellos for all these years, you could care less about me!

DARK VESPAEN

Well when you act like a crazy, selfish bitch, it's hard to think twice about you!

VESPAEN

(his eyebrows raise)

....My dark side uses curse words?

PIATT

Well neither of us have all damn night! Let's do this!

DARK PIATT

(readying for combat)

Come on!

Piatt and Dark Piatt dart toward each other. Dark Piatt releases a firebolt at Vespaen.

VESPAEN

(jumping out of the way)

AH!

Piatt kicks Dark Piatt in the gut, stunning her briefly, then uppercuts her in the face. Dark Piatt falls to the stone floor and Piatt gets on top of her and starts wailing away at her. They roll around taking turns beating each other up, trying to outmatch the other.

MELLOS

(dumbfounded)

Um....I feel like we should do something...but what?

RODNEY
 (to the two Piatt's fighting,
 egging them on)
 Quit hittin' yourself!

Dark Vespaen turns his eyes on his counterpart, who is brushing the stone and ash from his robe.

DARK VESPAEN
 So....what to do with you...

VESPAEN
 Your options are pretty slim. You can either kill me or face me.

DARK VESPAEN
 What is there to face? A coward who's afraid to be himself because he's worried about what everyone will think of him? A pathetic little elf who's in love with another man? Take your pick! There's nothing to face.

VESPAEN
 Actually...there is!

Vespaen uses a grapple spell to pull Dark Vespaen into him. As soon as they make contact, everything goes white.

71 EXT. ???

Vespaen and Piatt are together in an empty white space. They stand a bit disoriented, looking around.

PIATT
 What is this?

VESPAEN
 I guess I managed to get ourselves to merge with our counterparts.

DARK VESPAEN (V.0.)
 (echoing all around them)
 Not yet! There's still the reason we're here!

VESPAEN
 And what is that? Who's the real coward: the one who fears what everybody thinks about who he is attracted to, or the one who hides

from accepting himself for who he is?

Dark Vespaen then materializes before them.

DARK VESPAEN

So what's your point? You think I'm afraid of you?

VESPAEN

(his voice taking on a soft tone)
...you are. We've always been afraid of ourselves. We both know our desire for Mellos has nothing to do with our feelings of being inadequate.

(beat)

People have always looked down on us because we're small...they've always thought less of us because we we're gentle-natured and just want love and restoration for the world. But you know what?

(beat)

We may be naive, and we may have a lot to learn, but we have our own strengths, and we have our own weaknesses....and I'm okay with that....because imperfect is who I am.

DARK VESPAEN

(looking touched by the words)
...you know, we're both you, so you sound kinda crazy talking in plural like that...

VESPAEN

(smiling)
...My point exactly.

DARK VESPAEN

But Velaaren demands holiness. That's part of being a priest...except the church turned me away because I was in love with another man.

(turns his gaze downward)

I'm an abomination in His sight.

VESPAEN

(drawing closer to Dark Vespaen)
What kind of god would create someone like me so that he could punish me for being myself? That doesn't sound like

a loving god to me. And last I checked: I'm still able to call upon Velaaren's holy power...which tells me He's still on my side.

DARK VESPAEN
You really....don't hate me?

VESPAEN
I used to, but now...I feel kinda silly about it. Why did I ever care what other people thought of me?

DARK VESPAEN
...especially after how many years you've been around?

VESPAEN
(in an almost joking manner)
Don't push your luck.

Dark Vespaen is enveloped in light and phases back to his native realm.

PIATT
So where is my counterpart then?

Suddenly, a familiar voice is heard from behind her.

KIERAN
Piatt?

She freezes in surprise and slowly turns to face Kieran.

KIERAN
(walking up to her)
Piatt...it really is you.

PIATT
(slowly losing control of her composure)
Kieran...oh god, I missed you.

She throws her arms around Kieran. Vespaen slowly approaches but keeps his distance.

KIERAN
You don't know how good it is to see you again. It's just a shame that it's only for this moment.

PIATT

(tears streaming down her face)
Please...don't go. Let me come with
you.

KIERAN

You're not ready for that yet. You
still have so much ahead of you.

PIATT

But I couldn't bear to lose you again.

KIERAN

You're not losing me, Piatt. I'm
already gone. I'm here, right now, so
that you can let me go.

Her face drops as more tears flow.

PIATT

You can't ask me to do that. I love
you more than I could ever love anyone
else.

KIERAN

But you have a life. You have a
husband who needs you as much as you
need him. Please don't spend the rest
of your life mourning for me when you
have so many good things right here
for you.

Piatt stands in quiet weeping. Kieran reaches out and, with
his finger, pulls her chin up to face him while he greets her
eyes with a smile.

KIERAN

(in a loving tone)
Chin up, Piatt. Things can only get
better for you. I want you to enjoy
them.

Piatt still refuses to budge as she stands locked in a state
of grief and uncertainty.

Suddenly, she feels warm hands touch down on her shoulder.
She turns to see Vespaen standing behind her, offering her a
loving smile as well.

VESPAEN

(coming around front, speaking softly to her)

I know I'm not perfect...and I know I've left you out of my life. Whether or not I have a sensual desire for women, we are still a married couple, and the least I could have done was be here to support you - like a husband should.

Her eyes finally meet Vespaen's.

VESPAEN

I do care about you...and I also want you to be happy.

PIATT

But you're in love with Mellos.

VESPAEN

(giving her a strong smile)

And just like your love for Kieran, I too have to accept that it's a life that will never be able to happen. Since we are together - til death do us part - you deserve to be loved and supported by your husband.

Piatt's visage changes. Her tears stop, and she looks curiously at her husband.

PIATT

You would....do that for me?

VESPAEN

Of course.

(beat)

I would like to ask one thing, though, while we're still alone here...

Piatt nods.

VESPAEN

(looking to the side, a bit sheepish)

If you ever catch me looking at Mellos' butt...please don't hit me.

Piatt smiles as she puts her arm around him and moves to his side.

PIATT
 (smiling)
 Are you kidding? We can watch it
 together!

The married couple embraces for the first time since their arranged marriage. Kieran watches from a distance, with a smile gleaming his face as he fades away.

Everything fades white.

72 INT. MAGIC SCHOOL ATTIC

When everything fades back to normal, Mellos and Rodney are standing, watching in confusion as Vespaen and Piatt reappear by themselves, without their counterparts.

RODNEY
 So....which one are you...the crazy,
 unhinged beast Piatt or....the evil
 counterpart?

PIATT
 (shaking her head)
 Piss off, Rodney.

RODNEY
 (nodding)
 Good! That answers that question.

MELLOS
 (to Vespaen)
 So what happened? What was it like?

VESPAEN
 It was....humbling.

RODNEY
 I thought we were told "three" of us
 were here. Where's my counterpart?

PIATT
 I don't know. What would yours be
 like...?

There is an eerie stillness after a roll of thunder RUMBLES in the background. There is even a slight sound of dust WHISKING off of the decorations.

VESPAEN

(looking over his shoulder
nervously)

...I don't think we're alone in here.

RODNEY

(as if he knows a little bit about
what's going on)

Would you all forgive me for something
I'm about to do?

MELLOS

What?

PIATT

(not sure if she should be nervous)

Depends...

Without warning, Rodney kicks Mellos in the face.

VESPAEN

Rodney!

PIATT

What the hell?!

With Mellos thrown off-guard, Rodney proceeds to swing his foot behind Mellos' legs and forces him to his knees, then knocks him out with a swift blow to the temple.

VESPAEN

Are you insane?!

Rodney leaps in the air toward Vespaen, who holds his arms up in defense. Rodney comes crashing down on him, knocking him to the floor unconscious.

PIATT

(charging at Rodney)

Son of a bitch!

With one swift move, Rodney kicks his foot back and nails Piatt square in the face, knocking her out as well.

After a moment of silence, Rodney looks up toward the ceiling.

RODNEY

(to whatever may be listening)

What's the matter?! I gotta finish
your work for you?!

(spins around slowly watching the ceiling)
 It's just you and me now! What's it gonna be? You gonna come out now?

There's a light TICK sound as Dark Rodney lands on the floor gracefully.

RODNEY
 (turning around to see his counterpart)
 Ah, so my counterpart is the younger me, huh? Wish I could still move like that.

Dark Rodney stares silently.

RODNEY
 (not breaking eye contact)
 Don't think I don't know you. You've been following me your whole life. Followin' me around 'cause you think you have to. Well guess what? Here I am: you and me...in a standoff with each other. So what's it gonna be?

Dark Rodney continues to stare.

RODNEY
 You gonna kill us? I wouldn't blame you; we got dealt a shit hand in this life...maybe it would only be right to end it here.

Dark Rodney leaps around his target and approaches Rodney from behind, dagger in hand. Rodney retorts by kicking backward, landing a hit in Dark Rodney's groin.

RODNEY
 Think you can pull my own moves on me, huh?

Rodney disarms his counterpart before putting him in a headlock.

RODNEY
 You and me have a date with destiny...and you're coming with me whether you like it or not.

Everything fades white.

73 EXT. ???

Rodney is standing alone. Everything is quiet.

Suddenly, a voice is heard.

SNIDE MAN

I had the feeling I'd see you again,
Rococco.

RODNEY

Can't say I'm happy about it, either.

SNIDE MAN

(walking around him)

It seems you've found a way to
immortalize me, Rodney. You've made me
the manifested image of everything
that drives you.

RODNEY

Having to look in the eyes of the man
that killed your family tends to do
that to you.

SNIDE MAN

So have you learned, yet, that killing
me didn't solve your problems?

RODNEY

(nonchalant)

Yeah...but it sure as hell felt good
at the time. I can't undo what you
did...and I can't undo what that did
to me...But I have made it my
determination to not let my past
affect my future.

SNIDE MAN

Ah, but it has. Everything you
continue to do is driven by your past.
As long as the chain still exists, you
will always remain enslaved to it.

Rodney looks the Snide Man in the eyes with an almost
contemplative look.

RODNEY

You know.....you're right. I have let

myself be a slave to my past. You're the reason I started learning to kill. You're the reason I continue to kill...and you're the reason I've been slowly killing myself inside. And you know what? I don't want to live like that anymore.

The Snide Man gives him a slight tilt of the head.

RODNEY

(stepping forward)

You're a real scumbag, you know that? ...and because of you, I made a scumbag out of myself. What changed?

(beat)

I'm gonna do what I should've done the day I tracked your ass down.

Rodney approaches him and is inches away from him. To the Snide Man's surprise, Rodney extends his hand.

RODNEY

(with a solemn tone)

...I forgive you.

SNIDE MAN

(caught off-guard)

You what?

RODNEY

I'm severing the chain. I'm tired of carrying the memory, of what you did, with me. I'm tired of holdin' on to you, and quite frankly, I'm already tired of looking at your ugly mug.

SNIDE MAN

(taken back)

Well then...you've certainly grown, Rodney. Your father would've been proud of you.

As the Snide Man fades away, everything fades white once more.

74 INT. MAGIC SCHOOL ATTIC

When everything fades back in, the other four heroes are collecting themselves after regaining consciousness. Mellos and Vespaen are rubbing their heads.

RODNEY
Sorry, you guys.

PIATT
(angrily)
Rodney, what the hell was that all about?!

RODNEY
I was saving your lives. I'm very familiar with my dark side, and I've always believed there's no sport in killing someone while they're incapacitated.

VESPAEN
(sarcastically as he nurses his bruises)
Oh, well that just makes it all better.

MELLOS
So is it done?

RODNEY
(nodding)
It's done.
(beat)
That just leaves one more.

Mellos gets a look of dreadful anticipation on his face.

CROSSFADE

75 EXT. GRAND TEMPLE OF FAELADIS - DAY

The temple sits at the opening of the forest within the Elflands. It is surrounded by a dark, spherical ward. Congregated outside the ward are a large company of paladins camped and ready for battle at any time.

From the inside of the ward, many nefarious undead beasts amass for an attack, simply waiting for a command to strike. Atop the stairs by the temple entrance stands Dark Mellos.

DARK MELLOS
(looking over everything standing for and against him)
I know you're coming for me, Mellos.
And I'm ready for you.

76 EXT. ROAD TO ELFLANDS BORDER

The heroes are riding toward the border to the Elflands. They see the paladin camp approaching.

77 EXT. PALADIN CAMP - TEMPLE OF FAELADIS

As they reach the camp, the party dismounts as Lyle approaches them.

LYLE

Mellos! You're here! Our paladins have not been able to breach this ward.

MELLOS

That's because he's using a forbidden magic that we were never trained to deal with.

LYLE

So then, what do we need to do?

MELLOS

He's here for me.

LYLE

Who is he?

MELLOS

(looking Lyle in the eyes)
He's me.

Lyle gives Mellos a confused look.

MELLOS

This was my sin, Captain.
(his voice hinting resignation)
And I'm going to fix it.

Mellos walks by Captain Lyle, his sword in hand, and makes his way to the front of the camp by the ward.

MELLOS

(calling out to the inside of the
force field)
MELLOS DE MADRIENNE!

All noises go quiet as the paladins look over to see what the commotion is.

Dark Mellos steps forward, a large grin on his face.

MELLOS

I CONFESS TO BRINGING YOU HERE...BY MY OWN SELFISH DESIRE TO RIGHT MY WRONGS! YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR ME.....HERE I AM!

Everyone looks around at each other, confused.

DARK MELLOS

YES, I HAVE BEEN!

(he begins walking down the steps)

I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU, MELLOS! AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE QUITE QUICKLY MASTERED THE ART OF RAISING THE DEAD WHILE YOU TOOK YOUR TIME GETTING HERE! HELPS TO HAVE THE SEALED DARC'AEGAN TEXTS HERE AS WELL!

RODNEY

Wait. When the hell were we going to be told there was a copy of Darc'Aegan texts HERE too?!

LYLE

(genuinely confused)

We were never told! Good god, what have we done...?

DARK MELLOS

ONCE I CALL UPON VELAAREN TO DEAL WITH YOU, -I- WILL BE THE ONE TO BRING SYVELTH BACK, SINCE YOU'VE FAILED TO TRULY RIGHT YOUR WRONGS!

LYLE

(to the party)

There are spells to evoke Velaaren himself?

Mellos stands at the ward, with a solemn look on his face.

MELLOS

(to his counterpart)

...If that is how it must be.

Dark Mellos raises his hand.

DARK MELLOS

LEAVE HIM TO ME! KILL THE REST OF THEM!

The ward lifts, and the undead flood toward the paladin soldiers with a choir of HOWLS, completely moving around Mellos.

The battle erupts with swords CLANGING and the sounds of pained SCREAMS as the fray ensues.

Dark Mellos nonchalantly walks back into the temple while the battle continues.

Out in the battle, Rodney uses his swift, fluid attack moves to slice his way through the fray. Vespaen blasts holy light at the undead, causing them to erupt in ash and cinder, whereas Piatt burns the creatures coming to her with Fire magic, setting them aflame.

Overhead the battlefield, the sky turns a purple tint and the clouds begin to gather over the scene. A small series of earthquakes shake the ground underneath all of the fighting.

Mellos makes his way through the battle, fighting the undead he comes across along the way. Lyle and Lucas also are struggling to bring down some of the skeletons and ghouls on the field.

VESPAEN

(calling out to Mellos from a distance)

THE RITUAL IS STARTING! YOU NEED TO STOP HIM!

With a nod, Mellos bolts up the stairs and into the temple.

78 INT. TEMPLE OF FAELADIS

The purple light from the outside peers in through the small windows and cracks exposing the outside. The stone walls shake with the earth in a wobbly manner. Mellos keep his balance while carefully keeping out of the way of falling debris.

He makes his way to the main sanctuary. It's empty, but there is a purple light shining from the room behind the altar. Mellos makes his way, dodging falling pieces of rock and glass from the ceiling that come CRASHING to the floor, to the back room.

As he approaches the altar, the large stone pieces that make up the wall begin to lift from the ground and into the sky.

79 INT. TEMPLE OF FAELADIS BACK ROOM

When he enters the back room, Dark Mellos stands in front of a podium that has the open Darc'Aegan book open and his arms up to the sky

DARK MELLOS

(yelling over the noise, knowing that Mellos is standing behind him)

HE IS COMING! VELAAREN IS COMING TO BRING HIS JUSTICE UPON YOU FOR YOUR SIN! PREPARE YOURSELF FOR JUDGMENT!!!

At the completion of that sentence, the rock walls around them SPLINTER apart and raise into the sky, whose clouds are swirling in a massive spiral.

As Mellos looks up, the swirling clouds form the shape of a giant face.

The battle, still waging, slows as soldiers from both sides look up in awe at the manifested face of VELAAREN.

The eyes open and a strong, purple beam of light shines down through them upon Mellos and Dark Mellos.

VELAAREN

(his voice booming over everything)

IT IS YOU WHO CALLS ON ME, MORTAL?

DARK MELLOS

HOLY VELAAREN, THIS MAN HAS SINNED AGAINST YOU, HIS CHURCH, HIMSELF, AND HIS OWN KIN! HIS HEART HAS BEGGED FOR YOUR JUDGMENT, AND YOUR JUDGMENT HE SHALL RECEIVE!

While Dark Mellos has a look of maniacal glee on his face, Mellos himself outstretches his arms and closes his eyes to accept what is to come.

PIATT

(yelling out with tears in her eyes)

MELLOS!

The glowing purple light pierces down and encapsulates both of them, lifting them high up into the air, just underneath the clouds.

His body arched backward, his breast nearly touching Velaaren's open eyes, Mellos' and Dark Mellos' bodies lay suspended in air.

Everything fades white.

80 EXT. ???

Mellos is laid down on a plane of whiteness.

VELAAREN (V.O.)

(in a softer, inner voice)

I see your heart...it is a sad heart.

(beat)

You have carried a burden of guilt for the loss of your son.

(beat)

You blame yourself for what happened.

Tears form and stream down Mellos' motionless face, his eyes still closed.

VELAAREN (V.O.)

It saddens me that such a beautiful heart has carried such a wound for so long. You believe you have forsaken me, yet you continue to carry your faith even if by a thread.

(beat)

You are your own accuser, Mellos, and I have vowed to allow my creations to decide for themselves where their paths will take them. Because of this, I will let you choose what shall become of you.

(beat)

What is your deepest wish, my son?

MELLOS

(his eyes still closed and his body not moving)

I wish to see my son again....one last time.

VELAAREN (V.O.)

...Then open your eyes.

Upon opening his eyes, Mellos sits up to see young Sylveth standing before him.

SYLVETH

(a big smile on his little Elven
face)

Daddy!

The boy throws his arms around his father. Mellos embraces him tightly, one hand on the back of the boy's head. Tears are pouring from his face as he holds his son in his arms firmly.

MELLOS

(sniffing)

I missed you!

SYLVETH

I missed you, too, Father!

MELLOS

(letting off his embrace)

There's....so much I wanted to tell
you if I ever saw you again....now I
can't remember any of it.

SYLVETH

It's okay. There's something we've
been wanting to tell you.

Sylvia appears behind Sylveth.

MELLOS

(standing up in surprise)

Sylvia!

SYLVIA

We've missed you, Mellos. I know
you've missed us, too.

MELLOS

(wiping the tears from his eyes)

You have no idea.

SYLVIA

We've been watching over you from time
to time.

(beat, as her eyes turn toward the
ground)

Why do you do this to yourself? Our
problems....our pain...they're behind
us.

MELLOS

I know, I just....I failed
you.....I've failed you both...

SYLVIA

But you didn't. You couldn't have done
anything, Mellos. It was how fate
wanted it. You need to accept that.

Mellos looks downward. Sylvia walks up to him and puts her
hand to his cheek.

SYLVIA

(in a loving whisper)

We want you to be happy, Mellos. We
want you to remember us fondly, but
it's important to us that you move on.
We're not going anywhere, and we'll
always be here waiting for you.

MELLOS

(taking her hand in his)

I can come to you now. There's nothing
left for me back there.

Sylvia gives him that "You know I know differently" look.

SYLVIA

You know that's not true. There are
people back there who care about you.
They want you to be whole again just
as much as we do.

(beat)

And there's a woman and child back
there who care about you and need you.

As she makes this statement, images of Gwenyth and Tyvien
appear briefly before them.

SYLVIA

Few are blessed with a second chance,
Mellos. Take it.

MELLOS

I can't leave you.

SYLVIA

We'll always be here. We'll always
love you. All we want is for you to
live a long and fulfilling life.

SYLVETH

(smiling)

Everything will be okay, Daddy. We'll see you again.

Mellos looks at his lost wife and child, tears pouring through his attempt to look strong and gives them one last heartfelt embrace.

MELLOS

(his voice weak with his composure)

I'll see you soon.

SYLVIA

(smiling back, as everything fades white again)

Better not be TOO soon.

Everything fades completely white and grows quiet.

81 EXT. PALADIN CAMP - TEMPLE OF FAELADIS

The face in the clouds billows downward in smoke and upon hitting the ground, sends out a wave of smoke that permeates the battlefield and DISINTEGRATES the undead, leaving the paladins unharmed.

Everyone stares in quiet awe as the smoke gradually dissipates. Rodney looks with wide eyes, not understanding everything that has just transpired. Piatt and Vespaen watch in awe as well. Lyle and Lucas fix their gaze on the vacated temple foundation, with humbled looks on their faces as the purple skies fade back to normal and the clouds disappear.

Piatt, runs through the still crowd up to the temple.

LYLE

(trying to stop her, just in case it's not safe)

Don't go! Wait!

Not listening, Piatt shakes Lyle off and makes her way up to the temple ruins to search for Mellos.

She finds him, laying peacefully on the stone ground, his eyes closed. She kneels down and begins shaking him.

PIATT

(frantic and worried)

Mellos! Mellos, get up! Don't give up on us now!

Rodney and Vespaen start making their way up to her.

LYLE

(to those two as he grabs Vesp's robes)

Stay down here! This is sacred ground!

VESPAEN

(shaking him off)

My wife is up there!

RODNEY

(to Lyle)

Mellos is only family we've got left, old timer. Ain't keepin' us away from him.

Lyle watches but does not pursue to stop them.

With the other three surrounding Mellos, Vespaen places his hand over Mellos' heart and uses some healing magic on him.

PIATT

Is he gonna be alright, Vesp?

RODNEY

Why don't you try givin' him some mouth-to-mouth while you have the chance?

VESPAEN

(with a serious tone, but with a slight chuckle)

Shut up, Rodney.

Rodney smiles back in response.

Mellos' eyes open slowly and he looks around, still a bit physically weak to sit up.

PIATT

(overjoyed)

Mellos!

RODNEY

Welcome back to the land of the living, brother!

MELLOS

(whispering with a weakened voice)

All of you....are here?

VESPAEN
 (laughing with joy)
 What's left of us.

Piatt and Vespaen help him to sit up. Mellos sees the crowd of paladins looking back at him.

After the brief moment of silence, a CLAPPING is heard. Everyone turns to look and see who is clapping.

Lucas steps out among them, CLAPPING with his eyes fixed on Mellos. Then, other paladins join in the clapping until they all begin applauding.

Lucas steps up onto the ruins and makes his way over. The other three look up unsure of his intentions. Lucas bends over and offers Mellos his arm. Mellos firmly grips his arm and is helped up to his feet.

MELLOS
 Lucas....why?

LUCAS
 (a single tear coming down from his eye)
 Mellos, I..... I've been a terrible person. I let my faith get in the way of my humanity. I treated you like a stray dog....you didn't deserve that.
 (beat)
 You are a far more honorable man than I could ever hope to be, Mellos. And as much as I don't deserve your forgiveness.....will you please forgive me?

Mellos looks at Lucas, taken back a little.

After a pause, he takes Lucas' hand in his and gives him a firm handshake.

With their grip remaining, Lucas lifts Mellos' arm victoriously in front of the other soldiers, and they all begin to CHEER.

CROSSFADE

82 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - MORNING

The heroes, and the company of paladins, make their way into Merigold City on their way back to Gheldrynn.

Gwenyth looks up and sees that Mellos is indeed among them and immediately drops what she is doing and runs over to see him.

She immediately throws her arms around him.

CROSSFADE

83 EXT. MERIGOLD GARDENS - EVENING

There is a wedding in progress, with Mellos standing to the right as the groom and Gwenyth on the left as the bride. In between them, Lucas is reading through the marriage vows.

LUCAS

(giving the proceedings)
Without ties to the church or the Holy Order, Velaaren therefore smiles upon the union between this man and this woman today. Do you, Mellos de Madrienne, take Gwenyth to be your bride...to have and to hold, through better or worse, in sickness and in health...til death do you part?

MELLOS

(looking into her eyes)
I do.

As Lucas continues the proceedings, Vespaen and Piatt sit among the witnesses and look to each other, hand in hand.

LUCAS (O.S.)

And do you, Gwenyth, take Mellos to be your husband...to have and to hold...
(his voice fades into a blur)

Piatt and Vespaen slip their wedding rings - that they already have had - on their fingers.

LUCAS (O.S.)

...til death do you part?

PIATT

(to Vespaen)
I do.

Vespaen smiles back at his wife.

Rodney leans in to Piatt's shoulder.

RODNEY
 (whispering to her, in his usual
 trolling fashion)
 He wasn't talking to you.

PIATT
 (shakes her head, and gives a
 slight laugh)
 Shut up, Rodney.

LUCAS
 Then by the power invested in me, by
 the Holy Order of Gheldrynn, I now
 pronounce you...husband and wife! You
 may now kiss the bride.

Mellos leans in and kiss Gwenyth just as Piatt and Vespaen
 lean in to kiss one another, with Tyvien in between them,
 looking up with childish disgust.

TYVIEN
 Ick!

Everyone stands up to CLAP after the bride and groom kiss.

CROSSFADE

84 EXT. MERIGOLD CITY - EVENING

Mellos, Gwenyth, and Tyvien are walking through the city
 square as the sun sets when Mellos sees Rodney standing in
 the square, looking his way.

MELLOS
 (to Gwenyth and Tyvien)
 Go ahead. I'll catch up.

GWENYTH
 (giving a little wave to Rodney)
 Alright, just don't be too late. Don't
 want your dinner to get cold.

Rodney cordially gives a little wave back to her.

As the other two go inside, Mellos walks up to Rodney and
 gives him a brotherly hug.

MELLOS
 Good to see you again.

RODNEY

Same here. So how's married life treatin' you?

MELLOS

Very well, actually.

RODNEY

How's the little squirt?

MELLOS

Tyvien's doing good. We've been getting along very well. I was going to give him archery lessons tomorrow.

RODNEY

That's great to hear.

MELLOS

What about you, Rodney? What have you been up to these days?

RODNEY

Well, military intel, finding hot elf chicks and a good place to stay with some nice cold brew....the usual.

MELLOS

What brought you here?

RODNEY

I happen to be in town and thought I'd stop by to visit an old friend. Vespaen and Piatt settled into their own home up in the Elflands. I figure if my travels take me up that way, I'll go harass them for a bit.

Mellos chuckles.

MELLOS

So what are you going to do with yourself? Think you could settle down with someone, too?

RODNEY

Nah! Being tied to a woman isn't my cup of tea. Besides, getting whipped like you would cramp my style!

Mellos LAUGHS.

MELLOS

Well, at any rate, it's always good to see you again, Rodney.

RODNEY

It's good to see you too, Mellos.

(beat)

You behave yourself. Don't make anybody hire me to whack you. I'd hate to have to do it...

(beat, then with a playful tone)

...'cause I totally would.

MELLOS

(laughing)

I'll stay on my best behavior.

Mellos walks toward the house to join his new family, who are standing at the door. Rodney watches and smiles to himself.

RODNEY

(playfully, to Gwenyth)

Take good care of him, Gwen. He's high-maintenance!

She laughs and waves as Rodney walks down the northbound road through the city, headed toward the Elflands as the sun continues to set.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

CLOSING CREDITS ROLL

85 EXT. SHADOW GUARDIAN TEMPLE - POST CREDITS

Gustafson is still waiting outside the Shadow Guardian temple.

GUSTAFSON

(pacing back and forth impatiently)

Geez! How long are they gonna keep me here?! Feels like I've been out here forever!

(beat)

Geez, you'd think all this time going by that they were going in there ...to.....find...a way....back.....

(the realization finally hits him)

.....ah SHIT!

CUT TO BLACK - END