

Dark Wizard's Lament Ep. 1 - "Pilot"

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EXT. RITUAL SITE - FLASHBACK

A dais is constructed for a dark RITUAL in the GRAVEYARD of THE UMBRAL KEEP, a foreboding castle of polished black stone. Destroyed chunks float as if weightless.

At the foot of the dais SEVEN FIGURES, six humans and one EXTOL, an insectoid humanoid, stand in lightning cages.

BLACK EMPEROR VAIL (30), a dark-haired man in a THORNY CROWN, stands on the dais and waves his hands menacingly. Dark magic trails off his fingertips.

Below stands PRINCESS ROXANA, a fierce woman with white hair. Her skin is adorned with dozens of SPIKY DERMALS.

HART THE THIEF (30), another dark-haired man, stands next to her in knight armor and a brown leather COWBOY HAT.

They hold each other. In their free hands, Hart has his gun drawn and Roxana has a spell gathered. They both aim up at the Emperor.

A terrifying SHADOW SERPENT circles the dais and slithers up to tower over everyone.

The Emperor points at the pair below.

The serpent shrieks and lunges at Hart and Roxana.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BAKERY ALLEY STABLE - MORNING

LAIN STEMNOR (350, but looks like he's in his 40s or 50s) wakes with a start.

Silver, brushed-back hair and a goatee. A SCAR underlines his left eye. He projects the sadness of a hard life.

The COWBOY HAT from the flashback flies in and smothers Lain. A triangular piece is cut out of the brim.

He plucks it off and tosses it into the air.

He swipes his hand and a PURPLE SIGIL circle of light appears.

SIGILS like these cause magical light effects, and their color determines what school they are from. The "dark" sigils affect gravity.

The circle flies at the hat and pins it to a post.

Lain gets up and brushes himself off.

He washes his face from a bowl and gives himself a long stare in a mirror tacked up in the makeshift residence.

A knee-length black coat hangs on a peg opposite the stall door. Slung over it is a belt with a holstered BLACK METAL SIX-SHOOTER. He also has a LONG KNIFE in his boot.

Final tugs to straighten the wrinkles in his shirt, he belts on his gun and flips on the coat.

He pulls the hat from the sigil and tugs it on his head.

As he exits the stall, a bit of the brim BENDS DOWN and slaps him in the face again.

INT. BAKERY - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the bakery hosts a case full of delicious treats. A long JOB BOARD along the side wall is covered in a smattering of different LEAFLETS.

MARELLA (O.C.)  
 Realm's Light find you.

LAIN  
 (to himself)  
 It certainly tries.

MARELLA, a plump and warm woman with a hazelnut ponytail, enters from the kitchen with a tray of bread loaves.

MARELLA  
 Oh! Mister Lain! You're early this morning. I only just put the kettle on. It'll be a few.

She has the callused hands of a lifetime cook and the welcoming disposition of a woman who mothers the whole town.

LAIN  
 Oh, Marella, you don't have to do that. I couldn't sleep, so I thought I'd get an early jump on the day.

MARELLA  
 It's cause you've taken to puttin' your head down in that stable. Told you I have a perfectly nice room going untouched since my boy left.

LAIN

My good woman, you are simply too kind. For all you know, you could be inviting a dangerous drifter into your home.

MARELLA

Ha! 'Fore you arrived those weeks back, I can't even remember the last time I saw the wood at the back o' that request board. Mr. Lain, you been a downright hero to me.

LAIN

(firmly)

I'm no hero.

(beat)

Just lending a hand.

MARELLA

Well, you're a right pick-me-up to folks who could use some brightenin' up.

The kettle WHISTLES from the kitchen.

MARELLA (CON'T.)

You find some of those what catch your eye. We'll get a cup of grey in you and see what we can do 'bout getting some full bellies goin' on round town. And Williams dropped his glasses down that well again. Told him he needs a damn strap---

Her rant trails off as she disappears back into the kitchen.

Lain returns to the board and pulls some of the morning orders off their tacks.

A KNIGHT enters. His uniform tabard is emblazoned with a CREST, depicting a sun stabbed with six swords.

He nails up a new sign, and spares a glance for Lain.

SIGN KNIGHT

White Knight's grace to you,  
friend.

Lain tugs the corner of his hat down to mime a greeting, but keeps it tipped down to conceal his face.

LAIN  
Mornin'.

SIGN KNIGHT (O.C.)  
Dark Wizard.

LAIN  
(hiding his sudden tension)  
Pardon?

SIGN KNIGHT  
(indicating new sign)  
"Wanted Dead or Alive". Although,  
no one in their right mind should  
go for that alive bit. I know it's  
two thousand marks, but it's just  
a good way to get your head kicked  
in by one of those freaks.

LAIN  
Two thousand? It was one last  
season.

SIGN KNIGHT  
Word is Capital ain't seen too many  
turned in last few years. Probably  
thinks more coin will get a few  
noses back into it.

LAIN  
You have everyone in the Dominion  
hunt something for three hundred  
years, you eventually run out.

SIGN KNIGHT  
Sorry, what'd you say your name  
was?

Lain eyes the knight warily from under his brim.

MARELLA  
(re-entering)  
Ah! You must be here for the  
garrison's brekkers. Just got the  
twine on the lot. I can help you  
right over here, sir.

The Sign Knight turns and cheerily approaches to collect a  
tied-up parcel. Moments later, he exits.

Lain approaches the counter with a stack of orders.

MARELLA

That lot get to loiter round these parts, but my son gets shipped to the front? We may as well dismantle the whole Guard, lot of good they do us. This is some right *boola*, I tell ya what.

Lain splutters tea when he hears the OLD TONGUE curse.

MARELLA (CON'T.)

(mopping at counter)

Oh, Mister Lain. I'm sorry. That wasn't proper-like of me at all. Let me see what of this is coming out the oven and I'll get you a warm up on that tea.

Marella scurries off back into the kitchen.

Lain walks over to the Wanted section of the job board. The sign for Dark Wizard bounties the knight posted has prices, and a crudely drawn sigil in purple ink.

Various other Wanted posters litter the section.

C.U.: ONE IS FOR "THE OCTOPUS". IT SHOWS AN ASIAN WOMAN SHADED BY A HOOD. HER HAND STRETCHES INTO TENTACLES PLUCKING COINS FROM A TABLE.

MONTAGE

Lain delivers packages of food to folks all over town.

He gives a box of tea cakes to a small book shop attendant.

He brings a couple sandwiches in wax paper to a frazzled mother. Her children sword fight in the yard.

Lain walks to where the son and daughter play. He kicks the daughter's foot into a better stance and raises her sword.

She easily blocks her brother's next attack and knocks him on his butt.

A blacksmith struggles to shoe an unhappy HORSE WITH CRESCENT MOON NOSE DAPPLING.

Lain drops a loaf on the counter. The blacksmith waves his thanks, and the horse takes that moment to kick his stool out from under him.

Lain pays a miller and departs with two sacks of flour.

END MONTAGE.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

He drops the flour and the coins back to Marella.

She divides out a sizable portion for him. He scoops aside a few and tries to push the rest back, but Marella puts a hand over the pile to insist.

Lain drinks tea while he pulls more orders off the board. He rifles under a few and finds a surprising one at the back.

LAIN

Marella?

He hands THE JOB REQUEST to her. She covers her mouth.

LAIN (CON'T.)

Is that...?

MARELLA

Gil.

(nodding, wistful)

My son. My dumplings were his favorite dish. I was so busy, trying to send him off with extra coin in his pouch. I must have missed this.

An idea strikes Lain. He indicates he'll be right back.

EXT. BAKERY ALLEY STABLE - DAY

Lain rummages deep in his travel pack. He produces a vial of GLOWING PURPLE LIQUID.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

He hurries back inside.

LAIN

Make them.

MARELLA

Sorry?

LAIN

Make them, and I'll deliver them.

MARELLA

Mister Lain, that's very sweet of you, but Gil's at the front. Even if I knew exactly where, that's weeks and weeks from here.

Lain smiles and produces the vial.

LAIN

Sprinkle a few drops of this on them when they're done. They'll last a year.

Marella considers the vial, then takes it gingerly.

MARELLA

Lain... I still couldn't ask that of you. That trip would be terribly dangerous, and so very far.

LAIN

I think I still have some of the last danger I stepped in on my boots. As for distance, I've been needin' to put road under me again.  
(imitating her accent)  
There still be one lass left in this town what could use that pick-me-up.

Marella gives him a bemused squint, but reluctantly surrenders and continues to study the vial.

EXT. SHOP - DAY

Lain exits with more parcels in his arm.

He bumps into an EXTOL, a humanoid with a chitinous, dark skin and small horns. This one's are hidden poorly under a SCARF wrapped around his head like a headband.

The Dominion is currently at war with the HIVELANDS OF THE EXTOL, and one this deep in Dominion territory is assumed to be a SPY.

This Extol's name is HUGO, and he's definitely no spy.

Lain catches his various packages.

He glances down and sees Hugo sprawled on the ground, covered by the vellum of a large map.



Lain puts one of the box twines into his teeth and uses his now-freed hand to pick Hugo up by the collar.

Lain reaches down a second time, and Hugo flinches from what he thinks will be a smack, but Lain just brushes the road dust off him.

By the time Hugo opens his eyes, Lain is off down the road.

HUGO  
(calling timidly after Lain)  
Um, excuse me...

Lain walks away, not hearing him. Hugo turns and attempts to ask a woman sweeping her front step for directions. She flees into her house.

Two GUARDS have a whispered conversation as they watch Hugo.

INT. WELL - DAY

Lain rappels down into a well. He splashes into thigh-deep water in an underground stream. He peers hopelessly around in the dark.

He glances back up to the mouth of the well to ensure no one can see him.

He waves his arms around and a string of purple SIGIL CIRCLES appear off in the dark.

They tug the light shining down through the well out into the cave like a curtain, illuminating the space.

The glasses float against a rocky outcropping a short distance downstream.

Lain plucks them from the water and climbs back out of the well. He wraps the rope around his wrist to stop halfway up and CATCH HIS BREATH.

EXT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER - FLASHBACK

Hart scales Umbral Keep in the rain, wearing his cowboy hat and a poncho. He wraps the rope around his wrist to CATCH HIS BREATH and adjust his hat.

This is Umbral Keep prior to the bloody scene in Lain's nightmares. It's still a foreboding and dark structure. The tall towers stream dark BANNERS for the Black Emperor.

INT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The interior is a room for entertaining guests. A fountain burbles in the center of the room. A STANDING CABINET sits near an alcove with a window.

Hart lifts himself through that window and sags back on the sill, out of breath.

Roxana appears from the shadows and holds a knife to his neck. She has an unflinching edge, from a life proving formidable amongst noblemen who mistake her as their lesser.

Her skin lacks the dermals from the nightmare.

ROXANA

What in the name of the Goddess are you doing here?

HART

What? No, "So glad you live"? No, "How I've longed to look upon your face this last month?"

ROXANA

You think so terribly highly of yourself. Perhaps I went and found myself a lover who follows my instructions.

HART

(smugly)

Perhaps you've taken a blow to the head and rekindled passion for that fiancé of yours.

Roxana's knife presses more sharply under Hart's chin.

HART (CON'T.)

Maybe not that one. But there is an awful lot of life-threatening for the man that found your Legend.

Roxana drops the knife. Her shocked elation is apparent.

ROXANA

You found it?!? Don't you dare speak in jest.

Roxana jabs a pair of fingers into Hart's chest. He nearly falls back out the window. She has to quickly catch him.

ROXANA (CON'T.)

You know how long I have been  
searching. I could not handle it,  
if all you offer is a tease.

Hart slides off the ledge and stands as he reaches into his  
belt pouch and produces an ETCHED GLASS DISC.

A pair of massive doors to the room SLAM open.

Roxana flicks both of her hands in circles. A WHITE SIGIL  
rips open the doors on the standing cabinet.

A second appears on Hart's chest. It hurls him backwards  
into the cabinet and the furniture doors snap shut.

Emperor Vail struts into the room in frustration. He's  
dressed in an elaborate coat and headdress. He rips the  
latter off.

VAIL

He questions me now?!?

Following as his vigilant shadow is HIGH ADVISER VERAL (45).

VERAL

Your Highness, if I may; Archon  
Rodan holds a firm grip on the  
Eastern Dominion, and we have taxed  
them quite---

Inside the cabinet, Hart winces and pulls a fork out from  
his hindquarters.

He brushes SPECKLES left from the LIGHT SIGIL from his  
chest. They land on the LEGEND. The etched lines WARM UP. A  
nervous look jumps to Hart's face.

VAIL

(in a more hushed tone)

The infantry forces he promised  
matter little. Did he deliver the  
other item?

VERAL

(in a similarly secretive  
whisper)

All accounted for. The necessary  
headstones have already been  
removed to accomodate it.

VAIL

Good. Then tell me, what in the Goddess's name was that wall of mud that turned his nose up in such a manner?

VERAL

Vagrants, my lord. I shall have them dealt with.

Roxana steps solemnly into view. She picks at flowers, to pointedly ignore Vail's eye.

Vail considers her a moment.

VAIL

(to Veral)

No. Not the way you handle things. That tenement fire the other week. All those people have been relocated, yes?

VERAL

Sir, we can---

VAIL

It seems to me that was a yes or no inquiry.

VERAL

(rebuffed)

Yes, my lord.

VAIL

Then that row stands vacant at the moment. Put the homeless there.

ROXANA

(without looking at Vail)

Don't go feigning mercy on my account.

Vail dismisses Veral with a look, who exits with a bow.

VAIL

(turning to Roxana)

Those downtrodden are my citizens. To forget that is to lose sight of what this war campaign is for. Though, Light of My Heart, your presence reminds me of my duties.

Vail takes Roxana's hand and kisses slowly along it. When his face is down, she WINCES slightly at his touch.

She glances up and spots the glowing cabinet.

ROXANA  
 (feigning interest)  
 Why so weary, beloved? I heard  
 trouble with Archon Rodan?

Vail pauses his kisses and screws up his face. Unlike most people, he doesn't underestimate Roxana.

VAIL  
 You heard? I've only just come from  
 that meeting.

ROXANA  
 You know what they say about bad  
 news.

VAIL  
 He saw so many taking residence in  
 the street when he arrived, he made  
 quite the objection. Said perhaps  
 his ore and troops needn't push so  
 hard for the border, with so much  
 unattended to here.

RAYS OF LIGHT dance on the wall behind Roxana. Vail half turns to investigate. Roxana catches his cheek.

ROXANA  
 The other Archons have already  
 mobilized their reinforcements. The  
 Eastern Dominion cannot endure more  
 than a winter without the Reds you  
 send. When the thaw comes, your  
 lines will be refreshed, and new  
 arrivals mean a renewed push  
 against Ivarness.

Vail is impressed with Roxana's military cunning, but not totally swayed by the distraction.

VAIL  
 Ever brilliant, and always a step  
 ahead, aren't you, my love? No man  
 would stand a chance if you turned  
 your focus to defeating him.

Vail turns to the wardrobe. He rips the doors open.

Inside, it's empty.

Hart is wedged in the rafters over Vail's head, glowing Legend bag in his teeth.

Vail takes a comb from the cabinet and brushes out his helmet hair, to play off his outburst.

He turns and heads back towards Roxana. He trips on an uneven floor stone. Hart lets out a faint snort of amusement. Vail half-turns back, hand on sword.

ROXANA

And the item the Archon did  
deliver? What pray tell warrants  
such secrecy?

Vail pauses and considers Roxana sidelong. He glances up, but the rafters are empty. Vail turns back to Roxana.

VAIL

You needn't concern yourself with  
it. Not yet, anyway.

EXT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Hart hangs precariously by a curtain rope outside.

Doors close inside. Roxana leans out the window and grabs Hart's arm.

INT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER - CONTINUOUS

ROXANA

Are you mad?!?

HART

I mean, I figured a breath of fresh  
air was a sight better than  
explaining to your husband-to-be  
why I was here, but I can go chase  
him down if you want to have that  
conversation.

Roxana slugs him in the shoulder.

ROXANA

I meant getting the beggars stirred  
up to protest! Don't think I don't  
know that was you.

HART

Of course it was me! Rodan can't  
openly rebel, so I gave him an out  
to save face.

ROXANA  
 (indicating Vail)  
 And if he was in one of his moods?  
 He could have had them all  
 executed. What do you think he'll  
 do to you?!?

Both deflate. Roxana leans into Hart's chest. Hart holds up the disc behind her.

HART  
 I know. But we have the map now.  
 Soon, he won't be able to hurt any  
 of us again.

Light GLEAMS off the Legend.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The place is packed with village workers. Lain sits at the bar with a tankard.

A group of Dominion soldiers crowd a table in the center of the room. The group is overly handsy with the waitstaff.

Lain spares them the occasional harrowing glance.

CAPTAIN DEMAR, in nicer armor, plucks up his ale.

DEMAR  
 Good people! Was it not another  
 glorious day under the banner of  
 the Dominion? We each are blessed  
 with the hospitality of the White  
 Knight, may his shield ever hold  
 back the darkness, and his sword  
 swiftly find enemies to peace!

The other soldiers cheer. A few voices in the room half-heartedly chime in.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 For it was the Knight who purged  
 the Bog of Praxan of its toxins!  
 The Knight, who fed the starving in  
 Phandar! It is the Knight who holds  
 the terrors of Dunmore at bay!

The last one gives Lain pause as he goes to drink.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

Is this not the most beautiful day?

A waitress approaches as the speech winds down. Demar reaches out and pulls her in uncomfortably close.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

Speaking of exceptional beauty, who are you?

WAITRESS

(timidly)

Please, Captain. I have customers waiting.

DEMAR

Aren't we customers? For such good patrons, don't we deserve service with a smile?

The waitress looks deeply uncomfortable.

Lain gives a small flick of his hand. A small sigil disc appears at the legs of a stool by Demar. It slides out and knocks him in the thigh.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

(to one of his men)

Hey! Watch where you're kicking.

The waitress takes the opportunity to slip away.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

Hey! Wait a se---

Another stool knocks him from behind. He spins angrily, but another hits him.

The waitress walks by again with a tray of drinks. Worked into a lather, Demar attempts to follow.

Lain drains his tankard. With a last flick of his hand, the stool next to Demar slides out. It hits the captain and spins him about.

Lain slides out his own stool as he drops coins on the bar top. The back leg trips Demar, who falls on his face.

LAIN

You might want to pace yourself, friend. The Dominion isn't going anywhere.

Demar gets up with rage on his face.



The Sign Knight rushes over.

SIGN KNIGHT  
 (to Demar)  
 Cap', your ale's gettin' stale.

Demar gives one last glare for Lain, straightens his tunic, and returns to his soldiers. The Sign Knight waits for Demar to move out of earshot.

SIGN KNIGHT (CON'T.)  
 (to Lain)  
 Friend, I think you're done  
 drinkin' tonight. You may want to  
 think 'bout finding a new waterin'  
 hole. Like say, next town on.

LAIN  
 (putting his hat on)  
 Was just thinking it's 'bout time  
 to be leaving.

EXT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Lain stuffs his hands in his pockets and starts up the road.

The waitress ducks out the door of the tavern.

WAITRESS  
 (calling after Lain)  
 I don't know if you tripped him  
 intentionally.

LAIN  
 (without turning back)  
 It wasn't---

WAITRESS  
 If it was, I wish you hadn't.

Lain is taken aback, rebuffed.

WAITRESS (CON'T.)  
 Stopping them tonight just means  
 they'll come back worse some other  
 night.

The brim of Lain's hat bends down and baps him in the face. He brushes it away and turns back to the waitress.

LAIN

I've found men like that continue unless someone stands up to them.

WAITRESS

And what do we do when you aren't here to stand up and play hero anymore?

LAIN

I'm no hero.

WAITRESS

Then why'd you try to help me?

LAIN

(shrugs)

Seemed like the least anyone should try to do.

He glances at the brim of his hat. It remains motionless.

WAITRESS

Maybe in a better world. Still doesn't answer what we do when you move on.

LAIN

I don't know. I wish there was an easy answer. But I'm the last person you should ask. I didn't mean to bring you trouble.

Hugo exits the tavern, map out. The waitress glances back at him. When she looks back to the street, Lain is gone.

EXT. HOUSE BUILD - DAY

Townsfolk of various ages in thick cloth work at a house build. Lain joins a group to lift a massive cross beam.

One older man slips in the mud. The beam falls towards him.

Lain whips his hand in a quick motion. A SIGIL appears under the beam and the elder man is pulled safely from underneath before the sigil fades.

Lain returns to work as if nothing happened.

A young child saw the magic though. The boy runs off.

EXT. OLD CODGER'S HOUSE - DAY

A rocky switchback trail leads sharply up a cliff face to a rickety old home.

Lain arrives outside the house. He knocks.

A VOICE mutters in anger and furniture shuffles.

Lain waits, but no answer. Shadows move through the light under the door.

LAIN

You know I can see you, right?

CODGER (O.C.)

(muttering)

Son of a light-blasted whore.

(calling out)

No you can't! No one's home! Go away.

Lain rolls his eyes.

LAIN

Look, somebody cares about you enough to have ordered this stuff. You can either open the door, or we can both just stand here till one of us grows even older and dies. And my money's on you without these meds.

There's no further answer.

Lain walks away to a cluster of large rocks several paces from the door. He picks up a watermelon-sized one.

He spares a glance back at the house, then squints at it.

A PURPLE RING appears around it and crushes it to pebbles.

Lain plops down against a boulder, takes the first from the new pebble pile and hucks it at the door.

C.U.: PILE OF PEBBLES.

CROSS-DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLD CODGER'S HOUSE - DUSK

C.U.: THE PILE OF ROCKS IS MUCH SMALLER.

Lain tosses his next stone idly up and down and leans his head back.

The first few STARS peek through the setting twilight.

INT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER CHAMBER - FLASHBACK

Hart stares up at CONSTELLATIONS cast around the ceiling by the LEGEND DISC.

Roxana channels light into the disc to keep the projection going. Six large white, ornate SIGILS form scale 3D MODELS OF TEMPLES near the ground.

HART

You know how to read it?

ROXANA

Ancient sorceresses used star charts for all the breadth of their record, but their intimacy of the night sky dwarfs any understanding we've held fast to today.

HART

So... no?

Roxana spares him a withering glance.

Hart pretends not to see by covering one eye with a hand and frames a constellation in his thumb and forefinger.

HART P.O.V.: THE CONSTELLATION OF A SWORDSMAN.

He turns and frames up on another star field.

HART P.O.V.: THE SAME SWORDSMAN IN ANOTHER PART.

HART

These two match.

ROXANA

Verily.

(indicates two of the floor models)

Those two temples must be near enough to one another. But each boasts its own perspective of the night sky.

(indicates the ceiling)  
 There in lies the frustration. I  
 must match the celestial tapestry  
 to where these temples could see it  
 thousands of years ago. The  
 ancients rather could have made  
 this easier.

INT. KEEP HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Veral approaches, but stops when he hears Hart.

HART (O.S.)  
 These artifacts are incredibly  
 dangerous. They hid them for a  
 reason.

INT. UMBRAL KEEP TOWER CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

ROXANA  
 I know that more than most! But if  
 he finishes that ritual, the whole  
 world will be gone. Anything is  
 worth gambling against that.

Hart puts a comforting hand on her shoulder.

The door CREAKS. Hart and Roxana share a panicked glance.

INT. KEEP HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hart runs into the hall, gun drawn. The hall is empty. Hart  
 turns back and SLAMS a fist on the door.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. OLD CODGER'S HOUSE - DUSK

Lain SLAMS a fist on the codger's door.

LAIN  
 Come off it, ya miser. I don't want  
 to do that road back down in the  
 dark.

When there's no answer, Lain returns to the boulder and hops  
 up to sit on top of it. He tosses his hat away and it flaps  
 back to him.

LAIN (CON'T.)

Don't make me start singing. You,  
me, and the whole of the  
countryside'll regret it.

Still nothing. Lain takes a deep inhale, but a bolt slides back behind the door. It creaks open and the codger exits, a liquor bottle and two tin cups in hand.

CODGER

You gotta be the most stubborn  
errand boy Marella's ever sent.

LAIN

You know us old men. We've had time  
to grow out our stubborn roots.

He throws a coy grin to the codger, who growls at him.

The codger tosses the bottle to Lain, then hooks his cane over the rock and pulls himself up. He brandishes the cups.

CODGER

Well, make yourself useful.

Lain uncorks the bottle and fills both cups. The codger passes one off to Lain. The two sit for a couple minutes and watch the last bit of the sun dip away.

CODGER (CON'T.)

What makes a man give up hours of  
his day on a closed door?

LAIN

Why don't you live closer to town?

CODGER

I don't do well with other people.

LAIN

Same answer.

Lain produces the pill bottle and proffers it to the codger. The codger eyes it with annoyance, but eventually accepts it. The old man stuffs it in a pocket.

LAIN (CON'T.)

Y'know, you're supposed to take  
that.

CODGER

I saw that move with the boulder.

LAIN

(unbothered)

You plannin' to run off and call  
the garrison?

CODGER

(waving his cane)

I don't do much runnin' anywhere  
these days. 'sides, been round long  
enough t'know, dark, light, don't  
make one wick a' difference. I know  
some right heaps, and they don't  
have any magic at all comin' out  
their fingers.

LAIN

You're going to be real  
disappointed when you find out I'm  
a monster.

CODGER

A monster who spent two hours  
making sure a gnarled stump did  
what he was told? Don't know what  
you think you did was so bad, but  
you did alright today.

The codger jabs Lain in the ribs with his cane. For his part, Lain appears touched by the comment. He reaches out and clinks cups with the codger.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Lain lands with both feet after a hop down from the cliff road. He staggers a little DRUNKENLY. He tucks his hands in his coat and shuffles down the road.

HEAVY FOOTFALLS and MUFFLED WHINNIES break the silence around him. He stops and looks around in frustration.

LAIN

Little piece of advice! No one's  
ever snuck up on anybody on  
horseback.

Four YELLOW SIGIL RINGS appear in the air.

YELLOW MAGE SOLDIER

(incanting)

*Sol.*

The rings burst into orbs of LIGHT.

A circle of soldiers, headed by Captain Demar, surround Lain. The horse Demar rides is the one from the blacksmith with the crescent dappling. It now wears war barding.

Off to one side is a PRISON WAGON with Hugo inside.

LAIN  
Evening, officers. Problem?

DEMAR  
Y'know, it was the oddest thing. We were just saddling up for evening patrol, when---

Demar reaches over and lifts the WITNESSING KID from earlier off the back of the Sign Knight's horse.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
---we get the most ear-catching report. We hear we got ourselves a Dark Wizard in our midsts. Now I think to myself, I can't possibly be that lucky. A spy and a wanted fugitive in the same day?

Hugo jumps up in the cell.

HUGO  
I told you, I'm not a sp---

A soldier smacks the bars with their sword. Hugo falls back.

DEMAR  
(to Lain)  
You going to try and deny it too?

LAIN  
Why? If I resist, you going to try and order a beer from me?

The Sign Knight looks away from his captain in embarrassment.

DEMAR  
Wizard, by order of the White Knight and the Dominion, you are hereby charged with treason, to be sentenced to death.

Lain pulls back his coat to reveal the gun on his belt.

Demar flashes his KNIFE out under the kid's throat. The Sign Knight is visibly conflicted over the threat.



DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 Ah, ah. Even a high criminal like  
 yourself wouldn't want the blood of  
 a child on your hands, would you?

C.U.: LAIN LETS THE COAT DROP BACK OVER THE GUN.

LETTERBOX C.U.: HE TILTS HIS HEAD DOWN SO THE BRIM OF THE  
 HAT SHADES HIS EYES, AND ONLY HIS MOUTH CAN BE SEEN.

Demar gives a jerk of his head to the Sign Knight.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 Irons.

The Sign Knight dismounts and approaches.

LETTERBOX E.C.U: A SMIRK CURLS OVER LAIN'S MOUTH.

Lain chokes back low SNICKERS. The Sign Knight freezes in  
 his approach.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 What?

Lain starts to openly laugh.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 (in growing frustration)  
 What is it?

Lain HOWLS with laughter.

Demar brandishes his knife at Lain.

DEMAR (CON'T.)  
 What is so light-blastedly funny?!?

All of Lain's mirth evaporates in an instant.

LAIN  
 You're pointing the wrong way.

A DARK PURPLE SIGIL appear under Lain's boot heel as he  
 kicks off.

In a flash, he closes the distant to Demar through the air.  
 He flips back and plants a kick under Demar's chin. Demar  
 rockets backwards twenty feet.

Lain pirouettes in midair and scoops the kid off the horse.

Another sigil appears to his side as he hits the ground and  
 fires both of them sideways under the prison cart.

LAIN  
 (to the kid, frustratedly)  
 Stay here.

Lain exits the far side of the wagon as two soldiers flank the cart.

He points finger guns at them. Sigils appear at their backs and rip them off their horses.

He proceeds to dismantle a dozen soldiers with ease, combining sigils and eloquent fighting in a seamless dance. He drops the outnumbering force as if they're nothing.

Demar hobbles back.

DEMAR  
 Bunch of cheap shot parlor tricks!  
 You think you could win a real  
 fight, fair and square?

LAIN  
 You wouldn't know fair if it put a  
 boot up your ass. Since it isn't  
 here, mine'll have to do.

C.U.: LAIN SWEEPS A BOOT THROUGH THE DIRT.

He gives Demar the "come and get it" wave.

Demar charges. He swings over and over with a sword; but Lain, with no weapon at all, repeatedly steps to the side and knocks the captain down to a knee.

Demar pulls his knife, but Lain expects it. He twists Demar's knife arm back and kicks Demar back to his knees.

Knocked down again, Demar scoops a handful of dirt and tosses it in Lain's face. While Lain is blinded, Demar plunges the dagger into Lain's shoulder.

The hat flaps off Lain's head and latches onto Demar's face like an angry bat.

Lain clears his eyes and extracts the knife from his shoulder with a grunt. He drops it and steps up to Demar.

As the captain extricates himself from the hat, Lain spins into a roundhouse kick.

A SIGIL RING flashes around Lain's boot. The kick launches Demar sideways several feet to slam into the prison cage.

Lain holds up his hand. The hat flutters back to it as Lain heads towards Demar.

As Lain passes, the yellow mage stops pretending to be knocked out. He slinks past the HORSE IN BARDING to stab Lain in the back. Hugo spots the sneak attack.

HUGO  
 (to the horse)  
*Nezkla Raca!*

The horse recognizes it was spoken to and kicks back. It knocks the yellow mage out for real. The LIGHT ORBS around the road wink out.

Lain creates a sigil around his hand. It faintly illuminates him and a small distance around him.

He fetches an unlit torch and water skin from one of the horses. He upends the water onto the torch.

With a flick of his wrist, the ring around his hand flies up the torch and splits into a stack of THREE RINGS around the wet torch head.

The torch steams as the air pressure around the torch falls and boils the water in a vacuum. The abrupt steam build-up ignites the torch in spontaneous combustion.

Lain stands over the crumpled Demar on the ground and looks for somewhere to put the torch.

Hugo rushes to the bars and sticks his hand out. Lain side eyes him but hands it over.

Lain picks up Demar and slams him back against the cage.

LAIN  
 Here's what's going to happen.  
 Garrison withdraws to the edge of town. You're going to do your jobs and protect these people. No one under the Knight's banner ever drinks here again. And you, Captain. You're going to request a transfer as far as possible from here. Or you'll find out exactly why those posters have bounties for Dark Wizards.

Demar glares at him. He makes a hocking noise to well up phlegm, but Hugo bops him on the head with the torch.

HUGO  
Spitting's rude.

DEMAR  
(swallowing)  
Do you know who I am?!? We serve  
the light of the Dominion! Not only  
are we not leaving; when we report  
you, there will be a legion of us  
swarmed all over this town! The  
White Knight lets us do anything we  
w---

Lain slams Demar's head back against the bars and the  
captain goes slack.

Lain drops the unconscious form and takes the torch back  
from Hugo. Lain looks around at the other soldiers groaning  
on the ground.

The Sign Knight feebly crawls away.

Lain flicks his hand. A sigil appears underneath the Sign  
Knight and launches him back into Lain's grasp. Lain slams  
him similarly against the cage.

LAIN  
Here's what's going to happen---

SIGN KNIGHT  
(hands up)  
I-I got it the first time. We're  
gone. Tonight.

Lain shoves the Sign Knight off into the darkness.

He reaches under the cage and extracts the kid, who he plops  
up onto the armored horse. The kid opens his mouth to say  
something, but Lain points a threatening finger.

LAIN  
Not a word.

Lain takes the reins of the horse and starts to lead it off  
down the road.

HUGO  
Hey! Wait! You can't just leave me  
here!

LAIN  
(pausing in the road)  
Why shouldn't I?

HUGO

Well... well, because I saved your life.

LAIN

(returning to the cage)

You very much didn't. Besides, I was reminded very recently that just cause you think something is right, doesn't necessarily mean you should do anything. You can just end up making it worse. For all I know, you really are a spy.

HUGO

I'm not!

LAIN

Because that's something a spy would never say.

HUGO

Besides, that's exactly what a hero would do, jump in and act just because it's right.

LAIN

(leans in close)

Never make that mistake again. I'm no hero. I'm a monster, or hadn't you noticed?

Lain gestures around at all the broken soldiers on the ground. He turns and heads back towards the horse.

Hugo sits back against the side wall of the cage and hugs his knees.

HUGO

(more to himself than Lain)

You saved the kid. I thought you might do the same for a guy in a cage surrounded by wolves. Even monsters can do the right thing.

Lain glances back in surprise.

EXT. DUNMORE ALLEY - FLASHBACK

A BLOOD-SOAKED OLDER MAN in armor slumped in a similar position against the wall of an alley replaces Hugo. This is REINARD THE SELLSWORD.

Drizzle and fog coat the bleak memory. There's a tightly wrapped parcel in the crook of Reinard's arm.

REINARD  
(weakly)  
Even monsters can do the right thing.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The MEMORY disappears just as quickly.

Lain hangs his head in exasperation. As he picks it back up, the hat flaps down to smack him in the face.

LAIN  
(to hat)  
Yeah, I know. I got it.

C.U.: HUGO STUDIES HIS KNEES, RESIGNED TO HIS IMPRISONMENT.

He's alerted by the sound and light of a sigil by the door's lock. The sigil melts away and nothing happens.

Hugo still perks up at the sight of Lain back outside the door.

Hugo points up into the corner of the cage wall, where a WHITE CRYSTAL is affixed.

HUGO  
Dampening crystal. Neither of our Shading is going to work.

LAIN  
You must be a Green.

HUGO  
How did you know?!?

LAIN  
All Extols are green.

HUGO  
 (in feigned denial)  
 I-I-I... I'm not an Extol!

LAIN  
 And I'm not a Dark Wizard. Come off  
 it, kid.

Hugo nervously approaches the bars.

HUGO  
 Even knowing that, you'll still let  
 me out?

LAIN  
 (absent-mindedly, focused on  
 the lock)  
 Dominion's invading your home, not  
 the other way 'round.

Struck by an idea, Lain leans around the cage to look at the unconscious Demar.

Lain flicks his hand and a small sigil ring appears around the KEYS on Demar's belt. The keys tug against where they're tied but won't budge.

Lain gives an annoyed grunt.

With a larger hand motion, a sigil ring appears on Demar's far side and the body is flung toward Lain, who stops the unconscious man with his foot.

He unties the keys and tosses them to Hugo.

EXT. BAKERY - NIGHT

Lain pulls the horse up outside the bakery and notices footsteps behind him. He leans around the horse, where he sees Hugo, who gives him a big grin.

Lain walks back and lifts the kid off the horse. He drops the boy on his feet and points menacingly away. The kid books it.

LAIN  
 (to Hugo)  
 Why are you following me?

HUGO  
 The horse.

LAIN  
Somehow I don't think it's yours.

HUGO  
No. It now appears to be yours.

LAIN  
And? I think horse theft is the least of my crimes in the last hour.

HUGO  
There's only one reason a man needs a horse.

Lain stares at him expectantly to continue.

HUGO (CON'T.)  
Because he plans to ride it.

LAIN  
That tends to be their function.

HUGO  
If you were just planning to return the kid, you could have walked that. You took the horse cause you're leaving town.

LAIN  
After you beat the local constabulary into the dirt, it's generally ill-advised to just hang around. What's your point?

HUGO  
Take me with you.

Lain lets out a mirthless bark.

LAIN  
Why would you possibly think I'd do that?

HUGO  
*Yarnval.*

LAIN  
(recognizing the concept)  
No. Nope. Absolutely not.



HUGO  
You've heard of it!

LAIN  
The fool's notion that when two people save each others' lives, they're woven together by fate? I told you before, you didn't save me.

HUGO  
Maybe you won't admit it, but we found ourselves together here. I got goals, and you're about to set out. Let me hitch with you a bit?

LAIN  
People get hurt around me.

HUGO  
You seen me? I'mma get hurt if I stay on the road solo. And if the bandits or beasts don't get me, guards'll string me up for walking while Extol. Please? Please? Please-please-please?

Hugo folds his hands together and goes wide-eyed pleading.

Lain rolls his eyes, but hands over the horse's reins.

INT. BAKERY - CONTINUOUS

As Lain enters, a loud thump and puffs of purplish energy emit from the kitchen.

Marella exits. Her hair is blown back and frozen standing on end. She has a food box.

Lain hurries to her side.

LAIN  
Oh, Marella! I'm so sorry. I should have warned you, it kicks a bit.  
(referencing her hair)  
That'll fade in a day or so.

She grins, and excitedly sets to wrapping it. She takes an ORANGE POLKA DOT KERCHIEF out of a drawer and knots it around the box. She hands it to Lain.

MARELLA

Mister Lain, you are fillin' an ol' lady's heart with joy. I can't never tell you what this right means to me.

(setting about cleaning her counter)

Now, you get that sup tucked up in yer sack, and I'll get you square with vittels 'fore you make out on the road tomorrow.

LAIN

'Bout that... we're hitting the road tonight.

MARELLA

"We"?

LAIN

Yeah. He's... well, he's a long story. Point is, I got to make an exit rather quickly. After I go, some people are going to come looking for me. I'm sorry to drop this trouble in your lap. When they get here, tell them anything they want to know. Don't you dare try to cover for me. If anything were to happen to you, I'd never forgive myself.

Marella sympathetically reaches up and removes Lain's HAT. She brushes flour from his cheek.

MARELLA

You got a real problem with doing that.

She reverses directions and slaps him upside the head.

MARELLA (CON'T.)

I set a husband in the dirt, raised a son from brat to brave young man, and I've kept this town fed. You think a little questionin' is gonna be what licks me? You may got some grey in, but donch'ya think you can sass me, young man. You don't have to go on carryin' the whole world on your shoulders like to you do. All you gotta do is make one more delivery. You let me mind the store till you get back.

Lain lowers his head in embarrassment, but he gives her a GENUINE SMILE.

INT. UMBRAL KEEP THRONE ROOM - PRESENT DAY

The tapestries and black detailing of the Keep have been replaced with WHITE enamel and crystal.

Despite the extra light, LONG SHADOWS obscure sections of the hall.

THE WHITE KNIGHT stands by a window in heavy ALABASTER ARMOR, with an almost PEARLESCENT GLEAM. The PLATED HELMET hides his face.

Etched on the chest plate is the same SIX SWORD SUN CREST the soldiers wear.

He stares out at a distance mountain with a wisp of smoke.

Demar, stripped down to his undergarments and cuffed, is tossed onto the floor in the hall.

WHITE KNIGHT

Ah, Captain Demar. Glad you could join us.

When the knight speaks, it's VERAL'S VOICE.

DEMAR attempts to struggle up to his knees. A sword drops from the darkness near the ceiling and stabs him in the shoulder, knocking him flat.

WHITE KNIGHT (CON'T.)

From what your replacement tells us, you've used my name to rather enrich your own life. Taking as you please of food, drink... women.

Demar attempts to struggle up again, but another sword drops into the opposite shoulder.

WHITE KNIGHT (CON'T.)

Tell you what. I'll give you a chance to plead your case. What do you say by the count of three? That seems fair. One.

A much larger sword drops out of the darkness.

The White Knight holds up a hand without taking his attention from the window.

A PURPLE SIGIL RING appears around the sword's hilt, controlling it across the room.

DEMAR

Wait! Wait! I've served loyally under the banner for years! So, I took some fringe benefits for doing a good job. Is that really such a big deal? You're a guy. You get it.

WHITE KNIGHT

This armor is heavy. My arm is getting tired. Two.

The sword spins into position, aimed at Demar's neck.

DEMAR

I-I-I... I got more than two dozen conscripts for your forces at the front line. That's a lot of manpower.

The Knight lets out a sigh.

WHITE KNIGHT

A shame. I just had that carpet cleaned.

The Knight flicks his hand. The sword fires down.

DEMAR (O.C.)

There was a dark wizard!

The Knight's hand freezes mid-swing. The sword tip is frozen, pressed into Demar's neck. A small trickle of blood drips where the tip punctures the neck.

A DARK SIGIL appears beneath Demar and lifts him into the air, as if weightless.

With a crook of the Knight's fingers, Demar floats within an arm's length.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

You! You're a---

Demar's chin lifts as the massive sword swings threateningly underneath.

WHITE KNIGHT

There are worse fates than death if you're lying. What did this Dark Wizard look like?

DEMAR

He, uh, he had white hair and a scar under one eye. He wore a long black coat, a six shooter, and he had a stetson that I swear must have been possessed by a demon.

Finally, the Knight turns to give his attention to Demar.

DEMAR (CON'T.)

That's him, isn't it? He's the reason you want all the Wizards rounded up. Let me go back and get a squad together. We can---

The White Knight turns and heads further back into the hall. With an absentminded flick of the Knight's hand, Demar flies out the window with one last frightful SCREAM.

WHITE KNIGHT

(to Huntresses in the dark)

It appears our quarry has come out from under his rock. Which of you feels up for a hunt?

SIX PAIRS OF WHITE, GLOWING EYES light up in the dark.

ROLL END CREDITS.