



BOY-MAN THE BARBARIAN

"Pilot"

Written by

Early-Ray Mixon

505-289-6246

supercomixking@gmail.com

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLS - DAY

The burnt ruins of a hillside village, still smoking. There is no life to be seen, only death. Scattered bodies lay twisted in the trampled dirt left by a great many horses. There are two types of corpses the villagers and the raiders but there are by far more dead villagers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The world is a cruel and savage place, it is a universal truth. Here we begin our story, in the aftermath. The raiders fell like a sudden illness and took all that they could carry and killed all they could not take.

Not far from the ruins of the town, JACE, a muscular man in a loin cloth, appearing to be in his twenties lays bloody and unconscious in a slag filled ditch.

SUPER: Part One: "The Boy In The Barbarian"

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Here lies a stranger, a man from far away lands and unlike those all around him the barbarian lives.

Jace's eyes shoot open. He staggers to his feet and climbs out of the ditch and stands at the top of a hill looking down into the valley below. Descending into the valley is a great cloud of dust kicked up by more than a hundred galloping horses.

CUE MUSIC:

A bombastic theme evocative of danger and high adventure.

The raiders ride through the valley with nearly two hundred captives bound in nets and suspended from saddles two to a horse. The raiders are savage looking men wearing animal pelts and brandishing curved blades. Their faces are painted and each bear eagle tattoos on their exposed chests.

NARRATOR

The riders sweep through lands like a scythe harvesting human lives.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Nearly ten score souls travel into
bondage, including some most dear
to the barbarian.

We come to rest on SCOTT a lean but well built sixteen year old in jeans and a basketball jersey. He desperately saws at the net with a small pocket knife, he isn't making much progress. Netted up beside him is TONY, a bespectacled youth of about fifteen carrying a plastic shield and wearing a half-assed cosplay outfit consisting of a bright red cloak, cargo jeans and a t-shirt.

A pair of gaming dice fall from Tony's pocket.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

SUPER: Two Days Ago ... The First Worst Day Of Jace Boyman's Life.

INT. SCHOOL CLUB ROOM - DAY

The same pair of dice land on the table.

Jace, now a scrawny teenager of about fourteen and wearing typical clothes along with Tony, DANNY, an Asian teen of sixteen with an acne problem and PAT, a heavysset fifteen year old goth girl with short dark hair all sit around a card table covered in the trappings of Dungeons & Dragons. Pat is the dungeon master and sits behind a D.M. screen. Prominently at the center of the play mat are three skeleton figurines.

PAT

Your attack is a critical failure,
you miss.

DANNY

Damn!

JACE

I use barbarian rage and attack the
skeletons with my broadsword.

PAT

You do that.

Jace rolls his dice.

PAT (CONT'D)

It's a critical hit. The skeletons
are defeated.

Danny high fives Jace.

DANNY

You the man, barbarian!

PAT

The skeletal sentries no longer
block your way. There are two paths
before you, one leading up to
daylight and out of the dungeon and
the other leading down into deep
shadow.

DANNY

We found the book, there's no
reason to keep exploring.

TONY

No reason? The old guy said there was a magic sword down here and treasure.

DANNY

The old guy was a drunk and a follower of Takhisis.

JACE

I think we should check it out if there's treasure involved. The party is pretty much broke.

DANNY

Fine, I'm outnumbered.

PAT

You advance into a room filled with mounds of glittering gold. Suddenly, a massive figure rises up from the shadows. Looming above you is a red dragon!

JACE

Are you kidding me?

TONY

No!

DANNY

Fuck you, Pat. Just fuck you.

TONY

How the hell are we supposed to handle a dragon at our level?

PAT

If it helps it hasn't seen you yet.

An egg timer goes off.

PAT (CONT'D)

And that's time, gentlemen. We'll pick this game up tomorrow night.

They start putting away their gaming equipment.

TONY

Are we still meeting in that dank cave?

PAT

You ask that every week.

JACE

And every week we tell you that playing in the Temple Of Shadows is our group's oldest tradition.

DANNY

It's like being in a real dungeon.

TONY

Who would want to be in a real dungeon? The whole thing is cultish and weird.

Danny slaps Tony on the shoulder.

DANNY

Stop thinking about being afraid of the dark and start thinking about how to kill that dragon.

JACE

But Jesus, Pat throwing a dragon at us out of nowhere. This kind of shit is why you don't have a boyfriend.

Anger flashes in Pat's eyes.

PAT

What makes you think I don't have a boyfriend?

JACE

Um, I thought you were gay.

PAT

I'm bi, asshole.

JACE

Who would you even go out with, one of these guys?

PAT

It's none of your business who I date. But I don't like you making your dumbass assumptions.

Pat storms out of the room.

DANNY

Has anyone ever told you that you've got a real way with the ladies?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jace, Danny and Tony walk together.

TONY

Seriously, you've gotta fix this
before you drag us all down.

JACE

I know.

DANNY

You've got to apologize to her.

TONY

You've gotta do more than apologize,
you've gotta get down on your hands
and knees and pucker up for some
ass kissing.

A hand lands on Jace's shoulder and he stops short as it
squeezes painfully tight. His nervous line of sight leads to
Scott, standing behind him with a cruel grin.

SCOTT

Seems like you're pissing everyone
off today, buddy.

There is a moment of absolute silence as Danny and Tony stand
frozen in fear.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You boys should run along. Jace
and I have gotta have a little
conversation.

Tony and Danny look away, ashamed that they are too afraid to
say or do anything. Jace clenches his trembling fists as he
swallows his own fear and resentment.

JACE

Just go.

DANNY

We'll see you later.

Tony and Danny slowly back away and then run.

SCOTT

(laughs) You need a better
class of friend.

JACE

Like you, old buddy?

Scott shoves Jace into the boy's bathroom.

SCOTT

Yeah, that's right and I've got some friendly advice to give you, might even save your life one day.

Scott punches Jace in the stomach, holding nothing back. The skinny teen doubles over, gasping in pain. Scott follows up the initial blow with a kick.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You don't ever fucking snitch. Not ever, do you understand me you piece of shit?

Jace tries to nod and is rewarded with another kick. Scott bends down and pulls Jace up by his shirt.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

What did you think would happen? Did you think that if you dropped the dime a teacher would believe you over me?

Scott slams Jace against the stall.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

That's not how the world works. They don't want to believe you. To believe you they'd have to expel their star baller. Do you see that happening?

JACE

I can't believe you were ever my friend, fuck you.

SCOTT

Now I have to wash out your mouth.

Jace tries to struggle as Scott pushes him into the stall. Whoever used the toilet last didn't flush, it's yellow with fresh urine.

JACE

I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Jesus, I'm begging you, for the love of God don't!

SCOTT

You've got this coming.

JACE

No! Noooo!

Scott shoves Jace's head into the toilet bowl and the water froths and bubbles with the boy's drowned screams. Jace's feet kick impotently as he struggles in vain. After a long moment Scott pulls him up and tosses him to the floor, coughing, sputtering and soaking wet with toilet water, tears and piss.

JACE (CONT'D)

You're fucked up in the head, man.
What kind of person does that to someone?

SCOTT

A friend. I'm doing all of this for your own good. Look at me, I'm popular and I get laid all the time but I used to be a loser just like you. Don't you want what I have?

JACE

I don't want to be anything like you.

SCOTT

That's a lie, you envy me but you're too weak to change your pathetic life. That's why I have to break you just like my old man broke me. When I'm done you'll willingly put the nerdy bullshit behind you and even thank me for all this effort I'm putting in on your behalf.

JACE

You just want me to keep doing your math homework.

SCOTT

I deserve some compensation for my trouble. You just keep your mouth shut from now on. Once I've smashed that defiant look from your eyes I'll build you into a real man.

Scott turns to leave and then stops.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

A word of this to your sister and I'll break your fucking leg.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

She's finally going out with me and
hers is one juicy ass I plan to
tap.

Scott leaves and Jace gets up and tries to clean himself off
in the sink but he's getting nowhere. He looks at himself in
the mirror, tears and repressed fury in his bloodshot eyes.
He punches the mirror repeatedly until it cracks and his fist
comes away bloody.

JACE

Fuck!Fuck!Fuck!Fuck!Fuck!Fuck!

Zoom slowly in on his EYES in the cracked mirror.

EXT. PLAINS - DUSK

Zoom out to see Jace as the Barbarian, looking out over the
plains from atop a large boulder. He leaps down and begins
sprinting. We see that in the distance the raider party is
still visible.

NARRATOR

The barbarian does not give up.
Even as the raiders dwindle into
the distance he pursues them.

EXT. PLAINS - NIGHT

Jace runs under a vast starry night sky. On the ground in the
far distance the twinkle of campfires can be seen, almost as
remote as the stars.

NARRATOR

He does not stop for rest or sleep.
He presses on determined not to
lose them from his sight.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

Jace runs past herds of bison as he continues his pursuit. In
the distance the raiders can be seen but they are closer.

NARRATOR

He draws from a well of stamina
that seems bottomless. Some deep
part of him is amazed by this but
his mind is fanatically focused on
his goal.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Were he to take just a moment to examine his actions he might be shocked into stillness but he dares not stop.

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

As he comes upon the hills he finds a vantage point atop a cliff. The Raider camp is close enough for him to see individual tents and campfires in the distance. He pulls an apple from a nearby tree and takes a bite as he looks down at the camp.

NARRATOR

The barbarian's goal is so close that he can taste it. Just one more day and he can rescue his comrades and make their kidnappers pay in blood.

A troubled look crosses Jace's face.

JACE

No. Nobody else has to get hurt. I don't ever want to kill again.

Jace spits out a mouthful of apple.

NARRATOR

But he does not believe his own words. They taste as sour on his tongue as unripe fruit.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Jace runs through the forested hills and spots movement through the trees. He slows to a brisk but cautious walk. There are two men up ahead. When they spot him they snatch up weapons and come charging.

JACE

Shit.

Wielding spear and scimitar they are unmistakably two of the raiders who stole his friends.

JACE (CONT'D)

Hold on, lets just talk for a minute.

Jace jumps back as the raiders come in swinging. SLAER, the one with the scimitar moves in swinging while KINT hangs back with his spear waiting for a moment to strike.

SLAER
Die, barbarian!

Jace leaps back, trying to avoid the attack.

JACE
I don't want to fight.

The spear thrusts in with sudden speed, Jace barely dodges.

KINT
Good, I feel like killing someone weak.

As Slaer moves in, Jace instinctively grabs a branch and without thinking bashes him over the head, cracking his skull wide open. The dead man tumbles to the ground and before Jace can register what he's done Kint is coming at him with the spear. One moment the barbarian is using his makeshift club to block the attack and the next his foot is coming up with monstrous might. There is a loud crack as the raider impacts a big tree and falls down motionless and with his eyes open staring off at death. Jace looks at one and then the other body and for a long moment stands silently before throwing up in the bushes.

JACE
Jesus, I can't believe I did it again.

The sound of moaning catches Jace's attention and he follows the sound back through the trees in the direction the raiders came from. He looks up to see a bruised and battered and semi-conscious Scott, lashed to a tree, crucified. He stares for a long moment then spits in the dirt.

JACE (CONT'D)
Better than you deserve.

SUPER: Part Two "The Barbarian In The Boy"

He turns to leave and then stops, clenching his fists.

JACE (CONT'D)
Damn it.

He turns back, knowing that he has to do the right thing.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - NIGHT.

SUPER: One night earlier.

The raider's horses come to a stop in a field. Scott is cutting furiously at his net. He's made some progress but the hole isn't quite big enough to fit through yet. He passes the knife to Tony who starts cutting at his own net, also with a not-quite-big-enough hole. Hanging from the horse next door is RAFF, a scruffy looking hill person of about seventeen. He works on his own net with a hunting knife but doesn't bother passing it to the young girl netted up next to him, LILA.

TONY

I'm telling you, none of this is real. We're in some kind of advanced VR role-playing game.

SCOTT

Not this shit again. You're not even making sense. We were in a cave, no computers in sight and now we are dirty and miserable and surrounded by every kind of awful smell. Who the fuck would make a game like this and how the fuck would we even be playing it?

TONY

Haven't you ever heard of quantum computing? They created a super real environment and manipulated our memories so that we think this is actually happening. We're probably not even real teenagers, I'll bet we're both thirty.

RAFF

Your friend has lost his mind. You know that, right?

SCOTT

Not my friend but yeah, that's becoming clear.

TONY

I'm the only sane one here. If this isn't a game how do we understand what he's saying? Why is he speaking English?

RAFF

I'm not speaking your language,
fool. Their shaman cast the spell
of tongues on us.

TONY

In-game explanation.

Scott rolls his eyes but then sits up deadly alert at the sound of boots crunching gravel.

SCOTT

Everyone shut up.

Silence falls as the trio hastily put away their knives and pull the cut netting back together to conceal the holes. A tall, bearded SENTRY passes between the horses, his savage eyes falling from prisoner to prisoner with ill-concealed humor. Someone mutters something and with nonchalant speed, the sentry silences them with his club and moves on without looking back.

After a long moment of tension Scott breathes a sigh of relief. It seems the guard isn't coming back around.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

We can each just about squeeze
through these nets. I say we make a
break for it now, before he comes
back.

TONY

Bad idea. As the resident rogue,
I'm the expert in these things. We
want to wait until these goons are
asleep. I'm sure to have maxed out
my stealth and luck, navigating
this camp in the dark should be a
cinch.

RAFF

I hate to agree with this fool but
he has a point.

SCOTT

Why wait when we can get the hell
out right now?

Sudden screams erupt from the edge of camp and then die. In a moment the sentry passes by dragging two raggedly dressed corpses by a rope. He bumps into another guard and the two of them laugh.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Point taken. We'll wait.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - UNDER THE BLEACHERS

SUPER: The Day Before The Shit Hit The Fan.

FRANCO, a husky teen of about sixteen throws Scott a beer as he joins him under the bleachers to ogle the cheerleaders during their practice.

FRANCO
You took your sweet time.

SCOTT
I had some business to handle.

As Scott opens his beer can a wet and miserable looking Jace, clothes stained yellow from toilet piss, trudges past the chain link fence separating the football field from the parking lot. Danny approaches him.

DANNY
Dude, are you OK?

JACE
Don't talk to me.

Danny backs off.

DANNY
Yeah, I deserve that. I'm a cowardly shit, OK.

Jace just glares at him and keeps walking.

DANNY (CONT'D)
See you at the game tomorrow, no hard feelings!

FRANCO
That your handiwork?

SCOTT
Guy tried to snitch me out. Had to teach him to keep his mouth shut.

FRANCO
You need to lay off that kid before he snaps.

Scott takes a sip of his beer.

SCOTT
I've got plans for him. Big plans.

FRANCO
What's that supposed to mean?

SCOTT
It means he's my special project.
When I'm done with that dweeb he'll
be almost as awesome as us.

Franco shakes his head.

FRANCO
Dude, that's psycho. You should
just leave him alone.

SCOTT
I'm doing him a favor, besides I
can't fail math or I'm off the
basketball team.

The cheerleaders form a human pyramid and the boys crane
their necks to get good look up their skirts.

FRANCO
At least that I can understand.

SCOTT
You football boys have everything
worked out for tomorrow?

FRANCO
We got a keg and ten cases. The
bonfire is a go and the booze will
flow my hoop jockey friend. Who are
you bringing, one of these
lovelies?

SCOTT
I can't date cheerleaders anymore.
Half of them hate me and the other
half want a commitment.

FRANCO
Than who?

SCOTT
Susan Boyman, I've been working her
for weeks. This party is just the
thing to get her clothes to fall
off.

FRANCO

Unless she finds out what you did
to her brother.

Jace walks miserably to the bus stop, his eyes burning with
rage.

JACE

One day you'll get yours, Scott. I
just hope I'm there to see it.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Scott hangs suspended from the tree, his eyes are unfocused
and his mouth is chapped and parched. There are deep bruises
on his arms where the ropes bind them to the branches. Jace
hoists himself up behind him, hanging on to the branch with
one hand and maneuvering a sharp rock with the other.

JACE

So, it all finally came back on you
just like I wanted. For some reason
I don't feel like celebrating. I
really ought to be laughing at you
instead of cutting you down.

Jace saws through the rope holding Scott's right arm in
place. It drops, dangling lifeless and Scott begins to cough.

JACE (CONT'D)

After everything you've done to me
I should just leave you up here to
die. Unfortunately, it turns out
I've still got a damned conscience.

He cuts Scott's other arm free and catches him before he
falls. The trickling sound of a stream can be heard in the
distance.

SCOTT

Water.

JACE

Yeah, there's a stream nearby.
I'll bet those sadistic bastards
wanted you to hear it. Honestly,
I'm surprised they didn't let you
join them. Birds of a feather and
all.

Jace jumps down with Scott in tow and carries him towards the
sound of the stream.

JACE (CONT'D)

I hope you realize that saving your miserable life is not the highlight of my day. In fact, dragging you around like an over sized suitcase is a real pain in the ass.

Jace sets Scott down next to the babbling brook and bends to cup some water in his hands but freezes in motion as he spots his reflection. Reflected in the water is Jace, the fourteen year old boy. Still scrawny and awkward but dressed in the barbarian's limited attire. Jace looks at his barbarian body in confusion, comparing it with the reflection that looks back at him. His biceps vs the boy's biceps, his rock hard abs vs the skinny and toneless stomach. His manly stubble vs a lad's peach fuzz.

JACE (CONT'D)

What the?
(beat) This is too weird.

Scott groans and Jace's attention goes back to the task at hand. He scoops up a handful of water and moves over to the teen while trying not to spill as he bends down.

JACE (CONT'D)

Yeah, I get it. You're having a bad day. I know a little something about those. Come on, drink up.

Scott greedily drinks the water from Jace's hands.

INT. HOUSE - DAY.

Jace arrives home, his hair is scraggly and his eyes are red. He's still wearing the same damp yellow stained clothes.

SUPER: Later That Terrible Day

There's a note pinned to the door that reads. "Working late, TV dinners in freezer. Don't wait up. - MOM"

After taking one look at the note Jace groans and drops his backpack on the floor.

JACE

Typical.

He desperately wants a shower and can't wait to get out of his soiled clothes. He pulls off his shirt and drops his pants as he makes a b-line to the bathroom only to be cut off by SUSAN. Jace's sister is redheaded, skinny and buxom. She crinkles her nose at the stench coming off of him.

SUSAN

What did you do, take a bath in a toilet?

JACE

I don't have time for this. I had to walk home because they wouldn't let me on the bus. I need a shower, I've gotta be somewhere in twenty minutes.

Susan blocks him from the bathroom.

SUSAN

Not a chance, loser. I'm going to the bonfire tomorrow with Scott. That means I'm going to the salon today. Which means the bathroom is mine.

JACE

Scott's an asshole.

SUSAN

You're just mad that he ditched the dork squad to become a real man. Bathroom denied.

JACE

You don't understand. This might be my only chance to go out with April. I don't have a lot of girls lining up to date me. Please just let me take a shower!

Susan smiles unsympathetically.

SUSAN

You say all of that as if I'll care.

She slams the door in Jace's face. He loses his temper and starts to pound and kick at the door. He pulls at the handle to no effect and tries to ram it but doesn't have the strength.

JACE

Let me in, you stupid bitch! I need to take a damned shower. Don't you fucking do this to me. Let me in, goddamn it!

Jace's phone rings and he stops, a look of uncertainty crossing his face before he runs off.

Jace paces in his room as he talks on the phone. He hasn't bothered to put on any clothes and is desperately pleading with the girl on the other end.

JACE (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to stand you up. I'm having a really bad day. Just please give me another chance! No, April, don't hang up!

(pause) April?

Jace tosses the phone in anger.

JACE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He completely loses his shit and goes berserk. First he pulls down his bookshelf with a thunderous crash. Then he picks up his baseball bat and starts smashing everything in sight.

JACE (CONT'D)

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

His bat smashes the pictures on his wall one by one. Then he finally concentrates on a single picture. He smashes it off the wall and keeps pounding it over and over.

JACE (CONT'D)

I hate you. I hate you. I wish you were dead. I wish I had the guts to fucking kill you.

The picture in the smashed frame, surrounded by broken glass is one of Jace wearing a goofy fur barbarian costume. To his left is Danny dressed like an elf druid and to his right with a friendly arm around his shoulder and dressed as a bard is Scott. They all stand in a cave with interesting cave paintings on the walls. We linger on Scott's smiling face.

EXT. RAIDER CAMP - NIGHT.

Tony leads the way through the shadows followed by Scott and Raff.

RAFF

Are you sure you know where you're taking us?

SCOTT

It seems like we should have left the camp by now.

TONY

We're taking a little detour is all. Just a minor side quest.

SCOTT

What the fuck are you talking about?

TONY

A tiny little heist. These guys are bound to keep their valuables at the center of camp. We'll need money after we escape, right?

RAFF

This is a terrible idea.

SCOTT

They'll catch us for sure. We need to turn around and get out of here.

Tony indicates a nearby tent with two guards before snagging a lantern from another tent as they pass.

TONY

They're gonna be too busy putting out the fire to worry about us.

RAFF

For the love of the six gods don't start a
(beat)

Tony pitches the lantern into a tent and waits for it to go up in smoke. As the shouts of alarm raise and the guards run from their post to the disturbance, Tony dashes for the treasure tent. Scott and Raff have no choice but to follow.

RAFF (CONT'D)

Fire.

SCOTT

Tony, you crazy motherfucker!

Inside the tent Tony is stuffing whatever he can into his pockets, mostly dried food. They are in the food tent.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You risked our lives to rob the pantry?

TONY

It works, we need supplies. Just grab what you can.

Scott and Raff reluctantly follow Tony's lead and pilfer as much food as they can carry.

SCOTT

Damn it, he might be right. It was a long ride here and I don't know the first thing about hunting or foraging.

RAFF

Of course you don't. I've saddled myself with a spoiled incompetent dandy and a madman. I'd probably live longer going it alone.

Raff looks down in shock and horror as a bloody spear suddenly sticks out of his stomach. There is confusion in his eyes as he topples to the ground.

SCOTT

Oh my God!

Scott stares at Raff's body with slack jawed amazement. Raff tries to say something but only blood comes out of his mouth as his eyes glaze over and he lay still.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

No. This can't be happening.

A shadowy figure blocks the moonlight.

SENTRY

I know there's more of you devils in there. But don't worry, I've got plenty more spears.

Tony grabs the hanging lantern and chucks it at the sentry as he runs the other way, Scott following at his heels.

TONY

Run!

SCOTT

What about Raff's body? We can't just leave him there!

TONY

Don't sweat it, he's only an NPC.

EXT. HILLS - DAWN.

The sun rises as Tony and Scott reach the hills. Tony is exuberant and cheerful but Scott is melancholy.

He casts glances at his companion with a mixture of anger and mistrust.

TONY

I was amazing back there. Can you believe how easy it was to rip off those idiots?

SCOTT

Someone is dead because of you. Someone we knew personally and your up here laughing?

TONY

Chill out, dude. It's not like he was real. Frankly I saw it coming. The whole ride up here he was droning on and on about his backstory. Honestly with all that buildup I was a little disappointed with how easy he went down.

Scott punches Tony in the face.

TONY (CONT'D)

Ow! What the hell?

SCOTT

You're fucked up in the head, man. Get it through your thick skull, this is not a video game! Raff was a real person who you got killed.

TONY

You sound crazy.

Scott walks away in disgust as Tony wipes the blood from his busted lip.

TONY (CONT'D)

You don't think I've thought this all through? Magic isn't real. The universe is run by science and logic and reason. The only logical explanation for what is happening to us is that this is virtual reality.

SCOTT

I'm through listening to your bullshit. I'm gonna hike back to that magic cave, however long it takes and then i'm gonna go home.

TONY

What kind of game do you think this is? Backtracking wont help us, we've gotta move the plot forward. We're heroes on a quest of adventure. Now that the bad guys think we've run away is the best time to slip back in and free our companions. But first we might want to check these woods for useful artifacts.

Scott turns to Tony, all patience gone. Standing before him is a liability, a delusional idiot who will get him killed in no time.

SCOTT

You can go get yourself killed but leave me out of it. In fact, I don't want to see your face again. I'm not your friend, I don't like you and even if this was a game, which it isn't, you'd be the last person i'd pick as a partner.

TONY

That hurts, man.

SCOTT

One other thing. Rogues are a crap class.

TONY

Fuck you!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SUPER: Part Three: "The Sword and the Sand Pit"

INT. CAR - MOVING - DUSK

Scott drives a sweet Lamborghini and Franco sits in the passenger seat jealously admiring the car.

SUPER: The Day The Shit Hits The Fan

FRANCO

Fuck you, I'm so jealous. How the hell did you get a car like this?

SCOTT

My grandpa is extremely rich and he loves making my old man look like a chump. He showed up first thing on my sixteenth birthday and gave me the keys. Then my stepdad had to pretend that the old junker he got me was for himself.

They pull up to a house and Tamera, a blond girl of sixteen hops in the back.

FRANCO

Hey babe.

TAMERA

Jesus, Scott is this your car? I think I might be dating the wrong guy.

FRANCO

Nah, this guys got a nice car but he's got issues. Me, I'm a teddy bear.

SCOTT

None of that kind of talk in front of Susan. I want her to like me.

Franco smirks.

FRANCO

Or what, you'll do to me what you did to Susan's brother?

Scott turns in his seat to face Tamera, innocently smiling.

SCOTT
I didn't do anything to her
brother.

He shoots Franco a not so innocent look of warning.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
And you keep your mouth shut.

Scott parks the car in front of Jace and Susan's house, checks his hair in the mirror and gets out with a bouquet of roses.

EXT. HOUSE - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Scott goes up the walkway and knocks. A moment of nervous waiting and the door opens to Jace's hateful stare that drags into an awkward silence until he remembers he's on the phone and rushes off pleading with the girl on the other end. Scott shakes his head in amusement.

JACE
Just let me make it up to you.
(pause) If you're busy
tonight what about
tomorrow? (pause) What
about next week? I'm
begging you, give me
another chance!

SCOTT
Loser.

Susan comes to the door dressed for a party. Boots, miniskirt, tank top and freshly styled hair. Scott loses his composure as her hotness hits him like a hammer.

SUSAN
Ready to party?

She takes the roses from him, sniffs them sensuously and then puts them down without a thought.

SCOTT
Yeah, totally.

SUSAN
Then what are we waiting for?

She leads the way and he closes the door following behind her.

INT. CAR - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Scott drives through a winding road in the hills as the sun sets behind the trees. He slams on the breaks when several teenagers run out into the street and vanish in the woods.

SCOTT

Jesus!

SUSAN

What's their problem?

FRANCO

Probably drunk. We're almost there.

As they round the bend in the road their spirits sink. The distinct flash of police lights can be seen. As they slowly approach there are more kids desperately running through the woods and in and out of the street as the boys in blue give chase.

FRANCO (CONT'D)

We've been ratted out.

SUSAN

So much for the party.

TAMERA

Just keep driving. Tonight's a bust, literally.

Scott has a fighting look in his eyes as he leaves the scene of the busted party in his rear view mirror.

SCOTT

No, damn it. I've got booze enough in the trunk for the four of us. I say we have our own private party.

FRANCO

Cops are swarming tonight. Where are we supposed to go?

SCOTT

Don't you worry about that. I know a place where the cops won't be looking.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT.

Scott's car is parked in the bushes off the road as he leads the others up an overgrown path. Franco and the others carry two cases of beer, some blankets and a small radio.

SCOTT

There's a cave up here. It's the perfect place to party.

As they approach the cave nobody notices the bikes tucked away in the bushes. The flickering light at the mouth of the cave indicates the presence of other people.

FRANCO

Dude, I think someone's already here.

SCOTT

Nobody to worry about. In fact clearing them out might be just the thing to improve my mood.

Scott cracks his knuckles as he charges into the cave. Surrounded by candles and sitting around a stone slab are Jace, Pat, Danny and Tony. Each of them is wearing some kind of cosplay. Danny is dressed as an elf druid, Tony is a rogue, Jace wears his barbarian furs and Pat is still her normal goth self although looking maybe five times more goth than she would ever dare at school. They all turn, startled at the intruder and fear washes over them as they recognize Scott. With the exception of Jace whose eyes are hard with rage.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Playtime's over.

EXT. HILLS - DAY.

Scott's eyes flutter open and widen with fear as the blurry figure before him comes into focus as the intimidating barbarian.

JACE

Just looking at your face pisses me off.

Jace pulps a rock with his fist and Scott scrambles away in a panic.

SCOTT

Oh God, don't hurt me!

Jace grabs Scott with one hand and pulls him off his feet.

JACE

How does it feel to be totally helpless?

(MORE)

JACE (CONT'D)

Do you realize that I could end you with a simple squeeze? That ought to even our score.

SCOTT

I swear to God I've never seen you before in my life! I don't know what you think I've done but you've got the wrong guy.

JACE

Let me refresh your memory.

He hauls Scott to the water's edge and hangs him over to look at their reflections. In the water Jace looks like his teenage self, unaltered by the strange magic which has made him the barbarian. Horrible understanding hits Scott as he realizes whose meaty hands hold his life in their grip.

SCOTT

Shit, you're gonna kill me aren't you? Please, don't murder me, Jace. I really want to live!

Jace throws Scott to the ground.

JACE

Don't think I haven't thought about it. But instead you're here still breathing because of me. You're welcome.

Scott looks at the bruises on his arms and is visibly shaken.

SCOTT

You pulled me down?

JACE

Mind telling me why they put you up there?

SCOTT

It's a long story.

JACE

We've got time.

EXT. HILLS - DAY.

SUPER: Hours Earlier

Scott hides with his back against a tree, his face awash with fear as Slaer skulks through the brambles and trees.

He stops mere feet away from Scott and looks right in his direction before moving on.

After a long moment Scott judges that the slaver won't hear him and scrambles away as fast as he can. Just as he breaks through a thicket he comes face to face with KLLER, a muscular youth who looks savage even for a slaver, in his hand is a gleaming steel bastard sword. Scott throws himself to the ground as the weapon swings through the air.

SCOTT

Holy Shit!

Scott turns his fall into a roll and keeps running as Kller chases after him.

KLLER

Get back here, you little pest!

Scott is fast and manages to leave the larger man behind him as he runs headlong through the thick forest. As he rapidly approaches a clearing an alarm seems to go off in his head and he skids to a sudden halt.

NARRATOR

As the boy ran for his life he feels the touch of something uncanny.

Scott looks at the ground before him with suspicion and carefully walks around the clearing.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It is like a guiding hand on his shoulder.

As Scott makes it to the opposite end of the clearing Kller catches up with him.

KLLER

Now I have you.

Kller charges into the clearing and falls right into quicksand. Kller and Scott stare at each other for a long moment as the slaver begins to sink. There is a vine next to Scott, the kind thick enough to support a grown man's weight. Kller's eyes are glued to the vine.

KLLER (CONT'D)

Toss me the vine!

SCOTT

Do I look stupid to you?

KLLER

I swear on my honor I'll let you go
free. Just, please toss me the
vine!

Scott looks covetously at Kller's fine sword held up above
the muck.

SCOTT

Toss me your sword.

KLLER

My sword?

Kller hesitates, the sword is his most prized possession.

SCOTT

Toss me the sword and I swear on my
honor that I'll toss you the vine.

Kller hesitates for one more moment and then tosses Scott the
sword.

KLLER

Now, throw me the vine.

Scott holds the vine and looks at it with consideration
before dropping it.

KLLER (CONT'D)

You gave your word of honor!

SCOTT

I don't believe in the honor
system.

Scott picks up the sword and looks at it admiringly before
turning to walk away.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Thanks for the sword, asshole.

Kller has sunk to his chest. His eyes are filled with
pleading desperation as Scott turns his back and walks into
the forest.

KLLER

Come back here, you treacherous
devil! Please don't walk away. For
pity's sake, don't leave me here.

Scott keeps walking, more interested in his cool new sword
than in the slaver's cries for help. He cuts the vines out of
his way as he hikes deeper into the woods.

KLLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm begging you, help me! come
back. In the name of all that's
holy, come back.(pause)
Please, don't let me die like this!

Silence. Scott stops for a moment, the realization that he's effectively committed murder sets in. There is the briefest flash of remorse and then he smiles.

SCOTT
Thought he'd never shut up.

Scott cuts through some more vines and keeps trekking forward.

NARRATOR
To stand in judgement. To kill
without consequence. What a
powerful feeling. No more running,
no more hiding. He is man enough to
slay his enemies. Let them come.

Kller's hand sinks beneath the quicksand.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

SUPER: Part Four "Blood in The Temple of Shadows"

EXT. HOUSE - DUSK

Jace leans against the door frame as Scott's car drives off. He is still talking on the phone.

SUPER: The Absolute Worst Day Of Jace Boyman's Life.

JACE

That's right, officer. Dozens of teenagers out here drinking alcohol and they're starting some kind of fire. I just pray nobody gets hurt.

Jace grins as he hangs up the phone.

JACE (CONT'D)

Enjoy the party, jerks.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jace pulls off his shirt as he runs to the garage and grabs a loose fitting fur vest and throws it on. Rolling an old dirt bike out of the side door, he mounts it and rides.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DUSK

Police cars pass Jace as he rides his bike up the mountain road. He turns his bike off the road in the same spot where Scott will later park his car. He rides down the mountain trail and leaves his bike in the bushes before entering the cave.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Tony wait at the cave entrance, not wanting to look Jace in the eyes. Tony is wearing his rogue outfit and Danny is dressed as a druid with a green cloak adorned with twigs and leaves and some Celtic looking face paint and plastic elf ears.

JACE

Where's Pat?

DANNY

She's still in there setting up.

TONY

You're not still mad at us are you?

Jace hesitates before slapping them five and pulling them both into a hug.

JACE

I can't stay mad at my posse.
Honestly, in your place I might
have done the same thing.

Danny shakes his head.

DANNY

You wouldn't. You would have stood
with us and shared the beating.
You've got iron in your guts,
barbarian. That's why I like you.

Jace, Danny and Tony exchange playful punches until Pat enters from the other chamber, wearing black robes, chains and heavy mascara. She looks about five times more goth than usual.

PAT

If you boys are done with this
little love fest, the temple of
shadows awaits.

Jace, Tony and Danny exchange awkward looks before heading into the other chamber. Jace stops for a moment alone with Pat.

JACE

Are you still mad at me?

PAT

I'll let it slide this time but I
expect better from you. Increase
your diplomacy, barbarian.

Danny pats Jace on the shoulder.

DANNY

In other words, don't be an ass.

The cave chamber is filled with candles which illuminate the ancient cave paintings on the wall. The paintings are like a swirl of patterns and strange characters. At the center of the chamber is a large stone slab with folding chairs set around it. The DM screen, play mat and figures are set up on the slab.

TONY

I really feel like we should tell
an archaeologist about this cave.

DANNY

Don't even think it, asshole. This
cave is ours.

PAT

Yeah, and it's gonna stay that way.

JACE

We don't need science types or
anyone else showing up here to kick
us out.

Tony raises his hands in surrender.

TONY

Jeez, OK it was just an idea.

Pat sits down behind her DM screen.

PAT

You can shove that idea up your
ass. You've got more important
things to think about.

She laughs as she puts an exquisitely carved figure of a red
dragon on the play mat.

JACE

Shit, I forgot about that thing!

DANNY

You evil bitch.

PAT

Name calling won't save you from
the red dragon's wrath.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Jace, Tony and Danny are huddled around the stone slab in a
state of panic.

DANNY

I cast healing word on the
barbarian.

PAT

He recovers thirteen hit points.

JACE

Nothing we do seems to hurt that thing. If only someone hadn't insisted we go looking for treasure.

TONY

I'll admit that this is more of a challenge than I expected but the rewards must be that much greater. Keep distracting the dragon while I scout the area for the treasure.

DANNY

Forget the treasure we need to find a way out of here. I'm almost out of magic.

PAT

As if reading your mind the dragon puts himself between you and the one way out of it's lair.

JACE

Fuck, Pat. Give us a break!

Everyone's attention is taken out of the game by the sound of footsteps on the cave floor. Four figures approach slowly and one steps out of the shadows, Scott.

SCOTT

Well, well, well, looks like my cave has a dork infestation. I guess I'd better do something about that.

He cracks his knuckles.

EXT. HILLS - DAY.

Scott runs through the woods with his newly won sword, feeling invincible. He comes to an abrupt stop, Slaer is in his path with fury in his eyes as he brandishes a scimitar.

SLAER

I heard my brother's screams for help and here you stand with his sword in your murdering hand.

SCOTT

That's right. Gonna do something about it?

SLAER
Prepare to die!

Slaer charges with his scimitar swinging but Scott blocks him with the bastard sword. Scott matches his opponent blow for blow... for about thirty seconds. Slaer is faster and he is stronger than his inexperienced teenage enemy, every second that he fights his advantage grows. Scott is shocked to see the sword go flying from his hand. Slaer lifts his weapon for the killing strike and Scott can't help but to cringe and weep in anticipation of death.

SLAER (CONT'D)
I know not what trickery you used
to murder my brother but you will
join him now in hell.

A spear blocks the sword before it cleaves Scott in two. Slaer angrily locks eyes with the wielder of the spear, Kint.

KINT
You do him too much honor. This
slug does not deserve a warrior's
death.

SLAER
Than what?

Kint smiles.

KINT
The tree of pain needs fresh fruit.

Slaer smiles too.

SLAER
(laughs) Yes, we'll crucify
him.

Scott struggles against Slaer and Kint's superior strength as they take their time beating him before tying him up. They lash each of his arms to different rope and he screams in agony as they hoist him up a tree and leave him there to hang.

The sun blazes overhead and Scott can't shield himself from it's merciless rays.

NARRATOR
The boy hangs, certain of his own
death. A victim of cruelty, he is
ashamed at his own helplessness and
at the same time is reminded of the
cruelty he's inflicted on others.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Jace stumbles into the stone slab, knocking the figures and gaming equipment to the cave floor.

SCOTT

What part of get out don't you understand?

Danny places a restraining hand on Scott's shoulder, bad move. Scott takes him down with a sudden jab to the abdomen. Danny rolls on the floor in pain.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Any other heroes?

Tony backs off as Scott looks directly at him. Pat makes a fist but Jace shakes his head to warn her off. This is his fight. He gets up and defiantly stares Scott down.

JACE

This is our place. You don't belong here anymore.

Scott chuckles, unimpressed.

SCOTT

How about this. You guys clear out now without giving me any more trouble and I'll let you have some beer.

Scott snaps his finger and Franco tosses him a can of beer.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Think about it. Stop playing pretend for one night and live a little.

Jace looks at the beer skeptically.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You want it don't you? You can have it.

Scott opens the beer and pours it on Jace's head. As Scott laughs the rage is evident in Jace's eyes. Scott is too stunned to react as Jace punches him one, two, three, four times in the face. He wipes blood from his lip after stumbling a few steps back from Jace's attack. Franco steps forward, ready to back up his friend.

FRANCO

You got nerve, punk.

Scott holds up his hand, signalling Franco to stay back.

SCOTT

He's mine.

Jace shoots Pat and Tony a look that says "don't try to stop me." He puts up his dukes and advances.

JACE

Let's settle this right now.

SCOTT

You're a tough guy now. I like it,
too bad i gotta kill you. Nobody
touches my face and lives.

TAMERA

You are both idiots.

A flurry of powerful punches pushes Jace into the bowels of the cave, bloody and stunned. He lands a couple of jabs but nothing solid and then manages to break Scott's momentum with a roundhouse kick he wasn't aware that he was capable of.

DANNY (O.S.)

Kick his ass, Jace!

Scott bounces back up, barely stunned for an instant and furious. Scott's fists come fast and hard before he kicks Jace into the wall.

JACE

That all you've got?

Jace spits out a bloody tooth and stumbles on his feet. As Scott moves in for the attack Jace tackles him. They exchange punches to the head as they roll around on the cave floor. Scott gets Jace pinned and delivers blow after blow to his kidneys.

PAT (O.S.)

Don't give up, Jace!

FRANCO (O.S.)

You show that punk, Scott!

TAMERA (O.S.)

How did this become my night?

Jace puts everything he has into a savage headbutt that leaves them both writhing on the ground, gripping their skulls.

TAMERA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (laughs) That had to hurt.

Scott gets to his feet first and delivers several solid kicks to Jace's mid section before pulling him to his feet by his vest.

SCOTT
 You think you stand a chance
 against me? You ain't shit, you're
 worthless.

JACE
 I'm worth more than a traitor like
 you.

Scott takes a handful of Jace's hair and points him at a stalactite. With all of his strength he bashes Jace face first into the stalactite three times. Blood smears down as Jace falls to the cave floor but Scott isn't done.

TONY (O.S.)
 Jesus!

FRANCO (O.S.)
 Come on, man. The kid's had enough.

SUSAN (O.S.)
 Jace!

Jace is a bloody mess as Scott picks up his whole body and slams him into a cave wall with an intricately painted pattern. Jace badly gashes his arm on protruding rock and slumps down, bleeding profusely.

FRANCO (O.S.)
 Dude, lay off already!

SUSAN (O.S.)
 Stop him!

Scott doesn't seem to care how badly he's hurt jace, he just keeps kicking him. Franco and Danny grab Scott and pull him away.

FRANCO
 Jesus, are you trying to kill him?

DANNY
 Scott, for the love of god!

Susan kneels next to Jace, he's unconscious in a pool of his own blood. She looks at Scott with a mixture of fear and loathing, tears in her eyes.

As Jace's blood touches the cave paintings they turn a bright red which grows and grows until the cave is bathed in a crimson light.

SUSAN
Get away from my brother, you
bastard!

Jace's eyes open and he locks eyes with Scott. He clearly wants to get up and keep fighting but his body isn't strong enough. The frustration is plain on his face.

The cave begins to slowly shake. Everyone looks at each other confused.

PAT
It's never done that before.

Susan pulls out her phone and starts dialing 911.

SCOTT
Who are you calling?

SUSAN
He needs an ambulance!

Scott grabs her arm and takes the phone.

SCOTT
I'm not going to juvie over this.

SUSAN
Give it back!

Danny and Tony both try to make the call and Scott lunges for them.

TONY
You can't stop us both.

SCOTT
Wanna bet, four eyes?

The cave shakes again, this time the quake is more violent. A strange mist rolls out of the depths of the cave, filling it up as the rumbling starts to bring the whole place down.

FRANCO
It's a quake, we've gotta get out!

Franco grabs Susan and pulls her away as rocks and dust fall right where she was standing. The whole group runs in a panic towards the cave exit.

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As they come out of the cave mouth something is clearly wrong. They are on a different hillside and there are burning buildings not far off. Several men and women in ragged clothes run past in a state of utter terror.

DANNY

What the...?

Pat pushes Danny and Scott out of the way of a galloping horse. A second horse follows in it's trail, both are mounted by raiders carrying nets. One rides on and the other turns back toward them.

PAT

Fuck!

SCOTT

Run!

The teens all run in different directions. Scott, Pat and Susan end up together as the raider bears down on them.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The cave is filled with fog and shadow. Jace stumbles to his feet and lurches into the shadows. When he steps out of the shadows at the mouth of the cave his teenage body is gone and he is the mighty barbarian.

Seeing that his pants are split in two he drops them and turns his vest into a makeshift loincloth.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Help!

Jace breaks into a run.

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

Scott, Pat and Susan run from the horseman but just as they seem to lose him in the forest another just like him comes around the corner.

Scott trips on a dead man and to his credit is only horrified for a moment before spotting a sword and snatching it up.

SCOTT

Show me what you've got!

He stands between the raider and the girls, doing his best not to seem like he wants to piss his pants. One swipe of the raider's spear knocks the sword from his hands and sends Scott to the ground. The raider laughs as he tosses his net over the three of them.

Jace bursts through the trees.

JACE

Get away from my sister!

He dodges the raider's spear with amazing skill before grabbing it with both hands and yanking him from his horse. The raider cracks his head on a rock.

JACE (CONT'D)

Jesus!

He runs over to check on the raider. To his horror the man is dead, his brains oozing out of his cracked skull.

JACE (CONT'D)

Oh fuck, I killed him!

I didn't mean to

(beat)it was an accident!

Another rider gallops past and cracks the distracted Jace over the head with a club. Jace falls into a ditch, unconscious. The rider spots Danny, Tamera and Franco, he rides at them with intent.

END OF ACT FOUR

END OF PART ONE OF PILOT

TEASER

PART TWO OF PILOT

EXT. FORMER RAIDER CAMP - DAY

SUPER: Part Five "The Fool's Quest"

Jace and Scott emerge from the trees into the abandoned clearing where the raiders had made their camp and left behind plenty of evidence of their stay. Pieces of broken barrels and pottery are strewn about and the ground trampled by the feet of numerous humans and animals.

There are many corpses left in a shallow pit, already beset upon by flies and vultures.

SCOTT

The bastards cleared out. No surprise there, maybe we can pick up their trail.

Jace stares at the corpse pit.

JACE

You don't suppose...

His jaw clenches at the unpleasant thought. They stand silently for a moment.

SCOTT

We'll never know unless we
(beat) look.

They slowly approach the pit, afraid of what they'll find. They get closer and the smell gets to them. They both cough and gag as they try to cover their mouths with their hands.

ORN (O.S.)

One never does get used to that
smell.

Jace and Scott look up in alarm. ORN is an older man who is missing one eye and wears faded monk's robes. He has a shovel in his hand.

ORN (CONT'D)

Looking for friends?

Scott and Jace share a glance, not knowing how much to trust this stranger. Orn laughs before gagging on the stench.

ORN (CONT'D)

I'm not one of them, if that's what you're worried about. Do I look like a slave trader?

Jace and Scott relax a little as they approach the old man and the pit.

SCOTT

If you're not a slave trader, than who the hell are you? If you don't mind my asking.

Orn shrugs.

ORN

Just an old monk whose outlived his religion.

Jace scans the bodies until he's had a good look at all of them. His shoulders relax.

JACE

Nobody we know, thank God.

SCOTT

Speak for yourself.

Scott stares forlornly at the body of Raff.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Raff was a good guy. Deserves better than to rot in this pit.

ORN

That's what I'm here for. I've dug six graves so far but would appreciate help. If you know their names, I'll gladly make markers.

Scott shakes his head.

SCOTT

I only really got to know Raff.

Jace takes a good look at Raff's body and is disturbed to see how young he is.

JACE

He could have gone to our school. Something feels wrong about that.

ORN
 There's a lot wrong with dying
 young but it happens.

SCOTT
 It'll probably happen to us if we
 don't find a way home. Help me move
 him.

Scott and Jace carry Raff over to one of the freshly dug
 graves at the foot of a tree. As they lower the body Orn
 carves a kanji into the tree and pats it.

ORN
 Nature's headstone.

Scott grabs the shovel and starts filling in the grave.

SCOTT
 Wish we could help bury the others
 but there are some living people
 who need our help.

JACE
 I don't suppose you know where
 these bastards took our friends?

Orn hesitates.

ORN
 I'm afraid they've split up.

JACE
 What?

ORN
 The bulk of the slave traders
 headed east on the main road but a
 good portion of the slaves were
 sold to my former sect.

SCOTT
 What would monks want with that
 many slaves?

Orn shakes his head sadly.

ORN
 To keep the fires of human
 sacrifice burning.

The two look appalled.

ORN (CONT'D)

I know that its madness! That's why
I left when the new priest began
the savagery.

Orn looks away.

JACE

There's something else you aren't
telling us.

He nods at Scott's dirty jeans.

ORN

There was a lad wearing that style
of leggings following them. I tried
to turn him away but he was
determined to rescue all of the
captives, the young fool thinks he
can be a hero.

Scott and Jace exchange a look.

SCOTT

Tony.

JACE

Shit.

ORN

I saw others in strange attire
taken on the main road with the
larger group. If that helps.

JACE

I don't understand. If the other's
weren't taken, what the hell is he
thinking?

SCOTT

He thinks this is all a game.

Jace brushes himself off as he looks out in the distance at
the diverging tracks.

JACE

God damn it, he's on a side quest.

END TEASER

ACT FIVE

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT -

SUPER: The Previous Night

A lone, hooded figure stalks through the dark woods as the moon casts eerie shadows. Tony stops for a moment, angry, red in the face and breathing heavily.

TONY

Who the hell does he think he is
anyway?

An owl hoots in the distance and he looks around in the shadows, nervously adjusting his glasses.

TONY (CONT'D)

Any fool could tell this place is a
simulation.

Somewhere a wolf howls. Tony picks up his pace, trying not to be afraid.

TONY (CONT'D)

A very detailed simulation.

Flickering lights shine through the trees and he approaches with caution, skulking from tree to tree until he gets a good view of the slaver encampment. Two guards patrol the perimeter, GOU and GOUTO.

Tony picks up a rock and tosses it into the bushes.

GUO

Did you hear that?

GUOTO

We better check it out. With all
the shit that's happened tonight
there's no such thing as too much
caution.

Keeping low, Tony slips into the camp and ducks into the nearest tent, crawling on his hands and knees. He hides in the shadows and crawls under an over sized bed. Two men are talking, CHIEFTAIN HERR and a monk in grey robes with red trim, ZOROMON.

CHIEFTAIN HORR

I like this not, monk. You come to my camp in the dead of night and demand the purchase of a score of my slaves to serve as fodder for some accursed ritual.

ZOROMON

We have offered more than twice their worth.

CHIEFTAIN HORR

I tell you, that isn't the point! I don't like gods that deal in blood and sorcery and I loathe their followers.

Zoromon sneers.

ZOROMON

But you'll take our money just the same. Why must we dance this dance every time?

The chieftain takes a long drink of wine.

CHIEFTAIN HORR

Because you people make my skin crawl. I'd be kinder to butcher the poor devils like pigs than let you feed them to your fires.

ZOROMON

When you are done lying to yourself, show me through the camp. I must select the purist virgins for my god.

Chieftain Horr leads Zoromon out of the tent.

CHIEFTAIN HORR

How the hell will you even know that they are virgins?

Tony sneaks out from his hiding place and pockets a few trinkets, including a small knife, grabs a hunk of cheese from a banquet table and takes a couple mighty bites before stuffing it into a pocket and slipping under the edge of the tent.

Keeping low, he follows the chieftain and the priest as they work their way through the horses and their bundles of human lives.

Every now and then the monk will wave something in his hand over the bundles and it will occasionally glow with a dim light at which point he'll indicate the person bound in the net and move on.

CHIEFTAIN HERR (CONT'D)

I tell you, there's only one reliable way to know if a girl's a virgin and that's to devirginize her.

ZOROMON

Add this one to the list. In addition to the virgins, we'll also want a few strong men. Our god's eternal fire demands more wood each day and men to chop it.

CHIEFTAIN HERR

You'd be better to find a god who gives more and demands less.

ZOROMON

Who could ever trust such a generous deity?

We see Danny and Pat hanging in two adjacent nets as the priest and the chieftain stop to look them over. The priest's talisman remains dead as he passes it over Pat and then Danny. The two share a look. The priest sneers in disgust.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)

Slut.

He turns to move on. Herr hesitates and gives Danny another look.

CHIEFTAIN HERR

What about the boy?

ZOROMON

As worthless as a twig. Is this the best you have?

CHIEFTAIN HERR

Of course not! We've got more than enough untouched maidens and brawny lads to satisfy your thrice damned deity. Come on, this way.

The two walk on into the darkness. Pat and Danny look at each other apprehensively.

PAT
Was that good or bad?

Tony slips out of the shadows, giving them both a start. He signals for them to be quiet, indicating a passing guard.

TONY
Definitely good. That freak's in
the human sacrifice game.

Danny looks as if he might be sick at the thought.

DANNY
Seriously?

TONY
It's that kind of setting. He's
after virgins to burn alive which
begs the question...

Danny casts Pat a guilty glance. Pat avoids making eye contact.

PAT
Just hurry up and cut us loose!

TONY
Wait, the two of you are doin it?
Since when are you a couple?

DANNY
Shut up, that's none of your
business.

PAT
We're not a couple.

DANNY
We're not? But
(beat) I thought.

PAT
We're vibing, does it need a label?

Tony shoots Pat a horny glance.

TONY
Does that mean we can vibe too?

PAT
No!

DANNY
No!

Tony gestures for them to keep it down. Then he spots a guard coming over.

TONY

Shit.

Tony ducks into the shadows between two horses. The PATROLLING GUARD saunters past.

PATROLLING GUARD

Who the hell is talking?

He whacks someone at random with his club.

PATROLLING GUARD (CONT'D)

Shuddap! Folks is trying to sleep.

A tense moment follows the guard's departure before Tony slinks out of his hiding place.

DANNY

Hurry up and cut us loose!

TONY

Let me think. This place is swarming and I don't know if you guys have enough stealth to make it through. Even if you are an elf.

Danny looks at Tony as it begins to dawn on him that his friend is talking crazy.

DANNY

Wait, do you
(beat) think this is a
game?

Tony laughs.

TONY

What else would it be? State of the art simulation, we're in the matrix.

PAT

Jesus.

Danny pulls off a rubber elf ear and shows it to Tony.

DANNY

I'm not an elf, look at this it's rubber. I bought it off ebay and what I'm wearing is the same druid cosplay I've had for years.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

I made this costume myself. You've got to believe me. Whatever's happening here is real.

Tony examines the elf ear with a fascinated look in his eyes.

TONY

The level of detail is amazing. It's these personal touches that tell me whoever designed this game is a genius.

PAT

Look, believe what you want just cut us loose!

Tony smiles as he begins to develop what he thinks is a brilliant plan.

TONY

I've just had a great idea for how to get some help and rescue you guys.

DANNY

Don't you dare say what I think you're about to.

TONY

I'm gonna take a side quest.

Tony dodges Pat's fist as it comes for his head, causing her net to bounce and the horse to neigh.

PAT

Just let me get my hands on you!

Tony signs for quiet.

TONY

Those girls are the key. These types of missions always pay off big. I have no doubt that rescuing them from that cult is how I make the allies we need for the big picture. I'll be back for you guys!

Tony dashes off into the shadows.

DANNY

Don't just leave us, man.

PAT

Bring your ass back here! When I get loose I'm gonna strangle you.

Pat struggles in vain before giving up. After a moment they look at each other.

DANNY

So, about us?

Pat gives Danny an 'I'll kill you' look.

The guard cuts a girl (who had been indicated earlier by the priest) down and with a rough grip manhandles her as he guides her away.

PATROLLING GUARD

Come on, girlie and don't give me no trouble.

Tony follows the guard and the girl from a discreet distance. As he crouches down behind a packhorse he spots a composite bow and an accompanying quiver of arrows. He takes the bow in hand and slings the arrows over his shoulder as he keeps up his movement in the shadows.

TONY

Jackpot.

Eventually the guard shoves the girl in with about two dozen other young men and women. Her wrists are bound in rope and she takes her place in line with the other captives. They are led up the road by half a dozen mounted monks who emphasize their will with the crack of a whip. Zoromon hangs back and pulls a large sack from his horse, handing it to Horr.

CHIEFTAIN HARR

Silver?

ZOROMON

As you well know. It's been a pleasure doing business with you, chieftain. My god's blessings on you.

The chieftain spits.

CHIEFTAIN HARR

Your foul god can keep his accursed blessings. Money is all that matters in this world. So long as you pay I'll feed slaves to your damned fire but devils take the lot of you.

Zoromon mounts and silently rides away. Horr lingers for a moment, looking at the slaves as they're marched out of his camp.

CHIEFTAIN HERR (CONT'D)

It's no way to die, that's for certain.

He turns his back and grabs a jug of wine from the back of a packhorse as he makes his way back to the main encampment.

CHIEFTAIN HERR (CONT'D)

But what do I care? It's folks like us who prove there ain't no gods at all.

As the chieftain recedes into the shadows and the precession of cultists and slaves marches into the distance there is a drawn out moment of silence and all we hear are the crickets. The guard watching the road yawns and as he does Tony slinks behind him and runs at a crouch until he reaches the trees and vanishes into the brush.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. FORMER RAIDER CAMP - DAY

Jace and Scott stand at the same trail, arguing.

SCOTT

We've got to follow the main group.
That's where everyone is, including
your sister.

JACE

Don't you even talk about my
sister! You don't think I want to
help her?

Jace points up the winding road.

JACE (CONT'D)

But Tony is going to die. Do you
understand that? He's going out
there to get himself killed!

SCOTT

So what? The guy's a loser and he's
got it coming. Raff would be alive
if it weren't for him.

Jace loses a bit of his heat.

JACE

He's just confused. I'm sure he
didn't mean for that to happen.

SCOTT

Well he didn't care much when it
did.

JACE

And I know that when Tony can no
longer delude himself, his part in
Raff's death will break his heart.
But he has to live to make that
realization and that isn't looking
too likely right now.

SCOTT

If we go after him we might never
catch up to the others.

JACE

We'll catch up to them. On that you
can trust me.

They look at each other for a moment.

SCOTT

He could be dead already. It could all be for nothing.

JACE

We both have blood on our hands now and that's something we have to live with. But abandoning Tony to die like a dog, burned alive. I could never live with that, could you?

Another long pause. Scott looks up the road and starts walking.

SCOTT

Lets just get this over with.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT

The full moon is bright in the sky as the bound captives are driven up the dark winding road. The young girl, Lila stumbles and the whip of mounted cultist cracks like lightning.

MOUNTED CULTIST

Get up, you swine.

An older girl, NIA who is perhaps sixteen or seventeen leaves her place in the march to rush to Lila's side. The younger girl has tears in her eyes as Nia pulls her to her feet.

LILA

Nia, I can't go on.

NIA

Be strong, Lila. Remember those stories that grandmother used to tell?

Lila weakly nods.

NIA (CONT'D)

Remember how in them it always seems as if there isn't any hope.

The mounted cultist cracks his whip again. Nia shields Lila and takes the hit on her own back. She winces but bares the pain and hustles Lila back into place.

NIA (CONT'D)

What happens in those stories, does evil win?

LILA

No, there's always a hero.

NIA

That's right. Though evil does it's worst if we have the strength to endure we'll live to see a hero come to strike it down.

LILA

But those are just stories! Will a hero really come?

Nia forces a smile on her face as she lies to her cousin.

NIA

Yes, cousin because the world is a just place. There is always good to oppose evil and if we endure, our hero will come.

EXT. WINDING ROADSIDE FOOTHILLS - NIGHT

As the road winds into the dusty distance we look down from the foothills to see the slaves driven onward by the cultist's whips. A figure darts from tree to tree, keeping the captives in sight. He stops, his back against a tree and we get a good look at him before he continues his stealthy dash, it's Tony.

NARRATOR

Certain of his own reality a boy has cast himself as hero in a game he does not understand. Perhaps it is a trick of fate that he cant accept the mortal danger of his quest for the gods work in mysterious ways and a single twig once sparked can light an inferno.

Tony continues his sprint along the side of the road, stopping to hide himself as the rear guard looks in his direction before moving on. Tony then notices a flicker of firelight and begins to look around for the source.

ORN (OS)

Ho there, boy.

Tony turns, startled. He knocks an arrow with shaking hands and points his bow as Orn appears from behind a large rock boulder.

TONY
Stay where you are!

Orn approaches slowly with raised hands.

ORN
You've nothing to fear from me, lad
save for a seat by my fire and a
warm meal in your belly.

Tony's stomach growls, betraying his hunger. He cautiously lowers the weapon and follows Orn's lead to a campfire behind the boulder where he is roasting an unidentifiable piece of meat.

TONY
I can't stay long.

Tony nervously takes a seat on a log as Orn smiles warmly.

ORN
Places to be, have you?

TONY
I'm on a kind of quest.

It's Tony's turn to smile as he whips out his stolen knife and cuts himself a piece of the meat.

TONY (CONT'D)
Rescue the innocent, that sort of
thing.

Before taking a bite out of the meat Tony hesitates, remembering something of manors.

TONY (CONT'D)
My name's Tony by the way.

He offers his hand and Orn takes it by the wrist in the old fashioned way.

ORN
They call me Orn. It's nice to meet
a friendly face in these accursed
parts.

Tony fishes out the cheese he stole earlier and offers Orn a slice. The two continue talking as they share their meal.

TONY

Accursed?

ORN

I once led the sect that controlled these lands. We were a peaceful order but no longer. An evil has overtaken them. They have an unquenchable thirst for death.

TONY

I take it they're the ones in the business of buying virgins.

Orn nods, taking a drink from his jug before passing it to Tony. He chokes and sputters on the wine and Orn laughs.

ORN

Don't tell me you've never had wine. A lad your age should be drinking barrels of the stuff. But to your question, yes. They are the very devils you've been trailing.

TONY

How do you know about that?

ORN

I make a point of knowing lots of things. For instance, if I'm not mistaken those slave traders heading in the other direction have a few of your friends.

Tony is clearly troubled to hear this.

TONY

The slavers are leaving?

ORN

They break camp as we speak.

Tony sits and thinks for a moment rebuilding his resolve.

TONY

No. Heading back would be a mistake. In this kind of game it's best to move forward once you've committed to a course.

ORN

Game?

TONY

No point in explaining it to you. I doubt you'd be programmed to understand.

ORN

Try me.

Tony chuckles to himself.

TONY

Sure, why not? Everything you think of as the world is just an illusion. A false reality designed for the entertainment of a few individuals like myself, players in a game with a story I must follow to the end.

ORN

You've got an interesting philosophy. I suppose you fancy yourself and these others as gods?

TONY

Just real people.

ORN

And I suppose that makes me fake?

TONY

Obviously. No offense.

ORN

None taken. Though I must ask, why do you believe the whole world is a lie?

TONY

Because I can't be here. The world follows logical rules based on facts and evidence. And if that isn't the case how can I even know what's real?

ORN

Just one question, where's your evidence?

Tony stands up, exasperated.

TONY

Fine, I don't have any! But what else am I supposed to think?

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

That magic exists? That science is a joke? No, the only explanation is that this is all a game and I intend to win.

ORN

And your quest?

TONY

To save those virgins, of course. What kind of man would I be if I stood back and let them die?

ORN

A sane one. Listen to me. My former sect is not to be trifled with! They are killers, plain and simple and will not hesitate to slaughter you.

Tony picks up his things and readies himself to leave.

TONY

I thank you for your hospitality, Orn.

ORN

I'm telling you not to throw your life away!

TONY

If it's game over than at least I'll get to go home.

Tony walks into the shadows.

ORN

And if you're wrong you'll be dead for real, lad. I'll pray for you.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY.

Jace and Scott trudge up the long and dusty road. The sun is bright in the sky, beating them down with heat. Both are sweating but Scott is clearly becoming winded. He stops in the road to take a few breaths.

SCOTT

What exactly is the plan here?

JACE

Save Tony, what else?

SCOTT

Save the spaz, I get that. But I have a feeling that we're going to be a little outnumbered.

He indicates the many footprints leading down the dirt road.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

All those footprints don't exactly have me thrilled to reach our destination. I mean, are we just walking to our deaths?

JACE

I don't know what you want me to say, Scott. I know that we're outnumbered but I'm not just gonna hang back and let Tony get killed!

A bundle suddenly lands at their feet.

ORN (OS)

Ho there, friends!

Orn descends from the foothills to meet them in the road.

ORN (CONT'D)

I'm glad I caught you lads when I did. A few moments more and you'd have outpaced these old bones for certain.

SCOTT

We've been walking for hours, how the hell are you even here?

ORN

This road's a windy beast but a man
who knows these hills can cut
across fair quick.

Orn unties the rope holding the bundle tight to reveal a
large stone age style hammer.

ORN (CONT'D)

Our slaver friends left it behind
and I figure a thing like this will
serve you better than that broken
branch.

SCOTT

Serve him, what about me?

Scott pushes Jace aside to pick up the hammer.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'll have you know this is just my
style.

Scott strains himself to hold the hammer upright before he
has to drop it.

JACE

May I?

SCOTT

Knock yourself out.

Jace picks up the huge hammer with ease and swings it around
in a few practice strikes.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Show off.

ORN

And now, some advice.

Jace and Scott both turn to the old cleric.

ORN (CONT'D)

You swing that hammer with
incredible might but your heart is
gentle. Every life is sacred to you
but it's time you learned that some
lives are more sacred than others.
It is no sin to spill the blood of
wicked men.

Jace, now feeling less than comfortable looks at the hammer like the killing tool it is. Orn places a hand on Scott's shoulder.

ORN (CONT'D)

And you, I think need to learn some of your friend's empathy. You have a great capacity for compassion which may serve you well.

Orn's other hand reaches up to Jace's shoulder. He looks them each in the eyes.

ORN (CONT'D)

You both have hidden magic yearning to break free. When you feel it coming it will frighten you but you must fight the urge to resist. Because without that power you will both die before tomorrow's dawn. That much I have foreseen.

Orn pulls up his hood, bows to them both and hikes back into the foothills.

ORN (CONT'D)

May the gods be with you, my young friends.

Jace and Scott cast each other nervous glances and then both look up the winding road. In the distance they can see a large clearing with a grove in the center.

SCOTT

Lets get going.

JACE

Yeah, we still need to figure out a plan, right?

EXT. CULT'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT.

Tony moves through the tall grass as he descends from the foothills into an open clearing that must go for a mile. We see the stumps of many felled trees all around him and at the center of this clearing is a grove of trees. Just outside of the grove there is an encampment of several yurts. Tony heads for the tents and ducks down when he spots a patrolling sentry. He takes a deep breath and nocks an arrow.

TONY
Moment of truth.

His hands shake and his finger slips. The arrow flies into the dirt.

TONY (CONT'D)
Shit.

Tony scrambles to hide behind a big rock as the sentry approaches. The robed man holds a nasty looking scimitar but as he draws near it becomes clear that he's just making his rounds and has heard nothing. Tony breathes a sigh of relief and nocks another arrow and takes aim at the man's back as he turns.

TONY (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, I hope this is a game.

His aim is crap, the arrow goes wide, landing way off in the bushes. A group of startled birds take flight and catch the sentry's attention. He heads towards the bushes to investigate and Tony takes the opportunity to sneak past him towards the encampment.

Crawling through the tall grass, Tony makes his way to the edge of the camp. He waits for a robed cultist to pass before dashing to the shadows between two yurts. He counts the arrows in his quiver as he surveys the camp from his hiding place.

The place is alive with activity with Zoromon at the center. He directs the cultists to sort through their newly acquired captives. Using his talisman as guide, the evil priest has his hooded minions separate the strapping young laborers from the virginal sacrifices. Two or three resist but are savagely beaten with clubs. The young men are bound in chains.

Tony nocks an arrow and aims at Zoromon only to note how many hooded men with savage weapons there are and hesitate, lowering his bow. He repeats this motion several times as each new act of savagery stirs his anger.

Remaining now are mostly young women with an odd boy or two mixed in. Zoromon signals his men and they begin tossing buckets of water on them. After the collected virgins are thoroughly drenched, Zoromon approaches.

ZOROMON
You virgins have been chosen by our god of fire. When next the sun sets beneath the hills all but one of you will meet him.

His gaze falls on Lila and he licks his lips.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)

We priests are burdened with purity
but my god is generous and shares
his bounty.

Lila cringes as Zoromon cups her face in his hand.

NIA

Get away from her, you filth!

One of the robed figures slaps Nia to the ground as Zoromon takes hold of Lila who begins to panic and struggle against his hold.

ZOROMON

Come, I will spare you the fires.

LILA

No! No! Let go of me!

Zoromon pulls the squirming girl away from the others. In spite of her bound hands she tries to fight him but it's useless, he has her firmly in his grip.

As Zoromon guides the struggling girl to his yurt, Tony moves in the shadows with his bow drawn.

TONY

Save the damsel in distress...
classic.

Zoromon throws Lila to the ground in his yurt. He drops his robes, revealing his nude middle-aged body. Lila tries to crawl away as he slowly advances, taking his sweet time.

LILA

No! Get away from me. Help,
somebody please help!

Zoromon smiles, taking immense satisfaction from her fear.

We see a close up of a knife cutting the canvas of the yurt.

She doesn't stop struggling but he's much stronger than her and pins her down. She cries as he tears her clothes.

LILA (CONT'D)

(sobs)A hero(beat) there's
supposed to be a hero.

A shadow falls over the two figures. We see the head of the arrow pointing at Zoromon. Tony stands there with his hands shaking, his bow drawn and a smile on his face.

TONY

Did somebody say hero?

Zoromon looks at Tony in such a way as to send a chill up the spine.

TONY (CONT'D)

Get away from the girl or you'll regret it.

ZOROMON

Fool, do you not realize who and what I am?

TONY

I don't care.

Tony lets the arrow fly.

With a supernatural speed, Zoromon brings his hands up into a gesture.

ZOROMON

Osovasovasovo.

The arrow stops inches from his chest and freezes and slowly rotates in the air. Tony barely has time to register this with a stupefied expression before the arrow is shooting back at him and landing in his shoulder.

TONY

Shit!

Tony falls to the floor, he clutches helplessly at his profusely bleeding wound and writhes in a level of pain which he never before imagined was possible.

TONY (CONT'D)

(Scrams) God it hurts, it hurts so much.

SENTRY (OS)

Do you need me?

ZOROMON

Stay at your post.

Zoromon appraises Tony with perverse amusement as he heaves in agony.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)

I do enjoy having an audience.

Lila cries as Zoromon mounts her. We go from the look of terror in her eyes to the look of terror, disgust and shame in Tony's eyes as he watches helplessly.

For a few long moments we are subjected to the sounds of the rape. We hear Lila's screams and cries, Zormomon's grunts and the persistent smack of flesh on flesh. Tony tries to look away several times but his eyes betray him, always returning to the morbid spectacle.

Zoromon's hand reaches for a knife. He raises it up, Tony spots it before Lila.

TONY

No!

The knife plunges into Lila's neck and then stabs her again and again. The blood pools on the floor and is joined by a trail of shit freshly evacuated from her bowels. Tony vomits.

TONY (CONT'D)

You didn't need to do that, damn you.

Zoromon stands, still nude and dripping with blood and feces. He smiles and lazily points the knife at Tony.

ZOROMON

There is a price to pleasure and now it's your turn to pay.

The evil priest is leisurely in his pace as he comes for Tony. Tony tries to stand but having lost so much blood can't manage it and falls back down. As Zoromon comes for him he crawls across the floor, through his own vomit and through the priest's discarded robes as he tries in vain to escape.

TONY

Get away from me, you freak!

Zoromon toys with his knife as he comes to stand directly over Tony.

ZOROMON

And now it is time to snuff your flame.

Tony reaches for the knife in his boot and lashes out weakly but Zormon's foot knocks it from his hand. He shakes his head as he prepares for the killing thrust.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
No more futile gestures.

Zoromon's eyes widen as he catches the light from his talisman. It glows on the floor at Tony's side. Zoromon smiles.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
It seems the God of Fire has other plans for you.
(beat)
Come!

The sentry enters the yurt and casts a glance at the mess until his eyes fall on Tony.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
Get this virgin to his feet.

The sentry pulls Tony to his feet. Zoromon appraises the arrow sticking from his shoulder and grips it in his hand. The pain is evident on Tony's reddening face. He defiantly meets the priest's eyes as he bites his lip to hold in the screams he doesn't want to give him the satisfaction of hearing.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
This will hurt.

Zoromon violently pulls out the arrow. Tony's body spasms and his knees buckle but the sentry holds him firmly upright.

TONY
(Screams) Jesus Christ!!!

Zoromon frowns.

ZOROMON
Do not invoke your heathen deity in my prescience. A god you don't even believe in. Oh, I see in your mind how you delude yourself with doubts. You even doubt reality itself.

Zoromon makes several quick gestures with his fingers and quickly mutters something unintelligible. His index finger lights like a small torch, the flesh beneath the fire unharmed.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
This you will not doubt.

Zoromon slowly pushes his burning finger into Tony's wound, the flesh around which begins to smoke and darken.

TONY
(Screams)

Zoromon twists his finger in the wound.

ZOROMON
The smallest taste of my god's
embrace.

The pain is too much for Tony, he passes out and falls limp in the sentry's arms. Zoromon pulls the finger free and picks up his robe from the floor, dressing himself.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)
Make him ready for tomorrow's
sacrifice.

END OF ACT SEVEN

ACT EIGHT

EXT. CULT'S CAMPSITE - DUSK

SUPER: "The Grove Of Fire"

Jace and Scott approach the campsite, sneaking through the tall grass. They observe a lot of activity among the cultists, a line of chained men are driven by whip masters as they carry logs from the forest at the edge of the clearing to the small grove of trees near the campsite. There are also a lot of armed cultists patrolling the area.

JACE

Any luck coming up with a plan?

SCOTT

We need to get our hands on some of those cult robes and mix in with them.

Scott cracks his knuckles.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Let's see if all that muscle's just for show.

JACE

Look, maybe there's another way to-

Scott whistles, catching the attention of a passing guard. The guard carries a quarterstaff and has it raised cautiously. Scott jumps out of the grass and knocks him off balance with a solid uppercut. The guard stumbles back but catches himself and swings his weapon at Scott's head. The teenage athlete is able to dodge the attack with ease as Jace comes up behind the man and hits him with a double fisted punch. The cultist goes down.

Scott shakes his hand, in clear pain from the punch he threw.

SCOTT

Damn, I hoped I could take him down with one punch. How cool would that have been?

Jace takes the time to check on the man he KOed.

JACE

Good, he's still breathing.

He strips off the black robes and attempts to try them on to find that they are really too small.

SCOTT
You'd better let me be the one to
wear those. Oh, and we got to make
it look good.

Scott tears off a thin strip of fabric and loosely binds
Jace's hands.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Come on, Chewie.

JACE
(Growls like Chewbacca)

They grin at each other.

Scott, now wearing the cultist's robes leads Jace out of the
tall grass towards the encampment as if he were his prisoner.
They are stopped by a guard, DARAD.

DARAD
What's this than?

SCOTT
I caught him sneaking around.

The guard casts a skeptical look between Scott and Jace.

DARAD
YOU caught HIM?

The guard leans in and takes a good look at Scott's face.

DARAD (CONT'D)
Wait, I don't know you!

Scott brings the staff up in a swing and cracks it over the
guard's head. He falls to one knee and begins to draw his
sword.

DARAD (CONT'D)
Cheeky bastard!

Before the guard can lunge at Scott, Jace kicks him in the
head, sending the man sprawling to the ground.

SCOTT
That's two times I couldn't take em
down. What, do I need to work out
or something?

Jace checks on the guard and looks pained.

JACE

Shit! He's dead, I killed him.

Scott drags the body into the grass.

SCOTT

Him or us, I guess.

He throws Jace the robe. It doesn't fit well but it more or less fits.

JACE

This isn't going to work.

SCOTT

It's not perfect but if you hunch down a bit.

Jace hunches his shoulders and tries to make his body look smaller. Scott nods approvingly and directs his attention to some people being led out of one of the yurts under heavy guard. Six in all, four women, a young boy and a pale young man with a hideous wound on his shoulder, Tony. They are all shirtless and dressed only in loincloths. A group of cultists ceremoniously pours a bucket of water and flowers on each of them before dressing them in white robes.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I think we just found our boy.

JACE

What did they do to him?

Jace and Scott slowly move in closer. They try to hang back and not draw attention to themselves as they skirt the edges of the mulling crowd of cultists. Zoromon leaves his yurt, now wearing elaborate priestly regalia. He joins Tony and the other prisoners, touching them each on the face. Tony tries to jerk his head away from the man's touch but a cultist takes a handful of his hair, holding his head in place for Zoromon's hand. The lead priest then turns his attention to the cultists.

ZOROMON

These six pure virgins meet with our god's approval. The hour approaches for the god of fire to take them into his waiting bosom.

The cultists as a group let out an elated sound which a confused Jace and Scott do their very best to mimic.

ZOROMON (CONT'D)

Lead them to the honored place of
contemplation.

Surrounded by armed men, the sacrifices are led into the
grove.

JACE

Did you see the number of guards?

SCOTT

I'm more concerned about the god of
fire's waiting bosom. That doesn't
sound good for your friend.

EXT. GROVE - DUSK

The honored place of contemplation is a hilltop under a
cherry blossom. There are six stone totems surrounding the
tree. The hill overlooks a pit of fire being fed periodically
with newly cut logs. At the center of the pit is a stone
altar with steps that lead down past the fire.

Tony and the other sacrifices are huddled on the inner side
of the circle of totems, their guards surround them on the
outer side. All of their hands are tightly bound with rope.
Tony, stricken with panic is desperately struggling with his
bindings and as the futility sinks in on him begins to cry.

TONY

No,no,no,this can't be where it
ends. Shit, I don't want to die,
not here, not like this, burned
alive. Why can't it be a lie? Why
cant it all just be a game?

Nia angrily turns to Tony.

NIA

Stop crying and be a man! Do you
think any of us wants to be
slaughtered like cattle? But we
need to face our end with courage.
They don't deserve the satisfaction
of seeing our tears.

Tony looks rebuked. He doesn't want to meet her eyes,

TONY

I can't help it, I brought this on
myself.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

I used to think I was so much smarter than everyone but now I'm going to die because I'm stupid. I've basically committed suicide and for what?

Nia's gaze softens.

NIA

Hey, you're not stupid. Nobody's ever come closer to killing that bastard than you did, that takes smarts. It's not your fault that he's a dirty sorcerer.

Nia spits in the dirt at the mention of sorcery.

NIA (CONT'D)

To hell with their accursed breed.

Tony wipes the tears from his face and rests his head in his hands.

TONY

I can't believe I'm gonna die a virgin.

Everyone becomes deathly silent as one of the lead cultists passes the guards. He indicates the little boy. The boy's eyes widen and he tries to run away but is quickly grabbed by one of the guards and hoisted over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

BOY

No! Not me! Let go, pick someone else. Please, please don't send me to the fire!

They take the boy down the hill towards the flaming pit. Tony and Nia give each other a look which conveys both relief and shame at feeling that relief.

Meanwhile, Jace and Scott stealthily traverse the grove of trees. The glow from the fire pit is visible and soon the entire altar enters their field of view.

SCOTT

With all of those guards we're gonna need some kind of distraction.

JACE

Something's happening up there.

Zoromon ascends the stone steps to stand atop of the altar with the pit of flames beneath him. A half dozen or so black robed figures come out from the shelter of the trees and converge on the altar, chanting and dancing in a circle around it. The guard and the priest descend the hill overlooking the altar to deposit the struggling boy on the ground.

JACE (CONT'D)

That's just a little kid!

Zoromon raises his hands to the sky.

ZOROMON

Praise be to the god of fire.

The flames in the pit jump up several feet. Zoromon begins a series of signs with his hands. Scott seems enthralled by them, absently mimicking the gestures. A leaf falls toward Scott unnoticed and burns to nothing.

JACE

They wouldn't really kill a kid?

SCOTT

Don't put it past them. These people are freaks.

Jace stands, ready for action. He tosses the robe aside and pulls the hammer free from the rope strap on his back.

JACE

We have to stop this.

Zoromon continues to repeat the same gestures.

ZOROMON

Amakalara Zathira Vosko Vosufaious
Maximus Flamaro.

Two gigantic hands of fire rise up out of the pit to converge on the screaming and terrified boy. As they close in on the doomed child they look like hands in prayer. The screams die, smoke rises and the flames recede, leaving only a small, charred and crumbling skeleton.

Before any of the dancing cultists can react, Jace is charging at them in a wild rage.

JACE

Murderers, savages!

He smashes the skulls of two cultists with his stone hammer and chases after a third, grabbing his robe and pulling him in as he brings the hammer down. Seeing the look of terror in the man's eyes, Jace stops the motion of his hammer, hesitating to make the finishing blow. The cultist pulls a knife and slashes Jace's leg. The barbarian responds by kicking him six feet into the air. While this happens, five of the armed guards rush down the hill. Just after Jace kicks the man a whip slashes his back. He turns to face the guards, three men with spears and two with whips, led by the whip wielding CULTIST GUARD in the center.

CULTIST GUARD
Infidel! Prepare to die.

Meanwhile, on the hill there is only one guard left, GUTOC to watch the virgins. Nia turns to whisper in Tony's ear.

NIA
There's only one guard now. If we scatter, some of us might escape.

TONY
Or we could try to rush him, he's just got that whip.

Gutoc turns his attention to them and lovingly fondles his whip.

GUTOC
Planning to escape, eh? When I'm done with you, you'll be begging for the fires.

Scott jumps out of the shadows and cracks the guard on the head with his staff. The guard goes down, knocked out.

SCOTT
Yes! I finally got him in one shot.

Scott throws back his hood and meets Tony's eyes.

TONY
Scott?

SCOTT
Some people would say 'I told you so' in a moment like this.

Scott takes his pocket knife and cuts Tony's hands free.

TONY
You came back for me?

SCOTT

Not my idea, believe me. But for some reason Jace is attached to you.

TONY

Jace is here?

SCOTT

Yeah, and you wouldn't believe what he looks like.

Scott hands Tony the knife as his attention is drawn by the altar and the fight going on beneath it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Cut the others loose, something doesn't feel right.

At the bottom of the altar the frenzied cultists take turns lunging with spears and striking out with whips but Jace is in a full barbarian rage. He pulls a spear from the hands of one cultist and chucks it into the heart of another as he swings his hammer at the head of yet a third. In an instant the cultist's numbers are halved and the survivors don't have even a moment to regroup before Jace is on them. Three solid blows and he stands alone in a field of bodies. He points his finger at Zoromon as if to say, "you're next."

As Jace marches towards the altar his attention is grabbed by a high pitched battle cry. Five black robed cultists rush at him with swords and quarterstaves. Jace raises his hammer and screams back at them.

Meanwhile Zoromon has begun to make the hand gestures again. Scott sees this and begins to mimic what he sees with great accuracy.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Bastard's gonna try and burn everyone. I got to be crazy to think this will work, but what the hell, it's worth a try.

ZOROMON

Amakalara Zathira Vosko Vosufaious
Maximus Flamaro.

The two giant hands of flame rise out of the pit and begin to move towards Jace and his opponents. Scott, meanwhile finishes copying the gestures.

SCOTT
Amakalara Zathira Vosko Vosufaious
Maximus Flamaro.

Scott pulls his hands towards his body and as he does the giant hands turn towards Zoromon.

ZOROMON
What? Stop, stop I command you!

The hands of flame close in on Zoromon, clasp around him. Jace and the cultists stop their battle as they hear Zoromon's screams.

CULTIST
The god of fire turns against us!

The superstitious and terrified cultists flee. Scott's hands are clasped tightly as he looks at the scene with intense fascination. He releases his hands with an audible gasp and the flaming hands fall away and the fire in the pit goes dead. All that is left of Zoromon is a pile of ash.

SCOTT
I don't know how I did it but that creep won't be bothering anyone ever again.

Scott turns to see the virgins freed and looking at him with absolute horror.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
What? You're looking at me like I'm some kind of freak. In case you forgot, I just saved your lives.

Nia snatches the knife from Tony and charges Scott.

NIA
Die, sorcerer scum!

Scott snatches up the quarterstaff and beats her back.

SCOTT
Back off, you crazy bitch!

Scott knocks her to the ground and she drops the knife.

NIA
He has to die.

Tony helps her stand but also restrains her and is clearly in pain from the effort.

TONY

Do you normally try to kill people
who save your life?

NIA

You don't understand, sorcery is a
disease. He's dangerous!

Tony Sighs, exhausted from the effort.

TONY

You're right, I don't understand
and he doesn't understand. Neither
of us is from here but where we are
from, there's a thing called
gratitude.

Nia shakes herself from his hold and walks away to stand
alone.

NIA

Just keep that monster away from
me.

Jace climbs the hill to join them and sits under the cherry
blossom tree. He rests his hammer, now chipped and broken
next to him. He looks crestfallen.

JACE

I can't believe I killed so many
people.

Scott approaches him.

SCOTT

Jace, you've got to gangster up if
we expect to survive long here.

TONY

Jace? That's Jace?

SCOTT

The kinds of evil pricks we just
killed don't deserve an ounce of
remorse.

JACE

Maybe you're just the kind of
person who doesn't feel remorse.

TONY

That's really Jace?

Scott finally turns to acknowledge Tony.

SCOTT
Yes, it's really him.

Jace waves weakly.

JACE
Hey, Tony.

TONY
Well that's just unfair! Why is it
that I get to be the virgin
sacrifice and you get the body of
the gods?

Jace shrugs and stands up.

JACE
Nice seeing you too, Tony. I think
I'm going to take a walk and clear
my head.

Jace walks to the edge of the grove and watches the last rays
of the sun sink beneath the hills. There is activity visible
in the cultist's camp. Confusion until a lone figure
approaches from the hills, it is Orn. They gather around him.

Nia approaches Jace from behind.

NIA
It seems these sons of worms have
found a new leader.

JACE
More like they're crawling back to
their old one. Orn is a good man,
better than this scum deserve.

NIA
He could be a devil in human form
so long as he ends the madness.

Jace shrugs. Nia looks at him awkwardly, unsure of how to
approach the subject.

NIA (CONT'D)
I saw you fighting all of those men
alone. You're a real man and I need
a real man for what I'm about to
ask.

Jace shakes his head.

JACE

I was out of my head. I've had this rage building inside me for a long time but now when I let it out people tend to die.

NIA

Some people deserve to die. Those men back there would have burned us all alive to satisfy the whims of a depraved god.

Nia looks Jace in the eyes.

NIA (CONT'D)

But you see, this isn't the only cult of madmen who pay for virgins and I'm afraid I'll never feel safe as long as...

Jace suddenly realizes what she's getting at.

JACE

You want me? You want me to
(beat)are you sure?

NIA

There aren't a lot of men to choose from. Tony is in no condition and that sorcerer...

She shudders.

NIA (CONT'D)

I'd rather die than let him touch me. But I don't think I would mind spending some time in your arms at all.

She gently touches Jace's muscles.

Jace and Nia disappear into the thick trees together. Tony looks at Scott peevishly.

TONY

They're gonna do it aren't they?

SCOTT

Yeah, and that doesn't feel right at all. Jace gets lucky and I get the cold shoulder. Maybe you're right about none of this being real.

Tony shifts uncomfortably.

TONY

I'd like to believe I'm not the kind of sicko who would play a game as fucked up as what I've been through. That leaves one unavoidable conclusion, it's all real.

Tony sighs.

TONY (CONT'D)

And that means I'm a stupid piece of shit.

SCOTT

I could have told you that.

TONY

I'm serious! Raff
(beat) didn't need to die.
And now I can't stop
thinking about him.

SCOTT

Good. He didn't need to die and you can live with that knowledge for the rest of your life.

They sit in silence for a while, crickets chirping around them. Scott looks up at the moon.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Do you think we'll ever get home?

TONY

I'm not the sorcerer here.

EXT. FORMER RAIDER CAMP - DAY

Scott, Tony and Jace all stand at the fork in the road. Orn and Nia are there together, bidding the group farewell.

ORN

If you travel for a day on this road you'll reach the City of Bones.

Jace makes eyes at Nia.

JACE

Come with us.

Nia shakes her head.

NIA

Home is only a week or two away by foot. Orn has given me a pack mule and supplies enough to last the trip.

Tony, who now looks like hell warmed over shakes Orn's hand.

TONY

And thank you, by the way for the supplies.

Scott casts Tony an annoyed look.

SCOTT

And thank you, Tony for letting those slaving bastards get a full day ahead of us. Let's not waste any more time.

JACE

I'll never forget you, Nia.

They all wave goodbye as the trio heads up the road.

EXT. DUSTY ROAD - DAY - LATER

As the trio walk up the dusty road Tony slows and begins to sway on his feet.

TONY

I don't feel so hot.

Tony collapses. Jace and Scott rush to his side.

JACE

Tony!

Jace feels Tony's forehead, realizing that he has a fever.

JACE (CONT'D)

Jesus, he's burning up.

SCOTT

Damn it, we're still miles from that city. What do we do?

Pan up to show the winding road ahead with the city in the distance.

NARRATOR

The road of destiny has many
twists.

SUPER: To Be Continued.