

"Blood I"

by

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EXT. EAST COAST - USA

Our sweep into the past begins on the Eastern shores of the United States and travels East towards the Mediterranean Sea. As time slowly rewinds, we watch the ships of today morph into their ancient ancestors.

Skimming across the mid-Atlantic, through the pillars of Gibraltar and across the Western Mediterranean Sea, we enter the Eastern Mediterranean.

Arriving in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the sound of the surf THUNDERS and ROARS as a monstrous formation of WHITE WATER increases in intensity and size. The CONTINENT OF POTIETH rises from the sea.

The sweep ends with a soaring stride up the face of a rising cliff, into the blinding light of the sun, a blue sky, and then dives onto the back of a HAWK flying high above the Potiethian treetops.

EXT. POTIETH - EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

As the monologue begins, we visit the various places mentioned through the hawk's POV.

MONOLOGUE:

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA COASTLINE - EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

We are introduced to a coastline of bleached white sand and steep cliffs. It is bordered by a deep blue sea.

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA - EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

A great castle of Greek and Arabic architecture stands atop a mighty cliff. Surrounding the castle is a great civilization of similar architecture against a backdrop of sparse greenery.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Framed in crystal white sands and steep cliffs, Mantra is my majestic home. A wondrous place, it was the center of the known world...

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA FOREST - NOON - 10,000 B.C.

MANTRA FOREST: A rain forest, the Mantra Forest is lavish and colorful. Great rivers flow throughout it.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Mantra forest. A year-round  
tapestry of colors and blue  
rivers, it was a beautiful place.

EXT. POTIETHIAN DESERT - EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

The desert sand, in sharp contrast to the interior forest  
line, shines brightly beneath the sun.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Venturing further inland, the  
forest gives way to the  
mountainous desert terrain of  
the Potiethian Desert.

EXT. POTIETH - FIRE RING - EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

A ring of twelve active volcanoes, it is a marvelous sight.  
In the center is a lush tropical area. Amidst the rich  
greenery the all-female civilization of the Twelve thrives  
in its setting of Egyptian-style architecture.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

At the heart of this arid but  
beautiful place is a ring of  
twelve volcanoes called the  
Fire Ring. At night their  
aurora joins to create a fiery  
halo atop towering peaks and  
menacing slopes. Within their  
center is the home of the Twelve.

EXT. POTIETHIAN DESERT - CRIMSON CANYON OF THE JAHTALS -  
EARLY MORNING - 10,000 B.C.

The hawk, flying into the deep of the canyon, reveals to us  
a deep, dark, and foreboding place full of jagged edges and  
sharp spiny columns. A great and golden pyramid can be seen  
within the canyon's depths.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

To the south of the Fire Ring  
is the crimson canyon of the  
Jahtals. The final resting  
place of Mantra's mightiest  
kings, it is a dark foreboding  
place. That's the way it was  
before the thousand year war  
known in history as... The War  
of the Sands.

EXT. POTIETHIAN DESERT - BBATTLEFIELD - NOON - 10,000 B.C.

As the hawk flies high above the desert battlefield, we see two enormous forces below. They run toward each other at full stride.

FORCE 1: Mantra warriors, dressed in armor of Arabic and Greek design.

FORCE 2: Sibanian warriors, dressed in armor of Japanese and Roman design.

Entering a dive, the hawk takes us along on its free fall toward the center of the battlefield. As the ground quickly approaches, the BATTLE CRIES of THE MULTITUDE OF WARRIORS fill our ears.

The hawk, pulling out of the free fall, rides the space between the two armies.

At a sprinter's pace, their weapons in hand, the opposing forces clash just below the hawk.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

In the year 10,000 B.C. two kingdoms arose in the land of Potieth. To the West was Mantra, ruled by the wise and just King Sethran Jahtal...

In sync with the monologue thhe hawk soars from beneath the battle's wake. Entering a turn, the hawk focuses its eyes upon a masked KING SETHRAN, a Caucasian with a lean build and intense eyes; SETHRAN is on horseback.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Rumvash of Sibane.

The hawk, reversing directionn in a sweeping arc, turns its attention to the opposing force.

It centers on a masked KING RUMVASH; Bronze skin, large muscular build, sadistic eyes; RUMVASH is also on horseback.

TITLE: 990 Years Later

We are introduced to the MASKED SUCCESSORS of the two kings. Their eyes are fixed on two warriors fighting amidst a great battle.

EXT. POTIETH DESERT - BATTLEFIELD - NOON - 9010 B.C.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
 Hundreds of years passed and  
 then he came...

The hawk's attention swings from the descendant kings and centers on TWO WARRIORS in the middle of the battlefield.

Locked in mortal combat, they seem to stand alone in a skilled and dramatic fight to the death. After one Warrior falls dead, the victorious Warrior comes clearly into focus.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
 His name was Rahkahn Nomraii.  
 As Raido Gemdo he served as  
 head of Mantra's elite guard.  
 With abilities said to have  
 been bestowed upon him by an  
 ancient race of warriors, he  
 dominated all who stood before  
 him on the battlefield. When  
 the head of Sibane's elite  
 guard, the Klevanrah, fell at  
 his hands the tide of war was  
 forever turned in favor of  
 Mantra. With the help of  
 Rahkahn it would take only ten  
 years to force an uneasy truce  
 between the two kingdoms.

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA PALACE - BALCONY - 9000 B.C.

Thousands of MANTRAN and SIBANIAN CITIZENS cheer as one as the two KINGS sign a peace treaty.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
 But nothing is forever. After  
 2000 years of peace passed, a  
 new generation arose. And so  
 our story begins.

END MONOLOGUE:

INT. MANTRA - PALACE NURSERY - NIGHT - 7000 B.C

PALACE NURSERY: A large room, marble walls and floors, dimly lit by torchlight, balcony entrance opposite the nursery door.

The Mediterranean SURF can be heard close by. A lighted torch is mounted on the wall to the left of the door. The large room is made snug by shadows dancing amidst the dim light of the torch.

Finding shelter in the light is a lone cradle in the center of the room. The torchlight dances delicately upon the cradle's surface. As the cradle sways gently in the night breeze we hear the COO of a sleeping infant.

Centering on the nursery balcony entryway, we see the shadow of a DARK FIGURE appear on the silk drapes that line the entryway.

DARK FIGURE: Tall, lean muscular build, dressed in ninja-like robes, its face hidden by a mask.

Silver shards of dust, disturbed by the figure's footsteps, rise as the figure enters the tidy nursery.

With no sound, the Dark Figure's head cautiously peers around the corner. He crouches low and methodically slips past the drapes.

The Dark Figure's hand, disappearing momentarily behind its back, vanishes from sight. Reappearing, a SHIMMER OF LIGHT bounces off the surface of a METAL OBJECT; a DAGGER. The figure searches the room. Seeing no one, the figure moves closer to the cradle.

The nursery door, swinging open, SLAMS into the wall.

TRAIJAH, a member of the elite palace guard, charges into the nursery with his sword drawn.

Traijah: 60 years of age, Caucasian, lean muscular build, dressed in crimson armor of Arabic and Greek design.

TRAIJAH  
Away from the child!

Amidst the CLAMOR, we hear the COO of the child erupt into SCREAMS.

Startled, the Dark Figure takes a quick look at the defending Traijah, He leaps for the child with the dagger extended before him.

Suddenly, a Young Man leaps from the shadows of the nursery.

YOUNG MAN: His name is Ralir, 16 years of age, slim muscular build, bronze skin and dressed in blue robes and black armor similar to that of Traijah. He is the youngest candidate ever for a position in the royal elite guard.

Ralir lands between the dagger and the child. The knife slashes in and out of his back at shoulder height. Grunting in pain, Ralir takes the child into his arms.

The cradle CRASHES to the floor.

Off balance, Ralir follows the cradle to the floor. He winces as he lands next to the cradle with the infant in his arms

The Dark Figure, following Ralir to the floor, does not let go of the dagger. He rolls back to his feet and takes in the situation.

Traijah steps between Ralir and the Assassin, slashing at the intruder with his sword.

The Dark Figure, seeing his chance to reach the child about to slip away, ducks Traijah's sword and grabs Traijah by his sword-bearing wrist.

Realizing he is overextended in his attack, Traijah GRUNTS as the Dark Figure flips him to the side.

Seeing that his path is clear, the Dark Figure quickly moves toward Ralir and the child.

With a trail of blood following him, Ralir shuffles backwards with the child held tightly to his chest. He hooks the leg of the turned-over cradle with his foot, then drags the cradle between himself and his attacker.

Traijah has landed on his back and rolls to his feet. He dashes for the figure.

The Dark Figure stumbles forward over the cradle. He rights himself in time to dodge the barrage of attacks from Traijah's sword and leaps back.

Bounding up from the floor, Ralir jumps to his feet.

Traijah continues his attack.

TRAIJAH  
With that skill, he must be  
Klevanrah!

Rushing into the room, TWO PAALACE GUARDS stand side by side.

GUARD #1  
Klevanrah!

GUARD #2  
Klevanrah!

Distracted by the extra guardds, the Dark Figure barely ducks another slash of Traijah's sword in time.

Seizing his chance, Ralir dashes to the cradle.

The Dark Figure avoids another deadly slash of Traijah's sword, then turns toward Ralir with a savage battle cry.

Ralir quickly kicks the cradle into the path of the Dark Figure.

RALIR

Traijah!!!

The cradle catches the figuree between the legs. The figure trips, falling face first on the marble floor. Its HEAD BOUNCES HARD on the floor's surface. Grunting, the figure lies motionless.

Ralir tosses the infant to Traijah as Traijah simultaneously tosses his sword to him.

The child laughs in mid-flight.

He waves to the Two Guards.

RALIR

Protect him!

Guards One and Two move to taake a protective position in front of Traijah. They are abruptly interrupted as the Raido Gemdo, known as SHIVALSA NOMRAI, makes his way between them. Sick, he falters slightly, grabbing his chest as he draws his sword.

Shivalsa: 55 years of age, large muscular build, bronze skin and scarred face, dressed in royal purple robes and armor of similar design.

Ralir is taken by surprise as Shivalsa enters the room. He motions to him to keep his distance.

RALIR

Standing slowly, the Dark Figgure shakes its head. He growls at the sight of Shivalsa.

Shivalsa motions to Ralir that he is fine. He turns his attention to the figure.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalsa, this is your son??

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

(his eyes turn to  
the figure)

He is.  
(he frowns)

RALIR

Why...  
(choked by emotion)  
Who would send you to take the  
life of a child!

The figure's eyes remain fixed on Shivalsa.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalsa, please, this isn't  
what it seems. A darkness  
comes. My Master has foreseen  
it. This child will be its  
greatest weapon.

RALIR

Lies, Father! He is a Jahttal.  
He is our king's son.

Shivalsa remains silent. His eyes are menacing. His brow is  
drenched in sweat.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalsa, please! He will  
start a chain of events...  
(he stumbles over  
his words)  
He'll doom us all!

RALIR

Father!

Shivalsa holds his head in pain, he yells.

Traijah looks on; a troubled look crosses his face. He  
tightens his hold on the child. He steps forward, between  
the guards, toward Shivalsa.

SHIVALSA

Silence! All of you, SILENCE!!  
Who is your master, assassin?

Shivalsa motions for Traijah to keep his distance.

Traijah nods his head and stops.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalsa, listen! You are nnot  
yourself.

Shivalsa drops to one knee. HHis hands move from his head to  
his chest. He winces in pain.

SHIVALSA

I don't have time for this..

Traijah steps forward.

TRAIJAH

Shivalsa, my Raido, we needd to  
question him.

SHIVALSA

Traijah!

Traijah steps back. A confuseed look crosses his face.

The child begins to cry.

DARK FIGURE

You are not yourself, Shivaalsa!  
It's known to us, your  
sickness! We know that...

RALIR

DIE!!!

Shivalsa motions to Ralir to stop.

Ralir does not heed Shivalsa's request.

SHIVALSA

RALIR!!!

Allowing no time for further discussion, Ralir launches his  
attack on the Assassin.

Traijah steps forward but stops at a gesture from Shivalsa.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalsa!

The Dark Figure avoids the innitial slash and thrust of  
Ralir's sword but gets Ralir's back fist to his chin and a  
kick to his chest. He flies through the balcony drapes,  
ripping them down and tearing them from their anchors.

Ralir follows him out onto the balcony.

Shivalisa motions for Traijjah and the two guards to remain where they are. He follows Ralir and the Dark Figure onto the balcony.

EXT. MANTRA - PALACE NURSERY - BALCONY - NIGHT

NURSERY BALCONY: Large, black marble finish, overlooks the ocean, its surface covered in silver dust.

The Dark Figure, landing on the balcony floor, sends silver shards of dust into the air.

Ralir enters onto the balcony. His eyes are wild and his veins are visible about his neck and forehead.

Shivalisa follows soon after. He stops short just past the balcony entryway. He watches the duel.

Taking the drapes from his shoulders, the Dark Figure throws them to the ground in time to meet Ralir's attack.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalisa, stop him, stop thhis.  
He, it, it's got a hold on you.  
Shivalisa, it's manipulating  
both of you!

Finding its mark, a fist and a kick from the Dark Figure cause Ralir to take a step back.

We center on Shivalisa--his eyes grow wide at the sight of the Dark Figure landing a blow. Stepping forward, he attempts to intervene.

Raising a hand to Shivalisa, Ralir waves him off.

RALIR

No!

DARK FIGURE

Shivalisa, don't you see? Yoou  
must know that this isn't  
right! I should be...  
(he grunts at a near  
miss by Ralir)  
I should be questioned!

Shivalisa, smiles.

Center on Traijjah. He watches Shivalisa through the balcony entryway. A concerned look crosses his face.

Finding the Dark Figure's knees open to attack, Ralir seizes the moment and slides in on his back, parrying a delayed downward slash of the Dark Figure's sword. The heel of his boot finds its mark, bringing the Dark Figure to his knees.

The Dark Figure's eyes are reduced to small beads. He cries out in pain.

Rolling to his feet, Ralir stands above the Dark Figure. In one fluid motion he swings, unleashing everything he has against the Dark Figure's raised sword.

In a final desperate parry, their blades meet with a DEAFENING SOUND; the Dark Figure's sword flies into the air. Tracking on the sword, we follow it over the balcony, down a steep cliff, and into the surf below.

Close on Shivalisa. He smiles wickedly.

Ralir, breathing heavily, stands above his downed foe.

RALIR

Rest well.

DARK FIGURE

Shivalisa!

Ralir raises his arm, summoning up all his strength. He brings down his blade in one final powerful slash.

The Dark Figure instinctively raises a hand to deflect the blow. We watch as his head and hand follow his sword over the balcony railing and into the surf below. Twitching, his body falls limp to the balcony floor.

Ralir, gasping, stares at the collapsing corpse. He then turns to Shivalisa.

Shivalisa remains silent, shaking his head in disappointment as he returns to the interior of the nursery.

Ralir sighs and once more turns his attention to the headless corpse.

INT. MANTRA - PALACE NURSERY - NIGHT - 7000 B.C

Shivalisa, faltering, enters the nursery.

Traijah moves to aid Shivalisa.

Shivalisa waves him off.

SHIVALSA

No! I'm fine. What you can do  
is get a couple of men to  
clean this up... Thank you.

Traijah motions with a nod off his head to the two guards.

The Two Guards exit through the balcony entryway as Ralir enters.

Shivalsa takes the child from Traijah and hands him to Ralir.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Take him to his father. Tell  
him Traijah and I will join  
you shortly. We need to  
discuss a few things.

Ralir looks into Shivalsa's eyes.

RALIR

I messed up again, didn't I?

Shivalsa turns his eyes momentarily away. A frustrated look crosses his face. Looking Ralir in the eyes, he places a hand on his shoulder.

Ralir winces.

SHIVALSA

Forgive me...and no. You saved  
the life of our King's child.  
You did very well tonight. Now  
go and do as I ask.

With a troubled nod, Ralir turns to leave.

RALIR

I'm sorry, Father.

Walking away, Ralir's head hangs low.

SHIVALSA

Son!

Ralir turns to face Shivalsa..

RALIR

Yes, Father?

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

Don't bother with the palacce  
doctor, see Jasupha about your  
wounds. You'll find him in the  
King's chambers.

Ralir smiles and exits the room.

Shivalsa wearily walks over to Traijah. Placing a hand upon  
his shoulder, Shivalsa looks into his eyes and smiles warmly.

SHIVALSA

Thank you for your concern,, my  
friend, but I am fine.

TRAIJAH

SHIVALSA

stopping him when he gets like  
that. His insecurity about his  
abilities is constantly  
driving him into conflicts to  
prove himself...

(he shakes his head  
in frustration)

And sadly it's to prove  
himself worthy of a name that  
in all truthfulness is not  
worthy of him. He's more than  
a Nomrai. I wish he could see  
that.

TRAIJAH

He might be a captain...butt he  
is still only sixteen. He  
could have been killed.

SHIVALSA

Ralir is far beyond his yeaars.  
No man under our command can  
defeat him in one-on-one  
combat. If I felt the assassin  
truly had a chance to defeat  
him, I'd have taken his head.

Traijah returns Shivalsa's weery stare with questioning eyes.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Come, we can talk on the waay.

INT. MANTRA - PALACE CORRIIDOR - LEADING TO THE KING'S CHAMBER

Walking along the highly polished white marble corridor, Shivalisa and Traijah are in discussion.

SHIVALISA

I understand and agree thatt his skill was worthy. However, his strength was considerably lacking. He couldn't have been Sibane's new Klevanrah...the Twelve haven't trained a sibanian in hundreds of years.

TRAIJAH

this means.

SHIVALISA

Yes, a new enemy has come too Mantra... a hidden enemy.

Shivalisa, notices a look of cconcern on Traijah's face. He places his arm playfully around Traijah's neck.

SHIVALISA (CONT'D)

Traijah?

TRAIJAH

There is something else thaat troubles me.

SHIVALISA

You are my friend. I've comme to expect your openness... Why hold your tongue now?

TRAIJAH

enemies, but some of what he said...

(His voice quivers)

I have noticed a change in youu. Over the last few months, since the onset of your illness, there have been times when you've not seemed truly yourself.

SHIVALISA

Did I not say that I was fiine?

TRAIJAH

Yes, but if there is one thing you've taught me... it's that what we say and what actually is... can be two different things. I watched you from the entryway during the fight. My friend, you were colder. You knew we should've captured and questioned him but you did nothing to stop Ralir.

SHIVALSA

You know how, Ralir...

TRAIJAH

You should have stopped himm!

Shivalsa remains quiet for a short moment.

SHIVALSA

Come now, Traijah. He tried to kill our King's son.

Shivalsa laughs and pats Traiijah on the back.

TRAIJAH

Perhaps I was only imaginng things. You're right, my friend.

Arriving at the King's chambers, they pause at the door. We hear the MUFFLED VOICES of THE KING and JASUPHA just beyond the chamber door. In heated discussion, their tempers flare.

INT. POTIETH - MANTRA PLACE- KING'S CHAMBERS

KING'S CHAMBERS: Enormous, lavishly decorated, white marble floors and walls, large bed, fireplace.

We center on a gold dish which contains a bright flame and rests on a gold stand to the left of the Queen. A small golden branding iron is nestled within its flames.

The King holds tightly to his Queen as she holds firm to young Narjah (the infant from the nursery).

The KING: 30 years of age, Caucasian, medium build; he carries with him a just karma.

The Queen: 29 years of age, Caucasian, slim feminine build, long flowing red hair, beautiful.

Ralir, shirtless, kneels before the King and Queen. Jasupha stands behind him tending to his wound.

JASUPHA: Looks 70 years off age, frail, Caucasian, dressed in Magician's robes.

JASUPHA

Now you must agree with me,, my King!

THE KING

Something dark is slowly taking over all of Potieth... This is absurd. The people would think ill of me.

JASUPHA

But after tonight! Here, llook at this lad!

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ralir.

THE KING

Jasupha! I can't! I agree wwith you that something is awry in the land, but I can't go along with you on this.

JASUPHA

I have served your family aas the Palace Magician and Royal Advisor on the mystical for over seventy years. I come to you this night following a terrible attack on young Narjah's life... telling you of an approaching darkness of mystical origins. Yet you do nothing but shy away from my most humble and once trusted words. Dear Light, you won't even consider them! My King, there is a darkness coming! I see it and this lad here, who saved your son's life, glimpsed it.

THE KING

Jasupha...

JASUPHA

Today I fear that some among us here in Mantra are, without even knowing it, carrying out the will of this darkness. I am also fearful that it will be by their hands that not only Mantra but all of Potieth will fall.

THE KING

Jasupha! It is because of your time in our service that we allow you this freedom to speak your mind. But what you are saying...

We hear a KNOCK at the chamber door.

THE KING

Enter! Shivalsa and Traijah enter the King's chambers and bow respectfully.

SHIVALSA

My King.

TRAIJAH

My King.

THE KING

Jasupha, are you finished with young Nomrai?

JASUPHA

Yes I am, my King.

THE KING

Then leave...

JASUPHA

As you wish, my King. But shadows of ill tidings have come and utter darkness will soon follow. On that day you will remember the words of this old man.

THE KING

Leave me now, Jasupha!

Shivalsa and Traijah trade looks of bewilderment at the King's harsh treatment of Jasupha.

Jasupha, kneeling down, whhispers in Ralir's ear.

JASUPHA

You will soon be faced with  
hard choices...

Ralir turns toward Jasupha. AA concerned look crosses his face.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

Fear not...I'll be there when  
you need me...Take these...

Jasupha hands Ralir two gold rings.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

The one with your name on it  
will protect the wearer, you  
or your father, from the  
minions of this approaching  
darkness. Its power will be  
equal to the threat. The other  
is for, well, someone else...  
You'll know who when the time  
comes.

Jasupha smiles. He pats Ralirr on the back and moves to exit.

Ralir looks at the rings in his hand and then back at Jasupha.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

need...You'll know when the  
time is right.

Ralir smiles and nods.

RALIR

You still smell of that pottion!

JASUPHA

outside and you know how I  
hate those bugs.

Ralir laughs.

Carrying Ralir's bloody bandages, Jasupha pauses just in front of Shivalsa. He draws back slightly with a concerned look on his face and then steps forward very close to Shivalsa's face. He smiles warmly.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

My friend, you should listen to those who love and know you best. For it is they who will know you when it is only your reflection that remains.

SHIVALSA

I don't understand, Jasuphaa.

JASUPHA

Yes, no one seems to, but you all will soon enough. Rest well, my child. You and your son are the closest thing to family I've ever known. I will miss you, Shivalsa...

Shivalsa, standing with a blank stare, looks on as Jasupha leaves.

As the chamber DOOR CLOSES behind Jasupha, Shivalsa and Traijah join Ralir on one knee before their King.

THE KING

Please don't, it is I who should be kneeling before you. Come, stand before me.

The three stand.

Ralir winces in pain.

THE KING (CONT'D)

Please tell me of the night's events.

Traijah looks to Shivalsa for his approval.

Shivalsa nods.

TRAIJAH

My King, I was on watch in the courtyard when Anandon, the watcher of the east tower, saw a figure on the nursery balcony. He alerted me and moved to stop the attacker.

THE KING

Anandon has a pair of the most powerful eyes I've ever known. But to see over a hundred yards in the dark...

RALIR

My King...

The King, nodding his approval, gestures for him to speak.

Shivalsa and Traijah smile as Ralir seeks Shivalsa's approval after the fact.

Shivalsa motions for Ralir to continue.

Ralir mouths the word "Sorry" to Shivalsa.

The King and Queen both smile.

RALIR (CONT'D)

...It was my doing. I can't explain it, but I saw young Narjah's assassination in something like a dream. To save him, I borrowed some "desert tears" from Jasupha and coated the nursery balcony with it. On a moonlit night like this, even the softest step causes the powder to rise and glitter in the night.

THE KING

Desert tears are found only within the Fire Ring. So, you used this to alert the others while you lay in wait for the assassin...

Ralir nods.

THE KING (CONT'D)

... Then, throwing yourself between death and our child, you saved his life.

THE KING (CONT'D)

You are your father's son and I thank you for your sacrifice.

The King turns his attention to the trio.

THE KING (CONT'D)

I thank you all and I need not hear more. Young Nomrai, this night you, as your father and his father before him, have earned the right to walk as equals among we Jahtals.

(MORE)

THE KING (CONT'D)

And like them, you will become blood brother to the throne. I hereby promote you from the ranks of the infantry to the ranks of the Gemdo elite. If I am right, you are the youngest ever, congratulations...

The King, seeing a questioning look on Ralir's face, nods warmly to him.

THE KING (CONT'D)

...Yes, you deserve this. Tomorrow you will leave with your father for the Fire Ring. Upon your return you will assume his place as Raido Gemdo, head of Mantra's Royal Elite Guard and Supreme General of Mantra's Grand Army.

Ralir, looking toward his father, finds him peering down at the polished marble floor of the King's chambers.

The King, noticing Ralir's concerned look for his father, steps forward. He places a hand on both their shoulders. Their eyes turn to meet his.

THE KING (CONT'D)

Ralir, your father knew this day would come long before tonight. He understands...

Turning his attention toward the Queen, the King smiles.

THE KING (CONT'D)

My Queen, please.

Rising with her infant the Queen approaches the men. She stands face to face with Ralir.

Shivalsa and Traijah kneel and bow their heads.

Ralir, following their lead, starts to kneel but is motioned to remain standing by a fleeting touch of the Queen's delicate hand underneath his chin.

As if on queue a SERVANT GIRL enters the room. She pauses just inside the door.

The queen motions for her to enter with a nod of her head.

The Servant Girl takes her place beside the queen.

The queen hands her child to the young attendant. She pulls from its golden sheath at her waist the Sacred Dagger of the Jahtals. We see the hawk and serpent Jahtal Crest etched in gold on its hilt.

THE QUEEN

Your hand, Ralir?

We watch as Ralir offers his hand to the Queen.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

By this dagger you will become  
one with the throne of Mantra  
and protector of the royal family.

The Queen places the point off the dagger into the palm of Ralir's hand and then into the heel of young Lord Narjah.

The infant cries.

Putting away the dagger, the Queen takes Ralir's hand and her infant's heel and brings them together. Palm to heel, their blood mingles.

She takes the small branding iron from the nearby tray of flame. She CAUTERIZES their wounds and, once she withdraws the branding iron, the joined emblems of the Jahtal and Nomrai family crests are left burned into their flesh.

THE QUEEN

It is done.

The King smiles and gestures for all to rise.

The Queen takes the young infant from the servant girl and motions for her to leave. She soothes her CRYING infant.

The Servant Girl exits.

THE KING

Ralir Jahtal Nomrai, tonight  
you are an equal in the eyes  
of this royal house. Shivalsa,  
my brother, take your son and  
prepare him for the Twelve.  
Teach him their ways.

Shivalsa, looking upon his King and brother, nods reverently. He momentarily faces Ralir and smiles as their eyes meet.

Returning their attention to the King, Shivalsa, Traijah and Ralir each salute him by pressing their open palms to their chests.

The King in return places his hand upon their shoulders one by one. He smiles warmly.

THE KING

know the depths of your pride,  
you likewise know the depths  
of my love for you, my friend  
and brother. In all good  
conscience, knowing of your  
illness...

Shivalsa looks up, stunned.

The King smiles.

THE KING (CONT'D)

I cannot continue to place you  
in harm's way. I cannot, so  
go now. I also cannot go to  
our people and share with them  
Jasupha's words. But I know  
that there is, on some level,  
truth to what he says. I fear  
that...

(he pauses)

...you both will be needed soon.

SHIVALSA

As you wish, Brother.

With good cheer Ralir and Traaijah look at Shivalsa. They smile and begin to laugh.

Traijah pats Ralir on the back.

TRAIJAH

Young Raido...

Shivalsa returns their smiles with a smile of happiness and uncertainty. He walks between them and throws his arms about their shoulders. They then turn to exit.

SHIVALSA

Well, if I am to be replaced  
I'm happy it is to be by you, Son.

RALIR

Thank you father, thank you. I  
thought the Twelve were a myth.

Shivalsa's smile fades from his face as his eyes grow cold and serious.

## SHIVALSA

No, Son, they are real... tthey  
are very, very real.

INT. MANTRA - JASUPHA'S CHAMBBERS - NIGHT

JASUPHA'S CHAMBERS: small room, meager wooden furniture, out of place floor rug in center; very elaborate, a pail of water is placed in one corner.

Jasupha rushes into the room. He shuts the door and proceeds to the floor rug. He rolls it back; a pentagram lies beneath it. He looks about the room. His eyes fall on the pail of water. He moves to retrieve it.

The sound of wood CREAKING fills the room.

Returning to the pentagram, he pours the pail of water onto it. Kneeling, Jasupha feverishly attempts to scrub the drawing away with the bottom of his magician's robes.

JASUPHA

I'm sorry, my boy...

Tears fill his eyes.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry...

The sound of wood CREAKING aggain fills the room. It is followed by a THUNDEROUS THUMP.

Jasupha stops. He looks about the room with fearful eyes. Seeing nothing, he returns to his scrubbing.

A BLACK MIST rises from all corners of the room and slowly grows towards its center.

Jasupha is unaware of the Black Mist as he continues to scrub. Half of the pentagram gone, he takes a deep breath. Looking up, he is startled by the mist. He frowns with regret.

The mist quickly engulfs him.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

NO!!!

INT. POTIETH - MANTRA - PALACCE NURSERY - DAWN

We center on the nursery balcony entryway. As the drapes are still down we have a full view of the sunlit balcony.

The dancing SHADOW of a bird can be seen on the balcony floor and railing.

Suddenly the hawk enters our view. It perches on the balcony railing. Sweeping forward, we quickly join the hawk as it takes flight high into the morning sky.

Flying east the Hawk enters a dive. It pulls up just above the south watchman's tower on the palace's southern wall.

The TOWER WATCHMAN waves to the hawk.

The hawk acknowledges him with a shrill cry.

Clearing the tower, the hawk introduces us to Mantra.

MANTRA: Surrounded by a great wall, vast and beautiful, marble and golden stone, enormous white marble statue of an ancient king in its center. It reflects both Arabic and Greek architectures.

Those who see the hawk wave to it.

The hawk soars high above the great statue of the ancient Jahtal king. Its attention first centers upon a busy morning street and then upon Ralir and Shivalisa on horseback in the distance.

Sweeping forward, we join the hawk in a dive that ends with its landing on Shivalisa's arm.

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA - CITY MAIN ROAD - EARLY MORNING

On horseback, Shivalisa and Ralir ride in royal purple. Their robes, Arabian-Greek in style, flutter gently in the morning breeze.

Shining brightly, their black leather armor reflects strongly in the early morning sun.

Shivalisa carries his dual swords on his back.

Ralir carries a single sword on his back. He wears the two gold rings given to him by Jasupha on a gold chain around his neck.

With the exception of their ages and Ralir's smaller youthful frame, the father and son duo are identical in looks.

SHIVALISA

(eyeing the hawk on  
his arm)

About time you joined us,  
Shimacon. I was getting  
worried you were tired of our  
company.

RALIR

Father, tell me, just how oold  
is he? I can't remember a time  
without him. When I was little  
he squawked at everything I did.

Shivalsa laughs boisterously..

SHIVALSA

Ralir, how many times must I  
tell you? 'He' is a she and  
it's impolite to discuss a  
woman's age, even if she is a  
hawk...

Ralir laughs.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

...and if she had been  
squawking at you, you were  
probably doing something you  
weren't supposed to.

Shivalsa gives Ralir his fatherly eye. He smiles.

Ralir laughs again.

RALIR

Maybe I was.

Shivalsa, laughing, looks at Ralir's shoulder.

SHIVALSA

that shoulder's feeling.

Shrugging tenderly, Ralir winnces.

RALIR

Jasupha. A few more days and  
it'll be just like new.

SHIVALSA

He is an incredible man, issn't he?

RALIR

Yes he is, Father.

SHIVALSA

You know, at one time we haad  
no need for a palace doctor.  
Jasupha used his magic to care  
for the entire army.

RALIR

Yes, I know. He never passees  
up a chance to remind me.

Shivalsa chuckles and looks uup into the morning sky. He  
pauses for a moment.

SHIVALSA

(beneath his breath)  
Such beauty...

RALIR

Father?

SHIVALSA

I was only saying that...noow  
he's grown too old. His magic  
is no longer what it used to be.

Ralir looks at Shivalsa with a questioning eye.

RALIR

Isn't what it used to be?

SHIVALSA

What was that?

Ralir shakes his head.

RALIR

Nothing...

SHIVALSA

I hear you have been seeingg a  
lot of each other over these  
past few months.

RALIR

Yes, we have.

SHIVALSA

Then he has taken you as hiis  
newest apprentice?

RALIR

Yes, he thinks I have the Potential to one day become a powerful dual magician-warrior. He says that if I try hard enough then one day I'll be greater than even the great Rahkahn Nomrai.

SHIVALSA

I believe it, but be carefuul, he can be a tough teacher.

Shivalsa chuckles.

RALIR

What?

SHIVALSA

Nothing...You know... speaking of the great Rahkahn Nomrai, with regard to age I think You are already years ahead of him.  
(he makes eye contact)

he never had.

Ralir smiles and turns his eeyes toward the ground.

RALIR

Thank you, Father.

SHIVALSA

No, thank your mother.

RALIR

I wish I could have known hher. Why did she have to die?

A concerned look crosses Shivvalsa's face. His lips tremble.

SHIVALSA

Yes, why did she?

RALIR

So, the agenda...

SHIVALSA

What?

RALIR

Our path ahead.

Shivalsa laughs with a surprriised look.

SHIVALSA

Oh! That's right...!

Shivalsa laughs again.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

With everything going on itt  
slipped my mind. You infantry  
men are primarily stationed to  
the North of Mantra... Rarely  
do any of you make it out  
East...

(he looks towards Ralir)

Have you ever been out East?

RALIR

No, but I've always wanted to go.

SHIVALSA

Well, this will be your firrst  
journey...

RALIR

What's it like?

SHIVALSA

Let's see... There are onlyy  
two island provinces between  
Mantra and the desert  
border...Arbor Village and...

RALIR

Shumain...

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

You get your "A" for the daay  
in Geography.

Ralir laughs.

RALIR

No, I know where and what  
cities... I meant...what are  
they like?

Shivalsa nods.

SHIVALSA

Ahhh... Well, Arbor Villagee is a peaceful woodland village with the best brew and liquor in all Potieth.

RALIR

All the veterans who rotatee through my regiment speak of it as if it was the nectar of the gods.

Shivalsa sits back in his sadddle. He stares off in remembrance of his last goblet of Arbor Brew.

Ralir looks at Shivalsa, awaiting his comments on Shumain.

RALIR

And...?

Shivalsa snaps out of his dazze. He gathers himself, clears his throat.

SHIVALSA

Where was I?

Ralir smiles.

RALIR

Shumain.

Shivalsa smirks.

SHIVALSA

Now Shumain is known for itt's beautiful women, seafood, and candlestick makers.

RALIR

Candles?

SHIVALSA

Yes, beautiful works of artt...

Shivalsa winks at Ralir.

Ralir laughs.

The pair trot ahead, continuing along the path.

INT. POTIETH - MANTRA - OOUTSKIRTS - MIDMORNING

Atop a black steed, a hooded Jasupha rides along the path. His horse at full gallop, Jasupha is in pursuit of Ralir and Shivalisa.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - NOON

MONTAGE:

(1) We move forward in time. Ralir and Shivalisa make their way through the Arbor path of the Potiethian Woods.

(2) They laugh as light conversation continues throughout the day.

(3) Periodically Ralir glances back as if looking for someone, only to dismiss it and continue his conversation with his father.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - POTIETHIAN WOODS - DUSK

ARBOR VILLAGE: Dirt streets, moderate traffic, people everywhere, children at play in a game similar to soccer; merchants selling food and items throughout the bazaar.

As the sun begins to set, Ralir and Shivalisa ride through the lively forest village. The sound of the MERCHANTS, TROTTING HORSES and CHILDREN at play fill our ears.

Shimacon, the hawk, is again perched on Shivalisa's hand.

The children spot Ralir and Shivalisa on horseback. They invite the warriors to take part in their game.

Ralir looks at Shivalisa. He smiles.

Shivalisa, nodding his approval, sends Shimacon into the evening sky and takes Ralir's steed by the reins.

Ralir dismounts.

SHIVALISA

(with a motion of  
his head)

We'll sleep at the tavern over there... Remember to save some of that energy. Tonight you party with your father!!!

Ralir laughs.

RALIR

This will be a party to remember.

SHIVALSA

Indeed it will.

Shivalsa finds a spot in front of a local tavern. He dismounts.

A bar attendant pockets a couple of coins given to him by Shivalsa and leads both steeds off toward a nearby stable.

Shivalsa takes a seat outside. He watches Ralir and the children at play. Growing concern is seen on his face.

SHIVALSA

Forgive me, son...

INT. VOLCANO - FIRE RING - DAARK ONES THRONE ROOM

On a lake of magma rests a floating crest of hardened magma and blackened bones. On this charred island a black throne is centrally positioned. On the throne sits a HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE: his hands are pale-white, frail; his face cannot be seen.

Kneeling before the Hooded Figure Dressed In White is a FIGURE DRESSED IN DARK ROBES.

FIGURE DRESSED IN DARK ROBES: his name is Maston, in his late twenties, dark-skinned, bald, lean muscular build with piercing eyes. Also hooded, his face cannot be seen. He wears a sword about his waist with a diamond-encrusted hilt.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

(his voice is  
shadowy and ancient)

My pupil, my faith in our  
unwary pawn has waned. I'm not  
certain Shivalsa will go  
through with his King's  
tasking. After hundreds of  
years he is the first Nomrai  
to care for his blood more  
than a soldier's duty to his king.

Maston looks up.

MASTON

(his voice is that  
of a man in his late twenties)  
He will, he must...

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 This is too important to leave  
 to fate. Ralir must complete  
 the journey and accept his  
 destiny... or die...

Maston nods.

MASTON  
 How should I proceed?

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Take away all that Ralir holds  
 dear. First gain his trust and  
 then make him want to take the  
 path of the Nomrai before him.

Maston stands.

MASTON  
 Jasupha continues to protect  
 this one personally.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
  
 have dealt with Jasupha. If he  
 interferes again I will finish  
 him. Now go...go to the  
 appointed place. They await  
 your arrival.

MASTON  
 Will they do as they're told?

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Thanks to their misplaced  
 trust in their own sister hood,  
 they no longer have a choice...  
 Now go.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN - NIGHT

TAVERN: medium size building, two stories, dance floor lit  
 by the light of three lanterns on the ceiling, dining area  
 lit by candlelight in areas where the lantern light doesn't  
 reach, bar adjacent to the Tavern's exit.

CU: A jubilant and NOT SO BEAUTIFUL WOMAN dressed in meager  
 clothing. MUSIC and LAUGHTER fill our ears. A widening angle  
 finds her and her DANCE PARTNER, a male with similar  
 attributes, taking the dance floor.

The two dancers join others on a crowded floor. They engage in movement like a square-dance, a dance full of stomping and laughter.

Sweeping through the crowd we come to Shivalsa and Ralir's table.

Their weapons are tucked safely beneath the table.

There is a throw-knife visible just above the top rim of Ralir's boot.

Shivalsa, enjoying himself, holds a BEAUTIFUL PEASANT WOMAN on his lap. In his hand is a goblet which is larger than any other at the table and filled to the brim with the local brew.

He downs the brew, most of which lands on his uniform.

Ralir watches with wide eyes. He picks up his cup, looks at it, then looks at his father's cup with amazement.

RALIR

Hmm... That's the real thing...

Finishing his drink, Shivalsa slams his gigantic goblet onto the table.

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - STREET - NIGHT

Jasupha enters the village. His horse stops as he takes in his surroundings. His eyes rest on the Tavern.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN - NIGHT

The lady on Shivalsa's lap laughs and claps.

Shivalsa howls.

Ralir's eyes grow wider.

SHIVALSA

Didn't know your father knew how to party, did you?

Ralir laughs.

Shivalsa points to the empty cup. He belches.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

This here is nothing! The stuff in their cellar is pure heaven...just don't go drinking it too close to any fires!

Shivalisa laughs boisteroussly.

RALIR

I want one of those!

SHIVALISA

What?!

RALIR

I want one of those!

Shivalisa smiles.

SHIVALISA

What? The stuff in the cellar!

RALIR

Hell no! The brew!

Shivalisa laughs.

SHIVALISA

Think you can keep up?

The crowd becomes suddenly siilent. They part, allowing Maston to enter. He looks at Ralir and Shivalisa.

Jasupha slips in through the Tavern's door and heads for a table in the corner.

Ralir and Shivalisa's eyes turn toward Maston.

MASTON

Maston lifts his hood and remmoves his robe.

A barmaid takes them and disappears into the crowd.

Jasupha takes a seat at a table in a corner lit by candlelight. Near an open window the flame of the candle flickers in the night breeze. Sitting back, he fades into the shadows of the corner. He now turns his attention toward the three men and lifts his hood.

Maston smiles at the father-son duo.

Ralir looks him over, sizing him up. Beyond Maston's black leather outfit only his sword with its diamond-studded hilt draws Ralir's attention.

RALIR

I don't know you.

SHIVALSA

MASTON

My name is Maston. I'm fromm a  
place far beyond your shores.

RALIR

Then what brings you here tto  
this small village?

Maston sizes Ralir up.

MASTON

Actually, I'm here to visitt  
Mantra. Believe it or not,  
it's well-known far beyond  
your shores. Stories about it  
have reached almost mythic  
proportions.

RALIR

So you wanted to see it forr  
yourself?

Maston smiles and looks at Shhivalsa.

MASTON

Have I caught you at a bad time?

SHIVALSA

(semi-drunk)

Traveler... My name is  
Shivalsa and this is Ralir. As  
you can see, we're soldiers.  
We're trained to be suspicious  
of new faces...

MASTON

No offense taken...

RALIR

So you're headed to Mantra??

Maston returns his attention to Ralir.

MASTON

come to an end...

RALIR

So you're headed home?

MASTON

Forgive me, when I say heree I mean Mantra. I'm now on my way to Sibane.

SHIVALSA

Then you're headed toward tthe Potiethian desert. If you like you may join us. We too are going in that direction.

Maston's and Ralir's eyes meet. They stare each other down.

MASTON

No... It looks like you're a bit busy and I need to get on the road tonight. I think I'll grab a quick drink and start my journey. Maybe we'll meet later.

Maston smiles and nods to thee two warriors. He disappears into the crowd.

The Tavern returns to its merriment.

Shivalsa looks at Ralir.

SHIVALSA

A bit harsh, weren't you?

RALIR

seem right. Anyway, where were we?

Ralir smiles. He waves to a beautiful RED HAired MAIDEN at the bar.

Maston pauses at the Tavern door. He smiles and raises his hood. He continues out the door, disappearing into the night.

Ralir smiles brightly.

RALIR

Kathryn!!!

The Red Haired Maiden takes tthree goblets, each equal to Shivalsa's, and places them on a tray. Skillfully she lifts them and makes her way to their table.

Placing the goblets before Ralir she steps behind him and embraces him warmly. She whispers in his ear.

Ralir smiles, sits back and assumes an overly-masculine posture.

Shivalisa cocks an eyebrow..

The music suddenly stops and all eyes are on Ralir.

SHIVALISA

Let's see what you got...

Shivalisa looks into the eyes of the woman on his lap and smiles.

SHIVALISA (CONT'D)

Make that two!

The woman disappears for a short time and returns with three more goblets. After she sets the tray before Shivalisa she moves behind him and embraces him warmly. She whispers in his ear.

Shivalisa also smiles, sits back and assumes an overly-masculine posture.

WHISPERS are heard from the crowd. We center on an OLD WOMAN. Her eyes are wide.

OLD WOMAN

I have not seen the likes of  
this in all my years--I swear  
I haven't.

Ralir looks at the three goblets and takes a deep breath.

SHIVALISA

Study long... study wrong....

Ralir winks at Shivalisa.

The crowd begins to chant loudly "HILT UP!" They then begin to stomp and clap in unison.

Ralir and Shivalisa take hold of their respective goblets. They stare each other down and then begin drinking.

The crowd goes wild.

Shivalisa finishes first with another howl and slams his goblet down.

Ralir follows close behind. He too slams his goblet down.

RALIR

NUMBER ONE DOWN!!

Each grabs their next goblet and immediately begins to drink.

The crowd cheers.

Shivalisa shifts forward into the candlelight. His face, horribly scarred, twitches with concern. He waves a hand before the candle. Its flame turns into figures. The figures become Ralir, Shivalisa and the two women.

JASUPHA

No...

Through the flame we center on the the Red Haired Maiden. For a short moment her eyes glow a burning white.

We center on Ralir and Shivalisa. Ralir finishes his second goblet before Shivalisa finishes his and slams it down on the table.

RALIR

What now, Old Man?

Shivalisa slams his goblet down an instant after Ralir.

SHIVALISA

Pup, that's my third, remember!

(he belches loudly)

Let's finish this!!

Shivalisa's eyes are glassy. Obviously drunk, he grabs his final goblet of brew and begins to drink.

Ralir grabs for his goblet but is stopped by the Red Haired Maiden.

Stepping to his side, she places a hand on his goblet-bearing hand. Removing the goblet from his hand, she sits on his lap. Their eyes meet.

Ralir tries his best to whisper above the commotion of the crowd.

RALIR

He doesn't know yet, Kat. I'm going to tell him tonight.

The Red Haired Maiden smiles but remains silent.

Jasupha now tries to make his way through the jubilant crowd. Frustrated, he returns to his seat. He calms himself. Reaching for the candle, he centers it in front of himself. He looks deep into its flame and begins to meditate. He mutters an incantation.

Shivalisa, not halfway through his goblet of brew, is having trouble getting it down. He bangs on the table with his free hand.

The crowd continues to chaant "HILT UP!"

Across the table we see the Red Haired Lady move to kiss Ralir on the lips.

RALIR

Kat?

Looking into her eyes, Ralir is mesmerized.

She embraces him tightly as they kiss.

Ralir passes out.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

The Tavern quiet, Ralir wakes to find himself alone.

RALIR

everybody??

Ralir stands and walks to thee bar. He looks behind the bar.

A STIFF WIND fills the Tavern.

Ralir turns to find a Hooded Man Dressed in White, last seen at the volcano, seated at the table where he and his father sat.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Who are you?

The Hooded Man remains silentt.

Ralir approaches him.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Sir?

The Hooded Man continues to rremain silent.

A perplexed look crosses Ralir's face. He stops momentarily. He takes a step forward toward the Hooded Man but hears a SNARL beside him. He stops and looks down to find a WHITE WOLF by his side facing the Hooded Figure.

RALIR (CONT'D)

The White Wolf takes a protecctive position between Ralir and the Hooded Man.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

You were warned...

The Hooded Man waves a hand toward the wolf. A more violent wind erupts within the Tavern. The wolf fades away and the Tavern dims to a pitch black.

A bright green fluorescent light appears around Ralir. Looking around, he finds himself in a dark void.

RALIR (CONT'D)

What is this place??

The Red Haired Maiden appears before him in a shower of bright light

RALIR (CONT'D)

Kat?

THE RED HAired MAIDEN

Ralir...

RALIR

What's wrong?

The Hooded Man appears behind her. He grabs her and places a DIAMOND BLADE against her neck.

Ralir tries to move but can't.

RALIR

NO!!

THE HOODED FIGURE

(his voice is shadowy and ancient)

Young Nomrai...

RALIR

NO!!!

Anger on his face, Ralir's eyes flare.

THE HOODED FIGURE

No, you are no...you are noo Nomrai...

RALIR

Leave her alone!

Ralir struggles against his invisible restraints.

THE HOODED FIGURE

woman...your own wife...

RALIR

How do you know...? Who aree  
you!? LET HER GO!!!

THE HOODED FIGURE

You can't save her or anyone  
else you love from me... Not  
without their teachings...

Kathryn wears a blank stare oon her face. Her eyes are fixed  
on Ralir.

RALIR

Who...what?!

THE HOODED FIGURE

The Twelve, Child...only ththey  
can teach you what you need to  
know, to save those you  
love...to save you from the  
pain I bring...

RALIR

Pain?!

THE HOODED FIGURE

Yes...pain...

The Hooded Figure takes the bblade and slashes the neck of  
The Red Haired Maiden. He lets her fall. She fades away into  
the void.

RALIR

NO!!!

Ralir falls to his knees.

RALIR (CONT'D)

KAT!!

THE HOODED FIGURE

The Twelve...

The Hooded Figure slowly fadees away into the void.

Ralir, on his knees, cries.

RALIR

I'll kill him... I'LL KILL HIM!!

A moment passes. Ralir standss. He hears the faint sound of a  
WOLF SNARLING in the void.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Ralir, searches the void. He finds only darkness.

The sound comes closer. It is the sound of a Great Beast.

The anxiety growing in Ralir, he reaches for his sword but it's not there. A BRIGHT FLAME appears at some distance in the void.

The Bright Flame: It is a GREAT WOLF made of fire.

Ralir stands. The voice of the Hooded Figure echoes in his head.

HOODED FIGURE

(VO)

You are no Nomrai...You are noo  
Nomrai...

Determination on his face, Raalir abandons all thought of flight. He grits his teeth and stands ready to fight. His eyes follow the Great Beast.

The Beast, only yards from Ralir, pounces.

Ralir does not close his eyes. He stares down the Beast and swings with a clinched fist.

RALIR

I AM NOMRAI!!!

An instant before the Beast llands on Ralir, the White Wolf leaps into view. It intercepts the Flaming Beast in mid-flight.

The Great Beast disappears and its flames dissipate as the White Wolf lands in front of Ralir.

Ralir looks closer at the wolf.

RALIR (CONT'D)

What are you?

The White Wolf faces Ralir. IIt SNARLS.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Thank you, whatever you aree,  
White Friend.

Ralir reaches out to White Woolf.

The White Wolf strikes at Ralir and catches him by the neck.

Ralir's eyes open wide.

END DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN - NIGHT

Ralir wakes to the face of a drunken Shivalisa.

Shivalisa burps.

SHIVALISA

Sorry, Son-I need to work oon  
that...

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - SURROUNDDING WOODS - NIGHT

A black mist bubbles from the ground. It moves with a life  
of its own along the ground.

It enters Arbor Village and moves toward the Tavern.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN - NIGHT

Ralir, on the floor, looks Shivalisa in the eyes.

RALIR

I can't move...

Jasupha wakes from his meditaation to find a quiet tavern. He  
waves his hands before the candle's flames. He is shown a  
vision of Ralir on the floor and Shivalisa kneeling over him.

JASUPHA

Seeing, Jasupha's eyes grow wwide.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

No...no...

Jasupha, quickly turns to thee window. A look of fear crosses  
his face.

JASUPHA (CONT'D)

He comes...

Angle on Ralir, still on flooor.

RALIR

Ralir's eyes turn to the Crowwd. His eyes grow wide.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Father...

From Ralir's POV, Shivalasa looks down on him with a concerned but drunken look. Behind Shivalasa stands the Crowd.

CROWD: With their eyes glowing and skin darkened, they appear zombie-like.

Shivalasa burps.

SHIVALSA

What, boy?

The Crowd attacks the two on the floor.

A burst of light appears above the floor of the Tavern. The Crowd, frightened, scatters and exits through the Tavern's door and windows.

A stunned Shivalasa seizes the moment and dives for the weapons beneath the table. Standing, he turns the large table on its side. He returns to Ralir, taking a protective posture above him. He holds one of his swords at the ready, the rest in his other hand.

Jasupha joins them.

Shivalasa looks at Jasupha with surprise.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Jasupha?

Jasupha remains silent. He kneels beside Ralir and mutters an incantation as he presses his hand on Ralir's forehead and chest.

Ralir's hands twitch.

JASUPHA

Rise, lad...

They stand.

Ralir studies Jasupha's face.

RALIR

Jasupha, are you all right??  
What happened?

Jasupha looks into Ralir's eyes and smiles.

JASUPHA

Just looking after a good  
friend...and trying to make up  
for past mistakes...

Shivalsa tosses Ralir his sword and sheath.

Father and son belt on their weapons and sheaths.

RALIR

Along the path I knew we weere  
being followed. It was you  
that I felt...  
(he looks down  
toward the floor in thought)

JASUPHA

No time...come...

A black mist bubbles up between the floorboards of the Tavern.

The floorboards SHAKE violently beneath their feet.

Jasupha is thrown to the floor. He lands flat on his back  
and is knocked unconscious.

More black mist rises from between the wooden slats in a  
distant corner. The mist moves across the floor toward Jasupha.

Ralir sees it coming and motions for Shivalsa to look.

RALIR

Father!

Ralir and Shivalsa move to giive aid to Jasupha.

The floorboards EXPLODE into splinters between Jasupha and  
his would-be saviors.

A stake-like splinter of wood flies through the air; it is a  
foot long from end to end and about an inch in diameter. The  
black mist covers it for an instant. When it appears again  
the tip of the wooden stake turns black just before impaling  
Shivalsa through the shoulder.

Shivalsa yells in pain. He grabs for his shoulder.

A SECOND EXPLOSION sends Shivalsa and Ralir flying hard into  
the Tavern's bar.

The blown-out floorboards reveal the Tavern's basement which  
is filled with barrels of liquor and brew.

The black mist transforms into a snake. It slithers closer  
to Jasupha.

Shivalisa, holding his shoulder, stands slowly. With his fingers circling the wooden stake in his shoulder, he grunts in pain.

SHIVALISA

Thank the Light for brew.

He rips the wooden stake out of his shoulder and falls to one knee. He cries out in pain.

Ralir stands and takes in the situation:

- 1) Looking up at the ceiling, a lantern sways back and forth over the open hole which had been the floorboard above the basement; the lantern is about to give way;
- 2) Looking into the basement, he watches as the barrels of liquor burst; their contents spray throughout the basement.
- 3) The snake moves closer to the unconscious Jasupha.

RALIR

What is doing this?

The lantern falls from the ceiling and into the hole above the basement.

Ralir's eyes grow wide. He turns his attention towards Jasupha and the snake. He backs up into the bar and makes a running leap over the hole in the floor.

The lantern ignites the liquor in the basement, causing flames to spew from the hole.

In mid-flight Ralir is momentarily engulfed by the flames but makes it through safely. He lands close in front of Jasupha and rolls to his feet. He instantly draws his sword to confront the snake.

The snake backs away to size up Ralir.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Ralir, Jasupha, and the snake are surrounded by flames.

The snake strikes repeatedly at Ralir, who prevents it from getting through to Jasupha.

With Ralir's attention on the snake in front of him, he doesn't notice a black mist forming at the hole above the basement.

The newly-formed black misst turns into a SECOND SNAKE. This snake now slithers unimpeded to Jasupha. It rears up to Jasupha's neck.

Jasupha's eyes open wide. Face to face with the second snake he begins an incantation but is suddenly stopped short.

The second snake strikes him in the throat.

Ralir slashes at the first snake. It disappears before him.

A FLAMING OVERHEAD-BEAM falls, STRIKING the floor in front of Ralir.

Ralir protects his face from the flames and flying cinders with his hand. He turns his attention to Jasupha just as the snake withdraws from its attack.

RALIR (CONT'D)

NO!!

The second snake turns towardd Ralir. It hisses and fades away.

Ralir runs to Jasupha's side. Kneeling beside him, Ralir looks deep into the eyes of his old mentor.

Flames are growing higher everywhere as DEBRIS falls about them from the ceiling.

RALIR (CONT'D)

NO!!

JASUPHA

Don't...worry about me, Ralir..  
I've lived a long, long...life.

RALIR

Master...

JASUPHA

No, child... I was never your  
master. Just someone to help  
you...help you along your way.  
The time spent with you was  
worth the price...

RALIR

Master...

JASUPHA  
 Go...go before we both go uup  
 in flames. Always  
 remember...who you are as a  
 man...defines the man...

Ralir looks around.

RALIR  
 Go where?

Ralir looks into Jasupha's eeyes but finds a vacant stare in return.

SHIVALSA  
 (VO)  
 RALIR!!

RALIR  
 Rest well, Master.

SHIVALSA  
 (VO)  
 RALIR!!

Ralir looks into the flames ffor Shivalsa..

RALIR  
 Where are you?!

Suddenly a window and a good portion of the Tavern's wall is torn down before Ralir.

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN ALLEY - NIGHT

Shivalsa, with the robes about his shoulder drenched in blood, sits hunched-over on his horse. Ralir's horse stands beside him.

A rope is tied to the saddle pommels of both horses, the ends of which are tied to the debris from the Tavern's wall.

Shivalsa, weak from loss of blood and still somewhat intoxicated, struggles to free the two ropes.

Flames roar from the hole in the Tavern's wall.

Suddenly Ralir jumps free of the fiery tomb.

Shivalsa searches the night sky.

SHIVALSA

Hurry, boy...they're comingg!  
 (beneath his breath)  
 Where is that bird?  
 (calling out)  
 Shimacon!!

Rolling to his feet, Ralir mounts his horse. Drawing his sword he cuts the ropes free of the saddles, then takes a final look back.

Father and son gallop into the village road. They are immediately met by the zombie-like citizens of the village.

The Crowd of zombies grab at the two riders and the bridles of their horses.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

They're everywhere!

RALIR

This way!

Kicking free, Ralir and Shivaalsa gallop down the village street toward the exit. A wall of villagers confront them.

Though they attempt to turn their horses they find themselves surrounded.

In a panic, their horses rear up. The two warriors fall from their steeds.

Jumping back to their feet they fight their way through the Crowd, up a few stairs and into a nearby house which is on a platform three feet off the ground.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - NIGHT

HOUSE: Small, quaint, one bedroom in the back, no back door, a window facing the street.

Ralir and Shivalsa dive into the house.

Ralir, rising first, attempts to close the door which is being held open by the Villagers.

Shivalsa comes to his feet slowly and aids Ralir; they shut the door and bolt it with an inside latch.

Ralir runs to the window and peers out.

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - NIGHT

Ralir and Shivalisa's horses struggle to get past the Crowd of zombies. The horses are not attacked by the villagers and move slowly toward the village entrance.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - NIGHT

Shivalisa moves to Ralir's side. Looking outside, he smiles.

SHIVALISA

I guess they don't like horse  
meat.

Ralir smiles.

Shivalisa pats him on the back.

RALIR

What do you think?

Shivalisa moves for the Back Room. He looks around.

BACK ROOM: small room, small bed in a corner, single window facing an open field.

Ralir runs to the window. He breaks it and peers out the opening in the shattered glass.

Shivalisa, entering, closes the door behind him.

RALIR

Here...I'll let you down!

They hear the sound of the WINDOW BREAKING.

RALIR

They're in...come on!

Shivalisa looks at the window..

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Shivalisa, drunk and injured, struggles out of the window holding onto Ralir's hand. Ralir lowers him slowly toward the ground.

RALIR

By the Light, how much do you  
weigh?

Shivalisa laughs.

SHIVALSA

It's brew weight, son...a ffew  
minutes out back...a good  
tree...presto!...lighter than  
a feather.

Shivalsa's hand slips. He fallls to the ground. He grunts in  
pain.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

The villagers break into the room.

Ralir dives through the window.

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Ralir rolls to his feet and motions for Shivalsa to follow.

RALIR

This way!

Shivalsa stands slowly and foollows.

Running behind several houses they head toward the village  
entrance.

Shivalsa stops.

Ralir also stops running and goes back to aid Shivalsa.

RALIR (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Shivalsa's hand searches for Ralir's shoulder.

Ralir grabs his arm.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Shivalsa shudders and sweats profusely.

RALIR (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Shivalsa throws up.

SHIVALSA

Yeah...just fine now... Diddn't  
know your father knew how to  
party, did you?

They both chuckle.

Ralir looks around for any of the possessed Villagers.

RALIR  
Come, Father...

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN -- STREET - NIGHT

Ralir and Shivalisa enter the main village street from between two houses--a mob of Villagers is close behind them. The Tavern, ablaze, is just in front of them.

SHIVALISA  
We're right back where we sstarted!

RALIR  
Trust me!

Suddenly the horses break freee of the Crowd of villagers and head their way.

Ralir and Shivalisa step in front of their horses.

Agitated, the horses whinny and rear up.

Shivalisa and Ralir, taking the horses by the reins, calm them and then mount their steeds.

SHIVALISA  
Very good, Son!

The Villagers notice that thee duo has slipped by them and give chase.

RALIR  
Here they come!

SHIVALISA  
Follow me!

Ralir and Shivalisa gallop bacck into the ally, pass the flames and into a small field behind the Tavern. They stop momentarily to survey the situation.

From Ralir's POV:

- 1) The burning Tavern behind them.
- 2) Villagers approach from the left.
- 3) Villagers, zombies on fire, emerge from the alley behind them.

- 4) Villagers approach from the right.  
 5) A cornfield of dry stalks is ahead of them.

SHIVALSA

If we go through the cornfield  
 we only need to make it to  
 lake...then make a left and  
 follow the path to the bridge  
 leading out of here.

RALIR

Let's do it!

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Ralir and Shivalsa enter the cornfield with Ralir in the lead. They are followed by the Crowd of zombies.

Ralir, looking back, sees the corn burning. He sees this happening as the burning Villager zombies enter the field.

RALIR

What's going on?!

SHIVALSA

I've never seen  
 anything...anything EVER like  
 this!

A full moon shines down as the two riders tear through the field of corn on horseback.

After a moment they come to a clearing in the corn which is revealed to be a large crop circle.

Expressions of horror appear on the faces of Ralir and Shivalsa.

We slowly see what they see--there are HUNDREDS OF BODIES lying in the cornfield.

SHIVALSA

The people of the village...

Ralir's eyes find a body tied to scarecrows' pedestal in the middle of the field.

RALIR

No...

Ralir gallops through the bodies to the center of the field. He dismounts and kneels before the scare crows' pedestal.

RALIR (CONT'D)

NO!!!

Shivalsa, on horseback, joins him. He looks first at the hurt on Ralir's face and then at the body draped on the scare crows' pedestal.

SHIVALSA

Who was she?

We slowly see that the body on the scare crows' pedestal is Kathryn.

RALIR

(in tears)

to tell you tonight...I wanted  
you...you to meet her...

Shivalsa looks back to find not the zombie-like Villagers but a hundred foot wall of fire approaching. He turns his attention back to Ralir.

SHIVALSA

Ralir...I...

Ralir stands. His eyes hold steady on Kathryn.

Shivalsa's eyes return to the approaching wall of fire and back to the grieving Ralir.

SHIVALSA

We must go...NOW.

RALIR

Kathryn...

SHIVALSA

Ralir, snap out of it!

RALIR

(beneath his breath)  
I'm no Nomrai...

SHIVALSA

Snap out of it, boy!!

Ralir looks up at Shivalsa and then at the approaching wall of fire.

The glow of the huge fire reflects off their faces.

Ralir mounts his horse and the two of them gallop into the corn.

EXT. ARBOR VILLAGE - OUTSKIRTS - BRIDGE - NIGHT - LATER

Ralir and Shivalisa gallop across the bridge and into the Potiethian Woods.

The entire Arbor Village and surrounding area are ablaze.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - SMALL CLEARING - NIGHT

It is in the early hours of the morning. The two warriors have been riding for the better part of the night. Arriving at a small clearing, Ralir dismounts first and gives aid to Shivalisa as he dismounts.

SMALL CLEARING: Near the path, the clearing is surrounded by trees and shrubbery. In its grassless center two downed trees lie adjacent to each other.

Ralir and Shivalisa stand in the middle of this potential campground.

SHIVALISA

(wearily)

What do you think?

RALIR

It's as good of place as anny,  
Father.

Shivalisa smiles.

SHIVALISA

We see the two put up camp annd settle down for the evening.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - SMALL CLEARING - NIGHT- LATER

Ralir and Shivalisa sit before a small campfire finishing a small meal. Their weapons are noticeably within arms reach.

Closer angle on Ralir. Sitting on a log he eats the last morsel of his meal with all due attention on the last bite.

Shivalisa rests beneath a number of animal skin blankets with his back to the adjacent log. He looks deep into the flames of the campfire. His face is pale.

A fresh white bandage is seen covering his shoulder wound.

Ralir finishes the last of his food. He looks up to see how his father is faring.

Shivalsa, staring blankly into the fire, hasn't touched his food.

Ralir smiles and, picking up a small stick, tosses it at Shivalsa's feet.

RALIR

It can't be that bad. How is your shoulder?

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

I've never felt anything like it... You know in all the ruckus I never asked you about yours.

RALIR

I can't explain, even with all the strange things happening... it's almost healed.

Shivalsa nods.

SHIVALSA

THAT'S GOOD. TONIGHT YOU'LL LEARN WHY...

Ralir looks at Shivalsa, his face an open question.

Shivalsa turns his eyes to the flame of the campfire.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Ralir, I'm sorry about your wife. I'm sure she was a great woman. As for Jasupha, I know he was a great man who loved you.

Ralir nods.

RALIR

Thank you...

SHIVALSA

And no, it's not that. Your cooking is pretty good. As for my shoulder... I'm better thanks to my young doctor.

Ralir smiles.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Tell me, Son, what do you know  
about the Twelve?

RALIR

Come, please eat.

Shivalsa looks deeply into Raalir's eyes.

SHIVALSA

Please?

Ralir nods.

RALIR

Only what the palace Orator  
has told me in stories and  
fables...

SHIVALSA

And that is?

RALIR

That they are twelve ancient  
men of unimaginable fighting  
skill and power, the greatest  
warriors Potieth has ever known.

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

Go on...

RALIR

They grew tired of the world  
around them and retreated to  
the Fire Ring. Now they train  
only the best warriors in all  
Potieth.

SHIVALSA

Just as I thought, nothing....

A sudden look of confusion crosses Ralir's face.

Finding it hard to speak, Shivalsa's eyes retreat to the  
flames of the fire.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

soldier's duty?  
(he winces)

RALIR

Father?

SHIVALSA

I'm fine.

Shivalsa, agitated, regains his composure, then again winces in pain.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Forgive me, do you remember?

RALIR

Yes. It's the most important thing in a warrior's life.

Shivalsa sighs.

SHIVALSA

Yes... You love children, don't you?

RALIR

I guess so...I don't understand...

SHIVALSA

What I mean is... seeing you back there playing with those children, they really seemed to love you and you them... I'm sorry I never gave you a brother.

Ralir shrugs.

RALIR

I never thought anything of it, Father.

SHIVALSA

Sure you thought of it. You were always alone... But I couldn't say anything.

It's time you understand why.. Let me tell a tale that only a Nomrai can tell.

Ralir sits forward as if readying himself for the words of the Orator himself.

Shivalsa's face: As the light from the flames dance upon it, sweat, tension and concern are all reflected.

SHIVALSA

Ralir, you'll learn later in life that sometimes the truism about stories echoing life are more than just clichés. The story of the Twelve is just that. It's a story made of truth. Over time it has become a myth. The myth is its truth.

RALIR

I understand...

Shivalsa turns to Ralir with questioning eyes.

SHIVALSA

Do you? Ralir, you can take my place. But first you must be told the truth of the Twelve and the pact of blood that binds our family

RALIR

Pact?

SHIVALSA

Yes Ralir, a pact and a curse.

Ralir looks on with questioning eyes.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

What you have learned about the Twelve is correct in one respect. They are twelve warriors of incredible skill. However, they are not men; they are women.

RALIR

Women?

Shivalsa, nods.

SHIVALSA

Thousands of years ago they were an ancient emperors spoils spoils of war. Unable to bare the emperor male children they were forced to flee of face death.

Ralir, cocks an eyebrow.

RALIR

SHIVALSA

general, our ancestor, they  
escaped into the night with  
their mothers.

RALIR

And the Emperor?

SHIVALSA

On his death bed he orderedd  
all of their deaths. His guard  
tracked them for years. One  
day they caught up with them,  
their daughters and some of  
their suitors who had began  
training them.

Ralir, shakes his head.

RALIR

SHIVALSA

Yes... and when all was donne  
the twelve stood in crimson  
water colored with the blood  
of all they loved.

Ralir winces.

Shivalsa sighs.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

They tried to kill themselvves  
by swimming out to sea.  
Instead they they woke on the  
shores of Potieth.

Ralir shrugs.

RALIR

Then how did they get to thhe  
Fire Ring.

SHIVALSA

They wondered inland and was swallowed by a great quake and found themselves trapped in an underground cavern. They lived in that cavern for thousand of years, living off a green liquid which gave them their long life, strength and power

RALIR

You're right, I never heard that version before.

SHIVALSA

They trained in the arts of war until they were freed by another quake. Soon after that own Rahkhan would cross their paths.

Ralir's eyes grow wide with realization.

RALIR

He was the first?

SHIVALSA

Yes, he and a Sibanian Scout. They had confronted each other in the Fire Ring and were badly injured in a quake. Artati came across them and would have killed them...

Ralir smiles.

RALIR

Our family looks saved him..

SHIVALSA

young general in him. and took them both before the twelve where they were presented a pact.

They hear the SNAPPING OF A TWIG.

Ralir immediately picks up his sword and rises to his feet.

Shivalsa, trying to join him, attempts to lift himself from the ground but falls back helplessly.

SHIVALSA

Sorry, Ralir.

RALIR

there. You're too weak.

Shivalisa lies back.

SHIVALISA

Is it the Villagers?

RALIR

I doubt it. They would've bbeen  
on us by now... You rest, I'll  
look into it.

Ralir moves to the perimeter of the clearing and circles it. He searches the darkness of the woods for the intruder.

Shivalisa: His bandage turns red with blood. He passes out.

Meanwhile Ralir moves slowly about the perimeter of the clearing.

The Campfire: A bright-green-florescent orb is tossed from the shadows. In a high arc it lands in the fire. Suddenly the clearing is engulfed in an EXPLOSION OF BRIGHT LIGHT.

His training paying off, a blinded Ralir crouches low to the ground awaiting an attack. His sword is held up in an defensive position. His free hand shields his eyes from the intense light.

The attack comes in the form of three ASSASSINS #1-3.

The Assassins: Between 5'8" and 5'11" with lean muscular builds. They are obviously women and dressed in ninja-like robes. The eye slits of their masks are covered by black goggle-like speckles so that their faces are completely hidden. They wield diamond swords.

They pounce on Ralir. He instinctively rolls clear of the initial attack.

Ralir comes to his feet in time to meet a barrage of attacks. His skill with a sword is clearly extraordinary.

They go back and forth in the center of the clearing near the campfire.

Ralir glances toward Shivalisa, who is unconscious. Ralir sees the blood seeping through Shivalisa's once-white bandage.

RALIR

Father!

His new sense of urgency mmakes him reckless in his defense against the Assassins. Parrying their slashes with his sword, he starts to take blows to his face and kicks to his chest and back.

Directly opposite of Shivalsa's position, on the far side of the campfire, Ralir regains his composure. Anger fills his eyes; they FLASH a florescent green. He parries the slash of Assassin #1 on his right and simultaneously delivers a powerful kick to the chest of Assassin #2 on his left.

Assassin #2 flies out of the clearing.

Assassin #3, in front of Ralir, thrusts her sword at him.

Ralir sidesteps her and switches his sword to his right hand. With his left hand he grabs her by the wrist of her sword-wielding hand. He rolls across her back and delivers a hatchet kick across the neck of Assassin #1.

Assassin #1 takes the hatchet kick easily and begins to square off with Ralir.

Immediately Ralir follows up with a dropkick to the chest of Assassin #1.

Assassin #1 flies out the clearing.

Assassin #3 nods and takes a step back, allowing Ralir to come to his feet.

Ralir switches his sword back to his left hand and charges her.

In a move of impeccable skill Assassin #3 stabs her sword into the ground, traps Ralir's arms with her hands, disarms him and delivers an uppercut that sends him through the campfire and onto the sleeping Shivalsa's chest.

Assassin #3 leaps over the campfire.

Ralir is stunned.

RALIR

I've never seen a move likee...

Assassin #3 lands with her knnee on his chest.

Ralir coughs upon impact.

The other two assassins join her side.

Ralir, snapping out of his daze, can only watch as all three Assassins raise their swords for the deathblow.

The campsite is engulfed in another bright FLASH of light.

Maston rides into the campsite atop an almond-crimson steed. He draws his sword from its sheath and dismounts.

The Assassins jump back at the sight of Maston. Separated from him by the campfire, the three assume a ready posture.

MASTON

Come, Ralir! We can do this together!

Ralir rolls to his feet and dives over the campfire for his sword. Retrieving it, he stands ready with Maston. A moment passes before they charge the Assassins.

Back and forth they go.

As a team Ralir and Maston strike at the Assassins, landing punches and kicks. They back the Assassins to the edge of the camp.

With a high flip, the Assassins retreat a few feet from Ralir and Maston. Landing with their swords at the ready, Assassins #1 and #2 stand to the right and left of Assassin #3.

Ralir and Maston, winded, do not press the attack.

Assassins #1 and #2 move to finish them but Assassin #3, her arms outstretched, signals for them to stop.

Assassin #1 and #2 sheath their swords and back into the Night shadows.

Assassin #3 follows the others into the darkness.

MASTON

They won't be back...at least not for awhile...

Ralir runs to his horse and takes a bottle and some cloths from a bag hanging from the saddle. He races back to Shivalisa's side where he removes the previous bandage from his father's shoulder. He studies the wound.

RALIR

(beneath his breath)  
It's infected...

Ralir pours the contents of the bottle onto Shivalisa's wound and cleans it with the cloth.

Maston watches on.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - SMALL CLEARING - NIGHT - LATER

A few hours have passed.

Ralir rests beside Shivalsa in silence. His eyes are fixed on the campfire.

Maston sits with his back against the adjacent log. He pretends to write in a journal.

RALIR  
(beneath his breath)  
Thank you...

Maston's eyes rise from the pages of his journal. He looks at Ralir.

Ralir's eyes are still fixed on the campfire.

MASTON  
I'm sorry, friend?

RALIR  
I was just saying thank you.

Maston smiles.

MASTON  
It was nothing. I was actually about an hour ahead of you. I saw the flames of the village on the horizon and started back. Then I ran into some trouble of my own...

RALIR  
You too?

MASTON  
Yes, a band of thieves...twelve of them. It took me some time but I fought them off. By the time I was done I figured there wasn't much I could do for the townspeople so I continued along my path... Before I got very far...BOOM!! The explosion from their powder stores brightened the sky so... I couldn't help but see it. Naturally, I headed your way.

RALIR

Thanks again.

Ralir looks Maston in the eyes without mockery for the first time.

Maston nods.

Shivalisa starts to wake.

SHIVALISA

Ralir...

Ralir goes to him and kneels..

SHIVALISA (CONT'D)

Ralir...

RALIR

Yes...I'm here...

SHIVALISA

Maston's eyes grow wide. He sits forward.

MASTON

Ralir, he should really resist.

SHIVALISA

Who is that?

RALIR

It is Maston, the man from the Tavern.

SHIVALISA

strong arm on this journey...until I regain my strength. It definitely looks like it will take two to get through this one...

MASTON

SHIVALISA

(agitated)

the truth...about the pact.

Ralir motions for Maston to let it be.

Maston remains quiet.

RALIR

Tell me then if it will callm  
you...

SHIVALSA

Sit me up.

Shivalsa points to the campfire and smiles.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Maston, it is rare for an  
outsider to see this. You  
should feel honored...

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Where was I...

RALIR

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Yes...they were nursed backk to  
health and presented with a  
pact. The men would each be  
mated with one member of the  
Twelve at a time until one  
female child would be born.  
Upon the birth of their child  
they would be set free. Until  
that time, the Twelve would  
train the men in the various  
fighting techniques they had  
developed over the centuries.

Shivalsa erupts in a series oof coughs.

RALIR

You ok?

Shivalsa nods.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

The pact also had the  
agreement that on the  
sixteenth birthday of the two  
scout's firstborn son the  
scouts would return and  
present the son to the Twelve.

(MORE)

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Twelve with yet another female child each... Our family hasn't broken this cycle since the pact was made.

RALIR

It sounds simple. What about the other scout? Will I be meeting his...?

SHIVALSA

No, the scout died at the hands of Rahkahn... It was the turning point of the Thousand Year War...

RALIR

I remember now...Jasupha spoke of it...

A questioning look crosses Raalir's face.

RALIR

Should a child of the Twelvve be male?

We see a cold stare on Shivalisa's face. A bitter silence permeates the air. Only the CRACKLING of the campfire's flame is heard.

SHIVALSA

Ralir, drawing back sharply at the realization of the price, looks into Shivalisa's eyes with a shocked look.

Maston winces and rises to his feet. He retreats to his horse.

Shivalisa's eyes remain on Ralir.

RALIR

Father?

SHIVALSA

forgiven nor forgotten what the Emperor did to their children...their female children.

RALIR

What about the men who diedd helping them!

SHIVALSA

Ralir, certain thoughts give us strength. Revenge is one of the most powerful.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

They gave up certain memories to help them strengthen the one thought strong enough to get them through those many years of confinement in that cavern. Sometimes, you see, we remember only what we need in order to get through rough times in life.

RALIR

SO THAT'S THE PACT!!!

Ralir, standing, picks up his sword. He draws it from its sheath. He throws it into a nearby tree.

SHIVALSA

We as their father must lay them to rest upon the birth of the female child.

RALIR

Lay to rest! I will not kill my... I won't, Father!!!

Shivalsa rises with great effort. With a pleading posture he tries to calm Ralir.

Ralir, backing away, shakes his head no.

SHIVALSA

Ralir...

RALIR

No! No! What does duty have to do with me killing my own child, Father... WHAT!!! I can't... I won't!!!

SHIVALSA

could help end the war with what he would learn... and he was right.

(MORE)

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

this gift and curse that has ensured the peace in all of Potieth. Ralir, it is this peace that we as Raido Gemdo are sworn to uphold. It is our duty to our people and our king, no matter how great the sacrifice.

There is a deafening silence..

SHIVALSA  
I'm sorry, Ralir...

Ralir suddenly drops his headd as another realization hits him.

RALIR  
Father, did you?

SHIVALSA  
Ralir, duty is...

RALIR  
Duty, duty, duty... Is thatt what you tell yourself to make things right, FATHER!! Is this why you never had another child? Is this why I'm all... all alone...?

Shivalsa moves to embrace Rallir. He reaches out to him.

Ralir pushes away Shivalsa's hands.

Shivalsa stumbles backward.

SHIVALSA  
Ralir...

RALIR  
You took the life of your oown blood!

SHIVALSA  
Ralir...

RALIR  
Our blood... Father!

SHIVALSA  
Son...

RALIR  
 Our blood! I'm alone because  
 of YOU!!

We see Shivalisa grow tense with frustration and anger.

SHIVALISA  
 RALIR! BE STILL AND LISTEN!!!!

Ralir, suddenly quiet, backs up.

Maston, listening, stands by his horse pretending not to look. He smiles.

Shivalisa staggers toward Ralir.

SHIVALISA  
 life of any born Nomrai!

RALIR  
 So you never had a son before me!

SHIVALISA  
 I said be still and listen!!  
 Ralir, sit down!

With the fire between them, we see the glare of Ralir meet the glare of Shivalisa. The tension is powerful in the short moment of silence that follows.

Shivalisa, calming himself, sits down and gestures for Ralir to do the same.

SHIVALISA  
 Son, please?

Ralir reluctantly sits in silence. His anger and disappointment in his father are seen on his face and in his posture.

Shivalisa studies Ralir and then moves closer to him. He sits beside him.

Their eyes find comfort in the earth before them.

SHIVALISA  
 Son, as you are now... I was  
 angry with my father when he  
 told me the truth of our  
 family and the Twelve. Like  
 you I was ready to rebel. I  
 didn't want any part of it.  
 (MORE)

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

My Father said to me, "Duty is duty. Our family loss, though great, is still a small price to pay for the ensured safety of the people of Mantra... of Potieth. This is our sworn duty and we must do all we can to ensure that we never fall short." At that time I agreed with him.

The smile on Maston's face disappears.

RALIR

Did you take the life of our blood... a brother I never got a chance to know?

SHIVALSA

have to...

Turning their heads to face each other, their eyes meet.

SHIVALSA

All that I've told you about your mother was a lie. Your mother's alive and well...

We see a look of surprise on Ralir's face.

SHIVALSA

... Yes, Ralir, she's alive. Her name is Shir'Ali Sonrai. She is one of the Twelve. That's where your unusual strength and powerful abilities come from.

RALIR

Mother...

SHIVALSA

You also have a twin sister, Eftekhari.

We see mixed tears of joy, anger and confusion on Ralir's face.

RALIR

Father?

Shivalsa places a hand on Ralir's shoulder.

SHIVALSA

The truth is we were lucky.. Of all the Nomrai generations to pass their way, I was the first to produce twins. If it hadn't been for that fortunate happenstance your protection would've been out of my hands... I would have done my duty.

Ralir, looking into Shivalsa's eyes, shakes his head.

Shivalsa, seeing Ralir's eyes begin to tear, removes his hand. He looks into the flames of the campfire.

Ralir does the same.

RALIR

I don't understand any of tthis.

SHIVALSA

Ring, it was Shir'Ali with whom I was paired. We spent ten years together before you two were born. On that day we knew only one thing, you both would live. If it had been only you, I would've been paired with another and another of the Twelve until a female child was born and, upon her birth...

RALIR

I'd... I'd die at your handds?

Shivalsa nods.

SHIVALSA

Yes, at my hands... But there are those among the Twelve who don't agree with the majority. So, when there is any way to save a child's life, they seize the chance.

RALIR

But Father, if you're saying the Twelve are against this, then why... ?

Ralir turns to Shivalsa.

Shivalisa maintains focus on the campfire's flame.

SHIVALISA

Then why the deaths? Strangely  
enough, it is Artati who  
enforces the price of the pact.  
She has come to hate men with  
a passion I don't understand.

Shivalisa thoughtfully picks up a twig from the ground. His  
face is ghostly pale. He tosses the twig into the fire.

RALIR

But she is only one.

SHIVALISA

Artati has great influence on  
the others. She was first  
wife to the Emperor...  
Shir'Ali was second. Those two  
are the leaders of the Twelve.

RALIR

She's my mother...why doesn't  
she help?

SHIVALISA

Shir'Ali and I shared during  
those ten years may have  
weakened her influence. Women  
tend to harbor much jealousy.

Ralir arches an eyebrow in agreement.

RALIR

I wonder if she thinks about me?

Shivalisa searches the night sky.

SHIVALISA

Of course she does... Shimaacon  
was one of her most trusted  
friends. That hawk was given  
to me as sort of a nanny for  
you. It is she who has kept  
you safe in my absence. When  
Shimaacon feels you have  
attained the wisdom to care  
for yourself, she will return  
to Shir'Ali. I hope that  
explains her absence now.

RALIR

Why did you wait so long too  
tell me this?

Shivalsa faces Ralir.

SHIVALSA

I never wanted this for youu.  
If it weren't for this  
illness... I'm dying, Ralir...  
I'm dying. I thought that if I  
could hold on you'd eventually  
be too old and this would all  
pass you by.

Shivalsa bows his head in dissgust.

Ralir, turns toward the fire. He is silent for a long moment.

RALIR

I could never do it. I willl  
destroy anyone who tries to  
make me take the life of my own.

Shivalsa turns to Ralir, studding him, as his son's eyes  
look deep within the flames of the campfire. For a long  
moment he marvels at the maturity and devotion to family  
Ralir possesses. He takes RALIR by the shoulders. They stand  
face to face.

SHIVALSA

Look at me, Son... look at me!  
(he turns to Maston)  
Maston, a moment, please?

Maston frowns and starts walkking off.

MASTON

I think I'll go for a walk!!

SHIVALSA

Thank you...

Ralir looks up into Shivalsa''s eyes. His eyes are defiant.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Son, whatever you choose too do  
I will never think less of you.  
You are my only son.

RALIR

I won't kill my child!

Shivalsa nods.

SHIVALSA

We all do what we must. Youu  
are no different.

RALIR

Then what would you have mee do?  
What of my duty to our king?

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

When the time comes I'm surre  
you'll do what you feel is  
right. Even if you choose not  
to continue on beyond the  
desert border...

(sharply)

Duty or not...

RALIR

Is this a test?

Shivalsa smiles.

SHIVALSA

In many ways I suppose it  
is...regardless of your  
decision you will always be a  
Nomrai... perhaps the greatest  
of us all. I give you until we  
reach the desert border on the  
far side of Shumain to make  
your decision.

RALIR

I don't deserve to be Nomraai...

Embracing Ralir, Shivalsa patts him on the back.

Over Ralir's shoulder, we see Shivalsa's eyes; he remembers  
a moment in time when it was he in his father's arms. He smiles.

SHIVALSA

We all do what we must... wwe  
all do what we must.

Shivalsa gives Ralir a final pat on his back.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Come, I'm about to pass outt  
and Maston should be back soon.  
Help me to lie down.

Parting, Ralir helps Shivalsa lie down and checks his bandage.

Maston watches from the woods. His eyes flare. The voice of the Hooded Figure Dressed In White calls to him.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

(VO)

Patience...

MASTON

After that he'll never  
continue on to the Twelve. If  
that doesn't happen...

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

Calm yourself...I have  
prepared the road ahead. The  
city of Shumain will provide  
you all the time you need to  
persuade Ralir. When you reach  
the desert's border he will  
continue on...

MASTON

As you wish...

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - OPEN FIELD - NOON

The noon sun is burning down on two riders. Ralir and Shivalisa, dressed in fresh uniforms, ride East toward Shumain.

Maston, joining the duo, rides on the far side of Ralir.

In the distance dark clouds approach.

Shivalisa, still very weak, rides slightly hunched forward in his saddle.

RALIR

Look at those clouds ahead..

SHIVALISA

Yes, I've been watching them.  
They've been getting darker by  
the minute. It's like they're  
responding to our approach.

MASTON

You two are paranoid. The  
living dead, black snakes made  
of mist, cornfields full of  
bodies and now rain clouds  
that grow dark simply because  
we approach...

Maston laughs.

MASTON (CONT'D)  
 ...You two need help.

Shivalisa looks over at Ralir..

Maston's words, triggering memories of those who were lost, anger Ralir. He rides ahead.

Ralir moves his steed closer to Maston.

SHIVALISA  
 If I had not experienced thhis  
 past night in Arbor Village  
 I'd agree. But I did and we've  
 both lost a great deal. Please  
 don't make light of what you  
 don't understand?

MASTON  
 Forgive me...I had no idea..

Shivalisa rides ahead.

Maston smiles.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - OPEN FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

The silhouette of Shumain on the horizon, the trio rides side by side. The sun is shrouded in dark clouds. A stiff breeze picks up.

RALIR  
 Thunderstorm?

Shivalisa searches the horizonn.

SHIVALISA  
 Yes, I think so. We need too  
 pick it up a bit.

RALIR  
 (to Shivalisa)  
 Can you handle it?

SHIVALISA  
 Do I have a choice?

The trio gallops toward Shumaain.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - EVENING

The sun, just above the horizon, peeks out beneath a thick layer of clouds.

SHUMAIN: Enormous in scalee, a bridge leads into the city, huge arching gateway, a veil of cobwebs block its opening, clay-brick buildings, thousands of holes burrowed into the walls, cobwebs everywhere, cobblestone streets, empty.

Having crossed the bridge, the trio comes before the city's gateway.

Ralir, drawing his sword, swiftly cuts through the spider webs in the archway.

They enter the city.

RALIR

This looks bad.

SHIVALSA

times and not once have the streets been empty... Keep your eyes open.

Maston looks at Shivalsa withh questioning eyes.

MASTON

RALIR

There's only one village annd one city between Mantra and the Potiethian desert.

SHIVALSA

islands in a network of rivers that run throughout Potieth. Bridges over water are the only way to enter and leave these dwelling places.

Ralir points towards Shumain with his sword.

RALIR

Simply put...we have to gett through this city to reach the bridge on the other side.

Ralir sheaths his sword.

MASTON

Potiethian Desert?

RALIR

afraid of our undead friends  
back in Arbor, feel free to  
turn back.

Maston smiles.

MASTON

Lead on.

Ralir is the first to enter tthe city.

Shivalsa and Maston follow.

Inside the gates, Ralir points to a location in the distance.  
Sweeping through the streets we move from the entrance of  
Shumain to the bridge on the far side.

RALIR

There's our destination. Onne  
straight line.

Shivalsa smiles.

MASTON

Shall we ride?

RALIR

Father's wound. I was hoping  
to get some real help here...  
It doesn't look like that's  
going to happen.

MASTON

Is stopping here what you wwant?

Shivalsa holds his painful shhoulder, then something catches  
his attention. He looks toward the window of a nearby home.

WINDOW POV: From the nearby home a glimpse of something.  
It's revealed to be a GIANT SPIDER; eerily, the monster  
crawls behind a web-filled window.

SHIVALSA

What was...?  
(to Ralir)  
Let's ride!

The men ride swiftly through the center of the city toward  
their target, the distant bridge.

OVERLAPPED SHOT SERIES: Wee see the progressive stages of the initial half-hour of the journey across the city. They ride with determination on their faces.

MASTON

This is taking longer than I thought!

RALIR

The full journey across thee city will take us four hours!

Shivalsa falls behind. He sloouches in his saddle.

Ralir, looking back, sees the huge crimson stain about Shivalsa's shoulder. He pulls back and rides next to his father. He grabs the reins of Shivalsa's horse; they come to a stop in the center of the road.

Maston, stopping, joins them.

Ralir looks at the wound under Shivalsa's robes.

RALIR

only getting worse.

MASTON

daylight. What do you say we put up camp over there?

Maston points to the open door of the only close building. It's a candle store, one oddly not covered with holes or cobwebs.

They move for the building. As they ride near it they notice that the only front window of the building is closed. The walls on two sides are blackened with a strange substance. The other walls appear to be thicker than those on the other buildings.

Shivalsa falls unconscious.

Ralir dismounts. He takes a leather bag from his saddle and throws it over his shoulder.

Maston dismounts.

Together Maston and Ralir take Shivalsa from his horse and carry him inside the store.

INT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - SSTORE

THE CANDLE STORE: A small rectangular room with a single window barred shut from the inside; the window faces the street; two barrels of black resin stand in a far corner beneath a ceiling air vent that is one foot in diameter; decorative candles litter the floor; furniture is piled left of the store's single door; the door swings in to open.

RALIR

You smell that?

MASTON

Some sort of elixir.

RALIR

I remember that smell.  
 (beneath his breath)  
 Jasupha...  
 (to Maston)

bugs. He even invented a  
 powerful potion to keep them  
 away...

Maston holds his nose.

MASTON

That wasn't all it kept awaay.

They kick some of the candless to the side and lay Shivalsa in a corner next to the barrels away from the door. Ralir places his bag beneath Shivalsa's head.

RALIR

Rest...

Ralir walks over to a barrel of resin. He opens the lid slightly, then drops it.

RALIR

He waves his hand in front off his nose.

Maston surveys the store.

MASTON

This looks like a candle shhop.

RALIR

I know...that worries me.

MASTON

Why?

RALIR

presence of something highly flammable. Judging by the smell of the resin in the barrel, it's been mixed with something much the same.

Ralir's eyes widen. He quickly walks outside for a short moment. He returns puzzled.

RALIR

outside is covered in resin... someone set it on fire.

MASTON

What about the other walls??

Ralir shakes his head.

RALIR

Can't tell. The walls are too thick.

MASTON

smells bad enough as it is without being burnt.

Ralir surveys the room with a critical eye. His eyes rest on the barrels and the air vent above them.

RALIR

Maybe they really wanted to keep something out.

Maston points toward the door opening.

MASTON

So much for daylight.

Ralir looks towards the door.. He watches as the last traces of daylight fade to darkness. Concern dawns on his face.

RALIR

Quick, get them in.

MASTON

Who?

RALIR

The horses.

MASTON

Ralir runs outside.

RALIR

We'll make room. TRUST ME!!!

INT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORRE - LATER

With the three horses now sharing the small room, things are cramped. The trio's weapons are in their sheaths; they hang from the three saddles.

The front door open, moonlight now enters into the otherwise dark interior.

Ralir fans the store's interior with a blanket from his satchel.

Maston sits across from Ralir next to his horse; he is obviously cramped.

MASTON

Nothing's going to get rid of this stench.

RALIR

Alchemy 101. Who knows how long those barrels have been sitting over there. If we light a fire then, as you say ...BOOM!!!

They laugh.

Ralir places the blanket over Shivalisa. He lifts his head long enough to remove two narrow clay containers.

CLAY CONTAINERS: Circular, six inches in length, two inches in diameter.

Sitting a candle upright, Ralir places one drop of fluid from one container and one drop from the other container on the wick of the candle; the candle lights.

MASTON

Alchemy 101?

RALIR  
Jasupha 101...please close the  
door.

Maston rises and starts to close the front door.

Ralir stops him.

RALIR  
One moment.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORRE

Ralir emerges from the store. Taking the clay containers he places two drops on the wall outside; the resin ignites.

Maston joins Ralir outside.

The fiery wall burns bright.

MASTON  
Why did you do that?

Ralir ignores Maston. He places the two cylinders in two pockets on opposite sides of his robes and reenters the store.

Maston follows him.

INT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE

Maston enters the store, closes the door.

MASTON  
This door is metal...

Ralir takes a closer look at the door.

RALIR  
Yes it is...and it's covered  
in the same type of resin.

Ralir begins to move the furniture in front of the door.

RALIR (CONT'D)  
Give me a hand?

Maston aids him.

MASTON

RALIR

some reason I trust the prior  
occupants...

MASTON

What's on your mind?

Ralir hears a slight TAPPING SOUND over the sounds of  
furniture being moved. He pauses.

RALIR

Did you hear that?

MASTON

What?

Ralir shakes it off, disregarding the sound.

RALIR

Don't worry about it... It was  
nothing.

They finish moving furniture in front of the door.

Ralir backs away slowly.

Maston watches him with a curious look on his face.

RALIR

Trust me, Maston. Everything  
I've seen so far is telling me  
to do this.

Ralir hears the TAPPING SOUND again. He urgently looks about  
the store, but the sound disappears before he can localize it.

Maston, also hearing the sound, laughs.

MASTON

Rain...it's just Rain.  
Remember the clouds?

RALIR

Yeah...it's rain.

Suddenly, the tapping sound increases to thousands of  
individual taps.

MASTON

They both laugh.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Let's get some rest.

Ralir sits beside the resin barrels and Shivalisa sleeps.

Maston sits against the wall across from them. He looks at the barrels.

MASTON (CONT'D)

How can you stand that smell?

Ralir remains silent.

Maston watches him.

Ralir's eyes study the flame of the candle.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Why do you do that...?

Ralir is still quiet.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Ralir!

Ralir, jarred from his meditation, makes eye contact with Maston.

RALIR

Sorry.

Maston smiles.

MASTON

No problem. I asked you why you do that.

Ralir smiles.

RALIR

Jasupha...

MASTON

You mentioned his name earlier. Was he your teacher?

RALIR

Yes...he taught me many things.

MASTON

Is he back in Mantra?

RALIR

He was one of the victims at  
Arbor...

MASTON

Black snake...I'm sorry...I  
forgot.

Ralir nods.

RALIR

Jasupha taught me the  
importance of meditation...the  
clearing of the mind...the  
discovery of one's inner strength.

Maston laughs.

MASTON

I could use some of that training.

Ralir looks over at Shivala..

Maston sees Ralir's concerned look.

MASTON (CONT'D)

You two share a tight bond,,  
that's the way it should  
be...father and son.

RALIR

Nomrai men.

Ralir turns his eyes toward Maston.

MASTON

Did you say Nomrai...?

RALIR

Yes.

MASTON

for you.

RALIR

I don't understand.

MASTON

The Nomrai name is known even  
in my land...living up to it  
must be quite a challenge.

Ralir's eyes return momentarily to the flame of the candle.

Maston raises a finger and shakes it slowly left to right like a scolding teacher.

MASTON (CONT'D)  
 Don't do that. That's not  
 meditation... that's running  
 from away from a problem.

Ralir's eyes search the room..

MASTON (CONT'D)  
 I guess it's a lot to handle...

Maston's eyes narrow.

MASTON (CONT'D)  
 I overheard your campfire talk  
 with Shivalisa... You know...the  
 Fire Ring...the Pact...

Ralir rises and strolls toward the door of the store; his back is to Maston.

Maston notices Shivalisa's eyelids twitch. He frowns.

RALIR  
 So you did overhear.

MASTON  
 If I were you I wouldn't doo it.  
 I could never give the life of  
 my own child...my son.

RALIR  
 I have no intention of everr  
 doing that...

MASTON  
 So...you're not going through  
 with it?

Maston reaches for a candle beside him. He smashes the wax into his hand, then breaks off a piece and discards the rest.

Ralir faces Maston. He struggles with the answer.

RALIR  
 this moment.

MASTON

You'd be the first Nomrai to fail his king and people.

RALIR

My father doesn't seem to mind.

MASTON

It's your decision. But, if you truly think destroying the family name is what he wants...

A moment of silence passes.

RALIR

I've never been able to be the man my father is. I know I'll never be the man my father is.

MASTON

That may be, but with the right training you can still do great things.

Ralir frowns and turns back toward the door.

Maston takes the wax from the candle, spits on it, and flicks it onto the wall above Shival'sa's head. The wax begins to smoke slightly.

Shival'sa's hands and eyelids twitch; he's about to wake up.

Ralir turns to face Maston.

RALIR

The price...

MASTON

Yes, I know. I wouldn't do it either.

RALIR

I don't know.

Maston rises and walks over to Ralir. He places a hand on Ralir's shoulder.

MASTON

You know...you may not even sire... a male child. Your worry may be all for naught. Are you prepared to throw your family's name away on such a gamble?

RALIR

I don't know.

MASTON

Things that made your father  
the man he is now... This  
training may not only help you  
be the man your father is, but  
a man greater than all Nomrai.

RALIR

To live up to expectation....to  
be a Nomrai.

Shivalsa wakes.

Ralir moves quickly to his side.

Frustration and anger flash across Maston's face.

MASTON

(beneath his breath)

So be it... Shivalsa must die....

THE TAPPING grows louder and louder.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Ralir...

Ralir tends to Shivalsa.

SHIVALSA

How long was I out?

RALIR

A few hours.

There is an evil look on Maston's face.

MASTON

Ralir...the rain...

RALIR

What was that...?

Maston has a sinister look on his face.

MASTON

The rain...Ralir...

RALIR

It's only rain, isn't it?

Ralir laughs.

MASTON  
 (evilly)  
 No...I think you were right....  
 I don't think it's rain...

The TAPPING SOUND grows to a deafening level.

Shivalisa surveys the room.

SHIVALISA  
 What's that?

Ralir surveys the room.

RALIR  
 It's coming from everywhere!  
 Maston, give me a hand!

Maston hesitates.

RALIR (CONT'D)  
 Maston!

Maston aids Ralir in bringing Shivalisa to his feet.

Ralir looks around.

RALIR (CONT'D)  
 The horses.

MASTON  
 What?

SHIVALISA  
 What?

RALIR  
 (to Maston)  
 Put him on his horse!

SHIVALISA  
 I guess you know what you're  
 doing...

RALIR  
 Trust me!

They put Shivalisa on his horse.

Shivalisa's Eyes: Looking up at the vent his eyes grow wide,  
 overcome with fright. He points to the air vent.

SHIVALSA

Ralir...Maston...

Their eyes follow his finger up and toward the vent.

GIANT SPIDER LEGS: 12" inches long, up to 2" inches thick.

The legs ease out of the vent.

RALIR

NO!!

Ralir runs over to his horse and takes his sword from the sheath hanging on his saddle.

Maston does the same.

RALIR

Maston, get the horses as close to the other wall as possible!

Ralir takes the tip of his sword and lifts the lids from the two resin barrels.

MASTON

supposed to keep them out!

RALIR

Something's changed!

Three Giant Spiders enter from the vent.

Ralir slashes at the intruders.

Maston joins him.

Shivalsa is too weak to provide aid. He watches from his horse.

With a furious amount of hacking in the vicinity of the wall and floor, the two warriors kill the first three spiders.

SHIVALSA

That wasn't too bad.

There is a HOLLOW TUNNELING SOUND heard above the tapping.

Ralir turns toward the wall on the far side of the horses.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - SSTORE - ALLEY

The opening between the store and the adjacent building: We see that the moonlit wall of the store is covered with over thirty holes, each a foot wide.

Suddenly HUNDREDS OF GIANT SPIDERS swarm about the holes in the wall. Many of the spiders enter the holes.

INT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE

The eyes of the three men show the horror they are feeling.

The Wall: THIRTY ONE-INCH HOLES appear in the wall as DEBRIS falls to the floor of the store.

Maston, looks at Shivalisa and Ralir.

MASTON

What now?

RALIR

(beneath his breath)

Think...

Shivalisa looks at Ralir.

SHIVALISA

I see that gleam in your eye.  
What are you thinking?

RALIR

No time...I need your swordds!

The Air Vent: Spider legs easse through the opening.

The Wall: Hundreds of needle-point tips of spider legs break free of the growing holes in the wall. The legs feverishly dig to widen the holes.

The horses grow agitated and begin showing fear.

Maston hands his sword to Ralir.

Shivalisa unsheaths one of his swords and hands it to Ralir.

Ralir goes to barrels and dips their swords into the resin, then hands them back.

He looks them in the eyes one after the other.

RALIR

Win or lose!

SHIVALSA

Let's send them to HELL!!

Maston looks on.

Ralir places the tip of his sword in the flame of the candle.  
The sword ignites.

He places it between them. Shivalsa and Maston light their  
swords.

Suddenly THIRTY LARGE HOLES erupt from the wall spewing spiders.

The Air Vent ERUPTS as spiders seemingly ooze from its opening.

Ralir and Maston work their way around the horses while  
knocking attacking spiders off the backs of their horses.  
Reaching the wall they find a fierce battle ahead of them.

Shivalsa: From the saddle he slashes at the spiders coming  
through the vent.

Every spider touched with the flames of their swords  
SHRIVELS and DIES.

MASTON

This is hopeless!

Shivalsa slips in his saddle,, almost dropping his flaming  
sword into the resin. He catches himself. He holds his heart  
and breaths deeply. Looking down, he sees the smoldering wax  
on the wall Maston put there.

SHIVALSA

Ralir, put the candle out....

Ralir kneels as he slashes att spiders on the floor and wall.  
Beneath the bellies of the horses he sees the candle.

Maston continues to fight hard.

Ralir hops up onto the back of one of the horses. As he  
stands on the saddle three spiders also jump onto it and  
attack him. Ralir kicks one off and catches another with a  
slash of his sword.

The third spider jumps onto Ralir's back.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

Stop playing around and putt  
that candle out!!

Still standing on his horse, Ralir skillfully fights to get the spider off his back. He slips and his feet fly

out from under him. He falls back-first onto the candle. The candle is snuffed out by the clinging spider. The spider is killed and SHRIVELS in the flame. Ralir manages to hold on to his sword.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

GOOD!!

With all his might, Shivalsa takes his flaming sword and sticks it into the wall above the air vent. The flame limits the number of spiders that can enter from the vent.

SHIVALSA (CONT'D)

I'm going to need enough wax to plug a hole!

Ralir holds his sword to a candle long enough to moisten it. Fighting off numerous other spiders he picks it up and rolls it into the palm of his free hand.

RALIR

All set, Father!!

SHIVALSA

When I say plug it...plug it and get back!

Shivalsa removes his second sword from its sheath and slashes at the barrel's base near the wax on the wall. A hole opens up spraying the barrel's contents onto the wax placed by Maston.

SHIVALSA

PLUG IT!!

Ralir slashes in a high arc, FRYING ten spiders; leaping from the wall, he pitches the wax at the hole made by Shivalsa in the base of the barrel. The wax successfully plugs the hole.

Maston is swinging furiously at the increasing number of spiders entering the store from the wall.

Shivalsa removes his flaming sword from the wall and ignites the wax placed by Maston. It bursts into flames. He turns his head to face the wall.

A GIANT SPIDER leaps for his face but is caught in midair by the dagger Ralir has pulled from his boot.

Shivalisa swings his sword at the wall, momentarily clearing the wall of spiders. He looks back at Ralir.

SHIVALISA

Thanks!

Ralir smiles.

RALIR

SHIVALISA

Angle on Maston: He looks back and sees a distracted Shivalisa. He next looks at the spiders closest to Shivalisa. With an evil smirk he signals for them to ATTACK by nodding his head.

The spiders swarm Shivalisa, whose sword cannot stop them. He is ENGULFED by them while still swinging his flaming sword.

The horses start to buck. Ralir fights to get to Shivalisa's side. Suddenly the hooves of Shivalisa's horse kick him in the chest.

Ralir's sword flies out of his hand as he careens through the metal door of the store and out into the street.

Flames temporarily spew out the front door of the store.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE - CITY STREETS

The Store Front is ablaze; firelight fills the street.

Ralir rolls to his feet, then suddenly falls to his knees grasping his chest and back. He looks into the store; only spiders and Maston's flaming sword can be seen.

The voice of the Hooded Figure Dressed in White echoes in Ralir's mind.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

(VO)

father is lost to you...

Ralir yells.

The TAPPING of CRAWLING SPIDERS is deafening.

Middle of the Street: THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF SPIDERS converge on Ralir.

Ralir hears the voice of JJasupha.

JASUPHA

(VO)

The ring, Child... The  
ring...put it on...

Ralir looks down at the ring as the SEA OF SPIDERS comes closer and closer.

Ralir snatches the gold necklace from his neck. He slides the rings off the chain and places the ring with his name into his palm.

The voice of the Hooded Figure Dressed in White calls again.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

(VO)

The Twelve...only their  
teaching can save you... and  
those you love.

RALIR

No more...

Ralir is overwhelmed by the spiders. Only the sound of CRAWLING SPIDERS can be heard.

DREAM SEQUENCE: RALIR

INT. POTIETH - MANTRA - PALACE NURSERY - NIGHT

Palace Nursery Door: A torch is on the wall to the left of the entrance.

We see a large room made snug by shadows dancing amidst the dim light of the torch.

In the center of the room an unconscious Ralir lies beside a ruined cradle.

Above the CRACKLING sound of the torch the Hooded Figure Dressed in White calls to Ralir.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

(VO)

Young Nomrai...

Lying on the nursery floor, Ralir's eyes suddenly open.

Instantly he reaches for the cradle in search of young Lord Narjah.

Not seeing the child, Ralir looks around for the owner of the disembodied voice.

RALIR  
Who's there?

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
(VO)  
Young Nomrai...

RALIR  
Who's there!

As Ralir stands the torchlight grows dim. In contrast, a SILVER RAY OF LIGHT, emanating from the moon, invades the nursery through the balcony entryway. The light, intensifying, beckons to Ralir.

Ralir moves toward the light.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
(VO)  
Yes, follow the light, young  
Nomrai.

Ralir steps through the balcony entryway into the light.

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA - PALACE NURSERY - BALCONY - NIGHT

The curtains down, Ralir steps through the entryway onto the balcony.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

Ralir looks to his left.

The Hooded Figure Dressed in White: He is tall, slender, attired in white robes, his face is hidden; he stands just in front of the balcony railing with his back to Ralir.

Ralir reaches for his sword. It's not there! His hands are clinched in tight fists but he maintains his position.

Side angle: The hooded man raises an open palm filled with A FINE CRYSTAL-LIKE POWDER to the shadowy opening of his hood. Blowing the fine powder, the sound of his BREATH is heard. The powder, taking flight, fills the night air.

The powder SPARKLES as it catches the moonlight.

RALIR  
back here?

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 This powder, Desert tears....  
 Smart boy, you are indeed a  
 Nomrai.

                  RALIR  
 Who are you?

We hear the hooded figure LAUGH a deep bellowing laugh.

                  HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Child, you may call me  
 Li've'dof Nodde'gamra.

                  RALIR  
 What do you want?

                  HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 I'm here to help you, youngg  
 Nomrai.

                  RALIR  
 I thought pain was the onlyy  
 thing you had for me!

                  HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Help often comes in forms wwe  
 rarely understand...

Ralir takes a step forward.

                  RALIR  
 You've taken everything froom  
 me... What else is there to  
 understand about that?!

                  HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 My methods are not meant foor  
 you to understand. Just know  
 that your father wants you to  
 do a thing. You don't know if  
 you can... I can help you  
 through this... I can make  
 this worry go away... I want  
 to be your friend.

                  RALIR  
 Is this a dream?!

Ralir's posture is defiant.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

Your dreams show you things to  
come and so are not dreams,  
but visions.

RALIR

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
No, this is a revelation....

RALIR  
(mockingly)  
And what is it you'd reveal too  
me, Li've'dof?

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
Fear me not, young Nomrai.... I  
am here for you. My only  
desire is to be here for you...

Ralir takes a step back.

RALIR  
My father is here for me.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
Your father is no more... BBut  
still you must honor the pact...

Stepping back, a questioning look crosses Ralir's face.

RALIR  
(beneath his breath)

The spiders...

A moment of despair crosses Ralir's face.

As the night breeze picks up, their robes move gently in the  
wind.

Ralir, lowering his head, gazes at the floor of the balcony.

Ralir takes a couple of steps toward the Hooded Figure.

The Hooded Figure looks up at the night sky.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 I understand you, Child... You  
 must let me be there for you...  
 You have but to say my name...  
 You have but to call upon me...  
 To need me... Say that you  
 need me...that you'll follow me...

Ralir pauses, then takes a few steps back. A look of realization followed by one of sudden fear crosses his face.

RALIR  
 Who are you that I should  
 follow you?

The Hooded Figure stands sileently, making no reply.

RALIR (CONT'D)  
 You've taken everything from  
 me. For what...so that you  
 could take their place?!

A gale suddenly erupts aroundd them. Their robes ruffle briskly in the wind.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 If that is what you wish....

Ralir's eyes are filled with disbelief. He searches the room for a weapon.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 What is it you look for...??  
 Very soon you will understand  
 that all that you seek lies  
 within you. . Ralir yells back  
 defiantly.

RALIR  
 You'll die for what you've done!

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 You don't possess the skillls,  
 boy. I fear you are no true  
 Nomrai...

Ralir slowly turns to face thhe Hooded Figure. His eyes flash a florescent green.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Ah! Well done. Such potential  
 needs to be released...

RALIR  
I'll kill you!

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
Then you know what you needd to  
do...

The Hooded Figure stands in ssilence.

RALIR

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
Tell me, young Nomrai, who am I?

RALIR  
You are the darkness! You are  
the THING Jasupha was warning  
the King about!

RALIR (CONT'D)  
You were right about one thhing  
Li'... whatever your name is.  
This is a revelation. Now I  
know the truth of Jasupha's  
words. You have failed! There  
is no way I would ever follow you!

The Hooded Figure faces Ralirr.

A look of horror flashes across Ralir's face, but it is  
quickly replaced by a look of determination. In anger, he  
draws out the dagger hidden in the cuff of his boot.

The Hooded Figure laughs.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
Very good, young one... Yess...  
Face your fears...you are  
everything you were bred to be.

RALIR  
Bred...what do you mean?!

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
  
family's determination... Even  
in the face of fire.... Not in  
thousands of years have I met  
a coward amongst you.  
(MORE)

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHHITE (CONT'D)  
 Go... follow your heart's  
 convictions... In the end you  
 will serve he whom I serve...  
 No differently than me...

The opening of the Hooded Figgure's headdress: A pair of  
 glowing eyes can be seen within a a dark mist-like interior.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE (CONT'D)  
 Until then...

Ralir, shaking his head, changes his grip on the dagger and  
 charges the Hooded Figure. He moves slowly, in a dream state.  
 His voice slows to a deep moan.

RALIR  
 I'll never serve you... N-EE-V-  
 E-R!

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 Go now... One day you and II  
 will meet face to face... On  
 that day we will talk together  
 as ancients do... On that day  
 you will join us or die...

RALIR

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE  
 choice... Go!

The Hooded Figure disappears in a flash of light only a  
 split second before Ralir stabs at him with the dagger.

Ralir is now back to moving normally. Stopping abruptly, he  
 searches for the Hooded Figure. Stepping backwards, he trips  
 and glances down to see the Assassin's decapitated body.  
 Stumbling further backwards, he collides with the balcony  
 railing and tumbles over the side.

Ralir plummets down the face of the cliff. He screams as  
 the SURF and JAGGED ROCKS below rise to meet him.

RALIR

END DREAM SEQUENCE:

FLASHBACK:

MONTAGE:

INT. POTIETH - MANTRA PLACE- KING'S CHAMBERS

1) Ralir in the King's Chambers receiving his promotion.

2) Jasupha and Ralir in the King's Chambers; Jasupha patting Ralir on the back.

EXT. POTIETH - MANTRA - CITY MAIN ROAD - EARLY MORNING

3) Ralir and Shivalisa beginning their journey.

INT. ARBOR VILLAGE - TAVERN - NIGHT

4) Ralir and Shivalisa drinking in the Tavern.

5) Kathryn smiling brightly at Ralir in the tavern.

EXT. POTIETHIAN WOODS - SMALL CLEARING - LATE EVENING

6) Ralir and Shivalisa; father and son embrace.

END MONTAGE:

END FLASHBACK:

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE - CITY STREETS

A long second passes.

RALIR

NO MORE!!

A blinding WHITE LIGHT erupts from beneath the sea of spiders and fills the screen. All the spiders near Ralir are incinerated.

As the spiders are burning, Ralir stands surrounded by the WHITE LIGHT with clinched fists. He raises his fists to the sky. Bringing his arms down to his sides he walks into the spider-infested store with unmistakable determination on his face.

INT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE

The spiders are destroyed by the light. When all is clear Shivalisa, Maston and Shivalisa's horse lie motionless on the floor. The other two horses start to leave but are stopped as Ralir raises an open palm.

Ralir, kneeling, takes Shiivalisa in his arms.

Shivalisa's hands and face are covered in bites.

Ralir places Shivalisa on his own horse. He looks down and finds only one of Shivalisa's swords. It is no longer burning. He places Shivalisa's sword in his own sheath.

Ralir looks down at Maston.

He sees that Maston, unconscious, has no bites or wounds at all.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - STORE - CITY STREETS

Ralir rides out of the store at a trot. Shivalisa is draped across his horse. He leads Maston's horse by the reins; Maston, still unconscious, lies across it. The White Light covers Ralir, Shivalisa and Ralir's horse.

Thousands and thousands of spiders surround the trio. They attempt to leap onto Ralir and Shivalisa as they start their ride down the infested city streets; the spiders are instantly incinerated by the White Light.

Ralir pauses and places his reins in his mouth. He removes the cylinders from his robe's pockets, takes off their caps, then turns and throws them into the candle store.

Liquid flames trail the open cylinders as they tumble into the store.

Ralir rides off.

The store EXPLODES.

Ralir shows no emotion. He is silent. The sound of the horses' HOOVES STRIKING THE GROUND and the spiders CRAWLING about is all that is heard.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - OUTSKIRTS - BRIDGE - DAWN

Reaching their exit they cross onto a long bridge leading East into the Potiethian Desert; spiders still chase them.

The sun begins to rise; as it does the darkness of the night lifts like a veil. The shadow of night appears to run from the daylight.

Reaching Ralir, the sunlight touches one of the pursuing spiders; it goes up in flames.

All the spiders begin retreating back into the city.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - DDAWN

The spiders retreat into houses and the holes in the walls of buildings.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - OUTSKIRTS - BRIDGE - DAWN

The White Light surrounding Ralir disappears.

Maston wakes and sits up on his horse. He quickly looks around.

MASTON

The spiders!

RALIR

Everything's all right...noow.

Maston laughs with joy.

MASTON

We made it!

Maston notices Shivalsa draped over Ralir's horse.

MASTON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your fatherr.

Ralir remains silent.

Maston's lips curl into an unseen smile.

EXT. POTIETH - SHUMAIN - OUTSKIRTS - POTIETHIAN DESERT -  
BORDER - NOON

Arriving at the desert border, dark clouds swirl above and fill the sky. The wind picks up and quickly surges from a BREEZE to a GALE. SAND fills the air. The ROAR of the wind is thunderous.

MASTON

(sarcastic)

Lucky us! I guess it's going to be a long ride.

MASTON (CONT'D)

What are you doing?! we cann bury your father later. Let's move on!

Ralir takes Shivalsa's sword from his sheath and slaps his horse on the rump; taking off, the horse disappears in the sand-filled air.

MASTON (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Ralir turns to face Maston. His expression is filled with retribution.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Boy, you don't want to do this...!

RALIR

Dismount!

MASTON

Come, Ralir, jump on! I can take you as far as the Fire Ring...!

(he laughs)

RALIR

I said DISMOUNT!!

Ralir brings Shivalsa's sword to a ready position.

Maston, looking at his horse, cocks an eyebrow. He takes his sword from the sheath hanging on his saddle. He brings it to a ready position.

MASTON

Thank you for retrieving it for me.

RALIR

No more lies! No more lies,, Maston! Why?!

Maston laughs.

MASTON

Finally! You catch on!

RALIR

Why?

MASTON

find out?

Ralir charges Maston. He attacks with a flurry of slashes from his sword.

Maston parries Ralir's attack with ease. He laughs.

MASTON (CONT'D)

Then don't tell me...

Maston delivers his own attack; it is masterful. He delivers a volley of punches and kicks to Ralir from every angle. He pulls Ralir's arm down behind his waist and places his sword against his neck.

MASTON (CONT'D)

You simply don't understand!  
You don't have the skill to  
stop me or he whom I serve!

Ralir's face is a mass of sand and blood. He turns his head to face Maston. Rage fills his eyes.

RALIR

Li've'dof!

MASTON

Good! You've met!

RALIR

The only good thing is that I  
now know the faces of my  
enemies... I will kill  
you...I'LL KILL YOU BOTH!!!

MASTON

(mockingly)

Let me show you! Let me show  
you precisely what you lack.

Ralir stumbles back. He steadies himself and attacks.

They go back and forth.

Maston proves to be superior to Ralir in every way. His strength is UNEARTHLY; his speed and timing are exceptional and his skill is immaculate.

Ralir, outmatched, finds himself slashing at the wind.

Maston parries all of Ralir's attacks, landing punch after punch and kick after kick.

The sand swirls violently about them.

Again, Maston, traps Ralir's arms to his side. He disarms him. He looks down at Ralir's ring-bearing hand.

MASTON (CONT'D)

You won't need that anymore!

Maston, takes Ralir by the haand in a wristlock and flips him to the ground. He takes the ring from Ralir's finger with his teeth.

RALIR

It's supposed to work on thhe minions of the Darkness...Why doesn't it work on you!

Maston laughs.

MASTON

Because...I'm not a minion....  
I'M HIS SON!

Standing, Maston throws Ralirr thirty feet from the edge of the bridge.

Ralir lands in the desert sand. He stands hunched over and holding his head. He can barely see Maston through the sand.

RALIR

I'll KILL YOU!!

MASTON

Not this day...! Not this hhour...!

Ralir yells. He looks momentaarily into the swirling sand and then back toward Maston.

MASTON (CONT'D)

fair. As payment for the ring and good company you and your father provided... I feel I owe you this much...!

Maston starts to back away.

MASTON (CONT'D)

beginning! Sibane's King paid handsomely for our services. He gave his soul...!

RALIR

(beneath his breath)

worth.... worth all of this...

MASTON

He gave his soul for Mantraa...  
For Mantra, Ralir...! The  
funny thing is...we were going  
to do it anyway!

Ralir falls to his knees. Hiss eyes vacant, he stares into  
the sand. He screams in anguish.

MASTON (CONT'D)

So my pretty pets back therre,  
your undead friends back at  
Arbor and myself...are going  
to be paying Mantra a visit...!

Ralir again cries out.

MASTON (CONT'D)

your king that you and your  
father have been 'otherwise  
preoccupied'!!

Maston guffaws and motions foor his horse. He mounts the  
steed in stride and rides back toward Shumain. He fades away  
into the swirling sand.

Ralir stands. Determination is ingrained onto his face.

RALIR

(beneath his breath)  
The Twelve...

Ralir turns and looks toward the open desert.

RALIR (CONT'D)

The Twelve...I will learn....

Ralir's eyes glow a florescent green. He hears a Hawk's call  
over the roar of the wind and sand. He looks up at the sky.  
Through the sand he sees Shimacon high above.

The voice of a woman calls to him through the sand; it is  
Shir'Ali.

SHIR'ALI

Follow her, Ralir...follow her...

Ralir stumbles backwards, theen steadies himself.

RALIR

Shimacon...Shimacon...  
SHIMACON...!

Ralir looks back one last time and then again toward the open desert.

RALIR (CONT'D)

I'll learn...and I WILL RETURN!!

Ralir dashes into the swirling sand and disappears from sight.

INT. VOLCANO - FIRE RING - THE DARK ONE'S THRONE ROOM

Angle on the supernatural face of the Hooded Figure.

HOODED FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE

Yes, boy...on to your destiny...

FADE

OUT