

The Ancient Guardians

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FADE IN:

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EXT. NEW YORK CITY - JULY 13, 2160 A.D. - LATE EVENING

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY - JULY 13, 2160 A.D.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

--PEOPLE riding fuel cell-powered two-wheel scooters down the sidewalks.

--ONE PERSON MONORAIL CARS speeding along the rails.

--ROBOTS sweep up trash from the sidewalks.

--Robots serve Humans hot dogs and other foodstuffs.

--Many PEOPLE crowd the sidewalks on their way home from work for the weekend.

RETURN TO MAIN SCENE

MASTER VIDUR (V.O.)

Gradually, mankind became more advanced and with his newfound knowledge, he eliminated disease, poverty, hunger--every obstacle that impeded Human life...except one.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - TOP FLOOR - BIG SKY CONDOMINIUMS -
CONTINUOUS

Out the window is Freedom Tower.

We see a television on which the World Soccer Cup is showing on the screen. In the background, THREE MEN argue over who will win when suddenly the television picture becomes snowy and the men groan in disappointment.

The absence of noise from the television allows them to hear an object that sounds like a plane flying over the roof of the building.

Out the window, we see a huge explosion caused by the object striking Freedom Tower.

MASTER VIDUR (V.O.)

War.

The shockwave expands outward quickly, shattering the glass of the window and destroying the building before the three men can do much more than hide behind the couch. This is the beginning of the apocalypse.

EXT. MENDOCINO COAST, CALIFORNIA - EIGHT YEARS LATER - DAY

SUPER: MENDOCINO COAST, CALIFORNIA - EIGHT YEARS LATER

The survivors of the apocalypse scramble across the beach. They cough from the thick, poisonous fog saturating the air.

TWO MEN in particular are seen walking through the fog. One is COLONEL MARCUS and the other is PRIVATE BRYAN HAYES.

COL. MARCUS

Private Hayes, get them to the underwater city!

PVT. HAYES

But sir...

Colonel Marcus coughs.

COL. MARCUS

There's no time to argue. They're suffocating, Bryan, and nearly everything else is dead. We need to get them to the safety of the city.

Nearby, a body falls and the person coughs harshly. Marcus and Hayes turn and run toward where the body fell.

On the ground is young woman in her early teens. Hayes grabs her arms and hoists her into a standing position.

PVT. HAYES

We have to keep moving, Lisa. Up now. That's a girl. You're almost there.

LISA coughs.

LISA

I can't, Papa! I can't!

PVT. HAYES

Yes, you can! You're almost there!

Lisa falls again and Hayes lifts her into his arms. He pants and grunts under her weight. Hayes looks toward Marcus and hesitates.

COL. MARCUS
(rasps)
Go!

Hayes hesitates a moment longer before he moves away toward the waterline. Marcus coughs violently and gasps for breath. He falls to the ground and draws one last breath before his eyes close. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE storm by, struggling to reach the water.

MASTER VIDUR (V.O.)
The same knowledge that had helped man eliminate his obstacles had helped him create nuclear and biological weaponry. In the late 2150s, tension had begun to build between the nations of the world and disaster struck soon after. The citizens of the world who survived the nuclear holocaust were forced into underwater cities built in the late 2140s, originally intended to house the ever-growing population of the world. However, the circumstances forced them to use the underwater cities for refugees.

Some manage to board the seacrafts, but many don't make it that far. The beach is littered with bodies.

From the point-of-view of a survivor, we board the seacraft. We are pushed and shoved until we are next to one of the port windows. As the seacraft descends, our view becomes less sky and more water. Within moments, the view out the port window is just water and bubbles rise to the surface.

As the craft descends and moves forward, a city comes into view. It is a magnificent city consisting of several large glass globes, each of which contains a segment of the city. The globes have several hundred feet of distance between them and are connected by walkways each of which is surrounded by a glass cylinder.

The craft continues forward and soon the view is narrowed to one globe in particular.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - UNDERWATER CITY OF AERYDON - 200 YEARS
LATER - DAY

SUPER: 200 YEARS LATER...

In a classroom, DEVRAJ (mid-teens) stares off into space with a vacant expression.

MASTER VIDUR
(snaps)
Devraj!

Devraj turns abruptly.

MASTER VIDUR, an older gentleman with whitish hair and a goatee, scowls.

MASTER VIDUR
(snaps)
Devraj, are you listening?

DEVRAJ
Yes, sir. Because of the Great War, our ancestors were forced to use the underwater cities for refugees.

ANKITA (mid-teens with light hair) raises her hand.

MASTER VIDUR
Yes, Ankita?

ANKITA
What about the first Great War, sir? The myth?

MASTER VIDUR
That is not part of our lesson plan today.

ANKITA
Please, sir? I feel that it's relevant to our current lesson--and I very much enjoy the way you explain history.

MASTER VIDUR
Very well. It has been theorized that the war of the 2150s was not the first apocalyptic event to befall Terra. Long ago, there was a Great War between the Gods and a powerful Dark being called the Malum Res. The Malum Res sought a stone called the Ashal. Contained within the Ashal were the memories of many past lives and with it the knowledge of how to destroy the Light Guardians.

(MORE)

MASTER VIDUR (CONT'D)

If he possessed this knowledge he would be unstoppable.

ANKITA

Did he ever find the stone?

MASTER VIDUR

According to legend, no, he did not.

ANKITA

You said this Ashal contains memories of past lives. What sort of memories?

Master Vidur turns away.

MASTER VIDUR

That's all for today, then. Tomorrow, we'll be going into further detail about the impacts of the Great War on our ancestors' way of life.

The class stands and files out of the room.

ANKITA

But you didn't answer me, sir. What sort of memories?

Master Vidur turns toward Ankita.

MASTER VIDUR

The stories are myth, Ankita. They are no more true than the bedtime stories your mother tells you. Go home, Ankita. Study like a good girl.

Ankita leaves disappointed and Devraj leaves behind her.

Ankita drops her books on the way out the door and Devraj helps her pick them up.

Devraj places his hand at the small of her back and guides her through the door.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CORRIDOR -UNDERWATER CITY OF AERYDON - NEXT MORNING

SUPERIMPOSITION: THE NEXT MORNING...

Devraj is walking down a corridor. Ankita stands at their usual meeting place and stares out the window. Outside the window, a large octopus swims by.

DEVRAJ

Ankita!

Ankita turns toward him, startled, but relaxes when she realizes it's just him.

ANKITA

Don't sneak up on me like that!

DEVRAJ

I was hardly sneaking. What were you daydreaming about this time, anyway?

ANKITA

The surface must have been beautiful once. At least grandmother thinks so. "How could we have called an ugly place home?" she says.

Devraj opens his mouth to reply, but something impacts his shoulder and he drops to the ground.

Devraj winces as he lands face first on the floor.

He turns to see ANUJ (mid-teens with dark hair) walking away.

ANUJ

Watch where you're going, mama's boy!

Devraj's lips tighten and he stands.

DEVRAJ MUTTERS--

DEVRAJ

Pond scum.

Anuj disappears around the corner.

Devraj grunts in frustration and presses his face to the glass wall, then sighs in relief at the feel of the cool glass against his forehead.

ANKITA

You should stand up to him. He'd leave you alone if he knew that you weren't going to let him shove you around.

DEVRAJ

Before or after he rearranges my
face?

Ankita's eyes widen when Devraj pulls away from the wall and she touches the pads of her fingers to his temple. Devraj winces.

ANKITA MURMURS--

ANKITA

You're bleeding.

Devraj grabs her wrist gently and pulls her hand away.

DEVRAJ

It's just a scratch.

Ankita's eyebrows shoot up and she looks at him as though she doesn't believe him.

ANKITA

The last time that you told me it was "just a scratch", the wound became infected and you were sick for two days with the Fever.

Ankita looks down at her watch and frowns. They have little time before lessons start. Ankita grabs his hand.

ANKITA (CONT'D.)

Come on. We have just enough time to see Lona before lessons.

DEVRAJ

I'll be fine.

Ankita gazes at him sternly.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D.)

All right. But we'd better not be late for lessons. Master Vidur has already threatened me with extra lessons if I'm late again.

The two head toward the infirmary. Devraj grumbles under his breath the whole way.

INT. INFIRMARY, AERYDON - DAY

The two are now inside the infirmary with LONA (60s with grey hair), the children's healer.

Lona reaches for the medical kit and pulls out a bottle of antiseptic and a swab, and begins to clean Devraj's wound.

LONA

As accident prone as you are,
child, I have a medical file for
you thicker than a selkie's hide.

Devraj gives her an annoyed look when her back is turned.

Lona puts a bandage on Devraj's cut and then closes her medical kit.

LONA (CONT'D.)

There. You should be all right. Now
you run along before you're late
to lessons again. Master Vidur has
no doubt run out of patience with
you.

Devraj grimaces and then slides off the bed, making his way toward the exit with Ankita beside him.

Once outside, Devraj takes off at a run down the corridor. Ankita waves goodbye to Lona and follows.

INT. CORRIDOR BETA23, AERYDON - DAY

Devraj and Ankita are on their way back from lessons. Devraj waves the paper in his hand furiously.

DEVRAJ

Again! The old walrus is merciless!
I get a note to my father, but all
he gives you is a thousand word
essay on how being late can affect
your future! My father is going to
be furious!

ANKITA

We could talk in my room for awhile
before you go home so you can work
out how to tell him.

DEVRAJ

I'd probably just better get it
over with.

ANKITA

Good luck.

FADE TO:

INT. FAMILY QUARTERS - DAY

Devraj enters his family's quarters. His father, KANAK, waits for him.

Devraj sighs and slumps into an armchair. Kanak hesitates, then takes a seat on the couch in front of him.

KANAK (CONT'D.)
We should talk...about this morning.

DEVRAJ
What about this morning?

KANAK
I'm sorry I yelled, but I'm only trying to do what I feel is best for you.

Devraj glares at Kanak.

DEVRAJ
And you think that forbidding me to talk to my best friend is what's best for me?

KANAK
She's trouble, Devraj. Her head is in the clouds and she acts without thought to the consequences.

DEVRAJ
I understand, father. She's trouble because she wants something more than to be confined in a glass sphere beneath the ocean.

KANAK
No, I--I just don't want to see you hurt.

DEVRAJ
If that was true, then you wouldn't be trying to take away the best thing in my life! She's the only friend I have! I trust her. I'm sorry that you don't.

Devraj stands abruptly and storms into his room, closes the door loudly and locks it behind him.

Kanak follows and raps his knuckles against the cold metal.

KANAK

Devraj, open the door.

Devraj doesn't open the door. Kanak sighs and walks away, shaking his head in exasperation.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LAUNCH BAY - AERYDON - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

SUPERIMPOSITION: THE NEXT AFTERNOON...

Devraj and Ankita sneak into the launch bay. Devraj, reluctant to follow her at first does so anyway. Ankita intends to "borrow" a watercraft to do research for a project Master Vidur has assigned.

INT. INSIDE OF THE WATERCRAFT - LAUNCH BAY - CONTINUOUS

Ankita looks over the controls, reminding herself of their functions.

DEVRAJ

Are you sure you know how to pilot this thing?

ANKITA

Of course. Father's explained the functions dozens of times in relation to his mission stories.

DEVRAJ

He's explained! Have you ever actually piloted one of these things?

ANKITA

No.

The launch room doors open and Ankita guides the ship through them. A few moments later, they're through.

DEVRAJ

Gods of the Sea, Ankita! You're about to take us into open waters and you THINK you know how to pilot this thing? Maybe we should just get our parents to take us with them on one of their trips for our project.

Several long moments of silence pass and they are now quite a distance from the city. Fewer sea organisms swim by. The seascape becomes more barren the further away from the city they move.

ANKITA

You'll see. It'll be just like the stories we made up as children. We'll actually get to see the surface for ourselves!

DEVRAJ

The surface?! I thought we were just going to the edge of the reef! Do you have any idea how much trouble we're going to be in?! They'll send us to the Forbidden City for the rest of our lives.

ANKITA

The Forbidden City is just a story our parents tell us to scare us.

DEVRAJ

It is not! Uncle Sirius got sent there for smuggling Adelphine crystals into the city!

ANKITA

They're not going to send us anywhere, because we'll be back before they even know we're gone.

DEVRAJ

I still don't think this is a good idea.

ANKITA

You mean like you didn't think gluing Master Vidur's desk drawers shut was a good idea or like you didn't think breaking into the control room was a good idea?

DEVRAJ

Exactly.

The craft lurches suddenly and the two look out the window to see the underbelly of a gigantic octopus.

Its eight tentacles cling to the craft.

Its mouth sucks on the glass as though it's food.

The craft lurches again and a small crack opens in the hull, allowing water to start squirting in.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

Now what are we going to do?

Her eyes wild, Ankita struggles to keep the panic from her voice.

ANKITA

First, we need to get out of here.

DEVRAJ

We'll drown!

ANKITA

If we stay here, we'll drown.

Devraj inhales deeply then exhales in an attempt to calm himself.

DEVRAJ

So we get out of here. Then what?

ANKITA

Swim for the surface.

Ankita turns and spots the emergency exit hatch near the rear of the craft. She and Devraj head for it.

They drag in and release several deep breaths before drawing in one last deep breath and holding it.

They look at each other and nod. They're ready.

Ankita releases the clamps, and pulls the hatch open. Water fills the vessel. They swim through the open hatch into open waters.

Above them, the sunlight streams through and they swim frantically for the surface, leaving the octopus still wrestling with the sinking craft.

EXT. OFF THE MENDOCINO COAST - CONTINUOUS

Their heads break the surface of the water and they gasp for breath, then look around them. Devraj spots land and they swim toward it.

EXT. BEACH (MENDOCINO COAST) - CONTINUOUS

At the far edge of the beach, they see trees beginning to grow leaves and walk toward them.

Devraj and Ankita gasp for air for several moments. As her respiration rate returns to normal, she turns to Devraj, who is also stunned. They exchange astonished gazes and stare silently at one another for several moments.

ANKITA

Do you think the others know? That the air is breathable I mean. Master Vidur said the air was polluted.

DEVRAJ MUTTERS--

DEVRAJ

I think that Master Vidur's "wisdom" is born of ignorance.

The two stand and scan their surroundings. Devraj's features tighten in anger and he turns toward Ankita.

DEVRAJ

Well, Ankita, you wanted to see the surface. I hope you're satisfied.

Ankita remains silent and avoids his gaze. She then steps off of the beach and into the dead forest. He follows.

EXT. FOREST (FORMERLY JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

A hand grasps Devraj's shoulder and he jumps and spins around. He sighs in relief when he realizes it's only Ankita.

She extends her other hand and offers him a small daisy. He laughs and grasps the stem, and then he slides it from her hand. Their gazes lock and she smiles.

ANKITA

We'll find a way back to the city. You'll see.

He wraps his arms around her and pulls her close.

DEVRAJ

I know.

The two pull away and continue through the forest.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING (FORMERLY JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

Devraj runs for the edge of the forest and brings his hands up to cover his face.

He laughs when a fistful of dead leaves flies at him.

Ankita arrives by his side. She laughs and attempts to shove another fistful of dead leaves down Devraj's shirt, but he grabs her wrists and holds her hands away and pins her to a tree trunk.

Ankita glances across the river and her eyes widen.

ANKITA

Devraj...look.

A building similar in appearance to a Mayan temple stands tall at the other end.

Devraj's eyes widen in disbelief. The temple is like nothing he has ever seen before.

Curiosity drives the two walk downstream to look for a place to cross.

A little farther downstream, the river narrows and becomes shallower. The water comes to their waists.

They hold their bags above their heads as they wade across.

INT. TEMPLE OF ASHAL - LATER

Now inside the temple, they wander into the main chamber.

Writings cover the walls.

Devraj moves toward one of the walls and runs his fingertips over the etchings. Devraj stares at the etchings in awe.

DEVRAJ

This place must be ancient.

Ankita examines another set of writings. The outline of a hand lies at the center. Ankita lays her hand over the handprint and presses against it.

A trap door springs open and she shouts in surprise as she drops through.

Devraj turns and Ankita is gone.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

Ankita!

He moves toward the wall with the outline of the hand and traces the tip of his index finger over it.

He then places his hand inside and presses forward. The trap door opens again and he falls through. He screams as he plummets down a steep slide.

Several moments later, he collides with a solid dirt floor. He stands carefully and brushes himself off.

He then moves carefully toward a lit doorway.

DEVRAJ

Ankita!

He slips through the doorway and sees Ankita examining a blood-red stone attached to a chain necklace.

He sees the look in her eyes and realizes she intends to keep it.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

No, Ankita, you can't keep it.

ANKITA

Why not?

DEVRAJ

Because it's not yours.

Naturally, Ankita ignores him, and slides the necklace over her head.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

Ankita, put it back. It's not yours.

Again, Ankita ignores him.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

All right. But put it in my bag so that we don't attract attention.

She removes it from around her neck and puts it into his bag.

As the two step into the next room, the stone in the bag glows red. Ankita sees an imagined vision of arrows shooting from the walls.

Devraj steps on a raised brick that triggers the release of the arrows. Ankita shoves him to the ground.

Devraj lands on his stomach and Ankita falls on top of him just as the arrows breeze past. The breeze ruffles Ankita's hair and the tips of the arrows embed themselves in the opposite wall.

Ankita slides off of Devraj and struggles to her feet. She then offers a hand to Devraj to help him stand. He gets to his feet and stares at the wall where the arrows are imbedded.

His eyes widen.

ANKITA

Watch where you're stepping. There could be more traps.

They head back the same way they came in.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE ASHAL -LATER

Devraj leans against the wall, frustration evident in his features.

DEVRAJ

There must be a way out.

Devraj leans back further and his clothing catches on a switch. He pushes away from the wall, which throws the switch.

Stone frisbees fly from openings in the wall. Devraj doesn't notice them as he is facing away from them.

ANKITA

Devraj!

DEVRAJ

What?

The frisbees graze the loose material of his clothing before flying into the next room. They shatter against the thick wall.

Ankita sighs in relief.

ANKITA

Just don't touch anything else.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE ASHAL -LATER

Devraj and Ankita come around a corner. Devraj grimaces and throws his arms up in frustration.

DEVRAJ

We've passed that same pillar with
those same etchings five times now!
We've been going in circles!

ANKITA

How can you be sure? They all look
the same.

Ankita moves forward to examine the markings on the pillar.

DEVRAJ

This place is like a rat's maze
without end! It'll take us days to
find the way out!

Ankita traces her fingers over the markings and her brow
furrows.

ANKITA

Devraj, look.

Devraj turns and moves toward her. When he reaches the
pillar, he notes the familiarity of the symbols.

DEVRAJ

Are those what I think they are?

ANKITA

Symbols from one of the lost
languages--Hebrew. The language was
used to curse 21st century grave
robbers who disturbed the resting
place of Pope Fernando.

DEVRAJ

The eccentric religious leader who
thought he was a reincarnation of
Christ, the Hebrew savior?

DEVRAJ

What does it say?

ANKITA

I think it says "press the center
to exit".

Before Devraj can protest, a curious Ankita presses the
center of the pillar with the heel of her palm.

A trap door opens beneath them and the two shout in surprise
as they plummet. They speed down a slippery, spiral slide.
The farther they fall, the faster they fall. Suddenly, they
reach the end of the slide.

Devraj drops off of the end of the slide and lands with a loud thud on his back. He struggles to sit up only to have a still screaming Ankita land on him and the weight of her on top of him forces him back to the ground.

ANKITA
Oh, I'm sorry, Devraj.

DEVRAJ
(mumbles)
'S all right.

Once Ankita regains her breath, she shuffles off of him and stands shakily. She then offers a hand to Devraj and helps him up.

Devraj brushes mud off of his tunic and his brow furrows in concern.

DEVRAJ
Are you hurt?

ANKITA
No, I'm all right. You?

DEVRAJ
I'm fine.

The two take in their surroundings. They are in a dark, dank room. The wet ground squelches under their feet. Ankita wrinkles her nose.

ANKITA
What is that horrid stench?

DEVRAJ
It must be the mud.

He smells the mess on his hands. His head jerks back and his eyes widen. He gags in disgust.

DEVRAJ
Whew! By the Gods, that's horrible!

Ankita looks around nervously.

ANKITA
(whispers)
It's so dark.

Devraj frowns and removes the bag from his shoulder. He then digs through the bag until he finds a SLEEK, SILVER NUCLEAR HANDHELD LIGHT.

He pulls the light from the bag. He taps the side with his palm and the light flickers on. He directs the light at the dark tunnel ahead.

DEVRAJ

Better?

ANKITA

Much better. Do you think the tunnel leads to the surface?

DEVRAJ

It might.

Again, Ankita stares down the tunnel before them. She nods and the two make their way toward the tunnel.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - LATER

Devraj and Ankita struggle through the ankle-deep water and muddy ground at their feet. The tunnel begins to narrow.

Ankita grabs Devraj's hand and holds it tightly as he guides them through the tunnel.

Both start when the ground beneath their feet begins to shudder. The shudders continue and dirt rains down on them.

ANKITA

Devraj, what's going on?

The shudders grow more violent and boulders are loosened from the cave walls. Devraj presses Ankita against the wall and covers her body with his.

Devraj clings tightly to Ankita as the rocks fall all around them. The shudders gradually fade to nothing. Devraj pushes away from the wall. He then checks Ankita to be sure she's all right and brushes the dirt from her clothes and hair as he does so.

DEVRAJ

Are you all right?

ANKITA

What was that?

DEVRAJ

Earthquake. Master Vidur said they're common near areas of high volcanic activity.

ANKITA

At least that tells us part of
where we are. We'll have to climb
up in order to reach the surface.

Devraj turns to look behind them. A wall of rock blocks the
tunnels behind them.

DEVRAJ

Well, we can't go back now. Forward
is the only way.

Ankita again grips Devraj's free hand tightly. Devraj then
shines the nuclear handheld light ahead of them and the two
continue to walk.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE ASHAL -LATER

The tunnel leads to the secondary chamber of a cave with a
high ceiling. Water drips from overhead stalactites. Embedded
in the walls are yule marble stones that reflect light from
the handheld light.

Devraj and Ankita make their way around the stalagmites that
cover the floor and avoid small piles of bat guano.

The entrance to the chamber is also the only ground-level
exit. They must climb the wall to reach the ledge and passage
to the surface.

They stand in front of the wall and glance up at the ledge.
Devraj swallows roughly.

DEVRAJ

Up and out, I suppose.

Devraj grips two rocks that jut out from the wall and feels
with his right foot for another. As he reaches for a higher
handhold, he pulls himself up and searches with his left foot
for another foothold. He repeats this process several times.

Once Devraj is a few feet up, Ankita begins to climb the wall
as well.

Devraj stops climbing for a moment to catch his breath. Sweat
rolls down his face. His hands, slick with sweat, struggle to
grasp the rocks. His feet slip on the rocks and his grip on
the rocks with his hands is the only thing that prevents him
from falling.

He grits his teeth in effort and reaches up with his right
hand. He then pulls himself up and places his right foot on
one of the higher rocks.

At last, he reaches the top and scrambles onto the ledge. He gasps for breath.

ANKITA

Devraj!

Ankita, who is near the top, extends a hand. Devraj turns and grabs it. Her hand slips from his grip. He quickly wipes his hands on his clothes to remove the slick sweat and grabs her hand again. This time, he keeps his hold. He grunts with effort as he struggles to pull her the rest of the way onto the ledge. Once she is on the ledge, both collapse and gasp for breath.

DEVRAJ

Tough part's done then.

Ankita nods and stands. She brushes the dirt and mud from her clothes and then turns to stare at the opening before them.

ANKITA

One way out, I suppose.

Devraj stands as well and the two make their way toward the opening.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE ASHAL -LATER

Devraj turns a corner and sees a door at the end of the corridor. Light peeks through the cracks of the door.

He runs toward it. When he reaches it, he grasps the door handle and tugs hard.

Nothing happens. He tugs harder. Again, nothing happens. The door is locked.

DEVRAJ

Gods of the Sea! Not again! That's
the tenth door we've tried. Locked!
We'll never get out of here!

He throws up his hands in a dramatic gesture of defeat.

ANKITA

Maybe there's a key.

Ankita moves forward and glides her fingers over the symbols engraved into the door.

DEVRAJ

Ankita, the door is--

Ankita accidentally presses a sun symbol and the door lock clicks. The door then creaks open. Ankita jumps back, her eyes wide with surprise.

DEVRAJ

--locked.

Devraj's eyes widen and he approaches the doorway. He then extends his hand outward waving it to check for an invisible barrier.

The doorway is clear. Devraj and Ankita exchange a look of amazement before the two exit the temple.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE OF THE ASHAL - AROUND A CORNER - CONTINUOUS

A MAN watches them leave. We only see the back of his head. Once Ankita and Devraj have left, he turns toward two other men whose faces are obscured by shadow.

MAN 1

They have the stone. I saw it in the lad's bag.

MAN 2

Let's get after 'em, then.

Man 1 extends his arm and blocks the second man's path.

MAN 1

Not yet. Let's watch 'em first. I'd like to know how they knew where it was.

EXT. EDGE OF THE RIVER (NOYO RIVER) - DOWNSTREAM - LATER

Ankita sits cross-legged on the ground with her arms wrapped around her as Devraj blows onto the glowing embers within the wood. Gradually, the embers become flames. Devraj sits back, examining his handy work.

Ankita digs through their bags and finds a blanket, then wraps it around herself.

Several moments later, Devraj is shivering despite the fire. Ankita smiles and rolls her eyes. She then holds the blanket away from her.

ANKITA

Come on, then.

Devraj hesitates before he steps around the fire and sits down cross-legged on the ground next to her. He slides an arm around her waist as she wraps the blanket around the two of them, pulling her closer to him.

He then pulls the stone from his pocket and turns it over in his hand. He notices that its back contains similar marks to those on the temple walls.

ANKITA

Maybe it belongs to a God! Maybe it contains all of his powers!

Devraj shakes his head and then pauses before he comes up with a theory of his own.

DEVRAJ

Maybe it belonged to a queen, carved for her by her most talented craftsman.

ANKITA

Maybe it's some sort of magical talisman that allows the wearer to go back in time.

DEVRAJ

Don't be ridiculous. It's probably just a piece of costume jewelry. We should probably look for more permanent shelter until we find a way to get home. Who knows? Maybe we'll find an abandoned village or something.

It's then that he notices Ankita has fallen asleep with her head on his shoulder. He moves carefully so that they're lying on the ground facing the fire with the blanket over them. She shifts in her sleep and throws an arm over him, burying her face into his shoulder. He smiles and closes his eyes, drifting off to sleep.

EXT. EDGE OF THE RIVER (NOYO RIVER) - DOWNSTREAM - NEXT MORNING

Devraj sits bolt upright, gasping for breath. Ankita stirs and awakens.

ANKITA

What is it, Devraj?

DEVRAJ

Just a nightmare.

He turns away from her. Ankita frowns and folds the blanket and slips it back into her bag.

ANKITA
What was it about?

DEVRAJ
You died.

She immediately stands and wraps her arms around him. He brushes off her concern, but accepts her attempt to comfort him.

The two remain wrapped up in one another for several long moments, before Devraj removes himself from her embrace and begins to gather their belongings.

EXT. FOREST (JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

Devraj and Ankita hear leaves rustle and stop. Devraj then pushes Ankita behind him.

DEVRAJ
Stay behind me.

A tall, heavyset MAN covered in dirt jumps from the bush with a knife in hand. Devraj and the heavyset man stare at each other for several moments. Ankita pokes her head out from behind Devraj and tries to talk to them.

ANKITA
Hello? Can you understand me?

The man looks at Ankita for a moment, surprised, then he smirks.

TALL THIEF 1
Look here, lads. The pretty one can talk.

The men all laugh. Ankita glares at them with her hands on her hips.

ANKITA
Of course I can talk. I'm not stupid.

DEVRAJ MUTTERS--

DEVRAJ
Ankita, shut up and stay behind me.

Naturally, Ankita ignores him and moves to stand in front of him.

ANKITA

And I resent you implying that I am.

TALL THIEF 1

Cheeky lass, aren't you? I think you need to be taught some manners.

The man raises the knife. Devraj shoves Ankita into the bushes and ducks when the man swings the knife at him. Before the man can react, Devraj drives his shoulder hard into the man's stomach. The blow winds the man. Devraj then drives his fist hard into the man's face and the man falls to the ground, unconscious.

Two more men jump out, one short and thin and the other tall and thin.

ANKITA

Devraj!

He turns to find them surrounded by a small circle of four men. Ankita jumps to her feet and backs toward him. He returns his attention to the two men in front of him.

The three stare at each other for a moment.

TALL THIEF 2

Give us the bag, kid, and nobody gets hurt.

DEVRAJ

No.

A hand slides into Devraj's hand and small, warm fingers entwine with his. Ankita gives Devraj's hand a tight squeeze and Devraj glances to his left.

He sees a long, thick wooden branch lying on the ground. He glances back at the two men for a moment before he lunges for the branch and once he has a firm grip, he swings it at them.

The tall, thin man grasps the other end and laughs. The man then jerks and twists the branch, which causes Devraj to fall to the ground. All of the men laugh.

Devraj glances behind him and sees one of the men grip Ankita's arm. She swats the man's chest with her other fist to get free. The man then twists her arm and she cries out in pain.

The man laughs and Devraj looses it. Devraj sprints toward the man. He grunts with effort as he rams his foot into the man's shin. The man cries out in pain. He releases Ankita's arm and clutches at his shin.

Devraj then jams his fist into the man's neck and hammers into the man's jugular. The man drops to the ground.

Another of the men jerks Devraj's arms behind his back and holds them there.

The short, thin man slaps Devraj across the face. Ankita taps the short man on the shoulder and he turns. Her fist slams into the man's face and breaks his nose with a loud, painful crunch.

The scene distracts the man holding Devraj long enough for Devraj to plow his elbow hard back into the man's abdomen and whack the man across the face with a roundhouse kick, knocking the man out.

The remaining two men panic and run away.

SHORT THIEF

Come on, Sam. Let's get outta here!

Devraj and Ankita turn toward one another with stunned expressions on their faces.

EXT. FOREST (JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

Devraj and Ankita slow down, breathing heavily. They each lean against a tree and then turn toward one another.

DEVRAJ

Did we just...?

ANKITA

There are people here, Devraj!

DEVRAJ

Of course there are.

ANKITA

But there shouldn't be, you idiot. Don't you ever pay attention in lessons? Everyone who stayed on the surface was killed by the pollution, remember?

ANKITA (CONT'D)

Do you think the others know yet?

DEVRAJ

What you don't seem to comprehend is that we just knocked out three grown men and escaped with only a few scratches!

ANKITA

Yes. The question is how.

Ankita pauses. Her eyes widen.

ANKITA (CONT'D)

The red stone.

Devraj opens his mouth to protest, but Ankita shakes her head.

ANKITA (CONT'D)

How else do you explain what we just did?

The two stare at each other and Devraj pauses before nodding.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST (JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

As the two come to the edge of the forest, they see an OLD MAN, FATHER SHARMA sitting cross-legged beside a small pond with his eyes closed. He's dressed in a brown monk's robe.

FATHER SHARMA

Good morrow, travelers.

Devraj and Ankita jump when he speaks. They didn't know he was aware of their presence. The old man opens an eye and turns toward them.

FATHER SHARMA

You both look as though you could use a hot meal. Come.

The old man stands and moves away. Before them stands a huge temple similar in appearance to a mosque with columns like those of the Parthenon.

The two look at one another, shrug, and follow the old man.

INT. TEMPLE - MEDITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The three sit cross-legged in a small circle toward the center of the room. Devraj and Ankita tell Father Sharma about their discovery of the stone and the men who tried to take it from them.

DEVRAJ

This stone must be very important to them for them to try so hard to retrieve it.

FATHER SHARMA

Indeed it must be. May I see this stone of which you speak?

Devraj pulls it from his bag and gives it to the priest. Sharma smiles as he turns the stone over in his hands to verify its authenticity.

FATHER SHARMA

The stone you carry is indeed the Ashal. You have heard the stories?

ANKITA

Yes. How many people's memories are there inside?

FATHER SHARMA

Many millions, my dear.

Ankita's eyes widen in stunned amazement.

FATHER SHARMA (CONT'D)

This stone may seem outwardly limited in its storage capacities, but it can hold an infinite number of memories within it.

ANKITA

Why would anyone create such a gem?

FATHER SHARMA

That, child, remains unknown.

INT. TEMPLE - MEDITATION ROOM - LATER

DEVRAJ

Can you show us...how this Ashal works, I mean?

Father Sharma nods and sits on the floor at the center of the temple. Devraj and Ankita do the same.

FATHER SHARMA

You must both grasp the chain.

Ankita hesitates before grasping the chain and then Devraj's hand. All three close their eyes as the priest begins chanting.

FATHER SHARMA (CONT'D)
Ashal reveal, Ashal enlighten,
Ashal teach.

Devraj feels the chain under his hands grow hot and he opens his eyes to discover the stone glowing.

MONTAGE:

1. Tiberius as a young boy fighting hand-to-hand. His opponent, an older man, grabs his wrist and flips him onto his back.

2. Melkesh as a young girl muttering a spell as her open hand faces a tree. A ball of energy flies from her palm, putting a hole in the tree.

3. Tiberius as an older boy fighting hand-to-hand. Melkesh walks by and an infatuated smile crosses his lips. His distraction leaves an opening for the boy Tiberius is fighting and Tiberius turns back only to be punched in the face. A group of girls watches the scene and they giggle.

4. Tiberius carries a jug of water from the stream atop his head and notices Melkesh. An infatuated smile crosses his lips just before he falls into a ditch in his path that he hadn't noticed.

5. Tiberius opens his eyes and Melkesh looks down at him. She smiles slightly and he feels a wet cloth on his forehead.

6. Now in their late teens, Tiberius and Melkesh lie together on a bed of pine needles kissing.

7. The Malum Res tortures Melkesh's mother and father. Melkesh sobs as she watches from a distance.

8. Tiberius and Melkesh sit beside a fire in a clearing. Melkesh cries into Tiberius's shoulder and he whispers soothing words to her as he rocks her.

9. Tiberius and Melkesh exchanging vows in a small clearing in the woods with a priest as the officiator.

10. Tiberius slashes a man's throat with his sword and lets out a war cry.

11. Melkesh shouts. "Incedio exuro intus!" The cloaked man who runs at her bursts into flames and lets out a raw cry of agony as the flames turn him to ash.

12. Tiberius sobs violently as Melkesh's eyes close and she releases her last breath.

13. Tiberius stares out from the cliff at the field of lifeless corpses.

END MONTAGE.

Devraj's eyes snap open and he stares blankly for a moment. He blinks and stands, then sprints from the room.

Ankita glances at Sharma briefly before she stands and runs after him.

EXT. FOREST (JACKSON STATE FOREST) - LATER

Ankita approaches a clearing and sees Devraj leaning back against a tree. He hugs his knees to his chest and buries his face into his arms.

She approaches and stands beside him.

ANKITA

Devraj, please come inside. We should talk about what we saw.

DEVRAJ

Leave me be.

Ankita lays a hand on his shoulder.

ANKITA

It'll be getting dark soon, Devraj.

Devraj shrugs off her hand.

DEVRAJ

I don't want to talk about it.

ANKITA

Please, Devraj? I don't wish to leave you out here all alone.

DEVRAJ

Leave me be.

She stares at him for another few moments before she turns and walks back toward the temple.

INT. TEMPLE - INITIATE SLEEPING QUARTERS - NEXT MORNING

Ankita reaches out a hand and feels the bed beside her, expecting to find Devraj there. But all she feels is the mattress.

Her eyes snap wide open when she realizes he must not have come in last night. She jumps from the bed and slides on her traveling cloak and shoes. She then grabs her bag and rushes from the room.

EXT. TEMPLE - LATER

With her bag thrown over her shoulder, she moves toward the forest. As she walks, she waves at the priest.

SHE SHOUTS--

ANKITA

Thank you, Father Sharma!

She reaches the edge of the forest and returns her attention to the path.

ANKITA (CONT'D)

When I find that idiot...

She continues to follow the path deeper and deeper into the forest.

EXT. FOREST (MENDOCINO FOREST) - DEVRAJ - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Devraj shuffles down the path and through the trees with a contemplative look on his face. He kicks a rock and it goes rolling down the road. His brow furrows in concentration.

DEVRAJ (V.O.)

What do these memories have to do
with my dreams?

FLASHBACK:

A dark, cloaked figure stands over Melkesh's mother, cackling evilly. The hood falls back to reveal the hideous face of a semi-human creature.

END FLASHBACK.

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

Whoever or whatever I might have
been, he was a part of it. I'm sure
of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE RIVER (NOYO RIVER) - DOWNSTREAM - THAT NIGHT

Devraj sets the pile of wood in his arms down beside the circle of stones and moves toward the river. He kneels on the bank beside the river and cups his hands. He then dips his hands into the water and splashes it on his face.

ANKITA
(faraway)
Devraj!

DEVRAJ
Ankita?!

ANKITA
Devraj!

Moments later, she emerges from the trees and sprints toward him. She throws her arms around him and hugs him tightly for several moments.

Devraj pulls back and gazes at her sternly.

DEVRAJ
Are you insane? Wandering around in the dark alone? Someone could grab you from behind and there would be no one to save you.

Ankita's features tighten in anger.

ANKITA
Me? You're the one who left me behind this morning! Not so much as a word! What were you thinking wandering off alone like that? Anything could have happened! What if I'd never found you?

Their gazes lock and both remain silent for several moments. Ankita's eyes glisten with tears and she grips his hand tightly.

ANKITA (CONT'D)
We're in this together, Devraj. You don't have to go through this alone.

Devraj nods as his own eyes fill with tears and sighs, then embraces her again.

EXT. JACKSON STATE FOREST - CABIN - LATER

Devraj and Ankita approach a cabin and see an OLDER WOMAN outside tending to her plants. She hears them approach and turns toward them.

OLD WOMAN
Greetings, travelers. You look
weary. Come. Rest.

The older woman then enters the cabin. Devraj and Ankita shrug and follow her inside.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Devraj and Ankita sit on the floor beside a warm fire. They sip hot tea. The old woman smiles knowingly.

OLD WOMAN
You seek the Malum Res. I have been
expecting you.

DEVRAJ
You have?

OLD WOMAN
The spirits have told me of your
return.

ANKITA
What else have the spirits said?

OLD WOMAN
They have foretold of a gathering
of the Army of Darkness. This world
is once again threatened by the
Malum Res. You have been sent by
them to defeat him once and for
all.

Ankita shakes her head.

ANKITA
It cannot be. He was--he was
imprisoned deep within Earth's
core. In my dream, the witches
imprisoned him.

OLD WOMAN
Yes, child. He was. But he has
escaped.

DEVRAJ

How?

OLD WOMAN

By means beyond even the spirits' understanding.

ANKITA

What else can you tell us about this Malum Res?

OLD WOMAN

You don't remember. The Malum Res is the ultimate evil, his powers nearly limitless. However, there are protections on the Great City that even the Malum Res can't puzzle. But if he were to get his hands on the Ashal, within which the memories of the highest-ranking Light Guardians reside, he could overpower even the strongest of the Guardians' protections. This could very well spell disaster for not only this world, but for all worlds.

INT. CABIN - LATER

The older woman goes to bed and leaves Devraj and Ankita alone by the fire.

ANKITA WHISPERS FEARFULLY--

ANKITA

What are we going to do, Devraj?

Devraj's feature's tighten.

DEVRAJ

We'll just have gather an army of our own.

EXT. NEAR THE SMALL VILLAGE OF TANR NOKOR - LATER

Devraj and Ankita arrive at a clearing. As they look ahead, they wear expressions of awe.

Before them is a small town that sits on the bank of the river. The town is simple and quaint in appearance. Its buildings are made of dark grey stone and the roofs are made of dried mud and redwood shingles. One tall, skinny building rises high above the rest. In an opening near the top of this structure, sunlight glints off of a large bronze bell as it swings to and fro, CHIMING THRICE.

Devraj and Ankita exchange excited grins and run down the dirt path that leads to the village.

FADE TO:

EXT. TANR NOKOR MARKETPLACE - LATER

SUPER: Tanr Nokor Marketplace, Mahat Vana Province

Devraj and Ankita wander down the dirt streets of the city marketplace, which are crammed with people and wooden stands displaying items from food to clothing.

Devraj bumps into someone.

DEVRAJ
I'm sorry, I--

He trails off and gapes at the older woman, who is very similar in appearance to the Aerydonians.

The woman, offended by his gaze, HMPHS and storms away.

Before Devraj can react, a boy collides hard and fast with him, sending him toppling to the ground. The boy struggles against him and Devraj instinctively reaches out and grasps the boy's arm. Suddenly, the weight of the boy is gone. He looks up to see a woman scolding a child.

MOIRREY
What have I told you about running
off, Pherick?

Ankita extends her hand and Devraj takes it. He pushes off of the ground with his other hand. He stands and she release his hand. The woman gives Devraj an apologetic look.

MOIRREY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. Pherick doesn't always look where he's going. Are you all right?

DEVRAJ

I'm fine.

MOIRREY

I'm Moirrey, by the way.

DEVRAJ

I'm Devraj. And this is my friend, Ankita.

MOIRREY

So...where do you reside?

DEVRAJ

Far away. We're travelers.

MOIRREY

Oh, how wonderful. Where are you staying?

DEVRAJ

Actually...

ANKITA

We don't have anywhere to stay.

MOIRREY

Nowhere to stay? Then you must stay with us...at least until you are ready to leave Tanr Nokor.

Before Devraj or Ankita can protest, Moirrey turns and heads toward her home. Devraj, Ankita, and Pherick follow.

INT. HOME OF MOIRREY - DINING AREA - LATER

Devraj, Ankita, Moirrey and Pherick sit at a square wooden table. Upon the table sit several dishes including rice, squash and a chicken-like meat.

DEVRAJ

I couldn't help but notice that your storage building was only half constructed.

MOIRREY

Our village was raided by a group of men a few days ago.

(MORE)

MOIRREY (CONT'D)

We were fortunate that our home survived the raids intact.

DEVRAJ

Raided? By whom?

MOIRREY

We don't know who they are. Cloaks concealed their appearance.

DEVRAJ

Why would they raid your village?

MOIRREY

Most likely, they sought something that they thought one of our people had.

DEVRAJ

What could they possibly want that they thought one of your people had?

MOIRREY

No one knows. Many of those that they questioned are either dead or are too traumatized to recall the incident.

INT. HOME OF MOIRREY - BEDROOM - LATER

Devraj lies on his side on a bed of straw and feathers facing away from the doorway. He looks out on the night sky and the river as he listens to the sounds of the night. He then hears footsteps approaching. He closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep. Ankita lies down on the bed behind him and he tenses.

A pair of arms wrap around his middle and he feels soft, steady puffs of warm breath on the back of his neck.

ANKITA

Goodnight, Devraj.

DEVRAJ

Goodnight, Ankita.

The two fall asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

DREAM - INT. SEMI-DARK ROOM

Devraj sits in a room whose walls are made of dark stone held in place by mud.

The room is empty with the exception of two piles of straw. The room is windowless and the only light within it comes from an oil lamp sitting on a tree stump.

His gaze returns to the two piles of straw upon which now sit two older men, one tall and thin, the other short and stout, both of whom are talking animatedly.

TALL MAN

We must find a place to hide it.

Devraj returns his attention to the scroll in front of him and pretends to be studying.

SHORT MAN

But where? There isn't a place on Earth that we can hide it where he won't find it.

TALL MAN

There must be somewhere...

SHORT MAN

What if we disguised it?

TALL MAN

How?

SHORT MAN

(eyes widen)

Within the queen's red gem.

Curious now, Devraj listens for more.

The short man freezes and a look of horror crosses his face.

SHORT MAN (CONT'D)

He approaches.

The short man then moves toward Devraj and grasps his.

SHORT MAN

Tiberius! You must go, my son.

The man jerks him to a standing position and then all but shoves Devraj out the back door. Devraj tries to open the door. He can't. It's locked.

He presses his ear to the door, trying to hear what's going on. He hears the muffled voices of the elders as well as another voice, which is young, confident, harsh, and commanding. Suddenly, he hears someone scream.

Afraid, he stumbles back from the door and runs toward the woods. He is short of breath, but the fear drives him to continue running. The farther he runs, the shorter his breaths become until he's suffocating between the fear and the lack of oxygen. He slows and his legs give way under him. He crawls toward a nearby puddle of water and stares at the face reflected back at him. The face isn't his. It's Tiberius's.

INT. HOME OF MOIRREY - VERY EARLY MORNING

Devraj's eyes snap open and he bolts upright. He gasps for breath. His gaze shifts to Ankita next to him, who continues to sleep peacefully. He feels cold metal against his chest and looks down. The necklace with the red stone hangs about his neck. His brow furrows as he tries to recall how the stone came to be around his neck. He lies back on the bed, pondering the dream.

EXT. HOME OF MOIRREY - LATER

Moirrey emerges from her home with a few containers of rice and a loaf of bread. Ankita puts the containers into her bag and smiles.

ANKITA

Thank you, Moirrey, for your kindness.

Moirrey hugs them both.

MOIRREY

Good luck, dears.

Devraj and Ankita follow the path out of the village while they wave goodbye to Moirrey and Pherick.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj and Ankita sit beneath a tall tree eating part of the supply of bread and rice that Moirrey gave them.

ANKITA

What happened to the men?

DEVRAJ

I don't know. They shoved me out the back door shortly after. I pressed my ear to the door, but the voices were muffled. I couldn't understand what they were saying. When I heard screaming from inside the hut, I ran.

ANKITA

Do you think it's another memory? One from your previous life?

DEVRAJ

Possibly.

ANKITA

Maybe we were meant to find the stone--to protect it.

DEVRAJ

Then whatever happens, we must ensure that this Malum Res doesn't get his hands on the stone.

DREAM - EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The moon lights a clearing in the forest. In the center of that clearing, a man and woman lay on the ground, their features obscured by shadow. They're holding one another tightly as they kiss. The sound of heavy breathing grows louder and the sound of a heartbeat grows louder and speeds up.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Light falls on the woman's neck as the man kisses it.
2. The woman's hands go to the back of the man's neck and twine. She arches her back, thrusting her still-covered abdomen forward.
3. The woman calls out "Tiberius" breathily and her voice echoes as though far away.
4. The man, Tiberius, then kisses his way back up to her mouth, brushing his lips against hers.
5. Light falls on the man's face. He looks very much like Devraj, only older and more chiseled with light blond hair. "Open your eyes," he urges.

6. We see the woman's closed eyes up close. Out of frame, Tiberius urges again, "Beloved, open your eyes." The woman's eyes open and we see the sparkling blue eyes of Ankita.

End Series of Shots

EXT. EDGE OF THE RIVER (NOYO RIVER) - DOWNSTREAM - MORNING.

Devraj wakes with a start. Cold sweat covers his face. The sun peaks over the horizon and spills beautiful morning light into the enclosed room. He glances over at Ankita, who still sleeps peacefully. He releases a heavy sigh and lies back down. He stares blankly at the sky for a few moments before he rises to his feet and begins to pack.

EXT. VILLAGE OF NAGARA USARA - EVENING

Devraj and Ankita walk down the empty main street. The village looks abandoned.

Several yards ahead, they see an adobe-style building. They walk toward it and their gazes lock for a moment before they step over the threshold.

INT. ADOBE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Dust hangs in the air and Devraj coughs as he strides toward the covered window at the other end of the room. He pushes open the rotting wood shutters, which fall to the ground outside.

The dust slowly begins to settle and more of the room becomes visible. Items such as clothing, tools, and potsherds lay all over the floor.

Devraj drops to one knee and picks up a cloth doll, then turns to Ankita. Their gazes lock and neither says anything. A sudden scratching noise startles them and they both turn to look for the source.

A blanket sits up on its own, quivering. From beneath the blanket, a child whimpers. Ankita moves toward the child with caution and then pulls the blanket carefully away.

A FEMALE CHILD (9) with dark hair and dark eyes sits huddled there. She flinches when Ankita reaches out to touch her arm.

ANKITA

Shh. It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you.

FLASHBACK - UNKNOWN VILLAGE

A SMALL BOY edges slowly away, his eyes alight with fear.

MELKESH

Do not fear me, child. I mean you
no harm.

Tiberius watches Melkesh attempt to soothe the child. Melkesh stops and drops to one knee.

MELKESH

I am here to help you. Your mother
is worried for you.

The boy stays still. She smiles kindly.

MELKESH

I mean you no harm. If you come
with me, I will take you to your
mother.

The boy hesitates before he moves slowly toward her and takes her hand.

END FLASHBACK

Devraj's brow furrows as he watches Ankita soothe the girl, the scene eerily similar to that of his memory. The girl glances at Ankita's hand and then at Ankita. Ankita nods and removes her hand.

ANKITA

What's your name?

KAMALIKA

K-Kamalika.

ANKITA

Kamalika. That's a pretty name.

KAMALIKA

It means small.

ANKITA

Where's your mommy, Kamalika?

KAMALIKA

The big mean man took her.

ANKITA

What big mean man?

KAMALIKA

I don't know...but he's really big,
really mean, and really ugly. Mommy
told me to hide...so I did.

DEVRAJ

We should keep moving if we want to
reach the next town by dark.

ANKITA

What about Kamalika?

DEVRAJ

We'll have to take her with us I
suppose.

Ankita turns to Kamalika.

ANKITA

Will you come with us?

Ankita extends her hand, palm up, and Kamalika glances from
the hand to Ankita's face to the hand and back to Ankita's
face. Kamalika hesitates.

KAMALIKA

Will you help me find my mommy?

Devraj and Ankita exchange a glance before Ankita turns back
toward Kamalika.

ANKITA

We'll do our best to help you find
her.

Kamalika stares hard at her.

KAMALIKA

You promise?

Ankita smiles.

ANKITA

We promise.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - DUSK

Devraj, Ankita and Kamalika approach the edge of the forest.
As they look across the large clearing, they see an
encampment. Devraj and Ankita exchange a glance. Devraj then
grabs Kamalika's hand and the three continue toward the camp.

ENT. ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

The three approach an OLDER WOMAN, MALINA (60s) shouting orders to other women and children. The woman turns toward them.

WOMAN (MALINA)
Which village do you come from? For certainly you are not of our village.

DEVRAJ
My friend, Ankita and I are travelers from a distant land.

WOMAN (MALINA)
And the child?

KAMALIKA
I am of Nagara Usara.

WOMAN (MALINA)
You are welcome to travel with us.

ANKITA
To where are you traveling?

WOMAN (MALINA)
We must hurry to gain the cover of the trees before the Malum Res and his armies emerge from their daytime shelter.

The woman (MALINA) rushes off to help another woman pack her things.

EXT. FOREST - LATER (NIGHT)

Devraj, Ankita, Malina, and Kamalika walk together discussing the recent raids on villages.

MALINA
Our village was raided by the cloaked Terrorizers just three weeks ago. We've been evading their armies ever since.

DEVRAJ
Have other villages been raided as well?

MALINA

Dozens upon dozens, yes. It's most peculiar. Word came from my sister two days before our village was attacked pleading with me to join her in her cottage, stating that the Terrorizers avoided costal villages.

DEVRAJ

For what reason would they avoid costal villages?

MALINA

No one is quite certain why.

Devraj opens his mouth to reply but is cut off by several women screaming in fear.

Malina's eyes widen and she bolts toward the front of the group.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Devraj, Ankita, and Kamalika approach.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (50s) kneels on the ground...she cradles the lifeless body of a dark-haired boy (9)...she sobs in anguish.

WOMAN

(sobs)

My baby! My little boy!

Malina kneels beside the WOMAN and wraps her arms around the woman. Malina then turns to Ankita.

MALINA

He's been missing since the Terrorizers raided our village.

Ankita stares on with a thoughtful expression. She then approaches the duo and kneels in front of the woman. Ankita's gaze drops to the lifeless body and she stares for a couple moments.

ANKITA

I can help him.

DEVRAJ

What do you mean you can help him?
He's dead.

The woman sobs louder and clutches her dead son tighter.

Ankita ignores Devraj. She places her hand over the boy's heart and closes her eyes.

| | | |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p>ANKITA Exsisto existo, parvulus. Exsisto existo vacuus morbus vel malum. Exsisto existo quod ago iterum.</p> | <p>ANKITA (SUBTITLE) Rise, child. Rise empty sickness or evil. Rise, child and live again.</p> | <p>* *</p> |
|---|--|----------------|

Several moments later, the boy draws in a gasping breath. His eyelids flutter and then open.

BOY
Mama?

The woman gasps and sobs, then hugs the boy tightly to her.

WOMAN
Sanjiv! My darling boy!

The woman turns to Ankita.

WOMAN
I don't know what you did or how
you did it, but thank you.

The others stare at her with a mixture of awe and fear.

DEVRAJ
How did you do that?

Ankita stares at her hands, stunned.

ANKITA
I don't know.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj and Ankita walk through the trees. Devraj hesitates a moment, then--

DEVRAJ
How did you--

ANKITA
I told you! I don't know!

DEVRAJ
You sure seemed to know when you
were doing it.

ANKITA

I--it was--I just reacted, all right?

DEVRAJ

No, it's not all right! You can't just do something without thinking about the consequences!

ANKITA

Look, I don't know what I did or why it worked and I'm not going to try to puzzle it out, especially if you're going to criticize me about it!

A tense silence falls between them for several moments.

ANKITA

Do you think that Kamalika will be all right with Malina?

DEVRAJ

I'm sure she'll be fine.

ANKITA

I know, but it still doesn't feel right leaving her behind. We promised we'd help her find her mother.

DEVRAJ

Malina will help her now. We've got an army to build.

ANKITA

But where do we start?

Devraj shrugs, but says nothing.

EXT. FOREST - NEXT MORNING

Ankita bathes in the river and Devraj sits on the bank beneath a tall tree.

Devraj hears men whispering.

MAN 1 (V.O.)

(whispers)

He only wants one.

MAN 2 (V.O.)
(whispers)
Shut up! They'll hear you!

Devraj's brow furrows. He then stands and moves toward the voices.

RIVER

Ankita exits the river. We only see her face. She reaches for her clothes and puts them on. Once she finishes dressing, She frowns and looks around for Devraj.

ANKITA
Devraj! Where are you?

She hears a ghostly whisper and turns toward the river. She hears the whisper again.

RIVER
Run, child! Run!

Ankita listens so intently to the whisper that she doesn't notice A MAN coming up behind her.

The man grabs her from behind and covers her mouth before she can scream. He's one of a gang of thieves. She drives her foot into the in-step of the man's foot. He cries out in pain and releases his grip on her mouth.

ANKITA
Devraj! Help!

FOREST

Devraj turns and pales. He sprints through the trees back toward the river.

RIVER

A SECOND MAN wraps an arm around her neck from behind, then holds her tightly.

He presses the mouth of a flask to her lips. He holds her still and forces her to drink the liquid inside.

She struggles at first and closes her lips to prevent herself from drinking the liquid.

The man's arm around her throat presses harder, and she opens her mouth to gasp for breath. She swallows the liquid.

Her struggles slow and then cease. Her eyes close and her body goes limp in the man's arms.

MAN 2

Here, Sam...help me get her to the wagon. She's heavy.

A THIRD MAN pulls a wagon up beside them and the other two men toss her into the back onto a couple dozen bales of hay, which serve as cushioning. The two men then climb into the front and sit on the wooden seat.

SAM (MAN 1)

Come on, then, lads. Let's get out of here.

The third man, who sits in the middle, snaps the reins and the horse-like creatures take off down the dirt road and the creatures pull the wagon along bumpily behind them.

INTERCUT:

Devraj emerges from the woods and searches frantically for Ankita.

DEVRAJ

Ankita! Ankita, where are you?

Devraj stumbles and falls to the ground. He throws out his hands in front of him to prevent himself from landing on his face. He pushes himself to his knees and stares out at the river in shock for several moments.

His lips tighten and tears roll down his cheeks.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj stumbles toward a tree and leans against it.

He slides down the tree trunk and sits on the ground with his knees against his chest. He buries his face in his hands. A few moments later, he hears a woman scream and looks up. He hears the sound again and stands. He brushes his trousers off and runs toward the sound.

EXT. VILLAGE OF DUKHI - LATER

PEOPLE RUN up and down the STREETS screaming in fear. HOMES BURN. CHILDREN CRY.

OLDER MEN throw water desperately from buckets onto the burning homes while the YOUNGER MEN slash at beings in black cloaks with swords.

Devraj hears a FEMININE WHIMPER and his gaze jerks toward the sound.

A LITTLE GIRL sits in the middle of the street. She hugs her knees to her chest as tears stream down her face.

Out of the corner of his eye, one of the men wearing a black cloak stalks toward the child.

We see an IMAGINED FLASHBACK of Ankita being kidnapped in which she shouts "Devraj! Help!".

Devraj sprints toward the girl and snatches her up into his arms. He continues running.

He darts around a corner, dodges into an open door and closes it behind him.

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A figure blocks the light coming in beneath the door and the girl whimpers. Devraj covers her mouth and glances again toward the doorway. The figure remains for a few moments before moving on. Devraj hugs the girl and rocks her back and forth.

DEVRAJ

Shh. It'll be all right.

EXT. BUILDING - LATER

Devraj and the girl emerge from the building.

All of the buildings within their sight are destroyed and several continue to burn.

Devraj starts when he hears a loud "crack" and turns to see the roof of the building behind them collapse. The cave in takes two of the walls with it. The little girl clings tightly to him. She sobs in fear.

Devraj hears an elated cry and glances to the left. A WOMAN (40s) runs toward them with an expression of relief on her face.

WOMAN

Oh Ashrita!

The woman hugs the child tightly and both cry.

WOMAN

My darling! I was so afraid that
you'd been taken!

DEVRAJ

Taken?

The woman looks at him startled for a moment as though she didn't even know he was there. She then releases Alisha and hugs Devraj tightly.

WOMAN

You saved her, didn't you? I cannot
thank you enough.

At last, the woman releases him.

DEVRAJ

What do you mean by "taken"?

WOMAN

Have you not heard? The Terrorizers
have raided many villages and
abducted dozens upon dozens of
children.

DEVRAJ

Why? What use could the children
possibly be of to these men?

WOMAN

They seek a red stone that they say
has been stolen from them. They are
convinced that the thief is a
child.

Devraj stares at her for a moment, stunned.

DEVRAJ

Ankita.

He stares blankly at the woman.

EXT. FOREST - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Ankita lies in a wagon bed with her hands bound. She opens
her eyes and moans softly.

She closes her eyes again as her temples throb unmercifully.

MAN 1

'ere, lads. She's awake. Strong one, she is.

MAN 2

Jus' give 'er some more of the drink. We can't let her see where we're takin' 'er. She might find her way back, the clever lass.

Ankita jumps when she hears a loud clunk next to her ear.

MAN 2

Careful with that! Crack that bottle and the fumes will have us all dozin'.

Ankita takes advantage of their distraction and drives her foot toward the second voice. The second man grunts and grimaces in pain as she rams her foot into his stomach.

She opens her eyes and, before the first man can react, she jams her foot into his groin as hard as she can.

He groans and doubles over in pain.

The third man makes to grab her arm, but she stumbles backward, then drops from the wagon and lands hard on her backside.

She heaves herself to her feet and stumbles into the forest.

The third man hops from the wagon and sprints after her.

She almost makes it to the shelter of a cave when she stumbles and plummets to the ground. The tumble winds her and she struggles to draw in a breath.

The third man catches up with her and lifts her from the ground.

She attempts to struggle, but it's no use. The man heaves her over his shoulder and carries her back to the wagon.

EXT. VILLAGE OF DUKHI - WOMAN'S HOME - LATER

Devraj sits with the woman and the girl, ASHRITA, inside a damaged adobe building that is exposed to the night.

The woman builds a fire and lights it with a flaming torch. She then stands and replaces the torch in its wooden basket on the wall.

Ashrita blows on the embers and jerks back when the flames burst to life. She rubs her hands together and turns her palms toward the flames to warm her hands.

Devraj stares blankly at the flames for several moments.

The woman lays a hand on his shoulder and he glances toward her.

Her concerned expression steals her youth and speaks of much suffering.

WOMAN

Are you all right, child?

Devraj turns away.

DEVRAJ

I'm concerned for my friend.

WOMAN

She was taken?

DEVRAJ

Yes. By three men. It's my fault.
If I hadn't left her alone--

The woman, not knowing what to say, wraps her arms lightly around him. Devraj hugs his knees to his chest and buries his face in his arms.

INT. MUD HUT - MALUM RES'S CAMP - LATER

Ankita awakens in a room she doesn't recognize. She massages her temples and realizes her hands are no longer bound. She stands too quickly and is hit by a wave of vertigo. She sways, but keeps her balance.

She quakes in fear as she slinks toward the window and glances out it. Her eyes widen at what she sees. Out the window, BEINGS in dark cloaks surround a TALL BEING in a dark cloak.

The man at the center of the group pulls back his hood and reveals his face. He has several facial deformities. His skin hangs loosely as though it has been melted by fire and his irises glow a brilliant red. He grins to reveal two rows of nearly pointed teeth.

This man is the MALUM RES.

MALUM RES

Welcome back, my friends.

(pauses)

It has been so long since we first stood here plotting the destruction of the Guardians--and here we stand again for that same purpose.

The Malum Res glances around at the group of men.

MALUM RES

We have much to plan. The time approaches when the Light Guardians will fall once and for all.

All of the men cheer.

MALUM RES

Once we have the stone, brothers, we will no longer need to fear oppression! We will be free to use our gift as we wish!

All of the men cheer louder.

MAN 5

Long live the Brotherhood!

ALL MEN

Long live the Brotherhood!

Ankita backs away from the window.

While the men outside celebrate, Ankita huddles in a corner and hugs her knees to her chest.

EXT. VILLAGE OF DUKHI - WOMAN'S HOME - LATER

The girl, Ashrita, has gone to bed. Devraj and the woman sit across from one another as the fire crackles and burns between them. The woman tosses a few smaller sticks into the flames.

DEVRAJ

I have to find her.

The woman's head jerks up and her gaze meets his.

DEVRAJ

I have to find Ankita.

The woman stares at him. His gaze drops to his hands for a few moments. He glances up and his gaze locks with hers.

DEVRAJ

Anything that you can tell me about where she may have been taken--I would be *eternally* grateful.

WOMAN

It is rumored that the Terrorizers have a camp in the mountains. Many have seen them making their way towards them following a raid. It is perhaps a day's journey

DEVRAJ

Thank you.

Devraj gathers his belongings and loads them into his bag. The woman again stares at him, stunned.

WOMAN

You are leaving NOW? But it's too dark and too dangerous! You will be taken!

Devraj turns to stare at the woman.

DEVRAJ

If I am then so be it. But I have to save her--no matter what it takes, I HAVE to save her.

Without another word, Devraj throws the bag over his shoulder and marches off into the darkness.

EXT. MALUM RES'S CAMP - LATER

Ankita drops to her knees and gasps for breath. The short, fat man stands behind her and raises his wooden staff, then slams it across her shoulders. Ankita cries out in pain and collapses flat onto the ground.

MAN 5

Where is the stone?!

ANKITA

I don't know what you're talking about.

The man jabs the end of the staff hard into the small of her back. Again, she cries out in pain.

ANKITA

I told you! I don't know what in
Poisedon's name you're talking
about!

The man raises the staff to strike her again. Ankita covers her head with her hands.

The Malum Res grabs the staff to prevent the man from delivering the blow.

The man turns and is momentarily stunned.

MALUM RES

Enough. We will question her
further tomorrow evening.

A moment later, he releases the staff and bows heavily. He then moves back toward the mud huts.

Two other men lift Ankita from the ground and carry her back to the mud hut where she was being held earlier.

The Malum Res stares after her, his brow furrowed in confusion.

MALUM RES

It cannot be her.

MAN 6

Cannot be who, my lord?

MALUM RES

It doesn't matter. Secure the doors
so she doesn't escape.

INT. MUD HUT - CONTINUOUS

The men throw her without care to the floor. She cries out in pain as she lands on her injured arm. The door slams behind her.

She stands shakily and bolts for the door. She tugs on the handle one-handed with all of her strength, but it won't budge. They've blockaded it.

She strides toward the window and tugs one-handed at the bars between her and the glass. They won't budge either. She limps toward the far corner and slides down the wall so that she sits on the floor of the hut. She hugs her knees to her chest and buries her face in her arms. She sobs in fear and in pain.

EXT. MALUM RES'S CAMP - LATER

Devraj comes to a clearing near the base of the mountains. In the clearing, several mud huts encircle a large pit. Spires of smoke swirl upward from the pit as though the fire that had burned within it had been recently extinguished.

He creeps quietly into the camp and glances around. His gaze locks on the hut at the far right end of the camp. In his mind's eye, he sees flashes of various children being beaten and tortured.

The longer he gazes at the hut, the stronger the pull of the visions become. He closes his eyes and he sees flashes of Ankita being beaten.

SERIES OF SHOTS

1. Ankita falls to her knees and grimaces in pain as a male voice mutters "incendia exuro intus". Her lips part and she cries out in pain.

2. Ankita falls to her knees and gasps for breath. A wooden staff slams across her shoulders. She cries out in pain and collapses flat onto the ground.

3. A short, fat man jabs the end of the staff hard into the small of her back. Again, she cries out in pain.

4. Two men throw her without care to the floor of the hut. She cries out as she lands on her injured arm. The door slams behind her.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Devraj's eyes snap open and he slinks toward the hut. He reaches the hut, grasps the loop of rope and then tugs with all his might. The door won't open.

ANKITA

Devraj?

Devraj freezes and then drops to his knees to peer through the keyhole.

DEVRAJ WHISPERS--

DEVRAJ

Ankita? Ankita, is that you?

ANKITA

Oh, Devraj! You have no idea how glad I am to see you!

(MORE)

ANKITA (CONT'D)

They tortured me. They thought I had the stone--they thought I had the Ashal.

DEVRAJ

Shh. Sit tight and I'll get you out of there.

ANKITA

How?

Devraj pauses and examines the door. The markings on the door catch his eye. He reaches out a hand to touch them. When his fingers make contact, a bolt of energy shoots through his fingers and causes them to tingle. He pulls his hand away quickly and his eyes widen in surprise.

He then closes his eyes and reaches for the door. He places his hand flat against the door and feels energy pulsating beneath his palm.

DEVRAJ

Do you feel that? It's almost as if--

ANKITA

--the door is alive.

Ankita's eyes widen.

ANKITA

Magic. They must have sealed it by magic.

Devraj's serious expression wavers slightly. His tone hesitant and unsure as he replies.

DEVRAJ

Magic doesn't exist, Ankita.

ANKITA

Then what would you call bringing someone back to life? Slight of hand?

Again, Devraj hesitates.

ANKITA

If you have a better explanation, I'm waiting to hear it.

Devraj sighs and nods, his certainty that magic isn't real now a mere whisper of doubt.

ANKITA

If it's sealed by magic, there must be some kind of spell to undo it.

DEVRAJ

Even if we could figure out a way to undo it, how are you so sure you COULD undo it?

ANKITA

It won't hurt to try.

Ankita traces the writings with her fingers and then recites them.

ANKITA

Signum per veneficus, ianua, vos vadum patefacio pro nullus tamen mihi. Signum per veneficus, ianua, vos vadum puter pro nullus tamen mihi. Signum per veneficus, ianua, vos vadum cado pro nullus tamen mihi.

ANKITA (SUBTITLES)

Sealed by magic, door, you shall open for none but me. Sealed by magic, door, you shall crumble for none but me. Sealed by magic, door, you shall fall for none but me.

*
*

DEVRAJ

What are you doing? We don't have time for stories, Ankita.

ANKITA

Shh. I think I've got it. I know what spell sealed it. I just need to remember the spell to break it.

DEVRAJ

Remember? Ankita, you don't know anything about THIS spell.

Ankita closes her eyes and her brow furrows in concentration.

ANKITA

Ianua, victor pro atrum veneficus exsisto solvo. Ianua, victor pro atrum veneficus, vos vadum nunquam iterum servo is quisnam vomica vos. Ianua, victor pro atrum veneficus, vos vadum patefacio quod solvo mihi.

ANKITA (SUBTITLE)

Door, victim of dark magic, be free. Door, victim of dark magic, you shall never again serve he who cursed you. Door, victim of dark magic, you shall open and release me.

*
*

DOOR

What? No "please"?

Devraj and Ankita jump back.

DOOR

Yes, I can speak. I'm not mute, you know.

DEVRAJ

Shush, will you? You're going to get us caught!

The DOOR laughs.

DOOR

Oh, poor children. You'll be discovered and tortured.

DEVRAJ

I have the Ashal and if the Malum Res gets his hands on it, the results will be disastrous.

The DOOR stops laughing.

DOOR

Y-you have the Ashal? Why didn't you say so?

The Door opens.

Ankita stands and envelops Devraj in a tight hug. She then pulls back and her gaze locks with his. Tears stream down her face.

Devraj brushes the tears away with the pads of his thumbs and kisses her forehead.

DEVRAJ

Shh. Everything's going to be all right. I've got you now. Shh.

MAN 1

She's escaped!

Devraj and Ankita turn. A group of men skulk toward them.

Devraj grabs Ankita's hand.

DEVRAJ

Run!

Both sprint into the dense forest. The men scramble after them. The Malum Res emerges from his hut and glides after the men.

MALUM RES

I want them alive!

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Devraj and Ankita scramble over fallen trees and rocky ground. Ankita stumbles and nearly falls, but Devraj wraps an arm about her waist and supports her, then urges her forward.

Several of the men struggle to follow while others manage the obstacles with ease. One of the men catches up to them. Ankita trips over a tree root and hits the ground.

TREE ROOT (V.O.)

Hey! Watch where you're going!

The man grabs her ankle. Devraj wraps his arms around her abdomen and attempts to pull her away from the man's grip, but he can't. She focuses her gaze on the man.

ANKITA

Incendia exuro intus. Incendia
exuro intus. Incendia--

The man screams in agony and releases her ankle. She scrambles to her feet and she and Devraj sprint toward a set of bushes. The two drop to their knees behind it and struggle to slow their breathing.

The other men arrive. The man that Ankita cursed lays on the ground. He twitches and whimpers in pain.

MALUM RES

They're here somewhere. Find them!

The men split up and move in different directions to search.

Devraj's nostrils flare and his eyes narrow. He lurches forward to attack the Malum Res, but Ankita grabs him about his middle and holds him back. Devraj glares at her.

MAN 1

'ere, lads. Did you 'ear that?
Sounded like it came from those
bushes.

Devraj and Ankita freeze. They remain as silent as possible. The man moves closer to the bushes. He then reaches out to part them.

MAN 5

My lord, dawn approaches!

The man turns toward the Malum Res and awaits orders.

MALUM RES

We will resume our search at dusk.
Everyone back to camp.

MAN 4 (JONAS)

My lord, they'll be long gone by
then!

The Malum Res strikes Jonas across the face and Jonas drops to his knees. He then grasps the hem of the Malum Res's robes.

MAN 4 (JONAS)

F-forgive me, my lord. I did not
mean--

MALUM RES

I don't need your opinions, Jonas!
Still your tongue or I will still
it for you.

Jonas nods and scrambles to his feet and then skulks back toward the camp.

The Malum Res gazes directly at the bush where Devraj and Ankita hide. The two freeze again. The Malum Res then turns away and moves to follow his men back toward the camp.

Several long minutes later, Devraj jumps from the bushes and strides angrily away. Ankita runs to catch up to him. Devraj turns and glares at her.

DEVRAJ

Why did you stop me? I could've had
him!

ANKITA

Don't be stupid, Devraj! The only
thing that you would've gotten is
killed! We can't do this alone.
It'd be two against two dozen and
we wouldn't stand a chance.

DEVRAJ

We had the element of surprise. If
I could have just killed him--

ANKITA

Whose to say they didn't have
another two dozen men waiting as
back up? We can't do this alone! We
need help!

DEVRAJ

Who do you suggest we get to help us, Ankita? All of those fragile women we meet in that clearing? Or how about that woman and her son that we met two villages ago? Face it! There's no one to help us, Ankita! We're on our own!

ANKITA

So what? You're going to sacrifice yourself with a plan that may do nothing to stop them? We can't give up. To give up now would be to say that everyone who has died at the hands of these men-- this Brotherhood--that their sacrifices meant nothing. We'll find a way, Devraj. We MUST find a way.

Devraj says nothing and storms off into the forest away from the Malum Res's camp. Ankita sighs and follows him.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj lies on a bed of leaves. He turns to gaze at Ankita, who sleeps beside him. He then stares up at the tops of the trees, his mind wandering.

DEVRAJ (V.O.)

How is it that she's always right? She was right about the stone's powers, she was right about the magic spell on the door--what next? Will we stumble upon a group of men who happen to be warriors and seek a just cause to fight for?

He sighs and closes his eyes. Several moments later, he's asleep.

DREAM - MALUM RES'S CAMP - MALUM RES'S POV - MUD HUT

The Malum Res stares out the window and occasionally glances at Jonas. Jonas stands in the doorway. He cowers in fear when the Malum Res meets his gaze.

MALUM RES

Sino!

Jonas screams and drops to the ground, then writhes in pain.

MALUM RES

Are you so incompetent that you
can't find two powerless children,
Jonas?

JONAS

Please--forgive me, my lord. I--I--
We've tried. There is no sign of
the boy nor the girl--no indication
of which direction they might have
gone.

MALUM RES

Sino!

Jonas cries out in pain and writhes for several long moments
before going still. The Malum Res signals to two men who
struggle to lift Jonas from the ground.

MALUM RES

He needs to be isolated, I think.

The two men nod and drag Jonas toward one of the other mud
huts and seal the door. The Malum Res grabs a third man by
the collar of he robes as he moves to leave the mud hut.

MALUM RES

Find them or your fate will match
his.

The man nods vigorously. The Malum Res's releases the man's
collar and the man drops to the ground. The man then stands
and backs away. The Malum Res screams in outraged anger.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj sits bolt upright and gasps for breath. He glances
over at still-sleeping Ankita. He watches her sleep for
several long moments. He smiles and runs his fingers gently
through her hair.

He lies backward onto the bed of leaves and then turns toward
Ankita and wraps an arm around her shoulders. She shifts in
her sleep and buries her face in his chest. She sighs.

Devraj kisses the top of her head and buries his nose in her
hair. Ankita shifts in her sleep, but doesn't awaken. Devraj
closes his eyes and sighs into her hair.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj and Ankita stride through the forest as they talk about Devraj's dream.

DEVRAJ

He doesn't give a fish's fin that we escaped. It's the stone he wants. The Ashal.

Ankita frowns.

ANKITA

Well, we can't let him have it, then.

DEVRAJ

We'll just have to keep a low profile.

ANKITA

We can't hide forever.

DEVRAJ

No. But we can sure as Poseidon try.

Ankita hears a series of loud, insistent ANIMAL NOISES that sound like CHATTERING. She glances at a tree ahead of her. One FURRY, SQUIRREL-LIKE CREATURE chases ANOTHER up the trunk of the tree and into the branches.

CREATURE 1 (V.O.)

You stole my nut! Give it back you, little thief!

MORE CHATTERING.

CREATURE 2 (V.O.)

You have to catch me first!

Ankita stares at the tree, stunned.

Devraj hears the bushes rustle and he stops. Ankita runs into him.

ANKITA

Devraj, did you hear those creatures? They were talking!

DEVRAJ

Shush!

ANKITA

Turn and walk toward me.

The young man turns and walks toward her. He struggles against each step. He doesn't want to obey, but his body refuses to listen to him. Moments later, he stops in front of her.

Devraj gets to his feet and brushes himself off, then strides toward them. He glares at the young man.

DEVRAJ

Who are you and what do you want?

YOUNG MAN

I don't answer to anyone!

Ankita's gaze locks with the young teen's gaze.

ANKITA

Who are you and what do you want?

The young teen grits his teeth and his face scrunches up in concentration. His mouth opens and closes several times before--

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

I am Durjaya. I want nothing.

ANKITA

You must want something if you were spying on us. What do you want?

Again, he struggles not to answer her. But he fails.

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

The stone he wears about his neck.

Ankita glances away and Durjaya collapses to the ground. As he stands to run, her gaze returns to him.

ANKITA

You will stay where you are until I say otherwise.

The young teen grunts in annoyance.

ANKITA

What do you want with the stone?

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

The man said that if I brought it to him, he'd return my sister, Hita.

Devraj and Ankita exchange a significant glance.

DEVRAJ

What should we do with him? We can't take him with us or he'll try to steal the stone.

Ankita hesitates and then turns toward Durjaya.

ANKITA

We will help you rescue your sister and we will do so without giving that man the stone.

DEVRAJ

Didn't you hear what I just said? He'll try to steal--

Durjaya panics.

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

No! He'll kill her if I don't bring him the stone!

Tears roll down Durjaya's face.

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

Why is this stone so important to you?

ANKITA

This stone has--powers and, in the wrong hands, those powers can be dangerous.

Durjaya's gaze locks with Ankita's gaze and both stare for several moments. Then Durjaya asks cautiously--

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

If I promise not to steal the stone, will you help me rescue her?

Durjaya turns toward Devraj.

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

Will you help me rescue Hita? I will do anything you ask. She's my baby sister. Please--help me save her.

DEVRAJ

Yes. We'll help you.

YOUNG TEEN/DURJAYA

Thank you. I can't begin to express
my gratitude.

Devraj mumbles--

DEVRAJ

Save your breath.

He stares hard at Durjaya.

DEVRAJ

But I caution you, Durjaya--you do
not want to become my enemy.

Durjaya's eyes widen and he nods.

DEVRAJ

Good.

Devraj glances at their surroundings.

DEVRAJ

We should try to travel at least
another ten kilometers before dusk.

ANKITA

We'd better get moving, then. The
sun will set in two hours.

Devraj, Ankita, and Durjaya continue east along the path.

MONTAGE:

1. The sun sets.
2. Devraj, Ankita and Durjaya set up camp.
3. The three sleep.
4. The sun rises.
5. The three walk along the path.
6. The sun sets.
7. The three set up camp.
8. The three sleep.
9. The sun rises.
10. The three walk along the path.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The three set up camp. Devraj goes to get firewood, which leaves Ankita alone with Durjaya. They sit in silence for a few moments.

ANKITA

Where are your parents, Durjaya?
Were you separated from them?

Durjaya stares blankly ahead for several moments before his gaze drops to his hands.

DURJAYA

They were killed when the
Terrorizers raided our village.

A stunned expression crosses Ankita's face. She gazes at him empathetically.

ANKITA

I'm sorry.

A tear slides down his cheek.

DURJAYA WHISPERS--

DURJAYA

So am I.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Durjaya lies on the ground asleep. Devraj and Ankita sit huddled together on a log in front of the fire. Ankita glances at Durjaya to be sure he's asleep. She then returns her attention to Devraj.

ANKITA WHISPERS--

ANKITA

I had another of those dreams last
night.

DEVRAJ

What about?

ANKITA

Us.

Devraj stills.

DEVRAJ

Us?

ANKITA

Sort of, yes.

ANKITA

You were you--but you weren't.

DEVRAJ

What do you mean I wasn't me?

ANKITA

You looked older--but--oh, it's so difficult to explain! Your eyes and face shape were the same, but you--your features were more severe--hardened almost, as though you'd aged ten years in half that time.

DEVRAJ

And--and what did we do in this dream?

Ankita's cheeks flush and her gaze drops to her hands. Devraj grips her chin and tilts it upward. This forces her to meet his gaze.

DEVRAJ WHISPERS--

DEVRAJ

We made love, didn't we?

Ankita nods. Devraj stares intently at her for several long moments. She licks her lips nervously. Devraj leans slowly closer, as does Ankita, until they're millimeters apart.

Durjaya snores loudly. Both Devraj and Ankita jerk back as though burned. Devraj clears his throat.

DEVRAJ

You said I was--different.

ANKITA

Yes. In the dream, I--I called you Tiberius and you--you called me Melkesh.

DEVRAJ

What makes you so sure that it was me in that dream and not--someone else?

ANKITA

He had a scar on his right shoulder
--in the exact place that your scar
is.

DEVRAJ

It could be a coincidence.

Ankita narrows her eyes and her lips tighten.

ANKITA

You never believe me.

DEVRAJ

On certain things, I do.

ANKITA

But never when it comes to my
opinions.

Devraj hesitates.

ANKITA

Exactly. Why do you deny so
determinedly what you know to be
true?

DEVRAJ

Ankita, you've obviously been
taking the old stories far too
seriously.

ANKITA

And you haven't been taking them
seriously enough--or don't you
remember that I was kidnapped and
tortured because of that stone
you're wearing?

DEVRAJ

Yes. You were abducted. Can you see
now where your carelessness has
gotten us? We're stranded on the
surface with no way home, no one
knows where we are and because you
HAD to have this stone, we have a
mad man after us!

ANKITA

You think this is MY fault?

DEVRAJ

Yes.

ANKITA

Well, then. Since this is all my fault, perhaps I should throw myself into the fire to burn for my sins. No? How about I just march back into that camp with the stone about my neck so they can take it and then murder me?

DEVRAJ GRUMBLES--

DEVRAJ

I've had enough of your melodrama for tonight. Just go to sleep.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The three awaken the next morning and pack their belongings. Ankita, still angry with Devraj, throws her things into her bag haphazardly and storms ahead of the two. Devraj then packs hurriedly and jogs to catch up.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj struggles to keep up with Ankita. Durjaya walks briskly behind them. Devraj grunts in annoyance.

DEVRAJ

Ankita, will you slow down!

Ankita jerks to a halt for a moment and turns to glare at him before she resumes her pace. Devraj sighs in frustration and hurries to catch up.

DEVRAJ

I'm sorry for what I said. I didn't mean to hurt you.

He grabs her shoulder and she turns toward him.

DEVRAJ SAYS SOFTLY--

DEVRAJ

Please, Ankita. I can't stand to have you upset with me. You're right. I don't take you seriously and that's not fair.

He smiles weakly and cups her face in his hands.

DEVRAJ

From now on, I promise I'll give your opinions some thought before I respond to them, all right?

Ankita's gaze drops to her feet and she nods. He smiles and pecks her on the cheek.

DEVRAJ

That's my girl. Now, let's keep moving. I see a clearing about two kilometers ahead.

Ankita's gaze locks with Devraj's. She smiles wanly and nods. Devraj removes his hands from her face. He then slides one of his hands down to hers and laces their fingers together. The two continue to walk.

Durjaya stares at the two and smiles knowingly.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Devraj, Ankita and Durjaya approach the clearing. In the clearing, a large group of people gathers. Devraj and Ankita exchange a glance and break into a run. Durjaya hurries to catch up to them.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LATER

Devraj shoves his way through the crowd until he reaches the center of the group. At the center stands Malina.

MALINA

May I have everyone's attention, please?

Malina waves her arms to get the crowd's attention. The crowd gradually grows silent.

MALINA

Thank you. Now we have a large group here so we'll need you to divide up into families. There will be two families per area.

DEVRAJ

Malina!

Malina turns and stares in surprise.

MALINA

Devraj?

Malina smiles in greeting and hugs him.

MALINA (CONT'D)
It's good to see you in one piece,
child.

Malina pauses and glances around the crowd behind Devraj before returning her gaze to his.

MALINA
Where is Ankita?

He opens his mouth to reply when someone shouts his name.

ANKITA
Devraj!

He turns. Ankita forces her way through the crowd and stumbles toward him. She gazes at him sternly.

ANKITA (CONT'D)
Don't run off like that! We
couldn't find you.

Ankita turns toward Malina and nods in greeting.

ANKITA (CONT'D)
Malina. How does Kamalika fare?

MALINA
She fares well. My sister is
looking after her for the moment.

ANKITA
Has there been any sign of her
mother?

Malina shakes her head sadly.

MALINA
I fear that her family was lost in
the Terrorizers' attack on her
village.

Devraj glances around the crowd and then turns to Malina.

DEVRAJ
I don't recall your group being so
large.

MALINA
On our journey, we were joined by
others seeking shelter.
(MORE)

MALINA (CONT'D)

It seems that the closer we are to the waters, the less likely we are to be attacked by the Terrorizers.

PHERICK (O.C)

Devraj!

Devraj turns at the same time as Pherick runs into him and wraps his arms tightly around Devraj's left leg.

MALINA

Someone you know?

Devraj nods and looks down at the young boy who clings to him for dear life.

MOIRREY

Pherick! Pherick, where are you?

Pherick waves and SHOUTS--

PHERICK

Here, mama!

Moirrey at last breaks through the crowd and runs toward him.

MOIRREY

Pherick, how many times have I told you not to run--

Moirrey freezes when she sees Devraj and Ankita. She then envelops them both in a tight hug.

MOIRREY

It's so good to see that you're all right, dears.

MALINA

You know them?

Moirrey nods.

MOIRREY

They stayed with me one evening several sunsets ago. They had nowhere else to go, so I offered them a bed in our spare room.

Malina turns toward Devraj and Ankita and arches an eyebrow.

MALINA

It would seem that you have befriended many on your journey.

Another child emerges from the crowd and runs toward Devraj. She launches herself at him and wraps her arms around his right leg.

ASHRITA

Devraj!

Devraj smiles warmly and leans down slightly to hug them both.

WOMAN

Ashrita! Ashrita!

The child waves and SHOUTS--

ASHRITA

Here, mama!

At last, the woman breaks through the crowd and runs toward them.

WOMAN

Darling, you musn't run off like that. You scared me.

The woman glances up at Devraj and smiles.

WOMAN

This must be your Ankita, then.

Devraj's cheeks color in embarrassment and he nods.

The woman turns toward Ankita and inclines her head in greeting.

WOMAN

Very desperate to find you, this lad was. He stormed off in the middle of the night to look for you.

ANKITA

He did?

WOMAN

Yes, he did. He wouldn't hear anything of it when I tried to convince him to at least wait until daylight. "I have to save her--no matter what it takes, I HAVE to save her" he said.

Ankita's gaze locks with Devraj's for several moments. Unshed tears glisten in her eyes.

MALINA

We must hurry if we are to get this group organized by dark.

Devraj's gaze locks with Ankita's. He pauses and then glances around for something to stand on. A large rock sits in the center. He runs toward it and climbs up onto it.

DEVRAJ SHOUTS--

DEVRAJ

Can I have everyone's attention please?

Ankita whistles loudly and the crowd gradually quiets.

DEVRAJ

Thanks.

DEVRAJ

I have some grave news. Some of you may know what I speak of and others may not. The Malum Res has returned.

The crowd breaks out in whispers.

DEVRAJ

For those of you who know what that means, you also know what needs to be done. We need to fight him. We can't just run and hope to escape him. He and his followers have already claimed so many lives. We can't just stand by while he takes more.

A MAN from the crowd SHOUTS--

CROWD MAN 1

And who's going to lead us? You?

DEVRAJ

If necessary, yes. I will lead you.

The whispers grow louder.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

I'm willing to die for what I believe in. Are you?

Devraj glances around at the men in the crowd.

DEVRAJ (CONT'D)

Are you willing to let your families suffer further or are you going to do something to end their suffering?

The crowd remains silent. Durjaya glances around and then climbs up on top of the rock also.

DURJAYA

You must listen to him! He's our only hope of defeating the Malum Res. He wears the Ashal.

The crowd breaks out in whispers again.

WOMAN 1

Could it be? Could he be one of the Guardians?

Devraj pauses.

DEVRAJ

In a former life, I was Tiberius of the Aerydonian kingdom.

CROWD MAN 2

But you're a child!

Devraj's features tighten.

DEVRAJ

Mayhap in appearance. But I assure you that I speak the truth.

CROWD MAN 1

Prove it!

CROWD MAN 2

Yeah, prove it!

DEVRAJ

I'm sorry to say there is nothing but my word and the stone I wear about my neck.

Ankita glances around anxiously at the crowd and also climbs up onto the rock.

ANKITA SHOUTS--

ANKITA

I can prove it.

Several men laugh loudly.

CROWD MAN 1
Spirited as you may be, lass, only
a Guardian can use the stone.

ANKITA
I am a Guardian. I am Melkesh of
Aerydon.

The man sneers.

CROWD MAN 1
Prove it.

Ankita removes the stone from around Devraj's neck and slips it over her head and it falls to rest about her neck. She then entwines her hand with Devraj's and begins to chant.

ANKITA
Validus Verecundor, respondeo volo.
Subluceo pro testimonium is votum.

The stone glows a brilliant red and several in the crowd gasp in amazement.

WOMAN 1
It's true! The stone responds to
them. They are Guardians!

CROWD MAN 1
Wait! It could be an illusion--a
trick.

WOMAN
It is not! He saved my child from
the Terrorizers!

WOMAN 2
And the girl resurrected my son!

The gathered crowd breaks out in whispers.

CROWD MAN 2
They must be the Guardians!

Man 1, however, is still skeptical.

CROWD MAN 1
This is your proof? A stone and the
word of women?

Devraj sighs.

DEVRAJ

Very well. You don't believe me. I accept that.

He glances around at the others.

DEVRAJ

Those of you who do believe--which of you will fight with me? Who will help me destroy the Malum Res once and for all?

A tense silence hangs in the air for several moments before CROWD MAN 3 steps forward.

CROWD MAN 3

I will join you, Master Tiberius.

CROWD MAN 2

As will I.

CROWD MAN 1 hesitates before also stepping forward.

CROWD MAN 1

I will join you, Master Tiberius.

Throughout the crowd, random shouts of "I will" ring out. Many cheer in agreement. Devraj grins.

A man steps forward.

BLACKSMITH

There is one way in which you may prove yourself that would erase any doubt.

DEVRAJ

And what might that be?

BLACKSMITH

To cross swords with me.

CROWD MAN 2

Why you, then?

The BLACKSMITH turns toward the crowd.

BLACKSMITH

I am the son of the legendary swordsman, Saxen of the Kosala Kingdom.

The crowd breaks out in whispers. The blacksmith turns back to Devraj.

BLACKSMITH

Do you accept my challenge, boy?

Devraj straightens.

DEVRAJ

I accept your challenge,
blacksmith.

Devraj steps down and moves through the crowd.

Ankita jumps from the platform and runs after him. She then grabs his arm.

ANKITA

Have you lost your senses? You'll
be cut down like a sickly manatee.

DEVRAJ

It's the only way to prove it.

Devraj pulls his arm from her grip and continues toward the blacksmith. The crowd parts and creates a path. He halts in front of the blacksmith.

On the ground lay two swords. He selects one and tests its weight in his hands.

The crowd gathers in a large circle around the combatants. Ankita and Durjaya push their way to the front of the crowd.

The blacksmith grips the remaining sword and the two hold their swords at an angle in front of them. They circle one another several times.

Devraj's eyes narrow.

The blacksmith's eyes narrow. He lets loose a battle cry and runs toward Devraj.

The blacksmith brings his sword down from overhead.

Devraj blocks the blow.

The two swords collide with a thunderous crash.

Devraj retreats and angles the sword toward the blacksmith's shin.

The blacksmith blocks the blow and slashes downward, aiming for Devraj's sword arm. Devraj spins out of the way and delivers a swift kick to the back of the blacksmith's knee.

The blacksmith staggers slightly, but retains his balance.

The crowd gasps.

The blacksmith recovers and attacks with a series of blows, high and low.

Devraj blocks all but the last swing, which strikes his shin. He collapses and his sword flies from his hands.

The blacksmith smirks in victory and hovers over him for a moment before offering him a hand.

DREAM FLASHBACK

Tiberius brings up his arm to block the OLDER MAN'S blow. He smirks in triumph when the attempt succeeds, but yelps in surprise when his feet fly out from under him and he lands on his backside.

OLD MAN

You mustn't let your guard down, Tiberius, or you will pay the price.

Devraj as Tiberius gets slowly to his feet and rubs his sore backside.

TIBERIUS

I didn't let my guard down, Father.

OLD MAN

But you did. Winning one battle does not ensure that you will win the war. Melkesh does not let her mind wander so.

TIBERIUS

But magic is far easier than hand-to-hand combat, Father.

The older man arches an eyebrow.

OLD MAN

Is it? Magic requires equally as much focus as force does. She must imagine herself performing the action, as you must. Never say magic is easier, my son, until you have tried to perform it for yourself.

END DREAM FLASHBACK

Devraj's gaze locks with the man's and his gaze narrows.

Devraj swings his leg around and takes the blacksmith's feet out from under him. This sends the blacksmith to the ground. Devraj grabs his sword from the dirt and then jumps to his feet.

He slashes downward with his sword. The blacksmith blocks the blow, but is nearly overwhelmed by Devraj's strength. Devraj retreats and the blacksmith clamors hurriedly to his feet.

Devraj lets out a harsh cry and attacks with a series of blows, high and low. Each blow becomes more fierce. The blacksmith staggers backward with each one, barely able to counter the strikes.

Devraj strikes the blacksmith's shin with the flat of his sword and the blacksmith falls backward. He loses his sword and lands on his back.

The blacksmith attempts to grab his sword, but Devraj points the tip of his sword at the man's throat.

Both breathe heavily. The crowd roars in approval. Devraj retreats.

Ankita rushes toward him and throws her arms around his shoulders.

ANKITA

You did it!!

The only sound Devraj can hear is the racing of his heart. His gaze locks with the blacksmith's gaze. Their eyes narrow.

In slow motion, the blacksmith reaches for his sword and climbs to his feet. He runs at Devraj, his sword raised to swing downward.

Devraj shoves Ankita away and runs to meet the man. Their swords cross with a thunderous clang. Devraj grips the blacksmith's sword hand and delivers a hard kick to the man's abdomen.

The blacksmith flies backward and again loses his sword.

Before the blacksmith can grab it, however, Devraj picks it up and points the tips of both swords at his throat.

DEVRAJ

Must I decapitate you? I had hoped that this battle would end without death or bloodshed.

The blacksmith says nothing.

DEVRAJ
Do you concede, blacksmith?

BLACKSMITH
I concede--Master Tiberius.

Devraj retreats and returns his attention to the gathered crowd.

DEVRAJ
All right, then. We must plan. We don't have much time.

END OF ACT TWO

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Thousands of people sit around individual campfires each surrounded by between six and ten people. Most of these are men. They're scattered across the clearing.

Devraj stares into the flames of his and Ankita's campfire, his brow furrowed in concern.

The multiple CLANGS of METAL ON METAL resound REPEATEDLY.

Three campsites over, several BLACKSMITHS craft SWORDS, AXES AND OTHER WEAPONS. The men strike the metallic pieces over and over with their hammers.

Ankita stops behind Devraj and lays her hand his shoulder. He turns toward her and grins.

DEVRAJ
It worked.

ANKITA
It did. You fought magnificently.

DEVRAJ
You were right again. How do you do that?

ANKITA
Faith, Devraj. Faith.

She moves to sit beside him.

ANKITA
Are you ready for the battle tomorrow?

DEVRAJ

I honestly don't know. We must fight, but I'm not so sure I can lead these people like they believe I can.

ANKITA

You can, Devraj. Durjaya believes in you and so do I.

DEVRAJ

What do I know about fighting wars?

ANKITA

"Book learning does not a leader make." Remember? Master Vidur said that you can't read a book and expect to win a war by the book. It takes cleverness, heart and determination to be a leader--and you've got all three. Your problem is figuring out how to utilize them.

Devraj meets her gaze.

ANKITA

You can do anything you want, Devraj. You just need to want it enough.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - MORNING

Ankita awakens to the sound of horses whinnying. She glances in the direction of the sound to find a dozen horses reined and tied to a wooden post.

She stretches and rises to her feet, then moves toward the horses. She spots Durjaya.

ANKITA

Where did you find these creatures?

Durjaya looks up and smiles tiredly.

DURJAYA

Several others and I spent most of the night seeking them. They are most excellent transportation.

(MORE)

DURJAYA (CONT'D)

We thought they might give us some advantage in the approaching battle.

Ankita looks at him, her brow furrowed in confusion.

ANKITA

You ride these creatures? Upon their backs? Would that not hurt them?

Durjaya shakes his head.

DURJAYA

It is the way of humankind. It has been so as long as man has existed.

Ankita eyes the creature warily.

Durjaya turns to retrieve a saddle.

DURJAYA

Here. I'll show--

He turns back toward her and freezes in amazement.

Ankita slides her hand gently down the horse's neck. The horse whinnies nervously.

ANKITA

Shh. I mean you no harm.

Gradually, the horse quiets. It then bends its knees slightly.

Ankita grasps the reins and throws her right leg over. She then wiggles slightly to find her seat.

Once she has a comfortable seat and a good grip on the reins, she digs her legs into the horse's sides and clucks her tongue. The horse takes off toward the trees.

Ankita laughs and closes her eyes as the wind whips through her hair. A moment later, she opens her eyes and pulls back gently on the rein in her left hand.

The horse slows slightly as it makes the turn. It then takes off again back toward Durjaya.

A couple hundred feet from her starting point she pulls back on the reins. The horse whinnies and slides to a perfect stop.

Durjaya stares at her, stunned.

Ankita slides carefully from the horse and rubs its muzzle. She then turns to find Durjaya staring at her.

ANKITA

What?

DURJAYA

How did you do that? I thought you'd never seen one of these creatures before.

ANKITA

I don't know.

EXT. CLIFF - OVERLOOKING THE BATTLEFIELD - DAWN

Devraj stares with slightly glazed eyes out at the field where he will soon lead his army into battle. Lost in thought, he doesn't hear Ankita approach.

ANKITA

Did you sleep any at all?

He starts and turns abruptly toward her. He relaxes when he realizes it's only her.

DEVRAJ

No.

ANKITA

How can you expect to lead an army if you're falling asleep in your saddle?

DEVRAJ

Horses?

ANKITA

Durjaya, with the assistance of several others, rounded up a couple dozen while we slept. Two of the animals have been offered to you and I to ride into battle.

DEVRAJ

I would rather be on foot, thank you.

ANKITA

As would I. But Durjaya and the others were rather insistent.

DEVRAJ
I'll battle my fear of high places,
then, if they truly insist.

She nods and pauses.

SHE WHISPERS--

ANKITA
I'm afraid.

He wraps his arms around her and gathers her close.

HE WHISPERS--

DEVRAJ
I know. So I am. But everything's
going to be all right. We must have
faith.

ANKITA
That sounds familiar.

DEVRAJ
My friend told me that. She's
brilliant, you know.

ANKITA
Do I know this friend?

DEVRAJ
You might, yes.

The two gaze at each other for several moments before a
longhorn blares in the distance.

ANKITA
We should return to camp to prepare
for battle.

DEVRAJ
There is much to be done.

He entwines his fingers with hers and the two begin the walk
back to camp.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LATER

Devraj slips into the chainmail armor, metal helmet and
gloves provided to him by a craftsman.

Durjaya and several other men also wear chainmail while the
rest of the men wear thick leather armor and metal helmets.

Ankita wears her leather armor beneath her top as well as leather leg guards.

METALSMITH
Master Tiberius.

Devraj turns. The metalsmith kneels before him offering him the handle of a long sword. Devraj grips the handle and carefully pulls the blade away.

Devraj steps back and swings the sword gracefully back and forth a few times.

METALSMITH
It is engraved with the Protector's symbol. May it bring you much luck in battle.

DEVRAJ
Thank you.

The metalsmith stands and bows slightly before he strides back toward his anvil.

Devraj glances over at Durjaya and sees him struggling to saddle a horse. He moves toward him. He stops beside Durjaya. He then rubs the horse's muzzle.

DEVRAJ
Spirited creature.

Durjaya turns and gazes blankly at Devraj for a moment before returning his attention to securing the saddle straps.

DURJAYA
She is.

Devraj smiles and pats the horse's neck.

DEVRAJ
She seems fond of you. She doesn't struggle.

Durjaya tries and fails to secure the straps. Devraj grips the saddle and holds it still. Durjaya at last manages to secure the straps.

DURJAYA
She must be accustomed to a man's touch. Her calmness suggests that she only recently ran away from her master to join the herd.

DEVRAJ
Perhaps she should be yours, then.

DURJAYA
You want me to ride her?

DEVRAJ
You will ride beside me and Ankita,
then?

DURJAYA
It would be an honor--Master
Tiberius.

Devraj lays a hand on Durjaya's shoulder.

DEVRAJ
The honor is mine.

Devraj then moves toward the group of children to lead them
toward the selected hide out in the woods.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The Malum Res and his ARMY of 3,000 men MARCH WEST through
the forest. They have been on the move since dusk.

MAN 5 at the front of the group RAISES HIS ARM. All of the
men stop.

MAN 5 SHOUTS--

MAN 5
My lord, the scouts return!

TWO MEN ON HORSES shove their way through the crowd.

MAN 1
Out of the way, lads!

MAN 2
Move unless you want yer feet
trampled.

The men stop their mounts in front of the Malum Res and slide
from their saddles. They then drop to their knees.

MALUM RES
You bring news?

MAN 1
We do, my lord.

MAN 2

We have found the children, as you commanded.

MALUM RES

Then why did you not bring them back with you?

MAN 1

W-we could not, my lord. There were too many others with them.

MALUM RES

Others?

MAN 2

At least 1,000 of them men and 500 women and children. The men appeared to be preparing for a battle, my lord.

The Malum Res raises his hand to strike them both. The men cower in fear. The Malum Res hesitates and his hand drops to his side.

MALUM RES

If it's a war they wish, then a war it will be.

MOUNTAINS - LATER

The sun approaches the western horizon and the sunlight begins to fade.

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Durjaya spurs his white mare on across the open field until he reaches the front lines of the army of villagers filed in columns on the side of the hill.

DEVRAJ

How many do we face?

DURJAYA

Thousands.

Several dozen of the villagers whisper amongst themselves.

VILLAGE MAN 1

We're outnumbered!

VILLAGE MAN 2
That's suicide, that is!

Devraj tugs at his stallion's reins and the horse turns until Devraj faces his army.

DEVRAJ
Last eve, you committed to defending your homes--your families. Would you now flee from that commitment? Would you allow your families to die simply because you were afraid to fight for them?

VILLAGE MAN 2
Getting ourselves killed won't save our families. Not if we don't stand a chance of killing the Malum Res.

VILLAGE MAN 1
He's right. If we can't destroy the Malum Res, there's no point in fighting.

DEVRAJ
If not today, then when? The longer we wait, the stronger he will become. It must end today--it must end here. Yes--you may die if you fight. But if you run, you will only spend your remaining time in fear of the Malum Res finding you, torturing you and your family, and possibly even enslaving you. It is your choice. Fight for your freedom--or die for your fear.

The crowd remains silent for several long moments.

VILLAGE MAN 3
For our children!

ALL MEN
For our children!

All of the men cheer loudly. As the cheers fade, the THUNDERING OF HOOVES grows louder.

Devraj turns.

Everyone stares at another hill to the east. An ARMY of CLOAKED MEN crests the hill. Some men peak the hill on HORSEBACK, others ON FOOT.

EAST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

The army of cloaked men reaches the bottom of the hill. The Malum Res holds up a hand to signal the men to halt.

MAN 1
Halt, lads!

In another section of the group...

MAN 2
Whoa, lads!

Several more men in several other sections call out "halt".

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

The army of cloaked men comes to a stop. Devraj stares unblinkingly at the colossal army before him.

Ankita's eyes widen at the sight of the army.

Devraj's gaze locks with Ankita's, his chin tilted upward in defiance.

Ankita's lips tighten and she inclines her head.

Devraj then turns back toward his army.

DEVRAJ
Wait for my signal.

EAST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

The Malum Res faces his men.

MALUM RES
Bring me the boy who wears the
Ashal. Kill the others.

Man 1 glances at him. The Malum Res nods.

MAN 1
For the Brotherhood!

ALL MEN
For the Brotherhood!

The Dark army charges the Light army.

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

A longhorn sounds and resonates. The echo of thundering hooves grows steadily louder as the opposing army charges.

DEVRAJ
Archers, prepare!

A row of ARCHERS lines up a little higher on the hill. They make their arrows ready upon the strings of their bows and aim upward.

EAST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

The foot soldiers thrust their swords into the air and release an orgasmic battle cry as they dash across the field toward their enemy.

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Devraj raises his sword and his eyes narrow as the Dark army draws closer.

DEVRAJ
Steady, men! Steady--

EAST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

The foot soldiers continue their sprint across the field.

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD

The Dark army comes within the archers' range. Devraj BRINGS DOWN HIS SWORD.

DEVRAJ
Now!

The archers release the strings of their bows and HUNDREDS OF ARROWS HURTLE TOWARD the approaching DARK ARMY.

CUT TO:

ON THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

A CLOAKED MAN glances SKYWARD and freezes when he sees AN ARROW COMING STRAIGHT DOWN AT HIM. A moment later, the arrow pierces his chest dead center and the man collapses to the ground.

WEST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Dozens of men collapse to the ground as the arrows hit their targets.

The archers reload and release another round of arrows.

Dozens more men of the Dark army fall prey to the accuracy of the archers.

STILL...THE DARK ARMY CHARGES.

IN SLOW MOTION...

Devraj glances at Ankita to his right and then at Durjaya to his left. He then turns back toward the battlefield and thrusts his sword in the air.

DEVRAJ
Pro Matris Terra!

END SLOW MOTION

The army of villages darts down the hill and rushes to meet the Dark army.

IN SLOW MOTION...

The two armies rush toward one another and meet in a clash of swords and axes.

END SLOW MOTION

1. Devraj screams in outrage as he charges and cuts down cloaked man after cloaked man.

2. Ankita faces her open hand toward every cloaked man who gets in her way, shouting curses such as "exuro", "sino" and "morsus".

3. A cloaked man shouts "sino" and a village man falls to the ground, writhing and screaming in pain.

4. Another cloaked man knocks a village man's sword from the man's hand.

Before the man can retrieve it, the cloaked man grips the handle, jerks the weapon from the ground, and thrusts it into the man's chest.

The end of the sword protrudes from the man's back. The man collapses to the ground, his gaze blank and glazed.

5. Ankita falls. A cloaked man comes at her with a knife.

Durjaya drives a sword into his back and twists.

The man drops to the ground.

Ankita nods in thanks.

Durjaya rejoins the battle.

6. An arrow strikes a man riding horseback in the chest.

His eyes widen in surprise and he drops from the bucking horse to the ground, his eyes glazed.

7. A village man and a cloaked man parry swords. Both struggle to be the one who survives.

8. On the other end of the field, Devraj crosses swords with two men.

He ducks a blow from the first and drives his sword into the man's stomach.

He then turns quickly to the second man and slashes his throat.

9. The cloaked man's HEAD ROLLS DOWN THE HILL, coming to a stop at the bottom.

A TRAIL OF BUBBLING BLOOD oozes down the hill and leads to the severed head. The cloaked man's features are contorted in shock.

10. A small foot kicks the head out of the way.

11. Ankita hurls curses at a cloaked man who uses his sword to block them. A battle cry from the other end of the field causes him to turn.

Ankita takes advantage of his distraction and fires a curse at him.

The man falls limply to the ground.

END MONTAGE

THE LIGHT ARMY HAS THE UPPER HAND.

The Light Army continues to push back the Dark Army.

Out of the corner of his eye, Devraj sees Ankita struggling to fend off one of the cloaked men and he hurries to her aid.

He drops his shoulders and rushes the cloaked man, driving his shoulder hard into the man's side.

The man collapses to the ground and glances around to see where the attack came from. He spots Devraj and struggles to stand.

Before he can get to his feet, ANKITA SHOUTS...

ANKITA

Quies!

The man drops back to the ground, unconscious.

Devraj kicks the man to be sure he's knocked out. He turns to Ankita and smiles.

DEVRAJ

Well done.

Ankita smiles as well.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spots one of the cloaked men standing at the edge of the forest.

His gaze locks briefly with the man's.

FLASHFORWARD

He looks through a hole in the bushes at the Malum Res. The Malum Res's hood is down. For a short moment, their gazes meet.

END FLASHFORWARD

The man then turns and runs.

He takes off across the field after the man.

ANKITA

Devraj!

He ignores Ankita's cries and increases his speed.

EAST END OF THE BATTLEFIELD - LATER

The man is within his range. Devraj increases his speed once again and closes to within a foot of the man. He thrusts his hand forward and makes a grab for the back of the man's robe.

He misses.

He tries again and is able to get a tight grip on the material. The man stumbles and falls hard to the ground, taking Devraj with him.

The man struggles beneath Devraj's weight and at last manages to climb out from under him.

The man's hood has fallen back. The man is the Malum Res.

The two stare at each other for several long moments.

DEVRAJ

Why do you run away? Don't you want
your prize?

Devraj grasps the chain around his neck and smirks.

The Malum Res says nothing. He narrows his eyes. He then brings his hand up quickly, his palm facing Devraj.

MALUM RES

Sino!

A FLASH OF DARK LIGHT speeds toward Devraj. Devraj brings his arm up and the spell deflects off of his chainmail armor. Devraj drops his arm and his smirk widens.

DEVRAJ

Is that the best you can do?

The Malum Res lets out a frustrated cry.

MALUM RES

Abeo!

ANOTHER FLASH OF DARK LIGHT speeds toward Devraj.

Devraj drops to the ground just in time to avoid the spell and rolls toward the place where he dropped his sword. He grips the sword and jerks to his feet, wielding the sword with both hands.

The Malum Res grabs a stick from the ground that then transforms into a sword.

Devraj gapes at him.

The Malum Res cackles and then dashes toward Devraj, the sword raised above his head. When he reaches Devraj, the sword slices downward through the air at Devraj.

Devraj brings his sword up and turns horizontally just in time to block the blow.

The two force their swords toward one another for several moments before Devraj's sword slips away.

Devraj ducks and rolls to the side, barely avoiding the Malum Res's sword. Devraj jerks to his feet, waiting for the Malum Res's next strike.

Again, the Malum Res sprints toward him and their swords clash several more times as Devraj struggles to parry each swing.

The Malum Res's nth swing cuts through Devraj's chainmail and into Devraj's shoulder. The sliced chainmail slips from Devraj's shoulder, leaving his skin exposed.

Devraj cries out in pain and drops to his knees clutching his injured shoulder.

The Malum Res makes to strike again and Devraj rolls out of the way of the blow. He then brings his sword down on the Malum Res's and manages to strike the sword from the Malum Res's hands.

Before Devraj can deliver the final blow, the Malum Res grasps his exposed flesh and quickly shouts...

MALUM RES

Abeo!

Devraj stumbles backward and drops to his knees. His lips tremble and his eyes glaze over. His eyelids then drop and he falls to the ground. He lays spread-eagled on the grassy field.

The Malum Res cackles in triumph and slips the Ashal from around Devraj's neck. He then dashes toward the shoreline.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, FOREST- CONTINUOUS

Ankita approaches an area a little over a kilometer east of the beach with the others of the Light Army behind her. She sees Devraj lying still on the ground several yards away. She runs toward him.

When she reaches him, she drops to her knees at Devraj's side. He's dead. She throws herself on top of his body and weeps openly.

She feels a sharp spark where her hand lays over his heart and his eyelids flutter briefly. Startled, she jerks her hand away quickly. She cautiously lays her palm over his heart and closes her eyes.

ANKITA

Orior oriri ortus, diligo. Orior
oriri ortus vacuus morbus quod
malum. Orior oriri ortus quod ago
iterum.

A flash of white light blinds them all for a moment and before their eyes, Devraj transforms into Tiberius. Tiberius gasps for breath and sits bolt upright.

ANKITA

D-Devraj?

Tiberius turns toward her. He wears a stunned expression. He cups her face with shaking hands.

TIBERIUS

Do you not recognize me, my love?

Ankita stares at him and wears a stunned expression. She cups his face in her hands.

Tiberius smiles and closes his eyes.

TIBERIUS

Reverto ut mihi, meus diligo.

A white flash of light again blinds them for a moment. Then, before the eyes of stunned onlookers, Ankita transforms into Melkesh.

TIBERIUS

Do you remember when Father Shamesh
spoke of the Eternal Bond?

MELKESH

But it's only a myth--a fairytale
created by lovers who sought to be
together for eternity.

TIBERIUS

It's real.

TIBERIUS

We must retrieve the stone from the
Malum Res. There is a spell that,
when recited holding the stone,
strips the enemy of his powers. We
must stop him before he destroys
Aerydon.

MELKESH

How do you know this?

Tiberius ignores her question.

TIBERIUS

We must get to the city before its
too late.

FOREST - LATER

Tiberius and Melkesh runs through the woods toward the beach.
They leap over logs and duck under branches as they run.

BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The Malum Res stands at the edge of the beach with the Ashal
around his neck. He stares out and lifts his hands skyward.

MALUM RES

Arise, fair city of Aerydon, from
your shelter beneath the waters.
Arise! Your new master has arrived.

FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The ground beneath Tiberius and Melkesh's feet shudders and
quakes. Unable to keep their balance, the two fall. The
ground continues to shake.

MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

The spires of the Aerydonian city break the surface of the
water and rise upward.

The tops of the glass globes rise next.

The city continues to emerge from the waters until it floats
on the ocean's surface, completely exposed to the harsh light
of day.

FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The quaking stops. Tiberius and Melkesh exchange a
significant glance before both stand slowly.

The ground remains still.

MELKESH

What in Poseidon's name was that?

TIBERIUS

I don't know. But whatever it was,
it wasn't good. Come. We must
hurry.

Both resume their sprint toward the beach and surge through the bushes in front of them.

BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The Malum Res hears rustling in the bushes and turns.

Tiberius and Melkesh burst from the bushes and stumble onto the beach.

Tiberius's gaze locks with the Malum Res's and both stare at one another for a few moments.

Tiberius strides slowly toward the Malum Res and stops several feet from him.

The Malum Res smirks in triumph.

MALUM RES

You're too late, Tiberius. I've removed the Guardians' protections and with a simple word, the city will cease to exist.

TIBERIUS

Why? Why do you want to destroy the city? Your home?

MALUM RES

It was never my home! You know as well as I do, Tiberius, that I was only ever a joke for their amusement.

TIBERIUS

That's not true.

MALUM RES

Don't lie. Even you mocked me. You just never dared express your disgust to me directly.

Tiberius's lips tighten, but he remains silent.

MALUM RES

You don't deny it. How unlike you.

TIBERIUS

There is no sense denying it when you will think what you wish no matter what I say.

MALUM RES

I give you one last opportunity to join me. We could have power like no one of this world.

TIBERIUS

You offered me that opportunity once and I refused. I do so again.

MALUM RES

Why do you refuse me? You were just as intrigued by the stone's powers as I.

Tiberius stiffens.

TIBERIUS

Yes, Jacobi. Yes, I was.

The Malum Res narrows his eyes in anger.

MALUM RES

You dare to call me by that filthy name?

TIBERIUS

Why does it disgust you so? It's your birthname. Your name was derived from that of one of our greatest leaders--

MALUM RES

Great leader? Ha! The man couldn't even protect his own son!

TIBERIUS

Don't blame father for your cowardice, Jacobi. Only a coward would torture and kill his tormentors. Only a coward would--

MALUM RES

Enough!

Tiberius closes his mouth, unfazed by the Malum Res's temper.

MALUM RES

Then you leave me no choice, brother.

The Malum Res locks gazes with Tiberius and extends his hand with his palm facing outward.

MALUM RES

Abeo!

A FLASH OF DARK LIGHT RUSHES AT TIBERIUS. Without a moment's pause, Melkesh shoves Tiberius out of the way just in time. The two fall to the ground hard and Tiberius cries out in pain when the impact dislocates his shoulder.

Tiberius stands quickly while Melkesh remains on the ground, unconscious. His heart races as he glances quickly at Melkesh, not wanting to tear his gaze from the Malum Res. He glances again at her, his features tight with anxiety.

MALUM RES

Dead. Again. Because of her own foolish selflessness.

Tiberius again glances quickly at Ankita and notes the gentle rise and fall of her chest. He fights to keep the joy from his expression. He then returns his gaze to the Malum Res.

TIBERIUS

Her sacrifice was far more than selflessness, Jacobi. It was one of love--something I fear you will never quite understand.

The Malum Res's lips tighten.

MALUM RES (V.O.)

I understand. More than you know.

MALUM RES

Her sacrifice was foolish nonetheless because, dear brother, you will die despite her efforts.

The Malum Res quickly extends his hand and faces his palm outward. As he opens his mouth to curse Tiberius, Melkesh jerks to sitting position and extends her hand, her palm facing him, and SHOUTS...

MELKESH

Aufero telum!

The Malum Res stumbles backward in surprise. The Malum Res again extends his hand, palm facing Tiberius, and SHOUTS...

MALUM RES

Abeo!

Nothing happens.

MALUM RES

Abeo!

Again, nothing happens.

Tiberius glances at Ankita and grins.

TIBERIUS

Well done, my love.

MELKESH

You must retrieve the stone quickly! The spell only temporarily disables his powers.

Tiberius gaze locks with the Malum Res. He stares for a moment before charging him full on. He lets loose a yell of fury. He then collides with the Malum Res and the force of the blow sends both to the ground.

The collision winds Tiberius slightly, but he quickly recovers.

He attempts to remove the stone from the Malum Res's neck, but the Malum Res grabs his hands and jerks them away. Tiberius struggles to free his hands.

Melkesh attempts to stand, but gasps as a sharp pain shoots through her chest and she falls back.

Tiberius grits his teeth in effort, but its no use. He can't free his hand. Wait--HIS TEETH!

Before the Malum Res can react, Tiberius sinks his teeth deeply into the Malum Res's left wrist.

The Malum Res releases his right hand and cries out in pain.

Tiberius jerks the stone necklace and the chain comes undone at the back. He then stands and stumbles away from the Malum Res, toward Melkesh.

TIBERIUS

Are you all right?

MELKESH

I'm fine. Give me the stone.

Tiberius drops it into her hands as the Malum Res stands. Tiberius jumps to his feet and blocks the Malum Res's path to Melkesh.

The Malum Res sneers and dashes toward him, raising a fist to strike. Tiberius grasps the Malum Res's fist just before it makes contact. He then grasps the Malum Res's other fist as it comes flying at him. As the two grapple, Tiberius subtly leads the Malum Res away from Melkesh.

MELKESH

Keep him busy.

The Malum Res manages to free one of his fists from Tiberius's grip and strike him across the face. Tiberius grunts from the blow.

TIBERIUS

Of course.

As the Malum Res and Tiberius grapple, Melkesh struggles to read the tiny, engraved symbols on the back of the stone.

Tiberius yells in surprise when the Malum Res tosses him to the ground.

Melkesh's eyes widen in realization.

The Malum Res stalks toward her to take back the stone.

TIBERIUS

Melkesh!

She turns to find the Malum Res moving toward her. She fumbles and points the stone toward him, reciting the engravings from its back.

MELKESH

Ego excito veneficus of Tutela.
Attero is res pro is attero mihi.

A BEAM OF BRILLIANT RED LIGHT departs the stone and rushes toward the Malum Res.

The beam makes contact.

The Malum Res screams in agony as licking flames consume his entire body. Several moments later, all that remains of him is a pile of ash.

Tiberius and Melkesh stare at one another in shock of what they have just witnessed.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Tiberius carries Melkesh back toward the battlefield, careful not to jar her injured ribs.

MELKESH

If the power of the stone was so effective, then why did we not use it the first time?

TIBERIUS

This particular power was not to be taken lightly. We can't simply eliminate any enemy who wanders across our path.

MELKESH

Why not?

Tiberius pauses.

TIBERIUS

As Father Shamesh explained it--the more Dark magic one performs, the more one becomes tempted by it.

MELKESH

In other words, you become that which you are trying to fight.

TIBERIUS

Exactly.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Tiberius and Melkesh emerge from the woods to the victorious cheers of the villagers.

VILLAGE MAN 2

They did it, lads! They defeated the Malum Res!

Another of the VILLAGE MEN approaches Tiberius and glances down at Melkesh, who clutches her ribs. The man then glances up at Tiberius.

VILLAGE MAN 4

My wife is a shaman. She has performed many miracles.

TIBERIUS

Where is she?

VILLAGE MAN 4

Back at camp.

TIBERIUS

Show me.

Tiberius strides down the path that the man makes in the crowd. As he moves through, dozens of hands reach toward him and pat him on the back.

The cheers fade as Tiberius moves farther from the battlefield and into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Melkesh lies beside a crackling fire, which provides the only light in the darkness. A woman leans over her and gently slides her hands up and down over Melkesh's bound ribs.

Tiberius approaches.

The woman glances up and meets his gaze. She nods. She then moves back toward her family's fire, which leaves Tiberius and Melkesh entirely alone.

Tiberius turns toward her and grins.

TIBERIUS
You fought bravely today.

MELKESH
As did you.

Tiberius pauses.

TIBERIUS
There's one thing I'm curious
about, however.

MELKESH
And what might that be?

TIBERIUS
How did you survive a curse that
should have killed you?

Melkesh smirks and holds up a large, gaudy, green stone hanging from a gold chain.

MELKESH
Your birthday present to me.

Tiberius studies the stone and notes for the first time that a crack runs through the center.

TIBERIUS
 Aren't you rather glad for it now?
 I expect I won't hear another
 complaint from you about "that
 gaudy stone".

Melkesh's expression softens.

MELKESH
 No. Indeed you won't.

The two sit in silence for several moments.

TIBERIUS
 I'm sorry.

MELKESH
 What for?

TIBERIUS
 For all that I said as--Devraj.

MELKESH
 Devraj or not--you loved me.

TIBERIUS
 Yes, I did. For so long.

MELKESH
 I suppose there really is such a
 thing as the Eternal Bond.

Tiberius smiles.

MELKESH
 I wonder how the Malum Res freed
 himself from his imprisonment

TIBERIUS
 I suppose we shall never know.

Tiberius's gaze locks with Melkesh's and the smiles fades
 from his face. He cups her face in his hands.

TIBERIUS
 I love you.

Melkesh grins.

MELKESH
 I love you, too.

He then slowly lowers his head to hers. Their lips meet.
 Melkesh returns the kiss with a gentle passion.

We pull back slowly from the scene.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH

The wind sweeps up the ash remains of the Malum Res and scatters them over the ocean. An evil cackle similar to that of the Malum Res resounds.

THE END