

THE FEMPIROR CHRONICLES
THE INITIATION OF DAVID

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

SUPER: June 1775

A stereotypical small town is laid out in the moonlight. Shops and houses square off a clearing in the center of town at the center of which stands a large statue of a man. A plate affixed to the base of the statue reads:

DEDICATED TO GERALD HAUGINS
FIRST MAYOR OF HAUGINSTOWN

The shops and houses are dark, except one. THE WHITT'S END BAR has candles burning within.

SUDDENLY, BEN THURMAN, an old, gruff man in a drunken stupor, stumbles out. BARLIMAN WHITT, the Whitt's End barkeep, a time-hardened purveyor of alcohol, steps out after him.

WHITT

Hey, Ben, you gonna be all right?

BEN

I'm fine, Whitt.

Ben stumbles to the ground in a heap. Whitt helps him back up.

WHITT

Maybe I should walk you home, Ben.
You're drunker than a toad.

Ben shakes off Whitt.

BEN

I said I'm fine. I been worse, you know. You just go on and leave me alone. So what if I sleep outside? It don't matter none.

WHITT

You'd best get inside. Some people tell of a stranger around here lately - roaming the town at night.

BEN

Leave me alone!

Whitt shakes his head and walks back inside. Ben stumbles into the town square.

SOMEONE watches him from a distance.

Ben makes it to the statue and leans against it. He squints his eyes, looking across the square. He takes a few steps and stumbles to the ground again.

The person watching Ben moves closer.

Ben pulls himself back to his feet. He walks across the square again.

BEN
(slurred)
Walk me home... What does he think
I am? Drunk?

Ben stumbles to the ground again. The person watches Ben. Ben comes back to his feet and continues walking. The person moves at an unfathomable speed, catching up to the stumbling drunk.

Ben reaches the far side of the square. A twig SNAPS behind him.

He turns around to see a scruffy, wild-eyed young man behind him holding two halves of a twig, which he tosses behind him. This is RUFUS. Rufus is around 24 and well-dressed much like any other person in town.

Ben stands frozen. His eyes are wide-open in fear. Through Ben's eyes, Rufus is a blurry mess of two people.

BEN
(slurred)
Are you the strangers?

Rufus reaches into his belt and pulls out an ODD-LOOKING, CHROME DEVICE THAT RESEMBLES A MODERN SYRINGE, BUT HAS TWO LARGE NEEDLES AT ITS END RESEMBLING FANGS. This is called a NILROF. The nilrof is full of a DARK RED LIQUID.

Ben stares at the device. His vision focuses until he sees the device. His eyes grow wide.

Ben sobers and breaks into a run. Rufus chases and is much faster than Ben, tackling him almost at once. They come to a sudden stop, and Rufus loses his grip. Ben recovers and runs back to the bar.

BEN
(slurred)
Help!

Rufus recovers and chases Ben. As Ben passes the statue, Rufus leaps through the air and tackles him to the ground. Ben tries to get up again, but Rufus lifts him off the ground and tosses him in a heap next to the statue.

Rufus approaches the tired Ben, nilrof in hand, and kneels next to him.

INT. WHITT'S END TAVERN - NIGHT

Whitt looks out the window. He sees Rufus kneel next to Ben, and then Rufus turns and looks at Whitt. Whitt quickly turns away. One of the patrons looks at Whitt.

PATRON

What's happening out there? What do you see?

WHITT

Whatever happens, don't go outside.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

Rufus smiles and turns back to Ben. He gets very close to Ben's frightened face and looks into his eyes. Raises the nilrof for Ben to see.

RUFUS

Welcome to the family.

He stabs the nilrof into Ben's neck. The dark red liquid flows out of the nilrof. Ben convulses, and then lets out a blood-curdling scream.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - DAY

ABRAHAM BARBER - a 17 year old with short, dark brown hair, sharp hazel eyes and a chiseled face - walks with a purpose through the bustling town square toward the Taylor Shop.

He passes the window in front of the shop and sees JONATHAN TAYLOR, a large, middle-aged man with a kind, nurturing face, and trimmed mustache and beard, working inside the shop with MARK TAYLOR, a 21 year old younger version of Jonathan.

ABRAHAM

Good afternoon, Mr. Taylor.

JONATHAN

Good afternoon, Abraham.

Abraham continues past the shop to a gate on one side. He pushes it open.

EXT. TAYLOR SHOP ALLEY - DAY

DAVID TAYLOR, also 17, a handsome, well-built young man with short, light brown hair, blue eyes, and a distant, but unmistakably bored, look about him is in the alley churning something in a large barrel.

Spanning the alley is a rainbow tinted clothesline, and a black kettle sits atop a smouldering fire at the end of the alley.

David looks up and sees Abraham. His face lights up.

DAVID
Good afternoon, Abraham.

ABRAHAM
Did you hear about last night?

DAVID
Which version?

ABRAHAM
What have you heard?

DAVID
I know he didn't come home. They find him yet?

ABRAHAM
They're not going to. I heard he was attacked.

DAVID
Says who?

ABRAHAM
Says the keeper at the Whitt's End Tavern. He says that old Ben had had too much to drink last night and was stumbling home when-

DAVID
I hear that happens every night. You know, one time we found him all the way out by the old Miller's east of town half dead of thirst after two days.

ABRAHAM

Let me finish, David. This is different. Mr. Whitt said he was attacked by a creature with glowing red eyes and wings and...

DAVID

(laughing)

A what?

ABRAHAM

It chased him around the town square, picked him up and threw him like a rag doll before this thing leaned over him at the end. Mr. Whitt thinks it was drinking his blood.

DAVID

You can't be serious.

ABRAHAM

The mayor's declared no one should be out after dark just in case.

David shakes his head.

DAVID

I think all of you are drunk off the tavern keeper's wares to believe in that nonsense.

ABRAHAM

But after last night?

DAVID

Last night, Ben probably upset someone, and they took out their rage on him.

ABRAHAM

What about this thing throwing him around the square?

DAVID

Who knows? Only Whitt saw it, and Lord knows what he'd been drinking.

ABRAHAM

Mr. Whitt is not known for making up stories, you know.

Abraham looks at the barrel and David churning.

ABRAHAM

What are you doing?

David raises his churning stick. A very wet, blue shirt hangs at the end.

ABRAHAM

What is that?

DAVID

It's Mr. Franklin's. All the menial work still falls to me, so I am out here dying the shirt. Washed it in the kettle before that. I'll be drying it in a moment.

He lowers the shirt back into the barrel and continues churning. A door on the side of the Taylor Shop opens. David's father, Jonathan, steps into the alley carrying a white wool shirt.

JONATHAN

How's that shirt coming along, David?

David raises the shirt from the barrel again. Jonathan inspects it.

JONATHAN

Excellent. Give it some time to dry, and then wash the excess dye out. In the meantime, you can start on this one.

David's shoulders sink.

DAVID

Another one?

JONATHAN

Also Mr. Franklin's.

Jonathan hands David the shirt, and David takes it.

DAVID

How long am I going to be out here today?

JONATHAN

David, the life of a tailor is not always easy. Sometimes, the simplest jobs are the most important.

DAVID

But how long?

JONATHAN

Dry this one, and while it's drying, you can start washing the new one. Hopefully, you'll get them both done today.

David opens his mouth as if to say something more, but he closes his mouth before anything comes out. He nods, as if defeated.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

JONATHAN

Go ahead and take a break while that one dries and the water heats. Five minutes should be plenty.

DAVID

Thank you, sir.

David lifts the shirt with his churning stick and drapes it carefully over the rainbow tinted line. Jonathan looks at it for a moment and then back to David.

JONATHAN

Don't forget to turn it when you get back to dry the other side.

Jonathan points to the kettle at the back of the alley.

JONATHAN

And get that fire going again so the water's warmed as well.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

David walks back to the kettle and picks up a tinderbox sitting near it. He works with the box to restart the fire as Mark sticks his head out the door.

MARK

Father, Mr. Diddle gained weight since we measured him and now his pants don't fit.

JONATHAN

I'll be right there.
(to David)
(MORE)

JONATHAN (cont'd)
Five minutes after you get that
fire going.

DAVID
Yes, sir.

Jonathan walks inside the shop. David looks at Abraham, who is smirking. David holds the churning stick somewhat like a sword.

DAVID
You know, there are days when I'd
just like to-

He swings the stick around in wide circles, almost impossibly missing the barrel, clothes line, both walls, and Abraham (who takes a step back during the swinging) before dumping the stick in the barrel with the shirt.

Abraham stares in disbelief. David takes his hat from a nail on the side of the shop.

DAVID
Let's go.

They exit the alley.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - DAY

Abraham and David walk along the grassy area making a circuit around the statue in the center of town.

ABRAHAM
If you don't stop brooding, cousin,
I'll put you out of your misery.

DAVID
You know I hate this.

ABRAHAM
Is this still about the tailor
thing?

DAVID
What do you think?

ABRAHAM
Do you even know what you want
anymore? One day, you want nothing
to do with it, and the next you're
wishing that your father would
focus some energy on you instead of
Mark and James.

DAVID

I just- I don't know. You ever feel like you're just not made for something, no matter how hard you try?

Abraham shakes his head.

ABRAHAM

My profession is a combination of old alchemy and modern hair styling. Cut their hair and keep them alive, my father says. Hardly boring.

DAVID

So you're satisfied?

ABRAHAM

I would say so. It's not as if we're going to see the world or anything?

DAVID

We might.

ABRAHAM

Sure. If you're not a tailor here, you'll be a tailor somewhere else. You'll settle down with your little wife, and stay in the same little town your whole little life. Just like I will. Just like our families have. Just like-

DAVID

Just like everyone else in this town, I know. I need to swallow my pride or something.

ABRAHAM

Well, at least you know who you're going to end up with.

DAVID

What?

BETH CARPENTER runs up behind them, holding the hem of her dress off the ground and carrying a ball of yarn under her arm. The older women huff at her as she passes.

Beth is 17 with a bright, energetic face, long brown hair, deep brown eyes, and a smile to die for.

BETH
Good day, you two.

ABRAHAM
Good afternoon, Beth.

DAVID
Hey, Beth.

BETH
David. Abraham. What are you two doing?

ABRAHAM
Oh, you know, just brooding over a dull future.

BETH
Dull? Come on, life is out there. What could possibly be so dull about it?

ABRAHAM
Well, this isn't me so much as your intended here.

BETH
Abraham, hush.

ABRAHAM
David's got you, and I have the prospect of Mary Dillinger, the singular biggest eye-sore in this god-forsaken town. If I ever had one reason to get out of here...

BETH
Abraham, you know better than to-

ABRAHAM
I know you're trying to avoid public scrutiny, but don't you think people will figure it out?

DAVID
Not as long as certain people keep their mouths closed about it. This gossip-laden town does not need to know about us yet.

ABRAHAM
They'll figure it out.

DAVID

How? We've been friends forever,
and you'd be as big a suspect as I
would. Besides, we're known well
enough as a threesome right now.

BETH

And that's the way it will stay
until we're ready as well.

ABRAHAM

Ready? I know life will go on, but
we're not going to break up the
threesome, are we?

BETH

Be realistic Abraham. We're friends
forever, but life will make a
twosome someday.

Abraham stops in his tracks. His mouth hangs open. His eyes
betray the shot Beth just fired.

ABRAHAM

Right.

He recovers and catches up.

DAVID

Well, I need to be getting back.

Abraham glances to the barbershop to find his father watching
him.

ABRAHAM

Me too by the looks of it.

DAVID

Very well. See you later, Abraham.

Abraham stops following, wounded again. He waves as he backs
off.

ABRAHAM

Right. I'll see you later.

BETH

Bye.

David and Beth walk back over to the Taylor Shop. Abraham
casts a glance behind him at the pair. He shakes his head in
sadness.

EXT. TAYLOR SHOP ALLEY - DAY

David and Beth enter the alley through the gate. David closes the gate behind him. They wrap their arms around each other and kiss.

DAVID
I've been waiting all day for that.

BETH
Me too.

David glances down to the yarn Beth carries.

DAVID
(re: the yarn)
What's this for?

Beth laughs.

BETH
I've been working on a blanket for two for whenever we get married. When that day finally comes, it should be done.

DAVID
Sounds good.

BETH
I can't wait until we're able to tell the world about us. Just to be able to show them how we feel about each other.

DAVID
We will, but now is not the time.

Beth pouts for a moment, but David's smile wins her over.

BETH
Can you come out tonight?

DAVID
There's a ban on going out after dark. Besides, it isn't entirely proper.

BETH
It's never stopped us before.

David smiles and nods.

DAVID
That's true.

BETH
I'll see you tonight then?

They kiss again. Their eyes lock.

DAVID
Me and you, right?

BETH
For all eternity.

DAVID
No matter what.

Beth backs away from his glance, and exits the alley. David looks after her for a moment. He looks back to the kettle and its steaming water. He sighs, grabs the white shirt and tosses it in the water.

INT. TAYLOR SHOP - DAY

David sweeps a round of dust out of the alley door of the back of the store. Jonathan enters from the front of the store.

JONATHAN
Mr. Franklin was really pleased
with your work today, son.

DAVID
Thank you, father.

JONATHAN
However, I found the dye to be
rather uneven on the second shirt.
You rushed through the process too
quickly. You should have known he
would leave them here to dry fully.
You need to pay attention to what
you're doing and take your time
when time is needed.

DAVID
I'll be more careful.

JONATHAN
Good. People's clothes are their
first impressions. It's important
they be done right.

Mark comes out of the back and walks to Jonathan.

MARK

Where did I go wrong on that waistline, father?

JONATHAN

It was two inches. Anyone can make a mistake.

DAVID

Isn't this the third alteration he's done wrong?

JONATHAN

David, this is not your concern.

David sighs.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

JONATHAN

Now, finish sweeping the floor.

David resumes sweeping the floor.

INT. TAYLOR HOME - DUSK

Jonathan sits in a comfy chair in his living room with a piece of paper and a charcoal pencil. He has drawn a picture of a man in pants and a shirt.

David's brother, JAMES (24), along with Mark sit in the room. James reads while Mark carves a wooden needle.

JONATHAN

James, come here.

James puts his book down and walks to Jonathan.

JAMES

Yes, sir?

JONATHAN

This design needs something, and I can't place it. Do you have any thoughts on making it cooler?

James stares at the drawing for a moment.

JAMES

What if you cut off the sleeves
here-

He swipes across one of the arms on the page.

JAMES

-and here.

He swipes across the other arm. Jonathan looks at the page
and smiles.

JONATHAN

Short sleeves? That's it! You're
really starting to surpass me.

David walks up to Jonathan. Jonathan goes back to sketching,
hardly glancing at David.

DAVID

Father?

JONATHAN

What is it, David?

DAVID

I was wondering. Would it be
permissible for me to see Abraham
and Beth this evening?

Jonathan, Mark, and James all stop what they're doing to look
at him. Jonathan lowers his sketch.

JONATHAN

David, the mayor has banned all
activity after dark until this
business with Ben Thurman has been
cleared up.

David scoffs.

DAVID

Surely you don't believe the unholy
demon story.

JONATHAN

Nonsense as far as I'm concerned,
but the mayor doesn't want to take
any chances. The law is the law,
and we follow it. Are we clear?

David looks into his father's face. James and Mark watch
them. Jonathan's face betrays no humor. David nods, dejected.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

David walks towards the stairs. MARY TAYLOR walks past him, dressed like she just came out of the kitchen. She is an average homely woman with loving, but dark-circled, eyes.

MARY

Are you going to bed already, David?

DAVID

Forgive me, mother, but I feel as if the day has worn me out.

MARY

Are you feeling all right?

DAVID

I'm just a little tired. I'll be fine tomorrow. With your permission, I do wish to rest.

MARY

Very well. Good night, David.

DAVID

Good night, mother.

Jonathan watches David as he approaches the stairs.

JONATHAN

If you are going to bed, then I'd best find you there when I come up later. Are we clear?

DAVID

Yes, father. Good night.

JONATHAN

Good night, son.

David walks upstairs to his room and closes the door. Mary looks at Jonathan.

MARY

What was that all about, husband?

JONATHAN

Don't worry about it.

EXT. TAYLOR HOUSE - DUSK

On the second story of the house, a window opens and David peeps out. There is a sheer drop from his window to the ground below. He looks back at the closed bedroom door, and then leaps out of the window.

THUD. David lands. He looks around and runs off.

EXT. FOREST GROVE - DUSK

A grove of trees overgrows an area about the size of a small garage. The trunks and branches interlock so well that only someone who knew it was there would be able to find it. David enters.

DAVID

Beth? Beth, are you here yet?

Beth emerges from the brush.

BETH

My love, you made it.

They embrace briefly.

DAVID

Shall we go?

BETH

Please.

They run through the trees and out of town.

EXT. OLD MILL - DUSK

This old windmill has seen better days. The props still spin in the breeze, but it is used for little but hiding anymore. David and Beth run through the grass and open the door.

INT. OLD MILL - DUSK

David and Beth enter. Dust covers everything. Old ropes and wooden parts hang from every facet of the walls and ceiling.

BETH

Hullo?

DAVID
Anyone here?

They listen for a moment, and then look at each other.

DAVID
It looks like our secret is still
safe.

BETH
Good, because we need to talk.

David walks to the mill wheel, brushes off the dust and sits.

DAVID
This is about us, isn't it?

Beth nods.

BETH
At first, the secret was fun, and
then necessary, so we could see
each other without being trailed by
family. But David...

DAVID
It's getting old.

BETH
We're both old enough to be
married, and no one would object.
What are we waiting for?

DAVID
Well, before now, it was the fear
of being watched all the time like
young couples tend to be. Of
course, if anyone learned of this
rendezvous, we'd get lashed either
way.

BETH
If we get married, we'll be free to
be together whenever we want, and
the only thing we'll be watched for
is grandchildren.

David smiles and holds out an arm. Beth slides into his lap
and he holds her.

DAVID
Whenever you want to tell, I'm with
you.

BETH

Really?

She hugs him.

BETH

Oh, I'm so excited.

She jumps up and paces around the mill.

BETH

Well, I think I'd want the wedding next spring, so I think probably in a couple weeks we could reveal ourselves, allow a natural public courting period.

Beth's pacing widens across the floor of the mill which creaks under her weight.

BETH

You would, of course, have to ask my father for his blessing, but that should be easy.

David glances away with a worried look that Beth doesn't notice.

BETH

Then we could begin the actual planning process-

CRASH! The floor near a boarded doorway collapses and Beth goes down with it. She screams.

DAVID

Beth!

David runs to the hole and looks down.

DAVID

Beth!

A faint coughing sounds from deep within the hole. David looks around the mill. He pulls on some rope, but it is attached far above.

He runs over to the hole. Darkness.

DAVID

Beth, I'm coming down.

He closes his eyes and jumps.

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVERN - DUSK

Beth hits the ground and rolls a little. She heavily gets to her hands and knees huffing and puffing.

David hits the ground and rolls to a stop. He scrambles to his feet and runs to Beth.

DAVID
Are you all right?

Beth shakes her head and looks around.

BETH
Where are we?

In one direction, the waning sunlight shines just inside the cave entrance. Artificial light issues from deeper within.

DAVID
Well, we can either go out, or we can check out where that light is coming from.

BETH
I'm not sure I want to check out a strange light.

DAVID
It might help us figure out what happened to Ben. People are going crazy over it.

Beth shrugs and nods but grips his arm. They creep toward the artificial light source.

INT. CAVERN ROOM

The room is round and carved out of the dirt. Off to one side, another opening leads to another room, but it is darkened.

A crude table sits in the center with a lamp on it. The lamp light appears to be lit with a filament like a modern light bulb.

BETH
It looks like someone's house.

DAVID
Beth, look at that lamp.

They both stoop down to look at it.

BETH

There's no fire, but it glows.

David looks around the room again. On the far side of the room just on the edge of the light, someone rests on the floor. He taps Beth's arm and points.

DAVID

There's someone over there.

He walks toward the form, but Beth tugs on his arm.

BETH

David, let's get out of here...
please?

DAVID

I just want to know if it's Ben.
Maybe we can stumble across him
tomorrow and be heroes.

Beth cowers behind David as he closes in on the sleeping form.

He kneels beside the sleeper. It's Ben Thurman.

DAVID

Found you.

Beth tugs at David's shirt.

BETH

David, look at his neck.

On Ben's neck are two side-by-side puncture wounds about the width of canine teeth.

Beth covers her mouth in fear.

Someone steps out of the other room behind them, unnoticed.

BETH

They were right. He was bitten by
something. I'll bet it lives here.
What if it finds us here?

DAVID

Don't worry, no one will find-

David turns to find Rufus standing in the other doorway looking at them with a smirk.

He holds a sword in a scabbard at his side. The color drains from David's face. Beth glances over and her eyes open wide.

RUFUS

I found you.

The pair screams and darts out of that hole faster than their legs were meant to carry them.

Rufus chuckles. Ben stupors up and looks around.

BEN

What's going on?

Rufus scowls and rolls his eyes to look at Ben.

RUFUS

Oh, shut up, you old fool.

Ben lays his head back down. Rufus looks after the young lovers and smiles.

EXT. BETH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

They reach the doorstep, panting.

BETH

Do you think he followed us?

The door slams open. The pair screams and jumps away from the door. PATRICK CARPENTER, a large man with a no nonsense face and build to back it up glares at them.

PATRICK

Outside at night alone with a young man? Young lady, you'd better have a good explanation.

DAVID

Sir, we found Ben Thurman. He had marks on his neck.

David signs the marks on his own neck. Patrick is unsympathetic.

PATRICK

(cynical)

David, while this discovery is a commendable feat, there is currently a law against being outside at night!

BETH

But-

PATRICK

Not another word! This situation is highly improper, and I've half a mind to-

DAVID

Sir, I'd like to marry your daughter.

Patrick opens his eyes wide at David. Beth's mouth drops open - half shocked and half smiling. Patrick nods.

PATRICK

Beth, go inside the house and wash. We'll discuss your part in this in a moment.

Beth's head droops. She goes inside. Patrick glares at David.

PATRICK

Your declaration changes little. I will be discussing all of this with your father tomorrow, and I would recommend he find out from you before he finds out from me.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

PATRICK

And if you expect me to allow you to marry my daughter, Mr. Taylor, I expect you to follow the rules. I will not have a son-in-law who breaks the law. Now go home. It sounds like you've already learned how dangerous it can be.

DAVID

Yes, sir.

David leaves the porch.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

David crosses the town square. He looks at the stars and smiles. He lowers his head to look ahead of him. He freezes.

Rufus blocks David's path.

DAVID

Who... who are you?

RUFUS

You are a curious little chap, aren't you? First, you invade my home, then I get questions. Who are you?

DAVID

David...Taylor.

RUFUS

Well, David Taylor, I'm Rufus. A special emissary to Hauginstown from the Order of Tepish.

David only stares, his eyes wide open. Rufus approaches to within striking distance.

RUFUS

I'm here to reward your curiosity with eternal servitude to the Elrod Malnak of the Order of Tepish in his army to combat the Rastem insurrectionists.

David looks at Rufus, confused. Rufus knocks him to the ground. David struggles to no effect. Rufus pulls out another chrome, two-pronged nilrof and injects David's neck. David gasps.

RUFUS

Welcome to the family.

David hyperventilates for a moment and then screams the scream of a man being torn apart from the inside out. Rufus laughs. David faints.

Suddenly, Rufus is kicked off of David and thrown against the nearby statue. Rufus jumps to his feet, shaking this attack off.

He looks over to his attacker. Standing over David now is ZECHARIAH, a formidable presence appearing to be in his 60's, but extremely fit for this age.

He is dressed in dark clothing: a single piece shirt tucked into his dark trousers. He wears a long riding coat that goes to his ankles. His wrists and ankles are bound in metal gauntlets, and he has a sheath lashed on his back.

His face is etched with confidence. He has a long beard, unshaven in decades with hair to match, all a stark shade of grey-white.

He speaks in a gruff, firm voice.

ZECHARIAH

I don't know who you are, but transmutating humans into Fempiror is a blatant violation of the Rastem code.

RUFUS

The code is dead, old man, and your Rastem Order will soon be dead, too.

ZECHARIAH

Leave this town, malklek.

RUFUS

Or what?

ZECHARIAH

Or you don't leave at all.

RUFUS

Fine.

Rufus moves towards David. Zechariah blocks his path.

ZECHARIAH

He stays.

RUFUS

You have no claim to him.

ZECHARIAH

Nor do you.

Rufus draws a two handed longsword. Its design is very plain, almost assembly-line, in appearance.

Zechariah does the same. His sword is similar to a katana, but his hilt is very ornate, as if much time went into its design. His blade is also etched with a word in a strange form of symbolic writing.

A mighty duel ensues between them. Zechariah is very deliberate, yet quick, in his style, while Rufus is cocky. Their swords clash as each combatant makes moves upon the other.

The clash is impossibly fast. Rufus makes a swing for Zechariah. Zechariah ducks and swings for Rufus' feet. Rufus leaps up against the side of the statue and then down behind Zechariah.

Zechariah anticipates and makes a backward swing for Rufus. Rufus ducks the blow and the duel proceeds. The swords clang together over and over until Zechariah backs Rufus up against the statue.

ZECHARIAH

Who are you?

RUFUS

A Redäl Kötz of the Order of Tepish.

ZECHARIAH

Tell me, Redäl Kötz, where are your Fälzkrüz?

RUFUS

If you are so wise to know of the Fälzkrüz, old man, then you should also know of the Redäl Kötz who find their own Fälzkrüz.

ZECHARIAH

Who is the Elrod Malnak?

RUFUS

You'll never find out.

Rufus pushes Zechariah off him, and the battle continues. Zechariah makes a swing slicing Rufus belly. Rufus lunges for Zechariah, each swing faster than the one before it.

Zechariah goes on the defensive as Rufus takes swing after swing, but each one is skillfully blocked by Zechariah. In one deft move, Zechariah knocks the sword from Rufus' hand, and runs him through. Rufus has a shocked look on his face.

ZECHARIAH

Again, who is the Elrod Malnak?

Rufus spits blood in Zechariah's face.

ZECHARIAH

Who is your Kepinürsk?

RUFUS

The Tepish will rule forever.

Rufus dies. Zechariah pulls his sword out, wipes it with a cloth from his pocket, and re-sheaths it. He also removes Rufus' sword and sheath from his body, and ties it to his waist.

He looks around on the ground and finds the smashed nilrof. He sighs as he looks over what is left of the device, but he places it in the satchel Rufus carried, and straps the satchel around his own waist.

He looks over at David. Sadly, he shakes his head. He lifts David over his shoulders and then lifts the body of Rufus over his other shoulder. He carries them both into the night.

INT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - DAY

A non-descript room with no windows, a bed, and a nightstand with a lamp lit, once again, by a filament. David lies unconscious on the bed.

Then, David starts up with a slight scream. He looks around the room, confused. A look of dread crosses his face.

Slowly, he reaches up to his neck to find out if last night was real or just a nightmare. On his neck, his fingers run across two scabbed marks. He gasps.

The door opens. David looks up in fear to see Zechariah standing in the doorway. He gasps again, and backs away from the door into a corner of the room.

DAVID

Who are you? Where am I? What do you want with me?

ZECHARIAH

My name is Zechariah. Just relax, I'm here to help you.

DAVID

What did you do to me?

ZECHARIAH

Last night, you were injected with a serum that altered your physiology. You are now a Fempiror.

DAVID

A what?

Dvid appears to struggle with the word for a moment. He looks back to Zechariah.

DAVID

Vampire?

ZECHARIAH

Fempiror. One word descended from the other. The serum does give us characteristics similar to the vampire of mythology, but you will find the Fempiror quite different from the myth you know.

DAVID

I'll die before I drink anyone's blood.

ZECHARIAH

And no one expects you to drink anyone's blood.

DAVID

Oh.

ZECHARIAH

I think you'll find a lot of mythology is simply that. As of now, you are no longer human, so you will need to adjust to a new style of life.

DAVID

When can I go home?

ZECHARIAH

You can't.

DAVID

Why not?

ZECHARIAH

It's a violation of the Rastem code. Also, the human world lives in the sunlight, and that will kill you.

David looks at Zechariah, speechless.

DAVID

I don't...

He sighs and looks away from Zechariah.

ZECHARIAH

What is your name?

DAVID

David Taylor.

ZECHARIAH

I know this is hard, David. You won't like me for this part, but I am a Rastem, and the Code commands that I protect you. I will not allow you to hurt yourself or anyone else, so don't try to leave. Trust me on this.

David shrugs.

ZECHARIAH

Get some rest. We have a long night ahead of us.

David doesn't respond. Zechariah exits, closing the door behind him. David looks after him, anger and pain etched on his visage. A tear runs down his face.

INT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - DAY

The living area is expansive. It is decently furnished, and the kitchen area is all in the same room. There are other doors in the dwelling as well as a hall stretching off another direction. Sconces on the walls light the room.

A door opens. David peeps out of his room and looks around. Finding the living area empty, he steps out of his room.

He looks around the room at the various doors. He locates a door alone on a wall that is locked from his side.

He looks around again, and tiptoes to the door. He slowly unlatches the door lock.

He reaches for the door handle. Zechariah's hand darts out of nowhere and grabs his hand.

ZECHARIAH

You're not leaving, are you, David?

DAVID

I'm going home. You can't hold me here.

ZECHARIAH

True. I can't. But If you go out there right now, you'll die.

DAVID
I don't believe you.

ZECHARIAH
Really?

Zechariah grabs David by the wrist, pulls him behind the door and opens it. Outside the door is a short tunnel carved out of the dirt and then a wide-open, sunlit field

Zechariah steps toward the sunlight, still holding David's wrist, but David doesn't move.

ZECHARIAH
Are you coming?

David nods and follows Zechariah to the brink of the sunlight streaming past the tunnel.

ZECHARIAH
This will sting.

David looks up at him a little fearful. Zechariah thrusts his hand into the light. David howls in pain and the flesh on his hand begins to burn.

Zechariah releases him and David falls to the ground nursing his hand. He looks at Zechariah with hatred.

ZECHARIAH
Hate me if you want, but remember:
I could have let you leave.

Zechariah walks back inside his house and keeps the door open, waiting. David looks to the field and then down to his burned hand. He stumbles to his feet and walks inside Zechariah's house.

Zechariah slams the door behind him. David sits on the floor, nursing his hand.

DAVID
Why?

ZECHARIAH
I've seen men burst into flames
running out into the sunlight when
they couldn't take the darkness
anymore. I don't know why it harms
us; it just does.

DAVID

So we can't go out during the day
at all?

ZECHARIAH

Sunlight. If there are clouds, you
can go out. In fact, we have cloaks
to cover us during the day if we
need to move during that time. It's
the sun specifically that hurts us.

DAVID

What else will hurt me?

ZECHARIAH

Garlic, white oak, and I hope
you're not fond of orange juice.

DAVID

Does that mean I'm immortal too?

ZECHARIAH

No. We can be killed in exactly the
same ways as everyone else. We seem
immortal to humanity because we
live so much longer than they do.

DAVID

Why?

ZECHARIAH

Something about having a low body
temperature. I've never been clear
on what that has to do with aging,
but when I was changed, I was your
age.

DAVID

How old are you?

ZECHARIAH

(matter-of-fact)

Four hundred ten.

David stares at Zechariah, his mouth hanging open. He averts
his eyes.

ZECHARIAH

Get some rest. We have to go to
Erim, the central Fempiror city. I
need to talk to the Council, and
it's a long trip.

DAVID
I don't understand.

ZECHARIAH
I don't expect you to. We leave
just after sunset.

David climbs to his feet and trudges to his room. He closes the door. Zechariah walks down his hallway.

He enters a small cavern in which is placed a small pedestal with a cross. A small hole has been cut in the ceiling, and fashioned so the sunlight is directed only on the cross.

Zechariah kneels.

ZECHARIAH
Father in heaven, please be with
this child through this difficult
time in his new life. And Lord,
please help us all if the Tepish
have returned...

INT. HAUGINSTOWN TOWN HALL - DAY

The mayor of Hauginstown, GERALD HAUGINS, a large man who is probably too well-pampered by the townsfolk, stands at a lectern before an assembly of townsfolk.

Beth sits in the front row along with Abraham and David's family. Mary sobs quietly, her face tear-stained, while Jonathan only appears stunned.

MAYOR HAUGINS
Friends and neighbors, two days
ago, Ben Thurman disappeared. Most
people attributed the disappearance
to Ben's demeanor. We all know he
has disappeared before. However,
last night a greater tragedy
occurred. David Taylor, the son of
Jonathan Taylor, never returned
home.

David's mother turns her face into Jonathan's shirt. He holds her.

MAYOR HAUGINS
This morning, just east of the
Taylor family business, we found
the-

He pauses to collect the words.

MAYOR HAUGINS

(with difficulty)

-charred ... remains of a person.
Based upon the size of what was
left, we can only surmise these are
the remains of David Taylor.

David's mother wails. Beth wipes her eyes on a handkerchief.
Abraham looks at Beth, concerned. Jonathan holds his wife.

MAYOR HAUGINS

The last person to see David was
Miss Elizabeth Carpenter. Her
parents indicated that she and
David had discovered Ben Thurman in
a cave by the old Miller place. Mr.
Tibbets had gone out to this cave
with some men earlier. Mr. Tibbets,
would you relay the results of that
discovery?

MR. TIBBETS, a skinny man in his 40's, steps forward from the
back of the room. His manner is rather aloof, and he doesn't
appear pleased with his recent job.

TIBBETS

Yes, Mayor Haugins. We went out to
the area described by Miss
Carpenter and found a cave where we
discovered more charred remains we
believe may be Ben Thurman.

MAYOR HAUGINS

Anything in the cave?

TIBBETS

In the cave, we found a small area
that looked lived in, and there was
a broken lantern on the floor.
Thurman may have knocked it over in
a struggle.

Mayor Haugins looks at the lectern, sad. He faces the
assembly again.

MAYOR HAUGINS

Friends and neighbors, while some
rumors of demons and vampires may
be about, we can be certain that
there is danger in Hauginstown at
night.

(MORE)

MAYOR HAUGINS (cont'd)
 I must reiterate, do not go out
 after dark until this matter is
 resolved. During the day, travel in
 pairs. Funerals for our departed
 brethren will be tomorrow
 afternoon. God be with you all
 through this difficult time.

EXT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zechariah's house, from the outside, looks like an oversized mound of dirt with an opening in the side. Off to one side of the dwelling is a second, smaller mound.

INT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zechariah walks to David's door and opens it. David remains in his bed. Helooks at Zechariah briefly, and then closes his eyes again.

ZECHARIAH
 Are you ready?

DAVID
 No.

ZECHARIAH
 What do you need?

DAVID
 I need for you to let me go home.

ZECHARIAH
 We've covered this.

DAVID
 They would understand.

ZECHARIAH
 David, I became a Fempiror by
 choice almost four hundred years
 ago for a country that no longer
 exists. When I came home, my family
 and clan rejected me, and they knew
 what I was. I know how regular
 people react to our condition.

DAVID
 Then why didn't you stop it?

ZECHARIAH
 I was too late.

Zechariah presses a button on the wall, and the light extinguishes.

David jumps out of the bed and looks at the light. He grabs his hat and runs out after Zechariah.

DAVID
How did you do that?

ZECHARIAH
The light button.

DAVID
Light button?

ZECHARIAH
One of the first things you'll notice about Fempiror society is that centuries of peace and a long life span has allowed some of our people to create things the humans don't have.

DAVID
Like the lights?

ZECHARIAH
Since we are night dwellers, the first thing created was some kind of light that did not require fire.

DAVID
How does it work?

ZECHARIAH
You'll find out. Come on.

Zechariah presses the light button in the main room and leaves. David stands in the darkness for a moment looking at the extinguished lights.

ZECHARIAH (O.S.)
David! Come on!

EXT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zechariah exits his house and approaches a dirt mound off to the side of his house. David follows him. Zechariah signals David to stand off to one side.

DAVID
What are you-?

Zechariah halts him with a forefinger.

ZECHARIAH
Patience. Watch.

Zechariah reaches into a small depression in the mound and pulls a handle. As if on hydraulics, the side of the mound opens. An odd-looking cart without wheels sits inside.

DAVID
What's that?

ZECHARIAH
That is how we're going to get to Erim.

David looks at the cart, and then raises an eyebrow to Zechariah.

DAVID
Um... how is this going to get us there?

Zechariah smiles and touches a switch inside the cart. The cart lifts off of the ground a few feet and hovers. David's mouth drops open, speechless. Zechariah smiles.

He pulls the cart out of the mound.

DAVID
How? What?

ZECHARIAH
Instead of weapons of war, we create efficiency. We have to. Since functioning in the daylight isn't possible, we need to get where we're going quickly.

DAVID
What is it?

ZECHARIAH
Well, it's a levitating cart. We just call it a Levi-Cart.

DAVID
How does it work?

ZECHARIAH
Save your questions. We have to reach Cerebdim by sunset.

DAVID

Ceredim? I thought we were going to Erim.

Zechariah climbs into the Cart. He pulls a lever in the Cart and the short legs the Cart was sitting on retract into the bottom of the vehicle.

ZECHARIAH

Get in.

David climbs in next to Zechariah.

ZECHARIAH

We are going to Erim, but it's too far to reach in a single night - especially a summer night. Cerebdim has a Rastem Safe House that will accommodate us on our journey.

DAVID

Safe house?

ZECHARIAH

Again, I will explain later. You'll want to remove your hat.

David looks at Zechariah, confused again. Zechariah eases forward on a pair of levers on either side of his seat.

The Levi-Cart moves forward at an alarming speed. David snatches his hat before it flies off into the wind.

Zechariah steers the Cart so that it passes by Hauginstown and then

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - NIGHT

The Levi-Cart bolts across the surface at high speed. David smiles as the wind whips by him. He holds out his hand to feel the wind rush through his fingers. He looks back to Zechariah who smiles at him.

ZECHARIAH

So it is not so bad after all?

David crosses his arms and drops his smile.

DAVID

You were going to explain.

ZECHARIAH

Where to begin... Fempiror means "new warrior" in an old language called Felletterusk that the Fempiror still use and you will have to learn.

David scowls. Zechariah ignores him.

EXT. FELLETTERUSK BATTLEFIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Vista of an enormous battle between two great forces. Armies clash together, locked in a seemingly eternal struggle.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

In 1385, there was a war between the Felletterusk and our enemies, the Corelnesh. We were losing.

The Felletterusk Army retreats. The Corelnesh army cheers.

EXT. FELLETTERUSK TRAINING GROUND - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A man of about 40 with a dark well-cut beard, sharp eyes, and a nervous demeanor, VOIVODE DRACULYA, walks past a line of troops, handing them cups full of a dark, red liquid.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Volunteers took a serum created by an alchemist - Voivode Draculya - and became new warriors - Fempiror.

The troops drink the liquid in unison. Variously, they all scream and collapse to the ground.

EXT. FELLETTERUSK BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

This time, the Felletterusk troops run through Corelnesh encampments, destroying everything and everyone in their path.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

With our enhanced speed and strength, we were easily able to defeat the Corelnesh.

EXT. FELLETTERUSK FIELDS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The troops turn away from Voivode and walk home.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

After the war, Voivode had not yet perfected a cure to revert us to our former state, so we went home as Fempiror to rejoin our families and wait....

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - NIGHT

Zechariah looks into the distance, difficult memories etched on his face.

ZECHARIAH

...or that was the plan.

DAVID

What went wrong?

ZECHARIAH

Our family and friends didn't understand our condition.

EXT. FELLETERUSK VILLAGE - SUNRISE (FLASHBACK)

A Fempiror is dragged out of his house in a throng of blood-thirsty villagers. He is strapped to a pole - witch-hunt style. The sun rises over the horizon. He burns, screaming in pain.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

We frightened them. Some Fempiror were killed by people of their village who thought they were of Satanic origin. Some were tied to a post to wait for the sun to rise on them.

EXT. FELLETERUSK CAVE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The sun shines bright outside a cave where several Fempiror are huddled. One of them gazes out into the sun drenched countryside. He charges out of the cave. Another Fempiror tries to stop him, but is too late.

His flesh burns as he runs across the countryside.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Others couldn't handle the darkness anymore, and chose to gaze at the sun one last time...

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - NIGHT

Zechariah continues driving over the landscape, gazing out over his memories.

ZECHARIAH
...as it destroyed them.

Zechariah looks off to one side. He steers the Levi-Cart toward a small town.

DAVID
Is that Cerebdim?

ZECHARIAH
Yes. I'll tell you more as we continue our journey. Four hundred years of history takes time to tell.

David nods. The Levi-Cart continues to barrel onward.

DAVID
Are we just going to fly into town?

ZECHARIAH
No, we are going to stop and cover the Cart first. Then we walk and drag it behind us.

David stares at Zechariah, confused yet again.

EXT. CEREBDIM - NIGHT

Zechariah and David walk through the streets of Cerebdim dragging the Levi-Cart, though it appears to be a wagon covered with a dark cloth to conceal its content.

They each wear dark cloaks called DAY TRAVEL CLOAKS that fully cover them from head to toe.

DAVID
Are you looking for something?

ZECHARIAH
The Rastem Safe House is marked in the Felletterusk language and writing. It looks like nonsense to most humans.

DAVID
What is this safe house anyway?

ZECHARIAH
Just a place to stay the day
without odd looks, and so I can get
some information about the current
state of Erim. Here we are.

Zechariah points to a building with a sign written in an odd
language of symbols.

DAVID
What does it say?

ZECHARIAH
Rastem Feca Usrasa.

Zechariah looks at David who only stares back,
uncomprehending. Zechariah sighs.

ZECHARIAH
Do I really need to translate it?

David shrugs.

ZECHARIAH
Very well. Where did I say we were
going?

DAVID
Erim.

ZECHARIAH
No, in Cerebdim, David.

DAVID
A ... Rastem Safe House.

ZECHARIAH
Congratulations, you figured it
out.

David rolls his eyes. Zechariah walks to a well worn spot on
the wall near the sign. A large door opens of its own accord
and Zechariah pulls the Cart in behind him followed closely
by David.

INT. SAFE HOUSE GARAGE - NIGHT

Upon entering, David looks about. A Fempiror sits off to one side of the door, controlling it. Zechariah parks the Levi-cart. They cross to a door leading into the safe house.

INT. SAFE HOUSE COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Zechariah and David enter. The place is sparsely decorated with only large wooden tables adorning its wooden floor. The same sort of lighting system that lit Zechariah's home is in use here.

Zechariah walks over to a bar-like counter. The Fempiror behind the counter, ILDRITCH, a man looking to be in his 50's with a grey horseshoe of hair around his bald head with a friendly face and strong arms, looks up at them and smiles.

ILDRITCH

Well, I'll be... Zechariah, what brings you out of ... were was it? Hauginstown, right?

ZECHARIAH

Heading to Erim. Same as always, Ildritch. I have more proof of the Tepish threat.

The place grows quiet. Eyes turn to Zechariah. Ildritch draws close to Zechariah.

ILDRITCH

Now listen here, Zechariah... They didn't believe you fifteen years ago, and twenty-five years ago, your theories got you removed. They won't believe you.

ZECHARIAH

They have to listen, Ildritch, they must.

The whole place has silenced. Eyes remain on Zechariah and Ildritch. David looks concerned and curious. Ildritch motions Zechariah to a far end of the counter.

ILDRITCH

(low, in Felletterusk;
subtitled)

Ti sil atef esprültärsh runvajav,
kaki anlandi.

(MORE)

ILDRITCH (cont'd)
 Erim silnil hav ti sik.
 (translation)
 It is a hopeless venture, my
 friend. Erim is not what it was.

ZECHARIAH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Ka stüra tidä tod. Lew stüra
 Tepishel pesti anjo yeh crira
 vertes.
 (translation)
 I have to do it. The Tepish must be
 exposed before they are allowed to
 take over.

They look at David; then at the room. Conversation has resumed. David has followed them and waits. Ildritch looks back to Zechariah and nods.

ILDRITCH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Ravin gus. Yawlan ka resa
 retidamnil lidä. Erim sil jyc kaki
 jafdentib. Stom Rastem velada tidä.
 Liki nar iostef jatara rüft bato,
 tül ti jatara dyatep re yelta bato.
 (translation)
 So be it. Whatever I say will not
 deter you. Erim is beyond my reach
 now. Most Rastem avoid it. Your
 suspicions may be true, but it may
 be too late already.

Zechariah looks at Ildritch, worried.

ZECHARIAH
 Discouraging.

ILDRITCH
 (suddenly cheerful)
 A room?

ZECHARIAH
 (following Ildritch's
 lead)
 Please.

Ildritch pulls a key from the cabinet behind him, and hands it to Zechariah. Zechariah takes hold of it, but Ildritch doesn't release it just yet. Zechariah looks at him, curious. Ildritch is suddenly serious again.

ILDRITCH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Gras nilenh.
 (translation)
 Trust no one.

Zechariah takes the key, and walks past David. David follows.

DAVID
 What was he telling you?

INT. SAFE HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Zechariah walks down to their room.

DAVID
 Zechariah-

Zechariah turns to David, holding up a finger to quiet him. David stops. Zechariah turns the key in the lock and steps into the room. David follows.

INT. SAFE HOUSE, ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zechariah locks the door behind them.

ZECHARIAH
 Things may be worse than I feared.
 Nevertheless, we must go to the
 council, and pray to God that they
 still work for the people.

DAVID
 Who are these Tepish?

ZECHARIAH
 They are an offshoot of the Rastem
 order that fought the war against
 the Corelnesh. In the beginning,
 they weren't evil; they were just
 angry, and we all understood that.

EXT. FELLETTERUSK TRAINING GROUNDS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Two mighty regiments stand ready to fight. One stands behind a banner depicting a wolf. The other stands behind a banner depicting an owl.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

The Fempiror of the war had two divisions: Rastem, which means wolf; and Elewo, which means owl.

IMAGE: The Rastem army fights dressed in wrist and ankle gauntlets, using swords against swords.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

The Rastem were the fighting soldiers, specializing in swordplay and offense.

IMAGE: An Elewo, garbed like a ninja, sneaks around a corner and gazes on two Corelnesh soldiers. Unarmed except for the gauntlets on wrists and ankles, he moves up behind the Corelnesh, and after a very short battle, he takes them both down by snapping their necks.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

The Elewo specialized in unarmed combat and handled espionage and covert operations.

INT. SAFE HOUSE, ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - NIGHT

DAVID

Where did the Tepish come from?

ZECHARIAH

Out of the chaos that followed.

INT. FEMPIROR MEETING CHAMBER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Around a large round table, twelve Fempiror sit in discussion. They are all flanked by members of their units of Rastem and Elewo.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Our leaders talked for days on end. The Elewo decided to wait out a cure in peace, away from the people who rejected them.

The Elewo all leave the room. The remaining Rastem erupt into a fierce debate.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

The Rastem were divided. Some of us felt we should continue serving as we served before: protect the people from future threats. The others felt we should take our revenge on these people and do to them as we did to the Corelnesh. To these, their own families became their enemy. The Rastem divided into two orders from that day forward.

The Rastem leave the table. Half go one way, and half go the other way.

INT. SAFE HOUSE, ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - NIGHT

ZECHARIAH

Those who wished to continue in their duties to protect the people retained the Rastem name. The others who desired revenge became the order of Tepish, which means bat.

DAVID

What happened?

ZECHARIAH

They moved faster than we could have dreamed.

EXT. FELLETERUSK VILLAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A group of Tepish, armored in red and black with a bat on their chest, tear through a little village, killing everyone in sight, and torching everything.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

Like a swarm of locusts, they swept across the Empire, destroying everything in their paths - men, women, children - everyone who rejected them.

EXT. FELLETERUSK CAPITAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Buildings smolder. A group of Rastem stands in awe at the destruction.

ZECHARIAH (V.O.)

By the time we realized what was happening, we were too late. The Tepish had destroyed our country. We watched our capital city go up in flames before our eyes, and we were powerless to stop it. We had failed...

INT. SAFE HOUSE, ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zechariah stops and looks at the floor, tears welling in his eyes. David sits quietly.

ZECHARIAH

We have a long road ahead of us tonight. Get some rest.

David nods.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN CEMETERY - DAY

The cemetery holds two fresh graves. Beth and Abraham stand together at one of them. The simple grave marker shows "David Taylor."

Near them are the parents of David, Beth, and Abraham. Beth's eyes are red and puffy. Tears continue to roll down her cheeks.

Beth looks back at David's parents. His mother shoots her an angry look. Beth turns back. Abraham turns to her.

ABRAHAM

How are you doing?

BETH

David's mother blames me for his death. Maybe it was my fault.

ABRAHAM

Don't think that way.

BETH

No, if I hadn't suggested ... if we only had come home earlier ... he'd still-

Abraham places a finger on her lips. He withdraws his hand quickly and looks around.

ABRAHAM

The mayor has half the town staying up nights to try and catch the killer. By the grace of God, he will be brought to justice.

BETH

Maybe he isn't dead. I still feel like he's with me. In here.

She points to her heart.

BETH

This might not be him. It could be anyone, couldn't it? I mean, he was charred beyond-

Beth looks back and Mary Taylor stands directly in front of her. Jonathan takes her arm and tugs in a vain attempt to bring her away from Beth. The pair lock eyes for a moment.

MARY

It should have been you.

PATRICK

That's enough.

JONATHAN

He's right. Let's go.

Mrs. Taylor allows her husband to escort her away.

PATRICK

Come on, Beth.

Beth nods. Abraham stops her before she leaves.

ABRAHAM

Is there anything I can do?

Beth shakes her head.

BETH

I just need to be alone for awhile.

Abraham watches her go. He sees his parents standing off to one side, ready to leave as well. He watches Beth walk away for a moment, and then nods and follows his parents.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - DUSK

Beth enters. Her room is a hodge-podge of domestic heaven, as if her life has been in the preparation of becoming a homemaker. Clothes in a variety of sizes from baby to adult hang on a rack on her wall.

A half-completed cross-stitch picture of a house and yard lies on a small table. A painting of her and a male figure without a head sits on an easel next to an assortment of colors. A mirror sits beyond her easel.

The ball of yarn sits on her bed wrapped up in knitting needles. She walks into her room and sits on her bed. She looks around her, tears streaming down her face.

She picks up her incomplete knitting and holds it to her face, sobbing. She tosses it across the room into the rack of cloths and buries her face in her lap, sniffing.

She glances up to the rack of clothes and then looks to one of it to see her dirt-stained, blue and white dress draped over a chair.

She walks to the dress and picks it up. Holds it close to her and sits on her bed. Clutching the dress, she looks outside at the sunset.

BETH

What happened to you, my love?
Where did you go? I can feel in my
heart we did not bury you today.
But if it was not you, then where
are you now? As long as the hope of
your life lives within me, I can
never marry another. Come back to
me, my love, come back to me...

She lays her head down on her pillow and closes her eyes.

BETH

Come back to me...

Outside the sun sets, and night falls.

INT. SAFE HOUSE, ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - NIGHT

In bed, David's eyes snap open.

DAVID
 (whispered)
 Beth...

His eyes show a restless sleep. He does not move.

ZECHARIAH (O.S.)
 Get up, David.

David blinks. He looks over to see Zechariah, once again adorned in full Rastem gear, ready to go.

ZECHARIAH
 Summer nights are painfully short.
 We must hurry.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - NIGHT

Zechariah and David speed across the fields in the Levi-Cart.

DAVID
 So when we get to this "Erim," then what?

ZECHARIAH
 We petition the council for an immediate meeting, and then speak with a Rastem named Tiberius to find out the true state of Erim. If he's still there. I've been away for far too long. I've been a fool.

DAVID
 Why have you been away so long?

ZECHARIAH
 I came to Hauginstown to try and find evidence of an occurrence twenty-five years ago. I feel this attack is related.

EXT. ERIM - NIGHT

The city of Erim is modestly lit as Zechariah and David cruise into it. The city is busy with people.

Zechariah drives his Levi-Cart up to a building labeled "Cunlisk Ydöj Lakär."

They stop the vehicle. Zechariah shuts it off, and it lands onto the short legs that keep the levitation hubs just off the ground.

They get out of the cart and go up the stairs.

INT. COUNCIL BODY HALL - NIGHT

Zechariah and David enter. "Council Body Hall" is a beautiful, ornate structure with exemplary architecture.

JARVIS AORI, a skinny, sniveling, butler type of man with neatly trimmed white hair and distrustful eyes, looks up from his desk near the entrance.

He stands and walks over to them. He has a tone that drips with perfect customer service.

JARVIS

Good evening, gentlemen. Welcome to Body Hall. My name is Jarvis Aori. How can I direct you this evening?

ZECHARIAH

Hello Jarvis. I'm Zechariah and this is David. I need to speak to the Head; is it still Karian?

JARVIS

It is...and may I inquire, sir, as to the subject of your meeting?

ZECHARIAH

The Tepish.

A look of disbelief crosses Jarvis's face. His tone drops from friendly to sarcastic.

JARVIS

Yes, sir. Head Karian is in. I'll see if he's available.

ZECHARIAH

Thank you.

They follow Jarvis down the hall to a beautiful double door.

JARVIS

Please wait here.

Jarvis enters the office. David looks at Zechariah, who stands stoic.

DAVID
So what are we doing here?

ZECHARIAH
Patience.

Jarvis exits Karian's office, a smug look adorning his face.

JARVIS
Head Karian is too busy to speak to
you at this time.

ZECHARIAH
Did you tell him about the Tepish?

JARVIS
Yes.

ZECHARIAH
And he doesn't want to know about
it?

JARVIS
He is very busy.

ZECHARIAH
When does he want us to come back?

JARVIS
He didn't say.

ZECHARIAH
Then we'll see him now.

JARVIS
What?

Zechariah pushes Jarvis out of the way and slams open the door to Karian's office.

INT. KARIAN'S OFFICE, COUNCIL BODY HALL - NIGHT

KARIAN, a man who appears to be in his 60's, dressed in fine clothes, very fit with trimmed white hair and deep, blue, penetrating eyes, looks up from his desk. Zechariah enters followed closely by Jarvis, and then David.

JARVIS
Mr. Zechariah, you cannot storm in
here like this.

ZECHARIAH

And what are you going to do,
Jarvis? You were never the fighter
you claimed to be, and you haven't
changed.

Jarvis backs down as Zechariah continues to Karian's desk.
Karian does not look surprised and sits quietly waiting for
Zechariah to speak.

ZECHARIAH

I need a meeting of the Council
Body tonight.

KARIAN

You can't be serious.

ZECHARIAH

The only way this will get out is
to call a meeting.

KARIAN

Jarvis briefed me, and this is not
a matter for the Council.

ZECHARIAH

It's the return of the dark side of
our race. How is this not a Council
matter?

KARIAN

While we appreciate your concern in
this matter, the Tepish will not
and cannot return.

ZECHARIAH

How can you be so sure?

KARIAN

They were dealt their punishment
three hundred sixty-eight years
ago. You were there. I was there.
There are no Tepish anymore.

ZECHARIAH

There was never confirmation that
the Tepish were wiped out; many
known leaders were never found. How
do you explain the new Fempiror if
there are no Tepish?

KARIAN

The confirmation was the cessation of the uprising, and new Fempiror can be created by accident - you know this. Besides, the Tepish ideology was revenge. We all feel this at times.

ZECHARIAH

I killed a rogue who referenced the Order of Tepish; he said he was a Fälskrüz. A non-Tepish would not do this.

KARIAN

You are to believe a rogue Fempiror who willingly disobeyed the law?

ZECHARIAH

I'm willing to take action at the mention of the Tepish return. Call the Council.

KARIAN

It's not within my power to-

ZECHARIAH

Don't treat me like I was transmuted yesterday. I was on the council from the beginning, and I know what you can do.

KARIAN

And you were removed.

ZECHARIAH

For acknowledging a situation. Because you felt I was too dangerous allowing the people to know there may be a problem. You want them ignorant; I want them informed. Under Council Procedure fifty-seven, any Fempiror may request a meeting of the Council if it concerns a possible threat to our race.

Karian stares Zechariah down for a moment, angry.

KARIAN

Very well. The council will convene in four girafs. Choose your words carefully.

(MORE)

KARIAN (cont'd)
We don't want false rumors, and we
don't want to incite panic.

ZECHARIAH
Thank you.

KARIAN
Until then, Zechariah.

ZECHARIAH
Head Karian.

Zechariah exits. David follows closely behind.

EXT. COUNCIL BODY HALL - NIGHT

Zechariah storms out with David attempting to keep up.

DAVID
What is going on?

ZECHARIAH
The Tepish will not do anything
until they are certain they can
win. The ability to act with
patience is the biggest advantage
to having a long life. I believe
the Tepish are building their
forces, and their time is near.

DAVID
And the council doesn't agree?

ZECHARIAH
No. You heard his opinion of me.
They don't believe a word of it.

DAVID
Oh.

ZECHARIAH
Now, I need to talk to an old
friend of mine before the meeting.
There, we will discuss your future.

DAVID
My future? My future is with Beth.

ZECHARIAH
That's not possible.

DAVID

How can you say that? You think I can just accept this fate of darkness like you have?

ZECHARIAH

You listen to me, child. I know exactly what you're going through. We were soldiers used in an experiment, and when the war was over, we were outcast and forced to live on our own. I watched friends kill themselves because they couldn't take it. I have gone through more years of soul-searching than that little town of yours has existed. Don't you tell me what you're going through. You know nothing!

Zechariah turns away, angry. David waits for a moment before following Zechariah through the streets.

They walk in silence for some time through the winding streets of Erim. Fempiror around them go about routines in the night as if it were day.

David catches up to Zechariah.

DAVID

Forgive me.

ZECHARIAH

I understand.

DAVID

So why isn't there a cure?

Zechariah looks at him, then sighs.

ZECHARIAH

There was one once.

DAVID

What happened to it?

ZECHARIAH

It was lost. The Tepish destroyed Voivode's lab and used some of their own blood to change him into a Fempiror as an act of vengeance for "ruining their lives." The cure went with his lab.

DAVID
 Couldn't he just recreate the cure?

ZECHARIAH
 For over a hundred years he tried,
 but some piece was lost. Finally,
 he accepted his fate and lives in
 his ancestral home in the
 Carpathian Mountains.

David nods. They walk on a little further.

DAVID
 So the Fempiror serum runs through
 our blood?

ZECHARIAH
 Yes.

DAVID
 How does it change people?

ZECHARIAH
 Why?

DAVID
 Curious.

ZECHARIAH
 No one's curious about that.
 Explain yourself.

DAVID
 Well, if I can't return to
 Hauginstown, maybe Beth would want
 to be changed so we could still be
 together.

Zechariah turns, grabs David by the shirt, and holds him up
 against a wall without effort. David appears to have had the
 fear of God put into him.

ZECHARIAH
 Don't you ever think of doing that.
 One of the highest crimes you can
 commit is willful transmutation. It
 is the first rule of the Rastem
 Code. Not only is it morally
 corrupt, it is a sin against the
 person you change. You have no idea
 what you're getting into.

DAVID

But-

ZECHARIAH

I'm serious, boy. I don't want to ever hear of this again. Do you understand me?

Wide-eyed, David nods. Zechariah lowers David to the ground, and turns away. David catches up to him.

DAVID

But I love her.

ZECHARIAH

If you love her, you'll let her go.

DAVID

I can't.

ZECHARIAH

(calm)

If you go back to Hauginstown and deliberately change Beth into a Fempiror, I will kill you.

David pauses momentarily, watching Zechariah walk onward. He catches up to him. They both continue on in awkward silence.

EXT. URUFDIAM PLATEAU - NIGHT

A sheer mountainside looms in the distance. Something shoots out of a small cave in the mountain, rushing away from it. It's a LEVI-CART, similar in design to Zechariah's but appearing to be newer in design and condition.

Driving the cart is FERTID, a man in his 30's with medium length blonde hair, a serious face, and clothed in black drab with gauntlets on his wrists and ankles. His outfit is sliced in several places and he is bleeding from his wounds.

Behind him, another Levi-cart of the same model with four Fempiror flies out of the cave.

These four are dressed in black armor with a bat etched in red on its breastplate and red borders on the connecting armor plates. Their helmets protect their heads but are open in the front, much like samurai headgear.

The Four Fempiror approach Fertid's Levi-Cart. As they draw near, three of them prepare to leap onto Fertid's vehicle.

Fertid locks the controls to keep the cart moving in a straight line. He climbs onto the rear bed of the cart and secures his foot in a strap fixed to the rear of the cart.

Fempiror 1 draws his sword and leaps across the gap. He lands squarely on the cart.

Fertid fights unarmed with remarkable strength, speed, and skill. He blocks the sword blows with his gauntlets and knocks Fempiror 1 off the Cart. He crunches to the ground.

Fempiror 2 and 3 jump over together. Using his wrists and free ankle, he blocks their hits and makes a few on them. He knocks Fempiror 2 off the cart, and continues taking on Fempiror 3.

He glances up and sees the cart heading straight for a grove of trees. He hits Fempiror 3 who falls off the back, but grabs the side of the trailing cart.

Fertid releases his foot and jumps to the other cart that veers off just as his cart smashes into the trees.

Fertid attacks the driver and tosses him overboard. He takes the controls, but Fempiror 3 climbs back onto the cart.

Fertid blocks the sword blow, as if sensing its approach. He locks the controls again and battles Fempiror 3.

The cart nears another grove of trees. Fertid knocks Fempiror 3 off the cart. He takes the controls, but can't avoid the trees. He swerves between the trees at breakneck speed.

The trees are too close together and they clip off the sides of the cart.

Fertid brakes the cart as it wedges between two trees and stops. He grabs a day-travel cloak and leaps to the forest floor. He breaks into a very fast run across the nighttime landscape.

EXT. ERIM BUSINESS DISTRICT - NIGHT

Zechariah and David enter a congested business center of Erim. The streets are lined with permanent shops selling all manner of items.

DAVID

So if transmutation is illegal, why are there so many Fempiror?

ZECHARIAH

Willing transmutation is illegal.
You heard Karian. It's possible to
be changed accidentally.

DAVID

Oh.

ZECHARIAH

For another thing, not everyone
here is a Fempiror.

DAVID

They aren't?

ZECHARIAH

No. Humans who know of us
frequently visit and even live in
our town. Some of the shops are
open all day and all night. The
Fempiror owners hire humans to work
during the day while the sun is out
and vice versa.

DAVID

How can you tell them apart?

ZECHARIAH

Why would you need to?

Zechariah gestures to a particular shop.

ZECHARIAH

Here we are.

They approach a shop called THE LOST ART OF JIJUNGA.

DAVID

What's Jijunga?

ZECHARIAH

I really have no idea. Tiberius
made it up. I think it's some kind
of meditation.

Zechariah and David enter the shop.

INT. LOST ART OF JIJUNGA - NIGHT

They enter a large room that takes up the front half of the
building with a very high ceiling. A mat takes up a
considerable portion of the floor.

As the pair enters, an old Fempiror, TIBERIUS, comes out of the rear. He appears to be older than Zechariah, but more at ease. His hair is trimmed and white with a trimmed beard. He smiles upon seeing Zechariah.

TIBERIUS
Zechariah!

ZECHARIAH
How are you doing, Tiberius?

TIBERIUS
Great.

The pair hugs like old friends. Zechariah pulls David forward.

ZECHARIAH
David, this is Tiberius. He trained the Rastem for their original battles in Thirteen Eighty Five. He has also served to train or support almost every Rastem since.

DAVID
What does this have to do with my future?

ZECHARIAH
David, there are dark times ahead. You must have some knowledge of how to defend yourself, or you cannot survive.

DAVID
But I don't belong here.

TIBERIUS
Many have come who don't belong. Over time, willingly or unwillingly, they learn.

ZECHARIAH
This is not just for the battles to come, but if the Tepish are out there, there are humans who need defense from their desires.

DAVID
It didn't help me.

ZECHARIAH

While I was too late for you, I was able to neutralize the problem in your town. There is more to the code than preventing transmutation.

DAVID

But my life is still ruined.

ZECHARIAH

Whether you like it or not, you are here. You must make the most of it.

David folds his arms again and looks away. Zechariah looks at Tiberius and shrugs.

TIBERIUS

So tell me, what are you doing here, Zechariah? You haven't returned with more Tepish reports, have you?

ZECHARIAH

I have spoken to Head Karian and will meet with the council tonight.

TIBERIUS

You called an emergency meeting?

ZECHARIAH

Tiberius, the Tepish have returned. The encounter is proof.

TIBERIUS

The encounter will be dismissed as an isolated incident.

ZECHARIAH

They need to know.

TIBERIUS

They don't care.

Zechariah clenches his fists and looks at Tiberius.

TIBERIUS

Zechariah, bare mentions of the Tepish Order were outlawed years ago.

ZECHARIAH

We have to face this. If we don't, the Tepish way will be law, and our lives won't be the only ones ended.

TIBERIUS

Despite our apparent relationship with the humans of Erim, a lot of Fempiror resent them, like the Tepish do.

Zechariah stares him, resolute. Tiberius shakes his head.

TIBERIUS

It's too late to stop this, but we might be able to use it to our advantage.

ZECHARIAH

What do you have in mind?

TIBERIUS

They will make it well-known that you were removed from the council for the same presentation as today.

ZECHARIAH

That was not a vain mission. We knew the Tepish emerged and massed at that location.

TIBERIUS

The location had no evidence of habitation. In twenty-five years, no one's found anything, including you.

ZECHARIAH

Nothing anyone has lived to tell about.

TIBERIUS

Speak the truth, Zechariah. If this goes as badly as I suspect it will, you'll be captured. If you try to run, they'll get you with Chasers.

ZECHARIAH

Chasers?

TIBERIUS

Like your old Levi-cart, but smaller and faster.

(MORE)

TIBERIUS (cont'd)
 Everything has changed since you
 left. Even if they found proof, I
 suspect they'd cover it up.

Tiberius looks over to David.

TIBERIUS
 One more thing...
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Het grasa li pärel?
 (translation)
 How do you trust the boy?

ZECHARIAH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Ka kortananil kä ha sil atef ulöj.
 (translation)
 I don't believe he's a spy.

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Het criira li ras bato? Ha criiro lej
 anjo li rivadago. Ti criiro atel
 crotjav bato.
 (translation)
 How can you be sure? He could have
 been changed before you arrived. It
 could have been an act.

ZECHARIAH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Ka sik winikkesh haki nar crotjav.
 Ha saba grane atef frontumatjavero
 dega. Ka iostanil hadä.
 (translation)
 I have been watching his actions.
 He has the anger incurred from a
 regular transmutation. I do not
 suspect him.

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Maskün crotjav criira erandel ko
 milkavdel.
 (translation)
 Actions can be learned or
 remembered.

ZECHARIAH
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Ka sabanil ate elsud hadä bortil.
 (translation)
 I have no reason to doubt him.

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Yan ka grasa liki haltebjav.
 (translation)
 Then I trust your judgment.

They look over to David. He has a very confused look on his face as he looks from Tiberius to Zechariah. Tiberius smiles and walks over to a container with several wooden swords.

TIBERIUS
 David, right? Catch.

Tiberius pulls out one of the swords and tosses it to David. It sails through the air until David catches it by the hilt.

TIBERIUS
 Hm. Not bad.

He takes two other swords out of the container. He tosses one to Zechariah. Without warning, he swings his sword at David. Instinctively, David brings up his sword to block.

TIBERIUS
 Not bad at all. The boy has a lot
 of potential.

David looks at Tiberius incredulously for a moment before he tosses the sword to the floor. He folds his arms.

TIBERIUS
 Pay attention. The sword is the
 main weapon of a Rastem. It is your
 defense and your inner strength.
 Zechariah is a master. Observe.
 (to Zechariah)
 All right, Zechariah, let's see how
 rusty you've gotten out there in
 Hauginstown.

ZECHARIAH
 Let's see what Jijunga has done for
 you.

The two face off. They start with a courtesy wave of the swords before attaining a defensive stance.

ZECHARIAH

After you.

TIBERIUS

I don't think so.

Zechariah nods, and with lightning speed, he and Tiberius clash their wooden swords together. Tiberius blocks each move Zechariah makes. The two are clearly from the same school of fighting as each move is deliberately made and evenly blocked.

The front door opens, and VLADIMIR, another older Fempiror with slim, chiseled features, a small mouth, clean-shaven face and hair, and eyes behind which hide many mysteries, enters.

He watches the mock battle for a few moments before the combatants notice him.

VLADIMIR

Mind if I have a go, Tiberius?

Zechariah and Tiberius cease the hostilities.

TIBERIUS

Vladimir, you really think you can beat him finally?

VLADIMIR

I keep up my training.

Tiberius hands over the sword. Vladimir twirls it around on his fingers with cocky confidence as he talks.

ZECHARIAH

How are you lately?

VLADIMIR

Disturbed, I would say. I received an urgent communication stating a code fifty-seven meeting was called for tonight. I knew only the great Zechariah would do such a thing. In fact, he's the only one outside the council who even knows what one is.

ZECHARIAH

How long have you been on the council?

VLADIMIR

I replaced you twenty-five years ago. It reduced the brunt of your loss.

ZECHARIAH

I understand Erim is not what it was.

VLADIMIR

Many new faces. Some not to be trusted. If you are back with more Tepish "evidence," your voice will fall on deaf ears.

ZECHARIAH

I have to try. If I do nothing, how am I upholding the Rastem Code? He doesn't deserve to be like us.

VLADIMIR

So you're showing off for the new one.

DAVID

The new one doesn't care.

The three stop and look at him.

ZECHARIAH

I don't know how much longer I will tolerate your insolence.

DAVID

Answer me this: if I go through this training to be a Rastem, I'm supposed to help people right?

ZECHARIAH

Right.

DAVID

So, could I go back to Hauginstown, and be their defense? I could defend my family and friends. I'd be passionate about it.

ZECHARIAH

No. You've already expressed some intentions about Hauginstown, and the Rastem Code prohibits your returning until properly trained.

DAVID

Can I ever go back?

TIBERIUS

You are dead to the people you left behind. You have to let them go. It isn't pleasant being shoved into this life, but you have to take it and make the best of it.

DAVID

What if I don't care about my life anymore or this Rastem life or your race? What if I don't care if I live or die?

ZECHARIAH

Then you die. I have no desire to waste my time on frivolous ventures such as a defiant child who refuses to listen to reason. If you wish to learn, we are open to questions. Otherwise, say nothing. Understood?

David nods, silenced.

ZECHARIAH

Now pay attention.
(to Vladimir)
Let's go.

The two give the courtesy wave of the swords, and set themselves to duel. Zechariah strikes almost before Vladimir's sword comes down from the wave. Vladimir defends.

The duel is far more intense than the one between Zechariah and Tiberius. Zechariah appears to be angrier in this one. Vladimir makes several attempts to change the direction of the battle to his favor, but is highly unsuccessful.

Vladimir is backed up against a wall.

Zechariah takes a final swing, and the sword flies out of Vladimir's hand and through the front window of the building, breaking it.

Unphased, Zechariah stands over Vladimir, sword at the throat. Vladimir looks a little afraid that Zechariah might kill him with a fake sword.

He smiles a nervous smile.

VLADIMIR

All right, you win.

Zechariah backs off, and tosses the mock sword to Tiberius.

ZECHARIAH

Sorry about the window, Tiberius.

TIBERIUS

Don't worry about it, Zechariah.
It's not the first time I've lost a
window to a sword. I really should
consider reinforcing it.

VLADIMIR

Well, that was interesting.

ZECHARIAH

I win again.

VLADIMIR

Someday, I'll beat you. You're the
only one I never have.

ZECHARIAH

If I ever get maimed, we'll have
another go.

VLADIMIR

Zechariah, I am not here for a
friendly visit. I have come
personally to talk you out of this
meeting.

TIBERIUS

Zechariah, I know many Rastem
willing to investigate this without
the knowledge of the council;
Vladimir is one of those.

ZECHARIAH

Really?

VLADIMIR

Despite my political position, I
believe there is a threat.

ZECHARIAH

But once a code fifty-seven is
called, it cannot be retracted.

VLADIMIR

You could leave town first.

ZECHARIAH

I will not damage my honor.

VLADIMIR

All the same-

ZECHARIAH

David was changed into a Fempiror by a Tepish. He said he was a Fälskrüz. He even used a nilrof to do it.

DAVID

Used a what?

Zechariah turns to David, and then Tiberius.

ZECHARIAH

A nilrof. Tiberius, do you still have one?

Tiberius nods, and leaves the room.

VLADIMIR

Just because that's a Tepish device, doesn't necessarily mean that the order is returning.

ZECHARIAH

Whatever it means, the rogue referenced the Tepish, used Tepish equipment, carried out Tepish ideologies and claims to be the lowest rung of the Tepish Hierarchy. Whether we want to admit it or not, the Order of Tepish is being revived by someone. It must be stopped.

Tiberius returns with a box. He brings it to Zechariah and Vladimir. They open it. Zechariah reaches in and produces a chrome nilrof similar to the one Rufus used.

ZECHARIAH

Does this look familiar?

David flinches, and nods.

DAVID

That's why I have two marks where I got injected. Like a pair of fangs?

TIBERIUS

The Tepish perpetuate the vampire myth. This device not only easily injects our blood as the serum, but perpetuates the fang portion of the myth.

VLADIMIR

This meeting will not go well. I fear for you, old friend.

TIBERIUS

When the inevitable occurs, meet me at the Safe House in Cerebdim. We'll work out what to do from there.

Vladimir checks the time.

VLADIMIR

The meeting approaches. Until then, Zechariah.

ZECHARIAH

Until then.

INT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Zechariah and David sit at the forefront of the hall. Tiberius sits at the back. Warriors guard the exits. Two at the front and two at the rear. An ANNOUNCER rises at the front.

ANNOUNCER

(in Felletterusk)

Välenh närdsta telnyatelpar
cunliskelero Fempiror.

(translation)

All rise for the entry of the
Fempiror Council.

Everyone stands. The SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, Vladimir, JATARUA, TYRONIS, OLIGAR, VYRNYA, and GHITISH led by Council Head Karian, enter. The council members all appear to be about the same age.

KARIAN

(in Felletterusk)

Cunliskel jyc ghortia. Erästa satz.
(translation)

The council now convenes. Please sit.

Everyone sits.

KARIAN

We are here for an emergency meeting called by Zechariah, Rastem, and former member of the Council, removed for unfounded theories and disturbing the peace. Zechariah, I do hope you haven't called us all here in vain.

ZECHARIAH

I assure you, Head Karian, that I have not. I have with me one David Taylor, a former resident of Hauginstown, which I currently protect. He was recently transmuted by a Fempiror named Rufus, who claimed allegiance to the Tepish Order.

The crowd gasps and talks amongst themselves.

ZECHARIAH

The Tepish have existed for years in this capacity, but have not been a threat. However, this Tepish claimed to be a Fälskrüz, the lowest rank of the Tepish Hierarchy.

TYRONIS

And why is that significant?

ZECHARIAH

If you were an independent member of a dead order, why claim to be the lowest rank? Why not say you are the Elrod Malnak instead?

OLIGAR

It is the nature of the Tepish to instill fear, even those who work alone. What better way than to make you believe there are more than to say you are outranked?

ZECHARIAH

But the Tepish do not kidnap their victims; they leave them to be rejected by their families.

VYRNYA

I am not convinced.

ZECHARIAH

The Tepish are returning. They were taking David to be a part of an unwilling army, and when they are ready, they will attack and lay waste to everything.

GHITISH

Zechariah, you are getting out of order.

ZECHARIAH

My apologies, Council Head, but this is serious.

KARIAN

You claimed this urgency twenty-five years ago when you led our waning army to a desolate zone and found no evidence. We hold your claims as unfounded.

ZECHARIAH

What proof do you require? You will accept nothing short of invasion as proof. Then, you will call it isolated, sit quietly in your comfortable seats, and be slaughtered.

KARIAN

Zechariah, that is enough! Be silent!

ZECHARIAH

I will not be silent! I will not stand by and watch you allow my people to be destroyed from within.

VLADIMIR

Zechariah, please...

ZECHARIAH

No! This council no longer governs in the best interest of the people. Your leadership is worthless because you do not lead. You are all lambs awaiting your slaughter.

KARIAN

We cannot allow you to stir the people with this non-existent Tepish threat. You are under arrest. Seize him!

The four guards draw their swords and approach Zechariah. He draws his sword and moves David behind him.

ZECHARIAH

(to David)

Hang onto my neck.

DAVID

What?

ZECHARIAH

I don't want to worry about where you are. I can carry you. Just keep your feet off the ground.

DAVID

I understand.

David wraps his arms around Zechariah's neck from behind and curls his knees into his chest. Zechariah fights off the guards and leaps out the window, shattering it.

EXT. COUNCIL HOUSE ALLEY, ERIM - NIGHT

Zechariah charges down the alley, but he is blocked in on both sides by guards rushing in. He looks from one side to the other and straight up.

DAVID

We're trapped!

Without a word, Zechariah leaps from one side of the alley wall to the other, bounding upward to the rooftops.

EXT. ERIM ROOFTOPS - NIGHT

With David still clinging to him, Zechariah charges across the rooftops, leaping from one building to another.

The guards catch up to him as below, several CHASERS, one rider levi-carts resembling wheel-less motorcycles, converge. Other guards leap up ahead of him.

ZECHARIAH

Get down. I'll protect you.

David climbs down and hides behind Zechariah.

The first guard rushes Zechariah. Zechariah easily fells him and takes his sword. The others rush in and Zechariah fends off their every blow with lightning accuracy. After felling several of the troops, he turns to David.

ZECHARIAH

Get on.

David climbs on Zechariah's back again. Zechariah holds the swords between his teeth and leaps to a lower rooftop, and then to the ground. He lands with a light thud, and runs with amazing speed to his Levi-cart nearby.

David dismounts. They both get into the Levi-cart and blast out of Erim. Four chasers follow them.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - NIGHT

The Levi-cart crosses the land at high speed. The chasers gain on them. Zechariah turns to David.

ZECHARIAH

Listen. This controls left and right. This is speed. This slows us down. Maintain a straight course unless there is an absolute need to change directions.

DAVID

But I can't-

ZECHARIAH

Just do it.

David nods and takes the controls. Zechariah stands and faces the aggressors. He still has both swords. He slips his foot through a strap bolted to the Cart.

Two Chasers draw their swords and hold them out level with Zechariah's head. Zechariah holds both swords vertically and braces himself. The two Chasers hit hard, but he holds steady. They spin out of control, but soon regain it.

The two others take the advantage and try to ram the Levi-Cart on both sides to pin it.

ZECHARIAH

Speed up when I tell you to.

The Chasers rush at one another with the Levi-cart between them.

ZECHARIAH

Now!

David punches it. The cart thrusts ahead. The Chasers, attempt to correct forward, but are unable to control the momentum and collide.

One of the riders falls off as the rigs crash forward into the ground. The other uses the momentum to leap forward onto the back of the cart.

Zechariah meets him and they struggle hand to hand. Zechariah manages to hold the swords, but without room to use them.

The other Chasers have recovered themselves and rush the cart again, swords drawn. With little regard for their compatriot, they rush in at full speed, ready to lop off the heads of both fighters.

Zechariah sees this and ducks at the last moment. The rider jerks and then topples to the back of the cart. Zechariah takes the sheath of the dead Rider and pushes him overboard. He sheathes the extra sword.

The other Chasers wheel around again and charge the Levi-Cart head on.

Zechariah sheathes his sword and looks to a grove of trees off to one side.

ZECHARIAH

Head to the forest.

DAVID

Are you crazy?

ZECHARIAH

No time to argue.

Zechariah steers the cart towards the forest.

DAVID

We'll smash against a tree at this speed in the dark.

ZECHARIAH

You're a Fempiror. Relax and use your reflexes.

David takes a deep breath, grips the steering and flies into the trees.

Behind them, the Chasers speed after them, swerving through the trees at unnerving speed.

One of them settles behind the Levi-Cart. The rider ejects a grapple which attaches to the cart. The rider pulls his Chaser closer to the Cart.

Zechariah waits for the right moment, and then leaps from the Levi-Cart onto the Chaser. He and the rider struggle for a moment before he knocks the rider off the Chaser and into a tree.

He releases the grapple and takes off after the other Chaser. As they approach each other, they draw swords and battle at high speed while avoiding the onslaught of trees. Zechariah backs off and re-sheathes his sword.

He backs off and comes in from behind the Chaser, ramming the rider's rig from behind. After a second bump, the other Chaser spins out of control and into a tree.

Zechariah rejoins David. He signals David to stop, and Zechariah lands next to him.

LATER...

Zechariah is in control of the cart again. The Chaser is strapped to the back. They cruise slowly through the forest until they reach the open fields again. Zechariah punches the acceleration and they bolt off across the plains.

David indicates the Chaser.

DAVID

What're you going to do with that?

Zechariah shrugs.

ZECHARIAH

You never know.

Zechariah picks up the acquired sword and sheath and hands it to David.

ZECHARIAH

This will be yours. Tiberius or I will teach you to use it. Time was, you would make your own, but we don't have time.

David takes it and looks at it.

DAVID
I don't want this.

ZECHARIAH
I know.

David places the sword on the floor between the seats.
Zechariah sighs.

ZECHARIAH
If you had not been attacked, you
would be at home - safe and
ignorant of everything you know
now. You are now a part of a
different society, and in this time
and circumstance, no one has a
choice.

Zechariah and David continue at high speed across the plains
as sunrise threatens on the horizon.

EXT. CEREBDIM - DAY

Two figures, draped in hooded black DAY-TRAVEL CLOAKS walk
into Cerebdim pulling behind them a strange wagon draped in a
cloth that reaches the ground.

The people waking up pay it little attention. The figures do
not look up, but keep their hoods low over their faces.

The figures drag the wagon around a corner where the building
shadows them from the sunlight. The figures approach the
garage door of the Safe House, which opens for them.

INT. SAFE HOUSE GARAGE - CEREBDIM - DAY

Once inside, the figures remove their cloaks; it is Zechariah
and David. Zechariah pushes the covered Levi-cart out of the
way, and they enter the Safe House proper.

INT. SAFE HOUSE COMMON ROOM - DAY

Tiberius, Zechariah, and David sit around a table with food.

TIBERIUS
You really stirred them up last
night. Good show.

ZECHARIAH

I cannot believe how thick they are
to sit there blindly...

TIBERIUS

It is a worthless venture to ponder
their motives anymore. I often
wonder who they work for.

ZECHARIAH

What does Vladimir think?

TIBERIUS

Ask him when he arrives.

Tiberius takes a drink.

The door opens and everyone turns to it. Vladimir stands in
the doorway in his day-travel cloak.

VLADIMIR

Zechariah, you crazy malklek! Do
you have any idea what the Council
went through after your little
display?

ZECHARIAH

Ask me if I care.

VLADIMIR

You killed several of Erim's
security force. That is a serious
crime.

ZECHARIAH

Do you know how infuriating it is
to be wanted for upholding the Code
we've used for over three hundred
fifty years?

VLADIMIR

I could lose my position for just
talking to you.

ZECHARIAH

I hope you do. It's certainly not
worth keeping. The Council no
longer desires peace, despite its
lofty claims.

VLADIMIR

You cannot achieve peace by
inciting war.

ZECHARIAH

You can, however, find yourself in a war by claiming peace. You can't reason with the Tepish. You can't sign a treaty. They will see your indecision and docility and take over. You don't get war when you take no action. You get annihilation.

VLADIMIR

That's a rather cold outlook.

ZECHARIAH

It's reality. I won't feign peace when it does not exist.

Silence veils the table. Tiberius clears his throat.

TIBERIUS

Well, Vladimir, welcome. We appreciate your presence.

ZECHARIAH

We need to find their home area.

The door slams open again. Everyone looks to the door. In the door stands Fertid, looking haggard and worn. His cloak is torn and he is burned in several places from the sun. He collapses.

Ildritch runs over to him along with Zechariah, Tiberius, and other patrons.

ILDRITCH

(to Zechariah, who is closest)

Help me get him to a room.

Zechariah nods and together they carry Fertid off.

INT. SAFE HOUSE ROOM - DAY

Tiberius, Zechariah, Vladimir, and Ildritch stand in the room with an unconscious Fertid. They have removed the day travel cloak from him and dressed his wounds.

TIBERIUS

What do you think?

ZECHARIAH

He looks like an Elewo.

ILDRITCH

Really? They haven't been seen since the Tepish came about.

ZECHARIAH

I know, but look at him.

VLADIMIR

His garb does resemble the old order...

ZECHARIAH

...and he doesn't have a weapon.

TIBERIUS

He might have lost it.

ILDRITCH

Or it was taken from him.

ZECHARIAH

Tiberius, do you know where the Elewo are supposed to be these days?

TIBERIUS

No. When they left, I heard they settled in some caves in the mountains out west.

VLADIMIR

That's near Hauginstown, isn't it?

ZECHARIAH

It's also near where I suspected the buildup of Tepish forces twenty-five years ago.

ILDRITCH

Perhaps he escaped.

ZECHARIAH

Tiberius, we need to go there.

TIBERIUS

Zechariah, we can't assume every attack is Tepish related. We also can't assume this Fempiror is an Elewo. It's a full night's journey to those mountains, and we don't even know which one the Elewo are supposed to be in.

ZECHARIAH

Then we wake him up and find out.

ILDRITCH

This Fempiror is my guest, and he needs to sleep. I will not have you disturbing him.

VLADIMIR

We'll wait.

ILDRITCH

Get some rest. All of you. I'll let you know if he says anything.

TIBERIUS

Agreed. If our destination is beyond Hauginstown, then we'll need our energy.

INT. SAFE HOUSE ROOM - DAY

Tiberius, Vladimir, Zechariah, and David all sleep in the same room that contains one bed for each of them. There is a knock at the door. Tiberius jumps up to answer it. Vladimir and Zechariah sit up as well. David slowly stirs.

Tiberius admits Ildritch.

TIBERIUS

What is it, Ildritch?

ILDRITCH

He stirred for a moment. I tried to find out what happened to him. He said he is from the Urufdiam Plateau.

TIBERIUS

Urufdiam...

ZECHARIAH

Is he of the Elewo?

ILDRITCH

He didn't say. He just said the Dark West Fempiror are in danger. He escaped from a stronghold inside to get help. He said their numbers are overwhelming now.

VLADIMIR
Whose numbers?

ILDRITCH
He sounded delirious. He didn't
say.

ZECHARIAH
I think it's worth checking out.

TIBERIUS
I agree.

VLADIMIR
When are we leaving?

TIBERIUS
You aren't needed?

VLADIMIR
The Council will not gather again
for several weeks. We would not
have anytime soon but for
Zechariah's Code fifty-seven.

ZECHARIAH
My deepest apologies for disrupting
the Council's busy lives and
forcing them to concentrate on the
people...

Vladimir shakes his head.

TIBERIUS
Zechariah, when should we leave?
It's just west of Hauginstown.

ZECHARIAH
We can leave at sunset and be at the
Urufdiam Cave just before sunrise.
We can reach the Dark West
stronghold using day-travel cloaks.

VLADIMIR
Who else will be going with us?

TIBERIUS
I feel the fewer the better just to
assess the situation. Zechariah has
David. I will ride with Kaltesh,
and you can be with Yori.

(MORE)

TIBERIUS (cont'd)

I want to be ready in case there is a problem, but I don't want all our warriors there to be destroyed. I'll leave instructions on what to do if we aren't heard from in a few days.

DAVID

What do these Tepish want anyway? If they did take over your council, haven't they won already? What else is left?

The three look at him, and then exchange glances.

VLADIMIR

The Fempiror society stands with humanity in a very delicate balance. The Rastem are their only line of defense, and they don't even know it. If the Tepish had not been stopped, this world would be nothing but Fempiror by now. If the Tepish win and take over our society, their ideals would also take over, and our world will die.

DAVID

How?

ZECHARIAH

By turning every human into Fempiror, we would all have long lives, but no offspring.

VLADIMIR

The only way to create a Fempiror is to be transmuted. We cannot have children, so if the world were overrun by the Tepish, then it would be a world of Fempiror. Those who don't kill themselves would die after a few hundred years.

TIBERIUS

You might call it a slow genocide.

DAVID

That's what you fight for?

TIBERIUS

It is what we have always fought for.

(MORE)

TIBERIUS (cont'd)

It would be far better if our race were completely destroyed because we are such a threat to the human race. We stay, however, to protect our mother race, as it were, from total destruction.

David looks at the floor, as if thinking.

TIBERIUS

The road is long and the nights are short. Let's rest and leave at night fall.

Everyone agrees and leaves for their rooms.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - NIGHT

The sun has dropped beyond the horizon. Three Levi-Carts zoom across the surface of the land.

Zechariah and David ride together with the Chaser still strapped to the rear of his. Tiberius and Vladimir both travel in their own, each with a single passenger.

They travel non-stop throughout the night as the sun disappears completely and darkness engulfs the evening air. They pass small towns with fires burning for their own illumination.

EXT. PLAINS NEAR HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

As the caravan passes David's hometown, he looks out at the provincial little burg nestled in the trees. Zechariah glances at his young passenger. David only stares off at his memories. A tear drops down his face.

EXT. URUFDIAM CAVE - NIGHT

The three Levi-carts zip towards an enormous rock face. They feint off to one side and enter a small cave.

INT. URUFDIAM CAVE - NIGHT

They stop their carts and all six get out.

KALTESH looks to be around 38. He is a well-built man with deep blue eyes and long brown hair tied back in a pony-tail. He is sharp of eye, clean-shaven, and dressed in the traditional dark garb of the Rastem.

YORI appears to be around 27. Her blonde hair is tied up in a tight bun and her hazel eyes are bright with life and enthusiasm. Her garb resembles the Rastem tradition, but seems to have been modified to her feminine lines. She always seems to walk with a smile.

Zechariah hands David the sword he acquired from the guard earlier and had then presented to David.

ZECHARIAH

Take this.

DAVID

I don't want it.

ZECHARIAH

You may need it.

DAVID

I don't know how to use it.

ZECHARIAH

You may have to learn.

David looks at the sword for a moment and shakes his head. Zechariah pulls two day-cloaks from the Levi-cart and tosses one to David.

Zechariah walks over to Tiberius, standing with Vladimir, Kaltesh, and Yori. David replaces the sword in the Levi-cart and puts the cloak on.

ZECHARIAH

Kaltesh, it's been a while. We left too quickly.

KALTESH

Well, Tiberius said we had to go, so I assumed the pleasantries would have to wait.

ZECHARIAH

David, this is Kaltesh. He's younger, but quite well trained.

KALTESH

To Tiberius' credit, of course.

TIBERIUS

Of course.

ZECHARIAH

And this is Yori. She's barely a hundred years old, and yet she's managed to hold her own against me before, and is an excellent tracker.

VLADIMIR

Which is a prime reason we chose her. Never go underground without someone to get you out.

YORI

I have yet to be lost anywhere.

TIBERIUS

Let's go.

EXT. URUFDIAM CLIFF - DAY

The band of six walks huddled beneath their day cloaks as the sun peeks over the ridge. They look like six black ants traipsing under the dawning sun. They reach another larger opening in the side of the rock face.

INT. DARK WEST ENTRY HALL - DAY

The six lower their hoods as they pass out of the sunlight. They walk down a long hallway to a heavy door.

TIBERIUS

Stand back. We do not know what measures the Dark West employs.

(to the door; in

Felletterusk; subtitled)

Naltaka, mingorn Fempirorelero
rakad fren. Ka sil Tiberius
Erimerero. Lew mälinna corönskjav
eski.

(translation)

Attention, guardian of the Fempiror
of the Dark West. I am Tiberius of
Erim. We come seeking counsel.

A voice sounds from all around them. It is calm and reserved.

VOICE

(in Felletterusk;
subtitled)

Hav lajangev alma li?

(MORE)

VOICE (cont'd)
 (translation)
 What allegiance do you claim?

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk)
 Lew sil maskün piror rödelero
 Rastemero. Lew shua paltinjav
 rödelero Tepishero.
 (translation)
 We are warriors of the Order of
 Rastem. We desire knowledge of the
 Order of Tepish.

VOICE
 (in Felletterusk)
 Rastemel shua välgel paltinjavel
 maskün harutobatel Tepishelero.
 Havrol dandua lew sufdä frült?
 (translation)
 The Rastem have always desired the
 knowledge of the whereabouts of the
 Tepish. Why should we help you?

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk)
 Hav shua suf?
 (translation)
 What do you desire?

VOICE
 (in Felletterusk)
 Maskün sesakopjav enamua nillan.
 Lew shua nir azazdu. Het nar yazsar
 kläro li?
 (translation)
 Possessions mean nothing. We desire
 only wisdom. How many years have
 you walked?

TIBERIUS
 (in Felletterusk)
 Ka kläro siht rolda özla forshdro
 yazsar din tiyo ponacemero kaki
 saba re. Lewki paltinjav jatara
 järvacjav deratjav nol bato.
 (translation)
 I have walked this world over four
 hundred years as have two of my
 companions. Our knowledge may be
 valuable in trade.

VOICE
 (in Felletterusk)
 Lew tepöca.
 (MORE)

VOICE (cont'd)
(translation)
We accept.

The door opens. No one stands behind it. The six look at each other and pass through the doorway.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAY - DAY

The door closes of its own accord when the six pass into the hallway. David whips around, but the other five pay it no mind. They glance around the featureless hallway.

A Fempiror, PEDAR, dressed in red and black armor, without the helmet, steps from the shadows just ahead of them.

PEDAR
Follow me. The Leader of the Dark
West is expecting you.

Pedar walks away from them. They follow.

Pedar leads them through a winding maze of corridors that would lose the most talented map follower.

DAVID
These are some strange hallways.

PEDAR
It is a defense mechanism. A
straight path to the heart is a
request for death. A difficult path
discourages assassins.

DAVID
Makes sense.

Zechariah looks over the David and smiles. David looks at him and shrugs.

INT. GATHERING CHAMBER, DARK WEST HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Pedar leads them on path beside a sheer drop opening into an enormous chamber that could hold thousands of troops. The path branches off and winds around the entire chamber. It is not lit fully, so the other side disappears into the darkness.

YORI
Impressive.

PEDAR

We have force enough to defend ourselves. This room serves not only as a massing area, but also as training. Training has concluded for today.

ZECHARIAH

How many strong are you lately?

PEDAR

I am not qualified to divulge such information.

ZECHARIAH

Of course.

Tiberius looks at Zechariah. Zechariah shrugs. Tiberius smiles. The group passes out of the Gathering Chamber.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAYS - DAY

The group comes upon a door and Pedar stops. He turns to them.

PEDAR

This is the inner chamber of the Deldral of the Dark West Fempiror. Remember that you have been accepted upon the promises you have made.

Pedar bows and walks away.

The six stand and look at each other for a moment. Suddenly, the door opens and a voice sounds from around them.

VOICE

Enter.

INT. DELDRAL OF DARK WEST MAIN CHAMBER - DAY

The six walk into an expansive hall, richly decorated as if for a king. Light issues from gaps in the ceiling which serves to illuminate the room very clearly.

The walls are draped in rich tapestries, and doors lead out from the rear of the hall as well as the sides. At the far end of the hall sits the Deldral, ULRICH.

Ulrich is a large Fempiror, robed heavily in furs and seated on an enormous rock throne. Wisdom is set deep within his old eyes and he commands respect with an unbeatable presence.

To one side of Ulrich stands another older Fempiror, NIKOLAI, who whispers briefly to Ulrich as the six enter.

Nikolai appears to be in his 50's but maintains the fit look of the old Fempiror. His short black hair compliments his piercing blue eyes, but he holds an air of seedy-ness about him.

Tiberius stops a short distance from the throne. Ulrich stands to address them. It is his voice that has been speaking to them through the halls.

ULRICH

Welcome to the home of the Dark West Fempiror under the Urufdiam Plateau. I know you come with many questions, but it is late. Stay with us the day, and we shall answer all of your questions tonight when we are rested.

TIBERIUS

You honor us with your hospitality.

ULRICH

The Dark West have always treated guests with respect, and it is expected that the same be returned. My servants will show you to your quarters. We shall meet again this evening. Until then, our home is at your disposal. You may feel free to roam at your leisure, but return at the appointed time, or our deal is forfeit. That is all.

Ulrich sits.

YORI

That is all?

TIBERIUS

Yori, do not argue.

NIKOLAI

My lord, forgive me, but they have come a long way. Perhaps, there is something you would like to know now.

ULRICH

What I have spoken, I have spoken.

NIKOLAI

Surely, now is a far better time-

ULRICH

As you have pointed out, Nikolai, they have come a long way. I do not wish to tire them unnecessarily.

KALTESH

But what about the warrior-

ULRICH

All questions will be answered in due time.

NIKOLAI

What warrior?

ULRICH

Pedar will take you to your rooms.

NIKOLAI

I want to know who-

Ulrich puts up his hand, silencing Nikolai. Tiberius exchanges a glance with Zechariah.

TIBERIUS

We accept your invitation, and look forward to speaking with you later.

Tiberius bows, and the others do the same. The six turn to the door which opens, again, of its own accord. Pedar stands outside, waiting.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Pedar leads them through another maze of hallways to a set of rooms - one for each of the six.

PEDAR

These are your rooms. You are welcome to rest or explore. Areas designated as secure will be marked as such. Be careful not to get lost. Good day.

Pedar leaves them alone in the hallway. They turn to each other.

YORI

Now what?

TIBERIUS

This certainly is very curious.

KALTESH

The warriors we've seen look nothing like the one who found his way to the Safe House.

ZECHARIAH

Ulrich did not want anything discussed.

TIBERIUS

What do you make of the armor?

VLADIMIR

Reminds me of the old Tepish design.

ZECHARIAH

Are we going to sleep, or do you want to look around?

VLADIMIR

I'm up for walking around.

KALTESH

I'm with Vladimir. I want to know what the big secret is.

TIBERIUS

We know nothing at this time. We are free to do as we wish. We should rest, but be alert.

Tiberius enters his room and closes the door.

ZECHARIAH

I agree. Until reason is given, suspicion is not warranted. David, will you be all right on your own?

David nods. They all enter their rooms except Vladimir, who walks down the hallway.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - DAY

David looks around the room. It furnished with a bed and nightstand - the bare minimum in quantity, but of good quality and appearing comfortable. The carved-from-stone walls are cracked from age but well maintained.

He walks over to the bed and sits. The room is lit without fire, and David does not bother to find out where the button is. He lies down and passes out.

As David sleeps, one of the cracked portions of the wall swings open silently. Four red and black armored warriors step into the room and walk to David's sleeping form. David's eyes dart open as they surround his bed.

INT. ZECHARIAH'S ROOM - DAY

Zechariah sits on the floor of his room, eyes closed, hands folded in his lap. He appears to be meditating. Suddenly, his head snaps to one side. His eyes open.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - DAY

David is bound and gagged. He struggles as the warriors carry him through the hole in the wall.

Suddenly, Zechariah storms in. Two warriors carry David through the secret passage. The other two face off with Zechariah. The battle is swift as Zechariah takes down the young warriors.

He looks into the passage as Tiberius, Yori, and Kaltesh enter.

KALTESH

What's going on?

ZECHARIAH

Suspicion is warranted. Two of our red and black friends took David through here.

YORI

Where's Vladimir?

They all look around.

ZECHARIAH

He may still have decided to look around.

TIBERIUS

Such is his choice, but doublecheck his room.

Yori and Kaltesh run out. Tiberius and Zechariah examine the bodies of the dead. Tiberius specifically picks up one of the swords.

It is of the same basic design as Zechariah's: a thin lightweight katana-style sword, but the blade is etched with a bat insignia.

ZECHARIAH

Elewo do not practice swordplay. Their proficiency has always been hand to hand.

TIBERIUS

It was their espionage function that kept them unarmed. Things change, but the blade looks more of a Tepish design.

ZECHARIAH

Still no sign of anyone who looks like the one who supposedly escaped from here.

TIBERIUS

True.

Tiberius replaces the blade on the floor. Yori and Kaltesh return.

YORI

Vladimir was not in his room.

KALTESH

No evidence he was even there.

ZECHARIAH

Should we wait for him to return?

TIBERIUS

He can handle himself. We need to follow our young friend.

ZECHARIAH

Then let's see where this goes.

The four walk into the hallway. Unlike the rest of the plateau underground, this hallway follows a single curved line to its destination.

Suddenly, Kaltesh pulls up short.

KALTESH

Wait. This is a trap, isn't it?

ZECHARIAH

Of course it is.

TIBERIUS

They're using David as a lure to get the rest of us. We must be prepared for anything.

YORI

Oh sure, excellent observation, Kaltesh. Always the teacher's pet.

KALTESH

Well, you see, Yori, when you hit two hundred, you can just start figuring these things out.

YORI

Of course.

They continue walking through the hallway.

INT. DARK WEST GATHERING CHAMBER - DAY

The two remaining warriors deposit David in an oversized chair with restraints in the center of the enormous Gathering Chamber. The warriors secure him. Nikolai approaches him.

NIKOLAI

Welcome to my world.

David struggles, unable to move or speak.

NIKOLAI

Oh don't bother to struggle. Your life will end soon enough.

David squirms again.

NIKOLAI

Of course they'll know it's a trap. There is not an idiot among them.

(MORE)

NIKOLAI (cont'd)
But this is a trap of conscience,
not cunning. What would they not do
for the innocent?

David holds still, his eyes questioning.

NIKOLAI
Look around you! They won't fall
for it, but they won't have a
choice.

David struggles again.

NIKOLAI
Enjoy the view.

Nikolai laughs and walks away. David looks into the dark
expanse of the room. On the upper walkway, Fempiror move into
position. On the lower walkways, more Fempiror stand ready to
pounce. David looks over to the dark opening he was brought
through.

INT. SAFE HOUSE ROOM, CEREBDIM - DAY

Fertid sits bolt upright in bed. He looks around.

FERTID
Hello? Where am I?

Ildritch enters.

FERTID
What's going on?

ILDRITCH
You are in the Rastem Safe House in
Cerebdim. How are you feeling?

FERTID
I'm fine now. We need to get to
Urufdiam with some help.

ILDRITCH
Relax. Some Rastem are heading out
there now.

FERTID
How many?

ILDRITCH
Five.

FERTID

Five? Are they crazy? There are thousands of Tepish there! They'll be slaughtered!

INT. DARK WEST CHAMBER - DAY

Tiberius, Zechariah, Yori, and Kaltesh emerge in a room identical to David's. They look around for a moment, confused.

YORI

This looks familiar.

ZECHARIAH

Illusionary trick. It would have been more successful without the dead soldiers left behind.

KALTESH

I see.

TIBERIUS

Let's go.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAYS - DAY

The four exit the room into a bare hall. One end of the hall is blocked, allowing access in only one direction. As they stare down the hallway further, it becomes apparent that the maze has been reduced to a single suspicious walkway.

TIBERIUS

I'll have to say this is the most blatant trap I've ever seen.

The four of them creep down the hall past the blocked hallways.

KALTESH

You know, if ... when we get ambushed, there's nowhere to go.

ZECHARIAH

Relax. Your peace is your strength.

They stop near the entrance to the Gathering Hall when they see David in the center.

TIBERIUS

I'm open to suggestions.

ZECHARIAH

I have none.

YORI

What are we up against?

TIBERIUS

David looks alone in there, but he's probably surrounded by every Fempiror in the place.

ZECHARIAH

What are they expecting?

TIBERIUS

Good question. They cannot presume that we don't think it's a trap.

ZECHARIAH

They will expect us to try and sneak around then?

TIBERIUS

That's fair to assume.

KALTESH

But what if they assume that we assume they assume we'll sneak around and assume we won't sneak around because we assume they're ready for us to sneak around. Should we sneak around anyway like they may assume we won't or come in behind in like they assume we will?

Tiberius and Zechariah stare and Kaltesh and then each other.

ZECHARIAH

He makes a good point too.

YORI

What if we just run in there, grab him, and run out.

Zechariah and Tiberius look at Yori, and then at each other.

INT. DARK WEST GATHERING HALL - DAY

David sits in the chair, no longer struggling. He stares at the ceiling, fear apparent in his eyes.

Suddenly, Tiberius, Zechariah, Kaltesh, and Yori blast into the room, swords at the ready. With breakneck speed they cross the floor to David.

Zechariah, Yori, and Kaltesh stand around Tiberius as he breaks David free. He removes the gag.

DAVID

It's a trap!

TIBERIUS

Of course it is!

From the crevasses of the chamber, Fempiror dressed in red and black armor emerge. From the second floor, archers stand and take aim.

YORI

Archers on the second floor.

ZECHARIAH

Stand ready.

David released, the five of them make for the door they came in. It is blocked by a hoard of Fempiror.

KALTESH

They're firing!

A swarm of arrows closes in on the five. With lightning speed and accuracy, they block every one that was aimed for them. Several go astray and hit the Red and Black warriors. They fall to the ground.

The rest of them rush in for the kill. A fierce battle ensues between the four experienced fighters and the Red and Black Fempiror.

The fighting is unbelievably fast. Swords clash and astray blows are blocked by the speed and accuracy of the gauntlets on the four fighters' arms and legs.

David hides from the blows behind the fighters.

The archers fire again. Parrying blows with one hand, the four fighters split their concentration and block the incoming arrows with their gauntlets and dodging.

An arrow hits its mark in Yori's arm. She yells and feints to one side, a Fempiror sword just missing her. She recovers quickly, and with the arrow sticking out, she carries on.

Zechariah eyes the second floor.

As the archers are preparing another volley, several warriors emerge and take them down.

ZECHARIAH
Tiberius! Look!

Tiberius spares enough of a glance to see the archers turn their attention inward. They are being taken down by warriors dressed completely in black. Their faces are obscured by dark masks.

KALTESH
Could it be...?

Several of the warriors, armed with nothing except their hands and feet, jump down to the lower level and assist the fighters in dispatching the red and black warriors.

With the assistance of the additional warriors, the four fighters and David are able to make their way back into the hallway from whence they came. A larger warrior leads the way while another guards the back.

The Red and Black warriors start swarming after them, but some are delayed by the black warriors from the second floor leaping down in front of them.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAY

The small detachment makes their way through the hallway. The warrior passes the door to the room.

TIBERIUS
We're not going back through here?

DARK WARRIOR
Too obvious. We must choose another path.

KALTESH
The way is blocked.

The Dark Warrior approaches the boulder blocking the hallway. He puts his hands together and drops his head in rapt concentration.

ZECHARIAH
Defend the rear!

Noises from the pursuing Red and Black warriors fill the hallway.

With a loud cry, the Dark Warrior slams his fist through the boulder, smashing it into a million pieces. He regains his stance. The others look on in awe.

TIBERIUS
Only an Elewo could-

DARK WARRIOR
We must continue.

The group takes off running through the maze of corridors. The Dark Warrior takes lefts and rights seemingly at random.

At a crossroads, the group runs into a small group of the Red and Black warriors. They fight them off and continue.

The Dark Warrior stops in the middle of a long hallway with no apparent doors or openings anywhere.

YORI
What are we doing?

The Dark Warrior looks both ways, and then presses a secret passage open. The group files in and the Dark Warrior closes the door behind them.

Moments later, Red and Black warriors from both directions close the gap and look around, confused.

INT. DARK WEST CHAMBER - DAY

Inside the secret opening, the rock opens into a wide chamber before closing up again into another hallway. David slumps to the floor, exhausted.

DAVID
I was beginning to think this place
was all hall.

DARK WARRIOR
Come on, we're not out of this yet.

TIBERIUS
What's going on?

DARK WARRIOR
I had hoped to tell you when we
spoke.

TIBERIUS
Who are you?

The warrior removes his mask to reveal Ulrich.

ZECHARIAH

Ulrich!

TIBERIUS

So the Elewo have not forgotten
their style.

ULRICH

No. We are what we've always been.
But I must explain later. The
Tepish have overrun this place, and
we must leave.

Ulrich takes off down the passage. The others follow behind.

INT. PASSAGE - DAY

Ulrich moves quickly through the passages. Tiberius catches
up to him.

ULRICH

So Fertid got through.

ZECHARIAH

He did, but we didn't get much out
of him. Only that he came from
here.

TIBERIUS

How do you propose to escape this?

ULRICH

Are there just the five of you?

TIBERIUS

We had six. One of our number is
missing. The youngest is unskilled.

ULRICH

Then it is plain to me that this
battle must be left for another
day. The Tepish have been bringing
in many warriors, and I do not feel
we can stand against their numbers.

ZECHARIAH

Where did they all come from?

ULRICH

Everywhere. They solicited us after
you drove them from their base
twenty-five years ago.

(MORE)

ULRICH (cont'd)

We gave them refuge and left them alone. They've been building their numbers ever since, and only after they took over our home did we take notice.

Ulrich stops in this passage and presses on a part of the wall. It opens and they enter another passageway.

ULRICH

Before then, we paid them no mind. This way.

The wall closes behind them leaving no trace of a doorway.

INT. DARK WEST PASSAGE - DAY

The troupe continues walking through another long corridor.

DAVID

Where are we going?

ULRICH

Can I assume you left your transportation in the cave near the entrance?

TIBERIUS

We did.

ULRICH

We are going there. This mountain is littered with passageways, most of them we carved during our stay here over the last four hundred years.

INT. DARK WEST CRYSTAL CAVE - DAY

They pass out of the corridor into a natural cave. Sunlight streams through miniscule cracks overhead and reflects through a series of crystal formations, brilliantly illuminating the entire cave.

The group walks on a pathway leading them through the middle of the cave.

ULRICH

The Tepish do not know of this area. We were careful to keep some things secret from them.

(MORE)

ULRICH (cont'd)

They know of passages between the rooms, but not of any others. There are many ways into this cave, and my Elewo will find their way here.

They reach a large natural open chamber and stop walking. Several black-clad Elewo are already there. Ulrich turns to Yori.

ULRICH

You'd best have that wound mended. See Ghasta over there; he's one of our medics. He'll take care of you.

YORI

Thank you.

Yori goes over to GHASTA, who waits for her.

ULRICH

Your transports have been brought into our own hold which is behind the cave. Another doorway you did not see in the cave leads into here.

ZECHARIAH

Clever.

INT. DARK WEST CRYSTAL CAVE - LATER

Zechariah, Kaltesh, Yori, and David sleep away from the group. Very few people are stirring and the place has filled out with Elewo.

Tiberius sits with Ulrich and talks.

TIBERIUS

This is a beautiful cave, Ulrich.

ULRICH

It is rare we can take advantage of the sun, but I always love it here.

TIBERIUS

What will you do?

ULRICH

The Tepish have run us out of our home. My hope was that Fertid could solicit a larger force.

ZECHARIAH

There wasn't much left of him when he got there. We left as soon as we could.

ULRICH

We cannot stay in this place because they are intelligent enough to find it. We have to leave.

TIBERIUS

The Safe House at Cerebdim is small and easily compromised. Who do you still know?

ULRICH

I have been in scarce contact with anyone from the old days. We live a lonely life, Tiberius.

TIBERIUS

This place would have been perfect for a refuge.

ULRICH

Yes...

Kaltesh appears behind them.

KALTESH

Why can't it still be?

ULRICH

I know the Tepish numbers. It is suicidal to remain here.

KALTESH

Then let's get rid of them.

TIBERIUS

We do not have the numbers. If I had brought a larger force, perhaps, but not as we are.

KALTESH

He said these people were captured in the last twenty-five years. That means they are inexperienced.

TIBERIUS

Kaltesh, you are inexperienced.

KALTESH

I have been sparring you for the last one hundred eighty years.

TIBERIUS

It's not the same.

KALTESH

I held my own today.

YORI

As did I.

Yori and Zechariah appear from behind Kaltesh.

TIBERIUS

Zechariah, this is folly.

ZECHARIAH

Perhaps, but we have a responsibility here. It is only their goodwill that allowed the Tepish in after I found them. It is undoubtedly our presence that sparked what just occurred. We owe it to them.

ULRICH

If this seems wise to you, the Elewo will welcome your help.

Tiberius crosses his arms and lets out a concerned sigh.

TIBERIUS

This is very risky.

ZECHARIAH

It would put a severe dent in the Tepish forces.

TIBERIUS

If we die, we help no one. The council will dismiss the incident, if they ever hear of it.

ZECHARIAH

We could win.

TIBERIUS

How?

ZECHARIAH

You know how.

Tiberius looks at Zechariah, who seems almost giddy to get at the Tepish. Tiberius sighs once more, and nods.

TIBERIUS

All right. It will be the Elewo forces with the four of us, if Yori is well.

YORI

I'm ready.

DAVID

What about me?

ULRICH

This area will be kept a secret. You may remain here with our medics since you are still untrained.

ZECHARIAH

I agree.

DAVID

Understood.

David stands off to one side, listening to the conversation.

TIBERIUS

What is the strength of their forces?

ULRICH

Over the past years, they have grown their numbers to several thousand, but since they use this place as a training ground and send their troops elsewhere, only a few hundred are here.

ZECHARIAH

So we're primarily fighting against new arrivals?

ULRICH

Their advantage will be their numbers, so we must be careful not to get overwhelmed. My people treat them peaceably for they have never interfered with us.

KALTESH

What is our goal?

ULRICH

We must remove the leader here, who is Nikolai. He is a cold Tepish who finds suffering to be amusing. He will show you no mercy.

ZECHARIAH

Where will we find him?

ULRICH

With this most recent development, he will make his home in the throne room or in the quarters behind. He has been here for nearly twenty-five years. He knows the tunnels very well.

TIBERIUS

Brief your people. We'll rest up and start in a few hours. We will rely on you to lead us to the throne room.

ULRICH

I am at your service.

The meeting parts company. Ulrich one direction while the Rastem return to their cots to rest. David stands off to one side watching them go, his arms crossed.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, HAUGINSTOWN - DUSK

Beth exits a "General Store". She carries a ball of yarn of the same shade as the knitting in her room. She walks toward home, her arms crossed, holding the yarn ball.

Behind the statue, Abraham watches her. He turns and closes his eyes. He sighs deeply, and then speaks inaudibly to himself for a moment. With a deep breath, he walks out from behind the statue towards her.

ABRAHAM

How are you holding up?

BETH

Good, I suppose. I don't know what I'm going to do.

ABRAHAM

Well, you still plan on getting married and having a family, right?

BETH
I planned on doing all that with
David.

ABRAHAM
But what are you going to do now?

BETH
Abraham, I don't think-

ABRAHAM
Beth, I've tagged along behind you
two my entire life, but inside,
I've always wanted to be with you.

She stops. He halts a short distance behind her. She doesn't
turn.

BETH
Abraham...

ABRAHAM
I don't mind saying it. I will miss
David. He was my best friend, but
maybe ... maybe we were meant to be
together instead.

Abraham walks up behind Beth and gently rests his hands on
her shoulders. She shakes him off and turns to face him.

BETH
He was your friend...

ABRAHAM
He's gone, though. He's never
coming back. I don't want to
minimize your grief, but you have
to move on.

BETH
Abraham. It's not that easy.

ABRAHAM
Why not? What did he have that I
don't?

BETH
He would never talk to me like this
so soon after losing a loved one.

Beth turns to walk away. Abraham blocks her path.

ABRAHAM

Come on, Beth. What are you waiting for? I lo-

BETH

Get away from me!

Beth pushes him aside with adrenaline-rich strength. Abraham falls against the statue, crumples to the ground, and stays there. Beth storms off.

Abraham watches her go. After she crosses the small road, he sits up and pulls his legs into his chest and speaks quietly.

ABRAHAM

He's gone, Beth. He can't keep you forever. I promise you'll be mine.

He rests his head on his knees.

INT. DARK WEST CAVE VEHICLE HOLD - DUSK

David walks amongst the transports and Levi-carts in the Dark West storage area behind the cave they originally parked the vehicles in.

He runs his hands over the Chaser, still attached to the rear of Zechariah's Levi-Cart, a thought crossing his face. A movement behind him! He jumps, as if caught.

ZECHARIAH

David?

Zechariah walks over to him.

ZECHARIAH

What are you doing in here?

David shrugs.

DAVID

I'm just ... walking around. I won't have much to do for a while.

ZECHARIAH

This is true.

DAVID

A lot has changed since I first saw this machine...since I first saw you. Please forgive me. It's hard. I guess you know that.

ZECHARIAH

You may be assured that anything you have said, I understand. Your goal will be to assimilate yourself to your here and now, and to make the most of these circumstances.

DAVID

Thank you.

Zechariah gives David a hug, and they walk back into the main cave chamber.

DAVID

Take care of yourself.

ZECHARIAH

Don't get into too much trouble.

DAVID

I won't.

INT. DARK WEST CRYSTAL CAVE - DUSK

Once in the chamber, David sees that a hundred Elewo, both men and women, dressed in their traditional black uniform vaguely resembling Ninja, with their hoods down, are assembled along with Yori and Kaltesh.

Tiberius and Ulrich stand before them. Zechariah joins them beside Kaltesh.

ULRICH

Fempiror of the Elewo Order. Today, the Tepish Order has broken their promise to us. They have raided our home and done wrong to our guests. After centuries of living in silence, the time has come again to show that we are not as docile as they believe; to show the true strength of the Elewo.

The Elewo stand in silence, watching Ulrich. Their faces are solemn.

ULRICH

Our Rastem brothers stand with us and bring their own experience to help us.

(MORE)

ULRICH (cont'd)

In exchange for their goodwill, we will help them in their battle to prevent the Tepish from practicing their slow genocide on the human populace of our world. We will no longer hide. We will no longer be a mystery to outsiders. We will adopt the code the Rastem have held for centuries. We vow not to allow the Tepish to enact their revenge. With great solemnity, we vow to be the last Fempiror. There need be no more.

The Elewo beat their chests twice in quick succession.

ULRICH

You have your assignments.
 (in Felletterusk;
 subtitled)
 Gus klug din Jehovah bato suffümor.
 (translation)
 Good luck and God be with you.

The Elewo put their hoods down and disperse out a dozen different passages. Ulrich leads a handful of Elewo, Tiberius, Zechariah, Kaltesh, and Yori through another tunnel. In moments, the cave is virtually empty.

David turns and heads back to the vehicle hold.

INT. DARK WEST CAVE VEHICLE HOLD - DUSK

David walks right over to Zechariah's Levi-Cart and detaches the Chaser. He turns it on and it floats a foot off the ground. He grabs a dark day-travel cloak from the Levi-Cart and wraps it around himself.

He locates the door release and opens the door. Indirect light streams in from the sun lying low in the sky. David runs over to the Chaser. An Elewo Medic runs in.

MEDIC

Hey! What are you doing?

David jumps on the Chaser and blasts into the setting sun. The Medic is powerless to stop him. He runs over to the door to watch David speed across the landscape. He shakes his head and closes the door.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAYS - DUSK

SERIES OF SHOTS: Ulrich's team charges through hall after hall, bend after bend, fighting off Tepish warriors...the other teams storm sleeping areas...feeding areas... massing areas...fighting against Tepish, armored and unarmored, found throughout the plateau...the teams fell more Tepish than the Tepish do of them.

Ulrich's team reaches the door outside the throne room.

ZECHARIAH
(worried)
That was too easy.

ULRICH
It is possible we took them by surprise. The Elewo are not known for their rash actions. That's more of a Rastem trait.

ZECHARIAH
Touché.

The group kicks in the door to the throne room.

INT. DARK WEST THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

The group barges in. The room is empty.

TIBERIUS
Thoughts, Ulrich?

ULRICH
There are many passages from this main room.

TIBERIUS
Where would you go?

ULRICH
This way.

Ulrich starts toward the rear of the room. Instead of passing through the passage behind the curtain, Ulrich cuts to the left and opens a passage hidden among the decorative work in the room.

They all pass through and close the door behind them.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

David blasts towards Hauginstown on the Chaser. The sun has already passed below the horizon. He passes by the town and heads for the cave under the Old Mill.

He drives the Chaser into the cave, disappearing from view for a moment.

EXT. CAVE UNDER OLD MILL - NIGHT

David walks out of the cave, no longer in the day-travel cloak. He walks towards the town under the stars.

INT. DARK WEST HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ulrich and group walk down a hallway that appears blank. Ulrich stops and looks around.

ULRICH
This isn't right.

Suddenly, the walls on both sides of the company collapse revealing a large room and a hoard of Tepish warriors, armed and dangerous. Ahead of them stands Nikolai, smiling.

The group stands ready to do battle. The Elewo assume a fighting position, while the Rastem draw their swords. They are outnumbered.

NIKOLAI
So predictable, Ulrich. I knew you
would look here.

ULRICH
We have nothing to say, Nikolai.

NIKOLAI
Then I bid you farewell.

Nikolai walks away and the warriors swarm. Swords clash and fists fly as the trained Fempiror block and hit the young blooded Tepish. Elewo snap bones and Rastem hack limbs and run them through.

Ulrich breaks through the line and chases after Nikolai.

INT. DARK WEST POWER CHAMBER - NIGHT

Ulrich charges through the door into the enormous water power chamber of the Urufdiam Plateau.

A stone walkway spans across an enormous underground lake a hundred feet below. Sparks run under the water, giving the lake an eerie glow. Power lines run from the lake up the walls and out of various ports into the rest of the plateau.

Ulrich looks around slowly. Behind him, hanging above the door, Nikolai swings down atop the mighty Elewo. He recovers and Nikolai pulls his sword on him. Ulrich is undaunted by this show of power.

Nikolai takes several swings, but Ulrich blocks his blows with apparent ease. Frustrated, Nikolai moves faster but with less precision. The harder he tries, the easier the old Elewo blocks him. Ulrich hasn't even tried to hit him yet!

Finally, Nikolai swings especially hard. Ulrich sweeps the blade to one side and delivers one cracking blow to Nikolai's face. Nikolai's neck snaps. His body stumbles to one side and falls into the lake. Ulrich shakes his head.

Zechariah, Tiberius and company blast through the door and find Ulrich looking down.

TIBERIUS

Is everything all right?

ULRICH

It is such a waste to spend one's life in the hatred of others. Tell me, Tiberius... Do you fight because you love man or hate the Tepish?

Tiberius looks at Ulrich for a moment, silently.

TIBERIUS

It is for the love of mankind that we have always fought. But to love man is to hate the Tepish.

ULRICH

Well said. I and my Elewo will assist you. You may stay here.

Ulrich and Tiberius shake hands.

TIBERIUS
Let's finish this.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

Abraham remains on the ground where Beth left him. He gazes at the stars overhead. The grass shuffles. Abraham jumps to his feet.

Shocked recognition dawns on Abraham's face. David walks across the square towards Beth's house.

ABRAHAM
David?

David stops and turns to his friend.

DAVID
Abraham.

The two laugh and run towards each other, embracing.

ABRAHAM
My God, you are cold.

DAVID
It's a long story.

ABRAHAM
What happened to you? Where have you been?

DAVID
I've been changed. I can't explain everything. It's too much.

ABRAHAM
Changed? Into what?

DAVID
Physically, I'm different, but I'm still the same person you've always known.

ABRAHAM
Physically different?

DAVID
I'm a Fempiror. We're stronger, faster, and live much longer than regular humans.

ABRAHAM

Regular humans? You mean me?

DAVID

Yes. I'm not like you. Not anymore.

ABRAHAM

What are you doing here?

DAVID

I want to talk to Beth.

Abraham becomes defensive.

ABRAHAM

Why?

DAVID

It is personal.

ABRAHAM

You need to tell me why.

DAVID

It doesn't concern you.

ABRAHAM

Pardon me, David, but we buried you yesterday, and I would like to know why you want to see Beth... especially if you're no longer "like me." What are your intentions?

DAVID

Since when are my intentions any concern of yours?

ABRAHAM

You don't belong here anymore. You're now what this town has been hunting for to atone for your death and that of Old Ben. Who is buried in your grave?

DAVID

I don't know.

ABRAHAM

How do I know you didn't kill him?

DAVID

I have killed no one. Why would I?

ABRAHAM

But I can't trust you.

DAVID

Abraham, I am the same David you've known all your life.

ABRAHAM

No, you're not. You're cold. You disappeared, and now you come back and say you're different. How can you be the same and different?

DAVID

I don't have time for this right now.

David starts walking away, but Abraham grabs him by the arm and spins him around.

ABRAHAM

I'm not letting you get close to her.

DAVID

I don't want to hurt you.

Abraham attempts to fight with David, but David tosses him to the side. Abraham slumps against the statue, unconscious. David walks over to him. He kneels beside his friend's unconscious body.

DAVID

Forgive me ... old friend.

David walks onward.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth sleeps. Her pillow is tear-stained and her face is blotched red. A shadow passes over her.

DAVID (O.S.)

Beth.

Her eyes shoot open. She rolls over and looks at the shadow standing over her in the moonlight.

BETH

Who are you?

The shadow moves down and the moonlight lights up David's face. Beth gasps with joy. She jumps out of bed and hugs and kisses him.

BETH

David, my dear David, what happened to you? Why are you so cold?

DAVID

It's a long story.

Snoring echoes from her parents' bedroom.

DAVID

Will you come with me? We can talk elsewhere.

BETH

Is it safe?

DAVID

I'll protect you.

INT. URUFDIAM PLATEAU - DARK WEST HALLWAYS - NIGHT

The battles continue. When the Tepish retreat, the Elewo chase them out of the Plateau. Most of the Tepish are driven out the main door and run for their lives. The Elewo cheer.

INT. DARK WEST CRYSTAL CAVE - NIGHT

Ulrich stands before the celebrating Elewo and the four Rastem. The Elewo numbers have been decimated.

ULRICH

My fellow Elewo, we have fought a great battle today and have taken back our home.

The Elewo all stand silently, looking at Ulrich.

ULRICH

However, the Tepish are still out there. This leader is gone, but others will follow. We must finally choose sides in a war we don't want. To be the last Fempiror, we must adopt the pledge of our Rastem brothers: to protect humanity against the Tepish threat.

(MORE)

ULRICH (cont'd)

You have always trusted me to lead you in the paths we should go, and should you desire not to follow this and retain the solitude that we have always enjoyed that is your decision. But I encourage you to join me now. To be the last of the Fempiror!

ELEWO ARMY

The last Fempiror!

The army beats their chest twice in quick succession. They break the meeting and celebrate their victory. Ulrich walks over to two of the Elewo and speaks to them. They nod and run off.

An Elewo runs up to Tiberius and points off in a direction. He looks concerned and interested. The other 3 Rastem follow him.

The Medic runs up to Ulrich. He listens for a moment, and then runs over to Tiberius and company.

ULRICH

Zechariah...

He looks down. Vladimir lies on the ground, beaten and bruised.

VLADIMIR

...and when I walked around that last corner, about twenty of them attacked me. When I woke up, these Elewo were carrying me here.

TIBERIUS

Rest, old friend.

Vladimir nods. Tiberius pulls Zechariah to the side. Ulrich follows.

TIBERIUS

Do you believe him?

ZECHARIAH

Considering how easily we beat their forces, it seems strange he would lose.

TIBERIUS

In an overwhelming number, though?

ZECHARIAH

It's possible. He's one of my oldest friends, though. I don't have a reason to distrust him.

TIBERIUS

Very well.

ULRICH

Zechariah, I have just received a rather disturbing message about your protégé.

ZECHARIAH

Is something wrong with David?

ULRICH

Unknown. He left.

ZECHARIAH

Left?

Vladimir looks up.

ULRICH

A medic advised me that he took the Chaser from your Levi-cart, along with a day-travel cloak, and took off right after we went into battle.

ZECHARIAH

The fool!

TIBERIUS

Where is he going?

ZECHARIAH

Hauginstown.

Zechariah storms off towards the vehicle hold. Vladimir jumps to his feet. The medics around him look to him. He waves them off as if he is fine.

INT. DARK WEST VEHICLE HOLD - NIGHT

Zechariah walks over to his Levi-Cart.

ZECHARIAH

Open the door.

The Elewo inside the hold nods and opens the door as Zechariah jumps in the Cart. Vladimir appears behind him. Zechariah punches it and blasts out of the cave.

Though the wake ruffles him, the Elewo stands for a moment, and then starts to shut the door. Vladimir steps forward.

VLADIMIR

One moment, friend. Perhaps I should follow him to make sure he doesn't run into trouble.

The Elewo gestures at the other Carts. Vladimir gets in one, and cruises out of the cave. The Elewo closes the door behind him.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Beth sits in shock. David stands near her, not speaking. Finally she looks up.

BETH

So that night we found Ben, you got changed into a...?

DAVID

Fempiror.

BETH

And there is no way to reverse it?

DAVID

No.

David kneels at Beth's feet. She looks at him, saddened.

DAVID

But I don't want to leave you.

BETH

And I don't want to lose you... again ... but...

DAVID

...but there isn't a choice.

BETH

I know. I don't want to accept it.

DAVID

I don't want to either, but we must. I just wanted to say good-bye.

Beth stands and pulls him up. She looks into his eyes.

BETH

I don't want to say good-bye.

DAVID

But we cannot be together.

BETH

Then let me remember you as my husband. Let us have the wedding night we never will.

DAVID

I love you, Beth.

BETH

And I love you, David ... forever.

They kiss passionately.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - NIGHT

Zechariah drives his Levi-Cart as fast as it can go across the plains towards Hauginstown. His wake stirs up dust clouds behind him.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

Abraham remains as he was, against the base of the statue. A shadow passes over him. He stirs and looks up.

ABRAHAM

Who are you?

Vladimir kneels down to him.

VLADIMIR

A friend. What happened to you?

Abraham looks at the stranger in fear.

EXT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zechariah stops the Levi-Cart at his front door. He checks his garage mound first, and then runs inside.

INT. ZECHARIAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Zechariah searches through his rooms. He pauses in his kitchen area beside a table. His eyes reflect deep thinking. He pounds the table in anger and storms out.

EXT. HAUGINSTOWN - NIGHT

Vladimir stands in the center of town with Abraham. The people of the town stand around him with torches.

VLADIMIR

It was as soon as I heard the
horrific stories of this town that
I came as fast as I could because I
knew the cause.

The townspeople mutter and shake their heads.

ABRAHAM

He's telling the truth. Only
tonight, I saw David Taylor. He was
alive and claimed to be something
else. He was going after Beth.

Abraham looks to Beth's Parents. Patrick holds his wife, who is teary eyed.

ABRAHAM

And she's gone, isn't she Mr.
Carpenter?

Patrick nods. Beth's mother cries.

VLADIMIR

This person is not your David. Not
the one you remember. He is now a
possessed follower of Satan, bound
to do his will. His soul cannot be
saved. Tell us, Abraham Barber,
where would they be?

ABRAHAM

There's only one place they would
be: the old mill.

VLADIMIR

My friends, do you want to free
yourselves from this menace?

Muttering and nodding of heads all around.

ABRAHAM

He's going to take Beth away from
us! Do you want that?

Shouts of "No!" come out variously.

VLADIMIR

Follow me then! I will rid your
town of this pestilence forever!

More cheers from the crowd. Vladimir and Abraham lead the
torch-bearing mob out of the town.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

David and Beth sit next to each other, fully dressed. Their
mouths are locked in a long kiss. Finally, they separate.
Satisfaction reigns on both of their faces.

BETH

I love you.

DAVID

I love you.

BETH

I should get back.

DAVID

I know.

David stands up and holds his hand out to Beth. As Beth takes
his hand, she hyperventilates. She releases his grasp. David
kneels to her.

BETH

What's ... happening...

She collapses to the ground.

DAVID

Beth? Beth!

Suddenly, a hand snatches David from the ground and slams him
against the wall.

ZECHARIAH

What the hell do you think you're doing?

David looks at Zechariah, speechless.

ZECHARIAH

Answer me! What did you do to her?

DAVID

We ... uh ... sort of ... consummated...

Beth arches her back and screams. She passes out, unconscious on the floor.

DAVID

What's happening to her?

Zechariah throws David across the room, cracking the wall where he hits and crashing to the ground. Zechariah re-approaches him.

ZECHARIAH

What do you think is happening to her? The serum to turn one into a Fempiror is in your bloodstream. Sexual relations would also give her the serum. It worked slower, but is still effective.

David stumbles to his feet.

DAVID

Forgive me ... I didn't mean to...

ZECHARIAH

If you didn't mean to, you would have done as I asked, and not come back!

Zechariah tosses David across the Mill again. David crashes on the floor next to Beth.

ZECHARIAH

Give me one good reason not to kill you.

David backs up against the wall. Zechariah gets in his face. David cringes.

ZECHARIAH

Well?

DAVID

Forgive me. I didn't know.

ZECHARIAH

If you are to survive, you must follow our rules. You are but a child to us, and it will be a long time before you will be a man.

David looks to Zechariah. Zechariah's face does not soften.

ZECHARIAH

Get ready.

Zechariah turns away.

ZECHARIAH

It looks like we have another passenger.

DAVID

What?

ZECHARIAH

If it was your wish to have her come, then you have it. She cannot stay here.

DAVID

But ... why not?

Zechariah sighs with irritation.

ZECHARIAH

You will study the Rastem Code and learn it like your Bible. You have cursed her, so we have no choice. It's part of the Code.

DAVID

(quietly)
She'll hate me.

Zechariah turns to him, grim.

ZECHARIAH

Undoubtedly.

The sound of a large crowd permeates the silence. Zechariah runs to the door. He opens it just a little and looks out.

EXT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

The entire village approaches the mill with torches. In the lead are Abraham and Vladimir.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Zechariah closes the door.

ZECHARIAH
We have a problem.

David has Beth propped up against him on the floor, putting her dress together.

DAVID
What is it?

ZECHARIAH
I think your loved ones have come to give you a going away present.

DAVID
What?

David lays Beth down and looks out.

EXT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

The crowd grows closer. David's eyes widen as he spots Abraham in the lead.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

David gasps.

DAVID
Abraham!

He starts to open the door and go out, but Zechariah stops him. He closes the door.

ZECHARIAH
Wait! Vladimir is there.

DAVID
I saw him.

ZECHARIAH

As did I, but why is he here? And why is he leading the town here?

Zechariah looks thoughtful, but disturbed.

ZECHARIAH

I assume that hole goes down to the cave where you parked the Chaser.

DAVID

How did you know that?

ZECHARIAH

I parked the Levi-Cart next to it and heard you up here.

David averts his eyes, blushing.

ZECHARIAH

Take Beth and escape that way. I will deal with Vladimir and the crowd.

DAVID

Are you coming?

ZECHARIAH

I'll take the Chaser. You and Beth just take the Levi-Cart and go.

DAVID

Very well.

David turns to get Beth. Zechariah starts for the door. David turns to Zechariah.

DAVID

Zechariah.

Zechariah looks at him.

DAVID

Thank you for everything.

Zechariah smiles.

ZECHARIAH

You have begun a long road, David. Follow it to the best of your ability, and you'll find this is not such a hard life. Good luck.

DAVID

You too.

Zechariah exits the Old Mill as David lifts Beth and jumps down the hole.

EXT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Zechariah exits the Old Mill and watches the crowd approach. Vladimir rouses them.

VLADIMIR

There he is! The murderer who has been plaguing your city. He took David from you!

The crowd shouts in blood lust.

TOWNSPERSON 1

Give us back Beth!

VLADIMIR

(low; to Abraham)

Is there any other way out of that Mill?

ABRAHAM

There is a hole in the floor which leads to a cave underneath.

VLADIMIR

Go there. The imposter may try to escape that way.

Abraham nods and runs off. Vladimir rouses the crowd again.

VLADIMIR

He has killed before and will kill again! You know what he is! The walking undead! The spawn of Satan! A bloodthirsty criminal who has been left bereft of a soul by God!

Zechariah watches Vladimir, unimpressed. The crowd roars again in their lust for retribution. Zechariah steps forward. The crowd stops and gasps.

ZECHARIAH

Tell me, old friend, when did the

Tepish buy your loyalty?

VLADIMIR

Evil dead! I am a Master Vampire
Hunter who will have your head.

ZECHARIAH

Really? And these have fallen for
this charade?

Vladimir approaches Zechariah. The crowd cringes, afraid of
their new friend being hurt by the "vampire."

VLADIMIR

Fear not! I will slay this villain!
(low; to Zechariah)
Of course. They have two deaths
with no closure. They will believe
anyone.

ZECHARIAH

Why are you doing this?

VLADIMIR

Because you are trouble. And the
council wants your head.

ZECHARIAH

The council is afraid of the truth.

VLADIMIR

No, my friend. The council IS the
truth.

Zechariah's face drops.

VLADIMIR

Yes, you figured it out. Your
warnings came too late. Twenty-five
years ago, when you found the
massing of the meager Tepish army,
most of the council had already
changed their allegiance. You were
ousted because they knew you would
not follow the Tepish way. The
council did not want your words,
because it was they who have been
ordering the transmutations.
Council Head Karian IS the Elrod
Malnak.

Zechariah's mouth drops open in shock.

ZECHARIAH

Then it is over. The Fempiror way
of life is dead.

VLADIMIR

Only the Rastem way, dear friend.
The Tepish way - the way of truth -
is the new way.

ZECHARIAH

The Tepish way is vengeance. That's
no way to live a life.

VLADIMIR

It makes no difference. The Council
of Erim is ours. The only task that
remains is to stamp out the only
opposition that poses any threat:
the Rastem. You're first.

Zechariah draws his sword. The crowd gasps.

ZECHARIAH

If I die; may I be your easiest
battle. Let the Rastem live
forever, and may your threat always
remain.

Vladimir draws his sword.

VLADIMIR

If you die, your order will fall.

ZECHARIAH

Never!

The two clash in a fierce sword battle. The crowd with their
torches stands well back from the combatants. Looks of
confusion pass between them.

Zechariah's style remains swift and direct while Vladimir's
is more cocky, occasionally twirling his sword around his
fingers.

Zechariah looks to the Old Mill behind Vladimir. He springs
himself over Vladimir's head, parrying blows as he flies. He
lands never missing a beat and backs to the door.

With a swift kick to Vladimir, Zechariah jumps in the doorway
and closes the door.

Vladimir springs to his feet, and kicks the door in.

INT. CAVE UNDER MILL - NIGHT

David stands on the floor of the cave. He looks off to one side and sees the Levi-Cart next to the Chaser. He carries Beth to the Cart and puts her in the passenger side.

He spots the sword between the seats. He picks it up and looks at it for a moment. As if accepting his fate, he straps the sword to his back and draws it, holding it before him.

Abraham appears at the entrance.

ABRAHAM

What are you doing?

David looks up. Sadness falls across his face, as if knowing what is going to happen. He re-sheathes the sword.

ABRAHAM

You think you own her? You think you can just show back up after being dead, and take what you want?

DAVID

Abraham, it's not like that.

ABRAHAM

Then what is it?

DAVID

She has to come with me.

ABRAHAM

Why? What did you do to her?

DAVID

It was an accident. She got changed into a Fempiror like me.

Abraham is speechless for a moment. His eyes bulge as anger wells up inside of him.

DAVID

I didn't mean for it to happen. We just... I really messed up.

David looks at Beth, still unconscious. Abraham's hands ball into a tight fist. David looks back up just as Abraham nails him ... hard ... in the face. David flies off his feet and hits the floor.

ABRAHAM

(in tears)

You bastard! How could you do this
to her?! She did nothing but love
you...

(screams)

...and you ruin her life!

Abraham collapses to the ground, crying. David rises and
walks to him. Abraham jumps to his feet and pushes David
away.

ABRAHAM

Get away from me!

Abraham stumbles back.

ABRAHAM

Don't touch me...

DAVID

Forgive me.

ABRAHAM

Don't talk to me.

David walks to the Levi-Cart and looks back to Abraham, who
stands in the way of the exit, his head bowed. He is shadowed
in the moonlight, so only his silhouette shows.

DAVID

Abraham, stand aside.

Abraham doesn't respond.

DAVID

Abraham, stand aside.

ABRAHAM

No.

David steps toward him.

DAVID

We need to go.

ABRAHAM

I have decided you do not need to
go. You don't need to go anywhere.

Abraham looks up, his eyes filled with blind anger and tears.

ABRAHAM
You need to die.

David takes a step back, surprised.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Zechariah and Vladimir remain engaged in their battle within the Mill. They fight fiercely. None of the people enter after them.

EXT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

The crowd grows restless.

TOWNSPERSON 1
Did you see how they fought?

TOWNSPERSON 2
It looked like they knew each other.

TOWNSPERSON 3
Maybe they've met before.

TOWNSPERSON 2
Hey! How do we know this Hunter isn't one of them?

TOWNSPERSON 1
But he was helping us.

TOWNSPERSON 3
I don't trust him!

Murmurs of agreement pass through the crowd.

TOWNSPERSON 3
I say we burn the mill down!

Chanting of "Burn it down!" ensues. They throw torches on the Mill and it is quickly engulfed in flames.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Zechariah and Vladimir halt the battle for a moment to notice the fire.

ZECHARIAH

It looks like your friends
abandoned you. Ironic, really.

Vladimir thrusts with his sword. Zechariah blocks him. The battle continues.

CRACK! Debris falls. Zechariah sidesteps it. Vladimir takes the advantage and runs Zechariah through.

Vladimir holds his sword inside Zechariah, who is not yet dead. He looks into Zechariah's face.

VLADIMIR

The Tepish will rule forever!

Zechariah spits in his face. Vladimir twists his sword. Bones crack. Zechariah jerks, his eyes opening wide. Vladimir withdraws his blade. Zechariah slumps to the ground.

INT. CAVE UNDER OLD MILL - NIGHT

David backs up to the Levi-Cart. Abraham rushes him, arm back to strike. David sidesteps Abraham, pushing him to the ground.

He jumps into the Levi-Cart and punches it. Abraham recovers and grabs onto the back of the Cart as it blasts out of the cave.

INT. OLD MILL - NIGHT

Vladimir walks over to the hole in the floor and jumps through it as the Old Mill collapses above him.

INT. CAVE BELOW OLD MILL - NIGHT

He lands in the cave. Burning ash and debris flutter down around him, but he pays it no mind. He sees the Levi-Cart riding away with Abraham hanging on the back.

Vladimir smiles and walks to the Chaser. He powers it up and takes off after the Levi-Cart.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - NIGHT

Abraham climbs his way onto the back of the Cart. David spots him.

ABRAHAM

I can't allow you to poison the world.

DAVID

She was an accident.

ABRAHAM

No more accidents, then!

They struggle for a brief moment, but David overpowers Abraham. He holds him on the brink of the Cart.

DAVID

Forgive me, old friend.

ABRAHAM

I am not your friend. I will hunt you till the day I die.

DAVID

I know. Take care.

David tosses Abraham off the cart. Abraham crashes to the ground, rolling several times before coming to a stop, face down in the grass.

David and Beth bolt off into the distance.

Abraham slowly rises to his feet. He shouts after David.

ABRAHAM

Damn you! I will follow you to the ends of the earth! You will never escape me!

Abraham drops to his knees, in tears of frustration.

ABRAHAM

Damn you...Beth, how could he do this to you...?

A soft hum grows from behind him and then ceases. Footfalls approach. Abraham whips around to find Vladimir standing behind him. He gasps and backs away. Vladimir walks toward him.

ABRAHAM

What do you want?

VLADIMIR

Idle words, my friend. You cannot follow him.

ABRAHAM
Leave me alone.

VLADIMIR
But you'll never be able to compete
with him as you are.

Vladimir pulls a nilrof from his belt. He stabs his arms and
withdraws some blood behind his back.

ABRAHAM
Why?

VLADIMIR
He is stronger, faster, and will
live ten times longer. You need my
help.

ABRAHAM
I'll be fine.

Abraham stands and walks away.

VLADIMIR
I insist.

Vladimir stabs the nilrof into Abraham's neck and empties it.
Abraham falls to his knees, convulsing.

Abraham screams piercing the night calm.

THE END

Pronunciation of the Felletterusk Language

Felletterusk was the common language of the Fempiror. Use this guide to assist in pronouncing the language as it appears in the screenplay.

A = father
 B = baby
 C = cat, but never sit
 D = dog
 E = felt, unless at the end of a word, then = the ay in may
 F = felt
 G = grand
 H = hi
 I = police
 J = Jacques like the French j (zh sound)
 K = kit
 L = land
 M = maybe
 N = never
 O = hope
 P = person
 R = a cross between r & d, such as the British pronunciation of very (veddy), or the Spanish pronunciation of r in cara (face). It has a very slight trill to it.
 S = simple
 T = type
 U = boo
 V = visual
 W = window
 Y = yankee
 Z = zebra

Ä = date

Ö = person, but with the lips brought in to a sort of oo shape.

Ü = like u, but with the lips tightened considerably.

Unless otherwise indicated, words are accented on the second syllable. Accent usually only differs with the placement of the accent mark (á, é, í, ó, ú) placed on a separate syllable.

Diphthongs

sh = sh as ship
 ch = k as in kit

gh = g as in goat
 tch = ch as in church