

CHAINMAIL

aka

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS:
THE HAND OF CHAOS

Screenplay by
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FIRST DRAFT
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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK FOREST - DAY

CLOSE on a BATTERED SHIELD. Rain pours down on it as CREDITS BEGIN. It's a "heater" shield with a pointed bottom -- and the sharp-eyed viewer may recognize its silhouette as being the same as the Warner Bros. shield.

The shield is worn on the back of a TALL WARRIOR who hacks his way through dense foliage with a large sword. He's so big that he's practically bursting out of the plate mail armor he's wearing. On closer inspection, we realize that he's not entirely human. His heavy brow and fanged underbite are the telltale signs of a HALF-ORC.

A miserable band of adventurers follows the Half-Orc Warrior. There are THREE HUMAN FIGHTERS with spears and swords, BICKETY, a scar-faced human swordsman, ZANRIL, a bald-headed man in the black robes of a warlock...

... and OTIVAN TRICKFOOT, a four-and-a-half-foot-tall gnome cutpurse. His fingers are bejewelled with rings.

Last in line is a MAN with the hood of an oiled cloak pulled up against the rain, clad in leather armor, sword on his hip. He hears something behind them and turns, giving us our first look at our hero: RAVEN HIGHTOWER (30s), a dark-eyed rogue, long-haired and bearded.

He sees nothing but the driving rain. He gives the empty trail a long, unreadable look, then continues on...

EXT. CHASM - DAY

The Half-Orc (whose name is SKEEZER) emerges from the forest and stops at the edge of an impossibly high cliff. The others gather around him and look down. The chasm is a maw of jagged rocks, its bottom obscured by dense fog.

TRICKFOOT

There.

He points to a precarious ROPE BRIDGE spanning the abyss. Bickety and Skeezer exchange apprehensive looks.

EXT. ROPE BRIDGE - DAY

The adventurers watch anxiously as Skeezer slowly makes his way across the bridge. The big guy looks nervous.

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One by one, the others follow. First the Fighters, then Trickfoot. Hightower is next, but he hesitates.

BICKETY

Afraid of heights?

HIGHTOWER

I can read "keep out" in a lot of different languages.

He nods toward one of the wooden posts that the bridge is anchored to. It's adorned with tribal markings. Several SKULLS dangle from it. Not all of them are human.

HIGHTOWER

That's one of them.

EXT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - DAY

Rain pours down as the adventurers reach the site of an ANCIENT STONE RUIN. Only cracked steps and shattered pillars remain. Trees have grown up through it. The adventurers spread out with their weapons drawn, searching, but they find nothing. This is a dead place.

HIGHTOWER

Looks like we're a few hundred years too late.

Bickety and Skeezer turn on Trickfoot, angry.

BICKETY

We came all this way for nothing?

ZANRIL (O.S.)

Wait!

They turn to find Zanril, his hands spread before him, murmuring MAGIC WORDS. The pupils of his eyes begin to GLOW with a STRANGE, PURPLE LUMINESCENCE. As the others watch, he searches the ruins with his glowing eyes, then goes to his knees and begins feeling around in the mud...

... until he finds the edges of a STONE SLAB hidden beneath the muddy earth. He looks up, the light in his eyes gone and a greedy smile on his face.

Bickety, Skeezer, and the Fighters hurry over and start clearing the mud with their hands, scooping it away with daggers. They uncover a large rectangular slab, six feet long. Trickfoot can barely contain his excitement.

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BICKETY

Let's get some spikes under it.

The Fighters produce several IRON SPIKES and begin driving them into the edges of the slab, pounding on them with rocks. Slowly, but surely, the slab begins to rise. An opening appears. Mud pours in through it.

Skeever thrusts a thick tree branch under the slab and pushes with all his might. The others watch excitedly as the slab slowly begins to move...

That's when Hightower notices a STRANGE FIGURE clutching a crude spear, watching them from the jungle. It is man-sized, but even in silhouette, it is clearly not a man. It has a face like a hyena's and is covered in bristly fur and tribal ornaments. It is a GNOLL.

HIGHTOWER

We offend their gods or something?

The adventurers look around, realizing that they are surrounded by Gnolls. One by one, the hyena-like warriors emerge from the trees, encircling the party.

ZANRIL

The gnolls have no gods. And they take no prisoners.

Hightower draws two REPEATING HAND CROSSBOWS.

HIGHTOWER

Good. Neither do we.

Suddenly, the Gnolls attack. They leap at the adventurers, wielding tribal swords. Trickfoot panics. He grabs an amulet around his neck and VANISHES into thin air, leaving the others to fend for themselves.

Bickety sees this and curses, but then the Gnolls are on them. Skeezer drops the slab and raises his shield just in time to block a thrown spear. Hightower fires his repeating hand crossbows, dropping two Gnolls.

Zanril gestures, speaks magic words, and throws GLOBS OF STICKY WEBBING at one of the Gnolls, entangling it. Fighter #1 rushes in with a spear and runs it through.

Another Gnoll Swordsman leaps at Hightower, who drops his empty crossbows and draws a MAGIC FLAMESWORD. Its blade glows orange-hot, smoldering like it just came out of the forge. He blocks the Gnoll's blow --

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-- but then ANOTHER ATTACKS. Hightower is more than swordsman enough to fight both, but then a THIRD GNOLL pounces from behind, knocking him to the ground and the flamesword from his hand. The Gnoll raises its sword --

-- suddenly, its head flies off. Hightower startles. The decapitated Gnoll body slumps to the ground...

... revealing an even more terrifying creature standing behind it. It is reptilian, with dry, blood-red scales, more like a dragon than lizard. It is easily seven feet tall, with a long, swishing tail. It wears armor like a man and wields a huge bastard sword. It is a DRAGONBORN.

The Dragonborn cuts down another Gnoll. The remaining Gnolls surround it, but before they can attack --

-- the Dragonborn breathes fire at them, sweeping the area like a flamethrower. One of the Gnolls catches fire and Bickety skewers it on his sword. The rest flee.

The Dragonborn turns to Hightower. It looms over him... then offers his massive hand and helps Hightower to his feet. His name is HACK KARROWAY.

HIGHTOWER

What were you waiting for? A royal invitation?

KARROWAY

You're the one who told me to hang back and watch for trouble.

HIGHTOWER

Well, next time hang back closer.

KARROWAY

(grumbling)

You're welcome.

As Hightower picks up his dropped crossbows, he hears MOVEMENT nearby. Hightower turns toward it, scowling.

HIGHTOWER

They're gone. You can come out now, you little shit.

Trickfoot sheepishly reappears. He avoided the fight by turning *invisible*. The others glower at him angrily.

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - ACCESS ROOM - DAY

Trickfoot's punishment: he has to go in first. Skeezer lowers him on a rope through an opening fifty feet in the air. The others watch from above. The rain still falls.

Trickfoot nervously shines a torch around. It is a vast empty stone chamber. At the bottom, he discovers that the floor is flooded with a foot of scummy water.

He draws a dagger, alert for danger, but hears only ECHOES and DRIPPING WATER. He nervously looks up at the others and signals to them with the torch. Come on down.

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - CORRIDOR - DAY

The adventurers slog through the flooded temple. They light their way with torches and lanterns. The halls are wide, the ceiling high enough for a giant.

They come to a T-intersection. Bickety peers down both branches. There is only darkness beyond his torchlight.

BICKETY

All right, gnome. Time to show us this map of yours.

TRICKFOOT

The map's in my head. Just in case you get any clever ideas.
(under his breath)
Unlikely as that may be.

Bickety overhears and gives him a hard whack to the back of the head that knocks the gnome's helmet askew.

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - ATRIUM - DAY

A heavy door is forced open, revealing Karroway pushing from the other side. As Fighter #1 pounds spikes under the door, the others enter and cast their torches around. The pillared hall is flooded like the rest of the temple, but the ceiling is lower. Hightower doesn't like it.

HIGHTOWER

The ceiling's lower in here. The architecture's inconsistent...

BICKETY

So what? You with the Stonemason's Guild or something?

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Skeever laughs -- then takes a step and ABRUPTLY DROPS OUT OF SIGHT, vanishing under the surface of the water.

Hightower instantly pulls off his cloak and belt, getting ready to go in after him.

KARROWAY

What are you doing??

HIGHTOWER

He owes me money.

Then he dives into the water --

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - ATRIUM - UNDERWATER - DAY

-- and discovers that what they thought was the floor of the room was actually a balcony on the second floor of a much larger room that is completely filled with water.

Hightower spots Skeever, but the half-orc's heavy armor is pulling him straight to the bottom. He's frantically stripping it off as Hightower swims after him...

... when suddenly, a HUGE MOTTLED WORM, eight feet in diameter with a mouth like a fanged sphincter, slithers out from an underwater corridor. It swallows Skeever up to the waist. Skeever lets out a gurgling scream and stabs at the worm with his sword, but it has no effect.

Hightower can only watch helplessly as the blind beast drags Skeever back to its lair.

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - ATRIUM - DAY

Hightower emerges from the water and Karroway helps him out. The others stand by with anxious, expectant looks.

HIGHTOWER

Something got him.

Shocked looks all around. Bickety glares at Trickfoot. He grabs him by the collar and slams him against a wall.

BICKETY

You let him walk right off a ledge!!

TRICKFOOT

It wasn't like this on the map! I didn't know!

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Bickety snarls at him, but Hightower intervenes.

HIGHTOWER

The balcony we're on goes all the way around the room. We should keep moving.

Bickety reluctantly drops the gnome, still fuming. He takes a spear from Fighter #1 and leads the way, tapping the spear against the floor as he goes. Hightower eyes Trickfoot, suspicious...

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - SANCTUARY - DAY

Bickety leads the adventurers down a long, dark corridor that opens into a huge, vaulted chamber. The adventurers gape in awe at what they find...

Dominating the room is a GIGANTIC STONE IDOL of a HORNED DEMON seated cross-legged with a sacrificial bowl in its hands, flanked by braziers. At least five stories tall, its mouth wide and leering, filled with sharp teeth.

High above, the ceiling is cracked open. Rainwater pours in, trickling over the face of the idol. Hightower approaches, setting his torch to one of the braziers...

... revealing that the demon's eyes are ENORMOUS CUT RED GEMS, each one the size of a basketball. Trickfoot is practically salivating. Hightower's eyes light.

HIGHTOWER

Hello, beautiful...

Hightower shrugs off his excess gear. Karroway takes a pry bar from his backpack and hands it to Hightower.

ZANRIL

Be mindful. The right eye is cursed. You dare not touch it.

HIGHTOWER

His right or my right?

Zanril hesitates. Not sure. Hightower tucks the pry bar into his belt and begins free climbing the rain-slicked idol. The others watch as he makes his way higher and higher, carefully feeling for hand and foot holds.

He reaches the demon's shoulders, four stories up. The eyes are almost within his grasp...

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Suddenly, he SLIPS. At the last second, he grabs one of the demon's huge fangs. He takes a beat to catch his breath and his balance, then hoists himself up.

Finally, he reaches the top. The shining red gem seems even bigger and more beautiful up close. Hightower takes a moment to admire it, reaches out to touch it...

... then freezes. He glances at the other eye, still not sure which one is cursed. Well, one way to find out...

He touches the gem. Nothing happens. He smiles. Taking the pry bar from his belt, Hightower begins wresting the gem from its socket. The mortar around it loosens...

... and THEN IT IS FREE. Hightower gazes into it, then opens the pouch on his belt and slips the gem inside.

His descent is easy. He ties a rope around the idol's neck and rappels back to down. But when he gets there...

... he finds himself facing the pointy ends of two spears. One of the Fighters has a sword to Karroway's throat. The others surround Hightower, weapons drawn, except for Trickfoot, who cowers behind a pillar.

TRICKFOOT

I'm not with them! I swear!

Hightower raises his hands in surrender. The others close in around him. What none of them notice...

... is that the idol's dark, empty eye socket (where the red gem once resided) is slowly starting to glow.

While the Fighters keep their spears pressed to Hightower's throat, Bickety takes his pouch. A surreptitious look passes between Hightower and Karroway.

Bickety can tell that the weight of the bag is wrong even before he opens it. It's empty. Hightower grins.

BICKETY

Where is it?

ZANRIL

Kill him!

Bickety steps toward Hightower, scowling, but suddenly -- Hightower head-butts him, smashing his nose. The Fighters are caught off-guard. Hightower grabs one of their spears, uses it to clobber the other. At the same time, Karroway whirls and punches Fighter #3 in the face.

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Zanril raises his hands to cast a spell, but his magic words are abruptly choked off by Karroway's fist around his throat. Karroway hurls the warlock across the room, then draws his sword and fights alongside Hightower.

Just then... a LOW RUMBLING fills the room. Hightower glances up to see that the demon idol's eye socket is now filled with a MALEVOLENT GLOW. The RUMBLING grows louder and the combatants freeze, their fight forgotten...

... as the demon idol comes to life before their eyes.

Trickfoot instantly turns and runs away. Hightower and Karroway see him go. They exchange a look, then turn and hightail it out of the room after him, as...

... the huge idol begins to stand. The massive sacrificial bowl slides out of its hands and SHATTERS on the floor. Fighter #2 is CRUSHED beneath it.

Bickety backs away, but the idol grabs him in its great stone hand and SQUEEZES, juicing him like an orange. Zanril stands before it, defiant, hands raised.

ZANRIL

Demon, I fear thee not!!

He utters magic words and hurls a FIREBALL, but the idol lowers its hand and SQUASHES Zanril beneath it.

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - CORRIDOR - DAY

Hightower and Karroway catch up with Trickfoot as they race for the exit. A ROAR causes the ground to tremble and the wall behind them EXPLODES. The idol smashes through it, smoke streaming from its glowing eye socket.

Trickfoot slips and falls, but Karroway throws him over his shoulder like a sack of flour without pausing. The lumbering idol is slow, but it is quickly catching up...

INT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - ACCESS ROOM - DAY

They reach the chamber where they entered and start climbing the rope, but the idol is right behind them.

TRICKFOOT

Hold on!

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Trickfoot points up, twists a ring on his finger -- and suddenly they're yanked straight up, like the rope is being rapidly wound onto a winch. The demon reaches out for them, its great stone hand passing through empty air.

EXT. TEMPLE OF ORCUS - DAY

Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot are flung up through the opening by the retracting rope. It ZIPS out of their hands and magically coils itself into a neat pile. A BELLOW of frustrated rage echoes from the temple below.

Hightower catches his breath, then turns to Karroway.

HIGHTOWER

You have it?

Karroway grins and from his pouch... he pulls out the red gem. Trickfoot gives Hightower an astonished look.

HIGHTOWER

Our bags are magically linked.
Anything I put in mine shows up in his.

TRICKFOOT

You knew they were plotting something!

KARROWAY

They usually are.

Just then... the ground begins to TREMBLE. A stone pillar TOPPLES OVER and they have to dive out of the way.

Hightower and Karroway scramble to their feet. Karroway throws Trickfoot back over his shoulder and races into the forest with Hightower hot on his heels.

Suddenly, the demon idol's fist erupts from the hillside. It's punched through to the surface and is climbing out after them. They sprint off through the forest, the idol lumbering after them, knocking down trees as it goes.

EXT. ROPE BRIDGE - DAY

Hightower and Karroway race out of the forest and find themselves back at the chasm. The rope bridge CREAKS in the wind, but the demon idol is right behind them.

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HIGHTOWER

Go!

Karroway hurries onto the bridge with Trickfoot on his shoulder. Hightower quickly follows. Then, just as the idol bursts from the trees, Hightower draws his sword --

HIGHTOWER

Hold on!!

-- and cuts the rope bridge.

In EXTREME SLO-MO, Hightower and Karroway swing across the chasm on the severed bridge, Trickfoot shrieking, the idol leaping out after them. It looks like it's going to land right on top of them, but then falls just short. The idol reaches out as it plummets by --

-- and the tip of one giant clawed finger knocks Trickfoot right off of Karroway's shoulder. The gnome grabs hold of Karroway's pouch, but the pouch slides off Karroway's arm and Trickfoot goes flying off into space --

-- but at the last second, Hightower grabs the pouch's strap, stopping the gnome's fall. They watch as the idol plunges into the abyss and is swallowed by the mists.

The rope bridge SLAMS Hightower and Karroway into the cliff face on the opposite side of the chasm. Everyone holds on... but the red gem is dislodged from the pouch.

Hightower gives it an anguished look. He can only watch as the gem slowly slips out of the pouch and falls...

... right into Trickfoot's hand. Hightower breathes a sigh of relief. They share a laugh. They did it!

Then the pouch strap starts to loosen. The gnome's weight is slowly pulling it free from its buckle. Trickfoot looks up at Hightower, frantic...

... then the buckle gives way and Trickfoot falls into the chasm, clutching the gem. A moment later, only the swirling mists and the gnome's ECHOING SCREAMS remain.

EXT. DARK FOREST - DAY

Hightower and Karroway trudge back through the dense foliage. It's raining harder now. Hightower grimaces.

HIGHTOWER

It's not fair.

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KARROWAY

It could be worse.

HIGHTOWER

How so?

Karroway pauses to take an exaggerated deep breath.

KARROWAY

See? We're alive. That makes us the lucky ones, remember?

HIGHTOWER

Your positive attitude sickens me.

KARROWAY

Fine. Be miserable.

They trudge on through the ankle-deep sludge.

INT. DARK FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

Hightower and Karroway emerge from the trees and stop short. They were expecting to find something here...

HIGHTOWER

Where are the horses?

They find the horse leads still tied to the trees, but they've been CUT. The muddy ground is covered with distinctive DOG-LIKE FOOTPRINTS. Karroway scowls.

KARROWAY

Gnolls.

HIGHTOWER

Then they're horse stew by now.

Karroway tosses the severed rope aside in angry disgust. Hightower gives a disapproving tisk-tisk, then takes an exaggerated deep breath.

HIGHTOWER

We're the lucky ones, remember?

He walks off. Karroway gives him a dirty look.

EXT. GREYHAWK - DAWN

The rising sun casts rays of morning light on a GREAT WALLED CITY. A wide river borders it on the west, hills and rugged peaks to the north. A TITLE comes up:

*FREE CITY OF GREYHAWK
GEM OF THE FLANAESS*

EXT. GREYHAWK - DRUID'S GATE - DAWN

The Artisan's Quarter is already bustling with activity. A BLACKSMITH hammers a sword on an anvil. A BAKER pulls fresh bread from an oven. A FARMER drives a CART OF MANURE through the city gate and as it passes...

... Hightower and Karroway hop out of the back. Hightower brushes himself off, trying to maintain a semblance of dignity. Passersby give them a wide berth.

INT. SHADY DRAGON INN - BATHING ROOM - DAY

Hightower and Karroway are bathing in two large wooden tubs. Hightower wears a leather money pouch around his neck. GWYNNE (20), a pretty serving wench, pours hot water from a kettle into the tubs, wrinkling her nose.

GWYNNE

You two are the worst-smelling people in Greyhawk. And that's saying something.

HIGHTOWER

We strive for greatness in everything we do, my lady.

As she pours water into Hightower's tub, she whispers:

GWYNNE

What happened to your old partner?
You know, the handsome one?

HIGHTOWER

That's him.
(off her look)
A very angry wizard turned my formerly handsome partner into that ferocious Dragonborn.

Gwynne gives him a disbelieving look. Sure, whatever. But Karroway has overheard and grumbles:

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KARROWAY

No thanks to you.

HIGHTOWER

You're the one who stepped on the pressure plate, my scaly friend.

KARROWAY

You're the one who insisted on going in without a spellcaster.

HIGHTOWER

If you'd been able to run faster, we wouldn't have needed one.

As she listens to them bicker, realization slowly dawns. She turns to Karroway, agape. He shifts, uncomfortable.

GWYNNE

By the gods... it's really you.

She gives him a pitying look and strokes his snout.

GWYNNE

Oh, poor dear... I'm going to miss that gorgeous face of yours.

KARROWAY

It's not all bad...

Karroway takes her hand, pulls her close, and gives her his best come-hither look. Not easy for a Dragonborn.

KARROWAY

Have you ever been with a man with a forked tongue?

HIGHTOWER

Careful, Gwynne. His tongue's not the only thing that's forked.

Karroway shoots him a look. Hightower takes Gwynne's hand and pulls her to him instead.

HIGHTOWER

On the other hand, if you're in the mood for something a bit more conventional...

She smiles, flirtatious, and leans in as if for a kiss...

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GWYNNE

I don't suppose you can pay for
any of this, can you?

HIGHTOWER

Tell Sam to put it on our tab.

Instead, she grabs the money purse from around his neck.

GWYNNE

Sorry, love. Sam says no more
tabs for either of you.

She takes a FEW COPPER COINS from his purse, then tosses
the purse back to him. Hightower gives a dismayed look.

HIGHTOWER

That's everything we have!

Gwynne eyes him dubiously, then picks up his boot and
upends it. A SILVER COIN falls into her hand.

GWYNNE

And it's still not enough. Don't
come back until you can pay what
you owe.

She pockets their money and SLAMS the door.

EXT. GREYHAWK - RIVER DISTRICT - STREET - NIGHT

Hightower and Karroway make their way along a row of
taverns bustling with Greyhawk's BOISTEROUS NIGHTLIFE.

KARROWAY

Next time I'm about to save your
life, remind me not to.

Hightower eyes the DRUNKEN PASSERSBY and spots a WELL-
DRESSED MERCHANT. Hightower holds out a hat.

HIGHTOWER

Spare a copper for an unfortunate
traveller?

MERCHANT

Piss off.

The Merchant rudely brushes by him... and as he does,
Hightower deftly picks his pocket. Hightower and
Karroway continue on, completely nonchalant.

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KARROWAY

It's bad enough living with this curse. I don't need you fouling my chances with every woman we meet.

HIGHTOWER

You need to stop blaming me for your own shortcomings. Maybe you'd have better luck with your own kind.

They pass a DRAGONBORN WOMAN standing outside a tavern. She basically looks like Karroway with boobs. She gives him a flirtatious wink. Karroway shudders.

KARROWAY

No thanks.

Hightower spots another RICH MARK. He holds out his hat.

HIGHTOWER

Spare a copper for an unfortun --

The Rich Mark spits in Hightower's hat. Hightower is so disgusted that he forgets to pick the man's pocket.

HIGHTOWER

Thank you. That's lovely.

(to Karroway)

How can you be thinking about women when we're this broke? Do you realize where we were this time last year?

KARROWAY

Caverns of Tsojcanth?

HIGHTOWER

That was the year before. Last year we'd just come back from White Plume Mountain. We lived like kings off that haul and six months later didn't have a brass bit to show for it.

KARROWAY

That was a good six months.

HIGHTOWER

I concur, but now look at us.

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KARROWAY

Our luck will change. It always does.

HIGHTOWER

And what if this time it doesn't?
The wheel doesn't turn forever.
What if this is where it stops?

KARROWAY

That's what you always say. We
can't keep going on like this.
One more big haul. Never again.

Then, simultaneously:

HIGHTOWER

I'm serious this time.

KARROWAY

I'm serious this time.

Karroway smiles. Hightower gives him a dirty look.

HIGHTOWER

Well, this time I am. At some
point we either get out or we get
killed. It's one or the other.

KARROWAY

So you think if you quit, you'll
live forever?

HIGHTOWER

I might. I'm looking into it.

KARROWAY

This life has never been about the
money. We've seen things most
people can't even dream of.
You're an adventurer by trade.
Why else would you keep doing it?

This strikes a nerve. Hightower bristles.

HIGHTOWER

There are only two kinds of people
in this world. Those who finish
rich and those who don't. I know
which one I'm going to be.

(off his look)

We need to start thinking big.
High risk, high reward. Then we
play it smart for once and quit
before our luck runs out.

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KARROWAY

If you say so.

Just then, Karroway spots a HUGE RAT scampering across the street. He instinctively picks it up and POPS IT INTO HIS MOUTH, CRUNCHING noisily. Hightower grimaces. Karroway gives a heavy sigh. Instant regret.

HIGHTOWER

That was disgusting.

KARROWAY

I disgust myself...

Hightower scans the crowd for another mark... and sees something that stops him short.

It's Trickfoot. The gnome is hurrying along a busy cross-street and doesn't see them. Karroway hasn't noticed.

KARROWAY

You sure the Caverns of Tsojcanth was the year before?

Hightower pulls him into the shadows, just as Trickfoot passes. Karroway sees him and gapes in astonishment.

KARROWAY

How?

Hightower peers out, watching as Trickfoot hurries away.

HIGHTOWER

Let's find out.

EXT. GREYHAWK - RIVER DISTRICT - ALLEY - NIGHT

Trickfoot hurries along, nervously glancing over his shoulder. He turns a corner and suddenly --

HIGHTOWER

Hello, Trickfoot.

Hightower blocks his way. Trickfoot stops short... then quickly grasps his amulet and becomes invisible. We see his FOOTSTEPS in the mud as he turns and runs down the empty alley. Hightower chases him.

Suddenly, Karroway drops from a rooftop, right in front of the running footsteps. We hear the COLLISION as Trickfoot runs right into him and then see a SPLASH in the mud as the gnome falls flat on his ass.

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Karroway reaches down, grabs a fistful of nothing, and holds it up. Trickfoot resignedly becomes visible again. Karroway is holding him by the scruff of his shirt.

KARROWAY

You don't seem very happy to see us.

TRICKFOOT

Quite the opposite! I've been searching the Flanaess for you! You can't imagine how pleased I am to have finally found you!

HIGHTOWER

(to Karroway)

Of course. I always turn invisible and run away when I find someone I'm looking for.

Karroway gives the gnome a vigorous shake.

KARROWAY

Where's the gem?

TRICKFOOT

Sadly, the gem slipped through my fingers as I fell...

Hightower reaches into Trickfoot's pouch and pulls out the gem.

TRICKFOOT

... but... at the last second I miraculously caught it! Such tremendous luck, don't you agree?

HIGHTOWER

Why aren't you a dark stain at the bottom of that canyon?

TRICKFOOT

My magic rings! Look!

He holds up a bejeweled hand, pointing to his rings.

TRICKFOOT

This one does the rope trick. This one is a ring of ventriloquism. And this one allows me to fall like a feather!

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Karroway eyes the gnome... and then drops him. Trickfoot does not fall, but gently floats down to the ground.

TRICKFOOT

See? I will gladly sell it to you
for a very reasonable --

Hightower gives Karroway a look, then they turn and walk away, taking the gem with them. Trickfoot hurries after.

TRICKFOOT

Wait -- where are you going? Now
that we've found each other, let
nothing separate us ever again!

Hightower angrily turns to face him.

HIGHTOWER

I've got a better idea. You
disappear again and we'll forget
that you just tried to run out
with our share of the haul.

TRICKFOOT

My good friend, you wound me!

Hightower's hand flashes and suddenly the gnome is
staring at the tip of a dagger. Hightower glares at him.

HIGHTOWER

Not yet I haven't.

A tense beat. Trickfoot eyes the dagger, then nervously
looks back at Hightower, his heart in his throat.

TRICKFOOT

The crystal is a fake!

Hightower stops short. They eye Trickfoot, suspicious.

KARROWAY

Then what do you want with it?

TRICKFOOT

It may be a fake gem... but it's a
real treasure map.

Hightower steps closer, intrigued.

HIGHTOWER

What do you know about it?

Trickfoot smiles. His teeth are yellow and crooked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TRICKFOOT

Everything.

INT. THE HANGED MAN INN - NIGHT

A seedy establishment. Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot sit in a dark booth, a half-eaten meal in front of them. Karroway hungrily wolfs it down. Trickfoot looks around to make sure nobody is eavesdropping, then:

TRICKFOOT

What do you lads know about the
Eye of Vecna?

HIGHTOWER

(groans)
Only what every child knows about
it. It's a myth.

Hightower starts to stand up, but Karroway doesn't budge.

KARROWAY

He's paying for dinner. Sit down
and shut up.

Hightower reluctantly sits back down. Trickfoot smiles.

TRICKFOOT

Vecna is no myth. He was a
powerful necromancer, maybe the
most powerful who has ever lived.
Scholars of prehistory say he
conquered all of Oerik and would
have conquered the world had he
not been betrayed by his trusted
lieutenant, Kas the Bloody-Handed.

HIGHTOWER

I'm familiar with the story. Kas
used a sword that Vecna himself
had forged, a sword so powerful
that Vecna's body was completely
obliterated by it, except for his
left hand and left eye.

TRICKFOOT

Both of which lived on and could
not be destroyed by any means,
magical or physical. And they
continue to live on to this day.

(CONTINUED)

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HIGHTOWER

Assuming one believes in such things.

TRICKFOOT

Oh, I believe in the Hand and the Eye with all my heart. I've spent my entire life searching for them.

KARROWAY

If they still existed, somebody would have found them by now.

TRICKFOOT

They have been found many times over the years, only to be lost again. Miro the Paladin-King was rumored to have used the power of the Hand when he marched into the Cold Marshes against the black dragon Kolloman, but that was nearly a thousand years ago and it hasn't been seen since.

Hightower realizes something. He leans in closer...

HIGHTOWER

The crystal we found was set in the eye of that statue...

(beat)

You said it was a treasure map. What makes you think it leads to the Eye of Vecna?

TRICKFOOT

The Eye was discovered two hundred years ago by priests of Saint Cuthbert. They believed it was an artifact of evil and built a secret vault to contain it. They sealed eight of their own high priests inside with it to protect the Eye for all time. But a spy for the Cult of Vecna discovered the location of the vault and hid the secret inside that crystal.

Karroway stops eating. Hightower puts a hand on the pouch containing the crystal. Trickfoot smiles greedily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRICKFOOT

Legend speaks of the Eye granting its bearer great power over entire nations. Kings have waged wars to find it. Can you imagine what one would be willing to pay for it?

As Hightower and Karroway consider this, a MAN IN A BLACK CLOAK stands from a nearby table. He pulls up his hood and quickly slips from the tavern, unnoticed....

KARROWAY

That crystal doesn't look much like a map to me.

TRICKFOOT

The crystal itself is just an illusion. It must be removed by a magic-user of some skill. And preferably a great deal of discretion. I was on my way to just such a spellcaster when... we were so fortuitously reunited.

HIGHTOWER

We'll use our own spellcaster, thank you very much.

Karroway gives him a questioning look. Hightower grins.

HIGHTOWER

Malanthius.

KARROWAY

(groans)
I can't stand that kid. Besides, we owe him money.

HIGHTOWER

Not anymore, we don't.

EXT. GREYHAWK - CLERKBURG STREET - NIGHT

A more reputable part of town, home to the city's universities and colleges. Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot are clearly out of place. Hightower leads them to a LARGE SHED behind a boarding house. As he KNOCKS...

... we see the Cloaked Man from the tavern lurking in the shadows, all but invisible. He's followed them.

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Just then, the door of the shed opens a crack and MALANTHIUS (20s) peers out. He's a skinny, long-haired youth with acne scars that he has unsuccessfully tried to hide with a thin beard. He scowls at Hightower.

MALANTHIUS

That Beholder egg you sold me was fake.

HIGHTOWER

I was doing you a favor. Do you have any idea how dangerous a baby Beholder is?

MALANTHIUS

If you don't have my money, I don't want to talk to you.

Hightower opens a sack and takes out a steaming, JELLY-FILLED PASTRY. Malanthius eyes it, his interest piqued. The sack is filled with tasty-looking CAKES and TREATS.

MALANTHIUS

Are those from Fruit of the Mill in the Artisan's Quarter?

HIGHTOWER

Where else?

Malanthius takes the sack with a smile and lets them in. As they enter, the Cloaked Man slips into the night...

INT. MALANTHIUS'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

Malanthius munches on a pastry and leads Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot into a makeshift wizard's laboratory. Benches and worktables are covered in BEAKERS and FLASKS, CRYSTALS, POWDERS, and DIRTY DISHES. Trickfoot gives a JARRED GOBLIN'S HEAD a dubious look...

... then he notices a GNARLED WOODEN STAFF. His eyes light and he picks it up. There's a RUNE carved on it.

TRICKFOOT

Is this a Staff of Teleportation?

MALANTHIUS

Among other things. Please don't touch what you don't understand.

Malanthius takes the staff and sets it aside. Trickfoot eyes it, covetous. Malanthius gives a distrustful look.

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MALANTHIUS

(to Hightower)

You got yourself some interesting
new friends. What happened to
that half-witted buffoon Garroway?

Karroway growls and looms over Malanthius, menacing.

KARROWAY

It's Karroway. And who are you
calling a half-wit?

Malanthius's eyes widen in dismay. He turns to
Hightower, who gives an affirming nod. Malanthius turns
back to Karroway, shock stamped on his face.

MALANTHIUS

What in the Nine Hells happened to
you?!

Karroway gives Hightower an irritated look.

KARROWAY

It's a long story.

As Malanthius rubs his chin and scrutinizes Karroway, his
shock turns into amusement. He stifles a laugh.

KARROWAY

And it's definitely not funny.

Malanthius chuckles anyway and turns to Hightower.

MALANTHIUS

I heard a story a while back that
you guys got caught trying to
steal Tenser's Codex without a
spellcaster. But you couldn't
really be that stupid, could you?

Karroway eyes Hightower, expectant. Hightower bristles.

HIGHTOWER

It's a long story.

Trickfoot surreptitiously reaches for the staff again,
but Malanthius sees him and ZAPS him with a little BOLT
OF ELECTRICITY. Trickfoot yelps and looks irritated.

INT. MALANTHIUS'S LABORATORY - NIGHT (TIMECUT)

Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot watch as Malanthius carefully scrutinizes the stolen crystal. He sprinkles sand on it, studies how the grains fall. Then:

MALANTHIUS

It's good. Very, very good. But it's definitely an illusion.

HIGHTOWER

(to Trickfoot)
How did you know?

TRICKFOOT

I've been studying the lore of Vecna for longer than the three of you have been alive. Combined.

MALANTHIUS

How long do dwarves live??

TRICKFOOT

(still irritated)
I'm not a dwarf, I'm a gnome. And I'll live a lot longer than you will.

HIGHTOWER

(to Malanthius)
The illusion. Can you dispel it?

MALANTHIUS

Does Bigby's Forceful Hand require the spellcaster to wear a leather glove?

The others give him blank looks. Malanthius sighs.

MALANTHIUS

Yes. But it'll be permanent. Once I reveal the crystal's true form, there's no going back.

Karroway takes Hightower aside to talk in private.

KARROWAY

We could still sell it. Skip town before anyone figures out it's a fake, and leave this Eye of Vecna crap for the gnome to chase after.

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HIGHTOWER

If we sell the gem, we're right
back here in six months. But if
the Eye exists and we find it...?

(off his look)

Even split four ways we'll be set
up for the rest of our lives.

KARROWAY

So we're taking the gnome on as a
full partner? We barely know him
and he's already betrayed us once.

HIGHTOWER

He's the expert. I'd rather take
him with us than leave him here
and find out we needed him.

Karroway hesitates, still reluctant. A beat.

KARROWAY

It's a children's story. Nobody
believes it exists. Not anymore.

HIGHTOWER

But what if it does?

Hightower's enthusiasm is infectious. Karroway sighs.

KARROWAY

I hope you know what you're doing.

HIGHTOWER

There's a first time for
everything.

EXT. GREYHAWK - CLERKBURG STREET - NIGHT

The Cloaked Man emerges from the shadows and strides
toward Malanthius' shed. He's brought friends, TWO MORE
MEN IN CLOAKS. We don't see any faces, but one of the
men is huge, head-and-shoulders taller and twice as wide.

The Cloaked Leader glances up. There's a CLOAKED MAN on
the rooftop to his left and ANOTHER on the rooftop to his
right. All converging on Malanthius' laboratory...

INT. MALANTHIUS'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

Malanthius places his hand on the crystal, closes his eyes in concentration, and mutters some magic words. As Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot watch...

... the crystal begins to turn, spinning faster and faster until it's barely more than a blur. A SIZZLING SOUND can be heard and the crystal begins to GLOW.

Hightower, Karroway, and Trickfoot nervously lean back as the crystal's light turns white-hot, nearly blinding. Suddenly, there's a CONCUSSIVE BLAST that ripples the air around the glowing sphere, the light begins to dim...

... and where the crystal once sat, there is now a GLEAMING IVORY SCROLL CASE, etched with arcane runes.

TRICKFOOT

It worked... By all the demons of the Abyss, it worked...

He's about to take the scroll... but Hightower stops him.

HIGHTOWER

I'll hold onto that.

Trickfoot gives an innocent look, but before he can protest, a noise like a WARBLING BELL interrupts him. Malanthius sighs, annoyed by the disruption.

MALANTHIUS

It's just my alarm spell.
Somebody's trying to break through the protections on the front door.
(muttering)
Probably those drunken idiots from Gnarlyhouse again...

As he turns to the door... Hightower notices a worried look on Trickfoot's face.

HIGHTOWER

Wait --!

Suddenly, the front door EXPLODES, torn apart by a FIREBALL. Hightower knocks Malanthius out of its path in the nick of time, toppling the workbench. Trickfoot watches in horror as the scroll case goes flying.

The fireball SCREAMS across the room, torching everything in its path. Instantly the room is burning.

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Then two Cloaked Men race through the shattered doorway, broadswords ready. Hightower rolls to his feet and picks off both Swordsmen with his repeating hand crossbows.

Karroway whips his bastard sword out of its sheath, unwittingly kicking the scroll case. Trickfoot dives to the floor, catching a glimpse of it as it rolls away.

Then a cloaked mage (BELDAK, 40s, aristocratic) rushes in, uttering arcane words and hurling a barrage of MAGIC MISSILES at Hightower, who barely dodges out of the way.

Karroway leaps at Beldak, but the mage waves his hand and casts an INVISIBLE SHIELD around himself. Karroway is repelled by it and slammed to the floor, dazed.

Beldak closes in, preparing another spell... when suddenly, a GIANT SPECTRAL HAND appears out of thin air and grabs Beldak. Beldak cries out in surprise.

CAMERA FINDS Malanthius, who has put on a leather glove and joined the fight, conjuring the spectral fist. He makes a throwing gesture, hurling Beldak to the floor.

The fire is spreading fast. Suddenly, a door behind Hightower is SMASHED opened by the Huge Cloaked Man we saw earlier. His face is hidden by an EXPRESSIONLESS WOODEN MASK. Around his neck, a talisman: a golden hand with an eye inside its palm. We will call him THE BEAST.

The Beast grabs Hightower and SLAMS him into a wall, then picks him up and throws him into a workbench, sending it tumbling over. The Beast crosses the room toward him...

... passing Trickfoot, who is chasing the scroll case as it rolls through the melee. He is reaching for it when the Beast unknowingly kicks it across the room.

Meanwhile, Malanthius and Beldak are engaged in a spectacular magic-user's duel. Beldak conjures a shimmering PHANTASMIC SWORD and raises it --

-- but Malanthius BLINKS out of existence just before it hits. An instant later, he reappears behind Beldak, along with four MIRROR IMAGE copies of himself. Beldak lashes out, destroying the images at random --

-- but then the real Malanthius seizes him with a SHOCKING GRASP, jolting him with electricity.

Meanwhile, Hightower is getting pummeled by the Beast. Karroway races to his rescue, swinging his sword. The Beast retreats as Karroway presses the attack.

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Just then, Hightower sees the scroll case lying on the floor right next to him. He starts for it --

-- but then realizes the Cloaked Leader is looming over him. Hightower looks up. The man lowers his hood...

... revealing PRINCE RAZER VANDREE. He's an elf, but not like any you've ever seen. His skin is jet black. His hair is smooth and silken, as white as his skin is black, flowing over his pointed ears to his shoulders. Strikingly handsome and utterly sinister.

Hightower freezes at the sight of him, a flash of recognition on his face. Razer smiles down at him.

RAZER

Hello, *lince'sa*.

Hightower snarls, his eyes filled with hate, and rolls out of the way as Razer slashes at him with his sword.

Meanwhile, Karroway swings his sword at the Beast, but the Beast grabs it, wrests it away, and tosses it aside. Karroway head-butts the Beast, but it has no effect. The Beast punches Karroway, sending him reeling, as...

... Hightower regains his footing and draws his flamesword, defending himself against Razer.

RAZER

What a pretty blade you've come by! I hope it does you more good than whoever you stole it from.

HIGHTOWER

What do you want, Razer?

RAZER

The same as you, old chum. A bit of gold, a bit of sport. Though I doubt I'll get either from you.

Hightower angrily attacks, but Razer effortlessly blocks him and sends Hightower scrambling to defend himself.

Meanwhile, Beldak attacks Malanthius with a dagger. Malanthius defends himself with a TELEKINETIC PUSH that sends Beldak flying into a burning bookcase. The bookcase topples on top of him, knocking him out, as...

... Hightower and Razer continue to duel. Their swords lock and Razer notices a LEATHER BRACER around Hightower's right wrist. He rips it off...

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CONTINUED: (3)

revealing a TEARDROP SHAPED BRAND on Hightower's forearm. It's an old wound and Razer smiles at the sight of it.

RAZER

There it is. Hasn't faded a bit
in all these years, has it?

Hightower angrily drops a LONG DAGGER into his hand from up his sleeve. But as he lunges with it, Razer draws a similar dagger from up his sleeve and blocks his attack.

RAZER

You're going to have to do better
than the same tricks that I taught
you.

Hightower deftly sidesteps and nicks Razer's cheek with his dagger. Razer hisses in surprise, then smiles.

RAZER

Better, little *lince'sa*.

Whatever that word means, every time Hightower hears it, he attacks in anger and hands the advantage to Razer.

Suddenly, the burning roof starts to collapse. Karroway dives out of the way, just as a CHUNK OF CEILING falls, burying the Beast under a mountain of flaming debris.

Meanwhile, Trickfoot has found the scroll case with the treasure map in it. But just as he grabs it --

-- a BURNING BEAM falls on top of him, KNOCKING HIM OUT. Karroway rushes to his side and starts to lift the beam. As he does... sees that the Beast is struggling out from under the pile of burning debris, tossing aside huge chunks of burning lumber like they were matchsticks.

KARROWAY

Mal! We need to get out of here!

Malanthius grabs his staff and rushes over, placing Trickfoot's hand on it. As he does, the RUNE STARTS TO GLOW and space around them BEGINS TO WARP. Karroway grabs the staff as well and turns to Hightower.

KARROWAY

Ray! We're 'porting! Now!

Hightower is reluctant to give up the fight, but sees he has no choice. He cuts the legs off of a table, sending flammable spell components shattering on the floor. A magical fire erupts between him and Razer.

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Hightower seizes the distraction and races toward Karroway and the others. The Beast stands in his way --

-- but Hightower spots a rope holding the chandelier, cuts it and grabs hold, using the chandelier's weight as counterbalance so he can jump over the Beast's head.

Razer throws his dagger. Hightower dives, grabs hold of Malanthius' staff. Hightower and the others instantly disappear in a FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT, TELEPORTING to safety. Razer's dagger THUDS into the wall.

EXT. GREYHAWK - BURROW HEIGHTS - NIGHT

A quiet hilltop overlooking the city. There's a FLASH OF LIGHT and Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius appear out of nowhere. They breathe a sigh of relief. Hightower turns to Trickfoot, who is still unconscious.

HIGHTOWER

How bad is he?

MALANTHIUS

It doesn't look serious. Do we know who those people were?

KARROWAY

The big one had a talisman around his neck. A hand with an eye inside of it. I'm guessing Cult of Vecna.

Hightower nods, then stands and looks out over the city. The flames from Malanthius' laboratory are visible in the distance and the CLANGING of an alarm bell can be heard.

MALANTHIUS

This is so typical. You just walk through my door and an hour later my laboratory's on fire and I'm being attacked by a death cult.

Karroway stands at Hightower's side. A beat. Then:

HIGHTOWER

It was Razer.

KARROWAY

I know.

Hightower doesn't turn to face him, just looks down at the brand on his arm, his eyes distant and haunted...

EXT. GREYHAWK - WHARVES - DAWN

Outside the walls of the city, several rickety wooden docks extend out into the muddy river. Seafaring vessels, river boats, and barges ply the waters.

EXT. BARGE - DAWN

A 40-foot craft has set out north along the river. It is crewed by RHENNEE, the gypsies of this world. Hightower wraps a strip of cloth around his forearm to cover his brand, then crosses the deck to Karroway.

HIGHTOWER

They'll take us as far as Elmshire. We can gear up there, but we'll have to be quick about it. It won't take Razer long to figure out we've gone upriver.

KARROWAY

(nods; beat)
I understand that the Eye is sacred to the Cult of Vecna. But what's Razer's interest?

HIGHTOWER

Same as always. A bit of gold...

KARROWAY

... a bit of sport.

Hightower nods. They exchange a rueful look.

HIGHTOWER

The cult must have hired him to find the Eye for them.

KARROWAY

That doesn't explain how they found out about the map. How did he know we had it?

HIGHTOWER

That cult has spies everywhere. Trickfoot must have run his mouth off to the wrong person.

Just then, Malanthius appears from below decks.

MALANTHIUS

You can ask him if you want.

INT. BARGE - BELOW DECKS - DAWN

A makeshift bed has been arranged for Trickfoot amongst sacks and crates of cargo. His eyes flicker open and he finds Hightower, Karroway, and Malanthius at his side. His hand quickly goes to his inside pocket... but Hightower smirks and holds up the ivory scroll case.

HIGHTOWER

Looking for this?

TRICKFOOT

The scroll...? Is it...?

HIGHTOWER

It's a map. Just like you said it would be. We're already en route.

Trickfoot can scarcely believe it. Hightower offers him the scroll and he opens it with trembling hands...

It is a stained parchment with a crude map drawn on it by hand. Large geographic landmarks have been labelled, but there are also several cryptic symbols, all leading to...

... a drawing of a EYE nestled between two sharp mountain peaks. Trickfoot is left breathless.

TRICKFOOT

Can we use the staff to teleport there?

MALANTHIUS

You can only use it to teleport to places you've been before. Otherwise... well, you don't want to know what could happen.

Trickfoot looks at the map, anxious. Hightower smiles.

HIGHTOWER

Don't worry. We'll get there.

TRICKFOOT

Forgive my impatience. My whole life I have searched for this...
(a beat; realizing)
You had everything you needed to find the Eye right here. You could have left me behind.

HIGHTOWER

You never leave a partner behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARROWAY

Especially when they know more
about what you're looking for than
you do.

HIGHTOWER

That doesn't hurt either.

Hightower abruptly snatches the map back from Trickfoot.
As he tucks it back into his pocket, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT - MAP OF THE FLANAESS

We are close on a parchment map with the city of Greyhawk artistically depicted in black ink. Then, the river next to the city appears, as if drawn by an invisible hand. As CAMERA FOLLOWS the river up to a large lake...

... we DISSOLVE THROUGH A SERIES OF SHOTS with the map SUPERIMPOSED OVER THEM. The Rhennee barge headed upriver. Then a LARGER BOAT carrying our heroes across a lake, to the edge of a forest of GLOWING TREES.

The names of the lands they are passing through appear on the map as they reach them: *Phostwood. Wintershiven.* Finally, we see our heroes trekking over land toward a distant mountain range: *Griff Mountains...*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - DAY

A forbidding mountain pass. Hightower leads Karroway, Trickfoot, Malanthius, and a PACK MULE tromping through knee-deep snow and bitter winds. They're clad in furry cold weather gear and on the brink of exhaustion. Judging by their beards, they've been at this for weeks.

Karroway pauses to catch his breath.

KARROWAY

Do you have any idea what this dry
air is doing to my scales?

HIGHTOWER

No and I don't want to know.

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Malanthius stumbles and falls in the snow. Karroway helps him. Malanthius hasn't got much left in him, but a MONSTROUS HOWL in the distance hastens him to his feet.

Just then, Trickfoot stops and points to the horizon.

TRICKFOOT

Look!

Barely visible in the distance, beyond the next ridge, are TWO SHARP MOUNTAIN PEAKS. Hightower pulls out the map scroll and opens it. Trickfoot crowds in close...

The sharp peaks in the distance are identical to the two peaks on the map with the drawing of an eye between them.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DAY

Hightower and Trickfoot lead the way through a mountain pass. Karroway and Malanthius follow with the mule. They stop at a high cliff, dismayed looks on their faces.

They have reached the foot of the two sharp peaks, but there is only a deep, mist-filled gorge between them. The cliff is unscalable. There's no way down it and even if there was, there's nothing as far as the eye can see.

TRICKFOOT

Where is it...? The Cuthbertine Vault should be right here!

KARROWAY

What are we missing?

HIGHTOWER

Nothing. This is the place.

(beat)

It's just not here.

As they stand there, looking down into the gorge...

... something looks down upon them as well. It's perched on the mountainside behind them. All we can tell is that it has THICK WHITE FUR... and it GROWLS.

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVE - NIGHT

Outside, a STORM HOWLS. Inside, a small, smoky campfire burns. Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius huddle around it. Further back, the mule rests as well.

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Karroway and Malanthius are exhausted and miserable, but Hightower and Trickfoot still puzzle over the map.

TRICKFOOT

This symbol is the key.

Trickfoot points to a FIGURE on the map: a CIRCLE with a CUDGEL, MACE, and a TABARD inside it. It is drawn next to the two peaks with the eye between them...

TRICKFOOT

The iconography is that of Saint Cuthbert, whose followers hid the Eye inside the Vault. And its proximity to these peaks suggests a connection between them that we haven't figured out yet.

MALANTHIUS

Who says there's anything to figure out?

TRICKFOOT

This map meant everything to the man who drew it. This symbol is there for a reason.

Hightower sighs, frustrated, and rolls up the scroll.

HIGHTOWER

We'll go out to the gorge again tomorrow and take another look...

KARROWAY

Another look at what exactly? There's nothing there.

HIGHTOWER

Well, what do you suggest? We just stand around and wait for the Eye of Vecna to come to us?

KARROWAY

No, I suggest we go home.

A tense beat. Trickfoot looks shocked.

MALANTHIUS

I'd be willing to have that conversation.

TRICKFOOT

You'd quit? When we're so close?

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KARROWAY

Close to what? Freezing to death?

MALANTHIUS

Let's face it, we're stuck. If we go back to Greyhawk, I might be able to find that symbol in the Great Library. We can try again after we figure out what it means.

HIGHTOWER

There could still be a clue at the bottom of that gorge. We can take a few days, search the ridge --

KARROWAY

Our supplies are already running low. And that storm's getting worse. We're not going to survive out here much longer.

HIGHTOWER

You think if we quit now, we'll live forever?

Karroway stews for a beat, fuming. Then:

KARROWAY

Don't make this personal. I know how badly you want to settle the score with Razer, but it's not worth getting the rest of us killed over.

Hightower gives him a sharp look. Karroway's words have struck a raw nerve. He glares angrily.

HIGHTOWER

If you want to quit, then quit. I'm not stopping you.

Uneasy silence follows. Nothing more is said.

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVE - NIGHT

Hightower stands in the mouth of the cave, looking out at the frigid night. The others are inside, lying on their bedrolls. Trickfoot is asleep, but Karroway is watching Hightower, apprehensive. Malanthius turns to him.

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MALANTHIUS

What were you talking about earlier? Something about settling a score with Razer?

KARROWAY

None of your business.

MALANTHIUS

If I'm going to freeze to death in the night, I'd like to know why.

Karroway reluctantly considers for a beat, then levels him with an intimidating look.

KARROWAY

You breathe a word of this to anyone and I'll make you wish you hadn't. Are we clear on that?

Malanthius nods. Karroway hesitates, then:

KARROWAY

Ray and his sister grew up in the Underdark. Their father sold them to slavers when they were just kids. I don't know what kind of man sells his own children, but that's what he did. They were bought by one of the Drow noble clans. Prince Razer's family.

(off his look)

That brand on his arm is Razer's family glyph. It marks him as their property.

Malanthius is taken aback. He had no idea.

KARROWAY

The Drow tried to separate them, but Ray's sister was the only family he had. Growing up like they did, all they'd ever had was each other. So when they came to take her away, he fought back. He would have been killed, except that Razer was entertained by him.

(beat)

He offered to make Ray his *lince'sa*. It's a Drow word.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KARROWAY (CONT'D)

It means "pet." Ray would serve as his personal servant, hunting companion, and whatever else he wanted him to be. In exchange, Ray would be allowed to buy his sister's freedom. All he had to do was reimburse Razer for her purchase price.

(beat)

It was meant to be funny. No slave, even a noble's *lince'sa*, could possibly raise that kind of gold. Only nobody let Ray in on the joke.

(beat)

He's never told me what he had to do to earn that money and I think he probably wishes he could forget. It took him almost eight years, but he raised it.

Karroway pauses for a long beat. Malanthius hesitates.

MALANTHIUS

This story doesn't end well, does it?

KARROWAY

No, it doesn't. All he wound up buying with that money was a bag of bones. His sister had been told that he'd abandoned her and so she'd tried to escape on her own. She'd been caught and executed six months earlier. And for his years of faithful service, Ray was granted his freedom -- cast out of the Underdark with nothing but the rags on his back, his sister's bones in a sack, and that brand on his arm.

MALANTHIUS

(shudders)

So this isn't even about the Eye for him anymore, is it?

Karroway sighs and gives him a grim look.

KARROWAY

Razer's taken everything he's ever had. He's not going to let it happen again. He can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He turns to Hightower, who stares out at the HOWLING storm, lost in thought...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BURNING CITY - NIGHT (DREAM)

Suddenly, FLAMES fill the world. A CITY BURNS. A raging inferno, an all-consuming firestorm. METEORITES fall from the sky, spreading the flames as they land. The bodies of ANIMALS burn in the streets. The images are confused, without context, the SOUND EERILY MUTED.

Then we see MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN in chains, naked but for rags and iron collars around their necks. WHIPS CRACK. The slaves march, embers fall like snow, the dead are left at the side of the road, and the world burns...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN CAVE - DAWN

Hightower awakens with a start. It was only a nightmare, but it's left him pale and shaken. He groans...

... then turns to see that Karroway is already awake. Karroway gives him a concerned look.

KARROWAY

You all right?

Hightower hesitates for a moment, disturbed by what he's seen. Karroway senses that something is wrong. Then:

HIGHTOWER

Yeah. Fine. Let's get moving.

He starts gathering his gear. Karroway eyes him, uneasy.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DAY

Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius have returned... and so has the storm. The wind blows harder than ever. The mule is struggling. Hightower pauses to catch his breath and Karroway catches up to him.

KARROWAY

This is crazy! We have to go back!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRICKFOOT

No! It's here! I can feel it!

Hightower looks away, but Karroway grabs him, insistent.

KARROWAY

We don't have any choice! One way
or the other, we're --

HIGHTOWER

Shut up!

KARROWAY

Look at us! We're going to die --

HIGHTOWER

I said, shut up!

Karroway suddenly realizes that Hightower isn't arguing with him -- he's heard something. Karroway listens...

... as a MOURNFUL HOWL echoes off the mountains, like a cross between a lion and a mountain gorilla. Whatever it is, it sounds big. Malanthius gives a wide-eyed look.

MALANTHIUS

That sounded close...

Then, ANOTHER HOWL. Even CLOSER. Hightower and the others turn... and see TWO HUGE GRAY FORMS charging toward them through the mist and swirling snow.

HIGHTOWER

RUN!!

Hightower and the others dash off through the snow. One of the ONRUSHING FORMS tackles the mule and we glimpse something big and muscular, with THICK WHITE FUR.

Hightower glances back, sees the mule being torn apart, then suddenly -- there's ANOTHER ROAR as a THIRD GRAY FORM rushes in from the side, flanking them.

Hightower stops short and draws his flamesword. Karroway and the others stop and look at him like he's crazy.

HIGHTOWER

They're herding us! We're already trapped!

The others look around, suddenly realizing that there is a FOURTH GRAY FORM directly in front of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Karroway and Trickfoot draw their weapons. The beasts slowly close in, forcing the adventurers right to the edge of the gorge as they emerge from the mists...

They are YETIS. Huge, fierce-looking ape-like beasts, eight feet tall with giant fangs. They balk at the sight of Hightower's flaming sword, but don't back down. They pace back and forth, making ferocious threat displays.

KARROWAY

Mal! Get us out of here!

Malanthius raises his staff. The rune starts to GLOW...

HIGHTOWER

No! Stand your ground!

Karroway gives Hightower a stunned look.

KARROWAY

We can't fight these things!
You've got to let it go!

MALANTHIUS

Too late now!

Suddenly -- the Yetis attack. They all charge at once, rapidly closing in on our trapped heroes...

... when out of nowhere, a huge shadow falls upon them as a ROC (an enormous falcon, big enough to pick up an elephant in its claws), swoops down and snatches one of the Yetis. As it soars by, it uses the Yeti in its claws to swat another Yeti over the edge of the cliff. Then it drops the HOWLING Yeti in its claws into the gorge.

KARROWAY

What in the Nine Hells --

Suddenly -- THWAP!THWAP!THWAP! They all turn just as a BARRAGE OF ARROWS strikes the two remaining Yeti. One of them succumbs to its wounds and the other flees.

Hightower and the others turn to see their rescuers -- a group of FOUR MASKED ARCHERS dressed from head-to-toe in leather and furs. Behind them, TWO MORE MASKED WARRIORS sit atop GIANT RIDING LIZARDS. Then...

... with a great FLAPPING OF WINGS, the Roc lands among them and we see that it is saddled like a horse with ANOTHER MASKED WARRIOR holding its reins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KARROWAY

So who are these people?

HIGHTOWER

Let's hope they speak Common.

The LEADER of the Masked Warriors approaches, mace drawn. The Archers cover him. Hightower steps forward to greet them. He shows his empty hands and speaks very slowly and deliberately to the Warrior Leader.

HIGHTOWER

Friends. Understand? We friends.

WARRIOR LEADER

You're trespassers. State your business or die where you stand.

His voice is sophisticated and erudite. He doesn't sound like a barbarian. Hightower gives a sigh of relief.

HIGHTOWER

We're just simple travellers who have lost our way in the storm.

Hightower tries to appear innocent. The Leader considers them, his face hidden by his cold-weather mask. Then:

WARRIOR LEADER

Come with us.

He gestures to the Archers, who lower their weapons. Hightower and the others exchange uneasy looks...

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

The Masked Warriors ride their giant lizards across a vista of windswept snow. Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius each sit atop a saddled lizard, behind the riders. The Roc soars overhead, toward...

... an IMPOSING, HIGH-WALLED KEEP. The Warrior Leader guides the Roc in and lands atop a HIGH TOWER.

EXT. MONASTERY - TOWER - DAY

A BEAST HANDLER is on hand to take the reins and settle the huge animal. The Leader climbs out of the saddle, removes his cold-weather mask, revealing FATHER MONAHAN (hard-faced, 50s). He turns to a waiting MESSENGER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONAHAN

Inform the High Priestess that we
have visitors.

INT. MONASTERY - GRAND HALL - DAY

Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius are escorted by the warriors. They've all taken off their cold-weather gear and we now see that the warriors are noble-looking young men and women in gleaming armor. We will now refer to them as THE GUARDIANS.

Hightower and the others enter a torchlit hall dominated by a STONE STATUE of a stern-faced knight with a long beard holding a large mace. Trickfoot stops short.

TRICKFOOT

That's Saint Cuthbert...

(realizing)

This is a Cuthbertine monastery.

Then Monahan approaches. He wears a priestly robe over his armor. He stops before Hightower and the others.

MONAHAN

You must surrender your weapons.

Hightower nods and removes his scabbard. The others follow suit. Malanthius turns over his staff. Monahan eyes the beautiful hilt of Hightower's flamesword.

MONAHAN

Where did you come by this blade?

HIGHTOWER

I won it in a game of chance from
an elderly hill giant who used it
to light his pipe.

Monahan gives a withering look and reaches for the hilt.

HIGHTOWER

I wouldn't do that if I were --

The moment Monahan grasps it, his hand is burned as if the hilt were red-hot. He gasps. His palm is blistered. Hightower shrugs. Monahan glares at him angrily.

MONAHAN

Why doesn't it burn you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

I'm just special, I guess.

Monahan fumes and draws his mace, menacing.

MONAHAN

You seem to be in need of a lesson
in respect. You've come to the
right place.

But just then, the Guardians part as a ROBED PRIESTESS
descends the stairs. Hightower and Karroway look up and
stop short when they see her. Karroway's jaw drops.

KARROWAY

You've got to be kidding me...

Her name is ALLYSIA (30s). She's striking with long dark
hair and an athletic body. She wears armor under her
robes... and a look of stunned recognition on her face.

ALLYSIA

Raven Hightower.

HIGHTOWER

Alyssia --

Suddenly, Monahan strikes Hightower hard across the back
with his mace, driving him to his knees.

MONAHAN

You may refer to the High
Priestess as Your Reverence.

HIGHTOWER

That works for me...

Monahan is about to hit him again, but Allysia stops him.

ALLYSIA

Father Monahan. Enough.

She gestures for Monahan to back off, which he
reluctantly does. Hightower painfully stands back up.

MONAHAN

(to Allysia)
You know these people?

Allysia approaches Hightower with a resigned sigh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALLYSIA

This one, I know.

(to Hightower)

Where's your clay-brained partner?

Hightower eyes Karroway. Karroway groans.

KARROWAY

It's nice to see you too, Your
Reverence.

Allysia nearly does a double-take, giving him a look of
total dismay.

ALLYSIA

Hack Karroway???

KARROWAY

(sighs)

It's a long story.

ALLYSIA

It's an improvement, frankly.

(to Hightower)

What are you two doing here? Or
do I even need to ask?

MONAHAN

They claim to be travellers who
lost their way in the storm.

Allysia gives Hightower an extremely dubious look.

ALLYSIA

That's the best you could come up
with?

She puts her hands on her hips and as she does, her robes
part... revealing a symbol on her chestplate. It's a
medallion engraved with a cudgel, a mace, and a tapard...

Exactly like the symbol on the map. Hightower and the
others try to hide their excitement at the sight of it.

HIGHTOWER

Maybe... we could discuss the
matter in private.

ALLYSIA

I can't imagine the point of such
a meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Hightower is on the verge of a suggestive retort, but she sees it coming and cuts him off:

ALLYSIA

You and your friends are welcome
to dine with us this evening.
Rooms will be prepared for you to
spend the night. In the morning,
the Guardians will escort you down
the mountain and see you all
safely returned to Wintershiven.

HIGHTOWER

My boundless thanks, Your
Reverence. If there's any way
that I might express my
gratitude...

ALLYSIA

And if any of you return, you will
be immediately put to the sword
without question. Do not test me.

She levels Hightower with a stern look, then turns away.
Hightower and the others watch her go.

INT. MONASTERY - GUEST CHAMBERS - DAY

STEWARDS escort Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and
Malanthius into a dim room. As soon as the Stewards
leave and the door is closed behind them...

TRICKFOOT

That's it! She was wearing it!
Did you see it --??

Hightower quickly clamps a hand over Trickfoot's mouth
and puts a finger to his lips. Then, quietly:

HIGHTOWER

Of course I saw it. Mal, any
thoughts?

MALANTHIUS

It looks like a sacred symbol of
her order, so there's probably
some divine magic connected with
it...

Trickfoot shoves Hightower's hand aside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRICKFOOT

The map is plain enough. We need to bring that medallion to the Vault between the peaks.

KARROWAY

Only the Vault isn't there, remember?

HIGHTOWER

Then why do our hosts seem so anxious to send us on our way?

Karroway pauses. He hadn't thought of that.

TRICKFOOT

It was Cuthbertine monks who found the Eye and built the Vault to contain it. You think it's a coincidence that we've stumbled onto a Cuthbertine monastery here? In the middle of the Griff Mountains?

Karroway and Malanthius take a beat, realizing...

MALANTHIUS

The High Priestess... She called them Guardians, didn't she?

KARROWAY

They're guarding the Vault.

Hightower gives Karroway a knowing smile.

HIGHTOWER

You still want to go home?

The wheels in Malanthius' head start spinning rapidly...

MALANTHIUS

The gods aren't my specialty... but if the Vault is protected by divine magic, then it could have been there and we just didn't see it. It could be invisible, the gorge could have been an illusion, they could have shifted it to another plane of existence...

(off their looks)

Whatever they did, whatever magic they used, they would have needed some way to control it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIGHTOWER

And this was meant to hide the Eye
for all time, so it would have to
be something they could hand down
from one generation to the next...

KARROWAY

Like a divine relic.

The adventurers exchange an excited look. A beat.

HIGHTOWER

We need that medallion.

INT. MONASTERY - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

Dinner is served. Hightower, Trickfoot, and Malanthius sit alone at a corner table. Hightower eyes Allysia from across the room. She's still wearing the medallion. A look passes between them, but she quickly turns away.

Karroway joins them, speaking under his breath:

KARROWAY

Our gear's in the gatehouse. We
can get it on our way out.

HIGHTOWER

Guards?

MALANTHIUS

Once I have my staff, I can put
them all to sleep. We'll be long
gone before they wake up.

TRICKFOOT

That just leaves the medallion...

Hightower looks to Allysia, who says something to Father Monahan and walks up the stairs of the main tower.

HIGHTOWER

... Which looks like it's moving
upstairs.

Malanthius watches her go, clearly smitten.

MALANTHIUS

How do you know her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

We... met a few years ago. Before
she took her vows.

KARROWAY

The night before she took her
vows.

Hightower's eyes take on a far-off, nostalgic look.

HIGHTOWER

That was a good night.

KARROWAY

She was just using you.

HIGHTOWER

I know. Don't you wish it had
been you?

Karroway grumbles, clearly jealous.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

TWO MOONS hang in the sky, looking down on snowy peaks...

INT. MONASTERY - GUEST CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Hightower peers out the shutter at the courtyard below.
HALF A DOZEN SENTRYIES stand guard outside.

KARROWAY

You want Trickfoot's ring of
feather-falling?

HIGHTOWER

I'm not worried about falling.
I'm worried about those guards.
The moons are bright tonight.

Malanthius pulls a drab, green hooded cloak out of his
satchel and hands it to Hightower.

MALANTHIUS

Here. It's elven.

HIGHTOWER

Not bad...

He puts it on. The cloak shimmers and disappears, but
Hightower is still visible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARROWAY

You've got it on inside-out.

HIGHTOWER

I can never tell with these things...

He reverses the cloak... and this time Hightower seems to vanish. It's like magical camouflage, changing color and texture to blend in with its background.

HIGHTOWER

Better?

KARROWAY

Much.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

The Sentries warm their hands over a fire. They don't notice the shuttered window opening above them...

It's Hightower. The lights in their chambers have been put out so that he can climb out onto the window ledge undetected. The monastery's main tower looms over him.

Hightower very carefully edges out onto the wall and begins free climbing up the tower. The elven cloak makes him all but invisible against the stone wall as he makes his way up. He's almost to the top...

... when his foot slips on a frozen ledge and ICICLES CLATTER to the ground. The Sentries turn, but Hightower freezes, hidden by his camouflage cloak.

Just then, his cloak flutters in the wind and his legs are suddenly visible. The Sentries search for the source of the sound. If they look up, Hightower is exposed...

... but the wind dies and the cloak settles. When the Sentries look up, Hightower is again invisible.

INT. MONASTERY - ALLYSIA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

A THIN METAL HOOK appears between two closed wooden shutters, raising the latch from the outside. The shutters open, revealing Hightower on the window ledge. He slips inside and quickly closes the shutters.

Moonlight spills in through the cracks, revealing Allysia's bedchamber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hightower approaches the bed where she lays, sound asleep, her ample bosom almost falling out of her nightgown. He forces himself to move on.

He finds a tall wooden wardrobe and tries to open it, but it's locked. He quickly takes out a set of LOCKPICKING TOOLS, but the moment he inserts them into the lock --

Every CANDLE and TORCH in the room MAGICALLY IGNITES, filling the room with firelight. He whirls --

-- to find Allysia standing nearby in her armor, glaring at him, the medallion around her neck.

ALLYSIA

What do I look like to you?

Hightower gives her a confused look, then turns toward the bed. The romantic image of Allysia sleeping there suddenly shimmers and vanishes -- it was an ILLUSION.

Hightower is only taken aback for a moment, then quickly flashes his best come-hither look.

HIGHTOWER

I had to see you.

ALLYSIA

And you thought I was in the wardrobe?

Hightower doesn't have a snappy comeback. She sighs.

ALLYSIA

I may have miserable taste in men,
but I'm not a complete idiot.
Father Monahan found you on the
Vault's doorstep. Don't bother
telling me you didn't know it was
there.

Hightower sees that he's not going to charm his way out of this and just shrugs.

HIGHTOWER

Some of us have to work for a
living.

ALLYSIA

How in the Nine Hells did you find
it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIGHTOWER

You had a spy here about a hundred years ago. He drew a map and I followed it.

ALLYSIA

What were you planning to do? Sell the Eye of Vecna to the highest bidder?

HIGHTOWER

That's how it usually works.

ALLYSIA

This isn't a treasure that you're after this time. It's an artifact of evil. If Vecna ever recovers the Hand and the Eye, he could remake the world.

HIGHTOWER

And I'd be very worried about that if Vecna hadn't been dead for ten thousand years.

Allysia gives him a dumbfounded look.

ALLYSIA

You really don't know anything about it, do you?

HIGHTOWER

I know he conquered the world and then his buddy Kas destroyed him. Is there more to the story?

ALLYSIA

Vecna conquered more than the world. He conquered death. When Kas struck him down, his soul was banished to the Nine Hells, but it lived on. Over the centuries, he's amassed an army of demons and conquered Hell itself.

Hightower is taken aback. This is news to him.

ALLYSIA

Vecna's cult has been trying to bring him back for centuries.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALLYSIA (CONT'D)

They've created a spell that would cause his soul to be reincarnated into a child of this plane, but they need the Hand and the Eye to restore his powers.

A beat as Hightower takes this in.

HIGHTOWER

So you think that if the Eye of Vecna falls into the wrong hands, the original owner might come back for it with an army of demons and conquer the world?

ALLYSIA

That's why I'm here. The sole purpose of my order is to prevent that from happening.

He sees that she's serious and sighs, resigned.

HIGHTOWER

I need a drink.

Hightower spots a flask of wine, pours a goblet to the brim, and drinks deep.

ALLYSIA

The location of the Vault has been kept secret for generations. Your presence here jeopardizes everything. If the Cult of Vecna learned of this --

HIGHTOWER

We've already bumped into the Cult of Vecna. Back in Greyhawk. They... tried to steal this.

He reaches into a pocket and takes out the IVORY SCROLL CASE. Hightower considers it for a long beat.

HIGHTOWER

I was going to retire off of this.

He hands the scroll to Allysia. She opens it, her eyes widening when she realizes what it is.

ALLYSIA

Did the Cultists get a look at this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HIGHTOWER

No. Nobody's seen it except for
my partners and I. And now you.

Allysia crosses to the fireplace and tosses the scroll on
the flames. Hightower watches it burn.

ALLYSIA

You made the right decision.

HIGHTOWER

Then why do I feel like shit?

ALLYSIA

There will always be another
treasure.

HIGHTOWER

But it's not just the money I'm
giving up, is it?

(off her look)

You can't let us leave here
knowing what we know.

She gives a solemn look. There's no easy way to say it.

ALLYSIA

No. The secret of the Vault must
stay here on the mountain. Even
if you were sworn to secrecy, the
Cult could torture it out of you.

HIGHTOWER

So what did you have in mind?

ALLYSIA

Our spellcasters can modify your
memories. You'll forget you were
ever here.

HIGHTOWER

What if we don't want to forget?

ALLYSIA

Then Father Monahan will probably
want to kill you.

HIGHTOWER

That's some choice you're giving
us.

Allysia considers him for a moment, then steps closer.
She puts her hand on his arm, caressing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ALLYSIA

I could make it worth your while.

Hightower gives a surprised look. He offers the goblet of wine and she takes a sip. He eyes her, suspicious.

HIGHTOWER

I thought the Cuthbertines were celibate.

ALLYSIA

You're not going to remember it.

She steps closer. Hightower sets the goblet aside and takes her into his arms.

HIGHTOWER

Then what do I get out of it?

ALLYSIA

I could leave you with a very pleasant recurring dream of this night.

HIGHTOWER

Really? How pleasant?

They kiss. As their passion grows...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - DAWN

The sun is rising over the mountain peaks...

INT. MONASTERY - ALLYSIA'S CHAMBERS - DAWN

Allysia lies in bed, asleep, naked, covered in a tangle of sheets. She stirs, disturbed by the sunlight shining through the cracks in the shutters. She groans...

... and realizes that Hightower is gone. She tries to jump out of bed, but is stopped by a piercing headache. Her eyes fall on the overturned wine goblet. She grabs it, dabs a bit of residue on her finger, and tastes it.

ALLYSIA

(realizing)

Son of a bitch...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She dashes to the wardrobe and opens it, already knowing what she'll find: her armor is still inside, but the medallion is missing from her chestplate.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius hurry back toward the gorge. They've recovered their weapons and Hightower is wearing Allysia's medallion around his neck.

MALANTHIUS

But what if she's right about the Eye? What if it really is an artifact of evil?

KARROWAY

You've got a lot to learn, kid.

HIGHTOWER

If we had a brass bit for every time someone told us their priceless treasure was really an artifact of evil, we'd be richer than the Lords of Waterdeep.

(off Mal's look)

It's a scare tactic. The scarier the story, the bigger the prize.

As they dash through the snow, headed toward the gorge...

EXT. MONASTERY - DAWN

... Allysia mobilizes the Guardians. She leads a force of six Guardians riding Lizard Mounts out through the front gates in pursuit of our heroes. But what none of them notice as they ride off...

... are the SIX DARK FIGURES on the hilltop behind them. It's the cultists, led by Prince Razer. He is flanked by Beldak and the Beast. Then CAMERA REVEALS... that they are accompanied by DOZENS OF SNARLING YETIS.

Razer looks down at the monastery, a figure of jet black against the snow, watching as Allysia's force rides off.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DAWN

Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius have returned to the vast mist-filled gorge. Hightower stands on the edge of the cliff, looking up at the sharp peaks.

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CONTINUED:

KARROWAY

So what now?

Hightower takes the medallion in his hands and studies it. Then he raises it up... so that from his point of view, it is between the mountain peaks, just as it appeared in the drawing on the map.

For a long beat, nothing happens. Then... the ground begins to TREMBLE. Ice and snow start to crumble and fall into the gorge. Hightower and the others quickly back away from the edge of the cliff...

... as an ENORMOUS STONE STRUCTURE begins emerging from the bottom of the gorge. Centuries of accumulated dirt fall away from it, revealing an imposing, blank-faced edifice, barely more than a huge granite cube. It rises to meet them as if being lifted by a tremendous elevator.

KARROWAY

Who was it that suggested we just stand around and let the Eye come to us?

The Vault looms higher and higher over them, a dark monolith. As it SLAMS into place, a huge stone gate opens and stairs rise from the snow right under our heroes' feet, leading up to the dark portal.

After an awed beat, Hightower and the others go up the stairs. A long hallway leads into the Vault. A stale wind blows out, like the exhalation of a great beast.

Hightower turns to Karroway with an excited grin. This is his kind of place.

HIGHTOWER

All right. Let's roll.

INT. VAULT - ENTRY CORRIDOR - DAY

The adventurers tread carefully along the dark hall, torches raised, Karroway in the lead. Thin cobwebs flutter in the slight breeze. The way ahead is pitch black. As they pass, CAMERA LINGERS TO REVEAL...

... there's something MOVING above them. At first it looks like a shadow, but then it begins SLITHERING after them along the ceiling -- viscous, black, and glistening like an oil slick. It roils and CHITTERS. As it nears the torchlight, we see that it is covered with HUNDREDS OF LITTLE FANGED MOUTHS, like the suckers of an octopus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, when it's directly over Trickfoot... the BLACK PUDDING drops from the ceiling with a WET SPLAT.

The adventurers whirl, but Trickfoot has been engulfed, the Black Pudding's many mouths gnawing at his flesh with its tiny teeth and drooling ACIDIC SALIVA. The gnome screams, struggling helplessly against the sticky ooze.

Malanthius raises his staff and fires a BOLT OF LIGHTNING at it. The Black Pudding shudders and SHRIEKS --

-- then divides in two, like an amoeba. One half continues to attack Trickfoot, but the OTHER HALF slides off and quickly slithers straight at Malanthius.

Karroway steps in front of him and uses his torch to set the second Black Pudding on fire. It SCREAMS as it burns. Hightower waves his torch at the other Pudding. It instantly releases Trickfoot, slithers off down the corridor, and escapes through a crack in the floor.

Karroway groans as he watches it go.

KARROWAY

That's just gross.

Malanthius rushes to Trickfoot's side. The gnome is covered in slime, his skin riddled with little sores, but he's alive. Malanthius takes a potion from his pouch.

MALANTHIUS

Drink this.

Trickfoot shakily brings it to his lips and drinks. Hightower looks him over.

TRICKFOOT

I'll be all right.

Hightower sighs wearily and gives an admonishing look.

HIGHTOWER

Keep your eyes open, willya? You should have seen that coming.

He turns away. Trickfoot watches him go, dismayed.

INT. VAULT - INNER GATE - DAY

Hightower and the others find the way blocked by a LARGE, IMPOSING DOOR. Karroway gives Hightower a look. They approach the door, raising their torches to inspect it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

Here.

The others follow his look. In the center of the door is a circular depression. It bears the symbol of the cudgel, the mace, and the tabard. Same as the medallion.

Hightower raises the medallion... and the door parts. Everyone hangs back, hands on their weapons, but nothing comes out of the darkness. They cautiously enter.

INT. VAULT - CENTRAL CHAMBER - DAY

Hightower, Karroway, Trickfoot, and Malanthius enter a VAST ROOM. The ceiling is beyond the light of their torches, but from the HOLLOW ECHO of their footsteps, it's a long way up. Karroway hesitates.

KARROWAY

It's hot in here.

Malanthius kneels, placing his palm against the floor.

MALANTHIUS

It's coming from the floor...

Ahead of them is only a huge, blank wall. At opposite ends of the room are TWO STAIRCASES leading to doors halfway up the wall, one on the left, one on the right.

KARROWAY

Which way?

HIGHTOWER

You pick. I picked last time.

Karroway frowns. After a beat of indecision, he leads them to the left, but stops at the bottom of the stairs.

KARROWAY

Hold up.

Karroway opens his pouch... and to Trickfoot and Malanthius's surprise, pulls out a TEN-FOOT POLE. Hightower reads the looks on their faces and grins.

HIGHTOWER

You wouldn't believe half the stuff he's got in there.

Karroway taps the end of the pole against the first step. Nothing happens. He taps the second. Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But as he taps the third -- the step collapses and RAZOR-SHARP INTERLOCKING STEEL TEETH SNAP SHUT like the jaws of a bear trap, splintering the wooden pole.

Malanthius eyes the broken pole, shaken.

MALANTHIUS

Who builds something like that?

KARROWAY

Assholes.

He leads them up the stairs, tapping each step with the pole as they go. At the top, Hightower inspects the closed door, feels around its edges, then presses his ear against it. He gives Karroway a nod. All clear.

Karroway puts the pole away and draws his sword, ready for anything. Hightower opens the door...

INT. VAULT - AXIS CORRIDOR - DAY

... revealing a long, empty hallway. It spans the entire length of the room they were just in and leads only to another door on the far end. The same door they would have entered if they'd taken the staircase on the right.

MALANTHIUS

This doesn't make any sense...
That door just leads back to the
room we were just in.

HIGHTOWER

There must be a hidden door
somewhere. Look for seams in the
wall, even the floor and ceiling.

They slowly inspect the passage. Hightower pulls on an empty iron scone, but nothing happens. Trickfoot notices that there are DECORATIVE STONES lining the middle of the floor, but pressing on them has no effect.

Then suddenly, the door ahead of them bursts open and Allysia enters, flanked by the Guardians, weapons raised.

Hightower and the others stop short. He sees the angry look on Allysia's face and gives a devil-may-care shrug.

HIGHTOWER

Sorry I left without saying
goodbye this morning. I didn't
want to wake you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

This is your last chance,
Hightower. Yield or die.

HIGHTOWER

Maybe next time.

Hightower and the others quickly start back the way they came, but just then, they hear O.S. SWORDPLAY coming from the other end of the passage. Hightower and Karroway exchange an alarmed look. Even Allysia is taken aback...

... as a WOUNDED GUARDIAN staggers in through the other doorway, clutching a bloody wound in his gut. As he falls to his knees, a FIGURE with a gore-streaked sword appears behind him. The figure steps into the light...

It's Razer. Beldak and the Beast are with him.

RAZER

I'm afraid surrender is no longer
one of your options.

Hightower seethes at the sight of him and draws a hand crossbow. The heroes stand back to back, caught between the Guardians on one side and the Cultists on the other.

Just then, Trickfoot spots a slight groove in the wall next to him, partially hidden by a sconce. He eyes the dark stones on the floor, wheels in his head turning...

Karroway raises his bastard sword, ready for battle.

KARROWAY

(to Hightower)
Our options do appear to be
dwindling.

TRICKFOOT

On the contrary --

Suddenly, Trickfoot turns and buries his sword in Malanthius' back. The bloodied blade erupts from the young mage's chest. Hightower and Karroway are stricken.

TRICKFOOT

You've already lost.

Trickfoot yanks the sword out and snatches Malanthius' staff from his limp hand. Malanthius looks shocked and falls to his knees, blood dripping from his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRICKFOOT

I told you I'd live a lot longer
than you would.

Malanthius falls down dead. Hightower raises his sword --

HIGHTOWER

You son of a --

-- but before he can bring it down, Trickfoot grabs the
sconce on the wall next to him, pulls it --

-- and ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE. The entire corridor begins
to TILT toward the end where the Guardians are standing.
Trickfoot holds onto the sconce, but everyone else either
finds something to hold onto or is thrown to the floor.

The tilt of the floor gets STEEPER and STEEPER.
Malanthius' body starts to slip away. Hightower drops
his flamesword and grabs Malanthius' wrist while holding
onto a wall sconce with his other hand. His flamesword
CLATTERS down the tilted corridor and almost takes
Allysia's head off as it passes.

One of the Cultists loses his footing and slides down the
corridor, right past our heroes, SCREAMING all the way...

... as the passage completes its NINETY-DEGREE TURN and
becomes a long vertical shaft. At the top, where Razer
and the Cultists are hanging on, a DOOR OPENS, offering
escape. At the bottom, where the Guardians are...

... ANOTHER DOOR OPENS, REVEALING A PIT FILLED WITH
MOLTEN LAVA. The Cultist who slipped and several
Guardians fall through and are incinerated. Hightower's
flamesword falls in and is swallowed by lava.

The situation is now this: We have a long vertical
shaft. A fall from the top would kill you instantly even
if there wasn't lava at the bottom. Razer, Beldak, and
the Beast are holding on at the top. Hightower and
Karroway hold on near the middle. Allysia and a Guardian
hold on near the bottom, mere feet above the lava.

Meanwhile, the dark floor stones that Trickfoot noticed
have recessed six inches, creating a ladder. Trickfoot
hurries up it. Razer, Beldak, and the Beast follow him.

But at the bottom of the shaft, the last Guardian starts
to fall. Allysia grabs his hand, but can't hold on. As
he slips from her grasp, he is slowly lowered into the
lava. He screams as his clothes burst into flames, then
Allysia loses her grip and he falls in.

INT. VAULT - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

Trickfoot climbs out the top of the shaft and finds himself in a dark room filled with GEARS and COBWEBS. There's a HEAVY STONE SLAB positioned next to the opening, apparently used to cover the shaft.

Razer, Beldak, and the Beast climb out after him. Trickfoot points to a massive WINCH WHEEL.

TRICKFOOT
(to the Beast)
Close it! Quickly!

The Beast lumbers over to the wheel. As he turns it, the GEARS in the room also turn... and the stone slab starts moving to cover the opening of the lava shaft.

INT. VAULT - AXIS CORRIDOR - DAY

Hightower hears the GRINDING of the slab and looks up. He sees Razer looking down at him, gloating. Razer takes a PLATINUM COIN from his pocket.

RAZER
For services rendered.

He tosses the coin down the shaft. It bounces off Hightower's face. Hightower scowls up at him.

RAZER
They paid me a lot of money to lead them to the Eye, but it was so much easier to just follow you.

HIGHTOWER
I'll see you in Hell!

RAZER
I'll look forward to it.
Farewell, my faithful *lince'sa*.

Razer smiles down at him as the stone slab SLAMS into place. Hightower and the others are sealed inside.

INT. VAULT - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

Razer lights a torch and shines it around, inspecting the room. Trickfoot watches, anxious. Beldak hurries over... and prostrates himself before the gnome.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BELDAK

My lord, your mighty vision has
shown us the way! Your great plan
has succeeded --!

TRICKFOOT

Stop your groveling, fool. This
isn't over yet.

RAZER

Maybe not...

Trickfoot turns to Razer... whose torchlight has revealed
an open doorway and a long, ornate PASSAGEWAY.

RAZER

But we're getting close.

Trickfoot's eyes light with an evil gleam.

INT. VAULT - AXIS CORRIDOR - DAY

Karroway reaches the ladder and climbs down to where
Hightower dangles from a wall sconce. Hightower still
holds onto Malanthius' dead body, refusing to let him go.
Karroway reaches out to Hightower, but he's too far away.
The sconce that Hightower is holding STARTS TO BUCKLE...

KARROWAY

Let him go, Ray!

HIGHTOWER

We have to take his body to a
priest! He can be resurrected!

KARROWAY

If you don't let him go, you're
both gonna die!

The mortar around the sconce is crumbling. Hightower
sees it, then looks down at Malanthius' dead body...

... and lets him go. The young mage's body plunges down
the shaft and SPLASHES into the lava.

INT. VAULT - UPPER LEVEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Razer lights the way for Trickfoot, Beldak, and the
Beast. Unlike the other rooms of the Vault, the walls
here are elaborately carved with religious iconography
and symbols of warding. And at the end of the hall...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... is a HUGE CLOSED DOOR with a carving of a GLOWING EYE on it. Trickfoot smiles in anticipation of a long journey finally at its end. He pushes on the door.

It doesn't budge.

That's when he sees that inside the pupil of the eye are three familiar symbols: A cudgel, a mace, and a tabard.

Trickfoot's face falls at the sight of it.

TRICKFOOT

The medallion...!

RAZER

What medallion?

INT. VAULT - AXIS CORRIDOR - DAY

CLOSE SHOT - the medallion hanging around Hightower's neck. With Karroway's help, he climbs onto the ladder, then looks down at Allysia. She's holding onto a sconce and reaching for the ladder, but it's too far away.

Hightower looks up at Karroway and gestures to the sconce that Trickfoot pulled to trigger the trap.

HIGHTOWER

She can't reach the ladder! Try to reset the trap!

Karroway climbs up, tugs on the sconce -- and the surface of the lava rapidly starts to rise.

ALLYSIA

It's getting higher!!

Hightower frowns. Crap.

KARROWAY

You want me to pull it again?

HIGHTOWER

Just leave it! Start climbing! I'll go get her!

Karroway starts up the ladder while Hightower climbs down to Allysia. He offers her his hand, but can't quite reach her. The lava below them is rising fast.

HIGHTOWER

You're gonna have to jump!

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ALLYSIA
You'd better catch me!

HIGHTOWER
Trust me!

ALLYSIA
(groans)
Why did you have to say that?!

With that, she kicks off from the wall and leaps for his outstretched hand. He grabs her wrist, swinging her onto the ladder. Gesturing for her to go first, they quickly start climbing, the lava rising rapidly beneath them.

INT. VAULT - UPPER LEVEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Trickfoot, Razer, and Beldak move aside as the Beast steps forward. The huge masked brute looks up at the closed door... and starts pushing on it.

Nothing happens. He pushes harder. Still nothing. He strains at the limits of his strength, SNORTING like an animal. Trickfoot watches, fists clenched.

TRICKFOOT
You must succeed... You must!

The Beast GRUNTS behind his mask and digs in his heels. The stone floor actually starts to crack under his feet.

But then... very slowly... the door starts to open...

INT. VAULT - AXIS CORRIDOR - DAY

Hightower and Allysia climb to the top of the shaft. Hightower looks down. The lava is right beneath them.

Karroway pushes on the stone slab blocking their escape. It doesn't move. He looks around... and sees that the top step is actually a hole with a METAL LEVER inside.

KARROWAY
There's a lever here!

HIGHTOWER
Pull it!

Karroway reaches into the hole and pulls the lever... and the stone slab starts to move away. He breathes a heavy sigh of relief...

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CONTINUED:

but as soon as he lets go of the lever, the slab moves back into place. He pulls the lever again, this time holding it until the door fully opens.

KARROWAY

Go over me! It's going to close
as soon as I let go!

Allysia grabs hold of Karroway and climbs up the big Dragonborn like he was a ladder. Hightower is right behind her. When they've safely reached the top, Hightower puts his hand out to Karroway.

HIGHTOWER

Come on, big guy!

The lava is almost singeing Karroway's tail now. He releases the lever and quickly scrabbles up as the stone slab starts to close. He grabs Hightower's hand --

INT. VAULT - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

-- and Hightower heaves him up, just as the stone slab closes on his tail. Karroway cries out and tries to pull free, but he's stuck. The slab won't fully close and the lava is still rising. As his tail starts to burn --

-- Hightower grabs Karroway's sword and CHOPS OFF his tail. Karroway ROARS and falls to the ground. His tail drops into the lava and the STONE SLAB SLAMS SHUT.

Allysia hurries to Karroway's side.

ALLYSIA

Are you all right?

KARROWAY

(to Hightower)
You cut off my tail??!!

HIGHTOWER

It'll grow back.

KARROWAY

Eventually!

Just then... they hear a LOW, ECHOING RUMBLE, like stone grinding on stone. They turn toward it. That's when they notice the long corridor that Razer found...

... and the DIM LIGHT glowing from the far end of it.

INT. VAULT - CHAMBER OF THE EYE - DAY

The GRINDING SOUND is the huge doors at the end of the hall being forced open by the Beast. He pushes them far enough apart to slip through, then falls to his knees.

Trickfoot is the first one in. The sight stops him cold.

They are standing inside a LARGE, CIRCULAR ROOM ringed with HUGE MARBLE PILLARS. Inside the ring of pillars are EIGHT STONE SARCOPHAGI arranged in a circle. Each coffin is carved with a depiction of a different ARMORED WARRIOR. In the center of the circle is a raised dais...

... and floating six inches above the dais is a GLOWING YELLOW SPHERE, about the size of a walnut. As Trickfoot and the others approach...

... we see that the sphere is really a GLISTENING YELLOW EYEBALL. THE EYE OF VECNA.

Razer and the others watch Trickfoot cautiously walks up the steps of the dais. The light from his torch causes the Eye's pupil to contract. It's alive.

Trickfoot looks at the Eye. The Eye looks back. Then...

... Trickfoot takes a DAGGER from his belt and raises it to his own eye. He takes a deep breath. Razer and the others watch without flinching. Blood begins SPATTERING the dais at Trickfoot's feet...

... then Trickfoot's severed eye lands with a WET PLOP and rolls down the steps. He has cut out his own eye.

Suddenly -- Karroway BURSTS through the door. Hightower and Allysia are right behind him. Hightower raises his repeating hand crossbow and empties it at Trickfoot.

BELDAK

NO!

Beldak throws himself in front of Trickfoot, raises his hands, and casts a spell. Hightower's arrows are instantly stopped in midair by an INVISIBLE SHIELD.

In a flash, Razer has his sword out and the Beast is ready to thump skulls. The two sides face off.

RAZER

I'm actually glad you made it.
It's going to be so much more
satisfying killing you myself.

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CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

You'll have your chance. But
Trickfoot dies first.

Trickfoot CHUCKLES softly, his back still to everyone.
We see his hand reach out... and pick up the Eye of
Vecna. The moment he touches it --

-- the big doors SLAM SHUT, sealing everyone inside. A
SLIGHT TREMOR begins to build. The floor TREMBLES.

TRICKFOOT

"Trickfoot" was merely the name
given to this flimsy mortal body
my soul was reborn into. You may
call me...

He turns... and we see that he has placed the Eye of
Vecna in his recently emptied eye socket and it has
instantly become a part of him. He smiles.

TRICKFOOT

.... Lord Vecna the Undying.

Hightower and Karroway gape at him, then exchange a look.
WTF?? But before they can do more...

... the lid of the sarcophagus next to Allysia starts to
move. A SKELETAL HAND reaches out of the coffin, pushing
the lid aside. The bad guys are as surprised by this as
the good guys, all except for Trickfoot.

TRICKFOOT

I believe you'll recall me telling
you that there were eight high
priests sealed in the Vault to
protect the Eye for all time.

Then another sarcophagus starts to OPEN. And ANOTHER.

TRICKFOOT

We appear to have awakened them.

Trickfoot raises Malanthius' staff. The RUNE STARTS TO
GLOW and a familiar WARPING EFFECT appears around it.
Razer, Beldak, and the Beast all quickly join Vecna on
the dais and touch the staff.

HIGHTOWER

They're 'porting out!

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CONTINUED: (2)

Hightower draws his flamesword and races up the steps of the dais, but as he reaches the top, there's a FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT and his sword passes through empty air. The villains have TELEPORTED to safety.

It's not until they're gone that Hightower realizes... he's holding his flamesword. The one he dropped in the lava pit. Karroway and Allysia eye it, nonplussed.

KARROWAY

I thought you dropped that.

HIGHTOWER

I thought I did too...

Allysia gives the flamesword an uneasy look.

ALLYSIA

Where did you get that sword...?

HIGHTOWER

Can we deal with this other thing first?

Karroway and Allysia turn to see that ALL EIGHT SARCOPHAGI are now open. And as the ROOM TREMBLES...

... EIGHT SKELETAL WARRIORS emerge from their tombs. They are clad in rusty armor, their fleshless bodies skittering with insects and dangling with dry cobwebs. They wield a variety of weapons -- SWORDS, AXES, and SPEARS. There's even an archer with BOW AND ARROW.

Our heroes are trapped in the middle. As the Skeletons close in around them, Hightower suddenly has a thought --

He raises the medallion around his neck and shows it to a SKELETON WITH A HORNED HELMET, the apparent leader.

HIGHTOWER

See this? We're friends! We --

The Skeleton Leader lashes out with his sword, knocking the medallion out of Hightower's hand. So much for that.

The Skeletons ATTACK. They're surprisingly strong, incredibly fast, and our heroes are outnumbered. It's all they can do to defend themselves against the undead onslaught. Even when limbs are chopped off, the Skeletons just pick up their weapons and keep fighting.

Then Karroway inhales deeply... and BREATHES FIRE at the Skeletons, sweeping them with his built-in flamethrower.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Several Skeletons catch fire, their dry rags burning fast... but the flames do not harm them. The burning Skeletons keep fighting, just as fierce as before.

HIGHTOWER

Thanks, Hack. That's just great.
Now they're on fire.

KARROWAY

Sorry!

As the battle rages, TINY CRACKS APPEAR IN THE FLOOR, radiating out from the dais. The SHAKING INTENSIFIES, knocking Hightower off his feet. A Skeleton Axeman leaps at him, but Hightower swings his flamesword, chopping the Skeleton in half. Just then, a Skeleton Swordsman attacks. As Hightower turns to it --

-- the Axeman grabs his ankle. It's been cut in half, but is still "alive." Hightower chops off its head, then quickly grabs its shield to block the Swordsman's attack.

The cracks in the floor are SPREADING. Huge sections rise up, others drop. The whole room is coming apart.

ALLYSIA

We have to get out of here!

HIGHTOWER

I'm open to suggestions!!

The shifting floor is causing the very pillars of the room to CRUMBLE. Hightower throws Allysia out of the way, just as one of them comes CRASHING DOWN.

Without the supporting pillars, the whole ceiling starts to give way. Karroway is fighting a Skeleton and sees a HUGE CHUNK OF CEILING start to come down. He pushes the Skeleton away and dives for cover as rubble comes CRASHING DOWN. The Skeleton is pulverized beneath it.

Then, as the dust clears, Allysia notices something unexpected -- sunlight. There's a GAPING HOLE in the ceiling... and the way the pillars and rubble have fallen, there's now a pile of debris leading up to it.

Allysia knocks a Skeleton's head off with her mace and starts climbing the rubble pile. Hightower sees her.

HIGHTOWER

What are you doing??

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ALLYSIA

You said you were open to
suggestions!

Hightower sees what she's doing and calls to Karroway:

HIGHTOWER

Hack! We're leaving!

He and Karroway begin a fighting retreat toward the pile of debris, still dodging CHUNKS OF FALLING CEILING.

Suddenly, the floor shifts and the pillar that Hightower and Karroway are climbing starts to roll. Hightower slips, but Karroway grabs him. The Skeletons' bony fingers can't hold onto the smooth marble and they fall. One plummets all the way to the floor and SHATTERS.

Hightower and Karroway quickly catch up to Allysia. They scrabble up the rubble pile together, each one helping the other. Then Hightower looks back down...

... and sees that the Skeleton Leader and two Warriors are still climbing up the debris pile after them.

Karroway emerges from the hole in the ceiling first, then reaches down to help the others...

EXT. VAULT - ROOF - DAY

... only to discover that the rooftop is CRUMBLING under their feet. And there's no way for them to climb down.

Suddenly, the entire structure starts to fall. Remember how the Vault rose up magically out of the gorge? Well, now it's plummeting back into it. The walls split open and the whole mess is crashing down the mountainside.

Just then, the Skeletons reach the rooftop. Hightower raises his sword and tries to fight them off.

Then Karroway spots a possibility for escape. The Vault is falling straight down, so they will pass right by the ledge where they entered. It's too high to jump now, but as the structure falls, it's getting closer and closer...

KARROWAY

Come on!

Karroway and Allysia run toward the edge of the rooftop. Hightower stalls the Skeletons to give them a head start, then runs after them. The Skeletons give chase, as --

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DAY

Karroway and Allysia jump. It's a twenty-foot drop and even with the snow to cushion their fall, it's a hard landing. Hightower is right behind them. He leaps --

-- just as the rooftop drops past the ledge. He lands in the snow next to his friends, but the Skeletons miss the jump and ride the Vault to the bottom of the gorge...

... where the building EXPLODES IN A MASSIVE CLOUD OF DUST. The ground SHUDDERS from the impact and the sound of the CRASH ECHOES like thunder in the mountain pass.

After a long beat... silence. The frozen wind HOWLS. Hightower looks at Karroway. Karroway looks to Allysia. Allysia turns to Hightower. They're alive.

HIGHTOWER

Holy shit...

Then... RUUUMMBLE. They look up. The heavy snow on the peaks above them has broken loose and is starting to slide down the mountainside. It's an AVALANCHE.

It's too late to get out of the way. Hightower spots a boulder and rushes toward it. He grabs hold of the rock and reaches out to Allysia. She grabs hold as well --

-- and then the WALL OF SNOW LANDS LIKE A GIANT FIST. Karroway is SWEPT AWAY and then everything is white.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DAY (LATER)

Aftermath. Steep black mountains. Clear blue sky. Somewhere, the distant SCREECH of a hawk.

Below, a smooth plain of deep snow has filled the mountain pass. All appears to be still. Then:

A HAND appears from beneath the snow. It's Hightower. He struggles free, spits snow, gasping for breath. He turns and sees Allysia. She's already partially freed herself from the snow and helps him to his feet.

They look around, but see nothing but smooth white snow. Karroway is nowhere to be seen.

HIGHTOWER

Hack! Hack!

Only the ICY WIND calls back.

EXT. GRIFF MOUNTAINS - TWO PEAKS GORGE - DUSK

Hightower probes at the snow with a long tree branch, looking for some sign of his friend. He looks like he's been doing this for awhile. Allysia is helping, but eyes the setting sun, uneasy. The wind blows stronger.

ALLYSIA

It's going to be dark soon.

He doesn't respond. She approaches. A beat.

ALLYSIA

We have to get back to the monastery. They have to know what's happened.

HIGHTOWER

So go. I'm not leaving without him.

She puts a hand on his shoulder. He turns to her, angry.

HIGHTOWER

I can't leave without him.

(beat)

He didn't even want to be here.

She sees the anguish on his face, but before she can say anything, he pulls away and continues to search. Then...

Something stirs in the snow behind them. It's Karroway. The big Dragonborn staggers drunkenly to his feet, looks around... and falls right back down. Hightower and Allysia hear the CRUNCH and turn.

HIGHTOWER

Hack!

They hurry to Karroway's side. It takes both of them to steady him on his feet. He blinks at them, dazed.

KARROWAY

What happened...?

(realizing)

My tail hurts.

HIGHTOWER

I'll explain later. Come on.

Hightower and Allysia guide their friend away...

EXT. MONASTERY - DUSK

Karroway is walking on his own as they reach the hilltop overlooking the monastery. But as they climb it...

... they see smoke in the sky. Allysia goes pale and runs ahead, Hightower and Karroway close behind. When they reach the top, their fears are confirmed.

The monastery has been attacked. Smoke pours from the tower. Bloodied bodies are strewn in the snow.

INT. MONASTERY - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

The great wooden door has been splintered open. Hightower, Karroway, and Allysia enter, weapons drawn.

The main hall has been the sight of a pitched battle. The walls are scorched. Dead Guardians lie everywhere.

Hightower and the others cautiously investigate. They find a DEAD YETI among the bodies, riddled with arrows. There are more dead Yetis as they continue to search.

ALLYSIA

Yetis never attack like this.
They'll protect their homes, but
they'd rather hide than fight...

HIGHTOWER

It was the Cultists.
(off her look)
Their sorcerer must have used some
sort of charm spell to force the
Yetis to attack.

She turns on him, angry.

ALLYSIA

You said the Cultists hadn't seen
the map!

HIGHTOWER

They didn't. Trickfoot must have
left a trail for them to follow.

KARROWAY

We didn't keep him against his
will. Why didn't he just run away
and tell them what he knew?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

Why would he? We were taking him right where he wanted to be. And Razer could safely hang back until Trickfoot needed him.

ALLYSIA

"Trickfoot." You mean Lord Vecna.
(off their looks)
You brought Lord Vecna himself
into my monastery.

HIGHTOWER

Hey, you didn't know who he was either! I'd think you people would be better at figuring that stuff out than the two of us!

KARROWAY

I didn't even know Vecna was a gnome. I thought he was human.

ALLYSIA

He was. The gnome must be his avatar on the material plane. Now all he needs is the Hand and his power will be completely restored.

HIGHTOWER

The Hand's been lost for a thousand years --

ALLYSIA

And the Eye gives whoever wears it the ability to see where the Hand is. Do you understand now?
(off his look)
The Eye will lead them straight to the Hand. That's why they needed to find it first.

Allysia shudders with impotent rage.

ALLYSIA

You have no idea what you've done here. If you'd listened to me and gone home when I gave you the chance --

HIGHTOWER

Razer's party would have attacked anyway and you'd be dead too.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIGHTOWER (CONT'D)

Vecna still would have gotten the Eye. Everything would have happened exactly the same way!

KARROWAY

Not everything.

(off his look)

Mal would still be alive.

Hightower glares at him, but says nothing. Karroway holds his look. Hightower angrily storms outside.

EXT. MONASTERY - TOWER - NIGHT

Hightower sits on the roof, gazing at the moonlit snowscape. He unwraps the cloth from around his wrist, revealing Razer's mark. He looks at it for a beat...

... then he hears a GRUNT and looks down. Karroway is climbing up the wall toward him. The big guy isn't quite as agile as Hightower and needs a hand to reach the top.

HIGHTOWER

What are you doing, you big oaf?

KARROWAY

Looking for you!

HIGHTOWER

I took the stairs.

He gestures... and CAMERA REVEALS that there's a door behind him. Karroway groans and sits down next to him. For a long beat, neither of them speaks. Then:

HIGHTOWER

What do you want me to say?
You're right. I let it get
personal and Mal paid the bill.

KARROWAY

He knew the risks.

HIGHTOWER

No he didn't. None of us did.

(beat)

We had a traitor with us.
Trickfoot had already betrayed us
once. You tried to warn me, but I
wanted it too badly to listen.

Hightower eyes Karroway for a beat, reluctant. Then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

I've heard the old-timers call it "gold blindness." All the light shining off those piles of treasure gets in your eyes and you can't see the dangers anymore.

(off his look)

That's why I rushed the Codex job. We never should have gone in there without a spellcaster. What happened to you was my fault too.

Karroway doesn't know what to say. Hightower looks down at the bodies in the frozen courtyard below. A beat.

KARROWAY

Don't take this the wrong way, but this "gold blindness" sounds like a lot of crap. Just a nice way of saying you're selfish, really.

HIGHTOWER

In the slave pens, you learn to watch out for yourself. You see something you want, you take it fast or someone beats you to it. Eat or starve. Live or die.

KARROWAY

You haven't been in the slave pens for a long time.

Hightower studies the brand on his arm. Then:

KARROWAY

That's all in the past, Ray. The only way he can own you now is if you let him.

Hightower considers this, then looks at the mark on his arm. After a beat, he drops the strip of cloth off the roof. He watches as it's carried off by the wind...

EXT. MONASTERY - COURTYARD - NIGHT

A LIGHT SNOW has started to fall. Allysia kneels next to one of the bodies and whispers a blessing. It's Father Monahan. Hightower and Karroway approach.

HIGHTOWER

Can any of them be resurrected?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

No. The bodies aren't intact.
The Yetis have been feasting.

She stands and faces them. She looks tired.

KARROWAY

Is there anyone you can reach out
to for help?

ALLYSIA

I've already been in telepathic
contact with the Justiciar of my
order. He can send every Paladin
at his command, but where to? We
have no idea where Vecna is or
what direction he's headed.

Just then, the hilt of Hightower's flamesword starts to
subtly glow. Nobody notices...

HIGHTOWER

We can't just sit here and let
them get away. We have to do
something.

ALLYSIA

When did you start caring?

HIGHTOWER

When they betrayed me, killed my
friend, and left me for dead.

ALLYSIA

The whole world's at stake and all
you care about is getting revenge?

Before he can answer, a LOW, VIBRATING HUM begins to
build from his sword, getting louder and louder. It's
glowing brighter. Everyone gives it a surprised look.

A beat. Hightower warily reaches for the hilt...

KARROWAY

Are you crazy? Don't touch it!

HIGHTOWER

It's not going to hurt me.

Karroway doesn't look convinced. Hightower grabs the
hilt... and is instantly seized with a jolt of pain, like
an electric shock shooting up his arm. He grimaces in
agony, but can't let go. And to everyone's dismay...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

... the hilt of the sword begins to CHANGE SHAPE, glowing orange as if melting, reforming, then cooling down to reveal that the basket of the sword has taken the form of a bearded face with two horns jutting from its forehead.

Hightower draws the sword and sees that the BLADE IS DIFFERENT AS WELL. It is rippled, with a vein of gold running down the center. Hightower raises the sword...

... and points it at Allysia. Her hand goes to her mace, but Karroway stops her from drawing it. After a beat, Hightower directs the tip of the sword away from her...

... or more correctly, the sword directs itself. It's clear from the look on Hightower's face that he may be holding the sword, but the sword is steering his hand.

It comes to a stop, aiming straight out like a divining rod pointing toward water. Hightower's breath catches.

HIGHTOWER

Vecna's that way.

Karroway and Allysia give an astonished look. Then:

KARROWAY

Ray... I think it's time to tell everyone where you got the sword.

INT. MONASTERY - GRAND HALL - NIGHT

The flamesword rests on a table. Our heroes are gathered around the fireplace. Hightower gazes into the flames.

HIGHTOWER

About ten years ago, I fell in with some weapons smugglers in Hepmonaland. The natives warned us that we'd be passing through plague lands, but we didn't listen. We all contracted it. I was the only one who survived.

(beat)

I was unconscious with fever. I don't know how long. At least a few days, judging by the stink of the corpses when I came to.

He pauses, haunted by the memories. After a beat, he turns and gestures to the flamesword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

When I woke up... there it was.

Karroway and Allysia look at him, nonplussed.

KARROWAY

That's... all there is to it?

ALLYSIA

Someone just gave it to you? You don't know who?

Hightower hesitates, reluctant to share more. But then:

HIGHTOWER

While I was out... I had a dream.
Only it was more than a dream.

(beat)

There was a man. He was big. He had pale skin and his eyes were red. Like a vampire's.

(off their looks)

I saw his face in nightmares for a long time after that. I've never told anyone about him because I never wanted to see it again.

(beat)

But in the dream, he gave me the sword.

Allysia leans forward, suddenly intent. The others can see it on her face: this all means something to her.

ALLYSIA

Come with me.

INT. MONASTERY - LIBRARY - NIGHT

The walls are lined with HIGH SHELVES OF ANCIENT TOMES. Allysia stands on a ladder to reach a LEATHER-BOUND BOOK. Hightower and Karroway watch, curious.

ALLYSIA

Do you remember anything else from the dream?

HIGHTOWER

Just the same crap I always dream about. There was a big mountain shaped like a skull, a bashful succubus...

(off their looks)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER (CONT'D)

You guys don't have the bashful
succubus dream?

Allysia climbs down the ladder and quickly flips through the book. She finds the page she's looking for and pushes it across the table to Hightower.

It's a terrifying illustration of a TALL MAN in black armor with long black hair. His skin is pale. His eyes are blood-red. His teeth are sharp.

In his hand, the man holds a sword with a rippled blade and a basket shaped like a leering, bearded face.
Hightower blanches at the sight.

HIGHTOWER

That's him.

KARROWAY

(to Allysia)

Who is it?

Allysia gives them an excited look.

ALLYSIA

Kas the Bloody-Handed. That sword
is the Sword of Kas. The weapon
that destroyed Vecna.

Karroway eyes the image, dubious. Kas is scary-looking.

KARROWAY

That's Kas? The hero who betrayed
Vecna and saved the world?

ALLYSIA

Kas was no hero. And he certainly
didn't save the world on purpose.

As they look at the picture of Kas in the book, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT (10,000 YEARS AGO)

Now the picture has come to life. KAS sits atop a huge black steed, looking down upon a ROARING INFERNO that was once a majestic walled city. The fire reaches beyond the city, covering the land, just as in Hightower's dream...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA (V.O.)
He was a bloodthirsty bastard,
Vecna's most trusted general.

EXT. ROTTED TOWER - NIGHT (10,000 YEARS AGO)

THOUSANDS OF EMACIATED CAPTIVES are marched in chains, driven by UNDEAD WARRIORS on horseback. The prisoners are men and women, young and old alike. None have been spared. Even the mercy of death has been denied them.

The slave caravan stretches for miles. It weaves across the blasted landscape toward a TWISTED TOWER, an immense structure, born of darkness and evil.

ALLYSIA (V.O.)
Vecna's power over death made him
all but invincible.

INT. ROTTED TOWER - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT (10,000 YEARS AGO)

A dark room, dimly lit with magical light, dominated by a throne adorned with giant spider legs. A DECREPIT FIGURE stands at a window, looking down at the slave caravan.

We only see glimpses of this figure. A withered hand. Two yellow eyes. VECNA.

ALLYSIA (V.O.)
For a thousand years, his legions
of the undead destroyed every army
that stood against him. He would
have enslaved the entire world...
(beat)
... if Kas had not betrayed him.

Vecna turns and sees Kas enter, his sword in hand. Kas' blood-red eyes glare and he bares his pointed teeth.

ALLYSIA (V.O.)
But Kas was every bit as consumed
by evil as Vecna was. The only
reason he turned against him was
because he wanted the Spidered
Throne for himself.

Vecna launches himself at Kas, casting dark magic. Kas raises his sword attacks, their collision causing a TERRIBLE EXPLOSION OF LIGHT AND MAGIC as we --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MONASTERY - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Hightower and Karroway listen to Allysia's story.

ALLYSIA

When he attacked Vecna, the power of the sword destroyed them both. Vecna's soul went to the Nine Hells and Kas was banished to the Plane of Ash.

HIGHTOWER

But how could I have had a dream about him when this is the first time I've ever seen him?

ALLYSIA

It wasn't a dream. You were close to death and he called your soul to him. And if he gave you his sword, that can only mean one thing: you're his champion.

(beat)

He chose you to slay Vecna.

Hightower is dumbfounded. A stunned beat.

HIGHTOWER

Why me??

KARROWAY

You're just special, I guess.

HIGHTOWER

But this was ten years ago!

ALLYSIA

Time is meaningless across the planes. Kas must have seen that your path was destined to cross with Vecna's and gave you the weapon you'd need to destroy him.

(off his look)

You said you wanted to do something.

HIGHTOWER

I meant deliver a message or something! Do I look like the guy who's going to wield the Sword of Kas and destroy Vecna?!

Allysia hesitates. She considers lying, but can't do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

You're not the person I would have picked. Frankly, I'd be a lot more confident about this if I could do it myself. But nobody else can even touch the Sword.

(beat)

Kas chose you.

HIGHTOWER

Well, clearly he made a mistake!

Allysia is taken aback. A beat. Hightower sighs.

HIGHTOWER

Look, I want Razer and Trickfoot stopped as badly as you, maybe more, but I'm not as excited about getting myself killed as you are. If they find the Hand and Vecna comes to destroy the world, then you can count me out of whatever comes next. Sword or no sword.

Karroway turns to him with a serious look.

KARROWAY

If Vecna regains his powers, he's not coming to destroy the world. He'll be coming to enslave it.

(off his look)

If there's even a chance that you can stop that, don't you have to at least try?

Hightower eyes him sharply, then glances at the brand on his wrist. Allysia sees the uncertainty on his face.

ALLYSIA

It doesn't matter whether you think you can do it or not. You're all we have.

He looks at the image of Kas in the book and suppresses a shudder. His eyes fall to the sword in Kas' hand.

HIGHTOWER

Maybe it won't come down to that.

(off their looks)

I'll tell you something that's not in your book. This sword's alive. And it knows where Vecna is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KARROWAY

(realizing)

Then we can use it to find him.
If we hurry, maybe we catch them
before they get to the Hand.

A beat. They exchange a look. Weighing their chances.

ALLYSIA

They have a two-day head start on
us.

Just then, we hear the O.S. CRY OF A HAWK. Hightower
goes to the window and looks out...

HIGHTOWER

They don't have one of those.

Hightower and Allysia join him at the window... and see
the Roc swooping down out of the sky. The great bird has
survived the Cultists' attack and returned to its home.
It lands atop its roost and CRIES OUT.

EXT. MONASTERY - DAWN

Packs of supplies have been roped to the Roc's back.
Hightower and Karroway finish tying them down. Allysia
fits a bridle over the great bird's beak.

Karroway eyes the Roc, nervous. Hightower notices.

HIGHTOWER

You're not afraid of heights.

KARROWAY

Heights, no. Giant birds, yes.

Hightower smiles at his friend's expense and climbs onto
the Roc's back. Karroway reluctantly follows.

Allysia takes the reins and the Roc leaps into the sky.
Hightower draws the Sword of Kas and it directs his hand,
pointing to the horizon. With the glowing sword guiding
the way, Allysia steers the Roc over the mountaintops...

EXT. THE BARRENS - DAY

CAMERA FINDS a party of four on horseback, tear-assing
across rolling grasslands. As we get closer...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... we see that it is Trickfoot and his cohorts. They are all wearing dusty riding cloaks and look like they've been at it hard for days. The horses froth at the mouth.

Trickfoot reins in his mount and they all stop on a high hilltop. Trickfoot looks off to the horizon...

TRICKFOOT'S POV

-- and the magical sight of the Eye ZOOMS across the landscape, over rivers, through hillsides, to a DARK CAVERN... where the HAND OF VECNA waits to be discovered.

BACK TO SCENE

Trickfoot nods, pleased with what he has seen.

TRICKFOOT

We've made excellent time. You've guided us well.

RAZER

I live to serve, my lord. We should rest the horses soon.

TRICKFOOT

To the Abyss with the horses.
We'll ride until their legs break.
(off his look)
I sense something. An old enemy grows close...

RAZER

Hightower?

He looks back, sees nothing. He eyes Trickfoot, curious. Trickfoot ignores him, a far-off look in his eye...

TRICKFOOT

You've planned well, Kas. But this time, you're too late.

He snaps the reins and rides off. Razer, Beldak, and the Beast spur their mounts after him.

EXT. FOREST - HERO CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Hightower and Karroway are eating dinner around a campfire. Allysia joins them, carrying several parchment scrolls. She sits down and spreads one of them out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

I might have figured out where they're going.

It's a map. Hightower and Karroway watch as she traces a path with her finger that leads to an area of marshland.

ALLYSIA

Their trail has been straightening out. If they keep heading in this direction, they'll reach the Cold Marshes tomorrow.

HIGHTOWER

Cold Marshes? Isn't that where King Somebody-or-Other fought a dragon or something...?

ALLYSIA

Miro the Paladin-King. There were rumors that he used the Hand of Vecna in battle against the black dragon Kolloman.

HIGHTOWER

That's what I just said. What's your point?

ALLYSIA

The sword telling us where Vecna is doesn't help us if we can't get to the Hand before he does.

HIGHTOWER

Which is why I advocate we swoop down on him at dawn and stick that sword up his ass.

ALLYSIA

His sorcerer is too strong for us to fight him alone.

HIGHTOWER

So you want to fly ahead of them, find the lair of a dragon who died a thousand years ago, and try to get to the Hand before they do?

KARROWAY

What if the Hand isn't there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALLYZIA

If it's not there, we lose. If we
fight them, we lose. If we do
nothing, we lose.

(off their looks)

At least this is a chance.

Hightower and Karroway exchange a look.

EXT. FOREST - HERO CAMPSITE - NIGHT (LATER)

The campfire is out. Karroway stands watch while Allysia
and Hightower sleep. Hightower is dreaming, restless...

INT. ROTTED TOWER - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT (DREAM)

Suddenly, Hightower finds himself in Vecna's palace.
He's alone with the Spidered Throne. His hand goes to
the Sword as he looks around, his footsteps ECHOING...

TRICKFOOT (O.S.)

He's using you. You must realize
that.

Hightower whirls. Trickfoot now sits on the Spidered
Throne. He wasn't there a moment ago.

TRICKFOOT

Kas is banished to the Plane of
Ash. He can't harm me himself, so
he gave you the Sword to do his
bidding. You're his pawn in this.
A mere instrument of his revenge.

HIGHTOWER

I'm nobody's pawn. Kas and I just
happen to have a shared interest
in how this turns out.

Trickfoot smiles, amused. His yellow eye glints.

TRICKFOOT

Let me make you a counterproposal.

(beat)

Join me. You wield Kas' sword.
Why not take his place at my side?

HIGHTOWER

And be your pawn instead of his?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Trickfoot stands. Hightower backs away, ready to draw the Sword, but Trickfoot makes no move against him.

TRICKFOOT

Kas can't give you what you really want. I can.

(off his look)

You want power. You'd never be so crass as to admit it, but isn't that what you're really after? You seek wealth only as a means to an end. What you really seek is the power to be master of your own fate.

Hightower is taken aback. Trickfoot has nailed it.

TRICKFOOT

It's an understandable desire, given where you came from. How might your life have been different if you'd had the power to stop your father from selling you into slavery? Or the power to save your sister?

(beat)

You learned at a very young age that there are only two kinds of people in the world. Those who have control over their destinies... and those who do not.

Trickfoot crosses to the window. He gestures for Hightower to join him. Hightower looks out...

... and is stunned to see the Free City of Greyhawk in flames. Its people are being driven out in chains by Undead Warriors, enslaved. This is what he was seeing in his earlier nightmare. Trickfoot eyes Hightower.

TRICKFOOT

It's a simple choice, Raven. Where would you rather be? Up here? Or down there?

Hightower looks down at the oppressed people of Greyhawk, his heart in his throat. After a long beat...

HIGHTOWER

You shouldn't have shown me this.

(off his look)

I've been down there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIGHTOWER (CONT'D)

And you know what those people are thinking? They're thinking that nobody should be up here.

He turns to Trickfoot and draws the Sword, backing Trickfoot into the dais of the Spidered Throne.

TRICKFOOT

(snarling)

You can't defeat me...

HIGHTOWER

Actually, for the first time, I'm thinking maybe I can. Otherwise, why would you offer me anything?

TRICKFOOT

You'll destroy yourself if you try. That sword can only kill me if its wielder's soul is truly lawful and good. And you don't fit that description.

(off his look)

Kas didn't know. That's why he failed and it's why you'll fail too. If you strike me with it, your soul will spend eternity on the Plane of Ash, same as him.

HIGHTOWER

At least I'll have company.

He swings the Sword at Trickfoot's head, but Trickfoot raises his hand and casts a BLAST OF SHADOW ENERGY that blows Hightower off his feet.

Before he can stand, Trickfoot is looming over him... but the gnome's face is changing. His flesh is WITHERING, his skin DECAYING. Trickfoot raises his hands and another blast of shadow energy tears Hightower apart --

EXT. FOREST - HERO CAMPSITE - NIGHT

-- then he startles awake, heart pounding. After a beat, Hightower notices Karroway looking at him.

KARROWAY

Same bad dream?

HIGHTOWER

More or less. I saw what's going to happen if we lose.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER (CONT'D)
 (off his look)
 Let's not lose.

Karroway nods. Hightower settles into his bedroll and looks at the stars. There will be no more sleep tonight.

EXT. FOREST - VILLAIN CAMPSITE - DAWN

The Beast is packing their gear onto the backs of the weary horses at first light. Trickfoot is adjusting his horse's stirrups when Beldak rushes out of the trees.

BELDAK
 My lord! Come quickly!

EXT. FOREST - HILLTOP - DAWN

Razer stands with a bow slung on his shoulder, looking at something in the distance. Beldak quickly leads Trickfoot to his side. Razer points to the sky.

RAZER
 That bird looks familiar, doesn't it?

It's the Roc. Barely a spot against the early morning sky, but there's no mistaking it. Trickfoot sneers.

TRICKFOOT
 Destroy them.

Beldak nods and quickly moves to oblige. From his pouch, he takes a SMALL LEATHER SACK and a CANDLE. He kneels, closes his eyes, and murmurs an incantation...

The LEAVES begin to rustle. The WIND picks up, gathering speed and force until the AIR AROUND BELDAK SWIRLS as if he is in the eye of a miniature hurricane. He places the candle in the sack, tosses it in the air, and --

WHAM! A WHIRLING VORTEX OPENS and a nearly invisible ELEMENTAL BEAST erupts from it as if shot from a cannon.

The backblast nearly knocks Beldak to the ground. Razer and Trickfoot shield their eyes from the flying debris, watching as Beldak's AERIAL SERVANT races into the sky...

EXT. SKY - DAWN

Allysia is guiding the Roc through the clouds with Hightower and Karroway riding behind her. Suddenly, she hears a LOUD WHOOSHING SOUND from below, looks down...

... and sees the AERIAL SERVANT rushing straight at them. Clouds are torn apart as it blasts through them. We catch a glimpse of a DEMONIC FACE and an ETHEREAL FORM streaking through the sky like a heat-seeking missile.

Allysia yanks the reins hard and the Aerial Servant rushes past directly in front of them. The Roc SHRIEKS --

-- and is caught in the Aerial Servant's wake. The panicked bird tumbles out of the sky. Allysia and Hightower hold on, but Karroway loses his grip --

-- and goes flying. At the last second, he grabs a fistful of the bird's huge feathers and stops his fall.

HIGHTOWER

Hack!

The Roc recovers and swoops away as fast as its wings will carry it, Karroway hanging on for dear life. Hightower looks back and sees the Aerial Servant in the distance, coming back around for another attack.

HIGHTOWER

Whatever it is, it's coming back!

Allysia urges the Roc on, but there's no hope of outrunning the Servant. Hightower puts his hand out to Karroway, but he's out of reach and before they know it --

-- the Aerial Servant is on them again. Allysia puts the Roc into a steep dive and it BLOWS BY WITH A THUNDERING BOOM. They're like a single-engine prop plane being buzzed by a jet fighter travelling at the speed of sound.

The Roc sweeps low, skimming above treetops shrouded with mist. Allysia sees the Aerial Servant preparing to attack from above. It comes SCREAMING BACK DOWN AT THEM, faster than ever. It's going to ram them.

ALLYSIA

Here it comes!

Hightower turns to Karroway, who's clinging to the bird with one hand, his feet dangling over empty space.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

Hang on!!

KARROWAY

WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M DOING??

The Aerial Servant streaks straight through the great bird's right wing. The Roc CRIES OUT in pain and goes spinning out of control. The adventurers cling to the tumbling Roc as it falls helplessly out of the sky.

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAWN

The Roc CRASHES through a tangled canopy of treetops, SNAPPING off branches, careening in like a meteorite.

It SPLASHES DOWN in a shallow bog, sending up a huge geyser of stagnant water, tumbling end over end, and sending our heroes flying in every direction before finally coming to rest in a dying, crippled heap.

EXT. SKY - DAWN

The Aerial Servant, seeing that its work is complete, swirls in on itself... and vanishes as if it never was.

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAWN

The crippled Roc weakly CRIES OUT, futilely tries to flap its broken wings, then collapses back into the bog.

Not far away, Hightower staggers to his feet, bloody and soaking wet. He sees Karroway on the shore, painfully sitting up. At first, he sees no sign of Allysia...

Then he spots her, facedown in the water, unmoving.

HIGHTOWER

Allysia!!

Hightower splashes to her side and quickly drags her out of the bog. Her body is limp in his arms. Once on the shore, he lays her down. Blood trickles from her hair.

Hightower puts an ear to her chest, listens. He slaps her across the face, trying to rouse her. No reaction. He slaps her again, harder. Karroway rushes over.

HIGHTOWER

What's she got in the bag?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Karroway quickly empties Allysia's pouch. Hightower rifles through its contents. He finds several GLASS VIALS. He chooses one, uncorks it, sniffs what's inside.

He brings the vial to Allysia's mouth, but the potion just dribbles down her chin.

HIGHTOWER

Come on, drink it!

He pours more of the potion and holds her mouth shut, forcing her to swallow...

... and she instantly starts COUGHING. Her eyes open. Hightower breathes a sigh of relief. Karroway smiles and takes her hand, comforting her as she catches her breath.

After a moment, she looks up at them and sees the vial in Hightower's hand. She puts a weak hand on his.

ALLYSIA

Thank you...

Just then, the Roc CRIES OUT again. Allysia gives it a sharp look. It's still alive, but suffering horribly. Allysia tries to stand up, but is too weak.

ALLYSIA

Help me up.

(off their looks)

It's suffering. I can help.

Hightower helps her to her feet. She cautiously approaches the Roc. It lets out a MOURNFUL CRY and tries to move away, but can't. Its eyes are wide, frightened.

ALLYSIA

There's no need to be afraid...

The Roc seems calmed by her voice. She kneels next to its head and strokes its feathers, gazing into its eye.

ALLYSIA

There is no fear where you go.

As Hightower and Karroway watch, a SUBTLE WHITE GLOW appears around Allysia's hand. The bird shudders.

ALLYSIA

No fear.

The Roc lets out a great sigh and is still.

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAY

Hightower, Karroway, and Allysia have salvaged as much of their gear as they can carry and strapped it onto their backs. Allysia has her map scroll out and looks up, gauging their position by the haze-choked sun.

ALLYSIA

This way.

As they trudge off into the swamp, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAY

In a SERIES OF SHOTS, Hightower, Karroway, and Allysia trek across the Cold Marshes. It is a pitiless bog, blanketed in LOW-HANGING MIST. CROCODILES ply the waters and clouds of BITING INSECTS fill the air. Hightower leads the way. Allysia guides them with her maps.

At one point, Hightower motions for the others to stop. He's heard something. He carefully peers ahead...

... and sees a GIANT FROG squatting on a riverbank. It's huge. It must weigh a ton. It has eaten recently. The back leg of a YOUNG DEER juts from its closed mouth.

Hightower gestures for the others to be quiet and our heroes give the creature a wide berth.

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - WATERFALL - DUSK

Hightower leads them along a riverbank. As the sun starts to set, they arrive at the base of a WATERFALL.

ALLYSIA

That's it. The cave behind the waterfall.

They shrug off their heavier gear. Hightower and Karroway remove their cloaks and strap on extra weapons. Allysia strings a bow and shoulders a quiver of arrows.

ALLYSIA

If this was Kolloman's cave, that dragon's been dead for a very long time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

Doesn't mean there's nothing in there. No telling what's moved in since then.

Hightower draws the Sword and takes point. The rocky hillside is easily climbable. Hightower finds a wide ledge leading behind the waterfall and follows it...

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Water DRIPS from the ceiling. Karroway lights two torches. Hightower raises the Sword, using its glow to illuminate the passage. The shadows are dark and deep.

HIGHTOWER

Watch your step in here.

ALLYSIA

Wait.

Allysia takes a pinch of PHOSPHORESCENT MOSS from her pouch, along with several SMALL COINS.

ALLYSIA

Give me some more coins.

Hightower eyes her, uncertain, then forks over what he has. Karroway does the same. Allysia takes the coins, cups them in her hands with the moss, recites some magic words... and the coins begin to GLOW IN HER HANDS.

She tosses the coins out. They CLATTER all over the passage, revealing the terrain ahead. Which includes a DANGEROUS DROP-OFF. Hightower eyes her, dubious.

HIGHTOWER

You're going to pay me back, right?

She ignores him. Karroway hands her a torch and they descend further into the cave...

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - PASSAGES - NIGHT

Hightower, Karroway, and Allysia carefully explore a cave system with branches leading off in various directions. Hightower helps Allysia climb down a rocky incline.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIGHTOWER

You realize that even if the Hand
is in here, we could search these
caves for weeks and not find it.

At the bottom, she loses her footing on some pebbles.

ALLYSIA

I think we're getting close.

She points to the ground. It wasn't loose pebbles that
caused her to slip. The floor is LITTERED WITH BONES.

They shine their lights around, investigating. Remains
of various creatures are scattered everywhere. No intact
skeletons. This is more like a refuse pile. Allysia
raises her torch and finds something of interest.

ALLYSIA

Look at this.

Hightower and Karroway follow her look. Jutting out of a
stalagmite is a HUMAN SKULL WEARING A TARNISHED CROWN.

KARROWAY

King Miro?

HIGHTOWER

Now we know who won.

ALLYSIA

But where's the Hand?

They cautiously continue on...

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - CAVERN - NIGHT

Hightower, Karroway, and Allysia emerge onto the shore of
an underground lake. They can just make out the dark
shadows of huge stalagmites sticking out of the water.
The ground here is littered with bones as well.

Karroway catches a glimpse of something. Out on the
lake, a FAINT GOLDEN GLINT.

KARROWAY

Hold on...

The others follow his look. They see it too... and
something else. With their lights combined, they see
that the huge "stalagmites" sticking out of the water...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... are actually the exposed ribs of an ENORMOUS DRAGON CORPSE. It is half-submerged in the lake, its leathery flesh putrefied and dangling off its bones. Its once-great wings are now in tatters, like a broken umbrella.

HIGHTOWER

Hello, nasty...

ALLYSIA

Look!

She points. Around the dead dragon's neck is a THICK GOLDEN CHAIN, like a huge necklace. And dangling from the end of this necklace, like a charm on a bracelet...

... is the HAND OF VECNA. Severed at the wrist, it is blackened and gnarled, with long, gross fingernails.

Hightower shines the Sword around and sees that there are SEVERAL LARGE ROCKS in the water. One of them is near the dragon's rotting skull, within reach of the Hand.

HIGHTOWER

I'll be right back.

He nimbly steps from one rock to the next, each one taking him closer to the rotting corpse. Soon it looms over him. He raises the Sword's light and takes a moment to appreciate the dead dragon's huge, pearlescent horns.

HIGHTOWER

The horns are in perfect condition. They'd be worth a fortune if we could get them out of here...

ALLYSIA

Focus, please.

As he continues on, Karroway happens to look down, noting the footsteps they've been leaving in the bone pile.

The bones on top are clean and dry. The ones just under the surface are covered in mud and dirt.

KARROWAY

Why are some of these bones covered in mud and some not?

ALLYSIA

The ones on top are probably... more recent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Meanwhile, Hightower has reached the last of the rocks. The Hand is almost within his grasp. As he reaches out:

ALLYSIA

Raven!

He ignores her. His fingertips are about an inch away...

... when suddenly, the dragon's huge, rotted corpse gives a sudden lurch and -- as Hightower and the others watch in horror -- STAGGERS TO ITS FEET. It's still alive.

This is no ordinary dragon. It's a BLACK DRACOLICH. In laymen's terms: An acid-breathing zombie dragon.

The Dracolich rears back to strike. Hightower dives into the water just as it lunges for him. It comes up empty.

Allysia quickly draws her bow and strings an arrow. As she pulls back, the arrow begins to SHIMMER WITH SILVER LIGHT. It's a MAGIC ARROW. She lets it fly...

... and it strikes the Dracolich in the neck. It ROARS in pain and Allysia sends THREE MORE MAGIC ARROWS flying. They all hit. The Dracolich twists in agony...

... then turns toward Allysia and Karroway and SNARLS.

KARROWAY

Oh, crap...

It takes a deep, shuddering breath, then vomits a toxic spray of GREEN ACID. They flee back into the cave --

-- just as the acid SPLATTERS on the shore, SIZZLING and CORRODING everything it touches. The Dracolich ROARS in frustration and staggers out of the lake after them.

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - PASSAGES - NIGHT

Karroway and Allysia run back through the cave, but the Dracolich is faster than it looks. It slithers after them, clambering over rocks, SNARLING and drooling acid.

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - CAVERN - NIGHT

Hightower has swum to shore and hurries out the water. He sees the Dracolich's tail vanish down one of the passages. Its ROAR echoes from seemingly all around...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... and Hightower sees that there is another exit from this cavern. He draws the Sword and rushes toward it.

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - PASSAGES - NIGHT

Karroway and Allysia try to lose the Dracolich in the maze of passages, but it cuts them off. They dash down another tunnel, dart around a corner --

HIGHTOWER

Up here!

-- and see Hightower on a ledge above them. His passage has joined theirs, ten feet up. Karroway gives Allysia a boost and Hightower helps her up, hurriedly guiding her into a narrow crevice. Karroway scrabbles up after her. The Dracolich is about to turn the corner and see them.

HIGHTOWER

Douse the lights!

As Karroway and Allysia put out their torches, Hightower takes an IRON SPIKE from his pack and throws it --

-- just as the Dracolich rounds the corner. The spike CLATTERS LOUDLY, drawing its attention away as Hightower squeezes into the crevice with Karroway and Allysia.

Everyone freezes as the Dracolich approaches. It pauses, confused... then turns down the wrong passage. Our heroes breathe a sigh of relief, hearts racing.

HIGHTOWER

Remember when things used to die
and then they'd just stay dead?

KARROWAY

Not really!

ALLYSIA

It's the Hand! Its power must
have kept it alive all this time!

HIGHTOWER

So if we get the Hand away from
it, will it die?

Allysia starts to answer, but then -- the DRACOLICH SUDDENLY RETURNS, up close and personal. It looks right in at them and ROARS, but can't get its whole head into the crack in the rock. Our heroes are just out of reach.

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CONTINUED:

Hightower drives the Sword into the Dracolich's snout. It recoils in pain and starts TEARING AWAY at the opening with its HUGE CLAWS. Our heroes squeeze further back into the crevice, but the claws are reaching closer...

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a SHIMMERING DARK ARROW strikes the Dracolich in the back. It ROARS, whirling...

... just as Razer shoots another magic arrow at it from his bow. He's crouched on a high ledge, out of sight. The Dracolich angrily looks around for its attacker...

... when Beldak appears, hurling MAGIC MISSILES. The purple bolts SLAM into it, searing its rotted flesh.

Hightower and the others creep back out onto the ledge, watching as Razer and Beldak take on the Dracolich.

HIGHTOWER

Never thought I'd be happy to see
those assholes --

Suddenly, a shadow looms over him. He looks up --

-- and takes the Beast's massive fist right in the jaw. The blow sends him reeling and he falls off the ledge, down to the cave floor ten feet below.

Allysia rushes at the Beast with her mace, but it thuds harmlessly against his muscled back. He turns and swats her aside. She flies through the air, SLAMS into the cave wall, and slumps to the ground, unconscious.

Karroway draws his sword and BREATHES FIRE. The Beast takes the FIERY BLAST right in the face and staggers back, his wooden mask burning. He flings the mask away... finally revealing his face. Or lack thereof.

Where the Beast's head should be, there is instead a GIANT HEAD-SIZED HAND. It is a perfectly normal hand in every regard -- four fingers, a thumb, even fingernails -- only it is jutting up from between his shoulders, the Beast's neck serving as the head-hand's wrist.

Karroway is completely taken aback. The Beast CLENCHES HIS HEAD-HAND and HEADBUTTS Karroway with the giant fist.

Trickfoot watches from a safe distance as Beldak casts another spell, causing DANCING LIGHTS to swirl around the Dracolich's head, drawing its attention away from Razer, who is stealthily creeping up behind it.

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CONTINUED: (2)

The Dracolich angrily BREATHES ACID at Beldak, but the wizard quickly crouches behind a boulder, dodging the corrosive blast. With the Dracolich distracted...

... Razer leaps up onto one of its hind legs and CLIMBS ONTO ITS BACK. He's timed the jump perfectly and lands like an acrobat. Hightower sees this and looks up to Karroway on the ledge above him. Karroway calls down:

KARROWAY

Get the Hand! I can handle this!

Hightower hesitates only a moment, then DASHES TOWARD THE DRACOLICH. The moment he does, the Beast grabs Karroway and DRIVES HIM TO THE GROUND with a single punch.

Hightower tries to duplicate Razer's jump, but fails miserably. The Dracolich swings back toward him unexpectedly and knocks him to the ground.

Suddenly, he's underneath it, dodging its huge feet, trying like hell to avoid getting trampled to death. He rolls out from under, scrabbles to his feet, but gets SLAMMED back to the ground by the Dracolich's tail, as --

-- it bucks like a wild bronco, trying to throw Razer off. Hightower tries rushing in to grab the Hand from off the chain around its neck, but nearly gets squashed.

Meanwhile, Razer is climbing up the Dracolich's bony back, closing on the necklace. Hightower has to get up there, fast. He sees that the Dracolich is moving toward a LARGE FLOWSTONE FORMATION. Hightower nimbly darts up it so that when the Dracolich passes by --

-- he can jump onto its back. He nearly slides right off, but manages to grab hold and stay on.

Razer draws his sword and takes a swipe at Hightower, who ducks the blow and draws as well. They fight with swords and fists on the back of the raging Dracolich.

Meanwhile, Karroway is fighting the Beast, but can't land a blow. The Beast is just dodging, letting Karroway wear himself out. Then the Beast lets a punch land --

-- and grabs hold of Karroway's fist with his head-hand. Karroway cries out as the huge head-hand SQUEEZES DOWN HARD, breaking his knuckles. The Beast still has two free hands and begins pummeling Karroway with them, as --

-- the Dracolich decides to scrape Hightower and Razer off its back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

It crawls into a low passage with HUGE STALACTITES. Hightower and Razer dodge the stalactites, but one of them breaks off, knocking Hightower down --

-- and he slips through the Dracolich's rotted flesh, falling into its rib cage. Razer falls through as well and now they are fighting inside the Dracolich.

Meanwhile, Karroway has taken a horrible beating. He's just circling the Beast, trying to avoid a finishing blow. The Beast presses his attack...

... just as Allysia comes to. Karroway sees her and has a sudden idea. He calls out:

KARROWAY

Shoot the dragon!

Allysia gives him a confused look, then sees him grab a BATTERED SHIELD from among the remains on the floor. She realizes what he's thinking and quickly turns her bow toward the Dracolich. She SHOTS a magic arrow at it --

-- and the Dracolich whirls toward her with a ROAR. She runs, while Karroway circles the Beast. The Beast lands a blow, driving Karroway to his knees. The Beast looms over him, ready to deliver a coup de grâce...

... when the Dracolich suddenly rises up behind it and VOMITS A SPRAY OF ACID. Karroway quickly ducks behind the shield, but the Beast never sees it coming.

The Beast is doused from head-to-toe in the toxic sputum and immediately begins to dissolve. He slumps to his knees, sizzling and smoking, the flesh melting off his body. Within seconds, he is a puddle of smoldering ruin.

Meanwhile, Hightower and Razer are still fighting inside the Dracolich's rib cage. Hightower knocks Razer off his feet and quickly uses the Sword to carve an exit for himself in the Dracolich's hide. As he climbs out...

... Trickfoot sees the glowing Sword of Kas in his hand. His yellow Eye glints with rage at the sight of it.

TRICKFOOT

Damn you Kas...

(to Beldak)

He has the Sword! Destroy him!

Beldak follows his look and readies a spell, forming a FIREBALL in his hands. Hightower doesn't see it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

... but just as Beldak is about to throw the fireball, the Dracolich WHIRLS AROUND. Beldak steps back...

... and stumbles right into the path of the Dracolich's whipping tail. It SWATS Beldak like a bug, flinging him across the cavern. He slams into the cave wall and the fireball in his hands erupts, ENGULFING HIM IN FLAMES.

Meanwhile, Hightower has climbed the Dracolich's spiny back and reaches out for the gold chain around its neck. Razer climbs out of the Dracolich's rib cage, grabbing hold of the chain, just as Hightower lowers the Sword --

-- severing the chain and killing the Dracolich instantly. One second it's thrashing and rampaging, the next it collapses in a shattered heap. Its momentum throws Hightower and Razer to the ground, the dead dragon's huge bones CRASHING DOWN all around them.

Hightower and Razer are both dazed by the fall, but neither of them will let go of the chain that the Hand is on. Swords clash, the two combatants holding onto a chain. Razer yanks it, pulling Hightower off balance --

Just then, Karroway leaps from the ledge above, sword raised. He's about to bring the blade down --

-- when he's suddenly knocked off his feet by a BLAST OF SNOW AND ICE. Beldak isn't quite dead. He's crippled and horribly burned, but has managed to get a spell off.

Razer uses the distraction to land a blow. As Hightower staggers, Razer cuts the chain and grabs the Hand.

Karroway is groaning in pain, his hide covered in frost. Beldak is about to cast another spell... but Allysia sees him and quickly puts her last arrow in his heart.

As Trickfoot watches on from hiding, Hightower and Razer fight amongst the Dracolich's bones for the destiny of the Hand. Allysia is too far away to help, but starts climbing down from the ledge as their swords clash.

RAZER

I'm starting to think I may have
to put you down, my *lince'sa*.

HIGHTOWER

Call me that again.

His sword flashes, driving Razer back. Hightower is driven, focused, refusing to be baited by Razer's taunts.

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CONTINUED: (5)

Razer is forced to retreat from Hightower's relentless onslaught. As Trickfoot watches in dismay, Hightower wrests Razer's sword from his hand. Razer flips a dagger from up his sleeve, but Hightower quickly swats it away.

Hightower swings at Razer's head. Razer stumbles and falls. Hightower rushes at him, sword raised. Razer scrambles away, disarmed and in full retreat. But before Hightower can strike, Razer holds up the Hand of Vecna...

RAZER

You want it?

... and quickly throws it far across the cavern and into a DEEP CREVASSE. Razer sneers.

RAZER

Go fetch!

Hightower turns... as Trickfoot bursts from his hiding place and leaps into the crevasse after the Hand. He falls for only a moment, then he twists his *ring of feather-falling* and begins a gentle descent into the pit.

Razer uses the distraction to get to his feet and start running away. Hightower has a split-second decision: he can either stop Trickfoot or catch Razer. He can only do one... but he hesitates for only an instant.

Then he dashes across the cavern and jumps into the pit.

ALLYSIA

Raven!!

INT. KOLLOMAN'S LAIR - CREVASSE - NIGHT

As Trickfoot gently floats into the pit, he is stunned to look up at see Hightower falling straight at him, Sword raised. Hightower has aimed his jump perfectly and he tackles Trickfoot in midair, stopping his fall.

Now they're both gently floating into the pit, the ring's power holding them both. Trickfoot tries to push him off, but Hightower is about to skewer him with the Sword.

Desperate, Trickfoot takes off the ring. Hightower and Trickfoot instantly plummet to the bottom --

-- and land with a BONE-JARRING IMPACT. For a long beat, neither of them move. They look dead. Then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Trickfoot starts to move. He shudders in pain, blood pouring down his face. He sees Hightower unmoving, looks around... and sees the Hand. It's lying on the other side of pit. He drags his broken body toward it.

Just then, Hightower starts to stir as well. He sees Trickfoot crawling away from him. Then he sees the Sword, out of reach. He staggers to his feet...

... just as Trickfoot reaches the Hand. Trickfoot picks it up, clutches his treasure to his chest... then draws a DAGGER and cuts his own hand off at the wrist.

Hightower has just reached the Sword when Trickfoot cries out in agony. He turns and sees the gnome place the Hand of Vecna to his bloody stump. BLACK TENDRILS snake out of the Hand, reaching into the stump, fusing with it --

-- and then suddenly, there is a BURST OF LIGHT AND POWER. As Hightower watches in astonishment...

... Trickfoot begins to TRANSFORM. His flesh withers and rots. His hair falls out and turns to dust. His body stretches, long and emaciated, leaving no trace of the gnome. His clothes turn to rags and when he stands...

... he is LORD VECNA THE UNDYING. A living corpse.

Vecna smiles hideously, admiring his restored form, basking in his restored power, then turns...

... and sees Hightower standing before him with the Sword of Kas raised, poised for battle. Vecna SNARLS and says something in an ancient and unintelligible dialect.

HIGHTOWER

I'm going to assume that wasn't
your unconditional surrender.

Vecna sneers and points at Hightower with his left hand. A BLAST OF DARK ENERGY erupts from it --

-- but Hightower blocks it with the Sword. He's driven back by the force of the attack, but the Sword ABSORBS VECNA'S SPELL. Vecna raises his other hand, doubling his attack. More SPELL ENERGY tears through the air, but the Sword is Hoovering up everything Vecna throws at him.

Furious, Vecna launches at Hightower and conjures a PHANTASMAL SWORD. The MAGIC BLADES CLASH with an explosive force that nearly knocks the Sword of Kas out of Hightower's hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vecna attacks with a stunning speed, too fast for Hightower to do anything but defend himself and try to hold onto the Sword after each blow.

Vecna slashes at his head, Hightower blocks, and the swords lock. But Vecna is too strong -- Hightower struggles as Vecna presses the locked swords slowly downward toward his face. At the last instant --

-- Hightower twists away and attacks, but Vecna moves away in a blur, almost too fast to see, then whirls and attacks again. Hightower is hopelessly outmatched. He backs away, but Vecna closes in, raining blows on him --

-- and knocks the Sword of Kas out of his hands. He dives to recover it, but not before Vecna hurls a bolt of SHADOW ENERGY at him and strikes him in the back.

Hightower falls to the ground, stricken. His FLESH TURNS PALE, chalky and corpse-like, as the effects of Vecna's spell spread through his body. He screams in agony, back arched. Vecna smiles, a horrible lipless leer.

Then, in SLO-MO, Hightower rolls over and sees the Sword. It's within reach. Vecna raises his phantasmal blade. Hightower wearily closes his eyes, as...

FLASH:

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

... his mind calls back the image of Allysia comforting the Roc in its final moments. She kneels next to its head and strokes its feathers, gazing into its eye...

FLASH:

BACK TO SCENE

Still in SLO-MO, Hightower opens his eyes and grasps the Sword of Kas. The effects of Vecna's spell have spread all over him. His pupils are milky and dead-looking...

FLASH:

EXT. THE COLD MARSHES - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

The Roc's final moments. A SUBTLE WHITE GLOW appears around Allysia's hand as she comforts it. The bird shudders, releases its final breath, and dies...

FLASH:

BACK TO SCENE

Hightower draws a shuddering breath...

ALLYSIA (V.O.)

There is no fear where you go...

Then, as Vecna rushes toward him, Hightower draws on the last of his strength, forces himself to his knees -- and with an anguished cry, swings the mighty Sword of Kas.

The sudden move surprises Vecna and the blade slices cleanly through him, cutting him completely in half.

Instantly, Vecna's body EXPLODES WITH HELLISH ENERGY AND DISINTEGRATES. His left eye POPS OUT OF HIS HEAD and EXPLODES (in 3D, if I may be so bold).

Hightower takes the full force of the explosion right in the face. His body is hurled across the crevasse and consumed in a blinding cataclysm of fire and light --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PLANE OF ASH - TIME HAS NO MEANING HERE

Suddenly, we are someplace else entirely.

Hightower finds himself kneeling on the ground. A thick layer of ash covers everything like snow. He looks up. He is in a DESERT OF ASH. A vast, grey wasteland beneath a dark and sunless sky. Completely devoid of life.

Well, almost completely. A TALL, PALE FIGURE stands before him. He has long black hair and blood-red eyes. Hightower shrinks back from him.

HIGHTOWER

Kas...?

KAS

You've learned my name since last we met.

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CONTINUED:

Hightower looks around. In the distance, he sees an ENORMOUS HUMAN SKULL, the size of a mountain, with an entire city built inside of it. And behind Kas...

... a BEAUTIFUL, NAKED SUCCUBUS sits on a rock with her back to him. She looks just like a normal human woman, only with TINY HORNS and HUGE BAT WINGS. She gives Hightower a bashful smile. He blinks with surprise.

KAS

You've served me well, Raven
Hightower. Vecna's soul has been
obliterated for all time.

HIGHTOWER

Why me...?

KAS

I searched across time itself to
find you. On all the planes, you
were best suited to the task.

HIGHTOWER

But Vecna said the sword could
only destroy him if its wielder's
soul was truly lawful and good.

KAS

This is true. This is why you
were chosen over all others.

Hightower is taken aback. He gives a confused look.

HIGHTOWER

I'm no hero.

KAS

No. But you will be.

As Hightower considers this, a SHIMMERING LIGHT begins to spread over his body.

HIGHTOWER

What's happening to me...?

KAS

Someone is resurrecting you.

HIGHTOWER

I'm not banished??

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAS

No. You are free to return to
your plane.

As the light grows BRIGHTER, Kas steps closer, looming
over him. Hightower has a sudden thought.

HIGHTOWER

Wait... if I'm not dying, then
what am I doing here?

Kas SNARLS down at him, revealing his pointed teeth.

KAS

You have something that belongs to
me.

Kas' face suddenly TRANSFORMS into something menacing and
demonic. He ROARS and reaches out a long-nailed hand,
grasping for Hightower with supernatural speed --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. VILLAGE TEMPLE - NIGHT

Hightower's eyelids weakly flicker open.

He's lying on the floor of a small, one-room temple. He
is naked, his body tightly wrapped with white linen.
He's surrounded by arcane runes and lit white candles.

Allysia is kneeling at his side. Her hand is on his
chest. There is sweat on her forehead and she looks
exhausted. Karroway is here too, anxiously looking on.

KARROWAY

Ray...? Can you talk...?

Hightower opens his mouth, but his throat is too dry.
Karroway ladles water from a bucket and brings it to his
lips. Hightower swallows. A beat. Then:

HIGHTOWER

What's that smell...?

KARROWAY

Uh... you were dead for a few
days. She raised you.

Hightower lays his head back down, exhausted, and looks
to Allysia. There are tears in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

Welcome back.

Hightower rests for a beat, then tries to talk again.

HIGHTOWER

The sword...?

ALLYSIA

It's here. I --

She gestures to a pile of neatly folded clothes and gear in the corner, but stops short, puzzled.

ALLYSIA

It was right here.

She gives Hightower a questioning look. Too tired to speak more, he just gives a knowing smile and weakly reaches out to her. She takes his hand, smiling.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A few days later. Our heroes have taken refuge in a small farming village. There are a DOZEN CUTHBERTINE PALADINS with HORSES in the village square, gearing up to leave. Their presence has caused a great deal of curiosity and excitement among the PEASANTS.

Hightower emerges from a cottage, limping on a crutch. Allysia is with him. She is once again wearing her shining armor and priestly cloak. She's leaving.

ALLYSIA

Our scouts still haven't found any sign of Prince Razer. At this point, I think it's unlikely that they will.

HIGHTOWER

He'll turn up sooner or later. He usually does.

Allysia considers him for a beat.

ALLYSIA

I thought you'd be upset.

HIGHTOWER

I'm the one who let him go. Nothing like the end of the world to put things into perspective.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLYSIA

You mean you were fighting for
something more than yourself?

(off his look)

Kas did say you were destined to
be a hero. Maybe he was right.

HIGHTOWER

Let's not go crazy.

She smiles and kisses his cheek.

Elsewhere, Karroway is approached by a BEAUTIFUL FEMALE
PALADIN. He's instantly smitten. She eyes him, curious.

BEAUTIFUL PALADIN

The High Priestess says that you
were once a man?

KARROWAY

(hurt)

I'm still a man...

BEAUTIFUL PALADIN

I meant that you were once human.

KARROWAY

It's true. Only one thing can
undo the curse.

(off her look)

A beautiful woman must make love
to me.

He tries his best to look charming, but she just gives
him an amused look and walks on ahead.

KARROWAY

Even a kiss might help! It
couldn't hurt...

She ignores him. Karroway frowns. Just then, Hightower
and Allysia join him. Hightower shakes his head.

HIGHTOWER

Has that ever worked? Even once?

As Allysia mounts her horse, her SQUIRE rides up and
hands her a LONG, NARROW BUNDLE, wrapped in canvas.
Allysia takes it and gives Hightower a knowing smile.

ALLYSIA

Here. We brought these back for
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She hands the bundle to him. He unwraps it and is stunned to see the DRAGON'S PEARLESCENT HORNS. Karroway gapes in astonishment. Hightower admires them lovingly.

ALLYSIA

You're right, they're worth a small fortune. Try not to spend it all in one place.

HIGHTOWER

I promise nothing.

ALLYSIA

(smiling)

Farewell, Raven Hightower.

HIGHTOWER

So long, Your Reverence.

Allysia spurs her horse and leads the Paladins galloping out of the village in a cloud of dust. Hightower and Karroway watch her go. Then Hightower hands one of the dragon's horns to Karroway. He appraises it.

KARROWAY

Not a bad haul, all things considered. What are you going to do with your share?

HIGHTOWER

I'm going to start a new career.

(off his look)

I've had enough near-death experiences to last a lifetime. It's time we started earning an honest living.

Karroway eyes him, highly dubious.

KARROWAY

What did you have in mind?

INT. GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

Several POLYHEDRAL DICE land on a craps-style game table and roll to a stop. Hightower, who just threw the dice, smiles at the result. A ROUGH CROWD around the table CHEERS. A SCAR-FACED SAILOR pounds the table in disgust.

Hightower happily scoops up his considerable winnings. Karroway stands by his side, disapproving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARROWAY

You call this an honest living?

HIGHTOWER

Maybe not completely. But at least it's safer.

Just then, there's an O.S. CRASH and they turn to see that a BRAWL HAS ERUPTED in another part of the smoke-filled room between TWO ROUGH-LOOKING BARBARIANS.

KARROWAY

Marginally!

Across the gaming table, the Scar-Faced Sailor angrily glares at Hightower.

SCAR-FACED SAILOR

Double or nothing!

HIGHTOWER

Sorry, friend. I already have everything you have to lose.

SCAR-FACED SAILOR

Not everything...

The Sailor reluctantly reaches down and pulls something out of his boot. It's a FOLDED SQUARE OF OLD PARCHMENT. Hightower gives him a questioning look.

SCAR-FACED SAILOR

It's a map.

HIGHTOWER

Of what?

SCAR-FACED SAILOR

The Temple of the Elements.

(off their looks)

There's a golden skull hidden inside that old fortress. This map will lead you straight to it.

Hightower's eyes light. Karroway doesn't like the look on his friend's face. Under his breath, he mutters:

KARROWAY

Walk away...

Hightower hesitates. He eyes the old parchment map. For a long beat, he wrestles with temptation... then pushes his winnings back out on the table. Karroway groans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Hightower scoops up the dice and gives a crooked smile.

HIGHTOWER
All right. Let's roll.

As he throws the dice, we --

CUT TO:

INT. THE UNDERDARK - NIGHT

Epilogue. Far beneath the earth, inside an immense cavern, lies a DARK, HIGH-WALLED CITY. Sinister-looking WINGED LIZARDS fly through the air. We do not get a warm, fuzzy feeling about this place...

INT. TEMPLE OF LOLTH - NIGHT

A pair of heavy doors bursts open and TWO DROW EXECUTIONERS enter... dragging Prince Razer between them. The aristocratic dark elf has been beaten within an inch of his life. Arcane runes have been carved into his flesh with a knife. He is naked except for a loincloth.

The Executioners are of the same race of elves as Razer, with black skin and white hair. They dump Razer in the middle of the room and SLAM the doors behind them.

Razer looks up. He is in a sinister, blood-stained temple. The stone floor beneath him has been carved to look like a giant spider's web. And in front of him...

... is a LARGE STONE IDOL. It has the body of an enormous, bulbous spider... but the face of a woman with eight human eyes clustered in the middle of her forehead.

This is LOLTH, THE SPIDER QUEEN.

And after a beat... the idol speaks. She talks in a language we don't understand, her dialogue SUBTITLED:

LOLTH
Your quest for the Hand has
failed. Have you forsaken your
goddess?

Razer weakly replies in the same language, SUBTITLED:

RAZER
Never. May the Mother of Lusts
reign forever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOLTH

Then you understand the cost of
your failure?

RAZER

I do. May the Queen of Spiders
bestow her blessing upon me.

LOLTH

So be it.

For a moment, nothing happens. Then...

Razer is gripped by intense pain. He clutches at his
stomach, his body wracked by some invisible agony. He
looks up at the idol. It stares impassively back.

Suddenly, his body starts to change. HUGE, SPINY SPIDER
LEGS ERUPT FROM HIS BACK. He is undergoing a hideous,
painful metamorphosis, and when it is finished...

He is a DRIDER. Like a centaur, he has the torso of a
man and the body of a beast. From the waist up, he is
Razer. From the waist down...

... he is a giant, bulbous, hairy spider. He looks down
at his new form and SCREAMS.

The idol smiles. The Spider Queen is pleased...

FADE OUT.

THE END