

Prince of Persia
The Sands of Time

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THE SLOW BEAT OF WAR DRUMS.

We're moving over the surface of a relief MAP.

The European continent lies in darkness while the great empire of the Caliphs is bathed in a golden glow -- stretching from Spain across North Africa, the Arabian peninsula and the vast land mass of Central Asia, to the western edge of China.

TITLE OVER:

THE NINTH CENTURY

As we HOME IN on the Himalayan mountains -- the eastern edge of the region of light -- the map becomes REAL. We're flying through mist and craggy peaks, fog clearing to reveal...

EXT. ARMY CAMP - NIGHT

A medieval PERSIAN ARMY camped on a forbidding mountain slope, twelve thousand feet high.

A group of battle-scarred SOLDIERS cluster around a pair of men playing DICE, kibitzing and making side bets.

A heap of trinkets and coins is piled on the ground. One of the GAMBLERS is a big BRUTE with rotted and missing teeth; he produces a golden bangle and drops it in the pot. All eyes turn to his opponent...

DASTAN,

Who sits calmly with his back to us. We haven't seen his face yet but his very stillness sets him apart. He's as grimy and battle-worn as the rest but his armor and dress are of higher quality.

Dastan unfastens his own studded-leather wrist guard. Displays it for all to see; drops it on the pile.

The men crane eagerly as Dastan rolls... THREE: a bad roll.

The BRUTISH SOLDIER leers and scoops up the dice.

CLOSE ON HIS HANDS as he secretly swaps the dice before rolling...

A TWELVE! Groans from the crowd as the Brutish Soldier rakes in his winnings...

BRUTISH SOLDIER

Ha! *Kismet* smiles upon me again.

DASTAN (O.S.)

I can think of other explanations...

The Brutish Soldier looks up. Reveal Dastan's face:

Early 20s with the slim bearing of a natural athlete, he's of a nobler stamp than this gang of common soldiers yet completely at ease in their midst.

BRUTISH SOLDIER

Careful friend. Nobody likes a sore loser.

DASTAN

I'm not a sore loser. I just don't like being cheated.

The other soldiers fall silent. Uh oh.

The Brutish Soldier glares at Dastan and shrugs off his cloak. Massive chest and arms. He stands.

BRUTISH SOLDIER

Let's see how you like a beating then...

Then he stops short because:

THE POINT OF DASTAN'S DAGGER is an inch away from his face. We barely saw Dastan pull it out -- he's that quick.

DASTAN

I have a better suggestion: one more wager. Everything you've won against this...

Dastan removes the dagger from the man's face and flips it, catching it by the blade. He offers the jeweled handle to the Brutish Soldier. It looks valuable...

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Those are real emeralds.

BRUTISH SOLDIER

(examines it warily)
A roll of the dice?

DASTAN

No, a test of skill-- I'll take a single throw of the knife from fifteen paces.

The Brutish Soldier raises an eyebrow. Fifteen paces is a long throw... he nods acceptance.

MOMENTS LATER

An "X" is MARKED on a WOOD POST with a piece of charcoal. The Brutish Soldier counts out fifteen generous paces and draws a line in the dirt with his boot.

Dastan steps up. He flips the dagger in his hand several times, concentrating like a pitcher on the mound.

All eyes are on him. Various soldiers call out encouragement: take your time, don't rush, etc....

Dastan takes aim, cocks his arm and...

HERALD (O.S.)

Prince Dastan!

...throws! The dagger sails off target and... KA-THUNK sticks in a wooden barrel.

A HERALD arrives at a breathless gallop.

HERALD (CONT'D)

Prince Dastan, your brothers summon you.

The soldiers look around, uncertain who he is talking to. Slowly it dawns on them that he's addressing Dastan.

DASTAN

All right. I'm on my way.

The Brutish Soldier's face is suddenly filled with fear. He pulls the dagger free and hurries to return it to Dastan, going down on one knee...

BRUTISH SOLDIER

My Lord... I-I had no idea... please forgive me...

DASTAN

A bet's a bet. Keep it.

The Herald offers his horse and Dastan swings himself into the saddle. The Brutish Soldier watches him go with grudging admiration.

CUT TO:

A PRISONER SCREAMS IN PAIN...

INT. PERSIAN ARMY TENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the PRISONER'S FACE, drenched in sweat. Two guards hold him up while a third brings a lit torch close...

NIZAM (O.S.)

Stop! The prisoner has had enough.

NIZAM, the king's Grand Vizier (50s, cultured and wise) gives the prisoner a sip of water, which he gulps gratefully.

The four PRINCES watch the interrogation. Dastan is the youngest. Next are the twins, FARHAD and FARHAN -- identical, equally fastidious aristocrats who don't like to get their gleaming armor dirty. The eldest is TUS, a tough battle-hardened commander.

TUS

Question him again, Nizam; he will tell us who has been supplying our enemy with weapons and armor or he shall face the consequences.

Nizam addresses the prisoner in a FOREIGN tongue... the man nods in surrender and whispers his response. Nizam reacts with surprise, then turns to face the others.

NIZAM

Noble princes. The prisoner begs for mercy. He has confessed the identity of their secret ally...

He points to a spot on a parchment map with Arabic calligraphy. The four brothers crane to see.

NIZAM (CONT'D)

It is the city of Alamut that has been arming our enemy.

TUS

(frowns)

Alamut?

(MORE)

TUS (CONT'D)

I thought they were rumored to be
an ancient race of holy people...

DASTAN

What care we for rumors, brother?
If they have sided with our foe,
then Alamut must pay the price.

Tus gives his younger brother a stern look.

TUS

Our father, the King, would not
decide so rashly. I will consider
all arguments.

Farhan clears his throat-- his brother speaks:

FARHAD

Does Alamut have treasure?

FARHAN

He's only asking because it has
been a long campaign...

FARHAD

We're thinking of the men.

FARHAN

Exactly.

NIZAM

Treasure. Food. Beautiful women.
Alamut is renowned for them.

DASTAN

Nevermind the plunder-- the friend
of our enemy is our enemy.

Tus remains undecided.

TUS

I would have more proof.

NIZAM

I'm afraid the proof you seek lies
within the walls of Alamut itself:
secret forges, swords, spears... but
Alamut is a mighty Citadel that has
never fallen. You would risk much
to attempt it, Prince.

He bows deeply: the decision is not his to make.

TUS
What say you, brothers?

Dastan draws his sword, a thirst for glory in his eyes.
Farhad and Farhan follow suit -- a thirst for treasure in theirs.

Tus looks at them... swayed, he draws his sword as well.

TUS (CONT'D)
Then let their fortress come down.

EXT. ROCKY SLOPE - SUNRISE

A SERIES OF SHOTS: Footsoldiers on the move. Catapults pushed on wheels. The Persian Cavalry on horseback.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL... an ever greater number of soldiers as the army's advance gains momentum...

THE PERSIAN ARMY

Emerges from the morning fog. Thousands of men and horses. A stunning, fearsome sight.

Ahead, in the shadow of the mountain, a massive fortress rises from the mist like the home of the gods...

THE CITADEL OF ALAMUT. Ancient, mysterious and impregnable.

The common soldiers at Dastan's side look shaken and make superstitious gestures to ward off evil.

FEARFUL SOLDIER
They say the Alamut are sorcerers.
Black magic.

DASTAN
I expect they're flesh and bone,
like us.

Dastan rides ahead to join his older brothers on the ridge, completing a quartet of horsemen.

The PRINCES take in Alamut for the first time with their own eyes.

FARHAD
We're going to get dirty, aren't
we?

DASTAN

You only get dirty if you actually fight. Do that and I'll polish your armor for you.

FARHAN

(looks Dastan up and down)
You'd do better to polish your own.

TUS

Come. Let's make our father proud.

They gallop off.

INT. BEDROOM IN ROYAL PALACE - SUNRISE

Gossamer curtains billow in the breeze. A girl tosses in fitful sleep. Smooth limbs, long black hair -- the darkness offers only a tantalizing hint of the beauty that is TAMINA.

A GONG rings out. Tamina awakens, alarmed.

EXT. RAMPARTS - SUNRISE

A SENTRY beats a giant GONG. ALAMUT SOLDIERS run past shouting in Foreign.

EXT. BELOW THE CITADEL - SUNRISE

THE PERSIAN ARMY charges up the wide shaly slope.

Tus, galloping ahead, lifts his sword and lets out a WAR CRY. From the ranks rises a blood-curdling NOISE as thousands of voices join him. Then...

A FLAMING ARROW is fired from the ramparts. All eyes turn skyward to follow its arc.

At its apex, the arrow suddenly EXPLODES into a shower of brilliant white fireworks, illuminating the attacking army.

DASTAN

Is mesmerized; the Persians have never seen gunpowder before.

Suddenly an ARROW fells the man next to him. Dastan instinctively raises his shield, blocking another ARROW.

Dastan's eagle eye spots ALAMUT ARCHERS hidden among the rocks above. They're clad in black, like ninjas.

DASTAN

There!

Persian archers return fire. Tus, in the vanguard shouts--

TUS

To the walls! Attack!

EXT. CITADEL - SUNRISE

Like the ocean tide crashing against a sea wall, the first wave of footsoldiers reaches the citadel. Ladders are thrown up; men scale the walls--

ALAMUT SOLDIERS, rise from hiding to meet them with arrows and burning oil. Persian soldiers and ladders fall.

The battlefield is chaos. All around, men are felled by arrows. Dastan spots the problem -- ninja-like ALAMUT SABOTEURS darting like shadows among the troops.

DASTAN

The enemy is here!

Dastan gallops toward a SABOTEUR who's just doused a catapult with oil. Leaping from horseback onto the catapult, he strikes the torch from the man's hand before he can light it.

They clash swords. The Saboteur, an intimidating spectre swathed in black is a formidable swordsman. But Dastan holds his own with surprising skill.

A SECOND SABOTEUR joins in. Despite Dastan's speed and agility, the two Saboteurs inexorably force him up onto the catapult platform. While #1 keeps him busy, #2 lights a torch. The catapult BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

Dastan battles on with determination, heedless of the FLAMES rising around him. At last he turns the tables and knocks both Saboteurs off the platform into the flames.

A moment of satisfaction...

Then Dastan sees the TIE ROPE burning. Uh oh. He looks down, realizes what he's standing on...

Just as the ROPE BURNS THROUGH.

The catapult arm FLINGS Dastan into the air. He soars toward the ramparts...

EXT. RAMPARTS - DAY

Alamut SOLDIERS, fighting off the invaders, look up to see an enemy soldier hurtling toward them like a cannonball.

Whizzing over their heads, Dastan makes a desperate grab at a passing canvas awning. It RIPS -- but slows his flight as he tears through a series of canvas awnings, one after another.

Dastan's amazed he's survived until...

He runs out of awnings. Confronted with a FATAL DROP to the next rampart, he saves himself by grabbing the torn canvas of the last awning.

On the rampart below, a trio of ARCHERS take aim. Dastan dangles in space, a prime target.

Pushing off the stone wall with his feet, he struggles to climb the torn canvas. The first volley of arrows barely misses him. Dastan climbs faster. As he nears the top...

The canvas RIPS -- dropping him further than before and SLAMMING him into the wall. (Thanks to which, the second volley misses him too.)

Dastan gets a new idea. He starts to "run" back and forth along the wall, swinging on the canvas to gain momentum.

The cloth RIPS more. Not good. He's hanging by a thread.

His eye is on a nearby parapet: if he can swing to it...

EXT. CITADEL GATE - DAY

Persian soldiers on the narrow bridge leading to the citadel run a BATTERING RAM into the iron gate. Heave-ho! BAM!

And again. BAM! The battering ram SMASHES through the gate. The triumphant horde storms through the vaulted entrance--

Only to find themselves confronted by a SECOND GATE! A TORRENT OF ARROWS is unleashed on them from above. They're trapped by the men rushing in; it's a slaughter.

EXT. RAMPART - DAY

Running on the wall, Dastan swings almost within reach of the parapet... just misses it. He swings back the other way; an ARROW grazes him.

Below him, two more ARCHERS join the firing squad. They load their bows.

With determination, Dastan backs up as far as he can for the final swing, the one that has to make it...

As he's swinging toward the parapet, his canvas "rope" BREAKS. Dastan sails through the air...

Grabs for the parapet... misses it... plummets toward earth...

And, brilliantly, saves himself by grabbing a window ledge below. Scrambles through, just escaping a hail of ARROWS.

INT. GUARD TOWER - DAY

Dastan lands in a stone corridor. FIVE ALAMUT SOLDIERS converge on him. He draws his sword.

And now we see Dastan fighting in his element. His style is medieval *Parkour*; he uses walls, railings, statuary-- anything he can bounce, grab or roll off of for an advantage. Fighting him is like trying to grab hold of a bar of soap.

At one point, under double attack, Dastan reaches for his dagger-- only to find the sheath empty. Oh yeah, he gambled it away. CURSING, he ducks one blow while blocking another.

Dastan runs to the edge, looks down over the parapet.

HIS POV: The main bridge below, clogged with soldiers.

Beside him, thick rope cables rise from an open SHAFT.

ALAMUT SOLDIER (IN FOREIGN)
Stop him!

As the soldiers descend on him, Dastan jumps onto the main CABLE and does a fireman's slide to the platform below.

INT. GUARD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Dastan lands; GUARDS rush him. He flips one, sends the next plummeting down the shaft -- grabs a crank lever--

ALAMUT SOLDIER (IN FOREIGN)

NO!!

Dastan THROWS the lever, releasing the crank, which TURNS--

EXT. CITADEL ENTRANCE - DAY

A CHEER erupts from the horde of Persian soldiers as the GATE RAISES. Men pour into the citadel.

OUTSIDE THE GATE

TUS stares in disbelief as the bridge empties of men.

TUS

To the bridge!

FROM ALL SIDES, soldiers pour onto the narrow bridge.

INT. BEDROOM IN ROYAL PALACE - DAY

Tamina gazes out the window. A HANDMAID bursts in.

HANDMAID

My Lady! We must flee! The invaders have breached the gate!

TAMINA

What? How did this happen?

HANDMAID

There is no time-- you must save yourself!

TAMINA

There is far more at stake than my safety.

The Handmaid bows her head in acknowledgment. Tamina remains calm and self-possessed.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

Send word to collapse the passages
to the Hourglass. And have the
dagger brought to me.

HANDMAID

Yes my lady.

EXT. CITADEL MAIN COURTYARD - DAY

A courtyard of austere and exotic Eastern beauty. At the far
end stands a temple with a sacred FOUNTAIN guarded by stone
lions -- all carved out of a massive block of pure white
marble.

A flood of Persian soldiers soon overwhelms the defenders.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Civilians flee screaming through narrow stone streets.

EXT. INSIDE THE CITADEL - DAY

The twins fight side by side without breaking a sweat.

Nizam rides through the enemy troops wielding two swords at
once with a deadly dexterity surprising for a man his age.

Tus, hacking his way to victory, pauses --

TUS

Where's Dastan?

EXT. ANOTHER RAMPART - DAY

Dastan emerges onto a quiet rampart -- a narrow trench
between two high walls. The battle has not yet reached this
part of the castle.

A FLASH OF LIGHT catches Dastan's eye... he looks up at an
arched window where somebody is signalling with a small hand
mirror... a fleeting glimpse of a beautiful female silhouette
behind a sheer curtain: Tamina.

Then... HOOFBEATS. Dastan turns to see a mighty ALAMUT
WARRIOR galloping toward him on an armored stallion.

Dastan's trapped between the walls. The corridor is too narrow for him to escape. He's about to be trampled.

The WARRIOR draws a scimitar...

At the last instant Dastan runs straight up the wall-- pushes off with a backflip and lands ON THE HORSE!

The two men GRAPPLE on horseback. Sparks fly as armor and weapons scrape the stone walls at full gallop.

They fight -- Dastan getting the worst of it as his more heavily-armored opponent pounds him mercilessly. The Alamut warrior raises his sword to finish Dastan once and for all...

Dastan throws his arms around the warrior's waist, dragging him from the saddle. The two men crash to the ground.

Dastan fights his way loose. Only then does he realize that the man he is struggling with is dead; an ARROW protrudes from his back. Dastan looks up to see Persian SOLDIERS running toward them.

PERSIAN SOLDIER

The horse! Get the horse!

The soldiers run greedily past Dastan after the riderless horse, leaving him alone with the fallen warrior.

Dastan removes the warrior's helmet. His face is noble and in agony; worse than the mortal wound is the shame of his own failure... Dastan removes his breastplate to give him air.

TAMINA'S POV - from a window above she looks down and sees Dastan kneeling over the body.

The young warrior tries to speak-- Dastan cranes closer to hear his last words -- too late. He's dead.

Dastan slumps to a seated position, spent. We HEAR the victorious Persian soldiers looting the city in the distance.

Dastan notices a cloth-wrapped bundle tucked into the dead warrior's waistband, under his armor. He pulls it out. Unwraps it.

It's a ceremonial DAGGER with a glass handle encrusted with precious stones. Ancient and otherworldly, as if it had been made by the gods, not men.

The glass handle is half-filled with a fine white sand, so naturally bright it glows. Dastan tilts it curiously, the way you might tilt an hourglass.

Glad to have it, Dastan sheathes the dagger in his own empty scabbard...

ON TAMINA - her eyes burn with fury as she watches. Dastan's clothes are charred and torn from his escapades-- she takes him for the lowest sort of thief, one who loots the bodies of the dead for easy plunder.

EXT. CITADEL MAIN COURTYARD - DAY

Dastan emerges and spots his brothers conferring with Nizam amidst the crowd of soldiers. He approaches.

NIZAM

(to Tus)

It stands to reason that their
secret armories are well concealed.
Why not leave a team behind here to
search for them?

TUS

(spotting his brother)

Dastan. Where have you been?

DASTAN

Tus, I opened the gate!

Tus, in a bad mood, snaps--

TUS

Every man here played his part.
Don't take credit for their
bravery.

The Twins sneer and turn their back on Dastan, resuming the previous conversation...

FARHAD

(eager for booty)

Nizam is right. Why don't I stay
and search for the armories?

FARHAN

Why not me?

TUS

All of you -- return home. I
myself shall conduct the search for
these weapons that we came to find.

The steel in his tone warns them all not to argue further.

NIZAM

(bows deeply)

We hear and obey, my prince.

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

An OFFICER inspects a group of captive YOUNG WOMEN the
soldiers have brought in. Among them is Tamina, her fine
white dress concealed under a drab cloak.

Tamina evades the Officer's gaze; he lifts her chin to get a
good look at her face.

OFFICER

Let's see your hands.

Tamina shows one hand. The Officer yanks the other into
view, then gives her a rough whole-body frisk. Tamina
suppresses her shame and anger as he moves on to the next
girl.

REVEAL: Tamina's palmed the ornate RING she was wearing
earlier. She slips it unnoticed into the folds of her cloak.

Across the courtyard she spots Dastan. Her eyes burn into
him, and especially into the DAGGER in his belt...

EXT. CENTRAL ASIAN VALLEY - DAY

A caravan of Persian SOLDIERS, HORSES and CAMELS wends its
way down from the forbidding, icy mountain peaks.

Dastan sits backward in his saddle, reading a book. Nizam
rides up alongside.

NIZAM

Your brothers do you an injustice.
You turned the battle.

DASTAN

I don't need their praise.

Nizam smiles.

NIZAM

You have much to learn about the ways of politics, Dastan. Praise, flattery, renown -- these are the currency of power in court.

Nizam gestures toward a row of carts laden with booty.

NIZAM (CONT'D)

Look, your brothers bring your father treasures, trophies of war. What have you brought to gain his favor?

DASTAN

I'd rather earn his favor honestly.

NIZAM

How so?

Dastan puts away his book and turns around in the saddle.

DASTAN

Nizam, why do we win victories? Because we have the greatest army. The army he built, with his life's blood, starting from nothing. That was an accomplishment. What have I done thus far except go along for the ride?

NIZAM

To be the son of a great king-- even a fourth son-- is a destiny most men would envy.

DASTAN

Do you know what I want? To set forth from home with no army, just one horse and a good sword, and no one knowing I am the son of Shahraman. Then my achievements may be small-- but they'll be mine. And I can bring them home to him with pride.

NIZAM

(with a twinkle)

Dastan, I have misjudged you. I thought you the most modest of my King's sons. In fact, you are the most ambitious.

DASTAN

I'm not joking, Nizam. I will do it. As soon as we arrive, I'll ask my father for his blessing.

NIZAM

You'd do well to bring a gift.

DASTAN

Perhaps you're right. If only I'd asked for a share of the loot...

Dastan casts a glance at one of the CARTS piled high with rich silks, tapestries and gold...

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Do you think Tus would mind...?

NIZAM

Well... you did open the gate.

Nizam winks at him and spurs his horse onward.

Dastan, alone for the moment, trots his horse close to a cart. He scans the treasures and selects a gorgeous, embroidered silk ROBE as a gift.

EXT. NASAF - SUNSET

The sun sets behind the gleaming spires and domes of the royal city of NASAF. TILT DOWN to REVEAL the dusty caravan finally arriving home.

The returning soldiers are met by a cheering crowd.

The Captain of the Guards, GARSIV (a young hotshot) stands at attention for the returning nobles. His expression sours when Dastan comes abreast of him: the two are about the same age, and clearly have some history.

GARSIV

No injuries, Dastan? Didn't your brothers let you fight?

DASTAN

Hardly at all, Garsiv. I'm very rusty; maybe you'll be able to beat me in the tournament this year. Finally.

Dastan smiles tauntingly and rides past.

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

A magnificent eighth century palace with high vaulted ceilings and tiled mosaics.

Musicians play flutes and tambourines, beautiful slaves circulate, serving delicacies to the guests (all male), seated on cushions at low tables.

TAMINA

Is part of a group of newbie SLAVE GIRLS being prepped by a stern MATRON who makes last minute adjustments to each girl's attire before sending her out with an hors d'oeuvre tray.

The Matron frowns at Tamina's outfit, tugs at it to reveal more cleavage. Tamina, indignant, seems about to slap her -- then remembering where she is, submits. Her face burns as the Matron sends her forth with a pat on the ass.

FOLLOW the slave girls as they mix into the crowd... and MOVE PAST them, to a roped-off royal dais where...

DASTAN

Tears into a chicken leg with gusto. The Twins, eating with elegant delicacy shoot him twin looks of disgust.

FARHAD

You eat like a common foot-soldier.

DASTAN

Foot-soldiers know how to enjoy a good meal when they get one.
Bismillah.

Dastan halts mid-bite as he sees...

TAMINA across the room. He is mesmerized by the sight of her. He drops his chicken and starts toward her...

ON TAMINA

As she struggles under the weight of the tray. It is unexpectedly lifted from her hands by:

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Allow me... a delicate flower such as yourself needs care and drink, not heavy labor.

With a flourish, he swings the tray to a nearby table, comes up with two goblets of wine and offers one to her...

Her eyes go wide with recognition; he interprets her reaction as fear of being caught by the Matron.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Have no fear. I'm Prince Dastan
and I hereby grant you a temporary
reprieve from your duties.

TAMINA (IN FOREIGN)

*I have seen you before, you son of
a dog. You steal from the dead. I
curse your eyes.*

Dastan laughs modestly, not comprehending a word.

DASTAN

No, please-- there's no need to
thank me, Slave-Girl. You will
find I'm a very modern thinker.
Social rank means nothing to me...

As Dastan babbles on, trying to impress Tamina, her eyes go to the hilt of the DAGGER in his belt...

DASTAN (CONT'D)

...so you needn't be intimidated by
the fact that I'm a prince.
Although I'm sure it sounds very
impressive to you, I'm only a
fourth son--

A FANFARE of TRUMPETS signals the start of the royal procession. Everybody surges forward to look; Dastan and Tamina are separated in the crowd...

ANGLE ON TAMINA

As the Matron catches her without a tray and sends her roughly back to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Tamina ducks out of the line of slaves and doubles back toward the banquet hall.

SIDE CORRIDOR

Tamina finds herself alone in a dark hallway.

A sliver of light spills out of a door that is ajar. She hesitates and peeks inside...

She stares: whatever she sees is definitely something she wasn't supposed to.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
What are you doing here? Somebody
grab that girl!

Tamina flees. She races down the hall and slips into a laundry room to hide...

INT. BANQUET HALL - EVENING

KING SHAHRAMAN enters with his entourage. Gray-bearded in silk robes, he's the aged ruin of a once-powerful warrior. All bow deeply as he passes.

AT THE DIAS everyone gathers and takes his place...

Garsiv, Captain of the Guards stands sentry behind the throne.

Nizam steps to the fore ahead of the princes.

SHAHRAMAN
(embracing Nizam)
Nizam, my old friend! Again your
wisdom has brought us victory.

NIZAM
Not my wisdom. By your royal *faar*
your sons have brought honor and
glory to the banner of Nasaf.

SHAHRAMAN
(suddenly perturbed)
Where is my eldest son?

NIZAM
Tus has remained to bring order to
the lands conquered in your name.
His brothers will convey his
greetings to you.

The Twins step forward with elaborately ceremonial,
simultaneous bows -- a bit over the top for Shahraman.

FARHAD

My lord and father, to see you is
like seeing the sun after the
longest night of winter. Our noble
brother has entrusted me--

FARHAN

Us.

FARHAD

--has entrusted us with gifts.

On cue, TEN SLAVES enter bearing ten gold platters laden with
jewels, their powerful muscles straining under the weight.

FARHAN

And I bring gifts as well.

FARHAD

We.

FARHAN

We bring gifts.

Twenty more slaves parade in, bearing twenty golden platters
piled even higher than the first.

FARHAN (CONT'D)

From Turan and Alamut, out of love
for you, we carried the treasure--

FARHAD

--his as well as ours--

SHAHRAMAN

Alamut?

FARHAN

--through treacherous mountains,
across the burning desert, and--

SHAHRAMAN

NIZAM!

The Twins quake; did they say something wrong? Dastan is as
confused as they are. Nizam steps forward.

SHAHRAMAN (CONT'D)

What are these babbling fools
saying? Did we conquer Alamut?

NIZAM

We did, sire.

SHAHRAMAN

The kingdom of Alamut has endured inviolate for centuries as a sacred city. Why did Tus order the attack?

NIZAM

O King, your son was provoked by the treachery of Alamut... when you learn the full truth, you will understand. But look, your youngest son waits to greet you.

Shahraman looks at Dastan; his anger melts away. He has a special fondness for this son. Dastan throws himself into his dad's embrace, hugs him hard.

SHAHRAMAN

Dastan. What mischief have you been up to?

DASTAN

Father, I've brought you a gift.

SHAHRAMAN

(affectionately)

Do you mean to say you haven't lost it or gambled it away?

Dastan beckons to a pretty FEMALE SLAVE who appears carrying a cloth bundle -- and in a nifty move, shakes it out, unveiling the ROBE OF HONOR. Everyone oohs.

Shahraman takes the robe. Runs his fingers over the gold-embroidered silk. He's genuinely surprised and touched.

SHAHRAMAN (CONT'D)

Dastan, this is unlike you. I shall wear it with pride.

Attendants remove Shahraman's robe and help him don the new one. The Twins seethe with jealousy at such favoritism.

DASTAN

(the perfect moment)

Father, I wish to speak with you about a very important matter...

SHAHRAMAN

Later, my son.

Shahraman mounts the dais and seats himself on the throne.

SHAHRAMAN (CONT'D)

Now Nizam, tell me of Alamut.

NIZAM

O King, we discovered information
that Alamut was secretly supporting
-- My King, is something wrong?

The new robe seems to itch Shahraman; he tugs at it
irritably.

SHAHRAMAN

It's hot. Get to the point.

NIZAM

We learned from a captured Turanian
warrior that...

DASTAN

Father?

SHAHRAMAN

Take off the robe!

Attendants hasten to remove the robe, but cannot. It won't
come off-- it's glued to his skin. Shahraman ROARS in pain.

DASTAN

Father!!

Shahraman lurches to his feet. Like a maddened bull, he
shakes off his attendants, tearing at the robe. STEAM hisses
from the burning places where it STICKS to his flesh.

NIZAM

It's poisoned!

SHAHRAMAN

Take it off!

Every one is shocked and horrified. Dastan hurtles to his
father's side. Catches him as he falls, staining his own
clothes with blood. Shahraman is dying in agony, with third
degree burns all over his body.

SHAHRAMAN (CONT'D)

...my son?

Garsiv rushes to help his king. He shoves Dastan aside.

GARSIV
You've killed your father!

DASTAN
What? No! I--

GARSIV
(shouts)
Prince Dastan has killed the king!

Guards rip Dastan away from Shahraman. While he struggles, Garsiv and other guards attempt to remove the King's robe, but only intensify his death agony.

DASTAN
(fighting to break free)
FATHER!!!

Garsiv lowers Shahraman's dead body to the ground. He draws his sword and points it at Dastan.

GARSIV
Murderer!

The Twins draw their swords as well. All eyes are on Dastan.

DASTAN
(choking back tears)
I didn't do this!
(looks around desperately)
Nizam! Tell them..

Nizam looks at him with shocked disappointment.

NIZAM
That is for a tribunal to decide,
Dastan.

He nods sadly to the guards; they drag Dastan from the room.

With a sudden, desperate burst of strength, Dastan breaks free. He snatches a sword from one of the guards, parries the attack of another and...

...escapes through a small doorway behind the dais.

EXT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dastan runs for his life. Footsteps and shouts behind him.
He ducks into...

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dastan slams the door shut behind him. He turns and sees...

TAMINA

She stands by the window, holding a rope made of knotted sheets. Obviously preparing her own escape.

DASTAN
Slave-Girl! What strange good
fortune--

BAM! BAM! Soldiers are at the door. She pushes him to the window.

TAMINA
Go!

EXT. STABLES - NIGHT

Dastan lands with a thud at the bottom of the sheet-rope.
Tamina tumbles down on top of him just as he tries to get up.

Tamina leaps to her feet. Dastan is slower getting up.

DASTAN
Thank you for your help, Slave-
Girl. Now hide yourself. I must
flee at once and doubtless you
cannot even--

Tamina mounts a magnificent Arabian THOROUGHBRED and takes
off at a gallop.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
...ride.

Dastan stares for a moment. Then the GUARDS burst out of the doorway. Dastan leaps onto the nearest available mount-- a humiliatingly small and unimpressive pony-- and spurs it on.

IN THE COURTYARD

A dozen of the King's HORSEMEN led by Garsiv ride out, trapping Tamina and Dastan.

They're the best-trained, most formidable military unit in Persia. Normally everyone flees from them. Instead, Dastan rides straight at them.

He dodges right -- then left -- and slips by: Magic Johnson on horseback. The resulting moment of disarray lets Tamina charge past on the other side and out the entrance.

GARSIV
Close the gate!

As the GUARDS relay Garsiv's command like an echo, the dozen horsemen turn around as one to give chase.

EXT. PALACE MAIN GATE - NIGHT

The two fugitives gallop toward the great, lowering iron gate, Garsiv's posse on their heels.

Tamina's larger and faster horse gets there first. Dastan catches a glimpse of her nimbly swinging sideways in her saddle to avoid decapitation as she rides under the closing gate.

Impressive. But it looks like the gate will close before Dastan gets there. To make matters worse, four FOOTSOLDIERS range out in front of it, with spears raised to impale him.

Dastan's eyes narrow. Redoubling his speed, he charges on... and SHATTERS a spear with his sword, opening space to pass.

He swings halfway off his horse and narrowly squeezes through. The gate closes, sealing in Garsiv's men.

GARSIV
Open the gate!!

The soldiers raise the gate they just closed. Garsiv's posse, which has swelled to forty riders, charges through.

EXT. CITY IN THE DESERT - NIGHT

Dastan and Tamina gallop out of the walled city and strike out toward the hills with the king's men in pursuit.

A full moon illuminates the rough terrain. Tamina leads the way over a series of increasingly treacherous jumps.

DASTAN

(amazed)

Where did you learn to ride so
well, Slave-Girl?

Two pursuing horsemen fall jumping the boulders. The others
press closer...

An ARROW whistles past Dastan's head. He looks over his
shoulder, sees the posse gaining on him. He urges the little
horse to greater speed but he's outclassed.

Inexorably, the first ARCHER draws even with Dastan. He
shoots; Dastan drops from sight! The archer, seeing Dastan's
horse riderless, is momentarily confused -- did he hit him?
No, Dastan is clinging to the saddle on the other side,
shielded by the horse's body.

GARSIV

Shoot the horse!

Dastan, half upside-down, registers alarm on hearing this.
As the archer fires, Dastan pops back up in his saddle and
pulls up the reins -- causing the arrow to miss.

Dastan escapes into a narrow GULLY, forcing his pursuers to
follow single file.

Descending the steep gully, Dastan discovers the true gift of
his undersized mount -- he's a mountain horse. The sure-
footed animal rapidly regains the ground he lost. Recklessly
tackling the treacherous slope, Dastan emerges onto a broad
plateau -- ahead of Tamina.

Dastan's pursuers benefit from the shortcut as well. As they
pour out of the gully they land right on Tamina. She weaves,
trying to shake them, but can't escape.

Dastan looks back, sees Tamina in trouble. He slows. A
mistake. Within moments he too is boxed in by soldiers on
all sides. He can't get to Tamina.

To Dastan's left runs the sheer canyon wall. As his horse
draws up alongside it, he STANDS, perching on the saddle like
a circus rider -- then RUNS up the wall, using the horse's
galloping momentum to GRAB an overhanging shrub. The
soldiers are left herding a riderless horse.

Dastan launches off the wall and DROPS onto one of the riders
harassing Tamina, shoves him out of the saddle and takes his
place. Drawing his sword, he fights his way toward Tamina,
knocking off the soldiers one by one.

Suddenly Dastan's trapped between two riders: Garsiv on his left, another on his right. In a blinding series of sword-clashes, Garsiv forces Dastan to parry repeatedly... leaving himself wide open to the soldier on his right.

TAMINA

Dastan, look out!

Dastan BLOCKS the right-hand soldier's blow in the nick of time. Garsiv turns to see Tamina riding up on his own left.

Dastan doesn't waste a moment. He scrambles across Garsiv's saddle and joins Tamina on hers. Garsiv spins furiously to stop him-- too slow.

They take off at a gallop.

DASTAN

You have more than repaid the small kindness I showed you, Slave-Girl!

Tamina's eyes narrow: this guy is clueless. But there's no time to disabuse him-- both halves of the posses are closing in on them. Up ahead the plateau drops off in a SHEER CLIFF.

Dastan spots his small horse running loose. Taking the reins from Tamina, he draws up alongside... and JUMPS into the saddle. He reaches out to Tamina.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Come on! Jump!

TAMINA

This horse is faster!

DASTAN

Yes, but it's not a mountain horse! Trust me, jump!

Tamina hesitates... then JUMPS from her horse to his. Dastan catches her and hauls her up into the saddle.

As the soldiers close in, Dastan turns to face the cliff.

TAMINA

What are you doing?!

Dastan sets his jaw. Gallops straight toward the edge --

And LEAPS out into empty space.

The cliff is not quite sheer, just very steep. Incredibly, the horse hits the nearly vertical slope at a gallop -- straight downhill.

All the King's horses stop at the edge. Garsiv, in a frenzy, beats his horse, urging it on. But it refuses to continue.

Dastan and Tamina hang on as the sure-footed mountain horse gallops down, skirting rocks and potholes where a single misstep could mean death, until they reach the canyon floor.

Garsiv, stranded at the top of the cliff, watches in helpless fury as his quarry disappears into the canyon.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT

A shallow river flows between sheer canyon walls. They ride, Tamina is quiet and impassive. Dastan thinks aloud.

DASTAN

Who would want to frame me for my father's murder?

TAMINA

Where did the poisoned robe come from?

DASTAN

It was among the gifts sent by my eldest brother, Tus...

TAMINA

And who inherits the throne upon your father's death?

DASTAN

...Tus.

His head spins. He rides ashore and dismounts.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

I would never have believed my own brother was capable of--

As he turns to face Tamina, she swings a SWORD right at him! Dastan dodges by sheer reflex; the blow glances off his armor, sending him sprawling.

He rolls, avoiding a stamping horse's hoof that would have split his skull. He scrambles to his feet, drawing his sword in time to BLOCK Tamina's next blow.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Why are you--?!

Tamina attacks without mercy. Dastan, his arm deadened from the first hit, struggles to defend himself.

Tamina is good, but not really a match for Dastan. With each failed attack, Dastan recovers ground until Tamina has lost her initial surprise advantage.

Dastan counter-attacks with blinding speed -- he's not trying to kill Tamina, just disarm her. Finally he strikes the sword from her hand.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Who taught you how to use a sword,
Slave-Girl?

Tamina surprises him with a KICK in the belly. Seizing Dastan's arm, she sweeps his legs out from under him. They hit the ground together, grappling on the riverbank.

Tamina sees an opening; pulls the dagger from Dastan's belt. He grabs her wrist, flips her. The dagger goes flying.

Tamina pushes him off her, scrambles toward the dagger. Dastan gets there first. He snatches it up--

CLICK! Grasping it, he's pressed a JEWEL on the dagger's glass handle. A trickle of white SAND spills out and lands at his feet. He looks down surprised...

WHAM!!! THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE WARPS!

TIME slows to a STOP, the dagger frozen in Dastan's hand. The law of physics itself is suspended: dust and water droplets hang in midair. The only element of the scene that remains in motion is the white-glowing sand; as it hits the ground, a gust of WIND blows it away...

REWIND!!

TIME RUNS BACKWARD, reversing the previous action. Faster and faster -- Tamina and Dastan fight in reverse, their movements accelerating backward in a BLUR -- until --

DASTAN,

Staring amazed at the dagger clenched in his hand, suddenly relaxes his tight grip. The instant he releases the jewel, the sand stops pouring out -- and

THE REWIND STOPS

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT [SECOND TIME]

Dastan and Tamina, together again on horseback, ride ashore as they did the first time. Tamina is repeating:

TAMINA
...who inherits the throne upon your
father's death?

Dastan jumps off the horse in confusion and terror, backs away from Tamina as if she's a witch.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

DASTAN
You--

Turning, he points to the dusty patch of ground where they were just fighting. Or were they?

Tamina is equally perplexed. Dastan looks down at his empty hand -- then at the dagger, which inexplicably, is back in his belt...

And looks up to see Tamina's SWORD flashing toward him. Disoriented by what's happened, Dastan is slower to react this time; the blade SLASHES him across the chest.

Dastan looks down at the spreading stain of BLOOD soaking his tunic. He takes a step forward; buckles, falls to his knees.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Who are you?

Tamina draws herself up imperiously, takes out the RING she's kept hidden and puts it on her finger.

TAMINA
I am Tamina, daughter of Sarkander,
King of Alamut.

DASTAN
(mortally wounded)
What... magic...?

He looks down at the dagger in his belt. Draws it.

TAMINA

Give back what you have stolen.

Dastan studies the dagger. The jewel gleams on its hilt, just above where a hand would normally grasp the dagger. But if he grasps it this way, as he did when he snatched it up..

TAMINA (CONT'D)

Don't!

She makes a grab for the dagger -- Dastan presses the jewel. CLICK! Again, sand pours from the handle -- STOPPING TIME.

REWIND!! Back through time, reversing the preceding action--

This time, Dastan is more aware of what's happening. It's as if he's stepped outside himself, outside space and time, into a different dimension from which he can watch the rewind. He looks down at the dagger in his hand -- just as the last of the sand drains out, leaving the glass handle empty.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT [THIRD TIME]

TIME RESUMES a moment before Tamina swings her sword at him.

This time Dastan draws his sword and blocks the blow. She tries to duel him but he's the stronger swordsman. He disarms her and sends her sprawling to the ground.

He glances down -- to his amazement, his wound has vanished.

DASTAN

I don't want to hurt you, but if
you reach for that sword I will
stop you before you stab me again.

TAMINA

Again?

Her gaze flies to the dagger in Dastan's belt.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

The dagger... you've used up all the
sand!

Dastan checks the dagger. Indeed, its glass handle is empty.

DASTAN

How did you know...?

TAMINA
(catches herself)
Everybody from Alamut knows the
myth...

Tamina prostrates herself, avoiding his eyes.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
I'm merely a foolish Slave-Girl.
Forgive me for striking at you
Prince. I sought to escape.

Dastan looks down, lets her grovel. He realizes she has no memory of having revealed her true identity to him... a little smile creeps over his face.

DASTAN
I will forgive you Slave-Girl. But
come-- we cannot stay here.

INT. CAVE - LATER

Tamina sweats, building up the fire while Dastan lounges.

DASTAN
That's enough wood. Come over
here; my boots are dirty.

Her eyes burn into him: if looks could kill.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Is something wrong, Slave-Girl?

TAMINA
(through gritted teeth)
No, my lord.

She kneels to clean his boots. Dastan takes out the dagger and holds it in front of her, watching to see her reaction.

DASTAN
A dagger that can turn back time...
what else does your legend say?

She shrugs and replies offhandedly.

TAMINA
Only that it is worthless now that
it's empty.

Dastan presses the jewel again and again. Indeed, nothing happens. Suspicious, he puts it back in his belt.

She finishes with one boot. He lifts the other and places it in front of her; he watches her intently, trying to guess whatever it is she's NOT telling him.

Outside the sky begins to lighten.

DASTAN

The sun is coming up. It's almost time for me to go.

TAMINA

Go where?

DASTAN

To Alamut to confront my brother.
If he is indeed responsible for our father's death...
(touches the dagger)
...then I will kill him.

Dastan strides toward the entrance and saddles the horse. Tamina follows him.

TAMINA

How will you reach him with the entire Persian army looking for you?

DASTAN

I'll find a way.

TAMINA

You don't even speak our language...

He hesitates.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

I know the secret passageways, the back alleys, the local streets of Alamut... I can help you.

He turns back toward her, considering.

DASTAN

For a common Slave-Girl you have a remarkable set of talents.
(a beat)
Show me your hands.

Eager to please, Tamina shows him two empty hands. Dastan grabs both her wrists and deftly ties them together. Over Tamina's protests, he lifts her into the saddle.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
You may indeed prove useful. But
you lie far too well to be trusted,
Princess Tamina.

Her face flushes with indignation.

TAMINA
You knew? And you made me clean
your boots!?

He grins and swings up into the saddle behind her.

DASTAN
Yes, and you did an excellent job--
for a Princess.

He spurs the horse and they ride off.

INT. PALACE OF NASAF - DAY

Garsiv strides in, dusty from the chase. Nizam and the Twins look up from their conference.

GARSIV
My lords, he has the luck of the
devil himself.

FARHAD
Was it his luck or your failure?

FARHAN
The King's Guards against one
solitary man?

GARSIV
He wasn't alone, my Prince; there
was a girl...

As soon as the words are out of his mouth, Garsiv regrets them. His face burns with shame.

NIZAM
(sadly)
If only he hadn't fled...

FARHAD
If he fled then he's guilty...

FARHAN
If he's guilty he must be punished.

NIZAM
He is your brother...

FARHAD
The king was our father. Apprehend him.

NIZAM
(bows)
As you wish, my Princes... Garsiv,
prepare a full regiment this time.

GARSIV
Right away, my lord.

Garsiv is out for blood. Nizam notes his eagerness.

NIZAM
I, myself will accompany the search
party to make sure Prince Dastan is
treated with justice.
(turns to the Twins)
Tus is our king now. Until he
returns, you rule Nasaf.

FARHAD
(delighted)
I rule!

FARHAN
I rule.

Nizam hesitates as he looks from one to the other... then, on second thought, simply settles into a courtier's smile.

NIZAM
Precisely.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

With a thunder of hooves, soldiers of Nasaf descend on a CARAVAN of hundreds of travelers flowing through the pass.

The soldiers start grabbing people, searching for anyone remotely matching Dastan or Tamina's description.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Dastan and Tamina watch the caravan below, and more soldiers riding toward the pass.

Intent on the problem, they don't notice the ARCHER above, drawing a bead on them.. until Tamina turns with a gasp.

It's a 12 year-old SHEPHERD BOY, guarding his flock.

Dastan makes a friendly "excuse us" gesture, and hustles Tamina along. Fiercely scowling, the boy keeps the bow and arrow trained on them as they pass.

Seized by an afterthought, Dastan turns back...

TAMINA

What?

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Now naked, the boy runs toward his hut shouting--

SHEPHERD BOY

Papa! Papa!

Waving in his hand Dastan's SILVER BRACELET.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

Tamina, dressed as a shepherd boy, rides the boy's mule as Dastan leads it. Dastan has shed his princely armor and looks like any common traveler. They join the throng of people and animals moving in both directions.

As they approach the pass, Tamina tenses up on seeing the dozen SOLDIERS manning the checkpoint.

DASTAN

Don't worry. I don't look like a prince of Nasaf...

(looks her up and down)

...any more than you look like a girl.

Tamina glowers but Dastan doesn't notice. They pass directly in front of the soldiers, unnoticed.

EXT. DESERT - [ANOTHER] DAY

The blazing sun beats down on the parched earth as the caravan crosses the desert. Pilgrims, merchants, dervishes, civil servants... a panorama of medieval Persia.

Pale and weak, Tamina sways in the saddle, tied in place by a turban cloth.

A SERVANT from a group of wealthier Persians passing by offers Dastan a water-skin. He takes it thankfully and raises it to his lips-- stops as he notices Tamina out of the corner of his eye, dehydrated and exhausted.

Dastan lowers the water-skin and instead gives her a drink. She gulps it down, unaware of his small act of generosity.

Dastan nods his thanks to the Servant as he passes it back.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - [ANOTHER] DAY

Dastan and Tamina (now on foot) look down on their caravan as it continues without them. They're on their own. In the distance rise the icy peaks of Tamina's mountain kingdom.

TAMINA

We've no food and only one water-skin.

DASTAN

God will provide. Come.

She doesn't move, just looks down at her wrists-- still bound. Dastan sighs, then comes over and releases her. He moves on briskly so as not to make a big deal of it...

...and thus misses the murderous stare she gives him, rubbing her wrists.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Dastan and Tamina climb a steep little stream until a NOMAD CAMP comes into view below. A dozen tents; mules and oxen. Hungrily, Dastan sniffs the cooking aromas.

DASTAN

I told you. God will provide.

He watches from behind a rock, hiding.

TAMINA
You mean to steal these people's
food?

DASTAN
They're bandits. It all evens out.

TAMINA
Bandits?

THEIR POV: A few fierce-looking NOMAD MEN emerge. They all wear weapons. Tamina doesn't like the looks of this.

DASTAN
Wait for me here.

He dashes down the hill before she can stop him.

EXT. NOMAD CAMP - DAY

Dastan sneaks between the tents. There are people around, but he manages to avoid being seen. He ducks into a tent.

INT. NOMAD TENT - DAY

Dastan checks a few bowls and a copper pot -- all empty. Looking around, he spots something hanging in a cloth; sniffs it. Inside is a giant lump of dried buttermilk curd. He tastes it: not bad. Famished he shoves a big handful into his mouth, takes the rest to go.

Startled by a MOO, he turns to see a CALF watching him from a dark corner of the tent.

Dastan and the calf share a moment: "Okay, you caught me." Then Dastan ducks out.

And back inside in an instant, as FEROCIOUSLY BARKING DOGS descend on the tent. Dastan hastily ties the entrance flap shut. The tent SHAKES as the dogs hurl themselves at it.

EXT. NOMAD TENT - DAY

NOMAD BANDITS, alerted by the BARKING, come to investigate.

Dastan crawls out from under the other side of the tent. Spotting a CHICKEN strolling by, Dastan snatches it and dashes for the hill.

A six year-old GYPSY BOY sees him. SHOUTS at the top of his lungs in gypsy language -- "There he goes!"

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Tamina sees Dastan running up the hill toward her, chicken flapping madly in his grasp, dogs and nomads on his heels.

DASTAN

Run!

Tamina hesitates... turns to run. And nearly smacks into...

FAROOD.

A grizzled gypsy in his fifties. Two rough-looking BANDITS behind him. Utter incredulity on Farood's face.

Dastan arrives, stops short on seeing their escape cut off. Turning to face the dogs, he reaches for his sword--

FAROOD

Off!!

On command, the dogs fall back, snarling.

Farood looks Dastan up and down. Dastan releases the chicken.

DASTAN

(re: Tamina)

My cousin... he's hungry.

FAROOD

A man should take care of his family. I have a family too. A big family.

Farood indicates the camp below, where a crowd of curious NOMAD WOMEN and CHILDREN has gathered to watch. Among them, the little gypsy BOY, who glares bravely at Dastan.

DASTAN

Did not the Prophet say: "Give freely to those in need, for what you give, God will replace?"

FAROOD

A scholar!

DASTAN

I'm only a poor student from
Samarkand. My name is Ali.
(before Tamina can speak)
And this is my cousin, Bukbuk.
Alas, he's mute.

Tamina gapes in outrage.

FAROOD

I am Farood. These are my people;
what is mine is theirs. Ali of
Samarkand, I will make you a
bargain; give me that fine sword
you're wearing and I'll give you
the chicken.

DASTAN

A sword is worth more than a
chicken.

FAROOD

A chicken is worth more to a hungry
thief than a sword to a dead one.

DASTAN

The worth of a sword depends on
who's wearing it. To gain one
sword and one chicken at a cost of--
(surveys the opposition)
...eight men. Ten if I'm lucky... is
hardly taking care of one's family.

Farood rubs his beard thoughtfully.

FAROOD

You have a high opinion of your own
swordsmanship, Ali of Samarkand.
Shall we put it to the test?

A GIANT BANDIT steps forward. Seven feet tall and grinning
evilly. His friends place TWO SCIMITARS in his hands, which
he brandishes in a blinding display of speed and skill.

Dastan quickly recalculates the odds.

DASTAN

Why risk damaging such fine weapons
when we could settle the matter
with a wager of skill...
(dramatic pause)
...a throw of the knife.

The bandits exchange dubious glances. But Dastan has them hooked -- they're curious.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOMAD CAMP - MINUTES LATER

Dastan crouches near a tent, hastily trying to fill the DAGGER with SAND from the desert as he presses the jewel repeatedly. It's not working.

FAROOD (O.S.)
Ali! We're waiting!

DASTAN
Just a minute!

He makes a final desperate attempt, then gives up. Taking a deep breath, he strides into the circle of nomads where...

A WOOD POST with an X has been set up. A loooong fifteen paces away a line in the sand marks Dastan's throwing spot.

Tamina looks at Dastan in dismay -- what has he gotten into? He's going to gamble away their only weapon. Dastan gives her a reassuring look.

He flips the Dagger in his hand a few times, gauging its weight. The hollow handle makes for an awkward balance...

Dastan gets ready... concentrating... he catches the unnerving stare of the little Gypsy Boy -- and loses his concentration. False start. Everyone exhales.

Dastan gives the kid a reproachful look: "Don't do that to me!" Gets ready again...

And throws.

Whop-whop-whop-whop... PING! The dagger hits the top of the post, handle-first, and bounces off into the sand. A complete miss.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
That's not a good throwing dagger.

FAROOD
Come. We will speak man to man.

Farood squires Dastan away. Tamina, left alone with a dozen nomad bandits all staring at her, tries to strike an appropriate "male" attitude.

EXT. NOMAD CAMP - DAY

Farood and Dastan pause at the edge of the camp.

FAROOD

May I ask... after I take your sword and send you on your way without a chicken, what is your plan?

DASTAN

Without food or weapons, I suppose we'll die in a few days.

FAROOD

(nods in agreement)
Your destination?

DASTAN

Alamut. To find a cure for the curse that struck my cousin dumb.

FAROOD

It's not often in this wilderness that I meet a man as educated as myself. Though as you can see, I am virile as a bull -- alas, my wives have given me no sons. Only daughters. Seven wives, eleven daughters.

Dastan shakes his head with empathy.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

This is my great sorrow. All I have learned will die with me, like unpicked grapes that wither on the vine-- for what good is education to a woman? A man of business needs a protégé-- a partner. Where will I find such a man among this bunch of louts?

(waves toward the bandits)

One might as easily teach a goat to speak.

DASTAN

Your daughters are unmarried?

FAROOD

They are like eleven moons, each more beautiful than the next. I have yet to find the man worthy of them.

Dastan looks back toward camp, thinking.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

We travel the same road. Did not the Prophet say it is a duty to give hospitality to those in need? Tonight, before we strike camp, we will cook the chicken you did not win. My gift to you and your poor cousin.

It's the chicken that clinches it -- as Farood knows.

DASTAN

And my sword?

FAROOD

My sword. You may carry it, as long as you are in my caravan. What is in my caravan is mine; it pleases me for you to carry it.

Farood strides off, leaving Dastan bemused. Tamina, outraged, comes up to him.

TAMINA

You can't seriously mean for us to travel with these people?

DASTAN

Why not?

TAMINA

They're gypsies! They'd sell us out for a handful of copper.

DASTAN

Shh! You're mute.

Left alone to simmer, Tamina notices a female nomad (HALEEMA) gazing at her. Haleema, big enough to snap Tamina like a toothpick, smiles coquettishly. Tamina scowls and looks away. Haleema's smile broadens: she's in love.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

A SCOUT PATROL of half a dozen men rides down from the mountains to rejoin a FULL REGIMENT of the Persian army-- hundreds of horsemen with a well-equipped supply train.

NIZAM and GARSIV

Are approached by the SCOUT CHIEF, holding Dastan's bracelet.

SCOUT CHIEF

A shepherd in the Alburz pass says
his son traded his clothes for it.
To a man and a woman.

NIZAM

The Alburz pass... They're headed
for Alamut.

GARSIV

His brother Tus stands between him
and the crown. We must prevent him
from getting there!

THE REGIMENT

redoubles its speed, horses kicking up dust as they go...

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

The NOMAD CARAVAN wends its way along a mountain path, pack animals carrying the rolled up tents and mats.

Tamina watches Dastan, up ahead, showing off by doing handsprings between two mules. The nomads, including the little boy, laugh and applaud. Dastan falls back to rejoin Tamina.

TAMINA

How nice. You've found friends on
your own level.

DASTAN

At least gypsies know how to have
fun.

TAMINA

I'm talking about the mules.

Dastan makes a face: very funny.

He notices that she's limping -- her feet are tender.

DASTAN

Not used to trekking across the
desert?

TAMINA

I'm fine.

Dastan shrugs. He hears muffled laughter and turns to see several gypsy WOMEN riding up on camels. Exotically beautiful, they giggle and whisper behind their veils. Dastan steps away from his "mute cousin" to wave and smile at the girls. Tamina shakes her head.

ON FAROOD

Dastan comes up beside him.

DASTAN

You chose your words well. A moon
shines at night, but even daylight
cannot veil its beauty.

(off Farood's confusion)

Your daughters.

FAROOD

(sees where Dastan looks)

Oh, those aren't my daughters! I
wouldn't let them dress like that.
Those are my daughters.

Dastan follows his gesture to see...

FAROOD'S ELEVEN DAUGHTERS

Riding in a wagon. Strong as men and twice as homely, they glare at Dastan (Haleema among them).

FAROOD (CONT'D)

I've brought them up properly.
Hard workers-- and every one a
virgin.

Dastan stares. Any one of them could break him in two.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

As my partner you could become a
rich man very quickly. Perhaps you
could afford to marry all my
daughters.

Dastan smiles queasily...

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Do you wish to know the secret of my success? War.

(confidentially)

Alamut has fallen to a foreign army. A great piece of luck-- for us! War is hard on soldiers and common people. But for men of vision, war is an opportunity. Salt, cloth, things nobody thinks twice of in times of peace-- overnight the price goes up tenfold. This is why Farood will take his tribe to Alamut.

(a wink re: his daughters)

Think about my offer.

Beaming he claps Dastan on the back and rides off.

Dastan looks back at the daughters as they pass...

TAMINA

Haleema offers her a water flask. Tamina shakes her head, attempting to simultaneously convey masculinity, lack of interest and muteness. Haleema insists. Tamina gives in and drinks from the flask.

Farood's other ten daughters hoot with delight, startling Tamina into a coughing fit. Haleema beams adoringly. Apparently, sharing water is a significant nomad courtship.

As Tamina walks past, Dastan winks at her:

DASTAN

I see you've found a friend too.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - EVENING

The caravan is camped.

Dastan uses the DAGGER to play MUMBLETYPEG with the gypsy boy. He pauses, hearing a distant noise. Then the noise grows into a THUNDER. Moments later, HORSEMEN appear. A cavalry regiment charges past on the road above.

Dastan moves through the camp. He finds Tamina sitting alone by a fire.

DASTAN
Soldiers of Nasaf.

TAMINA
Looking for us?

DASTAN
Looking for a man and woman
travelling alone. I think we're
safe with the caravan.

He notices Tamina rubbing her raw and aching feet.

She quickly covers them. He turns away, not wanting to
embarrass her further. But he's concerned.

EXT. TRADING VILLAGE - MORNING

The crossroads of the world. The locals are Mongolian and
wear the boots and fur hats of the steppe. Travelers run the
gamut of the Silk Road from Arab to Chinese.

Nomads feed and water their animals at the central trough
while merchants haggle in the surrounding BAZAAR.

TAMINA draws water from a well.

Dastan arrives, leading a DONKEY. He grins broadly.

DASTAN
What do you think?

TAMINA
About what?

He sweeps his arm grandly toward the animal.

DASTAN
The donkey. I got it for you. On
account of your feet...
(prompting her)
'Oh, thank you Dastan! You're so
considerate, such a gentleman--'

TAMINA
Where did you get it?

DASTAN
At the bazaar, what--

TAMINA

I mean HOW did you get it? What
did you trade for it?

Dastan looks down at where she is staring: the empty sheath
on his belt. He traded the DAGGER.

DASTAN

It was a lousy throwing dagger...

TAMINA

You traded the dagger for a
donkey!?

DASTAN

What? You said yourself that it
was worthless without the sand,
that the magic was used up...

(off her look)

The magic wasn't used up?

TAMINA

(explodes)

NO! I was lying, you idiot!
Couldn't you tell?

A few people turn and stare. Dastan hustles her aside before
anybody from their caravan notices that she's a talking Mute.

DASTAN

Maybe if you told me the truth once
in a while, we wouldn't have these
little communication problems.

Tamina takes a calming breath. Considers. Realizes she's
going to have to tell him a bit more.

TAMINA

It's the sand that turns back
time... the dagger is the vessel.
It can be refilled when we get to
Alamut.

DASTAN

(deadpan)

So you're saying it's worth more
than the donkey?

She gives him a look.

TAMINA

We need to get it back.

EXT. BAZAAR - LATER

The sun burns high overhead. Tamina looks on as Dastan haggles with a Hogarth-grotesque, ONE-EYED MERCHANT.

ONE-EYED MERCHANT
...describe this dagger for me once again?

DASTAN
It's about this long, with a clear handle and it has a bunch of jewels on the hilt-- fake, fake jewels, they're glass, I'm pretty sure. But the merchant I got the donkey from said that--

ONE-EYED MERCHANT
Where is the donkey?

Dastan sighs. He explains patiently:

DASTAN
I traded back the donkey in exchange for the chickens that he traded for the dagger and that led me to the bushels of wheat, then the length of cloth and finally...
(lifts a jar triumphantly)
...this jar of perfume that you traded for my dagger.

The One-Eyed Merchant sniffs the jar. Reacts.

ONE-EYED MERCHANT
That's not perfume, that's goat piss! And I don't know about any dagger.

He shuffles off. Tamina turns angrily on Dastan.

TAMINA
These merchants have all been leading you around like a fool!

DASTAN
Thank you. How come you didn't speak up before it was too late?

TAMINA
Because I'm a mute, remember?

Dastan takes a whiff of the "perfume," then tosses it away in disgust.

DASTAN

If we're gonna find that dagger we need somebody who knows how to talk to these traders, somebody who really understands this world...

He trails off as his eyes come to rest on... FAROOD, in the center of a crowd, wheeling and dealing.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

(walks over)

Farood, my friend! I need your expertise...

CUT TO:

A GROUP OF NASAF SOLDIERS

Bullying their way through the bazaar, questioning the merchants, who plead ignorance.

Their leader is GARSIV. His keen eyes rove the crowd.

A SOLDIER comes up to report.

SOLDIER

No sign of them by the river, sir.

GARSIV

Keep looking. He's close. I can feel it.

The Soldier salutes and takes off running.

Garsiv turns to move on and bumps into a BOY in rags, knocking him down.

GARSIV (CONT'D)

Watch where you're going, boy.

ANGLE ON THE BOY: TAMINA.

A pair of hands swiftly pulls her clear of the soldiers' feet... Dastan averts his face as he leads her away.

Garsiv turns and watches their departing backs suspiciously. Something familiar but... he moves on to continue his search.

BEHIND A TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Dastan and Tamina peer out.

DASTAN
We have to leave at once.

TAMINA
Not without the dagger.

DASTAN
Forget the dagger. I don't care
about your magic relic.

TAMINA
Do you care about killing your
brother and avenging your father's
death?
(beat)
You'll need it.

DASTAN
(suspicious)
For somebody who was trying to kill
me not long ago, you suddenly seem
awfully eager to help...

She shrugs and looks down shyly...

Just then a tap on his shoulder makes Dastan jump.

FAROOD
Ali, Bukbuk... what are you doing
here? I have found your dagger.

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - SUNSET

The Soldiers of Nasaf have occupied the three-story home of
the wealthiest merchant in town.

Nizam is sipping tea in the tiled courtyard when Garsiv
tromps in after a fruitless day of searching.

GARSIV
No luck today. But tomorrow--

NIZAM
Tomorrow we make for Alamut.

GARSIV
My lord, I believe Dastan is hiding
in the wilderness nearby and that
if we wait--

NIZAM

If he is hiding in the wilderness
then he can do no further harm.

He looks at Garsiv pointedly.

NIZAM (CONT'D)

The personal animosity you bear
toward Prince Dastan clouds your
judgement, Captain Garsiv.
Tomorrow we make for Alamut.

Garsiv contains his frustration and bows his head.

EXT. TOWN - SUNSET

Farood leads Dastan and Tamina proudly toward an Inn.

FAROOD

...dealing with merchants requires
subtlety, skill and years of
experience honed in the bazaars
from Bukhara to Baghdad. You
couldn't possibly be expected to
master the art overnight, Ali.
Given enough time however, I could
teach you. Have you thought about
my proposal?

Dastan stares blankly for a moment. Then...

DASTAN

Ah yes... your daughters. I can't
get them out of my head. But about
that dagger...?

FAROOD

That was easy; the Innkeeper has
it.

INT. INN - MOMENTS LATER

An older female DANCER gyrates listlessly to the music played
on drums, tambourines and flutes. The tables are crowded
with diverse travelers.

Farood, Dastan and Tamina enter and make their way to...

INT. BACK ROOM - SAME

LENK, the wizened Mongolian innkeeper makes notes in his ledger. Behind him is a middle-eastern pawn shop. The DAGGER sits prominently on a shelf.

Dastan gestures to Farood and Tamina: "I'll handle this."

DASTAN

Salaam Aleikum. I'm told you are not only an innkeeper but a trader of great renown.

Lenk looks up slowly. Takes him in.

LENK

You have some worthless thing to sell?

DASTAN

Actually to buy. A mere trinket. A small dagger of purely sentimental value that I believe you... ah, there it is.

He points. Lenk picks up the dagger and examines it.

LENK

A trinket? This dagger has a gold hilt encrusted with rubies and sapphires. The edge is sharp enough to split hairs. And the workmanship is so fine it looks as if it were made by the gods.

DASTAN

(feigns disinterest)

I've seen better... how much do you want for it?

Lenk smirks, assuming Dastan doesn't have a single dinar.

LENK

One hundred dinars.

DASTAN

Done.

Quick as a flash, Dastan slaps a coin purse on the table.

Lenk stares. He picks up the purse. Its weight triggers new respect. Then...

Farood jumps forward and grabs the purse.

FAROOD
Have you lost your mind? That's no
way to bargain!
(to Lenk)
Twenty dinars.

Farood suddenly feels the purse and realizes...

FAROOD (CONT'D)
Where did you get one hundred
dinars?

Before Dastan can reply, Lenk snatches the purse back.

LENK
The price has already been agreed.

DASTAN
Yes, the price has been agreed!

FAROOD
Nobody pays the first price
offered.
(to Lenk)
He is a beginner. Fifty dinars.

LENK
One hundred dinars.

FAROOD
You are thief, not an innkeeper!
Come, we're leaving.

Farood takes the purse, grabs Dastan and hustles him out.

OUTSIDE THE BACK ROOM

Dastan stops Farood.

DASTAN
Farood, I want that dagger!

FAROOD
Oh, he'll come running after us and
take the fifty dinars, wait and
see.

Dastan whisks the purse from Farood and heads back.

FAROOD (CONT'D)
No, he must come to us!
(shakes his head)
It's going to take some time to
teach him.

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dastan hurries to the desk.

DASTAN
I accept. One hundred dinars.

He puts the money in front of Lenk who, offended, doesn't look up from his writing.

LENK
No deal.

DASTAN
All right then, name your price.

LENK
There is no price! Am I a beggar
to take insults from a gypsy?

Dastan is at a loss. Now he's completely screwed.

TAMINA (O.S.)
Suppose I ask you.

Lenk's pen freezes at the sound of the sweet, feminine voice. He looks up to see where it came from..

Tamina steps forward and removes her turban. Shakes loose her long dark hair. A beat. Lenk grins.

LENK
For you, the price is one hundred
dinars... and one dance for my
guests.

DASTAN
(instantly)
Done.

Tamina looks at him in shock and betrayal.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Garsiv strides down the street with half a dozen soldiers. He's in a foul mood after his conversation with Nizam.

INT. INN, BACK STAGE - NIGHT

Dastan hovers outside a curtained doorway.

DASTAN
(guiltily)
It must feel good to get out of
those rags.

TAMINA (V.O.)
(coldly, from within)
Go away.

INT. INN - NIGHT

Dastan pulls up an ottoman behind Farood's. Farood glances at the dagger in Dastan's belt.

FAROOD
I don't mean to be critical, Ali,
but you got the worst of that
bargain.

DASTAN
(his eyes on the stage)
Maybe not the absolute worst.

Just then, the musicians strike up a rousing dance rhythm. The customers lift their heads expectantly.

The musicians continue... and continue. Still the stage remains empty. The BAND LEADER beckons furiously toward backstage; gives the crowd a phony smile.

At that moment, the front door opens. Dastan turns to see:

GARSIV and SIX SOLDIERS enter with a blast of cold air from outside. The soldiers take several tables, displacing the locals.

Dastan turns pale. He wants to warn Tamina-- but there's no time. He settles for slouching down in his seat, out of Garsiv's sight-line.

Farood notes Dastan's reaction, realizing something is up.

ON STAGE

Tamina edges into view. She wears a veil and holds a scarf in each hand, as is traditional in Mongolian yak-herding regions. She looks as if she wants to sink into the floor. Someone backstage SHOVES her on -- she reacts angrily.

DASTAN

winces. The crowd is starting to mutter. He glances nervously to see if Garsiv has noticed.

GARSIV

Far from suspicious, Garsiv seems perversely amused by the spectacle onstage. He turns to his LIEUTENANT.

GARSIV

Pretty girl. A pity she can't dance.

DASTAN

Hiding behind Farood frantically gestures to Tamina to "dance." She glares back at him. He demonstrates, showing her how she needs to move her hips... then sees Farood looking at him.

DASTAN

("grooving")

The music is good, isn't it?

TAMINA

Ventures a timid dance step. The crowd BOOS. Someone throws a chicken bone at the stage.

Dastan makes more emphatic "dance" gestures for Tamina behind Farood's back, indicating the soldiers with his eyes.

Tamina looks. Registers Garsiv's presence.

Tamina's expression changes. Glaring defiantly at Dastan, she shakes her booty in the manner he advised. The crowd HOOTS and applauds. The band leader, relieved, kicks the music up a notch.

Tamina dances, with plenty of hip gyrations and scarf-twirling. Her eyes glint with cunning.

Garsiv is riveted.

Dastan watches nervously as...

Tamina dances off the stage, cutting a swath through the room, straight toward Dastan. All the time she keeps one eye on the soldiers. Alarmed, Dastan ducks under the table, baffling Farood.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
I think I dropped some...

Tamina pulls Dastan to his feet. She dances seductively around him. Her hands caress his body without actually touching. Her breath sears his cheek through the veil.

THE NOMADS AND YAK HERDERS

Stare open-mouthed. They've never seen anything like this. The gypsy boy, his sight blocked by grownups, strains for a better view.

GARSIV speaks to his lieutenant without taking his eyes off Tamina:

GARSIV
Whatever that girl costs -- pay it.

TAMINA and DASTAN

She's outdoing herself, making Dastan the target of an erotic floor show that has riveted the whole room.

DASTAN
(hisses)
That's enough!

Tamina keeps it up, smiling wickedly; she draws a gossamer scarf across Dastan's face. He's sweating bullets.

Before he's quite realized what's happening, she's drawn the DAGGER from his belt-- wrapping it in several turns of her scarf-- and is dancing away.

Outraged, Dastan starts to go after her-- then stops. If he pursues her he risks being recognized by Garsiv.

Tamina dances back to the stage, having gotten what she wanted. But as she passes the table of soldiers...

Her eyes briefly meet Garsiv's through the veil. Is that lust or recognition in his stare?

Unnerved, Tamina hurries onto the stage. With a final flourish of scarves, she disappears through the curtain.

The room ERUPTS. They'll be talking about this for months.

DASTAN

Glowing, jumps to his feet. He makes a beeline for the stage but his way is blocked by the crowd of Tamina's admirers. Lenk patiently handles the crush of MERCHANTS and TRADERS thrusting coin purses at him..

Dastan glances back across the room to the table where Garsiv was sitting. It's empty.

EXT. BAZAAR - NIGHT

Tamina hurries down alleys, glancing over her shoulder. Mongolian MEN, loitering in groups in the darkness, notice.

DASTAN

Climbs onto a rooftop. Up a series of ladders, drainpipes and awnings until he has a vantage point of the surrounding streets and alleys.

Nimble as a cat, he runs and jumps from one rooftop to the next, scanning all the while for a sign of...

TAMINA

Rounds a corner and spots an unattended pony. She goes over to untie the animal. She hears a footstep and turns...

GARSIV

steps into the light. His soldiers fan out in a semi-circle, cutting off her escape.

GARSIV

A magnificent dancer and a horse thief. You have so many talents, Slave-Girl.

Tamina quietly hides the dagger in the small of her back.

TAMINA

I will pay for the horse.

GARSIV

Yes, you will.

Garsiv nods to the soldiers who seize her roughly.

ANGLE ON DASTAN

Watching from a rooftop.

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - NIGHT

SOLDIERS sweep through the gate on horseback.

Garsiv dismounts and approaches one of the guards.

GARSIV
Where is Nizam?

GUARD
Asleep, sir.

GARSIV
Send for him. He'll want to be
woken for this.

EXT. CARAVAN - NIGHT

Dastan paces back and forth, gripping his sword and muttering to himself. He draws a line in the dirt and starts making hash marks on either side to weigh pros and cons...

DASTAN
(on the con side)
...the place is well-guarded and
you'd probably get yourself killed..
(in the pro column)
...she has that magic dagger..
(con)
...only because she stole it from
you..
(pro)
...if you don't rescue her, Garsiv
will do with her as he pleases...

That really burns him up.

Farood comes up behind him.

FAROOD
If you are finished drawing in the
dirt, Ali of Samarkand, we are
preparing to go.
(MORE)

FAROOD (CONT'D)
(a beat)
Where is your cousin?

Dastan turns.

DASTAN
I have a confession to make,
Farood. Bukbuk is not my cousin.
Bukbuk is my... fiancée. You see--

Farood holds up a hand.

FAROOD
I make no judgements.

DASTAN
Bukbuk is the dancing girl. I
mean, the dancing girl was Bukbuk.

FAROOD
(confused)
What...?
(realizing)
Oh... you mean...?
(grinning)
Oooooooh!

Dastan nods, running with it.

DASTAN
Yes, my parents forbid the marriage
on account of her being a heathen.
So we fled in the middle of the
night. Her father had us declared
outlaws so the soldiers came after
us. We only escaped by disguising
ourselves. Then we met up with you...
Now after all we've been through,
she has been captured.

Dastan wipes a fake tear from his eye. Farood puts a hand on his shoulder.

FAROOD
What a tragic and romantic tale. I
feel for you, Ali.

DASTAN
(quick)
Then you will help me rescue her?

FAROOD
Uh... why would I do that?

DASTAN
Our of romantic spirit...?
Friendship...? Goodwill...?

FAROOD
Ah-ha, hah-ha, hah-ha!

Dastan waits for him to stop laughing.

DASTAN
Okay. How much do you want?

FAROOD
(all business again)
What do you have?

Dastan produces a gold ring. Farood bites it: real gold.

FAROOD (CONT'D)
You're either a very rich student,
Ali, or a very good thief.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOUSE, UPSTAIRS CHAMBER - NIGHT

Tamina stands in the center of the room, her wrists bound together. A pair of guards flank the door.

Garsiv paces around her.

GARSIV
Where is Dastan?

TAMINA
I don't know.

GARSIV
Why do you go on protecting him?
He's no longer a Prince. He's
nothing. Powerless.

TAMINA
Good. Then you shouldn't need my
help catching him.

He circles closer to her, menacing.

GARSIV

You have a sharp tongue, Slave-Girl. I'll need to cure it if I'm going to keep you.

Garsiv snaps his fingers and a Guard hands him a ROPE. Tamina watches nervously as he knots it to her wrists, then throws the other end over a rafter. He pulls it tight until her arms are stretched up and she's forced onto her toes.

She grimaces.

GARSIV (CONT'D)

I'll give you a little time to get comfortable. If you're still not cooperative when I get back, we'll play some other games...

He ties the rope off to a cleat on the wall, then departs along with the guards.

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - NIGHT

A pair of SOLDIERS guard the gate surrounding the compound.

Farood approaches, a bottle in hand, weaving slightly.

FAROOD

Salaam aliekum.

As he bows to the soldiers a pair of dice falls out of his sleeve and rolls up to their feet... their eyes meet.

CUT TO:

A FEW MINUTES LATER

As Farood plays dice and drinks with the guards...

Dastan scales the wall in the background. He scampers over and jumps to...

A LARGE WALNUT TREE

Dastan climbs up and out a limb toward the house.

INT. GRAND HOUSE, UPSTAIRS CHAMBER - SAME

Tamina is tied up where Garsiv left her. She rubs and twists her wrists together in a desperate effort to fray the rope. It's no use.

Suddenly a movement outside the window catches her eye. She turns and sees...

DASTAN

perched on a tree limb as far out as he can go.

Tamina's eyes light up with astonishment and hope. She can't believe he's here.

He puts his finger to his lips-- points down.

REVEAL MORE SOLDIERS

Keeping watch around the house. Dastan assesses the situation: fifteen feet to the window-- too far to jump.

ON TAMINA - she hears footsteps outside the door.

She makes an impatient face at Dastan: "Get me out of here!"

He holds up a finger: "Give me a second, I'm thinking!"

Dastan stares through the open window at her bound wrists. Gets an idea. He takes out a throwing knife (borrowed presumably) and starts flipping it in his hand. Looks at Tamina:

DASTAN
(mouths silently)
DON'T MOVE.

Tamina sees what he's planning.

TAMINA
(mouths back)
NO!

He nods reassuringly: "I can do this."

She shakes her head emphatically: "No you can't."

Ignoring her, Dastan braces himself and takes aim. She shakes her head furiously: NO!

Dastan cocks the knife: one, two, three...

Just as he releases, a HISSING sound distracts Dastan: A LARGE SNAKE is coiling itself around the branch by his feet!

Dastan jerks.

The knife flies through the window.

Tamina closes her eyes as the knife sails past and...

THWACK! It slices through the rope where it's tied to the wall, causing it to go slack.

Tamina opens her eyes in amazement and realizes her arms are no longer held up. She yanks the rope from the rafter and runs to the window. She sees Dastan doing a curious dance on the tree branch...

TAMINA (CONT'D)
(whispers loudly)
Stop fooling around and catch this
rope!

Dastan looks up as Tamina throws the rope. The snake strikes: Dastan jumps. Catches the rope in mid-air...

Tamina is yanked OUT the window by her bound wrists. They plummet toward the ground until... the rope catches on a lower branch: they bounce to a halt, ten feet above the ground.

They swing back and forth for a moment.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
(hissed whisper)
You know, for a minute I thought
you were actually going to try to
cut my hands free with that knife
throw...

Dastan laughs nervously. Her eyes narrow: that's exactly what he was trying to do.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
You--

CRACK! The branch breaks sending them crashing to the ground.

TWO SOLDIERS come running...

SOLDIERS
Who goes there?

Dastan and Tamina pull the rope taught into a tripline and sweep the onrushing guards off their feet even as she continues to vent her fury.

TAMINA
I can't believe you! The only
reason you didn't kill me is that
you're such a bad shot you didn't
come close!

Dastan RAPS the soldiers' heads together before they can get up.

DASTAN
Is that your way of saying "thank
you for rescuing me?"

Tamina takes off running... runs out of rope and comes crashing to the ground.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Wrong way.

He reels her in. He pulls her close and wraps his arms around her. Her reaction is a mixture of outrage, surprise and maybe a little bit of excitement as Dastan runs his hands down her body, searching...

Got it! He pulls the DAGGER from behind her back. Cuts her wrists free in one motion and tucks the dagger into HIS belt.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Let's go.

INT. GRAND HOUSE - NIGHT

Garsiv leads Nizam (just dressed) up the stairs.

GARSIV
I tell you, my Lord, it's the self-
same girl...

They arrive at the door to the chamber and Garsiv throws it open. They enter and discover that it is... empty.

A beat.

GARSIV (CONT'D)

Dastan!

EXT. GRAND HOUSE - NIGHT

Farood waits nervously with two camels. There's a rustling in the tree branches above and...

Dastan drops down beside him. He reaches up to help Tamina... who ignores him and jumps down on her own.

Farood looks her over.

FAROOD

I like you better as a woman,
Bukbuk. One thing I don't
understand... are you still a mute?

Before she can respond they HEAR SHOUTS of ALARM raised within. Farood hands them both full length BURKHAS. They throw them on and mount the camels.

Farood sets off with his two "WOMEN" behind him..

EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING

The nomad caravan is waking up.

TAMINA (dressed as a shepherd again) crawls out of her bedroll and spots Dastan sitting alone, stoking the fire.

She goes over and joins him.

DASTAN

(glances up)

Ah, good morning Princess Bukbuk.

TAMINA

Good morning, Prince Ali. Until
you came back to rescue me
yesterday I wasn't sure you really
were the son of a king.

He looks at her to see if she's teasing him. She's not.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

Your father would have been proud.

DASTAN

I missed my chance to make him
proud while he lived. I played the
fool, wasted my time in amusements..
Now it is too late.

He looks down bitterly.

TAMINA

You can still avenge his death with
a noble act. Your brother Tus, who
brutally crushes my people--

DASTAN

My brother is a good man. I still
can't believe he killed our father.

Tamina's temper flashes.

TAMINA

A good man? He invaded our
peaceful kingdom for loot!

DASTAN

That's not true. Tus only ordered
the attack because your "peaceful"
kingdom was secretly supplying our
enemy.

TAMINA

Lies!

DASTAN

I was there when the spy confessed!

TAMINA

You heard this confession yourself?

DASTAN

Yes. Well... not exactly. Nizam
translated it for us.

TAMINA

(beat)

Nizam is the graybeard with two
swords?

DASTAN

Yes.

ON TAMINA, her mind racing.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PALACE OF NASAF, HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

Tamina flees the kitchen and moves down the corridor. She approaches the door that is ajar to peek inside...

TAMINA'S POV -

Nizam pours POISON on the ROBE OF HONOR. He looks up and sees Tamina.

NIZAM

What are you doing here? Somebody grab that girl!

Tamina turns and flees.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - RESUME SCENE

ON DASTAN

Shocked by her revelation.

DASTAN

It was Nizam...?

(beat)

Yet you encouraged me to kill my brother... knowing he was innocent?!

Tamina doesn't back down.

TAMINA

Not innocent: he invaded and destroyed my home. Or so I believed. Now I have told you the truth.

Her eyes bore into him.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

Even if Nizam deceived you, you and your brothers have done a grave injustice to my people. It is your duty to make it right.

Dastan looks back at her warily.

DASTAN

When we get to Alamut, you will help me reach my brother. We will tell him all that has happened. He will decide what to do.

Dastan stands and walks away.

EXT. CITADEL OF ALAMUT - DAY

Nizam, Garsiv and their regiment ride in through the gates.

Tus awaits them, trembling with emotion. Nizam dismounts, his expression sorrowful and compassionate.

TUS

Nizam, tell me it's not true. My brother did not kill our father.

NIZAM

Nor would I believe it, had I not seen it with my own eyes. Would that I had died rather than live to witness such a deed... my King.

Nizam prostrates himself before Tus.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY

The nomad caravan struggles uphill against freezing wind and snow.

EXT. CITADEL OF ALAMUT - DAY

A MASSIVE EXCAVATION PROJECT is under way in the main courtyard. HUNDREDS of SLAVES overseen by soldiers dig a pit at the entrance of the temple, where the SACRED FOUNTAIN lies shattered into pieces.

REVEAL NIZAM and GARSIV

Surveying the excavation from a battlement.

GARSIV

King Tus is eager to return to Nasaf, my Lord. Why do you persist in this fruitless search for secret armories?

NIZAM

I do not seek armories, Garsiv.
There is more here than you know.
Nor need to know.

GARSIV

So long as I am to be made general
of the armies, I care not. But I
am anxious about Dastan and the
girl. If they were to reach the
King..

NIZAM

(cuts him off)

Then remain vigilant. Make sure
that never happens.

EXT. GATES OF ALAMUT - DAY

Occupied by the Persian army, the citadel of Alamut stands
exposed in broad daylight and shorn of its mystery.

Soldiers stationed at the entrance do a thorough job of
checking everyone who goes in or out. Farood and his nomads
wait on the bridge for their turn.

FAROOD

We who have crossed the Hindu Kush
and endured every hardship of God's
creation-- now we wait.

Dastan and Tamina exchange a nervous glance: getting into the
city could be the toughest part of all.

DASTAN

Farood, there's something more I
have to tell you. I'm not really--

FAROOD

Nonsense. You have nothing to tell
me. Ali, my friend, I have been
thinking of the tale of Layla and
Majnun -- the young scholar who
abducted his beloved from her
husband's home.

DASTAN

(perplexed)

He did not abduct her. Majnun
spent his life pining for Layla and
died a wanderer in the desert.

FAROOD

Ah well, you are more educated than I. In the version I heard, they escaped together -- under the noses of her husband's men.

DASTAN

How did they do that?

FAROOD

His friends created a disturbance while the lovers slipped through the gates.

Dastan glances at the checkpoint. Their turn is coming up.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Ali, I am not a man to pry into matters that do not concern me. But I advise you to consider my version of the story.

(into Dastan's ear)

Anyway, do you really think I would let my daughters marry such a man-- a womanizer with no respect for the law?

Before Dastan can reply, Farood hurries to intercept a Soldier who is just lifting the tarp covering the wagon:

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Ah ha! Please! You may search me, and every member of my tribe-- but to search that wagon is a waste of time.

SOLDIER

Stand back.

The soldiers restrain Farood, who becomes agitated.

FAROOD

Why do you not search the camels and the mules? Why this absurd fascination with that cart? Take your hands off me!

All the soldiers come rushing over to contain the situation. Dastan nudges Tamina. They edge around the commotion while Farood continues to struggle and make a fuss.

The soldiers slash at the tarp and rip it from the cart. CHICKENS FLY OUT into their faces. The nomads race to catch the escaping poultry.

FAROOD (CONT'D)
Now who will compensate me for my chickens? In God's name, tie the cloth before they all escape!

Dastan sees the gypsy boy watching him. He winks and waves good-bye, and slips through the gate with Tamina.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Tamina rips off the turban and ties her hair in the more feminine, local fashion. Hiding behind a low wall, they watch the excavation -- Dastan curious, Tamina horrified.

TAMINA
They've defiled the temple and destroyed the sacred fountain.

Dastan spots Nizam, overseeing the excavation.

DASTAN
What is Nizam up to?

TAMINA
He knows.

DASTAN
He knows what?

She turns away, thinking her own thoughts. Dastan takes her by the shoulders.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
You want revenge for what Nizam has done to your temple? To your people?
(forces her to look the slaves digging)
I want revenge for my father. We can work together. But you need to tell me the truth. What's under that temple?

TAMINA
(hesitates)
Come with me.

INT. DOORWAY - DAY

Tamina pulls him into the shadows and starts to speak in a hushed, otherworldly voice.

TAMINA

'The sun god looked down and saw the wickedness of man, and the light became darkness in his sight. He sent a great sand storm to destroy every living thing, wipe clean the face of the earth.'

Dastan shivers, spooked by her trancelike recitation...

TAMINA (CONT'D)

'But the Great Mother said to the sun god: "Who are you to destroy my creation?" And she blew the sands into an Hourglass so strong no sword nor spear could break it. And thus she spoke: "These are the Sands of Time. As you decreed, all that lives shall die-- but not at once. Rather day by day, hour by hour, as the sand flows through the hourglass, so shall life slip away from all my children. When it is empty, then and only then shall the face of the earth be cold and dead forevermore."'

Her words die into reverential silence-- which Dastan breaks.

DASTAN

First of all, there is only one God. Second, the way I heard it, it was a flood, not a sand storm.

She gives him a withering look.

TAMINA

For ten thousand years the hourglass holding the Sands of Time has rested here in Alamut, below the temple. They are the time of all mankind. The dagger is the key -- the only key, entrusted to us by the gods to protect them. It is the only blade that can break the glass.

Dastan glances down at the dagger with newfound respect.

DASTAN

So Nizam is after the hourglass,
but he needs the dagger as well... he
must not realize it was ever taken
away.

TAMINA

(nods)

This changes everything. It was a
mistake to come back here. We
can't let the dagger fall into
Nizam's hands... We should flee.

DASTAN

And leave your people enslaved?
And my father's death unavenged?
(shakes his head)
I may only be a fourth son, but my
father was still a king. As was
yours. We can't give up that
easily.

Tamina meets his gaze. Sees his determination and it gives
her hope... a look of resolve appears in her eyes. She nods.

EXT. ALAMUT - DAY

Dastan follows Tamina, weaving through alleys and back ways.

TAMINA

The dagger holds only a minute's
worth of sand. Once we refill it,
we'll have only one chance to use
it to reach your brother. You are
certain he will listen to you?

DASTAN

When I was ten, my father bought a
stallion so wild, none of our
warriors dared ride it. I was sure
I could.

(beat)

The warriors were right. It was
Tus who jumped into the ring.
Pulled me out from under the
stamping hooves before they crushed
my skull. He broke an arm and two
ribs; I got off with a few
scratches.

(MORE)

DASTAN (CONT'D)
 Since then we've had our
 differences... but he'd still give
 his life for me, and I for him.

Tamina holds up a hand and stops him as she waits for a troop
 of Nasaf soldiers to pass by in the street. She turns and
 faces him.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
 I give you my word that my brother
 is an honorable man. When he
 learns the truth, our army will
 leave your city and Nizam will
 answer for his treason.

TAMINA
 (studies him)
 I will have to trust you.
 (beat)
 And you will have to trust me.
 Give me the dagger.

He hesitates, looking at her questioningly.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
 There is a secret path to the
 hourglass but it can only be opened
 by the High Priestess. And she
 must do it alone...

DASTAN
 (realizing)
 You're the High Priestess?

TAMINA
 I'll come back for you afterwards.
 I promise.

She holds out her hand. Is this a trick? Dastan looks into
 her eyes...

Slowly, he places the dagger in her hand -- their fingers
 touch and linger a beat longer than absolutely necessary.
 Then she's gone.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Pickaxes swing rhythmically, chopping at the ancient stone...
 overseers crack their whips... Through it all strides Nizam.

NIZAM

Tell them if they don't break
through by nightfall, their wives
and children will dig in their
place!

EXT. TEMPLE WALL - DAY

Tamina walks to a distant corner of the ancient wall. Nobody is around. She locates a brick with a faded image of a lion carved on it and a barely noticeable INDENTATION in the shape of a diamond.

Tamina mutters the words of an ancient incantation IN FOREIGN, then places the hilt of the dagger into the indentation... it fits perfectly. CLICK.

A beat. Then a deep grinding sound as a secret door in the wall slides open, revealing a narrow staircase descending into darkness...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Dastan waits, growing increasingly anxious with every passing moment. He doesn't like staying in one place this long.

ON TAMINA

hurrying back to retrieve Dastan.

A PATROL OF SOLDIERS

passes the far end of the alley where Dastan hides. A SOLDIER glances over just as a shaft of light illuminates Dastan's profile. The Soldier does a double take and whistles for his fellows to halt.

ON DASTAN

waiting, unsuspecting. The SOLDIERS ambush him without warning. He fights furiously but he doesn't stand a chance.

ON TAMINA

finally returning. She sees the commotion in the mouth of the alleyway and ducks into a doorway to watch.

Her face falls as she sees Dastan being dragged away.

EXT. BATTLEMENT - DAY

A MESSENGER comes running up to Garsiv.

MESSENGER

Sir! Prince Dastan has been captured!

GARSIV

Dastan? Are you sure it's him?
Where is he?

MESSENGER

Here in Alamut, sir. He's been taken to the dungeon.

Garsiv sets off immediately.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

FOLLOW A RAT scurrying across the dank dungeon floor to...

DASTAN,

complaining through the bars of his cell to a sleepy, drunk PRISONER in the adjoining cell.

DASTAN

...I'm telling you, never trust a woman. As the Poet says: "The only time a woman tells the truth is when she is silent."

A hunched old JAILOR in a hooded shawl approaches, doling out gruel to the prisoners.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

And another thing-- the more beautiful her face, the better she lies. It is a proven fact...

JAILOR (O.S.)

Should I take that as a compliment?

The "JAILOR" throws back the hood and reveals herself to be... TAMINA. Dastan stares in shock for a moment.

DASTAN

You! ...I thought you'd sold me out!

TAMINA

Is that your way of saying 'thank
you for rescuing me?'

She hands him his sword and pulls out a set of keys.

DASTAN

How did you...?

TAMINA

Your army may occupy the city, but
my people still run everything.

She unlocks the door and they hurry for the exit.

Dastan suddenly stops and doubles back for second:

DASTAN

(to the drunk prisoner)
Forget everything I said before.

And hurries after Tamina. Just as the door shuts behind them...

The door at the far end of the room opens and...

GARSIV enters attended by soldiers. They head for Dastan's
(empty) cell.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Tamina hands the keys back to the real Alamut JAILOR and
thanks him IN FOREIGN. The MAN bows deeply and kisses her
hand.

She and Dastan flee into the city.

DASTAN

(re: the Jailor)
I guess you really are the
Princess.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Garsiv stares in rage at the open door.

GARSIV

FIND HIM!!!

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Dastan and Tamina look back and see SOLDIERS pouring out into the streets.

TAMINA

Follow me.

Tamina takes Dastan by the hand and they run through the streets of the old city.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

A crowded, bustling SOUK. Tamina and Dastan try to lose themselves among the vendors and carts.

But patrols of SOLDIERS begin entering from every direction...

DASTAN

We're trapped. They've got all the exits covered.

TAMINA

There's a storm drain leading out below. Maybe it's not guarded.

Again Dastan follows, ducking down and hiding in the crowd.

EXT. STORM DRAIN - DAY

The din of the market fades as Tamina and Dastan slip into the dark tunnel. Nobody there. It looks like maybe they've escaped. Until they emerge on the other side and find...

A PATROL of A DOZEN NASAF SOLDIERS. Dastan draws his sword.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Put away your sword.

Dastan turns and sees... the BRUTISH SOLDIER he let keep the dagger in the opening scene.

He approaches and looms over Dastan.

BRUTISH SOLDIER

Dastan is a great Prince of Nasaf. I know him personally. He wears only the finest clothes and armor. Jewels and gold.

(MORE)

BRUTISH SOLDIER (CONT'D)
 (scornful)
 This man is clearly no prince. Let
 them go.

One brave SOLDIER steps forward to object.

SOLDIER
 But what if--

BRUTISH SOLDIER
 I said: let them go.

The soldier steps back, cowed. Dastan and the brute exchange a brief glance. Dastan nods: the debt is squared.

CUT TO:

I/E. SECRET ENTRANCE - DAY

Tamina leads Dastan to the doorway. They step inside and start down the stairs...

The stairs end. Tamina lights a TORCH. The flames illuminate a musty passageway, clearly ancient. Hushed, echoing. An underground RIVER flows somewhere out of sight.

Tamina recites a prayer in ancient FOREIGN, praising the gods and asking permission to enter. Dastan shifts uncomfortably and looks elsewhere.

Carved into the stone wall is an enormous LION FACE, primitive and terrifying. Dastan peers closer. Tamina yanks him back.

TAMINA
 This isn't a game. This place is
 sacred. There's a ritual for how
 you approach it. The sun god will
 be angry if we don't show respect.

DASTAN
 Your sun god is a lion?
 (off her exasperated look)
 All right! I'll just follow you.

As they pass the lion, Tamina gives it a wide berth, all the while uttering respectful prayers and making little bows toward it. Dastan rolls his eyes, and half-heartedly follows suit.

Tamina's torch illuminates the stone floor as they go. She grabs Dastan to stop him from stepping in a certain place.

TAMINA

Do you see that black paving-stone?

Dastan looks closely; he can make out a few flakes of what might have been black paint, a thousand years ago.

DASTAN

I wouldn't call it black. Maybe it's a little bit darker than the others.

TAMINA

We're in the sun god's temple. The black stones represent man's wickedness, the greed and selfishness that brought the sandstorm on us. We don't step on the black stones.

DASTAN

All right, look. I don't want to disrespect your religion. It's just that we may not have time to follow every little superstition...

TAMINA

Dastan!

Her eyes flash dangerously. Dastan backs down.

DASTAN

All right. No black stones.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Nizam turns from the dig as Garsiv strides to meet him.

GARSIV

My lord. Dastan is in Alamut.

INT. BROKEN BRIDGE CHASM

Tamina and Dastan come to a halt at the edge of a water-filled chasm where a rope bridge used to be. Remnants of rope dangle uselessly from either side. The rock wall has partially collapsed, smashing the bridge and flooding the chasm with water.

TAMINA

(dismayed)

They must have weakened that wall
with their digging. Now we can't
get across.

Dastan's eyes rove the far wall.

DASTAN

I think I can.

TAMINA

How?

Dastan backs up for a running start. Tamina grabs him.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

Don't be a fool. You can't jump
that far.

DASTAN

I know that. I'm not crazy.

He sprints toward the edge... but instead of jumping the gap,
he RUNS ALONG THE WALL for a good 20 feet... until gravity
catches up with him, his feet slip-slide and he starts to
fall.

Dastan PUSHES OFF THE WALL with his feet, propelling himself
across the gap -- GRABS a crevice in the rock wall opposite,
barely saving himself from the plunge --

-- as SPIKES spring up below, breaking the surface of the
muddy water covering the bottom of the pit. Tamina gasps.

Dastan begins to rock-climb across the wall, using the most
miniscule hand and footholds. He nearly falls -- more spikes
spring up below -- but he hangs on, keeps going. Tamina
watches, holding her breath.

At last Dastan reaches the far wall. It's sheer, not a
handhold in sight. He gropes for one anyway. His hand SLIPS
on the slick rock.

Tamina can't look...

The chasm is too wide at this end for Dastan to jump back to
the opposite wall. Nevertheless, he braces his feet against
the rock -- and LAUNCHES himself out into space.

Sailing over the pit... he GRABS the end of the broken rope bridge as he falls past it. Hangs on, twisting and dangling. It holds.

Dastan climbs up the rope bridge to safety. Brushes himself off, shouts reproachfully at Tamina across the chasm--

DASTAN (CONT'D)
You could have warned me about the spikes!

TAMINA
How do I get across?

Dastan looks around. There's no way.

DASTAN
We'll figure something out.

TAMINA
No. You're almost there.
(she takes out the dagger)
In the top of the hourglass is all time yet to come. In the bottom is time past. Between the two, it narrows to the width of a single moment: the Now. That is where you must insert the dagger's handle.

She tosses the dagger across the chasm. Dastan catches it.

TAMINA (CONT'D)
Hold the dagger by the blade. The handle will catch the sand as it falls. This is important: the blade must never touch the hourglass.

Their eyes meet across the chasm. Both acknowledging the trust she's placed in him.

DASTAN
Just make sure you're here when I get back.

He disappears. Tamina watches him go.

TAMINA
Watch out for the black stones!

INT. HOURGLASS PASSAGEWAY

Dastan threads his way through a narrow corridor, stepping over the occasional black tile. With each step he takes, nothing happens and he grows more confident.

He comes to another stone LION like the first. Sighing, he does as Tamina did, placing his back against the opposite wall.

DASTAN

Lion, I cannot bow down before you
for no one deserves worship but
God. But I do respect you, as a
lion -- and I ask you not to bite
me.

Pleased with this compromise, Dastan passes the lion.

And catches himself just about to step on a faded, black-painted stone.

Looking ahead he realizes that half the paving stones in the corridor ahead of him are black.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

(sighs)

God forgive me -- but she believes
in it so what am I to do?

With a martyred air, he hop-scotches down the corridor, from one safe stone to the next, until he reaches the alcove at the passageway's midpoint.

As he pauses to take a breather, Dastan's eye is drawn to a MURAL depicting the LEGEND: an angry sun god with a lion's head, a blinding sandstorm, the hourglass...

Dastan gazes in awe, experiencing the full religious impact. Maybe there's more to this than he thought...

Dastan takes a deep breath and looks ahead; the second half of the passageway is filled with even more black stones.

Carefully, he hops between the increasingly scarce safe stones. To avoid getting stranded, he's forced to start using the walls, clinging to them like a rockclimber.

At last, the end of the black tiles comes into sight. Gritting his teeth, he PUSHES off the wall with his feet, JUMPS through the air, straining for distance--

He's not going to make it. Switching his landing to a dive at the last instant, he hits the floor with both hands instead of his feet, tumbles-- and clears it!

Exhaling with relief, he gets to his feet...

And hears an ominous "snick" he's never heard before. Looking down he sees he's standing right on a BLACK STONE.

He looks around for bad consequences. Doesn't see any.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Sorry lion.

THWIPP!! A SCYTHE comes swinging down from the ceiling behind him. Dastan jumps ASIDE, barely escaping being bisected vertically -- only to land on another black stone.

FWIPP! A HORIZONTAL SCYTHE whips out from the wall at knee level. The blade just misses him as he JUMPS BACK --

Triggering TWO MORE HORIZONTAL SCYTHES on the opposite wall, one at neck level, one waist-high. He escapes both by THROWING HIMSELF FLAT--

-- Lands face down, only to hear the telltale "snick" of his weight depressing yet another black stone. Uh-oh...

Dastan ROLLS out of the way of one VERTICAL SCYTHE that whips out of the floor -- lifts his legs just in time to escape castration by ANOTHER -- and SOMERSAULTS past a third.

He lands in a crouch, looking around in wild terror. Miraculously, he's survived it all.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
(very fast, heartfelt)
There is no god but God, the
Almighty, all-compassionate and all-
merciful. Praise be to God; You
alone do we worship; Guide us on
the straight path; Amen.
(quick afterthought)
And no disrespect to the Lion.

INT. HOURGLASS CHAMBER

Dastan advances into the silent, natural cavern.

A waterfall cascades down a sheer rock face into the darkness of an abyss. We HEAR an underground river rushing far below.

Towering at the edge of the abyss is a titanic HOURGLASS. It seems to have grown out of the rock itself. It holds thousands of tons of glowing white sand that bathe the chamber in an eerie light.

Fascinated, Dastan approaches. He stares at the sand; thousands of millions of years worth of time -- no way to fathom it.

He looks up at an ascending set of stairs carved into the stone, leading to a rock promontory at the neck of the hourglass...

He begins to climb the stairs. At the top is a flat outcropping of rock. Above him looms the gigantic upper half of the hourglass, a vast reservoir of glowing sand.

Dastan lies down and belly crawls until his head and shoulders are over the edge of the abyss and he can reach the neck of the hourglass.

He draws the dagger. Holding it as Tamina instructed, by the blade, he brings its handle to within an inch of the glass.

DASTAN

God is great. *Bismillah*.

He pushes the dagger forward, with no idea what will happen.

The dagger's handle penetrates the thick glass, instantly rendered liquid as quicksilver. Dastan's so startled he jerks it right back out again -- rendering the glass once more miraculously intact.

Deliberately, Dastan repeats the action. This time, he holds the dagger inside the hourglass, to catch the falling sand.

Slowly, before his eyes, the glass handle starts to fill...

EXT. COURTYARD/ IN THE PIT - DAY

A pick-axe breaks through the rock shelf, triggering a landslide beneath the diggers' feet. With SHOUTS of alarm, they slide toward the bottom; their fellow diggers catch them, hanging on for dear life, and pull them to safety.

INT. BROKEN BRIDGE CHASM

Tamina is startled to see new CRACKS suddenly appear in the rock wall above the chasm. WATER trickles through, suggesting a significant pressure build-up on the other side.

Tamina backs away...

The water BURSTS part of the wall, pours through in a torrent.

INT. HOURGLASS CHAMBER

Dastan realizes he's been holding his breath. With a gasp, he pulls the dagger back. It's full of glowing sand.

The hourglass is as solid as if it had never been touched.

INT. HOURGLASS PASSAGEWAY

Dastan hop-scothes back through the corridor, nimbly avoiding the black stones.

Until, hurrying past the stone lion, he forgets to hug the opposite wall. Serrated IRON JAWS swing out from the horizontal slit of the lion's mouth. Dastan hurdles over the jaws as they crunch together like a giant bear-trap.

As Dastan runs, the corridor floor COLLAPSES under him. Desperately he increases his speed. He can already see the broken bridge ahead. In a few more strides, there'll be no floor left to run on. He makes a heroic RUNNING JUMP--

...out into space, above the yawning chasm where the floor fell in...

...And falls short. He can't believe it. After everything he's been through, this is how it ends -- plunging toward certain death on JAGGED SPIKES below!

As he's about to be impaled, he snatches the dagger from its sheath --

BOOM!! TIME STOPS -- the spikes inches from Dastan's chest, the entire scene frozen except for the SAND spilling from the dagger in Dastan's hand... his finger on the jewel. The sand blows away like ash in the wind.

REWIND!!

TIME RUNS BACKWARD. Dastan flies up away from the spikes, the corridor floor reassembling under his feet as he runs backwards, JUMPS backward over the lion-jaws as they open--

Until his hand releases the jewel.

INT. HOURGLASS PASSAGEWAY [SECOND TIME]

This time, Dastan runs to one side as he passes the lion jaws. And he's through, safely skirting all the traps.

INT. BROKEN BRIDGE CHASM

WATER GUSHES IN, swelling the already flooded pit... while new cracks pop up everywhere in the stressed rock wall. Tamina sees Dastan appear on the far side of the chasm.

TAMINA
It's collapsing!

Dastan surveys the scene. He sees that the rock wall is a DAM ready to BURST--

Suddenly the edge where Tamina is standing COLLAPSES! She falls into the water.

Without hesitation, Dastan dives into the chasm and starts swimming across, dodging falling rocks and swirling currents.

Tamina sees Dastan go under... she looks around desperately...

Dastan surfaces right in front of her.

DASTAN
Take a deep breath.

He grabs Tamina and pulls her down into the water.

THE DAM BURSTS! The wall caves in, a THUNDER OF ROCK and WATER are unleashed.

UNDERWATER: The explosive current propels Dastan and Tamina through a stone-walled channel -- Dastan takes Tamina's hand, kicks upward toward the LIGHT --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Dastan and Tamina surface in the river, below the citadel wall. They gasp for air. As soon as they catch their breath...

TAMINA

You used the dagger, didn't you!

Battered, half-dead with exhaustion, Dastan hoists himself onto the embankment. He reaches to help Tamina up. Angrily she shakes him off.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

One minute. We have one minute of sand to get to your brother and you've already used half of it!

Dastan looks at the dagger -- it's half empty.

DASTAN

I didn't think I used that much.

Just then, he dodges instinctively as an ARROW misses his head by inches, imbeds in the wall behind him. Defensively, before Tamina can accuse him--

DASTAN (CONT'D)

It missed by itself.

ARCHERS assemble on the ramparts above. Dastan and Tamina race up the stone steps of the embankment.

TAMINA

I just had the strangest feeling we've done this before...

Dastan suddenly grabs her, yanks her back.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

What?

DASTAN

Wait.

In the next instant, a volley of ARROWS shoot past right in front of Tamina. Dastan releases her.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Now.

As they continue their dash up the stairs--

TAMINA

You did it again, didn't you!?

DASTAN

That time I did. Trust me, you weren't any happier the other way.

INT. HOURGLASS CHAMBER - DAY

The majestic hourglass sits in silent darkness.

Suddenly, a PICK breaks through the roof. A shaft of sunlight illuminates the chamber that has been dark for centuries.

Shouts of excitement from the workers above. More picks chip at the hole, raining down rocks and debris.

THE HOURGLASS: as the rocks strike its surface, it begins to resonate like a great warning bell...

EXT. EXCAVATION PIT - SAME

Drawn by the sound, Nizam moves down toward the hole... his eyes light up as he finally glimpses the prize below.

NIZAM

Magnificent...

(turns to a FOREMAN)

Have them search every chamber. When they find a dagger with a clear handle, have it brought directly to me.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - DAY

Tamina takes Dastan's arm, points to the ROYAL PALACE standing on the other side of a deep mountain gorge. A narrow stone bridge below is the only way across the chasm.

TAMINA

That's the palace just across that bridge. I know a place--

Dastan tackles her to the ground as a SPEAR hurtles through the space where they were just standing.

DASTAN
 (not without pride)
 God, our soldiers are good!

Tamina looks, sees--

A DOZEN SOLDIERS running toward them across the rooftops.
 More on their way, throwing up ladders as they climb.

Dastan yanks Tamina to her feet. With the army on their heels, they improvise a rapid descent via stairs, ladders and free-fall to the bridge level.

As they climb down the final ladder (Tamina first), more soldiers run toward them from the bridge. Dastan and Tamina are trapped between the new arrivals and the soldiers above.

Dastan reaches for the DAGGER. Tamina stops him.

TAMINA
 No.

Dastan grits his teeth. All right, he'll do it the hard way.

He PUSHES OFF the wall with the ladder, LANDS in a judo roll that FLIPS the ladder over him-- tossing Tamina over the heads of the soldiers in front of them. Dastan continues his momentum, POLE-VAULTING over Tamina on the ladder. This master-stroke puts all the soldiers behind them, leaving them a clear path to the bridge.

DASTAN
 Run.

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - DAY

Dastan and Tamina make a mad dash across the bridge. They're more than halfway there when MORE SOLDIERS appear on the far side, led by Garsiv. Dastan comes to a skidding stop.

He looks back: they're trapped on a long, narrow stone bridge between two armies, above a vertigo-inducing ravine plunging ten thousand feet below.

DASTAN
 Should have used the dagger.

With a communal ROAR, the soldiers charge from both sides.

Dastan swings into action. Snatching up a rope coil, he swiftly ties it around a parapet of the bridge wall...

...and draws his sword as the soldiers descend on them.

Hopelessly outnumbered, Dastan and Tamina leap onto the bridge wall and run BACK the way they came-- Dastan parrying sword blows and uncoiling rope as he runs.

TAMINA
You can't possibly--

DASTAN
Hold tight.

Tamina locks her arms around Dastan just in time -- he JUMPS!

THEY PLUMMET ON THE ROPE TOWARDS THE BOTTOMLESS GORGE!

The rope stops their fall; they start swinging back toward the far side of the bridge-- incredibly, straight for a tiny ARCHER'S LOOPHOLE in the sheer fortress wall opposite. Dastan's aim was brilliant.

But not perfect.

They slam into the wall below the loophole. It's just out of their reach. As they start swinging back--

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Climb higher! We'll make it on the next swing!

Tamina and Dastan desperately climb up a few feet on the rope. ARCHERS on the bridge above them unleash a volley of arrows, which miss, but don't make their task any easier.

They reach the apex of their backswing, begin their return toward the loophole... Dastan reaches out to grab it--

Only this time, they don't even reach the wall. They've lost too much momentum.

WIDE SHOT

Dastan and Tamina swing uselessly back and forth, in a smaller arc each time. They're trapped at the end of the rope. Hanging off a bridge that's full of soldiers.

Oops.

ON THE BRIDGE

A soldier (call him the EXECUTIONER) mounts the parapet where Dastan tied the rope. He draws a wicked scimitar. Checks with Garsiv, who nods: do it.

The Executioner raises his sword high-- and CHOPS!

DASTAN and TAMINA are shaken. One more cut will sever the rope.

TAMINA
All right. Use the dagger.

DASTAN
Oh I don't know, I think we can get out of this one.

TAMINA
Use the dagger! NOW!!

The Executioner raises his scimitar for the coup de grace...

Dastan releases one hand from the rope, uses it to pull Tamina toward him and gives her a passionate kiss.

The sword cuts the rope: Dastan and Tamina plunge into the abyss... then Dastan HITS the jewel.

REWIND!

Reversing through the kiss, and all their back-and-forth swings, wider each time, until they land back up on--

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - DAY [SECOND TIME]

DASTAN
Hold tight.

Exactly as before, Tamina locks her arms around Dastan as he JUMPS from the parapet.

Only this time, he adjusts his aim, hastily CLIMBING the rope as they swing... hits the loophole, grabs and pulls them in!

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - DAY

Garsiv stares down into the gorge, dumbfounded, at the empty rope swinging below the bridge. They've escaped him.

INT. LOOPHOLE CORRIDOR - DAY

Tamina and Dastan land together on the floor.

TAMINA
That was fantastic!

Dastan sits up and stares at her with a goofy grin, still mesmerized from their kiss...

TAMINA (CONT'D)
Dastan! Did you use the dagger?

DASTAN
What? No! Of course not...

She examines his face but he doesn't break. No time for further discussion. She sets off down the hall and he hurries after her.

INT. PALACE BACK STAIRS/CORRIDORS - DAY

They race up stairs, through corridors, etc. Soldiers' voices echo, seemingly around every corner, but they see nobody.

DASTAN
I hope you know where you're going.

Tamina throws open the small wooden door of a supply closet... they duck inside. She closes the door, plunging them into darkness.

WE HEAR their breathing, rapid and shallow... then the click of a hidden latch and another door swings open--

INT. SECRET ROOM - SUNSET

Tamina lights a lantern revealing a cozy room, rich with curtains and draperies, a tea service and silk cushions.

DASTAN
A secret getaway...?

TAMINA
For the king. I was a nosy little girl, always getting into places I wasn't supposed to...

She parts a curtain, revealing a short passageway that dead-ends in a door. Tamina slides open a peephole and looks...

POV THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE:

Servants fill the royal baths with hot water. Tamina steps aside to let Dastan look.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

The King's private bath. They're preparing it for him now. When your brother returns, you'll have a chance to speak to him alone.

She walks back into the secret room. Dastan follows. He opens the shutter to look out the small window...

On the stone bridge far below he sees dozens of soldiers running around searching for the escaped fugitives.

Dastan turns to see Tamina step out from behind a folding screen, having changed into a gorgeous silk gown.

He stares, stunned. Tamina looks down.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

What? You don't like it? I had to get out of those rags...

DASTAN

No, no, I like it... it's just... you look beautiful.

He takes a step closer. Her face bathed in the warm light is exquisite... her skin flawless... he looks into her dark eyes and... kisses her full on the mouth.

Except this time there is no rewind. He catches himself, waiting for her to slap him... but instead, Tamina responds. She kisses him deeply in return, giving into the moment, pressing against him... their pent-up attraction is released and their embrace becomes more and more passionate until--

Tamina suddenly pulls away.

TAMINA

Stop. This can never be.

DASTAN

What? What can never be?

TAMINA

Us. You and me.

DASTAN

Why not? I mean, assuming I convince my brother, restore your kingdom and all that stuff... why not?

(suddenly defensive)

It's because I'm only a fourth son, isn't it?

She shakes her head sadly and looks toward the window.

TAMINA

I don't care about that. It's because I'm the High Priestess. I can only marry one who has been baptized in the sacred fountain.

DASTAN

Is that all? I told you I'm a very modern thinker; if it's that important to you I'll take a dip--

TAMINA

You can't! Nobody can, ever again. The fountain has been destroyed.

A beat. Tamina looks at him wistfully.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Dastan. It's not meant to be between us.

Dastan searches for the right words to say when...

A HORN BLAST outside signals the king's arrival. They both hurry to the window in time to see:

TUS and a half-dozen GUARDS ride across the bridge.

DASTAN

My brother.

TAMINA

You'd best prepare yourself. You cannot fail.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - NIGHT

Tus and his bodyguards stride across the great hall. A YOUNG GUARD steps forward and bows.

GUARD

My King. Nizam sends word that he would speak with you.

TUS

I've been riding all day. I'll see him after I've bathed and changed.

INT. ROYAL BATHS - NIGHT

STEAM fills the room. The King's guards watch the ATTENDANTS prepare the bath in a centuries-old Eastern ritual.

AT THE SECRET ENTRANCE

Dastan watches through the peephole, rehearsing nervously under his breath.

DASTAN

'It was not I who killed our father.' Can't start with that.
'My brother, it is I, Dastan. I come to you in peace...' No time for that; get to the point! 'My brother...' That's a good start.

DASTAN'S POV - the guards escort the attendants out. Moments later, Tus enters. The guards leave him alone to his bath.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

'My brother...' 'My noble brother...'

Dastan turns and locks eyes with Tamina one last time; she gives him an encouraging nod... Dastan presses on the door...

IN THE BATHS

The secret door, invisible in the tiled wall, opens. Dastan steps through silently and disappears into the steam.

TUS takes off his robe and lowers himself into the steaming water. Rinses his face and hair and sinks down. He closes his eyes...

Suddenly he feels a draft. Frowns. Opens his eyes...

DASTAN (CONT'D)
My noble brother.

Tus splashes to his feet, waist-high in the water.

TUS
GUARDS!

DASTAN
No!

TUS
GUARDS!!!

Dastan throws his sword aside. Holds up his hands-- unarmed.

DASTAN
You have nothing to fear from me.
What Nizam told you is a lie. He
killed Father. It was Nizam who
poisoned the robe.

The GUARDS burst in and seize Dastan

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Tus, Nizam deceived us all. He
made us conquer Alamut so he could
possess its secrets! And if you
try to stop him, he will kill you
too!

TUS
Enough!!

Everyone falls silent. Dastan ceases struggling and waits in
suspense for Tus's next words.

TAMINA
We are brothers. Since childhood
I've known you as I know myself. I
can tell by how artfully you've
rehearsed your speech that you are
lying.
(to the guards)
Take him to Nizam.

ANGLE ON TAMINA - watching through the peephole, dismayed.

Tus turns away as the guards drag Dastan off.

DASTAN
No! Tus, listen to me, I'm not
making this up! TUS!!

Tus never looks back. Dastan appeals to the guards:

DASTAN (CONT'D)
I beg you. One minute. Let me
speak to him. As you love him, as
you loved your king--

The CAPTAIN of the guards punches him in the head.

CAPTAIN
Shut up, you.

Now Dastan's mad. With a herculean effort, he yanks free,
just enough to draw the dagger from his belt--

GUARD
He's got a knife.

--and hits the JEWEL. BOOM!! TIME STANDS STILL.

REWIND!

INT. ROYAL BATHS - NIGHT [SECOND TIME]

Tus takes off his robe, lowers himself into the steaming
bath. Rinses his face and hair, just as he did before.

A NOISE makes Tus turn. Dastan has just BARRICADED the door
with a medieval two-by-four. Tus splashes to his feet. This
time, the first thing Dastan does is throw his sword away.

DASTAN
Tus, don't call the guards yet.
Listen to me.

TUS
GUARDS!!

Dastan winces; continues, improvising...

DASTAN
Beneath this citadel is an ancient,
mystical force beyond anything you
can imagine. It's the hourglass
that contains the Sands of Time.

SOUNDS of the guards beating at the barricaded door--

DASTAN (CONT'D)
This dagger holds only a minute's
worth of the sand.

He draws the dagger, forgetting it's a weapon too--

TUS
Coward! Do you attack me thus,
unarmed?

DASTAN
No!

Hastily turning the dagger around-- this isn't going well.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Nizam is after the hourglass and
the dagger. He tricked us into
falsely invading a kingdom that has
done us no wrong. To hide his
lies, he murdered our father and
threw the blame on me.

The door gives way; the guards burst in. Dastan doesn't have
to wait for Tus's verdict to know he's blown it.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
(angry with himself)
Damn it!

He jumps back, using the dagger to hold the guards at bay.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Stand back! I warn you!

The guards hesitate, perplexed. In a second they'll realize
there's no real threat and rush him.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
I need a minute. Just give me a
minute to think.

He looks at the dagger in his hand -- nearly empty. Just
enough sand for one last rewind.

Suddenly, desperately, he looks at Tus. He knows what to do.

DASTAN (CONT'D)
Tus, this is no ordinary dagger.
Touch this jewel on its handle and
you will learn Alamut's greatest
secret.

TUS
 (to the guards)
 Enough! Take him to Nizam.

As the guards move forward, Dastan swiftly brings the dagger's blade to his own throat. Again, they hesitate.

DASTAN
 (to Tus)
 If you won't believe me, then our
 kingdom is forfeit. Our honor is
 forfeit. And I'm better off dead.

Dastan PLUNGES the dagger into his own heart. Under the astonished stares of the guards, he crumples to his knees. Blood appears on his lips. He falls dead.

ON TAMINA - who stifles a cry.

Tus shakes off the guard who's just helped him put on his robe. He advances toward his brother's body.

CAPTAIN
 My lord, if it's a trick...

Tus turns Dastan over. He's dead, the hilt of the dagger protruding from his chest. Tus pulls it out. The blade is wet with blood.

Tus examines the dagger. The unearthly, glowing white sand inside its handle. For a moment we think he's going to do something with it-- but he just lays the dagger back down on the floor.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
 (to one of his men)
 Get Nizam.

ON TAMINA - who pulls away from the peephole, tears streaming down her face. She can't look.

The Captain tries to escort Tus out of the baths, but Tus lingers, troubled.

TUS
 He took his own life.

CAPTAIN
 A coward's way out.

TUS
 My brother was no coward.

He bends and picks up the dagger again. Presses the jewel...

TIME STOPS! The last sands fall from the dagger; a draft blows them away through the steam frozen in midair...

REWIND!

INT. ROYAL BATHS - NIGHT [THIRD TIME]

The guards close in on Dastan, just as they did before. Tus whirls, bewildered by *deja vu*: what's happening here?

As he did before, Dastan dramatically holds the dagger to his own throat -- unaware that the final rewind has already happened and that the dagger is empty.

DASTAN

If you won't believe me, then our kingdom is forfeit. Our honor is forfeit. And I'm better off dead.

Tus lunges at Dastan, GRABS his arm just in time to prevent him from stabbing himself. The guards pull them apart.

TUS

Let him go!!

Cowed by the royal command in his voice, the guards obey.

DASTAN

Thanks brother.

TUS

(wonderment)

You were dead. I saw the blood.

DASTAN

Blood? What blood?

Perplexed, he looks down at the dagger in his hand. He nearly faints on seeing that it's empty. Tus, overcome by emotion, clasps Dastan in a warm embrace.

TUS

My brother. On the day we left for war, our father told me: 'A king should listen always to the voice of reason-- but also listen to your heart.' My heart knew you could not have done what they accused you of. I should have listened.

Dastan nods, still a bit shaky.

TUS (CONT'D)
 (to the CAPTAIN)
 Send for a detachment of soldiers
 from my most trusted regiment.

The Captain nods and exits. Tus turns back to Dastan.

TUS (CONT'D)
 Come. We must find Nizam.

DASTAN
 One more thing, brother. There is
 somebody I want you to meet...

Dastan turns toward the secret door as...

TAMINA emerges like a vision from the steam.

Tus looks at his younger brother, impressed: where'd you get her?

DASTAN (CONT'D)
 It's a long story.

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Thunder rumbles in an ominous sky. Tus, Dastan and Tamina stride across the bridge accompanied by royal GUARDS with torches.

Nizam appears at the end of the bridge with his own detachment of elite GUARDS led by Garsiv.

TUS
 Keep your swords sheathed.

As the two groups come together, Nizam speaks first.

NIZAM
 O King!

TUS
 Grand Vizier Nizam, you have
 committed treason and murder and
 have conspired against the house of
 Shahraman.
 (to Garsiv)
 Captain of the Guards, I order you
 to arrest this traitor.

Garsiv steps forward and looks Nizam in the eye... then he turns and nods to the GUARDS surrounding Tus...

Tus's own guards grab him, Dastan and Tamina, bind their hands behind their backs and force them to their knees!

TUS (CONT'D)
Who dares lay a hand on Tus, son of
Shahraman, your King!

NIZAM
O King, O Prince, I am the shadow
of the reflection of your
greatness. Your humble servant...

As Nizam bows mockingly, Garsiv plucks Dastan's sword from him and raises it high...

DASTAN
NO!!!

Garsiv brings the sword slashing down. We don't see the impact, only the men's reactions.

Tus lies dead on the stone bridge, a spreading pool of blood beneath him in the light rain.

Garsiv throws the sword down. It clatters next to Dastan.

GARSIV
Your sword...

A CLATTERING OF HOOVES signals the arrival of the detachment of trusted soldiers with the CAPTAIN sent to fetch them.

NIZAM
Ho! Help! Murder!!

Dastan opens his mouth to protest but the guards silence him with a rain of kicks and blows. As the SOLDIERS arrive on the scene, Nizam steps forward in apparent anguish.

NIZAM (CONT'D)
God help us! We arrived too late.
Our King is dead-- slain by Dastan,
who killed his father.

Dastan tries to speak but the guards redouble their blows.

TAMINA
He's lying! Dastan is innocent!

GARSIV

This is the daughter of our enemy!
He would have conspired with her to
lead the people of this city
against us!

An angry murmur rises from among the detachment of soldiers,
eager for revenge on their king's murderer.

NIZAM

(steps in)

I shall take charge of questioning
Dastan and his accomplice. I will
find out the full extent of this
conspiracy.

Nizam's guards hustle Tamina and Dastan along the bridge,
drowning their protests... leaving the Captain and the soldiers
staring mournfully down at Tus's body in the rain.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Tamina and Dastan are shoved into a cell and chained to the
wall. The guards exit.

Nizam steps forward and lifts the DAGGER from Dastan's belt.
His eyes glint with greed as he caresses it...

NIZAM

Thank you Dastan. I've been
looking for this.

Tamina's eyes widen in horror.

TAMINA

No!

DASTAN

(bloody and beaten)

I'm sorry Tamina...

NIZAM

You should be. You stood before
the hourglass with the dagger in
your hand-- the one blade capable
of penetrating the glass nothing in
heaven or earth can break. And the
limit of your ambition was to turn
back time sixty seconds? A trick
for a street magician. I will turn
back time sixty years.

TAMINA

You can't! It's forbidden!

Nizam ignores her; continues speaking to Dastan.

NIZAM

Sixty years since the divine right of kingship was granted to the house of Shahraman. I was a child then, as your father was; I had the understanding of a child. Had I known what I know now, I could have acted. An accident at play. Children are fragile; they die so easily.

TAMINA

No!

NIZAM

On such small things empires turn. And so in my fifteenth year, when al-Ma'mun defeated al-Amin, and Babak's head rolled in the sand at Samarra, I -- not Shahraman-- shall be seated on the throne of Nasaf. And what a king I shall be!

TAMINA

Nizam, it is not for mortals to spill the Sands of Time for personal glory! You could unleash a storm that would wipe mankind off the face of the earth!!

NIZAM

Superstition, girl. A scary tale told to prevent lesser men from reaching for greatness.

DASTAN

Greatness cannot be stolen; it must be earned. You shall never achieve it, Nizam.

NIZAM

On the contrary I shall be the wisest and greatest of rulers. I will lay in stores of grain before the famine, I will build high walls when there is yet no enemy in sight.

(MORE)

NIZAM (CONT'D)

Under my reign Persia shall rise
again to be a great empire... and I
will be Shah-an-Shah, King of
Kings, God among men. It's
unfortunate that you will not be
born to reap this golden age.
Soon, you will never even have
existed.

(as an afterthought)

But first you will be executed.

As Nizam leaves he summons the GUARDS.

NIZAM (CONT'D)

Unchain the girl. I promised
Garsiv he could have her to enjoy.

Tamina is freed and dragged away, struggling. As Nizam
leaves with her, Dastan rages.

DASTAN

Nizam! Nizam! NIZAM!!

He ducks under one of the chains, turning himself around so
he's facing the wall with his arms crossed. He repeats the
maneuver, each time giving the chains another twist, until
he's close enough to brace his feet against the wall. Then
PULLS until he's screaming in agony.

INT. DUNGEON - LATER

Dastan is barely conscious. His chains haven't budged.

The distant NOISE of a door closing half-rouses him.
Dastan's lips are parched, his eyes glassy and delirious...

DASTAN

Tamina... Tamina...

Nizam's guards enter and unchain him from the wall. Dastan
is limp and unresisting, unaware of what's happening.

INT. DUNGEON CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Prisoners stare through the bars as the guards drag Dastan to
his execution. The cells are packed with MEN of Alamut,
sullen and fierce.

Farood, slumped disconsolately in a cell with the other
nomads is appalled to recognize Dastan.

FAROOD

Ali?! They got you too?

(grieved)

Ali, I am sorry. We should never
have come to this city!

As Dastan passes, Farood grips the bars, shouts--

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Tell your Layla that Farood is
sorry!

Dastan springs into action, revealing that he's been playing possum. Using his chains as weapons, he attacks the guards. More guards pour in, shouting for back up.

Dastan is a one-man army, fighting six at once in the narrow corridor. Unable to rid himself of his chains, he loops them over a ceiling hook and becomes a circus acrobat, spinning and KICKING off the walls to clobber one guard after another.

The prisoners rush to the bars, their shouts adding to the fearsome din. The little Gypsy Boy stares with open-mouthed hero worship.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Ali, you amaze me!

One unlucky guard, flung against the bars, is grabbed by Farood's daughters, who tie him in place with his own turban.

DASTAN

Get his keys!

Nomad hands reach through the bars, frisk the guard.

FAROOD

Nothing!

Dastan clobbers another guard, sends him Farood's way. The nomad women frisk the guard-- no luck. More soldiers arrive, making things hotter for Dastan every moment.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Try the fat one there!

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Garsiv enters and gazes at Tamina seated on low cushions, her wrists bound. Without taking his eyes off of her, he speaks to the guard:

GARSIV
Untie her. And leave us.

INT. DUNGEON CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Dastan fights desperately, outnumbered. Farood comes up triumphantly holding KEYS.

FAROOD
I got it!

DASTAN
So open something!!

Farood methodically tries one key after the next to open the nomads' cell, while Dastan battles to stay alive.

FAROOD
Tell me Ali, what was your crime?

Dastan doesn't have time to breathe, much less answer, as he dodges a killing blow from another guard.

FAROOD (CONT'D)
Ah your hands are full. You will never believe how I came to be in this awful place.

Dastan's in trouble, three guards strangling him with his own chains...

FAROOD (CONT'D)
I was arrested for selling an overpriced chicken at the market! Ridiculous! How can a chicken be overpriced? It is worth exactly what a man is willing to pay-- ah here it is.

Farood unlocks the cell. The nomads swarm out and overwhelm the guards, rescuing Dastan in the nick of time.

FAROOD'S DAUGHTERS finish them off with savage gusto.

FAROOD (CONT'D)
You see? I told you they were strong!

Dastan, Farood and the nomads hurry down the corridor, past cells packed with men of Alamut who rattle the bars and shout in Foreign at the escaping prisoners.

Dastan pauses on the threshold of freedom. Looks back.

FAROOD (CONT'D)

Ali-- come!

DASTAN

No. These men are prisoners
because of me. I am a king's son.

FAROOD

(nods understandingly)

A blow on the head can cause such
delusions. Fresh air and freedom
are the cure.

He pulls at Dastan's arm but Dastan shakes him off. To Farood's horror, Dastan takes the keys and unlocks the first cell...

With a ROAR, the prisoners charge out. Dastan climbs onto a barrel and shouts over the commotion.

DASTAN

Men of Alamut, hear me! It is
Dastan, prince of Nasaf, who calls
to you!

Farood winces-- this delusion is worse than he thought. The men of Alamut react with angry mutters that swell dangerously.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Well may you hate me-- as a
foreigner, as an invader. Were I
in your place, my blood would cry
out for vengeance for your
conquered land.

Farood is startled as it dawns on him.. Dastan is a prince!
His expression transforms to one of respect and awe.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Yet my land too is conquered-- from
within, by a vile usurper. Help me
defeat him, and I will give you
back your kingdom. I swear it in
the name of my father, Shahraman!

Dastan pauses for effect. Farood whispers in his ear:

FAROOD

Ali, they don't understand your language.

Dismayed, Dastan surveys his audience, realizes it's true.

At that moment several of the Alamut men succeed in smashing open the ARMORY. Spears and weapons are passed out. Dastan and Farood are in the center of a hostile, well-armed mob...

Just then, a battalion of Nasaf SOLDIERS charge in, diverting the prisoners' attention.

DASTAN

(with hand gestures)

Fight them! No, them!

A full scale battle erupts.

FAROOD

Ali! Well said. Now let's get out of here.

Dastan doesn't argue this time. Taking advantage of the confusion, they slip out of the melee.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Dastan, Farood and the nomads emerge through a narrow doorway onto the citadel embankment, above the river. Farood breathes in the free air--

Dastan pushes him down just in time to dodge a hail of arrows. Nasaf SOLDIERS on horseback ride to intercept them.

Dastan and the nomad bandits throw themselves into a pitched battle. The Giant Bandit fights three soldiers at once; he plucks one from the saddle and hurls him to an icy fate in the river below.

Dastan gets hold of the horse and swings into the saddle.

DASTAN

Farood. Hold them as long as you can.

FAROOD

(offended)

Now that you're a king's son, you are leaving us?

DASTAN
Farood! I need to save her!

FAROOD
Your Layla?! Why didn't you say
so?

Dastan smiles and prepares to depart. But suddenly he spots:

A new wave of NASAF SOLDIERS galloping toward them,
practically licking their chops. The nomads will be
desperately outnumbered... Dastan hesitates.

Then he sees the expression of the Nasaf Soldiers change from
glee to fear as...

The just-liberated Alamut men surge from the prison with a
terrifying ROAR! Now it's the turn of Farood's clan to grin
as the tide suddenly turns...

FAROOD (CONT'D)
Go! And remember Ali-- your sword
belongs to me!

Dastan smiles and gallops off.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Guards open the door to an iron CAGE suspended with ropes and
pulleys over the pit. Nizam steps inside and they begin to
lower him toward the hourglass...

ON A CRY OF PAIN WE CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD, GARSIV'S TENT

Garsiv comes reeling out, clutching his cheek where Tamina
has clawed deep scratches into his face.

A moment later, a pair of GUARDS drag her from the tent, arms
pinned behind her.

GARSIV
She is a demon! I'll throw her
into the pit myself!

DASTAN (V.O.)
GARSIV!

He turns as Dastan rides up and leaps from his horse.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

You always said you'd beat me if it
were a real fight instead of a
contest; now's your chance.

Two more GUARDS arrive and fit arrows to their bows, ready to
shoot Dastan. Garsiv holds up a hand.

GARSIV

No. I want to kill him myself.
(to Dastan)
I've waited a long time for this
moment, Dastan. And I'm going to
let your Slave-Girl live just long
enough to watch you die...

He draws his sword.

DASTAN

She's not a Slave-Girl.
(draws his sword)
She's a princess.

And he charges. The two fighters fall upon one another in a
fury of steel-on-steel. It's a perfect match of skill,
determination and mutual hatred.

Back and forth they battle, trading blows and parries.
Dastan is quicker but Garsiv is the stronger. With every
blow, Dastan loses a little edge. Garsiv gradually begins to
force Dastan backwards, toward the edge of the pit...

TAMINA struggles against the two Guards holding her tight.

Garsiv gives Dastan a vicious kick to the stomach that sends
him to the ground. Garsiv smiles, moving in for the kill.

GARSIV

This is not a tournament Dastan.
Your fancy tricks won't save you
now.

Dastan scrambles to his feet in time to block the attack but
he's on his heels, his back to the edge of the massive pit.
With a powerful blow, Garsiv knocks Dastan's sword from his
hand. Dastan is helpless, on the brink of the precipice.

Garsiv takes one last big, two-handed swing at Dastan, aiming
to cut him in half. Dastan does an impossible back bend over
the pit, like a limbo dancer, hanging by his toes...

SWOOSH! Garsiv's sword slices air inches above Dastan's nose! His momentum carries Garsiv around like a baseball slugger missing a strike...

Dastan spins low on one pivot foot, extending the opposite leg... hitting GARSIV at the back of the knees-- TOPPLING him over the cliff edge face forwards!

Tamina's GUARDS step forward with a gasp, as if they could catch Garsiv... MISTAKE.

Tamina plucks a sword from a Guard's belt. In a flash, she strikes them down.

The other two Guards turn to face her, warily. Dastan scrambles to his feet and starts to come to her aid--

TAMINA

Never mind me. Nizam is headed for
the Hourglass! All will be lost
if you don't stop him!

Tamina raises her sword, prepared to fight the two guards. Dastan hesitates.

TAMINA (CONT'D)

GO!

INT. HOURGLASS CHAMBER - NIGHT

With a cranking of wheels, the CAGE comes to a halt in front of the hourglass. Crumbling rockslides and running water create a non-stop shower of debris falling around the chamber and into the abyss. Nizam pays no attention, staring in wonder at the bright sand, inches from his face. He feels the solid glass...

NIZAM

(closes his eyes)
This is my destiny...

He raises the dagger to strike the hourglass...

Suddenly with a great RATTLING NOISE the cage shoots upwards. Nizam turns--

DASTAN

No, this is your destiny!

--and Dastan clobbers him with both feet, a human counterweight descending on the other end of the rope.

Nizam is sent sprawling... the dagger lands on the rocks, out of both of their reach.

Nizam gets to his feet, scowling. He draws both his swords. Dastan draws his one. They square off to duel.

Nizam's two sword technique is unlike any fighting style we've seen. He wields the swords with such skill and dexterity that Dastan struggles to defend himself.

NIZAM

Soon you shall be nothing more than
a dream that no one will remember!

Nizam presses the pace, attacking from both sides.

Dastan makes a last desperate counter-attack and suddenly--
KNOCKS one of Nizam's swords from his hand!

A beat. New ball game.

Nizam swings with his remaining sword-- Dastan blocks the blow confidently. With locked blades, Dastan presses for the advantage, his youth and strength coming into play...

A look of fear crosses Nizam's face. Dastan grins.

DASTAN

Not so confident with only one
blade?

But then... Dastan coughs. Blood trickles from his mouth. He looks down:

Nizam has drawn a hidden short sword with his other hand and plunged it into Dastan's side, mortally wounding him. He tricked Dastan.

NIZAM

I always keep a spare.

Leaving Dastan to bleed to death, Nizam retrieves the dagger. Again he approaches the hourglass.

And AGAIN, as he is poised to strike, the CAGE flies down and Tamina leaps out to stop him.

TAMINA

DON'T!!

But this time Nizam is ready. He sidesteps her attack, disarms her and grabs her by the throat. He lifts her bodily and holds her over the abyss...

NIZAM

(looks at her)

A very pretty face, indeed.
Perhaps when you are born thirty
years from now I will do you the
honor of making you one of my
wives...

Dastan lifts his head and sees Nizam dangling Tamina.

NIZAM (CONT'D)

...but right now you are a nuisance.

And with that he releases her!

DASTAN

No!!!

Dastan hears her screams echo into the distance as she falls.
With every last bit of his strength, he pulls himself up...

Nizam climbs the steps to the hourglass. He takes out the
dagger and raises it high...

He strikes! Just then...

DASTAN lunges into frame, grabbing his hand to stop him. Too
late. Nizam plunges the dagger into the glass blade-first!

TIME STOPS!

Falling rocks and water frozen in midair, Dastan and Nizam
grappling like two statues, faces contorted--

In the silence resounds a booming NOISE, like ice cracking.
The CRACK spreads across the surface of the hourglass from
the point where the dagger penetrated it. And--

SAND starts to pour from the crack.

TIME RUNS BACKWARD! Rocks and water fly back upward, Tamina
is returned and ascends again-- the REWIND ACCELERATING as
the crack in the hourglass widens, the glowing white SAND
pouring out at an ever-faster rate--

DASTAN and NIZAM

Are untouched in the eye of the storm, in the blinding LIGHT
of the hourglass. Both of their hands are on the dagger.

THE REWIND

Becomes a blur through which we catch quick glimpses of action: Dastan fighting Garsiv, Tus's murder on the bridge, Tamina and Dastan's kiss...

All the while, SAND keeps pouring from the hourglass-- now in a torrent, swept by the gathering wind into a blinding SANDSTORM that threatens to grow out of control and become apocalyptic...

DASTAN, as if stunned by a concussion, shakes himself awake to realize he's there with Nizam, in the bright ROARING center of the sandstorm.

Nizam, in ecstasy, holds the dagger in place -- SAND pouring out of what is no longer the hourglass, but a CRACK in the very surface of the universe. The wind sweeps up the sand as it pours out, adding to the storm.

Savagely, Nizam pries Dastan's hand from the dagger. Dastan hangs on, too weak to fight back. The wind rips at him; if he lets go, he'll be sucked into oblivion.

Nizam gives Dastan a sharp elbow. Dastan loses his grip and is nearly swept off by the wind-- but he keeps a hold.

Dastan looks down, sees blood soaking his tunic. His life is ebbing away; he can't hang on much longer.

Then, out of the maelstrom of events REWINDING all around them, an IMPLOSION of light in the dawn sky attracts Dastan's attention. Hazily looking up, he sees a flaming arrow arcing backward through the sky: the opening battle.

Dastan summons the last of his strength and will. Bearing down on Nizam's arm, he PULLS OUT THE DAGGER.

In that instant, the crack in the hourglass repairs itself. Before Nizam can recover, the SANDSTORM sweeps both him and Dastan into the void...

For a few moments, SAND is all we see and hear. Then, little by little, the SANDSTORM starts to clear...

Dastan looks around. At first he can't tell where he is. The sand is everywhere. In his teeth, in his hair. He searches himself for the dagger. He doesn't have it.

Gradually he starts to make out other figures nearby. Persian soldiers, shouting in the wind. Horses whinny...

With a shock of dread, Dastan realizes--

EXT. BELOW THE CITADEL - SUNRISE

He's too late. We're reliving the opening battle. The Persian army is already charging toward Alamut-- repeating the mistake with the inexorability of a nightmare.

DASTAN

No! No!!

EXT. RAMPARTS - SUNRISE

Lashed by sand and wind, the Alamut Sentry grabs a stick and beats the gong in warning as he did the first time.

INT. TAMINA'S BEDROOM - SUNRISE

The GONG awakens Tamina. Sand is blowing into the room.

EXT. BELOW THE CITADEL - SUNRISE

Tus raises his sword and lets out a WAR CRY, exactly repeating his action of the opening sequence. From the ranks rises a blood-curdling noise as thousands of voices join him.

Only one thing has changed: Dastan. Outwardly he's the same, but his face shows a new maturity and resolve. He knows what he must do.

Dastan looks to the ramparts and sees the flaming arrow launched into the air.

DASTAN

No.

He rides toward Tus, shouting--

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Tus! Call off the attack!

The arrow explodes into a shower of brilliant fireworks, illuminating the scene like a lightning flash.

Nizam, on horseback, suddenly blocks Dastan's way. He strikes, nearly knocking Dastan off his horse.

Dastan tries to ride past but Nizam maneuvers to block him: only these two men know what's at stake.

They clash on horseback-- Dastan parries Nizam's double-bladed attack. The duel begins... while around them the Alamut archers begin to pick off Persian soldiers, creating chaos as before.

Tus, in the vanguard, looks around and sees--

Dastan and Nizam dueling. His face contorts with anger.

TUS

Dastan.

He does not know why his hot-headed younger brother is fighting with Nizam, but he knows Dastan's immaturity is jeopardizing the battle. Enraged, Tus rides back...

NIZAM AND DASTAN,

fight furiously. As before, Dastan's on the defensive. A growing circle of onlookers gathers, uncertain whether to intervene.

NIZAM

(to the men)

Traitor! The King's son would
betray us to our enemy!

DASTAN

He's lying!

The battlefield around them is chaos-- soldiers felled by arrows, catapults erupting in FLAMES.

Nizam's personal guards ride toward the dueling pair. A handful of common footsoldiers block their way with spears.

BRUTISH SOLDIER

Oh no. This stays a fair fight.

In a bold and desperate move, Dastan stands up on his saddle and launches himself at Nizam, knocking him off his horse. They roll together on the ground. Nizam lands on his back, Dastan straddling him, sword raised--

Tus arrives on horseback, forcing his way through the circle.

TUS

Hold! HOLD!!

Dastan freezes, inches from killing Nizam. He can't disobey his brother.

Nizam's right hand creeps along the ground, toward his sword that landed inches away...

DASTAN

Tus, call off the attack! It's a trick. Nizam lied to us.

NIZAM

We can win. Dastan is a traitor.

TUS

Dastan, put down your sword.

DASTAN

No.

Tus can't believe Dastan's insubordination.

TUS

What did you say?

DASTAN

We have no reason to attack Alamut.
Our victory will bring us disaster.

Menacingly, Tus draws his own sword.

TUS

We are at war-- and I command. Put down your sword.

The threat is clear. Still Dastan hesitates.

Nizam sees his chance. His right hand closes on his sword hilt; he swings upward at Dastan's neck--

Dastan sees the sword coming, BLOCKS it--

As Nizam expected: he pulls out the hidden short sword with his OTHER hand and strikes toward Dastan's exposed torso--

But this time Dastan knows it's coming: with blinding speed Dastan turns, BLOCKS the second blow, and drives his sword like a stake into Nizam's heart.

The men watching are stunned. Nizam can't believe it either.

He coughs. And then he's dead.

Dastan hurls his sword away from him; it sticks quivering in the frozen ground. He stands to face Tus.

DASTAN

Kill me if you must. But call off
the attack-- for Alamut is
blameless.

Dastan advances, making it easier for Tus to kill him.

DASTAN (CONT'D)

Tus, do you remember Father's words
to you on the day we left for
war? 'A king must listen always to
the voice of reason.'

TUS

(mystified)
How could...?

DASTAN

'...but also listen to your heart.'

Tus stares at him. Dastan meets his gaze, calmly resolute.
This is not the younger brother he knew. It's as if Dastan's
matured overnight.

Tus turns and shouts--

TUS

Halt! Retreat!

His orders echo through the ranks, repeated by the commanders
at every level.

EXT. BATTLEMENT - SUNRISE

An Alamut PRIEST takes the dagger from an ornate box and is
about to entrust it to the Fearsome armored Warrior when--

Alamut soldiers come running bearing news, shouting. The
Priest looks out over a parapet.

Below, the great wave of men moving toward the castle has
stopped. The Persian army is turning around.

The Priest looks at the dagger in his hand... utters a silent
PRAYER of thanks, and replaces it in its box.

EXT. RAMPART - SUNRISE

Tamina, in her nightgown, watches through a loophole as the army vanishes into the mist. On her young face is a vague sense of the danger she's just escaped.

EXT. ALAMUT COURTYARD - [LATER THAT] DAY

A Persian delegation, Tus, the twins, Dastan and forty soldiers, marches past Alamut soldiers standing at attention.

The King of Alamut and his court awaits them on a dais.

TUS
(bows formally)
From my father, King Shahraman.

An ATTENDANT steps forward bearing a chest; an INTERPRETER repeats Tus's words in Foreign. The King responds in kind...

As the formalities drag on, Dastan slips away from his brothers. As he edges over towards the temple, he tries to catch the eye of...

TAMINA, resplendent in full regalia, standing amongst a group of Alamut NOBLEWOMEN. She notices the young Prince looking at her... he smiles! She blushes and turns away, giggling with one of her LADIES-IN-WAITING. But she glances back anyway...

On the dais, Tus and the King of Alamut embrace in ritual friendship. A murmur runs through the crowd.

The Twins lean together for a private aside.

FARHAD
I hope he doesn't make us marry his daughter.

FARHAN
Make you marry her.

FARHAD
No, you.

The sound of a SPLASH and a following commotion turns their heads. The Twins are greatly amused to see that:

DASTAN has somehow fallen into the SACRED FOUNTAIN. He's being helped out by an irritated Alamut Priest.

Tus shakes his head in embarrassment: his younger brother, at it again. The King waves it off indulgently.

Dastan emerges, dripping wet, with a big grin on his face. He looks right at--

TAMINA, unable to suppress a smile of amusement and curiosity.

Dastan gets a glimmer in his eyes. He winks at her, as if the two of them share a secret...

FADE OUT.