

" T H E B E A S T M A S T E R "

written

by

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"THE BEASTMASTER"

FADE IN: THE ANCIENT CITY OF ARUK

1 EXT. ARUK SQUARE - NIGHT 1

The windstorm howls down the empty village road and into the deserted village square. The stone pyramid of Ar looms ahead as THREE HOODED FIGURES appear out of the storm. Leaning into the force of the gale, they make their way toward the ominous stone edifice.

2 EXT. PYRAMID BASE - NIGHT 2

3 A massive wood door creaks open, revealing a gaunt, bald JUN PRIEST. Wordlessly, he turns, and the three hooded figures follow him. The skeletal priest leads them down a dark stone stairway into the base of the pyramid. He stops and motions toward a small door. 3

4 INT. WITCHES' CHAMBER - NIGHT 4

The central hooded figure enters as the others take up guard positions on either side of the door. In the center of the darkened chamber, three forms are crouched mysteriously around a vessel from which emanates a brilliant red glow. The hooded man keeps to the back of the chamber in the shadows and watches the ceremony before him. The THREE OLD WOMEN, with their haggard faces turned toward the glow, stare into the miasma in the earthen vessel.

Silently, one of the witchwomen rises and moves toward the hooded man. In a harsh whisper, she speaks.

WITCHWOMAN

It has been read. The truth is known.

The witchwoman leans toward the hooded man.

WITCHWOMAN (CONT'D)

You will die at the hands of Zed's unborn son.

Slowly, the high priest MAAX pulls off his hood. He glares out at the ancient witchwoman from his sunken eyes.

MAAX

Tonight.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. ARUK STREET - NIGHT

5

Maax strides through the windstorm with two of his high priests trailing behind him. The holy contingent is led by an escort of village warriors armed with bronze swords. As they reach the king's hut-like compound, two of the warriors lead the priests inside.

6 INT. ZED'S ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

6

The two warriors take up positions on both sides of the entrance. ZED, the strong, young king, is seated as Maax approaches. He is flanked on one side by his tactician, RAD, and on the other side by SYTH, a large black warrior. Rad whispers into Zed's ear as Maax stands before Zed.

ZED

I have been told you are planning a child sacrifice.

MAAX

Ar demands the sacrifice of an unborn.

ZED

I have outlawed the sacrifice. You have defied me. You will pay. You are banished for life. Here in Aruk, no one will remember your name. You can practice your heathen religion in the outlands with the barbarian Juns.

MAAX

I am forging a new religion, and Ar is a hungry God. Prophecy states that, unless this child is taken, Aruk will fall.

ZED

I have cast off the old ways, but you are intoxicated with the power of the circle of three. Tell me, whose child's death do they demand?

MAAX

Yours. It must be cut from the mother.

Choked with rage, Zed reaches for his sword.

ZED

I could have you put to death.

5 Zed is restrained by Syth and Rad. 5

6 Maax looks defiantly at Zed and then nods to his two 6
attending priests. With perfect composure, he stares back at
Maax.

The attending priests raise their gold necklaces in unison toward the ceiling as if to salute Zed. Instead, they inconspicuously hook the necklaces to a wood rafter and suddenly pull their feet out from under themselves. Hanged by the neck, both quiver and die. Zed is aghast. Maax stares at him benignly.

ZED
Fanatics! Take him away!

The two warriors grab Maax and lead him away.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. ARUK STREET - NIGHT 7

The witchwoman, leading a she-oryx by a rope, braces herself against the windstorm. Three horsemen round the corner ahead. Two village warriors lead Maax, who is chained to his horse. As they ride past, the evil Maax stares into the blank eyes of the witchwoman. The horsemen ride out of the village, and the witchwoman continues on her way with the mindless antelope-type creature in tow.

8 INT. ZED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 8

Asleep in the skin-covered bed is a YOUNG WOMAN. The large upswell in the covers around her belly reveals how close she is to childbirth. Beside her is Zed, sleeping soundly.

The sounds of the wind gusting outside mixes with her labored breathing. Suddenly, the wind gusts up harder than before, and the witchwoman and the she-oryx appear in the tent hut. She pulls off her tattered hood and moves to the young woman. Kneeling beside the bed, a look of satisfaction crosses her crinkled face. She reaches inside her clothing and withdraws a glowing vial. Removing the lid, she slides her finger into the liquid and then gently touches the throat of the woman. Now ready to begin her task, she begins tracing the outline of the fetus over the belly with her gnarled fingers. As she pulls her hands away, the woman's belly suddenly jerks. The young woman is awake instantly, and upon seeing the witchwoman, she tries to scream. Unable to make a sound because of the glowing salve on her neck, the fearful woman tries to move, but can't. Touching her gnarled fingers to the mute woman's belly once more, the witchwoman returns to her mysterious work.

8 The woman's belly suddenly begins to spasmodically jerk. 8
 Zed, awakened by the movement, opens his eyes. The witchwoman quickly reaches across and touches the glowing salve to Zed's forehead. Zed tries to move, but cannot. As the frightened woman looks down at herself, her belly begins deflating with a shudder. The she-oryx lets out a gasp as its belly begins growing. Paralyzed, Zed struggles in vain. The witchwoman reaches out to comfort her now-pregnant animal. Staring at the growing belly of the she-oryx, the young woman gasps and dies.

Zed watches in horror. A gust of wind blows through the tent hut and the witchwoman and the she-oryx disappear.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT 9

With only the dim glow of his candle lantern to guide him, PAGHL makes his way through the dark forest, cursing his jackass which obstinately follows behind. A robust man with a kindly face, Paghl notices a glow up ahead and moves toward it. Extinguishing his lantern, Paghl peers through the bushes into a small clearing illuminated by a roaring fire in the center. All he can see is the figure of an old woman huddled over the form of a stricken animal lying on its side. She pulls what appears to be a knife from inside her robes and ceremonially sets it on a flat rock beside her. The beast lets out a scream and dies. The witchwoman peers intently at what she's pulled from inside the animal.

Paghl, fascinated by what he's seen, steps out toward the firelight. Suddenly, he looks to the opposite end of the clearing. Behind the witchwoman are THREE JUN WARRIORS on horseback. Covered in their primitive Jun leather armor, they appear massive and evil. Sensing their proximity, the witchwoman attempts to hide her newfound possession next to the dead animal. Slowly rising, she turns and approaches the Juns. Spreading her arms in a peaceful gesture, she manages a crooked smile on her wrinkled face.

WITCHWOMAN

Surely you'll spare an old woman.

The central Jun warrior slowly pulls out his sword. Realizing her fate is sealed, the smile drops from the witchwoman's face and she looks to the ground. Imperceptibly, her fingernails begin flaking away, and sharp animal nails grow from below them. A low growl emanates from her throat with an animal-like rasp. Suddenly, with supernatural strength, she leaps for the central Jun. She claws at his eyes with her long spindly nails, blinding him. She then grabs his sword and slits his own throat.

11 As he unwraps the skins, the villagers gasp in amazement at the beautiful baby he has brought. CU of Paghl gazing at the child proudly. 11

DISSOLVE TO:

12 EXT. EMUR CLEARING - DAY 12

Paghl, now older, stands in a shaded clearing with his twelve-year-old adopted son. Sitting on the ground by the boy is a young, white-haired puppy. With his old, rusty sword, Paghl draws a line in the dirt.

PAGHL

When you make the line, you pledge your life for our village of Emur. This side is Emur... this side is the rest of the world. Anyone who crosses your line violates the spirit of Emur... and must pay with his life.

Young Dar playfully steps across Paghl's line.

PAGHL

That was a mistake.

Paghl swings his sword at Young Dar's head, but the boy quickly ducks.

PAGHL

Good move.

The boy stands proudly with his small sword drawn. Paghl smiles then suddenly drops his sword and motions behind Young Dar.

PAGHL

Dar, look!

Young Dar turns to look, and Paghl swats him with the broad side of his sword across his rear. Young Dar tumbles to the ground, and Paghl laughs heartily.

PAGHL (CONT'D)

Never turn your back on an enemy.

The puppy lets out a growl and bites into Paghl's legging. Paghl tries to kick the dog loose, but the puppy holds on tenaciously.

PAGHL

I never should have given you that damn dog.

Crestfallen, Young Dar pulls himself up and shakes off the dust. Finally, the pup releases. Paghl notices the boy's injured pride, and a big smile crosses his face. The old man reaches to his side and swiftly draws his kapa, the multi-bladed knife-like weapon. Young Dar smiles enthusiastically.

YOUNG DAR

Show me!

Hefting the worn bronze implement, he shows Dar the proper stance and calls across the clearing.

PAGHL

Tiis!

A fellow villager, standing about fifty yards away, turns toward them as Paghl winds up and flings the kapa. It whizzes across the clearing, making a boomerang-style curve toward the stunned villager, TIIS. Before he can duck, the kapa slices Tiis's skin hat off his head and slams it into a tree. The trembling villager shakes his fist at Paghl.

TIIS

You old fool!

Paghl and Dar begin laughing, but the boy quickly stops and looks over at some bushes behind them. He quietly whispers:

YOUNG DAR

Father.

Paghl continues laughing. Young Dar stares, mesmerized, feeling the presence of something lurking in the bushes. Young Dar grabs Paghl.

YOUNG DAR

Run, Father!

Paghl tries to look over his shoulder as the determined boy pulls on his arm. Suddenly, a huge bison charges out of the bushes, nostrils flaring and large horns slashing. The fierce horned beast charges toward Tiis and impales the unfortunate villager on his rack of horns. Tiis flies over the bison's back and slams to the ground. The animal turns and charges toward Paghl and Dar. Paghl turns to run with the boy but loses his footing, twists his ankle and falls. Young Dar runs back to Paghl but realizes there is no escape from the horned death. The boy steps out in front of Paghl and slowly walks toward the charging beast. He drops back into the mesmerized trance, and suddenly the charging animal slows and stops before him. Young Dar and the bison have communicated. The beast, now pacified, turns and walks slowly away. Paghl gazes in amazement. The boy picks up the puppy and comes to him.

15A Paghl looks up and sees the group of young men making their way through the village in the early morning light. Carrying hoes and other agricultural implements, the men head for the village entrance with Dar's beautiful shepherd dog leading the way. 15A

PAGHL

You old goat... you're just afraid
he'll beat your son in the ceremony
tonight. Dar!

15 Dar and his dog split off from the group and head over. Paghl reaches under his garment and extracts a small rolled bundle. As Dar arrives, he hands it to him. 15

PAGHL

For luck... in the ceremony.

Dar unrolls a leather mask with inlaid jade. He slides the beastmask over his face, and the other old men murmur their approval.

VILLAGER

The beastmask, an appropriate
totem.

Dar growls from inside the mask, and the old men and the young men who have stopped break into laughter. Dar pulls off the mask to reveal a proud smile. The young men head off to work. Behind Dar, the Old Man points to his head signaling that Dar is crazy. He whispers to ANOTHER OLD MAN beside him.

OLD MAN

Those stories of him and animals...
are just rumors spread to make us
forget he is an outsider... not
that I don't agree he's missing
something up here.

The Old Man looks around and then down at the ground. The dog is urinating on his leg. The Old Man kicks at the dog but misses, and the dog sprints off after Dar and the men.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. TERRACED FIELDS - DAY 15

Dar hoes vigorously on an irrigation canal in the center of a field of tall grain. His dog comes running down the aisle with a stick, which she drops at Dar's feet. Smiling, Dar drops his hoe and throws the stick out of the field and up onto a small rise fifty feet away.

16 The dog gamely springs after the stick and retrieves it, but suddenly she stops and peers off into the distance. Dropping the stick from her mouth, she begins to bark furiously. Dar stops his digging and looks toward her. Sensing something, he runs toward the barking dog. Reaching the edge of the field, Dar looks down at his village below. In the distance a large, dark dust cloud is approaching, and it is heading directly towards the small village. Dar's face tightens in fear as he whispers to himself.

DAR

Juns.

By this time, his coworkers have come out of the fields, and for a moment they all stand frozen, staring at the curse bearing down on their village. Dar breaks into a run down the road, and the other men charge after him.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. EMUR ENTRANCE - DAY 17

17A Paghl stands, watching the panic in the village. The people rush around in a frenzy, preparing weapons and looking for safety. Paghl and two of his elderly companions move calmly out of the village gate. Positioning themselves in the center of the road, they turn and face the oncoming Jun hordes. The dust cloud is but a few hundred yards away as Paghl unsheathes his old sword and firmly draws a line in the dust, separating his village from the oncoming Juns. His two companions make their lines and, with Paghl, crouch in a fighting position, awaiting the Juns and their certain fate.

18 EXT. EMURITE ROAD - DAY 18

Dar springs down toward the village ahead of his friends, having outdistanced them by a hundred yards. Like his fellow workers, Dar carries his thick-staffed hoe. His dog runs alongside him. As Dar enters the village, he sees that the Juns have overrun it and are slaughtering his people.

Led by a mighty Jun warrior with a crimson red insignia on his helmet, the Juns torch the village structures. The JUN LEADER wields a staff with small skulls mounted on it. From atop their horses, the massive Jun warriors, protected by their heavy skin armor, are easily vanquishing the villagers.

19 Dar wades into the battle, swings his hoe and knocks a Jun off his horse. Grabbing up the fallen Jun's sword, he begins slashing at his enemies. The women and children of the village huddle in a circle as a lone villager with a sword attempts to keep a mounted Jun at bay. The Jun swings down from his horse and draws his unique sword.

19 Attached to the hilt is a long chain which he draws out from around his waist. To the end of the chain is affixed a heavy barbed ball. The Jun flings the ball, and the villager shrieks as it sinks into his side. Slowly the Jun draws the doomed villager toward his sharp blade. 19

The other young men arrive at the battle; they fight valiantly but are easily killed one by one. Fighting furiously, Dar struggles toward their leader, but does not see a Jun bearing down on him from behind, swinging a crude ball and chain. The heavy ball crashes into Dar's head and groggily he falls to the ground.

The shepherd dog frantically peers into the fray looking for her master. Seeing Dar sprawled on the ground, she begins to make her way over to him. Dodging horse hooves and Jun crossbow arrows, she moves through the battle. A villager falls, and his staff slams into the shepherd dog's side. Stunned, she crumples to the ground. Shaking herself awake, she once again tries to make her way to her master. Finally reaching Dar, she takes the top of his garment in her mouth and begins to drag him.

19A On the outskirts of the village, a contingent of Jun priests, 19A
seeing victory at hand, move through the village entrance.
19 They are led by Maax, now the Jun high priest. The years 19
that have passed have added to Maax's emaciated, skeletal
demeanor. As he surveys the carnage, his face is
expressionless.

Trying to stay clear from the deadly horse hooves, the shepherd dog determinedly pulls Dar through the surrounding holocaust. Just as she nears the edge of battle and the safety beyond, a stray Jun arrow plunges into her flank.

As the arrow spears its way into the dog, Dar's eyes open wide, and his face contorts with pain, as if he himself is experiencing the arrow wound. Gasping in pain, the shepherd dog goes down once more. As blood matted into her white fur, she resolutely pulls herself to her feet once more and returns to her sole mission. In intense pain, she drags the now unconscious Dar out of the village and into the safe shelter of the wooded forest on one side of the village.
19B Pulling him deep into the brush, she lets go. Licking his 19B
face for the last time, she pulls herself on top of him,
protecting him with her dying warmth.

FADE OUT TO BLACK:

20 EXT. EMUR FOREST - BIRDVVIEW - DAY 20

21 As Dar shakes himself back to consciousness, he sees amazing 21
images. It seems as if he can see through the eyes of
soaring bird. Plummeting toward earth in a free fall, the
treetops loom closer and closer.

21 Swooping over an arid plain and then climbing up over a ridge 21
of mountains, the aerial vision is stunning. As the view
from the large bird's eyes approaches his village and swoops
down through the shroud of smoke, Dar forces himself awake.
20 Shaking his head from the lingering pain of the blow, Dar 20
sees the dead shepherd dog lying next to him. Cradling her
head and just barely remembering, he jumps to his feet and
runs back to the village.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. EMUR ENTRANCE - DAY 22

Smoke from the smoldering remains of the village hides the
destruction as Dar approaches. Not seeing any bodies, he
fearfully enters the village. Most of the huts and
structures have been burned to the ground. Almost all vision
is obscured by the dark smoke from the burning stacks of
grain. On top of a rock altar Dar sees a large eagle staring
22A at him. Apparently the only other living creature around, 22A
Dar stands transfixed, watching the majestic bird. Peering
through the smoky gloom, he feels something drop on his arm.
22 Suddenly realizing that it is blood, he jerks his head upward 22
and sees a dead villager impaled on the top of an eight-foot
high stake. As he moves into the center of the road, a
breeze momentarily clears away the smoke. Dar stares stonily
at the long rows of stakes lining the road. Atop each is an
impaled villager. The devastation of the village of Emur is
complete.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. EMUR STREET - SUNSET 23

Dar carries the dead shepherd dog in his arms, down the road
toward the center of the village. The bloody stakes still
line the road but the victims are gone. Dar reaches the
village square and begins to climb a mound of stacked
corpses. He sets his dog on top of this pyramid of death,
climbs down and sets a burning torch to the massive funeral
pyre. As Dar stands in silence watching the smoke of his
people waft into the sunset, the eagle leaps into the sky.
23A Looking up at the eagle gently flying in the breeze, Dar 23A
23 slightly reels, losing his balance. Once again he is able to 23
experience the sensation of vision through the eyes of the
23B eagle. Dar sees his burning pyre from hundreds of feet high, 23B
with himself just a speck. The eagle flies higher still, and
Dar can see far in the distance the dark dust cloud of the
23C Jun horde seemingly riding into the setting sun. As the 23C
eagle flies off towards the west, Dar gathers his sword and
other possessions.

23 With one last look at the roaring fire, he sets out after the 23
mysterious bird, into the sunset on his mission of revenge.

FADE OUT.

24 EXT. RIVER - DAY 24

24A With powerful strokes, Dar swims through the furiously 24A
rushing current of the blue river. Reaching the bank, he
pulls himself out and begins stripping off his wet clothing.
His beard and ruddy look reveal that he has been living in
the woods for a few months. Spreading his garments out in the
hot sun to dry, Dar lies on a warm rock looking up at the
24 sky. Watching the large eagle soaring effortlessly on the 24
warm air currents above, Dar drifts into sleep. Hearing a
noise, he is jolted awake, and looks over to see a piece of
his clothing careening off into the bushes. Dar jumps up,
grabs his kapa and, naked, charges off after it. He plunges
through the woods, following his garment, which is scurrying
along the ground ahead of him. While running, Dar takes aim
and heaves the kapa. Whatever was stealing his clothing
dashes off into the underbrush as the kapa pins the garment
to the ground.

24B Dar looks around but sees nothing. He pulls the kapa from 24B
the ground and retrieves his clothing. Slipping it over his
head, he pushes his way through the bushes surrounding the
clearing but stops suddenly. Before him are the remains of a
hut village devastated much as his own. The burned-out
structures loom ominously. Dar moves out into the village
and surveys the destruction. Behind Dar two furry little
snouts poke out of the brush. The tiny ferrets, each about a
foot in length, make a chittering sound as they watch him
with great interest.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 25

Dar makes camp for the night by the fire pits of the
devastated village. He sits in front of his fire slicing the
skin off some wild berries. He turns away from the fire to a
long flat rock and with the back of his knife breaks open
some nuts. He puts some in his mouth and turns back to the
fire. From behind him, the two diminutive ferrets stealthily
sneak out of the brush and creep toward the broken nuts. The
mongoose-like creatures reach the rock, and each grasping a
nut in their mouths, they dash back into the brush. Dar,
oblivious to it all, turns to the rock, but the nuts are
gone. Surprised, he breaks open a few more and puts another
one in his mouth.

Once more the crafty ferrets sneak out of the brush toward
the rock.

25 Quietly, they gather up the nuts and turn to scamper back, 25
but Dar whirls around and collars them. Holding the cute
little thieves up by the scruffs of their necks, he looks at
them hungrily.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 26

CLOSE-UP of a gourd holding a boiling liquid which hangs over
the campfire. As the camera pulls back, Dar is stirring the
contents of the gourd with a stick. Reaching into it, he
pulls out a strip of cooked meat. He gingerly puts the hot
food into his mouth and smiles in contentment with the taste.
The camera pans over and the two ferrets are seen sitting on
the rock next to him, eagerly watching the cooking process.
Dar pulls out a piece of meat and, ripping it in two, he
feeds one to each ferret. Sitting up on their hind legs,
they take the food and quickly gobble it down. As the
ferrets eat, Dar returns to work on the skins before him.
Using a curved bone needle and fiber string, he painstakingly
sews the animal hides. As he works, he talks to the ferrets.

DAR

What's your name going to be, huh?
How about Podo?

Dar pokes the chubby ferret in the belly.

DAR (CONT'D)

And you, I will name after a friend
who saved my life. Your name is
Riki.

The ferrets chitter. A night breeze rustles through the
burned-out structures behind them. Dar looks around warily.

DAR (CONT'D)

All of them... dead... or worse,
Jun slaves...

CUT TO:

27 EXT. FOREST - DAY 27

Dar hikes through the forest. Slung over his shoulder is a
crudely sewn hide pouch containing the lively ferrets, who
are enjoying this new form of travel. He stops by a stream
bed and sets their pouch down. As Dar kneels to drink, Riki
and Podo hop out and join him. Dar sits back on the bank
resting his tired feet. As he lies down on the cool moss,
his thoughts turn to daydream. Staring up at the cloudy sky
above, Dar notices the large eagle soaring above him.

27A 27A

27 Slowly turning his head to the left in comfort, Dar finds himself face to face with the bared fangs of a six-foot long adder snake. He freezes in horror, not daring to breathe. Hearing a hissing sound, he realizes it is not coming from the deadly snake, but instead from the two ferrets who are standing on his chest spitting out their hate for the fanged serpent. With lightning speed, Podo jumps at the snake, barely dodging a strike. Before the snake can recover from the decoy attack, Riki pounces onto its back and sinks his powerful jaws into the snake's neck. Holding on tightly, Riki rides the violent flailing of the snake. Dar jumps to his feet and instantly has his kapa out, ready to fling the curved blade at their assailant. With Riki riding on its back, Dar doesn't dare throw the weapon. The snake slams itself to the ground again and again, trying to dislodge the tenacious ferret. Podo avoids the venomous fangs and grabs hold of the snake, too. Together they subdue it, and the sound of the snake's spine breaking is heard. Dar lifts the ferrets off the big snake.

DAR

I did not realize that my little friends were warriors, too.

The ferrets' happy chittering almost sounds like chuckling. Dar slices the head off the dead snake. Throwing the decapitated snake over his shoulder, Dar looks at it with pride.

DAR (CONT'D)

This enemy will make a good meal tonight.

DISSOLVE TO:

28 EXT. A SMALL RISE - DAY 28

Dar hikes over a small rise, and before him is a grain field destroyed by fire. As far as he can see is black terrain. As he crosses the burned-out cultivation, the clouds above open and it begins to rain. Looking around for shelter, Dar heads for a nearby cliff face. As he nears it, he sees the remains of a cliff-dwelling village. The deserted village is made up of caves which line the cliff. Their fields were destroyed as was their village. Dar looks around warily, but the deluge forces him inside the nearest cave.

CUT TO:

29 INT. CAVE - DAY 29

Dar enters the dark cave, thankful for shelter from the powerful thunderstorm. He immediately drops to his knees and begins kindling a fire with a flint.

29 As the fire starts, the wet ferrets climb out of their soggy pouch. Dar begins cutting the skin off the snake as the ferrets dry themselves in the warmth. Behind Dar in the darkness of the cave, two glowing eyes open. A fierce growl shatters the silence of the cave, startling Dar and sending the ferrets scrambling back into their pouch. Dar instinctively grabs a burning stick and whirls around to face his attacker. A huge panther stands poised to leap. Dar and the cat hesitate, eyeing each other. Holding his torch higher, Dar can see the feathers of a Jun crossbow arrow embedded into the flank of the massive panther. Looking confidently into the wounded animal's eyes, Dar slowly approaches it. Gently he touches the big cat on the head, and it relaxes. Losing their fear, the ferrets' little snouts poke out of the pouch as they watch the two. Dar examines the caked blood around the wound.

30 PANTHER WOUNDING MONTAGE 30

He stares into the big cat's eyes and images flood his mind. The panther runs through the brush chasing a flash of fur. The camera streaks along the ground at panther-high level. The rabbit prey darts back and forth as the panther speeds after it. (Throughout this scene, the panther's eyes and Dar's eyes are superimposed as a series of dissolves.)

Suddenly the cat breaks through the underbrush and looks up to see a huge, terrified horse rearing on its hind legs. The cat tries to maneuver around the horse, but sees another horse with a mounted Jun warrior on it blocking its path. As the panther turns in the other direction, he sees the warrior raise his crossbow, and an arrow spears into his flank. Dar winces in pain. The cat tumbles into the bushes.

END MONTAGE

Grasping the Jun arrow, Dar quickly jerks it from the cat's flesh. Although it is in pain, the panther makes no sound. Dar stares at the Jun arrow in his hands, reminded of his heritage.

DAR

My friend, we share an enemy.

Dar snaps the arrow in two.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. RIVER ROCK POOLS - DAY 31

The panther stands peering into one of the many rock pools which line the beautiful blue rushing river. The wound on the cat's flank is covered with a mud pack. A study in concentration, the big cat quickly slams his paw into the water and snatches a large fish up onto the rock bank.

31 The two ferrets pounce on it and awkwardly drag it over to a large pile of freshly caught fish. Dar stands over another pool hefting a long thin pole spear. He flings it down into the water but comes up with nothing. As the car catches another fish, Dar moves over and kneels to examine the wound. 31

31A A shadow from above crosses over them, causing Dar to look skyward. The eagle glides above them. Dar stares at the graceful bird. 31A

CUT TO:

32 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 32

As the embers of the fire burn low, Dar sleeps. At his feet near the fire lies the cat. A wind-blown rustle is heard in the forest. The big cat raises his head, looks around intently, and returns to sleep. On the other side of the fire, the two ferrets sleep soundly on their backs with their fat little bellies turned up toward the warmth. Next to them is a huge pile of discarded fish bones. One of the ferrets burps.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY 33

Dar walks down a barren ravine with the cat padding softly at his side. Over his shoulder is slung the pouch containing the cheerful ferrets. Dar looks up and sees the eagle 33A

33A soaring above them. Coming over a small hillside, the cat 33

33 abruptly stops. Dar climbs up to the top, and before them, 33B

33B in the lush valley below, sits a peaceful temple. Built many years before, the small structure is surrounded by a 33B

34 fortified wall and seems devoid of life. Dar decides to give it a wide berth and heads around it, down toward the stream 34

34 below. As Dar and the animals cross through the bushes near the stream bed, they stop, hearing voices. Gently parting the brush, he sees two young women crouching on the bank. One gently splashes water on the other. As Dar watches intently, one of them walks away. The remaining girl slips off her clothing and steps into the cool water. As she glides through the water, her supple breasts skim the surface. Languidly floating, she suddenly stands, hearing a rustle from the bushes on the shore. Standing in the waist-deep water, she radiates a native beauty. Moving toward the bank, she notices some of her clothing is missing. She looks over and sees the top part of her garment careening along the ground and into a bush. The two ferrets tear away through the underbrush with the long piece of clothing in tow. Tying her remaining garment around her waist, the girl chases after it. In a small clearing, she stops and turns, looking for any trace. Suddenly, behind her, there is a fierce growl. She whips around and is confronted by the ferocious panther.

34 She quickly steps backward into Dar's arms. Startled, she jerks away, but he holds on. 34

DAR
Quiet. This beast is fierce.

She stops, silent.

DAR (CONT'D)
If we show no fear, we might escape.

As the girl relaxes, Dar suddenly steps around her, jumps at the panther and lets out a loud yell.

DAR (CONT'D)
Get out of here!

The panther scampers away into the brush. Dar turns back to the girl, slides his arms around her and pulls her to him.

DAR (CONT'D)
You've just got to show them who's in command. And now for my reward...

The girl starts to pull back as Dar begins kissing her passionately. She tries to resist, but Dar presses himself harder against her. Eventually she submits and begins to enjoy it. While kissing her, Dar glances up, sees the panther peering at him through some bushes. Dar gives the big cat a wink. Suddenly the girl twists his arm and effortlessly drops Dar to the ground. Dar grimaces in pain as the much smaller girl holds him on the ground with his arm in a twist lock.

GIRL (KIRI)
Who are you?

DAR
They call me Dar. You can let go. I'm no threat.

KIRI
I know that. Who sent you?

She eases up on the twist lock.

DAR
My village of Emur was destroyed by the Jun horde. I have sworn revenge and am following their path.

KIRI
You? Alone? Ha!

DAR

I'll have my revenge, sooner... or later.

Dar leans closer to kiss her again, and she twists on his arm harder. Dar groans, but instantly reacts with a more clever move and lands on top of her, pinning her to the ground.

DAR (CONT'D)

Now tell me, who might you be?

She struggles to free herself but, finding it useless, she relaxes.

KIRI

I am Kiri. Slave to the priests of the temple of Ar.

The girl struggles again but only manages to flip over. Now Dar sits astride her back. A grim look crosses his face as he sees the welts of whippings on her back.

DAR

Tell me, do the priests of Ar always whip you like a beast?

Dar lets her go and stands over her.

KIRI

Jun priests are all eunuchs. Their high priest permits them to slice themselves. They're not particularly nice to live with. But if it's Juns you want, go to the walled city of Aruk... I should know... it used to be my home.

DAR

Where?

KIRI

Take the river, it winds around the mountains. Aruk is on the other side.

DAR

I'll cross over them.

KIRI

Please, don't. Many brave warriors have sacrificed their lives to learn the secret of those mountains. And not one has returned.

34 The sound of a bell ringing from the distant temple is heard. 34

KIRI

I must go.

DAR

I will free you.

KIRI

You don't understand. My relatives
will be put to death if I do not
return.

DAR

Then I will come with you.

KIRI

NO! Impossible.

She turns and starts away.

DAR

Please. Stay.

KIRI

Goodbye, Dar. Follow the river and
take care while you're alone.

She turns and runs away.

Dar quietly watches her go as the animals come out from the bushes. The ferret hops up into Dar's arms and he squeezes it playfully.

DAR

I'm not alone.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY 35

35A Dar is back on the hillside watching the entrance to the temple. Above him the mysterious eagle soars. The girl, 35A
35B reunited with her friend, appears before the gate. Slowly, 35B
35 the gate opens and the two girls enter. Dar starts to draw 35
his sword and go after her. He hesitates and sheathes it.
He starts to draw it again but slams it back in its sheath.
Shrugging the whole episode off, Dar mutters and heads toward
the ominous mountains. As the temple gate closes, the two
Jun priests lead the girls away.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 36

36A Dar and the animals continue up the ridge overlooking the stream bed. Up above them the eagle soars majestically on the wind currents. Dar stops walking and gazes up at the huge bird. As he gazes, he keeps getting flashes of the view through the bird's eyes. Even though the image is of an strange lenticular sort, the clarity and his seeming ability to see through the bird's eyes at will amazes him. Excited, Dar reaches into his pouch and pulls out a small piece of salted fish wrapped in leaves. He hurls the fish up into the air, and the eagle folds in its wings and plunges toward it. Dar is almost in a trance as he vicariously experiences the view through the bird's POV as it hurtles downward. The eagle opens its wings to slow and snatches the piece of fish out of the air in its beak. Dar shakes his head, then taps it in disbelief that he can see through this strange bird's eyes. The bird lands on his arm. 36A 36 36B 36 36B 36

CUT TO:

37 EXT. FOOTHILLS - DAY 37

37A Crossing through the low foothills, Dar and the animals hike toward the mountains ahead. The eagle glides above them. 37A 37 The cat pads out in front of Dar. The eagle banks off in a different direction, and Dar's head is flooded with images from above. Drawn in that direction, Dar notices something ahead and stops. Looking through the trees, they see a very strange, seemingly deserted camp spread before them. 37B 37 37D Apparently inhabited by a tree-living race, the entire camp is situated around a massive Tyrod tree. Enough hut-like structures hang from the thick branches to house a small village. The base of the tree is surrounded by fire pits for cooking.

37E Surveying the bizarre, empty tree-village, they see a small cage hanging from one side of the tree. Dar quietly steps out into the clearing, cautiously looking around. Seeing nothing, he moves in to investigate. Peering up into the cage, Dar sees a frightened hollow-faced young MAN inside. Dar scans the clearing suspiciously. Before the tree is a large monument, consisting of a massive stone base with a thick tree trunk rising out of it. The trunk has been hewn to look like a huge bird on top, with gold inlaid etchings along the body of it. Dar examines the monument and then moves over to where the cat is sniffing a bronze cauldron hanging over the fire pit. Dar notices that the embers below it are still warm. He stares into the dark liquid in the pot. Taking a crude wooden ladle, he spoons up some of the stew. The cat eagerly sniffs the stew. Dar cautiously brings the ladle to his lips and starts to sip. In the cauldron a charred, severed human head floats to the surface. 37E

37E Dar recoils in horror as he spits out the human stew. 37E
 Turning to flee, he notices movement in the forest
 surrounding the village. The panther begins to growl. Dar
 draws his sword and slowly begins making his way back in the
 direction he came from. As he passes under the cage, he
 slashes at the door and it swings open. The man jumps from
 the cage and glances around the clearing in wide-eyed terror.

Suddenly, Dar sees a dark form rise out of the brush and
 start toward him. All around him from the darkness of the
 forest, they come for him. Dark, thin shapes, each looming
 over seven feet tall, surround him. The panther moves in
 protectively, eying the fifty shapes. The terrified man
 looks frantically for a safe path through them but sees none.
 Panic-stricken, he dashes toward the shapes hoping to run
 between them but stops, realizing there is no way. Suddenly
 one of the shapes looms up behind him, and the man realizes
 he is doomed. The tall BIRD WARRIOR snaps open its stick-
 like arms revealing a huge wingspan of reptilian skin.
 Instantaneously the bird warrior closes its wings, encircling
 the unfortunate victim in a gelatinous membrane. The semi-
 transparent wing draws taut revealing the form of the still-
 struggling man. Suddenly, vast quantities of foamy liquids
 flow from the opening at the bottom of the wings onto the
 ground. Dar steps back in awe. Just as quickly, the wings
 snap open, and only bones, armor and garbage tumble out. The
 bird warrior's wings snap closed, and he resumes the posture
 of the other dark shapes surrounding Dar. Podo and Riki peek
 out of their pouch with a frightened look.

Dar reaches in front of the snarling panther and, with the
 point of his sword, makes the line in the dust. As he lifts
 his sword and kapa to prepare himself for the futile combat,
 he hesitates. Shaking his head, he realizes that once again
 37C he is flashing on the eagle's point of view. Tapping his 37C
 temple with his hand, he tries to focus his thoughts on the
 37E impending fight. The eagle, meanwhile, is soaring above the 37E
 37A BIRD WARRIORS. Pulling in its powerful wings, it dives 37A
 toward earth. The bird warriors start to move for Dar. The
 37E big panther is poised to leap on the nearest one. Just as 37E
 Dar is ready to slash, the eagle comes diving over the bird
 warriors' heads, screaming out its battle cry and flashing
 its talons. The bird warriors instantly stop as the symbol
 of their village banks. Spreading its wings, it gently lands
 on Dar's forearm. An otherworldly chanting begins as the
 bird warriors slowly move back. Stunned by his deliverance,
 Dar begins slowly backing toward the forest. Suddenly Dar
 backs up against something and he turns quickly to see a bird
 warrior looming over him. Dar jumps away.

DAR

Ahhh!

A gnarled claw snakes out of the folds in the bird warrior's
 wing and holds a small glittering object out to Dar.

The bird warrior points toward the sky and offers up the clawed hand to him. Dar reaches out and takes the golden medallion from the bird warrior. Not knowing what to do, he turns toward the bush and walks away as confidently as he can. After what seems like an interminable walk, Dar reaches the forest, and as soon as he's hidden by the brush, he and the panther break into a run.

DISSOLVE TO:

38

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

38

Dar sits on a tree stump chewing on a piece of fruit with the gold medallion dangling from his neck. He watches a trail below him as hundreds of REFUGEES and wounded, loaded with belongings, make their way by. Watching the grim sight, he is reminded of the devastation of his own village. Dar splits what is left of the fruit and tosses half to the ferrets and half to the panther. They devour it hungrily. A crowd of people moves through the narrow pass, followed by a small family traveling together. Dar watches as the family moves off the trail to a clearing near him. Dar moves over to an outcropping of rock and stares intently at the four people relaxing below him.

DAR

The father looks strong.

The WOMAN of the family holds an injured young CHILD in her arms, comforting it.

DAR (CONT'D)

And the daughter, mmmmm.

The shapely DAUGHTER begins preparing a meal for the family when suddenly THREE BURLY MEN jump out of the bushes and accost them. One of the marauders grabs the girl, and the others hold down the FATHER.

FATHER

What do you want? We are just victims of the Jun horde like you.

MARAUDER #1

Your food... and the girl.

The father tries to struggle free, but the men beat him senseless.

DAR

Free her!

The men turn and see Dar, sword drawn, standing behind them. The man holding the girl pulls a dagger from his clothing and presses it to her neck.

39

MARAUDER #2

I'll kill her! Throw down your sword!

39

Dar hesitates, then looks to the sky. The eagle swoops down toward the man. Dar attempts to distract the marauders by throwing down his sword in disgust.

DAR

That's the last time I'll try to help someone!

Dar turns and begins to shuffle off, just as the eagle strikes. The big bird flutters over the unsuspecting man, and its sharp talons slash at his face. The surprised marauder drops the girl and stabs at the eagle but misses. Dar, locked in a trance, signals the panther. The big cat leaps from its hiding place in the nearby tall grass and, with a vicious bite, rips out the man's throat. One of his comrades raises his sword, intent on killing the panther. Suddenly Dar's kapa slices into his rib cage, knocking him dead to the ground. The lone living man turns and flees in terror. Dar lets out a joyous whoop and sprints toward the panther. He hugs the big cat and then retrieves his kapa from the dead man. Dar turns and starts toward the family, but stops. The family huddles in the far end of the clearing looking at him fearfully.

FATHER

Come no closer!

DAR

It's all right. I mean no...

FATHER

Sorcerer! Stay away! Animals don't help men! We want no part of your evil ways!

The family runs off into the bushes.

DAR

I just...

Dar stands looking dejected.

CUT TO:

40

EXT. RIDGE - DAY

40

Coming to the top of a ridge, Dar stops and stares off into the distance at what appears to be a large walled city. After a moment, Dar heads down.

41 As they descend the ridge, they have no choice but to go a few hundred yards closer. At the bottom of the ridge, as they are about to turn away from the city, Dar stops, staring again. Suddenly, he breaks into a run toward the road which leads to the city entrance. 41

42 EXT. ARUK ROAD - DAY 42

As the big panther catches up to him, Dar reaches the road. Even though the city gates are some four hundred yards away, the road is lined with Jun stakes and the rotted corpses of their impaled victims. The memories of his own village's demise overwhelms him, and he is barely able to control the flood of emotions. Kneeling beside the panther and looking deep into its eyes, Dar forms a mental link with the beast.

DAR

I will return soon. Keep to the woods.

The cat turns and obediently pads away. Dar hikes the ferret pouch up on his shoulder and stares up at the eagle soaring above him. For a moment, Dar flashes through the majestic bird's eyes and sees some kind of commotion in the center of the city. He breaks out of the trance and heads down the ominous road. 42A 42B 42

CUT TO:

43 EXT. ARUK BRIDGE - DAY 43

As Dar reaches the city, he sees that it is surrounded by a tar pit which forms a natural oozing moat. Crossing the crude suspension bridge, he kicks some rocks off the edge, and they sink into the black mire.

44 EXT. ARUK GATE - DAY 44

The ancient city's gates are wide open, and Dar walks through, down a long narrow alley of empty living quarters. Hearing the incantations of a crowd performing some kind of religious ceremony ahead, he continues toward it. 44A

45 EXT. ARUK SQUARE - DAY 45

Turning the corner, a vast village square spreads out before him. Shoving the chittering ferrets down into their pouch so that they cannot be seen, Dar surveys the few hundred assembled villagers. On the massive stone pyramid stands a Jun priest and two assistants. Pulling his hood on, Dar moves into the crowd for a closer look. 45A 45

46 Four men and their wives stand at the front of the crowd. 46
 Each woman holds a child ranging in age from one to three
 years. The two priests come down the stairs of the altar
 toward the group. One of the women begins hysterically
 screaming. As the priests reach her and take her two-year-
 old boy, she frantically tries to hold on to him. Her
 husband catches her as they roughly shove her aside.
 45A Together, they carry the boy up the stone stairs and hand him 45A
 over to the formidable high priest Maax, who waits ominously
 at the summit of the altar. Maax glares malevolently from
 his small sunken eyes at the crowd below. Hoisting the child
 over his head, the high priest ceremoniously recites an
 incantation.

MAAX

May your children's spirits purge
 you of your evil.

The two witchwomen sit behind Maax gazing into their earthen
 vessel containing the miasmatic fluid. Maax looks over to the
 witchwoman who slowly nods her head. The little boy,
 enjoying his height in the air, giggles. Maax then turns
 toward the stone god which has been erected on the altar.
 Holding the little boy over the stone arms, which lead at a
 steep angle to the gaping mouth, he mutters another
 incantation.

The two priests busily stoke the fire which burns in the
 mouth of the god. With the fire now burning out of the mouth
 at its hottest, the high priest hurls the unsuspecting boy
 down on the granite ramp-like arm. The screaming boy tumbles
 down the slick stone facing and into the inferno. As the
 last screams of the child die, a belch of smoke erupts from
 the god's mouth.

45 As the screams of the mother fill the village square, Dar 45
 turns away in disgust. Seeing the contingent of Jun priests
 which guards the entrance to the altar, Dar realizes that he
 is powerless to stop this carnage. Staring into the fire,
 46E Dar flashes back to the burning of his village. 46E

46 The Jun priests come down the altar toward the parents to 46
 claim another victim. A beautiful young girl of three, old
 enough to realize what is going on, tries to break free of
 her mother's grasp. She does, and attempts to flee, but she
 is snatched by the priests. The father, a short rotund man,
 tried to save his daughter, but is slammed to the ground by
 some of the attending priests. Screaming, he implores the
 crowd to rise up and save his daughter. The beautiful little
 girl is carried, crying, up the altar stairs.

45 Dar pulls off his hood and looks skyward. The eagle glides 45
 46B on the air currents high above the square. Concentrating on 46B
 the graceful bird, Dar can see through its eyes.

46A The priests hand the tearful girl to the dreaded high priest 46A
 45A and he lifts her dramatically over his head. Reciting his 45A
 46C incantation once more, he turns toward the fiery god. The 46C
 eagle banks, folds in its wings, and plunges toward the
 45A square below. Dar, vicariously experiencing the rapid plunge 45A
 45 downward, can hardly maintain his balance. As the father and 45
 46 the crowd scream for mercy, the high priest flings the girl 46
 45A to the granite ramp below him. She hits the god's arm and 45A
 tumbles down toward her death. Miraculously, she grabs hold
 of the slick rock and manages to cling tenuously to the edge
 of the ramp, just inches from a fiery immolation. Her
 clothing begins to singe as she determinedly hangs on for
 dear life. The high priest, infuriated, takes one of the
 long thin sacrificial knives and dramatically lifts it over
 his head to deliver the coup de grace.

The eagle, screaming its battle cry, dives in and with its
 powerful talons snatches the little girl from her precipice.
 45 With powerful strokes of its wings, it swiftly lifts her up 45
 by her clothing, into the sky to safety. The crowd, in awe
 of this amazing event, drops to the ground, prone, chanting:

CROWD

Ar... Ar... Ar... Ar...

45A The Jun priests, just as frightened, also drop to the dirt. 45A
 Only two are left standing, the evil high priest on his
 altar, and Dar. Their eyes lock on each other. Dar
 45 confidently stares him down as he stands alone among the 45
 45A hundreds of fallen people. The high priest looks away up to 45A
 46D the sky and sees the eagle, with its small bundle, flying 46D
 45 into the horizon. The high priest looks back to Dar, but he 45
 45A is gone. Composing himself, the high priest exhorts the 45A
 crowd.

MAAX

You see, Ar has spoken. He wants
 your children!

CUT TO:

47 EXT. ARUK ALLEY - DAY 47

Dar cuts down a deserted narrow alley and stops. The eagle
 swoops down over him and drops the tiny girl. She drops the
 last twenty feet and lands giggling in Dar's arms.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. ARUK STREET - NIGHT 48

Dar, with his hood pulled over his head, trudges down the
 dimly-lit village street.

48 Carrying a loaded burlap bag on his shoulder, he passes some townspeople, turns a corner and stops. Pulling Riki out of his pouch, he drops the top of the burlap bag to reveal the sleeping face of the small girl. He holds the ferret up to her, and it begins to sniff and lick her face. Covering her back up, he tosses the ferret to the ground. It scampers off down the road and Dar follows it. 48

Down the road, Riki hops, and then stops in front of a small hut. Dar steps up and raps on the door. Cautiously, the door opens. SACCO, the little girl's chubby father, peers out at Dar through his red, tear-swollen eyes. Behind him, inside their tiny earthen hut, his wife sits, quietly sobbing.

DAR
I've something for you.

48A The large eagle swoops down to roost on the roof of the hut across the alley. 48A

49 INT. SACCO'S HUT - NIGHT 49

A faint glimmer of hope crosses Sacco's face as Dar pushes past him into their hut. Dar drops the sack from his shoulder, and the sleeping little girl tumbles out onto the floor. The sight of their presumed-dead daughter awakening sends the parents into a hysteria of happiness. Sacco holds the half-asleep little girl over his head and starts to dance for joy.

SACCO
My little light is alive! Alive!
Snatched from death by...

Sacco comes to his senses and, handing his daughter to his wife, he throws himself at Dar's feet.

SACCO (CONT'D)
Master, my life is yours. Take it!

Sacco offers up a meat carving knife to Dar.

DAR
I don't want your life. But a meal, that you might interest me in.

Sacco jumps to his feet.

SACCO
Then you will have the best my humble house can offer. Namaal!

Sacco calls over his strong, husky son, NAMAAL.

49 SACCO (CONT'D) 49
 You will find the finest wine for
 the stranger, our friend.

Sacco hands him a pouch of coins and Namaal runs out the door.

CUT TO:

50 INT. CHAMBER - NIGHT 50
 Maax stands ominously in a dark chamber before three silhouetted figures. The gaunt, bold Jun priests wait obediently before their master.

MAAX
 You will find him, and you will
 kill him.

Maax hands one of them a heavy, engraved ring. The Jun priest slips the ring onto his finger.

CUT TO:

51 INT. SACCO'S HUT - NIGHT 51
 Illuminated only by the fire pit, Dar, Sacco, his wife and daughter eat.

SACCO
 The Jun horde swept through our
 village. They slaughtered most of
 our young men.

The little girl sits at the table eating, with the two ferrets on her lap. As she's about to eat, Podo jumps up on her shoulder and licks her ear. While she pulls Podo off her, Riki jumps up on his hind legs and takes a bite of her food.

SACCO
 The royal family was incarcerated,
 their children disappeared, and
 when the Juns left, they installed
 their high priest Maax in power.
 You saw today what kind of demon he
 is. Ahh! Incinerating innocent
 babies! His power comes from a
 circle of two, and they provide him
 with the Death Guards.

DAR
 Death Guards?

51

SACCO

His personal army... under the pyramid in the catacombs. They are what keep him in power now that the horde has gone. Each night one is released to wander the city. Woe to the man who is not safely locked in his home.

51

Dar looks at him in disbelief.

SACCO (CONT'D)

When you see their eyes, you will know. We used to be a race of proud artisans, but the Jun crusades have turned us into slaves.

DAR

The Jun hordes devastated my village. I was the lone survivor.

SACCO

But why were you spared?

Dar searches for a reply when Namaal bursts through the door.

NAMAAL

They're searching for him, the stranger. The priests say anyone found harboring him will forfeit his life to Ar!

Dar scoops up his ferrets into their pouch and shoulders it.

DAR

I will leave.

SACCO

I told you before, my life is yours.

DAR

But not your family's. Just show me a way out.

SACCO

Over the bridge is the only way. We are surrounded by that damnable sludge!

DAR

Which direction did the Jun horde take?

54 His bony hand, wearing the ring given him by Maax, rests on a tree branch in front of him. Metal lids on the carved ring smoothly slide open, revealing a glazed, liquid-covered eyeball inset in it. The eyeball looks from side to side and then fixes its stare on Dar in the distance. 54

Dar turns to the river and kneels to drink. The ferrets jump from their pouch and Dar cups his hand, filling it with water. Taking a long drink, he offers some to the thirsty ferrets. Dar reaches for another handful and quickly swallows it down. Podo and Riki each stand on their hind legs, sensing something.

Suddenly, a Jun priest on horseback looms up behind Dar. Before the ferrets can cry out, Dar is yanked to his feet with a garrote around his neck. Futilely struggling to free himself, Dar begins to lose consciousness as the powerful Jun priest tightens his hold.

Two other mounted Jun priests ride up, and one of them holds a loaded crossbow to Dar's throat. On the finger of the priest's hand is the eyeball ring. The metal lids of the ring slide open and the barbs on the ring dig into his finger. The priest goes into a trance as the eyeball ring vision is established.

55 INT. WITCHES' CHAMBER - DAY 55

The two witchwomen huddle over their glowing vessel with their fingertips immersed in the fluid. A bizarre apparition of Dar at the mercy of the Jun priests materializes in the fluid. Maax steps out of the gloom and, upon seeing Dar's image, flies into a rage.

MAAX

That's him. Zed's son! Kill him!
Kill him now!

56 EXT. RIVER - DAY 56

The priest with the crossbow is still in the grip of the eyeball ring trance. Perspiration streams off his bald head, and his body has started to shake. The priest's finger moves toward the crossbow trigger. Dar, barely conscious, looks upward because of the force of the garrote around his neck. He sees the panther poised to leap from the tree branch above him. The delirious priest has his finger on the crossbow trigger. With a ferocious snarl, the big cat pounces on the priest, ripping him off his horse to the ground. The crossbow discharges and the arrow spears into the chest of the priest holding Dar with the garrote. As the priest is propelled off his horse, Dar yanks the garrote from around his neck and breathes in great lungfuls of air.

- 56 He sees the lone living Jun priest racing away from the 56
 encounter on his fleet mount. Dar grabs his kapa, snaps out
 the blades, and is about to fling it when the rider
 disappears around some trees. Dar glances at the panther
 and, instinctively understanding, it dashes off after the
 fleeing horseman.
- 57 Placing himself into a trance, Dar concentrates on the 57
 panther's chase. Visions of the chase through the panther's
 eyes filter into his mind. The fast cat closes in on the
 tiring horse. Just as he's ready to pounce, the cat suddenly
 56 plunges into a camouflaged pit trap. Dar reels to the 56
 ground, for all he can see through the cat's eyes is
 darkness.
- 58 The Jun priest stops and circles his horse back toward the 58
 pit. The panther is trapped in a ten-foot deep pit designed
 to catch large animals. Frantically pacing the mucky floor,
 the cat can find no way out. As the Jun priest reaches the
 edge of the pit and looks down in triumph, he loads his
 powerful crossbow. Preparing to shoot at the helpless
 panther, the priest is suddenly knocked off his horse by the
 swing of a heavy wooden staff. SYTH, a large powerful black
 man, watches as the priest tumbles into the pit as a result
 of his swing. Coming alongside Syth is a handsome young
 white BOY of twelve. As they peer into the pit, they hear
 the screams of the Jun priest as the panther rips him apart.

SYTH

Face the animal on his terms, and
 you'll find you're not so very
 strong.

As the screams subside, the boy speaks with concern.

BOY (TAL)

Can't we help it out?

SYTH

Over here.

Syth motions to the boy to follow him. With much effort,
 they begin dragging a large log toward the pit.

SYTH (CONT'D)

A magnificent hunter should not be
 allowed to rot in a filthy jackal
 trap.

Heaving into the log, they push it to the edge. As it drops
 into the pit, Syth loses his footing and falls. The branch
 topples onto him, pinning him under it. The cat bounds up
 the log as Syth groans in pain. Dar breaks into the
 clearing, sees the accident, and runs to the stricken black
 man. He and the boy quickly jerk the heavy log off Syth.

59

EXT. RIVER - DAY

59

Dar finishes tying a bandage onto Syth's leg.

DAR

I am indebted to you for saving my
trusted companion.

TAL

Is he yours?

DAR

We fight together at times.

SYTH

Who are you, friend?

DAR

I am Dar of the Emurites...

Dar laughs bitterly. He begins whittling on a small branch before him.

DAR (CONT'D)

There are no more Emurites...
Thanks to the Juns, I am the last.
Who are you? Where do you come
from?

Syth looks furtively at the boy and then speaks slowly.

SYTH

I am Syth, and this is Tal. We are
pilgrims on our way back to Aruk.

DAR

I've never seen a pilgrim who could
use a staff like that.

SYTH

Ah, but sir, pilgrims share a deep
love of life, especially their own.

Dar laughs, but then speaks seriously.

DAR

You cannot return to Aruk. I have
just come from there, and it is now
a Jun city. The dreaded Maax has
been made high priest. That demon
has presided over child sacrifices
of scores of your village's
firstborn.

(MORE)

59

DAR(cont'd)

And most of the young men are now lining the road, on Jun spikes.

59

Syth cries out in astonishment.

SYTH

We must return immediately.

He rises to his feet, ignoring the pain from his leg.

SYTH (CONT'D)

Thank you for your ministrations.

DAR

If you like, I'll see you to the village road. You pilgrims are no match for the marauders which inhabit this area.

Syth looks at him slyly.

SYTH

Your companionship is welcomed...
We must be off.

CUT TO:

60

EXT. RAFT CROSSING - DAY

60

Syth and the boy follow Dar, who strides up ahead with the panther beside him. As they come round a bend in the river, they see a raft crossing ahead.

SYTH

We will ask those raftsmen to ferry us across.

Before them is a small dock with a rope stretched across the river. TWO RAFTSMEN are unloading their heavily-laden small raft. Syth glances at the boy and then pulls his hood on.

SYTH (CONT'D)

Wait. I will make the arrangements.

Syth crosses to the burly raftsmen and begins bartering. The boy plays with one of the ferrets. Finished with his negotiations, Syth returns.

SYTH (CONT'D)

We have to go one at a time. The raft is small and unbalanced.

60

Syth steps up onto the raft. As they shove off from the dock, one of the raftsmen gestures at Dar, who stands with his cat on the shore.

60

RAFTSMAN

With that animal, he will cost double.

Grasping the rope which stretches across the river, the two raftsmen pull the raft with their great strength. On the shore, the boy holds on of the ferrets on its back in his arms. He looks over at Dar.

TAL

That's a strange weapon you wear.

Dar looks down at his kapa in his belt.

DAR

My kapa. It was forged by my grandfather many years ago. I hope it will be tasting Jun blood soon.

TAL

Will you teach me how to use it?

DAR

It's a very selective weapon. You must first master the other fighting disciplines.

TAL

I can fight.

DAR

A peasant boy?

Dar grabs two sticks by the raft dock and tosses one to Tal.

DAR (CONT'D)

We shall see.

Dar lifts the stick to use it as a sword.

DAR (CONT'D)

Ready?

Tal nods.

DAR (CONT'D)

Tal. Look!

Dar motions behind Tal. The boy turns around to look and Dar leans forward, swinging his stick at Tal's rear.

60

Tal, suspecting a trick, ducks under the stick and, with a graceful cat-like move, trips Dar and drops him to the ground beside him. The surprised Dar breaks into a laugh.

60

DAR (CONT'D)

I wish my father could have been here to see this. You can turn your back on an enemy and win.

Tal beams with pride.

TAL

My cousin taught it to me. She's a Tryl warrior. They can be very dangerous.

RAFTSMAN

Boy! Your turn now.

Dar and Tal look over and see the raft pulling up to the dock. Tal scoops up Podo and starts toward the dock. Abruptly he stops, and holds the ferret up questioningly.

DAR

Go ahead. But be careful. She hates the water.

Tal turns and, pulling his hood down over his head, he walks toward the river. As he steps onto the flimsy raft, his hood catches the breeze and is blown off. One of the raftsmen looks over and, seeing the boy's face, he hesitates. He glances over at his mate and tries quietly to catch his attention. The boy jumps onto the raft, holding the anxious ferret tightly. As the raftsmen shove the raft out away from the dock, they momentarily stare into each other's eyes. Dar sits on the riverbank, next to the panther, and watches the crossing.

Reaching the middle of the river, the grimy raftsmen furtively glance at each other and at the nonchalant boy. One nods to the other, and suddenly they both lean to one side, capsizing the flimsy raft. Everyone is tossed into the water, including the hapless ferret. One of the raftsmen disappears under the water as the laughing boy tries to retrieve the ferret. Suddenly the boy is yanked underwater.

RAFTSMAN

He's drowning!

The boy surfaces, sputtering, but strong arms pull him back under.

RAFTSMAN (CONT'D)

Help! Help! He's drowning!

60 The petrified ferret speeds toward shore. With a gasp, both raftsmen surface and grab onto the capsized raft. 60

RAFTSMAN (CONT'D)

He's lost!

The ferret reaches shore, and Dar pulls the soggy animal out of the water. A long moment passes on the glassy surface of the water. The boy erupts out of the water about twenty yards downstream. Trying to catch his breath, he coughs up water.

TAL

Kill them, I command you to kill them. They know who I am!

The words echo across the water with a power the boy had not previously shown. The raftsmen swim towards Dar's bank. The panther snarls, and they stop. They turn and swim toward Syth.

RAFTSMAN

Please. It was an accident.

The raftsmen drag themselves up onto the bank and once again glance surreptitiously at one another.

RAFTSMAN

We meant no harm. We almost drowned ourselves.

As they pull themselves out of the water toward the hooded Syth, one of the raftsmen slips his hand around a club-like branch. Suddenly Syth throws off his hooded cloak, and standing before them is a towering black warrior. Syth pulls a short sword from his scabbard and swings at the surprised raftsmen.

As Dar pulls Tal from the water, the screams of the dying raftsmen are heard.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 61

Syth, Tal and Dar sit around a campfire, having just finished a meal.

SYTH

We have been gone from three years. Our Zed entrusted me with the task of teaching his son about the ways of the world. We have traveled very far in these disguises.

(MORE)

SYTH(cont'd)

But now we must return. And it seems they've placed a price on our heads.

DAR

In your city, it was said that your leader was dead. A victim of Maax.

TAL

That cannot be true.

SYTH

Zed must be alive, but we will prepare ourselves for the worst.

Syth sees the boy is distraught, and attempts to change the subject.

SYTH (CONT'D)

Tell me about your fine animals.

DAR

This is Ru. I found her dying in a cave with a Jun arrow in her flank. But she paid me back today. Saved me from a Jun arrow. Charak, my eagle. My wings. And my eyes. The strangest thing is, I've always had an ability with animals, but ever since a Jun laid his thudball into my head, I've been able to see through their eyes... to touch them... up here. And I know their thoughts, and they know mine.

TAL

Where did you find Podo and Riki?

Dar shrugs it off.

DAR

Ah, these are my little thieves.

Dar dumps them out of their pouch. As the ferrets tumble out, many shiny objects fall out with them.

DAR (CONT'D)

As you see, they steal anything that takes their fancy.

Dar holds the ferrets up by the scruff of the neck. The boy looks through the junk from the pouch.

DAR (CONT'D)

And their jaws are quite curious. They lock.

(MORE)

DAR(cont'd)

In battle, once a ferret makes a death grip, there is only one way to remove it. And that is to cut off its head.

Tal, spying something of interest, pulls a large ring from the pouch. He looks at the eyeball ring which one of the ferrets has stolen from the dead Jun priest. (This is the same ring the witchwoman gave to the Jun priest who was sent in search of Dar.) Tal slides the ring (the metal eyelid is shut) onto his finger, deciding to wear it. Continuing to look through the ferrets' stolen possessions, Tal notices something.

TAL

Syth, look.

He holds up a silver necklace. Syth springs up with his sword half-drawn.

SYTH

Explain this!

The animals instinctively become protective, and gather around Dar. Stunned, he tries to react.

DAR

I met a slave girl. Neat a temple.

SYTH

Slave girl! This comes from no slave girl!

Tal and Syth look at each other.

DAR

A slave girl. Podo must have stolen it from her.

SYTH

Where is this temple?

DAR

Up river, not far. I can take you there.

SYTH

We will go at daybreak.

Syth hobbles into the darkness.

DAR

Who is this girl?

65 Charak brings up his talons and backs away, but then realizes 65
 62 the dead man is no threat. Turning, the bird speeds out of 62
 the temple and back into the night. Syth and the boy,
 awakened by Dar's cry, move toward him. Still in the grip of
 the eagle view, he sits looking straight ahead in a trance.

DAR
 They've taken her away.

SYTH
 Where?

63 Dar has no reply as the eagle, making its way back, spies a 63
 warm glow from the forest trail below.

66 EXT. EAGLE AT PROCESSION - NIGHT 66

Diving in to investigate, Dar sees through the bird's eyes a
 procession of people from the temple. Led by ten JUN PRIESTS
 are SEVEN SLAVE GIRLS dressed in white. Surrounding them are
 a contingent of about TWENTY WARRIORS dressed in red.

62 DAR 62
 They've left the temple. She's
 with six others.

SYTH
 To where?

DAR
 This way.

SYTH
 How are they dressed?

DAR
 Seven women in white. Surrounded
 by warriors in red.

SYTH
 Ahh! They're to be sacrificed!

62A The big bird banks up into the sky. Dar pulls out of his 62A
 62 trance and sees the boy and Syth before him. 62

TAL
 What can we do?

DAR
 There are too many. If we try to
 save her, she could be killed.

Syth smiles.

62

SYTH

But my friends, the journey to Aruk
is a treacherous one. Come, we
have much work to do.

62

Charak swoops in and lands on the dead tree.

CUT TO:

67

EXT. RAFT CROSSING - DAY

67

The party of Jun priests are on the raft being pulled across
the river. Waiting to cross next are the slave girls and the
other girl dressed in white, Kiri.

67A

Emotionless, she looks around slowly and then up to the sky
at the large eagle circling above. As the raft returns, the
priests show the slave girls on board. One priest shoves
Kiri particularly hard, and she falls onto the deck.

67A

67

67

KIRI

Keep your hands off of me, you
nutless eunuch.

The priest jumps down, grabs her by the neck and forces her
head over the side, under the water. The powerful black arms
of one of the hooded raftsmen shoves the raft away from the
dock. Kiri struggles and manages to get a gulp of air, but
the priest shoves her head under again. Dar's eyes peer out
from under the raftsman's hood, watching Kiri drown. He
looks across to Syth, signaling with a nod of his head.
Syth, in a crouch by the stern, looks back at the dock where
the armed priests are but fifteen feet away. He looks back
at Dar and shakes his head in disagreement. Dar unnoticeably
drops a ferret to the ground. The ferret scampers over and
chomps down on the priest's big toe. He screams, and Kiri
manages another breath.

Syth looks back at the receding dock and decides the time is
right. He lifts his staff and, with the pointed cutting
edge, slashes the guide rope. As the raft jerks loose and
starts drifting downstream, the Jun priests whip around, yank
out their long knives and move for Syth. Syth yanks down the
blunt end of his staff and shatters a large carved ceramic
beside him. The enraged panther springs out with a roar.
The priests hurtle off the raft. Kiri is about to join them
as a strong hand grips her from behind.

DAR

Quiet. This beast is fierce.

To the astonishment of the priests onshore, the raft is
carried off in the current down river.

67

The boy grasps the robes of the slave girls, and restrains them from jumping off. Kiri turns, and to her relief, sees Dar gripping her arm. Tal and Syth pull back their hoods, and Kiri rushes to them. She throws her arms around her younger cousin. Dar turns away to see Ru holding the three remaining Jun priests at bay on the front of the raft. He moves up to the snarling panther and looks at the men cowering in fear.

67

DAR

Shall we kill them?

Syth looks over.

SYTH

No. They may have valuable information. Tie them.

Kiri, hearing the command, grabs a coil of rope, and moves toward the front of the raft.

KIRI

They have no information.

The men, who are relieved not to be immediately killed, hold out their hands. Tying them tightly, she then loops the rope around their necks. Kiri bends down behind them, finishing her task. Dar studies her shapely body in the white robes as she kneels tying their feet. Kiri suddenly shoves a heavy bronze statue over the side and jumps out of the way. The statue plunges into the water with a splash as Dar notices the coil of rope playing out furiously over the side. Before anyone can react, the rope snaps taut. The unsuspecting Jun priests are instantly jerked by their necks over the side and into the river. Dar jumps across the raft and looks down into the water, but sees only a stream of bubbles on the surface. Surprised, he looks over at Syth, who just stands, amazed. Kiri returns to the back of the raft, and her friends happily surround her.

CUT TO:

68

EXT. RAFT - DAY

Dar sits on the bow of the raft as it is carried along in the swift current. Ru lies beside him, resting her head on his leg. Syth, having attached a large oar to the stern, pilots the raft around a bend in the river. Dar looks over his shoulder at the rejoicing group in the back, and at the beautiful Kiri. He watches her explaining something to a concerned Syth and the boy. Looking up from her cousin with tears streaming down her cheeks, she catches Dar's eye and flashes him a brief, tenuous smile. Dar turns back and stares at the rushing river. The raft continues downstream. Dar feels a hand on his shoulder and turns to see Kiri.

68

68 KIRI 68
 Will you help us? Tal's father is
 alive, a captive of Maax and the
 Jun priests. My uncle is a wise
 warrior. If he can be freed, he
 can bring together all the villages
 and create an army powerful enough
 to defeat the Juns. But without
 your help, we are lost.

DAR
 Well...

Kiri leans over and they kiss passionately. She pulls away.

KIRI
 You come with me.

DAR
 You're gonna have a hard time
 getting rid of me.

69A Soaring high above, the eagle watches the raft's progress. 69A
 69 69

DISSOLVE TO:

70 EXT. VISTA - DAY 70

Eagle eye view of Dar, Syth, Tal and Kiri crossing a vast
 expanse with the sun sinking into the horizon behind them.

71 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 71

On a bizarre outcropping of rock, the four travelers camp
 around a roaring fire. Tal once again sleeps fitfully as
 Kiri wipes the perspiration from his brow. Dar lies with his
 animals on the other side of the fire and gazes through the
 flames at the girl tending to her young cousin.

72 EXT. FOREST - DAY 72

Following Dar and the big panther, Kiri and the boy break out
 of the dense forest.

KIRI
 Does Syth have any chance of
 finding rebels to help us?

TIIS
 If they are out there, he will find
 them.

73 They follow Dar down a ridge, and as they reach the village road, they see the Jun stakes which stretch for 500 yards to the village entrance. Kiri puts her arm around Tal as they stand in stony silence viewing the carnage. Dar notices a tear roll down Tal's cheek, and he remembers his own grief. 73

DAR

Come. We shall make them pay.

74 EXT. SACCO'S HUT - EVENING 74

Sacco walks out through his door and attends to a stack of pots which stand in front of his hut. A shadow moves over him and he looks up to see Charak, the eagle, roosting on the top of his hut. Sacco begins talking to himself with dread.

SACCO

Oh no... Oh no... why me big bird?
I am a coward. Can't you just fly
back and tell him you couldn't find
me?

Sacco shakes his head.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. ARUK ROAD - NIGHT 75

Sacco steers his small horse-drawn haycart away from the city. He holds a torch up to illuminate his ride through the darkness. Suddenly Dar leans out from the back of the cart, which he has unobtrusively climbed up onto, and whispers into Sacco's ear.

DAR

Were you followed?

Sacco screams in fright.

SACCO

Ahh! I thought I was dead for
sure! Ohh... no, no one saw me.

Sacco pulls the haycart to a stop. Tal and Kiri appear out of the darkness with the panther.

DAR

Quickly, under the hay.

Tal, Kiri and the car burrow under the pile of hay.

77 As the guard returns and hefts the spear, preparing to stab into the hay, Sacco protests. 77

SACCO
You will harm my feed!

GUARD #2
If you speak again, I will slit
your belly.

As the guard is about to stab the hay, Sacco looks past them.

SACCO
Excuse me, but some rats are
stealing your meat!

The guards whirl around to see the ferrets towing away the large piece of boar from the fire. The two men tear off into the darkness in search of their dinner. Sacco quickly jumps onto the cart and pulls into the village.

CUT TO:

78 EXT. ARUK STREET - NIGHT 78

As the haycart moves down the deserted street, Kiri pushes herself out of the hay and whispers to Sacco.

KIRI
Stop here. For a moment.

Kiri jumps out of the cart and slips into a dark stone building. The two ferrets tear down the street and hop up onto the cart, rejoining Dar. He lifts them by the scruffs of their necks.

DAR
Good work.. What is this place?

SACCO
Tryl house. She is tryl.

DAR
Tryl?

SACCO
Very dangerous. Lady warriors.

Sacco shudders.

SACCO (CONT'D)
They can kill with their... you
know... weapons, plus female
things...

78 Tal sits up, pushing the hay off himself. 78

DAR
How you feeling?

TAL
Better tonight. And when we free
my father, I'll feel great.

Sacco stares, astonished.

SACCO
Free the king? I'm getting out of
here. No way I'm going into the
catacombs with the high priests'
Death Guards.

DAR
Don't worry, Sacco. You'll wait
outside.

While Dar and Sacco talk, Tal sits in the back of the cart with a strange look. Suddenly the lids of the eyeball ring on his finger open. As the eyeball strains to see, Tal is overcome.

79 INT. WITCHES' CHAMBER - NIGHT 79

The witchwomen gaze into the glowing vessel, and vision through the eyeball ring is established. Maax steps out glowering behind them.

MAAX
So, both his sons live. But they
don't know.

80 EXT. TRYL HOUSE - NIGHT 80

The lids on the ring close. Dar, noticing Tal is ill, moves over to comfort him. With the ring closed, Tal feels better quickly. Kiri bounds out of the Tryl house and onto the cart.

KIRI
To the pyramid of Ar.

Sacco pulls the haycart away.

DAR
What was that all about?

80 KIRI 80
We'll be seeing my uncle. I had to
dress for the occasion.

Kiri smiles coyly.

81 EXT. ARUK SQUARE - NIGHT 81
The cart pulls slowly toward the looming pyramid of Ar.

82 EXT. PYRAMID BASE - NIGHT 82
The haycart stops at the side of the pyramid base.

DAR
Why no guards?

SACCO
You'll find out soon enough.

KIRI
Wait for us by the tower, Sacco.

Sacco grabs Dar's arm.

SACCO
Keep an eye out for my son, Namaal.
The high priests took him last
week.

Dar nods, and the three head down a flight of stairs leading
into the pyramid base.

CUT TO:

83 INT. CATACOMBS - NIGHT 83
Led by the panther, Dar, Tal and Kiri descend into the bowels
of the pyramid. They walk down a deserted hallway.

KIRI
This way.

84 INT. DEATH GUARD CORRIDOR - NIGHT 84
They descend through a tunnel-like stairwell and reach a dark
narrow corridor. Kiri motions to be silent, and they move
down the corridor. Suddenly, a monstrous shrieking is heard
from inside the chambers which line the corridor.

TAL
Death Guards.

The three hear a tremendous pounding as the Death Guards in their individual cells slam against the stout wooden doors which contain them. Suddenly metal-clad arms reach out through the grating in the doors. Dar, Tal and Kiri drop to the ground as the blade-studded hands of the Death Guards swing wildly. Following the panther, the three crawl on their hands and knees down the corridor. Past the last cell, they jump up and close a heavy door, sealing off the Death Guard area.

KIRI

First their brains are eaten with renx leeches, and then they're driven mad through torture and pain you can't imagine. The Jun priests encase their hands and head in that armor, so they can't free themselves... When a Death Guard is let loose, it kills anything... I mean anything in sight. They have no fear whatsoever. Shhh... we'll need keys...

Kiri points and Dar notices that, in a chamber hanging on the wall beside two priests, is a ring of bronze keys.

Dar pulls out the ferrets and, holding them by the scruff of their necks, stares into their eyes. He drops them to the floor and presses open the chamber door slightly. The ferrets quietly slip inside. Dar carefully wedges a small stone into the door opening to leave them a way out. He and Kiri continue stealthily down the corridor with the panther padding quietly ahead. They descend a dimly lit flight of stone stairs to a dark narrow corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. DEATH GUARD CHAMBER - NIGHT

The ferrets stand on their hind legs behind some ceramics, peering at the two bald Jun priests working over a table. Strapped to the table is Namaal, Sacco's adult son. The priest takes a piece of bronze armor and slides it over Namaal's forearm. With a crude metal press, the priests crimp the blade-covered armor permanently onto his arm. Namaal screams in pain as the metal cinches into his flesh.

Quietly, the aardwolves creep under the table and carefully cross over the legs and feet of the priests.

85 Eyeing the string of bronze keys which hang on the wall, they 85
see that the only way up is along a wooden railing, which is
blocked by one of the priests' legs.

CUT TO:

86 INT. STONE CORRIDOR - NIGHT 86

Ru sits on a dead Jun priest sprawled in the center of the dark corridor. Dar, Tal and Kiri round the corner, and he rubs the panther's head in admiration of her fresh kill. They continue down the hallway, looking into the chambers which line either side.

KIRI

Here.

They look through the tiny barred window in the door, and see a figure seated in the center of the chamber.

DAR

We need those keys.

Dar reaches down and presses on the door. Surprisingly, it swings open, unlocked. As they are about to enter, Dar hears a noise back down the corridor. He looks around to see another priest discovering his dead comrade. Seeing intruders, the priest lets out a yell and runs around the corner of the corridor for help. Dar whips out his kapa, and flings it down the hallway. The kapa makes a ninety-degree boomerang hook around the corner, and the sound of it slamming into the back of the guard reverberates down the corridor. Dar springs down the hall and sees the kapa sticking up out of the back of the prone guard. Dar pulls it out and, as he turns back toward the corridor, he hears a scream from where he came. Positioning Ru near the dead guards as a lookout, Dar springs back.

87 Reaching the darkened chamber entrance, he sees Kiri kneeling 87
before her uncle, with his back toward Dar. Grabbing a torch from outside, Dar moves toward the withered prisoner. Kiri's uncle groggily raises his head into the torchlight to reveal empty sockets where his eyes used to be.

CUT TO:

88 INT. DEATH GUARD CHAMBER - NIGHT 88

The Jun priests roll Namaal, who is almost berserk from pain and fear, onto his side. One priest holds up a crude bronze funnel and puts the tip in Namaal's ear. The other priest takes a jar loaded with slimy blue-glowing leeches and, using a tweezer-like instrument, reaches in and grabs a leech. Namaal faints.

88

The priest drops a leech and then another into the funnel opening. Namaal jerks awake in intense pain, screaming in agony. A blue foam drains from his ear as the leeches bore in. The Jun priests take a heavy metal helmet and pull it over Namaal's head. The helmet is clamped and locked onto his head with screws twisted into his skull. Namaal is now a Death Guard.

88

JUN PRIEST
Another Death Guard.

Still unable to get over the priest's leg, Podo gently nips his calf. As the priest moves his leg to scratch it, Podo scrambles up the rail as far as she can without being seen.

The Death Guard lies unconscious on the table. The Jun priest takes a staff and hits him across the chest, but the Death Guard lies motionless. The other priest takes a wrench-like tool and starts winching the Death Guard's "rodeo cinch belt." As the one priest tightens, the other prepares to attach a heavy link chain from the Death Guard's helmet to a shackle on the cell wall. Riki crosses to the opposite side of the chamber and bumps over a stack of ceramic pots. As they crash to the floor, the startled priests look over. Podo jumps up, grabs the keys in her mouth, and falls to the ground, unnoticed. From inside the helmet of the Death Guard appears an iridescent blue glow from its eyes. The one priest returns to tightening the crotch belt. As the other priest gives up looking for the cause of the noise and starts to attach the chain leash to the wall, the Death Guard suddenly rears to life. He slams his blade-studded hands into the "tightening" priest and lifts him over his head. The other priest vainly attempts to connect the chain leash to the shackle. With inhuman strength, the Death Guard flings the priest across the chamber and the body slams into the wall. The Death Guard throws itself at the other priest and quickly bludgeons it with his fists. The two ferrets cower in fear. As the Death Guard stands over the dead priests, it notices the ferrets and moves toward them. The ferrets spring out the door with the Death Guard in chase.

CUT TO:

89

INT. KING'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

89

Dar finishes tying a piece of cloth around the blind man's head, covering the eye holes. Kiri, sobbing, embraces her uncle.

KIRI
Uncle Zed. It is Kiri.

Her uncle speaks groggily.

ZED

Kiri?

Suddenly, the heavy door slams shut. Dar turns quickly to look at the door. The big panther down the hall snaps his head around. Looming in the doorway is the high priest Maax, hefting a thick wooden staff.

MAAX

Your uncle, he's so glad to see you.

Maax glares down at Dar.

As the panther springs to the door, Dar rises and faces Maax. From behind the high priest, the hunched form of a witchwoman appears. She turns her craggy features toward Dar and peers at him.

WITCHWOMAN

Yes. It is he.

Maax stares malevolently at Dar, barely able to control his anger.

MAAX

The freak. The freak who fights with beasts. Kill him.

The low rasp of a growl, the same as the other witchwoman, emanates from her throat. She slowly moves toward Dar, who stands apart from Kiri and Tal. The panther, sensing their danger, slams against the thick chamber door, trying to gain entrance. Up above, the eagle slashes its talons against the skylight bars which make it impossible to get inside.

The witchwoman stops a few feet from him. Her fingernails begin flaking away, and sharp animal nails grow from below them. Dar unsheathes his sword.

DAR

You will find me much harder to kill than defenseless babies.

Suddenly, the witchwoman throws open her hand at Dar, flinging a cloud of sparkling blue dust into his face. Crying out in pain, Dar is blinded by the attack. Unable to see, he lashes wildly with his sword, attempting to keep the witchwoman at bay.

Outside, the determined panther heaves itself into the door again and again.

Maax grabs Tal and Kiri and struggles to subdue them.

89

With her back to the sheer wall, spider-like, the old witchwoman climbs to the ceiling. Defying the laws of nature, she scurries on her back along the ceiling and clings above Dar. Jabbing out with the tip of his sword, the blinded Dar attempts to locate the witchwoman who, unknown to him, hangs above him. With his free hand, Dar tries to wipe his burning eyes, but to no avail. Concentrating deeply, Dar forms a mental link with the eagle outside. Able to distinguish forms from the eagle's perspective through the window, Dar suddenly realizes the witchwoman is above him, ready to drop.

89

Thrusting his sword upwards, he impales the witchwoman to the ceiling. She shrieks and struggles, revolving futilely in circles around the sword. Dar pulls his sword back, and with a final gasp, she falls to the ground.

The panther finally breaks down the door and bounds into the chamber. Maax releases his grip on Tal and Kiri and disappears down a tiny secret passage behind him.

Tal and Kiri rush to Dar, and as he kneels down, Kiri holds out a bowl of water, helping him to rinse his eyes. Though still blurry-eyed, Dar reaches out to the panther in front of him and strokes its head fondly.

Suddenly from behind, the seemingly-dead witchwoman rears up and leaps for Dar's head. The panther quickly springs, however, and grabs her throat in its vise-like jaws, crushing it. Dar jumps up and goes over to the old king, and grasps the blind man by his arm.

DAR

Are you well enough to try an escape?

The king feebly nods.

ZED

Yes.

DAR

Is there any other way out?

TAL

Just one.

CUT TO:

90

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

90

With the panther in the lead, Dar and Kiri walk Zed down the hallway. The sound of an ALARM bell being struck repeatedly echoes down the corridor.

92 Riki stands on his hind legs, sniffing. Podo, with the keys 92
still dangling from her mouth, looks around in concern.

Suddenly behind them, the Death Guard appears from around a corner. The confused ferrets, not knowing which way to run, scamper up inside a small clay pipe which runs the length of the corridor. The Death Guard swings its studded fists at the pipe and makes its way down the hallway, breaking the pipe as it goes. Riki and Podo dive out of the end of the pipe, just before the guard crushes it and they sprint away.

CUT TO:

93 INT. ROCK CHAMBER - NIGHT 93

94 Dar peers out through the partially open door, searching for 94
the ferrets. Suddenly, a squad of Jun priests appears at the
93 end of the corridor. They begin searching through the 93
chambers which line the hallway. Dar carefully closes the
heavy wood door and bolts it shut. The sounds of the guards
move closer as Dar looks over at the open tunnel entrance.
The priests are at the door and, realizing it is locked from
the inside, they try to force it open. Hearing the priests
battering at the door, Dar pulls out his sword and hacks at
the rope which suspends the large rock over the tunnel
entrance. The rope snaps and the rock slams to the ground,
sealing the tunnel.

CUT TO:

94 INT. CATACOMB CORRIDOR - NIGHT 94

Riki and Podo dash around a corner, pursued by the Death Guard. Ahead of them, they see the squad of priests battering down the door. They sprint down the corridor and dart between the legs of the crowd of priests. Hearing the shrieks of the approaching Death Guard, the priests turn in horror. The two ferrets quickly scurry through a large crack at the bottom of the splintering door. The Death Guard wades into the crowd of priests, swinging his blade-studded gauntlets, laying waste to them.

CUT TO:

95 INT. ROCK CHAMBER - NIGHT 95

Dar snatches up the ferrets and looks at Podo with the keys still dangling from her mouth.

DAR
A little late.

95 Podo drops the keys, and they jangle to the floor. Dar slips the furry ferrets into their pouch and turns, looking for an escape. As the screams of the priests die down, Dar sees Kiri appear out of the darkness of the chamber. 95

He looks at her, his surprise turning to admiration. He takes her hand.

KIRI

We can try an escape through the tower.

Suddenly, the studded fist of the Death Guard rips through the door. Kiri begins gathering the rope which was previously holding up the rock. Dar takes over as she reaches up to free a tiny door in the roof. Kiri pulls herself up through the opening as Dar slings the coil of rope over his shoulder. Dar follows her through the door and closes it behind him.

CUT TO:

96 INT. TOWER - NIGHT 96

Dar and Kiri scale the wood scaffolding which forms the core of the tower with the Death Guard not far behind. Higher they climb toward the top of the fifty-foot tall structure. The ferrets are ensconced in their pouch, which dangles from Dar's shoulder. They anxiously peer over at the sheer drop below them.

97 Reaching the top of the tower, Dar sees that their only escape is to climb down the face of the outside of the tower. He ties the rope around a heavy timber and drops it over the side. Kiri starts down first. Confident that the rope is 97
97A secure, Dar takes a last look at the view of the peaceful village below and follows after her. 97A

97 About a third of the way down, the rope suddenly jerks, almost knocking Dar off. He looks down to see Kiri stopped, hanging on tightly. At the tower summit, the Death Guard had hold of the rope and is violently jerking it. Riki is tossed out of the pouch, but manages to grasp hold of the strap. 97
Podo tries desperately to help her hapless mate. Dar manages to pull out his kapa, but it is knocked out of his hand. Unable to shake them loose, the guard begins hacking at the rope with his bladed fist. Looking down at Kiri, Dar yells.

DAR

Down! Now!

97B Dar looks up to the sky and sees Charak circling in the moonlight. Understanding, the majestic bird banks and then dives toward its prey. 97B

97 Folding its talons into fists, the huge eagle slams into the 97
 unsuspecting guard's head. The doomed Death Guard falls over
 the side and plunges by Dar and Kiri to his death. With Riki
 still dangling, Dar and Kiri quickly climb downward.

Half-severed, the rope begins to fray. Still twenty-five
 feet from the ground, they climb as fast as they can. The
 rope begins to unravel. Riki loses his hold and plummets
 toward the ground. Luckily, however, the ferret lands on
 Kiri's back. The rope begins to part as Dar looks upward.
 Twenty feet from the ground, the rope snaps, and they tumble
 into Sacco's haycart. Sacco looks back, nervously smiles,
 and then exhorts his donkey to run. As the cart pulls away,
 Dar rolls over to Kiri.

DAR
 How you feelin'?

Kiri pulls him closer and gives him a passionate kiss. As
 Sacco whips his donkey, urging it on, the shrieks of the
 Death Guards are heard behind them in furious pursuit.

98 EXT. ARUK STREET - NIGHT 98

The haycart barrels down the deserted street. The cart
 speeds around a corner and Sacco pulls it to a stop. The
 main gate is closed and a guard is perched on the parapet
 with a spear. Sacco pulls the donkey back into the shadows. 98A
 99 Behind them, the Death Guards are heard. 99

KIRI
 We have to get out, now!

DAR
 Does the gate have a counterweight?

Kiri nods. Dar pulls out the ferrets and hands them to her.

DAR (CONT'D)
 You two are going to open that gate
 for us.

Dar digs in the pouch and pulls out a leather strap. He
 looks to the sky, and the eagle swoops down and lands on his
 arm. Dar ties the strap around each talon, forming a loop
 between them. He takes the ferrets and is in the process of
 slipping them into the loop when suddenly a gate guard
 appears behind them. With his hands occupied with the
 animals, Dar is unable to respond. Kiri quickly pulls a comb
 from her hair and flings the weapon at the gate guard. The
 sharp tines of the comb slice into the eyes of the gate
 99A guard, knocking him to the ground, dead. 99A

99 DAR 99
Start for the gate. I know they'll
get it open.

103 EXT. PARAPET - NIGHT 103

The guard, unable to dislodge Podo from the rope, grabs a hand axe and starts to swing. Riki gives up trying to bite the guard's shin.

The enterprising ferret leaps up between the unfortunate guard's legs, under his leather skirt, and a loud crunch is heard. The gate guard screams in pain, drops the hand axe, and clutches his testicles. Riki jumps away as the guard topples off the parapet.

104 The haycart rolls toward the still-closed gate with the Death 104
Guards in hot pursuit.

Podo finally chews through the rope. The counterweight slams to the ground, and the main gate flies up.

With the Death Guards practically hacking at the back of the haycart, and a look of terror on Sacco's face, Dar draws his sword. As the haycart whips through the gate, Dar slashes at the counterweight rope. The ferrets dive off the parapet into the cart. The massive gate slams shut, crushing the squad of Death Guards and just missing the haycart. Sacco lets out a whoop of joy and thanks the little ferrets who hop onto the seat beside him.

SACCO
You saved us! Such smart little
animals!

The ferrets chitter happily. Sacco turns to see Dar and Kiri kissing passionately in the back of the cart. The ferrets also look at them. Sacco winks at the ferrets and chuckles to himself.

CUT TO:

105 EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT 105

The panther's eyes glow from the firelight. Ru lies next to the boy, who sits staring at the ground.

ZED
Even though I cannot see... I
reject your pity.

105

Around the campfire are twenty-five escaped villagers who listen to their leader. Next to the boy sits Syth, who also looks down.

105

ZED (CONT'D)

For though I have no eyes, my other senses are as keen as a young man's.

KIRI

Uncle!

Kiri breaks into the clearing and runs to her uncle. She embraces the blind man tenderly.

ZED

My girl. You are alive.

The panther springs up and trots over to Dar, as he and Sacco break through. Ru rubs up against Dar's leg lovingly.

KIRI

This is Dar. He and his animals are responsible for your freedom.

Zed holds out his hand and clasps Dar's.

ZED

Fellow warrior.

As Kiri embraces her uncle once more, Dar crosses to Syth and the boy, happy to see them. Neither returns Dar's hug with much enthusiasm. Dar sits next to them. Zed, with renewed vigor, addresses the crowd.

ZED (CONT'D)

The high priest and his monsters must die! We will take Aruk, and they will forfeit their lives.

Dar walks to the center of the gathering.

DAR (CONT'D)

You may take back your city. But the day will come when you face certain death.

ZED

Hold your tongue!

Ignoring Zed, Dar kneels before the hushed crowd and begins drawing a diagram in the dust.

105

DAR (CONT'D)

105

The Jun crusade, driven by their fanatic priests, crossed the Ebors and into our valley. My village, your city. Who knows how many more? But they are still here. To kill Maax and a few of his henchmen is suicide. The Jun horde will return on its way back to the Ebors. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon! And that is the key. If we could raise a strong army from all the villages in our valley, we could ambush and slay the entire Jun horde. With no survivors from their first crusade, they wouldn't send another, and the valley would live in peace. But to kill Maax alone is madness. For I have felt the wrath of the Jun horde. And I know.

The gathered people agree with Dar.

ZED

Who is this man?

DAR

I am Dar, your friend.

Zed moves toward Dar, stopping just inches from his face.

ZED

No. I remember... You are a freak! The freak who speaks to animals!

The boy jumps to his feet.

TAL

But father, he can help us. He is a beastmaster!

ZED

No! He is but a fool with four beasts. Ha! Out of here, fool. Leave this place at once. A beastmaster... can you fly with the birds? Go crawl down a hole with your animals!

Dar steps back, embarrassed before the crowd. He looks around for someone to come to his defense. No one does. He looks to Syth and the boy, but they both avert their eyes.

105 He looks over to Kiri, but she too looks away. Dar turns 105
 106 quickly and walks off into the surrounding forest. He comes 106
 to Sacco, who is sitting by his cart with his head in his
 hands.

SACCO

The king is insane. What are we to
 do?

Dar walks past Sacco, but is suddenly grabbed from behind.
 It is Kiri. Dar takes her hand.

DAR

You must come with me.

KIRI

I cannot.

DAR

You will die.

KIRI

I am Tryl. It is my duty.

DAR

Then I will stay.

KIRI

That's impossible now. He has
 ordered you out, and no one will
 challenge him. You have no choice.

Dar looks into her eyes for a long moment, then turns and
 disappears into the forest.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT 107

Dar walks quickly away from the area. As the animals join
 him, Dar stops and looks into Ru's eyes.

Tears run down Dar's face. He turns and begins to walk.

107A With the panther striding beside him, Dar breaks into a run. 107A
 The giant eagle soars above him through the moonlit sky.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT 108

Kiri returns to the campfire and sits. Tears stream freely
 down her face.

110

ZED

110

Many years ago, Maax took my other son. Now he will pay. We will conquer him and Aruk will be mine again!

Syth sits with a stony look on his face and quietly speaks.

SYTH

We are doomed.

111

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

111

A large beehive, which hangs from a tree branch, is covered with furiously buzzing bees. Below, Dar stands looking up at it, with the panther beside him. The chittering ferrets look up from their pouch in anticipation of a meal. Dar hikes back to his campsite and pulls off the ferret pouch. The ferrets scurry off onto the ground, as Dar reaches into his smoldering fire and pulls out a half-burned branch. Stoking up the fire with the branch, he grabs a skin and heads back toward the beehive. Dar holds the heavily smoking branch away from himself as he walks, with the ferrets trailing behind him. Wrapping the skin around his arm and shoulder for protection, he moves in toward the tree. Holding the branch up below the hive, Dar watches the heavy black smoke waft up into it. The bees quickly empty the hive. Podo and Riki scamper up the tree and begin gnawing on the cord which attaches it to the branch. The beehive falls to the ground, and Dar grabs it carefully. Running as fast as he can, he dashes back to the campsite, with Ru and the little ferrets trailing behind. Dar tosses it to the ground in front of the campfire, grasps his sword, and hacks it open. The ferrets pounce in on the honey. Dar grabs a hunk of honeycomb and begins eating it. The panther moves in and licks up some of the golden liquid. A lone bee stings Riki in the rear, and the surprised ferret skitters around, trying to dislodge the insect as Dar laughs.

CUT TO:

112

EXT. CAMP - DAY

112

Dar rests his head on the flank of the sleeping panther.

112A

Stuffed with honey, Dar begins to drift into sleep in the warm afternoon sun. Images float through his mind. He remembers Kiri on the raft, Syth and the boy, and the evil

112A

112

Maax. Dar snaps awake. The panther is sniffing the air. The two ferrets stand on their hind legs, looking in the same direction. Dar gathers the ferrets up into their pouch, and with Ru in the lead, he heads in search of the disturbance.

112

112A As he breaks through the treeline, he sees a lone rider with 112A
 two horses, galloping across the barren plain which stretches
 112 before him. Dar moves out onto an outcropping of rock and 112
 waves his arms over his head to signal the horseman. As the
 rider approaches, the eagle swoops down to rest on Dar's
 shoulder. Sacco, bone-tired and sweating profusely, pulls
 his horse to a halt and throws himself at Dar's feet.

SACCO

I found you! I found you! The
 attempt failed. You must save
 them. Maax lives!

DAR

I am not of your people. And the
 Jun horde. Even if I am
 successful, it will be in vain.

Sacco frantically pleads.

SACCO

They have Syth, the boy, and Kiri.
 They are to be sacrificed at
 sunset. You must save them.

DAR

How did you survive?

SACCO

Syth would not let me join the
 attack. He ordered me to stay
 behind and find you if they failed.

Dar hesitates.

DAR

They are my friends. Syth knows I
 will not let them down.

Dar stops speaking and looks into the eyes of the eagle.
 Inspired, he rips the medallion from around his neck, and
 holds it up to Charak. The large bird grasps the gold
 medallion in its talons and leaps to the sky.

DAR (CONT'D)

Fly quickly.

113 With the ferrets slung over his shoulder, Dar leaps onto the 113
 sleek horse Sacco offers him. The powerful steed bolts
 ahead, and Dar speeds across the plain with Sacco and the
 panther trailing him. Dar molds his body to fit his bareback
 mount. As he rides and rides, with the sun sinking toward
 the horizon, he puts more distance between himself and the
 striding panther. Sacco trails far behind them both.

CUT TO:

114 EXT. ARUK SQUARE - DAY 114

Zed, Kiri, Tal and Syth, bound at the wrists and dressed in white, are led through the crowd of fearful villagers. Surrounded by Jun priests, they are pulled toward the massive stone pyramid in the center of the square.

CUT TO:

115 EXT. PYRAMID BASE - DAY 115

Two Jun priests grab Zed, rip open the front of his clothing, and drag him up the pyramid shrine.

CUT TO:

113A EXT. PANORAMA - DAY 113A

Dar's horse speeds across the plains.

CUT TO:

116 EXT. PYRAMID STAIRS - DAY 116

As Zed is led toward the pyramid summit, a Jun priest prepares a sacrificial dagger. Zed nears the smoke-covered altar at the top.

CUT TO:

113B EXT. PANORAMA - DAY 113B

As Dar rides, his face expresses the urgency of his mission.

CUT TO:

117 EXT. PYRAMID ALTAR - DAY 117

As Zed nears the smoke shroud, suddenly hands reach out and pull him into it. An anguished scream pierces the air. A collective gasp escapes from the crowd of villagers as Maax's bloody hands appear out of the smoke with a freshly cut-out human heart.

MAAX
(screamed)
FOR AR!

CUT TO:

113C EXT. PANORAMA - DAY 113C

Dar's horse is foaming from the mouth, but he pushes it harder and faster.

118 EXT. PYRAMID BASE - DAY 118

A Jun priest rips open the front of the boy's clothing. Two Jun priests take Tal by the arms. With her hands bound, Kiri manages to shove her way between the boy and the priests.

KIRI

Me.

Despite Syth's protests, they rip open the front of Kiri's clothing, and pull her toward the altar steps. Kiri slowly climbs the steep stone edifice toward her fate. Syth and the boy are powerless as she is led toward the smoke-covered summit of the altar.

CUT TO:

119 EXT. VILLAGE ROAD - DAY 119

Breaking onto the village road, Dar aims his mount toward the entrance down the long rows of villagers impaled on stakes.

119A He flies across the bridge and into the village. 119A

CUT TO:

120 EXT. ALTAR - SUNSET 120

As she nears the smoke-enshrouded top of the stone pyramid, Kiri's face shows fear.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. ARUK SQUARE - SUNSET 121

Dar breaks into the village square and jumps off his horse.

125 He begins to run toward the pyramid when he sees Kiri halfway up the edifice. 125

122 Meanwhile... Tal is about to break down from the horror he has witnessed when he sees Podo beside him, gnawing vigorously on his bonds. Riki chews quickly on Syth's bonds. 122

121 Dar, with his hood pulled over his head, makes his way through the crowd. Moving quickly toward the pyramid, he keeps his head bowed as he pushes people out of his way. 121

123 Kiri, led by the priests, nears the smoke shrouding the summit. 123

124 As Dar reaches the pyramid base, his hand reaches for his sword. He shoves his way past two Jun priests who are keeping the villagers at bay. Jumping up a step, he throws off his hood and whirls around while whipping out his sword. Before the Jun priests can see the beastmask which covers his face, Dar slices off both of their heads in one stroke. As 126
125A Dar turns to head up the stairs, he sees Kiri snatched into 125A the smoke. Dar bounds up the stairs as fast as he can. A contingent of sword-bearing guards starts up the stairs, but the now-free Syth and Tal grab the beheaded priests' swords and hold them off. Dar reaches the summit and plunges into 126 the smoke. The smoky haze creates a sense of unreality as Dar looks around frantically. Suddenly, the smoke clears somewhat, and Dar sees Kiri held down on an angled stone face. Maax looms over her with a sacrificial dagger held high, ready to plunge. Dar lifts his kapa, whips open the blades and flings it. The whirling weapon flies across and slices into Maax's shoulder. Maax drops the knife from over his head as his assistants release Kiri. The stunned Maax staggers forward a step and Kiri grabs his hands and shoves the sacrificial dagger into his abdomen. Maax shrieks and slowly turns, facing Dar.

MAAX

Enjoy your kill now. The horde
arrives by nightfall.
(he groans)
Prophecy was correct. You have
returned...

Maax falls to the ground. Dar grabs Kiri and they move toward the stairs. They do not notice the witchwoman looking out from behind a column as they pass her. She looks over toward Maax and waves her hand. Maax's eyes roll open and he reaches down and pulls the dagger from his chest.

125B Dar and Kiri stand looking down as Syth and Tal finish off the last of the Jun priests. The ferrets hop up to them. 125B
127 Riki looks up toward the smoke-covered top of the altar. 127
Letting out a concerned chirp, the tiny ferret stands on its hind legs, sniffing the air.

About ten feet behind Dar, the dying Maax breaks out of the smoke, clutching the sacrificial knife. He staggers toward Dar with revenge in his mad eyes. Riki screams a tiny scream, but Dar does not notice. As the malevolent high priest raises the dagger, Riki scampers up the rock face of the pyramid and leaps at Maax. Riki sinks his sharp fangs into the flesh of the high priest's neck. The ferret holds on mightily as Maax plunges the dagger into his tiny body.

127 Dar whirls, feeling the ferret's pain. The high priest, his 127
 scream choked off, tumbles backward. He hits the edge of the
 sacrificial firepit, and with Riki still gripping his throat,
 they both tumble in. Dar rushes to the firepit, but there is
 nothing left other than smoke and flame. He turns away,
 fighting back tears.

125C Syth and Tal shove the last Jun priest to the jubilant crowd 125C
 below. As Syth embraces him, Tal looks up the altar and sees
 127 Dar standing alone. Syth and the boy climb up to him and 127
 realize what has happened. Podo scurries over to Dar and
 stands looking for her mate. A villager grabs Syth's arm and
 points toward the east. A stony look covers Syth's face as
 128 he sees the great dust cloud of the oncoming Jun horde. 128

127 SYTH 127
 Juns.

The men of the village crowd around Syth and Tal.

VILLAGER #1
 We must fight!

VILLAGER #2
 We must flee!

Syth looks over at Tal.

SYTH
 It's your decision now.

SACCO
 We have to do something or we'll be
 skewered like meat on Jun spikes!

128 Dar drags himself from his misery and looks out at the dust 128
 127 cloud to the east bearing down on Aruk. A glimmer of 127
 recognition crosses his face. Tal, trying to decide, glances
 at Dar.

DAR
 We must fight!

CUT TO:

129 EXT. ARUK GATE - DAY 129

Outside the village gates, some of the men hack at the
 supports of the crude wooden bridge which spans the tarpit.
 Everyone else scoops dust onto the surface of the tar,
 covering it. A heavy granite boulder is rolled onto the
 bridge. The weight of the stone causes the bridge to break
 away and fall into the tar.

129 The fifty-foot wide tar pit which surrounds the village 129
 entrance is almost entirely covered with dust. As the bridge
 submerges into the tar, the women and children scurry away.
 The remaining handful of men position themselves around the
 village wall.

130 EXT. ARUK BRIDGE AND GATE - NIGHT 130

Night has fallen, and Dar crouches with Kiri, Syth and Tal,
 peering into the darkness.

DAR

In my village of Emur, the tar was
 a rite of manhood and a test of
 strength. If we're lucky, the Juns
 will fail this test.

A lone young man of the village stands out, away from the
 wall, holding a blazing torch. The only sound that can be
 heard is the thunder of the approaching horses. Dar rubs the
 head of the panther who sits calmly by his side.

131 Suddenly, the Jun horde breaks through the darkness and slows 131
 to a stop before the village. Three hundred mounted Juns
 stand in a line, sensing something wrong. Syth looks into
 130 the boy's eyes. The Jun warriors charge. 130

131 Bearing down on the village, they run right into the tar. 131
 Their horses, mired in the goo, are trapped. As they
 struggle, some load their crossbows and hail arrows down on
 the village. The young man carrying the torch begins to run.
 Holding it high, he dashes for the tar pit. Before he can
 get close enough, however, a Jun arrow slams into his chest,
 knocking him to the ground. Tal springs to his feet and
 sprints toward villager. Keeping low to the ground, the boy
 reaches him and grabs up the torch. He dodges arrows as he
 runs, but before he can near the trapped Jun warriors, an
 arrow slices into his shoulder. Staggering back to his feet,
 the boy forces himself onward. Nearing the pit, he hurls the
 torch. The massive explosion of flame blows him back off his
 feet.

132 As Syth and Dar run toward the prone Tal, the cries of the 132
 Jun warriors fill the air. The mass of Juns are incinerated,
 but fifty of them survive and make it across. The fifty
 regroup in front of the sea of flame in which their
 companions are burning and slowly move toward the village.
 Dar and Syth reach the boy. Cradling Tal's head in his arms,
 Syth tries futilely to remove the arrow from the unconscious
 boy's shoulder. The villagers at the wall flee, leaving the
 three friends to face the Juns.

SYTH

It almost worked.

132 As the still-smoking Juns approach, the inferno rages behind 132
 them. Seeing they have but three adversaries, the warriors
 dismount. Dar stares into the panther's eyes.

DAR
 Protect them.

The mounted Jun leader, brandishing a short staff with small skulls stuck to it, slowly approaches. As the fifty remaining warriors surround them, Dar steps out in front of Syth and the unconscious boy and makes a line in the dirt before them. Dar remembers the devastation of his own village and realizes by the red insignia on the Jun leader's helmet that this is the warrior who led the attack on his people.

Dar whips his kapa up and flings it at the massive Jun. It sings through the air and slams into his thick shield. The Jun leader dismounts and slowly approaches Dar, holding his skull staff in front of him menacingly. Suddenly, he twists the base of it and five blades spring out from it, and he wields it like an axe. Dar dives out of the way and comes up with his sword swinging. A powerful swing of the staff axe glances off Dar's sword. They fight furiously, but Dar cannot match the Jun's powerful strokes.

132B Dar is knocked to the ground. As he tries to regain his 132B
 132A feet, he has a flash of the eagle's view from above. The big 132B
 132 bird dives toward the circle of Jun warriors below. Swooping 132A
 in with a scream, the eagle lands beside Syth and the boy. 132
 The Jun and Dar slowly circle one another. Dar leaps forward 132
 and swings but the Jun leader is prepared. The big Jun hooks
 Dar's sword in a notch of his staff axe twists, snapping the
 blade. As Dar prepares to face the warrior with only the
 stump of his sword, two Juns in the back of the circle are
 quietly jerked off their feet into the darkness. As the Jun
 leader moves in for combat, Dar sees the looming profiles of
 the bird warriors rise up from behind the encircled Juns.
 The Juns are surrounded and outnumbered by the tall bird
 warriors.

The bat-like wings of the bird warriors snap open and envelope the hapless Juns. They struggle inside as the wings draw taut. Vast amount of dissolving fluids drain from inside their wings. Within moments, the only Jun warrior left alive is their leader, who faces Dar. Dar steps back, and the bird warriors close in around the helpless Jun. He slashes futilely until his screams are choked off.

DAR
 Quick, let's get out of here.

132 Dar grabs the injured boy's shoulders and Syth his feet. With 132
the panther covering their rear, they hurry away from the
carnage.

CUT TO:

133 INT. HUT - NIGHT 133

Dar and Syth lay Tal on the floor of the hut. Dar and Syth
kneel beside Kiri who cradles the boy in her lap. As Syth
grasps the arrow which is embedded in Tal's shoulder, Dar
grips the boy's hand. Syth rips the arrow from the wound and
Tal jerks awake in pain. Gripping Dar's hand tightly, he
looks into Dar's eyes.

TAL
(mumbling)
Beastmaster.

The boy swoons back into unconsciousness.

FADE OUT:

134 EXT. VILLAGE GATES - DAY 134

Dar sits against the village wall looking at the devastation
of the previous night. Smoke billows from the smoldering
tarpit. He cradles the lone ferret, stroking it gently. Dar
looks over at the hut where he left Tal. Syth steps out of
the hut, walks over and kneels beside Dar.

DAR
How is he?

SYTH
He'll be left-handed for awhile,
but he's well.

Dar smiles and nods.

DAR
Then I will be leaving.

SYTH
Tal will make a fine king. He's a
little headstrong...
(laughs)
But that's his youth. He faces
dangerous times ahead. He could
use a strong friend standing beside
him like you.

Syth looks at Dar.

134

SYTH (CONT'D)

134

Join us.

DAR

He already has the strongest right
hand a leader of men could want.

Dar and Syth embrace. As they move apart, Dar holds out a
small hide-covered bundle.

DAR (CONT'D)

For the new king.

Dar shoulders the ferret pouch and dons his sword. He turns
from Syth and slowly walks away from Aruk.

Kiri runs from the tent hut to the gate and stands watching
Dar leave. Seeing her, Dar hesitates. He turns and slowly
walks toward her.

DAR (CONT'D)

I wanted say goodbye but... you
come with me.

Dar slides his arm into hers and they walk away from Aruk.

KIRI

You'll have a hard time getting rid
of me.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK, revealing the smoking tarpit ahead of
them.

DAR

I just thought of one thing the
Juns are good for.

KIRI

What?

DAR

A bridge.

Dar and Kiri cross the smoking tarpit, stepping on the burned
remnants of the Jun horde.

CUT TO:

135

EXT. HUT - DAY

135

Tal opens his eyes and looks around. The village is once
again inhabited. Villagers bustle everywhere, cleaning the
village and eliminating the signs of their Jun imprisonment.
Syth sits at his bedside.

135

SYTH

Our new king has returned from the
dead.

135

Tal shakes himself awake, and the pain of his wound brings
back his memory.

SYTH (CONT'D)

He left this for you.

Syth holds up a small bundle wrapped in hide. Tal gently
sits up and takes the bundle from Syth.

TAL

But I needed them.

136

Tal jumps to his feet and runs out into the village square. 136

137

Favoring his wounded side, he runs up toward the pyramid

altar. He springs up the stone stairs to the top. Looking 137

137A

out toward the horizon, past the smoking tarpit, he searches

137

for Dar. Way off in the distance, Tal sees the eagle soar 137A
over the mountains and out of sight. Looking down at the 137
bundle in his hands, Tal begins to unwrap it. Inside is
Dar's kapa. Tal holds the curved throwing knife reverently
as it glints in the sun.

From behind him, a voice speaks.

WITCHWOMAN

He is gone.

Tal whirls around to see the lone remaining witchwoman
standing behind him.

WITCHWOMAN (CONT'D)

You will need help in ruling your
city. I can give you powers your
young mind could never imagine.

TAL

I have no need for your powers.

WITCHWOMAN

I can bring back the Beastmaster.

Tal hesitates, looking off into the horizon, then slowly
speaks.

TAL

He understands that he must go.
And now I understand what I must
do.

Tal turns back toward the witchwoman as a crowd of villagers
reach the top of the pyramid armed with hoes and staffs.

