

DARKON  
A Fantasy Trilogy in Three Books

by  
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Adapted from the documentary motion picture "DARKON."

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EXT. ATOP A HIGH COUNTRY HILL - TWILIGHT \*\*\*

We look out over a range of rolling green hills. The time and place are ambiguous. As twilight falls, we see a figure at the crest of a high hill. \*\*\*

This is SKIP MCINTYRE, 29. But right now, he wears the gleaming armor of PRINCE BANNOR, the character he plays in the medieval role-playing wargame called DARKON. \*\*\*

Skip is scruffy, soulful, a little overweight, but his look somehow works with his quasi-D&D garb--in a way it might not in the real world. #

He leans on his orange broadsword (it's PVC pipe wrapped in foam, but we can't see that yet) and watches the late summer sunset. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(full of awe)  
Man. \*\*\*

As the Prince surveys his lands, he is joined by an anxious figure wearing a green, flowing cloak. \*\*\*\*

This is Andrew Kreel, 28, but both in and out of the game he is known simply as KARNAGE. A jumpy, unnaturally skinny geek, "Karnage" is blissfully unaware of the irony of his name. \*\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
Strange, isn't it, old friend? The sun sets over all the lands of Darkon... But for our realm, Realm Laconia, it is truly the dawn of a new and glorious age. \*\*\*\*

Skip looks to his palm, where he holds a small, intricately carved wooden box. His eyes are lit with triumph. \*\*\*\*

KARNAGE  
We must make haste, milord. The scouts have returned. \*

SKIP  
What news, Karnage? \*

KARNAGE  
Marius reports all clear to the east, but our other scout... has not come back. \*

SKIP  
Darius? What happened? \*\*\*\*

KARNAGE	*
All that we found was this.	*
Karnage holds up a cloak, torn to shreds.	*
SKIP	*
What could have done such damage? A wolf?	*
KARNAGE	*
Worse. I suspect a warg, milord.	*
SKIP	*
A warg?! Poor Darius. Has Marius been told?	*
KARNAGE	*
No need. A twin brother feels such tidings in the blood.	*
SKIP	*
Very true.	*
KARNAGE	*
I feel we must rid ourselves...	*
(whispers)	*
...of the <i>item</i>	*
SKIP	*
But we fought so hard to get it! It's our destiny!	***
KARNAGE	*
But milord, a warg <i>smells</i> magic. The item will lead the beast directly to us, and all our foes will follow.	*
SKIP	*
You worry, warmaster. The honor of Laconia will always protect us.	*
KARNAGE	*
You act as though you <u>desire</u> pointless conflict, milord.	***
SKIP	*
Glory in battle, Karnage, that's why we're here.	*

They walk into the woods. Almost as soon as they leave, a helicopter buzzes noisily across the sky.

EXT. LACONIA CAMPSITE - EVENING

\*\*\*

Later, Skip, Karnage, and their nine teammates sit around a campfire, all clad in the heraldic green and gold of their team/"realm" Laconia.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

They are deep in the dark, wild woods. This will be the site of the BATTLE OF THE BROOCH.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip raises a pewter tankard.

#

SKIP AS BANNOR

#

Raise your mead, and let us remember our fallen friend, Darius. See how his brother mourns.

\*\*

Close up on the somber face of MARIUS, 36, an overweight African-American man, staring somberly into the fire.

\*\*

\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)

\*\*

Let us hail them both!

\*

There is some confusion over whom to hail first.

\*

SOME

OTHERS

\*\*\*

HAIL DARIUS! HAIL MARIUS!

HAIL MARIUS! HAIL DARIUS...

\*\*\*

I MEAN, MARIUS...?

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

(watchfully)

\*\*\*

I think it would be wise to stop yelling now.

SKIP AS BANNOR

And raise mead to our realm Laconia, finest in Darkon! Let us hail them both!

\*\*\*

\*

(beat)

Laconia first.

ALL

HAIL LACONIA! HAIL DARKON!

Suddenly, a cloaked figure enters the circle of firelight. All stand and grab their swords.

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

Hold, stranger! Who do I see?

\*\*\*

The figure throws back his hood to reveal a beefy, pouch-cheeked white man, 38. This is DARIUS... but he is acting strangely.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
 (shocked) #  
 Darius!

MARIUS  
 (leaping to his feet in joy) #  
 My twin lives!

KARNAGE  
 Wait, Marius, no! \*\*\*

Despite Karnage's warning, Marius rushes to embrace his \*  
 twin. Darius shambles forward, zombie-like. \*

DARIUS  
 Brains! \*\*\*

He grabs Marius and pretends to bite his neck. \*\*\*

MARIUS  
 Aaaah! I have been mortally wounded! \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
 Darius is undead, raised by black magic. \*\*\*  
 (beat)  
 We are under attack.

Karnage reaches into his pouch and dons a full-head \*\*\*  
 rubber skeleton mask--his regular battle regalia. \*\*\*

One of the warriors of Laconia pulls Darius off Marius. #  
 He "binds" him symbolically by making him hold some rope. #

DARIUS'S CAPTOR  
 (to Darius)  
 You are bound, death-walker. \*

The rest form a circle with their backs to the campfire. \*\*\*

In the dark, they hear the rhythmic BEATING OF SWORDS ON  
 SHIELDS. Of course, they are plywood shields and foam  
 swords, but it's still unnerving.

Then, from the darkness spring six warriors of the \*\*\*  
 team/"realm" ARKOPOLIS, clad in purple and white. With \*\*\*  
 them is a white-clad ELDER, one of Darkon's referees.

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
 Men of Arkopolis! Attack! \*\*\*

As the Elder observes, the two teams engage in hand to hand combat. As Carnage fights with his foam staff, Skip hits an Arkopolitan with his orange sword. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(calling out with each hit)  
Orange weapon! Enchanted weapon! Double damage! \*

ARKOPOLITIAN  
(role playing) #  
Aaaahh! I am mortally wounded!

Cut to a Laconian warrior limping on a stiffened leg. \*\*\*

LACONIAN WARRIOR  
Help! I have been wounded! Mage! \*

Karnage spins, pulling a small plastic bottle from a leather pouch on his belt. \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
(throws the potion)  
Potion of healing! \*

The Laconian warrior catches the potion and drinks it, but Karnage is caught off guard. \*\*\*

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS #  
(attacking Karnage) \*\*\*  
Yellow weapon! Hit! Hit! Hit!

KARNAGE  
(falling to his knees)  
I am mortally wounded. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
No!

Skip rushes to Karnage's side, but it's too late. Angrily, and with surprising skill, Skip quickly takes out Manfred with a series of fierce blows.

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
(striking)  
Orange weapon! Orange! Orange! Orange! \*  
(beat)  
Yield, Duke Manfred of Arkopolis. You are mortally wounded.

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
(falls to the ground)  
I am mortally wounded.

The remaining Laconians vanquish their enemies. The battle seems to be over. Skip kneels next to his fallen friend, Karnage. \*\*\*  
\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(to Karnage)  
Your potion of healing?

KARNAGE  
It is spent.

Karnage is role-playing his slow, painful death with great conviction, and it's surprisingly convincing.

The Elder clicks his stopwatch. \*

ELDER  
He has 30 seconds left before he has to go to the underworld. \*  
\*  
\*

Suddenly, from the forest, a terrifying HOWL is heard. It should be legitimately spooky. \*\*

We cut to Zombie-Darius, crazy, wild-eyed, calling in response. \*

DARIUS  
Awooooooooooooo! Awoooooooooo! \*\*\*  
\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
Warg?

KARNAGE  
Warg. \*\*

We cut to the remaining Laconian warriors as they peer out into the night, afraid. \*\*

LACONIAN WARRIOR  
Warg... \*\*

ELDER  
Actually, it is a were-warg.

The HOWL rings through the night again. Duke Manfred laughs cruelly as he "dies." \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
And it will slay you all--unless you are packing some heavy magic. \*\*  
\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
The item! We must use it. \*

Skip takes the carved box from his pocket and opens it, revealing a tacky woman's brooch--costume jewelry. #  
\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D) \*  
(in awe) \*  
The Brooch of Disruption.... \*

KARNAGE  
It's useless now, milord. I am nearly \*\*\*  
dead, and you cannot recite the spell. \*\*

O/C, we hear the HORRIBLE SOUNDS of the growling warg as \*\*  
it attacks the Laconian warriors, fighting its way to \*\*  
Skip. \*

KARNAGE (CONT'D) \*\*  
Throw it into the woods! It will draw the \*  
Warg and save our men.

SKIP  
But... our destiny... \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
(as he "dies") \*  
Let it go, milord... let it go... \*\*\*

ELDER  
(checking his watch, blase) \*\*\*  
That's it. He's dead.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(mournful and frustrated) \*\*  
Fuck!

ELDER  
(school-marmishly) \*\*  
That language is out-of-game, Bannor.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(he stands) \*\*  
Jesus Fuck! \*\*

Now truly, pissed, Skip turns to face the were-warg. \*\*

The "were-warg" is actually a man in a wolf suit--like \*  
the mascot of a sports team. But in the dark it looks \*\*\*  
fearful, its glass "eyes" catching the firelight. \*

Skip sees the beast finish off the last two Laconians. \*\*\*  
Because we catch the very end of the action, it actually \*\*\*  
looks pretty scary.



ELDER  
(as they "die")  
Instant death, instant death. Go to the  
underworld.

☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

The were-warg now turns its eyes on Skip and growls menacingly.

\* \* \*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(mustering his courage)  
Come get some.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

Skip and the were-warg fight furiously. This must look halfway cool--not merely ridiculous. Skip is a good fighter, but he's still clutching the Brooch, and it's a handicap.

☆ ☆ ☆  
 ☆ ☆ ☆  
 ☆ ☆ ☆  
 ☆ ☆ ☆

Then, as Skip deflects a strong blow from the warg's "claws", Skip loses his footing, and begins to fall down a surprisingly steep, wooded slope.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

Aaaaah! SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)

\* \* \*

We cut to a close up on the face of the man wearing the warg-suit. He watches Skip fall.

\* \* \*

Oh, shit. WERE-WARG

\*\*\*

Skip skids, stumbles, then finally trips and rolls violently downhill.

\* \* \*

EXT. A SHALLOW RIVER AT THE BASE OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS

\* \* \*

Finally, Skip crashes into a shallow, swift little river in the woods. It's still a little light out, the last touch of dusk still blueing the evening sky.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

Skip lies face up in the shallow pool, arms outstretched, his eyes blinking slowly, disoriented. There is an enormous dent in his breastplate.

#  
\*\*\*

Cut to Skip's hand, still loosely clutching the Brooch of Destruction. And then it slips from his palm.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

Cut to Skip's POV, we see a house and deck overhanging the river on the other side.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

TWO SMALL CHILDREN are staring over the railing in surprise. The little boy is holding a hot dog.

☆ ☆ ☆

☆ ☆ ☆

Then THEIR FATHER appears, also staring. He's wearing an apron and holding tongs. It's a family barbecue. \*\*\*

The hot dog slips from the little boy's bun. He keeps staring. \*\*

We cut to Skip, in pain, struggling to lift his head. \*\*\*

SKIP  
Hey there. \*\*

The children and dad stare. \*\*\*

LITTLE BOY  
Spaceman? \*\*\*

Skip shakes his head "no." \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
...knight in shining armor. #

His head falls back with a groan. We begin to hear Skip's opening narration now, in voice-over. \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*  
Everybody wants to be a hero. \*\*\*\*

Skip's turns his head wearily to look down-river. \*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*  
But in real life, that doesn't actually, \*\*\*\*  
you know, happen... \*\*\*\*\*

From Skip's POV, we see the Brooch slipping over the stones, out of reach and down the river, followed by the hot dog. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

We cut to an aerial shot that moves over the Massachusetts countryside. \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*  
My name is Skip, and I live in Western \*\*\*  
Massachusetts...three counties of failing \*\*\*\*  
mill towns, dairy farms, and hippie \*\*\*\*  
colleges along the Connecticut river. \*\*

As we continue we gradually dissolve to a lovingly hand drawn map of the mythical land called "Darkon." \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*  
But two weekends a month, my name is \*\*  
Prince Bannor, and I live in Darkon. \*\*

As we continue to fly over the map it dissolves to a clearing where two large masses of Darkonites in full costume are rushing each other on a local soccer field. \*\*\*\*\*  
\*  
\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*\*  
Darkon is a game. A full contact medieval \*  
fantasy sport. \*

We cut to ground level to watch the fight. \*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
Where warriors and wizards, thieves and \*  
elves, all battle for glory in local \*  
parks or overnight campouts. \*

As he runs through the various players, we zoom in on a massive WARRIOR, a robed WIZARD, a pair of THIEVES in quasi-ninja garb, and finally a pack of "Dark Elves" shooting foam-tipped arrows from the sidelines. \*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

The Elves are exceedingly weird and spooky, heavily pierced, with coal black make-up covering every inch of their faces. \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

INT. A DEPRESSING CORPORATE OFFICE - EVENING \*\*\*\*\*

We see KENYON STRUNK, 32, is sandy-haired, handsome, but paunchy. He's hunched over his desk after hours, working on the "Big Map"--the official map of Darkon, painstakingly drawn on hexagonal graph paper. #  
#  
#  
#

SKIP (V.O.) \*  
We organize ourselves into Realms, like \*\*\*  
teams--each controlling a certain number \*\*\*  
of hexes on the Big Map. \*\*\*

We look over Kenyon's shoulder and see that he is coloring in MANY black hexes representing "Realm Mordom." They surrounded the few green hexes of "Realm Laconia" like a great cancerous mass. Kenyon smiles grimly. \*\*\*\*\*  
#  
\*\*\*\*\*  
#

EXT. A MEADOW FULL OF FLOWERS- A HOT SUMMER DAY \*\*\*\*\*

We see Skip, in costume now as "Bannor," leading the men of Laconia in a huffing, sweaty, furious charge across a field of bright yellow flowers. #  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) \*\*\*  
My realm is Laconia--a band of 12 noble \*\*\*\*\*  
adventurers. \*\*\*\*\*

We pull back to see that Skip is running alongside Kenyon Strunk. Except now Kenyon is in costume--cruel red and black armor. And he leads a huge group of black-clad warriors: the host of MORDOM. #

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*\*  
In fact, we're the second most powerful \*\*\*\*\*  
Realm in the whole game... \*\*\*\*\*

Though they are charging together, Kenyon soon overtakes Skip with a cocky grin. His warriors swarm around and finally pass Realm Laconia, leaving them in the dust. \*\*\*\*\*

EXT. A WOODED GLADE - A FALL AFTERNOON \*\*\*\*\*

We see Skip in costume standing in a wooded glade, autumn leaves falling around him. He's staring down a figure in a ridiculous "monster" suit made of huge hunks of raw foam rubber, twine, tape, and plastic googly eyes. #

SKIP (V.O.) \*\*  
People talk all the time about conquering \*\*  
their demons. \*\*

Now we see Skip ready to engage in a fight to the death. \*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
I actually get to *conquer demons*. \*\*

Skip, with brutal passion, "kills" the monster. \*\*

The monster falls to its foam rubber knees. \*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
I can't tell you how awesome that feels. \*\*

EXT. A SNOWY PLAIN - A GRIM WINTER'S EVENING \*\*\*\*\*

We cut now to Kenyon, in his cruel red and black costume. \*\*\*\*\*  
He towers over a TRIVIUS, a fat hapless guy, 20, on his \*\*\*\*\*  
knees, blubbing in the soggy snow. He wears a \*\*\*\*\*  
ridiculous helmet made out of a plastic 5 gallon syrup \*\*\*\*\*  
jug. \*\*\*\*\*

TRIVIUS \*\*\*\*\*  
Mercy! \*\*\*\*\*

KENYON #  
(raising his sword) \*\*\*\*\*  
Death! \*\*\*\*\*

Kenyon slashes down. We do not see the hit. We just hear the SCREAM and see the empty plastic jug/helmet rolling across the field. \*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.) \*\*\*\*  
 Another good thing about Darkon is, you \*\*\*\*  
 never die, you just get killed. \*\*\*\*

Now we come back to the hapless guy, kneeling in the grass, rubbing his neck, whining. \*\*\*\*

TRIVIUS \*\*\*\*  
 Ow.... \*\*\*\*

INT. A NEARLY EMPTY APARTMENT - DAY \*\*\*\*\*

As Skip speaks, we see a brief montage of Darkonites disrobing. #

-We see the guy who had been playing the "warg" in his bedroom, brushing the brambles out of the costume's synthetic fur. #

-We see the foam rubber "monster" struggling to get its foam rubber head off. Perhaps to our surprise, we see the "monster" is a woman in her thirties. #

SKIP (V.O.) \*\*  
 People look at me and say, oh, *Darkon*. \*\*  
 That's an escape from real life. \*\*

#

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*\*  
 The truth is, *life* is a role-playing \*\*\*\*  
 game. \*\*\*\*

We are facing the front door of a nearly empty apartment. #  
 A cheesy poster of a wizard is the only decoration. The #  
 door swings open, revealing KARNAGE, in full mask and #  
 costume, coming home. #

SKIP (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*  
 I don't care if you're a cop, or a \*\*\*\*  
 banker, or Mr. Rogers... \*\*\*\*\*

-We see Karnage, still at the door, taking off his mask. \*\*\*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

\*\*\*\*\*

...When you get home from work, you're  
always taking off some kind of uniform,  
and putting on another...

\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

-We see Skip in the carport of his crummy, 80's era  
house, patiently banging out the dent on his breastplate  
with a hammer.

#  
#  
#

INT. SKIP'S HOUSE - NIGHT

\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.)

\*\*\*\*

Sometimes I feel like I was born in the  
wrong time.

\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

We see Skip inside his house, full of junky, cast-off  
furniture. He's got a huge pile of laundry in his hands,  
and he's trying desperately to pick a stray sock up off  
the floor without letting the whole pile fall.

\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*

Meanwhile, his older brother CHAZ, 35, an off-duty  
Marine, sits on the couch, staring off into space, doing  
absolutely nothing to help Skip.

#  
#  
#

I/E. CITY BUS - DAY

\*\*\*\*\*

We cut to Skip riding the city bus. He's in full costume.  
He's got his sword with him, and now we can clearly see  
the foam and duct tape. People are staring at him.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.)

\*\*\*\*\*

I know I am capable of great things. I  
just need a chance to show it.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

We cut to Skip's POV of the passing street--a typical  
abandoned American main street in a once-thriving town: a  
struggling hardware store, an empty Subway sandwich shop,  
and lines of empty storefronts.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

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

\*\*\*\*\*

But in Darkon, at least, I will finally  
be recognized.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

We come back to Skip on the bus. A senior citizen sits  
down and eyes him, dubiously.

\*\*\*\*\*  
#

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

\*\*\*\*\*

They will say, here was a leader. Here  
was a man who went to war, who triumphed  
in great battles, who won the day.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Skip struggles to exit the narrow doors of the bus with all his gear. \*\*\*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D) \*\*\*\*\*  
In Darkon, I will triumph. It is my \*\*\*\*\*  
destiny. \*\*\*\*\*

The doors close behind him as the VO ends. \*\*\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S CARPORT - DAY \*\*\*\*\*

Skip is still hammering at his armor, we can also see Chaz sitting nearby, silently buffing his old dress uniform shoes. \*\*\*\*\*

Just back from Afghanistan, Chaz is depressed and sort of drifting through life--a huge lug who is smarter than he seems (though to be fair, he often seems very, very dumb.) He's wearing a USMC T-Shirt. #

We linger on the two brothers for a moment, working on their respective uniforms. \*\*\*\*

They have an old TV propped up on a milk crate: it's CNN, and we hear a newscaster discussing the Presidents' "surge" strategy in Iraq. \*\*\*\*

CHAZ \*  
Fucking idiots. \*\*\*

Skip is unsure of how to respond. \*\*\*

CHAZ (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
They spelled Afghanistan wrong on the crawl.

Skip nods: uh huh.

CHAZ (CONT'D)  
(deep sigh)  
*Again.*

It should be very hard to tell how much Chaz cares about anything. He's completely lost.

JILLIA, 26, buxom and pretty and heavily tattooed, comes out into the carport, her hair still wet from the shower.

She gives skip a long, deep, soul kiss. It's gross. \*\*\*

JILLIA  
Milord.

SKIP

Milady.

JILLIA

Can you catch a ride with your brother?

#

Wordlessly, Chaz puts down his shoes and grabs his keys.

SKIP

Yeah, sure.

I/E. SKIP'S SHITTY SUBARU - DAY

Chaz is driving Skip to work.

CHAZ

You have to learn how to drive, bro.

SKIP

I *know* how to drive. I just don't have a license.

CHAZ

Don't get me wrong. I love driving this sweet, sweet Subaru. But you can't be the baby brother forever.

SKIP

I'm not a baby.

CHAZ

Your big brother gives you his old car.  
Then you get your bigger brother to drive  
you around in it. That makes you a baby.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

No it doesn't.

CHAZ

A *big* baby.

SKIP

I always catch a ride from someone. It's good for the environment. Car pooling.

CHAZ

(deadpan)

You car pool with babies. Babies who wear  
diapers.

\*\*\*

SKIP

That doesn't make any sense.



CHAZ

And diapers are *shit* for the environment.  
So there goes your whole argument.

\*\*\*

SKIP

You're insane.

\*\*\*

Chaz gives him a long, angry look: has Skip crossed a line?

\*\*\*

CHAZ

(laughs)

I'm just fucking with you.

(Then, cheerfully)

Oh, hey, I wanted to tell you: I heard  
you doing it with your lady last night.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

(mortified)

Oh, jesus, really?

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Just thought you should know. Thin walls.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Oh, god. I'm sorry.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

CHAZ

I'm not complaining. I love it.

#

SKIP

What? That's disgusting.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

I think it's awesome that my baby brother  
is having loud sex with a saucy young  
wench.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

(unsure of how to take this)

Oh. Well. Thank you.

CHAZ

But you better watch out.

SKIP

What do you mean?

CHAZ

Jillia. You met her through your game  
right? Darkon?

SKIP

Sort of. At the Renaissance Faire. It's not exactly the same thing.

CHAZ

Whatever... You had the armor on when you met her?

#  
\*\*\*

SKIP

OK. You're fucking with me.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Just answer, Galahad. Armor: yea or nay?

SKIP

OK. Yes. OK?

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Well, there you go: chicks dig the uniform.

\*\*\*

SKIP

If you want to make fun of me, just do it. Don't drag Jillia into it.

CHAZ

No, bro, I see it all the time in the Marines. Some girls, they just like being with warriors. Drives them NUTS. And those kinds of girls: they make a lot of noise.

SKIP

OK. Fine.

CHAZ

When they have sex, I mean.

SKIP

Got it.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

But the thing is: it's not you. It's the uniform. If they see another one they like better, say goodbye.

\*\*\*

SKIP

I don't think that's going to happen.

CHAZ

Good. I hope it doesn't. Believe me, I WANT to hear you having sex. It's really one of my few pleasures.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

## EXT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - DAY

The shitty Subaru pulls up an old 19th century grist mill on the terraced banks of a loud river. This is the McIntyre family business, Empires Miniatures. \*\*\*

Once the premiere maker of lead figurines for Dungeons and Dragons and the like, Empires now caters to an ever-dwindling market of tabletop gamers and collectors. \*\*\*

A weathered sign bearing the company logo--a silhouette of a castle tower--hangs above the door. \*\*\*

Skip gets out of the car. \*\*\*

SKIP

You want to come in and do some work? \*\*\*

CHAZ

Nah. \*\*\*

SKIP

What are you going to do? \*\*\*

CHAZ

(shrugs)

I'm just gonna keep it breezy.

SKIP

(resigned)

Ok.

Skip closes the door. The second he closes the door he jumps as Chaz turns on the RADIO VERY LOUDLY. Weirdly, it's "This American Life." Chaz screams out of the lot. #

## INT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - LATER \*\*\*

Skip is hunched over his worktable, sculpting a halfling out of a green epoxy putty. \*\*\*

Over his shoulder, we see an old, framed article from "Dragon" Magazine. It's a profile of Skip's father, Malcolm "Mal" McIntyre, with a photo of his three sons, Chaz, Malcolm, Jr., and Skip--still just a child. #

The headline reads: "A Miniature Dynasty: Will McIntyre and Sons Dominate Fantasy Miniatures Forever?" \*\*\*

We pull closer in to read the pull-quote from Mal, Sr.: \*\*\*

"'As long as kids are still playing with toys that are made out of lead, I don't see how we can fail,' says the proud father of three avid gamers..." \*\*\*

We pull even closer in to read the article date: 1982 \*\*\*

As we pull back out to see Skip working, MALCOLM, SR. and MALCOM, JR. walk by, talking business. \*\*\*

Mal, Sr., 67, is spindly, affable, with a wispy mustache. He's a businessman who made his money in the 70s and still dresses that way. He is completely un-glamorous.

Mal, Jr., 34, wears business casual and looks more like he collects Successories posters than fantasy miniatures. \*\*\*

MAL, JR.

Dad, the detail you're able to get with this plastic is better than anything we've ever seen. And it's cheaper. \*\*\*

Half listening, Mal, Sr. pats Skip's shoulder. \*\*\*

MAL, SR.

Morning, Skip. \*\*\*

SKIP

Hey, dad.

MAL, SR.

(to Mal, Jr.) \*\*\*

OK, OK, Mal, I'll think it over. \*\*\*

Mal, Sr. walks on to his office, leaving Mal, Jr. behind. \*\*\*

MAL, JR.

Terrific, dad. #

Mal, Jr., hangs around, looking over Skip's shoulder. \*\*\*

MAL, JR. (CONT'D)

So how's that hobbit coming along, Skip?

SKIP

(not bothering to look up) \*\*\*

Actually, it's a halfling, Mal.

MAL, JR.

Right. Of course. "Halfling." Because if we called it a "hobbit," we might actually, you know, sell some of them. I mean, even I know what a hobbit is. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
 No you don't.

MAL, JR.  
 Sure I do. Little hairy guys. The guy  
 from "Rudy" was one. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
 (losing control a little) \*\*\*  
 OK, Mal. According to Tolkien, there are  
 three kinds of hobbits. I'll give you two  
 of them: Fallohides and Harfoots. What's  
 the third?

MAL, JR. \*\*\*  
 Yeah. I guess you got me there, Skip. Are  
 they "Rudies"? \*\*\*

SKIP  
 STOORS! Stoors are the third kind of  
 hobbit. Our *customers* know that. Even *dad*  
 knows that. You should know that, Mal. \*\*\*

MAL, JR. \*\*\*  
 (unfazed)  
 Okey doke. Let me know when you get back  
 from middle earth, little brother.

Skip turns back to his work and seethes. \*\*\*

EXT. A RENAISSANCE FAIRE - DAY \*\*

We cut to Skip as Bannor, his sword aloft, screaming... \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 TO WAR!!!! \*\*\*

The realms of Darkon are fighting on a large open field  
 abutting a bustling Renaissance Faire. \*\*\*

Among those playing are halpess "Trivius," plus Skip and #  
 Laconia. But here we will mainly see THE POWER OF MORDOM. \*\*\*\*\*

Standing beside Skip is Mordom's leader, Kenyon, in full #  
 costume as "Lord Derleth." He raises his black sword and #  
 echoes Skip's cry... #

KENYON AS DERLETH \*\*\*\*\*  
 TO WAR!!!! \*\*\*\*\*

As they rush to battle, we cut to a group of spectators--  
 some in contemporary clothes, some in Ren Faire costume--  
 watching with a mix of awe and scorn. A banner ID's the  
 locale as the New York State Renaissance Faire, held  
 annually in Tuxedo Park.

\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*  
 \*\*\*  
 \*\*\*  
 \*\*\*

We cut back to Skip's POV in mid-charge. We see the  
 opposing army getting closer and closer--it should be a  
 little scary. Finally the armies meet and the foam swords  
 clash.

\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*  
 \*\*

Skip and Kenyon fight side by side, directing their  
 armies.

#

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 Laconia, now is your time!

\*\*\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 Mordomite archers! First volley!

\*\*\*

On his precise word, a volley of foam-tipped arrows fly  
 over Skip and Kenyon and into the opposing armies.

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 (awed by Mordom's precision)  
Wow.

\*\*

We follow the Mordom arrows as they connect with their  
 targets: the feeble men Realm Trembelaine, led by  
 Trivius. He no longer has his plastic jug helmet, instead  
 sporting a huge cylindrical ice-cream container with a  
 hole cut out for his face.

\*\*\*  
 #  
 #  
 #  
 \*\*

An arrow hits a Trembelanian warrior in the chest.

\*\*

TREMBELANIAN WARRIOR  
 Ooff! Mortal wound!

\*\*

An arrow strikes Trivius's left arm. He whines...

\*\*\*

TRIVIUS  
 Ow!  
 (Then, happily...)  
 Light wound! Light wound to my left arm!

\*\*

\*\*\*

We cut back to Kenyon.

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 Javelins, now!

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 (to himself)  
 Javelins? Really?

A volley of foam tipped javelins fly through the air.

We cut to Trivius as a javelin hits him squarely in the ice-cream drum.      \*\*

TRIVIUS      \*\*

AAAHHH!

He immediately topples over, and Kenyon can't help but laugh.      \*\*\*

Suddenly, the line of enemy soldiers parts to reveal five EVIL WIZARDS in tall, peaked caps. They swagger cockily into the fray.      \*\*\*

We cut to Karnage as he catches sight of them.      \*\*\*

KARNAGE

Oh, no....      \*\*\*

(freaking out)      \*\*

EVIL WIZARDS!      \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

(keeping his cool)      \*\*

Magic on the field! Prepare for spellballs!      \*\*

ALL MORDOMITES

MORDOM HO!

In unison, the Mordomite warriors huddle and raise their shields in precise formation, like the Spartans in "300."      \*\*\*

Dozens of "spellballs" (actually multi-colored hacky-sacks) rain down on their shield.      \*\*\*

Barely dodging a spellball himself, Skip is impressed.      \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR      \*\*

Jesus Christ....      \*\*\*

We cut to the Evil Wizards, throwing their spellballs. Before they throw each ball, they have to invoke the particular spell they are casting.      \*\*\*

EVIL WIZARD      \*\*

Dark Magic undo his brain!      \*\*\*

He throws a red spell ball. We then cut back to the forces of Laconia to watch as it hits Darius      \*\*\*

DARIUS

\*\*\*

I am struck by a red spellball! The spell  
of feeble-mindedness!

He begins to grunt and stumble around, acting  
"feeble-minded." He is a terrible actor.

\*\*\*

CUT TO:

...a snobby Ren Faire participant watching Darius from  
the sidelines. He is dressed like Captain Jack Sparrow.  
He rolls his eyes.

\*\*\*

SNOBBY JACK SPARROW

\*\*\*

Now, that's just ridiculous.

\*\*\*

BACK TO:

...Darius, acting feeble-minded, right in Skip's face

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

\*\*\*

Jesus, Marius, get your brother away from  
me!

\*\*\*

(to Kenyon)

\*\*\*

We have to take those Wizards out. Prince  
Derleth, do you join me in arms?

\*\*

\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

\*\*\*

You're a bold one, Prince Bannor. Fight  
on!

The two press forward together into the enemy lines,  
fighting their way to the Evil Wizards.

\*\*\*

\*\*

They easily "kill" the Evil Wizards, as a white-garbed  
Elder looks on.

\*\*\*

ELDER

All you Wizards go to the Underworld.

\*\*

EXT. UNDERWORLD - DAY

We take a break from the action to go to the  
"Underworld"... a sort of penalty box on the sidelines  
where players go when they are "killed."

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

UNDERWORLD ELDER

\*\*\*

(to a spindly Darkonite)

That's 30 minutes, Doonadeen. You are  
returned to life.

The spindly Darkonite returns to the battle.



One of the Evil Wizards arrives and sits next to a  
scowling player who's smoking a cigarette.      \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

                                EVIL WIZARD      \*\*\*  
                                Can I bum one?      \*\*\*

EXT. REN FAIRE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Back in the thick of battle, Skip and Kenyon have      #  
cornered Trivius. All his men are dead. His is      \*\*\*  
defenseless.      \*\*\*

                                KENYON AS DERLETH  
                                This stripling's mine.

                                SKIP AS BANNOR  
                                (shrugging)  
                                Okey doke.

Trivius turns and runs wildly, and Kenyon pursues him,      #  
leaving Skip behind to blithely turn to the next foe.      #

We follow Trivius as he weaves through the fighting      \*\*\*  
Darkonites. He then flees the battle entirely, reaching a      \*\*  
wooded area at the edge of the meadow.      \*\*

He looks behind him and smiles. He seems to have escaped.      \*\*\*  
When he turns around again, though, he is suddenly      \*\*\*  
surrounded by a group of 12 DARK ELVES, including one we      \*\*\*  
have not seen before.      \*\*\*

This is REBECCA DILLON, 28, in character as "Elvenmaid."  
She is beautiful, with long, curly red-brown hair. We      \*\*  
would call her voluptuous, though others might call her      \*\*\*  
overweight. We don't listen to them.      \*\*\*

Of all the Elves, only Rebecca does not wear the creepy      \*\*\*  
black make up. But she joins her comrades in an evil      \*\*\*  
grin: Trivius has been caught.      #

The King of the Elves is DELVER, 35: tall, willowy,      \*\*\*  
heavily pierced, with spooky red contact lenses. He      \*\*\*  
speaks in a strange, made-up language called Elftongue      \*\*\*

                                DELVER, ELF-KING  
                                Ni, hychy dig bryf?      \*\*

                                TRIVIUS  
                                I don't understand!

DELVER, ELF-KING  
 (almost hissing)  
 Little bug, web-caught, struggling.  
 Mordom gets its juicy bug. Elveses get  
 their gold. What gets the little man-bug?

TRIVIUS  
 I... I don't know.

Now Kenyon has come up behind Trivius and turns him  
 around by the shoulder.

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 The sword! \*\*

He raises his sword high and slashes down. \*\*

EXT. REN FAIRE BATTLEFIELD SIDELINES - LATER \*\*

We cut immediately to Skip, raising a pewter tankard of  
 beer above his head. \*\*

SKIP \*\*  
 Hail Laconia! \*\*

ALL LACONIANS \*\*  
 Hail! \*\*

Skip chugs the beer down and laughs merrily. The battle  
 is over, and all the players have gathered by the  
 sidelines to relax and drink beer from tankards they have  
 brought from home. Skip is not technically in character  
 any more, though he is still in costume. And he is drunk. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*  
 Now, where's Jillia? \*\*

Skip walks, and we follow him. As he goes, we see other  
 players packing up their swords, taking off their monster  
 costumes, etc. \*\*

Then Skip catches sight of something that makes him  
 pause. Kenyon and his Mordomites have Trivius surrounded  
 by the side of the field. Apparently they're not quite  
 done playing the game yet. \*\*

TRIVIUS \*\*  
 (kneeling) \*\*\*  
 Goddess protect me! \*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH	**
(circling him)	**
No goddess will protect you, apostate.	**
ALL MORDOMITES	**
MORDOM HO!	**
KENYON AS DERLETH	**
Our god, the ONE true god, is the Red	**
Griffin known as Mordom. And his talons	**
shall tear your flesh.	**
ALL MORDOMITES	**
MORDOM HO!	**
KENYON AS DERLETH	**
(leans in, quietly)	**
I have already killed you four times. You	**
<u>know</u> what comes next.	**
TRIVIUS	**
(confused)	**
What? What comes next?	**
KENYON AS DERLETH	**
Pathetic. Before you meet me in battle	**
again, read the fucking rules.	**
Kenyon pats Trivius on the cheek condescendingly.	***
KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D)	**
Mordom departs.	**
He turns and walks away, and the Mordomites follow him	**
with fascist precision.	**
ALL MORDOMITES	**
MORDOM HO! MORDOM HO! MORDOM HO!	**
Skip witnesses this whole display, unsure of what to make	***
of it--maybe even a little admiring...	***
SKIP	**
Wow. That's hardcore.	**
Before he can consider it further, Jillia grabs Skip. She	***
is wearing an absurdly suggestive corset.	
JILLIA	
Kiss me, my prince.	

They kiss. Skip thinks they're done. But then Jillia pulls him back in for an almost unbearably graphic tongue kiss. Skip is embarrassed. \*\*\*

JILLIA (CONT'D) \*\*  
I have to go back to the crystal shop to \*\*  
get my paycheck, and then I want to meet \*\*  
you in the corn maze. \*\*

SKIP \*\*  
The corn maze? Why? \*\*

JILLIA \*\*  
I know corners of that corn maze that *no* \*\*  
*one* has ever seen. Corners that will blow \*\*  
your mind. \*\*

She kisses him again. \*\*

JILLIA (CONT'D) \*\*  
20 minutes. Don't keep your lady waiting. \*\*

SKIP \*\*  
I won't.

JILLIA \*\*  
And bring a turkey leg. I'm starving. \*\*

He watches her flounce off and continues his happy stroll. \*\*

He grabs another beer and spies Karnage, now unmasked, who is having an argument with Snobby Jack Sparrow. \*\*

SNOBBY JACK SPARROW \*\*\*  
But it's absurd! The RenFaire is about \*\*\*  
*recreating* the past. A *real* past. Not  
some magical fantasy world.

KARNAGE  
(undaunted, pure deadpan)  
Ah. So may I presume the cheesecake on a \*\*\*  
stick that I bought earlier from the food  
wench was Renaissance era cheesecake on a #  
stick? #

SNOBBY REN FAIRE  
PARTICIPANT \*\*\*  
We can't control every vendor! \*\*\*

Snobby Jack Sparrow stalks off, flustered, as Skip walks up. \*\*

SKIP

The Faire-rats giving you trouble?

KARNAGE

I do not think we will be welcome at the Renaissance Faire next year, milord.

SKIP

Well, they're Jillia's people. She wanted us to come...

Then Skip sees something by the treeline of the meadow. \*\*\*

We cut to his POV to see the Dark Elves gathered among the trees. One by one, they disappear into the woods. \*\*\*  
It's theatrical and silly and spooky all at once. \*\*\*

We cut back to Skip's reaction as he watches. \*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

Jesus. That's odd. \*\*\*

KARNAGE

(watching the Elves with Skip)

Verily, the Dark Elves are mysterious. They choose no company but their own, no allegiance but to the gold they horde in their dark caverns... to which, I suppose, they return now.

Skip shoots him a look.

While Skip will often lapse into modern slang while playing Darkon, Karnage keeps strictly to the pseudo-medieval, flowery "gamespeak" preferred during in-game conversations. In fact he's rather good at it, often verging on accidental geek poetry. #

SKIP

But who is that with them? The one without the make up?

We cut to Rebecca, among the trees. Just before she disappears, she catches Skip's eye and almost seems to smile. \*\*\*  
#  
\*\*\*

KARNAGE

(almost wistfully)

Her skin speaks human, but her movements speak elf. And yet, her face... her face is silent.

Long beat as Skip stares at his friend. This is pouring on the gamespeak a bit too thick for him. \*\*

KARNAGE (CONT'D)  
(off of Skip's look)  
I presume this conversation is over?

SKIP  
(an affectionate eye-roll) \*\*\*  
Yes, Karnage. Now go drink some ale! \*\*

Skip walks off... \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
Surely milord has not forgotten my #  
allergy to gluten? \*\*\*\*\*

EXT. INSIDE THE CORN MAZE- A LITTLE LATER \*\*

Skip is standing in a maze carved out of a tall corn field. He's holding two turkey legs and his tankard. He tries to take a drink, but it's hard with the turkey legs. He has clearly been waiting a long time. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*

Giving up, he navigates out of the maze, turkey legs in hand, and begins searching for Jillia. \*\*  
\*\*

He wanders drunkenly through the Ren Faire "town square"-- a semi-permanent assembly of shops and tents selling costumes, medieval knick knacks, and, incongruously, patio furniture and garden sheds. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
Jillia!? \*\*\*

INT. YE OLDE CRYSTALE SHOPPE - CONTINUOUS \*\*

Close up on a leering dragon's head made of crystal, mounted atop a carved wooden staff. It shudders rhythmically. It doesn't take much to figure out what is causing the motion: if this tent is rocking, you should not bother knocking. #  
#  
\*\*  
\*\*

SKIP  
(entering) \*\*  
Hello?

Then we see it: Jillia and a REN FAIRE WIZARD, dressed in blue robes and a starry cap, are half naked, doing it. \*\*\*  
Skip drops his turkey legs. #

SKIP (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

JILLIA  
Skip!?!?

#

Skip backs out of the tent quickly. He takes a breath,  
and goes back in. \*\*

Jillia and the Ren Faire Wizard are composing themselves. \*\*

JILLIA (CONT'D)  
(absurdly, brightly)  
Skip! Do you know Jeff?

\*\*

Skip is speechless. \*\*\*

JILLIA (CONT'D)  
He worked the crystal shop with me last  
year and...  
(beat)  
When I saw him again, I just...  
(beat)  
Well, you know I'm a passionate person.

\*\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Skip can't look at her. \*\*\*

SKIP  
You're with the ren faire, Jeff?

\*\*\*

REN FAIRE WIZARD  
Listen, man, I had no idea.

\*\*\*

SKIP  
No, I guess you didn't. Because if you  
had any fucking idea about anything,  
you'd know that a wizard is just an earth  
spirit in manly garb.

(beat)  
It's against the code of your order to  
have relations with mortals.

REN FAIRE WIZARD  
This is... this is just a costume.

\*\*\*

SKIP  
The code of YOUR FUCKING ORDER!

\*\*\*

Skip storms out.

There is an awkward moment as Julia and Jeff watch the  
flapping tent door. \*\*\*

After a moment, Jeff leans in to kiss her again. She gently rebuffs him. \*\*\*

JILLIA  
No... I can't. \*\*\*

But then, after very brief consideration, she turns and throws herself at him. #

EXT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - THE NEXT MORNING #

Skip sweeps up the small driveway by the river, very hungover. The old grist mill is actually pretty beautiful: a kind of 19th century Yankee Rivendell. #  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip sweeps for a bit. Then he calmly puts the broom down and walks to a railing overlooking the river. He vomits. \*\*\*

When he turns around, he sees his father standing there, very concerned. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

MAL, SR.  
Skip... \*\*\*

Skip looks awful--like he's about to cry. #

We cut to the two of them sitting on the mill's stone steps. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

MAL, SR. (CONT'D)  
I don't like to see my sons this way. You or Chaz... \*\*\*

SKIP  
Dad, Chaz accidentally killed one of his own men in Afghanistan. I'm not that bad off.

MAL, SR.  
But in a way, this is harder for me, Skip. Because this is my fault. \*\*\*

SKIP  
(confused)  
No dad, I'm pretty sure it's not your fault that my girlfriend is having sex with Jeff the Wizard.

MAL, SR.  
(surprised)  
Is that what's bothering you?



SKIP

Well, yeah. Of course.

MAL, SR.

Oh. I figured Mal, Jr. must have said something to you.

SKIP

About Jeff the Wizard?

MAL, SR.

No, Skip. About the company.

SKIP

What about the company?

MAL, SR.

I'm retiring, Skip.

Skip's ears immediately prick up. He's been waiting to hear this news for a long time. Still, he has to act shocked.

SKIP

Wow. That's... I mean, the end of an era.

MAL, SR.

OK. OK. You don't have to act sad, Skip. This isn't bad news. We all did a good job, and I'm happy to retire.

\*\*

SKIP

But, Dad, it's not like it's all over. Because, you know. I want to keep it going.

MAL, SR.

(sadly)

I know you want to, Skip. But I can't let you.

SKIP

Yes you can! Of course you can!

\*\*\*

Mal, Sr. looks at his son for a long beat, sadly.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

You're giving the business to Mal.

\*\*\*

Mal, Sr. nods sympathetically.

\*\*\*

I/E. EMPIRES CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

As they continue to talk, we cut to a shot of Mal, Jr...  
He's high up in the building's old cupola, looking out  
over the river, grinning triumphantly.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.)

But Mal hates this place.

#

MAL, SR. (V.O.)

No, Skip. You don't realize it, but he's  
saved Empires, several times.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP (V.O.)

By making plastic crap! Video game  
characters and serial killers.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

As Mal continues to grin, we cut to a close up of his  
hands... he's cradling a prototype of a figurine of the  
one of the torturers from "Hostel."

\*\*\*

Then we see his face as he admires it...

#

MAL, JR.

My precious...

MAL, SR. (V.O.)

Well, that's what's kept us afloat ever  
since the lead ruling.

\*\*

SKIP

Dad, I know our customers. I know their  
world. They'll never accept it.

#

MAL, SR.

I love you, son. But that world is dying.

\*\*\*

SKIP

I can tell you for sure that's not true.

MAL, SR.

Of course it is, Skip. It was dying the  
year you were born.

(beat. Then, reminiscing...)

In the seventies this was a nice  
business. But with the computers, forget  
it. There probably aren't 30,000 tabletop  
gamers in the whole country now.

\*\*\*

Skip broods for a moment.

SKIP

No.

MAL, SR.

We'll still need you to sculpt, of course...

\*\*\*

SKIP

No, Dad! You can't take the company you built out of nothing and just hand it all over to that happystick MBA shitbag!

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

MAL, SR.

Wait, Skip. He's your brother.

SKIP

That's not how the story is supposed to end, Dad!

\*\*\*

Mal, Sr. shrugs sadly. He seems to know that this is precisely Skip's problem.

MAL, SR.

It's not a story, Skip.

\*\*\*

Skip stands up and goes back to sweeping. Angrily

\*\*\*

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - THAT AFTERNOON

\*\*\*

Skip is walking along the two lane road, dejected.

\*\*\*

EXT. THE WAGON WHEEL - CONTINUOUS

#

Skip walks past The Wagon Wheel, a local burger and soft serve ice cream place.

He sees Chaz sitting at a picnic table eating an enormous soft serve cone dipped in chocolate magic shell (AKA Foster's Freeze). Skip walks over.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

Why didn't you pick me up?

CHAZ

(holding up his cone)

Magic shell, bro! Check it out!

#

Skip shakes his head, befuddled. He sits down.

SKIP

I have a question for you.

CHAZ

Shoot.

SKIP

You knew, didn't you? About Jillia and this other guy? Jeff?

CHAZ

The wizard? Oh yeah.

\*\*\*

Skip is speechless--are you kidding me?!

\*\*\*

CHAZ (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

Yeah. He came over when you were on your big campout in the woods. He picked her up. In his car.

\*\*\*

(pointedly)

\*\*\*

Yup. He's a driver.

SKIP

\*\*\*

Why didn't you just tell me?

CHAZ

I don't know. He's a wizard. You're a Prince Bannor or whatever. I thought maybe you were into it.

SKIP

But...

CHAZ

(studying his cone)

With this game, I just don't know you any more, bro. You're a total mystery to me.

#

#

(beat)

Man. Magic Shell. Isn't this stuff just the goddamned promise of America?

\*\*

EXT. STATE FOREST PARKING LOT - DAY

\*\*\*

It's the following weekend, and another overnight Darkon campout, this time at a Connecticut State Forest.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip and Karnage are in the parking lot, waiting in line to have their equipment checked by an Elder.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

Milord seems distracted. Are thee ready for battle?

SKIP

(kind of mean)

\*\*

Can it, Karnage. We're not in game yet.

Karnage, hurt, puts on his mask.

They hand their weapons and other paraphernalia to the Elder, who is seated at a folding card table.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER

Your weaponry is appropriate, Prince Bannor and Karnage. You may enter the realm of Darkon.

SKIP

Yeah, yeah...

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

We thank thee, O Elder.

SKIP

Let's bust some heads, Laconia!

\*\*\*

EXT. A PEACEFUL GLADE - DAY

\*\*\*

Skip and Laconia are in the midst of a skirmish with Arkopolis, while Mordom is engaged elsewhere in the forest.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip is fighting lazily. Angrily. Badly. An Arkopolitan clubs him in the side.

\*\*\*

ARKOPOLITIAN

Green club! blessed hit! Double damage!

\*\*\*

Skip ignores him and slashes at him with his sword.

\*\*\*

ARKOPOLITIAN (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

Hey! Don't you shake off my hit! You're dead, man!

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

It was a glancing blow, and I'm wearing class four armor!

ARKOPOLITIAN

It was a BLESSED HIT!

\*\*\*

An elder steps in.

ELDER

Ungomiel is right, Bannor. Go to the Underworld.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

SKIP

Fine. Whatever.

He stalks off, leaving Karnage behind.

\*\*\*

EXT. APPROACHING THE UNDERWORLD - DA

\*\*\*

Skip walks towards the Underworld in a forest clearing.

\*\*\*

He spies someone in the treeline off to the left. It's Rebecca, in Elven costume. She catches his eye and gestures for him to follow her.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip looks to the Elder waiting for him at the Underworld, and then to Rebecca. Something in his eyes says "Fuck it." He walks past the Underworld and heads for the trees.

\*\*\*  
#  
\*\*\*

EXT. DEEP IN THE STATE FOREST - DAY

\*\*\*

Skip follows Rebecca through the woods. She is fast, and he barely keeps up with her as she laughs and taunts him. They are headed uphill.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

EXT. ABOVE THE RAVINE - DAY

\*\*\*

She stops at the top of a small hillock. Suddenly, her mood shifts from flirtatious to serious, urgent.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID

\*\*\*

Ach yn cwffio'r brwydra, Bendefig Bannor.

\*\*

Skip doesn't understand.

REBECCA

\*\*\*

Agor'ch chreuau a canfod...

\*\*\*

She crouches and points through the brush. Skip joins her and looks down into the shallow ravine below them, where another Darkon battle has just concluded.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip sees Trivius once again kneeling before Kenyon and Mordom. Many more from other realms are watching. There is an air of ceremony and dread to what's happening.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

EXT. IN THE RAVINE - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

Well, Trivius, this is the end.

\*\*\*

TRIVIUS

Please don't kill me!

#

KENYON AS DERLETH

Now you understand, don't you? What it means if I kill you now? No underworld. No regeneration. Just: death.

\*\*

\*\*

TRIVIUS

Yes! I read the rules! I'm sorry!

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

(almost kindly)

I am a warrior, not an executioner. So it gives me no pleasure to do what I must.

\*\*\*

Kenyon draws his sword and "cuts off" Trivius's head.

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D)

(without emotion)

Black damage to the mortally wounded. Instant death.

\*\*

ELDER

Final-Kill! No regeneration! Sorry, kid.

\*\*\*

The host of Mordom cheers.

ALL MORDOMITES

MORDOM HO! MORDOM HO! MORDOM HO!

Trivius openly weeps. He is not role playing. According to the rules, after 5 consecutive deaths in battle, the character is considered to be so weak that the player must retire it forever.

#

#

\*\*

In a cheerless ceremony, TRIVIUS'S armor is stripped from his body by the Mordomites.

#

\*\*\*

It's pretty shitty armor, actually: a lot of corrugated cardboard and plastic. When KENYON takes apart Trivius's newest helmet and sees that it's made from a colander, even he breaks character for a moment.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KENYON.

\*\*\*

Oh, come on.

\*\*

EXT. ABOVE THE RAVINE - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

From their hiding spot, Rebecca watches this humiliation angrily. Skip watches as though he's really seeing what a jerk Kenyon is for the first time. Rebecca now speaks firmly.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID

\*\*\*

Dyma'r anturia argeisi. Dyma'r brwydra'ch baffio.

\*\*  
\*\*

Skip doesn't understand. But he gets the message. This is wrong. He looks down to the ravine again.

\*\*\*

EXT. IN THE RAVINE - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

Back in the Ravine, "Trivius" is gone. He is now merely some FAT KID NAMED PETE, blotchy patches of red shame spreading across his face, blubbering alone in his black sweatpants and an oversized t-shirt that's soaked with sweat and the misty rain that's begun to fall.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

EXT. ABOVE THE RAVINE - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

Skip turns back to where Rebecca had been crouched beside him

\*\*

She is gone, replaced by a different Dark Elf in full make up who cackles a horrible laugh right in his face, sending Skip over onto his back in shock.

\*\*\*

The LAUGHING ELF howls hysterically and begins singing a loud, bawdy-sounding song in Elftongue. The Elf dances through the forest, leaving Skip on his back in the ferns and the muck.

SKIP

Fucking elves.

EXT. STATE FOREST PARKING LOT - LATER

\*\*\*

Skip rejoins Laconia near the parking area, The day is done, and everyone is partying around a small bonfire, which sputters in the misty drizzle.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

KARNAGE

\*\*

The men were wondering where you went.

\*\*



SKIP	**
Yeah, sorry.	**
KARNAGE	**
The men were concerned that you had	**
abandoned them.	**
Skip is a little dazed--his world has just been rocked.	***
SKIP	**
Tell them.... I followed an elf into the	**
woods.	**
KARNAGE	**
I see. It may interest you to know that	**
we won.	**
SKIP	**
(still walking)	**
Oh. Good.	**
KARNAGE	**
(catching up)	**
Though I was killed.	**
SKIP	**
(walking on)	**
Oh yeah?	**
KARNAGE	**
Twice.	**
At the bonfire, Kenyon stands with his foot cocked on a	***
battered aluminum beer keg.	***
KENYON AS DERLETH	
Fellow Darkonites, Mordom celebrates a	#
great victory today. Come raise your	***
tankards! TO VICTORY!	***
With mixed enthusiasm, all join in. EXCEPT SKIP.	***
KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D)	***
Bannor? Mordom gives you ale tonight. Why	**
not drink with me, old friend?	**
Skip closes his eyes, decides, and opens them again.	***
SKIP AS BANNOR	***
Because I am not your friend anymore.	
This provokes a general hubbub and gasp.	***

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
 You shouldn't have final-killed Trivius.                   \*\*  
 It was cruel... And it was wrong.                       \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
 (concerned and shocked)  
 Milord...

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 But the Laws are quite clear... laid down               \*\*\*  
 long ago by the Elder of Elders in far                   \*\*\*  
 Milwaukee. If you are killed in five                   \*\*\*  
 consecutive battles, that is the end of               \*\*  
 your character. Trivius can create a new               \*\*\*  
 character, hopefully a stronger                       \*\*\*  
 character. Certainly a wiser one. It is               \*\*\*  
 how we have all grown in Darkon.                       \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 But I've seen you pick on him again and               \*\*  
 again, and for what? A hex of land?

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 We are by definition an imperial realm.               \*\*  
 This is known to all.                                       \*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 But you don't... you don't have to be a  
 prick about it.

KENYON AS DERLETH  
 You're a little out-of-game in your  
 speech, my friend. What is this word,  
 "prick?"

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 OK... OK...   \*\*\*  
       (struggling with game-speak)  
 Just because the bough is... weak... does  
 not mean it should be pruned.

KARNAGE  
 (to Skip)  
 Actually, milord, if you want the tree to               \*\*\*  
 survive, you really *should* prune such a  
 bough.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 Shut up, Karnage.

KENYON AS DERLETH

But your warmaster speaks well! Anyone  
with a basic understanding of treecraft \*\*\*  
knows this to be true.

(beat)

But now we speak of war. Do you challenge  
Mordom, Bannor? For surely you know you \*\*\*  
haven't the force to defeat us. \*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

(knowing that it's true)

I do not challenge you on the  
battlefield, Lord Derleth. I instead  
propose a tribunal of all the Realms... \*\*\*

(making it up as he goes) \*\*\*

...to judge your behavior... and consider \*\*\*  
a charge of war crimes.

KENYON AS DERLETH

(momentarily speechless) \*\*\*

It is my turn to speak out-of-game.  
Bannor. This is Darkon. This isn't the  
fucking Haque. \*\*\*

(beat) \*\*\*

You didn't stop me from killing him  
before. \*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

It's not just Trivius. Mordom has bullied \*\*  
and trampled many small realms. Is that \*\*\*  
what this game is about? Power? Greed? \*\*\*  
Fucking marketshare? If so, I can get all \*\*  
that out THERE...

(indicating the real world)

I don't need it in Darkon \*\*

Reaction shots from THE FORMER TRIVIUS, amazed and  
grateful, as well as others. Skip has struck a chord with \*\*\*  
the crowd. \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

What are you really after, Bannor? Land? \*\*\*  
Riches? Or just a hopeless cause? \*\*\*

Skip eyes Rebecca, watching from the now attentive crowd. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*

I seek only justice.

KENYON AS DERLETH

Ha! That's about as hopeless as it gets, #  
I guess. #

SKIP

Enough parley! I demand you stand before  
the tribunal of the Fourteen Realms!

KARNAGE

Um, 13 actually, now that Trivius is dead

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

...The Tribunal of the Thirteen  
Realms.... that I am founding right  
now... and will convene at the next  
campout. And if you should be found  
guilty, then your own character shall be  
sacrificed, just like Trivius.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

(amused and a little amazed)

Fine. Form your tribunal. But you will  
have to capture me before I stand before  
it. And if I instead kill you? Will you  
put yourself before the same harsh  
penalty and sacrifice Laconia to me?

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

His fellow Laconians exchange wary glances, but Skip  
looks only to Rebecca as he says...

\*\*\*

SKIP

I will.

And so the sun sets once more on Darkon, and Skip wonders  
what he has gotten himself into.

\*\*\*

INT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - SOME DAYS LATER

\*\*\*

Skip is at his workbench. A half-completed plastic  
statuette of a torture scene from the movie "Saw" is on a  
stand beside him, but he is studying the "Big Map" of  
Darkon.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Mal, Jr. comes up behind him.

\*\*\*

MAL, JR.

You have a visitor, Skip.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Really?

\*\*

MAL, JR.

Yeah, a pretty little thing, too.

\*\*

Skip's eyes light up. He rushes off, checking his  
appearance.

\*\*

\*\*

Mal, Jr laughs and looks at the torture sculpture, \*\*\*  
adjusting it a little. \*\*\*

EXT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - CONTINUOUS

We see Mal's "pretty little thing": an imposing, obese \*\*\*  
biker named DAMON, 42, another Darkon player. \*\*\*

DAMON  
Hey, Bannor. \*\*

SKIP  
Call me Skip. You're what? Oxtar? Right? \*\*\*

DAMON  
Oxholt, actually.  
(shrugs) \*\*  
Damon.

They shake hands.

DAMON (CONT'D)  
I'm with the Moon Mountain Clan. I also \*\*\*  
work up at the Rendezvous in Turner's  
Falls.

SKIP  
Oh yeah, sure. \*\*\*

DAMON  
Wow. This is really Empires Minis, huh? I  
knew you guys were around here, but I  
didn't realize this was the place.

SKIP  
Yeah. But it's not the same anymore.

DAMON  
Still: holy shit, you know? That bezerker #  
set from like, 77? That was incredible. #

SKIP  
It was 1981, actually. #

DAMON  
Really? Jesus, how old are you? \*\*\*

SKIP  
29.

DAMON

Huh. Anyway. I come as an envoy from the Moon Mountains. This thing you have with Mordom. We'll back you up.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Really?

DAMON

Yeah. Kenyon's a shit and a half. Plus, he's taken a lot of hexes from us. Buncha of iron mines, silver mines, some castles. We'd love some payback.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

Wow. OK. Great!

\*\*\*

DAMON

But listen: we don't want to be on the losing side of this.

\*\*\*

\*\*

SKIP

Uh, huh.

There's a long, long pause.

DAMON

So what we want to know is, are you going to pull it off?

Skip realizes he is going to have to really sell this one.

#

SKIP

Yes. With the warriors of the Moon Mountains... and others will join us too... we WILL defeat Mordom. You have my word as a member of the noble council.

Damon studies him for a moment. Then shakes his hand.

DAMON

We swear allegiance.

Skip is happy and amazed.

I/E. SKIP'S SHITTY SUBRAU - DAY

\*\*\*

That afternoon, Karnage is driving as Skip talks.

\*\*\*

SKIP

It was incredible. And four other realms  
e-mailed their allegiance today, too.  
This thing is really going to happen!

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*

KARNAGE

Mordom is still a strong foe.

SKIP

What have you heard from Arkopolis?

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

They are remaining neutral for now. Like  
many, they fear a vengeful Mordom should  
we not prevail.

\*\*\*

SKIP

We'll prevail. You ought to have seen  
this guy. He'll prevail all over their  
asses. You're coming tonight, right?

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

KARNAGE

Yes. I am bringing beef jerky.

INT. SKIP'S DOORWAY - THAT NIGHT

\*\*\*

Skip has called a big meeting at his house for all the  
realms that have joined him. As they arrive, Chaz greets  
them affably at the door.

\*\*  
\*\*

A GUY WITH AN ENORMOUS BEARD arrives.

CHAZ

Awesome to see you. Entrez.

\*\*\*

A TALL GUY carrying a snake's head staff arrives.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

What is that, a snake's head? NICE!

Marius and Darius arrive together.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Hey! It's the twins! Which is which?

\*\*\*

MARIUS

Hey, Chaz.

DARIUS

Hey.

\*\*\*

Karnage arrives with beef jerky.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

My man with the jerky!

KARNAGE

Well, I'm allergic to products containing gluten.

CHAZ

Dude, I know. Get the fuck in here!

\*\*\*

INT. SKIP'S HOUSE - NIGHT

20 Darkonites crowd around Skip and Karnage at the kitchen table, while Chaz watches golf in the living room

\*\*

\*\*\*

MARIUS

So you're saying they're actually building a castle?!

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

Actually, it is a plywood structure that is merely fashioned to look like a castle. But yes: Mordom gained permission from the farm's owner. They've been building it now for a couple of days.

\*\*\*

#

#

DARIUS

And it's two stories high?

SKIP

Relax. It's a psychological ploy. It'll be no different than storming an *imaginary* structure. We've done it lots of times before.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

That isn't the primary complication.

\*\*\*

Karnage pulls out a piece of hex paper where he's sketched a map.

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

The Mordomite castle is at the top of this hill. Its back is to the adjoining property, so we can only approach it through this narrow gully. It will be hard to get our siege weapons up there.

\*\*\*

\*\*

CHAZ

(shouting from the couch)

\*\*\*

And an approaching column is like a shooting gallery to a fortified position. You'll be massacred.

\*\*

(watching TV again)

\*\*\*

Killer putt!

\*\*\*



SKIP

Come on. We won't be massacred.

#

Everyone seems doubtful.

SKIP (CONT'D)

Don't listen to my brother. We won't be massacred.

\*\*

Damon comes into the kitchen.

DAMON

Skip. You're getting an IM on your computer. It's the Elder of Elders.

Everyone is shocked into silence.

SKIP

Ok. Ok. Cool.

They all crowd around Skip's Ikea desk. It's crammed with various books and papers and a huge old PC monitor.

\*\*\*

The screen reads... "THE ELDER OF ELDERS REQUESTS A VIDEO CHAT WITH YOU. DO YOU ACCEPT?"

\*\*

Skip adjusts his computer camera and clicks "Accept."

On screen, the face of a middle aged man comes into view: THE ELDER OF ELDERS, 51, is the founder of Darkon... a mysterious, eccentric burnout who first wrote the rules of the game in the 1980s.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

The following conversation stutters along awkwardly as the video chat software attempts to keep up with the dialogue.

\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS

Hello? Are you there?

\*\*\*

SKIP

Yes. I'm here.

ELDER OF ELDERS

So. You're "Bannor?"

\*\*\*

SKIP

Yes. Skip McIntyre. What should I call you? "Elder of Elders?"

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS

(thinks it over)

Yeah. That's good.

(MORE)

ELDER OF ELDERS (CONT'D)

So listen, I got your e-mail here. You \*\*\*  
want to capture and try this other \*\*\*  
player? This "Lord Derleth?" \*\*\*

SKIP

That's right.

ELDER OF ELDERS

And the Circle of Elders and The Noble \*\*\*  
Council... they've really OK'ed this?

SKIP

Yes, Elder... of Elders. But on the \*\*  
condition that I get your approval.

ELDER OF ELDERS

Got it. But who is this guy? What's the  
big beef?

SKIP

Well. Basically, sir, he's choked off all \*\*\*  
the hexes on the map. No one can grow  
their territory, and if they try, he  
bullies them out of it.

ELDER OF ELDERS

Uh huh. A real asshole, huh? #

SKIP

(laughing along) \*\*  
Your words, not mine!

ELDER OF ELDERS

(dubious) \*\*\*  
Bannor, this is a WAR game. The whole  
point of this thing is to work out your \*\*\*  
differences by *FIGHTING*.

SKIP

OK. Well. I've thought a lot about this,  
sir. And what I think is that Darkon is  
something more than a war game.

(beat)

Look, in life, we all want to do great \*\*\*\*\*  
things. To stand up for something. But \*\*\*\*\*  
let's face it. In real life, what do we \*\*\*\*\*  
do? Our laundry. We go to work, take shit \*\*\*\*\*  
from our bosses, go home, jack off before \*\*\*  
we go to sleep, and then wake up and do \*\*\*  
it all over again.

ELDER OF ELDERS

Very poetic.

SKIP

Sorry. I live in a really shitty town. \*\*\*\*\*

(clearly he's rehearsed this)

But Darkon, in Darkon we have a chance to be the hero. It's not just land hexes and gold pieces. That's all Kenyon cares about. \*\*\*

But most of us in Darkon, we're fighting for something bigger. We're fighting for a life that has meaning. \*\*\*

The Elder of Elders takes it all in.

ELDER OF ELDERS

All right, all right, Skip. I'm going to OK this scheme. Just take some advice from an old warrior, OK? #

SKIP

Thank you! Yes, yes, of course! \*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS

You can only fight one enemy at a time, Skip. Do you get what I mean? \*\*\*

SKIP

(not getting it at all)

Right! Gotcha! \*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS

Good. Look, my kid needs the computer to research flightless birds, so I gotta go. You take care now. \*\*\*

SKIP

Thank you! Thank you, Elder of Elders! #

The video chat ends, and the window goes black. Laconia and her allies cheer. \*\*\*

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

\*\*\*

The next day, Skip is standing in line for coffee. He has a big bag from the art supply store full of foam and other material for making weapons and armor and such.

As he waits, he sees the player once known as Trivius working behind the counter, fumbling hopelessly with the cash register. #

The Former Trivius catches sight of Skip, and beams-a friend!

But Skip freaks out and leaves without speaking to him. Even though he's championing this kid's cause, Skip still considers him something of a loser. \*\*\*

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY \*\*\*

Exiting Starbucks, Skip finds the bus stop and waits \*\*\*

As he does, he notices Rebecca walking down Main Street toward him. He's totally surprised and happy. \*\*\*

As she approaches...

SKIP \*\*\*  
Oh, Hey! I'm... I'm glad to run into you...

Rebecca meets his gaze, even flirtatiously...

SKIP (CONT'D)  
I've actually been trying to find out, you know, who you are, so I can tell you what we're doing...

But Rebecca refuses to speak as she walks right by him.

SKIP (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Fucking elves.

At this, Rebecca stops, turns.

REBECCA.  
(without looking back)  
*Changeling.*

SKIP  
What?

REBECCA.  
*Changeling.* I'm a human, kidnapped at birth by the elves and switched in the cradle for one of their own kind.  
(beat)  
They *call* me Elvenmaid. But I was only *raised* by elves. \*\*\*

SKIP  
 (unsure how to react)  
 Oh. OK.

\*\*\*

REBECCA.  
 Out here, though, I'm Rebecca Dillon. And  
 the reason I didn't talk to you is  
 because we've never met. Out here.

SKIP  
 Jesus, that's odd.

REBECCA.  
 No. It's the rules. No relationships  
inside of Darkon can be carried out  
outside of Darkon. And vice versa.

SKIP  
 Do we... Are we in a relationship?

REBECCA.  
 (flirtatiously)  
 If you dare entangle with a fucking elf.

\*\*\*

She turns and walks to the end of the street. A  
 convertible drives up, full of Dark Elves--out of make-  
 up, but still very weird. She gets in back.

\*\*\*

REBECCA. (CONT'D)  
 Do you need a ride?

SKIP  
 (lying)  
 Nope. I'm good.

#

He stares after her as they drive away. He is in love.

\*\*\*

EXT. THE CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - EVENING

\*\*\*

It is the weekend of THE SIEGE OF MORDOM. All the realms  
 of Darkon have gathered at a farm they occasionally rent  
 for campouts--30 hilly acres of mixed woods, meadows,  
 dairy pasture, and a sprawling Christmas Tree farm.

\*\*\*

#

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

From above, we watch as some 120 Darkonites walk through  
 the Christmas Trees and gather around an Elder, who  
 stands upon a stump.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER  
 This will be an adventure of three nights  
 and two days. As always, Stone Trolls are  
 afoot, so be wary.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

The woman in the ridiculous foam rubber monster costume roars. #

ELDER (CONT'D) \*\*  
 All of the ancient relics of Darkon are \*\*  
 in use, including the Javelin of  
 Lightning, which Lady Mithandra of  
 Belkianland did us the favor of mending  
 last week.

General applause. LADY MITHANDRA holds a yellow foam-covered PVC pipe above her head proudly. \*\*

ELDER (CONT'D)  
 (with a stern look to Skip)  
 But as you know, the Brooch of Disruption  
 remains lost. \*\*

We cut to Skip looking sheepish. \*\*

ELDER (CONT'D)  
 Now normally the Circle of Elders would  
 devise a plot to guide you through this  
 weekend. But fate has already written a \*\*  
 fine story. Prince Bannor of Laconia and \*\*  
 his allies seek to lay siege upon Castle  
 Mordom and capture Lord Derleth. \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH \*\*  
 We wish him good fate!

Many Mordomites laugh, but there are many new faces among his troops who just seem confused. \*\*\*

Karnage, masked, whispers to Bannor. \*\*

KARNAGE \*\*\*  
 Mordom has grown stronger than I feared. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 They're all newbies. He probably  
 recruited them at the RenFaire.

KARNAGE  
 Numbers are numbers, Milord.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 Don't worry, Karnage. I've made some new  
 allies. \*\*

ELDER  
 ...For now, though, return to the camps  
 of your realm and make merry, for the  
 battle is joined at dawn. Hail Darkon.

\*\*  
 \*\*

ALL  
 Hail!

EXT. LACONIA CAMPSITE - DUSK

On a clearing in a hillside, the Laconians have created a  
 small city of camp tents that have been kitted out with  
 green and gold banners. A small fire burns.

\*\*

INT. SKIP'S TENT - DUSK

Skip sits alone by the light of several oil-lamps,  
 waiting. He's wearing a kind of toga--Darkon leisurewear.

A LACONIAN HERALD enters.

LACONIAN HERALD  
 My prince, two visitors approach.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 Admit them.

The Laconian Herald reluctantly holds open the tent flap  
 for Rebecca and a Dark Elf, who acts as her translator.

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
 Please enter.

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID  
 Anerchiadau, Bendefig Bannor

\*\*

TRANSLATOR ELF  
 Elfkind speaks greetingses to human-  
 prince.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
 And I greet you both. Have you come to a  
 decision?

\*\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID  
 Arglwydd Delver wedi  
 cysidro'ch chynnig. Adora.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

TRANSLATOR ELF  
 The Elf-King has thinksied and the Elf-  
 King has thinksied  
 (MORE)

TRANSLATOR ELF (CONT'D)

(beat)

And he agreees. We will take your many  
gold pieces.

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID

Asethwn ynoch i mewn'ch  
brwydra erbyn Mordom

\*\*

\*\*

TRANSLATOR ELF

We fight the Mordoms with you, aye.

SKIP

(excited)

\*\*\*

I thank you, good elves. Your payment  
awaits outside.

Rebecca nods. With a word of Elftongue, she sends the  
translator out of the tent. He leaves.

Now alone in the tent, Skip and Rebecca stare at each  
other. Wordlessly, awkwardly, they figure out what's  
going to happen next. They kiss, and end up going crazy  
on one another.

\*\*\*

EXT. THE SIEGE BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Skip, full of hope, leads the armies of the Allied Free  
Realms against Castle Mordom.

They enter the narrow, uphill gully between huge fir  
trees that Karnage described, pushing with them three  
cumbersome catapults.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

It's a hard slog uphill. Finally, they see CASTLE MORDOM  
looming before them.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

True to Karnage's description, it's a plywood facade made  
to look like a castle. It only has three sides concealing  
a narrow catwalk stalked by Kenyon and his Mordomites.

But it is still more elaborate than anything anyone in  
Darkon has ever seen, and it has an undeniable  
psychological effect upon the attackers.

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

(under his breath)

Oh, god.

\*\*

EXT. ATOP MORDOM CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Kenyon raises his right fist.



KENYON AS DERLETH  
Wait for it... Wait for it...

\*\*\*

EXT. THE SIEGE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Karnage approaches skip.

KARNAGE  
We've lost the wheels on one of the  
catapults, milord.

Skip winces, then composes himself.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
It will have to do.  
(aloud, turning)  
Free Realms of Darkon! For too long,  
Mordom has towered over us, and we have  
fought in its shadow. But I say to you,  
this is the LAST morning they will stand  
so tall!

\*\*\*  
\*\*  
#  
\*\*\*

All cheer

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
Are you ready? Are you ready to tear down  
the might of Mordom? And build in its  
place something better...

But, in mid-sentence, the charge has already begun,  
swirling around Skip madly.

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)  
OK. OK. Then. Charge!

#

EXT. ATOP MORDOM CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

KENYON AS DERLETH  
(he lowers his fist)  
Kill them all.

A volley of arrows flies over the walls. The battle is  
engaged.

\*\*

On the Laconian side, the two catapults are moved into  
position. One manages to lob a bevy of green catapult  
balls over the walls of Mordom, taking out a few of their  
archers, but the other catapult fails and cannot be  
repaired.

\*\*\*

A Laconian ally reaches the castle door and touches the handle. An Elder immediately steps in. \*\*\*

ELDER \*\*\*  
That door is boobytrapped. Instant death! \*\*\*

A thief approaches the castle wall and mimes "scaling" it \*\*\*

LACONIAN THIEF \*\*\*  
Scaling the wall! Scaling the wall! \*\*\*

But from atop the wall, a Mordomite dumps a bucket of water on him. \*\*

MORDOMITE \*\*  
This is boiling oil! \*\*

LACONIAN THIEF  
(miming extreme pain)  
Ahhhhhh! Ahhhhhh!

As each wave of Laconia and its allies approach, they are quickly dispatched by Mordom's own arrows, javelins, and spell balls. #

Stationed at the rear of the fight, calling out orders, Skip realizes that Chaz was right. It's going to be a massacre. His face shows it: he will let them all down. \*\*

Then: a strange SOUND. From the woods to the rear of the battlefield a haunting KEENING is heard: ELFSONG. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR \*\*\*  
(brightening) \*\*  
Elfsong! \*\*

All pause to listen to the frightening, haunting noise. Even the "dead" hitch themselves up to listen. #

Then, suddenly, screeching, 20 Dark Elves, including Rebecca, rush in from the treeline behind them. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D) \*\*  
The elves join our fight! Attack! \*\*\*

Then Skip notices the strange Laughing Elf from before. He seems to be running directly at Skip. Cackling with mad glee, the Laughing Elf tackles him, knocking him to the ground. Skip briefly blacks out. \*\*\*

When he comes to, he sees the Dark Elves attacking his own men. He realizes he has been betrayed. \*\*\*

Getting to his feet, Skip sees Karnage cornered by a Dark Elf. Before the Dark Elf can land the killing blow, Skip mortally wounds him, saving his old friend.

Karnage gets to his feet, but he holds his arm out stiffly. #  
#

KARNAGE  
I am lightly wounded on my left arm. #

SKIP AS BANNOR  
I can heal you.  
(touching his friend's arm)  
5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30...  
(in between counts)  
The elves betrayed us. 35... 40.... 45... \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
As the saying goes, an elf that's been paid once is an elf that knows he can be paid twice.

SKIP AS BANNOR  
75...80...95...100. Thou art healed.

KARNAGE  
Thank you, milord. \*\*\*

They hear a terrible CREAKING. \*\*

We cut to see the doors of the castle opening. The host of Mordor pours forth from the gate. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip rushes toward the castle. Karnage pulls him back.

KARNAGE (CONT'D)  
No, milord. We cannot take the castle--we must break the elves' line if we have any hope of retreat to the woods. \*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR  
(out of control)  
No. NO RETREAT. \*\*\*

He turns, furious. He can't help but throw himself angrily, almost suicidally, upon the nearest enemy. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Meanwhile, Kenyon, swaggers triumphantly through Castle Mordom's gate. He is joined by DELVER, King of the Elves. \*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip fights on. His sheer anger carries him for a while, but he is actually punching and kicking the other players: a gross violation of the rules. And what remains of the armies he led into battle are slowly vanquished.

\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Eventually, Skip runs out of steam and finds himself wheezing, in the midst of a full-on asthma attack. He falls to his knees, alone, facing Kenyon and Delver. Skip is finished.

There really isn't any joy on KENYON'S face as he pulls out his black foam sword. Fade to black.

\*\*\*

EXT. THE SIEGE BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Fade up. Skip kneels, silent in the grass, surrounded by all of Darkon. He is friendless, countryless, and he is being slowly stripped of the armor he had been working so hard on in the opening scenes.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

As this goes on, Skip watches Kenyon pay Delver for the Dark Elves' services. Skip also spots Rebecca among the Elves, who is clearly sad, but she shrugs: what are you going to do?

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Then, one by one, the Elves do their disappearing act into the forest. As the last piece of armor is taken from Skip, Bannor is banished from Darkon forever.

\*\*\*

I/E. COLLEGE BUS - MORNING

\*\*

Skip is riding the bus. He's sitting in the exact same spot as he was in the opening voice over, except now he is not in costume, and no one bothers to stare.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*

INT. MAL, JR.'S OFFICE AT EMPIRES - DAY

Mal, Jr. sits at his desk, clicking his ballpoint, sizing up his brother who sits across from him.

\*\*\*

MAL, JR.

So. You're in the real world for good now, huh?

SKIP

What's that supposed to mean?

MAL, JR.

Look, Skip. Don't get me wrong. You're our best sculptor. But I won't lie and say that the game wasn't a distraction.

\*\*\*

Reflexively, Skip opens his mouth to fight back, but then stops himself. He has no fight left. He sighs

\*\*\*

MAL, JR. (CONT'D)

The truth, Skip? I'm glad you're here now. 100%. I mean it.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip is taken off guard by his sincerity.

SKIP

OK, Mal.

MAL, JR.

(suddenly cheerful)

Well! That completes your first quarterly review.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

He scribbles on a piece of carbon paper, signs it, and hands it to Skip, keeping a copy for himself.

\*\*\*

You see, I told you it would be painless!

\*\*\*

SKIP

Great, Mal.

Skip just gets up and goes back to work. He notices that everyone on the small staff is now wearing ties.

\*\*\*

INT. SKIP'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The place is a mess. Cheetos on the floor. Dishes in the sink. Lamps without shades: pure bachelor indolence. Skip and Chaz are watching the new Battlestar Galactica.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

So how the fuck can they be Cylons? Those aren't robots!

#

#

SKIP

(bored)

They're the new model. Like replicants.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

What's a...

SKIP

(anticipating the question)

Robots that look like humans, even at the cellular level. \*\*\*

We cut to the TV screen. It's the first season BSG episode where Starbuck is torturing a Cylon. Chaz can't believe what he's seeing. \*\*\*

CHAZ

Is she.... waterboarding that replicant? \*\*\*

He's troubled by the scene, but appreciative of its accuracy to what he may have seen or heard about. \*\*\*

CHAZ (CONT'D)

That's intense. \*\*\*

SKIP

(shrugs)

Told you. \*\*\*

INT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - DAY

Skip is working on a bust of yet another woman being tortured by yet another maniac. His heart isn't in it. #

MAL, JR.

Hey, Skip. Superkiller is outside for you.

SKIP

Who?

MAL, JR.

What's his name? The weird one from the D&D club. Bloodbath. #

SKIP

Karnage?

MAL, JR.

Ha ha! That's it!... Wow. #

We cut to a view through Skip's window of Karnage, in street clothes, waiting for Skip outside. He's walking back and forth between two trees, touching one then quickly spinning and fast-walking to touch the other, like some kind of OCD ritual. Admittedly, it's pretty weird. \*\*\*

We come back to Mal and Skip. \*\*\*

MAL, JR. (CONT'D)  
 That is one first class freak. No  
 offense, but that right there is the past  
 of this company, Skip. And thank god.

\*\*\*  
 #

Skip turns and looks Mal, Jr. in the eyes. Mal, Jr. is  
 oblivious to how he might have just hurt his brother's  
 feelings.

MAL, JR. (CONT'D)  
 You know, Skip...

Skip spits in Mal's face. The gob hits Mal, Jr. awkwardly  
 in the cheek. It's not a triumphant moment, but a stupid,  
 pointless gesture. Then he storms out.

#  
 \*\*\*

SKIP  
 Carve your own torture porn. I quit.

\*\*

INT. THE GREENFIELD APPLEBEE'S - LATER

\*\*

Skip and Karnage are having lunch together.

\*\*\*

A waitress is taking Karnage's order.

KARNAGE  
 I'll have the Steak Sizzler Number Three.  
 But no potatoes, please.

\*\*\*

WAITRESS  
 Which cheese topping for your steak?

\*\*\*

KARNAGE  
 What are my choices?

WAITRESS  
 Blue, spicy jack, or buffalo cheddar.

\*\*\*

SKIP  
 (impatiently)  
 Buffalo cheddar.

\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*  
 \*\*

KARNAGE  
 I'll try the Buffalo cheddar

#

WAITRESS  
 Great!

\*\*\*

After she leaves.

KARNAGE  
 (awkward, robotically)  
 So. How are you? #

SKIP  
 You know, it's fine. Everything's fine. \*\*  
 It's not fine. \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
 I see. As for me, I've joined the realm  
 of Mordom.

Karnage takes a sip of his enormous coke as casually as possible.

SKIP  
 What? \*\*

KARNAGE  
 I am simply telling you news from my  
 life.

SKIP  
 But, I mean. What the fuck? We started  
 Laconia. \*\*\*

KARNAGE  
 Yes, but Laconia no longer exists.

SKIP  
 But Laconia was our dream... #

KARNAGE  
 True, but it no longer exists. \*\*

SKIP  
 Our dream for a different kind of realm.  
 One where...

KARNAGE  
 I think you'll agree that this exchange  
 is no longer operating at peak  
 efficiency.

The waitress comes back with rolls. \*\*\*

WAITRESS  
 Here are your rolls.

KARNAGE  
 No rolls!



WAITRESS

OK. Sorry. I'll be right back with your sizzlers.

She leaves.

SKIP

This makes no sense.

KARNAGE

On the contrary. We both know I lack certain social skills needed to lead my own realm. Do you deny it?

Skip is amazed at Karnage's self-awareness.

\*\*\*

SKIP

\*\*\*

No.

KARNAGE

Since you are no longer playing Darkon anymore, logic dictates that I must join the strongest realm that will have me.

Karnage takes out a sheet of hex paper.

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

I've drawn a flowchart that might help...

\*\*\*

Karnage pushes the hex paper across the table. Skip pushes it aside brusquely.

\*\*\*

SKIP

I don't want to look at any fucking hex paper.

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

At the risk of sounding impertinent, perhaps that is why Laconia no longer exists.

\*\*

\*\*

Skip glowers at him. He tears the hex paper up.

\*\*\*

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

Skip. Darkon is a game...

SKIP

No. *Andrew*. Darkon is *not* just a game. Big world, little world: it's the same... the same shitty world. The assholes still win. The nice guys still finish last. And everyone you think loves you betrays you.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

\*\*\*

May I presume this conversation is over?

Karnage is now crying.

\*\*

Skip feels guilty and angry at the same time. He doesn't know what to say. After a long moment, the waitress brings their steak sizzlers.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

WAITRESS

\*\*

Sizzlers!

\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S CARPORT - DAY

\*\*

Skip is standing in his carport, looking at his Subaru. He has a piece of paper in his hand. It's clear he's come to some sort of decision.

\*\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

He takes a breath and opens the car door. He sits down. Because Chaz always drives, Skip realizes he's a mile from the steering wheel. He fumbles around for a long, long time trying to figure out how to adjust the seat.

\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*

Through the car window, we see the bottom half of Chaz as he strolls by.

\*\*

\*\*

CHAZ

\*\*

Underneath and to the right.

\*\*

Skip reaches under the seat, finds the lever, and scoots forward. Then he starts the car.

\*\*

\*\*

I/E. SKIP'S SHITTY SUBRAU - DAY

Skip is driving, nervously. We do not know where's he's heading or what his intention is. He's looking at a Google maps print out as he drives, which makes it a little dangerous.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

EXT. A SUBURBAN RANCH HOUSE - DAY

\*\*

The Subaru pulls up in front of a suburban ranch home, which is about as awful as you'd expect.

\*\*

Skip rings the bell. A SUBURBAN WOMAN, late 50s, perhaps a little drunk, opens the door. Taking one look at Skip, she figures him for a Darkon player. She dismisses him...

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SUBURBAN WOMAN

\*\*\*

Down the lawn, around the back.

... and closes the door in his face.

\*\*\*

Skip, puzzled, follows her directions. He walks around the house, down a sloping lawn, until he finds the door to the finished basement. Down below the grass-line, it sort of resembles the entrance to a Hobbit hole.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip knocks. Rebecca opens the door. This is who Skip was looking for. She doesn't know what to say.

SKIP

I. Um. Well. Look. I don't know why you did what you did. But I figure: OK. It was the game. It was just the game.

\*\*\*

Rebecca nods, still speechless.

SKIP (CONT'D)

OK. And it got me to thinking. If it was in the game, I mean... now that we don't have a relationship in the game anymore, does that... I mean, does that mean...?

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

And she kisses him. And they go inside.

INT. REBECCA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They have sex. It is very honest: they are not incredibly good looking people, and they are not great at sex. But they are sincerely excited, scared, and hot for each other, and that should carry through on screen.

\*\*\*

Afterward, they lie looking at each other. Rebecca smiles. Then she covers her face with her hands.

SKIP

What?

REBECCA.

I have a son.

SKIP

A son?

REBECCA.

I should have told you right away. It's just... we didn't really speak much English before.

SKIP

You mean, like a baby?

REBECCA.  
No. No. He's 11. \*\*\*

SKIP  
11? Well that... \*\*\*

REBECCA.  
...makes me a former teenage mother, yes. \*\*\*

SKIP  
You're a mom... #

REBECCA.  
(now unapologetic)  
That's what I'm explaining to you. \*\*\*

SKIP  
A mom... I'd like to fuck. Literally.

REBECCA.  
(deadpan)  
Hilarious.

She starts getting dressed.

My son's name is Ralph.

She pronounces it "Rayfe" \*\*\*

SKIP  
Like Ralph Finnes?

REBECCA.  
(decisively)  
No.

She checks the clock radio as she puts on her underwear.

REBECCA. (CONT'D)  
He's a very good person, and also a very  
loud person. And he will be home from  
school in about five minutes.

RALPH (O.C.)  
MOM!!!!!!!!!!

REBECCA.  
(calm)  
Or right now.

Rebecca swiftly moves to the bedroom door and locks it.  
She points at Skip and whispers firmly. \*\*\*

REBECCA. (CONT'D)  
Do. Not. Speak.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip pulls up the covers.

\*\*\*

INT. REBECCA'S BASEMENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ralph, 11, husky and towheaded and lumbering, plows  
through the living room, dropping his army-navy backpack.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

RALPH  
Mom?!!!

We follow Ralph into the small kitchen.

\*\*\*

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ralph opens the breadbox, takes a whole loaf of unsliced  
bread and gnaws off an enormous hunk.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

RALPH  
(with mouth full)  
Mom??!!!

Ralph goes through the kitchen and upstairs.

RALPH (CONT'D)  
Grandmom?

We hold on the kitchen for a spell while we hear him  
pounding around upstairs like giant: BOOM BOOM BOOM.

\*\*\*

He comes back down.

RALPH (CONT'D)  
Jesus Christ, where is everyone?

He walks into the living room where we find...

\*\*\*

INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...Skip, dressed, sitting too-casually on the sofa.  
Rebecca is standing in the middle of the room.

RALPH  
Mom. You tell me to be home by 3 o'clock.  
And *you're* not even home. That's  
unfucking fair, don't you think?

REBECCA.  
 (calmly) \*\*\*  
 You could make that argument. Ralph, this  
 is...  
 (she realizes she doesn't know his real name) \*\*\*  
 ...Bannor. \*\*\*

SKIP  
 Skip.

REBECCA.  
 Skip? Oh. \*\*\*

Skip nods. \*\*\*

REBECCA. (CONT'D)  
 Skip.

RALPH  
 Oh god. Are you one of mom's fantasy  
 friends?

SKIP  
 Not really. Not anymore.

REBECCA.  
 Skip gave me a ride home from the store.

SKIP  
 Yes. I did. I did give her a ride. In my #  
 car, I mean. It's parked outside. \*\*\*

Ralph knows what is going on. He doesn't like it, but  
 he's still too young and squeamish around this topic to  
 say anything about it. He's happier accepting the lie.

RALPH  
 Fine. I'm going up to Grandmom's to watch #  
 cable.

REBECCA.  
 OK.

The two face off for a moment, sizing up who is control. \*\*\*

REBECCA. (CONT'D)  
 Give me the loaf of bread, Ralph. \*\*\*

Ralph sighs dramatically and hands it over. \*\*\*

RALPH  
 See ya, Bilbo.

Then he turns and pounds through the kitchen and up the stairs. Rebecca watches as he goes. Skip realizes his t-shirt is on inside out. \*\*\*

REBECCA.  
(letting Skip off the hook) \*\*\*  
You can leave now, if you want.

SKIP  
(amazed that he's saying it) \*\*\*  
I... I don't want to. \*\*\*

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rebecca is making dinner. Every motion she makes is confident, unapologetic. There's eerie cool to her manner, honed by so many years of defending the decisions she's made. But now it's just who she is. \*\*\*

REBECCA.  
Ralph's father did the best he could. But he was a Lacrosse player. When that was done, all that was left was the assholism. To his credit, he knew it. He's in Vermont now, selling marijuana and kitchen cabinets and having sex with college girls. \*\*\*  
(pause) \*\*\*  
He's happy.

SKIP  
My mom left my dad. She's a lesbian psychotherapist now in Santa Fe. So Ralph... he must be pretty angry. \*\*\*

REBECCA.  
(setting the table) \*\*\*  
Yes he is. But on the other hand, I am a really, really good mother. \*\*\*

She says it, and he believes it. \*\*\*

SKIP  
Wow.

REBECCA.  
No point being modest.  
(yells suddenly)  
RALPH! DINNER!

RALPH (O.C.)  
 (yells from upstairs) \*\*\*  
 FINE! JESUS!

SKIP  
 Plus, you have your mother's help.

REBECCA.  
 She has been a help. To Ralph.

Ralph pounds down the stairs. He is holding a hot pocket.

RALPH  
 Grandmom's having pizza rolls.

REBECCA.  
 (grimacing) \*\*\*  
 You don't want to eat that, really?

Ralph nods happily. \*\*\*

REBECCA. (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
Really? Urg. Homework?

RALPH  
 Did it. Math, too.

REBECCA.  
 What's she watching up there?

RALPH  
 Golden Girls.

REBECCA.  
 (calculates, and negotiates) \*\*\*  
 OK. Take this salad with you and go.

She hands him a plate of salad. He takes it, smiling, genuinely.

RALPH  
 Thanks, mom.

He pounds back upstairs. She sits down and they eat.

SKIP \*\*  
 How did you get into Darkon?

She thinks seriously about how to tell the whole story. \*\*\*



REBECCA.

I went to Smith College. We did a lot of howling at the moon. Eventually I fell in with the Society of Creative Anachronism.

SKIP

Yeah. I did the same thing. At UMass. I used to walk around campus with a cloak and a stuffed dragon on my shoulder.

REBECCA.

Please tell me that is not true.

SKIP

Yeah, it was pretty bad. But I had been gaming since I was a little kid. It was in my family, you know. My dad had founded Empires right at the beginning...

REBECCA.

(calmly stopping him)

We were talking about me.

\*\*\*

SKIP

What? Oh. Right. I'm sorry. What did you study at Smith?

REBECCA.

The role of women in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.

SKIP

Really? Wow. Gilbert and Sullivan?

#

REBECCA.

Yes.

SKIP

So you're that kind of nerd.

#

REBECCA.

(laughing)

Yes. It is very nerdy. But also very clever and often beautiful, in a patriarchal, Victorian sort of way.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Wait, you went to college...

REBECCA.

That's right. With a little baby. That's where mom's help really came in handy.

SKIP

Wow. That must have been hard.

REBECCA.

It was extremely hard. And extremely expensive. And that's why I live here, sadly enough. But I work at the food co-op...

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

(confessing proudly)

And I have a secret business.

SKIP

Really?

REBECCA.

Yes. I make skins.

SKIP

Whoa. What?

REBECCA.

I make *skins*. I do character design for Second Life.

She pours him wine.

REBECCA. (CONT'D)

Take this with you.

She leads him into the living room.

INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She's got him sitting in front of her computer. It is a Mac, obviously.

Rebecca is manipulating a 3D Second Life character, showing Skip how she can change the face, the hair, the costume.

#

REBECCA.

Most people don't have the patience to make their own character look good. So they pay me to design it for them--hair, facial features, wardrobe, everything.

SKIP

They pay real world money?

#

REBECCA.

Yes.

SKIP

Me, I never went in for any of this  
virtual world stuff. World of Warcraft,  
any of that.

#

REBECCA.

Me neither. I prefer the real thing.

SKIP

Exactly. When I started doing Darkon, I  
had been gaming forever, and doing art.  
But once I was out on a campout, in the  
armor, it was like... it was like nothing  
else. It was actually Kenyon who got me  
into the game...

#

Rebecca raises her hand to silence him.

REBECCA.

Nope.

She points to herself.

REBECCA. (CONT'D)

Still me.

She points to the couch.

REBECCA. (CONT'D)

Sit down.

Rebecca puts on HMS Pinafore. She sits on the couch.

SKIP

So how did you become an elf? Sorry.  
Changeling?

REBECCA.

An old boyfriend got me into it.

\*\*\*

SKIP

An elf?

REBECCA.

Not just any elf. The King of Elves.

SKIP

Oh, no. That guy? Really?

#

REBECCA.

Don't worry. That was over long ago.  
We're just teammates now.

SKIP

But elves, those guys drive me crazy \*\*\*

REBECCA.

Oh, come on. They're fun. \*\*\*

SKIP

Is it true that they all live together in  
some weird old house? \*\*\*

REBECCA.

Not all. But most of them do, yes. \*\*\*

SKIP

You have to admit that's fucked up.

REBECCA.

No, I don't really have to admit that.  
Not in my own home.

SKIP

I'm sorry! No no. I'm sorry I said that.

REBECCA.

That's OK. Even I have my limits. Why do  
you think I don't wear the make up? \*\*\*

Pause as Skip listens to the music. It's "...I am the  
Monarch of the Sea" from HMS Pinafore.

SKIP

Hey, I remember this from "Raiders!"  
Sallah sings it. \*\*\*

REBECCA.

That's why everyone remembers it.

SKIP

Cool... So how does it work out for them,  
the women of Gilbert and Sullivan? \*\*\*

REBECCA.

Badly. They're always mixing up pirates  
with noblemen, high born for low born. \*\*\*  
They subvert the class system, but in the \*\*\*  
end, the old order is stronger than ever. \*\*\*

SKIP

I see.

He doesn't. \*\*\*

REBECCA.

They're very smart. But they're always  
vowing to save fallen men who are much  
stupider than they are. Men below their  
station.

\*\*\*

(pause)

Now you can tell me about yourself.

\*\*\*

SKIP

I think you already know everything.

They kiss as the opening bars of "A British Tar" from HMS  
Pinafore begin...

The music continues over a brief montage of Skip getting  
his life together.

INT. THE DMV - DAY

Skip is taking the road test for his driver's license.

INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Skip is sorting through a box of his old figurines from  
Empires.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Ralph is watching with a mix of fascination and contempt.

Skip unpacks an orc, a cleric, a berzerker, a dragon.  
Then he unpacks the figure of the woman being tortured by  
a maniac.

Ralph reaches over and picks it up, fascinated.

Skip takes it back from him and throws it away.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S HOUSE - MORNING

Chaz is sitting on Skip's doorstep, drinking a beer.  
There are a bunch of newspapers piled up around him. He  
reaches up and catches another newspaper as the delivery  
guy tosses it. Then he throws it over his shoulder.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

INT. KARNAGE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Karnage is sewing the red and black griffin of Mordom  
onto his cloak.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

INT. THE RENDEZVOUS BAR - DAY

\*\*\*

Skip and Rebecca play Scrabble over beers at a local bar.

\*\*\*

Skip looks up to realize that Damon, the massive Moon Mountain Man is tending bar. He shoots Skip an angry look.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip sighs heavily. He walks over to the bar and offers his hand. Reluctantly, Damon takes it. They've made peace.

\*\*

EXT. OUTSIDE REBECCA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Outside Rebecca's apartment, a van full of elves has driven up to take her to a Darkon meet. She's packing up her equipment.

She kisses Skip and Ralph goodbye.

REBECCA.

\*\*

Are you sure you don't want to come back?

\*\*\*

SKIP

\*\*

Nah. I like speaking to you in English.

\*\*

Ralph and Skip wave as she and the elves drive off.

\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

\*\*

Bye Bye! Have fun storming the castle!

RALPH

(smiling, too broadly)

Bye, Mom! Bye, freaks!

The van drives off. Skip and Ralph watch after them.

\*\*\*

SKIP

(dismissively)

Elves.

RALPH

Fucking elves.

INT. REBECCA'S MOTHER'S DINING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Skip, Ralph, and Rebecca's mother, eat dinner. Rebecca's absence as this strange family's center is palpable.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

Thanks for the pizza rolls, Mrs. Dillon.

REBECCA'S MOTHER

(takes a long swig of rose)

They really do taste like pizza, don't they?

Ralph is studying a bunch of miniatures arrayed before him. He holds one up. It's just a plain metallic cube. \*\*\*

RALPH

What is this one again?

SKIP

A gelatinous cube. It's like jello, but it's toxic, and it fills up the whole dungeon corridor. \*\*

RALPH

(scoffing)

Stupid. \*\*\*

SKIP

What? That's a cool monster! It strips flesh from bone! \*\*

RALPH

I'm a kid. I'm supposed to like this shit. But you're like, 40? Why don't you live in the real world?

REBECCA'S MOTHER

Ralph...

SKIP

No. That's a fair question. \*\*

(turns to Ralph)

In fact. I've been asked that question my whole life. And you know what, Ralph? It is stupid. But the problem isn't that I was living in a fantasy world. The problem was: I wasn't really living at all. Does that make any sense? \*\*\*

RALPH

(beat)

Jesus, Bilbo. Was that supposed to be deep? \*\*

But we get the sense Skip may have gotten to him.

MRS. DILLON  
Who wants ice cream?

SKIP  
I'd love...

Ralph grabs Skip's arm. He shakes his head firmly: NO. \*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)  
No thank you, actually.

MRS. DILLON  
(shrugging)  
I have nice ice cream.

INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT NIGHT

Rebecca is back from Darkon, unpacking. She has a huge  
bruise on her arm. She's happy. \*\*\*

SKIP  
See, I think he was talking about you! \*\*\*

REBECCA.  
Skip...

SKIP  
I think he thinks that you think that  
real life isn't good enough. And you  
know, real life, that's him.

REBECCA.  
Skip, stop.

SKIP  
It wasn't even about me! It just hit me a  
in a flash. It was about you! \*\*

REBECCA.  
Skip. Stop it. I just spent a weekend  
kicking ass, and I had a great time. I  
come back, and you tell me I'm a bad  
mother, and you also seem to expect to  
spend the night here. *Again*. \*\*\*

(beat)  
I have to say, I don't think this is a  
winning strategy for you.

SKIP  
I'm sorry, I don't mean it that way.



REBECCA.

If you think I haven't thought about what you're saying....

SKIP

No, I know you have...

REBECCA.

Skip, I'm 60,000 dollars in debt. I live in my mother's basement. I spend every day rasing and feeding a human being who outweighs my by forty pounds. I have exactly one hour a day to myself after he collapses from sugar shock and before I fall asleep. And then I have Darkon. And that's OK.

\*\*  
\*\*\*

SKIP

Of course it is. I just thought, maybe you should take him with you some time.

REBECCA.

To Darkon? Why would I want that? I live with him.

SKIP

Just so that he can see what you're doing. What you like about it...

\*\*\*

Skip isn't sure if he should go on.

\*\*\*

REBECCA.

Don't say it.

SKIP

...so that he knows you don't like it more than you like him.

\*\*\*

Rebecca seethes.

REBECCA.

It hurts me. It hurts me so fucking much that you're right.

She gives up and sits on the bed, near tears.

\*\*\*

SKIP

I'm sorry. I promise it won't happen again.

\*\*\*

(He puts her arm around her;  
she accepts it.)

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

What's wrong with your mother's ice cream?

Rebecca, crying, laughs

REBECCA.

Oh, god. It's about two years old.

\*\*

EXT. OUTSIDE REBECCA'S BASEMENT APARTMENT - MORNING

\*\*

Skip opens the door to go leave the next morning and finds Chaz waiting for him.

SKIP

Jeez--you scared me, Chaz.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

I tried to call your cell.

SKIP

Yeah, I don't get very good reception down here. You need the car or something?

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Dad had a stroke, Skip. He's dying.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

It's twilight. Strong yellow sunlight is pushing through the blinds.

Mal, Sr. lies in his hospital bed. He's very weak.

\*\*\*

Skip, Chaz, Mal, Jr., and Mal, Jr.'s wife are all in the room. A doctor is speaking to them.

\*\*\*

DOCTOR

So normally I wouldn't want to tire him, but he says he has a gift for each of the brothers, starting with Malcolm, Jr.

MAL, JR.

That's me.

Mal, Jr. goes to Mal, Sr.'s bedside. This sequence should have the sort of ritual pacing of a fairy tale.

\*\*\*

MAL, SR.

(barely able to speak)

Hello, Junior.

MAL, JR.

Hi, Dad. I just want you to know that you had a great life. An amazing, full life.

\*\*\*

MAL, SR.  
 (offended) \*\*\*  
 What's the matter with you?

MAL, JR.  
 I just....

MAL, SR.  
 You think I'm ready to die? I don't want #  
 to die. #

MAL, JR.  
 I know, dad, I was just...

MAL, SR.  
 Never mind. I'm leaving you Empires, son. #  
 But first, you have to forgive Skip. #

MAL, JR.  
 I... OK. I will. \*\*\*  
 (pause)  
 What. Now?

Mal, Sr. nods. \*\*\*  
 \*\*\*

MAL, JR. (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
 Fine.  
 (over his shoulder)  
 I forgive you, Skip.

Mal, Sr. gives him a look of supreme disapproval. \*\*\*

Mal, Jr. straightens up and turns around. He looks Skip \*\*\*  
 in the eye. He immediately bursts into tears.

MAL, JR. (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
 I'm sorry, Skip. I'm sorry.

They hug.

MAL, SR.  
 Chaz.

Chaz walks over to the bed.

CHAZ  
 Yeah, dad?

MAL, SR.  
 I'm leaving you the speedboat on Lake \*\*\*  
 Winnepesaukee.

CHAZ  
Fucking A.

\*\*\*

MAL, SR.  
But you have to forgive yourself. You  
understand? You have to forgive yourself.

CHAZ  
(he does understand)  
OK, Dad.

MAL, SR.  
I love you son.

CHAZ  
I love you, too, dad.

Chaz stands and moves back to the group.

MAL, SR.  
Skip.

Skip walks over to the bed.

SKIP  
Dad.

MAL, SR.  
I need you to forgive me, Skip.

SKIP  
Of course I do, Dad. I don't care about  
the business anymore.

MAL, SR.  
You might think I'm giving your brothers  
what they want. But I'm giving them what  
they need. What they need to live. And  
that's what I'm giving you, Skip.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

SKIP  
Oh. OK.

\*\*  
\*\*

Mal, Sr. whispers something weakly.

\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)  
What? What, dad?

\*\*  
\*\*\*

MAL, SR.  
(whispering)  
Defeat Mordom.

Skip is flabbergasted--what the fuck? His life has suddenly become the plot of a fantasy novel. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*  
You don't even know what Mordom is, dad.

MAL, SR.  
Everyone knows what Mordom is, Skip.

And then Mal, Sr. grows too weak to talk.

The room now is flooded with dying sunlight, red as fire. \*\*

INT. KENYON'S WORK - CUBICLE FARM - DAY \*\*\*

Kenyon and Skip walk down a long aisle of cubicles in Kenyon's office, the corporate headquarters of the Big Y supermarket chain in Springfield, MA

Skip is wearing his regular clothes. Kenyon is wearing dockers and a decent business shirt and tie. \*\*\*

KENYON  
(cheerfully, as he walks)  
By six o'clock, most everyone has gone home. But I'm usually here til 8 or 9, so it's no problem.

SKIP  
(without enthusiasm)  
Great, thanks.

KENYON  
(waving at the cubicle farm)  
Yeah, this is where I slogged it out for the first few years. Before I got the big office.

SKIP  
Uh, huh.

KENYON \*\*\*  
But I'm no genius, you know? I just survived. Business is like war, Skip. \*\*\*  
Whoever hangs in there long enough, gets to be king.

They reach his office.

INT. KENYON'S OFFICE - "THE BIG OFFICE" - DAY

\*\*\*

We see Kenyon's office again--how cramped and unimpressive it is. Kenyon sees this, too.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

KENYON

\*\*\*

Yeah, I know. It's really not much. But we don't make rap albums, you know? We just feed your family. Heh heh. You shop at the Big Y, Skip?

\*\*\*

SKIP

Well, Rebecca and I go to the Greenfield Organic Co-op.

#

\*\*\*

KENYON

We're getting a lot of organic stuff at the Big Y, too, Skip. Carrots and so on. Washed lettuces. You should check it out.

\*\*\*

(beat)

\*\*\*

Sit. Sit down.

Skip sits and pulls out a scroll of parchment.

\*\*\*

SKIP

\*\*\*

So here's my petition to begin a new realm. You're the Land Marshall, so you'll need to sign off on it.

\*\*\*

#

KENYON

I'm sure it's all in order, Skip. You've always done everything by the book.

\*\*\*

Skip doesn't know quite how to take this "compliment."

\*\*\*

KENYON (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

You have the minimum four players, of course.

SKIP

6, actually.

KENYON

6? Really? Alrighty, then...

(looks at the parchment)

\*\*\*

Let's see. Darius and Marius, naturally.

CUT TO DARIUS AND MARIUS FACING THE CAMERA

They are sitting on matching riding lawnmowers, facing the camera. There's a pickup truck behind them with the logo: TWIN BROTHERS LANDSCAPING.

\*\*\*

Darius and Marius rev their engines.

\*\*\*

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON.

KENYON (CONT'D)

Then there's you. That's three. Damon  
Graff? Oh, right. Oxholt. He's no longer  
with the Moon Mountain Clan?

\*\*\*

CUT TO DAMON, BEHIND THE BAR AT THE RENDEZVOUS

DAMON

(to camera)

The Moon Mountain Clan just wants to play  
nice with Mordom. Fuck that. I want  
payback.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

SKIP

No, I guess not.

CUT BACK TO DAMON.

DAMON

I want to rip that pretty little  
asshole's throat out.

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

KENYON

Heh. Good guy. I always liked him.

\*\*\*

(reads on)

\*\*\*

Who is this Pete Leblanc?

SKIP

You knew him as Trivius.

CUT TO THE FORMER TRIVIUS BEHIND THE COUNTER AT STARBUCKS

\*\*\*

THE FORMER TRIVIUS

(to camera)

\*\*\*

Really? You want me?

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

KENYON

That's decent of you, Skip. But one  
leader to another? I hope you're not  
taking him on as a pet cause. A realm  
needs warriors, not mascots.

\*\*\*

#

SKIP  
I think he has potential.

KENYON \*\*\*  
Your call, but he'll need a new name. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
He's working on it. \*\*\*

CUT BACK TO TRIVIUS \*\*\*

THE FORMER TRIVIUS \*\*\*  
Conanicus? Superblius? Axe-man? \*\*\*

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

KENYON  
That's always the fun part, isn't it?  
Coming up with a name. You know what name  
I always wanted to use?

Skip couldn't care less. \*\*\*

KENYON (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
"Scarlac." \*\*\*  
(Kenyon rolls it around a bit  
on his tongue) \*\*\*  
"Scarlac." "Scarlac." Yeah. You should  
suggest it to him.

SKIP  
I think he'll want to come up with his  
own name, Kenyon.

KENYON \*\*\*  
Sure, sure. So who is your war-master, \*\*\*  
now that I've got Karnage on my side? #

CUT TO CHAZ, DRIVING THE SPEEDBOAT HIS DAD LEFT HIM \*\*\*

CHAZ \*\*\*  
(to camera)  
Fuck it, I'm in.

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON \*\*\*

KENYON \*\*\*  
And what is his character name? \*\*\*



BACK TO CHAZ ON THE SPEEDBOAT

#

CHAZ  
(to camera)  
Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Lion of Panjshir.

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

KENYON  
That's a mouthful! Is "Lion" a noble  
title? Do we need Elder approval on this?

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

BACK TO CHAZ

#

CHAZ  
(to camera)  
He fought the Soviets. Fought the  
Taliban. He saw 9/11 coming a mile off  
and tried to warn us, but we didn't  
listen. 9/9/01: the Taliban assassinates  
him. Two days later, the world turns to  
shit. But the Lion... he saw it coming.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

BACK TO SKIP AND KENYON

SKIP  
It's a personal thing. I think we better  
leave it alone.

KENYON  
OK. So If everyone has paid their dues, I  
see no reason we shouldn't en-hex you  
with a new realm. Let's get out the "Big  
Map."

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Kenyon Takes out the hex-map of Darkon and circles a hex  
way out on the margins.

\*\*\*

KENYON (CONT'D)  
I know it's not great, Skip, but we can  
give you this hex here. If you can defend  
it next week at the soccer field, then  
you can start exploring other hexes after  
that.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

(beat)  
So what's the name of your new country,  
Skip?

SKIP  
Empirica.

KENYON  
Pretty nice. Pretty nice.

Kenyon takes out an enormous plume and signs the parchment.

KENYON (CONT'D)

As duly appointed Land Marshall I welcome the free and sovereign state of Empirica to the Land of Darkon.

Shakes Skip's hand.

KENYON (CONT'D)

Welcome back, Skip.

Skip is getting ready to leave.

SKIP

Thanks, Kenyon.

KENYON

(not ready to let him go)

\*\*\*

What brings you back, if I can ask? I hope you're not still sore about all of that stuff between us...

SKIP

(considers it)

\*\*\*

No.

KENYON

Good. I'm really glad to hear that. So why?

SKIP

Well, on his deathbed, my dying father charged me with the mission of destroying you. And that's what I'm going to do.

KENYON

(rattled)

Wha? Oh! Ha ha!

\*\*\*

SKIP

See you later, Kenyon.

\*\*\*

KENYON

Yeah... OK... yeah...

\*\*\*

We hold on him for a moment as he puts his enormous plume away. He thinks Skip is nuts, but he's a little scared, too.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S YARD - DAY

\*\*

Chaz is drilling Marius, Darius, the former Trivius (now known as CONANICON) and Damon in some Marine moves.

\*\*\*  
#

CHAZ

OK. Listen up. We're going to be learning some basic hand to hand combat techniques, some submission moves, and some defensive work. If you learn this correctly, you won't even need to use your foam sword. Or, in Conanicon's case, your magic PVC pipe of kickass.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

We see Conanicon holding a very bad looking foam sword.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S CARPORT - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Skip is carefully making a new shield, beginning with plywood, and wrapping foam around it.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S YARD - DAY

Chaz leads the players through a regimen of calisthenics.

Ralph and a couple of his school friends watch from the distance, leaning on their bikes, mocking, but curious.

EXT. SKIP'S CARPORT - DAY

Skip carefully duct-tapes the foam to the plywood, giving it heft and shape. Behind him we can see his new sword, and a new, more modest suit of armor--a leather tunic.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S YARD - DAY

Chaz is sparring with Damon. Chaz is a pretty big guy, but Damon easily towers over him. Nonetheless, with a surprisingly graceful leg sweep, he topples Damon over.

\*\*\*

DAMON

Hot damn!

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S CARPORT - DAY

Skip is painting a logo onto his shield.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP'S YARD - DAY

Conanicon is sparring with Ralph, who has somehow gotten in on the action. With the same leg sweep, Conanicon also brings Ralph down.

RALPH

Hot damn!

\*\*\*

They are both thrilled.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Good. Let's move on to knife work.

\*\*

We cut Darius, Marius, Conanicon, and Ralph sparring with knives and shields.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, Chaz and Damon are sitting together in the grass, observing, passing a 2 liter of soda between them. They've bonded.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

CHAZ (CONT'D)

So we were dug in, and there was a nest of shooters downhill, trying to come up. But that was our hill, you see. It was a rocky, jagged piece of shitty, sharp Afghan fuck-mountain, but that was our fucking hill. If anyone made it up, you're dead, I'm dead, we're all dead. So we're lobbing it at them, and they're lobbing it at us. Must have been 45 minutes of that. We lose two guys.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

#

(beat)

Then it just settled down. It happens like that. You're a pubic hair from death, and then nothing. Silence. We figure we must have picked them off, but to be safe, we wait 45 before sending someone down to check it out. You know what happens next, don't you?

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

DAMON

They were your own guys.

CHAZ

Our own fucking guys. That's what it is: 50 minutes of shooting at each other because your radios are fucked, or someone just gets spooked. And suddenly you're bleeding out, dying.

\*\*

(MORE)

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Help is only 60 meters away, but no one's coming down to help you because they think you're the fucking enemy. \*\*\*

DAMON

Jesus. Who went down to find them?

CHAZ

That would be me.

(his attention shifts) \*\*\*

Whoa, whoa, whoa, Ralph! Illegal move there buddy! \*\*\*

We cut to Ralph, sitting on Marius's chest, repeatedly "stabbing" Marius in the face with a foam knife. \*\*\*

RALPH

Die! Die!

He's not really hurting him, but any sort of hit to the face in Darkon is illegal. \*\*\*

Chaz laughs and gets to his feet. \*\*\*

CHAZ

I'll get the taser and pull him off. \*\*\*

Suddenly, Skip comes out bearing his new shield. It has the old castle logo of Empires Miniatures emblazoned on it. He sees his army. They see him, and they see a leader. \*\*\* #

SKIP

OK. Here we go. \*\*\*

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - SOME DAYS LATER \*\*

Skip holds his shield aloft on a school soccer field. This is a small battle, only a few dozen players, but it's where Empirica will prove itself KING OF THE HILL. \*\*\*

SKIP

To me, Empirica!

His very small army gathers around him. \*\*\*

MARIUS

News, milord. Mordom does not take the field today. I hear they are in Maine, fighting a cross-league event with the New England Role Playing Organization. \*\*\*

(off of Skip's surprise)

Could they be afraid?

SKIP

Probably they think they're giving us a break.

(turning to the whole group)

Warriors of Empirica. We have one task today: to hold our one hex of land. Our warmaster, Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Lion of Panjshir, will go over our strategy.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

OK, jokers, this is simple king of the hill. When the shit hits, make for those bleachers and get up high. I've talked to the Elder, and they're in play. Oxholt, Marius, you get underneath and protect our legs. The rest of you get up top and wait for them to come to us.

#  
\*\*\*

MARIUS

Why can't I fight with Darius?

\*\*\*

SKIP

(breaking in)

Because you won't fight for the team if you're protecting your twin. And Darius?

\*\*\*

DARIUS

Yes, milord?

\*\*\*

SKIP AS BANNOR

If they launch spells at us, I want you to REPEL them with your shield.

DARIUS

(offended)

Why would milord say such a thing!

SKIP AS BANNOR

Come on. We all know you think it's fun to get enchanted, Darius, so just brush 'em off. We need you.

#

Darius looks sheepish.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

If we can hold this ground for 20 minutes with no mortal wounds, we've done good enough. So take it easy. Fight with your brains and shields.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

ALL

BRAINS AND SHIELDS!

CHAZ

OK. That wasn't meant to be a chant, but fine. Let's go.

\*\*

EXT. SOCCER FIELD BATTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Game on. A sweeping aerial shot as the Darkonites rush to surround the bleachers, which EMPIRICA holds like a small hill.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

We see Darius, Chaz, Conanicon, and Skip atop the bleachers. Marius and Damon/Oxholt below, fighting off side attacks. Empirica holds off the attacking armies. Their skill is surprising, though the effort is clearly testing their reserves of strength.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

#

#

When the opposing armies lull, flustered, Skip stares them down.

SKIP

Mop'em up.

Chaz and Damon stride out onto the field before the clearly shocked enemy armies and begin kicking ass.

And Skip holds the hill. A small victory.

\*\*

INT. APPLEBEE'S - THAT EVENING

Empirica toasts their victory with a technicolor array of Tyler Florence-designed shitty cocktails.

ALL

BRAINS AND SHIELDS!

They celebrate. Rebecca and Ralph are there, and even Ralph is having a good time. But Skip seems preoccupied.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

CONANICON

...and I can't wait to see Kenyon's face when I stab him in his smiling face!

SKIP

Now hang on. Yes, we did well today. But I don't want anyone to get their hopes up.

\*\*\*

#

#

REBECCA.

Nice pep talk.

CONANICON

But we *have* to beat them. I mean: we're the underdogs. That's how it works!

SKIP

No. We simply don't have enough players. Or gold. Or skill for that matter.

\*\*\*

Suddenly standing at the table: KARNAGE!, still in costume, though unmasked, and carrying an overnight bag.

\*\*

#

KARNAGE

He is right, of course. Mordom is stronger than ever.

Skip is speechless, happy, confused. Karnage sits down.

\*\*\*

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

I was just driving back from Maine, and I thought I would get a steak sizzler.

\*\*\*

(beat)

Have you ever heard of a roadside stand in Maine called Perry's Nut House? I was surprised to learn it doesn't only sell nuts, but also salt water taffy.

\*\*

SKIP

(thrilled)

You are extremely weird.

KARNAGE

I am also disappointed. Had I known you were forming your own realm, I would never have joined Mordom.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

I... I didn't think I would play again.

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

No matter. It seems that I can be of some service to this new country. Shall we discuss it over salt water taffy?

\*\*\*

He reaches in his bag and brings out a box of salt water taffy.

\*\*

INT. REBECCA'S MOTHER'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

It's some days later. As Rebecca's mother serves a variety of frozen prepared foods, Team Empirica lay their plans for the upcoming campout.



Chaz and Karnage study a hex map. Karnage is eating a bowl of disgustingly freezer-burned ice cream. \*\*\*

KARNAGE

The only way to draw Mordom into direct combat is to invade one of their hexes. \*\*\*

CHAZ

That's insane. We can't beat them on open ground.

KARNAGE

Nor do we have time or money to build a fortification. That is why we will make our stand here.

He circles a wooded area on the map.

CHAZ

Guerilla warfare....

KARNAGE

Kenyon thinks only in terms of direct combat. So long as they believe we are desperate and crazy, Mordom will not expect our retreat to be a plan. \*\*

CHAZ

Yeah, but we're also desperate and crazy. \*\*\*

KARNAGE

That is true. #

Skip watches this conversation from the doorway to the kitchen. He pensively eats a pizza roll, then turns and leaves.

EXT. REBECCA'S MOTHER'S DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Skip is zipping up his jacket as he walks to his car.

Rebecca comes to the door.

REBECCA.

Skip. Are you sure you want to do this? \*\*

SKIP

It's the only way, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

But remember. Whatever happens, once we're in-game, I won't be able to help you.

\*\*

SKIP

I know.

REBECCA.

I won't even be able to speak to you.

SKIP

Ewyllysia beunydd cara'ch.

\*\*

REBECCA.

(taken off guard)

Your accent is pretty good.

\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

Thanks.

He gets in his car and drives away. As he goes...

REBECCA.

I love you, too.

I/E. SKIP'S SHITTY SUBRAU - NIGHT

Skip drives along an increasingly remote country road. Finally he pulls up in front of...

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

EXT. THE LAST HOMELY HOUSE - NIGHT

...a strange old Victorian house by the old railway line. It's painted garishly in purples and yellows, the yard filled with crystal balls, garden gargoyles, and other bizarre fantasy geek bric-a-brac. It is creepy and depressing. A sign marks it as "The Last Homely House," the communal crash pad where DELVER, and several of his fellow DARK ELVES live.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

INT. THE LAST HOMELY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Skip sits in the largely empty, candlelit parlor on a busted-out love seat. Across from him, Delver, Elf-King, sits in a ratty old Gropius chair. The Laughing Elf stands beside him.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

A black velvet bag sits on a milk crate between them.

DELVER, ELF-KING

What pretty heaps of gold for the Deep-  
Elf King. Most of it comes from the  
darksy pockets of the double-traitor.  
Guess I wrong?

Skip rolls his eyes, but keeps it together.

\*\*\*

SKIP

\*\*\*

Karnage has amassed wealth with Mordom,  
yes. But he's with us, now.

\*\*\*

(beat)

\*\*\*

Even so, we need the strength of the Dark  
Elves... and their guile.

\*\*\*

Delver smiles at this...

DELVER, ELF-KING

How knows thee that deepsy elves won't  
turn on thee again?

SKIP

Yeah, well, I don't know. Kenyon could  
always pay you more.

\*\*\*

\*\*

DELVER, ELF-KING

Ha! Now he thinks like elf-kind! We turn  
and turn like leaves in autumn windies!

\*\*\*

The Laughing Elf cackles uproariously at this.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Yes. Ha ha. Maybe there's something,  
though, that's not gold... Something I  
can offer, and Mordom can't.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

DELVER, ELF-KING

(very serious now)

Perhapsey. Perhapsey so...

\*\*\*

EXT. A GRASSY FIELD FULL OF CARS - DAY

\*\*\*

The eve of THE FINAL BATTLE finally arrives. This campout  
is being held in the same hills where Skip fought, and  
lost, the "Battle of the Brooch" in the opening scenes of  
the movie.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

And while we're only in the de-facto parking lot, it's  
still a glorious late fall day. Astonishing foliage. Pure  
New England.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip is unpacking his Subaru.

Kenyon's SUV pulls in next to him. Kenyon gets out.

KENYON  
Hey there, Skip! \*\*\*

SKIP  
How are you doing, Kenyon?

KENYON  
Awesome. I heard about the buttkicking  
you unleashed on the bleachers. \*\*

SKIP  
Yeah. We had a good day.

KENYON  
Seems like it. Anyway, listen: when you  
said that thing about your dad, well, I'm \*\*\*  
sorry. I hadn't realized he had passed \*\*\*  
away.

SKIP  
Oh, you know... \*\*\*

KENYON  
He was a legend, Skip. And I know that \*\*\*  
company should have been yours. We all  
do.

SKIP  
(taken aback)  
OK. Thanks. Thanks, Kenyon.

KENYON  
It's good to have you back, buddy. \*\*\*

He offers his hand. Skip takes it. Kenyon sizes him up. \*\*\*

KENYON (CONT'D)  
Maybe I shouldn't have said hello, right? \*\*\*  
I'm worried I won't get much of a fight  
out of you if you think we're pals.

SKIP  
Maybe I want you to worry about that.

Kenyon laughs it off. \*\*\*

KENYON \*\*\*  
Ha! OK! Good!  
(beat) \*\*\*  
You going to greet the Elder of Elders? \*\*\*

SKIP

He's here?

KENYON

Oh, yeah. It's the rematch of the year,  
buddy. Everybody is here.

EXT. THE GATES OF DARKON - MOMENTS LATER

Skip hikes his equipment over to the check-in area. He's \*\*\*  
sees Rebecca waiting for him. Ralph is sparring nearby  
with Chaz.

REBECCA.

I see you brought Ralph along.

SKIP

He's registered and ready to play

REBECCA.

He really wants to play with you?

SKIP

Nope. He wants to be an Elf, god help  
him.

(beat)

He wants to play with you.

Rebecca doesn't know what to say.

SKIP (CONT'D)

He's calling himself Rackstraw. I helped  
him with it.

Rebecca, touched, kisses Skip on the cheek. Ralph catches  
sight of her and rushes over.

RALPH

Mom! I need a weapon!

Skip, Chaz, Rebecca, and Ralph, now joined by Karnage, \*\*\*  
Marius, Darius, Conanicon, and Damon, all walk to a \*\*\*  
banner mounted on tent-poles: "The Gates of Darkon" \*\*\*

A small crowd has gathered there around the Elder of \*\*\*  
Elders, garbed in a ridiculous flowing white robe with  
golden trim. He looks pretty shlubby, but everyone is  
treating him with the utmost respect.

ELDER OF ELDERS

Bannor!

SKIP  
Greetings, Elder of Elders

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS  
You still answer to that name?

Skip doesn't know what to say.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS (CONT'D)  
I was under the impression that after  
your fall to Mordor, "Bannor" was dead.  
Yet I hear you recently fought under that  
name. Is that true?

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP  
It was with my new realm, sir. I have  
given up all my gold and land as agreed.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS  
But Darkon does not admit ghosts through  
its gates.

KARNAGE  
Well, actually, it does admit phantoms.  
And also dire wraiths.

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS  
Ok, but...

KARNAGE  
I also know a banshee, which I believe is  
a kind of ghost, in the Celtic tradition.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP  
Karnage...

ELDER OF ELDERS  
OK, OK. The point is: "Bannor" cannot  
enter.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP  
I... I submit to your decision, Elder of  
Elders. But please do not punish my whole  
realm. They are strong and full of hope.  
Turn me away if you must, but I beseech  
you, in all humility, let my people pass.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS  
(confused)  
Skip. *Just pick a new name.*

SKIP

Oh. OK, fine. Um. Let me see.

CHAZ

What about Major Kickass?

SKIP

No.

KARNAGE

You can't use contemporary military ranks.

SKIP

Also, Chaz, it's stupid.

\*\*\*

KARNAGE

You *can* use noble titles, like Lord or Sir, but...

RALPH

What about Sir Dorkwad?

KARNAGE

...but as I was saying, you would have to petition the Noble Council first.

\*\*\*

RALPH

OK, just Dorkwad.

CONANICON

What about Bannoricus?

ELDER OF ELDERS

Bannoricus!? That's terrible!

#

CONANICON

I'm sorry.

ELDER OF ELDERS

Really, really terrible!

#

SKIP

(interrupts)

Skip

(beat)

My name is Skip.

ELDER OF ELDERS

(considers it)

An unusual choice, but I'll allow it.

\*\*

Very well, "Skip." Welcome to Darkon.

\*\*

And so they enter.

EXT. A CIRCULAR MEADOW - DUSK \*\*\*

In a circular meadow atop a hill, Team Empirica sit \*\*\*  
around a campfire. Rebecca and Ralph are with them... for \*\*\*  
now. \*\*\*

A bearded troubadour plays a guitar as the teammates joke \*\*\*  
and talk to one another.

SKIP  
(to Rebecca)  
How long can you stay?

REBECCA.  
Until moonrise. Then I join the Elves.

Suddenly, Chaz's CELL PHONE rings. \*\*\*

MARIUS  
Anachronism!

DARIUS  
Anachronism! \*\*

CHAZ \*\*\*  
(answering) \*\*\*  
Sorry, dudes. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
That's pretty out-of-game, Chaz. But \*\*\*  
we'll let it slide.

There's a long pause as Chaz talks out of earshot. Only \*\*\*  
Rebecca seems to guess what's going on. She looks at \*\*\*  
Skip, and kisses him, concerned. Skip doesn't get it.

CHAZ  
(returning to the campfire)  
Sorry, guys. I'm out of here. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
What? What are you talking about? Where \*\*\*  
are you going? \*\*\*

CHAZ \*\*\*  
(shrugs) \*\*\*  
Baghdad, apparently.

SKIP  
I... oh, god. Really? #



CHAZ

(still breezy, but shaken)  
Some fucking thing, huh? I have to be at  
base by morning.

\*\*\*

Skip stands. He doesn't know what to say. They hug.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Take the car.

\*\*\*

CHAZ

Don't worry, bro. You guys were fucked  
even with me on your side.

They laugh ruefully, and Chaz packs up and goes into the  
night.

It's only when Skip sits back down, blown over with  
emotion, that he notices: the moon his high and bright.  
Rebecca and Ralph have slipped away.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Skip looks at his teammates. He wants to say something,  
but he just stares into the fire.

\*\*

EXT. THE FINAL BATTLEFIELD - DAWN

It's a foggy cold November morning. Skip and his small  
band hike across a great green battlefield--a high  
plateau between a steep rise of thick woods to their  
right, and a gentle downward wooded slope to their left.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

They greet a ragged line of other realms who, for one  
reason or another, are also aligned against Mordom.

\*\*

At the opposite end of the field is Mordom, at least 30  
strong now and imposing. They stand at the center of a  
much larger array of realms. It looks bad.

\*\*

#

\*\*\*

Skip brings the 6-strong army of Empirca together and  
does his best to rally their morale, his breath steaming.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

I don't know what's going to happen here.  
Maybe we'll succeed. Maybe not. But  
that's good. Because it means this isn't  
a story. This is real. As real as  
anything. And the end isn't written yet.

\*\*\*

\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

(beat)

Today we write our own story. And when we  
leave Darkon, we'll write our own story  
there too.

\*\*

\*\*\*

(MORE)

SKIP (CONT'D)

And no matter what happens, when we look  
back, I know our story will be a good  
one.

#  
\*\*\*

He pauses. It's not the most rousing speech in the world.

\*\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

OK, then. Let's go kick some Mordomite  
ass.

All of Empirica cheers, as well as a few players from  
other Realms who were just listening in.

\*\*\*

Skip turns to face the foe.

Both sides BEAT THEIR SHIELDS. For a long moment, that is  
all that can be heard. Finally, Skip orders the charge,  
and the armies race to meet one another.

\*\*\*

The reality is that Empirica is grossly outnumbered, even  
with its few allies. And as they slog through a hard  
battle, Skip gives a nod to Karnage.

#  
\*\*

SKIP (CONT'D)

OK, I'm going.

\*\*  
\*\*\*

KARNAGE

I bid thee luck.

\*\*  
\*\*\*

Skip turns. But Karnage stops him.

\*\*

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

But milord?

\*\*  
\*\*

SKIP

Yes?

\*\*  
\*\*

KARNAGE

Don't run off into the woods with any  
elves this time.

\*\*  
#  
\*\*

SKIP

If I live, I will be back. I promise.

\*\*  
\*\*

Karnage nods. Skip runs off toward the downward slope.

\*\*

KARNAGE

Retreat, retreat to the woods!

\*\*

Empirica covers his escape by making for the steep,  
rising woods on the opposite side of the field.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

EXT. THE DOWNWARD SLOPE - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

Skip steals down through the woods on an errand of his own.

EXT. THE LITTLE RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Skip reaches the swift little river from the beginning of the movie and starts following its line against the current, splashing over the stones of its shallow bed.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

As he goes, he passes the spot where he previously had fallen, the house and deck hanging above the river.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

The little boy from those early scenes is there again. He watches Skip as he passes.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

LITTLE BOY

Good luck, spaceman.

\*\*\*

Skip stops and turns. He looks up at the boy, who is all by himself, in pyjamas and wearing a superman cape. Light glints at his throat: the cape is clasped by the Brooch of Disruption.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

The two stare at each other in the gray cold morning.

\*\*\*

EXT. THE REFUGE CLEARING - DAY

\*\*\*

We cut back to Empirica at war. Karnage and his soldiers have taken refuge in narrow clearing amidst the thickly wooded, steep hillside. There is only one path up from the battlefield. They are picking off the oncoming Mordomites with spells and arrows, but they are running low on ammunition.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

Conanicon rushes to Karnage.

CONANICON

Mordom is massing at the bottom of the hill, warmaster. It's only a matter of time.

KARNAGE

Let's hope it's enough.

\*\*

EXT. THE ARKOPOLITAN CAMP - DAY

\*\*

Finally, Skip arrives at his destination: the tent city of Arkopolis, not involved in today's battle.

\*\*

\*\*

He sneaks his way through the tents, avoiding the sentries, making his way to the tent of Duke Manfred of Arkopolis. With surprising skill, Skip quietly "kills" the two guards, and enters the tent.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

Kenyon (as Derleth) stands at the edge of the battlefield at the foot of the steep hillside. They have finished off all other opponents, now he turns smugly to his siege of Empirica.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

A MORDOMITE LIEUTENANT approaches him with news.

MORDOMITE LT.

Milord, my spies among the Dark Elves tell me that Prince Bannor...

KENYON AS DERLETH

Skip.

MORDOMITE LT.

Excuse me. Skip has left the battle. He has been sent by the elves in search of some artifact held by the Arkopolitan Duke.

\*\*

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

He is in Arkopolis now?

MORDOMITE LT.

Aye, Milord.

KENYON AS DERLETH

Is it a trick?

\*\*\*

MORDOMITE LT.

I do not see how, Milord. We have his men trapped on the hill, and the Elves have been paid twice what he paid them.

\*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

Very well. I shall go myself. Assemble a guard to accompany me. What is this Elvish artifact anyway?

\*\*

\*\*\*

## INT. DUKE MANIFRED'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

We cut to Skip, alone in the tent with Duke Manfred of Arkopolis, who is very confused. \*\*

SKIP  
I said, give me your belt, or I'll kill you. \*\*\*

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
But why? It's not magic or anything. It's fucking Banana Republic.

SKIP  
Look, I don't know. The Elves want it for some reason.

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
Oh, god, I hate those guys.

SKIP  
I know. \*\*\*

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
I mean, who knows why they do anything.

SKIP  
Believe me, I know.

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
(Sighs, takes off his belt) \*\*\*  
Fine...

Suddenly, Skip hears Kenyon's voice outside the tent.

KENYON AS DERLETH (O.C.) \*\*\*  
Skip!

## EXT. DUKE MANIFRED'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Kenyon stands outside the tent. His guard of 8 men hold the Arkopolitans at bay. \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH  
You are surrounded, outlaw! Come out and face me.

Skip and Duke Manfred exit the tent sheepishly, the Duke holding up his pants, Skip holding his belt.

Kenyon and his men laugh.

KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D)

Ho, ho! Honestly Skip, I don't care what you do on your own time. But when your own men are dying?

\*\*\*

\*\*

Skip just stares at him.

KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D)  
(now evilly)  
Did you honestly think the Elves would  
honor their deal with you?

Skip keeps staring: he just doesn't know. \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH (CONT'D) \*\*\*  
(has run out of taunts)  
OK. I am going to kill you now.

Kenyon's guard surrounds Skip, pushing him to his knees. \*\*

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS \*\*

At the foot of the hill, a Mordomite soldier reports to the Lieutenant that Empirica have ceased firing arrows and spells.

MORDOMITE \*\*  
They are out of ammunition, my liege. \*\*

MORDOMITE LT. \*\*  
They may have rigged the hill with magic \*\*  
traps. Send a raiding party. 5 men. \*\*\*

EXT. THE REFUGE CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER \*\*

```

CONANICON                                     **
They're coming up! Where's Skip?             ***

```

KARNAGE \*\*  
For various reasons, I would not count on \*\*  
his return. Get into position. \*\*

The Mordomite raiding party begins to walk up the foggy hillside, but the warriors of Empirica have a few surprises left.

Chaz's training has borne fruit. Using the tree cover and the fog, they stealthily take out all Mordomites but one using kickass Marine maneuvers.

The final surviving Mordomite stands alone in the fog,  
scared. Suddenly, he is grabbed from behind by  
Damon/Oxholt.

SURVIVING MORDOMITE

Ahhh!

DAMON AS OXHOLT

Tell your master, no magic, no traps.  
Just death. Tell your master: this is our  
fucking hill.

He sends the Surviving Mordomite running. As Damon  
watches, him Karnage approaches.

KARNAGE

Do you think he was scared?

DAMON AS OXHOLT

(proudly)

Yup.

KARNAGE

Scared enough that none will follow?

Damon doesn't know.

EXT. THE ARKOPOLITAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Skip is on his knees, flanked by two Mordomites, their  
hands on his shoulders.

We see Kenyon from behind, swaggering over to his prey.

Suddenly, arrows fly through the air and hit Skip's  
guards squarely in their chests. The guards take a moment  
to process that they've been hit.

MORDOMITE GUARD 1

I am mortally wounded.

MORDOMITE GUARD 2

I am mortally wounded.

They fall. At that moment, the Dark Elves, including  
Rebecca and Ralph, move in swiftly, killing or capturing  
all of Kenyon's guard with frankly astonishing speed and  
skill.

In a moment, Kenyon himself is held by Delver, who holds  
a knife to his throat.

Ralph goes around taunting the Mordomites, while Rebecca smiles to Skip--though she doesn't speak to him. #

Skip is as surprised as anyone at this development--he knew something was planned, but not this. Skip stands and bows to Delver. \*\*\*

SKIP \*\*\*  
Greetings, Elf King.

DELVER, ELF-KING  
Hellos, Hellos, Human. Now you have what you desired: onesy on onesy. None shall interfere.

SKIP  
I thank you.

KENYON AS DERLETH  
You Elvish bastards! \*\*

DELVER, ELF-KING  
(ignoring him)  
Will you give us what we wants?

SKIP  
I will.

DELVER, ELF-KING  
Then stick your pigsy, Elf-Friend. Or die alone.

Delver releases Kenyon, who instantly rushes at Skip, screaming with real fury. \*\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH  
AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH! \*\*

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Back at the bottom of the hill, The Mordomite Lieutenant confronts the one survivor of the raiding party. \*\*\*

SURVIVING MORDOMITE  
I'm not going back up there! \*\*

The Mordomite lieutenant pushes him away. He's shaken. \*\*\*

MORDOMITE LT. \*\*\*  
ALL MORDOMITES: ATTACK THAT HILL. LEAVE  
NO SURVIVORS! NO SURVIVORS! \*\*\*



EXT. THE REFUGE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

\*\*\*

The Lieutenant's orders ring out through the woods. All of Empirica hears it. Karnage's head drops.

\*\*

\*\*

KARNAGE

(to himself)

\*\*

Then it is over.

\*\*

EXT. DUKE MANIFRED'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

\*\*

Back in Arkopolis, Kenyon and Skip are engaged in their big duel as the DARK ELVES watch on.

#

Like any such climactic duel, the advantage goes back and forth, Kenyon fighting with his two handed black foam sword; Skip with his new sword and Empirica shield.

\*\*\*

Kenyon shoves Skip back with his shield, and Skip nearly topples.

\*\*

Seeing this, Ralph, clearly angered, lunges to help Skip, but Rebecca stops him.

\*\*

\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID

\*\*

Ni must mo busnesa.

\*\*

Unbelievably, Ralph replies in Elftongue. Somehow he's picked it up, or perhaps he's always known it. It's the one line in Elftongue that is ever subtitled:

\*\*

RALPH

Chicia eiddo honky asen, Skip!

\*\*

Subtitle: "KICK HIS HONKY ASS, SKIP"

\*\*

Skip, emboldened, fights back furiously, and then with one quick, Marine-style leg sweep, he puts Kenyon on his back in the dirt.

\*\*

\*\*\*

His sword at his foe's neck, he stares into the eyes of his old enemy.

\*\*\*

\*\*

SKIP

That last move comes courtesy of the United States Marines Corps

\*\*

KENYON AS DERLETH

Kill me, then, jarhead.

SKIP  
(containing his disgust)

No.

Skip waves in the Elves. Delver forces Kenyon to hold a length of rope.

DELVER, ELF-KING  
You are bound.

SKIP  
You are bound, Derleth. You will stand before the Tribunal of the Thirteen Free Realms for War Crimes. The Elves will keep you til then.

KENYON  
No! Not the Elves....

#

The Laughing Elf laughs.

Skip turns to Rebecca and Ralph. Rebecca and Skip want desperately to embrace, but they know they can't: a relationship outside the game cannot be carried over into the game.

\*\*  
\*\*\*

But Ralph cannot help but high five him.

RALPH  
Nice work, Bilbo.

SKIP  
It's not done yet.

He turns to Duke Manfred.

SKIP (CONT'D)  
Duke Manfred, my men are under siege by Mordom.

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
Then your men are dead.

SKIP  
That may be, but I have to try to save them. Will you help me?

\*\*  
\*\*

DUKE MANIFRED OF ARKOPOLIS  
(seeing Kenyon captured)  
Yes. Fuck yes.

They race off.

EXT. THE STEEP HILLSIDE- MOMENTS LATER \*\*\*

On the steep wooded hillside, Empirica makes its last stand. \*\*\*

Darius, Marius, Oxholt, Conanicon, and Karnage are trying to hold the narrow path up the hill, but they are being pushed back and up by a column of some 15 Mordomites, all in a line. \*\*\*

Marius, at the front of the pack, is killed. \*\*\*

DARIUS \*\*\*

No! \*\*\*

EXT. THE FINAL BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS \*\*\*

We see Skip, Duke Manfred, and five Arkopolitan Warriors sprinting across the battlefield, rushing to the steep hillside. \*\*\*

EXT. THE REFUGE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS \*\*\*

We see Empirica beaten back into the small Refuge Clearing. The 11 remaining Mordomites, no longer confined to the path, flood into the clearing and quickly surround our four remaining heroes. \*\*\*

EXT. THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS \*\*\*

We see the Mordomite Lieutenant, now alone, standing at the foot of the path that leads up the hill. Skip runs up, spins him around, and quickly kills him before racing up the path. \*\*\*

MORDOMITE LT. \*\*\*

I am mortally wounded. But your men are finished! \*\*\*

EXT. THE REFUGE CLEARING - CONTINUOUS \*\*\*

We see a bird's eye view of Karnage, Conanicon, Oxholt, and Darius in a circle, taking refuge behind their shields, as they are tightly surrounded and harried by the Mordomites. \*\*\*

Darius is killed as Skip runs into the clearing. He can't see past the circle of Mordomites. \*\*\*

SKIP	***
Karnage?! Do you live?	***
KARNAGE	***
I live!	***
SKIP	***
INCOMING!	***
Skip raises his hand. He's holding the Brooch of Disruption.	***
Karnage sees this.	***
KARNAGE	***
(to himself)	***
No. Please don't throw it. I can't catch anything.	***
Skip throws it. It wobbles through the air... AND DIRECTLY INTO KARNAGE'S HAND!	***
KARNAGE (CONT'D)	**
(amazed, gaining confidence)	***
I... I wield the Brooch of Disruption! I, a mage of the ninth rank and warmaster of the seventh, have right to bear this brooch and speak its power.	***
	#
Everyone freezes as Karnage speaks. His voice is suddenly powerful. Plus: the Brooch of Disruption is a major weapon.	
All who hear me know this spell/Foe on foe turn on themselves/Until death claims their souls for hell. I am Karnage, mage of the ninth order, warmaster of the realm of Empirica, and I wield the Brooch of Disruption!	***
	***
Slowly, the Mordomites, knowing they have no choice, turn on one another, robotically killing each other one by one.	***
It's all a role-play, but it should seem strange and dreamlike, and the remaining warriors of Empirica walk through the chaos, amazed, weary, and relieved: Victory.	#
	#
Skip and Karnage greet one another and embrace. They walk through the surreal, role-played fight of their enemies.	

KARNAGE (CONT'D)

Thank you, Milord. That's twice you've saved my life.

SKIP

I thank you warmaster. It was a good plan.

KARNAGE

It was a reasonable strategy. But war fights itself once it is begun. The only truly inspired part, if I may say so, came before the war even started.

\*\*\*

SKIP

Which part was that?

KARNAGE

The part where I convinced your father to charge you with defeating Mordom.

He walks on as Skip stands, stunned.

SKIP

What did you say?

KARNAGE

He wanted to give you the speedboat. Can you believe it?

\*\*\*

Skip and Karnage leave camera as the last Mordomite kills his last comrade and then himself.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

We hold on the clearing for a moment: 14 "dead" bodies, still and gruesome. Then an Elder emerges from the woods.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

ELDER

Game over.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

And one by one, they all get up.

\*\*\*

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Skip and Karnage reach the bottom of the hill, where they are soon joined by their revived comrades: Marius, Darius, Oxholt, and Conanicon.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Awaiting them are a company of Dark Elves, including Rebecca, Ralph, and the captured Kenyon.

Delver now bows to Skip.

\*\*\*

DELVER, ELF-KING

\*\*\*

Now you are king of Mordom and all its  
former lands. Richy and richy you are.  
But are you still prepared to pay the  
price?

#

SKIP

I am.

KARNAGE

Shall I retrieve the belt, milord?

The Laughing Elf laughs uproariously for a moment, and  
then suddenly stops, deadpan.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

SKIP

No, Karnage. That's not the whole price.

\*\*

DELVER, ELF-KING

The true price, warmaster, is a favor.  
For many years we have raised and trained  
this changeling...

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

(waves to a confused Rebecca)

\*\*\*

...fed her meat and roots, when deep-  
elves eat only night air and starlight.  
For the long lifesy of the king, I do not  
know why we stole her in the first place.  
She is very... boring.

\*\*

\*\*\*

Rebecca is surprised and angry. She doesn't know what to  
say, or what language to say it in.

DELVER, ELF-KING (CONT'D)

Now we see she has borne a squealing  
little piglet, mud-mouthed and hungry.  
Are we to raise this one as well? No. It  
is too much for elf-kind. Too boring.

\*\*\*

#

#

RALPH

Are you talking about me?

Delver points dramatically at Skip.

DELVER, ELF-KING

You take them. Marry. Leave elf-kind in  
peace at last.

SKIP

(smiling at Rebecca's shock)

\*\*

You know that I agree. But does the  
changeling?

Rebecca stares back and forth at them both in anger.

\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID  
Fucking elves!

EXT. EMPIRICA CAMPSITE - THE NEXT DAY

\*\*

Cut to Rebecca and Skip's marriage... their in-game marriage at least.

\*\*\*

It is the next day, at the beginning of twilight. With the fog gone, the circular meadow is bright and beautiful

\*\*\*

All of Darkon has assembled for the ceremony. Skip and Rebecca stand in full costume. The Elder of Elders is set to officiate and stands between them.

\*\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID  
(to the Elder of Elders)  
Let me ask you a question. Won't it violate the rules for us to be married both in Darkon and out of Darkon?

\*\*

#

ELDER OF ELDERS  
Hang on. Are you two already married?

#

SKIP  
No! I mean... wait. Are you proposing?

\*\*

REBECCA AS ELVENMAID  
That's right, human. If we're doing this, it's no game.

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

It dawns on him: she just proposed to him, for real.

\*\*\*

SKIP  
Oh. OH! Right. I mean: yes!  
(then, to Elder of Elders)  
But what about the rule?

\*\*\*

\*\*

ELDER OF ELDERS  
(shrugs)  
You know what? Do whatever you want.

That's about all the ceremony they need. Skip and Rebecca kiss, and all of Darkon cheers.

REBECCA.  
(to Skip, half-sarcastically)  
Look at that: a fairy tale ending.

\*

\*

\*\*

SKIP  
Really? I didn't even notice.

\*

\*

As they kiss again, we hear a voice-over epilogue. It may not be immediately obvious, but it's Chaz's voice. \*\*\*

CHAZ (V.O.)

And so Mordom was defeated, its lands given by King Skip to all the realms of Darkon to explore and settle as they liked. \*\*\*

EXT. THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The camera pulls back further to show the crowd gathered, the shape of the hill, and the great beautiful country that surrounds them. \*\*

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

CHAZ (V.O.)

Among those new pioneers was a dark stranger, of unknown name, yet somehow familiar in his gray eyes and dark ambitions. #

We see Kenyon, now playing a different character, hiking through the woods at some point in the future. He's now wearing a very long, enormous, ridiculous beard. \*\*

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

But for now the realms were calm and ordered. While some empires failed... \*\*\*

EXT. EMPIRES MINIATURES - DAY \*\*

Mal, Jr. watches bitterly as the sign for Empires Miniatures is taken down and the equipment is carted out.

CHAZ (V.O.)

...Empirica would thrive and grow.

INT. THE BACK ROOM OF STARBUCKS - DAY \*\*

Conanicon is seen recruiting a new group of players at Starbucks. \*\*\*

CHAZ (V.O.)

And once the King's skill at weapons and armor craft...



INT. REBECCA'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

\*\*

We see Skip designing a suit of armor on the computer.

\*\*\*

CHAZ (V.O.)

...joined the Queen's business savvy,  
their online business was soon generating  
a far greater fortune.

\*\*\*

EXT. SKIP AND REBECCA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

\*\*

Skip, Rebecca, and Ralph stand outside a brand new, eco-friendly, underground house.

CHAZ (V.O.)

They even hired the king's brother to  
help with the books.

INT. SKIP'S HOUSE - NIGHT

\*\*

Mal, Jr. sits in Skip's old house, working on a spreadsheet, then secretly clicking over to play World of Warcraft.

CHAZ (V.O.)

News was not as good for Empirica's  
warmaster, who was forced to give up his  
mask due to a recently discovered allergy  
to latex...

\*\*\*

EXT. A DARKON BATTLEFIELD - DAY

\*\*

In the heat of battle, Karnage takes off his mask and scratches his neck feverishly.

#

CHAZ (V.O.)

But this too had a happy outcome, as it  
allowed someone to finally see his face.

As Karnage scratches, he notices the foam rubber monster woman from the very beginning of the movie. She takes off HER mask, and smiles at him. He returns the smile... awkwardly.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*

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

Ralph never did join Empirica, choosing  
instead to join his mother's people and  
their wild unpredictable ways.

#

INT. THE LAST HOMELY HOUSE - EVENING

\*\*

The Elves and Ralph, in full make up, are dancing like maniacs with the Banana Republic belt.

\*\*\*

CHAZ (V.O.)

And after some debate, the Dark Elves decided they wanted the belt any way. It was from Banana Republic, after all.

\*\*\*

INT. BRADLEY FIGHTING VEHICLE - DAY

\*\*\*

We close up on Chaz's face, riding in a car of some kind.

\*\*\*

CHAZ (V.O.)

\*\*\*

As for the King's brother, he traveled far and wide, not knowing if he would ever return to Darkon, but pleased to learn such news as could be sent to him by electronic mail...

#

\*\*\*

We pull back to reveal Chaz, in uniform, reading a printed e-mail as he rides in a Bradley fighting vehicle through the streets of Baghdad.

\*\*\*

\*\*

As he finishes reading, he smiles.

\*\*\*

CHAZ (CONT'D)

\*\*\*

(Live; not V.O.)

\*\*\*

Love you, bro.

\*\*\*

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

...and to hear tales of those peaceful lands beyond the sea, and the wise and noble ruler who watched over them all.

\*\*\*

CHAZ puts the e-mail in his pocket. The Bradley squeals to a halt, and CHAZ steps out into the middle of a busy Baghdad market. Almost immediately, a car bomb explodes next to him, blowing him out of the frame.

\*\*

FADE TO BLACK.