

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 item

SKIP

But we fought so hard to get it! It's our destiny!

KARNAGE

But milord, a warg *smells* 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 desire 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!

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
(throws the potion)
Potion of healing! *

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

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

SKIP AS BANNOR

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

SKIP AS BANNER (CONT'D)
(striking)
Orange weapon! Orange! Orange! Orange! *
(beat)
Yield, Duke Manifred 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
Aoooooooooo! Aoooooooo!

**

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 Manifred 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.

SKIP AS BANNOR (CONT'D)

Aaaaah!

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

WERE-WARG

Oh, shit.

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. ***

LITTLE BOY

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. *****

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, blubbering 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, hychydig 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

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.

Now, where's Jillia? SKIP

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
know what comes next.

TRIVIUS
(confused)
What? What comes next? ***

Kenyon pats Trivius on the cheek condescendingly. ***

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 no 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. * * *

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.

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, his 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, forgot
 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 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

* *
* *
* * *

KARNAGE

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

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

* * *

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)

* * *

MARIUS DARIUS
Hey, Chaz. 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 Elder 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 ***

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.

At this, Rebecca stops, turns.

REBECCA.
(without looking back)
Changeling.

What? SKIP

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 greetings 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 agreeses. 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. ***

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

LACONIAN THIEF

Scaling the wall! Scaling the wall! ***

LACONIAN THIEF
(miming extreme pain)
Ahhhhh! 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 BANNER
(brightening) * * *
Elfsonq! * *

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. ***

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. ***

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...

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

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.

Who? SKIP

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

Karnage? SKIP

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
Winnepeaukee.

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 assassinate
 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

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

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 shabby, 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 Mordom, "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 Bannorius?

ELDER OF ELDERS

Bannorius!? 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 Manifred 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 Manifred 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 Manifred 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.

**
**
**

MOROMITE 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
Hello, Hello, 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
AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH! **

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 Manifred.

SKIP (CONT'D)
Duke Manifred, 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, Conanic, 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 Manifred, 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, Conanic, 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. ***

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.