

Night Land

EXT. THE NIGHT LAND - NIGHT

Pulses of heat lightning reveal ridges of bare rock rising above scrub choked valleys.

Winds scour the land, a singsong moan disturbed by --

CLATTERING ROCKS dislodged by nine ARMOR CLAD MEN scrambling up a ravine. Medieval knights?

No, this armor is high-tech, it covers them like a second skin. All carry WEAPONS strapped to their backs - a large, circular blade held between a y-shaped handle. Called a DISKOS it's a distant descendant of the battle-ax.

Two help a WOUNDED MAN with a severed leg. The rest keep lookout. Heads whirl at half-heard noises, half-seen dangers.

The lead man crests the top, reaches back to help the others up. A dusky face, almost boyish, his name is TORIN.

On top of the ridge weary bodies slump to the ground - except Torin. He listens to a new voice in the wind - HUNTING DOGS.

TORIN

The Hounds will find our scent
soon. We can't rest long, not this
far from the Pyramid.

A huge bear of a man, JOPHAR, regains his feet. He looks back over their trail. His gaze lingers on a RUINED SPACECRAFT half-eroded out of a distant hillside.

JOPHAR

What about Brohas? We're not
waiting for him.

TORIN

Pray that he's taken the Release.

JOPHAR

He could be just behind us.

TORIN

You felt the Slayers gathering -
same as me. Nothing Human remains
back there.

Jophar whirls on Torin --

But says nothing, instead he heads back down the slope. Torin rushes to restrain him.

JOPHAR

We shouldn't have left him. It was our duty...

TORIN

To die with him? There's nothing left inside that ship. The Corruption has devoured everything but its shell. This was a fool's errand. Our only duty is to return with our lives.

Jophar notices dried blood on Torin's hand.

JOPHAR

You found nothing inside?

Torin evades Jophar's eyes.

TORIN

The Monstruwacan's device is gone, turned to dust. Brohas searches in vain.

JOPHAR

I'm going back for him.

Jophar pushes past but only takes a step before Torin throws him back.

TORIN

It's too late now. The Hounds are between us. You can't go back. We can't wait.

The wounded man makes a low moan.

TORIN

(To wounded man, upbeat)
 Only a few more miles Delanos.
 You'll be fine. The healers are waiting for us at the Circle.
 (To group)
 We're going, we can't afford to rest any longer.

Torin remains blocking Jophar's way until, reluctantly, the big man rejoins the main group.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - LATER

Tortured hills tumble down to a volcanic plain slashed by numerous crevasses. In the middle of this hellish landscape lies the men's destination - a mighty PYRAMID of gray metal.

A thin blue CIRCLE, acting as a protective moat, surrounds it at ground level. The barrier effects even the oily clouds - they part like water meeting a rock in a stream, flow around the structure.

From foundation to apex the Pyramid soars EIGHT MILES in height - but this is not the top. A cluster of luminous TOWERS rise from its apex, each a thousand feet high.

A STROBE LIGHT from the Towers FLICKERS in a rapid pattern. Torin watches the signal, mouths its message.

TORIN

The Monstruwacans warn of Abhumans
on the trail ahead. We'll have to
go back, try to approach the
Redoubt from the South.

Faint ROARS and HOWLS come from all around, grow louder.

JOPHAR

(To group)

Listen... The warning has betrayed
us. Now everything in the Land
knows Men are outside the Circle.
The Watcher of the South will be
aroused. We won't be able to pass.

TORIN

(To himself)

No, there is a way.

EXT. THE NIGHT LAND - LATER

The WATCHER OF THE SOUTH - a MOUNTAIN weathered by malice into a demon's shape, fills the southern horizon. It seems immutable - except for its roving eyes.

STADIUM SIZED PUPILS sweep towards Torin --

He takes cover behind a rock ledge with his men. A ROARING, like a low flying jet, passes over. The ground TREMBLES - a respite - then CHAOS again as the Watcher's gaze passes back.

JOPHAR
You see? It's impossible. We
can't go this way.

TORIN
I know. We're going through the
Cut.

JOPHAR
That valley has consumed entire
armies! There's not even a dozen
of us left.

TORIN
Exactly. We'll pass unnoticed.

JOPHAR
Builders preserve us.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - ENTRANCE TO THE CUT - NIGHT

Torin leads his men down a narrow defile. They slide on the
steep slope, set free small AVALANCHES of stone.

Gathered at the bottom they hear more TUMBLING ROCKS behind.

The men pull free their diskoi. One steps away from the
group, PEERS into an impenetrable mass of bushes --

Broken twigs FLY OUTWARDS. A horse-sized canine, a NIGHT
HOUND, leaps forth!

JAWS SNAP and TWIST - the man's HEAD rolls free. The beast
launches itself from the still twitching body --

Falls upon Jophar, bears him to the ground. His diskos flies
from his hand.

JAWS plunge down --

Meet Jophar's armored forearm - a brief stalemate.

The Hound forces his arm down. Teeth SHATTER - FAILING ARMOR
squeals. Jophar SCREAMS in agony as --

Torin drives into the Hound's side. The blade of his diskos,
now awash in BLUE FLAMES, spins madly. The HUMMING blade
tears the Night Hound's flesh like paper.

The beast topples over, lies still. Bones protrude from its
torn side. But victory has come at a price - Jophar's bloody
forearm hangs from its muzzle.

But ARE they victorious? They watch as a black TONGUE expels Jophar's limb. Malicious eyes open. The men back away as the Hound regains its feet.

Torin and ANDROS attack together. The Night Hound spins unexpectedly - a taloned paw flings Andros into the shadows.

Torin retreats, baits the Hound to attack while --

Jophar, still on the ground, recovers his diskos. As the beast steps across his body, intent on Torin, Jophar swings --

SEVERES the Hound's neck. It contorts wildly - sprays gore in all directions before thumping to the ground.

Torin surveys the carnage.

TORIN
Where is Andros?

KINE
He was thrown over there.

TORIN
Find him, quickly.

Another man joins Kine, together they push their way into the thick scrub.

KINE (O.S.)
He's dead. Neck's broken.

Torin absorbs the news numbly.

TORIN
Place the fallen together with their diskoi upon them. The Earth Current will consume them. We can at least keep their bodies from the scavengers.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - HILL TOP OVERLOOKING THE CUT - SAME

A towering man watches the glow from the diskoi play within the dark slash of the Cut. His name is BROHAS. His armor is beaten, rent by gashes.

Yet he lives while three Night Hounds lie dead at his feet.

A once handsome face, now a ruin of torn flesh, reads another message flashed from the Pyramid. After digesting the message he lurches into motion, descends into the Cut.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - THE CUT - SAME

BLUE FLAMES (Earth Current) surge from the dead's diskoi, consuming their bodies as the weapons themselves blacken and crumble. The flickering light illuminates Torin's face.

TORIN

The rest of the pack cannot be far behind. We have to go on.

Jophar, arm wrapped in bloody dressings, approaches Torin.

JOPHAR

(whispering)

The Hound has taken the Capsule from me. If the Slayers come... spare me the Final Death.

He leaves Torin without waiting for a reply.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - NEAR THE CIRCLE - NIGHT

Which surrounds the Redoubt - a thin glass tube filled with rushing Earth Current that floats inches above the ground.

The men carry Delanos over the tube into --

A WALL of blue flames that springs up as they cross.

Jophar hesitates before crossing, looks behind him, hoping...

JOPHAR

Look! It's Brohas!

He heads back towards the distant shape. Torin once more restrains him.

TORIN

No! That's no longer Brohas.

Jophar throws off Torin's hand. Runs towards Brohas.

TORIN

Think! Has he sent the Master Word?

Jophar stops, suddenly uncertain.

JOPHAR

No. But he wouldn't, not until he was near the Circle. It would have drawn the Slayers to him.

Jophar waves at Brohas.

JOPHAR
Ho! Brohas! ADAMOVICTUS

ADAMOVICTUS, the MASTER WORD. Its sound reverberates in the air like thunder.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - SAME

The Word fills the air around Brohas. He sees Jophar waving at him from the edge of the Circle but doesn't respond.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - NEAR THE CIRCLE - SAME

TORIN
You see? The Word eludes him.
That's only flesh worn by the
Slayers. Get across, hurry!

Jophar's face becomes a mask of fear. He rushes back to the Circle, crosses with Torin close beside him.

EXT. PYRAMID'S GATE - NIGHT

Seems fused to the Pyramids surface like an old scar. Set within the hundred-foot wide main gate is a secondary hatch ten feet in diameter.

A cacophony of METALLIC CLANGS and HISSING GASSES.

The hatch rotates, withdraws into the Pyramid leaving a threaded passageway. The men enter. Exit into --

INT. PYRAMID - ANTECHAMBER

A vaulted room with soot stained walls and a grilled metal floor. Another huge gate lies on its far side.

In front of the inner gate stands a grim, middle-aged man draped in white robes that symbolize the glowing towers.

TORIN
(head bowed in respect)
Honored Monstruwacan. We have
returned from the Night. We seek
readmittance to the Great Pyramid.

MONSTRUWACAN

Do you have the artifact?

TORIN

No your Honor. Brohas entered the Ancient's ship to retrieve it but...

MOSTRUWACAN

You abandoned him.

TORIN

There was no hope he would find it intact - corruption covered everything. Even so we waited hours while he searched. Remained even after the Abhumans attacked, with Delanos nearly dead from his wounds. We did not leave until we had no other choice - the Slayers were gathering.

Torin glares at the Monstruwacan.

TORIN (CONT'D)

We all felt them. What else could we do?

MOSTRUWACAN

Stayed until your task was complete. You have the Capsule of Release. If they Slayers came you would be spared the Final Death.

TORIN

Brohas had the Capsule. Tell me, what now walks outside the Circle?

MOSTRUWACAN

The Capsule can only save those who have the courage to use it.

Delanos moans, goes limp in Leyden's arms.

LEYDEN

Your Honor please, the healers must treat Delanos. Where are they?

MOSTRUWACAN

The healers are within the inner gate. Speak the Master Word and you may go to them.

One by one the men SPEAK the Master Word, for each man it has a slightly different tone and force. When Torin voices the Word the air TREMBLES.

The inner gate remains closed.

TORIN
(angry)
Monstruwacan, the gate! Open it!

MOSTRUWACAN
I have not heard from Delanos.

TORIN
He's unconscious, you can't expect...

MONSTRUWACAN #1
You know the law! Those who go into the Night can only return upon uttering the Master Word.

TORIN
But he will die!

MONSTRUWACAN #1
He is already dead! You asked me what walks outside the Circle? A man far wiser than you!

Torin lifts Delanos' head --

His eyes are BLACK, BULGING. INKY FLUID spills from his nose and mouth.

The men holding Delanos SCRAMBLE away as --

His body BURSTS apart!

SHARDS of armor fly outward. Leyden's head SNAPS back - a jagged piece of metal protrudes from his forehead.

Where Delanos once stood floats a BLACK, AMORPHOUS NIGHTMARE.

The SLAYER lunges forward. Morphs tentacles tipped by cruel BARBS that shred armor and flesh with ease.

MEN SCREAM as it TEARS WRAITH-FORMS from their bodies. Transfixed by barbs their spirits twist in agony while the Slayer consumes them.

Kine drops to his knees, casts off his gauntlet, bares the skin on his arm --

BITES deeply into his own flesh.

Between bloody teeth he holds a large pill, the CAPSULE OF RELEASE. He crushes it, dies as the amber liquid rushes down his throat.

The Slayer tentacles explore the body, pass through it as if it were INSUBSTANTIAL - his soul has escaped.

Jophar kneels before Torin.

JOPHAR
Torin! I beg you!

Torin raises his diskos to strike - then lowers it, removes his own gauntlet. Offers Jophar his arm.

Pain blinds Torin as Jophar TEARS free the Capsule.

When he opens his eyes all his men are dead. Only the Monstruwacan remains.

The Slayer drifts near the Monstruwacan who remains calm, unconcerned. The Slayer retreats from him, heads for Torin.

Torin swings his diskos in wild arcs. The Slayer looms over him. A tentacle shoots out --

Impales his chest. His agonized cries blend with a harsh HISSING from below. FLAMES surge through the grated floor.

He SCREAMS as FLAMES surround him, his vision blurs --

WHITE OUT:

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - DAY

A caterpillar munches on a bright green leaf.

A man's hand reaches out, gently plucks it from the plant. A LARGE SCAR marks his forearm.

It is Torin, although now middle-aged, he still retains the rippling muscles of his youth. He wears a coarse-threaded, brown tunic. Gardening tools hang from a wide belt.

He holds the caterpillar up for inspection.

TORIN
(to caterpillar)
Aha! A trespasser. What are you doing outside the hatchery?

Places the caterpillar into a canister on his belt.

TORIN (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I'll drop you off at
Master Loofstrife's later.

He returns to weeding his garden. As he crouches among the plants a huge SHADOW sweeps over him - then another.

He looks up. TWO MEN riding GLIDERS circle in the air above. They swoop low, forcing him to duck, then land a short distance away on the roof of a humble cottage.

GLIDER MAN #1

It's all set Torin! We're ready
when you are.

TORIN

I'll pretend not to know what
you're talking about.

GLIDER MAN #2

But it was your idea!

TORIN

I said it could be done not should
be done.

GLIDER MAN #1

Think about it. In the whole
history of the Redoubt no one has
dived the entire length of the
Central Shaft.

GLIDER MAN #2

A free fall of a hundred miles.
We'll be famous!

TORIN

Why is it you two only seem to
listen to me when I've been
drinking?

GLIDER MAN #2

Because the only thing you talk
about when your sober is your
precious garden.

TORIN

Leave me out of it. If you don't
kill yourselves outright the
Monstruwacans will have your skins
flown from the highest tower.

(MORE)

TORIN (cont'd)

I have enough trouble with them as it is.

Glider Man#1 looks past Torin.

GLIDER MAN #1

Yes, I can see that. Well, if you change your mind we've hidden your wings behind the statue of Kronos in the Chamber of Assembly.

The pair leap off the back of the cottage. Articulated wings spread as they PLUNGE into a deep chasm that opens just beyond its walls.

The chasm's depths boils with Earth Current. The winged pair fall close to the roiling surface before a rising thermal fills their wings. Torin watches them shoot from the chasm.

At his friend's departure Torin looks back across his garden. Two ARMORED GUARDSMEN approach, a lumbering GIANT and a SMALLER MAN, equal to Torin in size.

The Giant's boots CRUSH Torin's vegetables as he walks through the garden. Torin grimaces, but returns to weeding.

Laboured BREATHING at his back. Torin continues to weed.

GIANT GUARDSMAN (O.S.)

Are you Torin a-Sur?

Torin remains crouched, glances over his shoulder... Only boys! The young guards are red-faced, sweaty.

Torin turns his attention back to his garden.

TORIN

You know I am.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

Come with us. The Master Monstruwacan has summoned you to the Towers of Observation.

TORIN

Why? What does he want?

GIANT GUARDSMAN

I was not told why. Perhaps your skills as a gardener are needed?

TORIN

(laughs)

I'll see him when I'm finished here. Shouldn't be more than a few hours.

The Giant REACTS as if he's been slapped.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

You will come now! Immediately!

He grabs Torin's shoulder...bad move.

Torin shoots up, TWISTS into him, takes the man off his feet, to his shoulders --

THROWS him onto his face.

The other guard quickly assumes a fighting stance, he seems shaken by the sudden turn but ready to defend himself.

Torin takes a similar posture. Tense, ready to strike --

Then abruptly stands upright, completely relaxed.

TORIN

Easy, easy, not today. I owe you a lesson - but it'll have to wait. Come on, let's go.

He walks away from the guards, down a grassy slope. He doesn't bother to see if they follow.

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - CONTINUOUS

Torin makes for a skyscraper rising from the valley floor. A SWEEPING PANORAMA shows more of these skyscraper/columns spaced miles apart upholding a vast CEILING.

A thousand feet above transparent tubes carrying Earth Current provide light. Below the tubes a web-like mesh of cables carry vehicles in all directions. Sparks shower down as they zip over an ENCLOSED PARK-LIKE WORLD.

The Guards struggle to match Torin's pace. Giant breaths harder than ever.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

I don't see how you Groundlings can stand the air down here. It's so thick...and the smell!

SMALL GUARDSMAN
(Noting Torin's tan)
Your skin is discolored. Are you
ill?

GIANT GUARDSMAN
(laughing)
No Atoli, that's not it. It's from
rolling in dirt!

Torin GRABS the Giant, seems about to strike him again...but
instead brushes dirt from his cheek.

TORIN
Careful, I wouldn't want you to
ruin your complexion.

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - PLAZA - DAY

Near the base of the skyscraper. Hundreds of people bustle
about. In its center are five circular pits. The largest,
central pit is fifty feet across.

There purpose is soon revealed. People drop from above
riding a metal DISK, the Pyramid's version of an elevator.

Torin reaches the Central Shaft. Looks up - more of these
vast chambers lie stacked above him.

TORIN
(to the smaller guard)
Something about you seems familiar
to me. What city are you from?

GIANT GUARDSMAN
We are both from Calmey. On the
1001st level of the Pyramid. I
think it unlikely you've ever been
to one of the High Cities.

TORIN
In fact I have. When I was your
age we were required to complete a
pilgrimage through each city of the
Redoubt before we could claim
citizenship.

ATOLI
Even at a city per day that would
take over three years!

TORIN

It was time well spent. It made us a closer people. No cities considered themselves higher than any other. No one called the people of the Under Country groundlings. We were all equal citizens of the Redoubt. The Monstruwacans were wrong to stop the practice.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

If the Monstruwacans saw fit to stop it then it was a waste of time.

TORIN

The Master Monstruwacan considers many of the old ways a waste of time, doesn't he?

ATOLI

How does a gardener come to question him?

TORIN

He is only a man - like myself, like you. Even if he rules from the Towers for a thousand years, what is that compared to the long history of the Pyramid? The old traditions have served to repel the Slayers for millions of years, to discard them now is foolish.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

By the Builders! I will report your words when we reach the Towers.

Their disk transport arrives. The Guards converse with its OPERATOR, then the Giant addresses the people already aboard.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

Attention citizens. This disk has been appropriated for official business. Leave the transport immediately.

The people meekly file off, send curious glances at Torin.

GIANT GUARDSMAN
 (to Torin)
 You see? This is how proper
 citizens behave.

Torin has no reply as the disk RISES into the air.

BEGIN MONTAGE - THE CENTRAL SHAFT

-- The disk rises quickly, passes through bustling cable traffic, into a shaft bored into the stone ceiling --

-- Emerges into the next level - hundreds of square miles of golden wheat fields worked by huge combines.

-- Faster, level after level, every imaginable ecosystem, an environmental Noah's Ark.

-- The disk enters a steel lined shaft, emerges into a football dome-sized chamber. Alcoves in the wall hold immense stone statues of grim men and women.

-- Onward, through levels of dark deserted halls...

-- Into sudden light. Multitudes go about their daily activities in multi-storied courts. The populated levels flicker past - furtive glimpses of diverse cultures.

-- The transport ends in a small chamber. An ANCIENT MONSTRUWACAN waits for them. From him Torin receives a HELMET and EVA SUIT.

-- Viewed from outside the Pyramid: Torin and his escort ride a small disk through a hatch in the top of the Pyramid into a silent VACUUM. Around them pillars of Earth Current support the floating Towers. A hatch in a Tower's base irises open, they pass through into --

END MONTAGE

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - TRANSPORT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sound returns as air is pumped in. Torin removes his helmet.

The trip has changed him. His confident smile is gone, apprehension marks his face.

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - OBSERVATION ROOM

Filled with technicians at complex machinery, the convex outer wall is comprised entirely of glass.

On a raised platform within a CLEAR TUBE stands a YOUNG GIRL. Medusa-like, she wears a helmet fitted with dozens of cables.

Around her MONSTRUWACANS enter data into terminals - their heads also incased in helmets, though far less elaborate.

The Monstruwacan from the gate is here though not a day older. He now wears a platinum robe with a black band at the hem, the robes of the MASTER MONSTRUWACAN.

Torin's escort herds him into the room. The Master sees him but continues talking with two powerfully built MEN wearing crisp military uniforms.

Torin recognizes the largest as Brohas. Although now past middle age and horribly disfigured the man is still an awesome physical specimen.

Brohas speaks a few words to his subordinate. The man nods, heads for Torin, a deep scowl on his face.

The officer, CAPTAIN JENRA, gets right to the point.

CAPTAIN JENRA

(to guards)

You may go now.

GIANT GUARDSMAN

Captain Jenra, you should know that this groundling did not come easily. In fact he attacked me. What worse he spoke ill of the Master Monstruwacan. I can give you the details now if you wish.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Perhaps I was not clear, you are dismissed.

(Nose to nose with giant)

I am not interested in your... details. Return to your normal duties. At once!

GIANT GUARDSMAN & ATOLI

(in unison)

Yes sir!

The guards flee to the safety of the transport. The Captain, now smiling, appraises Torin.

CAPTAIN JENRA

I'm surprised to see you so soon. I thought it'd take at least a squad to bring you up here. I'm afraid the Master is not quite ready for you.

TORIN

If you thought I'd be so much trouble why did you only send those two?

CAPTAIN JENRA

Because they're young and arrogant. Atoli, the handsome lad, is my son. Both are desperate to prove themselves out in the Night Land. I thought I'd let them tussle with you first...let them learn that some monsters can be found within the Circle.

Torin looks past him at the Master Monstruwacan.

TORIN

Yes, I'm afraid that's true.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Just how exactly did you attack that boy anyway? He didn't have any broken bones as far as I could see. I must confess, I'm disappointed.

TORIN

It won't be the last time.

They stare down one another, Torin loses - he cracks a smile.

TORIN

I knew I recognized Atoli. I can't believe how big he's gotten, and I thought I'd teach him a lesson! I'm glad I didn't. If you've taught him anything he's sure to be a dirty fighter!

They share a laugh.

CAPTAIN JENRA
So you came willingly?

TORIN (CONT'D)
If the Master wanted me brought to
the Towers I knew it was only a
question of how I would come, not
if. Did you really think it would
take a whole squad?

A woman's muffled SCREAM interrupts the Captain's reply.

Within tube the girl JERKS spasmodically. The attending
Monstuwacans lie SLUMPED over their terminals.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Terminate the session! Terminate!

Technicians snap from their paralysis, throw SWITCHES.

Cables POP free from her helmet. Released she collapses
against the tube, slides down its surface. Through the glass
her vacant eyes hold Torin's.

The glass tube lifts away breaking the connection.
Technicians hurry to carry her from the room.

The Master Monstruwacan BELLOWS at the head technician. The
poor man trembles under his verbal onslaught.

CAPTAIN JENRA
(low)
By the Builders he's giving it to
him. I'll wager by tomorrow he'll
be cleaning algae tanks without a
viro suit.

His scolding complete The Master Monstruwacan speaks to the
remaining technicians.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Leave, all of you. The Arms Master
and I have private matters to
discuss with our visitor.

Captain Jenra winks at Torin as the Master Monstruwacan and
Brohas storm towards them.

CAPTAIN JENRA
(under his breath)
Try not to get him upset.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER

Torin stands with Brohas and the Master Monstruwacan looking through the outer glass wall of the observation room.

TORIN

Was that for my benefit Master Monstruwacan?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Your purpose is to benefit me, not I you. The Observation should have been completed before your arrival from the Under Country.

TORIN

Will the girl be all right.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Who can say? She ventured too near the House of Silence. She knew the danger, yet she allowed herself to be lured to its very threshold. If her mind is permanently damaged she will be given the Release.

TORIN

Benevolent as ever I see.

Brohas steps into Torin, towers over him.

BROHAS

Watch your tone degenerate.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Brohas. Enough.

(to Torin)

I did not bring you here to discuss the burdens of my office.

TORIN

No, I suppose not. Why then?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Simply this, I have a task uniquely suited to your abilities.

TORIN

I'm no longer one of the Guard Monstruwacan, for reasons you know well. I have no obligation to do your bidding.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
I am Master of this Pyramid! All
who take shelter here are at my
disposal, to use as I see fit.

Torin recoils from the enraged man.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)
Yes, I do know the reason you
forsook the Guard, why you now
cower in the Under Country. Reason
enough to exile you from this
Pyramid.

TORIN
I'm a danger to no one. I'm not...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
A degenerate? Then speak the
Master Word!

TORIN
(defeated)
It is lost to me.

The Master regains his cool demeanor.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
And by law you should be cast into
the Night - nevertheless you have
proved yourself useful to me.
Prove useful again and you may
return to your gardens.

TORIN
I won't kill for you.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
You presume, a bad habit.

TORIN
How else can my "abilities" serve
you?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
You underestimate yourself. Did
you not spend many years within the
Sealed Cities after your...
retirement from my service?

TORIN
What of it?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

I need you to find someone who has taken refuge there.

TORIN

Ha! A refuge? There are a hundred ways to die down there, none of them pleasant. What did he do?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Ah, still you presume. It is, in fact, a woman. She murdered an Initiate, here, within the Towers.

TORIN

But the Interdiction?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

You know, intimately, how the Slayers influence can overcome the Interdiction against homicide. She is Afflicted. We cannot suffer to have her roaming free within the Redoubt.

TORIN

For once I agree with you, but what makes you think I can find her?

BROHAS

Like kinds tend to gravitate towards each other.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Her name is Marlara. We know where she entered the abandoned levels. It is an area known to you. Perhaps you still have, associates, there?

TORIN

Even if I did it could take months to find her.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

You have nine days. This is an image of her.

At a gesture a life sized 3-D HOLOGRAM of a stately red-haired woman appears within the room.

TORIN

A beautiful woman.

BROAS

Her looks should not concern you degenerate! Remember, she's no longer human.

TORIN

What if I can't find her?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

I will flood the abandoned levels with Earth Current until not a cell of organic life remains.

The flat statement shocks him - he calls the Master's bluff.

TORIN

Why not do that now?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

The Earth Current is precious. I will not squander it needlessly, otherwise I would have sterilized the abandoned levels long ago.

The Master dismisses the image.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)

More importantly I want her alive. She could be the key to understanding how the Slayers invade the human mind. Incidents like today's could be prevented.

Torin gazes across the Night Land below.

TORIN

Nine days to find a murderess hidden within 12 cubic miles of abandoned corridors? And once I do somehow drag her all the way back to the Towers - so the Monstruwacans can dissect her brain at their leisure?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Good. You have grasped the essence of the task. Now...

Brohas grabs Torin from behind. Drives a pneumatic injector into the side of his neck.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)

Brohas has implanted a colony of nanomatons into your bloodstream. They will allow me to track your movements within the Redoubt.

Torin rubs his neck.

TORIN

You couldn't do that already?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Not within the abandoned levels, but there is a more useful task they will perform...should the need arise. You see, the nanomatons normally repair damaged cells - they are what allow the Monstruwacans to live beyond a normal life-span. If you succeed you will also enjoy this boon. But, if you fail, I will instead instruct them to dismantle your body, cell by cell. I can make this a slow, orderly process lasting days, perhaps weeks.

Brohas grabs Torin's arm and pulls it up so the livid scar on Torin's wrist is before his face.

BROHAS

A pity you can no longer take refuge in the Release.

Torin twists his arm out of Brohas's grip. The Master leaves them glaring at each other, issues a final order.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Brohas, escort Torin back to the Under Country. See to it he is not delayed. After all, his time is short.

On cue the door of the transport room cycles open. Torin looks from the small enclosed space to the hulking form of Brohas. It's going to be a long ride.

INT. UNDER COUNTRY - TORIN'S COTTAGE - DAY

Torin stuffs provisions for his journey into a large pack. He casts a furtive glance at an open window --

Shuts it, pulls across a heavy curtain, braces his front door closed with a chair.

He kneels on the cut stone floor. By candlelight he uses a trowel to pry up a large stone- reveals a hollow space below.

Torin reaches in, retrieves several items:

- a blackened, armor breastplate
- filter masks
- military knife
- crudely made crossbow...

And a FUTURISTIC HANDGUN

He holds it before him, loses himself in reflected candlelight playing across its polished surface.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PYRAMID - MEDICAL WARD

A YOUNG TORIN lies asleep on a sterile bed. His opens his eyes, sits up quickly --

Winces at a sharp pain in his side. His fingers gently explore a fresh incision along his rib cage.

A HAND gently restrains him, stops his self-examination.

A PHYSICIAN stands near. Torin looks past him, down a long row of beds - each occupied by a man with a similar incision. Brohas occupies the last bed.

PHYSICIAN

Leave that be.

(Pushes Torin back down)

Lie still, your cells are still replicating. You shouldn't even be awake yet.

YOUNG TORIN

How much longer?

PHYSICIAN

A few days. The lining of the interstitial sack needs time to thicken.

YOUNG TORIN

Will this work?

PHYSICIAN

The Histories show precedent. Your flesh will keep the artifact safe - but if the corruption is already present...

YOUNG TORIN

Take the Release, I understand.
 (Pounds fist on cot)
 This is insane! What do the Monstruwacan's hope to learn from that derelict ship? All technology fails once outside Circle. It's been that way since the Siege began.

PHYSICIAN

You don't approve of this expedition? Then why go? There are others who would be honored to take your place.

Torin looks again at the long line of men.

YOUNG TORIN

Brohas has convinced them they'll be listed among the Roll of Heros once we return.

PHYSICIAN

That is their reason, not yours.

YOUNG TORIN

I've trained with these men since I was a tyro. I won't abandon them now.

PHYSICIAN

You are a loyal friend Torin.
 (Loads a syringe)
 Now rest.

Torin's eyes close as the doctor injects a sedative.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UNDER COUNTRY - TORIN'S COTTAGE

Torin pulls off his shirt, exposes his bare chest. A SCAR tracks along his rib cage.

He takes several deep breaths then --

CUTS along the old scar with his knife.

He teases the cut apart, reveals a POCKET OF LIVING TISSUE. Gently, he inserts the gun.

Sweat covers his trembling body. He takes THICK WHITE OINTMENT from a jar, spreads it over the wound. The bleeding stops almost immediately, pain recedes.

A KNOCK sounds at his door.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Torin? Torin are you here?

Torin gets to his feet in obvious discomfort.

TORIN
A moment Master Loofstrife. I was resting.

Torin tosses his rucksack into a corner, kicks the contraband objects under his bed...

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE (O.S.)
(laughing)
Was your journey to the Towers so taxing? My apprentice informed me you've been back for some time.

Climbs into his shirt...

TORIN
I'm not as young as I used to be Guild Master.

Opens the door revealing --

A diminutive old woman, MASTER LOOFSTRIFE . She wears robes of an incandescent material that constantly shifts color. A few BEES orbit around her body.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE
You complain to me of the frailties of age?

TORIN
How can I serve you Guild Master, are the gardens not to your children's liking?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

The gardens are full of nectar. My children are happy enough. In fact this year's hatching may be the greatest in a long age.

TORIN

They say prolific hatchings are an omen of great change.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Indeed, that is why I'm here. The Master Monstruwacan has called you back into his service. I'd like to know why.

TORIN

I'm sorry?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Don't be so surprised. The Monstruwacans may no longer consult with the Council but we still know a great deal about what goes on in the Towers - and we suspect more.

(She takes Torin's hand)

Come with me.

EXT. UNDER COUNTRY - CONTINUOUS

They walk a short ways beyond the cottage to the rim of the chasm. They look into its depths.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

The Earth Current has served the Great Pyramid for five million years, but it will not last forever. When it cools the Long Siege will end. We will end.

TORIN

So say the Oracles, but that is far into the future. Why bring up the Final Days now?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

The Oracles tell us how long the Earth Current may last - not will last. Our future is not fixed. It can be changed for the better...or the worse.

She points to the far rim of the chasm.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Look there. To the Cliffs of Rebirth. Each day more than a thousand souls return to the Current's source, their essence set free to start anew.

Torin watches tiny human forms dressed in white perform the funeral rites on the far rim.

BIERS travel down the vertical cliff on rails. Bursts of light erupt as the dead enter the roiling Earth Current.

TORIN

And so the Living Flame is maintained. A Cycle that will last until the Earth itself crumbles to dust around us.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

But what if the Cycle was broken? What if one took far more than his due? Do you see that conduit over there? The one larger by far than all the rest?

TORIN

I do.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

I call it the Master's Conduit. It was sunk into the chasm just ten years ago - for what purpose we can only guess.

TORIN

Hasn't the Council asked?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Of course, the Monstruwacans said it was "to supplement the Towers needs". A vague answer that satisfied no one you can be sure, but the Council has grown timid - no one will force the issue.

Torin considers for a moment.

TORIN

You don't think he's told me?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

(chuckles)

No, of course not. But you are in his confidences again. That places you in a position to hear things others might not.

TORIN

Dangerous. Very Dangerous.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

For us both, yes I know.

Torin's face reflects his internal debate, finally...

TORIN

I'm sorry Guild Master but I can't help you.

Loofstrife conceals her disappointment by searching within her robes. She hands Torin several steel containers about the size and shape of cigars.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

I want you to take these. I give them freely - I only ask you think further about these matters. They hold yeast cultures designed to grow in the cold with minimal nutrients. Not so useful here, but more inhospitable places they could be very valuable.

The Master Loofstrife leaves him without waiting for thanks.

TORIN

Master Loofstrife, wait. I have something for you as well.

Torin takes his canister from his belt, tips the caterpillar into the woman's hand.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Ah! What a beauty she is.

TORIN

And well traveled. I plucked her from my garden yesterday. She's been with me ever since - all the way to the Towers of Observation. I almost...

A tear rolls down the Master's cheek. Her fist trembles, wet pulp drips between her fingers.

TORIN
Master Loofstrife!

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE
The Towers are Outside the full protection of the Great Pyramid. The Circle alone can protect a Human mind from the Influences of the Night, but not a simple creature such as this. I had to destroy her, it was my duty - to protect us.

She holds her fist before Torin

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE (CONT'D)
We all have this duty, every one of us. Remember that!

INT. UNDER COUNTRY - TRANSPORT DISK - DAY

The levels of the Under Country rush past. Torin stands next to the disk's operator.

DISK OPERATOR
We'll reach the fourth level soon. Step to the edge. I won't stop for more than a moment.

TORIN
(teasing)
Afraid of the dark?

DISK OPERATOR
For good reason. Last month a group of tyros snuck into the Fourth to do a little exploring. The Afflicted didn't leave much for their parents to bring back to the Cliffs of Rebirth.

TORIN
Why were they attacked? The Afflicted usually run away when confronted.

DISK OPERATOR
When was the last time the abandoned levels were purged?
(MORE)

DISK OPERATOR (cont'd)
 The Afflicted must number in the
 thousands by now, they're starving.

The Disk Operator thrusts Torin's rucksack into his gut.

DISK OPERATOR (CONT'D)
 Still going? I wouldn't take one
 step from this transport, not
 without a diskos.

TORIN
 I couldn't deal with the enclaves
 carrying a diskos, they wouldn't
 trust me.

The Operator spits.

DISK OPERATOR
 Bah! Degenerates! What do they
 know of trust? They're worse than
 the afflicted - at least their sins
 can be blamed on madness.

Torin doesn't respond but moves to the disk's edge. Rapid
 deceleration sends him to his knees. The operator smirks.

DISK OPERATOR
 No delays now!

Torin leaps off as the disk draws level to the floor --

TORIN
 That quick enough...

But the disk has already left him far below.

TORIN (CONT'D)
 ...for you.

FOURTH ABANDONED LEVEL - TRANSPORT CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A huge domed space, dimly lit. Massive tunnels at the
 cardinal points lead away into darkness.

Torin approaches the nearest tunnel, pauses. ROARS from
 disks passing though the chamber echo down its throat.

He shoulders his pack, steps forward - the black mouth
 swallows him whole.

EXT. TOWER OF OBSERVATION - NIGHT

Among the Towers a flurry of people wearing EVA suits work upon an object hidden behind scaffolding.

Closer inspection shows a nearly completed SPACESHIP - the same design as that seen in the Night Land. A thick conduit carrying Earth Current enters its side.

INT. TOWER OF OBSERVATION - CONTROL CENTER - SAME

The room bustles with technicians and Monstruwacans at lighted consoles.

Brohas joins the Master Monstruwacan at a wide window looking out on the spaceship.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Torin has entered the abandoned
levels.

Brohas's fist thunders onto the widow's ledge.

BROHAS
Why did you give such an important
task to that degenerate? My men
and I would have found Marlara, and
purged the lower levels clean at
the same stroke.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
It is this very zeal that made you
unfit for this task. I need the
woman alive. You know the bargain
I've struck. I cannot risk your
passions overruling duty.

BROHAS
Look at my face Monstruwacan. Tell
me I don't know my duty. I wonder
if you know your's as well?

The Master shows fear - for an instant.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
My old friend. This has been a
long bitter road we've walked. We
can not allow ourselves to falter
so near journey's end.

The Master places his hand on Brohas's shoulder.

MOSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)

Your opinion of Torin has merit, I too lack full confidence in him. You are right, we should take steps in case he should fail us. Take some men into the abandoned levels - but allow Torin to locate the woman. Once he does you may secure her.

BROHAS

And Torin?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

As he said, there are a hundred ways to die there...

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - CORRIDORS

Crisscross randomly creating a maze. Earth Current conduits in the ceiling provide sporadic light.

Torin picks his way across floors strewn with debris - everything from rotted clothes to components for machinery.

He finds a stairway, descends a few feet when a FIT OF COUGHING overtakes him.

He staggers back up, clutches the framed opening for support as he gasps for breath.

He feels something under his hand scratched into the wall. He wipes age old grime away, reveals a SYMBOL FOR POISON.

As he recovers SHOUTS mingle with his last coughs. Torin holds his breath, listens. Did he imagine it?

More SHOUTING, now closer - human but unintelligible.

Torin seeks concealment. His boots have left clear tracks in the thick dust - a dead giveaway.

He unslings his rucksack, fumbles inside.

He hears SHUFFLING FEET. SHADOWS amble on the walls ahead.

At last he pulls free a FILTER MASK, looks up --

Sees a dozen EMACIATED MEN AND WOMEN staring back at him. Some have crude weapons - all of them look hungry.

Torin slowly hoists his pack, backs towards the stairwell.

TORIN
(to himself)
Builders preserve me.

The AFFLICTED SCREAM. Rush as one towards him.

Torin launches himself down the stairs.

At the bottom side corridors branch left and right. Which way? The Afflicted pour down from above.

Torin runs left, finds a small side corridor. Back against the wall, mask tight to his face, he wills himself to breath slow regular breaths.

From the stairwell the Afflicted's HOWLS become GAGS and COUGHS. Spitting wordless vulgarities they retreat.

Alone in the dark, Torin sags to the floor with relief.

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - CHASM RIM - DAY

Earth Current licks high along its walls while Master Loofstrife contemplates the Master's Conduit.

ROARING at its intake increases in intensity. Earth Current streams into the conduit's maw.

Above her the ceiling dims - twilight falls.

EXT. THE NIGHT LAND - SAME

Twisted CREATURES gaze hungrily towards the Pyramid as the Circle itself grows dim.

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - CHASM RIM - SAME

The Earth Current has sunk low into the chasm. The lights slowly rebuild to full strength, revealing --

Master Loofstrife's face, twisted in anger. Her lazy halo of bees thickens into a HUMMING swarm.

She turns from the chasm. Heads towards the Central Shaft and its transport disks. The swarm grows.

INT. THE ABANDONED LEVELS - A BARRIER

Composed of piled junk blocks a wide avenue just beyond a four way intersection. Torin approaches cautiously.

Paths through the dust are clearly visible on the floor. They lead to a metal PANEL set within the barrier.

Torin PUSHES against the panel.

CHECK POINT CHARLEY (O.S.)
Get back from the gate. Back I
said! Out into the light where I
can see you.

Torin looks about. Crude speakers toss the voice around him.

TORIN
I'm looking for Host's enclave.
This is the East side of Old Genova
isn't it?

CHECK POINT CHARLEY
Yah. This its outer check point.
You a trader? What do you got?

Torin drops his rucksack to the floor. Pretends to go through its contents, slowly, while inspecting the barrier.

He sees a MIRROR placed on the wall above the barrier. Barely perceptible shadows move within.

TORIN
Anyone who explores the Dark must
be something of a trader, but I'm
really more of a relic hunter.

Torin retrieves a irregular glass lens. Covertly fits it to his eye like a monocle. Looks at the mirror again...

Sees Charley leaned back in a chair contentedly smoking a pipe. Charley speaks into a crude microphone:

CHECK POINT CHARLEY
Got no use for grave robbers! Go
back where you come from.

Torin makes a show of searching his bag.

TORIN

But I have tobacco! And something else that might interest you even more. Why don't we...

CHECK POINT CHARLEY (O.S.)

I said get!

Torin pulls a FLASHLIGHT from his bag. BOUNCES the intense beam off the mirror into Charley's face.

CHECK POINT CHARLEY

ARRG! By the Maker!

Torin hears Charley fall off his chair with a clatter.

Metallic BANGS and SQUEALS. The metal panel pivots away. Charley storms through. He carries a crossbow that looks like it was made in shop class.

TORIN

Easy friend. I'm sorry, I only wanted to get your attention.

Charley points the crossbow at Torin.

CHECK POINT CHARLEY

It worked.

Torin holds up of the cigar shaped vials.

TORIN

I have yeast cultures, ones adapted to the abandoned levels. If you let me pass I'll give you say, a gram. You should be able to start your own vat farm with that. What do you say?

Charley licks his lips, motions with his hands.

CHECK POINT CHARLEY

How about we take it all?

Two more MEN, a pair of squat TROLLS, close in from behind, crossbows at the ready.

CHECK POINT CHARLEY

Away from the bag. Be quick now. The Interdiction has no hold on us.

Torin steps away from the bag. Then THROWS the flashlight at Troll#1 hitting him SQUARE BETWEEN THE EYES.

Two bolts FLY into Torin's chest. They RICOCHET away deflected by his CONCEALED ARMOR.

Torin becomes a whirlwind of fists and feet Troll#2 crumples.

Charley back peddles, tries to reload his crossbow.

TORIN

I also lack the Interdiction.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - HOST'S ENCLAVE

A once grand multi-storied plaza now rotted by millennia of neglect. Dozens of people dressed like paupers trudge about a shabby open air market.

Torin heads for a rowdy establishment on its far side.

INT. HOST'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Crowded with men and women drinking and gambling.

At the far end a HAIRY man dispenses booze from a steel drum into anything that holds liquid. Behind him a CHILD leans from a window taking in bartered items.

Torin pushes his way towards the jovial hair-ball.

HAIRY MAN

Torin! We thought Brohas had you thrown from the Towers.

TORIN

You wish. I want the credits you owe me Silas - now.

SILAS

I don' remember owin' you credit. Besides, I don' have any. Do you think I'd be pouring distillates for Host if I did?

TORIN

I know you have a lousy memory, but I'm sure there are some things you do remember.

Torin casually fingers the handle of his knife. Silas flinches, spills some booze. The crowd HOWLS, outraged.

SILAS

Okay, maybe I owe you somethin',
but I really don't have any
credits. Can't we work somethin'
out?

TORIN

We'll see. How is Host by the way?
Is he here?

SILAS

Sure, he's in back playing runes
with some city folk.

TORIN

Why don't you take me back there?
A nice round of runes sounds fun.

This time Silas manages not to spill anything -- barely.

SILAS

Ha! That would be fun wouldn't it.
No thanks, I'd rather be humped by
a pack of 'flicted.

TORIN

I need to see him Silas. I'll
forget about what you owe me - if I
can talk to him today.

SILAS

You 'flicted Torin? What do you
think he'll do to me if I let you
back there?

Torin glares at him.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Okay, let me see what I can do.

INT. HOST'S BAR - BACK ROOM

Dominated by a polished steel table. HOST, tall, every
feature an acute angle, sits on the far side. Behind him on
either side are two men - obvious BODYGUARDS.

Host counts his winnings piled on the table as an reluctant
Silas shows Torin into the room

TORIN

You did pretty well.

HOST
 (Drunk)
 What do you want Torin?

TORIN
 I want to make up for...

HOST
 I asked what do you want.
 (To bodyguards)
 Get him out of here.

Like fighting dogs freed from their chains the Bodyguards head round the table. Host lurches up unsteadily.

HOST
 Careful! Don't let his size fool you, he's dangerous. Just ask the boys from the East check point.

The Bodyguards pull up, approach Torin with sudden caution. Torin allows himself to be held - but resists being ushered from the room.

TORIN
 I need information. I can pay...

HOST
 Get out of my enclave. I'll kill you myself if you come back.

OUTSIDE THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

The Bodyguards TOSS Torin into the plaza. Silas gets the same treatment, landing hard nearby. A ROAR of approval comes from the bar. Silas gets up and glares at Torin.

SILAS
 I can' never go back there now.
 Don' care what I owed you, we're even.

TORIN
 Actually you never did owe me any credits.

Silas looks at him in disbelief.

TORIN (CONT'D)
 You really do have a lousy memory.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - OUTSKIRTS OF HOST'S ENCLAVE

Corridors are smaller, dimmer. Few people are present.

A trio of MEN armed with crossbows follow Torin. Their purpose is clear: KEEP MOVING.

Ahead of him Torin hears a CREAKING noise.

An OLD MAN approaches, pushing a cart loaded with miscellaneous junk scavenged from lost corridors.

Some clear tubing coiled on top draws Torin's attention. He examines it, holds a length up, smiles.

TORIN

Would you consider a trade?

OLD MAN

What interests you?

Torin hands him a yeast vial.

TORIN

Everything you've got. Follow me.

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - AUDIENCE CHAMBER

A windowless room sheathed in gray metal. A TRIANGULAR TABLE dominates its center - each side able to seat a dozen people, yet only a single chair remains at its apex.

Captain Jenra stands at the base of the table. The door behind him opens. Master Loofstrife storms into the room followed by an anxious FUNCTIONARY.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

(to Functionary)

Away with you. The Guild Masters still have some say in the ordering of the Redoubt despite the Council's cowardice.

FUNCTIONARY

But Guild Master, you don't have an appointment. The protocols...

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Into the Night with your protocols. The Master Monstruwacan will answer to me for his actions.

The Functionary GASPS at her words. Pale faced he retreats from the room.

Captain Jenra CHUCKLES.

CAPTAIN JENRA

And to think I've waited four days for my audience.

(Bows respectfully)

Guild Master Loofstrife, well met.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

My apologies for the outburst Captain, but the Monstruwacans have gone too far this time.

CAPTAIN JENRA

I have similar concerns. Perhaps we could present our cases together?

At that moment the Master Monstruwacan enters the room accompanied by two GUARDS. He assumes his "throne".

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Captain Jenra, my time is short. What is it you wish to discuss.

The Captain gives Master Loofstrife an embarrassed look.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Your Honor, the Guild Master's concerns take precedence...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

If the Guild Master seeks an audience it can be arranged...in due time.

(Signals to guards)

Until then I suggest she return to her hives.

The guards take Master Loofstrife by her elbows --

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Your lofty views have given you ambitions to match. Do the Towers need to be reminded of their dependence on the Under County? Shall we see how long the head can survive once severed from the body?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
You overestimate your importance
beekeeper. The Under Country is
not the body of Man, merely a
gangrenous limb - and sooner
excised the better. The
Monstruwacans will not suffer its
loss.

At a gesture the Master's guards drag her from the room.
Her treatment stuns the Captain.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Your concerns Captain.

CAPTAIN JENRA
(softly)
The Current cannon.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Speak up Captain!

The Master's shout shocks the Captain back to his senses.

CAPTAIN JENRA
The Current cannon your Honor.
Members of the Old Guard say Earth
Current no longer reaches the
batteries.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
That is correct. I have arranged
for the Current to be rerouted.

CAPTAIN JENRA
You're responsible? Why would you
do this? The batteries have been
maintained since the building of
the Great Pyramid.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
They are a useless waste of power.
Not since the creation of the
Circle have we needed them. We can
no longer afford to squander our
resources for the sake of a few old
men's pride.

The Captain leans across the table at the Master.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Yes, the Old Guard are proud to serve the batteries in their final years - as they were proud to serve the Monstruwacans in their youth. I wonder who the Monstruwacans serve, if not themselves?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Don't presume to judge my Order Captain.

(He stands)

You've been outside the Circle - if only for a short time.. You've heard the Slayers's thoughts. Tell me, do their voices yet haunt your dreams?

The Captain's face shows he remembers his nightmares well.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)

How would you like to never know an hour, a minute, without them? That is the burden for we who pass through the Trials. The Monstruwacans serve, at peril to our very souls.

The Monstruwacan's eyes burn into the Captain. Without another word the Master exits the room. The Captain flinches as the heavy door SLAMS leaving him alone.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - HOST'S ENCLAVE

Torin disguised as the old vendor, wheels his cart past Host's bar. He stops just within site and sets up shop.

Host soon emerges with his bodyguards. He hasn't sobered up - in fact he can now barely walk. Torin follows as the trio stagger from the plaza.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - OUTSKIRTS OF HOST'S ENCLAVE

Host SINGS off-key, the words slurred into nonsense sounds. After a few bars he stops to wretch against a wall. His bodyguards struggle to keep him upright.

From behind Torin CLUBS BODYGUARD#1. BODYGUARD#2 spins --

Right into Torin's haymaker.

Host leans against the wall, looks blearily at Torin.

HOST

Hey Torin! How about you and me
get a drink.

A short PUNCH to the jaw knocks him out cold.

Torin DUMPS Host's limp body into the cart, covers him with
junk and rags - but Host's boots still stick out.

From behind A HAND grabs Torin's upper arm. He SPINS to
confront his assailant --

An OLD WOMAN. She moves to the cart, strokes Host's boots
like they were a pet.

GRANDMA

These are fine boots. Yes! Fine
indeed! Do you mind?

She takes hold of one and PULLS. Host's bony foot hangs
accusingly between them.

Grandma doesn't miss a beat.

GRANDMA

I'll give you two spheres of
Oracle's Dream for them.

Neither does Torin.

TORIN

Make it three and you got a deal.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - COLLAPSED STRUCTURE

A blurred streak dances before Host's eyes. His focus
clears, light trickles through a crack in the wall of an
abandoned room.

He tries to sit up - can't. Straps bind him to a crude cot.
He sees a NEEDLE in his arm from it TUBING FILLED WITH HIS
BLOOD spirals into the SHADOWS.

HOST

(shouting)
What is this?

Torin leans into the light. Host sees that the tubing's
other end terminates in Torin's arm.

TORIN

Ouch! Keep it down will you? What in the Builder's names were you drinking anyway?

HOST

What are you doing to me?

TORIN

Sharing a gift from the Master Monstruwacan.

Torin mimes a toast.

TORIN (CONT'D)

To your health!

Host leans back on cot, closes his eyes, smiles.

HOST

I'm hallucinating. One of those city fops must have dosed me. Clever bastards.

Torin YANKS out Host's IV. He YELPS.

TORIN

No such luck, partner.

Host struggles anew against his bindings.

HOST

Partners again are we? Then make some sense damn you! What do you want from me? What is this gift? The only gift the Master Monstruwacan gives to the likes of us is swift Release.

TORIN

I want information, and I'm through asking nicely. You've got a billion cell-sized machines running through your veins now. If you help me they'll give you long life and health, if not...

HOST

You've corrupted me!

TORIN
(laughs)
You were corrupt long before we
ever met.

Host calms down, he's beaten.

HOST
Ask me what you want to know.

TORIN
A high-born woman entered the
abandoned levels two weeks ago. I
need to take her back to the Towers
of Observation. I - we, have only
five days left to find her. With
your men helping...

Host groans.

HOST
I already know where she is.

TORIN
You do?

HOST
The lower levels are vast, but a
high-born woman won't go unnoticed
for long down here. A half dozen
enclaves were tracking her after
only a few hours.

TORIN
And?

HOST
The usual fights and deal making.
Vessel's enclave has her now.

Torin strikes the wall with a fist.

HOST
I see you haven't forgot them.
Even if she still lives, would the
Master want what's left?

TORIN
He only wants her alive.

HOST
And if she's not?

Torin doesn't answer, only looks at the blood welling from his knuckles.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - VESSEL'S ENCLAVE

Makes Host's enclave seem like a five-star resort. Steel girders angle across a filthy, congested plaza.

Torin surveys the plaza from a connecting tunnel. His pack and weapons are gone, he has nothing but the shirt on his back.

On a landing above him CLAMORING men mass in front of a mural painted to look like a woman's spread legs.

ON THE LANDING

Torin looks over the crush, brawny DOORMEN guard steel doors: the center of the mural. Men plead with them to accept scavenged objects of dubious value. A lucky few get inside.

Torin tries to make his way to the front but a FLURRY OF ELBOWS drives him back. While bent over holding a freshly bloodied nose he spots some large BOLTS on the floor.

He picks several up, gives one an experimental flip. At the entrance a GIANT TRAMP barterers with the doormen. He'll do.

A bolt RICOCHETS off Tramp's skull. The enormous man spins round - sees Torin leaning against the landing's railing JUGGLING his remaining bolts.

Tramp pulls a STEEL SPIKE from his waist. The crowd scatters as the mad bull charges!

Torin moves at the last instant, sweeps the Tramp up and OVER the railing.

Torin looks down. As he watches outcasts swarm over Tramp's still form, fight over his meager valuables.

Torin returns his attention to the suddenly uncrowded entranceway. He walks slowly up to the doormen, begins juggling again - this time with GLASS SPHERES.

TORIN

What do you say boys? A sphere of Oracle's Dream each? Just like grandma used to make.

The Doormen exchange looks - smile.

INT. VESSEL'S BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS

A Doorman escorts Torin to a circular chamber. Many openings lead from the room each covered by heavy curtains.

Torin notices the Doorman examining his sphere.

TORIN

Go ahead. A little taste won't do any harm.

The Doorman nods, makes sure no one else is around, then puts his lips to the sphere. His face becomes dreamy at once.

Torin edges away from the drugged doorman. Ducks through a curtain and passes down a hall.

The hall ends at another curtain. Behind it Torin hears a man's voice. He pulls the curtain aside...

VESSEL'S PRIVATE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A circular chamber with alcoves set into the walls. Crude bars enclose each alcove - miniature prisons that hold half-clothed women in drugged stupors.

Other passages lead into this chamber of horrors. From them come the harsh shouts of men mixed with the cries of frightened women.

At the center of the room a FAT WOMAN sprawls upon a lounge. A tall well-dressed MAN wearing a MASK argues with her:

TALL MAN

I'm paying you double last times fee. What more do you want?

FAT WOMAN

I must think of my other customers your grace. These days most of the runaways run afoul of the Afflicted before I can round them up. I can't easily replace the girls lost to your...affections.

Fat Woman reaches into a nearby crystal bowl filled with multi-colored capsules. She crushes one under her nose, inhales its thick vapor with relish.

FAT WOMAN (CONT'D)

You could help me in this matter.
You are well placed to give my men
access the upper Redoubt. The
dormitories for instance...

TALL MAN

No. I cannot risk that.

FAT WOMAN

No, of course not. Very well, take
that one there. She's nearly spent
anyway.

She indicates a young girl sitting comatose in her cell.

TALL MAN

Yes... She'll do.

The fat woman picks up a flute, plays a beautiful melody.

The music snaps the GIRL out of her comatose state. She
lunges for the bars on her cell, grabs them tight.

GIRL

No, no, no, no, no...

A door in the back of her alcove opens. Two men enter, rip
her from the bars and drag her away.

Tall Man prepares to follow after the girl.

FAT WOMAN

Your grace, if you could restrain
yourself only a little...

The Tall Man reaches into his pocket, throws coins onto the
floor in front of the Fat Woman.

TALL MAN

Next time have more than just one
skinny girl.

Before the Tall Man can leave Torin enters the room.

TORIN

Palacios.

TALL MAN

What?

TORIN

The High City of Palacios, 910th level of our Great Pyramid. I was trying to place your accent. Am I right?

TALL MAN

Who are you?

TORIN

A seeker of pleasure, much like yourself...Lord Grennon.

The Tall Man's hand reaches up to check his mask.

TALL MAN

Night take you...you degenerate!

The Tall Man storms out of the room, the girl forgotten.

FAT WOMAN

You just drove away one of my best customers.

TORIN

He already paid didn't he?

FAT WOMAN

(lauging)

That he did. Who are you?

TORIN

As I said, a seeker of pleasure.

FAT WOMAN

Indeed. Well, what are your tastes?

Torin looks at the women in the alcoves. None look like the woman he seeks.

TORIN

I'm afraid I'm rather particular. Do you have any redheads.

FAT WOMAN

A rare breed. What do you have to trade?

Torin holds forth his yeast vials.

TORIN

These contain a strain of yeast
developed to grow within the
abandoned levels.

Now Torin has her attention!

FAT WOMAN

A redhead you say. It so happens I
recently acquired one, but
she's...strange.

TORIN

Afflicted?

FAT WOMAN

No, but she seems to be mad
nonetheless. She raves about the
Master Monstruwacan bringing about
the Final Days.

TORIN

(eager)

I'm intrigued. Bring me this
woman. I'll pay you well.

FAT WOMAN

I'm sure you will. Monstruwacan
spy!

The Fat Woman blows shrilly on her flute.

THUGS pour into the hall, rain blows down on Torin.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - OBSERVATION ROOM

The Master Monstruwacan is alone. He stands on the Seer's
platform, helmet obscuring his face - except his mouth. His
lips tremble...

EXT. THE NIGHT LAND - MASTER'S VISION

A distorted view of the Night Land. MOUNTAINOUS WATCHERS
over shadow the Pyramid. At their feet --

A MANOR HOUSE made of cyclopean stone blocks sits atop a
hill. Diffuse light glows from its queer windows, spills from
a massive front entranceway.

The Master stands on path that leads to this HOUSE OF SILENCE. He hears a DOOR OPEN somewhere far inside the House. Winds lift his robes, drawn into the House by a great vacuum.

A shape emerges. Like a Monstruwacan it's black and tattered robes symbolize the Great Pyramid - but one utterly destroyed. It is a SILENT ONE, emissary of the Slayers.

The Silent One glides smoothly down the path to the Master.

It stops before him, its eight-foot tall frame dwarfs his. It points at the distant Pyramid - at the Towers, CLENCHES its black fist --

The Towers burst asunder!

The Master humbles himself, falls to his knees before it.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Please, I beg you. I only need a little more time. The child will be yours.

INT. VESSEL'S ENCLAVE - PRISON CELL

Torin lies face down on a cold metal floor. A dark halo surrounds his head, blood from a wicked cut in his scalp. Torin GRUNTS as he peels his head from the tacky surface.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

So, you're alive after all?

The voice echoes inside his dark cell, he searches for its source. High along one wall - a barred opening.

TORIN

I'm even more surprised than you.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

You must have important friends. Perhaps they will arrange a ransom?

TORIN

(laughing)

I'm afraid not. I imagine that bloated woman is only being cautious. Once she finds out I won't be missed I'm compost.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

A shame. I'd hope to have more than fertilizer to talk to.

RUSTLING sounds are heard through the bars.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you hungry? Thirsty?

TORIN
Of course, but I can't ask...

Bits of food fly through the bars along with a glass vial filled with crystals.

Torin gobbles the food, cracks open the vial, pours the crystals into his cupped hand. A FIZZING occurs, transforms the crystals into water. He sips the liquid with pleasure.

TORIN
Thank you, but can you spare it?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I'm treated well enough. At least they give me all the food and water I need. Madame Vessel hopes I may agree to serve as her Oracle.

TORIN
An Oracle?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I was once a Seer. All our Oracles were once Seers.

The revelation jolts him.

TORIN
You're a long way from the Towers. How did you come to the abandoned levels?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Much like you Torin, I was driven here by the Master Monstruwacan.

Torin starts again when he hears his name.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Please Torin, let's talk plainly. I know who you are...I know what you are, why you are here. It is better that you let me die than take me back to the Towers.

TORIN

I was told you were Afflicted, a murderer. The Master never said you were a Seer. If that's true what's to prevent you from taking refuge in the Capsule?

MARLARA (O.S.)

You can be sure the Master neglected to tell you many things. As for why I cannot take the Release, the Monstruwacans have seen to that.

TORIN

What do you mean?

MARLARA (O.S.)

If you can, look through the opening, see for yourself.

Torin leaps, grabs the bars, pulls his head level to the opening. Through them he sees an upthrust arm. A livid scar marks the skin where the Capsule should lie.

Torin drops to the floor, falls against the wall, slides down to the floor. He looks at his own scarred arm.

TORIN

What does this mean?

MARLARA

It means the Great Pyramid is ruled by a madman. The Final Days are near.

INT. VESSEL'S BROTHEL - PRIVATE CHAMBER

Vessel reclines on her velvet covered lounge. ATTENDANTS hover near catering to her wishes.

On a gilded table Torin and Marlara's tinny voices come through a speaker. A withered OLD MAN sits beside it, transcribes their conversation into a tablet.

VESSEL

(sarcastic)

My very own Oracle, what a fine idea that was! All I have is yet another degenerate!

Her gaze falls onto a nearby Attendant, he withers, clearly the architect of the failed scheme.

VESSEL (CONT'D)

Well, too late for regrets. The question is what to do now?

She cracks a number of drug capsules, breaths deeply of the potent mix. The chemicals bring her courage.

VESSEL (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Still if the Master is concerned enough to send his personal hound to bring her back... Perhaps I can profit from this after all.

She grabs hold of the rebuked Attendant, pulls him close.

VESSEL (CONT'D)

Get a message to our contact within the Guard. Tell him I have an item the Master's misplaced.

An effeminate, ALBINO ATTENDANT interjects.

ALBINO ATTENDANT

Madame Vessel, you don't propose ransoming the woman to the Master Monstruwacan himself? What's to stop him from sending the Guard to take her?

FAT WOMAN

Weren't you listening? He wants her alive. He can't risk taking her by force. Send the message.

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Cloaked in darkness, the Master Monstruwacan sits alone at the head of the pyramid-shaped table.

Brohas enters, light from the open door briefly reveals the Master's face - hollow-eyed and haggard.

Brohas draws in a sharp breath.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

The Silent Ones grow impatient. Do you have word of the woman.

BROHAS

I do. Marlara is alive. She's being held by a degenerate enclave on the fourth level. They wish to negotiate for her release.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Indeed. I assume you have already positioned your men?

BROAS

I have, the degenerates will find the diskos not easily bargained with.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

No! Satisfy what ever terms these vagabonds propose to secure her release.

BROAS

You will make terms with --

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Then burn their lair bare with Earth Current, I want none left alive.

Brohas nods, satisfied. He turns to leave, hesitates...

BROHAS (CONT'D)

What of Torin? Have the readings changed?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

No. They are still confused. I can not say for certain where he hides. What little I can tell seems to indicate a near constant state of inebriation.

BROHAS

I expected little more. Since he has failed you, why not be done with him.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Ah Brohas, are you so eager to see him die? Let me make a bargain with you. Bring the woman to the Tower, then I will let you unleash the nanomatons upon Torin.

Brohas opens the door to leave. Once more light illuminates the Monstruwacan's devastated face.

BROHAS
My pardon Master, but I would
refrain from making further
bargains - were I you.

INT. VESSELS BROTHEL - TORIN'S CELL

Torin sits in the semi-darkness, breathes raggedly.

One bloody hand holds a jagged SHARD from the water vial, his other cradles his HAND GUN.

He hears approaching FOOTSTEPS outside his cell.

MARLARA (O.S.)
They're coming.

His cell door SQUEAKS open, he lifts his head, squints into the bright light outside.

JAILER
Get up.

Torin takes his time. Shuffles towards the Jailer, pulls his concealed weapon half-free from beneath his tunic --

And is hit in the chest by a bundle of clothes.

JAILER
At the end of this hall there's a
room with clean water to wash
yourself with. Put these on once
you scraped off that filth. We'll
bring food and drink to you later.
A whore if you'd like.

TORIN
What? Who do you think I am?

JAILER
Madame hasn't told me, and I don't
ask. I'd think you'd know.

Jailer herds him down the hallway.

JAILER (CONT'D)
Down this way. Don't be long,
Madame Vessel is waiting.

INT. VESSEL'S BROTHEL - PRIVATE CHAMBER

Torin enters the room escorted by the Jailer. Vessel lies on her lounge surrounded by Attendants and Thugs. Marlara sits on a comfortable couch across from her.

VESSEL

Ah Torin, at last. You don't look half bad considering the beating you took. The Master's dog is certainly a tough breed.

TORIN

So you know who I represent. Can I assume you're releasing the woman to me?

VESSEL

Not just yet. I am willing to return her to the Monstruwacan, for a fair price. Perhaps you know her worth?

Before Torin can answer --

MARLARA

You can't send me back to the Towers!

FAT WOMAN

Don't tell me what I can do woman. I've treated you well so far --

WOMAN

Only because you're afraid of me. Bloated coward.

Vessel seizes Marlara by the throat, chokes her.

VESSEL

Whore! Never speak to me that way. The Interdiction does not hold here!

MARLARA

(strangled voice)
Fat cunt!

Vessel SCREECHES, takes Marlara in a vicious headlock.

TORIN

(calm)

She wants you to kill her.

Vessels hears him, throws Marlara back onto the couch.

VESSEL

You do, don't you? Tell me why.

Marlara stands, unclasps a broach at her shoulder, holds her gown aside, stands naked before them. Her hand rests on her belly - she's pregnant.

MARLARA

This is what the Master
Monstruwacan wants.

ALBINO ATTENDANT

(laughing)

Pregnant? Is that the bastard
child of the Master Monstruwacan?

Marlara angrily re-clothes herself.

WOMAN

Fool! The Monstruwacans can have
no children, their Trials leave
them impotent.

VESSEL

Then what's so special about this
child? Thousands are born everyday
in the Great Pyramid.

MARLARA

This child was conceived to be a
gift to the Slayers.

The room erupts with cries of outrage.

VESSEL

Impossible, the Master Monstruwacan
above all others would not entreat
with the Slayers. You lie.

MARLARA

The Master has lost his senses.
He has built a vessel from the Days
of Twilight. He will use it to
open the Doors of Night and leave
this universe.

TORIN

The Master knows nothing but the gray metal can withstand the Corruption outside the Circle. Why would he waste his time with the Ancient's technology?

MARLARA

Because he's struck a bargain with the House of Silence! This child for safe passage of his ship.

ALBINO ATTENDANT

Of what value is a single child to the Slayers? They have taken billions of lives since the War began.

MARLARA

This child will teach them the Master Word.

Shocked silence.

TORIN

The Word is unknowable to them. Only a Human can utter It.

MARLARA

They cannot learn the Word because they were not conceived with it, this child is...different.

VESSEL

Possessed!

ALBINO ATTENDANT

Women are not allowed outside the Great Pyramid. How could this happen?

MARLARA

I was a Seer. The Towers of Observation are outside the full protection of the Circle.

VESSEL

The Monstruwacans would have sensed the corruption within you. They would have destroyed you.

MARLARA

Not if the Master Monstruwacan
ordered otherwise.

VESSEL

They knowingly allowed the Slayers
into our last refuge?

MARLARA

Do you know my worth to the Master
now?

VESSEL

Yes...

Vessel rises from her lounge in a rage.

VESSEL (CONT'D)

You've ruined me. He'll suspect
I've learned of this abomination,
he can't risk otherwise.

(To attendant)

How long ago was our message sent?

ATTENDANT

Almost a full day.

VESSEL

More than enough time. Quickly, we
must leave.

She lumbers towards an exit.

MARLARA

What about me?

Vessel motions to four of her THUGS.

VESSEL

(To Marlara)

You wish to die? So be it.

(To Thugs)

Kill them both.

The Thugs draw knives and come for them. Marlara closes her
eyes, waits for death.

Torin pulls free his GUN, fires at the Thugs. A dazzling
beams shoot forth, burns gaping holes through their chests.

Marlara's eyes open, surprised by the noise.

MARLARA

No! I want to die! I must!

TORIN

Not yet. Come with me.

WOMAN

No! I won't let you take me back!

They struggle. Torin reaches into the "candy bowl" near Vessel's lounge, cracks several ampules within his fist, holds his hands over Marlara's face. Her eyes become dreamy.

TORIN

We have to leave now.

WOMAN

You're saving me?

TORIN

Yes, I'm saving you.

He grabs another handful of drugs for good measure then pulls Marlara after him out of the room.

BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS

They flee down a maze of corridors. SHOUTS about the Guard's imminent raid causes panic. Half-dressed men and women spill into the halls. Torin and Marlara struggle to push through.

From ahead more SHOUTS:

CROWD

The Guard!

Torin flees back into the heart of the brothel. Behind him the HUM of the diskos mixes with anguished screams. Torin struggles to hold Marlara in the chaos.

They emerge through a door that opens onto a deserted corridor. Torin welds the door shut with his gun. They flee into darkness as the steel door behind them glows red hot.

INT. HOST'S ENCLAVE - HOST'S LIVING QUARTERS

The dirty, dishevelled abode of a confirmed bachelor. Torin and Marlara eat ravenously while Host paces in front of them.

HOST

Explain to me again why you didn't simply give her over to the Guard when they raided the brothel?

TORIN

What if what she said is true? We can't let the Master Monstruwacan have her until we know.

HOST

Can't you see this woman is 'flicted? She's killed a man - broken the Interdiction. It's driven her mad. Her story about a bargain with the Slayers is a fantasy.

Marlara pushes her food away.

MARLARA

It's the truth! If the Slayers get this child the Pyramid falls. I would die to prevent that.

HOST

There now! She may be 'flicted but she's got the right idea. I say kill her and put her body where the Guard can easily find it. That way we all win.

Host pulls a long knife from his waist.

TORIN

No! We have to bring her before the Council, expose the Master for what he is.

HOST

Then what happens to us? Thanks to you we're both filled with the Monstruwacan's machines. What happens when the Master realizes he's been betrayed?

TORIN

She's willing to sacrifice herself. Won't you risk as much if it means saving our entire race?

HOST

Very noble. Our race? We're degenerates to them Torin - not saviors.

TORIN

We may have lost the Word, but we're still human. We keep her safe.

HOST

She's either insane or possessed. Either way...

Host lunges at her. Torin pulls free his weapon, points it at him. Host freezes, sees the resolve on Torin's face.

HOST

So, you still have that souvenir from Outside do you? Marlara, have you ever wondered how the Tower's Master rose so quickly to his position? Wonder no more. That toy in Torin's hand made short work of his rivals.

Host replaces his knife in his belt.

HOST (CONT'D)

I thought you should know who you have placed your trust in.

TORIN

That was a long time ago.

HOST

Finish eating, then leave. If you prefer the 'flicted you can go live with them.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - CORRIDORS

Torin and Marlara walk through a dark labyrinth. Ahead they see LIGHT through cracks in a nearby building. A noise like a BLOW TORCH comes from inside.

INSIDE THE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A ruptured Earth Current conduit spills flames into the room.

TORIN

We'll rest here. The Afflicted fear
the living fire.

Clearly exhausted, Torin lets his pack thump to the ground. He strips off his shirt, cuts and bruises cover him. Marlara watches him dab ointment on the cut along his ribs.

MARLARA

I wondered how you managed to
conceal that weapon from Vessel's
men. Perhaps it's good some wounds
never heal?

TORIN

We can thank the Monstruwacans for
that. You've seen this before?

MARLARA

Brohas has a similar scar. Of all
his wounds he said it was the only
one that still troubled him.

TORIN

Brohas? Why would he...

Marlara moves near the roiling Earth Current.

MARLARA

Host said your weapon came from
Outside. They say nothing that
comes from the Night Land is
wholesome. I guess that isn't
always true, it certainly saved us.

TORIN

No, its true. This cursed relic
has cost me everything, even the
Word itself.

MARLARA

Then why do you keep it?

TORIN

To kill a certain Monstruwacan.
Delivering you to the Towers would
have been the perfect opportunity.

Marlara warms her hands over the flames.

MARLARA

Ah, to be warm again! It's been
weeks since I've felt warm.

The Current mesmerizes her. Her eyes become glassy, she steps forward --

Torin pulls her back. For a moment her hands seemed to have been within the fire. He checks them for burns.

MARLARA

You fear the Earth Current. Why?
To enter its embrace is to start
anew.

TORIN

For the uncorrupted. We're both
kin slayers. Only the Final Death
awaits us.

MARLARA

We have only lost our innocence,
not our souls. We can still return
to the Cycle. We don't have to
remain on the path set for us by
the Monstruwacans.

Torin finds himself touching the scar on Marlara's wrist. He drops her hand, embarrassed.

TORIN

Why you?

MARLARA

The Master found a weakness within
me he could exploit.
(Pleads with him.)
I never killed anyone Torin, my
crime was far worse. I only wanted
to have a child!

TORIN

The Healers couldn't help you?

MARLARA

They tried of course...

She rubs her scar in anger, weeps.

MARLARA (CONT'D)

Years of treatments with no
results. I was desperate. That's
when our Master proposed a
solution.

TORIN

How could he help where the Healers
could not?

She turns away, can't face him.

MARLARA

There are rooms within the Towers
that contain machines from the
Twilight years. My child was
conceived with their aide.

TORIN

Marlara...

MARLARA

Don't you see? This was his plan
all along. He needed a child
created through artificial means,
such a mind would be helpless to
defend itself against the Slayer's
influence.

Her body heaves as she cries.

TORIN

What about your husband? He
couldn't have agreed to this.

MARLARA

I never told him.
(Laughs madly)
So how could I defend myself when
the tests said it wasn't his child?

TORIN

Who's then?

MARLARA

The initiate they say I murdered.
My lover, according to the Master.
I swear to you it's not true.

Marlara takes a deep breath, recovers herself.

MARLARA (CONT'D)

The Master's only mistake was
underestimating my husband's
reaction. He nearly destroyed the
clinic in his rage. I ran away in
the confusion. I was so ashamed!

Torin leaves her to her thoughts. Shrugs his shirt back on. He winces, the pain reminds him of his wound. Where did she see that scar before?

TORIN
Marlara, your husband --

MARLARA
Yes, it is Brohas.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - CORRIDORS

Torin jogs through a deserted plaza, drags Marlara behind. She stumbles...

MARLARA
Torin, I'm tired can't we rest?

Torin looks suspiciously at the balconies above.

TORIN
No.

Marlara has had enough. She plants her feet, forces a halt.

MARLARA
I thought you decided not to kill me? I have to rest!

TORIN
Fine, but not here. I don't like these open spaces.

MARLARA
You said you lived in the Under Country. This can't be anything compared to that.

TORIN
Yes, but there aren't roving bands of Afflicted or men who'd slit your throat for a pair of boots in the Under Country either.

She ignores the snide reply.

MARLARA
I've seen holos of people flying above the Great Chasm. I always wanted to do that.

TORIN
 (distracted)
 I promise I'll take you some day.
 Now be quiet. We might be in
 trouble.

MARLARA
 But you have one of the Ancient's
 weapons. What can overcome --

TORIN
 Did you hear that?

Torin steps away from her, looks above --

A BOLT hits the wall next to him. More shots rain down.
 Torin takes cover.

TORIN
 I knew we were being followed.
 (To attackers)
 Host? Is that you?

HOST (O.S.)
 Leave the woman Torin. You didn't
 think I'd let you have your way so
 easily did you?

TORIN
 No, only surprised it took you this
 long to sober up!
 (To Marlara)
 Get ready.

Torin rises, lets loose with several BLASTS from his weapon.
 His attackers dive for cover.

TORIN
 Now! Run!

INT. HOST'S ENCLAVE

Guards swarm through the buildings around the plaza. They
 round up the populace, herd them into the main square.

Brohas holds Silas by the throat.

BROHAS
 Where is this "Host"? They say he
 is holding a woman from the High
 Cities.

SILAS

(choking)

The woman was taken away by a man called Torin. They left a day ago. Host's gone looking for them.

Brohas releases his hold.

BROHAS

Where did he expect to find them?

SILAS

Hard to tell. The Darks a big place.

Silas waits for a handout - instead he gets Brohas's Diskos under his chin.

BROHAS

Where would you guess degenerate?

SILAS

Host said they'd make for the Under Country. The northwest trail's the shortest way. I could draw you a map, I'm good with maps.

Brohas removes his Diskos. Grabs Silas's shoulder.

BROHAS

(shouts to Guards)

We're done here.

(to Silas)

You'll show me.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - CORRIDORS

Marlara watches Torin hesitate before choosing a path.

MARLARA

Do you know where you're going?

TORIN

No, I don't. Be glad of it. I spent most of my time down here with Host and his boys. If I know where I am he'll know.

MARLARA

You think he's still after us?

TORIN

I'm sure of it. He's a survivor,
he won't accept a death sentence.

MARLARA

Torin, I'm...

TORIN

Don't worry. I regret things I've
done in the past - not this.

Torin stops, throws out an arm to hold Marlara back.

TORIN

Do you smell it?

Marlara takes several deep breaths, wrinkles her nose.

MARLARA

I smell something, what is it?

TORIN

Yeast, from food vats.

MARLARA

Good, we can replenish our
supplies, do you think its far?

TORIN

No, not far at all. That's what
worries me. Down here where
there's food there's someone, or
thing, around to eat it.

MARLARA

Afflicted?

TORIN

Could be, let's go back a ways and
try to circle around.

They only take a few steps back when they see furtive shapes
ducking in and out of shadows.

MARLARA

Torin...

TORIN

I saw them. Turn back around,
we'll have to keep going. Try and
act like you didn't see them.

MARLARA

I'll try.

TORIN

Here, you better take this. Just
in case.

He hands her a length of discarded pipe.

MARLARA

Just in case?

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - FOOD VATS

Torin and Marlara enter a warehouse sized room filled with tanks oozing slop onto stained floors. Clusters of grubby men and women feed upon the drippings.

MARLARA

(whispers)

There must be hundreds of them.

TORIN

Keep walking...slowly. It looks
like they have plenty of food,
they'll probably leave us alone.

Marlara watches an URCHIN girl flit from group to group attempting to sneak handfuls of food. A BULLY catches her in the act, gives chase. He knocks her to the ground, beats her.

MARLARA

Get off!

Marlara runs to her aide, WHACKS Bully with her pipe. Urchin HISSES and SPITS at Marlara, scampers away.

The low grunts of eating are gone, only the occasional plops from the leaking tanks break the silence.

Marlara looks up from the unconscious Bully - hundreds of eyes stare back at her. She steps slowly back towards Torin.

MARLARA

Sorry.

TORIN

Me too.

Bully's group breaks the standoff. They charge, scream senseless profanities.

Torin and Marlara streak past rows of tanks pursued by hundreds of the Afflicted. They make for

A NARROW PASSAGE

In its restricted confines Torin stops, fires bursts from his weapon. Dozens of the tightly packed Afflicted fall - but the rest surge over the dead. Torin and Marlara's flight continues into...

A MULTI-STORIED PLAZA

Degenerates swarm above and ahead. Torin clears their path with his gun. He spies a narrow, easily defended tube.

TORIN

In there! Go!

Marlara runs down the tube while he defends the entrance. The Afflicted's numbers are overwhelming, Torin can't hold them off. A few more blasts then he follows --

INTO THE NARROW TUBE

But RUNS INTO Marlara already coming back!

TORIN

What's wrong?

MARLARA

Come see for yourself.

DEAD END

The tunnel opens onto a balcony overlooking a bottomless transport shaft. Twenty-feet below another balcony juts from the wall.

TORIN

We'll have to jump. Come on, I'll lower you down.

SCREAMS from the tunnel, Torin's fires, blocks the passage with bodies, the Afflicted retreat - for now. Torin waits for them, his weapon ready --

As a grating falls from the ceiling. From the opening leaps a GANGLY MAN. He tackles Torin, knocks his weapon away.

They struggle. Gangly Man falls near the gun, picks it up. Intelligence glimmers in his eyes, he brings the weapon to bear on Torin --

A SHOE hits him in the head, the shot goes wide. Torin dives to the side of the balcony opposite from Marlara. Slightly wider than the tunnel the balcony offers their only cover.

TORIN

I'll distract it. Get ready to jump.

MARLARA

No. I still have one shoe left!

TORIN

Don't argue. Get to the Under Country, find Guild Master Loofstrife, she'll protect you.

MARLARA

Without you I'll never make it that far. The Guard will arrest me as soon as I step foot on a transport. It's better I die here.

The Gangling Man seems confused by their debate. It can't decide who to shoot.

So Marlara makes herself an easy target.

TORIN

No!

Torin jumps in front of Marlara. Gangling Man takes aim. Over his shoulder we see the Afflicted race down the tunnel.

The gun barrel fills Torin's vision, blue light gleams off its polished surface, grows brighter.

Blinding light fills the tunnel - Earth Current surges towards them, consumes the Afflicted from behind.

TORIN

Look out!

Torin pushes Marlara away. They fall back on opposite sides of the balcony.

Earth Current rushes between them. Torin dimly makes out Marlara through the flames. What is she doing?

She steps from the protection of the balcony, enters the flames! Her clothes burn away leaving her naked but unharmed. She walks towards Torin.

Her hand emerges from the flames, grasps his.

TORIN

I can't...

Marlara smiles at him, pulls him gently into the fire.

INSIDE TORIN'S BODY

Nanomatons rest on blood cells, cling to artery walls. Tiny camera eyes REACT as a FLOOD of Earth Current surges over them. None remain after the cleansing fire.

BACK TO SCENE

Marlara walks Torin backwards. He's entranced, watches the Earth Current play along his flesh.

MARLARA

You see? The Living Flame forgives us. The Cycle begins anew.

She pushes him backwards, into the mouth of the shaft.

He falls. Marlara's face fades --

WHITE OUT:

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - OPENING OF NARROW TUBE

Earth Current pours from a flexible steel conduit like water from a fire hose. A pair of Guards sweep the flames back and forth across the tube mouth. Brohas observes with Silas and several more Guard members.

BROHAS

That's enough. Let's see what remains.

DEAD END - LATER

Brohas and his men pick through charred bodies.

Brohas takes Torin's scorched gun from the grasp of the Afflicted's corpse. Stomps on the skull, shatters it.

A short distance away Marlara lies sprawled on the floor naked and shivering. A Guard kneels by her.

BROHAS
Does she live?

GUARD #1
Yes Sir.

BROHAS
(sadly)
We must hurry to the Towers.

Brohas walks away from them. He doesn't get far before Marlara awakens, cradled in the Guard's arms.

MARLARA
Brohas?

BROAS
Yes, I'm here. Better you had died
in the flames.

MARLARA
Yes, my husband, I know. Better
for us all.

She falls back into unconsciousness.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. THE LAST REDOUBT - ANTECHAMBER

SEEN THROUGH A NARROW SLIT, VOICES ARE MUFFLED.

Brohas, as we first saw him, enters via the threaded passage. He takes in the room's carnage, kicks at a scorched suit of armor on the floor, it crumbles to ash.

BROHAS
A Slayer was with them.

MOSTRUWACAN
Yes, it hid itself within the
wounded one.

BROHAS
Jophar, my brother, was with these
men. Was he spared the Final
Death?

MOSTRUWACAN

Some took refuge in the Capsule...
others did not. I cannot divine
his fate from ashes.

Brohas looks directly at us.

BROHAS

Torin, he lives?

MOSTRUWACAN

So it seems. It is...curious.

BROHAS

He took a side-arm from one of the
Ancient's cadavers. That was what
brought the Slayers down on us. He
is to blame for this!

He storms towards us.

MONSTRUWACAN

Attend me Brohas! There are more
important matters here. I must
know. Do you have the vessel's
core memory?

Brohas places his hand on his chest.

BROHAS

It is here.

MOSTRUWACAN

Show me.

Brohas reaches into the neck-hole of his armor. With a HISS
of released gas his armor drops to the floor. Brohas rips
away a blood stained shirt, exposes the gash along his ribs.

Slowly he works a hand INTO the cut, retrieves a smooth
oblong crystal.

MONSTRUWACAN

Well done Brohas. We will go
directly to the Towers of
Observation and begin downloading
its contents.

Deep metallic GRATING as the inner gate opens.

BROAS

Your Honor? What of him?

MOSTRUWACAN

Only his flesh survived the flames,
his mind was destroyed with the
Slayer. Leave him.

(Then reconsiders)

No, wait. Perhaps there is some
use for him. Bring him.

Despite Brohas' injuries he takes us to his shoulders with ease. He moves near the gate but doesn't follow the Master through.

MOSTRUWACAN

Well, what is it?

BROHAS

I have not been challenged.

MOSTRUWACAN

(annoyed)

Yes...of course. Speak the Word!

BROAS

ADAMOVICTUS

The Word is loud, strong, fades slowly. Brohas leaves with the Monstruwacan through the inner gate.

Behind us the gate descends, cutting off light from the antechamber. The gate seals with a THUMP!

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - LOWER BALCONY

Torin regains consciousness, sits up. He's battered but able to move. He stands - still a bit shaky.

TORIN

Marlara!

The cry echoes within the shaft. There is no answer. Defeated, he stumbles into the dark, naked and alone.

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Broas leads Marlara into the room.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 You disappoint me. Don't you realize your sacrifice will free humanity from the Slayers.

MARLARA
 If that were true I would gladly serve your cause.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 You doubt my words?

MARLARA
 I do, because they originate from beyond the Doors of Night. You merely give voice to the lies of the Silent Ones.

The Master strikes her face. Marlara glares back.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 I am my own master, be sure of that! Your tales of doom may have frightened Torin but I assure you they have no effect on me!

MARLARA
 Torin! Where is he?

BROHAS
 He's dead. I found this.

He hands the Master the soot stained gun.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 No Brohas, Torin still lives. But only for a while. See?
 (Shows him a display)
 The nanomatons place him on the twenty-first level, at the very place you recovered this woman. I believe we had an arrangement?

BROHAS
 Yes...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 Well then, you have upheld your end, I will now uphold mine. Press this key - here.

Brohas reaches forward, presses the key. A faint beep.

BROHAS

It is done?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

It is.

Marlara weeps for Torin as grim faced Monstruwacans file into the room.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Now go. Leave the woman here. We must prepare her for her journey.

INT. ABANDONED LEVELS - DEAD END

Torin finds his pack still resting on the balcony. From it he pulls spare clothes. He whirls at a SOUND behind him --

Host stands over him, a crossbow in his hands.

HOST

Where is she?

TORIN

I don't know. There was Earth Current... I fell... Now I can't find her.

HOST

Brohas has her then. He was here, with a full company of Guards. They used the Current to scour the Afflicted from the tunnel, at least we can thank them for that.

TORIN

Then it's over.

HOST

What about the Master Monstruwacan? He'll know you were trying to hide the woman from him. What will he do?

TORIN

I don't care.

HOST

I care! Now that he has the woman what's to keep him from killing us?

TORIN

It's us now?

HOST

Not for much longer. If the Master knows your dead he'll forget about his little machines.

Torin spreads his arms wide, exposes his chest.

TORIN

Kill me then.

HOST

No, not here. Your body must be found quickly and I'm not dragging it for miles.

(Motions with crossbow)

Get up, we're going.

TORIN

Why should I make it easy for you.

HOST

Because, despite what you say, you want to live. You're a survivor Torin, like me. You'll do anything it takes, Interdiction be damned, to draw one more breath. That's what you are, that's what truly being human is - surviving.

Torin stands, allows himself to be herded down the tube.

Behind him Host's triumphant smile becomes a grimace. WHEEZES and COUGHS build into convulsions.

Host goes bug eyed. His weapon clatters to the ground, he falls to his knees.

As Torin watches Host melts away. Orderly columns of flesh march from a shrinking mass that was once a man. The formation flows into the shadows, leaves only a piles of clothes and gear.

Torin pokes and prods himself. Satisfied he's okay he nears Host's remains, picks up his shirt, shakes it.

Torin looks up, as though he can see the Master Monstruwacan gloating in his Towers. He gathers his things, strides with renewed purpose into the corridors.

INT. PYRAMID - CITY OF CALMEY - NIGHT

Even during Night-Period the High City bustles with pedestrian traffic. A compressed, claustrophobic metropolis.

Torin watches the entrance to a restaurant from across a street. Loud CHEERING comes from inside.

Captain Jenra exits the restaurant on the tails of a final cheer. He weaves uncertainly along the street.

Torin falls into step close behind him. In his hand he holds an AMPULE from Vessel's stash.

Jenra crosses the entrance to a narrow alley --

Laughing loudly, Torin claps him on the shoulder. He quickly cups his other hand over Jenra's nose and mouth. Jenra slumps. Torin walks him down the alley. To all appearances two drunk friends helping each other home.

INT. CITY OF CALMEY - STORAGE ROOM

Bare floor, no windows, boxes stacked against the door.

Captain Jenra lies bound on the floor. Torin breaks a different ampule under his nose, he comes to.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Torin! They said you burned.

TORIN

Not burned, cauterized.

CAPTAIN JENRA

What are you talking about?

Captain Jenra tests his bindings.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Why are you doing this to me? I've always treated you fairly, despite what Brohas said of you. We were friends.

TORIN

I hope we still are. Tell me, why were you celebrating.

CAPTAIN JENRA

Celebrating! For appearances only.
I want to mourn. My son is going
into the Night. The Monstruwacans
have allowed a thousand youths to
complete the Rituals of
Preparation. Brohas will lead them
beyond the Circle to parley with
the Silent Ones.

TORIN

You know the Slayers can't be
bargained with. How can you
continue to serve the Monstruwacans
when they are so willing to throw
away the life of your son?

CAPTAIN JENRA

What else can I do?

Jenra breaks down. Torin puts a gentle hand on his shoulder.

TORIN

We can still save your son. Tell
me, where is he now?

CAPTAIN JENRA

At home, meditating.

TORIN

Can you take me to him, without
either of us being seen?

CAPTAIN JENRA

I think so. Yes. Why?

Torin cuts away Jenra's bindings.

TORIN

I owe him a lesson.

OUTSIDE CAPTAIN JENRA'S HOME - NIGHT PERIOD

Captain Jenra's home looks like the facade of a Georgian
mansion set incongruously into the walls of a chemical plant.

Rheumy eyed, Captain Jenra watches the double doors of his
front entry. A pair of men wearing uniforms flank the doors.

Light within the plaza brightens - Day Period begins.

The doors swing inward. Out strides a GUARDSMAN IN FULL ARMOR - visor down. The gate keepers salute him as he passes.

PEDESTRIANS within the plaza pause to watch the armored warrior with admiration. They SHOUT:

PEDESTRIANS
Builders preserve you Atoli!
(And)
Praise the Guard!

The Guardsman acknowledges no one, his rapid pace carries carry him through the throng of admirers.

Captain Jenra falls in beside the Guardsman. Praise now falls on both men as Father escorts his son to glory.

Captain Jenra leans in close:

CAPTAIN JENRA
Atoli?

The Guardsman doesn't answer, keeps walking.

CAPTAIN JENRA (CONT'D)
Torin? It is you isn't it?

Still no answer.

The crowd thins as they leave the plaza behind. Now within less traveled corridors, the Guardsman leaves the main thoroughfare, ducks into a narrow alley.

Captain Jenra follows, grabs the Guardsman, turns him about.

CAPTAIN JENRA
Torin! It is you. What of my son?
What happened after I let you in?

The visor on the helmet FLIPS UP revealing Torin's face: bloody nose, black eye.

TORIN
I knew he'd be a dirty fighter.

MONTAGE - GATHERING OF THE GUARD

--Individual Guards leave their family homes.

--Gather into groups. Crowds cheer them as they make their way through the great cities.

--A mighty host gathers within the central shaft. Hundreds of armored youths solemnly board the transport disks.

--Millions of civilians crowd the platforms surrounding the central shaft, watch their heroic guardsmen descend.

--Within the Chamber of Assembly: The host forms into ranks at the feet of the cyclopean statues of the Builders.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE LAST REDOUBT - CHAMBER OF ASSEMBLY

Brohas descends to the chamber floor upon a transport disk. With him eight BEARERS carry a LITTER between them. Gilded metal sides conceal its contents.

Followed by the Bearers, Brohas walks through the silent ranks. At the head of the column he gestures --

The litter's feet STRIKE the floor with the sound of a gavel's blow. ECHOES roll through chamber.

BROHAS

Our ancestors once lived on green worlds under night skies lit by a trillion stars. Six million years ago their science opened the Doors of Night, allowed the Slayers into our universe. It was the beginning of a war that would last a million years. A war they could not hope to win.

Brohas holds up his Diskos, ignites its flame.

BROHAS (CONT'D)

Only where the Earth Current was strong could they resist the Night, but nowhere did the Current last. Only here, on Earth, on this very spot was there Earth Current in quantity - enough they thought to last till the End of Time. Here they built the Great Pyramid, the last Redoubt, a sanctuary for the survivors of our race. For five million years we have endured, but our fortress has become a prison.

(MORE)

BROHAS (CONT'D)

In the end it will become a tomb -
 for even here the Earth Current
 fades. So? Will we wait meekly
 for our doom? The Monstruwacans
 say NO! Today we end the siege.
 Today we buy our freedom! The end
 of the long Night is at hand!

Brohas turns away, powerful strides propel him towards the Great Gate. Behind him his men CHEER wildly. The Bearers pick up the litter and as one the host follows.

EXT. NIGHT LAND

Queer Things of tooth and claw peer at the Pyramid as EMBRASURES on its sides come alight. They chitter to themselves: What could this mean?

Light spills out from the base of the Pyramid. The hatch opens! Man comes into their Night!

The Things rejoice - today they will feast.

INT. THE PYRAMID - EMBRASURE BALCONY

Multitudes swarm to broad balconies set upon the outer walls of the Pyramid. Through crystal embrasures they gaze into the Night Land, watch their army cross the Circle.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PYRAMID'S GATE - NIGHT

Torin marches towards the inner threshold of the Circle. He feels his scarred forearm - no Release, the Final Death.

At the Circle's edge some youths break rank. Too frightened to pass beyond. Their CRIES of fear and shame rattle Torin. He falters with the Circle's light blazing at his feet. Others continue to march past him.

He looks beyond the Circle. The gilded litter, the Master Monstruwacan's gift, marches steadily away from him.

TORIN

Marlara!

He lunges through the barrier - the Night ROARS its greeting.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - NIGHT

Brohas stops his men before a stone obelisk, waits for a sign. All around the horrors of the Night Land gambol beyond the men's lights. Cries of hunger come from the dark.

AT THE HOUSE OF SILENCE - SAME

Lights within the House GO OUT one by one. As each one extinguishes SOUNDS of the Night diminish, become muffled.

The glow at entranceway fades last, leaving a BLACK HOLE.

Deep within the house - A DOOR OPENS. Then --

UTTER SILENCE

SHAPES exit the black maw of the entranceway. Resolve into three SILENT ONES.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - SAME

Torin works his way to the front ranks. He hears only the rapid beating of his own heart. The men around him seem paralysed.

The Silent Ones emerge from the shadows of the obelisk only a few feet from Brohas. The men's breath turns to white plumes. Icy fingers of frost spread across their armor.

Torin's rapid HEART BEATS become erratic. He grabs his chest. Around him others drop to their knees, collapse.

BROHAS

Enough!

Brohas UNSLINGS HIS DISKOS. The ROAR of Earth Current banishes the unnatural silence.

Men snap from their stupor, regain their feet. Each holds high his diskos - a thousand blades throw back the dark.

A Silent One comes forward. Gestures to the gilded box.

Torin rushes forward --

TORIN

Brohas NO!

BROHAS
 (to troops)
 Restrain him!

Several Guardsmen seize Torin from behind, hold him fast.

TORIN
 You can't do this!

BROHAS
 This is the Master Monstruwacan's
 will, not mine. I am only a
 servant of the Towers.

Brohas fits his Diskos to the gilded box like a key. Its sides fall away revealing Marlara, sedated, lying on a silken bed, the swell of her belly obvious to all.

GUARDSMEN
 A woman?! This is forbidden! What
 have we done? Builders preserve us.

BROHAS
 (to men)
 Have faith in the Monstruwacans.

TORIN
 (to all)
 Have faith in yourselves. The
 Monstruwacans have betrayed us.
 You were told we would buy our
 freedom today, but the price is the
 Master Word. That woman's unborn
 child will give them its secret.

Confusion among the men. The hold on him loosens.

The Silent One ignores the humans, steps near Marlara, stretches forth a hand.

Its fingers elongate, flow into barbed tentacles, weave over her stomach. Her skin stretches, her unborn child pushes up from within.

Marlara's eyes flutter open. She SCREAMS in pain.

TORIN
 It's tearing her apart!

Brohas brandishes his Diskos at the Silent One. The Slayer retreats from the living fire.

BROHAS

What is the meaning of this? You
were to take the woman into the
House of Silence, not gut her
before us like some animal.

The Silent One FLOWS into a shapeless mass. A pseudopod
lashes out at Brohas. He tumbles away, limp, lifeless.

The Silent One regains its humanoid shape, comes for Marlara.
She sits up, holds her belly as the tentacles reach for her.

Torin breaks free. Unslings his diskos - but the blade
remains lifeless. The Silent One's gaze crumples him, he
falls across Marlara.

TORIN

Marlara, I'm sorry.

Marlara places her hands over his on the diskos' handle.

MARLARA

Speak the Master Word.

TORIN

I don't remember...

MARLARA

(whispers in his ear)
My son knows, listen to him.

She lays his head on her stomach. Torin's diskos slides
through his frozen grip --

His eyes go WIDE!

TORIN

ADAMAVICTOS!

The blade ignites, the Silent One reels back. But another
form charges in from the side --

Brohas. He cleaves through the Silent Ones body. Shrieks
fill their minds as the Slayer dissipates. The remaining
Silent Ones seek the shadows of the obelisk --

But Brohas is faster, he cuts them to shreds.

EXT. THE HOUSE OF SILENCE - SAME

Somewhere deep inside - HUNDREDS OF DOORS OPEN.

A BLACK RIVER pours from its entrance --

EXT. NIGHT LAND - SAME

Creatures slink down from the surrounding hills.

BROHAS

(to all)

The parley is over! Form skirmish lines. Take defensive positions.

(to Torin)

Get her back to the Pyramid. We'll hold here as long as possible.

MARLARA

You can't hold back the Night Brohas. Retreat.

Brohas can't bear to look her in the eyes. He grabs Torin, pulls him close.

BROHAS (CONT'D)

The Master Monstruwacan waits within the South Tower. You will deliver this message:

TORIN

Of course.

BROHAS

Tell him we will meet again beyond the Doors of Night for, at last, I understand where his path truly leads - to Hell itself. I will be waiting for him there.

Brohas throws Torin back, leaves to organize the defense.

Torin takes Marlara's hand. With Eight Guardsmen they run through the ranks, flee towards the Pyramid as the Night-creatures begin their assault.

INT. THE TOWER OF OBSERVATION - OBSERVATION ROOM

The Master Monstruwacan watches Torin's group run towards the Pyramid. A TECHNICIAN attends him.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

How long before the craft is ready?

TECHNICIAN

Two days Master.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Increase the flow of Earth Current to the engines. Make final preparations for departure. We will leave today.

TECHNICIAN

Master, if we increase flow the Circle cannot be maintained.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

The Circle is no longer required. It has served its purpose. Do as I say!

TECHNICIAN

Yes Master.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - WITHIN THE BATTLE

Brohas swings his Diskos against horrid creatures.

Around him young men fight bravely but die in droves. Hounds tear through their ranks, drag them off to be devoured. They can't hold much longer - but it doesn't matter...

The BLACKNESS from the House nears. It flows over the blasted landscape. Creatures too slow to escape disappear under its advance.

BROHAS

The Slayers are upon us! The Release! The Release! Escape the Final Death!

He throws his diskos into the massed Night-Creatures. BITES down on his Capsule as BLACKNESS sweeps over him.

INT. PYRAMID - EMBRASURE BALCONY

People gathered at the embrasures witness the black wave cover their young warriors. Parents and children weep.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - TORIN'S GROUP - SAME

Watch the last diskos disappear.

MARLARA

All of them, gone, for us.

Over her shoulder, the Circle blazes in the distance.

TORIN

Not just us, the entire Pyramid.
The Master's scheme has failed.
We'll make the Circle now.

GUARD#1

Only if we hurry. The Slayers
don't stop to mourn our dead.

GUARD#1 urges them to follow, as he passes near a thicket --

A GIANT HAND snatches him from sight.

A SCREAM - abruptly cut off.

The others scramble back as an emaciated GIANT crawls forth.
It scuttles like a four-legged spider towards them.

Two Guards step in front of Torin and Marlara. Their diskoi
reflect in the Giants black, bird-like eyes.

The standoff is brief. It lunges - pins GUARD#2 with a
dextrous foot/hand.

GUARD#3 moves to save him, but a clawed fist sweeps him up.

Armor and all, it stuffs them into a wet, sphincter like
mouth. Fleishy lips quiver with pleasure.

The others counterattack, manage to hack off a finger. The
Giant examines the stump more curious than hurt.

The increased fury of the Guards forces the Giant to its
feet. At twenty-feet tall the men can't reach anything
vital. Two get stomped to pulp - only three remain.

GUARD#4

(to Torin and Marlara)

Run to the Circle. We'll lead it
away!

They wave their diskoi to attract the hulking brute. The
Giant pursues them as they sprint into the shadows.

EXT. - NIGHT LAND - THE SLAYERS

Advance like floodwaters towards the Pyramid.

EXT. NIGHT LAND - ONLY A FEW YARDS

Now separate Torin and Marlara from the safety of the Circle.
They pass in front of a large boulder --

WHACK - The armored body of one the Bearers slaps into the
rock. The body slides to the ground leaving a bloody trail.

The Giant lumbers out of the darkness.

TORIN
Cross the Circle.

MARLARA
Not without you.

Torin leaves her, rushes to meet the Giant.

INTERCUT

Torin and the Giant square off.

Marlara sees that the dead Bearer still clutches his diskos.

Torin dodges in and out of the Giants reach - slashes its
legs repeatedly which only enrages it further.

Marlara wedges the heavy Diskos into a fissure.

MARLARA
Torin! This way!

Torin hears Marlara beckoning to him. It nearly costs him
his life. A lunge by the Giant misses him by inches! He
runs to Marlara - the Giant in close pursuit.

END INTERCUT

Marlara kneels with the haft of the Diskos in both hands.

MARLARA
Cut the handle!

TORIN
What?

The Giant looms over them, raises a massive, taloned hand.

MARLARA
Do it now!

Torin swings --

Earth Current bursts from the sheared handle.

All the weapon's energy releases in an instant - an incandescent beam that bores between the Giant's eyes, erupts through the back of its skull. Time stretches as the Giant falls heavily onto its back.

Marlara lies stunned. Torin leans over her, shakes her.

TORIN

Marlara?

She gives Torin a weak smile.

MARLARA

I didn't miss...did I?

Torin helps her sit up to see the twitching body go still.

INT. PYRAMID - EMBRASURE BALCONY

Citizens gathered there cheer wildly as Torin and Marlara cross the Circle.

A grey bearded old man with wild eyes enters --

OLD GUARD MEMBER

To arms! To arms! Take hold your diskos, don the gray armor. Make way to the Chamber of Assembly. Old Guard report to the cannon batteries! Those without training take to your homes. The Slayers come!

CIVILIAN MAN

What do mean the Slayers are coming?

An OLDER MAN pushes forward.

OLDER MAN

(to Old Guard Member)
Hadring? What's going on?

HADRING

Captain Jenra says we must prepare for an assault against the Pyramid's walls. We must make ready.

The crowd mummurs at the mention of Jenra's name.

OLDER MAN

Builders preserve us! Kristos!
Linnus! Hurry!

Two strapping boys follow their father from the room. A few others follow - most remain.

CIVILIAN MAN

You can't be serious? The Circle protects us. What do the Monstruwacans have to say?

HADRING

What words would you hear from them? Haven't your eyes told you enough? A thousand youths devoured by the Night - why? Because the Tower's Master believed he could escape the Slayer's noose. The fool! He has done nothing but pull it tight around our necks!

The gathered crowd gasps at his seditious words.

CIVILIAN MAN

They will expel you from the Redoubt for those words.

HADRING

(speaking to entire crowd)
I should hope to have a Redoubt to be expelled from after today.

He moves to the embrasure, looks out.

HADRING (CONT'D)

The Doors of Night have opened wide. The Slayers pour through, even now their vanguard nears the Circle...

Turns back to crowd.

HADRING (CONT'D)

Can it be breached? I don't know. Surely it will be tested today as never before. I do know this, if it fails the Slayers must learn a force stronger yet lives within these walls.

Civilian Man continues to sneer at Hadring - but he's in the minority, around him the crowd melts away.

EXT. THE GREAT GATE

Torin stands before the entry hatch with Marlara.

TORIN
(strikes the hatch)
Open the gate Monstruwacan!

Marlara pulls him around --

BLACKNESS flows to the Circle's edge, spreads round the barrier. The Pyramid becomes an island in an obsidian sea.

Lights from the Tower flash a message...

INT. TOWER OF OBSERVATION - OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME

The Master, wearing observation helmet, stands on a watch platform.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Look to the Circle. Can't you see
this world will never be ours
again? Why linger here when we can
escape through the Doors of Night
into new realms? The Slayers were
willing to let us go. They only
asked for the Master Word. A small
price to pay for our freedom.

Black spittle runs from the corner of the Master's mouth.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)
But you were too afraid to seize
this opportunity. I pity you.
Thankfully your selfish act changes
nothing. My ship is ready. I can
take only a precious few, but we
are enough. Because of me Humanity
will survive!
(Licks his lips)
You see, I have struck a new
bargain with the Slayers. I find
their new demand more than fair.
(Manic grin)
They only ask that I give them the
Pyramid.

EXT. THE GREAT GATE - SAME

As Torin reads the last flashes from the Towers the glow from the Circle dies.

A blast of air sweeps over Torin and Marlara.

Blackness pours over the barrier like floodwaters over a dam. Countless Slayers rise from its surface, rush towards them.

Torin pushes Marlara away, raises his diskos.

TORIN

I can spare you Final Death.

MARLARA

If the Pyramid falls Final Death takes us all.

They turn to face the Slayers which --

Fly over them - up the sides of the Pyramid. Their passing knocks Torin and Marlara to the ground.

INT. PYRAMID - EMBRASURE BALCONY - SAME

Civilian Man backs away from the embrasure as Slayers hurtle up the Pyramid's walls.

CRASH - Thick crystal implodes inwards. Slayers swarm through the breach.

Trapped beneath rubble Civilian Man has no chance as TENTACLES reach for him.

EXT. THE GREAT GATE

Torin and Marlara pick themselves up. Debris rains down around them. Marlara weeps.

MARLARA

Why didn't they take us?

TORIN

They were too eager to invade the Pyramid to notice us.

Swarms of creatures stampede out of the Night Land. A pack of Night Hounds races in front --

TORIN (CONT'D)
 But more than the Slayers have
 waited for the Circle to fail.

Close to within yards of Torin and Marlara --

A GREAT GRINDING OF METAL.

Behind them the GREAT GATE OPENS. Light spills forth - a
 hundred-thousand diskoi alive with flames!

The host races past Torin and Marlara. Opposing fronts meet.
 Chaos and death erupt within the Circle.

Torin takes Marlara's hand pulls her against the flow of
 outpouring warriors into the Pyramid.

INT. PYRAMID - CHAMBER OF ASSEMBLY - LIGHTS DIM

Torin and Marlara reach the transport shafts. An OPERATOR
 moors his disk to the surrounding railing.

TORIN
 (To Operator)
 I have to get to the Under Country.
 If the Circle can be restored the
 Redoubt can still be saved.

OPERATOR
 There isn't enough power left to
 descend.

MARLARA
 Then we're cut off, from both the
 Towers and the Earth Current.

Torin paces angrily to and fro.

TORIN
 No, there must be a way.

He rails against the mighty statues of the builders.

TORIN (CONT'D)
 You built this place. Arrogant
 fools! Couldn't you foresee this
 day?

Torin moves towards Kronos' statue, his diskos ablaze. Wild
 eyed he raises his weapon to strike --

But by its light sees an object hidden behind stone robes.

TORIN

Marlara!

A broad smile plays on his face.

TORIN (CONT'D)

Haven't you always wanted to fly?

INT. THE GREAT PYRAMID - CHAMBER OF ASSEMBLY - LATER

Torin and Marlara stand wrapped in a rough harness made from the Operator's mooring rope on the lip of the Central Shaft.

On Torin's back are the folded wings of a glider. The Operator looks on with disbelief.

TORIN

Are you ready?

MARLARA

You've done this before right?

TORIN

In the five million year history of the Redoubt - no one has done this.

OPERATOR

No wonder. The transports make dozens of corrections a second to navigate through the connecting shafts - and that's at a fraction of the speed you'll reach.

MARLARA

I was hoping to hear something encouraging.

TORIN

Do you want to stay here?

MARLARA

No. Just hurry, before I lose my nerve.

TORIN

On three then. One, two...

And they plummet into darkness.

INT. PYRAMID - CITY OF CALMEY - DIM LIGHT

Slayers swarm over every surface. Thousands lie dead in the streets, pale corpses twisted in agony. Amid the slaughter men armed with diskoi protect small pockets of survivors, but it's clear they cannot hold much longer.

INT. UNDER COUNTRY - CENTRAL SHAFT - NIGHT

Wind roars around Torin and Marlara. The chamber floor rushes up. The connecting shaft looks like the eye of a needle - impossible to thread.

Torin adjusts the glider's wings. The pair oscillate wildly over the shaft's opening.

TORIN

Here we go!

MARLARA

I don't want to know.

Marlara closes her eyes as they --

Pass through the needles eye - but so close Torin's boot throws a roostertail of sparks along the shaft wall.

They fall from the connecting shaft through the next level's transport grid. Slayers pause from plucking people from stalled cars to watch Torin and Marlara streak past.

Three Slayers DIVE after them, morph into sleek darts.

Marlara opens her eyes, sees them.

MARLARA

Torin! Slayers!

Torin goes vertical to increase speed. It's not enough.

Just above the chamber floor Torin swerves at the last instant, takes a smaller secondary shaft.

Two of the Slayers impact on the plaza floor, destroy themselves. The other enters the shaft just behind them.

Torin and Marlara emerge into the next level. From the shaft a BLACK PSEUDOPOD stretches out - becomes a gaping mouth.

It uncoils like a striking snake - misses. The Slayer drops free, reforms into its dart shape.

Torin pulls free a knife strapped to his thigh, cuts the ropes binding him to Marlara.

MARLARA

What are you doing?

TORIN

Don't worry, I'll catch up.

He pushes her from him as he extends the glider's wings. Marlara quickly drops away as he --

Veers off towards a skyscraper/column. The Slayer morphs a pair of wings in pursuit.

Torin corkscrews tight around the building. Furtive glances show the Slayer gaining then --

It's gone.

Torin thrusts his Diskos out before him. Shielded behind the blade he rounds the buildings side --

Smack into the waiting Slayer.

Torin passes through its body within a cone of Earth Current, emerges on the far side as Slayer disintegrates.

Torin scans below for Marlara, she gone - already fallen into the next level. He descends in a steep dive.

MARLARA FALLS - CONTINUOUS

Towards the chamber floor of the bottom level. She sees the Chasm, Earth Current glows feebly in its depths.

The ground rushes up --

Then one arm, and another, wraps round her body.

Torin and Marlara embrace fiercely. Together they glide towards a small gathering on the rim of the chasm.

INT. THE UNDER COUNTRY - RIM OF THE CHASM - NIGHT

Torin and Marlara touch down at the edge of a diverse group of men and women. Guild Master Loofstrife and Captain Jenra emerge from the crowd, rush to meet them.

TORIN

What are you waiting for? Destroy
the Master's conduit.

CAPTAIN JENRA

With what? It's made of the gray
metal. We can't even reach it.

Master Loofstrife touches Torin's glider wings, walks to the
edge of the chasm.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

(pointing)

Torin, can you set me on that
ledge? The one just to the left of
the conduit?

Torin looks where she indicates. Weighs his chances.

TORIN

No, it's too small for us to land.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

You don't need to land, just get me
to the ledge. Is it possible?

TORIN

Maybe, but it won't be pleasant I
can promise you that.

Distant SHRIEKS from above. All eyes look to the chamber's
roof. Slayers swarm through the ceiling's shafts.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Hurry, we don't have much time.

MARLARA

Master Loofstrife, I can guess what
you must do, please...let me go.

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Thank you child, but this is not
your task. You are needed at the
Circle.

MARLARA

How do you know? You're not an
Oracle...are you?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE

Was it a true vision or an old
woman's nightmare...I can't say.

(MORE)

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE (cont'd)
But I've seen the South Watcher at
the Circle's edge - you were
standing before it.

MARLARA
What can I do against one of the
Watchers?

MASTER LOOFSTRIFE
Hold fast child...hold fast.

Marlara nods her head, hugs the ancient woman.

The Master ends the embrace, goes to Torin who enfolds the
tiny woman within his arms.

They leap into the chasm, dive low over the simmering
Current. Thermals thrust them up the far cliff face --

Inches from the jagged rock face, the ledge approaches --

Torin releases Master Loofstrife. She falls --

WOMPS hard against the rocks --

Rolls limply across ledge, tumbles over --

But catches herself at the last moment. Bloody, but not
beaten, she pulls herself to the ledge.

AT THE EDGE OF THE CHASM

Torin lands next to Marlara.

TORIN
What's she doing?

CAPTAIN JENRA
What can she do? She seems to be
just sitting there.

TORIN
She's hurt, I'll...

Torin makes to take off again, Marlara restrains him.

MARLARA
No, give her time.

ON THE LEDGE

Master Loofstrife sits calmly with her eyes closed. A few bees orbit lazily around her - then a few more.

AT THE EDGE OF THE CHASM

A dark shadow passes over the crowd.

GUARDSMEN

The Slayers!

Torin looks to the sky.

TORIN

Those aren't Slayers.

An immense SWARM OF BEES sweeps over head. The HUM from a billion wings drowns out all other sounds.

The thick cloud flows toward Master Loofstrife, surrounds her. She disappears within the swarm.

ON THE LEDGE

Master Loofstrife gets to her feet, smiles. Far below she sees the white hot orb that marks the intake of the conduit.

She jumps from the ledge.

AT THE EDGE OF THE CHASM

The crowd watches the swarm dive into the depths of the chasm. Its departure reveals an empty ledge.

CAPTAIN JENRA

What has she done?

MARLARA

All that she could.

The swarm reaches the surface of the Earth Current --

A geyser erupts, Current licks the chamber's ceiling a thousand feet above.

Torin and company shield their eyes from the actinic light.

The flames die, Torin looks across the chasm --

The Master's conduit lies in ruins!

The chasm immediately surges with renewed energy. Within the Under Country night turns to day.

Energies surge along the cables in the ceiling. Earth Current arcs in LIGHTNING BOLTS across the chamber, seek out the Slayers, destroy them.

The crowd CHEERS the light show.

INT. PYRAMID - CHAMBER OF ASSEMBLY

Torin, Marlara and Captain Jenra with several dozen guardsmen reach the chamber floor.

Marlara steps from the disk.

MARLARA

(to Torin)

You're risking yourself foolishly.
The Monstruwacans are powerless
now. Come with me to the Circle.

TORIN

I can't, not till I drag the Master
from his tower. I can't let him
escape.

MARLARA

Torin, there is no escape. He will
never pass the Door of Night.

Torin sets his jaw. It's clear he's made up his mind.

CAPTAIN JENRA

(to Marlara)

Half my men will accompany you to
the Circle.

MARLARA

I can't ask...

CAPTAIN JENRA

You haven't. Until the Current
Cannon clear the Circle these men
will keep the Night at bay.

MARLARA

Thank you.

The guardsmen file off the disk, surround Marlara in a protective formation. Torin holds Marlara's gaze as the transport rises away.

EXT. WITHIN THE CIRCLE - NIGHT

The battle rages on. The humans have dwindled to a few thousand men pushed back to the Pyramid's foundation.

Above them METAL GRINDS against metal. Rust cascades down the Pyramid's side. Hatches, closed for million years, open.

CURRENT CANNON, like the mighty guns of battleships, slide through the openings. Servos WHINE as they take aim.

A hundred cannon FIRE!

Gouts of flame arc over the embattled men's heads, impact within the seething mass of Night Land creatures. Whole swaths of ground are cleared with each burst.

The creatures retreat but are caught between the Cannon and the revived Circle. Soon all are exterminated. The few surviving humans CHEER.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GATE - SAME

Marlara emerges with her escort. She surveys the carnage, the dead cover the ground.

MARLARA
So much death.

ESCORT
But not the Final Death. They
didn't die at the Slayers' hand.
At the Cliffs of Rebirth their
Cycle will continue.

EXT. NIGHT LAND

Creatures flee from the South Watcher as it moves towards the Pyramid. The Watcher is so massive it doesn't walk on the land but wades through it as if bedrock were thick mud.

INT. PYRAMID - CITY OF CALMEY - CENTRAL SHAFT

Distant battle sounds come from beyond sight. Captain Jenra's remaining men run from the transport towards the fray.

CAPTAIN JENRA

This is my home Torin. My wife and son...

TORIN

I understand. Go, tell Atoli I've made good use of his diskos but I'll need it awhile longer.

Jenra rushes to battle as Torin rises alone to the Towers.

EXT. TRANSPORT DISK TO THE TOWERS

Carries Torin through the void between Pyramid and Towers. The pylons supporting the Towers SPUTTER ominously, the entire Tower complex leans at an angle.

INT. TOWERS OF OBSERVATION - CONTINUOUS

Torin runs across canted floors, finds room after room empty of both living and dead. He heads higher. At last --

Comes to a room filled with dead Monstruwacans. SHOUTS come from beyond an open doorway. Torin gets halfway across the room when --

The Towers heave over several more degrees. The lights go out. Torin, thrown on his stomach, lights his diskos.

The Monstruwacan's corpses, animated by the Slayers, crawl towards him like moths to a flame.

Bloody work with his diskos clears a path to the door. He heaves it shut, leans against it.

HANDS coming from behind help brace it closed. Several INITIATES work with him to bar the doorway. Behind them stands the Master Monstruwacan - he holds Torin's gun.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

You must forgive my fellow Monstruwacans Torin, they are not feeling themselves today.

TORIN

They were your Brothers!

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

They were cowards. Too afraid to go where I would take them. Look!

Torin follows his gesture. The Master's spaceship lies beyond a glass wall. Torin walks in a trance to the window, clearly impressed by the massive ship.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN (CONT'D)

They should have rejoiced at their chance to leave this dead world. I am glad the Slayers dealt with them, they deserved no better.

Torin makes to lunge at the Master but is held off by the gun leveled at him.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

You see what Brohas retrieved for me? Do you wish it returned?

TORIN

It is a corrupt thing, it belongs in corrupt hands.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Indeed? You hold the Master Word yet you still speak like a degenerate.

TORIN

Degenerate! It was only through your lies that I believed so. You used me...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

As a tool, yes! It was my right. It was for the good of our race that I pursued this course.

TORIN

You have only done the Slayers will. They exploited your arrogance, your pride. The Slayers have been with you for so long you can no longer tell their voices from your own.

The Master Monstruwacan takes aims --

TORIN

You no longer feel the
Interdiction do you Monstruwacan?
Tell me then, which of us is the
degenerate? Speak the Master Word
if I'm wrong!

The Master Monstruwacan snarls, aims the weapon over Torin's shoulder - fires into the outer glass wall.

It bursts outward, explosive decompression tears the room apart. The Initiates, already unbalanced by the tilted floor, fly out the window.

The Master drops the gun, takes hold of the door frame with both hands. The gun tumbles towards the shattered opening.

Torin tracks the gun across the floor, releases his hold, slides after it --

Snatches it as it flies past. He slams against the jagged remnants of the wall. It holds - for now. Spider cracks spread through the glass behind him.

Torin takes aim at the Master Monstruwacan.

The bright chrome on the weapon dulls, corrosion spreads from barrel to handle

He pulls the trigger --

But the gun crumbles in his hands.

The Monstruwacan's fear turns to satisfaction.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

I bequeath to you this world.
Breath deep its corrupt air, rule
as you see fit its bankrupt people.
For too long have I done both. It
has given me little pleasure. Now,
I am done.

Torin watches, helpless, as the Master leaves.

The glass behind Torin continues to crack - at last it gives.

Torin tumbles down, strikes the canted face of an adjacent tower, slides down its glass surface.

Rolls like a rag doll until he comes to rest atop the flat plateau of the Pyramid.

EXT. THE SHIP - NIGHT

Rises on a column of fire.

EXT. ON TOP OF THE PYRAMID - SAME

The launch further unbalances the Towers, their base crushes a support pylon. EXPLOSIONS tear away the Tower's foundation.

Still stunned, Torin watches a billion tons of steel and glass rush by as the Towers FALL from the plateau --

Down the side of the Pyramid to the ground eight-miles below.

EXT. AT THE CIRCLE - SAME

Marlara and her Escort watch the Towers fall as the Master's ship streaks away soon becoming a pinprick of light. The only star visible in a black void.

ESCORT #1
Night take me!

MARLARA
Torin!

As pieces of the Towers strike the ground a billowing debris cloud rises. Distant thunder reaches Marlara's ears.

The cloud grows - rolls towards them.

ESCORT #1
It's not safe here. We have to
move.

MARLARA
Too late.

She's right. Chips of glass fly ahead of the roiling cloud.

ESCORT #1
Behind me!

He pushes Marlara down, the others hunker around her.

Debris sweeps over them. Armor RINGS from impacts.

Larger pieces come - a scream of pain. Torn from the group a man disappears into the swirling dust.

Out of the brown haze - something massive.

Wreckage the size of a house. It ROARS towards them - at the last moment pinwheels overhead --

Crashes to the ground beyond and is gone.

The storm subsides. Marlara and her group shake free of clinging rubble. Lost in a brown haze they seek some point of reference.

MARLARA

Where is the Circle?

ESCORT #1

I don't know. Its light is gone.

The Pyramid appears through the swirling dust.

MARLARA

There, I see the Great Pyramid.
Then the Circle should be...

A gust of wind draws the dust aside. She sees the Circle - its hollow tube cut in two by a steel beam.

A low rumble pulls her gaze from the wrecked Circle to the horizon. Something massive moves in the dark.

MARLARA

The Circle is broken. Back, back
to the Pyramid. The Watcher comes!

They run. In their panic her escort doesn't realize she holds back. Soon she stops altogether, turns back.

Without the Circles protection the Watches gaze sweeps like a scythe over the racing men. They fall along with all caught outside the Gate.

Desperate Cannon fire from the Pyramid rakes across the Watchers body - to no effect, except to draw its ire.

INT. CURRENT CANNON BATTERY - SAME

The air inside SHIMMERS as with great heat. Men scramble to escape. Too late! Flesh withers away, gray skin stretches tight over bones.

EXT. EDGE OF THE CIRCLE - NIGHT

Marlara stands alone.

The Pyramid's cannon fall silent. Another ROAR takes their place - ROCKS SHATTER as the Watcher breaches the last hills.

But Marlara's attention is drawn elsewhere - to the severed Circle and its weak flow of Current.

She kneels within the breach, bridges the gap by taking hold of each end of the shattered tube.

Around her the air begins to boil. She looks up --

Meets the leering visage of the Watcher - without fear.

The Watcher's pupils dilate. It BELLOWS.

Hurricane winds tear at Marlara's grip. She leans into the wind, grips the Circle fiercely, sharp edges cut her hands.

She holds, looks up to challenge the Watcher's gaze again.

It will crush her! A hand capable of pulling down mountains reached out --

EXT. ON TOP OF THE PYRAMID

Torin hobbles to the edge of the plateau, sees the Watcher at the Circles edge.

TORIN

Marlara!

MARLARA (O.S.)

Torin!

He whips around. Near him the crushed pylon spouts a column of Earth Current. A WRAITH of Marlara floats within.

WRAITH MARLARA

The Circle is weak. It can't hold back the Watcher.

TORIN

What can I do?

WRAITH MARLARA

A hundred-thousand souls lie within
the Circle waiting to rejoin the
Cycle. Bring the Current to them.

Torin steps back from the ruined pylon --

Then charges it, throws his shoulder against the twisted
steel. Slowly it starts to lean --

EXT. PYRAMID - NIGHT

Earth Current cascades down the Pyramids face. Flows over
the bodies within the Circle. A mighty disk of Current
forms, ever stronger rushing out --

TOWARDS THE CIRCLE

As the Watcher's hand descends --

The spinning disk of current expands to the Circle - the
whole Redoubt has become a diskos!

The Watcher recoils, tries to retreat --

But is sheared in half as the Current releases itself!

The Watcher explodes, shock waves expand into the Night --

Destroy creatures caught in the open.

Even the House of Silence is not spared - it topples like a
house of cards.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE GREAT PYRAMID

Half-constructed towers rise from the apex of the Great
Pyramid. Within scaffolding swarms of men wearing EVA suits
labor in cold vacuum.

On the completed, lower portion of a tower one window glows
with cold, white light. Within --

AN OBSERVATION ROOM

A Seer stands inside her glass chamber. YOUNG MONSTRUWACANS
attend her, transcribe her visions into their machines.

YOUNG MONSTRUWACAN #1
 (to Young Monstruwacan#2)
 Inform the Council the House of
 Silence is nearly rebuilt.

YOUNG MONSTRUWACAN #2
 What about the North-East Watcher?

YOUNG MONSTRUWACAN #1
 It is six inches closer to the
 Pyramid since we last measured.

Young Monstruwacan#2 nods, takes a transport --

DOWN THE CENTRAL SHAFT

Through level after level. Around him the Pyramid's myriad societies bustle with everyday activities.

The transport disk enters the abandoned levels.

Light fades --

The disk shudders, abruptly halts. Disconcerted, the Monstruwacan peers about him.

A BLACKNESS deeper than the shadows glides onto the disk. Barbed tentacles lunge for him! He SCREAMS --

CUT TO:

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A boy in his early teens lies asleep in bed. Behind closed lids his eyes dodge like a rabbit pursued by a fox. His mouth opens to shout --

But he makes no sound.

His eyes open, pupils dilated, unseeing. A long blink --

Consciousness returns. His hand goes to his mouth, breaths come in short gasps. He rolls to his side looks --

Across a small room, two younger boys sleep soundly within alcoves molded into a wall.

The site reassures him. A deep, cleansing breathe flushes tension from his wiry frame.

He slips out of bed. Tip-toes from the dark room. Into --

A COMMON AREA

Cozy, with simple furnishings. A SIGH draws his attention.

Beyond an open door, Marlara rolls over in sleep. A wistful smile plays on her face. Beside her - an empty space of ruffled bedding.

The boy looks to the outer door. It hangs partially open, beyond someone HUMS a pleasant tune. The boy crosses to the door, pushes it open. Walks outside.

EXT. UNDER COUNTRY - NIGHT PERIOD

Light from the Earth Current chasm reflects from the chamber's ceiling equaling the light of a full moon.

Torin sits tipped back in a chair beside the door. He notices the boy, stops humming.

TORIN

Brohas, What are you doing out of bed? Are you nervous about tomorrow's examination?

BROHAS II

Not really. I had a dream. It was strange.

Torin's chair drops forward, gives Brohas his full attention.

TORIN

Do you want to talk about it?

BROHAS II

I dreamt a man wanted me to tell him something. A secret. At first I didn't want to tell him...but, he kept asking. Over and over again. I couldn't stand it!

TORIN

And...?

BROHAS II

Well...I told him. I thought I'd go mad if I didn't.

TORIN

What? What did you tell him?

BROHAS II

That's the weird part, I don't know. I woke up just as the words were coming out.

Torin leans back, smiles.

TORIN

Well, that good isn't it. Your secret is still safe.

BROHAS II

I guess, but I wonder what I was going to say? I don't know anything important. Not really.

Torin gets up, rests hand on Brohas' shoulder.

TORIN

I wouldn't say that in front of the examiner tomorrow! Speaking of which: back to bed. You'll need a clear head for the testing. You want to become a Citizen don't you?

(Torin scoots him inside)

Have you finished packing your things?

BROHAS II

Yes, I'm ready but I'm going to miss Jayden and Najon.

TORIN

You can come back for visits. The pilgrimage through the cities doesn't have to be done all at once. The Council is trying to rebuild unity within the Redoubt, not divide families.

BROHAS II

I know, Mother always says that should be their main goal.

(Faces Torin)

Father?

TORIN

Yes?

BROHAS II

The man in my dreams, he called himself the Master Monstruwacan.

(MORE)

BROHAS II (cont'd)
He's gone for good isn't he? He
won't ever come back?

TORIN
No, not ever.

INT. SPACE SHIP

The bridge: unmanned, dark. Panels with BLINKING LIGHTS the only indication the craft still functions.

In another compartment: frosted hibernation capsules hold the Master Monstruwacan and his contingent of followers.

Back on the bridge: an ALARM sounds from a control station. Screens flicker to life. Telemetry briefly shows the ship approaching a large object --

Then degenerates into garbled pixels.

EXT. SPACE SHIP

Retro-rockets ignite.

INT. SPACE SHIP

Throughout the craft LIGHTS switch on, illuminate a Spartan interior. PINGS and BEEPS as systems come back on line.

Frost evaporates from glass enclosing the hibernation capsules. The Master Monstruwacan stirs.

INT. SPACE SHIP - LATER

The Master Monstruwacan and crew busy at the helm.

CREW MEMBER #1
We have come to rest relative to
the object Master.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
What is it, a planet?

CREW MEMBER #1
Not quite so large. The
gravitational index indicates it's
similar in mass to Earth's old
moon.

(MORE)

CREW MEMBER #1 (cont'd)
 Forgive me Master but most of the
 instruments aren't working
 properly. I can tell you little
 more.

The Master Monstruwacan closes his eyes, meditates.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 For the first time in my life I can
 no longer hear the Slayer's
 thoughts.
 (He opens his eyes)
 We have passed beyond their ken.
 (To crew member #2)
 Open the shields. Our eyes will
 show us what these instruments
 cannot.

Heavy panels roll away. Outside the portals --

-- PITCH BLACK

CREW MEMBER #2
 Where are the stars? Shouldn't
 there be stars?

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 Silence! The object before us
 blocks their light. Turn the craft
 about.

The PILOT manipulates her controls. Bodies shift as
 thrusters rotate the ship about. The void outside remains.

PILOT
 We have returned to our original
 position Master.

CREW MEMBER #2
 (whispering)
 Nothing. There is nothing...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 Pilot, can the ship be set down on
 this moon? Could we lift off again?

PILOT
 Yes Master. It's gravity is
 sufficiently weak.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
 Then do so.

CREW MEMBER #2

There is nothing here, no place for us to go. What is the purpose...

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Our purpose is to survive. If there is no light left in this Universe what does it matter? We will pass through the Doors of Night again into a new one.

PILOT

We don't have the energy to open another Doorway. We launched too soon.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

We will find the energy we need. Rejoice! We are beyond the Slayer's reach. If necessary we will wait until the stars are reborn.

EXT. SPACE SHIP

Slowly touches down on the surface of the strange moon. The ground is smooth - a vast marble dome.

The Master Monstruwacan exits the craft followed by two crew members. All wear EVA suits. The crewmen carry a bulky mechanical device outfitted with a drill.

Lights from the ship illuminate a vast area. The Master Monstruwacan kneels to examine the too perfect surface. It stretches to the limits of vision in every direction.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN

Place the probe here. Pray to the Builders that some Earth Current remains.

The drill machine bores into the hard surface, spider cracks radiate away from the hole.

A ROAR. The crewmen's hands press hard to either side of their helmets, they SCREAM in pain. Even the Master Monstruwacan falls to his knees, stunned.

The sound fades. The crewmen lie dead. The Master Monstruwacan staggers to his feet --

Stumbles to his ship, pounds on the closed hatch.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
We must leave this place.

STATIC whispers back to him on his comm-line.

MASTER MONSTRUWACAN
Open the hatch.

The static goes silent.

A slight vibration shakes the boarding ramp.

It strengthens quickly. A massive quake. The drill machine topples over.

The Master Monstruwacan retreats as landing gear BUCKLES. A desperate leap saves him as the craft falls to its side.

Prone on the ground, he lifts his head. To either side WALLS OF STONE rush together --

The final seconds of his life - REFLECTED ON HIS FACE PLATE, as the walls SMASH TOGETHER.

SEEN FROM SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A FIRE BALL of Earth Current erupts from the crushed ship. A lone star in a dark universe.

The stone cliffs retreat from the conflagration - now revealed as the LIDS to a VAST EYE.

The star's life is brief. All too soon it dissipates, allowing darkness to return.

FADE OUT