

SEASON OF THE PLAGUE – THE FINALE

ORIK's eyes snap open and he is once again alone in the forest, back in reality. He gets to his feet and heads back to camp, but stops dead when MERIKH comes out from behind a tree.

MERIKH: So, holy man. Is the Goddess still with us?

ORIK: Of course.

MERIKH: Did she say anything interesting?

ORIK: Like what?

MERIKH: Like why she allowed such a good man to die.

ORIK: The Goddess...she struggles.

MERIKH: Going mad, is she?

ORIK: She's strong.

MERIKH: Good. Because I have a feeling you're going to need her.

ORIK: We're going to need her? You travel with us, yet you travel alone.

MERIKH: I can hardly betray myself.

ORIK: Can't you?

With that, ORIK gives a nod and heads back to the camp. Only now do we see that MERIKH was holding a dagger ready behind his back.

EXT. A MAKESHIFT CAMP - NIGHT - HARLID sits on a stump whacking a log with his sword. FENERIS is trying to sleep.

FENERIS: Harlid!

HARLID: I want to get that girl back.

FENERIS: No.

HARLID: We can sneak into their camp.

FENERIS: I have other plans for those do gooders.

HARLID: But she's mine.

FENERIS grabs a rock and throws it backhanded at him.

FENERIS: Shut the hell up!

HARLID hits the log a few more times, then:

FENERIS: Harlid!

HARLID stabs the sword into the ground.

SHOT OF THE MOON rising in the sky. HARLID sits, leaning his head back against the tree. He is sleepy, his eyes getting heavy....he nods off. After a few moments:

GODDESS ZAREN: (vo) Harlid...Harlid.

HARLID wakes up, but not in the real world but rather the God's World. From around the tree, ZAREN appears and leans close to him, whispering in his ear.

GODDESS ZAREN: Look at him sleeping.

HARLID looks over at FENERIS, sound asleep.

GODDESS ZAREN: Take your knife and kill him.

HARLID: No.

GODDESS ZAREN: Kill him and take the girl back.

HARLID: He's...my boss. My friend.

GODDESS ZAREN: You want the girl?

HARLID: Yes.

GODDESS ZAREN: Then go get her.

HARLID: Feneris said...

GODDESS ZAREN: She's already thinking about that monk.

HARLID: She loves me.

GODDESS ZAREN: But he's so handsome. So strong. He's going to have her. You know he is.

HARLID: She's mine!

GODDESS ZAREN: Is she? A real man wouldn't let anyone stop him from getting what he wants. Go.

HARLID looks over to make sure FENERIS is sleeping.

HARLID's head pops up...now he's awake. He looks over at FENERIS, then creeps away.

EXT. REALM OF THE GODS

ZAREN watches, on the game board, as HARLID sneaks away from the camp. She smiles. With a slight move of her hand, she pans over to FENERIS. She leans in and whispers:

GODDESS ZAREN: Feneris.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT NIGHT

HARLID lies on his stomach watching the camp with the spyglass. HARLID'S POV, through the spyglass, of TAMZIN sleeping.

HARLID: (whispers) There you are, my sweet thing.

Suddenly he gags with severe pain as a sword is stabbed down through his back, pinning him to the ground. He coughs blood. FENERIS looks down at him, anger on his face.

There is a moment of confusion, then a silent struggle as HARLID tries reaching for the sword, but soon enough, he collapses dead.

Silhouette of FENERIS pulling the sword free of HARLID's dead body. A moment, then he heads back into the darkness.

EXT. CAMP - SUNRISE

Establishing shot of the sun coming up over the hills. The CHAMPIONS are breaking camp. TAMZIN packs her sack and looks up when MAYA puts a hand on her shoulder.

MAYA: Help me dress my wound.

They go aside and sit down on a fallen tree. TAMZIN gently unwraps the bandaging from MAYA's wounded hand. She cleans and dresses it as they speak.

TAMZIN: I don't think the Goddess is watching over us.

MAYA: Orik says she is.

TAMZIN: He still needs our help. He would say anything.

MAYA: I suppose a good portion of faith is needed.

TAMZIN: I no longer have any. The next safe village we come to...

MAYA: You will leave us. And what of your brother?

TAMZIN: Phillipe must follow his quest, but I don't have to watch him die.

MAYA: He may not.

TAMZIN: By the Gods, Maya. You're trying to kill the Gods. How can anyone walk away from that? -- I can't do this. I can't.

MAYA: We'll find somewhere safe for you.

TAMZIN: Don't say anything to Phillippe. He'll just try and talk me out of it. Promise.

MAYA: He won't hear it from me.

Maya gives her an encouraging smile to which she nods and begins bandaging the wound.

EXT. FOREST PATH - LATER - On HARLID's body. A Slow Pan up as the CHAMPIONS hike by not more than a few yards away.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The CHAMPIONS travel through more desolate areas, Mt. Parnus is often seen in the distance, with the wall and clouds.

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET - Establishing shot of the river.

A pair of EAGLES fly over the slow moving river. On the shore, SARA watches. She smiles, yet is filled with a sad melancholy. There has been so much loss. Behind her, MERIKH approaches. She glances over her shoulder, then goes back to watching the eagles.

MERIKH: You shouldn't be out here alone.

SARA: Did you see?

MERIKH: They are beautiful creatures.

SARA: Eagles mate for life.

The Eagles land in a tree.

SARA: Kieran was his name. We were to be wed this fall. -- The Eaters struck his homestead first. When they came to ours they brought him and his family. Butchered in the bottom of their wagon. There was so much blood. Just blood and...hair. He had such thick wonderful hair. It was so soft and smelled like...(deep breath) ...rain.

MERIKH: I'm sorry.

SARA: You've killed people like him.

MERIKH: I killed those who opposed my father.

SARA: Your father was a tyrant. People like him. Like the Eaters. They take everything they want and leave us dirt to toil in. – I have nothing. No home. No family. No husband. I will never have children. -- I am truly alone.

MERIKH: You don't have to be.

*She looks at him...a moment...he leans in for a kiss, but she pulls back, confused.*

SARA: I am damaged. I've been...used. A kiss on my lips would be like kissing a whore. You are a Prince.

*He gently cups her face in his strong hand.*

MERIKH: You are no whore, Sara. You are a strong and spirited woman. The things that happened to you, you should be bitter and hateful, yet you can still look at Eagles and see beauty. Why would that not be desirable?

*She touches the wound by her eye.*

SARA: (whispers) I'm desirable?

*He takes her hand and gently moves it from her wound.*

MERIKH: Very.

*This time when he leans in for a kiss she does not resist.*

**EXT. FOREST - SUNSET**

*MAYA is collecting firewood, and comes upon ORIK who is just coming out of his prayer with Shea. He falls over, exhausted. MAYA drops the wood and hurries to his side.*

MAYA: Orik!

*He sits up and takes deep, steady breaths, then:*

MAYA: Are you ill?

ORIK: The Goddess struggles. I give her my spirit.

MAYA: What are you saying?

ORIK: She only takes what she needs to remain strong.

MAYA: Will this kill you?

ORIK: I don't know.

MAYA: But...

ORIK: Maya. It's okay. I serve my Goddess willingly. We each have our part in this journey.

MAYA: And yours is to bring the Scroll to the hermit. Not to die by the hand of your Goddess.

ORIK: If it is her Will.

MAYA: Orik, stop! I know you must hold onto your faith but even you must realize that once the Gods have left, your worship, your prayers will be useless...

ORIK: I will not abandon her! I will not listen to your poisoned words! She is my Goddess!

MAYA: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

ORIK: No. I'm the one who is sorry. I know you only mean well for me.

MAYA: You are my friend.

ORIK: We have become so, haven't we?

MAYA: Yes.

ORIK: I came to the Order an orphan. Cold and starving. When I stood before her altar I felt her grace upon me, and I knew I would never be alone again...She saved me. Faith gives me each breath, Maya. And I gladly offer each one of them to do her Will. Even if they shall be my last. – I will not abandon her.

A moment, then she puts her hand on the hand he has on her shoulder.

MAYA: Nor will I.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

The CHAMPIONS head down the path. PHILLIPPE is playing his flute. MERIKH is flirting with SARA, whispering in her ear. She giggles. MAYA struggles, now feverish. ORIK stays close to her. Both sides are ready for a fight if need be.

Up ahead, a MERCHANT approaches.

MERCHANT: Peace be upon you, travellers.

ORIK: And upon you, stranger.

They stop and wait for him to catch up. A moment as both sides appraise each other and then weapons are relaxed.

ORIK: What path do you leave behind you?

MERCHANT: Xu'nar Village. I'd stay clear of that place.

TAMZIN: There are people there?

MERCHANT: Zealots. Wouldn't let me get close to the village. Weren't interested in trade.

MAYA: You're a Merchant then?

MERCHANT: I am.

MAYA: I'm in need of Camfan leaves.

He sees her bandaged hand.

MERCHANT: Not easy to come by. Especially in these times. One must venture into the deepest swamps to find Camfan.

MAYA: I will trade two strips of salted beef.

MERCHANT: You have meat? Show me your trade.

MAYA digs through her bag and produces the jerky. He takes a piece, sniffs it.

MERCHANT: Beef?

MAYA: The last of my wayfare.

MERCHANT: I have no trade with Eaters, to be clear.

MAYA: It's beef. From the last cow on my farm.

MERCHANT: Hmmm. Those strips are rather short, my friend. And thin. I can trade one palm of Camfan leaves.

SARA: One palm? That's hardly fair. She's sick. She needs them.

MERCHANT: Fair is whatever a soul is willing to trade.

MERIKH: We could just take it from you.

MERCHANT takes a step back, and his hand drops to the dagger at his side.

MAYA: I accept your trade, Merchant. Your wares are safe.

MERCHANT drops his bag and digs out a pouch of leaves. He stands and steps over to MAYA.

MERCHANT: One palm then.

MAYA holds out her hand. MERCHANT is about to pour some into her hand, but stops when ORIK lays his much larger hand, palm up, on MAYA's. This stuns the MERCHANT.

MERCHANT : But...

ORIK: You didn't say which palm.

SARA leans into MEIRKH and whispers.

SARA: I like the monk.

A tense beat.

MERCHANT: Fine.

MERCHANT pours the leaves into ORIK's hand. MAYA gives him the beef jerky.

MAYA: Our trade is complete. God's witness.

MERCHANT: God's witness.

MERCHANT moves back to his sack. ORIK pours the leaves into a small pouch MAYA holds open.

MERCHANT: I have a number of odds and ends. Dried fruit. Flints. Sharpening stones. Sugar. Flour.

PHILLIPE: Would you happen to have any Ciffery? Apples?

MERCHANT : Ciffery? No. Apples, huh? Sure. Not fresh, but they should be good enough for you.

He produces a couple of rings of dried apples.

MERCHANT: And what will you trade?

PHILLIPPE hesitates for a moment and then hands him his flute. The MERCHANT blows a couple of notes and laughs. He tosses him the dried apples.

MERCHANT: Sure. Why not, boy. I'm no musician but I might be able to trade it down the road.

MERCHANT grabs up his sack and with a wave continues down the road. The CHAMPIONS continue on their way as well.

EXT. XU'NAR VILLAGE - FARM FIELD - DAY - CLOSE SHOT on a hoe tilling the ground. WOMEN work in the field. A few SOLDIERS stand guard at the edge of the field. The CHAMPIONS approach.

ORIK: Greetings.

SOLDIER #1 bows respectfully.

SOLDIER #1: Greetings, monk. May your blessing be upon me.

ORIK: You are a child of Shea?

SOLDIER #1: I am.

ORIK makes a sign over the man.

ORIK: May you walk in Her light.

SOLDIER #1: Thank you. -- What brings you to our village?

ORIK: We are just passing on our way to the Valley of Ameer.

SOLDIER #: Best you circle the Highlands then.

ORIK: We are short on time.

SOLDIER #1: Your business is yours, but be warned, there is trouble in the Highlands.

MERIKH: What kind of trouble?

SOLDIER #1: There is rumor the Freeman tribes have become Eaters... We're told that the forests smell of the blood they have spilled. If you must stay your course, then build no fires and sing no songs. Once you pass through the Jarin Gorge you should be safe.

ORIK: Thank you.

SOLDIER #1: Peace be upon you.

They start on their way, but TAMZIN holds back. PHILLIPE glances over his shoulder.

PHILLIPE: Come on.

TAMZIN: I'm not going.

PHILLIPE: What?

TAMZIN: I'm staying here.

PHILLIPE: What are you talking about?

TAMZIN: I can't do this anymore.

The rest of the CHAMPIONS stop several yards ahead.

MERIKH: What now?

MAYA: Tamzin will be leaving us.

SARA: Why?

MAYA: She's frightened.

PHILLIPE: Can't do what anymore?

TAMZIN: This isn't my journey. It's yours.

PHILLIPE: Yes, but...

TAMZIN: I can't watch you die.

PHILLIPE: I don't plan on dying.

TAMZIN: Neither did Darius and he was a soldier.

PHILLIPE: But...I need you. You're my little sister. We're a team.

TAMZIN: I can't.

PHILLIPE: Tamzin.

TAMZIN: Come back to me when your journey is over. I just can't go with you anymore.

She gives him a quick kiss on the cheek then runs towards the WOMEN in the field. He watches her leave, horribly sad.

ORIK: Perhaps you should stay as well. Your fever is getting worse.

MAYA: The Camfan will work soon. The fever will lift. I'll be fine. -- Come. Let's go.

They continue on their journey. PHILLIPE wipes his tears away and hurries after them.

PHILLIPE: Stupid girl. She's nothing but trouble anyway.

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS...

SARA: (vo) (warped and distant) Maya...Maya...You're going to be alright.

FLASHES OF WARPED FACES AND BLACKNESS

ORIK: (vo) Mayaaaaaaaaa.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON SARA'S hand wiping MAYA's forehead with a cool cloth. MAYA is lying unconscious on a bedroll. Off to the side, the men talk.

ORIK: I'm afraid we have little time and no choice.

MERIKH: We should have left her at that damned village.

PHILLIPE: What if she doesn't make it?

ORIK: She's strong.

PHILLIPE: But if she dies.

ORIK: You must bring Sara back to the village. You'll be safe there. Can you do so? Phillipe?

PHILLIPE: Yes. Yes. I can. But Shea wanted me on this journey. She told me to go to the Valley.

ORIK: She told you to find me.

PHILLIPE: Yes, but the journey continues. I gave up everything for Shea's Will. Just as you have. I left Tamzin behind. I don't think we should split up.

MERIKH: Do you suggest we carry Maya to the Valley?

PHILLIPE: You should stay. You don't even serve Shea...

MERIKH: ...I serve no one...

PHILLIPE: ...For all we know you may serve the very Gods we are trying to destroy.

MERIKH: If that were true. I would have slit your throat while you slept.

PHILLIPE: (to Orik) How can we be so sure he's on our side? He may want to kill the hermit for all we know. He may want to kill you. The Outlaw wanted the Scroll. Maybe the Prince does too.

MERIKH: The boy is full of nonsense.

ORIK begins to gather his things.

ORIK: Remember. No fires. No flute.

PHILLIPE: That's it? That's your decision? What if I just followed you?

ORIK looks over at MAYA and SARA.

ORIK: She's our friend.

PHILLIPE: And no singing.

ORIK: Be as still as possible.

MERIKH goes over to SARA and puts a hand against her cheek.

SARA: I'm scared...The Eaters.

He bends down and gives her a kiss. A moment, then produces a dagger.

MERIKH: My best dagger. -- It will cut you before you feel it.

She nods and carefully takes the dagger. Another kiss, then he goes to join ORIK, but stops to give PHILLIPE a warning.

MERIKH: Protect her or die.

ORIK: We'll return as soon as possible.

PHILLIPE: Okay.

ORIK: Trust in Shea.

PHILLIPE: I will.

With that, they are off. PHILLIPE moves back to SARA. SARA gingerly unwraps MAYA's wound. It's disgusting. She looks worried at PHILLIPE.

PHILLIPE: She'll make it. She has to.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

VARIOUS SHOTS of ORIK and MERIKH running through the forest, trying to make up time. They are both strong and determined, adrenaline pushing them onward until they reach the opening to the Jarin Gorge...

A massive, dark opening cut into the rock face opens before them. They exchange a look, then move into the foreboding darkness.

EXT: CAMP - DAY

MAYA is on the verge of unconsciousness, struggling to stay awake. SARA is trying to make her as comfortable as possible. MAYA shivers from the fever. PHILLIPE watches, feeling helpless.

MAYA: Get a fire going. Brew the last of chiffory.

PHILLIPE: Really?

MAYA tries to chuckle...coughs. PHILLIPE scurries off to gather wood and water.

MAYA: Sara. If I loose consciousness see that I at least take water. If sign of the plague don't hesitate.  
Can you do that?

SARA: I can.

MAYA: Good. Find Chalan pods for the Sildar tea. To keep my body at rest.

SARA: The juice from the seeds. Yes. I know.

MAYA lays her hand on SARA's stopping her for a moment.

MAYA: Merikh...

SARA: He'll be okay. They'll come back.

MAYA fades away. SARA looks of in the direction ORIK and MERIKH went.

SARA: He'll be back.

EXT: CREEPY FOREST - DAY

ORIK and MERIKH are searching.

MERIKH: There's nothing here.

ORIK: There is.

MERIKH: We've crossed this valley twice now. We're wasting time. There's nothing here.

ORIK: But this is the valley. Shea told me to bring the scroll here.

MERIKH: You ever for even one moment considered that your blessed goddess may be stark raving mad?

ORIK: She's not.

MERIKH: She sends you to the shite end of nowhere with a stupid box. Is there even anything inside it?  
Have you even looked?

ORIK: I don't need to look.

MERIKH: I know. You take it on faith. And what is that faith going to get you?

ORIK: It's all I have.

As they look at each other the ACOLYTE ghosts past them in the distance.

ACOLYTE: (almost a whisper) Follow me.

They look around. She ghosts in towards them.

ACOLYTE: Follow me.

MERIKH: Who are you?

ACOLYTE: You wish to see my master.

ORIK: Yes.

ACOLYTE: Then follow me.

MERIKH: Where?

ACOLYTE points to a shimmering gateway.

ACOLYTE: There.

ORIK follows without hesitation and passes through the portal after the ACOLYTE. MERIKH hesitates and as the portal starts to close....

MERIKH: Shite!

Hurries through.

EXT: CAMP - DAY

PHILLIPE is busy getting a fire started, SARA grinds chiffery. PHILLIPPE looks over at MAYA, concerned.

SARA: She'll be okay.

PHILLIPE: I know. She's tough. It'll take more than a small wound to stop her. Darius died from a small wound.

SARA: Shea won't desert us.

PHILLIPE: I don't know any more. I'm scared, Sara. For the first time I'm really scared.

SARA: We've come so far. Maybe Shea can protect us a little while longer and Maya will recover. Or maybe the madness has already taken the Goddess and Maya will die. Death comes to everyone. To everyone. I know this. But whatever happens, we need to be strong, even if we are afraid.

They hug each other for comfort.

PHILLIPE: We need to be strong, for as long as we can.

EXT: THE TEMPLE OF AMEER - DAY

ORIK, MERIKH and the ACOLYTE emerge into a small garden. The HERMIT sits in quiet contemplation. A silent STUDENT sits beside him, preparing tea. There is the faint sound of wind chimes in the air.

ACOLYTE: The temple of Ameer. Come.

They approach the HERMIT. ORIK goes to his knees, bows before him. MERIKH stands back, watching.

ORIK: Master.

HERMIT: After all these years....

ACOLYTE: They have come at Shea's request.

HERMIT: Yes. I know that. Why do I know that... You! (To Merikh) You do not belong here. You smell like him, full of death and hate. There's a song..there's a song...Do you remember it?

The HERMIT tries to hum the melody.

HERMIT: Oh, I've written it down somewhere.

ORIK: Master. I was asked to bring this to you. It is the scroll of Ameer. With it Shea said you could open the realm of the Gods.

HERMIT: Ameer! (Laughs) Oh, Shea it would be good to see you again, my love. But why now, when I'm this.

ACOLYTE: Master. The world is dying. The gods have left, or have gone mad. It is like before. It is your strength that can save us.

HERMIT: (half singing, remembering) Ashrof fell, la da da da da da.....Ameer stood with sword blazing red....Ashrof fell, a god slain forever.....Ammer stood ....and cried...no...and he...no...

ACOLYTE: And on that day Gods wept bitter tears.

HERMIT: Let me see this box.

ORIK hands it to him. The HERMIT runs his hands over it, studies it, remembers things as he does so.

ORIK: I know that story, of Ameer and Ashrof. Ashrof forsook the realm of the gods and came down to the mortal world to claim humanity and rule as God on earth. The world bled under his hand. Ameer followed and destroyed Ashrof. It was the only time a God has ever died.

ACOLYTE: And doing so, Ameer sealed his own fate and could not return to Shea or the realm but was doomed to live here, in our world, as a mortal.

MERIKH: So, how did he do it. How did Ameer kill a God. Or does it take one to kill one.

HERMIT: No. No. The answer was a simple one. It only took a moment. One instance to go back to the beginning and Ashrof was vulnerable. But come. Your friends are in danger.

MERIKH: When aren't they.

HERMIT: But I still have some power left.

He stands and the silent STUDENT helps him prepare, take his cloak, his staff. He opens the portal again.

HERMIT: Come, come.

MERIKH: If there's danger I should go first.

Hand on hilt he walks towards the portal, the ACOLYTE a step behind him.

MERIKH: So do you have a name?

ACOLYTE: No. I gave that up when I began preparing myself to be the next vessel.

MERIKH: (As he steps through) Vessel?

ACOLYTE: (following) For his body, when this one burns through.

The HERMIT steps through, but ORIK stops at the portal.

ORIK: (awed whisper) Ameer.

HERMIT: (vo) We'll talk later.....

ORIK steps through and the portal closes. The silent STUDENT begins to gather up the tea things.

EXT: CAMP - DAY

PHILIPPE is in the distance practising sword katas. SARA is wiping a restless MAYA's brow, MAYA's eyes begin to flicker as if she is awakening. She moans softly and tries to get up, SARA helping her. SARA brushes hair from MAYA's face.

MAYA: Your hand feels lovely. So cool.

SARA: I need to redress your wound. Where did I put my knife?

MAYA's fingers close around the knife, half hidden under her blanket.

MAYA: Come closer, Sara. I need to tell you something. About Merikh...

SARA: Shh. Rest easy.

MAYA: Come closer.

SARA: What?

MAYA grabs Sara's wrist, drawing her closer, Maya's eyes glowing red.

MAYA: He is ours.

SARA: No. No.

PHILLIPPE continues his katas when SARA stumbles into him backwards. He looks over his shoulder at her.

PHILLIPPE: Sara?

She turns and he sees her clutching her stomach, blood flowing between her fingers. She tries to speak but falls to the ground. Beyond her he sees MAYA standing there, bloody knife in hand.

PHILLIPE: Nooo!

He runs towards her.

MAYA: Come play little boy. Let's make it two!

He stops short when he sees MAYA's red eyes.

PHILLIPE: What? Why?

MAYA: Think you can win boy.

She licks SARA's blood from the knife.

He charges MAYA and they fight. MAYA toying with him, letting his rage consume him. Finally she allows him the upper hand. He's about to strike the killing blow. He raises the sword, about to strike her down when FENERIS wrests the sword from his grip. PHILLIP shoves him aside, jumps on MAYA, struggles to get the knife from her hand. FENERIS grabs him, pulls him off, holds him.

FENERIS: It's not your friend. She's trapped somewhere inside.

MAYA: You!

She begins to laugh maniacally, then stops abruptly, falling unconscious to the ground.

Behind them a portal opens and MERIKH steps through followed by the others. He scans the camp, takes in MAYA's inert form, FENERIS holding PHILLIPPE and beyond SARA's bloody corpse. A cry of grief overwhelms him and he runs to her, gathers her into his arms, his heart ravaged.

Blackness.

FADE IN: The sun bright behind ORIK his hands raised to the heavens in supplication. The hollow, echoing sound of MERIKH's grief under the last words of ORIK's prayer. Fade out as he speaks.

ORIK: Holy Shea, Blessed Mother - Your smile is my light - Your word is my guide - Your love is my road. May I be found worthy to be your servant.

FADE IN TO:

EXT: THE CAMP – DAY – A SHALLOW GRAVE

MERIKH kneels by Sara's grave. MAYA comes to the other side, kneels as well. She's devastated. MERIKH draws his sword, lays it to her throat.

MAYA: Will that help, killing me?

MERIKH: Yes.

MAYA: It was the Gods. You know that.

MERIKH: I know it was your hand that held the knife.

MAYA: It was my hand. And I have to live with that. The fact that I was not strong enough. I saw it. The hand, the knife. I screamed inside, clawed at the thing in my mind. Raged. And it laughed at me.

MERIKH: Phillipe told me how you licked her blood from the knife. How you enjoyed it.

MAYA: You know the truth.

MERIKH: She was all the things that were good, gentle, strong. In her I saw what I could be. What I wanted to be.

MAYA: Withdraw your sword then. Use it to strike down the Gods. And when we are done, if you still wish me to pay for the hand that took Sara, my life is yours. Or take it now, and you destroy the man she saw in you.

For a moment it looks as if he might do it, But then he lowers the sword.

MERIKH: When this is done, old woman.

MAYA: When this is done.

CUT TO: The ACOLYTE and FENERIS sit next to each other.

ACOLYTE: The Gods haunt you.

FENERIS: Every night. That bastard Alamon burns me in his damned fire. Get the scroll. He doesn't even know what it is. What it does.

ACOLYTE: But that isn't why you are here.

FENERIS: I don't know why I'm here. Maybe it is for the scroll, to do Alamon's will and finally end it. Or maybe to finally end Alamon if I get the chance. Eventually I'll decide why.

ACOLYTE: You are not afraid.

FENERIS: I don't have anything lose.

ACOLYTE: Your life

FENERIS: Not worth much.

ACOLYTE: Worth everything.

The Acolyte stands up. She walks away.

CUT TO: AMEER and ORIK in another part of the camp.

AMEER: I was an immortal, trapped in a mortal body. I couldn't go back to Shea. Not like that. Once the mortal body burned itself up I would have no form. I'd never be able to hold her again.

ORIK: So you travelled from body to body.

AMEER: There was always someone who was willing to play host to me, someone willing to lose themselves to hold my essence.

ORIK: Someone of faith.

AMEER: Someone of faith. You understand faith. I see her in your eyes. I know that she needs you to hold on to her sanity. Each time she loses a little part of herself to you, even as you give yourself to her. Even as each time I take on a new life I lose part of myself. There are times when I remember everything. And there are times when I forget. (nods at the ACOLYTE who is walking over to PHILLIPE) She writes it all down, everything in those lucid moments, moments like this. There are thousands of books containing my memories at the Temple. Written by those who would be my future. And she helps me remember when I forget.

ORIK: So, how do we do this then? The scroll, is it the answer? Can you teach me the words now, before you forget again?

AMEER: The scroll is the key to enter the realm. The answer to killing gods is something else. We were all human once. Shea and I were the first to ascend. Others followed. We were Gods with all our human faults. When Ashrof fell, we knew that human side within us could be dangerous. I asked Shea to erase that human memory from the minds of the others. It was the last time I spoke to her.

ORIK: If the Gods were once mortal, then you found a way to make Ashrof mortal again.

AMEER: I had my hands locked around his throat, his hands around mine. I looked into his eyes, into him. And I saw it. Behind all the layers of his godhood. I saw his soul. His mortal soul. And I grabbed hold of it and I pulled it forward until I saw it in his eyes, a moment of mortality. For a heartbeat it hovered there. And I killed him.

ORIK: And something went wrong, trapped you here.

AMEER: The price you pay to kill a god. Each human has within them the power to ascend and become a god. And each god holds within themselves that small bit of mortality, a remnant of their soul. All it takes is for them to live inside a mortal body and I can draw that out, make them vulnerable.

ORIK: So once we enter the realm of the Gods we will need to fight them. We need to let them possess us. And hold them inside until you can draw that mortality out of them. But how?

AMEER: When they see me there they will change how they attack you. If you can physically hold them, I can draw them in to you. Once they are trapped inside you, I can hold them long enough for you to die, or be killed.

ORIK: And we will lose who we are.

AMEER: Yes. It won't take them long to figure out what is happening. Not after the first one of them falls. When they do... They will use whomever they've possessed to fight the others.

ORIK: So we will need to fight the gods, each other and protect you as well, long enough for you and Shea to succeed..

AMEER: Yes.

**CUT TO - The ACOLYTE comes up to where PHILLIPE is sitting. She lays a hand to PHILLIPE's shoulder.**

ACOLYTE: There is nothing you could have done.

PHILLIPE: I know. But it doesn't make it easier.

ACOLYTE: One truth I have learned. In everything there is a reason.

PHILLIPE: What reason was there for her to die?

ACOLYTE: We may not know that right now. But there will come a time when her death will have meaning.

**She looks over to where MERIKH is beside the grave. MAYA has gone. MERIKH stands and picks up Darius's jacket. Puts it on. The Acolyte smiles.**

PHILLIPE: I don't think there is any faith at all left inside me.

ACOLYTE: Maybe not. Or maybe there is and you just misplaced it.

MERIKH goes to the middle of the camp. A rage is upon him.

MERIKH: There are gods that need killing. (Points to the mountain) Can you take us there?

AMEER: Not all the way but close enough.

Ameer opens a portal.

EXT: DAY - THE BASE OF MT. PARNUS

The mountain stands solitary, A gateway surrounds the mouth of a cave. Halfway up the mountain a massive wall, rising into the mists, the top of the mount just barely visible above it. The landscape before the mountain is blasted. Empty. The bones of the fallen merged with the dust. Among these are the petrified remains of giants. Into this landscape the party enters.

PHILLIPE: The realm of the gods.

ACOLYTE: No. The mountain is just a gateway. The realm is not part of this mortal plain.

AMEER: I know this place. A great battle...a great battle...

MERIKH: Which are his bones, the bones of the fallen god?

AMEER: None of them. And all of them. Through the gateway. Beyond that a path takes us to the wall.

MAYA: The gate is a dead-end. Darius was here. He said as much.

AMEER: Do you still believe monk?

ORIK: I do.

AMEER: Then lead on

ACOLYTE: There is always a door, if you know where to look.

They walk towards the gate, passing the body of one of the giant remains. PHILLIPE touches it tentatively.

PHILLIPE: I don't like this place. It feels like the dead are watching.

FENERIS: The dead can't hurt you.

PHILLIPE: I'm not so sure.

As they walk away the giant opens its eye, glowing red. Sand shifts off its body as it slowly sits up. It releases a strange undulating cry echoes across the landscape. The party stop, turns to look back. The

giant rises to its feet.

PHILLIPE: They're not dead!

The party turns and runs for the gate. FENERIS stops and turns.

FENERIS: (laughs) Ah! This is why I'm here.

ORIK: Feneris.

FENERIS: Run. Get through the gate and breach the wall. Kill the Gods. I'll take care of this one.

A moment and then the party runs for the gate. While FENERIS faces off against the giant. The giant lets go another undulating cry, grabs up a large chunk of wood to use as a cudgel and advances with thundering steps towards FENERIS.

FENERIS: Let's dance!

FENERIS release a wild yell of his own as he charges towards the giant. With astonishing speed it closes the gap between them and they fight. It is not in FFENERIS' favor and he is tossed and pummeled brutally but still keeps picking himself up and going at the giant again. While the fight ensues the rest of the party reach the gate. They stop to look back. ORIK wants to go forward but MERIKH holds him back.

MERIKH: There's nothing you can do.

ORIK: (to Ameer) Help him.

AMMER: Giants. I haven't seen a giant...so long, so long.

Across the plain two other giants begin to stir.

ACOLYTE: We must go.

ORIK: Ameer.....

ACOLYTE: He will need his strength to open the way, to fight beyond the wall.

ORIK breaks free of MERIKH and nocks an arrow. The ACOLYTE places a hand on his shoulder, stopping him.

ACOLYTE: (in Shea's voice) This is his sacrifice....You must honor this. Come to me.....

ORIK has a moment of conflict and then turns, heading through the gate and the others follow. FENERIS looks towards the gate and sees the rest of the party pass through. Though he is badly broken he still manages to laugh.

FENERIS: You lose Alamon. They are coming.....

The Giant shrieks with rage as it sees the last of the party disappear through a gate too small for it to follow. It looks down at FENERIS, raises its cudgel. Its downswing fades to black and FENERIS's laughter is abruptly cut short.

CUT TO: EXT. DAY – THE WALL

The party emerges from a cave, through another gate, into a misty clearing. The mist blows away from the wall, revealing an enormous spinning ball built into the wall.

AMEER: I remember this place.

ACOLYTE: The scroll.

She hands it to him and he unfurls it. He looks at it. Confused.

AMEER: I can't read this.

ACOLYTE: The knowledge is written inside my mind. Take it.

She touches her forehead to AMEER's.

AMEER: (with power) Ahnesh. Orwrin.

AMEER holds the scroll towards the ball and the words glow golden. The ball slowly stops spinning, grinds to a halt. He lays the scroll against the stone and it sinks into the rock. The ball begins to implode and then explodes in a shock wave of energy and sound speeds past them down the mountain to the plain below. The giants are blown apart by it as it hits them. Where the spinning ball was is now an open gap in the wall. AMEER takes the ACOLYTE aside for a moment.

AMEER: (to the Acolyte) You must stay here.

ACOLYTE: But Master...

AMEER: You must wait.

ACOLYTE: For whom.

AMEER: For whomever returns. Serve them as you have served me.

ACOLYTE: Then you will leave.

AMEER: I am a god, despite this mortal body. If I stay...

ACOLYTE: I will do as you ask.

He strokes her hair for a tender moment and then he turns to the others.

AMEER: Come.

He leads them into the opening.

CUT TO - The party comes walking out, amazement on their faces.

REVERSE ON THEM TO SHOW:

The realm of the gods. A magnificent valley. Monolithic stone towers rising gracefully above the trees, scattered through-out. Most are dark. But four remain lit, spinning slowly, jewel-like lights shining from their peaks.

AMEER: Home. Each tower is a world, created by the god who lives there. When the god is gone, their tower dies.

MERIKH: Four gods then. Not bad odds, provided that good old Shea is still sane and on our side.

ORIK is about to respond but AMEER puts a gentle hand on his arm, stopping him.

MAYA: So to which world do we go?

SHEA: (Appearing) The battlefield. Tychus.

AMEER: Shea.

SHEA: Ah, my sweet love. You look so very different.

AMEER: And you look as I see you in my dreams.

SHEA touches his face, he touches hers. You can feel the love between them.

AMEER: Are you ready to do this?

SHEA: I have been ready for so long.

Mist comes up and swirls around them. Settles. Revealing them in the world of TYCHUS. A devastated plain, much like the plain below the mountain. Only here there is the wreckage of great war machines and towers. Immense statues of warriors stand vigil over the terrain.

SHEA: It will be difficult for you to trap them.

AMMER: Trust that we will force them to possess you.

MERIKH: I will not let any god possess me.

ORIK: It is the only way.

SHEA: That is his choice.

TYCHUS appears, dressed for battle.

TYCHUS: Ah, guests. And I don't remember sending out any invitations. (he looks at Merikh) Well, maybe one.

ZAREN and ALAMON appear, also dressed for battle.

ZAREN: Dear brother. How thoughtful of you to provide some entertainment before dinner.

ALAMON: Shall we begin then and end this?

ZAREN: Not yet. Give them a moment of hope. Let them savor the taste of victory so close at hand and yet so unreachable.

ALAMON hurls a fireball at the party, scattering them.

ALAMON: No waiting.

#### **AS CHOREOGRAPHED BY SHAW FORGERON**

Orik steps forward, ready to lead the charge. He notches an arrow, draws, takes aim and, with Shea at his side, he looses a long, arcing shot across the field. As the arrow flies, Shea steps forward, following with her eyes, as if lending her influence. The arrow streaks towards the mad god Zaren, who watches dispassionately before de-materializing an instant ahead of the arrow piercing her chest. Instead, it whizzes through empty air and is buried in the ground with a thud. Almost instantaneously, Zaren appears across the field, ready to attack Shea while her back is turned, though Shea similarly disappears the moment before being struck. Phillipe and Merikh rush forward to attack Zaren in tandem, while Orik draws another arrow, but Zaren is gone as their blades fall, and Orik takes up the chase towards where Shea and Zaren will reappear fighting. Phillipe and Merikh struggle to regain their balance after their wild attack, and Merikh shoves Phillipe aside as he takes off across the valley to engage the two made gods who have remained, unmoving, amusedly uncoordinated efforts. While Phillipe races after Merikh, not to be bested, Maya yells after them saying 'we must fight together!' Her pleas fall on deaf ears, though, as the two men race towards their fate. In this moment, Ameer steps forward, taking Maya's wounded hand in his. She looks at him, stunned by the sensation, as he stares impassively across the battlefield. Taking her hand back from his, Maya is awed by the new strength he has gifted her. Ameer, who's gaze remains fixed on Alamon, glances towards Maya saying 'I will draw our quarry' before he disappears. Meanwhile, Merikh and Phillipe are approaching Alamon and Tychus. In order to reach them, they leap aside avoiding fireballs hurled effortlessly by Alamon, and Merikh stumbles and falls. While Phillipe adeptly rolls to one side of Alamon, Ameer appears nearby. Alamon is ready and eager to loose another deadly attack towards Phillipe, who is rising, preparing to strike, but Ameer intercedes, catching Alamon by the arm and dousing his fire. The two clashing gods disappear as Phillipe continues charging forward, and instead he must join the fight with Merikh, who has engaged Tychus. At this point, Shea and Zaren are fighting hand to hand, while Orik stands some ways off, arrow ready, keenly watching for a moment to strike. Every time he releases a bolt, though, Zaren disappears, immediately followed by Shea, and Orik must sprint to reorient himself. Merikh and Phillipe fight with Tychus, who barely registers their attacks, deliberately limiting himself to rebuff their assault with martial prowess only. Around them, Alamon and Ameer flit in and out of view, just long enough for Alamon to loose a fireball towards the melee, before Ameer appears to catch him. While the skirmish continues, we see

Ameer successfully grab hold of Alamon, ready to hurl him across the field to where Maya stands ready. The two gods, intertwined, disappear and reappear, as Maya brings her staff crashing down across Alamon's back, driving him to the ground with the help of Ameer. Angry and crazed, Alamon responds with gout of flames, which drive Maya and Ameer away from him. He stands, rage in his eyes, resolved now to brutalize his two aggressors. Back to Merikh and Phillipe, who are becoming more coordinated as they fight side by side, and Tychus, who is experiencing some legitimate and disturbing difficulty. He must now regrettable allow a trickle of his supernatural power in order to continue toying with the mortals. The two champions redouble their efforts and manage to land glancing blows on Tychus, until Merikh's sword lands heavily against the back of his leg, bringing the mad god to his knees. It is at this point that Tychus breaks his restraint, knocking back Merikh, and debilitating Phillipe with a swift series of vicious strikes. Now Tychus is looming over Phillipe, as Merikh struggles dazedly to his feet, and Tychus grips Phillipe at the throat. Phillipe can barely muster the strength of his sword arm, as Tychus swats aside a feeble attack and, glancing at Merikh, then back down into Phillipe's eyes with great amusement and disdain, he growls 'You want to play my game? You cannot hope to win...' And, with that, Tychus possessed the enfeebled Phillipe in sight of Merikh, who yells 'COWARD!' As the puppet Phillipe rises unsteadily to his feet, suffering from grievous wounds, he retrieves his sword, laughing at the fearful Merikh, spitting blood, and says 'Despair! For you are far afield and only pain shall guide you to your end...' He attacks. Maya struggles to defend herself against Alamon's rampage, and Ameer likewise lends his support to keep her alive. Alamon is becoming blinded by rage, and continually alternates his attention on Ameer and then Maya. As the two use this to their advantage, and are beginning to overcome the fiery god, Shea and Zaren appear in an instant when Zaren must bear the brunt of Alamon's furious counterattack. As soon as Alamon turns his attention towards Shea and Zaren's fight, they are gone, and an arrow streaks through Zaren's place and into Alamon's back. He is at the pinnacle of his temper, and now raises a devastating fireball to fall down on Maya's head. Ameer must intercede, shielding Maya by catching the orb and attempting to suppress it, with great difficulty. Alamon laughs maniacally, drained and exhausted from mustering a tremendous power with which Ameer struggles, Maya at his side and, sacrificing her hand Ameer had mended, she directs the blast towards Alamon center chest. The god goes down in a blaze, stunned and bewildered, severely dampened, though Maya has compromised herself in the process. After touching Alamon's flames, she is laid out on the ground, in agony, as Ameer looks on, powerless to help her. Maya is being consumed by fire from the inside, coursing through her veins from her ruined hand. Struggling against the pain, she says to Ameer 'Do... what must... be done...' and so Ameer forces the weakened Alamon into possessing Maya's body. The prone god disappears, now occupying Maya's pain, tortured by his own fire, he pleads with Ameer: 'She will die! And by your hand!' Ameer's unwavering reply: 'There is no way out, I will not allow you to escape... You will die... and she has killed you.' Across the battlefield again, Shea and Zaren are evenly matched. As they continue to fight, Shea is being gripped by the plague of madness. Shea is becoming more ferocious, beginning to revel in the chaos. Shea and Zaren completely outstrip Orik, despite his best efforts. Now Merikh is faced with the task of defending himself against Tychus' puppet, Phillipe. 'What's wrong' says the mad god, 'strike me down!' They skirmish... 'Or do you fear that, as your blade falls, I will be gone from this wretched husk, and only his blood will spill? Very clever! First his... then yours!' 'Not so!' says Ameer, suddenly with them, and he musters his powers to trap Tychus in Phillipe's body. 'I can hold him here but you must deliver the final blow...' Merikh hesitates, weary yet focussed, and in this moment Tychus desperately attacks Ameer. Ameer shouts 'NOW!' and Merikh intercepts Tychus, catching the dying body as it falls, laid out on the ground. Merikh looks into Phillipe's lifeless eyes, calling his name tentatively, hoping for some sign of recognition. As Ameer watches, stoically, an almost imperceptible grin creeps across Phillipe's face, as his last breath escapes. At this point, the heavy toll of battle washes over Merikh, who is nearly about to collapse. Instead, Ameer steps forward, bracing the tormented champion, and offering his hand. Merikh reluctantly accepts, and stands,

held up by Ameer, heading towards their final opponent. Shea is, at this point, in the full tilt of madness, fighting wildly against Zaren. Orik can see that he must come between them, and so he looses a desperate volley of arrows, strategically changing the direction of the gods brawl. With a deft roll, Orik positions himself in a line immediately behind Shea, and fires an arrow at the small of her back. Shea is able to vanish just in time to catch Zaren off-guard, and the arrow pierces her shoulder. Furious, Zaren attacks Orik, who barely has time to draw another shaft. With an arrow in his hand, he lashes out in melee, trying to counter Zaren's flurry of attacks. He is able to fire one shot, though Zaren evades and knocks him to the ground, immediately on top of him, pressing his own bowstring into his neck. Orik grasps wildly for one of his arrows, which have spilled across the ground. He manages to clasp one in his palm, and he uses the point to cut the bowstring. Taking advantage of the tension break, Orik slams the bow-staff into Zaren's face, and she jumps away. Orik is immediately on his feet, ready with his bow-staff to press the advantage, but Shea reappears with a devastating blow that knocks Zaren to the ground, dazed. Shea stands over her, laughing as she exclaims 'We cannot kill her like this! She and I will fight to the end of days!' Orik is thoroughly disturbed by Shea's behaviour, and he approaches the two gods with caution. Shea starts as he takes her hand. It is now Orik's task to convince Shea to take some of his spirit, to stave off her progressive madness. With reluctance, she does so, though she takes too much, and Orik is left in a weakened state. Zaren, who has been recovering her faculties, takes advantage of the opportunity, and possesses Orik before Shea can gather her senses. Shea is dismayed at this revelation, and Ameer arrives with Merikh. Zaren gives a speech about her victory, how Orik must die in order for her to be killed, and how Shea must sacrifice her disciple. Either that, or Zaren will possess the newly delivered Merikh and kill Orik herself. In order to prevent this, Shea traps Zaren in Orik's body, and, with great difficulty, instructs Merikh to end Orik's life. Ameer counsils Merikh to do so, but, after searching his soul, Merikh cannot. Zaren threatens that, as soon as Shea releases her, she will have Merikh kill Orik without hesitation, though Merikh tells Shea he can resist. Ameer and Shea both decide that Merikh does not have the strength left to resist Zaren, but Merikh gives Shea a telling look, and, as Shea releases her hold on Orik's body, Merikh is poised to fight. In the instant Zaren jumps into Merikh's body, he falls on his own sword, taking his life and Zaren's in the process. Only Shea, Orik, and Ameer are left alive.

ORIK sinks to his knees, a moment, and then tears fall silently.

SHEA: Do not weep. Your world is safe.

ORIK: Safe. Then why do I feel so empty inside.

SHEA: Because you live. Know this Orik. Maya's grandchild will not grow up in fear. Phillipe looks down and sees that Tamzin has the home she dreamed her whole life about. Darius holds his wife and children again. And Sara waits on the other side for Merikh. It was always about the journey to find that willingness to sacrifice within each of them.

ORIK: What about me then? What's my sacrifice?

SHEA: Letting go of me.

ORIK: What do we do when you are gone?

SHEA: Make a new world

AMEER: Come my love.

SHEA: (as they fade away) Farewell monk.

ORIK continues to kneel for a moment. Then he slowly gets to his feet. He takes Phillippe's sword, Darius's coat, Maya's staff. He looks down at MERIKH and then cuts one of the leaves from his vest. Slowly he begins the long climb down from the tower.

CUT TO: THE BROKEN GATE – DAY

The ACOLYTE stands up when she sees ORIK appear.

ACOLYTE: You are alone.

He nods.

ACOLYTE: Then the Gods have all died or left.

ORIK: I don't even know your name.

ACOLYTE: I am called Kiri, master.

ORIK: Just Orik. Come. There is work to do.

CUT TO: EXT. - XU'NAR VILLAGE – DAY

ORIK's VO over the action...

TAMZIN is sitting with some women when they see two figures coming up the road. She recognizes one as ORIK and runs towards him. The other villagers follow her. He tells her of her brother and she collapses, weeping. He goes down and holds her. The villagers crowd around. The ACOLYTE takes TAMZIN from his arms, continues to hold her as and

OVER THE ACTION THIS:

MAYA: (vo) With the passing of Shea and Ameer from our world the Plague began to fade. The madness slowly disappeared as people came back to themselves. There was a great deal of pain and sorrow. But there was also promise. A man travelling the roads with a young woman at his side. And he spoke to them of the fall of the Gods. But more importantly he spoke to them of us. Of who we were. He spoke of the things we left behind and of the love, the faith and the hope that gave us the strength to make the final sacrifice to save it all.

SLOW ZOOM IN ON ORIK AS he begins to speak to the villagers.

FADE TO BLACK