

FADE IN

EXT SPACE - PLANET OF KULTHEA

A tiny blue planet looms in the distance. Suddenly, a small SPACE CRUISER drops out of hyper space. It is badly damaged, with many large blast marks covering it. Seconds later, a LARGER SHIP, with no apparent damage to it, also drops from light speed. Then ANOTHER, and yet ANOTHER. The three new crafts are in pursuit of the first. They open fire.

CUT TO

INT ROYAL CRUISER - ANTE CHAMBER

An explosion rocks the CRUISER that is carrying what remains of the IMPERIAL ROYAL FAMILY. An alarm sounds throughout the passageways. RICHARD, a stately man of 38, and his wife MARISA, gracefully draped in long flowing robes, prepare their infant son for a journey. In the room behind them, an escape pod launch room can be seen. TWO IMPERIAL GUARDS run into the room, followed by ANDRAAX.

Andraax stands 6'5". His build appears slight, but his agile movements say otherwise. His skin is tanned, with little body hair. Long, thick coal-black hair offsets his deep violet eyes.

ANDRAAX

The charges are set.

Richard and Marisa are lost in their sorrow, embracing each other and their child. Andraax places his hand on Richard's shoulder--we can see six fingers on his hand.

ANDRAAX (CONT'D)

Sire -- the rebels are upon us, we must hurry.

RICHARD

Yes...Yes. I know.

CUT TO

EXT ROYAL CRUISER - NIGHT

REBEL GUN SHIPS streak in across the surface of the IMPERIAL CRUISER, weapons ablaze. Surface explosions occur.

Three heavy turrets return the barrage. Two of the gun ships are destroyed.

BACK INSIDE THE
ROYAL CRUISER

MARISA, sobbing, suppresses her cries and kisses her son gently on the forehead one last time, then hands him to RICHARD, who does likewise. Richard turns to ANDRAAX.

RICHARD

My dear friend, I entrust to you the life of my only son and the soul heir to my throne. Protect him. And please tell him...

Richards voice begins to break off, becoming overwhelmed with emotion.

ANDRAAX

(comforting Richard)
I shall sire.

Andraax takes the baby and bundles him up.

ANDRAAX (CONT'D)

Do not fear Richard. No one will find us where we are going. Your son is safe with me, I assure you of that.

Andraax steps into the escape pod and turns to face Richard for the last time.

RICHARD

Farewell.

Door closes on the pod.

OUTSIDE ROYAL CRUISER

The containment latches securing the ESCAPE POD to the cruiser release. As the small craft begins to drift away, an explosion on the SHIP adjacent to the launch bay sprays debris throughout the heavens, partially concealing the pod.

The thrusters on the pod engage and it is underway. In the b.g. we see the Royal Cruiser growing smaller. REBEL SHIPS swarm it as the hull finally gives. The resulting explosion silhouette's the escape pod.

Follow the pod as it streaks past, heading for a tiny blue planet. A SPACE BUOY, emits a message.

VOICE

(over speaker)

Danger, planet of Kulthea, the Shadow-World. Planet is off limits to all forms of technology. Do not approach this planet, equipment failure is imminent.

CUT TO

EXT WASTES OF XOR - RUINS - DAY

Barren wasteland sprawls endlessly in all directions. Crouched amid the ruins and rocky terrain, a LONE FIGURE (ALARIN) draped in robes, shambles about amongst the rubble.

Hearing a noise, Alarin stands and moves to investigate.

As he peers out over an outcropping, we see the wreckage of a smoldering escape pod. Bewildered, Alarin approaches it.

INSIDE THE ESCAPE POD

The muffled cries of a child are heard as Alarin enters through the main hatch. He throws back his hood to reveal his elven features--long pointy ears, accentuated by his large oval eyes. His complexion is perfect, his features sharp and angular, giving him a timeless appearance.

In the center are two life-support pods. The first is already open, but empty. The second contains the crying CHILD. Alarin moves toward the child. The bed opens with a hiss, releasing it's gasses in a blinding cloud.

Alarin peers over the child, noticing the cool blue of his eyes, and the strange little CREATURE that appears to have come with him. The creature is a small, reptilian type with under-developed wings and a long tail. The baby stops crying and smiles at Alarin.

Suddenly, the escape pod creaks and shifts violently. Alarin quickly scoops up the infant and his little companion, then darts out of the pod.

THE WASTES OF XOR

ALARIN looks back at the pod as he reaches the rocks once again, and sees it shudder and quake furiously, disappearing abruptly, leaving only a blackened crater where it once sat.

Disbelief covers Alarin's face. He looks to the child and smiles.

ALARIN

Well my little friend. You certainly know how to make an impression. Come along.

Alarin bundles up the child with his tiny companion, and walks off.

In the F.G., a DARK FIGURE slips away, unnoticed.

FADE TO BLACK

OPENING TITLE AND CREDITS SEQUENCE

SUPERIMPOSE OVER BLACK SCREEN TWO DECADES LATER

FADE UP ON

INT RUINED TEMPLE - DILAPIDATED PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Crouched in the hallway is KELES, a 25 year old, wiry Duranaki male standing 5'6", fiddling with the lock of a formidable looking door.

Up the hallway are FATHIAN, 27, a powerfully built 6'5" Myri keeping guard, and ADRIANNA, a young 5'7" 116 lbs. Erlini Elf, waiting impatiently.

FATHIAN

Keles, c'mon! I don't wanna fight that damn priest anymore than necessary. Let's get this orb and get the hell out of here.

KELES

Relax Fathian! Just a few more seconds and...

The lock clicks.

KELES (CONT'D)

We're in! Besides, I thought you enjoyed, "Cleansing the world of Essence users."

The party moves into the room that Keles just opened. Keles first, followed by Adrianna, and then Fathian.

FATHIAN

Yeah, well Jaiman could use a few less thieves also.

Keles stops and turns to face the big man. He is furious. Adrianna continues to walk.

KELES

I am not a thief! I'm a professional -- who's in charge here, anyway?

FATHIAN

Well, actually, I always kinda thought Jagas...

KELES

Oh, just forget it.

Fathian chuckles as the two men turn and resume their walk.

INT. RUINED TEMPLE SHRINE ROOM - DAY

Fathian and Keles are surprised as they enter the room at the end of the short hallway to find NINE YINKA and their PRIEST KING.

The Yinka are a short, stocky race with mahogany skin, brown eyes, and straight black hair. Their dress is somewhat barbaric, except for the Priest King, whose apparel is more sophisticated.

Adrianna is being held by two Yinka, with Yinka #1 covering her mouth. Both men spring into action. Fathian, with sword drawn, immediately moves to position himself between the Yinka and Keles. Keles dips his dagger into one of his many poisons.

FATHIAN

You ready?

KELES

As always.

Yinkas #3, #4, #5, and #6 advance on the two men. Fathian steps forward and with one blow, dismembers #3 and #4. Keles hurls his dagger at Yinka #1 striking it in the neck. Almost immediately, the creature releases Adrianna to grasp at the dagger, but it is too late. The poison is swift and the Yinka goes into convulsions, blood and bile flowing from his mouth, as he slumps to the floor and dies.

Adrianna, now free of her captor, uses this opportunity to deliver a smashing elbow to the solar plexus of Yinka #2. She then pulls her quarterstaff from the hands of the dead Yinka beside her and uses it to knock the incapacitated Yinka unconscious.

Meanwhile, Fathian has lost his sword, and is in combat with #7, #8, and #9 barehanded. About him, dismembered and beheaded bodies are strewn. The look in his eyes seems to say that perhaps he did not lose his sword after all.

Keles swiftly moves to retrieve his dagger and check on Adrianna.

KELES (CONT'D)
 (to dead Yinka)
 Pleasure was all mine.

Pulls dagger out of the neck of the poisoned Yinka.

KELES (CONT'D)
 (to Adrianna)
 You okay?

Adrianna speaks very proper Jaimerian Common(English) with the hint of an Elvish accent.

ADRIANNA
 Yes, but if we do not do some-thing
 about that priest...

Points to Priest King.

ADRIANNA (CONT'D)
 ...none of us will be for long.

The Yinka Priest King is chanting, calling upon his dark god. To counter this, Adrianna stands and begins to trace magical runes and symbols in the air with her long, slender fingers. As the Priest works his magic, the vines and roots that have taken over the old temple start to move as if alive.

Suddenly, a large root erupts from the temple floor and wraps the Priest King in it's coils.

Fathian, noticing this, finishes off his remaining opponent, smiles in the direction of the Priest, and pulls his sword from the body of a nearby Yinka. The Priest desperately tries to break free. Fathian approaches him.

ADRIANNA (CONT'D)
 Fathian, don't!

In one enormous swing, Fathian cuts the Priest in half.

ADRIANNA (CONT'D)

You did not have to kill him. Why do you always insist on killing? There are other ways.

FATHIAN

Pardon me. Next time I'll just let him begin raising his dead, so they can dismember us instead.

ADRIANNA

I had the situation completely in hand.

Keles retrieves the orb from the raised dais and places it in his backpack.

KELES

Would you two stop bickering. We've got what we came for. Let's get back to town and collect our money.

Adrianna hits Fathian in the chest, then turns and walks away in a huff. Fathian looks to Keles with a smile, winks, and the three friends exit.

CUT TO

INT HALLWAY - CITADEL OF THE DRAGONLORD - NIGHT

A CONTINGENT of ARMORED LUGROKI GUARDS march down the corridor, escorting TWO MEN. The hallway is dimly lit, it's walls covered with many treasures and artifacts.

The Lugroki stand between 5' and 6' tall with heavily muscled bodies. Their grotesque faces have slanted eyes and flattened snouts of sharpened tusks.

The appearance of the two men is strangely different. They carry themselves with an air of arrogance. KORPAHK is a large man, standing 6'4" tall, with a stocky build and cynical appearance. He wears a beard and mustache. RASHAN is smaller, standing a mere 5'5" tall, with a slight frame, and very meticulous appearance.

INSIDE THE AUDIENCE CHAMBER

The guards file into the room and the two men are led to a platform facing an ominous throne. Shadows dance about the room in the scarce light, causing Rashan and Korpahk to squint.

KORPAHK

Must we endure this?

RASHAN

I am afraid so. Ni'Shaang is the only creature on this rock the Emperor will deal with.

Through a hidden doorway adjacent to the throne, emerge TWO HERALDS OF NIGHT. The first is a male, standing 6'6" tall. The second is a female standing 6'0" tall. Both have a muscular build and pale white skin, contrasting their hair of darkest black.

At first glance, they appear to be twins. Appearance, dress, even their beautiful, emotionless faces look the same. Both Heralds wear black armor and carry large swords sheathed on their backs. Their armor seems to absorb any light that normally would be reflecting from it.

They take their positions beside the throne, awaiting their lord. A wave of fear visibly sweeps over Korpahk, Rashan, and the guards.

A gong sounds, signaling the approach of Sulthon Ni'Shaang.

The guards immediately drop to one knee and bow their heads. Looking about them, Rashan and Korpahk seem reluctant to comply, but after the Heralds glower at them, they kneel. Only then do the Heralds kneel, continuing to watch Rashan and Korpahk.

SULTHON NI'SHAANG ENTERS the chamber. Dressed in fine garments of red and amber, he stands 6'6" with a muscular build. His physical features are those of a man of thirty years, but the wisdom in his eyes betrays his apparent age.

Taking his position in front of his throne, he sits. Sulthon Ni'Shaang is charismatic and regal.

SULTHON NI'SHAANG

Please, rise.

The Heralds stand first, followed by Rashan and Korpahk. The guards remain in their kneeling position. As Rashan moves to address Sulthon Ni'Shaang, Korpahk notices the guards.

RASHAN

Good evening sir. We are emissaries Rashan and Korpahk of the Royal Dominion.

(MORE)

RASHAN (cont'd)

My Lord, the High Emperor, sends his regards, and wishes me to express our utmost appreciation for your assistance in this matter.

SULTHON NI'SHAANG

Do return my regards. And inform your Emperor, that I expect him to comply with the terms of our agreement.

A nervous silence follows. Finally, Rashan nudges Korpahk, who is being unusually subdued and distracted.

KORPAHK

Uh...yes. He also wished us to bring to you this gift as a sign of our...

SULTHON NI'SHAANG

I'm sorry, your name was?

KORPAHK

Korpahk, sir. General Korpahk.

Rashan clears his throat.

KORPAHK (CONT'D)

This scepter is made of a metal taken from the heart of a star and forged before it has cooled. You will find no harder, nor more beautiful a substance in all the galaxies.

Korpahk takes out the scepter. It is an exquisite golden rod with many jewels and tiny ornate carvings. It gleams in the torch light as he holds it out.

Sulthon Ni'Shaang speaks in a dark, guttural language. The male Herald descends the steps to retrieve the gift. When he reaches Korpahk, their eyes meet for just an instant. Korpahk hesitates for a moment and releases it. His nerve has returned.

The Herald delivers the scepter to Sulthon, who looks it over and is duly impressed.

RASHAN

Now, if you could just tell us the whereabouts of...

SULTHON NI'SHAANG

Later. Come now. Let us talk in private chambers.

Sulthon stands and begins to exit the chamber. The Heralds descend the steps to stand next to Rashan and Korpahk, motioning for them to follow Sulthon. A look of reluctance flashes across Rashan's and Korpahk's faces as they comply.

SULTHON NI'SHAANG (CONT'D)

Tell me more of these - galaxies.

CUT TO

EXT KULTHEA - MOUNTAINOUS REGION - SUNSET

In the b.g. lays the Town of Shaskin. Descending down from a mountain path is JAGAS, a tall, lean young man of 24. His cool blue eyes are framed by his raven black hair. Moving gracefully along the path, he smiles when he sees Shaskin beyond the hills. He appears to have had a long, hard journey.

JAGAS

Jitahkt, my little friend, we are finally home.

A REPTILIAN CREATURE appears over Jagas' shoulder. It is the size of a small cat, with a long neck and tail, and butterfly-like wings. JITAHKT makes a series of chirping and cooing noises with smoke puffing from his nostrils, then cuddles Jagas' face.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

I'll be glad to see the others again also. Hope they haven't gotten into too much trouble while we've been gone.

Above Jagas in the rocks, five YINKA wait in ambush for him. The Yinka scamper to get into position, a few of them knocking loose pebbles and smaller stones as they scurry along. Jagas hears the noise, but believes that the long journey behind him, and the dusk mountain shadows are beginning to affect him. In an open, flat section of the trail, the trap is sprung.

Jitahkt senses the trap, and roars a shrill warning. Hearing this, YINKA #1 lets loose an arrow from his short bow. Jagas quickly avoids the shaft by dropping to one knee while drawing his scimitar. Jitahkt takes flight. YINKAS #2 and #3 jump down from their positions in the rocks. YINKAS #4 and #5 emerge from behind to cut off any possible retreat.

Yinka #2 charges Jagas with his short sword, with #3 on his heels.

Jagas utters some words under his breath. A bright, shining sphere surrounds Yinka #2's head as it lunges at Jagas with his sword.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

Ya know, if you guys are going to pursue me half-way across Jaiman...

Yinka #2 goes flailing by as Jagas side steps the thrust and runs his sword along the length of his foe.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

...you could at least make kicking your tails a bit more of a challenge.

In one fluid motion, Jagas comes around with an arcing inside crescent kick to disarm Yinka #3, followed by a thrusting right kick that nearly beheads him.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

Oooh...see what I mean? You guys just aren't listening are you?

In a harsh tongue, Yinka #1 barks out a command to Yinkas #4 and #5. The two advance on Jagas.

As Yinka #1 continues to watch the spectacle before him, he feels a sudden puff of hot breath on the back of his neck. He turns cautiously. Behind him, flapping in the air, is Jitahkt.

Jitahkt grins, chirping and gurgling at the Yinka. Yinka #1 takes a quick swing at Jitahkt, but finds only air as Jitahkt easily dodges the clumsy blow. The Yinka is disoriented. Jitahkt bellows a screeching roar. The Yinka spins to confront him and is greeted by a cloud of fire.

Jagas has finished off all but one of his enemies the last of which he is dragging behind him. Jitahkt returns.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

Sure, now you show. These Yinka don't have much of a sense of humor, do they?

Jitahkt grins with a snort, then rambles something in his peculiar language.

JAGAS (CONT'D)
 Yeah, as ugly as they are, I'd
 think they would too.

Both friends chuckle and head down the mountain. Thunder rolls in the distance.

JAGAS (CONT'D)
 We better get to town. Looks like
 there's a storm coming.

CUT TO

INT INN OF THE PHOENIX - TOWN OF SHASKIN - NIGHT

Dimly lit tables are assembled about the moderately-sized room. The atmosphere is jovial, thick with talk and laughter. MANY DENIZENS of SHASKIN (of all different races) are about the Inn, traveling from bar to table, and then back again. A MINSTREL sits by the fireplace, playing requests, music filling the air.

In an obscure corner of the room sit FATHIAN, KELES, and ADRIANNA, enjoying each others company. Large plates of half-eaten food and empty mugs of ale and wine litter the table.

Keles is at one end of the booth, drifting in and out of consciousness, occasionally blurting out some nonsense. A glassy-eyed Fathian rests his head on Adrianna's shoulder, while she fidgets with his hair.

The tranquillity is shattered as the doors to the tavern burst open with a thunder, and a YINKA suddenly explodes into the room, falling to the ground in a heap. JAGAS follows behind him.

Jagas grabs the Yinka by the back of the neck and walks him to the table where his friends sit. A commotion follows as the bar patrons scamper for a better look at what is going on. Jagas motions to one of the dwarves at the bar, KHAAD, to come over. When Khaad arrives, we see Jagas motion to him to keep the Yinka bound. Khaad complies, twisting the Yinka's arms behind his back. Jagas pats Khaad on the back and turns to the crowd.

JAGAS
 Please, everyone return to what you
 were doing. I'm sorry to have
 disturbed you.

The crowd disperses. Adrianna is startled as Jagas plops down next to her. Fathian and Keles both snap out of their stupor long enough to greet him.

FATHIAN
Heeeyyy, Jagas.

Jagas reels from Fathians breath. Keles has his head buried in his arms resting on the table. He raises a weak hand.

KELES
'Lo Jagas.

All at the table cringe a bit, as the odor of the two new arrivals begins to fill their nostrils.

FATHIAN
You really need to be more particular about who you travel with.

ADRIANNA
When is the last time you bathed?

Jagas is underwhelmed by his reception.

JAGAS
Yeah, I'm glad to see you guys too. Listen, I think something is going on...

FATHIAN
Why, what's happened?

Fathian begin to pay attention and Keles raises his head, squinting from the light.

JAGAS
That Yinka and his former comrades have been following me ever since I left the College.

KELES
Gryphon College? What's with all of these Yinka being so far south?

JAGAS
Huh?

FATHIAN
We ran into a bunch of `em in an abandoned temple east of town.

JAGAS
Oh. Well, from what I could get out of this one, they are part of some Dragon Lords army.

KELES

Dragon Lord?

ADRIANNA

The Dragon of the North?

A commotion stirs throughout the Inn when people overhear the name Dragon Lord being mentioned. A previously unnoticed figure emerges from the shadows. It is an OLD MAN draped in long, tattered robes, with tangled grey hair all about him. He rests his weight on an old, gnarled staff.

OLD MAN

Dragon Lord. The Dragon of the North. Sulthon Ni'Shaang. All are names that that one goes by.

A hush comes over the crowd as all stop to listen to the rambling old man. None dare make a sound but the minstrel, who changes his melody almost as if on cue, to accompany the tale, adding to the tension as the story is told. The storm is beginning to rumble outside the Inn.

I need to come up with some short, detailed, intense story about the Dragon Lord and his kind.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The Dragon Lord is one of the last of his kind from an age long past, an age that is better forgotten.

JAGAS

And what else do you know of him old one?

OLD MAN

I know that he is a dangerous foe to those that would make him such.

FATHIAN

But we have done nothing to him.

OLD MAN

Perhaps not. But one of you may serve a purpose for him.

ADRIANNA

That would have to be a powerful need, especially with Lorgalis so close to the west.

OLD MAN

Lorgalis is a fool. Sulthon
Ni'Shaang has new allies with power
beyond even his comprehension.

JAGAS

And what do you suggest we do about
this approaching doom?

OLD MAN

Beware, for if his minions are this
far south, then his hand is
powerful indeed. It...He... must
be destroyed.

JAGAS

What are you...

The conversation and mood are broken when the door is thrown open once again, this time from the raging storm outside. Wind, rain, and debris blow into the Inn as a single figure stands in the doorway. The lamps and torches on the wall waver from the intense wind, and the room darkens for just an instant.

The old man's eyes flare a brilliant red at recognition of who has arrived, shadows dancing across the six-fingered hand on his staff.

The figure in the door way enters. He is tall and thin, wrapped in robes and a cloak to protect against the weather, but considering the storm outside, he is amazingly dry. The doors behind him close. The Inn patrons are becoming noticeably shaken by the evenings events.

The tall man scans the room from beneath his hooded cloak. Stopping when he comes to the corner of the Inn where Jagas and his companions are seated, he approaches them. Jagas looks about and notices that the old man has disappeared. Some of the crowd returns to their food and spirits, and some decided they've had enough excitement for one night.

When the tall man arrives at the table, Fathian is becoming a bit nervous and begins to stand, only managing to stumble about, causing the pitchers of ale and wine on the table to topple and spill. Finally, the tall man stops next to Jagas, looking in the direction of Fathian.

TALL MAN

Please friend.
(motions with his hand)
Sit back down.

Fathian fights the urge for a moment, but finally gives in to what is the best idea he's heard all night.

JAGAS

Alorin?

The tall man looks to Jagas, pulling back his hood.

ALORIN

Yes. How are you brother?

The tall man is ALORIN. He is a High Elf with long, flowing black hair, an occasional braid placed here and there. The majority of his bulk comes from his apparel. A wide smile is on his face at seeing Jagas. The two embrace.

JAGAS

It's been so long.

ALORIN

Too long brother.

The two suddenly realize all of the eyes upon them and glance back to the table.

JAGAS

Uh, everyone I would like you to meet my brother Alorin.

KELES

Brother?

ADRIANNA

How is that he is your brother? You are not half-elven Jagas.

ALORIN

Well madam, although we do not share the same blood, we do share the same father. And you are?

Adrianna introduces herself with her proper name to Alorin in her native Grey Elven tongue. Alorin replies in the same tongue, taking her hand in his and kissing it. Adrianna blushes.

FATHIAN

Humph!

JAGAS

And you guys thought I was smooth. Anyway. The menacing one there is Fathian, and the one with the empty look on his face is Keles.

Alorin greets them, having his hand crushed by Fathian, and shaking Keles' hand for him.

KELES

Hey, where did the old guy go?

ALORIN

What old guy?

JAGAS

Just before you came in, there was an old man in here telling us about the Dragon Lord...

ALORIN

The Dragon Lord? What interest do you have in him?

ADRIANNA

There have been many Yinka in this area lately, sent by the Dragon Lord.

ALORIN

For what purpose?

JAGAS

That we do not know, but we were trying to find out from our friend here.

The groups attention now returns to the captive Yinka being held by Khaad.

JAGAS (CONT'D)

But I'm afraid that he was not much help.

ALORIN

Not surprising. Maybe we should return to the College. Alarin may know what is going on.

FATHIAN

Who?

JAGAS

Alarin. He is our father, the man who raised us. He is a Loremaster, he will know what to do.

Perhaps I could split the party here. Alorin and Jagas heading for the college, while the others check out the Yinka camp. Eventually meeting up again in the Wastes of Xor, near the college.

KELES

So what are they doing down here?

JAGAS

Don't know, couldn't get that much out of him. He just kept babbling something about some "strange travelers."

FATHIAN

Wonder if there's any more of `em down here? They could do a lot of damage.

JAGAS

I did get him to tell me where their camp is.

KELES

Where?

JAGAS

To the northwest of town, just beyond the mountains near the border of Rhakhaan. Think we should check it out?

ADRIANNA

Probably. I would hate for these creatures to begin wreaking havoc on the local populace.

JAGAS

Agreed. But from the look of you three, we had better get some rest. We'll set out in the morning.

Everyone at the table nods and stands. As they file out the door, Khaad yells to Jagas.

KHAAD

Whadda ya want me to do wit this one?

JAGAS

Eh? Oh, I'm sorry. Uh...you can have him. Goodnight all.

The patrons respond with fond farewells as Khaad smiles and Jagas winks back. The look on the Yinkas face grows hopeless as he realizes his fate.

CUT TO