

Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together Game Script

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Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together PSP Game Script
(c) RevenantThings (Kyle Johnston)

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Guide Notes

About

This is (duh) a game script for Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together for PSP. I compiled mostly everything myself and have given credit to the few spots where I used other resources for direct confirmation or misc. information at the end of this guide.

The formatting is fairly simple script format, following the course of the game in linear fashion. Because this game relies heavily on choices and diverging plot elements, I have tried to separate these various differences using indentation. So the results of a choice will indent for you to see the dialogue changes in each decision you make or ignore. I also indent for flashback sequences as well.

There are a few instances where I won't be transcribing (at least as of yet). A lot of the "tutorial" dialogue in the early parts of the first chapter have been omitted. I have edited some text (very slightly) as well for flow (usually nothing more than an altered word or combined dialogue).

To Do List

This is an ongoing list of items that I do not currently have (either by my own admission or brought to my attention by you, the readers). If you have the time and opportunity to transcribe anything that I'm missing or list here, please message me on the GameFAQs boards and I will be most obliged.

- Various recruitment choices - Coda choices - Palace of the Dead with Cressida - Coda with Ozma - Additional character endings - Clean up some of my original grammar choices (Neutral path may have odd capitalization scheme compared to rest of FAQ) - Fully transcribe character names - Spice up blocking/description (late in script I get fairly lazy)

Chapter 1

There is blood on my hands, how long till it lies on my heart?

VOICE: It is an age of war. The Wheel begins to turn...

[Snow falls on a rustic settlement at night. Overlooking the village stands a force of armed men, a one-eyed rider at the lead.

Elsewhere, a lone rider rushes through a muddy field at incredible speeds.

The armed men stampede through the village, setting fires and attacking all who stray beyond their homes. The village is now aflame as the troops cut down civilians - men, women and children. They haul out prisoners from a church as the one-eyed leader remains atop his perch, watching.

The lone rider reaches the church and it is clear that some time has passed since the destruction of this town.]

Golyat

[The rider enters the church, leaving his horse tethered outside. The man, Vyce, descends into the tattered remains of the church where his compatriots, Denam and Catiua, huddle around a solitary flame.]

VYCE: It's as we heard, Denam. Lanselot's returned.

DENAM: Then it's time. Right, sister?

CATIUA: Time to end this madness. We can't beat him. You know that.

VYCE: What are you saying, Catiua? You'd have us pass up a chance like this?

CATIUA: It's foolishness to think the three of us might defeat the Dark Knights.

DENAM: They're the ones who've been foolish. And we stand to gain.

VYCE: Don't tell me you're scared! If you've lost your taste for blood, I'll do this myself.

DENAM: That's enough, Vyce. Let's go.

[The two men climb the stairs and after a moment's thought, are joined by Catiua. They convene in a hidden area of the village.]

CATIUA: No.... This won't end well. And what do we "gain" by taking their lives, anyway?

VYCE: Lanselot is Captain of the Dark Knights, and they are the source of Bakram power. Kill Lanselot, and you remove one of the pillars supporting them. The Bakram **will** falter, if only for a moment. Yet that moment will be all the encouragement the Galgastani require. They want Valeria for their own, and they will move to take it.

CATIUA: The turmoil of the last war has only just settled, and you'd start another?

VYCE (moving close): Are we Walister so free of turmoil now, Catiua? We are less than vermin in their eyes - insects to be crushed underfoot.

CATIUA: If war begins anew, we'll die just the same.

[Before Vyce can retort a shuffling is heard in the distance.]

DENAM: Shh! They're here.

VYCE: We'll flank them! Denam, go round behind.

DENAM (nodding): Right.

[Denam sneaks behind the house while the mysterious group of men file into the center of the town. Denam positions himself in just the right spot to advance and deals a mighty blow against the first soldier he sees. Unfortunately for him, the soldier recovers quickly.]

KNIGHT: Who goes there?

[Realizing subterfuge is not an option, the three patriots regroup and stand in the way of the soldiers. Three knights, an aged sorcerer and a man bearing wings comprise the group.]

VYCE: Friends of the Resistance...and no friends of yours!

KNIGHT: The Resistance?

WINGED: I expected a warmer welcome than this! ...Eh? They're children!

KNIGHT: Wait. Do you even know who we are?

VYCE: You're Lanselot, and that makes you my enemy!

KNIGHT: Lanselot **is** my name, true. How is that you know me?

VYCE: How could I forget you!? The Dark Knights laid torch to this town only a winter past!

LANSELOT: The Dark Knights...? But we come from the kingdom of New Xenobia to the east.

CATIUA: And Lanselot of the Dark Knights has but one eye. You have two.

8. Qadriga Fortress
 9. Port Asyton
 10. Port Asyton
 11. Port Asyton (without Oelias)
 12. Mount Hedon
 13. Hagia Banhamuba
 14. Ndamsa Fortress
 15. Almorica Castle
 16. Golyat
 17. Almorica Castle
 18. Golyat
 19. Gates of Coritanae
 20. Coritanae Ward
 21. Mount Weobry
 22. Almorica Castle
 23. Arkhaiopolis of Rhime
 24. Almorica Castle
 25. Almorica Castle
 26. Phidoch South Curtain Wall
 27. Phidoch West Curtain Wall
 28. Phidoch Interior
 29. Phidoch Great Hall
6. Chapter 3 (Chaotic)
1. Phidoc Castle
 2. Port Asyton
 3. Xeod Moors
 4. Gates of Coritanate
 5. Coritanae Ward
 6. Coritanae Keep
 7. The Reisan Way
 8. Bahanna Highlands
 9. Heim
 10. Brigantys West Wall
 11. Brigantys Castle
 12. Brigantys Great Hall
 13. Bahanna Highlands
 14. Almorica Castle
 15. The Gates of Coritanae
 16. Coritanae Keep
 17. Coritanae Ward
 18. Coritanae Keep
 19. Mount Weobry
 20. Golyat
 21. Arkhaiopolis of Rhime
 22. Almorica Castle
 23. Boed Fortress
 24. Phidoch West Curtain Wall
 25. Phidoch South Curtain Wall
 26. Phidoch Castle
 27. Phidoch Great Hall
 28. Heim
7. Chapter 3 (Lawful)
1. Phidoch Castle
 2. Almorica Castle
 3. Madura Drift
 4. Brigantys South Curtain Wall
 5. Brigantys West Curtain Wall
 6. Brigantys Castle
 7. Brigantys Great Hall
 8. Bahanna Highlands
 9. The Reisan Way
 10. Coritanae Keep
 11. The Gates of Coritanae
 12. Coritanae Ward (against Apollinaire)
 13. Coritanae Ward (against Gatalo)
 14. Brigantys Castle
 15. Krysar
 16. Bahanna Highlands
 17. Psonji Weald
 18. Lake Bordu
 19. Tynemouth Hill

LANSELOT: One eye, you say? Would that he lacked my name as well. His reputation, it seems, does me no favors.

[Both groups relax slightly and tensions die down.]

KNIGHT: No marauding knights us, but mercenaries come looking for work.

LANSELOT: I am Lancelot Hamilton, a Holy Knight of Xenobia.

WINGED: And I am Canopus, the one they name Wind Caller. Our aged companion here is -

WIZENED MAGE: The Star Seer, Warren Omon, at your service.

YOUNG KNIGHT: Mirdyn Walhorn, a knight of Xenobia, as it please you.

BEARDED KNIGHT: Gildas is my name. There now, no need to be frightened.

VYCE: I wasn't - I...I don't know what to say.

CATIUA: Forgive us, good knights. But perhaps this meeting might benefit us both. We have need of strength such as yours.

LANSELOT: Tell us your tale, then. We are strangers in this land, and I would hear more of it.

VYCE: I'm Vyce...and it would seem you are not our enemy.

CATIUA: I am the sibyl Catiua, and this is my brother, Denam.

[Choice 1 - You must forgive our error.]

DENAM: Please, forgive our mistake.

[Choice 2 - Stay on your guard, Sister.]

DENAM: Do not be so quick to trust, sister. We know nothing of these men save their name, and that only on their word.

CANOPUS: You are mistrustful for one so young. Let's leave the children to play amongst themselves, Lancelot.

LANSELOT: We mean you no harm. Is the benefit of the doubt too much to ask?

CATIUA: Where are your manners, Denam? Apologize at once!

LANSELOT (hoisting his sword): I swear upon my blade, on my honor as a knight. I will be no enemy of yours.

[Choice 1 - I'll take you at your word.]

DENAM: A good oath. Forgive our mistrust, Lord Knight.

[Choice 2 - ...]

DENAM: ...

CATIUA: You must forgive my brother. He is quick to anger.

LANSELOT: Already forgotten, though you did give us quite the surprise. Now, do you think we might talk somewhere out of this wretched heat?

CATIUA: We have just the place. It's not much, but it's secret and it's safe.

[They adjourn to the church.]

CATIUA: As it is, we lack swords enough to face the Galgastani. The Bakram share our deficit...a deficit they've remedied by joining forces with Lodis.

CANOPUS: So Lodis sent them the Dark Knights Loslorien.

20. Golyat
21. Boed Fortress
22. Gates of Almorica
23. Almorica Passageway
24. Almorica Castle
25. Mount Weobry
26. Heim
27. Arkhaiopolis of Rhime
28. Phidoch West Curtain Wall
29. Phidoch South Curtain Wall
30. Phidoch Castle
31. Phidoch Great Hall

8. Chapter 4

1. Heim Castle
2. Phidoch Castle
3. Bahaana Highlands
4. Brigantys South Curtain Wall
5. Brigantys West Curtain Wall
6. Brigantys Great Hall
7. Almorica Castle
8. Heim Castle
9. Mount Hedon
10. Golborza Plain
11. Hagia Banhamuba
12. Barnicia Castle
13. Krysaro
14. Phidoch Castle

15. Balmamusa
16. Qadriga Fortress
17. The Vanessan Way

18. Lambiss Hill
19. Tzorious Field

20. The Gates of Barnicia
21. Barnicia Courtyard
22. Barnicia Grand Staircase
23. Barnicia Grand Staircase (Against

- Catiua)
24. Tzorious Field
25. Phidoc Castle (with Catiua)

26. Phidoc Castle (Without Catiua)
27. Phidoch Castle (Catiua slain)

28. Iorumza Canyon
29. Boulder Sands
30. Oeram

31. The Gates of Heim
32. Heim South Curtain Wall
33. Heim Postern Gate

34. Heim Castle
35. Heim Courtyad
36. Heim Castle

37. Heim Great Hall
38. Heim (without Catiua)
39. Heim (With Catiua)

40. Heim Outskirts
41. Krysaro

42. The Hanging Gardens - Foot of the Gardens
43. The Hanging Gardens - Twixt Heaven

- and Earth
44. Heart of the Gardens - Relics of the Past

45. Heart of the Gardens - Chamber of the Seal

46. Heim Castle
47. Almorica Castle
48. Golyat

9. Endings

1. The Xenobians' Return
2. Ravness
3. Olivya
4. Folcurt, Bayin and Arycelle

WARREN: Loslorien is an order under the direct command of High Priest Sardinian, ruler of Lodis. They are said to be the greatest of the sixteen orders, and the high priest's favorite besides. Yet he uses them not in open battle, but in shadows and secrecy. They are his ears, and when there is need of it, his dagger. No knights in shining armor, these. In word and deed, they are as dark as their name.

GILDAS: And these Dark Knights whatever-you-call-them are backing the Bakram, neh?

VYCE: So why are **you** come to our isles? Does Xenobia think to claim Valeria as her own? Do Lodis and Xenobia mean to bring **their** wars to our shores!?

CATIUA (turning): Enough, Vyce.

LANSELOT: Your question deserves an answer, Vyce. We are Xenobian, after all. Yet we do not serve as Knights of Xenobia. We were banished. Cast out.

GILDAS: We're outlaws. No place waiting for us back home, neh?

CANOPUS: We've come to find work - preferably of the well-paying variety.

VYCE: I don't trust you, and I don't trust your story. This is -our- fight!

CATIUA: Vyce, please. Lord Knight, you must forgive our passion.

LANSELOT: There is nothing to forgive. Your passion does your credit. Tell me, what will you do now?

DENAM: For one, we have to get Duke Ronwey out of Almorica.

LANSELOT: Duke Ronwey? He is your leader?

VYCE: Not just us. He leads all the Walister. The Galgastani hold him captive in their castle. They plan to execute him, if the rumors are to be believed. We mean to stop them.

CANOPUS: A Duke, is it? If his purse matches his title, there's coin to be had.... A little rescue work might be just the thing. How about it, Lancelot? What say you?

VYCE: Look. I'm sorry for not trusting you. It's true that if we're to rescue the duke, we're going to need help.

GILDAS: Then there's nothing to be gained jabbering on here, neh? To Almorica Castle!

CATIUA: Wait! The castle is well defended. A fight there would mean our deaths - and yours, Lord Knight. And I...I've seen enough of fighting. Enough of death.

LANSELOT: What about you, Denam? Would you have our aid?

[Choice 1 - I would.]

DENAM: Without your help, the duke is as good as dead.

[Choice 2 - There is no need.]

DENAM: No. This is our fight. I must decline your offer.

LANSELOT: What if I told you we make for Almorica too - not to aid you, but to fight for our own purpose. The arrow of the nobleman and the arrow of the hunter may find the same hare, though one shoots for sport and the other shoots for his supper. What say we work together, while such cooperation is to our mutual benefit?

VYCE: Why not let 'em join us? I've a feeling they'll come whether we want it or not.

LANSELOT: Then it's settled. We will prepare at once.

[The Xenobian Knights filter out, followed by Vyce. Catiuva remains, staring into the flickering flame and calls to Denam before he can follow the rest.]

CATIUA: Why do you not heed me, brother? I know how you must feel, but what of my feelings? I don't want to lose you. Our father is dead - a hard truth, but a truth all the same. In all the world, you are the only one bound to me by blood, brother. I couldn't bear to let you die. Forgive me. I know my words will not sway you. Only promise me.... Promise you'll never leave your sister.

[Before Denam can respond, Vyce rushes back inside.]

VYCE: What's keeping you? Everyone's ready.

[Denam turns back to his sister and wordlessly exits.]

5. Donnaito
6. Hobyrim
7. Ozma
8. Hobyrim and Ozma
9. Oelias and Dievold
10. Lord Ending
11. The Xenobian King
12. The Dark Knights
10. Coda
 1. Episode 1 - The Songstress
 2. The Pirate's Graveyard - Cape of Spite
 3. The Pirate's Graveyard - Bosom of the Sea Goddess
 4. The Pirate's Graveyard - Into the Darkness
 5. Episode 2 - The Search for Warren
 6. The Palace of the Dead - Level 88
11. The Palace of the Dead - Level 105
12. The Palace of the Dead - The Chamber of the Seal
 1. Heim
13. Episode 3 - A True Knight
 1. Heim
 2. Arkhaipolis of Rhime
 3. Delakroa Common
 4. Torakoria Way
 5. Heim
14. Episode 4 - The Magnificent Twelve
 1. Golyat
 2. Golyat - Quayside
 3. Golyat - South Village
 4. Golyat - Sailor's Way
 5. Golyat - North Village
 6. Golyat
15. Sidequests
16. The San Bronsa Ruins
 1. Tower of Law Eternal - Level 3
 2. Tower of Law Eternal - Level 10
 3. Tower of Law Eternal - Level 12
17. The Rogue Diego
 1. Port Omish
 2. Port Omish
 3. Qadriga Fortress
 4. Port Omish
 5. Pirate's Graveyard - Crystal Halls
 6. Pirate's Graveyard - Ripples of Grief
 7. Pirate's Graveyard - On Holy Ground
18. The Fallen Princess
 1. Grimsby
 2. Neimrahava Wood
 3. Phidoch Castle
 4. Oeram
19. The Apocrypha
 1. Gecho Fortress
 2. Geyld Fortress
 3. Lahzan Fortress
 4. Boed Fortress
 5. Qadriga Fortress
 6. Ndamsa Fortress
 7. Coritanae Keep
 8. Ndamsa Fortress
 9. Sanctum of Hahnela
 10. Qadriga Fortress
 11. Sanctum of Nestharot
 12. Boed Fortress
 13. Sanctum of Xoshonell
 14. Lahzan Fortress
 15. Sanctum of Lyuneram
 16. Gecho Fortress
 17. Sanctum of Vaasa
20. The Necromancer's Daughter

VYCE: You can't coddle him forever. He's no little boy anymore.

CATIUA: Do not speak to me of my brother. He does not share your lust for blood.

VYCE: I have no love of war. But I'd sooner die on my feet than on my knees.

CATIUA: You would die on the backs of others.

VYCE: You were the one who brought them in here, Catiuu!

CATIUA: Because when I find a tool well-suited for a job, I use it. At least one of us has the sense to recognize an opportunity. You should thank me!

VYCE: Feh. Is that how you see people? As tools? I'd have expected more of a sibyl.

[He leaves Catiuu alone. She lowers her head and sits in silence.]

CATIUA (quietly): I only want to see an end of death.

The Gates of Almorica Castle

[Denam and company, allied with the Xenobian mercenaries, prepare their assault on Almorica.]

BAPAL: You're the rebels what been hiding out on Golyat. Here to save your duke, is it? There's two thousand Goth on that one's head, boys! Half the purse to him what brings him down!

[Bapal swings his weapon forcefully and meets Lancelot and company head on.]

BAPAL: One whisper of Ronwey's execution, and out you come, bold as you please. A rat can smell a trap, but not our rebels, eh? High time we were rid of your lot.

CATIUA: A trap. And we walked right into it.

VYCE: Trap or no, we fight or we die! I've never let a Galgastani get the better of me, and I don't mean to start today!

DENAM: Focus, Vyce! Our first duty is to save the duke!

VYCE: Don't lecture me on duty! Your only duty is to stay alive!

CATIUA: You should not speak to Denam so! He was only trying to help!

[Denam and his friends contribute to the struggle. Bapal, hands filled with Lancelot and his company, grows weary.]

BAPAL: Wait...you're not Walisters! I know a man from Lodis when I see one!

[The battle rages on.]

CATIUA: Are you all right, Denam? You shouldn't let Vyce get to you.

DENAM: I'm fine, sister. Back to the battle!

[Bapal's forces are overridden and the boss is struck a lethal blow.]

BAPAL: Looks like our luck...has turned...

LANSELOT: The way inside is clear. Stay on guard.

CANOPUS: Leave the heavy lifting to us, Denam. Cover our flank - that's all we ask.

[Denam and company advance into Almorica Castle.]

Almorica Passageway

[Lancelot holds Denam back as they reach the interior passage.]

AGARES: Hmph. A fine time for this, with Master Nybeth away... Listen well. We face the rogues who slew Bapal and his men. Underestimate them and share Bapal's fate! Give these rebel swine a taste of Galgastani steel! Almorica shall never fall!

[Lancelot and his companions set to prove Agares wrong and fight valiantly.]

AGARES: Interlopers! Why do you meddle in our affairs? Our struggle with the Walister goes back generations - it's no concern of yours. Or do you seek to claim valeria, as Lodis does? I will have your answer!

LANSELOT: We are men without a country. We have lent them our swords because it suits us to do so.

CANOPUS: And we're looking for mercenary work, as it happens. Not hiring, by any chance?

AGARES: And worry you'll leave for a bigger purse? We don't need outsiders to do our killing.

1. Balmamusa
2. Qadriga Fortress
3. Golyat
21. Ocionne the Wyrmcaller
 1. Belmorose Highwinds
 2. Vasque
 3. Lhazan Fortress
22. The Palace of the Dead
 1. Palace of the Dead - Level 1
 2. Palace of the Dead - Level 2
 3. Palace of the Dead - Level 3
 4. Palace of the Dead - Level 5
 5. Palace of the Dead - Level 5 (Neutral)
 6. Palace of the Dead - Level 22
 7. Palace of the Dead - Level 41
 8. Palace of the Dead - Level 74
 9. Palace of the Dead - Altar of the Beyond
23. Credits

CANOPUS: He makes a good point. Let's rescue this Duke, collect our reward, and be done with it.

AGARES: A craven who would choose lucre over loyalty deserves only one reward!

[Agares, felled by Lancelot, cries out with hands raised.]

AGARES: My life...for Galgastan.

Almorica Castle

[The castle is secure and Duke Ronwey is rescued. There is much rejoicing, but the celebration is short-lived as the patriot group and the duke reconvene to discuss further plans.

Lancelot and his companions join Denam and his friends at a table headed by Ronwey.]

RONWEY: The taste of freedom is sweet. You have my thanks. Sweeter still that Walister youths came to my aid. Denam, was it? Doubtless you and your friends are a gift from the Great Father Himself. The Walister boon is great, and our future bright!

DENAM: We are not alone in our loyalty. Upon word of your grace's release, many Walister have left their haunts and hideaways for Almorica.

RONWEY: And there is still time before the Galgastani come to remedy my freedom, though not long, I fear. We must regroup. Now I must ask if the tale our guests have told us is, indeed, the truth.

LANSELOT: Upon my sword, it is. We are outcasts from our land.

RONWEY: I do not doubt your sword. It is the whiskers of your companion that give me pause. I hear a diviner matching his description was ever at the side of King Tristan when your New Xenobia came into being two years past. And that you, Sir Lancelot, were captain of the Holy Knights. Is the saint king so brazen as to cast out the very men who placed him upon the throne?

WARREN: I, too, have heard tell of this diviner, but I am not he.

RONWEY: Lodis plagues us with the Dark Knights Loslorien. How do we know you are not some new menace visited upon Valeria? If New Xenobia does not seek to usurp, I would have your proof.

CATIUA: Your grace, these Holy Knights risked their own lives to win your freedom.

LANSELOT: A man can claim knighthood only when he serves a worthy lord. It is for such a man that we seek.

RONWEY: I have your word then, and its proof shall be in your deeds. You sought a reward - you shall have it, and employment besides. I would have you train our Walister loyals as guards and soldiers here in Almorica.

LANSELOT: As you wish.

[Lancelot and his group depart, leaving Denam and his friends alone with the Duke.]

RONWEY: Now, Denam. Your father was an abuna in Golyat, was he not? I met him myself, once. A wise man, Abuna Prancet. What happened in Golyat was...a tragedy.

CATIUA: Please, your grace, you must avenge our father - no - all the people of Golyat.

RONWEY: Yet the enemy before us is Galgastan. They must come first. And for that, I will need knights. Knights...such as yourselves. Will you join my table at Almorica?

VYCE: Us? Knights!?

RONWEY: As young heroes of Walister, you will serve as a shining example to your clansmen. I would have you become knights in my direct service. You will be the spear that strikes swift and true. Well, what say you?

VYCE: O-of course. I mean, as you wish, your grace! I know Denam's with me on this.

RONWEY: Excellent. I have much for you to do. Your first task takes you to the town of Krysaro, to the southwest. The captain of my knights, sir Leonar, has gone there in pursuit of the former overseer of this castle, a necromancer named Nybeth. Truth be told, he's having a harder time of it than was expected. You'll be going to Krysaro to aid him. Understood?

VYCE (standing): You can count on us, your grace. We won't let you down.

RONWEY: Then may victory and glory await you, young heroes of Walister.

[The newly raised knights give their thanks and prepare to leave. They meet up with Lancelot outside the hallway.]

LANSELOT: You've led us to a gainful employ after all. My thanks.

DENAM: No, it is I who should thank you.

LANSELOT: So you're off to aid one of the Duke's men. I regret we cannot join you. Above all else, stay alive. Win or lose, while there's life, there's hope.

DENAM: I'll try to remember that.

CANOPUS: Best not forget. The dead get no second chances.

DENAM: If death were our aim, there are swifter ways to go about it than soldiery.

LANSELOT: True enough. Still, do not needlessly seek out danger. Enough will find you as it is.

DENAM: Of course.

[They exchange goodbyes and Lancelot and his group return to the Duke's chamber. Ravness, a fierce noblewoman, greets Denam.]

RAVNESS: You are the Heroes of Golyat, are you not? I must thank you for saving his grace the duke. Indeed, accept my thanks on behalf of us all.

DENAM: And you are...?

RAVNESS: Ravness Loxaerion, a knight in service of the duke. I would ride to Leonar's aid myself, but his grace has other need of me. I fear the task falls to you.

VYCE: No need of fear, friend. We took back this castle, didn't we?

RAVNESS: In a manner of speaking, I suppose.

VYCE: And what "manner" would that be?

CATIUA: She and her fellow knights drew off the garrison defending the castle, else we would not have succeeded.

DENAM: If it were not for the sacrifice of others, we would be no heroes of Golyat now.

RAVNESS: Make no mistake, I have high hopes for you. We must unite the people behind us if we are to put an end to this endless war. Word of your heroics emboldens them.

VYCE: Then you hold us up as heroes to serve some stratagem, is that it?

RAVNESS: If you do not like it, give truth to the lie. Write your own fate on the battlefield.

[Ravness turns to leave.]

DENAM: May fate smile on us both, Dame Ravness.

[She turns back to Denam and wordlessly leaves.]

CATIUA: She thinks highly of herself. I pray we are not near when she falls from such height!

Tynemouth Hill

[On the way to Kryсарo, Denam encounters Galgastani troops.]

ORBA: Walister rebels? Here? Then Almorica has fallen for true. Reinforcements for their kinsmen we have pinned down in Kryсарo, I reckon. We can't let them pass. Make peace with the light, Walister swine! Today you die!

[Before Denam can draw his weapon, the flutter of wings is heard and none other than Canopus joins his ranks.]

CANOPUS: You looked a lonely lot. Thought I might join you. I am Canopus. Step forward and meet your fate, dogs!

[Canopus charges ahead of the rest of Denam's party.]

VYCE: This is a Walister fight. We need no help from you!

CANOPUS: Stubborn as ever, eh? How did one so young grow so thick of skull?

VYCE: Thick? I'll give you thick!

[Vyce hurls a stone at Canopus's backside.]

CANOPUS: Ow! Not the wings!

CATIUA: Vyce, control yourself!

[The two men sullenly agree to stop fighting with each other while the battle rages on.]

DENAM: Today we fight for Walister honor, but where does it lead?

VYCE: What's the matter? Lost your nerve? Or has the nagging of your pacifist sister unmanned you? Always hiding behind her skirts.

CANOPUS: Thick of skull and a bully besides.

VYCE: That's enough squawking out of you, bird-man!

[Again Vyce launches a rock in Canopus's direction.]

CANOPUS: Better a bird than a brute!

[Canopus fires back at Vyce.]

CATIUA: You're not men, you're children!

[Shamed by Catuia, the two continue attacking the enemy, eventually quelling the enemy leader.]

ORBA: No place to die, this...

Krysaro

[The slums are covered in a dark shadow and a holy man finds himself in the middle of an undead skirmish.]

DONNALTO: Great Father! Ne'er have I seen such an undead throng! That Necromancer uses men's souls for sport! Sleep, souls. Embrace the waiting everworld!

[Donnalto casts a spell of exorcism but to no avail.]

DONNALTO: Impossible! My exorcism has failed!? Perhaps the corpses must be stilled before the sould can be put to rest.... I've forgotten much in the fifteen years since I last faced the undead. Ah, but listen to me, making excuses. Patience, Leonar. We need only wait for reinforcements.

[As if summoned, Denam and company arrive at the town's entrance.]

DONNALTO: There, our liberators! Great Father smile upon us this day.

[The conjurer of the undead host quickly decides to strike before Denam's group can make any impact.]

MOLDOVA: Perhaps they merely bare their teeth at you, old man. The sleep has already taken your friends. And no common sleep; they descend the sepulchral stairs toward death. When they wake, it will be as unliving horrors! We only need hold until Master Nybeth's return. Give them not an inch, and show them no quarter!

[Moldova's units strike hard and fast while Denam races to Donnalto's aid.]

[Donnalto perishes]

DONNALTO: I've failed you...Leonar. The rest is in...your hands.

MOLDOVA: Master...Nybeth! Even in death would I have...served you.

[She falls, and Denam is able to find Leonar before any ill effects take hold. They hold counsel in a dry room while the storm continues to brew.]

[Choice 1 - Donnalto dies]

LEONAR: Our thanks to you, Denam. You've saved our lives. We came here in pursuit of Nybeth, but the man is as crafty as he is abhorrent. We were ambushed. I left some men in the field.... Did you come across any other survivors?

[Denam lowers his head.]

LEONAR: ...As I feared. I have lost too many of the duke's men. I know not how I shall face him.

DENAM: If only we'd arrived sooner. Still, I'm grateful we were able to reach you. The duke is a reasonable man. Surely he knows you share his grief.

LEONAR: You speak well, and i am grateful for your words. But this Nybeth...he is anathema to me and all with good in their hearts. How many have lost their lives to satisfy his dark hunger? I failed to take his head. A failure I mean to remedy.

[Choice 2 - Donnalto lives]

LEONAR: My thanks to you, Denam. You've saved my life. And my apologies to you, Abuna. Such is our reward for striking blind. Already I have lost too many of the duke's men. I know not how I shall face him.

DONNALTO: I am thankful that you, at least, still live. The Great Father favors us.

LEONAR: As he is surely displeased by the trespasses of this Nybeth: A sorcerer of the foulest sort.

DONNALTO: Yes, Nybeth! He lies hidden in a rotting fastness beyond the town. Odd, with his men left at Almorica, I'd have thought him bound for Coritanae. What could he be scheming?

LEONAR: I want his head, whatever it may be plotting. I will not return to the duke empty-handed.

DONNALTO: You mean to take the fastness with these numbers? Should we not withdraw and regroup?

LEONAR: Were it only myself and the remnants of my men, I would find retreat more palatable. But do not forget our new allies.

DONNALTO: I have not. Yet be mindful of the Galgastani threat. Why, they might attack Almorica at any moment.

LEONAR: As I see it, we would not have the luxury of choice were it not for the heroes of Golyat.

DONNALTO: Yes, yes, of course. Advance or retreat, the decision is rightfully Denam's.

LEONAR (turning to the troops behind him): Voltare, Sara. I know you'll not object.

DONNALTO (to Denam): Then it's settled. We are yours to command.

Qadriga Fortress

[Denam's group travels to the Qadriga where the necromancer Nybeth waits anxiously for them atop a spiraling staircase.]

NYBETH: Tracked me down, have you? Moldova's gone, then. She harbored a rare appreciation for my research. Sad to see her pass, though I envy her newfound vicinity to death! Yet it is not time to join her company. Perhaps we might come to an...understanding? I care not who rules this island. Take it, it's yours. My siege of Almorica was a purely business venture, you see. a deal struck with the heirophant to satisfy my...curiosities. And what of it? Your precious castle is returned. What's done is done! I propose you let me go free. The alternative, of course, would be for us to do battle. But no...the time it would take to destroy you is that much less time for my research! Hardly efficient. If there's anything I detest in this world, it is inefficiency!

[Choice 1 - Surrender, and I will not harm you.]

DENAM: Lay down your arms, and you will come to no harm. But you cannot go free. If you would do penance for your crimes, come to Almorica. I promise your life will be spared.... Though, you will be our prisoner and treated no better than you deserve.

NYBETH: I approve! You forsake the chaotic nature of youth for the twin lights of reason and order! Yet, I must decline. You may mean well, but there is no shortage of others who would see me hang. Even as I ask why we must fight, I accept the inevitability of the coming battle. Freedom's wage must be paid in full. Now, an experiment! Let us mix youth with danger and observe the reaction!

[Choice 2 - To the Darkness with you!]

DENAM: You would take lives to sate some curiosity? You profane the light as you profane the dead.

NYBETH: You have me wrong. My intellectual curiosity and your blind loyalty are not so dissimilar. Both inspire us equally to action, and there is little difference in the number of resulting dead. But you see, while you leave only death in your path, I leave a species of life. Let's see whether your false piety can prevail!

[Nybeth shoves all pleasantries and resorts to his evil gambit.]

NYBETH: Denizens of the Abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[He conjures a deadly host of skeletons, zombified soldiers and worse to battle Denam. Donnalto, irate at Nybeth's experimental savagery, sounds off on the necromancer.]

DONNALTO: To steal not only lives, but the very dignity of repose...you Fiend! In the name of the great Father Philaha, I condemn you to hell!

NYBETH: Oh dear, not one of those. I find men who go about claiming to speak for the gods insufferable. The tenacity of your belief is admirable, but truly, deities and demons? Rubbish.

DONNALTO: Avaunt, Mage, for the Holy light that gives me strength is a miracle in truth - as the necromantic heresy you practice is the work of demons!

NYBETH: What you call magic is merely another aspect of physical law, and those who call themselves "deities" or "demons" merely flesh. While one man's spirit may be lofty, and another's heart devilish, bowing to one of them does not make you pious.... It makes you weak! To honor the gods and despise demons is to dilute the weight of your words and the import of your actions. A man of your years should have realized this fundamental truth by now.

DONNALTO: Enough of this cretin's blasphemy! I was wrong to pay him any heed at all.

[Denam and company force their way through the demonic horde, wounding Nybeth gravely.]

NYBETH: I am forced to choose between retreat and death. How...unexpected. But I am afraid your victory cannot be complete, for there is still vital research to be done, and none to do it but me! Denam, was it? A name I shall make a point to remember. When the war is lost and won, I feel we will meet again. When we do, I will be only too happy to reveal the ripened fruits of my research. Until then.

[Nybeth transforms into a crow and in a puff of black smoke vanishes, leaving Denam the victor.]

Almorica Castle

[Denam, Leonar and Lancelot hold counsel with Duke Ronwey.]

RONWEY: Leonar has told me of the battle. You have served me well. I hope you continue to do so. You are to accompany Leonar to Phidoch Castle - a Bakram holding.

DENAM: Phidoch Castle - where the Dark Knights are garrisoned. Why there?

RONWEY: I want you to forge a treaty of non-interference before the real fighting with Galgastan begins. Not with the Bakram, mind you, but with the Dark Knights of Lodis. We cannot have them hounding our flank while we are occupied with Galgastan.

CATIUA: But...your grace. It was the Bakram who brought on this war. Our parents died on Loslorien swords. Had they not aided the Bakram, how much suffering might we have been spared?

RONWEY: None know this better than I, Catiua. But consider what would happen were we to face such a foe in open battle. They would crush us. The Bakram people, overfed swine that they are, are no threat. Ah, but the Dark Knights - there is a foe to be feared. Which is why we must swear allegiance to Lodis and ensure they are no foe of ours.

VYCE: So your grace means to bend knee to Lodis?

RONWEY: Tread carefully, Vyce. I have told you we are of one mind on this. I know the devil's bargain we make with Lodis. But it is only until we can deal with Galgastan...and Balbatos. With the Dark Knights at bay, those opportunist in the Galgastani camp clamoring for war will fall silent. There's our chance. Once Balbatos is dead and buried, only then do we turn to strike the Bakram. What does our Holy Knight make of this? The Xenobian throne has no designs on Valeria. Nor Lodis, they. Surely, then, King Tristan would not object to a treaty of non-interference. A gesture of support for our burgeoning state. Ah, but I forget this has no bearing on you, Sir Lancelot. Forgive me.

LANSELOT: ...

RONWEY: Well, the sooner you and Leonar have left for Phidoch, the better. A purse of 5,000 Goth should help you see to your needs. I'll not have you depart unprepared.

Golborza Plain

[Denam and Leonar encounter Galgastani troops on the doorstep of Almorica.]

BREZEN: Walister forces.... Can't catch a break, can we?

SOLDIER: They have us in numbers. Best fall back to Rhime.

BREZEN: I'd sooner fall into my grave! Are you a son of a Galgastan or no!

SOLDIER: Talk brave as you like, it won't change our odds. We should rejoin the file.

[As the soldier turns to flee, Brezen knocks him into submission with one deft swing of his hammer.]

BREZEN: Almorica falls, and you think the sky falls with it. There's no place here for cowards. Bring 'em on, I say! For Galgastan!

[Encouraged by fear, the Galgastani pursue Denam and Leonar.]

DENAM: Warriors of Galgastan! Lay down your arms, and you may yet keep your lives.

BREZEN: I thought to offer you much the same deal, boy! A battle's won with blood, not numbers.

DENAM: Your cause is hopeless. Why throw your lives away?

BREZEN: Soon or late, all men meet their end. What good to live in fear of it? I know your kind - young, always thinking on tomorrow. You might try letting go. Drifting with the current.

DENAM: You think me unprepared for death? I'm not so young as that!

BREZEN: Gods beneath us, why do I even bother?

[Their quarrel continues amidst the rapidly flowing river.]

VYCE: Stubborn wretch. What's it take to kill you?

BREZEN: Quite a tongue on you, boy. Small wonder your kind find themselves reviled at every turn.

VYCE: **Us** reviled!? Look who's casting stones!

LEONAR: Calm, Vyce. We do not fight to prove which side is least loved. We fight to restore peace!

BREZEN: I spit on your peace! Almorica knew peace until you plunged it back into war!

[Brezen's words end as he's struck down.]

BREZEN: At least I'll know peace...in death.

Akhaiopolis of Rhime

[A female warrior finds herself surrounded by Galgastani troops.]

BOLIS: The sooner you accept the truth, the sooner this will be over. The alternative is also swift yet...painful.

WARRIOR: Kill me if you wish! You can never kill our spirit, nor our desire for justice!

BOLIS: Defiant cur! Kill her.

[The troops move in at his command, but the warrior deftly avoids a fatal blow even as Denam and his companions arrive at the town's forefront.]

BOLIS: Hmm? Who goes there?

LEONAR: She's not Resistance.... Another faction perhaps?

[Choice 1 - Whoever she is, we can't just leave her.]

DENAM: I won't stand here and watch her be hunted. Quickly, to her aid!

[The warrior continues her flight as Denam and Leonar lay waste to the foe before them.]

BOLIS: What!? I was not fated to die here.... Not to you!

[After the battle, the warrior, Cistina, thanks Denam and his friends.]

CISTINA: Without your aid, I would never have escaped with my life. Thank you. I am Cistina, a warrior in the Liberation Front. I was scouting the Galgastani in preparation for a raid on their stores when they spotted me.

VYCE: Liberation Front? Partisan zealots, the lot of them. Nothing but trouble.

CATIUA: I had always thought us two sides of the same coin.

LEONAR: She is a Bakram Traditionalist, a group loyal to the late King Dorgalua.

CATIUA: I've heard of them. Not all Bakram support the current regime, after all.

LEONAR: Oh their goals are lofty enough, but their deeds border on butchery. They risk the lives of soldier and innocent alike with their subversion. Means unworthy of their end.

CISTINA: You have us wrong! These are lies spread by Brantyn! We seek only a return to better times, when a man's race and beliefs could not discredit him.

VYCE: Better times? Don't make me laugh! Good enough for those with luck to be born Bakram, but we lied then as we do now - insects beneath the boots of our betters!

CISTINA: I see...then tell me: Why is it that you fight?

[Choice 1 - To secure a future for the Walister.]

DENAM: We must build a country of our own if our people are to have any future.

CISTINA: Your words echo Brantyn's own. You speak of your country, your people, but you care only for yourselves. You refuse compromise, turn your back on cooperation. What selfish creatures.

VYCE: Are your motives so pure? I find the stench of Bakram dogs difficult to tell apart!

[Choice 2 - For peace.]

DENAM: We seek only peace, a world free of war and strife. This is why we fight.

CISTINA: Then we share a common cause. Let us fight together.

VYCE: Us, fight alongside Bakram? Absurd. The peace we fight for is one in which the Walister can live as men. We want no part of any shared peace. I piss on your common cause!

LEONAR: Enough vyce. Such talk leads us nowhere. You are free to go Cistina. But you must quit this place at once. This is our land. Our fight. The Bakram are not welcome here.

CISTINA: As you wish. But we will not stop until the world is made fair and just. One day you will open your eyes. You will see that only by putting aside vain desires can we usher in an era of true peace.

LEONAR: Go now. And do not return.

[Cistina exits and Leonar convinces the party to be on their way as well.]

[Choice 2 - We have more important battles to fight.]

DENAM: I'd help her if we could, but we've more important battles to fight.

CATIUA: You can't be serious. You'd let those Galgastani hunt her!?

VYCE: Of course he would, and he's right to do so. It's you I can't understand, Catiua.

LEONAR: Either way, our quarrel is with the Galgastani. If we save her in the process, all the merrier.

[The woman dies.]

CISTINA: Aah, Cerya! Cerya, my sister.... The Front is in...your hands.

DENAM: The Liberation Front? She's with them!?

[The warrior continues her flight as Denam and Leonar lay waste to the foe before them.]

BOLIS: What!? I was not fated to die here.... Not to you!

[After the battle, the warrior, Cistina, thanks Denam and his friends.]

CISTINA: Without your aid, I would never have escaped with my life. Thank you.

LEONAR: Think nothing of it. It is by chance we helped you, no more. Rather thank the Great Father. He favors you. Now, why is it the Galgastani clamor for your blood?

CISTINA: I am Cistina, a warrior in the Liberation Front. I was scouting our common enemy.

VYCE: Liberation Front? Partisan zealots, the lot of them. Nothing but trouble.

CATIUA: I had always thought us two sides of the same coin.

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CISTINA: You have us wrong! These are lies spread by Brantyn! We seek only a return to better times, when a man's race and beliefs could not discredit him.

VYCE: Better times? Don't make me laugh! Good enough for those with luck to be born Bakram, but we lived then as we do now - insects beneath the boots of our betters!

CISTINA: It is plain nothing I say will sway you. I thank you again for saving me. Now I will take my leave.

LEONAR: You have leave to go, Cistina. But you must quit this place at once. This is our land. Our fight. The Bakram are not welcome here.

CISTINA: I shall try to remember that.

[She departs, her head held high.]

Phidoch Castle

[Denam and Leonar arrive at Phidoch Castle and are greeted by a vast contingent of Dark Knights.]

DARK KNIGHT: Who goes there? Speak your name!

LEONAR: I am Leonar Reci Rimon, sworn sword of the Knights of Almorica. I come before you a humble servant of the great Duke Ronwey, esteemed leader of the Walister.

DARK KNIGHT: I shall announce your arrival.

[The knight turns back to the gate.]

LEONAR: The Dark Knights make their fastness here in Phidoch Castle. See her soaring white walls? No wonder they name her "The Swan." But beneath her outward beauty is a nearly impregnable fortress. Be glad we are not tasked to take her.

[The knight captain returns with a well dressed nobleman in tow.]

BALXEPHON: We have looked for your arrival, Sir Leonar. You bring word from the duke?

LEONAR: I do, my lord.

BALXEPHON: No doubt you've had a hard journey. Come. Rest within our halls.

[He leads the party inside where a meeting room is prepared. After some time spent resting, the group awaits Balxephon's return.]

BALXEPHON: ...Good knights. We find your duke's proposal most intriguing.

LEONAR: Have you an answer?

BALXEPHON: Perhaps you had best ask my lord directly for that.

LEONAR: Sir Lancelot is here, in this castle!?

[As if waiting for his name, the one-eyed Dark Knight enters the room and takes the remaining seat opposite Denam.]

LANSELOT: He is. Greetings, brave Knights of Walister. I am Lancelot Tartaros.

LEONAR: Leonar Reci Rimon of Almorica, if it please you. You have considered our proposal?

LANSELOT: Ha! You waste no time, do you? I like that. I do have an answer for your duke. Tell his grace that his struggle with the Galgastani is of no concern to his eminence Abuna Brantyn. Nor is it any concern of ours. The Knights Loslorien remain and shall remain neutral on the matter.

LEONAR: My thanks, sir, for your swift response. Our lord will be much pleased.

BALXEPHON: Indeed. Yet I must ask: Do you really believe you can defeat Galgastan without our aid?

LEONAR: Defeat Galgastan? Surely not. But such was never our intention. All we want - all we have ever wanted - is to fashion a peace with them. The Galgastani are a proud people. Were it to come to light that we sought the aid of a foreign power...I am afraid it would endanger the position of those in the Galgastani ranks who seek an accord as we do.

LANSELOT: So your duke does not want to anger his neighbors by placing his problems in our hands. Bakram could stand to take a lesson from him!

LEONAR: I...I did not mean to suggest...

LANSELOT: No matter. We of Lodus place much upon a man's honor. I can understand why your duke would disdain the Bakram way - enjoying a life of leisure while others do their dirty work.

LEONAR: As you say, sir.

LANSELOT: Forgive me, but your henchmen are so youthful I feared you wanted for seasoned men.

LEONAR: Though they may be young in years, my Knights' skill in battle is no lesser for it.

LANSELOT: Indeed.

LEONAR: They freed his excellency and routed the Galgastani at Almorica. Moreover, it was they who came to my aid in Kryсаро. Without their intervention, I would not be here today.

LANSELOT: Ah, so these are the heroes of Golyat, then? Forgive an old knight his errant tongue. I say...have we met?

CATIUA: No, not as such. That is...

LANSELOT: That is...what? Speak plainly.

CATIUA: That night in Golyat, it snowed for the first time in years. I remember the sweep of flakes over the harbor, the bitter cold. You were there.

LEONAR: Mind your place, Catiua! Have you forgotten why we are here?

[Choice 1 - Not now, Sister.]

DENAM: He's right, sister. This isn't the time. This conflict is larger than us now.

[Choice 2 - We were fools to treat with our enemy.]

DENAM: We cannot join forces with a sworn foe...and you **are** our foe.

BALXEPHON: What quarrel is this, and what place has it here!?

LEONAR: Are you mad? Please, forgive him. His passion clouds his judgement.

LANSELOT: Ahh, the torching. You would have been children...of course!

BALXEPHON: Aye. We attacked that night on word that elements of the Resistance lurked in town.

LANSELOT: False word, yes. I remember it well. As do you, clearly. We were in error, though I hardly expect forgiveness on that count. Still, I can but apologize, for all it will do.

[Lanselot bows his head momentarily.]

LEONAR: E-enough of this. The Duke awaits our return.

[Lanselot stands.]

LANSELOT: Oh? I had hoped to speak at greater length.

LEONAR: forgive them - forgive us, good Sir. We'll be taking our leave.

[Denam and his friends follow Leonar out. Catiua remains just by the door, glances back to Lanselot as if to say more. She hesitates and instead leaves. Balxephon walks toward the window and stares out when the visitors have all left.]

BALXEPHON: Was that entirely necessary?

LANSELOT: You recall Hobyrim?

BALXEPHON: Hrnn? My brother? Aye, he was a staunch ally in a fight. Why?

LANSELOT: Nothing. Only, the brother and sister just now put me in mind of him and you.

Almorica Castle

[Duke Ronwey, Ravness, Leonar and Denam meet in the halls of Almorica to discuss the events and the agreement made with the Dark Knights.]

RONWEY: You set aside your own enmity for the greater Walister good. Such loyal service will not be forgotten. Would that time afforded you more rest - but I must ask you to leave for Balmamusa at once.

CATIUA: Balmamusa? That lies in the territory the Galgastani allotted for Walister rule, no?

RONWEY: Walister rule.... Hmph. Camps where our people are forced to live in squalor. It was a mining town, once. Coal. Now our kinsmen are herded there like cattle. Some five thousand labor in Balmamusa, slaves in all but name. The conditions are horrific beyond words. Scores die by the day.

CATIUA: Then it falls to us to free them.

RONWEY: You could never free five hundred, leave alone five thousand. No, you are to incite them to revolt.

VYCE: An army five thousand strong, there for the taking.

RONWEY: In truth, we cannot stay our course and hope for victory. We are far outmatched. However slight, we must tip the scales in our favor before Galgastan strikes. If all goes well, our bid will widen the rift between Balbatos and his enemies at home. He can scarce dispatch troops here before silencing the cries of dissent within his own ranks. We cannot let such chance escape us!

LEONAR: There will be those in Balmamusa with no stomach for fighting, and others who would sooner leave things as they are. Your task will be to win them to our cause.

RONWEY: They grow weary of fighting, else they would rally more readily. I can think of none better to wake their slumbering heroism than young heroes such as yourselves.

LEONAR: I shall follow at the head of a separate file bearing arms for them.

RONWEY: The Galgastani hold the lands west of Tynemouth. Dame Ravness will go with you in support.

RAVNESS: My sword is yours.

RONWEY: Much rests on your young shoulders. I pray for your swift return.

[Denam and his companions nod and depart. Duke Ronwey turns to Leonar after they have cleared the room.]

RONWEY: I'm counting on you, Leonar. Do not fail me.

LEONAR: No need to worry. Our plans proceed apace.

Almorica

[Denam and company prepare to venture to Balmamusa first light. As the night falls, he seeks a word with his old friend, Lancelot, who stands at the mouth of a river, staring into the sunset.]

DENAM: Sir Lancelot.

LANSELOT: Ah, Denam. Tracked me down, did you?

DENAM: Sir Gildas told me I'd find you here.

LANSELOT: So you have. Please, come closer.

[Denam joins Lancelot at the cape.]

LANSELOT: You look troubled. This business in Balmamusa disturbs you?

DENAM: Sir Leonar says it will be a dangerous undertaking.

LANSELOT: Are you frightened? That's not like you.

DENAM: I am not frightened.

LANSELOT: There's no shame in admitting fear. We are all afraid at one time or another.

[Silence passes.]

DENAM: Even you?

LANSELOT (nodding): More times than I can count. At the first ring of steel, my hands tremble with it. But fear alone cannot kill you - it has no teeth.

DENAM: It's strange. I tell myself I would gladly die for our cause. But when faced with death, the fear is all too real.

LANSELOT: Risking your life is one thing. Losing it is another. The best way to aid your people is to stay alive. See the battle through to the end. And there's your sister to think of.

DENAM: What about you? Would you die to save the ones you love?

[Lanselot pulls out a strange device which emits a somber tune.]

DENAM: What's that?

LANSELOT: A music box. It belonged to my wife.

DENAM: ...Your wife?

LANSELOT: It's been four...five years now. Before the war with the Empire. They had already begun their advance, and we fled - vagrants in our own land. My wife fell ill, and before I knew it...she was gone. I considered following her into death. My thoughts often strayed down that path before battle. But her music box still sang of life, and I knew it was not my time. My burden had not yet reached its end.

DENAM: I'm sorry.

[Lanselot puts the box away and turns, the music drowned out by the sea.]

LANSELOT: One young as you should never be forced to fight. But that's not the world we live in.

Lake Bordu

[Denam and Ravness venture out early toward Balmamusa, running into a Galgastani force early on.]

GRION: Walister? Here!? And in such numbers.... How does his eminence not see it? Troubled times such as these demand a staunch front line.

[One of Grion's soldiers edges away from the battlefield.]

GRION: You there! Hold the line, or I'll kill you myself! We cannot let these rebels cross Lake Bordu! Forward!

[Grion and his Galgastani do their best to defend the crossing.]

RAVNESS: Warriors of Galgastan! Lay down your weapons and you may yet live!

GRION: By the Light! Ravness, is that you? I thought you long dead by now.

RAVNESS: I know this voice. How is it that you do not find yourself dead, Grion? You have rare luck indeed. Let our swords meet. The cry of their steel is fitting lament for those you have butchered.

[Ravness duels with her old foe and comes out the victor.]

GRION: More men...we needed more...

[He falls, allowing the party to continue their journey east.]

Xeod Moors

[Again Denam's troops are waylaid in a marshy pit. A ruthless-looking Beastmaster stands alone in their way.]

GANPP: Broken through our line, have they? I always knew Grion weren't nothin' but talk. Just as well. Past time me pets had their first taste o' battle. Berda!

[Ganpp whistles loudly and a gryphon appears at his side.]

GANPP: Obda! To me!

[Another whistle brings forth another gryphon.]

GANPP: And what are the rest o' you waitin' for? Get out here!

[The rest of Ganpp's men arrive, placing themselves between Denam and Balmamusa.]

GANPP: Berda! Obda! Show 'em how it's done!

[Denam and Ravness fight man and beast, striking down Ganpp and his pets.]

GANPP: Berda? Obda? What have they done t'you!? Home now! No one hurts my precious pets and gets away with it! I won't forget who it was done this!

[Ganpp and his pets flee, freeing the rest of the field to Balmamusa.]

Balmamusa

[Denam and Ravness arrive at Balmamusa by nightfall. A lone soldier spies their advance amidst a heavy rain.]

SOLDIER: Who...who's there? Rebels!? We're under attack! To arms!

[A horde of Galgastani arrive on the spot, easily taken over by Denam.]

DENAM: We have some time before our support arrives. There's no time to speak to everyone. We should gather a small group who can serve as our heralds.

[The party agrees and quickly filters throughout the town, spreading their rebellious ideals. Eventually they host a small contingent of townsfolk. They begin their discussions in a crowded room, where the townsfolk utter words of protest to Duke Ronwey's plan.]

VYCE: Are you daft? We didn't come all this way to listen to you spout nonsense. **We** are not the enemy! Or are you so taken with your Galgastani masters you have forgotten?

CATIUA: There's no call for such rancor, Vyce. We should hear them out.

OLD MAN: Suppose we do fight. What then? conflict will only lead to more suffering. At least here the winds of war do not howl in our ears, and our stomachs do not grumble.

VYCE: Shelter, fodder - you enjoy all the luxuries of cattle. Doubtless you will so long as you remain. But do you not long to be free? To live as men? You are Walister! Where is your pride?

OLD WOMAN: Leave as you came. Let us live out our lives in peace. Today it's the Resistance, tomorrow who-knows-what, but you all sing the same tune. My son sounded much as you do - the war claimed him six months ago. Will your violence bring him back?

OLD MAN: We want no part of your fight. You're doomed to fail, any road. Galgastan is too powerful. Heroes you may be, but the pride always comes before the fall!

[The door opens and Leonar steps in, seriousness engraved on his face.]

LEONAR: Forgive me, I was delayed. Might I have a quiet word?

[He leads Denam out into the rain. Flashes of lightning pierce the sky.]

LEONAR: I overheard your conversation. These people do not convince easily. No matter. We feared it would come to this. Listen to me. There's something you must do. You must...you must kill them. All of them. Spare no one.

DENAM: What!?

LEONAR: The duke foreknew this outcome. These are his orders.

DENAM: But why this? If you know even one reason, I would hear it!

LEONAR: Because his grace...demands it.

[Leonar recalls a private audience with Ronwey to Denam.]

RONWEY: If the people of Balmamusa rise up as we ask, well and good. But the words of these children will not be enough to move them to take up arms. When they refuse, you are to kill them under guise of Galgastani agents. Leave no survivors.

[Leonar pushes back his chair.]

LEONAR: You can't be serious! You order us to kill our own!

RONWEY: Calm, Leonar. You've a good head on your shoulders. Consider our situation. If we are to defeat Galgastan, the Walister must unite as never before. If it appears the Galgastani destroyed Balmamusa, our people in the remaining camps will rally to our banner.

LEONAR: But...your Grace...

RONWEY: Nor will opposition in the Galgastani ranks remain unmoved by such outrage. Balbatos will be beset by foes without and within. we will finally have both the opportunity and the moral imperative to rid the world of the creature.

LEONAR: Denam and the others will not do this quietly.

RONWEY: You will see to that as well, when the time comes.

[Leonar finishes retelling of the Duke's words to a shocked Denam.]

LEONAR: You are with me then? It is the only way. The future of our people depends on it!

[Choice 1 - I understand.]

DENAM: I see what must be done. I will bloody my hands.

LEONAR: Don't worry. We'll not let their sacrifice be in vain.

[Ravness, Vyce and Catiua rush out of the building to confront Denam.]

VYCE: Denam, are you mad? You're going to go along with this!?

RAVNESS: The duke gave such an order, Leonar? And you would carry it out?

DENAM: Open your eyes. We cannot win if we are unwilling to dirty our hands.

LEONAR: ours is to follow orders. I swore an oath before the Duke. Before the realm.

[Vyce moves to face Denam.]

VYCE: Listen to you! If I closed my eyes, I'd think I spoke with a Galgastani!

RAVNESS: The duke would sacrifice these people as a piece in some great game. Our lord has betrayed us all. To think I was willing to give my life for such a man. What a fool I was.

LEONAR: Then you stand apart, Vyce? You will not join us?

VYCE: Damn right! These people have done nothing. Where [sic] the justice in killing them!?

[Leonar turns coolly to Ravness.]

LEONAR: I did not think you one to abdicate duty, Ravness. To break faith with lord and realm.

RAVNESS: I break no faith. I renounce the Duke.... I renounce you all!

LEONAR: I always thought to find you at my side the day the Walister won their freedom. But if men of our own blood would stand against us, why should I expect more of you?

RAVNESS: Am I not Walister?

LEONAR: Walister descended from Galgastani stock. But the fault is mine. I should not have placed such faith in one of mingled blood!

RAVNESS: How dare you!

LEONAR: Every victory comes at a price. Can't you see that? People are dullwits! The sacrifice must be great to wake them from their languor!

[Suddenly Leonar slices at Vyce, who only barely escapes the knight's sword.]

VYCE: And you, Catiua? Will you follow in this madness?

[Catiua hesitates then steps forward.]

CATIUA: I...I will ever stand with Denim!

[Vyce shakes his head in disbelief, leaps down a small cliff and bounds away. He turns to look at his former friends.]

VYCE: From this day, you and I are enemies!

[Before Denam can respond, the voices of Galgastani soldiers are heard from above.]

SOLDIER: Kill them all! No rebel leaves this place alive!

LEONAR (to Denam): Galgastani reinforcements - deal with them. Leave the townsfolk to me!

[Leonar flees, leaving a torn and isolated Ravness alone while Denam prepares for battle.]

RAVNESS: I hoped more from you, Denam. A man who places ends before means treads a dangerous path. The shame is mine for daring to hope. On my honor, you are my foe, Denam!

[She places herself in between Denam and the Galgastani.]

DENAM: I just can't believe you're of Galgastani descent.

RAVNESS: You feel yourself betrayed? You'd heed blood over word and action? Can the light of deed not pierce the shadow of one's birth? I believe it can. I will not believe otherwise!

CANOPUS: Now now, her blood's not mixed of her own doing, boy. I myself am not of the common race...though I can't say as I've met misfortune on that account. Just luck, perhaps.

DENAM: I...hadn't considered that.

CANOPUS: Time for considering later. We've more pressing matters.

DONNALTO: Lower your blade, Ravness. What reason could any of us have to quarrel amongst ourselves?

RAVNESS: I would have your reasons, if you've any worth repeating! You'd give your blessing to this sacrilege? Or have you chosen to turn your back on the light, on the very teachings of the Great Father? Is revenger your calling now, Abuna? The blood of your sworn enemy flows in my veins! Why not slay me, too?

[They continue to fight.]

RAVNESS: Since ancient times, there has been a word for one who sells his soul to the devil. They call him "ogre," a demon who eats the flesh of men! I see now the many you will consume in your lust for power. You are an ogre in truth!

[Denam and company rid themselves of the Galgastani reinforcements.]

RAVNESS: If the Great Father does not yet require my soul, then what? Am I to be a shepherd to these youths?

[Ravness flees.]

VYCE (from afar): I'll kill you by my own hands, Denam! I swear it!

[The town is burned and the people are butchered. At the front, with sword drawn and eyes ablaze, Denam leads his troops to do what must be done.]

This ends Chapter 1. Go to **Chapter 2 (Lawful)**

[Choice 2 - Stop this lunacy!]

DENAM: Stop this madness! What virtue can there be in taking innocent lives!?

LEONAR: You are yet young.... Your heart is pristine, though I daresay your hands have seen their share of bloodshed. All that is required of you is to plunge those hands deeper. Bloody them not for survival, but for your cause. If you cannot do that, you do not belong in this battle!

[Leonar forces Denam to the ground just as Vyce and Catiua burst outside.]

CATIUA: Denam!

[She rushes to Denam but is held back by Ravness.]

CATIUA: Denam, are you all right? Vyce, with us, quickly! Vyce? What are you waiting - No...!

LEONAR: Kill them, Vyce. All three of them!

[Vyce advances on his friends.]

VYCE: What good are kinsmen who won't lift arms for our cause? I'll tell you. They're as good as dead. If it's retribution you fear, fear not - they'll all be in their graves, thanking you for martyring them!

CATIUA: I don't believe what I am hearing! If this is a jest, it is in terrible humor!

VYCE: Quiet, Catiua! You've made a fool of me long enough. You as well, Denam! You...you vex me. Always have! What ever gave you the right to command me!

RAVNESS: Leonar, I cannot believe such an order came from his Grace! And you would see this madness through!?

LEONAR: I would see through any of his grace's decrees, as his loyal servant - no, as a loyal servant to our people.

RAVNESS: You'd call such bloodshed "service"? Since when have we used our kinsmen's lives as leverage? Our lord has betrayed us all. To think I was willing to give my life for such a man. What a fool I was.

LEONAR: I did not think you one to abdicate duty, Ravness. To break faith with lord and realm.

RAVNESS: I break no faith. I renounce the Duke.... I renounce you all!

LEONAR: I always thought to find you at my side the day the Walister won their freedom. But if men of our own blood would stand against us, why should I expect more of you?

RAVNESS: Am I not Walister?

LEONAR: Walister descended from Galgastani stock. But the fault is mine. I should not have placed such faith in one of mingled blood!

RAVNESS: How dare you!

[Leonar turns to spy the Walister troops dressed in Galgastani garb.]

FALSE GALGASTANI: Hear me, fierce warriors of Galgastan! We made this province to give shape to the peace we all want. Yet Ronwey in Almorica and his rabble have trampled upon that peace, and lifted their swords once again. We will not sit here and wait for death to visit us! We'll show them what it means to be Galgastani! Root out the Walister in town and butcher them like swine they are! Leave not one alive! To battle!

LEONAR: Vyce, to me! Leave this to the others. We take the town!

[Leonar and Vyce dash off to join the fake Galgastani troops.]

RAVNESS: Wait...Leonar! Vyce!

[Vyce turns and unleashes a crossbow bolt directly at Ravness. She falls.]

VYCE: Heel, Ravness. You yap like the mongrel you are!

RAVNESS: Leonar...do not think you can escape...judgement for your deeds.

[She falls. Denam and Catiua have little time to mourn as the false Galgastani advance on the town.]

DENAM: Do not let them harm the villagers! We will defend them with our own lives, should it come to that! Go!

[They rout the troops, but a familiar voice calls to Denam from afar.]

VYCE: Next will be your turn. I'll kill you by my own hands! I swear it!

[The town is burned and the people are butchered. At the front, with sword drawn and eyes ablaze, Vyce leads his troops to do what must be done.]

This ends Chapter 1. Go to **Chapter 2 (Chaotic)**

Chapter 2 (Lawful)

I will fear no reproach

VOICE: Three weeks have passed since the massacre at Balmamusa. Consumed with a lust for revenge, the Walister took to the battlefield, wresting large swaths of territory from Galgastani control. The Duke's gambit was a success. Yet not all went as the Duke had intended. Though the atrocity galvanized the Walister, those in the Galgastani camp who opposed their own Heirophant Balbatos did not rise to action. Worse, whispers of the truth behind what happened had begun to spread throughout Galgastan on the lips of Bozeck and his men. Where the duke had sought to sow discord, a new sense of unity now grows among the Galgastani people, even as the stalemate of forces along the Burnham Massif shows no signs of yielding clear victory to either side. Fearing the truth behind the massacre might reach the ears of his own troops, the duke has pushed forward with a daring strike on Balbatos's stronghold at Coritanae Keep. Meanwhile, Denam arrives at the ruins of Balmamusa with orders to harry the enemy's flank.

Balmamusa

[Denam and Catiua walk around the ruined town.]

DENAM: I hear no alarum, Sister. I think we made it.

CATIUA (looking around): By the look of things, the Galgastani can't have stationed many men here. The fewer we must kill to be done with this business, the better.

[Denam recalls the earlier meeting with Ronwey and Leonar that precipitated his return to Balmamusa.]

LEONAR: You would have me fight such a battle with our numbers? Are you gone mad?

RONWEY: I dislike your tone.

LEONAR: Forgive me, your Grace. We are more powerful now than ever, I grant you. But let us not forget, we failed to rouse the Galgastani against Balbatos. Our Resistance remains far outmatched.

RONWEY: I do not need you to tell me what I know so well.

LEONAR: Then I beg you to reconsider.

RONWEY: Humor your Duke. Hear my plan before you reject it, hmm? First we dispatch a light force to secure Balmamusa, a small town southwest of Coritanae. Thence to advance to the Xeod Moors.

LEONAR: You'd distract them by needling their flank? They will never fall for such a ruse.

RONWEY: Your ears would serve me better than your tongue.... I mean to have our young Hero lead the band. We will feed sweet lies to their whisperers: That it is no small band, but half our army that marches. A morsel they will find impossible to resist. Nor will they know whether it is from Almorica or Balmamusa that we strike.

CATIUA: And they will believe this tale?

RONWEY: The presence of the Hero of Golyat will convince them. Balbatos would not think we place our Hero at the head of so few. This will be enough to give Balbatos pause, but he is no fool. He will not commit the entirety of his forces to Balmamusa. No, he will divide his men between the Psonji Weald and the Xeod Moors. The martial advantage is his. Even with his forces split, he will not fear defeat. Yet only this way will we have a true chance at victory.

LEONAR: Perhaps. But if Balbatos does not split his troops, what then?

RONWEY: We must see that he does. There's more. Once our heroes have a foot hold in Balmamusa, they will turn their attentions to the Port of Asyton. Asyton is but a short distance to the west of Coritanae. Balbatos will fear an assault. And with his troops mustering in Coritanae, Asyton will be ripe for the taking.

LEONAR: Of course. Without Balmamusa or Asyton, they'll be cut off from the sea.

CATIUA: Is that so great a blow?

LEONAR: In Valeria, the sea is life. Without the bounty of her trade, we wither and die. Doubly so the Galgastani in their landlocked keep at Coritanae. Believe our rumors or no, they must respond. And that means splitting their troops.

RONWEY: Should the gambit fail, we still weaken them by closing their ports.

DENAM: And what becomes of us?

RONWEY: If you sense disadvantage, withdraw swiftly.

LEONAR: So in the end, we still must fight a battle of Galgastan's choosing.

RONWEY: You fret like an old maid, Leonar. The plan is perfect.

LEONAR: As you say, your grace.

[Denam and party strike a Galgastani force after recollecting.]

DENAM: Forward! Leave no Galgastani standing!

[After clearing the battlefield, Denam sets his sights on the next target.]

DENAM: The Xeod Moors are within our grasp. Onward.

Xeod Moors

[Denam's troops run into gang of Galgastani.]

GARBA: Denam of Golyat? I see a rumor in the flesh! Then Balmamusa was no feint after all. Ha! You there. His eminence must hear of this. Go! Now!

[The Galgastani scout quickly leaves.]

GARBA: We must halt their advance as long as we can. Remember, we fight not for ourselves. We fight for Galgastan! Only your blood can pay the price for those you've slain.

DENAM: Then we share a grim cause. But I bear you no malice: It is war makes us enemies. And as enemies, we must fight!

GARBA: The simple reasoning of youth! I expected more than that.

DENAM: The hatred I bear for you is anything but young. I carry on the struggle of my father, and his father before him. I am the wrath of the Walister!

GARBA: The struggle of your father.... That's cause enough to fight. Cause we share. The roots of the conflict between Galgastani and Walister do run deep. But you must look past your hatred to see your true foe. The sins of the father trap the son.

DENAM: And what of you? Do you not harbor some hurt that drives you to fight?

GARBA: I'll not deny I do. My twin brother, Orba - you killed him.

DENAM: I...I did not know.

GARBA: Say nothing. There's nothing to say. It was the will of the Wheel he die at your hands.

[They continue to fight.]

GARBA: I said only your blood could atone, but I was wrong. We must set aside the wounds we carry if there is to be any true atonement. It is with this knowledge that I fight...but I do not expect you to understand. You are yet young, naive...common.

DENAM: Not so naive that I am blind to the wounds you carry.

GARBA: Forgive me. Fault is most difficult to see in oneself. Let me be your mirror, then. So long as there is vengeance in your heart, your victories will turn to ash. But you must know this only too well, butcher of Golyat!

DENAM: ...

[Denam goes silent as they continue to fight.]

GARBA: If only I had heeded...my own advice. It is I was naive...foolish.

DENAM: I do not fight for vengeance.

Rhea Boum Aqueduct

[Denam encounters another group of Galgastani.]

JOSEPHINE: The butcher of Golyat!? Here? If he means to lay siege to Coritanae from our backs, we dare not leave the keep undefended. You, bring word of this to Sir Xaebos. Impress upon him the need for reinforcements!

[Her scout leaves.]

JOSEPHINE: Forget the others - it's the boy I want! We'll mount his head on the walls of Coritanae!

[Denam defeats her.]

JOSEPHINE: I thought myself prepared for death, but now I find...I'm frightened.

[She flees.]

Port Asyton

[The defending group of Galgastani await Denam in the port town.]

NADIA: Is this town the prize you've come for, rebel? Best think again. Galgastan gives no quarter to an ogre who slays his own!

[Denam attacks.]

NADIA: May the light judge our enemies...and embrace our fallen.

Almorica Castle

[Meanwhile, Ronwey and Leonar convene.]

RONWEY: Very well. Give the order. Tomorrow we attack with the dawn.

MESSENGER: At once, your grace.

LEONAR: I beg you wait, my duke. It's too soon!

RONWEY: Oh? Balmamusa is fallen, is it not? The plan proceeds apace.

LEONAR: But we still do not know whether Balbatos has divided his troops.

RONWEY: Even as we breathe, Denam takes Port Asyton. My plan unfolds as I have seen it. Why do you worry so? The gods of Valeria are with us, Leonar. You'll see.

LEONAR: I do not question our success, but surely there is no harm in awaiting word from Port Asyton. It is not only our lives that hang in the balance, but the destiny of the Walister race. Prudence demands caution.

RONWEY: So I am imprudent **and** reckless? You talk a perilous line, Leonar!

MESSENGER: Your orders, sire?

RONWEY: You have them. Go, and see that they are carried out!

MESSENGER: As you command.

[The messenger departs and Leonar, visibly upset, pushes his chair back.]

LEONAR: Please, your grace!

RONWEY: That's quite enough from you! Begone from my sight!

LEONAR: ...As you wish.

Port Asyton

[After overtaking the town and preparing to leave, a hostile group appears from the shadows.]

ARYCELLE: At last I find you, Denam. You've given good chase, but the hunt ends here!

DENAM: Look again. It is you who've fallen into our trap, fool of a Galgastani!

ARYCELLE: Galgastani? No. Your work in Balmamusa brings me here!

DENAM: You were in Balmamusa!?

ARYCELLE: Such fine heroes we Walister make.... You will die for what you did at Balmamusa - for what you did to my brother!

[Enraged, the archer lashes out toward Denam.]

DENAM: We cannot fight amongst ourselves! You play into the enemy's hands!

ARYCELLE: I know your part in the massacre. Do not deny it! My brother had hurt his leg.... He couldn't even walk.

DENAM: You know what happened. Then know also that we had no choice. Had we fought the Galgastani openly, there could be only one outcome. There was no other way to bring our people together!

ARYCELLE: Our people? This is a war fought in the name of power, not people. The nobility want it, and they will crush whomever they must to have it. Don't you see? You're no better than the Galgastani or the Bakram. If it's absolution you seek, look elsewhere!

DENAM: I never wanted power. Only a future for the Walister!

ARYCELLE: You ignore the will of your people - slaughter them - and call it revolution!? Who do you think it was first fanned the flames between clans, then pointed at the bonfire as proof of conflict? The nobility! Better the rams rise to lead the flock than such shepherds with miters for crooks and crowns for caps. And you...you are little better than the yapping sheepdog that does his master's bidding. To hell with you. To hell

CATIUA: She has no ear to listen. If words will not win us free, our steel must!

[They use their steel to fend her off.]

ARYCELLE: Feh.... Retreat! We retreat! As for you.... You will die with or without my hand.

DENAM: We'll deal with your kind once the heirophant lies in the ground.

ARYCELLE: Oh, hadn't you heard? Your duke lost at Psonji!

DENAM: Peddle your lies elsewhere. We're not buying!

ARYCELLE: 'Twas a victory of attrition decided by a handful, but a victory for Balbatos nonetheless. More than enough to sound a death knell for your Resistance. The people will turn to us to lead them now!

[She flees.]

DENAM: I do not believe it. I cannot! Did Balmamusa mean nothing...?

[Denam and Catiua contemplate this news and meet at the docks where a ship awaits.]

DENAM: Sister, let us take this ship for our return to Almorica. If that woman spoke true, the roads will be too perilous.

CATIUA: Denam.... Let us quit this island altogether!

DENAM: Cut and run? You can't be serious!

CATIUA: If what she said is true, then we are finished whether we admit it or no. They'll kill us if they catch us.

DENAM: But we must return to Almorica to see the truth of it ourselves. No?

CATIUA: ...Here is the truth of it. I would not lose you, Denam! There is a mare that visits me nightly, a dream in which I am alone, brotherless.

DENAM: Only a dream, sister. As I stand here now, I will never leave your side.

CATIUA: And yet it frightens me as though I saw it in waking. I...I cannot live alone.

DENAM: You won't have to. Don't worry, the duke hasn't lost. I'm sure of it. All will be revealed at Almorica. And if we find the castle fallen, then we will leave this island. Together.

CATIUA: Promise me we will. Promise me.

The Reisan Way

[Along the gravelly road, a Galgastani force has captured Ravness.]

KNIGHT: The road to Coritanae is long. Why take her all that way? She's for the gallows at any rate. I say we have done with it here and now!

ALFRED: Orders is orders. Commander Loxaerion is to have a proper hearing before her justice is meted out.

KNIGHT: And is it not some opposition nobleman who spares her? Why do you suppose they go to such lengths to keep her from harm?

ALFRED: They say there's Galgastani blood in her. Might be that blood is bluer than most.

KNIGHT: Then her crime is twofold, for she is a kinslayer besides! I see no Galgastani before me - only a Walister Knight!

RAVNESS (to herself): The Walister name me a Galgastani traitor, while the Galgastani claim I am a Walister Knight. Enemy to all and friend to none.

RAVNESS: The Galgastani can't so much as escort a prisoner without a quarrel. No wonder the country splits in two.

SOLDIER: Silence her!

[The soldier smacks Ravness across the face.]

ALFRED: I'll have a much easier time guarding you if you would guard your tongue. It'll mean my neck if I don't bring you back safe to Coritanae.

[A Galgastani archer spies something across the way.]

SOLDIER: Sir Alfred, it's the Walister!

RAVNESS: Now's my chance...

ALFRED: What? How!?

DENAM: Is that...Ravness?

[She sprints away from her captors.]

SOLDIER: Damned woman!

ALFRED: She's sealed her own fate. We've cause enough to kill her now. Kill kinslayer and rebels all!

[Denam and Catiua make their way across the road to reach Ravness.]

RAVNESS: If you mean to seize me as a traitor, then do so. Else return to your duties. Tarry here too long and your master may wonder at your absence.

[CHOICE 1 - You are a friend, then?]

Missing

[CHOICE 2 - I cannot leave you here.]

DENAM: Wherever your loyalties lie, I cannot simply leave you to your fate.

RAVNESS: Not words I'd expect from a man with the blood of Balmamusa on his hands. But still only words.

DENAM: Believe me or not, as you will.

RAVNESS (to herself): He speaks plain enough. Perhaps the horrors of that day have wrought some change in him. I think I shall see for myself.

RAVNESS: If I fall now, all comes to nothing. I will not die here! I must go on!

[They work together to defeat the Galgastani.]

ALFRED: Should have...killed her while I...had the chance.

DENAM: What do the Galgastani want with her...and she of them?

RAVNESS: I suppose I should thank you. Even if you lead me away a traitor, I owe you my life.

DENAM: Are you a traitor?

CATIUA: She has Galgastani blood in her. Is it any wonder some tie remains?

DENAM: You speak as though she betrayed the Walister outright, sister.

RAVNESS: Only words. Though no doubt there are others who share her thinking. Those who claim that, fearing for my life, I struck a deal with the Galgastani, who were only too willing to embrace one of their own. And there is some kernel of truth to it. I doubt even those Galgastani nobles who do not take so hard a line as Balbatos would have offered me shelter were it not for my blood. But in the final lay of the cards, I am a woman without a country.

DENAM: I'm sorry.

RAVNESS: I had always told myself I was a Walister, and I acted the part as best I could. But this.... I am shaken to the core. I no longer know what I am meant to be.

DENAM: Ravness, come back with us. Warriors of your skill are in short supply. We could use you.

RAVNESS: I am cheered to hear you say so, but I...I can never go back. I cannot forgive the duke for what he did at Balmamusa...nor the disgrace I suffered there.

DENAM: I see.

RAVNESS: But my gratitude is heartfelt. Both for saving my life...and for setting me free.

[She silently passes Denam and Catiua.]

CATIUA: The duke wants her captured. Can we really just...let her go?

DENAM: Leave it be, sister.

RAVNESS: You may find it hard to believe, but I love the Walister. I was born in Almorica - spent my childhood there. It will always be my home. Even now, I do only what I feel best for the Walister people. Farewell, Denam. Perhaps we'll meet again someday.

CATIUA: Are you certain this is the right choice? What if she joins forces with the Galgastani? Should you face her on the battlefield, it will not go easy for you.

DENAM: If she becomes an enemy for true, I will face her as any Walister soldier would. Do not worry, sister. All will be well. Come, let's be off.

Qadriga Fortress

[A fierce pirate group corners a strange face as Denam takes port at the fortress.]

DARZA: Who are you!? You got no business with us! Ahhh, come to steal my prize, is it? Can't be lettin' you do that. 5,000 Goth on this one's head, and I'm keen to collect! There's knifework to be done, lads. Gut 'em!

[They find themselves unlikely allies.]

CANOPUS: You're a rare breed of bounty hunter.

XAPAN: Bounty this, bounty that...I'm just a mercenary. And you, you're not from these isles: Feathers the wrong color. The mainland, is it?

CANOPUS: Yes, as it happens. A mercenary, like yourself. Not in over your head, by any chance?

XAPAN: Old Xapan, in over his head? Ha! I'm tempred in a hundred battles. When I stare death in the eye, death blinks. It'll take more than a handful of pirates to do for me!

DARZA: Good. I like a challenge!

[Together they defeat the pirate gang.]

DARZA: A pirate's death...for me.

XAPAN: A tight scrape, that. Don't think I'd have made it on my own.

DENAM: The pirate - he mentioned a bounty. Who are you?

XAPAN: No criminal, if that's what you're thinking. I'm a Walister, same as you. Hired on with the Resistance, but my boss man died on the Psonji Weald 'fore I saw a single Goth. Any road, I must've left an impression on the Galgastani. They went and put a bounty on my head.

DENAM: Then it's true. The Resistance lost in Psonji.

XAPAN: Plenty dead on all sides. I reckon both armies are headed home to lick their wounds. But don't worry, the duke's alive. Way I see it, he owes me some coin. I'm off to Almorica to collect. Say, you're not headed that way are you? If you need another sword, you can hire mine for a song.

[CHOICE 1 - Why not?]

DENAM: We could use all the help we can get.

XAPAN: It's a deal, then. And don't forget your part of the bargain, eh? When we reach Almorica, be sure and tell the duke you hired me on. We'll throw it on top of what he owes me.

[CHOICE 2 - The risk is too great.]

DENAM: A wanted man in our midst might draw unwanted attention.

XAPAN: Now that's a pity. I thought we'd get on like geese on bread. Be seein' you round then.

Tynemouth Hill

[On the way to Almorica, a Galgastani force stands in Denam's way.]

WYNOA: I had hoped to avoid the attention of the Resistance and the battle that must follow. Alas.... High commander, we'll assay to hold them here. Withdraw to Psonji.

GATIALO: A Galgastani commander turn his back upon the enemy? Never!

WYNOA: No, m'lord Gatialo. You cannot throw away your life here. Galgastan needs you alive. Return to our holdings at Coritanae, there to reform our lines.

GATIALO: You are but a band of Akhiatros. They'll crush you!

WYNOA: We are prepared to die. We have always been so. Besides, you're in no condition to fight. You wouldn't reopen wounds so freshly closed and ruin our work, would you?

GATIALO: Then I shall take especial care not to die.

[He does not move. She turns to face Denam.]

WYNOA: Let down your guard at your own peril, Walister! We are proud warriors of Galgastan, and we will fight to the last!

[The group, comprised mostly of weakened units, attacks.]

XAPAN: Well if it isn't old Gatialo! Fancy seeing him here!

DENAM: You know him, Xapan?

XAPAN: Aye, he's a commander in the Galgastani army, a real goadsticker of a man. As feared as he's respected. Worse, it was him what pushed for Balbatos's blood war. My band ran afoul of Gatialo's lines at Psonji, and they hewed us down like scythes to grass. His kind would kill Walister for sport. Best give that one a wide berth.

[Gatialo is killed.]

GATIALO: Hngh.... Base Walister r-runt.... You besmirch the glory of Galgastan!

WYNOA: No.... A true hero of Galgastan has died today. Walister devils! I will visit this pain in my heart upon you sevenfold!

[Wynoa falls while Gatialo tries to retreat.]

WYNOA: So it ends, commander.... Run. Live.... Avenge us!

GATIALO: The killing of soldiers is one thing, but to slay Arkhiatros with such abandon.... You reaffirm my convictions. The Walister are a plague upon this land, a blight to be burned away!

[Gatialo makes a stand against Denam.]

GATIALO: Hngh.... Base Walister r-runt.... You besmirch the glory of Galgastan!

[Gatialo flees the battlefield.]

GATIALO: I've marked well your faces, Walister. Next we meet, I shall mount them upon pikes that all may see!

WYNOA: Now, to buy m'lord as much time as we can.

[She staves off Denam for only so long.]

WYNOA: My hands have healed many. Now...they rest.

Almorica Castle

[At long last Denam returns to Almorica.]

RONWEY: I am heartened by your return. As you live, so too does the Resistance.

CATIUA: What do you intend to do after such a defeat?

RONWEY: Defeat? Nonsense! Psonji was a stalemate! All that's lacking is the coup de grace. I will muster a new host and march on Coritanae.

LEONAR: And where will you find men for this...host?

RONWEY: What do you propose instead? Hmm? If you're sitting on some great strategem, I would hear it.

LEONAR: Balbatos suffered losses as great as ours at Psonji. This is fact. But do not forget, Denam's feint required that Galgastan hold considerable forces in reserve. If he were to strike now, we would be hard-pressed to repel him. What's more, ever since Balmamusa, we've suffered an endless stream of deserters. We cannot fight a war without soldiers.

RONWEY: If I held a dagger at Balbatos's throat, you'd complain of its dullness!

LEONAR: Not complaints, your grace. Simple facts. One thing to talk of bringing down Balbatos, but idle musings bring us no closer to victory!

RONWEY: All talk, am I? Impudent knave!

DENAM: Enough of this. This is no time to quarrel amongst ourselves.

[The two check their emotions.]

RONWEY: We must turn to the Dark Knights Loslorien for reinforcements.

[Leonar backs out of his chair.]

LEONAR: What? You can't be serious! This is some species of madness!

RONWEY: The decision is made. It is the only way to bring down Balbatos.

LEONAR: By begging for reinforcements, we all but admit defeat. Again you would vassal us to the Bakram. Were it to become known, our ranks would dwindle further. Even those under watch of our walls would take flight. You would drive them into the waiting arms of the New Walister Alliance. I will not lend my name to this...this suicide!

RONWEY: Still I wait to hear how **you** would deliver us! No, forget I asked. I've heard enough of your counsel.

RONWEY: What does our young hero make of this? It's you I must persuade.

DENAM: Well...

RONWEY: Will you not venture to Phidoch Castle? Convey my missive to Tartaros?

LEONAR: Your grace! You must rethink this!

RONWEY: It is not your place to tell me what I must and must not do. Begone from my hall!

[Leonar backs up slowly against the wall and leaves the room without looking back.]

RONWEY: The future of the Walister rests on your decision. Will you go?

DENAM: As my duke wishes.

[Outside the counsel room, Denam and Catiua are called to.]

XAPAN: Hold there!

[The mercenary sprints after them.]

DENAM: Why the urgency? The duke paid you, no?

XAPAN: Aye, and then some! Said there was more where that came from if I'd join you.

DENAM: I'm pleased for you. But you needn't come with us.

XAPAN: Eh, why's that now?

DENAM: Our path leads to danger.

CATIUA: This messenger's errand? What danger in that?

DENAM: Remember our safety is at the mercy of the Dark Knights Loslorien. Galgastan is as eager to prevail as we. They may have sent their own messengers to persuade the knights from their perch and onto the battlefield.

XAPAN: Ture, that. If the knights have joined against us, you'd be walking into the lion's den, as it were.

DENAM: Indeed. Yet we're bound to see how the lion lays. You have your coin. You only place yourself in needless peril by joining us.

XAPAN (laughing): Ha! Hard to argue with that. But I'll join you all the same. Where there's peril, there's reward!

DENAM: A soldier with a merchant's heart, I see! As you like then. I'll not stand between a man and his profit.

The Golborza Plain

[On the road to Phidoch a scouting party awaits.]

GOUSIN: You're Denam! The "Hero of Golyat," they call you? Hrm. Something tells me I won't be recruiting you.

DENAM: You must be part of the New Walister Alliance. We share a common cause.

GOUSIN: Cause? You abandoned our cause when you drew steel on your kinsmen, traitor. Listen up, boys! That one there's the hero of Golyat! Slaughtered the people of Balmamusa like cattle, he did. All to slake his thirst for power! You going to let him and his bloodthirsty lord rule us into the grave? I didn't think so! For the alliance!

[His troops rallied against Denam, Gousin and the New Walister Alliance charge.]

GOUSIN: You're Catiua, sister to Denam, are you not? Oh, he has forsaken you, truly! Power is the prize in his eye now. But you, you know better. You know strength can push away as well as it pulls closer. Does the duke's army not bleed men by the day? If you have the best interests of the Walister at heart, you will leave Denam's side and service!

[Choice 1 - Who are you?]

CATIUA: Your face is not known to me. How do you know mine?

GOUSIN: Oh, it matters little what I know. What matters is what **we** know. Your brother is a danger to his own people. And to you.

CATIUA: Why should I listen to anything you have to say?

GOUSIN: Because I say only what you already know. In his heart, Denam has abandoned you!

DENAM: Don't listen to him, sister! I stand, as always, by your side!

[Choice 2 - Who do you think you are?]

CATIUA: What is your business, and how do you know who I am? Your words sit very ill with me, I'll have you know.

GOUSIN: Ah, er, yes, well...

CATIUA: Well what? If you've aught to say, say it!

GOUSIN: Y-you see, ma'am, we seek to build a society free of the repression v-visited upon us by the ruling elite!

CATIUA: Well said. Go on.

GOUSIN: S-see, your brother, Denam, he's but a c-clinging cretin, wagging his tail for the duke! Thinks maybe the duke will throw him a bone...some land or a title, perhaps, eh? And you'd follow him?

CATIUA: I follow on thing only: My heart. And my heart tells me to remain by Denam's side. Valeria be damned!

GOUSIN: I see...

DENAM: Sister!

[Gousin falls to Denam.]

GOUSIN: Well...that could have gone better.

Arkhiapolis of Rhime

[Denam dashes through the empty streets of Rhime, trailed by his sister.]

CATIUA: Why in such a hurry, Denam?

DENAM: Sir Lancelot is here, sister. Come.

CATIUA: Must we greet him so short of breath?

[After searching they enter what they believe to be Lancelot's station only to find a familiar face.]

DENAM: Sir Leonar? What are you doing here? Where's Lancelot?

LEONAR: I wished a private word with you, and Sir Lancelot was good enough to oblige me.

CATIUA: Why such secrecy?

LEONAR: It is a matter of grave importance.

[Two knights block the doors and Denam and Catiua wait for Leonar to speak.]

LEONAR: The Resistance teeters at the edge of the void. We lost a great many men in the battle at Psonji, and each day we lose more to desertion. Why do you think that is?

DENAM: I can't say.

LEONAR: It is our leadership, or lack thereof. We were defeated at Psonji because we rushed into battle too soon. We moved before the enemy's forces were fully divided, and see where it has led us. Already we hasten toward a greater error. If we place ourselves at the mercy of the Dark Knights, we betray everything for which our kinsmen died. Think you not so? Until now I have been patient. Too patient, perhaps. Triumph over Galgastan is more distant than ever. Walister rots from within. Our Resistance needs a new leader. I believe you are he!

DENAM: You can't be serious!

LEONAR: The duke has played his part. It falls to us to draw the curtain.

CATIUA: This is madness! Do you have any idea what you're saying?

LEONAR: Only too well, Catiua. Your brother sees it, too.

CATIUA: You would murder the duke, a man you swore to honor. I'll not believe it...

DENAM: Sister...Leonar is right. If we continue down this road, the Resistance is finished. Those who gave their lives at Balmamusa will have died for nothing. We must win this war, whatever the cost. The duke is lost already.

LEONAR: Night and day, soldiers desert the duke's army. The people love him not. But you? You have accomplished much, you have the people's trust...and the vigor of youth. Yes. The people will see the brightness of our future in you. We could ask for none better to lead!

CATIUA: This is absurd! My brother is no leader!

LEONAR: Well, Denam? I say you are.

[Choice 1 - Yes. This is my calling.]

DENAM: If this is what our people need of me, so be it.

CATIUA: This jape has gone too far! Do you truly think the people will follow the man who slays their duke!? Always you trust to steel for deliverance, but where has it led us? We are beaten! Accept this, and let us quit this island.

DENAM: No. Not yet. Our battle is far from over. Someone must bloody his hands. If there is none other with courage to do so, let it be me.

LEONAR: Well said, Denam. You are a man grown now, and the role well suits you. When you act, the people will follow - the failings of the duke are hardly a secret. But the people will not know where this new road leads. They lack the vision to see. They will turn to you to shepherd them. To be their courage - ah, but there will be time for talk later.

[Choice 2 - I could never replace the duke.]

DENAM: A poor replacement for the duke I would make. Look at the blood on my hands.

LEONAR: The blood of Galgastani. You fought only guards at Balmamusa. The sins of that day are mine to bear.

DENAM: I stood by as men and women were slaughtered. Is there no sin in that?

LEONAR: These horrors touch you less than you think. Your heart is still pure.

CATIUA: Please, torment my brother no further. He is ill prepared to lead the Resistance entire.

LEONAR: Then I will speak on it no more. It is enough that you are with me.

[After a moment Leonar catches himself.]

LEONAR: Come, we must return to Almorica and strike before the duke realizes aught is amiss.

[As Denam prepares to depart for Almorica, a few familiar faces block him at the exit of town.]

VYCE: Who would have thought we'd meet again like this?

DENAM: Vyce? What are you doing here?

VYCE: I had hoped the good knight Lancelot might lend me his aid, but alas, he's nowhere to be found.

ARYCELLE: You need only give the word, Vyce!

VYCE: Calm, Arycelle. A quarrel now would only leave our strength diminished.

ARYCELLE: But they are the backbone of the Resistance. We must strike while we can.

VYCE: Gousin said much the same thing, and now he feeds the worms.

CATIUA: Arycelle...how did you come to be here? Vyce, you don't mean to - you wouldn't!

VYCE: Not to worry, Catia. Our enemy is elsewhere.

ARYCELLE: Yours, perhaps, but I do not forgive so easily! I will avenge you, brother!

[Catia and Denam reluctantly fight against their childhood friend.]

ARYCELLE: Your lust for power will be your undoing!

VYCE: Damn that woman! It should not have come to this. Call off your men, Denam! A fight between us serves no purpose. The duke who pulls your strings - **he** is the enemy! He cares nothing for liberating the Walister. He thinks only of the kingdom he might build for himself. It is he who plays each clan against the other. He who sacrifices the blood of his kinsmen! Anyone who ignores the will of his people and uses them as a means unto an end is my enemy! Who knows all the duke has wrought better than you, Denam!

DENAM: Quite a speech. But it is your actions that concern me, not your words. What can you know? You, who ran from the truth!

VYCE: It was you who ran, not I! You talk of revolution, but revolution without principles is meaningless! What happened to the old Denam? Has lust for power blinded you to the damage you do?

DENAM: Always so quick to judge, Vyce, so impatient for results. A mountain is climbed in steps, but you expect to vault to the top in a single leap! Can't you see that what I've done - what I do - is vital?

VYCE: What you've done is treason. I'm sorry it's come to this.

[They continue to spar with one another.]

CATIUA: I would not have thought to find you in league with the New Walister Alliance, Vyce.

VYCE: In league, Catuia? The New Walister Alliance is my creation.

CATIUA: Of course.... No wonder Gousin knew so much of me.

VYCE: You remember our life in Golyat? Miserable as it was, you had your brother. I had nothing. But I don't hate my father for it. It wasn't his fault. When I saw what happened at Balmamusa, I finally understood. It is men like the duke who bear the blame. These so-called noblemen play the smallfolk against each other to avert our watch from the true enemy. Balbatos and Brantyn are no better - clergy and nobility are two sides of the same false coin. Both want only a docile flock to rule.

CATIUA: Gone is the quiet boy I knew, too timid to speak his mind.

VYCE: I know you, Catuia, like your brother cannot. He'll never understand your true spirit.

CATIUA: And you do?

VYCE: Deny it if you will, but you know it in your heart. I'm not like him.

CATIUA: Frankly, I care nothing about who you are or what you do.

VYCE: I know. More's the pity.

[Vyce takes notice of some of Denam's party.]

VYCE: Still with this flock, bird-man?

CANOPUS: You're rather loose with your tongue for a man about to die.

VYCE: And looser still with my coin - how much to switch sides? I'll make you a sweeter offer than the duke ever did.

CANOPUS: No deal. Even you should know a mercenary's true currency is trust, not coin.

VYCE: Oh, but it's more than that, no? I know what it is that keeps men like you with Denam.

CANOPUS: Aye? Then you should join us. The rewards of friendship are far richer than the spoils of war.

VYCE: Friendship is in rare supply these days.

CANOPUS: I walked away from a friend once. Seems an age ago now. And over what? Some trifle I scarce remember. Foolish to let such a small thing drive us apart. At the time, I never wanted to see him again, let alone fight at his side. But even without words, true friends have a way of understanding one another.

VYCE: You're rambling, old man. Your point?

CANOPUS: Whatever may come between you, in time, it will pass.

VYCE: You have all the wisdom of a dusty old tome, and the charm to match.

CANOPUS: And you rise to the bait like a spring trout. Ha!

[Vyce gets wounded.]

VYCE: We've no hope of prevailing against the duke's men, not yet. We must withdraw!

[Arycelle dies.]

ARYCELLE: Forgive me, brother. I have...failed you.

VYCE: Arycelle! No!

[A flash of light and a strange noise rumbles from within the distance.]

VYCE: What? What was that?

[Away from the battle a rogue group of Dark Knights attacks the city.]

BARBAS: Take the town!

[The Dark Knights scatter and suddenly a lone warrior appears to fend them off.]

LANSELOT: No more! Is this what passes for honor in Lodis?

BARBAS: You bear the arms of Xenobia.... So this is the Holy Knight Lancelot! How I have longed for this moment! Show me the power that crushed Hyland!

LANSELOT: Only too gladly! Let our steel sing!

[Vyce and Denam lay down their weapons briefly.]

VYCE: I didn't expect the Bakram attack to come so soon. And you, the duke's loyal, scarce equipped to march, let alone repel them!

DENAM: If the Bakram expect us to lie down for the trampling, they're in for a nasty turn!

VYCE: What, you have a plan? No matter, I'll see soon enough. But there's little time. If you've some miracle on hand to rally the Resistance, best work it quickly.

DENAM: I will. When next we meet, it will be as enemies full-fledged, Vyce. Stay whole till then.

VYCE: And you, Denam. Until next time.

Almorica Castle

[The duke sits alone at his table when a messenger bursts into the room.]

SOLDIER: Your grace, I bring terrible news! Denam rises against us in revolt!

RONWEY: What!? Impossible!

SOLDIER: I am not certain of his numbers, but they are likely more than these walls can bear. We could send for our host on Tynemouth...but I fear it would arrive too late.

RONWEY: Bah! The commons were right about him, it seems. He is a traitor to the core!

SOLDIER: Your grace, it's not safe for you here. Please, go while there is still time.

RONWEY: Go? Fool. Where would I go! No, the key is the boy. Kill him, and this ends!

SOLDIER: M'lord.

[He departs to warn the castle's troops.]

RONWEY: The cur bites his master's hand, eh?

The Gates of Almorica

[Denam arrives at the meekly defended gate.]

MODILIANI: Betrayer! Whose creature are you? Balbatos? Brantyn, maybe? Are you blind to the army at our gates? You place us all in jeopardy!

DENAM: I am no lord's creature! I seek only what the Resistance has always sought! Our ranks dwindle by the day! Can't you see it? The people no longer follow the duke!

MODILIANI: And so they follow you? Usurper! They say heaven's justice is swift, but you deserve far swifter!

[Denam assaults the gates of Almorica once more.]

MODILIANI: Fool boy.... I curse you.... With my dying breath, I curse you!

DENAM: We're going in, press the attack! Spare any who've lost the will to fight!

Almorica Passageway

[A remaining group of soldiers stands against Denam.]

MARINO: Traitor to the Resistance! How quickly you forget your debt to the duke. Your kind are thorns in the heel of progress - how fortunate I bear the perfect remedy. My sword will teach you the right of things! Advance!

[They charge to defend their keep but fail in doing so.]

MARINO: You may have stopped me, but...our uprising will not die...so easily.

Almorica Castle

[Duke Ronwey paces back and forth when his messengers bursts in.]

SOLDIER: Your grace. Sir Leonar has arrived!

RONWEY: Leonar? Here? Perhaps there is yet hope.

[Leonar enters cooly.]

LEONAR: Your grace, my humblest apologies for not coming sooner. Not hanging from the parapets yet, I see.

RONWEY: No, good friend. But that rebellious upstart would be the first to see me so, no doubt.

LEONAR: If he fails, the Bakram will have their chance soon enough. Rhime has fallen.

RONWEY: What!?

[Leonar draws out a blade and kills the messenger. He turns to Ronwey.]

RONWEY: Leonar!? But...why?

[Leonar slowly advances.]

LEONAR: Your grace bears too great a burden. Let me lighten your load.

[Meanwhile, Denam and Catiua speak to their followers about how best to proceed with overtaking Almorica.]

DENAM: Listen well. I want no needless bloodshed. Make a path out of the castle, and drive out those who resist.

SOLDIER: Sir!

[Leonar joins them as the messenger speeds away.]

DENAM: Sir Leonar! What of the duke?

LEONAR: All went according to plan, thanks to your effort.

DENAM: Then the duke is no more.

LEONAR: Yes.... And all that remains is for you to join him!

[He lunges forward but Denam barely escapes his blade and falls to the ground. Catiua ducks away.]

DENAM: What!? What are you doing!?

LEONAR: Something that would have been impossible were it not for you. You die, taking responsibility for both the revolt and the death of the duke, and the Resistance rallies to me. Truly, you have my undying gratitude, Denam.

DENAM: You really think my death will accomplish so much?

LEONAR: How could it not? Death is the ultimate absolution, and you have much to atone for - Mostly **my** sins, but no matter. You've played your role. Rest, your days of sacrificing heart and soul to the Resistance are over.

CATIUA: Venomed words - don't listen to him! It's as Vyce said. Leonar and the duke are the same: Men, drunk on power!

LEONAR: Respect, please! I am twice the man he was.

CATIUA: Rise, Denam! This is not your place to die! I...I forbid it!

LEONAR: I am sorry.... You will live on in my heart.

[An arrow looses from out of nowhere and strikes Leonar back. Vyce and Arycelle stand atop the walls of the great hall.]

VYCE: Stand and fight, Denam! Have you forgotten your promise!

LEONAR: You, Vyce? What are you doing here? Ah, I see. Old friends reunited. Very well. You can die together!

[Denam, Catiua, Vyce and Arycelle surround Leonar.]

LEONAR: Now to restore the Resistance. Raise your sword, Denam!

VYCE: I thought you different from all the rest, Leonar. But you love the nobility as much as they love themselves.

LEONAR: If the nobility can provide a fairer rule, then they have my devotion.

VYCE: A fairer rule under the same despots? You dream if you think the nobles will serve as their own headsman!

LEONAR: You mistake me, Vyce. If a man wants power, he must claim it for himself. No noble will do that for him, true. Yet most commons wait for such a man, a savior to put things to rights. Whence this savior, then? Why not people like you - like me - the few who take up the sword to better their lot in life. They can be the next nobility, shepherds to the rest. And where the wrong in that? I know you desire change, but such is forged slowly, link by link, not made whole in the span of a night.

[Leonar tangles with Vyce and Arycelle, giving Denam a moment's rest.]

DENAM: Vyce, Arycelle...thank you.

VYCE: Our paths crossed by chance. That's all.

ARYCELLE: Fortunate for you that an even greater menace faces us both. I sheathe my hatred of you for the sake of the people, for now. Do not expect to find me so charitable next we meet.

DENAM: Be that as it may, I still thank you.

[He rushes to help Vyce, who is still embattled with Leonar.]

VYCE: You talk much of power, but what of honor? What possible claim to virtue could you make over Denam's disgraced corpse!

LEONAR: I fear you lack sufficient dedication to understand. It is my dedication to a cause that trumps all such fleeting considerations. The man who wallows in sentiment accomplishes nothing. That is what it means to bloody your hands, boy!

VYCE: You forget whose blood it is!

[Denam reaches Leonar's back, where they all find weapons hot.]

DENAM: Leonar, put away your weapon! I do not wish to fight!

LEONAR: Still clinging to some hope of reconciliation, you simpering waif? Know I will strike without hesitation! If you wish to live, if you wish to change this world on your own terms, then slay me! Fail, and only the worms will remember you.

DENAM: You leave me no choice!

[Denam delivers a stirring blow against his former friend and ally.]

LEONAR: It's over. Well fought, Denam. Go on, finish it. Tell our people.... Tell them this: It was my scheming brought us here.

DENAM: Did you intend this all along?

LEONAR: Either death, yours or mine, serves to unite the Resistance. Though in truth, I had much rather it been yours. Ha. We harbor none of Vyce's nobles or their pets now, do we? The New Walister Alliance will...will join you. Welcome them. My eyes...grow dark. My limbs numb. All rests on you now. You have the strength.... You have the strength.

Arkhiapolis of Rhime

[Bodies litter the streets as night falls.]

VOICE: Who can know if the path we choose is right or wrong. I will fear no reproach. For man is a creature of sorrow and fault and ever will be.

This ends Chapter 2. Go to **Chapter 3 (Lawful)**

Chapter 2 (Chaotic)

This world can be put to rights

VOICE: Three weeks have passed since the massacre at Balmamusa. The tragedy was as flint to fire the Walister, bringing them together as never before and inspiring to action those Galgastani who bore no love for Balbatos. Soon, the Galgastani had split into two camps, placing Heirophant Balbatos in a most precarious position. Balbatos assayed to silence the voices of dissent, but as cities began to fall to the Duke's Resistance, he was obliged to retreat for the safety of his keep in Coritanae. As Galgastan faltered, more joined the Walister Resistance. until the rebel ranks had grown to fully threefold their former number. It seemed only a matter of days before Balbatos would be brought ought before his own walls to answer for what he had done. As for Denam, through the duke's scheming, he has been named a mastermind of the massacre, and a price put on his head. Resistance fighters and headhunters alike scour the highroads for him, while Denam finds tempoary solace in the port town of Asyton.

Balmamusa

[Ravness, bedridden from her wound delivered by Vyce, speaks to Denam and Catuia with quiet resoluteness.]

RAVNESS: Galgastan.... I heard. Another culling.

DENAM: And not just those who bared steel against Balbatos. The nobility backing them lost their heads as well. Half of Galgastan now flocks to the Resistance.

RAVNESS: Just as the duke planned.

CATIUA: The ground shifts beneath us. If the Resistance takes Coritanae and the war ends...

[Denam lowers his head in thought.]

RAVNESS: Remain strong. All things...in their time. The means are more important than the end.

DENAM: All things in their time.

RAVNESS: Though my blood be not true, it does not lessen my love for Walister. In the end...which is more important? I can never forgive the Duke. It is for warriors to die on the battlefield.

DENAM: Ravness...

RAVNESS: You must...save the Walister. Light their way...

[She trails off. Denam and Catiua rush to the bed.]

DENAM: Ravness? Can you hear me? Ravness!

RAVNESS: Denam.... Build a new home...for our people.

[She turns her head back and closes her eyes one last time.]

Port Asyton

[Denam and Catiua hole up in an abandoned house in Asyton, recalling the events passed.]

CATIUA: Don't go on blaming yourself. You did all you could.

DENAM: I did nothing. I couldn't save them.

CATIUA: Denim, what if we left this place? Sailed far away and never looked back?

DENAM: We've been through this - Father must be avenged! Besides, how could we leave things as they are? No, we stay and see this through. We owe it to those who died at Balmamusa.

[Canopus walks in.]

CANOPUS: At it again, are you? Give your quibbling a rest and look at this.

[He holds up a worn scroll.]

CANOPUS: As the Duke grows more impatient, you grow more valuable! Up to 30,000 Goth now.

[Denam reads over the scroll.]

CATIUA: Salt in our wounds. We are criminals before all the world.

CANOPUS: Justice and war seldom keep company. In the heat of battle, all are criminal and all are innocent. Only later does the victor decide who is which. That's the way of the world.

DENAM: And since I lost - since I failed Balmamusa - I am made a criminal for it.

CANOPUS: All the more reason to be on the winning side. Come, enough navel-gazing. We need to go.

CATIUA: Go? Where?

CANOPUS: The Walister Army gathers southwest of the Burnham Massif in the Psonji Weald.

DENAM: Of course. Galgastan doesn't stand a chance of repelling the Resistance, not now.

CANOPUS: You touch it with a needle. Balbatos's days are numbered. I daresay Walister victory is in the air.

CATIUA: In which case we shall remain outlaws.

CANOPUS: All the more reason to be on our way. Something must be done. Word reaches me that the Holy Knight Lancelot has taken up position behind the Walister - on Tynemouth Hill, to be exact. With the Walister massed elsewhere, Tynemouth will have but light defense. What better place to break through the line?

CATIUA: Of course! Lancelot will aid us, I am certain.

DENAM: Then we move. There's naught more to be done in this wretched place.

[As Denam prepares to move, he finds himself trapped within the city by an archer who waits for him with expectation.]

ARYCELLE: At last I find you, Denam. You've given good chase, but the hunt ends here!

DENAM: You're not the first headhunter to mistake me for easy quarry.

ARYCELLE: Oh, I'll have your head, but I am no headhunter. You'll pay in blood for what you did in Balmamusa!

DENAM: You were in Balmamusa!? Please, you must hear me!

ARYCELLE: We are past talk. For Balmamusa! For my brother!

[The vengeful warrior strikes hard, pressing her troops against Denam with all her might.]

DENAM: Enough of this! We did no murder in Balmamusa! We were there, I'll not deny it - but we did all we could to stop the slaughter!

ARYCELLE: Lies! I only pray you sold your loyalty for a worthy sum!

DONNALTO: Hold, Arycelle! You must hear me! All Denam has told you is true. We were conspired against!

ARYCELLE: Abuna Donnalto? How can this be!? Leonar said that you...you died in Balmamusa!

DONNALTO: Leonar told you this? I did not think him capable of such duplicity. Arycelle, as I am living proof, Leonar's words are false. A cozener playwright, he knows the truth, yet writes for us a damning fiction.

ARYCELLE: What do you mean to say? That Leonar has misled me on purpose? Nay. This is no fiction! I know the horrors I saw in Balmamusa! I will never forget!

DONNALTO: No, Arycelle! You are captive to your own rage. It veils from you the truth! O, Great Father Philaha! Raise this child's heart from the dark recesses of hate!

[The fighting continues and Arycelle is overcome with emotion.]

ARYCELLE: My brother injured his leg - he couldn't even walk - but they cut him down just the same.

DENAM: All the Duke's doing. Galgastan had no hand in it, though the duke wished it to appear so. Believe what you will, I speak the truth!

ARYCELLE: Have you no shame?

CATIUA: She has no ear to listen. If words will not win us free, our steel must!

ARYCELLE: Did Leonar know his error when he spoke to me of Abuna Donnalto's death?

CANOPUS: No easy task, discerning the truth. Least of all when it's unpleasant.

ARYCELLE: Do you suggest I am blind to truth, outlander? Speak!

CANOPUS: I suggest only that you take a deep breath. I find it often calms the troubling mind. The wind and my people have been as one since the dawn of days. Restoring the balance of spirit and wind helps clear the head - and only a clear head can search the soul. Easier said, eh? Still, if you can do, might see something you missed.

ARYCELLE: Am I now to be a lectured by one who prostitutes his loyalty?

CANOPUS: Sky above, what is it that makes you Valerian women so stubborn?

[After much pleading, Denam is forced to critically wound his foe.]

ARYCELLE: I know when I am bested...though the knowledge that my brother goes unavenged pains me more than any wound. It is done. Now kill me. Kill as you did in Balmamusa!

DENAM: I will not. You are not my foe. If you have lost the will to fight, leave. I will not give chase.

ARYCELLE: If I leave here now, I will only return to claim your life.

DENAM: Then know I am bound for Tynemouth. If you would hunt me, hunt me there.

ARYCELLE: You're going to regret this.

[She retreats.]

DENAM: Regret? There is already too much for me to regret.

Rhea Boum Aqueduct

[Denam and Catuia take a lesser known path toward Tynemouth and again are met with those who hunt for them. A sword for hire, waits with a horde of monsters.]

XAPAN: The Wheel spins true! "You'll find them in Asyton," they said, and here you are! Not every day you chance on a mark worth 30,000 Goth!

CATIUA: There are your headhunters, Denam. I know them by the dull light in their eyes.

XAPAN: Wa ha ha! A comely maid with a curdled tongue! I approve! Don't worry, little lass. You'll be spared. You alone. A man grows lonely so far from home, heh? Well, well, let's begin, shall we? Look sharp, boys! Let one go, it'll mean your purse!

[The mercenaries strike across the system of channels and marble.]

CANOPUS: You there, warrior. You've the look of a man who settles for digging in the dust when he could be moving mountains. You'll find more glory in battle than chasing after a pittance of bounty, no?

XAPAN: Glory in battle? Ha! There's no glory to be had there, not any more. Balmamusa made a cripple of Galgastan. She only has the one leg left, and that already in the grave.

CANOPUS: Little profit to be had from laying siege to Coritanae, then?

XAPAN: Aye, that's the truth of it. Still profit in claiming heads like yours, though.

[Xapan never gets the chance as his wounds become more than he can bear.]

XAPAN: Feh. That was ill played. Pull back! These ones'll keep for later.

CATIUA: What, running away? After all your talk of glory? Bristle-bearded boor!

XAPAN: Har! That mouth ne'er opens but a mealy nugget spills forth. I'd tarry longer just for that! But next time, fair lass. Next time.

[He flees, leaving Denam free passage to the Xeod Moors.]

Xeod Moors

[A contingent of Galgastani troops awaits Walister movement. The leader gives orders to his troops.]

VANCE: Take the scouts alive! They'll talk...or they'll scream.

SOLDIER: Decurion, I know this woman. She led the ambush at Lodum.

VANCE: This...-this- is the Thunder Maiden!?

[Arycelle appears, proclaiming her nickname with a strike of fear down the Galgastani units.]

ARYCELLE: What of it? Near six hundred fell at my bidding, 'tis true. Would you deliver their vengeance? The blood of tenfold that number stains your hands! And then there is Balmamusa.... I'll not be lectured by the likes of you!

[Denam arrives as Arycelle appears to take on the entire Galgastani force.]

DENAM: Is that Arycelle? The Galgastani have her outnumbered. We must help!

CATIUA: Oh? It is she pursues us. What cause have we to help her?

DENAM: Sister, no doubt you are right. But I will live with no more regrets!

CATIUA: My dear Denam...

[Denam and Arycelle unwillingly join forces to vanquish the Galgastani.]

DENAM: Arycelle, I'm coming! Draw closer, if you can!

ARYCELLE: Explain yourself, Denam! I am your sworn enemy. I name you traitor!

DENAM: I am no traitor. But I was wrong to fight for the Duke. I see that now.

ARYCELLE: Still you spout treason! Stay back! Any closer, and I'll kill you!

DONNALTO: Arycelle, your faith in Leonar is understandable - I would fain believe him myself. But he - Leonar has lost his way. He forgets that no aim, no matter how lofty, is ever served by sin. He was not like this before. I fear he has lost his way.

ARYCELLE: It's true then? Leonar is responsible for Balmamusa? Abuna, I...I can't believe it. I do not want to believe.

DONNALTO: Nor do I. But the blood of our people soaks his sword. Perhaps as high champion of the Knights of Almorica, he placed duty before honor.

ARYCELLE: Why him? Why was he alone tasked with such a burden?

DONNALTO: I know no more than you. Indeed, it vexes me I did not espy it in his heart before it was too late.

ARYCELLE: No. I loved him. It is I should have known. Perhaps...it was my love that blinded me.

[Arycelle contemplates amidst a forceful Galgastani attack.]

ARYCELLE: I will not die...not until I have the truth from Leonar.

CANOPUS: There's no doubting your resolve, but how long must this go on? We are not the enemy!

ARYCELLE: No more words. I must have proof!

CANOPUS: Fair enough. But is not the enemy of an enemy a friend? The Galgastani are our common adversary. Can we not first deal with them?

ARYCELLE: A truce then. For now.

CANOPUS: For now. There's no getting round to the truth if we're dead!

[Arycelle falls in combat]

ARYCELLE: Brother, forgive me. I did not intend to join you...before avenging you.

DENAM: No! It wasn't supposed to be this way! No!!!

VANCE: My life spills on the ground.... Forgive me, brothers. Your deaths go...unavenged.

DENAM (lowers his head): Again I've failed. Am I so powerless as this?

[Together the troops fend of Vance and the Galgastani.]

VANCE: My life spills on the ground.... Forgive me, brothers. Your deaths go...unavenged.

ARYCELLE: I can go no further. I surrender, Denam. I'm too weary to go on.

DENAM: Then your life is mine. But I will not claim it here.

ARYCELLE: So I am to be your hostage? Do not think such tactics will dissuade the duke.

DENAM: You have it wrong. We wish only to clear our names. Watch with your eyes, listen with your ears. Witness the truth of this war for yourself. If still you cannot trust me, your life will be yours once more. And my life yours as well.

ARYCELLE: Your words have the ring of truth, but I am a Knight of Almorica. Honor demands evidence more substantial.

DENAM (nods): Then I will speak on this no more. Come, we should be going.

[Denam and Arycelle form a tentative alliance as they travel onward.]

Lake Bordu

[Denam encounters a party of Galgastani.]

GENZO: Resistance? Here? I thought they rallied in the Psonji Weald.... Wait, I know that face. You're the Walister that did for Balmamusa! I saw the bill for your bounty. Bad enough you made it seem our work, but to slaughter your own.... Faithless swine. So young, for acts so foul. No wonder the Duke outmaneuvered you so easily.

DENAM: Believe what you will, we played no part in that pantomime.

ARYCELLE: It's no good. Even our fellow Walister are convinced you were behind it. What hope have you of convincing this crowd of your innocence? And the fact remains: They are Galgastani, we are Walister. We are honor bound to fight!

GENZO: It's as the lady says. I care nothing for the bounty on your heads. One Walister is much like another - only good to me dead. Rally to me! For our brothers! For our homeland!

[Denam confronts the overproud Galgastani.]

GENZO: My struggle ends too soon.... Glory to Galgastan! Glory...

[Denam hurries on to a quiet Tynemouth Hill.]

DENAM: There's no one here. Strange. Perhaps they've already joined the others in the Psonji Weald.

[They explore a bit and spy a familiar face lurking in the shadows.]

DENAM: DIALOGUE MISSING

VYCE: Good to see you again, Denam. And looking so well. I worried some secondrate headhunter had done for you.

CATIUA: What are you doing here? The Holy Knight Lancelot - where is he?

ARYCELLE: Vyce! What business have you here? I thought you in the Psonji Weald!

VYCE: And I thought you dead, Arycelle. Guess we were both wrong. They say you ignored Leonar's orders and chased down Denam.... But this? So that's the way of it. Turned traitor, have you? Fool woman. You choose the losing side.

ARYCELLE: I choose no side until I have judged for myself who the traitors among us truly are.

DENAM: What are you doing here, Vyce? Where's Lancelot?

VYCE: Ha ha! All these years, and still you surprise me. I did not think false whispers would lure you so easily. Your Xenobian's not here. No doubt he's in Rhime by now, deep in his cups.

[Denam backs away but a hoarde of troops arrives at Vyce's command.]

VYCE: Sorry you won't be joining them, but you die here. Duke's orders. None with eyes at Balmamusa are to live.

ARYCELLE: What!?

VYCE: You too, Arycelle. If the truth were to get out, it would mean no end of trouble.

ARYCELLE: You were at Balmamusa, Vyce?

VYCE: Aye, that I was. With your beloved Leonar, no less. So wait - You knew nothing of what was planned? Not a word?

ARYCELLE: No...no! Leonar must be mad! Only a lunatic would pay such a price for victory.

VYCE: Pity you learned the truth, girl. There'll be no reconciling with Leonar now. You're not one to look the other way. Kill them all! Spare no one!

[Denam has no choice but to fight his former friend.]

VYCE: A life spent hiding from soldiers.... Brings back old times, eh? After the Dark Knights attacked Golyat, we three hid in a deserted house near the church waiting for the Bakram to withdraw. Our stomachs were empty, our hearts full of fear they would discover us. You swore you would never live like that again, Catiua.

CATIUA: Your point eludes me.

VYCE: It's not too late, Catiua. Come with me. I can have you spared with a word. Where has following Denam led you? Always running, always hiding. It wearies you, I see it in your eyes. Wouldn't you rather walk in the light?

CATIUA: Shadow, light, I care not! My only wish is to stand at Denam's side! Do you feel nothing, Vyce? How can you look upon the wreckage of Balmamusa and not weep with shame? We have known each other since we were children! How can you lift your sword against a friend!?

VYCE: Because I know that what I do is right, Catiua. I'm no murderer, but this is war! We are not playing at soldiers anymore! And I am not content to sit grousing about "injustice" when the means to end this suffering is within my grasp!

CATIUA: As you "ended the suffering" of so many of your countrymen in Balmamusa?

VYCE: I see you'd place all the evils of war at my door! Tell me, what would you have done if Denam heeded Leonar - heeded the Duke's orders in Balmamusa? What if he had chosen as I did? What then? No, stay your answer. I already know. Readily would you have joined in the slaughter! Am I wrong, Catiua!?

CATIUA: Never.... He would never...

ARYCELLE: There are many in Almorica who are as I was, blind to the truth of Balmamusa! Will you go on deceiving them? How long can you carry on such deception?

VYCE: As long as need be, if we are careful. The people care nothing for truth. They need only a story they can convince themselves is true!

ARYCELLE: You're wrong! Without truth we are lost!

VYCE: When Denam told you the truth, were you quick to believe him? Did you not yet cling to Leonar's tale? Then as now, you believe only what you want to believe!

[The women, disbelief and shock filling their hearts, have no choice but to brandish their weapons against Vyce and the Walister.]

DENAM: Vyce! Call of your men! There is no need for this!

VYCE: You disobeyed orders at your own peril...traitors!

DENAM: Orders!? That was a call to slaughter innocents! What man could heed that?

VYCE: This man could! How are you unable to see it, Denam? History Will show that our countrymen's sacrifice built our future anew.

DENAM: Vyce...what's happened to you?

[Arycelle breaks from the pack and lets loose a fury of arrows.]

ARYCELLE: I will avenge my brother on his killer. Even be that you, Leonar.

[Eventually Denam's group overpowers Vyce.]

VYCE: Grah! This could have gone better.... We withdraw for now! No going back to Asyton, Denam! Your route is cut off. There's nowhere to run.

[Vyce flees.]

ARYCELLE: You flee, Vyce? Coward! I'll chase you to the ends of the earth! You'll never escape what you did in Balmamusa! Denam, you were right. I owe you an apology. My life...my life remains yours to do with as you will.

DENAM (nods): We should withdraw before they receive reinforcement. Fall back to Krysaro.

Krysaro

[Denam returns to Krysaro, where a squadron of Walister await.]

FARREL: Ho ho, the hero of Golyat shows himself. It's as Vyce predicted.

[Farrel turns to a weakened captive Knight surrounded by Walister soldiers.]

FARREL: Had you figured for Denam's man. Out scouting all alone? You've courage, I'll give you that!

KNIGHT: ...

[Farrel leaves and calls again to Denam.]

FARREL: You should take better care of your friends, lest they fall into the wrong hands!

DENAM: Who is that Knight? Do you know him, sister?

CATIUA: Their captive? No. And you've sent out no scouts, have you?

FARREL: Take him away. We've work to do here.

[The guards hustle the mysterious Knight away.]

FARREL: The ground be your graves, whey-faced Walisters!

[His attack proves fruitless and Denam prevails.]

FARREL: To die at a traitor's hands...

[Denam and Catiua find the former captive knight alive and well.]

FOLCURT: I am Sir Folcort, of the Liberation Front, as it please you.

CATIUA: The Liberation Front. Cistina belonged to your company.

FOLCURT: So it was you, then, who saved Cistina in Rhime? My comrades have told me of your plight...though I did not expect to come upon you here.

DENAM: Had you arrived any later, you would not have. The duke's men are at our tail. We make haste for Rhime.

FOLCURT: For Rhime? I'd call that rash. Fatally so. You stand little chance of penetrating the duke's lines with your numbers.

DENAM: Yet we accomplish nothing by standing here, wringing our hands.

FOLCURT: A proposal, then. As it happens, some friends of mine were taken by pirates. If you were to aid me in wresting back our ship, I could take you to Rhime. A suitable arrangement for us both, I should think!

CATIUA: A rather self-serving proposition.

FOLCURT: You lack options. I lack men.

DENAM: Water does seem the more easily tread path.

FOLCURT: The pirates are in Qadriga Fortress. It's not far, and their numbers are not many.

DENAM: Very well. We'll aid you.

FOLCURT: You have my thanks.

[Folcort leaves to prepare for the assault on Qadriga.]

CATIUA: You trust this man? Have you forgotten who the Liberation Front are?

DENAM: You see another way? If we run afoul of the duke's lines, we will die, sister.

CATIUA: I care not for such coercion.

DENAM: Be more charitable. He's merely eager to aid his fellows.

CATIUA: Would that I had your faith.

DENAM: You care for little that does not play out as you see it.

[Denam joins Folcort, leaving Catiua alone.]

CATIUA: Perhaps.

Qadriga Fortress

[Denam and Folcort are greeted warmly by the pirates, who have a captive magician.]

DARZA: Should've stayed well away if you knew what's good for you. You'll need more men than that to break what storm and sea have made strong.

FOLCURT (to the mage): Bayin, are you all right? Steady on, I'm coming!

BAYIN: Why are you returned, Folcort? Ought to have left me for dead.

DARZA: Good idea, that. Waste the old fool! But spare the women, lads. They'll fetch a tasty price!

[Denam and Folcort rush to Bayin's aid.]

[Bayin dies.]

BAYIN: You must stop her. Stop...Cerya.

DARZA: Veldrei won't be best pleased...

[He falls and Folcort reunites with Bayin and collects his prized ship.]

FOLCURT: The ship is ours once more. We sail with the tide. We'll take you safe to Rhime, as agreed. Best get aboard.

[Bayin died.]

DENAM: We should make for Golyat first - stock up on supplies. Most of the duke's men muster in the Psonji Weald. The town's defense should be light.

FOLCURT: Good. Oh, and one other thing. I'd like to pay a visit to Boed Fortress before delivering you to Rhime.

CATIUA: Boed? It's more ruin than fortress. Why go there?

FOLCURT: Run-down it may be, but Boed is an essential fastness. Our leader, Cerya, commands from there.

DENAM: Cerya? The same woman Bayin bade us stop with his dying breath?

FOLCURT: You will know when we're there. And you will learn of many other things besides. Now, aboard. I'd like to reach the deep while we still have some light.

BAYIN: Hold, Folcort. They've taken Cistina.

FOLCURT: What!? I thought her safely away.

BAYIN: The others are safe. Her alone they took and scurried back to their den. Surely we must rescue her ere we return to Boed.

FOLCURT: Of course. And we shall. But first we must take them to Rhime.

BAYIN: Foolishness! You'd as well kill Cistina yourself.

FOLCURT: They honored their promise. I owe them no less.

BAYIN: I though Cistina dear to you. Perhaps I was mistaken.

FOLCURT: Before all else I am a knight, Bayin. I'll not break a sacred vow.

BAYIN: Stubborn mule! If you'll not help, perhaps I can appeal to their better nature. You heard my tale. Our friend is taken captive by pirates. No concern of yours, to be sure, but we'll need help if we are to rescue her. What do you say?

CATIUA: Surely there are many others you might call upon. Why do you not do so?

BAYIN:By the time our pleas reached them, it would already be too late.

CATIUA: We are pursued ourselves. Already we've delayed too long. And have we not kept our word? This fortress is fallen, and your ship is yours once more. Sir Folcort has the right of it. It now falls to him to fulfill his part of the bargain.

BAYIN: You'll be safe once at sea. The Walister cannot give chase. An attack on the pirates now will delay your arrival in Rhime by a scant few days.

FOLCURT: Enough, Bayin. She's right, you know.

BAYIN: Yours is the final word, Denam. I would hear your thoughts.

[Choice 1 - We will help you.]

DENAM: You have our swords. Though we may disagree on much, I find your devotion to your allies admirable.

CATIUA: But, Denam!

DENAM: Follow my lead, Sister. The others will understand.

FOLCURT: I am in your debt, Denam. You have a kind heart.

BAYIN: I know where the pirates make their den: Ndamsa Hold on Deknigos.

DENAM: To Ndamsa Hold, then.

[Choice 2 - We must decline.]

DENAM: I am sorry, but we cannot lend you our swords. Time is too pressing, and the stakes too high. What!? Has the whole of Valeria sold its standards at market, then? Bah!

FOLCURT: Leave off, Bayin. Our problems are not theirs. Pay him no mind, Denam. Off to Rhime, now, before your hunters arrive.

BAYIN: You too, Folcort? Bah! If none will aid me, I'll go myself!

[He storms off.]

FOLCURT: Sorry. If that old man were any more set in his ways, I'd need a chisel just to wake him in the morning. If you're on to Rhime, there's someone I'd have you meet in the fortress at Boed. What say you?

CATIUA: Boed? It's more ruin than fortress. Why go there?

FOLCURT: Run-down it may be, but Boed is an essential fastness. Our leader, Cerya, commands from there.

DENAM: And you would have us meet her, the leader of your Liberation Front? Why?

FOLCURT: You will know when we're there. And you will learn of many other things besides. Now, aboard. I'd like to reach the deep while we still have some light.

Ndamsa Fortress

[Denam and his new allies arrive at the pirate's stronghold.]

VELDREI: You're the ones who killed Darza, aren't you. He may not have been much of a man, but he was **my** man.

FOLCURT: We've come for Cistina. Return her to us, and I guarantee your safety.

VELDREI: A likely tale, but Darza took no fool for his wife. You'll not have her back so easy as that! This one's for the boss, boys! Bring me their scalps!

[Enraged, the pirates launch a furious attack against Denam, but to no avail.]

VELDREI: Where are you, my love? Your wife and child...come for you...

[Denam's group defeats the pirates and they rescue Cistina. On the dock she offers her thanks.]

CISTINA: That's twice you've saved me - a debt no words can repay.

FOLCURT: I feared I'd never see you again. Thank the light you're alive.

CISTINA: I rejoice to see you. You and Bayin both.

CATIUA: I hate to interrupt, but I think it best we set sail.

FOLCURT: Yes. Yes, of course. Best if we reach the deep while we still have some light.

BAYIN: Before we make for Rhime, perhaps you might accompany us to Boed Fortress.

CISTINA: A splendid idea. If we're lucky, we might even reach Cerya in time to stop her.

CATIUA: Boed, did you say? It's more ruin than fortress. Why go there?

FOLCURT: Run-down it may be, but Boed is an essential fastness. Our leader, Cerya, commands from there.

DENAM: And you would have us meet her, the leader of your Liberation Front? Why?

CISTINA: When you see her, you will understand. We've problems of our own.

FOLCURT: Best get aboard. We sail.

Boed Fortress (with Cistina)

[Denam, Catiua and Cistina arrive at the fortress.]

GUARD: Who's there!? Answer well, else it's my bow you'll quarrel with!

CISTINA: Hold, he's a friend.

[Denam calms himself and puts his weapon away.]

CISTINA: It's I, Cistina. Unbend your bow!

GUARD: Cistina? It is you! I'd feared the worst. Chief's been worried, too. Well, come on up.

CISTINA: You heard the man.

[They venture inside the fortress and meet with Cerya.]

CERYA: You bring wanted men here, to our refuge!? Might as well tell every crier and herald from here to Almorica where we hide! So tell me, why **have** you returned?

CISTINA: Be not so quick to anger, sister. At least hear my tale.

CERYA: Here, I am not your sister. I am your commander.

CISTINA: I was taken captive by pirates. These people rescued me. I owe them no less than my life.

CERYA: Pirates? Did they harm you?

CISTINA: I am well enough, sister - my pardons - Commander. As for why I've returned, I've come to stop this madness you call a plan.

CERYA: A tale long since grown stale in the telling. Squabble all you please, it changes nothing. You left with those who shared your doubts, did you not? I do not oblige anyone to take part against his will, else I would not have let you go.

CATIUA: Take part in what? What plans?

CERYA: It's no concern of yours. I would thank you to remain silent.

CISTINA: They mean to assassinate Duke Ronwey.

CERYA: Silence!

[Denam and Catuia exchange glances.]

CISTINA: Assassinating a single man, even the Duke, will not end this struggle. With no one to tend the Walister rudder, the Bakram will sense opportunity. It will be all-out war.

CERYA: That is our purpose. Balbatos and the Galgastani now teeter on the brink. If the Walister are allowed to deliver the finishing blow, they will control half of Valeria. The Bakram and Walister armies would then be evenly matched - they would break themselves one against the other. But Brantyn and Ronwey are no fools. They would forge a truce, and all would be as it is now! However, if the Duke is dead, a very different story unfolds. The Bakram would at last invade. And when Brantyn declares himself Hegemon over all Valeria, then...**then** we assassinate him as well. This isle will be ours!

CATIUA: A great many ifs and whens.

CERYA: No more than we require. You've heard our plan. Why not join us? Fight at our side? You can run, let the Duke hunt you, or...you can become the hunter. Help us cast down the Duke, cast down the Dark Knights, and restore peace to this land.

CISTINA: War's horrors are visited not on us, but on the smallfolk caught in the maelstrom. I want no part in a kingdom built on the bones of the innocent!

[A soldier trudges in, out of breath.]

CERYA: You'd best have good reason for this interruption!

GUARD: A messenger!

CERYA: Catch your breath soldier, and we'll hear your news.

GUARD: Coritanae is fallen! The Walister forces have broken the Galgastani!

CATIUA: What's this!?

GUARD: More, heirophant Balbatos was taken captive and put to the sword this morn.

CERYA: This changes nothing. Have the men prepare. The messenger is welcome to stay...and rest.

GUARD: Yes ma'am.

[He leaves.]

CISTINA: No, sister! You must stop this!

CERYA What means are left us now that Coritanae has fallen? We must move swiftly, before the Duke rallies the Galgastani remnants to his flag. If there were another way, its time has passed, Cistina.

CISTINA: No, Sister, you are wrong. You are wrong!

[Cistina storms out.]

CERYA I'm afraid I am needed elsewhere. While she remains blind to the reckoning of the day, my sister will ever chase her dreams. Lofty visions are well and good, but without feet firmly upon the ground, you will drift. If my sister refuses to soil her hands, the moment will slip through her fingers...much as it has for you. Regardless, I love my sister. Please, watch over her. Do not begrudge her your aid.

[Outside, Cistina stares at the sea. Denam and Catiua join her.]

CISTINA: My sister is wrong. There must be a better way. If we choose ends over means, we are no better than the Demon Brantyn and the duke. Is that what you have been fighting for, Sister? A country with roots steeped in blood? I cannot believe it.

[Choice 1 - Come with us, Cistina.]

DENAM: Join us. We're your people now.

CISTINA: In truth, I've felt a kinship with you from the time we met.

DENAM: Then fight with us!

CISTINA: I shall. And I will cling to my dream, even if that should lead me into opposition with my own sister.

[Choice 2 - You chase a dream...]

CHOICE MISSING

Boed Fortress (without Cistina)

[Denam, Catiua and Folcurt arrive at the fortress.]

GUARD: Who's there!? Answer well, else it's my bow you'll quarrel with!

Folcurt: Steady on. He's with us.

[Denam calms himself and puts his weapon away.]

FOLCURT: It's me, Folcurt. Unbend your bow!

GUARD: Folcurt? It is you! I'd feared the worst. Chief's been worried, too. Well, come on up.

FOLCURT: Come on, let's get inside.

[They venture inside the fortress and meet with Cerya.]

CERYA: You bring wanted men here, to our refuge!? Might as well tell every crier and herald from here to Almorica where we hide! So tell me, why **have** you returned?

FOLCURT: I was taken captive by pirates. These people rescued me. I owe them no less than my life.

CERYA: Understandable, then. But why have you returned?

FOLCURT: To stop you from enacting this plan, commander.

CERYA: A tale long since grown stale in the telling. Squabble all you please, it changes nothing. You left with those who shared your doubts, did you not? I do not oblige anyone to take part against his will, else I would not have let you go.

CATIUA: Take part in what? What plans?

CERYA: It's no concern of yours. I would thank you to remain silent.

FOLCURT: They mean to assassinate Duke Ronwey.

CERYA: Silence!

[Denam and Catiua exchange glances.]

FOLCURT: Assassinating a single man, even the duke, will not end this struggle. With no one to tend the Walister rudder, the Bakram will sense opportunity. It will be all-out war.

CERYA: That is our purpose. Balbatos and the Galgastani now teeter on the brink. If the Walister are allowed to deliver the finishing blow, they will control half of Valeria. The Bakram and Walister armies would then be evenly matched - they would break themselves one against the other. But Brantyn and Ronwey are no fools. They would forge a truce, and all would be as it is now! However, if the duke is dead, a very different story unfolds. The Bakram would at last invade. And when Brantyn declares himself hegemon over all Valeria, then...**then** we assassinate him as well. This isle will be ours!

CATIUA: A great many ifs and whens.

CERYA: No more than we require. You've heard our plan. Why not join us? Fight at our side? You can run, let the duke hunt you, or...you can become the hunter. Help us cast down the duke, cast down the Dark Knights, and restore peace to this land.

CISTINA: War's horrors are visited not on us, but upon the smallfolk. I want no part in a kingdom built on the bones of children!

[A soldier trudges in, out of breath.]

CERYA: You'd best have good reason for this interruption!

GUARD: A messenger!

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GUARD: Coritanae is fallen! The Walister forces have broken the Galgastani!

CATIUA: What's this!?

GUARD: More, Heirophant Balbatos was taken captive and put to the sword this morn.

CERYA: This changes nothing. Have the men prepare. The messenger is welcome to stay...and rest.

GUARD: Yes ma'am.

[He leaves.]

FOLCURT: You truly expect the people to forgive you for this?

CERYA: What means are left us now that Coritanae has fallen? We must move swiftly, before the duke rallies the Galgastani remnants to his flag. If there were another way, its time has passed, Folcort.

CISTINA: No, you are wrong. You are wrong!

[Folcort storms out.]

CERYA: I'm afraid I am needed elsewhere. While he remains blind to the reckoning of the day, Sir Folcort will ever chase his dreams. Lofty visions are well and good, but without feet firmly upon the ground, you will drift. If he refuses to soil his hands, the moment will slip through his fingers. ...Much as it has for you.

[Outside, Folcort stares at the sea. Denam and Catiua join him.]

FOLCURT: I've never seen her so hellbound.

DENAM: What will you do?

FOLCURT: No point in rotting away here. I suppose I shall gather a band and venture forth again, in time.

DENAM: Why not join us?

FOLCURT: Aye? I'm Bakram, if you haven't forgotten.

[Choice 1 - We have no quarrel with you.]

DENAM: Our fight is not with you, sir.

FOLCURT: There are others who will not see it so, though I thank you for your offer.

DENAM: I see. May the Wheel turn for you, then.

FOLCURT: And for you, Denam. I will listen for word of your exploits in days to come.

[Choice 2 - The Bakram are not our enemy.]

DENAM: I bear no enmity for the Bakram. Only for those who would drive our clansmen toward chaos.

FOLCURT: Perhaps together we can guide our people true.

Golyat

[En route to Boed, Denam passes through his home town, where a party of headhunters await.]

DAGON: Denam? Here!? How did you escape the siege? No matter. It is enough that the Wheel has brought us together, traitor. Your bounty is the answer to my prayers.

[Again Denam is forced to fight in his hometown.]

DAGON: Thirty thousand Goth.... So small a sum, to...save my daughter's life...

Coritanae

[Meanwhile, Duke Ronwey and the Walister amass at the now conquered Coritanae, where the former ruler Balbatos lies with his head in a guillotine. Ronwey addresses the gathering.]

RONWEY: Behold! A new day breaks to rouse us from our long, troubled sleep! A time of nightmare, oppression, and darkness ends with the death of this man!

MAN: The blade's too clean a death! Let him feel the Walister's pain!

WOMAN: Why does his blood still pump warm while my son lies in the earth! Die, Galgastani demon!

OLD MAN: To hell with you, Ogre! Your death is new life for Galgastan!

RONWEY: Hear that, Balbatos? Even your clansmen bear you no love.

BALBATOS: Be done with it.

RONWEY: Quiet, quiet. Brave Walister clansmen. I hear your cries all too clearly.... For they are my own! Galgastani friends! Know that all suffering, yours and ours, flowed forth from this man. With his blood, let us wash away all bile and rancor. Let his life pay the debt upon our hearts. Walister and Galgastani stand as one. War is ended!

[Ronwey steps down from the platform while an Abuna and axman arrive.]

ABUNA: Child of the Great Father, son of Philaha. Have you any last words?

BALBATOS: War is...ended? Ha! Fool. It was not I who started this war. All of you took up arms with me.

RONWEY: Despicable! Even with your last breath, you seek to place the blame upon these people, your subjects?

BALBATOS: I pity you, Ronwey. We are more alike than you can know, sitting behind our castle walls. We talk much of how the world should be, yet never stoop to dirty our own hands. That's what Knights are for, is it not? Yet as much as you tell yourself the people are yours, you are wrong. They do not dance upon our palms. It is we who dance upon theirs. Mark my end well, Ronwey, for it will be yours.

RONWEY: That's enough of that. Do it!

BALBATOS: They kill me now because they tire of war. What cause will they proclaim when they kill you?

[The axeman hefts his weapon and cuts down the blade to fall upon Balbatos.]

Arkhaiopolis of Rhime

[Denam arrives finally to Rhime. It is dusk.]

DENAM: Silence.... No one's here. It's all right, sister. You can come out.

[Catiua appears from behind a building just as a familiar face also creeps from the shadows.]

DENAM: Xapan!

XAPAN: A fortunate encounter! The Wheel turns for me!

CATIUA: If not for us. I'd have happily grown old never having seen your pockmarked mug again.

XAPAN: Ah now, no need to be so sour. If you only got to know me, you'd find me quite amiable.

[Denam and Catiua find themselves surrounded.]

DENAM: Amiable when luring us into a trap!

XAPAN: No, no trap. Just luck! Now, to claim that head of yours before any saintly Knights happen along with different ideas. Get 'em!

[Xapan lunges toward Denam.]

XAPAN: I misstepped at Rhea Boum, but I'll make no such errors this round!

CATIUA: Why not show some sense. Retire before it's your head rotting on some pike.

XAPAN: Almost worth it, if my head could rot next to yours! Take my hand, lass, and I'll lead you to a better place.

CATIUA: I'd sooner throw myself down before the host at Almorica! You.... You'd show me more mercy to gouge my eyes than force me to look upon those bearded jowls!

XAPAN: An alluring angel, plucking at the strings of my heart!

[Denam dodges deftly.]

DENAM: You spoke of knights. So you knew not only that we made for Rhime, but our purpose withal.

XAPAN: Aye. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that we're here on Almorica's coin. See, with their Galgastani problem done for, they're all eagerness to see you done for as well.

DENAM: An eagerness Lancelot does not share, apparently. Why else would they hire you lot?

XAPAN: Aha! The lad is more than just a pretty face! Still, it changes nothing. I'll have your head, and I'll have it now!

[After some fighting Xapan decides it prudent to flee.]

XAPAN: We've no hope of prevailing against the duke's men, not yet. We must withdraw!

[An explosion sounds in the distance and the sky flashes crimson.]

XAPAN: What? What was that?

[Beyond the battle site, the Dark Knights set Rhime ablaze and slaughter its inhabitants. The commander orders more of his men in.]

BARBAS: Take the town!

[His Dark Knights spread out, sowing their carnage. The Holy Knight Lancelot appears and challenges Barbass.]

LANSELOT: No more! Is this what passes for honor in Lodis?

BARBAS: You bear the arms of Xenobia.... So this is the Holy Knight Lancelot! How I have longed for this moment! Show me the power that crushed Hyland!

[Lancelot takes a long stride forward.]

LANSELOT: Only too gladly! Let our steel sing!

[They fight.

Denam, in the confusion, loses sight of his foe. Catiua searches too.]

DENAM: Come out, Xapan! Where are you hiding!?

CATIUA: Here, Denam!

DENAM: Catiua! Where - !?

[He spies Catiua, bound and held captive in the village square by Xapan.]

CATIUA: Up here!

XAPAN: Greetings, Denam! So close, so very close. Almost slipped away on me. Your sister will be joining my merry band. If you care to see her again, hasten to the walls of Almorica!

DENAM: No...Xapan! Don't do this! Coward!

[A Dark Knight appears before Denam.]

DENAM: Who goes there?

MARTYM: Did your mother not warn you against playing on the streets at night, boy?

[Before the man can taunt Denam further, Gildas creeps behind.]

DENAM: Gildas!?

GILDAS: Dark Knight of Lodis! Your quarrel is with me!

MARTYM: What's this? A Xenobian wants to fight? I'll gladly meet you, if you've even strength enough to draw!

[They prepare to duel while Xapan shuffles Catiua away.]

XAPAN: Pick up your feet, lass!

CATIUA: Denam!

DENAM: Sister!

[Gildas is gridlocked with Martym.]

GILDAS: Go, Denam! Swiftly! Follow them!

MARTYM: As imprudent as you are impudent. I'll dress you like a holiday goose, Hedge Knight!

GILDAS (calling over his shoulder): I said go!

[Denam gives chase as Martym prepares a powerful attack.]

MARTYM: But first, a venomous strike to take the fight from you!

GILDAS: Hnnngh!

Coritanae

[Duke Ronwey stands alone, staring out a glass window. A soldier walks in.]

RONWEY: I can't steal a moment's peace.... What now?

Guard: It's the Bakram, your grace. They've marched on Rhime!

RONWEY: What? That's absurd!

Guard: Our riders send word that the battle is already joined.

RONWEY: What news of the city? Has it fallen?

GUARD: No, your grace. The Xenobian Knights have managed to hold her walls. But they cannot long last against the Bakram siege. They've requested immediate reinforcements.

RONWEY: Very well. Summon Leonar!

GUARD: Begging your grace's pardon. Sir Leonar rode for Almorica at daybreak.

RONWEY: Yes...yes of course. Bring quill and parchment. Leonar must know of this. Ready the fasters courser in Coritanae!

GUARD: At once, your Grace!

[The guard leaves and Ronwey paces around the table.]

RONWEY: What is Lodis scheming, eh?

[He returns to the window and gazes with different intent.]

RONWEY: With Balbatos gone, old alliances turn to ash. Confound them all!

Almorica Castle

[Denam once again lays seige to Almorica in order to break through. Xapan awaits his coming at the gate.]

XAPAN: Here he is, sure as the wind. I half worried the Bakram had got the best of him.

RAMIDOS: So this boy is the ero-butcher of Balmamusa, is he?

DENAM: Xapan, you coward! What have you done with my sister?

XAPAN: You know what's to be done, then.

RAMIDOS: Aye, well enough. I don't give a fig for no bounty, long as his head rolls. I had old friends at Balmamusa. They'll rest better with him beneath the earth.

XAPAN: Pardon the parley, Denam. Had a few matters needed tending. Your sister's safe and sound within the castle. But you'll not be leaving with her, exceptin' by force.

DENAM: By force, then.

[He draws his weapon and charges the gate.]

DONNALTO: Ramidos, hear me. You have Balmamusa wrong!

RAMIDOS: That you, Abuna? Feh. Thought you kept better company. A man of cloth abetting in such...carnage. But then the church has never shied from a good blood-letting, has it?

DONNALTO: It was Leonar and the Duke who slew the people of Balmamusa, not us or the Galgastani. I swear it in the name of the Great Father!

RAMIDOS: You clergy are all alike. Invoke the name of God and you expect the people to follow you like sheep. Balbatos and Brantyn can scarce void their bowels without speaking Philaha's name. Well I'm not having any of it! Your god is just another faerie tale! Tell me, what god would visit war on his people? And a holy war, that's the richest of them all! I may not believe in gods, but the devils who brandish their steel before me are real enough!

ARYCELLE: Ramidos, please, you must listen!

RAMIDOS: Arycelle? Now this is a surprise. I thought you dead. But it's not like the Thunder Maiden to betray the Resistance over a pretty young face, hero or no.

ARYCELLE: The massacre was the duke's plot. I had it from the lips of his own men! Denam tried to stop them. He's innocent!

RAMIDOS: If it is as you say - Leonar lied to us?

ARYCELLE: I know. I didn't want to believe it, but I can no longer deny the truth.

RAMIDOS: Have the years robbed me of my wits?

[Under Xapan's order Ramidos insists on fighting but falls swiftly.]

RAMIDOS: I...I didn't know. I was too quick to judge. The spirits have...told me everything. Forgive me, Denam. The Wheel finally...comes round. With luck, I'll find my sons waiting.

[She perishes.]

XAPAN: Fat lot of good she was, the mealy old hag!

[Xapan clings to life.]

XAPAN: That's three times you've bested me, boy!

[He flees and Denam pursues inside the keep.]

DENAM: If Xapan thinks I'll abandon my sister, he's sorely mistaken. I'm coming, sister.

Passageway

[Denam rushes inside to find Vyce, standing above a fallen Xapan.]

DENAM: Vyce? Here?

XAPAN: You...you can't! We were allies!

VYCE: Fool. I know the proper use for a hostage.

[Vice cuts down Xapan with one swing. He dies.]

XAPAN: Uagh!

VYCE: You're next, Denam.

DENAM: What have you done with Catuia?

CATIUA (from afar): Denam!

[A guard forces her out of the room.]

DENAM: Unhand my sister!

VYCE: Oh, I will. But first, you and I have a score to settle.

DENAM: There must be some other way. Here me out -

VYCE: Talk, talk, talk. Let our steel speak!

[The two friends fight.]

DENAM: Vyce, it doesn't have to end like this!

VYCE: Ever since we were boys, you could do no wrong. They lavished praise on you while I looked on. Forgotten. Is it because of our fathers, do you think? The son of a respected abuna and the son of a loutish drunkard. It was a relief when he died. But nothing changed. Why do they hate me? What flaw have I that you have not?

DENAM: This is...this is a fantasy! You're my friend. What became of that friendship?

VYCE: Did I hide my hatred so well? I was never your friend. How I envied you! Your father, the good abuna. Your sister, all beauty and grace.

DENAM: Catiua thinks of you as a second brother.

VYCE: If you could only hear yourself. You've always been the one she cares for. Not even your father was good enough for her. You're the only one she trusts - the only one she loves!

[They continue to duel in the halls of Almorica.]

DENAM: No...it's not too late. Whatever you may say, I was a friend to you. And I would be so again.

VYCE: I want no betrayer for a friend! The duke and Leonar have placed their faith in me. They are friends enough.

DENAM: They only use you. When you've outlived that usefulness, they'll throw you to the wolves!

VYCE: You have it the wrong way round. I am using them.

[As the duel rages, Leonar appears suddenly from a gated area.]

LEONAR: Enough of this! Stay your blades!

[The fighting ceases.]

VYCE: But he's good as dead!

LEONAR: Easy, Vyce! Our circumstance has changed.

VYCE: But it was you who ordered his death!

LEONAR: Stop talking and listen! You'll want to hear this too, Denam. Rhime has fallen. The Bakram will soon be here.

DENAM: But Sir Lancelot -

LEONAR: Dead. Fled. I know not. But we no longer have the luxury of fighting amongst ourselves. Denam, you must join the Duke! What's done is done. Our true foe stands before us!

VYCE: Have you gone mad? He's a traitor!

LEONAR: Enough, Vyce. Did you hear nothing I said? I know why it is you fight, Denam. You dream of a world free of war and hatred. A worthy dream, and reasonable. But reason alone cannot move men to act! Is that how you want this to end? Will you let your father go unavenged? Join us. If not for yourself, then for the Walister!

[Choice 1 - You're right, this is no time to fight.]

DENAM: The Bakram are our true enemy. We must work together if we are to stop them.

LEONAR: Good. You see the truth of it. I expected no less of our young Hero.

VYCE: You've both gone mad! I'll take no part in this.

[Vyce escapes.]

DENAM: Vyce, wait!

LEONAR: Let him go. We must away to the Duke.

[Leonar prepares for the Bakram, leaving Denam alone in the passageway.]

DENAM: Vyce.... Damn him!

[Choice 2 - You know I can't do that.]

DENAM: I'll never rejoin you. You're no different from the Bakram. You are beaten. It is you who chase a dream!

LEONAR: What now? Do you go on trying to bend the world to your will?

DENAM: I'm not so arrogant as that. But I will show our people there is another way! I believe they can rise above this...pettiness.

LEONAR: While we walk the earth, there will ever be conflict. A man will kill another over a husk of bread if not restrained! It falls to us to rein in these base creatures and bring order to the world. They crave a master to lead them, to give them purpose.

DENAM: There is truth in your words, but still I mistrust them. I don't know what to believe.... Why do I fight? Why do any of us?

LEONAR: Perhaps you will understand in time. These are demons you alone can face. Now go, Denam. Take your sister and leave this place!

VYCE: What are you doing? You can't just let him leave!

LEONAR: Go. See the world as it is and dispel your doubts. Search the isles - search all the world - you will not find what you seek. When your hope has died, come back. I'll be waiting.

DENAM: You'll wait a long time.

[Denam stares Vyce down one last time and pursues to retrieve his sister.]

VYCE: Denam!

LEONAR: Let him go. He must come to us willingly, or not at all.

VYCE: We may regret letting him live.

LEONAR: Should it come to that, I'll put him down myself.

[Leonar prepares for the Bakram, leaving Vyce alone in the passageway.]

VYCE: No. Let it be me.

This ends Chapter 2. Go to **Chapter 3 (Chaotic)**

Chapter 3 (Neutral)

There will be sacrifices

VOICE: Four weeks have passed since the Arkhaiopolis of Rhime fell to the Bakram armies in hard-fought battle. Swift on the heels of their victory, the Bakram continued their southward march. For a third time, the Abuna beseeched the Dark Knights Unsure as he was of his own forces, Duke Ronwey took little consolation in the Dark Knight's In private Now both sides watch and wait for the stone that will tip the balance in their favor.

Phidoc Castle

[In Phidoc Castle, the Dark Knights Balxephon, Barbas and Martym discuss current events in their keep.]

BALXEPHON: What am I to do with you, Barbas? Hmm? One cannot deny your insubordination. To act without leave of the High Champion is strictly forbidden, whatever the circumstance. Time and again you were ordered to return, and each time you've ignored your orders! Only now do you deign to grace these halls. I am galled.

MARTYM: Galling, yes, the obstinate lout. Go on, beg forgiveness.

BALXEPHON: You talk too much, Martym. And I have an ill temper.

BARBAS: What was I to do? Deny the Regent? Impossible.

BALXEPHON: We do not answer to Brantyn! Speak true. You learned that the Xenobian Knights were Rhime and sought to do battle. Is it not so?

BARBAS: ...

[Balxephon rises from his seat as the Dark Knight Lancelot enters, escorted by two others.]

LANSELOT: Enough, Balxephon. What's done is done.

BALXEPHON: Welcome back, Lord Commander. I see Ozma and Oz accompany you.

[Balxephon offers his seat to Lancelot.]

LANSELOT: What word of the Walister?

BALXEPHON: They rally their troops on Golborza, yet they do not make to march.

LANSELOT: I should think not. The duke has but a tenuous grasp on Galgastan. Dispatch an envoy. Explain our position to the Duke and renew our vow to remain unaligned.

BALXEPHON: And the Bakram? I cannot imagine the Regent sits idle.

LANSELOT: Brantyn will be made Heirophant, his age-old wish fulfilled. If that does not content him, nothing will. Controlling the isles is not our mandate. Nor can we afford the Xenobians to perceive otherwise. So long as we are the advocates of peace, they dare not act. Is that clear, Barbas?

BARBAS: ...Aye.

LANSELOT: I'm sending you to Heim.

BARBAS: But Heim is leagues from the front!

LANSELOT: Steady, Barbas. I do not intend for you to serve as Castellan for the Regent, if that is your fear. Abuna Prancet was being held in Heim Castle. Unfortunately, a band of rebels saw fit to free him.

BALXEPHON: What!?

LANSELOT: The work of the Liberation Front, no doubt. Regardless, I would prefer our true tast remain secret. Mannaflo's whereabouts elude us, and now the abuna, the only man who might now, has gone missing as well. Barbas, I task you with a mission of utmost import. Recapture Abuna Prancet, whatever the cost.

BARBAS (rising): Yes, Lord Commander.

[Lanselot turns to Oz and Ozma.]

LANSELOT: The two of you are to deal with the Liberation Front. Too long have we suffered them to move unchecked.

OZMA: On the honor of house Glacius, my brother and I will see it so.

OZ: Common Rabble. They'll be little trouble.

LANSELOT (to Balxephon): Andoras's search for Mannaflo is to continue. You and Martym are to proceed with our negotiations with the duke.

BALXEPHON: As my lord wishes, so shall it be.

[The Dark Knights go their separate ways in fulfilling Lanselot's demands.]

Almorica Castle

[Denam, Catiua and Leonar share the table with Duke Ronwey and hold counsel.]

RONWEY: What part of the Galgastani have joined our cause?

LEONAR: Half their men, perhaps a little more. Another third have deserted.

RONWEY: Hmm. Then the rest are loyalists who will cleave to Balbatos unto the bitter end.

LEONAR: Few as they were, they were the backbone of his army. The best of the best. Their support in the crofts and villages runs deep. They'll not fall easily.

RONWEY: Who better to see that they do. Spare not a moment.

LEONAR: It shall be done.

RONWEY: The Bakram show no sign of moving farther south. There's solace in that. Perhaps some faint breath remains in our pact with the Dark Knights. Let us send another envoy and remove all doubt. And you, my Hero of Golyat, are to hunt down Vyce Bozeck, who fled behind the enemy's line scarce a month past.

DENAM: Must we avenge ourselves upon him?

RONWEY: You do not understand the creature you hunt. Indeed, he must seem a strange species to you. You and I share a common conviction, however different our methods and means. Else why would you have returned to my halls? Vyce is different. He fights not for convictions or ideals but out of some base bloodlust. Unguided by higher philosophy, he acts without thought. Judged by your measure, he is useless - and how that must enrage him! Now he thrusts this rage at you, his onetime friend, a Hero to all the world. I had held out hope that Vyce might return this past month. But too much time has passed. Were we to wait any longer, we risk him becoming a grave threat to our Resistance.

CATIUA: But to put a price on his head.... Is that not going too far?

RONWEY: It pains me, truly. But it is the needful course, Catiua.

CATIUA: Will you say nothing in his defense, Denam?

DENAM: Do not look for Vyce to return. Not while I'm still here.

CATIUA: As ever, my words fall on deaf ears. Fine. Do as you like.

[She makes for the door.]

DENAM: Catiua!

[Catiua waits momentarily but leaves quickly.]

LEONAR: Let her go, Denam.

RONWEY: Then we are agreed?

[Denam lowers his head and says nothing.]

RONWEY: Ah, I'd nearly forgotten. Sir Mirdyn has returned.

DENAM: He has? Were there any others?

RONWEY: He and Warren. That's all. Warren suffered a grievous wound. No doubt a visit from you would do much to cheer him.

[A guard bursts into the room.]

SOLDIER: The men stand ready, Sir Leonar.

LEONAR: I'll join them with all haste. Denam, let's away. I know this sits ill with you, but it is our duty.

[Leonar stands outside Almorica before a host of soldiers.]

LEONAR: I make my offer one final time. Answer me, and your lives will be spared. Who leads your band of stragglers, and where is he? Your answer!

HEKTOR: You may take a Galgastani Knight's freedom, Leonar, but never his pride. We do not sell friends, not even for the unkindest price. Would you do any different? I suppose I wouldn't. Very well.

DENAM: Then...

LEONAR: Then we shall hold a public execution.... However! In deference to your honor, we will not bind you, and will furthermore arm you as befits your former station. If you truly desire freedom, fight for it!

[Denam and Leonar team up to fight the group of Galgastani loyalists.]

HEKTOR: Clansmen of Galgastan! Tell our wives and children of how we died here today, of our last service to our homeland! And tell them to avenge us!

LEONAR: Words in the wind, soldier! Our ears are deaf to your cries. We know you who pledged fealty to Balbatos are the true blight upon this land.

[Denam strikes down the enemy.]

HEKTOR: Glory...to Galgastan.

LEONAR: Your leader's sword lies silent. Will you fight on? Then justice has been served. Those surviving will join our ranks from this day forth! We will show them that Walister do not scorn those who embrace our cause!

Almorica

[Denam and Canopus venture to the cottage where Mirdyn and Warren rest.]

MIRDYN: Canopus! And Denam, too! I am glad to see you both well.

DENAM: And you, Sir Mirdyn.

CANOPUS: How is he?

MIRDYN: The Star Seer remains lost in the mists of sleep. But he draws breath and is whole of body.

CANOPUS: That is well, then. And Lancelot and Gildas? Have they not returned?

MIRDYN: I've seen neither since the night of the Bakram attack.

DENAM: It was Sir Gildas who saved me from the Dark Knights' sword that night. Would that I had been warrior enough to return the favor...

MIRDYN: I am sure both will return unharmed. And besides, there was little you could do. ...I hear you search for Vyce. You know where he makes his den?

DENAM: No, but there is a price on his head. Not many places where a wanted man can hide.

MIRDYN: Indeed.

CANOPUS: He would have to go to ground - or well under it - to hide from both the Resistance and what remains of the Galgastani.

MIRDYN: Aye. As we were leaving Rhime, I received report that a company led by an unnamed Dark Knight had taken to the highroad. A commander he was, called to Heim to help defend the town from partisans.

CANOPUS: Of course. These partisans must be the Liberation Front. They intend to strike the fortress at Boed, I'm sure of it! If Vyce should be there...

MIRDYN: They'll have his head in a sack by the morn!

CANOPUS: We ought to make for Heim at once, Denam! How will you ride, Mirdyn?

MIRDYN: With your party, of course. Denam, I know you serve his Grace, but I also know you would not leave Vyce to die an ignoble death.

[Denam nods.]

MIRDYN: Good. Let us ride.

Boed Fortress

[Atop the fortress, the Dark Knights Ozma and Oz and a number of her soldiers have captured their prisoner.]

OZMA: Gave us quite a chase, Abuna, but now it's back to Heim for you.

PRANCET: Godless woman. You...you killed them all!

OZMA: Our work is done, Oz. We withdraw.

OZ: Hold, Sister. I've another prize: The leader of the rabble. Bring her forward! Slew every Bakram soldier that marched with us from Rhime, this one did. A real firebrand. But she doesn't hold a candle to you, dear sister.

[The Dark Knights escort Cerya out.]

CERYA: Kill me and have done with it!

PRANCET: Cerya! You live!

CERYA: Forgive me, Abuna. This is not how I mean to meet again.

PRANCET: You've no cause to seek forgiveness. It is I who have troubled you.

CERYA: If you see my father, tell him his daughter met an honorable death.

OZMA: is this touching melodrama played out? Take him away.

PRANCET: Think not on the grave, Cerya. Live. And know they dare not kill me.

[The Dark Knights lead Prancet away.]

OZMA: What do you plan to do with her, Oz?

OZ: She'll make a fine gift for the High Commander, I should think.

OZMA: Oh? I recall no order to take her alive. Besides, look at her. She'd sooner choke on her own tongue than go a willing captive.

OZ: Her eyes give the truth to your words. What am I to do with her, Sister?

OZMA: You rely on me too much, little Brother. Decide for yourself.

OZ: Such bile. So be it. But where to begin? Darkest lords of Vuir Viou, grab fast these legs and drag them down!

[His enchantment weighs down Cerya.]

OZMA: You've a wicked streak, Oz. Enjoy your games, but don't tarry too long.

[She departs, leaving Oz alone with Cerya.]

OZ: Run, if you can. Name your conspirators and the location of their fastness, and I'll spare your meager life.

[Before he can ask Cerya another question, Denam and company arrive.]

DENAM: Damn! We're too late! Cerya! We're coming!

OZ: Feh, I've drunk my fill of these Walister dregs. A Dark Knight's work is never done.

[Denam ascends the fortress to save Cerya.]

CISTINA: Cerya! My dear sister!

OZ: A sister? I'll be sure you're close at hand to watch your sibling draw her last breath!

CERYA: Why have you come back, Cristina? Leave this place while you can! You walked away from the Liberation Front. This is not your battle!

CISTINA: I've come to save you, you ungrateful fool! I cannot bear to lose my sister. And the Front cannot bear to lose its leader.

OZ: Senseless blather. The Liberation Front is dead. We hacked its body to bits with our swords. Only the head, such as it is, remains.

CISTINA: Front or no, while we draw breath, our deeds can yet change Valeria!

OZ: You're a formidable lot. Still rabble, yet perhaps not so common.

DENAM: Now that you know your enemy, you would do well to lay down your sword. To do otherwise is to throw yourself upon it.

OZ: You dare threaten me, baseborn knave? How I hate these wretched isles and all who dwell upon them! You squabble over Valeria like beggars over scraps. The sooner she is rid of you, the better!

DENAM: Show him no quarter!

OZ: If you had an inkling of all this world encompassed, you would know the piddling place you held in it. But you do not, and so are your isles forever mired in blood and death!

DENAM: You and your kind brought this war to our shores!

OZ: No! You have summoned us here. We come to quiet the storm. We bring order where there is chaos - peace where there is war!

DENAM: Do all Knights of Lodis mantle themselves in such twisted truths?

OZ: The dwarf lectures the giant? Ha! You are more fool than I thought. Lodis is a land of kings! Think you we care about the scraps of some unruly rabble? What can you know, you who hasten toward your own destruction? Destroy yourselves as you like, but do not visit your ruin upon us!

CANOPUS: You there! Dark Knight! Do you always justify your own misdeeds by finding fault in others?

OZ: The listless draw! of a Xenobian... You must be Canopus. We encountered your countrymen at Rhime.

CANOPUS: How...?

OZ: Any truth to the rumors that you were driven from your homeland? Such a sad tale. What's this now? The color has fled your cheek.

CANOPUS: If you set out to anger me, job's done. I'll carve you like a roast!

OZ: You would make a poor mummer, Canopus. I see you for what you truly are.

CANOPUS: Let's hear it then.

OZ: Once, in a battle, you weighed duty against friendship...and friendship won. You renounced the sword that day. So why do you play these piteous islanders false? You act the plain-spoken man to divert them from Xenobia's true intent!

CANOPUS: A fair speech for so foul a tongue. Tell me, are all Knights of Lodis so long-winded? Just as well for you to savor your last words, I suppose.

OZ: Your kind ever were an ignoble lot. Pity my sister is not here. She would have pleased in your death.

[Cerya dies.]

CERYA: **Your father, Denam. He...lives.**

DENAM: **My Father...? What? How!?**

CERYA: **You must...rescue him from the Dark Knights. Your father knows.... He knows.**

[She falls.]

CISTINA: Cerya!

[Denam regroups with Ceyra as Oz falls.]

OZ: It's a dark day sees the likes of this rabble...get the better of me.

[He dies and Cistina is reunited with her sister.]

CERYA: My friends may be lost, but my battle is not over. Denam...your father, Abuna Prancet. He lives. We held him safe in our care until a short while ago.

DENAM: What? How...? Where is he?

CERYA: The Dark Knights left with him just before you arrived.

CISTINA: Why would they bestir themselves over one man?

CERYA: The Dark Knights care nothing for who rules the isles. Denam, it is your father, Prancet Pavel, whom they seek.

DENAM: What could they possibly want with him?

CERYA: I know little more than you. But I can offer one piece of the puzzle. They seek someone - or something - called Mannafloa. Whatever it may be, they are bent on finding it. And there is but one man who knows where it is.

DENAM: My father.

CERYA: Your father holds the key to this war.

DENAM: Is it possible - was he the reason they attacked Golyat?

CERYA: You had best leave. There's no knowing when they might return.

CISTINA: And what will you do, sister?

CERYA: I...I mean to help Abuna Prancet.

CISTINA: Alone? Foolishness! What can you hope to accomplish? She'll not listen to me. Perhaps you can dissuade her from this madness!

DENAM: Madness is a bit...well, yes. What if you were to come with us?

CERYA: I am sorry, but I will not serve under a duke who sanctions the slaughter of innocents. Besides, I have my own duties as head of the Liberation Front. I owe it to our fallen to carry on.

CISTINA: Sister...

CERYA: Look after Cistina for me.

[Cerya departs.]

DENAM: Our father is alive.... I must tell my sister!

Almorica Castle

[Denam, Catua and Ronwey meet.]

RONWEY: Then you're telling me we don't know where Bozeck has gone?

DENAM: That's right, my lord. Nor did the Dark Knights give any indication they knew.

RONWEY: This business with the Dark Knights - why did you engage them?

DENAM: I...I don't understand, my lord.

KNIGHT: You knew full well that Galgastan had not yet been brought to heel. But still you slew a commander of the Dark Knights.

MAGUS: We can ill afford to make an enemy of them now. You were tasked with finding the renegade Vyce Bozeck, were you not? Better to have left that rabble rouser to fend for herself!

DENAM: I...I couldn't...

RONWEY: Enough. What's done is done. Dispatch an envoy to Phidoch. There is yet time to settle this with ink and quill.

KNIGHT: Yes, my lord.

RONWEY: Further, we will raise the price on Bozeck's head to 10,000 Goth.

MAGUS: It shall be done.

RONWEY: We cannot suffer him to come and go as he wills. With a bounty so high, he will think twice before haking his presence known. As for the rest, it is in the hands of the headhunters. Our foremost concern is rooting out what followers of Balbatos remain and securing Coritanae. To which end, I want you to travel to Asyton.

DENAM: To find these followers of Balbatos?

RONWEY: Difficult to say. We know only that you face a formidable foe. We've not heard from one of our companies stationed in Asyton for some time now. We believe they are responsible. What's worse, the casualties were not limited to our soldiers. Many smallfolk have turned up dead as well. Our response must be swift, decisive. I wish for you to lead it. I trust I may rely upon you?

DENAM: ...Yes, my lord.

RONWEY: Splendid. You're to leave at once. Oh, there was on other thing. Scarce more than a rumor, in truth.

MAGUS: we are told that a man matching the description of the Xenobian Knight Sir Gildas has been seen in Asyton.

DENAM: Sir Gildas? What would he be doing there?

KNIGHT: Took fright and fled from Rhime, no doubt. Bloody coward.

DENAM (standing): Sir Gildas is no coward!

RONWEY: Silence! I'll not have you at each other's throats! Go to Asyton. Send back word of what has happened. I know our hero will not disappoint.

[Denam leaves to catch up with Catiua in the halls of Almorica after the counsel.]

DENAM: Sister, wait!

CATIUA: What does the great hero need of me?

DENAM: Please, don't. You're still upset, aren't you.

CATIUA: If you have no urgent need, I'll be on my way.

DENAM: It's father. He's alive!

CATIUA: What? So he lives. What now?

DENAM: What now? We rescue him! What else?

CATIUA: Even if he is no true father to us?

DENAM: What do you mean?

CATIUA: I mean we are orphans, brother. He is not our father. Not by blood, at any rate.

DENAM: No.... Who told you this? It's a lie! It must be!

CATIUA: It is no lie. I overheard him talking about it once, long ago. In all the world, you're the only family I have.

DENAM: Why tell me this only now?

[Catiua turns her head.]

CATIUA: Because you're leaving me.

DENAM: Leaving you? Scarce a moment goes by we are not at each other's side! And so it shall remain. I will never leave you.

CATIUA: There is a lie! Someday, you will cast me aside as you did Vyce!

DENAM: No, sister.

CATIUA: I'm alone without you...

[She runs away.]

DENAM: Catiua!

Tynemouth Hill

[On the road to Asyton, Denam encounters a familiar face.]

GANPP: I remember you, boy! The Wheel brought us back together, has it? Someone up there must like ol' Ganpp. Obda! Berda! To me!

[He whistles and his flying gryphon pets fly to his side.]

GANPP: You're well acquainted with Berda and Obda, but I been brewin' something special for just such an occasion! Banga! Zanga! To Battle!

[Another whistle introduces a cockatrice pair.]

GANPP: Time to repay his eminence's kindness. Today you feed on the rich stew of vengeance!

[Denam demolishes Ganpp again.]

GANPP: Piss and blood! The day is theirs! Next we meet will be the last! I won't forget what it was you done here!

[He flees and his animal companions follow swiftly.]

Krysaro

[On the way to Asyton, Denam encounters Leonar and a group of allies tucked away.]

LEONAR: The Balbatos loyals fell upon them at Tynemouth. a tenacious lot, I'll give them that. We lost near twenty men uprooting those who had gone to ground in the city.

PHAESTA: What business is it of his? Why are you here, hero? Come to aid the heirophant's men as you did the partisan rats in Boed?

LEONAR: Enough.

PHAESTA: But he is a traitor!

LEONAR: I said enough!

[The woman leaves.]

LEONAR: Forgive her, Denam. She speaks in anger.

DENAM: Hmph.

LEONAR: I hate to part so soon, but I fear I must. They've taken captives and holed themselves up in Qadriga Fortress. I douse one fire, only to have ten others kindle in its place. No rest for the weary, eh? Do not let her words dishearten you, Denam. I know you for the man you truly are.

Qadriga Fortress

[Denam makes his way to Qadriga where a number of bodies litter the ground.]

DENAM: Phaesta! Are you injured!?

BOTIS: Ha! More grist for the mill! I'll make corpses of you all!

[They fight, reviving the fallen.]

TAMUZ: Thanks, friend. Ye saved my life.

CHAMOS: I am ashamed at my own lack of prowess. Thank you, boy.

PHAESTA: Thank...thank you. It seems I am in your debt.

DENAM: What of Leonar? Where is he?

PHAESTA: Taken, inside the castle. I fear he has not long to live!

[Denam rescues the injured.]

BOTIS: H-heirophant...forgive me!

[Denam arrives to save his friend in time.]

DENAM: Sir Leonar! It is good to see you.

LEONAR: So the thinking of the guards was your work! This marks twice you've saved my life. You have my thanks.

[A man creeps in.]

LEONAR: Oh, him? He's no enemy. He's a captive here. Sir Hobyrim, this way.

[The man joins them.]

LEONAR: This is -

HOBYRIM: I know you. Denam, yes?

LEONAR: You can see him!?

HOBYRIM: Nay. 'Tis more a feeling than a seeing. He has the air of a hero to him.

DENAM: Denam Pavel, if it please you.

HOBYRIM: It does. I am Hobyrim.... Hobyrim Vandam.

LEONAR: Sir Hobyrim may lack the gift of sight, but he is gifted in other ways. Hobyrim Steelsong, they call him. It was he who dispatched what guards remained here.

HOBYRIM: I hear you fight the Dark Knights. Are they your true enemy, then?

[Choice 1 - In truth, yes.]

DENAM: As I draw breath, the Dark Knights are my foemen. Had they not come to these islands, had they not lent their swords to the Bakram.... This conflict would not be!

[Choice 2 - I am no longer certain.]

DENAM: It is a puzzle. That they present the clearest danger, I have no doubt. Yet I feel they are just a piece in a larger game. It is those who would wield such power who trouble me.

HOBYRIM: I see. In a manner of speaking. Let me join your struggle, then. Should I prove more a burden than a boon, I will depart, bearing you no malice.
[Choice 1 - You would be welcome.]

DENAM: You would be a welcome addition.

HOBYRIM: Ah, with Sir Leonar's permission. I had promised him my sword. Then promise me you'll return in one piece.

LEONAR: You have it, and my blessing besides.

[Choice 2 - I cannot accept your offer.]

DENAM: I'm sorry. Were circumstances different...

HOBYRIM: Understood. No matter. I am sure we will meet again. Then my sword goes to you, Leonar, as discussed. I hope it is no burden?

LEONAR: Hardly. I welcome your aid.

[Leonar turns to Denam.]

LEONAR: You make for Asyton, yes? Then promise me you'll return in one piece.

Port Asyton

[Denam arrives in Port Asyton, where a mysterious knight embattles a group of soldiers. A priest looks on in worry.]

WOMAN: Dievold, brother!

[The man advances on the woman as Denam arrives, seeming to recognize him.]

DENAM: Gildas!? What's going on down there?

GILDAS: ...

[The soldiers fight back this strange and ghastly version of Sir Gildas.]

GILDAS: ...

[He abandons the town.]

DENAM: Gildas! Wait!

[The remaining forces center in on the woman.]

WOMAN: No, stay away!

[The soldier who attacked Sir Gildas rushes to the woman.]

DIEVOLD: Stand back, Oelias!

OELIAS: Help.... Please, help us!

DENAM: We'll be there as soon as we can!

[Divold dies.]

OELIAS: Dievold, no! No...how could this have happened?

[Oelias dies.]

DIEVOLD: Oelias! No.... Great Father! What have I done!?

[Denam finds himself confronted with a ghostly adversary but manages to reach the distressed siblings in time.]

DENAM: What has befallen Gildas?

Port Asyton

[Denam meets with Oelias and Dievold.]

OELIAS: Thank you for your aid, knight. I am Oelias. And this is my brother. Forgive his silence. he is not given much to conversing.

DIEVOLD: No, I would thank you myself. My name is Dievold.... Forgive my rasp.

OELIAS: My brother is...ill. It has ravaged his throat.

DENAM: I am Denam. I fight for the Resistance. Please, you must tell me what has happened here.

OELIAS: That knight who attacked - the one with the foreign crest upon his armor. He was one of yours?

DENAM: Gildas, you mean? Yes, he was a staunch ally. I had not seen him since the night of the Bakram attack on Rhime. No one knew what had befallen him.

OELIAS: Ah...then I have ill news for you. That was not the man you know.

DENAM: No, I'm quite certain that was Gildas.

OELIAS: You mistake me. Did you not see them? The ones pallid of flesh?

DENAM: What, the zombies? ...What are you saying? You don't mean that Gildas...that he was - no!

OELIAS: There is a man who wields the walking dead as you wield your sword. He plays with death, defiling the very substance of life and profaning all that is sacred.

DENAM: Who is he?

OELIAS: The most vile necromancer in Galgastan, Nybeth Obdilord. ...My father. I am Oelias Obdilord, the necromancer's daughter. Though it gives me no pride to say it.

DENAM: Nybeth! What foul turn is this?

OELIAS: Please, you must let us join your Resistance. We would aid you in defeating the necromancer.

DENAM: You'd fight your own father? For true?

[Without Dievold.]

OELIAS: Nybeth would give his very life to the darkness to sate his desire for knowledge. As for others' lives, he cares not one whit. Humans are as insects to him, subjects for experimentation. I saw it myself when my brother died. Why mourn, when my brother's passing provided the perfect opportunity to work his sorcery? I hate him.... With all my being, I hate him! Now that my brother has finally been laid to rest, it is my father's turn!

OELIAS: Yes. My brother..

DIEVOLD: Your eyes will tell you what my tongue cannot.

[He removes his helmet and reveals a pasty and ghastly visage.]

DENAM: Ah!?

[Dievold replaces his helmet.]

DENAM: What...are you? Do you even live!?

DIEVOLD: Hmph. A riddle, to be sure, to which not even I know an answer. My bones are knit with magics, not sinew. What's more, though my head is mine, my body is another's.

DENAM: What!?

OELIAS: My brother...was executed by Balbatos when the warring began, as an example to others who would defy the Heirophant. But my father, Nybeth, used a soul-fetching spell to call him back from the shores of death.

DENAM: A soul-fetch...?

DIEVOLD: Yes. I was returned to this world against my will. A full five days after my departure. When I awoke, I found that my body was not my own. My father had affixed my head to another corpse. He told me then that my old body had suffered damage too great to be of further use. But...I suspect that was a lie. He merely wanted to see if the transposing would work.

OELIAS: That, and the soul-fetch was incomplete.

DIEVOLD: It is a difficult thing to fetch a departed soul and seat it within a mortal shell. Though my father's magic did bind me to this body, I know now how long it will endure.

DENAM: What happens when the spell wears off?

DIEVOLD: Death. Again.

DENAM: ...I'm sorry.

OELIAS: Our father...continues his experimentations, trying to perfect the spell. He has even joined in league with Balbatos - the very man who killed his son - to satisfy his need for corpses. I.... I hate him! I hate him for his betrayal, and for what he did to my brother!

[Choice 1 - Very well, you may join us.]

DENAM: Join our ranks. March with us.

OELIAS: Thank you. You'll not regret it.

DENAM: Let us after Nybeth, then. I've seen enough of his dark work here. I do not care to see more.

OELIAS: I have heard that our father has crossed the straits to the Isle of Banhamuba.

DENAM: Then we must make haste.

[Choice 2 - I'm sorry, but I must refuse.]

DENAM: I do not see how you can aid us, ardent though you may be.

OELIAS: You are right, of course. What use a sybil, untrained in combat? I should not have asked. Farewell, knight. Thank you for your help.

DIEVOLD: If you would pursue our father, cross the straits to the Isle of Banhamuba. Stop him, lest the dead never know rest.

OELIAS: May the light shine upon your path.

Port Asyton (without Oelias)

DIEVOLD: I thank you for your help. My name is Dievold.... Forgive my rasp.

DENAM: I am Denam. I fight for the Resistance. Please, you must tell me what has happened here.

DIEVOLD: That knight who attacked Oelias - he with the foreign crest upon his armor. He was one of yours?

DENAM: Gildas, you mean? Yes, he was a staunch ally. The woman who fell in the battle - Oelias, you said? - who was she?

DIEVOLD: She was my blood...

DENAM: Then I am sorry we could not save her.

DIEVOLD: Your eyes will tell me what my tongue cannot.

[He removes his helmet and reveals a pasty and ghastly visage.]

DENAM: Ah!? What...are you? Do you even live!?

DIEVOLD: Hmph. A riddle, to be sure, to which not even I know an answer. My bones are knit with magics, not sinew. What's more, though my head is mine, my body is another's.

DENAM: What!?

DIEVOLD: When the warring began after Dorgalua's passing, I was executed - an example to others who would rise against Balbatos.

DENAM: Executed!? How -

DIEVOLD: You know of the necromancer, Nybeth?

DENAM: Aye, though I wish I did not. The necromancer of Galgastan, Nybeth Obdilord, is a curse given flesh.

DIEVOLD: Yes, he is a curse. And also my father.

DENAM: Your father!

DIEVOLD: My father Nybeth used a soul-fetching spell to drag me back to the world of the living.

DENAM: A soul-fetch...?

DIEVOLD: Yes. I was returned to this world against my will. A full five days after my departure. When I awoke, I found that my body was not my own. My father had affixed my head to another corpse. He told me then that my old body had suffered damage too great to be of further use. But...I suspect that was a lie. He merely wanted to see if the transposing would work. As if that was not enough, the soul-fetch was incomplete. It is a difficult thing to fetch a departed soul and seat it without a mortal shell. Though my father's magic did bind me to this body, I know not how long it will endure.

DENAM: What happens when the spell wears off?

DIEVOLD: Death. Again.

DENAM: ...I'm sorry.

DIEVOLD: That outland knight you called your companion ran afoul of my father...

DENAM: No...

DIEVOLD: I am sad to say that he and I are of a kind, now. No longer truly part of this world.

DENAM: No.... Damn him!

DIEVOLD: I would offer you my aid in exchange for yours. Nybeth must be stopped. To let him live would be to sow the seeds of some future strife. ...And swell the ranks of his victims, like your friend, and Oelias...and myself.

[Choice 1 - Very well, you may join us.]

DENAM: Join our ranks. March with us.

DIEVOLD: I thank you. What time remains to me shall be yours.

DENAM: The woman.... Oelias, you called her? She, too, was a victim?

DIEVOLD: That...is a tale for another day.

DENAM: Nybeth is out there. Let's be off.

DIEVOLD: I understand he has crossed the straits to the Isle of Banhamuba.

DENAM: Then we must make haste.

[Choice 2 - I'm sorry, but I must refuse.]

DENAM: Though I do not doubt your willingness, I do not think you can help us.

DIEVOLD: I understand. Promise me, then, that you will use caution. Nybeth is mad, but no less dangerous for it. Perhaps more. If you would pursue him, cross the straits to the Isle of Banhamuba. Stop him, lest the dead never know rest.

[He leaves.]

Mount Hedon

[Denam travels beyond the sea where apprentices to Nybeth awaits.]

CASSANDRA: You are far from home, Denam of Golyat!

CRESSIDA: Denam, you say? Then we are betrayed! Cursed sister...

CASSANDRA: Nothing I can't handle, Cressida. Go now. Inform master Nybeth of our visitor.

CRESSIDA: What? And leave you here alone, mother? You must permit me to stay, I beg you!

CASSANDRA: Do not worry yourself over me. Master Nybeth's artifact will serve, should it come to that. Now, get you gone!

CRESSIDA: Have care, mother!

[She leaves and Cassandra prepares a spell.]

CASSANDRA: Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Undead and monstrous enemies appear with a thirst for blood.]

CASSANDRA: The blood of my dearest daughter, Moldova, stains your hands. Blood calls for blood.

[Denam defeats the horde.]

CASSANDRA: I did not think to need this now...

[She raises a ring to the sky which shatters into hundreds of sparkling orbs.]

CASSANDRA: What!?! No! Nybeth has doomed me!

[She falls to her death.]

Hagia Banhamuba

[Denam arrives at the technologically advanced site where undead filter the grounds.]

DENAM: One false step near that pit, and they'll need no swords or sorcery to do us in.

CRESSIDA: That you profane this temple can only mean my mother and I are forever parted.

DENAM: It is she who profaned the dead. I'll not mourn her passing. Yield now, or rejoin her in the ever-world.

CRESSIDA: Who are you to judge, you who have slain legions in your war? The wage of your ambition is paid in the lives of others. You can never understand the prize for which we struggle.

DENAM: You use souls and corpses for sport! No prize is worth such sacrilege.

CRESSIDA: I've no time to argue with the likes of you. I must focus on the task at hand, both for my sister, and now my mother. Your corpse will make a fine gift for Master Nybeth! Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Again a host of undead and malicious foes appear.]

CRESSIDA: Master Nybeth...forgive me...

[She falls and Denam glances around for his friend.]

DENAM: Sir Gildas! Are you here? Answer if you can hear me!

Ndamsa Fortress

[Having cut through Nybeth's minions, Denam encounters the necromancer himself as he speaks to a zombified Sir Gildas.]

NYBETH: Hrm.... The flesh has already begun to fail. I have yet to perfect my art. A living-corpse incantation yields the subject undead. Resurrect restores life to the body, but does naught for the soul. But Dievold fared better than most. His memories remain intact. That's one hurdle cleared, at least. But what is the mind without the body? Each new success brings only another failure. But such are the restraints I must work against. No small task, restoring life to the dead. Another of my works, a failure. Forgive me. Clearly it is not enough to call the soul back to a house no longer fit to hold it. But what if there were some means of leaving behind the shattered body - a transmigration of the soul? Perhaps that way lies the path to vanquish death. If I must resort to the tools of the Magi to learn the secrets I seek, then so be it.

[Denam and company draw their attention.]

NYBETH: Ah, what's this? A visitor?

OELIAS: Please, father, you must stop this! Put an end to this suffering!

NYBETH: What suffering? You can't mean my zombies! They attack of their own will. They cannot abide the living, and death is an agony. They simply seek more of their own, and I have given them hope! It is gratitude I am owed, not resentment. Don't spout that tired doctrine the church passes for the truth! You were too weak to save Dievold's soul. What makes you think you can save these others?

OELIAS: I'll not turn my back on them and run as you did! I do not despair of life as you, father. I revel in each moment!

NYBETH: Ever the self-righteous one. A quality I found endearing, once. I will not enjoy killing you, but I see no other way. Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Nybeth summons his minions and Denam launches to attack.]

DIEVOLD: Nybeth...father! You must end this! Your sorcery brings only suffering!

NYBETH: How can you say such things, Dievold? Is it not thanks to my power that you stand here now? Yes, my techniques are imperfect. I will be the first to admit I have caused discomfort! But, when I do perfect them, then we will know true succor from the ravages of death! Is that not worth some pain along the path?

DIEVOLD: What you do sins against life. It is a twisting of the Great Father's providence. It can never be perfect, for by its very nature it is corruption!

NYBETH: Great Father? Don't chastise me with faerie tales, child. I am the only father you will ever have! You expect me to bend to the will of an imaginary being, when my own purpose lies so clearly before me? We are born only to die. If that is the providence given us by life, then I reject it! I make my own way through this world. My steely will, my shining intellect - these are light enough for me to follow!

DIEVOLD: Then I must slay you before you take any more down your twisted path to hell, old man.

NYBETH: Yes. Enough of words. Deeds bring transformation! Swing your sword as you will!

OELIAS: I don't understand. What possible benefit could your abhorrent inquiries merit? I have no love for death, but I know better than to seek to change it, to bend the laws that bind us to our fate. Nor do I believe that life unfairly reclaimed is true life. Lashing a tortured soul to a corpse is not salvation - it is cruelty!

NYBETH: How my own flesh and blood cannot see the wonder I work is beyond me. Does the world not lament the veil of death, and likewise rejoice to see it lifted?

OELIAS: You disregard death's purpose. It is the final reckoning toward which we strive. Life's ambrosia is sweet only when we know the cup will run dry!

NYBETH: The same words you said to me before. Yet they still ring false, a paper-thin veneer that cannot disguise your fear. Death terrifies you, as it does us all.

OELIAS: I fear death, yes, yet I will strive to accept it when my time comes. For I believe in my heart that death brings more than despair!

[The siblings band together and fight off their father.]

NYBETH: An...unfitting end to my research...

[Once more the necromancer transforms into a bat and vanishes.]

DENAM: Wait, Nybeth!

GILDAS: What fell change has come upon me?

DENAM: Gildas!

GILDAS: Ah...Denam...? You are...unharmd. That is well. That is...

[Gildas falls and dies.]

DENAM: Gildas, no!

Almorica Castle

[Back in Almorica, Duke Ronwey and Leonar convene.]

RONWEY: She says she wants to return to Golyat and will not listen to reason...the wretched girl.

LEONAR: It is only a half-day's journey, your Grace. Why not indulge her?

RONWEY: Indulge her? When our ranks are filled with men and women eager to see home and hearth again? Besides...we need Catiua here if we're to keep Denam close.

LEONAR: I understand. Permit me to speak with her.

RONWEY: Gladly.

[Outside in the hall Leonar passes a priest. He calls to her.]

LEONAR: A word, sybil. Have you seen Catiua?

SIBYL: Catiua? ...I have not. Not since the noon bread, in truth.

LEONAR: I see. On your way.

[They leave. Leonar walks to the outskirts of the castle, looks around and sees no sign of Catiua.]

LEONAR: I hope she has not done anything rash.

Golyat

[At night, Catiua stands alone at the town pier, staring out into the sea.]

CATIUA: Denam.... I am alone without you.

VOICE: No. You have always been alone.

CATIUA (turning): Who's there!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot appears from the shadows.]

CATIUA: Lancelot Tartaros! What are you doing here?

LANSELOT: Your mother left this world upon your birth. And your father followed her only a few months before the war broke out. Your blood begins and ends with you, Catiua. You are alone, truly.

CATIUA: what are you talking about? I have a brother! Surely you've not forgotten Denam!

LANSELOT: I gather you have realized the Abuna was not your father. Yet you assumed that your "brother" shared your orphaned lineage. You assumed...wrongly.

[A flash of lightning streaks across the sky.]

CATIUA: Then who am I? Who do you say I am!?

LANSELOT: Versalia. Your true name is Versalia Oberyth.

CATIUA: Versalia Oberyth.... That's not possible.

LANSELOT: You are cautious. Good. House Oberyth gave Valeria her king. You are his daughter.

[Another flash of lightning is followed by a sudden downpour.]

LANSELOT: But it was not Queen Vernotta who bore you into this world. One of her handmaidens, a girl named Mannaflora, caught the king's eye. But even as you quickened in the womb, the queen carried the unborn prince. Wanting no rival for her son, she expelled your mother from the castle before you were born. Mannaflora died giving birth to you.

CATIUA: Who would believe such a tale?

LANSELOT: It was the Bakram regent, Brantyn Morne, who took you in. He left you in the care of his brother, Abuna Prancet. Were it not for you and your secret, a man such as Brantyn would never have risen so high or so swift.

CATIUA: Nonsense and lies!

LANSELOT: But there is proof: Your necklace. It bears an inscription, written in the old tongue. One with your religious training should have no trouble reading it.

CATIUA: ...

LANSELOT: Labon Versalia xan phon, destonia lera phoenan. To my daughter Versalia, eternal beloved. A gift from King Dorgalua to celebrate your birth. The Queen made it appear as though you and your mother had been killed. He went to his grave full expecting to meet you in the beyond. You must have read that inscription. Nurtured doubts about your origins. Am I wrong?

CATIUA: What do you want from me?

LANSELOT: For you to return with us to Heim.

[A pair of men join Lanselot.]

LANSELOT: There, Abuna Prancet can answer any other questions you may have.

[He waits for Catiua to respond. She does not.]

LANSELOT: This way, Princess Catiua.

[Catiua follows Lanselot.]

Almorica Castle

[Denam and Duke Ronwey discuss the events from Port Asyton and Leonar arrives.]

LEONAR: Sorry to keep you waiting, your Grace.

RONWEY: Yes, yes. Be seated. The Dark Knights have agreed to an informal meeting. We must convince them that we seek a truce with the Bakram. Naturally, with the Dark Knights mediating the negotiations. Ah, it's almost too good to be true. I needn't tell you I have no intention of forging a truce. Brantyn must die if we are to realize our ambitions. Besides, what assurance have we that he would abide by such an agreement? Too many have died to end this with half measures.

LEONAR: Then we move forward with our plans to retake Rhime.

DENAM: What? We can't openly defy the Dark Knights!

LEONAR: The prospect unmans you? It would not be the first time you faced them in battle.

RONWEY: They think us weary of fighting, and that shall be their undoing. Their conceit blinds them. They will not expect us to fight any more than they will expect us to win.

LEONAR: We will seize Sir Lanselot at the parley. The Dark Knights won't dare move against us while we hold their high champion.

DENAM: And what of the Bakram forces at Rhime?

LEONAR: Your company will recapture the city.

DENAM: How are we meant to reach her, much less take her? While one man or two might approach undetected, an entire company is likely to draw notice.

LEONAR: True, you cannot hope to cross Golborza without alerting them.

DENAM: Golborza is out, and they will have eyes along the coast. The Burnham Massif rises to the west, but - you can't think we'll scale mountains to reach them!

LEONAR: Why not? It's the last thing they would expect.

RONWEY: There's no one else I can trust with this.

[A soldier rushes in.]

MESSENGER: Dark news, your grace. Coritanae has fallen!

RONWEY: No need for alarm. All goes as planned. We witness the death rattle of Balbatos's men. We drew down our numbers at Coritanae to lure them to one place - the easier to snuff them out. It aids in our deception of the Dark Knights, as well. They will think us desperate. Our Hero should be capable of dealing with Coritanae as well, no? Good. Now, we had best be going. There's much to be done.

LEONAR: We move, your grace.

Golyat

[In a trip to Golyat, Denam misses Catiua. He happens instead upon a gang of mercenaries.]

ORGEA: You've a keen nose to find me here.... That man we took...a scout of yours, was it? Bah! Ill luck, that. Well, plenty of time for remorse after we've carved you into sausages. Look sharp!

[Denam squashes the Galgastani troops.]

ORGEA: Xaebos.... The assault on Almorica...was not to be.

[Denam searches the town for the captive scout that the Galgastani believed to be his man. The man, it turns out, was in no need of being saved. He easily defeats the men that held him captive, leaving one gasping survivor.]

SOLDIER: Yeeearrrgh! Spare me!

[The Galgastani runs headfirst into Denam.]

SOLDIER: Waugh!

Scout: You with this quailing excuse for a soldier?

SOLDIER: P-please! Forgiveness! I-I've no quarrel with the Resistance!

[The scout advances.]

SOLDIER: H-he's no man! He's a demon! Thought he couldn't see, we did. Until he left two of me men with stumps for heads! I'm too young to die here! We...we was just takin' orders!

DENAM: Leave.

[The soldier gratefully escapes.]

SOLDIER: Oh, thank you! Thank you, sir! I'll not forget this! Not for as long as I live!

DENAM: I said leave!

SCOUT: What's this? Kindness wears armor.

DENAM: Denam Pavel, if it please you.

SCOUT: Ah, it does indeed! The young Hero of the Resistance, hmm? I am Hobyrim.... Hobyrim Vandam.

DENAM: Why are you here?

HOBYRIM: Heard there was a fight going on, 'tween your lot and the Dark Knights. Thought I might join in.

DENAM: You've some score to settle with the Dark Knights?

HOBYRIM: Aye, you might say that. What if I told you it was they who stole the light from me?

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: I may not be able to see, but my sword is truer than most. Let me join your struggle, then. Should I prove more a burden than a boon, I will depart, bearing you no malice.

[Choice 1 - You would be welcome.]

DENAM: You would be a welcome addition.

HOBYRIM: You've my thanks, then, and my sword.

[The sightless swordsman joins Denam's ranks.]

[Choice 2 - I cannot accept your offer.]

CHOICE MISSING

Gates of Coritanae

[Denam and company arrive at Coritanae, once again under the control of the Galgastani.]

KNIGHT: Over here! He's on the roof!

[Vyce sprints across the roof and is cornered by Galgastani soldiers.]

VYCE: Piss and blood.

KNIGHT (turning): What? The Walister!?

DENAM: Vyce! Are you all right?

VYCE: I can look after myself.

[He lunges forward and slices at one of the guards, allowing him to flee. A woman on the ground commands the guards on the keep.]

GILDORA: You! After him! I'll deal with these! I will avenge my lord. For Balbatos!

[Denam uses Walister forces to take back Coritanae.]

DENAM: Warriors of Galgastan! Lay down your arms and surrender! Your clansmen do not wish to see you continue this fight. Nor do they wish to see you dead! Don't throw away your lives. Join us in rebuilding this land!

GILDORA: Empty words! A Galgastani does not fool so easily!

[Denam has no choice but to vanquish them all.]

GILDORA: Forgive me, Balbatos.

DENAM: No time to rest! Coritanae will be ours again!

Coritanae Ward

[Denam encounters the leader of the Galgastani forces standing boldly to face him.]

XAEBOS: We may be all that's left of Galgastan. But we'll fight to the last. Look well, boy. This is how men of honor meet death!

[Denam charges.]

XAEBOS: Tell me! Why do you follow the duke, Denam of Golyat? He lays the blame for Balmamusa at your door, brings disgrace upon your name. Your kinsmen revile you as a traitor. But like a beaten cur, you return for more. How do you live with yourself?

DENAM: I have always done what I thought best. Who can do more? When the duke ordered Balmamusa put to the torch, I refused. They deserved better than to be used as pieces in his game. But the wheel has turned. Only a fool would press a dagger to the duke's throat with a Bakram knife at his back!

XAEBOS: I see the principle that guides you, such as it is. When you accept the choices offered you by another, you do their bidding. How can a creature unable to make his own choices know which course is best? But you do not trouble yourself with wondering what's best for kin or for country. You choose only what's best for yourself! You are driven by survival. It is cowardice guides your hand!

DENAM: Enough!

[They continue to fight.]

DENAM: Do you think we've forgotten what you've done? If this is the fruit of principles. What good are they?

XAEBOS: Fool! Good and evil are matters decided by history. A hundred years hence, the bards will sing of our noble struggle against Walister oppression. To make it so, we need only win. It is the victor who pens the tale!

DENAM: Then Balbatos and all his works are surely evil, for he has lost! Your deaths are only the epilogue.

XAEBOS: True enough. We have lost. But you know the duke for the monster he is. You can shut your eyes, but he won't go away. And when he is defeated, when he stands revealed, you are the one they will vilify! You knew him for a tyrant and did nothing. When they sing of the Walister, let them sing of that!

[Xaebos's resolve cannot let him stand against Denam.]

XAEBOS: Defeat is a bitter draught...

[He falls and Denam glances around.]

DENAM: Vyce, are you there? If you can hear me, answer!

VYCE (from afar): Did you think to buy my loyalty by saving my life?

DENAM: I only wanted to help.

VYCE: Do me no favors! I swear to you, someday you'll regret saving me.

DENAM: Vyce, wait!

[Denam never finds Vyce and proceeds on as the duke requested.]

Mount Weobry

[Denam begins the long trek to Rhime.]

DENAM: We can ill afford casualties before we've even reached Rhime. Be careful! Steady on. The real battle lies ahead!

Almorica Castle

[Duke Ronwey and Leonar and a corps of Knights surround Balxephon the Dark Knight.]

BALXEPHON: You don't understand what you're doing!

RONWEY: I assure you I do. You'll make a most valuable hostage. Though in truth we had hoped to capture Lancelot, not his second.

BALXEPHON: Fool! Hadn't you guessed the true purpose of this meeting? We were prepared to hand these isles over to your Resistance. You've thrown away your one chance at greatness!

RONWEY: Silence! I cannot bear such arrogance. Grown tired of Brantyn, have you? Thought to find a new puppet? We need no borrowed steel to crush the Bakram! Leonar. The time is ripe.

LEONAR: As you say. Send word to Denam. Tell him everything is in place. The enemy must not hear of this - not one whisper!

KNIGHT: Understood, m'lord.

[The Knight excuses himself.]

BALXEPHON: Your armies already march? When? How?

RONWEY: Ha! You can't truly think we'd tell you.

BALXEPHON: You'll pay dearly for this!

RONWEY: Were I you, I should be more worried about myself. You're safe enough...for a time. After all, you're no good to us dead. Until Rhime falls, you will remain here as our...guest.

[Knights escort Balxephon away.]

Arkhaiopolis of Rhime

[Denam arrives at Rhime where Bakram troops still hold.]

DENAM: Bakram marauders, hear me. You trespass on Walister soil. You defile the noble city of Rhime with your presence. Throw down your weapons and quit this place.

KNIGHT: How's this? Where did they come from?

MAGUS: What matter? The Dark Knights will make quick work of them.

[The Dark Knight Ozma arrives and casts an angry glare at Denam.]

OZMA: You! My brother's death is on your head!

[Another Dark Knight arrives.]

DARK KNIGHT: Dame Ozma, we've just received word. They hold Sir Balxephon hostage.

OZMA: What!? They force our hand. Damn them! We must withdraw!

[They flee.]

DENAM: Do not look to Lodis to save you. See how they leave you in your hour of need?

MAGUS: He's right. The Dark Knights do not come. We're alone.

KNIGHT: Faith, mage! I pull a hair for Lodis. We can handle this rabble. Past time we put these Walister in their place. Come on, then!

DENAM: So much for reasoning with them.

[Denam and company attack the remaining Bakram soldiers.]

DENAM: Rhime is ours again!

Almorica Castle

[Duke Ronwey, Leonar and Walister Knights hold counsel when a messenger runs in.]

SOLDIER: My lord, I've just come from Rhime. We've retaken the city.

LEONAR: Well done. Your grace, I'll send word to our armies at Almorica. Have them begin their march for Phidoch.

RONWEY: Yes, with all haste. We cannot afford them a moment's reprieve.

[A commotion rouses outside, drawing the group's attention.]

OZMA (from afar): Sir Balxephon! Thank the star you're unharmed!

LEONAR: With me! Now!

[Leonar charges with Knights in tow to the jail where fallen soldiers litter the hallway.]

KNIGHT: It's shut tight, sir

LEONAR: To the side!

[Leonar attempts to break the door and eventually knocks it over. He rushes in and finds a window broken and Balxephon freed.]

LEONAR: Gone! Hells! Wait...the Duke!

[A bloodied and raging Vyce holds Duke Ronwey at knife point, breathing hard.]

VYCE: Who...holds the power now, your grace?

RONWEY: What madness has taken you Vyce!? You've your blade to the wrong throat, friend!

[Leonar arrives.]

RONWEY: Leonar! Thank the Father!

VYCE: Feh. I was hoping you'd keep away.

LEONAR: Cease this at once, Vyce! Why turn on your staunchest ally, your liege?

VYCE: Quiet, traitor! You...you yourself.... Ungk!

LEONAR: Vyce! You're wounded. Throw down your sword, I'll bind your wounds myself. End this, Vyce.

VYCE: And be discarded like so much refuse? I know what becomes of those who've outlived their usefulness.

RONWEY: Please! A pardon, I'll issue a pardon! Just spare my life!

VYCE: Your braying's loud in my ears, old man.

[Vyce slices quickly and expertly.]

RONWEY: Aaugh!

[The duke collapses and the knights charge, dishing equally fatal blows to Vyce. He stumbles back.]

VYCE: Ca...tiua...

[The soldiers encircle Ronwey.]

KNIGHT: ...He's gone.

LEONAR: No... By the Great Father, no!

Almorica Castle

[Denam, Leonar and various other Resistance members hold up in the duke's former meeting chamber. Leonar sits at the head of the table.]

MAGUS: Can we truly take Phidoch Castle?

WICCE: Can we afford to doubt? The die has already been cast.

WARRIOR: Perhaps we might hold out against the Bakram host...but against the Dark Knights?

ARCHER: How can we continue on this course without his Grace's guiding hand? We cannot.

KNIGHT: You would suggest some peaceful resolution to this? Now!?

WICCE: He's right. We should attack now, strike before they've time to shore up their defenses.

LEONAR: Time.... We have no time. Certainly not for fighting amongst ourselves.

[He stands and moves to the window.]

LEONAR: Recall what the Duke struggled for! Recall **his** dream! Do not tell me you have forgotten.

[He turns to the tabled group and throws out his hands.]

LEONAR: Why have we been fighting all these long months? For the Walister? Was it to claim this island as our own? From some base greed? No - I say no! If we were driven by avarice, the Galgastani would have little cause to follow us, or indeed, to do anything but resist us. For what have we bled, I ask you? Who are our enemies? Heirophant Balbatos of Galgastan, yes, and Brantyn Morne of the Bakram, and the Dark Knights! It is these men who have forced our people to sacrifice so much, who have tortured and trampled the people under well-shod heels! While they remain standing, true peace will find no purchase on these isles. We must remember, friends, that this is why we fight. To bury them! Even should it mean my death, I go willingly in the knowledge that I gave every ounce of flesh, every dram of blood to this end. We have the right in this conflict - justice is on our side - and so are we compelled to action!

[The Resistance members bow their heads in silence for a moment.]

ARCHER: Yes, you're right. For the people if not for ourselves.

MAGUS: And for his grace's memory. We must carry on his struggle!

WICCE: Sir Leonar! What would you have us do?

[Leonar reclaims his seat after his rousing speech.]

LEONAR: Lay siege to Phidoch Castle! Tear her down brick by brick! Phidoch's walls are stout, but a castle is only as strong as its garrison. The Bakram within stir no fear in me. The problem is the Dark Knights. If the knights were to ride in force, we would crumble before them. Therefore, I propose a two-pronged attack to divide their strength. I will lead one division, and Denam the other. Are we agreed?

[Denam stands, turns to Leonar and nods resolutely.]

LEONAR: One of us from the south, the other from the west. I will leave that choice to you.

Phidoch South Curtain Wall

[Denam and Leonar prepare their assault on Phidoc.]

VESTIARRI: Stand proud, warriors of Bakram! Our enemy may not wield torches and scythes, but they are a mob! Focus your attacks on their commander, and they will wither before us! To battle!

[Denam takes the charge uphill.]

VESTIARRI: Just a little longer before the Loslorien host arrives to relieve us! Hold, for the glory of Bakram, hold!

[They continue to fight.]

VESTIARRI: What takes them so long? Surely Loslorien has not abandoned us!

DENAM: I don't see any Dark Knights riding from the castle. The rift between the two forces must be wide indeed.

[They cannot hold any further and Phidoch is breached.]

VESTIARRI: Hold the line...! Hold...

Phidoch West Curtain Wall

[Denam and Leonar prepare their assault on Phidoc.]

MERCURE: Denam of Golyat, is it? Impressive to lead the great Walister armies at such a tender age. And yet here, the record of your conquests come to an end!

[Denam takes the charge.]

MERCURE: Pity those foolish enough to follow you, boy. Today they will learn the folly of a frontal assault! It will be too late to beg your lives once the Dark Knights arrive!

[They continue to fight.]

MERCURE: Where could the Dark Knights be? Surely they've not forsaken us!

DENAM: I don't see any Dark Knights riding from the castle. The rift between the two forces must be wide indeed.

[They cannot hold further and Phidoch is breached.]

MERCURE: If we have failed...then...there is no stopping them.

Phidoch Interior

[Balxephon sits at a table and Ozma bursts into the room.]

OZMA: The front line is broken! Phidoch will fall.

BALXEPHON: And with me sitting the throne. A disgrace!

OZMA: We must salvage what we can, my lord. Depart at once. Leave the castle's defenses to us.

BALXEPHON: You expect me to desert my post?

OZMA: The High Champion is afield without so much as an honor guard! I am asking you to protect him!

BALXEPHON: Of course. We must see to Lancelot. And there is the matter of the girl, besides! Ozma, the castle is yours.

OZMA: I'll take good care of her.

[Ozma heads for the door.]

BALXEPHON: Ozma - watch yourself out there.

OZMA: And you, my lord.

[She leaves with a Dark Knight tail.]

Phidoch Great Hall

[In the Great Hall, Leonar walks around to find no sign of the Dark Knights.]

LEONAR: Not a soul.... Hnn?

[Catiua, garbed in unfamiliar clothing, steps out of the shadows.]

LEONAR: Catiua!? What are you doing here?

CATIUA: Come to my rescue? Such a brave knight.

[Without a pause she lunges at Leonar and stabs him, forcing him down the steps and to his knees.]

LEONAR: What? Why!?

VOICE: Ah. There you are, Catiua.

LEONAR: Lancelot!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot comes down and joins Catiua.]

LANSELOT: It's dangerous here. We're leaving the castle. Come with me.

[Catiua takes his side as Ozma arrives.]

OZMA: My lord, I thought you were on the field.

LANSELOT: Glad to see you still live, Ozma.

OZMA: Sir Balxephon awaits you without.

LANSELOT: The hour grows late. Take whoever's left and leave the castle.

[Denam rushes into the room, startled at what he sees.]

DENAM: Sister!? Strength, Leonar!

LEONAR: The time for strenght...passed. It's in...your hands now.

[He collapses and dies.]

DENAM: No!

OZMA: Leave this one to me. The princess must be kept safe!

LANSELOT: You will have ample opportunity to avenge your brother later, Ozma.

OZMA: I will show...restraint.

LANSELOT: We leave at once!

[Lanselot and Catiua file out and leave Ozma behind.]

OZMA: Catiua will never mourn you as I mourned Oz. Think on that as your blood wets these stones!

[She calls forth a host of Dark Knights and Bakram forces.]

DENAM: Wait, no! Catiua!

OZMA: Denam of Golyat! You will pay for my brother's death!

DENAM: Your brother? The commander of the Dark Knights at Boed? You have his look.... Twins?

OZMA: Two parts of one soul. And now half of that soul is gone, thanks to you!

[Denam faces off against Oz's sister.]

OZMA: No.... Oz.... You are un...avenged.... Glory.... Glory to...Lodis!

DENAM: Why did she go with them? What could she be thinking?

[Denam and the Resistance continue their fight within Phidoch while Denam questions his sister's actions.]

This ends Chapter 3. Go to Chapter 4

Chapter 3 (Chaotic)

Ambition and greed rule, while dogs and swine serve

VOICE: Four weeks have passed since the Arkhaiopolis of Rhime fell to the Bakram armies in hard-fought battle. But the fierce resistance of the Holy Knight Lanselot and his men took a heavy toll on the attack and the Bakram were forced to halt their advance. Meanwhile, duke Ronwey watched from Almorica Castle as the raids on his outlying holdings grew bolder, even as his own forces were occupied with the supporters of Balbatos, who had declared against the Walister. He knew that something had to be done. To that end, the duke assembled a great host at Almorica Castle to stand against the Bakram threat, while at the same time secretly despatching an envoy to treat with the Dark Knights and delay them taking the field. Having denied the duke, Denam went into hiding, waiting for the right time to strike at his former lord. Outraged at such betrayal, the duke named Denam a traitor, placing a bounty on his head and tasking Sir Leonar to hunt him down and kill him. Now fearing for his life, Denam makes ready to leave Port Asyton.

Phidoc Castle

[In Phidoc Castle, the Dark Knights Balxephon, Barbas and Martym discuss current events in their keep.]

BALXEPHON: What am I to do with you, Barbas? Hmm? One cannot deny your insubordination. To act without leave of the High Champion is strictly forbidden, whatever the circumstance. Time and again you were ordered to return, and each time you've ignored your orders! Only now do you deign to grace these halls. I am galled.

MARTYM: Galling, yes, the obstinate lout. Go on, beg forgiveness.

BALXEPHON: You talk too much, Martym. And I have an ill temper.

BARBAS: What was I to do? Deny the regent? Impossible.

BALXEPHON: We do not answer to Brantyn! Speak true. You learned that the Xenobian Knights were Rhime and sought to do battle. Is it not so?

BARBAS: ...

[Balxephon rises from his seat as the Dark Knight Lanselot enters, escorted by two others.]

LANSELOT: Enough, Balxephon. What's done is done.

BALXEPHON: Welcome back, Lord Commander. I see Ozma and Oz accompany you.

[Balxephon offers his seat to Lanselot.]

LANSELOT: What word of the Walister?

BALXEPHON: On that matter, we have a messenger here from the Duke.

LANSELOT: Let us hear him, then.

OZ: The Resistance messenger may enter.

[The Dark Knights line up and allow the messenger in. It is Vyce. He takes a seat at the table.]

VYCE: Such a grave assemblage of knights...with the blood on their armor to prove it.

BALXEPHON: Insolence!

VYCE: Breathe easy, old man. You'll suffer a bout of the yellow bile. Besides, it's we who've been wronged here. Oath-breaking is a foul business.

LANSELOT: So the duke is piqued. What would you have us do?

VYCE: Don't worry, I won't ask you to go prostrating yourselves in apology. We would know the lie of your hearts, that's all.

LANSELOT: What if I told you our hearts yearn to see Almorica in flames?

VYCE: Then I'd shed a tear for the people, whom I would expect to suffer in the conflict to follow. As I would expect you to lose the favor of every lord who ever sat a throne, in this land or beyond.

BALXEPHON: Lancelot! I will not suffer any more insults from this churl in our hall!

LANSELOT: We maintain our position of neutrality, as before.

VYCE: Were the Dark Knights that led the van at Rhime equally...neutral?

LANSELOT: We are not infallible. There are always those who will act imprudently.

VYCE: The duke demands proof.

LANSELOT: What kind of proof?

VYCE: I'm glad you asked...

Port Asyton

[Again Denam, Catiua and Canopus hide out and discuss what has recently happened.]

DENAM: You are mistaken, sister. I do not do this to abet the duke.

CATIUA: Oh? Who better to profit from the ousting of Balbatos's men from Coritanae?

CANOPUS: Will you two stop this ceaseless bickering? My head rings like a church bell! Your look, Catiua, could singe the scales off a dragon.

CATIUA: So you will have your way or none at all. Just like a child!

DENAM: Me? A child? The days I have spent in the field, fighting for the Walister - only to realize it was not my clan for whom I fought. This clash between Walister and Galgastani is no more than a power struggle between Balbatos and the duke. While we who serve suffer! It's not about who sits the throne. It's about the pain all around us, sister! That's why I fight. Do you ever consider your countrymen at all? Or are you too consumed with your own travails to care?

CATIUA: I would ask the same of you! You've never considered me, not once!

[She storms out.]

DENAM: Wait, sister!

CANOPUS: Let her go. She has no ear for you right now.

[A rough voice calls from outside the house.]

HEADHUNTER: You can't hide forever, Denam!

CANOPUS: Your reputation precedes you.

[Denam glares at his friend.]

CANOPUS: A jest! 'Twas a jest!

[Denam rushes outside to meet his attacker.]

CANOPUS: Hold on now. Wait for me!

[Denam and his party confront their would-be assassin.]

GANNON: There you are, Denam! I was beginning to think you'd gone to ground a corpse. My thanks for holding on to that head of yours till I could come claim it.

[They fight.]

GANNON: Not bad at all. I can see how Xapan fell to that blade.

DENAM: Xapan? What if I told you it was not I who took his life?

GANNON: Then I'd call you a poor liar. Not that it much matters. A man has little need of revenge before a prize so sweet. The price on your head's encouragement enough!

[Denam holds off the attackers.]

GANNON: No wonder the front had their hands full with you lot...

Xeod Moors

[An Almorican force stands ready.]

FELNATORRE: Well, well, well. If it isn't Denam of Golyat! Fancy meeting you here. I thought you fled across the waves for sure, headhunters baying at your heels. The Wheel turns for me today. Your head will make a fine trophy, Vyce be damned!

[They fight.]

FELNATORRE: Branded traitor, pursued by our armies and the Galgastani alike.... You fight well, but what can you possibly hope to achieve at this late hour?

DENAM: I do not know, in truth. But as long as there is any chance of ending this conflict, I will perservere.

FELNATORRE: Absurdity! If it's less fighting you want, lay down your sword! You should have run long before, not challenged us. It is we who have fought long for peace in this land, while you've run whimpering in your weakness, too craven for a cause!

DENAM: Laugh all you like, if it please you, but I run from no one. Your noble cause is little more than lords bickering over land and title - lords who, in their struggle, sow the seeds of further conflict. If it is true peace you seek, leave the duke. He promises prosperity even as he salts the earth beneath us. Always an eye for an eye.... This war will never end!

FELNATORRE: Slander and venom, masquerading as wisdom. Let's see if that silvery tongue can turn my blade!

DENAM: It is you who runs, not I! You whose words fail to inspire the conviction that comes with truth. Even should I die here on on this field, you will learn I had the right of it one day - may the Father have mercy on you.

[Denam prevails.]

FELNATORRE: Better to die at a traitor's hands than die a traitor myself.

Gates of Coritanate

[The Galgastani stand ready.]

GILDORA: The duke outpaces haste itself. Sir Hektor and his men are not yet returned, neh? Send word to the lord commander. Tell him to rally what troops he can. I will avenge my lord. For Balbatos!

DENAM: Hear me. We are not of the Walister Resistance.

GILDORA: What of it? You harbor no more love for us than they. We defend Galgastani honor to the last!

DENAM: If you'll not listen to reason, perhaps your men will. You are defeated, routed by the duke's armies! And yet you persist. Do you not see that this struggle leads nowhere? Or would you carry on the good heirophant's work and rid the isles of the Walister?

GILDORA: You have us exact! We will fight until the seas run red with Walister blood!

DENAM: Do all of you share her bloodlust? If we cross swords this day, the conflict will not end here. Those same swords will be taken up by your children, and ours. Is that what you want? To me, it sounds a grievous error.

[They fight.]

GILDORA: You appeal to the mind, but it is our hearts that move us! Walister are less than filth - night soil to be cast in the gutter. We must rid the isles of your kind if there is ever to be peace!

DENAM: Once you've killed the last of us, who next? The Bakram? Who will follow them? When the last of your enemies has fallen, what will stop you turning against each other? You disparate religions, customs, beliefs - fertile soil for dissent.

GILDORA: I'll not be lectured by this lowly creature!

DENAM: The Galgastani are not my enemy, nor is any clan. I despise you and your ilk! With clever tales you pit neighbor against neighbor. And for what? Power? You poison Valeria and all within her!

[Reluctantly, Denam defeats the Galgastani.]

GILDORA: Walister filth...

Coritanae Ward

[Galgastani remnants await Denam.]

XAEBOS: Denam of Golyat! You will answer for Gildora's death! Clever ploy, feigning to be at odds with the duke. A deception worthy of Balmamusa!

DENAM: I am not the duke's man. It shames me to think I ever was. Men like you and the duke think only of your own reward. Do not cast me among you!

XAEBOS: How many have you slain to slake your own thirst, eh? There is blood enough on all our hands, boy!

DENAM: And soon it will be your blood!

[They fight.]

XAEBOS: Even now you do the duke's work! Or hadn't you realized?

DENAM: The duke gains nothing in your death. His head will be the next to fall.

XAEBOS: So it is power you seek after all, eh? You wear it well, but I see past the silks and baubles of your "convictions." You would rule in the duke's place. Hold up the mirror, and you will find him looking back at you. It is your own ambition you follow!

DENAM: I pity you. You look on the world and see only avarice and greed. You are prisoner and gaoler, held hostage by your own base desires. It is within you to free yourself, if only your pride would let you. Instead you lead your fellows to their doom.

XAEBOS: You presume much, boy! What can you know of it?

DENAM: I know you are beneath contempt. I know you have seduced others as you have seduced yourself. You fight beneath Balbatos's banner, but it is the carnage of the battlefield that draws you, not loyalty. You exult in death, and you have not gone wanting!

XAEBOS: You dare mock me? Insolent wretch! Your deeds give the lie to your words, as they must. Your convictions are a fancy of youth, no more!

[He is wounded.]

XAEBOS: Beaten by a boy.... Piss and blood! Coritanae is yours. You've bought it at a dear price!

[He flees.]

DENAM: Xaebos! Wait!

Coritanae Keep

[Denam meets with his men and reformed Galgastani inside the castle.]

DENAM: Xaebos is fled to Brigantys then?

PRISONER: No doubt about it, my lord.

DENAM: I have heard the castle stands empty, its lord lost to the war.

PRISONER: In truth no, my lord. As Coritanae sat invested, another force was to lay siege to Brigantys. The attack at Coritanae was only a feint to lure out the duke's armies. The Resistance would march unwitting into a trap! Then the greater force at Brigantys falls upon them to deliver the coup de grace. Your arrival, however, has left that plan in tatters.

DENAM: Why tell me all this?

PRISONER: Unlike Xaebos, I know when to bend the knee. And there's more.

DENAM: Go on.

PRISONER: There are others in Brigantys Castle - men and women who spoke against Balbatos. They sought shelter from the heirophant, but Xaebos means to use them as hostage. The Resistance's distaste for Galgastani hostages makes little difference to him. Xaebos will dress the ramparts with their corpses before the castle falls, an example to those who would cross him.

DENAM: The man's mad!

PRISONER: A foul business, my lord. I wanted no part of it.

DENAM: I thank you for your candor. I will leave for Brigantys at once.

PRISONER: You've a noble heart, my lord.

DENAM: Noble...

PRISONER: There's more to nobility than blood, my lord.

[Deep within the halls of Coritanae, Catiua walks alone.]

DENAM: Sister, wait!

CATIUA: What does the great hero need of me?

DENAM: Please, don't. You're still upset, aren't you.

CATIUA: If you have no urgent need, I'll be on my way.

DENAM: Then you will return to Golyat?

CATIUA: I shall. Fight on as it please you. I don't give a fig for your war.

[Choice 1 - So you're just going to leave me?]

DENAM: Then you abandon me.

CATIUA: It was **you** abandoned **me**!

DENAM: Sister, I would never.

CATIUA: I've always been terrified of being alone...

DENAM: Avenging our father - is that not why you fight?

CATIUA: Why should I care to avenge him? He is no true father to us.

DENAM: What?

CATIUA: I mean we are orphans, brother. He is not our father. Not by blood, at any rate.

DENAM: No.... Who told you this? It's a lie! It must be!

CATIUA: It is no lie. I overheard him talking about it once, long ago. In all the world, you're the only family I have.

DENAM: Why tell me this only now?

CATIUA: Because you're leaving me.

DENAM: Leaving you? Scarce a moment goes by we are not at each other's side! And so it shall remain. I will never leave you.

CATIUA: There is the lie! You have chosen your war over your sister! How long until you cast me aside? Until you forget me altogether?

DENAM: Never, sister.

CATIUA: I'm alone without you...

[She turns and walks away.]

DENAM: Catial!

[Choice 2 - You're being selfish, sister.]

MISSING

The Reisan Way

[A pair of necromancers wait.]

CASSANDRA: So you do move against Brigantys, Denam of Golyat!

CRESSIDA: Denam, you say? Then we are betrayed! Cursed sister...

CASSANDRA: Nothing I can't handle, Cressida. Go now. Inform Master Nybeth of our visitor.

CRESSIDA: What? And leave you here alone, mother? You must permit me to stay, I beg you!

CASSANDRA: Do not worry yourself over me. Master Nybeth's artifact will serve, should it come to that. Now, get you gone!

CRESSIDA: Have care, mother!

[She leaves.]

CASSANDRA: Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Her army appears.]

CASSANDRA: The blood of my dearest daughter, Moldova, stains your hands. Blood calls for blood. Perhaps they have cause to name you hero after all. You fit the part. But Master Nybeth has taught me much of the necromantic arts. Will you endure them so well?

DENAM: You use souls and corpses for sport! Do you never regret the path you've chosen!

CASSANDRA: Simple child. Life and death are but two parts of a whole. Faced with death, a man will do anything to escape it - a soldier is no exception. This is what battle is: The earnest avoidance of our doom. I wonder if you can hear them at all. The whispers of the dead. Their cries. How they yearn to go on fighting! The flames of their vengeance burn bright!

DENAM: Who are you to use the laments of the dead against them? Why keep them from rest?

CASSANDRA: How little you understand. The dead are much like the living, you see. Some there are with pure hearts, gentle and kind. But there are also ones who hunger to take up the sword once more and ravage the living. Your war has filled the charnel houses to overflowing. There are legions of dead only too glad to strike at you!

DENAM: If I must sever their bond with this life a second time, so be it!

[She falls.]

CASSANDRA: Forgive me, Cressida. I go to walk with Moldova...once more.

Bahanna Highlands

[Denam's group treks the snowy passes.]

DENAM: The air is chill. This would make a foul place for battle. Let's on to Brigantys.

CRESSIDA: That you stand before me can only mean my mother and I are forever parted.

DENAM: She profaned the dead. I'll not mourn her passing. Yield now, or rejoin her in the ever-world.

[A knight arrives.]

CRESSIDA: Hektor? What are you doing here?

HEKTOR: I've come on word of Master Nybeth. He foresaw these attacks on you and your mother. He sees much that escapes the ken of lesser men.

CRESSIDA: But Sir Xaebos would never consent to divide his forces, few as they are.

HEKTOR: The high commander turned a blind eye when I made from the castle. You are the sister of my betrothed, may she rest in peace. I could not sit idle knowing the danger you faced.

CRESSIDA: Thank you, Hektor.

HEKTOR: There is no fiercer guardian of this place than your mother. Her absence is a warning.

CRESSIDA: This was their work.

HEKTOR: Then we have all suffered a dire loss.

HEKTOR: Cressida, you should hurry to Brigantys. Let me deal with these dogs!

CRESSIDA: Rubbish. We fight them together! They've claimed my sister's life, and now my mother's. I owe them dear!

HEKTOR: Please, Cressida! Master Nybeth ordered me to see you returned safe to the castle. Go. For me, if not for him. After all we've lost, to lose you is more than I could bear!

CRESSIDA: I'll not go! Not for you, or my father, or anyone!

HEKTOR: We are beaten. The high commander would never say as much, but the people of Galgastan are no longer with us. Master Nybeth is not one to deny hard truths. He sees reality, and so he fears for your safety. I am a knight. I swore an oath to Galgastan...and your sister. I vowed to stand by them in life, and in death. I beg you, save yourself. You must understand. Without you, who would there be to remember Moldova and me as we were?

CRESSIDA: My sister chose her husband well.

[She leaves.]

HEKTOR: Now my love turns to vengeance, Denam of Golyat! I am Hektor Didarro, son of Briam, Knight of Galgastan. I thank the Father for bringing you before me this day, Denam of Golyat! On the souls of my destined wife and her mother, I swear you will not live to see another dawn!

[They fight.]

HEKTOR: You are a ferocious warrior, Denam. Though you be my foe, I'll not deny you that. The blood of innocents stains your name, your kinsmen hunt you, and still your blade does not waver. My father, Briam, had the right of it when he said you would not meet your end here.

DENAM: I want no praise from a creature of Balbatos.

HEKTOR: Fair enough. Only think not that all of Galgastan's Knights gloried in doing as we were bid. Duty, honor, loyalty...a knight is nothing without these. I could not break the oath I swore to Galgastan.

DENAM: Then cast down your sword and surrender! It's Xaebos we're after!

HEKTOR: No matter how futile my struggle, I'll never surrender. I will not break the vows I swore to my kingdom and my beloved! Fate ordained our meeting. To do less than fight to the end is to dishonor those who've fallen!

DENAM: You're as stubborn as you are loyal. Are you so eager to join Moldova and Cassandra in death? There is a future for Valeria - for Galgastan - if only you had eyes to see it!

HEKTOR: I do as my liege lord bids. Such is the warrior's lot.

DENAM: Then this frozen plain will be your grave!

[Denam defeats Hektor.]

HEKTOR: You are a worthy foe...Denam of Golyat. Xaebos may have met his...match. I beg one kindness only. Cressida...my beloved's sister. Take pity on her. Ah...Moldova. I...I return to your side.

Heim

[In the Bakram stronghold, the regent holds counsel.]

BRANTYN: This defies all reason.

KNIGHT: There's no mistake, lord regent. The host at Almorica took no part in the siege of Coritanae.

BRANTYN: Then Ronwey will have no choice but to dispatch his own men to assault the castle. He'll send Sir Leonar - none other can take the field against the hero of Golyat.

KNIGHT: A keen insight, my lord.

BRANTYN: Hrm.... Very well. Assemble a force five thousand strong from our armies here at Heim.

KNIGHT: At once, my lord.

VOLAQ: I beg you reconsider, lord regent.

BRANTYN: ...

VOLAQ: I trust you've not forgotten your arrangement with the high champion?

BRANTYN: ...

VOLAQ: An arrangement with certain obligations. I must ask that you refrain from making any...rash moves.

BRANTYN: Obligations, you say? As I recall, you are obliged to grant me whatever aid I require to wrest control of these isles. Yet here I sit, waiting, while you lecture me about **my** obligations!?

VOLAQ: Stay your anger, lord regent. I meant only to suggest that provoking Almorica might not be the wisest course. Have patience. You'll see.

[Brantyn rises.]

BRANTYN: To hell with your patience. And your counsel! You there, go. See that my orders are carried out!

KNIGHT: Yes, my lord.

VOLAQ: Your eminence would make enemies of us.

[A messengers enters.]

SOLDIER: Begging your pardon, eminence, but we've just received a man claiming to be a messenger from Almorica!

BRANTYN: A messenger? Here?

[Vyce enters.]

VYCE: And a long ride it was! Are you the regent?

VOLAQ: Why do you hesitate? Swords!

[The surrounding troops close in on Vyce.]

VYCE: Easy, lads. You wouldn't kill the messenger before you've heard the message, would you?

BRANTYN: Bold, for one so young. Very well, let's have it.

VYCE: I knew you'd listen to reason. Besides, I think you're going to like what you hear.

VOLAQ: You're from Almorica? Who are you?

VYCE: An upstanding member of the Resistance, naturally. My lord, I don't suppose you'd send away the old man, would you? Delicate business, this.

BRANTYN: Ha! Boldness bordering on insolence. A rare breed. Go on. Leave us, Volaq. This is not for Lodissian ears.

[The Dark Knight turns.]

BRANTYN: You may speak.

VYCE: Right, then.

Brigantys West Wall

[Galgastani stand aside.]

ORGEAU: You're Denam.... the butcher of Golyat, is that what they call you? I could care less about the heirophant's honor, but you'll pay for Gildora!

[Denam defeats the guards.]

ORGEAU: Reunited, Gildora...all too soon...

Brigantys Castle

[Nybeth and his daughter talk within the castle.]

CRESSIDA: Why leave, Master Nybeth? Where have we to go!? Let us see this through to its end - our end, if need be! What is our purpose if not this?

NYBETH (shaking his head): How little you yet understand. We are not here to fight the Walister. With Heirophant Balbatos gone and the young lord of Coritanae in their hands, the kingdom will never again rise. It falls to us to make the most of the situation and complete our research! That is our purpose, dear Cressida.

CRESSIDA: Then...then let me ask you, as daughter to father, do you not want vengeance for mother and sister? The very man who assaults this castle is their murderer! Forsaking your country is one thing, forsaking kin another! I will not.... I cannot!

NYBETH: As stubborn as your sister...

[A man bursts into the room.]

XAEBOS: Master Nybeth, why are you yet within!? The time for flight is now.

NYBETH: Commander Ronsenbach. It is to my shame you had to witness this.

XAEBOS: There is no shame in a daughter so devoted to her people. But, Cressida, you must leave here at once with your father.

CRESSIDA: What? How could you ask this of me? I am full ready to die here by your side, commander!

XAEBOS: Then you are a fool. The lives of me and my men are payment enough today.

CRESSIDA: No!

XAEBOS: His eminence saw in Master Nybeth's inquiries a light for Galgastan's future. If there's any hope he can claim that prize - the greatest prize of all - then we must devote ourselves to seeing that he complete his work. I do not deny the wrath directed at us by those outside our walls. But you need not bear the burden for that! Complete your research. Prove us worthy of such a boon. Bring joy to Galgastan! Your place is by your father's side, Cressida. For Hektor's sake as well as ours.

CRESSIDA: But, commander!

XAEBOS: Please, Master Nybeth, go now. Your research shall be our legacy.

NYBETH: I shall consider it my duty, above all others.

XAEBOS: Godspeed, Cressida. One day, you will tell your own child of the glory and the fall of the great kingdom of Galgastan.

CRESSIDA: The chariot guide you, commander!

Brigantys Great Hall

[Again Denam encounters Xaebos.]

XAEBOS: I was starting to wonder if you'd ever arrive, Denam.

DENAM: It's over, Xaebos! Throw down your weapons and surrender!

XAEBOS: Show some respect when you speak to a high commander, boy. Defeated or not, if we're going to hell, you're coming with us!

[They fight.]

XAEBOS: I know why the duke pursues you.

DENAM: What do you mean?

XAEBOS: He despises you. Your hands are clean, your words sweet, and your appetites vast. Why dirty them, when a mob will do the knifeman's work for you in exchange for a few words about justice and ideals?

DENAM: ...

XAEBOS: Sooner or later, the people will see the duke for what he is and come flocking to you. The plebs like a man who's unsullied...while it lasts. You can't keep the blood off those hands forever, boy. The men who betrayed this castle do naught but wait. they wait for someone to come to their rescue. For a savior to descend upon the isles. Their minds are simple. It is their nature. But we're not like them! We can shepherd these docile lambs down the true path!

DENAM: You lead them to the slaughter! How many innocents have died in your name? Are the differences between Walister and Galgastani worth so many lives?

XAEBOS: If society must be built on the backs of the oppressed, best to be the oppressor, neh? Even a ditch-born bastard in Galgastan can look on you Walister and know his lot could be worse. The fools see the bodies of your dead and feel grateful to be alive.

DENAM: It's a wretched knight who mocks his own people.

[Xaebos falls.]

XAEBOS: You think to replace...the duke? Become the savior...of your people? Heh. A fine irony...that.

[The remnants of Brigantys greet Denam.]

GALGASTANI: We owe you our lives. I suppose thanks are in order. But that begs the question: Why? I can't recall the last time a Walister went out of his way for us. And story was, you were the one behind the massacre at Balmamusa.

DENAM: I was there, but I had no part in it. I made up my mind to leave the Resistance the moment I learned of their plans for Balmamusa. The duke repaid me by blaming me for the massacre and placing a price on my head.

GALGASTANI: Hrm...

DENAM: I knew then who my true foe was. The age-old struggle between Walister and Galgastani is a lie. Men like the heirophant and the duke pit us against each other in their own struggle for power. It is they who deserve our wrath, not you and I.

GALGASTANI: And as you rise to become a leader of men, do you never worry that you become the tyrant you replace? What will you do then?

DENAM: Should it come to that, I am prepared to forfeit my life.

GALGASTANI: That's youth talking. Still, you seem to believe what you say. That's good enough for me.

DENAM: I hope to prove your trust well placed.

MAN: Dark knows, Denam. Coritanae has fallen to the duke.

DENAM: So, the Resistance has come. I never set out to destroy them. Now here we are. If it means defeating the duke - if it means bringing peace to Valeria - I fight them only too gladly!

Bahanna Highlands

[A crowd chases after a lone man.]

NINJA: There he is! After him!

[Two of the men surround the warrior and attack. He steps aside and deals fatal blows with ease but more troops arrive.]

MAN: Hmh? They move like the wind.

DENAM: That man - whoever he is, he's in trouble.

MODILIANI: Denam of Golyat!? Our mysterious swordsman has flushed out rare game! The Wheel turns for us!

DENAM: This way! We can help you!

MAN: And you are?

DENAM: My name is Denam Pavel, captain of the Order of Goldscale.

MAN: Young for a knight captain. No matter. I'll take what help is offered!

[The Almoricans rush toward Denam.]

MODILIANI: You're the stripling who betrayed the Resistance! All that talk of heroes go to your head, did it? The duke favored you above all others, but like any mongrel, you were quick to bite the hand that feeds.

DENAM: I fought not for the glory of a single man but to bring peace to my people - to Valeria! It is the duke who betrayed our struggle!

MODILIANI: Listen to him crow! Steady hands, lads. We face a foe more foul than the heirophant himself!

[Denam and the swordsman unite.]

MODILIANI: Felled by a traitor. Forgive me, my...duke.

MAN: Thank you for aiding me. You're the one they call the hero of Golyat, yes?

DENAM: I'd rather you address me by my name, Denam Pavel.

MAN: Of course, forgive me. I am Hobyrim Vandam. I owe you my life. I'll not forget it.

DENAM: What errand brings you to such a place as this?

HOBYRIM: I heard you were bringing the fight to the Dark Knights. I thought to lend you my sword.

DENAM: You've some score to settle with the Dark Knights?

HOBYRIM: Aye, you might say that. What if I told you it was they who stole the light from me?

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: I may not be able to see, but my sword is truer than most. Let me join your struggle.

[Choice 1 - You would be welcome.]

DENAM: You would be a welcome addition.

HOBYRIM: You've my thanks, then, and my sword.

[Choice 2 - I cannot accept your offer.]

MISSING

Almorica Castle

[Duke Ronwey consults with his troops.]

RONWEY: I am told Tartaros has accepted our proposal.

VYCE: He has. We're to meet at the cathedral in Rhime, at a time of our choosing. He even agreed to limit our escorts to three men apiece.

RONWEY: You've served me well in this, Vyce. I could ask for no finer envoy.

VYCE: We are one step nearer to vanquishing the Bakram.

KNIGHT: All well and good, your grace, but can the Dark Knights be trusted?

VYCE: I should have your tongue out for that! You dare question me?

RONWEY: You squabble like children. Your concern, however well meant, is uncalled for. The Dark Knights will honor their agreement. They know full well the Bakram cannot stand against us with the Galgastani gone. An alliance serves their interest as much as ours.

MAGUS: If the commons learn of this pact with the Dark Knights, it will not go well for us.

RONWEY: We need only maintain the deception until Brantyn falls. His claim to power rests on the young heir to House Eltenague. Without the boy, Brantyn is nothing. Stripping him of the regency will be simple enough. With his power lost, his flock will soon scatter. Once we have restored peace to the isles, the Dark Knights will have no choice but to return to Lodis.

VYCE: ...

RONWEY: I know you've only just returned, but I'm afraid there's no time to rest. We must inform Tartaros of the time of the meeting. Fetch me quill and parchment...

The Gates of Coritanae

[Again Denam assaults the keep.]

MARINO: Denam of Golyat! I knew he'd be back. He is rare brave to meet us head on, or else rare foolish. Listen well! This is no common foe you face. He has taken this castle once before. Show him what true Walister are made of! Give him a traitor's death!

[They fight.]

MARINO: You betray your kinsmen and conspire with Galgastan. I would know why! Why strike at Balmamusa? What drove you to turn against us?

DENAM: Step aside, and you may yet learn!

MARINO: Would you stain your hands with more Walister blood?

DENAM: Are you so sure it's my hands are stained? How easy my path, were it truly so.

MARINO: Innocent as a newborn babe, to hear you tell it. Hmph! I tire of your japes!

[He falls.]

MARINO: An ill turn...

Coritanae Keep

[Denam walks in and spies a familiar face.]

DENAM: Leonar!?

LEONAR: It's been a long time, Denam. Tell me, do you still cling to hope? Or has despair taken its place? Even now, there is a place for you in the Resistance, you know. You defeated high commander Xaebos. With such a fine trophy as that, none would gainsay your return.

DENAM: That's not why I fought Sir Xaebos. You of all people should know who started this war! There's no place in the Resistance for me - or you, for that matter.

LEONAR: A vast gulf spreads between what is and what might be. Someone must span this divide.

DENAM: And you're the man to do it? Is that what you want?

LEONAR: The wheel has turned. Our fate was decided the moment you stood before me. You crave the light, but I am content to dwell in the dark and drink deep of blood. Draw your sword. We decide this now. Just you and I.

[Choice 1 - A duel, then.]

MISSING

[Choice 2 - This fight is not ours alone.]

DENAM: We will decide this, but not alone. This war is much bigger than us.

LEONAR: So it is.

Coritanae Ward

LEONAR: Judgment's hour is at hand, Denam!

[Denam's troops launch against the Almoricans.]

DONNALTO: After all you have seen, how can you still follow the duke? The poor starve while the nobility grow fat, and peace remains a distant dream. The duke will not change this.

LEONAR: Have the years robbed you of your wits, Abuna? Easy enough to talk of lofty ideals. But who has come closer than the duke to making them reality? The journey is a difficult one, and any who tell you otherwise deceive you with faerie tales!

DONNALTO: And this gives excuse to murder our people as you did in Balmamusa? If the means you use are any judge, you are no different than Balbatos and Brantyn! There can be no true victory down this path. The people will abandon you long before you reach its end!

LEONAR: And you think Denam will fare better? Then you are a fool.

DONNALTO: He may fail, but his vision will not! Men of honor. Men of hope. So long as they dwell in Valeria, our cause will never die! When did you grow so weak of heart, Leonar?

LEONAR: Enough of your ramblings, old man! Insult me again, and those words will be your last.

DONNALTO: Rule of Valeria is a means to an end, not an end of itself. It is not enough merely to change the ruler. We must change how we are ruled! There can be no return to the old ways. We cannot abandon our ideals! But it's too late for you, Leonar, isn't it. Your heart is hard as stone.

LEONAR: And if it is? What then, abuna?

DONNALTO: Then the Great Father have mercy on your soul!

[Arycelle calls to her former ally.]

ARYCELLE: My brother nearly lost his leg saving you in the war, Leonar. And how did you repay his sacrifice? You killed him in the name of this fool plan!

LEONAR: Arycelle? You're alive!

ARYCELLE: And you are dead to me! You deserve a fate no better than the duke's! How could you, Leonar?

LEONAR: There's naught to explain. I am a cruel, heartless man. Do you think we did not understand what it was we did? What it would mean? It was a vile plot from the start, but it had to be done. For our people - our future! Galgastan hunted us. We had no other card left to play. So I did it - did it gladly! And if I had it to do again, I would!

ARYCELLE: Leonar.... I don't understand. You were a good man once. A kind man, and just. I...I loved you. How did you fall so low? All I can do is avenge my brother on you. Avenge all who died at Balmamusa.

LEONAR: A right you've earned. But there is too much left to be done for me to die now. The Bakram must be defeated, the Dark Knights driven from the isles. I will kill any who stand in my way. Even you.

ARYCELLE: Tell me one thing, Leonar. If I do not survive this day, I would know the truth before I die. We shared a home. A bed. Would you never have told me what you had done?

LEONAR: I would have told you everything when the time was right - when the war was over.

ARYCELLE: I believe you would have. To atone for what you had done. When you made up your mind to carry out the massacre, you knew it would mean your own death too. You alone would bear the blame - bear it to your grave. How like you, Leonar. It saddens me.... You cast aside more than Balmamusa that day.

LEONAR: I know.

[The fight continues.]

DENAM: I never wanted this, Leonar.

LEONAR: Nor did I, Denam. But it is a fitting end all the same. However close, however alike, we were never meant to tread the same path. It is not our cause that separates us, but our means. Only one of us can see this through to the end. Only one!

DENAM: Then I have no choice.... Damn the Wheel. Damn the world!

LEONAR: Steady, Denam. You cannot afford to think of me as any more than the foe I am. As I think of you. If it meant the future of our people, I would kill you a thousand times!

[Leonar is defeated.]

LEONAR: You've...grown strong, Denam. And you were right...

DENAM: ...

LEONAR: Denam...listen to me. The duke meets with the...Dark Knights at Rhime. He hopes...to forge a new pact.

DENAM: What!?

LEONAR: But it's a devil's...bargain he strikes. After the Bakram fall...the duke has no intention of driving out the Dark Knights. He will...bend his knee to Lodi...and Valeria will be his reward. The duke's gone mad with power.

DENAM: Be still, Leonar.

LEONAR: Please, Denam. Go...to Rhime. You must...stop the duke. In you I still see...hope...

DENAM: Leonar!

LEONAR: Arycelle...my love.

Coritanae Keep

[Denam maps out his next course.]

DENAM: All roads to Rhime lead through Almorica.

GUIDE: All roads, perhaps. But what if you were to hire a ship in Asyton?

DENAM: The sea is much too dangerous. The duke has bolstered patrols as a precaution against partisans and what remains of Balbato's men.

GUIDE: A ship would draw notice, yes. And the war has left no shortage of parties. There is, however, an alternative.

DENAM: What alternative?

GUIDE: The Burnham Massif is all that stands between Coritanae and Rhime.

DENAM: Cross the Massif? Are you joking? I know of no pass through the mountains.

GUIDE: There is an obscure trail the caravans have used to reach Rhime since the onset of the war. No easy journey, I admit. But I see no other way.

DENAM: If it will allow us to approach Rhime without raising the suspicions of the Bakram or the duke, it's perfect.

GUIDE: Not entirely perfect. You see, it is more than crags and cliffs that make the journey perilous. The trail is a favorite of fell beasts, demons, and worse.

DENAM: When you put it that way...what are we waiting for?

Mount Weobry

[A familiar face awaits Denam on his next step to Rhime.]

GANPP: I remember you, boy! The Wheel brought us back together, has it? Now there's a stroke of luck! Berda! Obda! To me!

[His pets arrive at his call.]

GANPP: You're well acquainted with Berda and Obda, but I been brewin' something special for just such an occasion! Banga! Zanga! To battle!

[Another pair of beasts join the fray.]

GANPP: I may be a headhunter, but that don't mean ol' Ganpp is ungrateful for all his eminence did for him. It's time you paid for what you done to Galgastan!

[Again Denam faces the deadly beastmaster who laments after the fall of each of his pets.]

GANPP: Obda! What have they done to you! Your sorrow is my strength! Forgive me, Banga! Your soul will live on in me! Berda! My sweet Berda! Your anger feeds my own! They'll pay dear for this, Zanga! My heart ain't so gentle as yours!

[After taking out his pets, Denam cripples Ganpp.]

GANPP: Piss and blood! The day is theirs! Next we meet will be the last! I won't forget what it was you done here!

Golyat

[Catiua stands on the docks at night.]

CATIUA: I am alone without you.

VOICE: No. You have always been alone.

CATIUA (turning): Who's there!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot appears from the shadows.]

CATIUA: Lancelot Tartaros! What are you doing here?

LANSELOT: Your mother left this world upon your birth. And your father followed her only a few months before the war broke out. Your blood begins and ends with you, Catiua. You are alone, truly.

CATIUA: What are you talking about? I have a brother! Surely you've not forgotten Denam!

LANSELOT: I gather you have realized the Abuna was not your father. Yet you assumed that your "brother" shared your orphaned lineage. You assumed...wrongly.

[A flash of lightning streaks across the sky.]

CATIUA: Then who am I? Who do you say I am!?

LANSELOT: Versalia. Your true name is Versalia Oberyth.

CATIUA: Versalia Oberyth.... That's not possible.

LANSELOT: You are cautious. Good. House Oberyth gave Valeria her king. You are his daughter.

[Another flash of lightning is followed by a sudden downpour.]

LANSELOT: But it was not Queen Vernotta who bore you into this world. One of her handmaidens, a girl named Mannaflorea, caught the king's eye. But even as you quickened in the womb, the queen carried the unborn prince. Wanting no rival for her son, she expelled your mother from the castle before you were born. Mannaflorea died giving birth to you.

CATIUA: Who would believe such a tale?

LANSELOT: It was the Bakram regent, Brantyn Morne, who took you in. He left you in the care of his brother, Abuna Prancet. Were it not for you and your secret, a man such as Brantyn would never have risen so high or so swift.

CATIUA: Nonsense and lies!

LANSELOT: But there is proof: Your necklace. It bears an inscription, written in the old tongue. One with your religious training should have no trouble reading it.

CATIUA: ...

LANSELOT: Labon Versalia xan phon, destonia lera phoenan. To my daughter Versalia, eternal beloved. A gift from King Dorgalua to celebrate your birth. The Queen made it appear as though you and your mother had been killed. He went to his grave full expecting to meet you in the beyond. You must have read that inscription. Nurtured doubts about your origins. Am I wrong?

CATIUA: What do you want from me?

LANSELOT: For you to return with us to Heim.

[A pair of Dark Knights join Lancelot.]

LANSELOT: There, Abuna Prancet can answer any other questions you may have.

[He waits for Catiua to respond. She does not.]

LANSELOT: This way, Princess Catiua.

[Catiua follows Lancelot.]

Arkhaiopolis of Rhime

[Denam walks the busy streets of Rhime.]

DENAM (to himself): Getting into Rhime might have been the easy part. Where could the duke be hiding?

VOICE: Quickly! Quickly, now!

DENAM (to himself): If they've found me...

[Vyce rushes through the streets, followed by a group of soldiers.]

DENAM (to himself): What could Vyce be doing with those Bakram soldiers?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot and Ronwey are surrounded by Bakram soldiers.]

LANSELOT: Who put you to this? Answer me!

RONWEY: What farce! They're here under your orders! You've conspired against me, Tartaros!

LANSELOT: I know nothing of this. I swear it!

[Vyce walks in.]

RONWEY: Vyce! Thank the Father!

VYCE: Your grace, to me!

"[Ronwey steps forward but is stabbed the moment he reaches Vyce. He stumbles back.]

RONWEY: What...treachery is this? Vyce? You.... No...

VYCE: Who holds the power now, your grace? You're next, Lancelot!

LANSELOT: Ambition has poisoned you. It will be your downfall.

VYCE: Look around you. I've already won! Kill him.

[The knights advance on Lancelot but a disruption is heard.]

VYCE: What's that?

[Elsewhere, the Dark Knights encounter a forceful group.]

OZ: What's the meaning of this? Out of our way!

HIRAM: You are guests in our land, foreigner, and as such you will stand down.

OZMA: Whose black coin fills your purse, eh? Surely not Brantyn's.

HIRAM: Your own lack of restraint has brought this upon you. Now, yield!

OZ: Words you'll regret, churl!

KNIGHT: What? Where'd they come from!?

[Denam's forces arrive.]

DENAM: Seems as though the Bakram have turned against the Dark Knights.... Or rather, the Dark Knights played them false.

[The Dark Knights flee.]

KNIGHT: Hold!

HIRAM: Let them go. We'll deal with this lot first!

DENAM: These Bakram are green to battle. Take out their leader, and their ranks will crumble.

HIRAM: You're no soldier from Almorica...and young to be the duke's honor guard. Perhaps you're neither. Perhaps you're a wanted man...the butcher of Golyat!

DENAM: And if I am?

HIRAM: You cut down Ronsenbach for what, to gain the support of those who still rally against the heirophant's loyals? It would serve to reason that you're here after the duke's head, then. Ha! A cur come back to bite his master's hand!

DENAM: Watch who you call cur!

HIRAM: We want the duke dead as much as you, boy, but we do this alone. We've no need of a butcher's aid. Now lay down your swords, and we'll spare your lives.

DENAM: If it's our swords you want, come and take them!

[He fails to do so.]

HIRAM: Unfortunate to...die at the hands of one so...unworthy.

DENAM: Now's our chance to find the duke and the Dark Knight Lancelot...then quit this place for good.

[Meanwhile, Vyce on his knees, his former allies slain, the Dark Knights stand over him.]

VYCE: No.... Spare me, please! Mercy!

OZ: Whatever shall we do with you?

VYCE: Please...this was Brantyn's idea. It was him put me to this! I've no quarrel with the Dark Knights! Mercy, I beg you!

LANSELOT: Have you no honor whatsoever?

VYCE: What...whatever you wish. My honor is yours. I am at your command!

LANSELOT: Then I command you to be silent.

VYCE: I...I bear you no ill will, truly! It was a demon...an ogre crept inside me!

LANSELOT: I said **silence!**

VYCE: Urk!

LANSELOT: Mercy, was it? Very well. I grant you your life.

VYCE: Thank you! Thank you, sir!

LANSELOT: But you are never to appear in my sight again!

VYCE: Th-thank you! I won't! I swear it!

LANSELOT: Away with you!

[Vyce backs up and flees.]

LANSELOT: My thanks to you both.

OZMA: A horse arrived from Phidoch a short while ago. Prancet is no longer under chain at Heim. Someone has taken him away.

LANSELOT: What? Who did this?

OZMA: The Liberation Front, it seems.

LANSELOT: Now that we have the princess, Prancet is of no further use.... And yet I would rather not have him filling people's heads with scandal and hearsay. I will leave this matter in your capable hands. Find this party from the front and destroy them. I care not if Prancet should fall with them. All who know the truth must be dealt with, and swiftly!

OZMA: On the honor of House Glacius, it will be done.

OZ: And what of Brantyn?

LANSELOT: He's made his bed. Let him lie in it. As for us, we practice patience. Soon we will find what we seek.

Almorica Castle

[Back in Almorica, Denam is greeted with sullen but open arms.]

KNIGHT: We put ourselves at your mercy. Our swords are yours, if you'll have them.

MAGUS: Those who refused surrender have already left the castle.

WARRIOR: We are yours to command, my lord.

KNIGHT: It was Sir Leonar's order that we surrender, should it come to that.

MAGUS: What's done is done. We must look forward now.

[Denam stands to glance out the window.]

DENAM: Regent Brantyn, Heirophant Balbatos, Duke Ronwey. These are the men who set us against each other. They embroil Valeria in unending war to satisfy their lust for power. How many innocents have suffered for their greed? When we still lived under the heel of the Galgastani, I swore I would never follow in their footsteps. And if I found myself marching down their path, I vowed to forfeit my life. Are you prepared to do the same?

WARRIOR: Those of us who remain have long harbored doubts about the duke's methods. I cannot say that all are prepared to make such sacrifice. But we will follow your example as best we can.

MAGUS: They know you had no part in the misfortune at Balmamusa. Sir Leonar told us everything before he left for Coritanae. He took with him those who would not listen or yet supported the duke in spite of the truth.

KNIGHT: I was to march for Balmamusa, but Sir Leonar commanded me to stay. He did the same for anyone he felt might balk at such an order. When the deed was done, he told us he meant to bear the blame, and that you were to carry on in his stead.

DENAM: ...

KNIGHT: Accept us among you. On our lives, I swear you will never have cause to regret it!

DENAM: Very well. This day hence, we fight as one.

[After reuniting with the Almoricans, Denam and his companions find old friends waiting. The remaining Xenobians Gildas and Mirdyn stand aside a bedridden Warren.]

MIRDYN: Canopus! And Denam, too! I am glad to see you both well.

DENAM: And you, Sir Mirdyn. Sir Gildas.

CANOPUS: How is he?

MIRDYN: The star seer remains lost in the mists of sleep. But he draws breath and is whole of body.

CANOPUS: That is well, then. And Lancelot? Has he not returned?

GILDAS: I've not seen him since the night of the Bakram attack. They held us at a camp outside Rhime. We would be there still if not for you. What is next for you? An assault on Phidoch, I suppose?

DENAM: That's the plan. A rift grows between Brantyn and the Dark Knights. While they contend with one another, we stand a good chance of taking the castle.

GILDAS: As it happens, we have a score of our own to settle. Room in your party for two more?

[The men nod in agreement.]

MIRDYN: Good. How soon do we leave?

[A messenger walks in.]

SOLDIER: Sir Denam! Word from our shadows in the Bakram army. The Dark Knights have dispatched a lone company from Phidoch. They travel by stealth for Boed.

CANOPUS: Boed, of all places?

DENAM: The Liberation front! But why would the Dark Knights move against them now?

GILDAS: Whatever the reason, no good will come of it. Best have a look for ourselves.

DENAM: Let's move.

Boed Fortress

[The Dark Knights prowl the battlefield after their victory over the Liberation Front.]

OZMA: Our work is done, Oz. We withdraw.

OZ: What about the abuna?

OZMA: They led him away just now, quiet as a church mouse.

OZ: I have that effect on people, don't I.

OZMA: So it would seem. Come, we've tarried long enough.

[She leaves.]

OZ: We must remove any trace we were here. You, put the torch to this place. While you're at it, make certain we left no survivors.

KNIGHT: Down there!

DENAM: Damn, too late!

OZ: Feh, I've drunk my fill of these Walister dregs. A Dark Knight's work is never done.

[They charge.]

OZ: Your ears or your nose?

DENAM: What?

OZ: Our meeting can be no coincidence. You must have a spy in Phidoch. How else would you know to come here? I should take you alive and have the names of your whisperers.

DENAM: I would never betray my men!

OZ: No, I think not. You enjoy playing the martyr too much. So I ask you: Which shall I cut off first? Your ears or your nose?

DENAM: ...

OZ: We'll see how tight-lipped and stoic you are under the knife, boy.

[Oz is defeated.]

OZ: Don't think you've won, boy!

DENAM: And yet it's you who runs. All talk, are you?

OZ: I much prefer inflicting pain over receiving it. And now we part!

[He flees and Denam runs into the fortress to look for survivors.]

CISTINA: Great Father, what have they done?

[Among the fallen bodies, Cistina's sister breaks in.]

CISTINA: Cerya! Are you all right?

CERYA: I'm...I'm fine. What of the others?

DENAM: Why did they do this?

CERYA: We freed the abuna from Heim. Brought him here.

DENAM: What abuna?

CERYA: Your father, Abuna Prancet.

DENAM: My father lives? Where is he!?

CERYA: I know not. If his body isn't among the dead, they must have taken him with them.

CISTINA: Why would the Dark Knights go to such lengths to recapture a single man?

CERYA: They seek a woman named Mannafloa. There is but one man who knows her whereabouts.

DENAM: ...My father.

CERYA: Only I think they might already have found her.

DENAM: What do you mean?

CERYA: It's...complicated.

CISTINA: Another time, then. We had best away before they return.

DENAM: You're right, of course. Cerya, you should come with us.

CERYA: I'm not sure that's wise.

DENAM: We are not the Resistance you knew, Cerya. The duke's ways are not our ways. Join us. Together we can end this war.

CERYA: Too many good men died today that I should let it end like this. I shall take you at your word.

DENAM: Good. Now let's be off.

Phidoch West Curtain Wall

[Denam's army approaches the gate.]

MERCURE: Denam of Golyat, is it? Are your ranks so bare that you must lead your armies yourself? Cut off the head, and the body dies. Today will be your last!

[They fight.]

MERCURE: Pity those foolish enough to follow you, boy. Today they will learn the folly of a frontal assault! It will be too late to beg for your lives once the Dark Knights arrive!

[He falls.]

MERCURE: If we have failed...then...there is no stopping them.

Phidoch South Curtain Wall

[Denam prepares the assault on Phidoc.]

VESTIARRI: Stand proud, warriors of Bakram! Our enemy may not wield torches and scythes, but they are a mob! Focus your attacks on their commander, and they will wither before us! To battle!

[Denam takes the charge uphill.]

VESTIARRI: Just a little longer before the Loslorien host arrives to relieve us! Hold, for the glory of Bakram, hold!

[They continue to fight.]

VESTIARRI: What takes them so long? Surely Loslorien has not abandoned us!

DENAM: I don't see any Dark Knights riding from the castle. The rift between the two forces must be wide indeed.

[They cannot hold any further and Phidoch is breached.]

VESTIARRI: Hold the line...! Hold...

[Denam quickly enters the keep.]

Phidoch Castle

[Ozma bursts into the room occupied by Balxephon.]

OZMA: The front line is broken! Phidoch will fall.

BALXEPHON: And with me sitting the throne. A disgrace!

OZMA: We must salvage what we can, my lord. Depart at once. Leave the castle's defense to us.

BALXEPHON: You expect me to desert my post?

OZMA: The high champion is afield without so much as an honor guard! I am asking you to protect him!

BALXEPHON: Of course. We must see to Lancelot. And there is the matter of the girl besides! Ozma, the castle is yours.

OZMA: I'll take good care of her.

BALXEPHON: Ozma - watch yourself out there.

OZMA: And you, my lord.

Phidoch Great Hall

[In the Great Hall, Denam walks around to find no sign of the Dark Knights.]

DENAM: Not a soul.... Hnn?

[Catiua, garbed in unfamiliar clothing, steps out of the shadows.]

DENAM: Sister!? What are you doing here?

CATIUA: Come to my rescue? What a good brother you are!

[Without a pause she lunges at Denam forcing him down the steps.]

DENAM: What are you doing!?

VOICE: Ah. There you are, Catiua.

DENAM: Lancelot!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot comes down and joins Catiua.]

LANSELOT: It's dangerous here. We're leaving the castle. Come with me.

[Catiua takes his side as Ozma arrives.]

OZMA: My lord, I thought you were on the field.

LANSELOT: Glad to see you still live, Ozma.

OZMA: Sir Balxephon awaits you without.

LANSELOT: The hour grows late. Take whoever's left and leave the castle.

DENAM: Catiua!

OZMA: Leave this one to me. The princess must be kept safe!

LANSELOT: The better part of valor is discretion. Come, Catiua. We leave at once!

[Lancelot and Catiua flee.]

OZMA: You made a mockery of me at Rhime. A slight I mean to avenge, boy.

[Oz arrives with a host of Dark Knights.]

OZ: Your right eye, or your left? Either will suffice, I should think. It will make a fine gift for your sister - a pendant, perhaps a brooch. How fitting. I'm told you only have eyes for her.

[They fight within the halls of the castle.]

OZ: Denam of Golyat! It is a foul turn you've done my brother.

DENAM: Twins? Yes, you have his look.... Do you share his vulgar nature besides?

OZMA: I hope you enjoyed that insult.... It will be your last.

[Cerya arrives to the battle.]

CERYA: I am Cerya, leader of the Liberation Front! I demand vengeance for our fallen!

OZ: Now there's a woman with flint in her voice and fire in her eyes! 'Twould be a pity to scar such a lovely face. Perhaps I'll cut your feet off at the ankles instead. Wouldn't want you running off before the real fun begins!

CERYA: You had your chance to kill me, but you let it pass. A fatal mistake!

OZ: You do not quail. I like that in a woman. It's not too late, you know. Surrender now, and I will spare your life. House Glacius is an ancient and noble line. As our meanest servant, you would be worth ten commonfolk.

CERYA: If only you fought half as well as you spoke!

OZ: On second thought, I'll start by plucking out your tongue.

OZMA: How it must shame you, Cerya, when all who called you friend are dead!

CERYA: Do you think me a fool? My people were prepared to die. The shame would be in letting their deaths be in vain. I will not rest until you burn in hell!

[The battle continues.]

OZ: We have something in common after all - a sister whom we would do anything to protect.

DENAM: Return her to me, and speak no more of what we have "in common"!

OZ: If only you could hear yourself! "Return her to me! Return her to me!" Ha ha ha! Yes, I might beg as you do, in your place. I feel a lump in my throat just thinking of it.

OZMA: Enough, Oz! No wonder you lost at Boed, going on like this.

OZ: You wound me, sister! Have I not always been devoted entire to you?

[Denam fights the Dark Knights.]

DENAM: What have you done with my father!?

OZMA: What nonsense is this?

OZ: The boy is Abuna Prancet's son.

OZMA: Is that right?

DENAM: You have Mannaflora! What do you need my father for? Tell me where you've taken him!

OZMA: You don't know, do you? He lives, yes, but...

DENAM: What have you done to him!?

OZ: We only loosened his tongue, so to speak.

DENAM: You're beasts, all of you!

[The battle draws to a close.]

OZ: Pain and agony are a rare dish. Better to serve than be served!

OZMA: We must buy time for the high champion and Balxephon to escape the castle!

[Oz dies first.]

OZMA: Oz!

OZ: Help me...sister...

OZMA: Forgive me, Oz. I will soon join you in that darkest land. But I will not go alone!

OZMA: Glory to...House Glacius. Glory to Lodis...

[Ozma dies first.]

MISSING

[The battlefield is cleared.]

DENAM: What has Catiua done?

Heim

[A group of Bakram civilians and soldiers hold a struggling Vyce at the gallows.]

ABUNA: ...And death shall redeem thee of thy worldly sins, even as it washes clean thine eternal soul.

VYCE: Let me go! Please! Don't kill me!

ABUNA: Kneel, child. Pray to the Great Father.

VYCE: Kneel? What have I done? Why are you doing this!?

ABUNA: Great Father Philaha. Forgive the sins of this, your child.

[They lift him toward the noose and prepare his last seconds.]

VYCE: Please, no! Call Brantyn - he'll tell you! I did as he ordered, no more! Please, I don't want to die! Denam! Denam!!!

[The sound of the trap falling rings throughout the courtyard.]

DENAM: It was two days before I learned of the execution...

This ends Chapter 3. Go to Chapter 4

Chapter 3 (Lawful)

"Deciever and decieved"

Phidoch Castle

[In the keep of the Dark Knights, Balxephon is in the midst of chastising his own men for the attack on Rhime.]

BALXEPHON: What am I to do with you, Barbas? Hmm? One cannot deny your insubordination. To act without leave of the high champion is strictly forbidden, whatever the circumstance. Time and again you were ordered to return, and each time you've ignored your orders! Only now do you deign to grace these halls. I am galled.

MARTYM: Galling, yes, the obstinate lout. Go on, beg forgiveness.

BALXEPHON: You talk too much, Martym. And I have an ill temper.

BARBAS: What was I to do? Deny the regent? Impossible.

BALXEPHON: We do not answer to Brantyn! Speak true. You learned that the Xenobian Knights were Rhime and sought to do battle. Is it not so?

BARBAS: And what if it is? The Walister and Galgastani will hack each other into the ground. What more could we want for? You see fortune and call it calamity, Balxephon.

[Balxephon rises from his seat as the Dark Knight Lancelot enters, escorted by two others.]

LANSELOT: Enough, Balxephon. What's done is done.

BALXEPHON: Welcome back, Lord Commander. I see Ozma and Oz accompany you.

[Balxephon offers his seat to Lancelot.]

LANSELOT: What word of the Walister?

BALXEPHON: We've received word that they rally on the Psonji Weald.

LANSELOT: They think to bring the fight to Almorica in the duke's absence. Good. Send a messenger to Volaq. Tell him to double their watch to ensure the Bakram - rather, the regent does not move without permission.

BALXEPHON: As you command, sir.

LANSELOT: Barbas, I'm sending you to Heim.

BARBAS: But Heim is leagues from the front!

LANSELOT: Steady, Barbas. I do not intend for you to serve as castellan for the regent, if that is your fear. The Liberation Front has freed Abuna Prancet from Heim Castle.

BALXEPHON: What!?

LANSELOT: Those partisan rebels might well catch wind of our true task. Mannaflora's whereabouts elude us, and now the Abuna, the only man who might know, has gone missing as well. Barbas, I task you with a mission of utmost import. Recapture Abuna Prancet, whatever the cost.

BARBAS: Yes, lord commander.

[Barbas stands to salute as Lancelot turns to the other two Dark Knights, Oz and Ozma.]

LANSELOT: The two of you are to deal with the Liberation Front. Too long have we suffered them to move unchecked.

OZMA: On the honor of house Glacius, my brother and I will see it so.

OZ: Common rabble. They'll be little trouble.

[Lancelot nods and turns to Balxephon.]

LANSELOT: Andoras's search for Mannaflora is to continue. You and Martym will keep a close eye on the Walister and Galgastani for us.

BALXEPHON: As my lord wishes, so shall it be.

[The Dark Knights, missions handed to them, depart.]

Almorica Castle

[Denam, Catiua and Vyce stand in the halls of Almorica.]

VYCE: We'll go on ahead. You finish up here.

DENAM: Vyce.... Can you forgive me?

VYCE: There's no forgiving what you've done. You were the duke's hand in the massacre. There are no words for one so low.

DENAM: ...

VYCE: But a man can repent. You did what you thought best. If I were a greater fool, I might have done the same. End this war, Denam. You owe the people of Balmamusa that much. Let that be your atonement.

CATIUA: You...you have no right!

DENAM: No, sister. He has every right.

VYCE: Farewell, Denam.

DENAM: And you, Vyce.

VYCE: Someday the gods may forgive you. But I haven't.

[He leaves as Denam makes preparations for his departure as well.]

CATIUA: Denam, wait.

DENAM: What, Catiua?

CATIUA: Do not tell me you intend to cross the Brigania Flats!

DENAM: This again? The pieces are already in motion, sister. If we do not move, then Vyce makes for his own doom in Psonji.

[Denam recalls the earlier meeting with his sister and Vyce. A group of New Walister also join.]

CATIUA: You would match his folly with your own? The enemy has twice our number!

PEYTON: What would you counsel us to do then? Wait here, polishing our armor!?

BEYLEVRA: Enough of that, Peyton. The Resistance is clearly unmanned.

PEYTON: I see. First, they lose their duke, and now they can't find their spines! Ha!

[The two chuckle.]

VYCE: Stop it, both of you. What point in arguing amongst ourselves? The Resistance, the Alliance...these are old names without meaning. We are the order of Goldscale now.

APSARA: It's as Vyce says. If you wish to argue, you're free to leave!

VYCE: The forces massed at Psonji are nearly the Galgastani army entire. Our scouts report that even the garrison from Coritanae has taken the field. Do you understand? The opportunity presents itself to strike at the hierophant directly. If another means to victory exists, I do not know it.

DENAM: All well and good if we can reach Coritanae, but how do we do that?

VYCE: There is only one approach to Coritanae that will not alert them to our intent. We must advance from behind the keep, from the Brigania Flats.

CATIUA: Impossible! The Brigania Flats are a frozen wasteland, covered in snow and ice the year through. For every step forward, we would slide back two!

VYCE: And yet, there is no other way. Think on it: The hierophant would never expect attack from the flats. And Brigantys Castle stands alone in that waste. We could hardly ask for a better fortified waypoint.

DENAM: The idea isn't entirely without merit...

VYCE: I've no doubt you're up to the task, Denam.

PEYTON: You'd better be. Or we'll be sitting decoy for naught!

BEYLEVRA: Let us pray to the Father that the cold does not wither your courage, hero! Ah ha ha!

[They chuckle again.]

[Denam turns to Catia.]

DENAM: Flee? Now? Don't be ridiculous!

CATIUA: I knew it. You're going to leave me.

DENAM: It's always about you, isn't it? Well I've had enough! If you want to go back to Golyat, go! I'll not stop you.

CATIUA: I've always been terrified of being alone...

DENAM: Avenging our father - is that not why you fight?

CATIUA: Why should I care to avenge him? He is no true father to us.

DENAM: What?

CATIUA: I mean we are orphans, brother. He is not our father. Not by blood, at any rate.

DENAM: No.... Who told you this? It's a lie! It must be!

CATIUA: It is no lie. I overheard him talking about it once, long ago. In all the world, you're the only family I have.

DENAM: Why tell me this only now?

CATIUA: Because you're leaving me.

DENAM: Leaving you? Scarce a moment goes by we are not at each other's side! And so it shall remain. I will never leave you.

CATIUA: There is the lie! You have chosen your war over your sister! How long until you cast me aside? Until you forget me altogether?

DENAM: Never, sister.

CATIUA: I'm alone without you...

[She turns and walks away.]

DENAM: Catia!

Madura Drift

[After taking the seaward route, Denam arrives in the frozen areas north of Coritanae.]

KNIGHT: It's colder than a witch's teat. We'll not find trouble out here.

SOLDIER: I'd sooner be back in Brigantys, m'self.

KNIGHT: Quit your griping. We have a patrol to finish.

SOLDIER: Beggin' your pardons, Sir Hektor. I weren't doin' no gripin', honest.

HEKTOR: Easy, lad. Wh wouldn't rather be home in front of a roaring fire, eh?

KNIGHT: What is it brings you out all this way, lord commander?

HEKTOR: I'm no lord. Just a common soldier [sic], like yourselves. I was ordered to hold Brigantys, and this I have done.

KNIGHT: You were ever a loyal follower of House Orlandeau. Still, a man like you, serving under Xaeobs.... It's a disgrace.

HEKTOR (intensely): I'll string you from the gallows myself if you speak of the high commander like that again!

KNIGHT: Of-of course! Forgive me, sir.

HEKTOR: A knight's first duty is to liege and kingdom. My father, Sir Briam, taught me this, as his father, Sir Cornelius, taught him. Perhaps you think these age-worn vows bind us, but it is in times such as these that their true worth becomes clear.

KNIGHT: Forgive me, Sir Hektor. I spoke out of turn -

HEKTOR: Rouse yourselves! The enemy is upon us!

[The Galgastani troops turn to find Denam trudging through the falling snow.]

DENAM: I didn't think to encounter Galgastani scouts so far afield.

HEKTOR: We haven't come all this way for naught, then. To arms!

[They do battle atop the ice.]

HEKTOR: I am Hektor Didarro, son of Briam, Knight of Galgastan. Speak your name, Walister!

DENAM: I am Denam Pavel of the Order of Goldscale.

HEKTOR: The butcher of Golyat. Your infamies precede you. You're to be commended. Few Walister have tread so deep into these lands. But you'll not reach Brigantys on our watch!

[They continue to fight.]

HEKTOR: Your hand is unsteady, Denam of Golyat. Is it knowledge of what you've done that weighs on you? Or knowledge of what you will do?

DENAM: Who are you to question me? How many have **you** slain, creature of Balgatos!?

HEKTOR: Fair enough. Only think not that all of Galgastan's knights gloried in doing as we were bid. Duty, honor, loyalty...a knight is nothing without these. I could not break the oath I swore to Galgastan.

DENAM: Then cast down your sword and surrender! It's Balbatos we're after!

HEKTOR: No matter how futile my struggle, I'll never surrender. I will not break the vows I swore to my kingdom. I will not bring disgrace upon my house! Fate ordained our meeting. To do less than fight to the end is to dishonor those who've fallen!

[Denam pushes their number back.]

HEKTOR: The tide turns.... We withdraw! I'll be waiting for you at Brigantys, Denam!

[He flees.]

Brigantys South Curtain Wall

[At the southern gate, Denam encounters the Galgastan guards.]

KAKRINOROS: Greetings, butcher of Golyat! You'll not find the warriors of Galgastan such lambs as the people of Balmamusa! Like a fox you creep in the shadows toward Coritanae - but we've got your tail, fox!

[Canopus spies a strategical miscue on their part.]

CANOPUS: Those archers up there trouble me. We'll need to deal with them before making our approach.

[They whittle away the defenses.]

KAKRINOROS: Hrah! Stronger than I thought.... Perhaps those rumors of an alliance hold some water? Where's our reinforcements? Where's Sir Hektor!?

[Their help never arrives.]

KAKRINOROS: Glory to Balbatos.... Glory to Galgastan.... Glory!

Brigantys West Curtain Wall

[At the western gate, Denam encounters the Galgastan guards.]

BINGHAM: The Wheel turns against you, Denam of Golyat! None have faced Bingham, lord of slaughter, and lived to tell the tale! Curse the gods or curse your sorry self, for your luck has run dry.

[They fight.]

BINGHAM: Errgh. A nobler death...I deserved.

Brigantys Castle

[Within the walls, Hektor holds emergency counsel with his knights and father.]

KNIGHT: But the Walister have already breached the gates! We must send a rider to inform Coritanae!

HEKTOR: Do that, and you sign your own writ of execution. His eminence tasked us with this castle's defense! By the honor of House Didarro, we will defeat these interlopers and stop their advance here. Or have you lost your courage so soon!

KNIGHT: But our dungeon holds scores of men who want nothing more than to see Galgastan fall! Should they join forces with the Walister -

HEKTOR: It shall not come to pass! We won't allow it! Consider that our enemy has fought across harsh, unfamiliar terrain outside our walls. They are fatigued. We will draw them inside the castle and finish them! Did you not wonder why I kept our forces from the field? Do you understand nothing of what I say!?

BRIAM: House Didarro has never fallen short of its word. My son, Hektor, will not see it do otherwise now. If you are a knight of this house for true, you will follow your liege's orders with all due-obedience.

KNIGHT: Yes, m'lord!

HEKTOR: By your leave, father.

BRIAM: You have it, and the pride of House Didarro as well.

HEKTOR: Praise of which I am unworthy, in truth.

BRIAM: No, it is I who should apologize. I'm sending you to your death.

HEKTOR: You do not understand, father. This is the opportunity I've long awaited! How many times I spoke of dedication to my land, my people - while my heart pained with every word. I could ask for no clearer sign than the Walister's arrival here, today. I was meant for this!

BRIAM: Doubtlessly, they seek to take this castle and use it to launch an assault upon the weakly defended flanks of Coritanae. You see, this is their main force. The rabble at Psonji are no more than a feint. A clever, if reckless, stratagem...and yet, this may just give them a hope of toppling the heirophant.

HEKTOR: If it will mean an end to this conflict, then my life is a small price to pay. The castle is yours, father. I leave her charges, and Galgastan, in your hands.

[A commotion draws their attention outside the room.]

VOICE: Retreat! ...Broken through...inside the walls!

HEKTOR: I am needed below. Know this: The honor of House Didarro will not falter this day.

BRIAM: Our honor is greater for your sacrifice. Godspeed.

Brigantys Great Hall

HEKTOR: You've come a long way to die, Denam. You'll find these walls will not yield to you easily. Nor will they offer up her prize without a fight.

DENAM: What prize?

HEKTOR: Those enemies of the heirophant who languish in her dungeons. You mean you're not here to rally them to your cause? Then why...? Well, no matter. The dead seldom accomplish much of note!

[Hektor launches his final defense.]

DENAM (to himself): A victory here might gain us more than a strong base for an attack on Coritanae. An alliance with those Galgastani who turned against the heirophant could well lead to a lasting bond between our clans!

HEKTOR: I see your plan. You've drawn our lines off to Psonji in order to strike at Coritanae's undefended flank.

DENAM: True enough, for what good the knowledge will do you. You're finished, knight. Your castle will be ours. Bend the knee to us, and we'll spare your life.

HEKTOR: You dishonor me by the mere suggestion, butcher of Golyat. I am a knight of Galgastan. You will not take this castle while I yet draw breath!

DENAM (to himself): Something about this rings false...

HEKTOR: What's wrong, Denam of Golyat? Do not tell me the butcher hesitates to draw blood! You and I are foes, of this there is no doubt. One of us will triumph here, and the other will be cast into the abyss! Now, come, show to me the quality of a hero among Walister!

[Denam grants Hektor his wish.]

HEKTOR: Ah...it ends. The castle...in your hands, father...

[Afterward, Denam is greeted by Hektor's father, Briam, and the prisoners in the castle.]

BRIAM: In the name of the armies of Galgastan, I, Briam Didarro, surrender this castle to you. What defenders remain have already thrown down their arms. I beg you, take their freedom, not their lives.

DENAM: You are not the first Didarro I have met this day.

BRIAM: Aye. You slew my son, Hektor. But I do not weep. He died in utmost service to his sovereign, and with bravery in defense of our house's honor.

DENAM: ...

BRIAM: The men and women behind me are those whom the heirophant imprisoned here for treachery. You requested them brought here, and I have done so...yet my clansmen they remain. Tell me, Walister. Are these enemies of the heirophant your enemies as well?

[Choice 1 - Of course they're not.]

DENAM: No, of course not. But we did not take this castle to free them. They've done us no harm, so we've no cause to fight.

BRIAM: So the enemy of your enemy is a friend, yes? Very well.

DENAM: Know that I have no intention of taking the lives of your Galgastani garrison. Though I do intend to free your prisoners, and they may feel otherwise.

BRIAM: Well, you heard him. What say you? Jeunan. I would hear your thoughts.

[A crimson dragoon steps forward.]

JEUNAN: You have taken the castle and released us from our bonds, Denam. I have not the words to express my gratitude...but let me say this: Your present course will not bring an end to this conflict. As you lift your voice and sword against a tyrant, one day another shall do the same unto you. Your struggle...changes nothing.

BRIAM: Enough, Jeunan. He asked to know your heart, not your politics. Pay him no heed. He has languished overlong in the dungeon.

DENAM: No. His words ring far too true to be ignored.

[Choice 2 - How could they be?]

DENAM: What wrong have they done us? We are not the Resistance of old. Our quarrel is not with the people of Galgastan. The generations-long conflict between your clan and ours never was! Always it has been men with power, men such as the heirophant and the duke, who throw their people at one another to further their own ambitions. It is not the Galgastani who must answer for this bloodshed...it is Balbatos and his ilk.

BRIAM: Springtime words from the mouth of a youth.... Let us pray to the Father that they remain true through the winter to come.

DENAM: ...

BRIAM: What will you do, Jeunan?

[A crimson knight steps forward.]

JEUNAN: I am inspired to throw my lot upon the wheel and trust this Walister.

BRIAM: I see. Denam of Golyat. This man before you once aided the heirophant in his blood war against your people. Yet he knows now the rror of his ways and seeks to atone. Allow me one request: Take him with you. Give him his chance.

DENAM: If he has sinned, then my sin is greater still. I bear him no enmity. You are welcome to join us, Jeunan.

JEUNAN: Thank you.

Bahanna Highlands

[Denam passes through and a encounter a Galgastani patrol.]

ROBERVAL: Wish they'd sent us to fight at Psonji. Beats a supply run to Brigantys at any rate.

[The weather takes a turn.]

ROBERVAL: And now it snows. Bad to worse, eh? Who's there?

DENAM: Galgastan outriders.... More swift than I expected.

ROBERVAL: Walister? In these god-forgotten lands? They must have crossed the Brigania Flats.

DENAM: Troops on their way to resupply Brigantys, by the look. They must not know the castle has already fallen.

[They fight.]

ROBERVAL: The roads to Asyton are shut off, and we'd have heard if Asyton had fallen. Could this rabble have taken Brigantys!? Impossible! Sir Hektor would never surrender the castle!

DENAM: Balbatos has not taken notice of us - a rare stroke of luck.

JEUNAN: Sir Hektor's doing, Denam.

DENAM: Sir Hektor? Why?

JEUNAN: He has no love for Balbatos. But you know Sir Hektor - loyal to fault. He and his father both. They would never oppose Balbatos openly. When you arrived at Brigantys, he understood your true purpose. He and his father set in motion a plan to ease your way.

DENAM: What plan?

JEUNAN: Sir Hektor and Sir Briam made certain word of your approach would not reach Coritanae. They even ordered the garrison's force divided, else your siege of Brigantys would never have succeeded. House Didarro values loyalty and honor above all else, so none doubted their intentions.

DENAM: Why not join our cause outright?

JEUNAN: For one thing, they did not know if you were a worthy ally or just another would-be duke. For another, they hold their honor too dear. They could not openly betray their lord.

DENAM: Sir Hektor let us take the castle?

JEUNAN: Aye, and his life. I am sure that by now, his father, Sir Briam, joins him -

DENAM: What!?

[They focus on the Galgastani at hand.]

ROBERVAL: Never should've come to this...blasted place...

DENAM: Balbatos must fall, or they died for nothing.

The Reisan Way

[The Galgastani stand blocking the road.]

VANCE: What is it, two days since we last heard from Brigantys?

SOLDIER: Two at least. It's not like Sir Hektor.

VANCE: Perhaps the weather turns foul. Brigania Flats is often beset with storms this time of year, no?

SOLDIER: True enough. But if snows had blocked the roads, I expect the company we sent to resupply Brigantys would have turned back by now.

VANCE: When did you find time to sharpen that dull wit of yours?

SOLDIER: Dull or not, I'm right, most like. If the high commander finds out aught is amiss, it's your neck, not mine.

VANCE: I'll worry about my neck; you worry about yours.

SOLDIER: Decurion! A party approaches!

VANCE: Friend or foe?

SOLDIER: Can't say.... But they're not from Brigantys.

DENAM: A Galgastani patrol.... We can't let them alert Coritanae. To battle!

VANCE: So these Walister dogs are the reason Brigantys has fallen silent. Their heads will make fine gifts for Sir Xaebos!

[The groups clash.]

VANCE: No wonder crossing Brigania Flats gave you no trouble. You fight like lions! Hoping to take Coritanae from the rear, I reckon.

DENAM: Truly we face one of Galgastan's finest military minds.

[Denam takes down his respected foe.]

VANCE: When our armies return from Psonji...your time will come...

DENAM: Coritanae isn't far now. We must press on!

Coritanae Keep

[The heirophant Balbatos holds counsel with his advisors.]

BALBATOS: So it's done. The Walister are broken!

GATIALO: Just so.

APOLLINAIRE: They are, my lord. Sir Xaebos does not disappoint.

BALBATOS: Indeed not. Now all that remain are Brantyn and the Dark Knights. Still, even with Almorica, defeating them will be no small task.

[A messenger bursts into the room.]

SOLDIER: My lords! The Walister.... They're here!

APOLLINAIRE: Calm yourself! You speak in tongues, soldier.

GATIALO: Here? What are you talking about?

SOLDIER: They lay siege to the castle!

GATIALO: How many are there?

SOLDIER: I-I don't know, sir. What do we do?

GATIALO: Meet them with every man who can hold a sword!

SOLDIER: Yes sir!

[The soldier leaves after hearing her advice.]

BALBATOS: The remnants of their army couldn't have broken through our lines, unless...Psonji was a diversion!

The Gates of Coritanae

[Denam arrives at the gate of Coritanae as the sun sets.]

DENAM: I am Denam Pavel, of the Order of Goldscale! Hear me, Leundar Balbatos! Open the gates of Coritanae and surrender! Kneel without a fight, and I will ensure you a fair reckoning. Resist us, and we will release heaven's judgment upon you for your crimes!

ORGEAU: What hole did they crawl from? Listen up, boys. We only need hold these walls until our main host returns! Let not one of them into the keep! Listen well, interlopers! The Walister host was routed in the field! You're fighting for a lost cause!

DENAM: So they weren't able to hold in Psonji.... Unfortunate, but our course remains the same. We've a keep to take!

[Denam and company lead the assault on Coritanae.]

ORGEAU: Make your peace with the Father now, for when Sir Xaebos returns with his legions, you will die!

DENAM: Sounds like another way to say you're doomed unless your friends come to save you.

ORGEAU: Wishful thoughts, cur!

DENAM: It is a long way for word to travel to Psonji...and as long for your legions to return.

[He falls.]

ORGEAU: So.... So close.

Coritanae Ward (against Apollinaire)

[Denam enters the keep and finds a stout resistance awaiting him.]

APOLLINAIRE: A crafty ploy, Denam of Golyat! But this keep still stands, and by the might of Galgastan she will not fall!

[She calls her forces to attack and notices a familiar face on the other side.]

APOLLINAIRE: You.... Jeunan!? What are you doing with those Walister blackguards!?

JEUNAN: Daesi.... How many seasons have passed since we last met.

APOLLINAIRE: If you are here...then Brigantys has fallen, and the traitors to the heirophant conspire with the Walister!

JEUNAN: True enough, though I dislike your choice of words. We are not criminals, but brothers-in-arms, seeking not more conflict, but peace.

[They whittle down her ranks.]

APOLLINAIRE: You do not know the past of this man you call your ally, Denam of Golyat. His sword is wet with the blood of innocents, and his boots dark with the ashes of their village!

JEUNAN: It is true. I have no desire to deny what I have done. Nor do I deny that it was a terrible mistake, a weighty sin upon my soul! All those who lent aid to Balbatos's blood war were ogres...ogres in men's flesh!

APOLLINAIRE: You blame his eminence? it was you upon the field of battle! You who mistook friend or foe!

JEUNAN: You speak as though your own hands were not stained dark with the blood of innocents!

APOLLINAIRE: Innocents? Do not brand me with your iron, traitor! I fought only the enemies of this kingdom...gnawing vermin like you, who place the blame for their own sins upon our lord!

JEUNAN: True. Killing the heirophant now would do little to absolve my guilt. I was a man changed then. Those villagers - something dark inside me moved my hand to cut short their cries for mercy. I believed, in my black heart, that I did my duty for Galgastan. That I served my people even as I slew them. But what did I serve, other than death? I watched as the light faded from the eyes of our people and fear grew in their hearts. I watched as the beauty that was Galgastan...perished.

APOLLINAIRE: Foolishness! You'd have us return to the years of Dorgalua's rule, is that it? When the Bakram and Walister dined at the king's table, while the Galgastani were left to forage for scraps? You would throw away all we built this kingdom for! Where is the beauty in that, I ask you!?

JEUNAN: You decry the injustices of Dorgalua while you wish them upon the Walister! You would strip them - and your own clansmen - of their freedom. The heirophant's justice has failed, and his people abandon him. Surely you see it, Daesi! You cannot build a castle upon shifting sands.

APOLLINAIRE: As you wish, Jeunan. We will let the battle decide who has the right of it!

[Jeunan arrives the victor.]

APOLLINAIRE: Glory...to Galgastan.

Coritanae Ward (against Gatialo)

[Denam enters the keep and finds a stout resistance awaiting him.]

GATIALO: I know you! Bless my mending wounds for keeping me here and granting me this chance to face you again. Have no fear, boy. I'll show you all the mercy you showed our Arkhiatros!

[He calls his forces to attack and they whittle down his ranks.]

GATIALO: To meet death at the hands of these Walister swine.... Forgive me...

Brigantys Castle

[Denam and his troops storm Balbatos's chambers, where the heirophan wields a dagger pointed inward.]

DENAM: Our forces have taken the keep. It is over!

BALBATOS: No closer, Walister! I'll never kneel to the likes of you.

DENAM: You have no choice.

BALBATOS: Foulest of days.... We won in Psonji! We won!

[One of Denam's knights steps forward.]

BALBATOS: I said stay back, insolent cretins!

[Denam draws his sword.]

DENAM: Your keep is taken and your men are slain, Balbatos. Yield!

BALBATOS: You were wrong, Walister...

[He thrusts his blade into his chest.]

BALBATOS: I do...have a choice!

[He collapses. Denam returns his weapon and checks the pulse of Balbatos.]

DENAM: He's dead. I wonder how Vyce has fared...

Krysaro

[In a Galgastani occupied town, a Galgastani commander holds Vyce in a dark room and whips him.]

XAEBOS: Where is Denam? Speak!

VYCE: How should...I know? Run off somewhere...I'd wager...

XAEBOS: You expect me to believe the hero of the Walister turned tail and fled? Tell me what you're scheming, or I'll quiet you for good!

[He lashes out again when a soldier runs in.]

SOLDIER: Sir! The Walister - They've taken Coritanae!

XAEBOS: What!? How is that possible?

SOLDIER: A forced crossed the Brigania Flats and assaulted the keep from her flank!

XAEBOS: Madness! What of the heirophant? Surely he's not -

SOLDIER: Slain, sir. the dogs showed no mercy.

XAEBOS: The heirophant...slain?

VYCE: Ha! He did it! He really did it! Ha ha!

XAEBOS: You...vile, scheming creature!

[Xaebos kicks Vyce in the chest.]

VYCE: Unh!

XAEBOS: ...How stand our ranks?

SOLDIER: Sir. We have.... Roughly four companies remain, sir.

XAEBOS: Godspit! We've lost more than I thought. Send Brutakos and Muntzer to Coritanae! We will march on Almorica!

SOLDIER: At once, sir!

XAEOBS: That demon of Golyat will pay for this!

Bahanna Highlands

[Meanwhile, Ravness limps through the snow-covered terrain with a knight in tow.]

RAVNESS: We'll both be caught here. I'll stay and slow the enemy - you go on ahead!

WARRIOR: I owe you an apology, Ravness. I thought you could not be trusted. Forgive me.

RAVNESS: You're kind, but there's naught to forgive. Now go. See to our young lord of Coritanae.

[He leaves when a Galgastan force surrounds Ravness.]

KNIGHT: Thought you could slip away, did you?

DENAM: Warriors of Galgastan! Coritanae has fallen! Balbatos is slain! Surrender and save yourselves!

RAVNESS: I did not think Coritanae would fall so swift.

KNIGHT: Walister lies! Shut your ears to their slander. Seize the woman, slay the rest!

DENAM: Dame Ravness, rally to us!

RAVNESS: Already you lead the armies of Almorica.

DENAM: Sir Leonar gave his life to make it so. Balmamusa, Sir Leonar...how many more must I send to their death?

RAVNESS: A brave man, Sir Leonar. I knew him well. He would bear any dishonor for his country.

[They fend off the Galgastani.]

RAVNESS: It is a great burden he has passed to you. But who am I to fault him for that?

DENAM: You're too hard on yourself.

RAVNESS: Am I? Balmamusa was a foul business. It was unfair of us to ask one so young to bear so much. We trusted to your strength, when we ought have heeded our own wisdom.

DENAM: I might have chosen another path at Balmamusa. I might have died in Sir Leonar's place. But there is no undoing what is done.

RAVNESS: You press on because you must, bearing your shame upon your shield.

[They seek to meet and thwart the Galgastani.]

JEUNAN: So this is the Dame Ravness.

DENAM: She's no enemy of ours.

JEUNAN: Easy, Denam. Sir Briam told me all. A Walister Knight who toils for Galgastan is a rare creature indeed.

DENAM: What do you mean?

JEUNAN: She's well regarded among those who oppose Balbatos. And Balbatos's men think of her less as a Walister Knight than a rogue within their own camp.

DENAM: Dame Ravness, a Galgastani rebel?

JEUNAN: I'd sooner have the tale from her, but she'll not talk if she's dead.

[Canopus joins the fray.]

CANOPUS: You're looking well, all things considered.

RAVNESS: I see you've not changed, Canopus.

CANOPUS: Not as you have. There's a rose in your cheeks. It suits you. You had a grim look when first we met at Almorica.

RAVNESS: I was confused about a great many things. But no longer.

CANOPUS: To the business at hand then. So many foes in need of mortality.

[They eventually rout the Galgastani.]

DENAM: Dame Ravness! Are you all right?

RAVNESS: Thank you, yes. I live to fight another day.

DENAM: It was the Galgastani who pursued you, and a Galgastani whom you helped escape. I admit I'm rather...confused.

RAVNESS: The knight you saw opposes the heirophant. It was Balbatos's loyals who gave chase.

DENAM: To what end?

RAVNESS: The lord of Coritanae is the rightful ruler of Galgastan. Heirophant Balbatos is merely his steward. As the young lord was not yet of age, Balbatos was free to reshape Galgastan as he saw fit. The poor child was a piece in a game he scarce knew existed. We had hoped to reach him before your assault on Coritanae.

DENAM: Where is he now?

RAVNESS: Balbatos's enemies shelter him. With Coritanae sacked and Balbatos dead, I should think they'll take him to Brigantys. A great many of their number hold the castle.

DENAM: Good people, and true.

RAVNESS: That's right - you've met them, haven't you. It is they who reached out to me to aid in the reformation.

DENAM: Of Galgastan, you mean?

RAVNESS: Of course. Not everyone in Galgastan wanted war with the Walister. What better way to bring peace to both people than to change Galgastan from within?

DENAM: Peace without bloodshed.

RAVNESS: With my mixed blood, I thought myself a fitting standard-bearer for the cause.

DENAM: ...

RAVNESS: I had but to open my eyes and see. And when I did, a new truth emerged - a way for Walister and Galgastani both to emerge victorious.

DENAM: A worthy goal. One I share.

[He extends his hand.]

DENAM: Join us, Ravness. Fight at our side. Our paths parted at Balmamusa, but we seek the same thing. Look past what is done, and lend me your steel.

RAVNESS: You've grown much since Balmamusa. My sword is yours.

[They grasp hands.]

Psonji Weald

[Denam traverses through the grounds where Galgastan claimed victory not long ago.]

BRUTAKOS: You'll pay for the heirophant's death with your own, Denam!

[Denam strikes through.]

BRUTAKO: Forgive me, your eminence...

DENAM: Onward! We take back Almorica!

Lake Bordu

[A Galgastani necromancer awaits.]

MUNTZER: I expected a coward like you to slink away from the battlefield at Psonji.... But you've made a misstep. Look down at your feet, deep into the marsh. See something familiar? That's right.... Your fallen comrades have been waiting here for you. And who am I to deny them the reunion for which they long? Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[The dead rise.]

MUNTZER: It'll be just like old times!

[They fight.]

MUNTZER: No wonder Coritanae fell to you.

[She falls.]

MUNTZER: Galgastan is finished. Whether Xaebos realizes it or not, the ground has shifted beneath him. If you live through the coming battle, I am sure we will meet again. So long!

[After transforming, she flees.]

DENAM: Onward! We take back Almorica!

Tynemouth Hill

[A familiar face awaits Denam on his next step to Almorica.]

GANPP: I remember you, boy! The Wheel brought us back together, has it? Someone up there must like ol' Ganpp. Obda! Berda! To me!

[His pets arrive at his call.]

GANPP: You're well acquainted with Berda and Obda, but I been brewin' something special for just such an occasion! Banga! Zanga! To battle!

[Another pair of beasts join the fray.]

GANPP: I may spend my days hunting heads for a paltry fee, but I've not forgotten my debt to his eminence. There's a legion of Galgastani dead who can't wait for you to join 'em!

[Again Denam faces the deadly beastmaster who laments after the fall of each of his pets.]

GANPP: Obda! What have they done to you! Your sorrow is my strength! Forgive me, Banga! Your soul will live on in me! Berda! My sweet Berda! Your anger feeds my own! They'll pay dear for this, Zanga! My heart ain't so gentle as yours!

[After taking out his pets, Denam cripples Ganpp.]

GANPP: Piss and blood! The day is theirs! Next we meet will be the last! I won't forget what it was you done here!

Golyat

[Catiua stands on the docks at night.]

CATIUA: I am alone without you.

VOICE: No. You have always been alone.

CATIUA (turning): Who's there!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot appears from the shadows.]

CATIUA: Lancelot Tartaros! What are you doing here?

LANSELOT: Your mother left this world upon your birth. And your father followed her only a few months before the war broke out. Your blood begins and ends with you, Catiua. You are alone, truly.

CATIUA: what are you talking about? I have a brother! Surely you've not forgotten Denam!

LANSELOT: I gather you have realized the Abuna was not your father. Yet you assumed that your "brother" shared your orphaned lineage. You assumed...wrongly.

[A flash of lightning streaks across the sky.]

CATIUA: Then who am I? Who do you say I am!?

LANSELOT: Versalia. Your true name is Versalia Oberyth.

CATIUA: Versalia Oberyth.... That's not possible.

LANSELOT: You are cautious. Good. House Oberyth gave Valeria her king. You are his daughter.

[Another flash of lightning is followed by a sudden downpour.]

LANSELOT: But it was not Queen Vernotta who bore you into this world. One of her handmaidens, a girl named Mannafloa, caught the king's eye. But even as you quickened in the womb, the queen carried the unborn prince. Wanting no rival for her son, she expelled your mother from the castle before you were born. Mannafloa died giving birth to you.

CATIUA: Who would believe such a tale?

LANSELOT: It was the Bakram regent, Brantyn Morne, who took you in. He left you in the care of his brother, Abuna Prancet. Were it not for you and your secret, a man such as Brantyn would never have risen so high or so swift.

CATIUA: Nonsense and lies!

LANSELOT: But there is proof: Your necklace. It bears an inscription, written in the old tongue. One with your religious training should have no trouble reading it.

CATIUA: ...

LANSELOT: Labon Versalia xan phon, destonia lera phoenan. To my daughter Versalia, eternal beloved. A gift from King Dorgalua to celebrate your birth. The Queen made it appear as though you and your mother had been killed. He went to his grave full expecting to meet you in the beyond. You must have read that inscription. Nurtured doubts about your origins. Am I wrong?

CATIUA: What do you want from me?

LANSELOT: For you to return with us to Heim.

[A pair of men join Lanselot.]

LANSELOT: There, Abuna Prancet can answer any other questions you may have.

[He waits for Catiua to respond. She does not.]

LANSELOT: This way, Princess Catiua.

[Catiua follows Lanselot.]

Boed Fortress

[The Dark Knights prowl the battlefield after their victory over the Liberation Front.]

OZMA: Our work is done, Oz. We withdraw.

OZ: What about the abuna?

OZMA: They led him away just now, quiet as a church mouse.

OZ: I have that effect on people, don't I.

OZMA: So it would seem. Come, we've tarried long enough.

[She leaves.]

OZ: We must remove any trace we were here. You, put the torch to this place. While you're at it, make certain we left no survivors.

[A Dark Knight leads a captive.]

KNIGHT: Keep walking! Their leader, my lord.

OZ: Doesn't know when to die, does she.

CERYA: Go on.... Kill me.

OZ: You're in no position to be making requests. She's yours. Enjoy the spoils of war.

KNIGHT: We'll put her to good use, won't we, boys?

CERYA: go on and...try!

[The knights swarm over her.]

Gates of Almorica

[At the gates, the remnants of the Galgastani opposition awaits.]

GILDORA: So you're the commander of the Walister forces who took Coritanae? You'll pay for the disgrace you brought upon the heirophant, Denam Pavel!

DENAM: Soldiers of Galgastan! Release your captives and throw down your arms! Balbatos is no more! There is no longer cause to fight!

GILDORA: Fool! Why should we heed you? We're the victors here! We will see his eminence's vision through: An end to your befouled bloodline!

DENAM: Victors? But you've lost. The people of Coritanae and Brigantys both have joined us. They follow you no longer!

GILDORA: The people? They're as fickle as a weathercock, turning whichever way the wind blows. Once you are buried and Almorica is ours, we'll see how quickly they return to their former masters!

DENAM: And how will you lead them? With fear? You follow the same dark course as the heirophant!

[Denam unwillingly fights the Galgastani.]

GILDORA: Forgive me...heirophant. I...have failed you.

Almorica Passageway

[The ousters await Denam.]

XAEBOS: We may be all that's left of Galgastan's armies, but we'll not surrender to you! Look well, boy. This is how men of honor meet death!

RAVNESS: Sir Xaeobs, lay down your sword! There is no honor in a meaningless death!

XAEBOS: We gladly give our lives for the sake of the heirophant's cause. A noble act...lost on the likes of you, Ravness.

RAVNESS: It is not honor you seek but glory! You have a sacred duty to your kinsmen. Where is the nobility in abandoning them?

XAEBOS: Who are you to speak to me of duty? You're nothing but a mongrel bitch who betrayed her better half!

[The forces battle.]

XAEBOS: You. You're Jeunan Avertif. Rebels taken you under their wing, have they? A fine pair you make. Denam is no better than the duke.

DENAM: What do you mean?

XAEBOS: Have you forgotten Balmamusa? You seemed only too glad to carry out the duke's orders then. I know you for what you are, boy: A butcher, and ruthless.

JUENAN: So quick to find fault, but these are past sins for which we seek to atone! What about yourself, Xaebos? You lead your men to their doom.

XAEBOS: Hmph, I might have expected as much from you, Jeunan. You and Denam are cut from the same cloth. You speak of the good of the people, yet think only of yourselves!

[The battle continues.]

XAEBOS: All our plans, ruined by you Walister filth!

DENAM: Walister, Galgastani - that's how men like Balbatos and the duke wish to paint us. They play us against each other for their own purposes. But we have had enough!

XAEBOS: You quibble over words. In the end, each of us fights for our own reasons. You convince the people that you are their champion. Perhaps you've even convinced yourself. But it is naught but a convenient lie.

DENAM: I don't have to convince myself of anything.

[He falls.]

XAEBOS: A sorry sight...I must make. Remember it well, Denam. Someday...this will be your fate.

DENAM: I'll not sink so low.

XAEBOS: It takes...only one false step.

DENAM: If ever I turn against my people, death seems a just reward.

XAEBOS: Ha.... Might be that it is. The people aren't half as smart as...you credit them. But nor are they...fools. Betrayal...retribution...righteousness. Words on the wind. Enjoy your victory...while it lasts, boy.

Almorica Castle

[After seizing Almorica, Denam and his companions find old friends waiting. The remaining Xenobians Gildas and Mirdyn stand aside a bedridden Warren.]

MIRDYN: Canopus! And Denam and Vyce besides! I am glad to see you well.

DENAM: And you, Sir Mirdyn. Sir Gildas.

CANOPUS: How is he?

MIRDYN: The star seer remains lost in the mists of sleep. But he draws breath and is whole of body.

CANOPUS: That is well, then. And Lancelot? Has he not returned?

GILDAS: I've not seen him since the night of the Bakram attack. They held us at a camp outside Rhime, but we managed to escape. What is next for you? An assault on Phidoch, I suppose?

DENAM: That's the plan. But first we must do something about the Bakram armies at Rhime. If our casualties there are too great, we'll never take Phidoch.

CANOPUS: What we need is some way of taking Rhime unawares. What we have is a frontal assault across the Golborza Plain. Hardly an ideal strategem.

VYCE: There is one way.... There are hidden passes through the Burnham Massif - ways known only to the goatherds and peasants who make the mountains their home. We can use these trails to approach Rhime from the west. It's the last thing they'll expect. The city will fall in the confusion.

GILDAS: As it happens, we have a score of our own to settle. Room in your party for two more?

[The men nod in agreement.]

GILDAS: Let's be about it, then!

Mount Weobry

[Across the treacherous terrain they encounter foul beasts.]

DENAM: We can't afford to lose a single man to these fiends. Watch yourselves!

[They defeat the creatures.]

DENAM: Onward to Rhime!

Heim

[In Heim, the regent Brantyn sits in his throneroom, the Dark Knight Volaq and his advisors with him.]

BRANTYN: This defies all reason.

KNIGHT: The whole might of the Order of Goldscale. A host equal to our own. Perhaps greater.

BRANTYN: How have they mustered such a force in such short order?

VOLAQ: Perhaps heirophant Balbatos had even more enemies than we suspected. It is true that, on word of his death, men deserted his armies like rats from a foundering ship. What's more, the New Walister Alliance enjoys the support of the slaves and commons. It would seem this young Denam is as much at home before a crowd as he is at the head of an army.

BRANTYN: You speak as though it was not your doing that brought us to this unhappy pass. We ought have marched on Almorica as soon as we took Rhime. Perhaps it's not too late. Summon my war council! Inform them I plan to lay siege to Almorica.

KNIGHT: At once, my lord.

VOLAQ: I beg you reconsider, lord regent. Surely the Bakram armies alone are not sufficient to the task.

BRANTYN: What? The Dark Knights would abandon us now? You wouldn't dare!

VOLAQ: You have an arrangement with the high champion. An arrangement with certain...obligations.

BRANTYN: Obligations, you say? As I recall, you are obliged to grant me whatever aid I require to wrest control of these isles. Yet here I sit, waiting, while you lecture me about **my** obligations!?

[The regent rises from his throne and stands to face Volaq.]

VOLAQ: Stay your anger, lord regent. I meant only to suggest that you avoid rousing the Order of Goldscale before there is need. Have patience, you'll see.

BRANTYN: And how will you reward my patience? I half fear you mean to betray us for a new suitor.

VOLAQ: Do you not trust us, lord regent? That would be most unfortunate.

BRANTYN: I spoke without thinking. But understand, my patience is not without limit.

VOLAQ: Not to worry, lord regent. We'll take care of everything, I assure you.

[Brantyn sits back down.]

BRANTYN: Very well - we wait.

VOLAQ: As you say, my lord.

Arkhaiopolis of Rhime

[A blind swordsman stands in the city alone when two Bakram guards approach him.]

KNIGHT: You there! No going out of doors after dark.

MAN: Is it night already? I hadn't noticed. An error you'll not begrudge a blind man, I pray?

KNIGHT: Think you're clever, do you? Let's have your name!

[The Dark Knight Ozma appears.]

OZMA: What trouble is this?

MAGUS: Found him lurking in the shadows, Dame Ozma.

OZMA: Turn. Show me your face.

KNIGHT: Are you deaf as well? Do as you're told!

[The man slowly turns.]

OZMA: Hobyrim? Is that you? How is this possible?

HOBYRIM: You have me mistaken, my lady.

OZMA: Don't be absurd, Hobyrim. Where have you been? Why have you come to Valeria?

[Before he can answer her question they hear a sound.]

MAGUS: Who goes there!

DENAM: I am Denam Pavel, captain of the Order of Goldscale! Throw down your swords or die. The choice is yours.

[Hobyrim is able to move himself away.]

KNIGHT: A blind scout. That's a bloody laugh!

[He calls more troops.]

OZMA: Spare the swordsman! I want him taken alive!

KNIGHT: All due respect, Dame Ozma, but if it's his neck or mine, I'll save mine. We can't let the city fall! Drive them back!

DENAM: Attack! Over there - those Bakram are chasing someone. To his aid!

[Ozma calls to Hobyrim from across the town.]

OZMA: Hobyrim, say something! It is I, Ozma! Your eyes.... What has befallen you? Have you forgotten even the sound of my voice? Please, tell me what happened!

[The battle continues.]

OZMA (to herself): You look...frail, Hobyrim. Where have you been these past six years? I had it from Balxephon that you were dead! ...Was he in error? But no, he would not make such a mistake. Then, was it a lie?

[She calls to her troops.]

OZMA: Stop! Do not attack him!

DENAM (to himself): Odd. That woman of the Dark Knights seems to know the swordsman they chase.

[The man dies.]

HOBYRIM: And so...it ends. Would've liked to get in...one more cut.

OZMA: Hobyrim! No!

[They successfully fend off the Bakram.]

OZMA: It pains me...but we must withdraw!

HOBYRIM: ...

OZMA (to herself): I'll leave Hobyrim to the Order of Goldscale for now. I must hear the truth of the matter from Balxephon first, lest I place him in harm's way again.

[She flees and Denam and his group meet the mysterious man.]

HOBYRIM: I thank you for your aid. You are the Almoricians at war with the Dark Knights, I take it?

DENAM: I am Denam Pavel, captain of the Order of Goldscale.

HOBYRIM: Ah. The one they call the hero of Golyat, yes? I am Hobyrim Vandam.

DENAM: Rhime is turned battlefield since the Bakram invaded. What was your business here?

HOBYRIM: I heard you were bringing the fight to the Dark Knights. I thought to lend you my sword. As you can see, I am without sight. But I am gifted in other ways. I wield a blade better than any common soldier you'll find.

DENAM: You're confident, I'll give you that. Tell me, where do you hail from? You're not of this island, are you.

HOBYRIM: Ah, the lad has a sharp ear. You're quite right. I am Lodissian. But do not think that makes me enamored of our Dark Knights. Quite the contrary. I revile them.

DENAM: You've some score to settle with the Dark Knights?

HOBYRIM: Aye. You might say that. What if I told you it was they who stole the light from me?

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: Let me join your struggle, then. Should I prove more a burden than a boon, I will depart, bearing you no malice.

[Choice 1 - You would be welcome.]

DENAM: You would be a welcome addition.

HOBYRIM: You've my thanks, then, and my sword.

DENAM: Only, allow me one question.

HOBYRIM: What might that be?

DENAM: The Dark Knight that was after you - the woman. Do you know her?

HOBYRIM: Aye, that I do. I'm sure you have doubts regarding my intentions, but I must ask that you do not inquire further. I will tell you all when the time is right... But for now, know that I am a sworn enemy to the Dark Knights, and no enemy of yours.

DENAM: Very well. I'll give my trust, in hopes it will be soon earned.

HOBYRIM: That it shall.

[Choice 2 - I cannot accept your offer.]

DENAM: I'm sorry. Were circumstances different...

HOBYRIM: Well.... I cannot fault you for distrusting a sightless swordsman, can I. I am sure we will meet again, youth of Golyat. Until that time, fare thee well.

Phidoch West Curtain Wall

MERCURE: Denam of Golyat, is it? Are your ranks so bare that you must lead your armies yourself? Cut off the head, and the body dies. Today will be your last!

[Denam takes the charge uphill.]

MERCURE: Pity those foolish enough to follow you, boy. Today they will learn the folly of a frontal assault! It will be too late to beg for your lives once the Dark Knights arrive!

[They cannot hold further and Phidoch is breached.]

MERCURE: If we have failed...then...there is no stopping them.

Phidoch South Curtain Wall

VESTIARRI: Stand proud, warriors of Bakram! Our enemy may not wield torches and scythes, but they are a mob! Focus your attacks on their commander, and they will wither before us! To battle!

[Denam takes the charge uphill.]

VESTIARRI: Just a little longer before the Loslorien host arrives to relieve us! Hold, for the glory of Bakram, hold!

[They continue to fight.]

VESTIARRI: What takes them so long? Surely Loslorien has not abandoned us!

DENAM: I don't see any Dark Knights riding from the castle. The rift between the two forces must be wide indeed.

[They cannot hold any further and Phidoch is breached.]

VESTIARRI: Hold the line...! Hold...

[Denam quickly enters the keep.]

Phidoch Castle

[The Dark Knights Balxephon and Ozma converse within the walls.]

BALXEPHON: You're certain? It was Hobyrim?

OZMA: I know who I saw. And a wretched sight he was.

BALXEPHON: Of course. I did not mean to doubt you.

OZMA: You told me he was dead - taken ill in the dungeons of B'Landone.

BALXEPHON: Indeed. He was given a funerary rights - a meager ceremony befitting a criminal, but even so.

OZMA: So you bore witness to his corpse. Perhaps I was mistaken after all.

BALXEPHON: As I have said.

OZMA: I want to believe you, but I cannot deny what I saw.

[Oz enters.]

OZ: Not interrupting, am I?

BALXEPHON: A private matter. No concern of yours.

OZ: Now now, Balxephon. That's no way to speak to the brother of your betrothed.

BALXEPHON: Brother or no, I am your commander. If you've business with me, I would hear it.

OZ: Our front line is breached. It's only a matter of time before Phidoch falls.

BALXEPHON: So the Bakram were not enough to hold them after all. Ozma, take a detachment of men and leave the castle. Oz and I will delay them as long as we can.

OZMA: Oh? Am I to flee like the thrush before the storm?

BALXEPHON: Nothing of the sort. You are to guard the high champion.

OZMA: Of course. He and the princess must be kept safe.

BALXEPHON: You have your orders. Go!

OZMA: As you say.

[She starts to leave.]

BALXEPHON: Ozma - we'll continue this later.

OZMA: ...

Phidoch Great Hall

[In the Great Hall, Denam walks around to find no sign of the Dark Knights.]

DENAM: Not a soul.... Hnn?

[Catiua, garbed in unfamiliar clothing, steps out of the shadows.]

DENAM: Catia! What are you doing here?

CATIUA: Come to my rescue? What a good brother you are!

[Without a pause she lunges at Denam forcing him down the steps.]

DENAM: What are you doing!?

VOICE: Ah. There you are, Catia.

DENAM: Lancelot!?

[The Dark Knight Lancelot comes down and joins Catia.]

LANSELOT: It's dangerous here. We're leaving the castle. Come with me.

[Catia takes his side as Balxephon and Oz arrive.]

BALXEPHON: Everything is in order, my lord. Come, you'd best be on your way.

LANSELOT: Of course.

BALXEPHON: Ozma awaits you without. Oz and I will handle this.

LANSELOT: See that you do.

DENAM: Catia!

[Oz steps forward.]

OZ: You must be Denam. It was an ill turn you did my sister at Rhime.

LANSELOT: We must be going, Catia.

[Lancelot and Catia flee.]

BALXEPHON: The whelp has grown. Let's see how much!

[They fight within the halls of the castle.]

BALXEPHON: I like what I see, boy! You're determined, with a good eye and a steady sword hand. Not to mention the notches in your blade! To think you've killed my captain, my liege...and all those at Balmamusa. Why, I might even consider letting you minister here in Valeria. In our name, of course.

DENAM: Don't waste your breath telling me of the stains on my shield. I know them all too well. But know that I will not let Lodis take these isles. Her peoples will not abide you!

BALXEPHON: And I see you are at peace with your own baser nature! Marvelous! One could hardly ask for more in a ruler. For who can deceive others who cannot deceive himself? No. We cannot dwell upon our missteps along the path to domination. A bit of repentance, a touch of regret, perhaps. But do not shed a tear for the watches - let their wounds weep for them. These things we do are necessary. The pruning of ill-formed branches, that our children might enjoy the fruits of our labors, yes? this is the heart of the conqueror! This is you!

[After a moment the Dark Knight notices someone.]

BALXEPHON: What are **you** doing here, Hobyrim!? Come to repay my mercy with murder?

HOBYRIM: That voice.... Well met, Balxephon! Though, I am puzzled by this talk of mercy. Was it mercy robbed me of my sight? Mercy that killed our father?

BALXEPHON: You've traveled a long road for your revenge, brother. You question my mercy? In truth I question it myself! I gave you the chance to begin anew, and you tread the same old tired steps back to where you began.

[Oz reaches Denam.]

OZ: You, boy! I owe you thanks for showing such hospitality to my sister.

DENAM: His sister? The Dark Knight! The resemblance is striking.

OZ: Ah, but how best to thank you? A meal perhaps? I'm quite the chef, you know. I'll tell you my secret. Preparation is everything. A silver fork, a silver knife.... First I'll cut off both your arms, run the left through with the fork, and the right with the knife. I believe. And for the soup, molten lead goes down best. I'll slice your neck and pour it down your throat, so there'll be no need for spoon. Then, I think, a thin cut of flesh from your back. Raw. Bleeding. You like steak, no? And next -

BALXEPHON: Enough, Oz! This is no time for your games.

[Oz dies first.]

OZ: Feh, this could have gone better. Perhaps it's time for a change in tactics?

DENAM: Fleeing, you coward? They say the feeblest hound barks the loudest, and now I see it to be true.

OZ: I should have your tongue out for that!

BALXEPHON: Oz!?

OZ: Th-this...was not supposed to happen.

BALXEPHON: Fool! You never did know when to retreat...and now it has cost you. As it will cost you, boy!

[He gets wounded.]

BALXEPHON: You have wounded my flesh and spat upon my honor this day, wretch of Golyat! You will pay thricefold for this when your time comes. Mark my words!

[He flees.]

[Balxephon falls first.]

BALXEPHON: I think we've won ourselves time enough. The moment is ripe for our departure. We've held out as long as we can, Oz!

OZ: Go on, Balxephon! I will buy you time.

BALXEPHON: And throw away your own life in the bargain? I won't allow it!

[He flees.]

OZ: What have you done, boy! This...was...unexpected. Sister, help. Help...me.

[Denam and the Resistance continue their fight within Phidoch while Denam questions his sister's actions.]

DENAM: Why, Catiua...why?

VOICE: I may deceive others...but never myself. Though at times, the temptation is all too great.

This ends Chapter 3. Go to **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4

Let us cling together

The Bakram reeled as rumor after rumor flooded in following the fall of phidoch castle: The leader of their enemy, a youth scarce old enough to shave; their own Abuna Brantyn, a man unworthy of their trust; the Dark Knights, routed in the field of battle. But above all else, the news that King Dorgalua's daughter still lived! In their desperation, the people wept. They yearned for a righteous leader, a savior to bring them prosperity. The Lady Catiua was the answer to their prayers. Lancelot Tartaros, mouthpiece of the Holy Lodissian Empire, recognized Catiua as the rightful heir to the Valerian throne. The quarrel over succession was officially laid to rest. By Lancelot's accounting, this "prior unrest," as he named it, stemmed not from a deep-rooted divide between clans, but instead from the misdeeds of a handful of power-hungry men. The history books would speak of no great Valerian war. Yet only the landed and the nobility paid any service to Lancelot's tale for those who resented the ascendancy of the Bakram, words made a poor salve. The wounds they suffered would not heal without further bloodshed. So it was that, while the lie of the battlefield changed, the war raged on. What had once been seen as a clash of clans became a rift between the rulers and the ruled, a struggle to break free from the yoke of oppression.

Heim Castle

[Lancelot Tartaros enters the dungeon where a sullen man hangs by shackles.]

LANSELOT: Hmph. You still live. Leave us!

[The dungeonkeeper nods and leaves the cell.]

VOICE: ...Another uprising...companies...to the highroads...

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Can you hear that, Knight of Xenobia?

[The prisoner raises his bloodied head - it is Lancelot, the Holy Knight.]

H. **LANSELOT:** It is only a matter of time before you fall.

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Who rules in Valeria is a trifling matter. You of all people must understand this.

H. **LANSELOT:** ...

VOICE: ...Need more men...nearly enough...Loslorien! ...Not be able...quell this rising...

H. **LANSELOT:** Let me guess. Unable to stem the tide that rises from the hamlets and villages?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Perhaps we asked too much of the Bakram's soldiers. They are not the soldiers we are, you know. Or the men.

H. **LANSELOT:** Always binding people to your will, fettering them lest they show signs of free thought. Perhaps therein lies your problem?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: They **ask** for a stern hand to rule them.

H. **LANSELOT:** They...ask? You're mad!

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: You have it wrong. It is the world that is mad. Tell me, how many of these peasants would even lift a hand to better their lot were they given a chance? How many would bloody their hands, risk their necks, walk without leaning upon another?

H. **LANSELOT:** ...

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Think back to your own uprising. Where were the people for whom you shed blood? Safe at their hearths, grouching that more was not done for them!

H. **LANSELOT:** Times were hard. They had all they could do to keep themselves fed...

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Nonsense. They chose to be victims! They think that only from without the castle walls may one voice discontent. Not realizing that the quickest way to the throne is a knife to the king's ribs.

H. **LANSELOT:** These people have the right to live out their own lives, not some part in a play of your design!

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: You have both your eyes, and yet you see less clearly than do I. **True** freedom is not granted from above, it is won from below. And yet the commons look without for a savior, even as they claim sovereignty over their own fait! They wait and they wait for this savior, never taking that first step toward saving themselves.

H. **LANSELOT:** Man is not so slothful a creature as that.... They...merely lack our strength.

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: You are much too pure of heart, Holy Knight. The people have no need of dreams. We give them all they need.

H. **LANSELOT:** And what is that, pray tell?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: A strong, unwavering ruler.

H. **LANSELOT:** You **are** mad.

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: All men are born with a terrible burdon upon their hearts, this insatiable yearning for pleasure. They do not hesitate to take the lives of others if it will better their own. And yet, even these base creatures can know guilt. So what do they do? They turn it round. This is not -my- fault, man says. The world has failed **me**. Someone must bring order to this chaos! If the commons want to pursue their pleasure, let them do it in our service, under our rule!

H. **LANSELOT:** You call this "rule"? This trampling underfoot of all who disagree with you?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: We trample no one. All we do is reach beneath the suppurating flesh of this world and wrench out the source of its ailment.

H. **LANSELOT:** No. As the body strives to mend itself, so does the heart. These people you so despise may one day astonish you with their valor!

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT (turning): You have far too much faith in the creature called "man," Knight. People are drawn to power, drawn toward safety. They will betray even their most beloved to obtain it - Catiua, come!

[Catiua enters and joins Lanselot at his side.]

H. **LANSELOT:** Catiua! What are you doing here!?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Allow me to introduce you to your leige, knight. For this girl is none other than the gift left us by Dynast-King Dorgalua: The Princess Veralia, rightful ruler of Valeria!

H. **LANSELOT:** What!?

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: As you say, the Bakram are not long for this world. But, with the princess in our hands, Valeria will beg to serve under Lodis.

H. **LANSELOT:** Catiua, how.... Is this true?

CATIUA: I loved Denam. As my brother, I loved him. But he was no brother to me. He abandoned me. And now I, him.

[She flees.]

H. **LANSELOT:** Catiua!

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Though it pains me to part with the man who took my eye, I see no need to further torment the vanquished.

[He starts to leave.]

H. **LANSELOT:** Wait!

THE DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Farewell, Knight of Xenobia.

Phidoch Castle

[Denam stands in war attire, listening to a messenger in the former meeting room of the Dark Knights.]

SHADOW: The princess has not been seen since the ceremony. Not even the officers among the Bakram know her whereabouts, and the regent has lent his spies to the search. I see no other explanation but that the princess has sided with the Dark Knights.

DENAM: Then the rift between Brantyn and Tartaros widens. What word of the Dark Knights?

SHADOW: Most remain garrisoned in Heim. But many of their commanders, including Tartaros, are conspicuously absent.

DENAM: Perhaps this is why the Bakram do not move against us. What could they be scheming?

SHADOW: You asked me to search for the Holy Knight of Xenobia...

DENAM: Yes. Have you heard something?

SHADOW: A confession wrung from a scullery maid. It seems that the Holy Knight languishes in the dungeon below Heim Castle.

DENAM: So he lives!

SHADOW: Yes, but under such a guard that not even the Bakram are allowed near. I was unable to mark him with my own eyes.

DENAM: Still, you have done much. Go. Rest.

SHADOW: By your leave, commander.

[The ninja informant retires.]

DENAM: Catia...

ATTENDANT: Commander, should we not move our forces on Heim?

DENAM: Not as yet. It would be rash indeed to strike without first knowing the Dark Knights' purpose.

ATTENDANT: Yes, but the more time that passes before we strike, the weaker we become. Have you forgotten the way the men speak of the princess? Soldiers in your own ranks weep aloud at the thought of lifting a sword against Dorgalua's blood!

DENAM: I know. I know. All the more reason to not act in haste!

[A messenger enters.]

SOLDIER: A report, sir!

DENAM: What is it?

SOLDIER: The soldiers at Brigantys have taken hostages and holed up inside the castle!

ATTENDANT: What's this!?

DENAM: What are their demands?

SOLDIER: Our surrender to the Bakram, sir!

ATTENDANT: After all the fighting we've been through? Not bloody likely!

DENAM: So the Order of Philaha joins the fray.... Their followers among the soldiers were many, were they not?

ATTENDANT: Aye. And their influence has only grown since the princess's appearance.

DENAM: Not a situation we are like to change. My sis- the princess's arrival was, for many, the advent of a savior. Add to this the fact that the late Dynast-King was a fervent follower of Philaha. How natural for these new converts to rekindle his cry for accord and seek to abandon the fight.

ATTENDANT: What will you do?

DENAM: I see no other choice but to meet with these followers and Philaha and speak with them.

ATTENDANT: Out of the question! It's too dangerous, Commander.

DENAM: Not if I go alone and unarmed. They will hear me out.

Bahaana Highlands

[En route to Brigantys, Denam encounters a mysterious mage.]

URAM: I have looked forward to our meeting, Denam of Golyat! You will pay for your crimes against Galgastan with your life!

[Denam fights this Galgastani force.]

URAM: The bastard's [sic]...killed me.

Brigantys South Curtain Wall

[Denam, as promised, shows up at the gates alone and unarmed.]

RUDE KNIGHT: Not a step farther! State your business. Only the faithful are permitted within!

DENAM: Don't you recognize me? I've come for an audience with your high priest.

RUDE KNIGHT: I don't care much for your tone!

KNIGHT: Steady there! That's Denam of Golyat you're talking to.

RUDE KNIGHT: What!?

DENAM: I am unarmed. I mean no ill will.

RUDE KNIGHT: I'll be the judge of that. How do I know you don't have half a dozen soldiers with you?

KNIGHT: Leave off. Sir Denam isn't the sort to lie to us.

RUDE KNIGHT: I knew you were always **their** man!

[He draws a weapon.]

KNIGHT: A grave insult.

[He takes his out as well, but they are interrupted.]

WOMAN: Enough! Sheathe your swords.

[A pious woman descends to them.]

WOMAN: You too.

[Her knights reluctantly do so and she invites Denam inside the castle.]

[Denam's troops frighten the enemy and they are forced to fight.]

DENAM: As I told you, I've come only to speak with the leader of your Order. I want no bloodshed, nor do I intend harm upon any of your followers.

KNIGHT: Lies from the mouth of a murderer! Why come attended by soldiers and bearing arms if you truly want no bloodshed?

DENAM: I am true to my word, but if you attack, we will be forced to defend ourselves!

KNIGHT: We do not fear death, for the Great Father will receive our souls. But for those who abandon faith for the fist, only hell awaits!

[They fight.]

DENAM: This parley has taken an ill turn.

Brigantys West Curtain Wall

[Denam arrives at the castle rear.]

FEMALE KNIGHT: Sir, the enemy approaches!

MALE KNIGHT: But that's Denam! What's he doing here?

TERROR KNIGHT: He's come to kill us - what else?

MALE KNIGHT: Impossible! He would never do such a thing!

TERROR KNIGHT: You mean to suggest he has come to parley? Then why does he not approach from the front gates?

MALE KNIGHT: You're right.... He's not come to talk.

TERROR KNIGHT: I did not take you for a thief, come to stab us in the back! We will defend the Order with our lives!

[They fight.]

DENAM: This parley has taken an ill turn...

Brigantys Great Hall

[Denam arrives in the great hall of Brigantys where representatives meet him.]

[Denam has fought his way into Brigantys.]

SIBYL: This castle shelters only the priests and followers of our Order. We wish you no harm. Please, leave at once and do not return.

DENAM: I've come only to talk!

PRIEST: Then why do I hear the cries of the wounded outside our walls?

PRIESTESS: Leave here! You must leave! This is no place for your kind!

WOMAN: Enough!

[A woman strides through the ranks of priests and greets Denam.]

WOMAN: I am Olivya, a sybil of the order here. You wish to meet with our leader, Abuna Prancet? Come this way.

DENAM: What did you say? Abuna Prancet?

OLIVYA: Yes, your father is here.

DENAM: I don't understand.

OLIVYA: Please, we must hurry. There isn't much time.

DENAM: What do you mean?

OLIVYA: The Great Father Philaha calls him to his side. I'm sorry, Denam.

DENAM: What!?

OLIVYA: When we discovered him in the corpsevale near Heim, he lacked even the strength to stand.

DENAM: What place is this "vale"?

OLIVYA: It is a small cavern where those afflicted with incurable disease or plague are kept.

DENAM: Plague...

OLIVYA: We did all we could to save him, but his condition only worsens.

[Denam considers this news briefly.]

DENAM: The Dark Knights had a hand in this, didn't they.

OLIVYA (nodding): He was tortured, yes, and made to quaff a vile draught meant to loosen the lips...and the mind.

DENAM: Father...

OLIVYA: Let us go.

[She leads Denam to a dim-lit chamber where his adopted father rests.]

DENAM: Father, it is I! Denam!

PRANCET: Ah.... Denam. You've come at last.

[Denam walks to his father's side and kneels.]

PRANCET: There is something I must tell you...

DENAM: It's about my sister, isn't it?

PRANCET: Catiua...is not your sister, as you know. She is the last remnant of Dorgalua's line...the Princess versalia Oberyth.

DENAM: ...

PRANCET: Catiua's mother was one of the Queen's handmaidens...a girl named Mannaflora.

[Prancet recalls a meeting between Queen Vernotta and the handmaiden named Mannaflora.]

[In her royal garden, the queen stands alone when her servant arrives.]

VERNOTTA: You wanted to speak with me? What of?

MANNAFLORA: I was hoping, your Highness, that I might be granted a short leave.

VERNOTTA: I am dismayed! Do you not know you're the only one in this castle to whom I can confide my heart, Mannaflora?

[Vernotta turns to face her servant.]

VERNOTTA: ...The more your betrayal cuts to the quick. Did you think me blind?

MANNAFLORA: Forgive me!

[Vernotta steps forward and slaps Mannaflora.]

VERNOTTA: I should have known that a king risen from the peasantry would prefer a simple, country girl.

MANNAFLORA (rising): Your forgiveness, I beg you!

VERNOTTA: Forgive you!? I might as soon strangle you, you.... You will serve me for the rest of your days, Mannaflora. Do you understand? My slave, till you die!

[Mannaflora turns and sullenly nudges her stomach.]

VERNOTTA: Wait...surely you are not with child!

[She advances on her servant. Later, amidst a somber rain, Mannaflora flees the castle.]

PRANCET: She gave birth to Catiua not long after departing the castle.

[Abuna Brantyn stands in a homely cabin and a younger Abuna Prancet enters with a babe in his arms.]

BRANTYN:How is Mannaflora?

[Prancet shakes his head.]

BRANTYN:I feared as much. The strain was too much for her delicate heart to bear. So...that is Versalia.

PRANCET: Is that to be her name? Versalia?

BRANTYN:It was his Highness's wish to have his daughter named so.

PRANCET: We should tell him. He will want to know.

BRANTYN:Have you not heard? Queen Vernotta will bear her own child a month hence. No. It is best that only you and I know of this.

PRANCET: Then, what should I do with the child?

BRANTYN:Keep her. You lost a child recently...Catiua, was it? Raise this one in her stead.

PRANCET: As my own flesh and blood?

BRANTYN:Yes. For her sake, and the good of Valeria.

PRANCET: But how...

BRANTYN:I am sure you will find a way. Ah, I have something for you. Take these necklaces. They should fetch a good price.

PRANCET: What? Where are these from?

BRANTYN:They were a gift from his Highness, to celebrate the birth of his child. He intended that the blue be given to a prince, the red to a princess.

PRANCET: But...I could not sell these!

BRANTYN:You will need money if you're to raise a child. And a princess, besides. You and I both grew up commons. You know what it is to need. What we must do.... Give it no more thought, Prancet. This is the only way.

[Prancet wraps up his story with an intently listening Denam aside.]

PRANCET: But Brantyn deceived me.... He used his knowledge of Mannaflora and the girl to advance his position within the church.

DENAM: ...

PRANCET: I...erred, Denam, when the king passed away. Had I only offered up Catiua then, this war might never have come to pass. But I.... I couldn't let her go. When I heard her call me "father," I could not take that way from her...or her from me.

DENAM: I had no idea...

PRANCET: The Dark Knights have searched long and hard for Catiua. But not to make her sovereign of Valeria. They pursue another purpose.

DENAM: You know this purpose?

PRANCET: Yes...her crowning ceremony was for show.... They don't want her upon a throne.... They want King Dorgalua's legacy.

DENAM: What legacy? Some sort of artifact?

PRANCET: I do not know what it is.... Only that it rests with the King. Now that they have Catiua...they seek the tomb.

DENAM: And my sister knows where it is?

PRANCET: No...she knows nothing. Yet her role is vital. Only one who shares the Dynast-King's blood can undo the seal upon the tomb.

DENAM: They're using her.

PRANCET: Yes, and when she has...fulfilled her purpose...they'll - *cough*

DENAM: Father, you must rest!

PRANCET: Listen to me, Denam! You must save Catiua. You are the only one who can. You can lead her to her rightful destiny.... Do this for us...for Valer- *cough*

DENAM: Father!

PRANCET: Find Mreuva! He...was once Archiereus in our order.... He can help you.

DENAM: Say no more, father. You must conserve your strength!

PRANCET: Know it is not about -you-. Become a stone along the path to our salvation. You must look with clear eyes, Denam! Make the right choice! Lead us along the true path...make our way.... Do this...only this...

DENAM: You mustn't talk. You must rest!

PRANCET: Denam.... Forgive...me.

DENAM: Father!!!

[Prancet's eyes close and Denam spends a few quiet moments with his father before leaving.]

DENAM: Father...

OLIVYA: There is something else you must know.

DENAM: Can it not wait?

OLIVYA: No.... It concerns you and the regent, Brantyn.

DENAM: what?

OLIVYA: He and your father were siblings. True brothers by blood.

DENAM: Brantyn's my uncle!? Then who am I?

OLIVYA: Your true name...is Denam Morne.... You are Bakram.

DENAM: That's madness! I won't believe it. Me? Bakram?

OLIVYA: Please, good sir. Calm. Think back. When you were quite young, you resided with Abuna Prancet in the royal city of Heim.

DENAM: Sibyl...you lie!

OLIVYA: I wish it were so, but I speak true. As a child, you oft played on the grounds of Archiereus Mreuva's villa.

[Denam steps forward and grabs Olivya by the collar.]

DENAM: Stop this, please!

OLIVYA: You spent your days in play with Mreuva's four daughters there...

DENAM: ...Go on.

OLIVYA: You were closest to the girl who shared your birth year.... One day, as you played by the water, this girl wandered too deep and began to drown.

[Denam releases Olivya.]

DENAM: How do you know that?

OLIVYA (lowering her head): ...

DENAM: But...but that was my sister who was drowning.... No, she saved me...I remember...

OLIVYA: In her struggling, the girl struck her head...leaving a small scar.

[She pulls back her hair.]

DENAM: It...was you?

OLIVYA: It was my eldest sister, Cerya, who fished us out.

DENAM: How is this possible?

OLIVYA: I am the daughter of Mreuva, who was once Archiereus of Philaha.

DENAM: I...I cannot...

[He falls to his knees.]

OLIVYA: You can. You must, Denam. You are who you were born to be.

DENAM: ...

OLIVYA: Now, stand, Denam! What you are, who you are, has no bearing on who you will become! Surely you did not dream of a kingdom for one people only? Remember your father's words!

[Denam stands tall.]

DENAM: Yes.... It's as you say. It does not matter who I am. It matters only how I live, what I achieve. Thank you, Sibyl Olivya.

OLIVYA: I am pleased. You **are** the Denam I remember.

[From outside a familiar voice calls.]

CISTINA and **CERYA:** Olivya!

[Cistina and Cerya rush into the hall.]

OLIVYA: Cerya, cistina! How I rejoiced to hear you were with the Resistance. When I learned that the Dark Knights had destroyed the Liberation Front, I feared the worst.

CISTINA: Never mind me. What of father?

CERYA: What are you doing in Brigantys? Where is father?

OLIVYA: ...I know not where father is.

CISTINA: How is that possible? You were with him!

OLIVYA: He...blamed himself for your departure from the Order. His days were spent locked in his quarters, though I believe his heart wandered elsewhere. When he did leave the castle, on the night the Dark Knights attacked Rhime, he never returned.

CISTINA: What!? Father's missing? Wherever could he have gone?

OLIVYA: I do not know. In truth, I hoped you might have some idea, sister.

CISTINA: I...how could I know?

DENAM: Just think. Search your memories for anything, anything at all.

CERYA: I may know. The Hagia Banhamuba.

CISTINA: Wait, of course! The Shrine of Ishtar!

DENAM: I've not heard of any such shrine on this isle.

CISTINA: Of course you wouldn't have. It's known by a different name now. Few venture there. You've heard of the old Hagia on Banhamuba? That is the Shrine to Ishtar. Cerya once told me that father studied there in his youth.

CERYA: It is a place of worship to Ishtar, Goddess of Light. Father studied there in his youth. If he has left the Order, he has slipped from his faith. he would go there to find direction. I am sure of it.

OLIVYA: You may be right. And you believe him to be there now?

CISTINA: Perhaps.

CERYA: Let us pray I am.

DENAM: We must go to the Hagia Banhamuba at once, then!

OLIVYA: Wait - Where is our sister, Sherri?

OLIVYA: But where are Cerya and Sherri?

DENAM: That's right. There were four of you, weren't there.

OLIVYA: Cistina!

DENAM: I last saw Cerya at Boed Fortress. We parted ways there. Neither Cistina nor I know what's become of her.

OLIVYA: What of Sherri, then?

CISTINA: Sherri.... Sherri has surrendered to the Bakram.

OLIVYA: Cerya!

CERYA: Sherri has betrayed us. She's gone to Brantyn.

OLIVYA: What? That cannot be!

CISTINA: I fear it is, Olivya. After leaving the order, Sherri surrendered herself to the Bakram. She serves as Brantyn's right hand now.

OLIVYA: My sister.... My sister.

[Denam gives the sisters a moment.]

DENAM: Let us find your father, Olivya. Have you any idea where he might be?

[She shakes her head.]

DENAM: ...

OLIVYA: Perhaps...he lost his faith?

DENAM: What's that?

OLIVYA: It may seem odd, but as you rise in the ranks of the church, your duties become less of faith and more of politics. Men like Balbatos and Brantyn are such - their power as regent or steward becomes more important than their devotion. I watched as my father dirtied his own hands...full aware of what he did.

DENAM: ...

OLIVYA: After Dorgalua passed away, my father lost in a struggle for power with Brantyn, and so lost his rank as archiereus. But though he could now return to his faith, free from political machinations, he was not pleased. That is when my sisters left. They could not accept that he had changed, that faith and politics are links of a single chain. The teachings of god are a compass needle for the righteous man, a way for all to live in peace and happiness. Throw yourself into the maelstrom that is governance - as long as you follow the teachings, your course will be true. But my father.... My father lost his faith. He set out upon the same path as Brantyn before him.

DENAM: So...perhaps he has left to find his faith once more?

OLIVYA: It...is possible.

DENAM: The Temple of Philaha is in Heim...but he could not have returned there.

OLIVYA: Then where could he have gone? I've not heard of any other Temple of Philaha in these isles.

DENAM: My father once spoke to me of an ancient shrine, a hagia on Banhamuba. We might start there.

OLIVYA: I can think of no other course of action.... To Banhamuba, then, Denam.

Almorica Castle

[At Almorica, Denam checks up on his old friend Warren, who is doing better with each passing day.]

WARREN: So Sir Lancelot has not yet returned. Let us hope he is all right... *cough* *cough*

DENAM: You should get some rest. Your wounds have yet to fully mend.

WARREN: I'm fine. I think I've staved off death another day.

DENAM: Sir Warren, there was something I wanted to ask you.

WARREN: This has the sound of something serious.

DENAM: Why did you come to our isles? The real reason.

WARREN: Why do you want to know?

DENAM: If your ends are the same as Lodis, I would ask you to return to Xenobia.

WARREN: Hrm...

DENAM: I have no wish to fight you. If you've another purpose here, perhaps I can help.

WARREN: I already told you. We were banished.

DENAM: The truth, Warren!

WARREN: Very well. The truth, then.

WARREN: We **are** here on an errand for our king. But I assure you, we have no designs on Valeria. Our true purpose is quite different...

[Warren tells of the Xenobian's secret mission.]

[Lancelot, Canopus and Warren meet with the Xenobian King, Tristan.]

LANSELOT: We will return as swift as possible, Majesty.

TRISTAN: This banishment was...a necessary evil.

LANSELOT: Fool a friend to fool a foe - or so they say. We deserve no less. The safekeeping of the blade was our sworn duty. On the honor of the Holy Knights, we will return Brynhildr to its rightful place.

TRISTAN: Whatever Lodis's reason for taking the blade, it belongs here. See it done, Lancelot.

LANSELOT: Your Majesty.

DENAM: Brynhildr.... All this intrigue over a sword?

WARREN: No ordinary sword. It is said that he who wields Brynhildr wields a conduit to the wisdom of the gods...and to their wrath. I cannot vouch for the legend, but regardless, the sword is an ancient Xenobian heirloom. We must retrieve it at any cost.

DENAM: And it was the Dark Knights who stole it.

WARREN: Quite right. We were convinced they had taken the sword to Lodis, yet all the while it was in Valeria. Did they bring it here as mere subterfuge, or for some deeper purpose? We must...must find out. *cough* *cough*

DENAM: I dislike the sound of that cough. You had better rest now.

[Warren slides under the bedsheets, his eyes closing.]

DENAM: Think no more on the sword. We will find it, and when we do, it will be safe.

WARREN: I've no doubt of that, Denam. Thank you.

Heim Castle

[The Dark Knights surround Balxephon, Ozma irate.]

OZMA: Speak the truth! The blind swordsman we encountered at Rhime **was** Hobyrim. I have it from one of our own whisperers in the Resistance!

BALXEPHON: You've been busy, then.

OZMA: You gave the order, Balxephon. I merely received the report. Had I not chanced to do so, I very much doubt I would ever have learned of it.

BALXEPHON: ...

OZMA: Why go on denying it? Hobyrim lives. You lied to me!

LANSELOT: Ozma's right, Balxephon. Confess and be done with it. There should be no secrets among friends.

BALXEPHON: You have the right of it, Ozma. Hobyrim lives.

OZMA: Why, Balxephon? How could you lie to me?

BALXEPHON: A grave crime, yes. But I could not bear to see my brother, my own blood, imprisoned and put to death. Nor could I merely set him free. As adjutant, I bore certain...responsibilities. I took his eyes to mark him for his crime, made it appear as though he died in the dungeons, and banished him.

OZMA: The pieces do not fit. When we were at Phidoch, I suspected nothing. Why lie to me then?

BALXEPHON: It was for your own good. Hobyrim was to be your husband, and ordering the man put to his death seemed too cruel by far. I love you, Ozma. Hobyrim had brought you enough suffering. I did not wish to see it continue.

OZMA: Lies upon lies!

[Balxephon lowers his head.]

MARTYM: As soon preach to a statue once a woman's made up her mind, eh?

BARBAS: You disobeyed orders to save your own brother, as I recall. Had you kept that from us, I don't expect we would have seen such a commotion.

MARTYM: That's women for you. Always poking their noses where they don't belong, and turning them up when they dislike what they smell.

OZMA: Do not mock me!

VOLAQ: Calm, Ozma. Do not take Martym's jibes to heart.

BALXEPHON: I promise to keep nothing more from you. Forgive me.

OZMA: ...The traitor who murdered the stratarchis, his own father, lives in hiding on these isles. Bringing him to justice is our sacred duty. If you will not see it done, I will!

[She flees.]

LANSELOT: Ozma, wait! Have you forgotten our purpose here?

[Volaq chases after her.]

MARTYM: A brother who is a traitor, a pig-headed bride. A fine house you keep! At this rate, we'll be on these bloody isles forever.

Mount Hedon

[Denam encounters Bakram forces atop the fiery peak.]

LEROZZA: Wait, you're Denam! What are **you** doing here!?

DENAM: I might as the same of you! What are the Bakram about!?

LEROZZA: If you want to know, you'll have to beat it from me!

[Denam defeats the Bakram troops.]

LEROZZA: You're after Mreuva too, aren't you? ...Waste of time. Too late.... Our friends...have him by now!

Golborza Plain

[Meanwhile, the Dark Knights, led by Volaq, stand amassed in front of Ozma.]

VOLAQ: You abandon your post and go over to the enemy!? Do you know what this means?

OZMA: Balxephon admitted to the lie. You heard him, Volaq.

VOLAQ: It's his brother, after all. Balxephon has shown poor judgement, but who are we to find fault? Men are governed by passion. Rules and reason are not enough to bind them.

OZMA: He played me for a fool! to say nothing of my parents, House Glacius...even Lodis!

VOLAQ: I know, but the high champion's orders are quite clear. He's to be charged for his crimes **after** his return to Lodis.

[Ozma turns away.]

OZMA: Do you not think the high champion knew of all this? He and Balxephon keep close counsel. I cannot believe he knew nothing of Hobyrim.

VOLAQ: Speak no more, Ozma. Return with me to the high champion. For my sake, if not your own.

OZMA: I can't go back.... Not like this!

[She flees.]

VOLAQ: Ozma!

[He turns to his men.]

VOLAQ: Leave Ozma to me. You're to return to Heim and make a full report to the high commander.

KNIGHT: Sir!

Hagia Banhamuba

[Sherri, sister to Cistina, Cerya and Olivya, addresses her captured father.]

SHERRI: No use to feign ignorance, father. I know you know.

MREUVA: I do not. And I wouldn't tell you if I did!

SHERRI: Is that any way to speak to your own daughter? Or...have you abandoned me, as you did mother?

MREUVA: I have abandoned no one.

SHERRI: Then you'll tell me where to find the Apocrypha.

MREUVA: You'll have no aid from me in that foolishness, Sherri. None!

SHERRI: You leave me no choice but to bring you with me.

[The soldier guarding Mreuva grabs him by the back of his cloak.]

MREUVA: What!? Unhand me!

SHERRI: I'm sure you'll change your mind once we've reached Heim.

MREUVA: Do not do this, Sherri!

SHERRI: Prepare him for the journey. Time to leave.

[The soldier pushes Mreuva out and Sherri begins to gather her soldiers when Denam breaks in, slashing the guard in the process.]

DENAM: Abuna Mreuva, are you all right?

MREUVA: Who are you?

DENAM: Would you know me if I said I was Denam of Golyat?

MREUVA: Prancel's son!

DENAM: There will be time for talk later. Let me handle this.

MREUVA: Yes...but please, spare the woman.

DENAM: What?

MREUVA: She is my daughter, Sherri.

DENAM: ...Very well.

MREUVA: The Father watch over you.

SHERRI: I always knew LeRoza was useless. All breeding and no substance, that one. What about you, Denam? I seem to remember you as a fey child, delicate as a rose. But no matter. Such fancies will not stay my blade.

[Denam and company hold off Sherri's troops in hopes of escaping with Mreuva.]

OLIVYA: Sherri! Stop this at once! We mustn't fight one another!

SHERRI: Then surrender to the Bakram, and it will end! You prolong this by clinging to father...a man who couldn't even guard his own wife!

OLIVYA: Surely you cannot lay this at his feet! The Bakram killed mother, not him.... The very Bakram you now serve!

SHERRI: You are wrong, Olivya. When a man vies for power and loses, he pays a price. Mother's blood is on our father's hands!

OLIVYA: How can you say father lost, when it is you who have lost your way, sister? You saw him as he truly is, and you could not accept it. So you chose to throw it all away! It is you who have lost!

[Another of Sherri's sister pleads to end the fight.]

CISTINA: Please, sister, lay down your arms! We do not wish harm upon you!

SHERRI: Harm to me? I am not so careless as that. My strength will not fail me!

CISTINA: I fear that strength will become your undoing, sister. The Dark Knights brought the Liberation front to ruin, and they will do the same for the Bakram!

SHERRI: And your Almorican friends are any different? Do you not wield **your** strength against us? You take pains to find fault with me, when you only need look at yourself!

CISTINA: We do not fight to seize power for ourselves, sister! We seek an end [sic] this bloody conflict...even though it mean more bloodshed.

[Cerya stands up to her sister.]

CERYA: Stand down, Sherri. Return with your men to Heim.

SHERRI: A colder reception than I'd hoped for, sister. Though I am glad to see you live, even though your front does not.

CERYA: Yes, I live. And I will bear my shame until the Dark Knights are driven from the isles forever!

SHERRI: Even if that should mean drawing sword against your own blood?

CERYA: You wanted this, Sherri! You've chosen this path, and now you must walk it!

[The sisters are forced to fight. Sherri questions Denam's true motives.]

SHERRI: Why have you come here? Do you think to make an ally of my father? What is it that draws men to him, even now? Say what you will of Heirophant Morne, at least he does not lose his battles.

DENAM: Why drive your family to the feet of he who ruined you?

SHERRI: Because there is no surer road to victory than to join the winning side.

DENAM: What good victory without principles?

SHERRI: As much good as taking your principles with you to your grave, surely. It is the victor who lives. that is the only truth that matters.

[Denam and Sherri's sisters have no choice but to keep attacking.]

SHERRI: No...I will not accept defeat at the hands of a child! I've come too far to turn back now. The Apocrypha will be mine!

[Sherri is killed.]

SHERRI: Forgive me...mother...

[She falls.]

[Denam and Sherri's sisters wound the leader and obey Mreuva's wishes.]

SHERRI: You've made a dire enemy this day!

[She flees, leaving Mreuva freed.]

MREUVA: So Prancet has rejoined the Great Father.... I grieve with you.

DENAM: Then help me.

MREUVA: What good will come of it? I know you are no tyrant - no Balbatos or Ronwey. But it is the people who suffer in any struggle, however noble. You know this as well as any. Your own Golyat suffered such a fate.

DENAM: The more reason to quench the flames of war for good and all. We must forever rid the isles of the vile instruments the Heirophant and the duke have used against us. As Dorgalua once united us, Valeria must unite itself!

MREUVA: Dorgalua's time is long past.... What vestiges of that era remain are in the hands of the Dark Knights.

DENAM: Catia...

MREUVA: Have you the will to wage war upon her?

[Choice 1 - That I cannot do.]

DENAM: She is my sister. I must find some way to help her.

MREUVA: The old bonds die hard.

DENAM: She is family to me, whether by blood or no.

MREUVA: Family...yes. Very well. Such aid as I have to offer is yours.

[Choice 2 - I shall do what I must.]

DENAM: I will become like the ogre if I must. I see no way around it.

MREUVA: You would choose the path of violence?

DENAM: But I cling to my hope, and will do so as long as I can. If anyone can save my sister...it is me.

MREUVA: Ah. If I'd had your courage, perhaps I too could have saved Sherri. ...I will accompany you, Denam, if you will have me.

DENAM: You honor me.

???

[Regent Brantyn stands alone in a foggy ruin.]

BRANTYN: Where is this place?

[He looks around.]

BRANTYN: ...And why am I here?

[A red light flashes in the distance.]

BRANTYN: Who's there? Show yourself!

[Another flash, followed by a roar that Brantyn hears.]

BRANTYN: "Make haste"? Make haste with **what**? Who are you to command me!?

[Again a loud roar and flash. Brantyn falters.]

BRANTYN: What...? Waaah!

Barnicia Castle

[A loud scream brings Brantyn, sitting down in the comfort of his keep, awake and sweating.]

BRANTYN: Ha.... It was a dream. A foul dream.

[A messenger enters.]

SOLDIER: A report, Lord Regent.

BRANTYN: What is it?

SOLDIER: Lady Phoraena's expedition for the Apocrypha has not reported in on schedule.

BRANTYN: Sherri? The Almoricans' work.

SOLDIER: I cannot say, though given the circumstances...

BRANTYN: Poor, poor Sherri. All breeding and no substance.

SOLDIER: Perhaps they've taken hostages. Shall I send a party to Almorica?

BRANTYN: No. Leave them!

SOLDIER: My lord?

BRANTYN: I said leave them. Do not make me repeat myself again. She was given a simple task, and she failed. The Bakram have no need of such "aid."

SOLDIER: As you say, lord Regent.

[Brantyn stands and walks to the window.]

BRANTYN: Must I be surrounded by such fools?

Krysaro

[The Dark Knights have cornered Ozma.]

VOLAQ: Becalm yourself, Ozma. I know you're upset, but you cannot allow your feelings to rule you.

OZMA: I hunt a traitor who has committed unconscionable crimes against his country. What could be more rational?

VOLAQ: You do not do this for your country. This is for you and you alone. With the war faltering, we cannot permit you to wreak havoc as you please. The situation demands unity. Now more than ever, we must stand as one. Balxephon realized this, else why admit to his mistake?

OZMA: You would have us follow our orders without question in the name of **unity**?

VOLAQ: It is our duty. There cannot be order without trust.

OZMA: Balxephon lost my trust when he deceived me.

VOLAQ: What he did, he did for your sake. It was not easy for him.

OZMA: And I'm to accept this? I'm to **trust** him?

VOLAQ: Listen to reason, Ozma. I have no wish to lead you back in chains.

OZMA: ...

[A Dark Knight rushes over.]

KNIGHT: Sir Volaq! The Resistance!

VOLAQ: Here?

[Ozma dashes past Volaq.]

VOLAQ: Ozma! What are you doing!?

OZMA: What I must. I will see whether Hobyrim lives for myself!

[She calls to Denam.]

OZMA: I am Ozma of the Knights Loslorien, and I have a question for you. A blind swordsman fought us at Rhime. Is he with you now?

[Hobyrim is not party to Denam.]

DENAM: The man you seek is not among us. What do the Dark Knights want with him?

OZMA: It's no concern of yours. And you're of no more use to me!

HOBYRIM: ...

OZMA: I know you can hear me, swordsman! Are you Hobyrim Van Rahms or no?

[Choice 1 - No, I am not.]

HOBYRIM: No, my lady. You may shout as loud as you wish, my answer will not change.

OZMA: So be it. You have forgotten me...forgotten your homeland. I will slay you as I would any other Resistance scum!

[Choice 2 - Yes...I am Hobyrim.]

HOBYRIM: Yes, Ozma. It is I.

OZMA: You're alive. Balxephon lied to me...they all lied! Even Oz. ...Why?

HOBYRIM: They sought to make the truth of the lie.

VOLAQ: Ozma, listen to me! We have our orders. What matter the whys and wherefores? This man is our enemy. It is our oath-bound duty to strike at him!

BALXEPHON: I don't believe it... Balxephon killed Stratarchis Vogras!? When they said you'd murdered your father, I felt something was amiss, but this.... I never imagined. He must have known what it would mean for us - for Lodis.

HOBYRIM: Loslorien care nothing for means so long as their ends are met. You of all people must know this! As they shaped Lodis then, they shape Valeria now. They will rule by brute force and fear, and purge any who dare to speak against them. But the people of these islands have risen to overthrow their corrupt rulers. How long before Lodis meets the same fate?

OZMA: I am a Knight of Lodis. I will not betray our homeland!

HOBYRIM: You name me a traitor, but I have ever been a son of Lodis. Lancelot and Balxephon are the true betrayers! It is they who used the high priest to deceive the people. It is they who use **you**, Ozma!

OZMA: No...

VOLAQ: **He** is the enemy, Ozma. Don't believe a word of this nonsense!

[After a moment Volaq realizes it really is Hobyrim he faces.]

VOLAQ: So, this is Hobyrim. You're really something, you know. Most men would have surrendered their sword along with their sight.

HOBYRIM: A knight commander, is it? You have the air of rank about you.

VOLAQ: Does nothing escape you? I shall have to take blind swordsmen much more seriously. To watch you moe, it is clear you are no common warrior. Let our steel sing, then. Your crimes against Lodis demand blood!

HOBYRIM: Strike me if you can. I flee from no one.

[Ozma bears the brunt of Denam's force.]

VOLAQ: You wear too many wounds, Ozma. Keep a steady eye on your foe! This battle is unworthy of your death!

OZMA: Save your worry, Volaq. I will not die until I've learned the truth!

VOLAQ: Do not let vengeance overcome you. I have already lost Oz. I will not lose you, too.

OZMA: I am a Loslorien knight commander. Vengeance does **my** bidding!

[Ozma dies.]

OZMA: I'll never know.... Oz.... I rejoin you...at last.

BALXEPHON: Ozma, no!

[Eventually the Dark Knights fall.]

VOLAQ: This is no place to die. Ozma, we must withdraw!

OZMA: I will not leave until I have the truth! Away from me, Volaq!

VOLAQ: The truth's no good to you dead. Take care, Ozma!

OZMA: I yield. I will fight you no more. Hobyrim, I must know the truth. All of it.

HOBYRIM: Very well.

[They put away their weapons and meet in an abandoned house.]

DENAM: Hobyrim, what past do you share with the Dark Knights?

HOBYRIM: I was once one of them.

DENAM: I hope you've an explanation for this.

HOBYRIM: My full name is Hobyrim Von Rahms.

DENAM: Von Rahms? Sir Balxephon -

HOBYRIM: - is my brother. And Ozma was to be my bride.

DENAM: How could you keep this from me?

HOBYRIM: Hear me out. I have long since turned my back on Loslorien. I ventured to these islands with but one purpose: To kill my brother.

DENAM: What!?

HOBYRIM: Balxephon murdered our parents.

[Hobyrim retells of a scene with his brother, Balxephon, and father.]

BALXEPHON: What do those withered fools in the senate know? Traitors, every one of them! They make no obeisance to High Priest Sardian, yet they fawn over every merchant and upstart house with two coins to rub together! Decay eats Lodis from within. Only Loslorien can cut away the rotten flesh! Lord father, when the senate convenes tomorrow, we must have your support!

VOGRAS: You are obstinate to a fault, Balxephon. What you ask is impossible! I will speak **for** the senate's proposal. We cannot allow Loslorien to grow any more powerful. Ask anything else of me, my son, and it shall be yours. But never this!

BALXEPHON: When did you become a tool of the aristocracy? Ours is an old and noble house. You tarnish our name with this needless groveling!

VOGRAS: I placed you in Loslorien to be my eyes. Now you are become Sardian's pet! You are unfit to lead this family. Begone from my sight! Come, Hobyrim.

[Vogras turns to leave and Balxephon slashes at him. The old man falls in a heap.]

HOBYRIM: Lord father!

BALXEPHON: Fool.

HOBYRIM: What have you done, brother!?

BALXEPHON: Open your eyes! The senate is a suppurating wound in the body of Lodis. Our father was a species of disease!

HOBYRIM: Have you gone mad? The people will never abide such treachery!

BALXEPHON: The people are already ours. You know that. There's nothing you can do to stop us now. The wheels are already set in motion. You **will** follow me!

HOBYRIM: You mean to incite a war! I may not be able to stop you, but I will never join you. You must kill me as you killed our father!

BALXEPHON: I thought you more reasonable than this, my brother...

[Hobyrim trails off.]

HOBYRIM: Much of the aristocracy was culled in Sardin's rebellion. The high priest's men purged the senate and filled its ranks with bootlicks and scullions. The blame for my father's murder fell on me. As punishment, they plucked out my eyes and banished me from Lodis.

DENAM: How horrible...

HOBYRIM: I did not learn of my mother's death until a month after the rebellion. The official account declared her the victim of some mischance or another.... In truth she was poisoned because she would not lend her voice to their cause.

OZMA: And it was Balxephon who made word of this "mischance" known...

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: I know how this must sound, but I swear in Philaha's name that every word is true.

DENAM: So you've come here seeking vengeance.

HOBYRIM: And I will have it. I came to Valeria seeking vengeance, but that is not the only reason I remain. Yours is a worthy cause, denam. I would join you. Ozma, I have always loved Lodis. But the country I knew is gone. High Priest Sardin has twisted it beyond recognition. I could not save Lodis, but it's not too late for Valeria! If I can aid them in their revolution, I will do it gladly.

OZMA: I see...

DENAM: You are a man of honor, Hobyrim. I should be glad to have you at my side.

HOBYRIM: Thank you, Denam. What now, Ozma? Knowing the truth, will you return to Loslorien?

OZMA: Nothing would please me more than to join you, Hobyrim. But the Resistance killed my brother, a debt I have yet to repay.

[Choice 1 - As I owe you for my father.]

DENAM: My father would still be alive if not for you. But he told me to be a stone along the path to our salvation. Begrudging you his death serves nothing. If it will move Valeria toward peace, then you are welcome among us. What's done is done.

OZMA: You would forgive me? It would be easier to cut you down were you not so obliging. Let me be your eyes, Hobyrim. Though it may be you who shows me the way.

HOBYRIM: Thank you, Ozma. It cheers me to hear you say so.

[Choice 2 - I cannot force you to forgive me.]

DENAM: I'll not beg your forgiveness. It means nothing if not given willingly. Nor have I forgotten what you did to my father. And there are others who must grudge you as well. You surrendered to us, so I will not harm you. But when we've finished here, you must leave.

OZMA: Know I would do whatever I can for you, Hobyrim. But I will not ally myself with the Resistance.

HOBYRIM: Then you will return to Lanselot.

OZMA: And devote myself to his cause. I must trust that the high champion knows what's best for Lodis.

HOBYRIM: I'll not try to dissuade you.

OZMA: Be well, Hobyrim.

Phidoch Castle

[Denam, Mreuva and his counsel meet at their home base, where Denam's spy has news.]

DENAM: I hear you've learned the whereabouts of the princess?

SHADOW: She was spotted with a party of Dark Knights training at Barnicia Castle.

DENAM: Abuna Mreuva, is the king's tomb located at Barnicia?

MREUVA: I do not know.... I had already left the city when the king passed. Yet, I find their actions baffling.

DENAM: How so?

MREUVA: I heard no claims that the king had been buried anywhere but the royal mausoleum. I am sure that the queen and prince rest there, in the city.

DENAM: So they search for a different tomb.

MREUVA: When we reach Barnicia, we'll know.

DENAM: True enough. I doubt Brantyn expects us to move on them there. And we should have the support of the people if we're seen as wresting the princess from the hands of the Dark Knights.

MREUVA: I am inclined to agree.

DENAM (standing): We prepare for war, then. Send one legion to Iorumza Canyon to draw the Bakram forces' attention. While they are so occupied, I will lead a detachment directly on Barnicia.

ATTENDANT: As you command, sir.

[He hurries to give out Denam's orders.]

DENAM: Much hangs in the balance. Let us pray the chariot rides with us.

Balmamusa

[Before venturing to Barnicia Castle, Denam ventures to Balmamusa in memory of the events that have transpired. He escapes into an empty house with Olivya in tow to dry themselves off from the storm.]

DENAM: Well, I'm soaked.

OLIVYA: Quite the downpour. I'm drenched myself. We'd best dry off, or we'll catch our deaths of cold.

[Denam hears a shuffling in the shadows.]

DENAM: Who's there? Step into the light!

[A familiar foe appears.]

OLIVYA: Sherri? It is you! What's happened? Are you all right!?

[Sherri, confused and wear, glances up at her sister.]

SHERRI: Olivya? You've come to kill me, yes? Do as you will. I've grown weary of...this.

OLIVYA: What are you saying? We've been searching for you! Father has been worried so. Come home, sister, please!

SHERRI: Home? Where might that be? Home is.... I have no home. You took it from me!

[She pushes her sister aside and points a knife at Denam.]

OLIVYA: What are you doing!?

SHERRI: What I should have done long ago!

[Olivya stands in her way.]

OLIVYA: No, sister! Stop this!

SHERRI: Out of my way, Olivya!

DENAM: If it will ease your pain, I welcome your blade.

OLIVYA: Denam?

DENAM: What's wrong? You can't kill me in front of your sister, can you.

OLIVYA: Sister! No!

[Sherri drops the knife and backs away.]

DENAM: Your hatred twists you from within, Sherri. Let it go. Can you not see how deeply you are loved?

OLIVYA: Enough, Denam! She's not ready for this. It's all right, sister. You're not alone. You'll never be alone again.

SHERRI: Aaah.... *sobs*

OLIVYA: Do not weep, sister. It's over. You're safe.

SHERRI: I...I'm sorry...

DENAM (turning): ...

Qadriga Fortress

[Returning to Phidoc in preparation to mount the assault on Barnicia, Denam encounters a strange group.]

EHLRIG: What's the self-styled leader of the Resistance doing in these parts? Come to beg our help, have you? Or perhaps you've come to convert the free seas to your cause?

[Choice 1 - What "free seas," pirate?]

CHOICE MISSING

[Choice 2 - Will you aid us?]

DENAM: Would you join us? What use this badgering of our own people? You've got steel, and men. Use them to serve Valeria!

EHLRIG: We answer only to the wisdom of the father and the cruelty of the sea! Why help your sort? Power-hungry men, fighting to soak their lands with blood.

DENAM: Then we will vanquish you like the pirates you are!

EHLRIG: You've more spine than rumor'd have it. Sounds like the girl was telling the truth. A truce, then! Our swords could use the rest. And there's someone I'd have you meet. Girl by the name of Cerya.

DENAM: Cerya? What's Cerya doing with pirates?

EHLRIG: There's no pirates here, lad. You're looking at what's left of the Liberation Front. You only need trust us a moment. We'll talk after you've met the girl.

DENAM: All right. If this is a trap, know that retribution will be swift.

[Denam meets with Cerya and Ehlrig and avoids fighting.]

DENAM: I thought the Liberation Front was destroyed.

CERYA: Captain Ehlrig and his men were at sea when Boed was attacked. It was by chance alone I found them when I did, docked at Rhime. I've been watching you from afar. It seems you've gone from playing the hero to being one.

DENAM: There are a few who would give me such credit. Will you join us, Cerya? I feel we share much the same goals.

CERYA: I would be honored. You saved my life at Boed. I would fain return the favor.

The Vanessan Way

[A Bakram troop blocks the road.]

ALESSANDRO: They're on Bakram soil, but they won't get far! This is our land. If I fall this day defending it, I leave no regrets.

[Denam cuts through the Bakram highway guards.]

ALESSANDRO: Can't let them...cross the Iorumza. Heim...must be...defended.

DENAM: The way to Iorumza Canyon is clear. Ready a detachment.

Lambiss Hill

[Beyond the road, Denam attacks another contingent of Bakram.]

PAJEOT: So the Almoricans think to deny reinforcement to Iorumza Canyon. A fine stratagem on the page, but how long can this lesser force endure? We will crush them and harry the Almorica flank ourselves!

[Denam fights off the Bakram.]

PAJEOT: This is no detachment.... No...this is the true host. The Armies at Iorumza...only a feint. It's Barnicia Castle they seek. The Dark Knights...

Tzorious Field

[Denam encounters a group of Dark Knights surveying the field.]

ANDORAS: Denam of Golyat! So it's true! I had forgotten how invigorating the battlefield could be. I'm too long slinking about in the shadows. Come to storm Barnicia Castle and rescue the Princess fair? You may find her a somewhat...unwilling companion. Ha ha!

[Denam assaults the Dark Knight force.]

ANDORAS: I confess, I am surprised to see you fighting on the front lines.

DENAM: This is no errand to leave to another. I am not come to abduct a Princess - I mean to persuade my sister to leave!

ANDORAS: And if I told you the princess was not in Barnicia Castle? That this was a ruse to lure you out?

DENAM: A lie! Our men risked their lives to glean her location. Yet even if their reports were false, it would change nothing. It is you and the rest of the Dark Knights in Barnicia Castle who are our enemies, not the Bakram!

ANDORAS: You still have much to learn, Denam of Golyat. Such trust in your friends, such devotion to your cause, such love for your sister. Your reckless credulity may be your most endearing quality.

[They continue to fight.]

CANOPUS: The tone of your skin, the line of your jaw.... A Bolmoccan?

ANDORAS: A winged from Xenobia.... You can only be Canopus.

CANOPUS: I'm surprised to see a Bolmoccan slave at the head of a Dark Knight army. Your bearing marks you as a member of the Nildahme royal house, or what's left of it. Lodis brought ruin on your kingdom, yet here you are, serving them on bended knee.

ANDORAS: What of it?

CANOPUS: Do you bear no loyalty for your fatherland? How can you fight beside those who destroyed your home? How can you aid them as they visit their sins upon another? If you had any honor at all, you'd put a dagger to their throats, or failing that, your own.

ANDORAS: A fine speech, Canopus. The same one you delivered to Gilbald when Peshaval fell? How amusing! I think I'm growing to like you, bird man.

CANOPUS: So that's the way of it! You fancy yourself in Gilbald's place? You pretend yourself a slave to protect your people, whom Lodis holds hostage?

ANDORAS: Ha! It's you who's taken with wild fancies. Your guilt over Gilbald clouds your thoughts.

CANOPUS: You mean to say your allegiance to Lodis is heartfelt?

ANDORAS: You have me exact. I care nothing for my fatherland. I spare not a thought for my people. It is fortune who brought down our royal house, already decaying from within. Slavery is a fitting bounty for the people of Nildahme!

CANOPUS: Rotten to the core, you! A fool I was to look on you and see Gilbald.

ANDORAS: Then you should have no qualms about fighting me, eh?

[Andoras recognizes a member of Denam's force.]

ANDORAS: Enjoying your time afield, Ozma? I'd be interested in hearing which you prefer: This, or the Dark Knights.

OZMA: What am I to make of that? That you wish to desert Loslorien?

ANDORAS: A slave does not bear the burden of choice. I serve at the Dark Knights' pleasure.

OZMA: I'm glad you know your place. You are Sir Lancelot's man now, body and soul. There is no future for you or your people that **he** does not command.

ANDORAS: Spoken like a true daughter of House Glacius. My people are fortunate to have such fine figures watching over them.

OZMA: I see it now. You play the part of the tragic prince - and well! Closing your eyes when it suits your purposes, always a caustic word on your lips. It was never about your people, was it? It's about **you**.

ANDORAS: The Nildahme were doomed from the start. Once the invasion had begun, there was nothing I could have done to stop it. Yet though my homeland has perished, I defend her people to this day!

OZMA: A convenient stance, to be sure. What possible quality did I see in you, Andoras? 'Tis a mystery to me now.

ANDORAS: And to think Balxephon wants to marry this woman. Or perhaps it is only that he wants to marry a daughter of House Glacius.

OZMA: I'd hold my tongue, were I you, lest it slip and reveal your cowardice.

[Denam and company wound Andoras.]

ANDORAS: Enough of this. I've done my duty to Lodis here.

DENAM: I hope you're not thinking of leaving!

ANDORAS: I admire your spirit, boy! Can't wait to see what happens once you take Barnicia!

DENAM: What? You think this a game!?

[Andoras gives no answer and flees.]

The Gates of Barnicia

[Denam encounters a host of Dark Knights defending the front of Barnicia.]

DARK KNIGHT: What business have the Almoricians here!?

DENAM: Lower your weapons and surrender at once! Your lives will be spared!

DARK KNIGHT: As you spared the lives of Oz and Ozma!? Let's show them Loslorien's true mettle, boys!

[The Dark Knights advance and are felled with ease.]

DENAM: It's almost as if they didn't know we were coming...but why? Surely that Dark Knight who escaped would have given them warning?

Barnicia Courtyard

[Denam enters the keep. Atop the entrance, the Dark Knight Lancelot, Catiua and Barbas meet.]

LANSELOT: I did not expect them to find us here.

BARBAS: Someone whispers to the Almoricians?

LANSELOT: Who, the regent? That fond of us, is he?

BARBAS: It matters not. This provides the perfect opportunity to avenge Oz and Ozma.

LANSELOT: Do not be so eager to die, Barbas. They're not the rabble they once were.

BARBAS: You call me weak.

LANSELOT: I call you foolish if you think you face children down there.

BARBAS: But face them we must! It's only a question of whether we end this here, or in Heim.

LANSELOT: ...

BARBAS: Surely you aren't suggesting we quit these islands entirely? We have not yet lost, and you would leave without a fight!?

LANSELOT: I fear that even were we to place Catiua upon the throne, it would not bring an end to the unrest.

BARBAS: Precisely why we must crush them here and now!

LANSELOT: Surely you haven't forgotten our true goal, Barbas! The rule of Valeria is but one step along our path. If we retreat now, our losses would be trivial. The high priest has commanded as much!

BARBAS: The high priest? I'd as soon have his head on a pike as hear what that imbecile has to say.

LANSELOT: Enough, Barbas! Or it may be your head upon the pike.

BARBAS: Bah. Speak the truth, Lancelot! You don't want to lose favor with the Senate. What of the miracle we seek? Was that not the very reason we stole the Xenobian blade?

LANSELOT: Speaking of which, I received word from Balxephon.

BARBAS: Again? What would he have us do now? Wrest the firmament from its perch?

DENAM: Sister!

[Denam catches the meeting atop the keep and calls to them.]

DENAM: Tartaros! Release my sister at once!

[Lanselot leads Catiua away.]

LANSELOT: I leave this in your hands.

BARBAS: My hands will be happy to show them the difference between knights...and children.

LANSELOT: We leave now, Catiua.

BARBAS: I was waiting for you, boy!

[He leaps down the keep's wall with little effort and out pour a number of Dark Knights at his side.]

BARBAS: But you're a fool to advance on our front gates!

DENAM: A fool? Your friends did not call me so as they died.

BARBAS: And brazen besides! Allow me to show you something.

[He reveals a mysterious weapon.]

BARBAS: Know what this is? Of course you do not. This marvelous weapon is called a "fusil," and it's far more powerful than any sorcery!

[He uses the weapon on one of his soldiers, who dies instantly.]

BARBAS: Fie! Worthless, bedeviled contraption! You! Get him out of here. As I was saying, contraptions are well and good, but a true knight fights with a sword! Excepting those who fight with hammers...such as myself!

[He chuckles.]

BARBAS: Ready yourself, Denam of Golyat! I intend to end you **and** your futile war.

[Denam leaps to attack the overbearing Dark Knight.]

OZMA: Now here's a stroke of luck, finding the courtyard in your hands, Barbas. Of all our knights commander, I always considered you least worthy of the title.

BARBAS: Do you think to rout me with those cheap parlor tricks of yours, Ozma?

OZMA: Brute force, is that all you understand? Perhaps it's time I versed you in the higher arts.

BARBAS: Such pride for a woman. Nothing a good beating won't remedy! I wonder what Oz would think were he to see you now. His beloved sister, a traitor.... No, a flighty wench, run off to another man!

OZMA: My brother's memory is no fodder for your japes!

BARBAS: I'm surprised. I was convinced you'd forgotten all about your brother. After all, you seem to have fallen in quite readily with his murderers.

OZMA: I warn you, Barbas!

BARBAS: No. Thank me, for I will reunite you with your brother. You can ask him now he rests yourself!

[Denam's allies arrive to the field.]

GILDAS: Now yours is a familiar frame. Where was that.... odd. You'd think such a pock-marked pisswater face would leave a stronger impression!

BARBAS: Xenobian! Why aren't you dead yet?

GILDAS: Because your jester of a brother is a terrible swordsman. Where is your facile friend today?

BARBAS: Martym...? You speak of Martym! So you're the knight who begged for your life at the point of his sword!

GILDAS: Do you repeat every lie you're told in this fashion? By my honor, if you know what **that** is, 'twas your fool of a friend who cried mercy.

BARBAS: A fine tale. May it keep you company in your grave!

[Vyce confronts the Dark Knight.]

VYCE: It's him - I'd know him anywhere!

BARBAS: Something you want to say to me, boy?

VYCE: Denam! He's the dog who led the attack on Golyat!

DENAM: You're certain?

VYCE: I watched as he butchered our friends...as he slew my father!

BARBAS: The drunk's whelp? If you miss your father, I'll send you to join him!

VYCE: A courtesy I thought to offer you. You contend with me in this life, and my father in the next!

[Barbas' face looks familiar to more of Denam's allies.]

CANOPUS: What have we here? The very Dark Knight who assaulted Rhime, slaughtering innocents by the score! What have you done with Lancelot? What have you done with my brother!?

GILDAS: The high champion's your brother now, is he?

CANOPUS: Quiet, you!

BARBAS: A bird's place is the stewpot, not the battlefield.

CANOPUS: I'll peck your eyes out for that! Mind your taunts. They always come home to roost!

MIRDYN: I've a score to settle with you from Rhime.

BARBAS: Rhime? Ah, yes. You failed to defend her, as I recall, knight. How are you with your other ladies? You must disappoint **them** as well.

MIRDYN: I'd be more worried about my own fortunes in love, were I you. When I'm finished with you, the ladies will barely know you for a man...let alone a knight.

[Denam, Vyce and the Xenobians attack for their fallen friends.]

BARBAS: I find myself needing to depart.... I suppose I have a good excuse, at least.

DENAM: Wait, Barbas!

Barnicia Grand Staircase

[Lancelot and Catiua prepare to flee with a guard of Dark Knights.]

LANSELOT: I do not leave the field eagerly...but I admit we are outmatched. Catiua, we return to Heim! This decrepit castle crumbles around us.

CATIUA: No! I've had my fill of flight!

LANSELOT: To the back chambers at once!

[She flees.]

DENAM: Sister!

LANSELOT: Denam of Golyat! May the chariot favor the better man!

[Lancelot attacks Denam.]

HOBYRIM: I need no eyes to know who stands before me, Tartaros.

LANSELOT: Hobyrim.... The finest swordsman Loslorien ever produced. I'm glad the loss of your sight has not diminished your skill. Our convictions may have been at odds, but I was sorry to lose you all the same.

HOBYRIM: One of your ability should have been able to find some other way forward. But this.... To change so much so quickly invites suffering.

LANSELOT: There **was** no other way. Lodis needs change. Move too slowly, and the commons would never recognize it for what it was. Our uprising showed them that change had come. But more importantly, it taught them where to kneel.

HOBYRIM: You wield an iron fist, when a velvet glove would serve.

DENAM: Your machinations end here, Lancelot. Accept defeat, and release my sister!

LANSELOT: Release her? She is with us of her own accord. And who are you to demand anything of the monarch of Valeria?

DENAM: You brought war with you when you came to these islands! Valeria needs you not at all, and my sister needs you even less.

LANSELOT: Oh? It was none other than the Bakram regent who summoned us here. Your very uncle, Brantyn Morne! We are not invaders, but mediators. It is you who insists upon war! If you truly wish order for the islands, then you will follow Lodis!

DENAM: I have no desire for order born of irons and bonds!

LANSELOT: Hmph. You remind me of another. Yes, he said much the same as you! Talk of "freedom." "People have the right to live out their own lives," was it? Very well. You may share his fate!

DENAM: You speak of Lancelot...

[The battle rages.]

LANSELOT: Ozma. So you truly have turned your sword against Lodis and Loslorien.

OZMA: I do not intend to make enemies of either. I have merely lost faith in you, high commander.

LANSELOT: I always thought well of you, Ozma. Never resting on the laurels you were born to. A bold spirit, you had. Deep love for your homeland, and a true desire for reform.... Pity.

OZMA: As I respected you, high commander. It was through your effort that Lodis rose from its own rot and returned to strength. But I cannot see a future in the course you and Balxephon take - the way you deceive and rule others with fear. You bring change, but what follows? Press down upon the people for too long, and you will warp the land and invite destruction.

LANSELOT: If your will is set, I will be happy to play the part expected of me. You will not win, Ozma.

[Denam continues fighting.]

LANSELOT: We cannot hold against such a force. We must withdraw!

DENAM: Lancelot, wait!

[Catiua stands firm in a lit room.]

MAN: Still nothing.

GRUFF MAN: Keep looking. She must be here somewhere.

MAN: ...This room been searched?

[Denam enters as Catiua moves to the corner.]

DENAM: Catiua...

SOLDIER: We've looked everywhere, sir. There's no sign of -

DENAM: You may go.

SOLDIER: Sir.

DENAM: Are you all right?

CATIUA: What do you mean to do with me?

DENAM: Do with you? I'm here to help you, sister.

CATIUA: Come no closer!

DENAM: Please, sister.

CATIUA: I am not your sister. I am Versalia, rightful ruler of Valeria.

DENAM: No, you will always be my sister.

CATIUA: ...

DENAM: We lived our whole lives together. One day you may be queen of Valeria, but you will always be a sister to me, blood be damned!

CATIUA: A lie. What brother would abandon his sister as you did?

[Choice 1 - I never abandoned you.]

DENAM: I had obligations - duties to fulfill. But in spirit, I was ever at your side.

CATIUA: Another lie! You were glad to be rid of me!

[Choice 1 - You are my sister, and I love you.]

DENAM: I love you, sister. How could I want to see you taken from me?

CATIUA: Your love is inconstant as the wind. It is my crown you love, not me!

DENAM: You're wrong, sister!

CATIUA: More lies! Everywhere I turn, more lies...

DENAM: ...

CATIUA: I wanted to be your sister. No, more simple than that. I wanted to be near someone who needed me...for me.

DENAM: ...

CATIUA: Why can't you see me for the person I am? Denam, look on me with your heart, as well as your eyes.

[Catiua pulls out a knife and thrusts it into her chest. Denam leaps to catch her from falling.]

DENAM: Sister, no! Someone! Help us!

CATIUA: I am a burden...no more...

DENAM: No!

[He wails as help arrives too late.]

[Choice 2 - I took no joy in our parting.]

DENAM: How could you think I would want to be parted from you? You're the only family I have left!

CATIUA: Denam...

DENAM: Father is dead. As he lay dying, he told me something. Had he returned you to the king when the prince died, this war might never have happened. But he could not bring himself to hand over the child who called him "father." He loved you too much! You were not of his blood, but he loved you no less. As I love you. You're the only family I've ever known.

CATIUA: ...

DENAM: I don't want to lose you, sister.

CATIUA: I'm sorry, Denam. How could I have been so selfish? Can you forgive me?

DENAM: It is I who should ask forgiveness. I will not part with you again.

[Choice 2 - I did only what I had to do.]

DENAM: I did leave you. I'll not deny it. But only because I did not want to see you caught up in this war, sister.

CATIUA: Is this war so important to you?

DENAM: Ending it is. But I need your help to do it, sister!

CATIUA: You beast! You would use me as the Dark Knights have! **You** of all people!

DENAM: No, you have it wrong! The Dark Knights would have kept you a vassal in your own kingdom. A puppet, no more. Come with us, sister, and together we will see you crowned a true queen.

CATIUA: I want no crown! It's you and Lodis and all the rest who clamor for my throne! No more... I can take no more!

DENAM: Calm, sister. It will be all right.

CATIUA: I'm past all that now. Forgive me, Denam.

[Catiua pulls out a knife and thrusts it into her chest. Denam leaps to catch her from falling.]

DENAM: Sister, no! Someone! Help us!

CATIUA: I am a burden...no more...

DENAM: No!

[He wails as help arrives too late.]

Barnicia Grand Staircase (Against Catiua)

[Lanselot and Catiua prepare to flee with a guard of Dark Knights.]

LANSELOT: I do not leave the field eagerly...but I admit we are outmatched. Catiua, we return to Heim! This decrepit castle crumbles around us.

CATIUA: No! I've had my fill of flight!

LANSELOT: You must heed me!

[She runs away from Lanselot.]

LANSELOT: Catiua, no!

[Denam enters just to see his sister try and run.]

DENAM: Sister! Sister, hear me! You are deceived! They care nothing about restoring your throne. They seek a relic left by the Dynast-King. Only one of Dorgalua's blood can help them grasp it.... They're using you!

LANSELOT: Do not lend him your ear, Catiua! Think on how you've been betrayed. By King Dorgalua, Abuna Prancet, even your brother! That's right. Your dear brother betrayed you. Have you forgotten your pain so soon!

CATIUA: So they serve their own ends. What of it? It is a fact of life and war that men use others...even as I will use them to defeat you. At least **here** I know I am needed.

[Vyce calls to his friend.]

VYCE: Why join them, Catiua? Have you forgotten what they did to Golyat?

CATIUA: I am Versalia, daughter of the Dynast-King. The Catiua you knew is no more. I stand with the Dark Knights to end this war.

VYCE: The war began when **they** came to these islands! Do you really think they will help you end it? Feh. Even if they do, they'll not let Valeria free of their clutches. We must win our own freedom, else it means nothing! Don't you see, Catiua? They are using you!

CATIUA: I'll not deny it. Do as you feel you must. Can you not trust me to do the same?

VYCE: This is no question of trust, Catiua! You may well be a princess. You may even end this war. But a darkness grows within you.

CATIUA: What would you know of it!

[Denam unwillingly battles against his sister.]

DENAM: Your machinations end here, Lanselot. Accept defeat, and release my sister!

LANSELOT: Release her? She is with us of her own accord. And who are you to demand anything of the monarch of Valeria?

DENAM: You brought war with you when you came to these islands! Valeria needs you not at all, and my sister needs you even less.

LANSELOT: Oh? It was none other than the Bakram regent who summoned us here. Your very uncle, Brantyn Morne! We are not invaders, but mediators. It is you who insists upon war! If you truly wish order for the islands, then you will follow Lodis!

DENAM: I have no desire for order born of irons and bonds!

LANSELOT: Hmph. You remind me of another. Yes, he said much the same as you! Talk of "freedom." "People have the right to live out their own lives," was it? Very well. You may share his fate!

DENAM: You speak of Lanselot...

[Catiua is slain.]

CATIUA: Denam.... You **did** need me.

DENAM: Sister...? No!

LANSELOT: What? Catiaua!

CATIUA: To be needed.... As a sister, as a friend, as...family. That is all I wanted. I was...alone.

DENAM: Sister! No.... No!

LANSELOT: An ill-favored day, this is. This is what comes of looking down at your own feet and ignoring the horizon.

DENAM: No.... You did this to her. You did this to all of us!

LANSELOT: It was **you** who killed Catiaua! You called her sister, and you murdered her! She was our last hope for lasting peace on these islands. That hope died with her.

[He flees.]

DENAM: Sister...

[Denam continues fighting.]

LANSELOT: We cannot hold against such a force. We must withdraw!

CATIUA: What!? And leave me here?

LANSELOT (to himself): Perhaps I should kill her now. The turmoil would only make it easier to assail these wretched islands.... And make ruling them a far more difficult proposition. No, we trust to Catiaua...for now.

[He turns.]

LANSELOT: Forgive me, Catiaua. May the Empress watch over you.

[He abandons Catiaua.]

CATIUA: Coward!

[Denam and Catiaua retreat to a small room.]

DENAM: You shouldn't lurk in doorways. Are you all right?

CATIUA: What do you mean to do with me?

DENAM: Do with you? I'm here to help you, sister.

CATIUA: I am not your sister. I am Versalia, rightful ruler of Valeria.

DENAM: No, you will always be my sister.

CATIUA: ...

DENAM: We lived our whole lives together. One day you may be Queen of Valeria, but you will always be a sister to me, blood be damned!

CATIUA: A lie. What brother would abandon his sister as you did?

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DENAM: I had obligations - duties to fulfill. But in spirit, I was ever at your side.

CATIUA: Is this war so important to you?

DENAM: Ending it is. But I need your help to do it, sister!

CATIUA: You beast! You would use me as the Dark Knights have! **You** of all people!

DENAM: No, you have it wrong! The Dark Knights would have kept you a vassal in your own kingdom. A puppet, no more. Come with us, sister, and together we will see you crowned a true queen.

[She steps back.]

CATIUA: I want no crown! It's you and Lodis and all the rest who clamor for my throne! No more.... I can take no more!

DENAM: Calm, sister. It will be all right.

CATIUA: I'm past all that now. Forgive me, Denam.

[Catiua pulls out a knife and thrusts it into her chest. Denam leaps to catch her from falling.]

DENAM: Sister, no! Someone! Help us!

CATIUA: I am a burden...no more...

DENAM: No!

[He wails as help arrives too late.]

[Choice 2 - I did only what I had to do.]

DENAM: I did leave you. I'll not deny it. But only because I did not want to see you caught up in this war, sister.

CATIUA: Another lie! You were glad to be rid of me!

[Choice 1 - You are my sister, and I love you.]

DENAM: I love you, sister. How could I want to see you taken from me?

CATIUA: Denam...

DENAM: Father is dead. As he lay dying, he told me something. Had he returned you to the King when the prince died, this war might never have happened. But he could not bring himself to hand over the child who called him "father." He loved you too much! You were not of his blood, but he loved you no less. As I love you. You're the only family I've ever known.

CATIUA: ...

DENAM: I don't want to lose you, sister.

CATIUA (tearing up): I'm sorry, Denam. How could I have been so selfish? Can you forgive me?

DENAM: That's behind us now. The important thing is that we'll never be apart again.

[Choice 2 - I took no joy in our parting.]

DENAM: How could you think I would want to be parted from you? You're the only family I have left!

CATIUA: But we're not family, Denam. Not really.

DENAM: ...

CATIUA: I wanted to be your sister. No, more simple than that. I wanted to be near someone who needed me...for me.

DENAM: ...

CATIUA: Why could we not be together? Why was I born a princess?

[Catiua pulls out a knife and thrusts it into her chest. Denam leaps to catch her from falling.]

DENAM: Sister, no! Someone! Help us!

CATIUA: I am a burden...no more...

DENAM: No!

[He wails as help arrives too late.]

Tzorious Field

[Lanselot and the remaining Dark Knights meet up with Barbas.]

LANSELOT: Barbas! I cannot say I'm pleased to see you live.

BARBAS: ...

LANSELOT: Back to Heim!

[The Dark Knights march. Lanselot halts to say some more to Barbas.]

LANSELOT: I've had enough of knights not worth their armor.

BARBAS: ...

Phidoc Castle (with Catiua)

[Catiua and Denam meet with their top forces and Abuna Mreuva.]

CATIUA: Thank you for freeing me from the Bakram. I will not forget your loyalty and service.

MREUVA: You are most gracious, your Highness.

CATIUA: I wish only for this warring to be over. Peace cannot come a day too soon. Nor will it come without the help of the Order of Goldscale. I expect great deeds of you.

MREUVA: And you shall have them, even if it means our lives. You Highness, you are welcome to remain here in Phidoch -

CATIUA: Abuna Mreuva! If I am to lead my people, I cannot afford to remain holed away, far from where the arrows fly. I will join the ranks, in the front. I will show my people and my soldiers who fights for them.

MREUVA: But, your Highness!

CATIUA: Do not worry on my behalf. That...is an order, Abuna.

MREUVA: As your Highness wishes.

CATIUA: About the front lines...

DENAM: The Bakram move independently now. The Dark Knights have lost the regent's trust.

CATIUA: Then a resolution is at hand. Let us return to the city my father built. Back to Heim to end this for all time!

DENAM (rising): Ready the troops!

[The soldiers leave to make preparations.]

CATIUA: Well. How did I do?

DENAM: You've really come into your own, sister. Father would be proud.

CATIUA: Come into my own? Odd, when I felt like someone else entirely.

MREUVA: Not to worry, Catiua. You will do splendidly.

CATIUA: I hope you're right.

DENAM: Still, you should stay here in the castle. For your safety, and that of -

CATIUA: I said I wouldn't, and I meant it. I won't be some figurehead for my people to hoist and carry about. You'll come to my rescue should I get in any real trouble, won't you?

DENAM: Well, of course, but...

CATIUA: It's settled then.

MREUVA: The late king loved the front no less. Must be in the blood.

CATIUA: Yes. The Dynast-King's spirit will protect me.

DENAM: That's all well and good, but still...be careful.

CATIUA: Don't worry. I will.

Phidoc Castle (Without Catiua)

[Denam's trusted warriors meet in the castle halls.]

DENAM: Sadly, we were unable to save the Princess Versalia. I lacked the strength.... The failure is mine. Forgive me. But do not forgive the Dark Knights! They abandoned the princess when they realized their own defeat was inevitable. I tried to persuade her to our cause, but the Dark Knights had sown deep the seeds of doubt and fear. She took her own life.... It is for her that we fight as well.

KNIGHT: We're ready to march, my lord. Just give us the word.

DENAM: Good. We move against the Bakram and the Dark Knights with everything we have. The final battle awaits. Onward to Heim!

[The soldiers leave.]

MREUVA: You did well.

DENAM: I tire of this theater!

MREUVA: Do not say that. **You** must bring this war to an end. If that means enduring a little "theater," I think it a fair price.

DENAM: I watched as my sister died.... Was that part of the price as well?

MREUVA: You must push such thoughts from your mind. Naught will come of it. Right or wrong, let history be the judge. Now you must focus on the task at hand, Denam.

DENAM: ...

Phidoch Castle (Catiua slain)

[Sullenly, Denam sits with Mreuva.]

MREUVA: Right yourself, Denam! This is no time for maudlin reflection! Much remains to be done, and swiftly.

DENAM: I doubt that not. And all of it meaningless, without her.

MREUVA: So was it fated. You cannot blame yourself.

DENAM: Fate? It was not fate who killed my sister! It was me!

MREUVA: Leave us.

KNIGHT: M'lord.

[The guards leave.]

MREUVA: You must calm yourself, Denam. If your men see you waver so, you will lose your command, and then the war. What is done is done. No amount of mourning will raise Catiua from the grave.

DENAM: ...

MREUVA: With Catiua gone, only one path remains to us. The Dark Knights plotted her murder - what more reason do we need to brand them traitors and cast them from our shores! After all, it was they who drove the princess to her doom.

DENAM: No. It was I who robbed her of hope. I did this...

MREUVA: What are you saying! Have you any idea how many lives you hold in your hand, **commander**? Prancet was right, you know. It is you who must lead us toward peace. Never forget that!

DENAM: ...

MREUVA: The Bakram stir. There is no avoiding conflict now. I have ordered our men to prepare for an all-out attack. You **must** put this behind you. Our armies need their commander, Denam.

[He leaves Denam alone.]

DENAM: Catiua...

Iorumza Canyon

[Denam encounters a group of bandits.]

STANOSKA: Past time Denam showed his face! Better men than him have died trying to cross Iorumza Canyon. His bones will join the rest!

[They attack across the treacherous river.]

STANOSKA: Done in by...Walister dogs...

Boulder Sands

[Denam sneaks around Heim.]

MIMOSE: So they move from Barnicia.... They'll find these lines well defended. We will not let them reach the open desert. Move!

[They fight across the empty desert.]

MIMOSE: Hope of redeeming my family's honor...dies with me...

Oeram

[A large force stands before Denam's army.]

HANZO: Listen well! This town is the last before they reach the royal city herself. Should they reach her, they will plunder her stores and slaughter our families. If you find yourself wavering in the coming battle, let thoughts of **that** rekindle your flame!

[The Bakram defend but do not last against Denam.]

HANZO: Rest comes...at last...

The Gates of Heim

[A group of warriors await.]

DERAIN: You're bold to attack our front gates. Or perhaps merely foolish.

[They fight and the guard recognizes his foe.]

DERAIN: Ozma of Loslorien? Could it be? What is she doing with those rebels!? Lord Tartaros remains at his excellency's side, does he not? Or...has Lodis betrayed us!?

[The battle rages.]

DERAIN: They put up a good fight...but we must persevere! Let the gates fall, as long as the enemy falls with them. Lessen their numbers and we will ease Sir Latimer's task! Sir Latimer...this passes to you, now!

Heim South Curtain Wall

[Denam approaches the southern reaches of Heim.]

VERMADO: The Almoricans are a fearsome foe. We are like to be overwhelmed. If you value your life above honor, leave now, and I will look the other way.

[None of his soldiers move.]

VERMADO: I'll not offer again.

[Still they remain steadfast.]

VERMADO: Good. You do the Knights of Bakram proud. If we are to die this day, let our deaths be glorious!

[They labor to defend their keep.]

DENAM: Knights of Bakram! Sheathe your swords. We have no wish to see you die. Surrender, and let us put this senseless bloodshed behind us.

VERMADO: No doubt you're right. Surrendering would spare much blood on both sides. But honor demands we fight to the last!

[Vermado and his troops indeed hold to their honor.]

VERMADO: Glory...to the knights of Bakram...

Heim Postern Gate

[The gate is guarded heavily.]

HALPHAS: Hold them here! We can't let them into the castle!

[They fight and recognize their foes.]

HALPHAS: A Loslorien Knight marches with the Resistance - and a commander, no less. Has Lodi betrayed us?

[The battle rages.]

HALPHAS: His eminence has charged me with defending the postern gate. I must show him that trust was not misplaced!

[She falls.]

HALPHAS: I've failed you...eminence.

Heim Castle

[Within the keep Brantyn is interrupted by a messenger.]

SOLDIER: Your Eminence! They've breached the castle gates!

BRANTYN: Denam goes too far! How stand the knights of Lodi? You've lost my trust. I hope you've not lost your nerve as well! Or do you fancy taking my city from me, as a coda to losing the princess of Barnicia!?

VOICE: Sheathe your anger, your excellency. It serves nothing here.

[The Dark Knight Lancelot enters, trailed by a remaining few Dark Knights.]

BRANTYN: I thought you in hiding, Lord Tartaros, so little have I seen of you. Finally muster the strength to stand in that armor of yours?

LANSELOT: You appear to be **embattled**, your excellency.

BRANTYN: A jest, yes? We are two rabbits in the same pot. Is it the largely uncontested loss of Phidoch and Barnicia that weighs upon your shoulders, or shame at your own inadequacy? Perhaps you should ride out and **face our foes** if you do not wish to become even more of a laughingstock!

LANSELOT: I did not come to talk strategy. I am come to bid you farewell.

BRANTYN: You would abandon us - your allies - now!?

LANSELOT: Your excellency should learn to govern his tongue. Had you but followed our instructions, none of this would have come to pass. I include the matter of the princess when I say this! All you needed to do was abandon that Eltynaha puppet of yours and offer up the throne - it is what the people wanted!

[Brantyn stands in a rage.]

BRANTYN: Your counsel is not welcome here, knight!

LANSELOT: Do you not see!? You are defeated, your excellency!

[Lancelot turns to go with his men in tow. Brantyn laughs.]

BRANTYN: Oh? Truly? It is you who have lost, **sir!**

[Some of Lancelot's men draw their swords and hold them to their former leader's necks.]

LANSELOT: Barbas! What madness has come over you!?

BARBAS: Your time has passed, brother!

[Brantyn's men surround Lancelot.]

BRANTYN: Take him away.

Heim Courtyad

[Denam faces another group of steadfast Heim soldiers.]

LATIMER: Enemies of Heim! Your march ends here!

[Denam confronts this loyal group.]

DENAM: It is only a matter of time before your castle falls! Lay down your sword if you value your life.

LATIMER: Would you do the same were you the defender here? Or would honor prevent you as it does me? The Bakram will fight to the end!

[Denam has no choice but to fight them all.]

LATIMER: An unexpected...turn.

Heim Castle

[The Dark Knight Lancelot's former companions bound him in an empty room and relieve them of their weapons.]

MARTYM: I'll be taking this.

BALXEPHON: Traitorous worm!

[Martym leans back and pummels Balxephon.]

MARTYM: Is it not you who betray Lodis?

VOLAQ: What?

MARTYM: You meant to use Brynhildr to break the seal, princess or no!

VOLAQ: What is he talking about?

MARTYM: This sword holds the power of the gods. No mortal seal can stand against it. Yet you had us scouring the islands for a woman long dead and an uncharitable princess.

VOLAQ (to Lancelot): Is this true, high champion?

MARTYM: You wanted Dorgalua's legacy for yourself!

VOLAQ: Do you mean to...mock us to death?

[Martym kicks the still Balxephon.]

MARTYM: No need. When the Almoricans find you, they'll do it for me.

[He leaves.]

VOLAQ: Are you all right, Balxephon? Andoras. How can you have any part in this?

ANDORAS: Must I spell it out for you, Volaq? How I have yearned for this day. The day my mother and father, my brothers and sisters are avenged.

VOLAQ: Still you cling to the Nildahme royal house?

[Andoras turns and leaves without saying a word.]

LANSELOT: The reins change hands.... Perhaps it was only a matter of time.

VOLAQ: What do you mean?

BALXEPHON: Catiua, the sword - nothing more than keys.

VOLAQ: What?

LANSELOT: Lodis can take these isles whenever it likes. For now, Valeria is best left to her people. It's only a question of who rules, and how. If nothing else, our sojourn here has taught me that. Can you move, Balxephon?

[Lancelot and Balxephon struggle and break free of their ropes.]

BALXEPHON: Well enough, I think.

LANSELOT: It's time we were leaving Heim.

Heim Great Hall

[Brantyn and his remaining contingent of Dark Knights wait in the great hall.]

BARBAS: Well?

MARTYM: The old coot Balxephon had it!

ANDORAS: We'd best not tarry.

BRANTYN: What are you doing!? They're coming! Make ready to meet them in battle!

BARBAS: Then, to the Hanging Gardens, as discussed.

BRANTYN: What do you mean? ...What are you planning!?

BARBAS: We're done taking orders from you!

BRANTYN: I'm the regent! How dare you speak to me like that!

DENAM: It's over, Brantyn!

MARTYM: Bah, sooner than I expected!

[He flees in Denam's appearance. The other Dark Knights prepare to follow.]

BRANTYN: The Dark Knights...fleeing?

BARBAS: We've helped you as we said we would. This...this is your dungpile to spade.

[Barbas winks out of the hall.]

DENAM: No! Barbas!

[Denam and his allies fight within the hall.]

CATIUA: Regent, put away your weapons. Can we not discuss truce? Surely there is benefit to be had by us both.

BRANTYN: A most convincing argument, your majesty. Your royal blood does much to conceal the mark the provinces have left on you.

CATIUA: Three times I sent envoys to treat for peace before moving against Heim. each time you refused them. A decision reached with Lodis at your back, I should imagine. But look about you. I see no Knights Loslorien. You cannot win. Is it not a lord's duty to watch the curtain fall with grace?

BRANTYN: We need no help from Lodis! I will not surrender the country I built to some baseborn girl, no matter how thickly Dorgalua's blood runs in her!

CATIUA: So be it. We fight to the last.

BRANTYN: Denam! As you are my nephew, hear me! It is not too late! Kneel to me, and together we will rule Valeria!

DENAM: It is you who should kneel, Brantyn. Throw down your sword and rein in your troops, and your life will be spared. Resist, and we will show no mercy!

BRANTYN: But the Dark Knights have left! You saw them! It was they who brought this upon us, not I - Yes, I did their bidding...but I did it to save Valeria. When we lost King Dorgalua, we could no longer hold Lodis at bay - who could!? Had we fought to drive them back, they would have killed us all!

DENAM: If the people are so dear to you, why did you not inform the king that his daughter was alive? All Valeria would have welcomed the news after the prince's passing.... Look at me and tell me you did not seek to use her - as you used my father!

BRANTYN: Yes, I sought to use her...and where is the wrong in that? I did what any lowborn man would do. When you lack a silver spoon, you fashion one of steel. You understand. You're like me. Where you carved out your destiny with a sword, I used my wits. But there's little difference, in the end. We both walk toward our future treading upon the backs of others. Deny it, and you only deceive yourself!

[Denam's allies advance with their leader.]

SHERRI: Hello, Brantyn.

BRANTYN: After all I did for you, Sherri...how could you side against me? You will die a traitor!

SHERRI: I, a traitor? You turned on me long before I had the chance.

BRANTYN: You still think highly of yourself, I see. A keen eye for fault in anyone but yourself. You abandoned your faith, abandoned the Bakram - it is a wonder the Resistance will even have you.

SHERRI: They trust me because I choose to trust. In my father, my sisters... myself. It is only the weak who cling to power.

BRANTYN: You deceive yourself to think so. **All** men desire power. Few ever come to possess it. Those who do have a duty to use it justly.

SHERRI: Such arrogance.... If only I had seen it sooner. I lost all I had for my error. I will not repeat it!

[They corner Brantyn.]

Heim (without Catiua)

[Denam sits at the head of the table, his allies listening intently.]

BRANTYN: Impossible.... It...it cannot be...

DENAM: We must not bare our swords against them, even if they resist. The Dark Knights are our enemy, not the Bakram who follow them. Dispatch a messenger. Inform them of our intent. If we treath them like rebels, we will only push them away.

KNIGHT: It will be done, my lord.

DENAM: We must do likewise with the Resistance, of course. If any of our men make protest or show disrespect to the Bakram, they will be punished.

SPELLBINDER: If I may, my lord.

DENAM: Go on.

SPELLBINDER: It's...no easy matter. I'm told there's been a good deal of rapine and plunder in the city.

DENAM: What?

SPELLBINDER: There is worse. Elders beaten, women...defiled.

DENAM: My soldiers do this!?

MREUVA: Crude though it may be, many do battle not for glory or duty but for the spoils. We cannot rid ourselves of them all.

SPELLBINDER: How will you deal with these, my lord?

[Choice 1 - We must look the other way.]

DENAM: They will receive their due, but for now, I see no other course but to look the other way.

SPELLBINDER: ...

MREUVA: We have more pressing concerns.

SPELLBINDER: As you say.

[Choice 2 - They will be punished for their crimes.]

DENAM: They will be punished as they deserve. Good?

SPELLBINDER: Sir.

DENAM: Today, we begin the long work of peace. We are no longer walister or Bakram. We are Valerians. The war is done.

KNIGHT: We hereby swear an oath to serve, your loyal retainers unto death.

[Denam rises.]

DENAM: The Dark Knights have sought refuge in the Hanging Gardens. We travel there to rid ourselves of them for good and all. A great battle awaits us. But beyond it, peace! We must take up the sword once more. For Valeria!

ALL: For Valeria!

Heim (With Catiua)

[Catiua sits at the head of the table, her allies listening intently.]

CATIUA: We must not bare our swords against them, even if they resist. The Dark Knights are our enemy, not the Bakram who follow them. Dispatch a messenger. Inform them of our intent. If we treat them like rebels, we will only push them away.

KNIGHT: It will be done, your majesty.

CATIUA: Do likewise with the Resistance. It cannot appear we show favor. Any who act against my orders will meet punishment swift and fierce.

DENAM: As you say.

CATIUA: The war is finally over. From this day forward we are no longer Walister or Bakram. We are Valerian. The past must be forgotten. If any hatred still burns within you, shut it away. We must forge a new kingdom together.

KNIGHT: We swear you our undying allegiance, Princess Versalia.

CATIUA: I thank you.

DENAM: The Dark Knights have sought refuge in the Hanging Gardens. We travel there to rid ourselves of them for good and all. A great battle awaits us. But beyond it, peace! We must take up the sword once more. For Valeria!

ALL: For Valeria!

Heim Outskirts

[Shadow, Denam's informant, leads Denam and Catiua into a church with some news.]

SHADOW: Right this way.

[Catiua glances at the huddled refugees and Denam stops in front of a woman with a child.]

SHADOW: Is...something wrong?

DENAM: No. Nothing.

[They continue into a room where a young woman attends a blond man, seated facing an open window.]

WOMAN: Ah! M'lord Sir Denam! And the p-princess! M'lady!

[The woman falls over herself curtsying and Denam recognizes the man.]

DENAM: Lancelot? What...!?

MAN: ...

[Denam, unsure whether this man is his old friend, notices something on the desk.]

DENAM: What's this? Lancelot's music box?

[He plays the box. The man turns and stands.]

MAN: Ah.... Aaahh.... Aaaaaah!

[He collapses to his knees.]

DENAM: It couldn't.... Is it really you?

WOMAN: There there. It's all right. In your chair.

CATIUA: The...Holy Knight? What ill fortune is this?

[She rushes out of the room.]

WOMAN: M'lady...? Do you know this man?

DENAM: ...

WOMAN: I'm sorry. 'Twasn't right of me to pry.

DENAM: No worry. But I must ask -

WOMAN: Wait, there's something you should see, m'lord.

[She retrieves a sword from a bureau and holds it to Denam.]

WOMAN: The sword he carried.

DENAM: Lombardia!

[Denam takes his friend's sword and thoughts as he departs.]

Krysaro

[Denam stops over in Krysaro after hearing some unsettling rumors. Hobyrim requests a word.]

DENAM: You had something to tell me?

HOBYRIM: A rumor's been making its way through Heim. Perhaps you've heard it.

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: They say a spy walks among the Resistance ranks.

DENAM: You have never given me reason to doubt you, Hobyrim.

HOBYRIM: I'm glad to hear it. But there's something you don't know.

DENAM: Yes?

HOBYRIM: I was in the order of the Dark Knights Loslorien.

DENAM: I hope you've an explanation for this.

HOBYRIM: My full name is Hobyrim Von Rahms.

DENAM: Von Rahms? Sir Balxephon -

HOBYRIM: - is my brother.

Denam (backing away): How could you keep this from me?

HOBYRIM: Hear me out! I am no spy, I swear it! I ventured to these islands with but one purpose: To kill my brother.

DENAM: What!?

HOBYRIM: Balxephon murdered our parents.

[Hobyrim retells of a scene with his brother, Balxephon, and father.]

BALXEPHON: What do those withered fools in the senate know? Traitors, every one of them! They make no obeisance to High Priest Sardian, yet they fawn over every merchant and upstart house with two coins to rub together! Decay eats Lodis from within. Only Loslorien can cut away the rotten flesh! Lord father, when the senate convenes tomorrow, we must have your support!

VOGRAS: You are obstinate to a fault, Balxephon. What you ask is impossible! I will speak **for** the senate's proposal. We cannot allow Loslorien to grow any more powerful. Ask anything else of me, my son, and it shall be yours. But never this!

BALXEPHON: When did you become a tool of the aristocracy? Ours is an old and noble house. You tarnish our name with this needless groveling!

VOGRAS: I placed you in Loslorien to be my eyes. Now you are become Sardian's pet! You are unfit to lead this family. Begone from my sight! Come, Hobyrim.

[Vogras turns to leave and Balxephon slashes at him. The old man falls in a heap.]

HOBYRIM: Lord father!

BALXEPHON: Fool.

HOBYRIM: What have you done, brother!?

BALXEPHON: Open your eyes! The senate is a suppurating wound in the body of Lodis. Our father was a species of disease!

HOBYRIM: Have you gone mad? The people will never abide such treachery!

BALXEPHON: The people are already ours. You know that. There's nothing you can do to stop us now. The wheels are already set in motion. You **will** follow me!

HOBYRIM: You mean to incite a war! I may not be able to stop you, but I will never join you. You must kill me as you killed our father!

BALXEPHON: I thought you more reasonable than this, my brother...

[Hobyrim trails off.]

HOBYRIM: Much of the aristocracy was culled in Sardian's rebellion. The high priest's men purged the senate and filled its ranks with bootlicks and scullions. The blame for my father's murder fell on me. As punishment, they plucked out my eyes and banished me from Lodis.

DENAM: How horrible...

HOBYRIM: I did not learn of my mother's death until a month after the rebellion. The official account declared her the victim of some mischance of another.... In truth she was poisoned because she would not lend her voice to their cause.

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: I know how this must sound, but I swear in Philaha's name that every word is true.

DENAM: So you've come here seeking vengeance.

HOBYRIM: And I will have it.

DENAM: Tartaros and Balxephon were taken captive when Barbas seized control of the Dark Knights. The whole while we were in Heim, we found no trace of them. I've deployed our shadows to seek them out, but it's possible they've already left the isles.

HOBYRIM: I came to Valeria seeking vengeance, but that is not the only reason I remain. Yours is a worthy cause, Denam. I would help you in any way I can. Though I love my homeland, the Lodis I knew is gone. High Priest Sardian has twisted it beyond recognition. I could not save Lodis, but it's not too late for Valeria! It is a great honor to fight at your side.

DENAM: No. The honor is mine.

HOBYRIM: Thank you, Denam.

The Hanging Gardens - Foot of the Gardens

[Denam and his party arrive at the Hanging Gardens to a quiet scene.]

DENAM: So these are the Hanging Gardens.

[A rustling is heard as a group of Dark Knights appear.]

MARTYM: Ah! We've been waiting for you, Denam!

DENAM: You've run out of places to hide, Martym!

MARTYM: Who's hiding, I ask? Lodis barely needs lift a finger to send legions of troops to your pitiful isles.

DENAM: Is that a threat?

MARTYM: I never make threats. You, deal with him!

DARK KNIGHT: Sir!

[Martym casually retreats.]

DENAM: He's getting away!

[They break through the Dark Knight defenses and descend into the dark.]

The Hanging Gardens - Twixt Heaven and Earth

[Martym and Andoras wait.]

MARTYM: Well, you certainly took your time.

DENAM: You Knights of Lodis have a rare gift of flight. A useful skill for cowards.

[Martym raises his sword.]

MARTYM: You'll regret those words! A knight knows how to pick his battles.

ANDORAS: Easy, Martym. Go to Barbas. Leave this one to me.

MARTYM: Feh!

[He puts his weapon away.]

MARTYM: Fortunate for you, boy!

[He disappears.]

DENAM: Not again!

ANDORAS: You face me, Denam! Let us **end** this!

[He charges while Ozma tries to dissuade him.]

OZMA: Cease this, Andoras! You are finished.

ANDORAS: How can you be so certain? You know as well as I what lies hidden in these gardens! A miracle is before me, and I will not pass up my chance to claim it!

OZMA: Clinging to miracles is ever a sign of weakness - I have seen what good can come from perseverance and adherence to principle. Give up your miracle and stand on your own feet, Andoras!

ANDORAS: Ha! Green as a spring morn! I cannot understand how someone of your quality ever made it into the order.

OZMA: You find fault with me? With such fine nobles in House Nildahme, it's no wonder your people suffer.

ANDORAS: You have it wrong, Ozma. It's you who will suffer!

[Denam and Andoras spar.]

ANDORAS: You've done well for yourself. This war's made a hero of you.

DENAM: I did not take up the sword to become anything.

ANDORAS: Maybe so, maybe so! In fact, perhaps it was the duke's idea. Men such as he have use of heroes. I'm sure you understand.... The title served you well following the duke's passing, after all.

DENAM: I dislike your reasoning. I do not do this for power!

ANDORAS: Yet here you are, a man of power! As a hero, you led your army, and now you must fulfill their wishes and place Catiua upon the throne! Or you would become the next Dynast-King.

DENAM: It is not I who shared his blood. This is **not** about power! I do my duty!

ANDORAS: As you wish. Now, come, do your duty. Defeat us, and claim Valeria for your kin!

[Denam struggles against his foe.]

DENAM: Why not leave these isles altogether, Andoras?

ANDORAS: You know why I remain.

DENAM: Dorgalua's legacy. But why the rift with Sir Lancelot? The promise of riches bring out your true colors?

ANDORAS: Riches? You think we're here for coin?

DENAM: Aren't you?

ANDORAS: Your answer lies upon the road ahead. Defeat me if you would find it.

[Denam has no choice but to grant Andoras his wish.]

ANDORAS: Death comes...too soon.

DENAM: Where's Barbas? Martym? Where have they gone?

ANDORAS: To Dorgalua's...Tomb.... Both of them are there...

DENAM: You've found the tomb? Where? Tell me!

ANDORAS: The tomb? Heh.... Beneath the Gardens.... This tower...is his tomb-marker.... But you're too late.... Barbas is opening the...seal even now.

DENAM: But he can't open it without Catiua!

ANDORAS: No.... He has the Xenobian blade.

DENAM: Then I haven't much time...

ANDORAS: Wait, Denam...listen. The Nildahme perished...like these islands, our people...failed to join as one. It is only...a matter of time before...Lodis invades. You must make...Valeria...strong, like a rock...

[He falls.]

Heart of the Gardens - Relics of the Past

[Martym and Barbas stand at the seal where it remains shut.]

MARTYM: What's taking so long? They'll be here any minute now!

BARBAS: Patience, Martym. The seal is not what I expected...

MARTYM: Look around you, Barbas. We're all that's left. I've had my fill of traps and seals!

BARBAS: Be silent, or be silenced!

MARTYM: Hmph.

[A flash of red and a burst of noise draws his attention.]

MARTYM: What's that?

DENAM: Barbas! Martym! There's nowhere left to run!

MARTYM: Andoras must have fallen.

BARBAS: This is it! The words to break the seal!

MARTYM: Be quick about it!

[Barbas raises his blade above him and steps back.]

BARBAS: Berloda en barinda, phaexanra len Philaha. Seal born of age-old strife, you've served your duty well. In the name of the Great Father Philaha, I release you!

[A light erupts from the seal, bursts above them and disappears.]

BARBAS: It's done!

[He sprints through the doorway.]

MARTYM (to his Dark Knights): Hold them off!

DENAM: Damn!

Heart of the Gardens - Chamber of the Seal

[Barbas and Martym stand around a cropping of mysterious stones.]

BARBAS: Behold the holy blade Brynhildr, deifacted gift of the heavens. By that name most sacred, hear my plea. Gate divine, earthly prison of accurst gods. Throw wide your doors! The Great Father commands it!

[Another light appears from within and disappears just as quickly.]

MARTYM: Is that all? I had expected something...more.

BARBAS: Indeed.

DENAM: Martym! Barbas! No farther!

MARTYM: Persistent, aren't you?

BARBAS: You seem bent on meddling in our plans.

DENAM: Lay down your weapons and -

BARBAS: Save your breath, Denam. We both know that will never happen. You want to kill us. I see it in your eyes. Put down your words, and take up your sword.

DENAM: The dead of Golyat and Rhime deserve vengeance!

[The ground trembles.]

BARBAS: It begins.

DENAM: What's happening?

BARBAS: Dorgalua's legacy, you simpleton.

DENAM: What?

BARBAS: You really don't know, do you? A man came to this place, long ago...

DENAM: What man was this?

[Barbas turns and stares into the distance.]

BARBAS: A valiant warrior who used his strength and skill to possess all he desired. But there was one foe he could not conquer: Death. Misfortune took his beloved son, and soon after, his wife. In his despair, he prayed for their return. I need not tell you his prayers went unanswered. Overcome with wrath, he renounced his faith and sought instead the power of the dark gods. He descended in the hells where they make their fastness.

[He returns to Denam and Martym.]

BARBAS: ...I trust you know the legend of the ogre battle?

DENAM: The battle between men and ogres in the age of myths.

BARBAS: Yes. The struggle that decided who would rule this earth. The gods of light sided with men, and the dark gods with the ogres. For eons the war raged...

DENAM: What is it to us?

BARBAS: Do you know how the legend ends?

DENAM: Men were victorious, and the ogres retreated to the darkness. A tale every child has heard at his mother's skirts.

BARBAS: Ha ha ha.

DENAM: What do you find so amusing?

BARBAS: It is no nursery tale.

[The trembling increases.]

DENAM: What do you mean?

BARBAS: These ruins are the very gate to hell. The Chaos Gate!

DENAM: What!?

BARBAS: The man who journeyed into the abyss is your precious Dynast-King Dorgalua!

MARTYM: I think we've finally gotten the gate's attention.

BARBAS: The darkness awaits.... And all the power it holds!

DENAM: I can't let you go.

BARBAS: Of course you can't. Which is why you must die. You'll need no gate to enter hell!

[Denam and his companions charge after the remainder of the Dark Knights.]

DENAM: You would venture into the abyss to claim this power? If what you say is true, why is it King Dorgalua never returned?

MARTYM: The gate was made to prevent darkness from entering our world. It's barred from this side. It cannot be opened from within.

BARBAS: Dorgalua left his most trusted man to prepare for his return, but this gate keeper was easily slain. With the king missing, it was a simple task to declare him dead and claim the throne.

[Ozma fights her former companions.]

OZMA: Barbas! Martym! Heed sense, and flee with your lives!

BARBAS: The traitor speaks, when she would do better to flee! When we lead you back to Lodis in chains, it will not go easy for you.

OZMA: It's you who've betrayed the Empire! I can come to restore Loslorien - to turn it from the treacherous path Balxephon embarked upon. But you...you have eyes only for wealth and power!

MARTYM: Aren't you forgetting something? It was the high commander who sought to conceal Dorgalua's legacy. We seek only to claim the treasure of the Chaos Gate for the glory of Lodis!

OZMA: The lie falls easily from your lips, but I will not believe it. The Dark Knights ought never have allowed your filth to sully their ranks!

BARBAS: It is your **guilt** speaks, woman! The name of House Glacius may curry favor back home, but it means nothing here. You should have stayed at home and married some rich, old nobleman, if any would have you.

[Catiua questions the Dark Knights.]

CATIUA: You use the Xenobian sword, Brynhildr, to break the seal of the gate.

MARTYM: Ah, Princess Versalia. You grace us with your presence.

CATIUA: If you did not need me to break the seal, why go to such lengths to win me to your side?

BARBAS: The high champion must have known the sword was all we needed. He meant to use you to rule these pathetic isles. A waste, when Lodissian steel would serve.

CATIUA: Small wonder Lord Tartaros would not keep counsel with you. You are too foolish to see his true purpose.

MARTYM: What is this "true purpose" you speak of?

CATIUA: You may rule people with the sword, but you will never win their hearts. Lord Tartaros understood this. It was not by might alone that you rebelled in Lodis. You rallied under the banner of overthrowing a corrupt senate and installed the just High Priest Sardian in its place.

BARBAS: What has that to do with these provincial goatherds!?

CATIUA: Brynhildr's mysteries are wasted on the likes of you. Had it been up to you, no doubt you would have killed me and gone on ruling through brute force. Lord Tartaros sought a better way!

BARBAS: We're to believe that we were no more than pieces being moved by some unseen hand?

CATIUA: I underestimated you. I didn't think you'd realized.

MARTYM: I'll dash your head in, you misbegotten filth!

[Martym dies first.]

MARTYM: Barbas...how?

BARBAS: Martym, you bloody fool! So close. So very close...

[Barbas dies first.]

BARBAS: Bested by a...a pack of dogs.

MARTYM: The gate - why won't it open!? I can't die...not here.

[Denam and his companions catch their breaths in time to see the gate open.]

DENAM: The gate!

[A dark figure rises from the gate amidst a fiery light. It is a demonized king of the ages.]

DENAM: !?

DORGALUA: I am Dorgalua. You beasts that crawl upon the earth, kneel down before your god.

DENAM: A god?

DORGALUA: O come, Brynhildir, sword of light. You are my rightful due. Give me the blade...that I may rise again.

DENAM: The Chaos Gate must still bind him.

DORGALUA: Rejoice ye all in my return!

DENAM: You are a fallen king, a creature of darkness. Your wife and son await upon death's shores!

[Dorgalua transforms the very ground around him.]

DORGALUA: Valeria...is my domain. Bow low before your king...or face his wrath!

[He extends a fist and creates shadows of Denam's troop in an instant.]

DENAM: Dopplegangers!?

[Dorgalua commands his minions.]

CATIUA: This is King Dorgalua? My...my father?

DENAM: No, sister! This creature is not your father! It wears his shape, but it is a denizen of the abyss.... An ogre!

DORGALUA: ...Versalia?

CATIUA: Lord Father? You recognize me?

DORGALUA: My natural born...Versalia dear. Blood calls out...to blood. At last...I shall return to my...true home. Now give to me...the sword of light divine.

DENAM: He deceives you, sister! Don't listen to him!

[Denam struggles against this devilish being.]

DENAM: Here, fiend!

DORGALUA: So arrogant you are...for one so small.

DENAM: Be gone! This is the world of men. You have no place here!

DORGALUA: 'Tis true, I am...no man. I am a god!

DENAM: What god could be so foul? You are an ogre!

DORGALUA: An ogre...

[A quiet voice calls from the center of the pit.]

VOICE: False words speaks he. Destroy you him. Our foe this man-fool is. Naught else.

DENAM: Who's there!?

VOICE: The hour chimes. Hatreds old reborn. The ogre battle wage you now.

DENAM: The Chaos Gate speaks?

[The gate erupts and in a blinding flash transforms Dorgalua into a giant winged beast - an ogre.]

DENAM: What power is this!?

[Denam confronts the dark power and vanquishes the demon.]

DORGALUA: I am Dorgalua.... Valeria's true king...a god.

[The ground engulfs the fallen king, and a bright light seals the gate in one bright moment. After a brief stillness, the gate shakes again.]

DENAM: The gate's opening! We'll be pulled in!

MAN: O Great Zephyr, dance unseen - fly across heaven's veil!

[Denam's companions blink away and are transported. The spellcaster reveals himself.]

DENAM: Warren!

[Warren nods to his friend from across the gate.]

WARREN: This place will soon collapse. When it does, the Chaos Gate will cease to function.

DENAM: This is no place for your, Warren!

WARREN: Perhaps not, Denam. Farewell. O Great Zephyr, dance unseen - fly across heaven's veil!

DENAM: What are you doing!?

[Denam disappears before he can hear Warren's answer. The Seer collapses.]

Heim Castle

VOICE: In the name of the Great Father Philaha, you are hereby crowned our sovereign lord, Queen Versalia Oberyth, defender of the realm. Let no man gainsay this sanctified ascension.

[Queen Versalia sits on her throne.]

VERSALIA: I will not ask you to forget all that has happened. No, we must remember why this war began, what we lost because of it, and what we achieved. We must tell this to our children, that we never forget.

DENAM: Catiua.... You have a great task before you, sister.

[She recalls her life's recent events.]

[In Golyat...]

CATIUA: Why do you not heed me, brother? I know how you must feel, but what of my feelings? I don't want to lose you. Our father is dead - a hard truth, but a truth all the same. In all the world, you are the only one bound to me by blood, brother. I couldn't bear to let you die. Forgive me. I know my words will not sway you. Only promise me.... Promise you'll never leave your sister.

[In Phidoch...]

DENAM: I don't want to lose you, sister.

CATIUA: I'm sorry, Denam. How could I have been so selfish? Can you forgive me?

DENAM: That's behind us now. The important thing is that we'll never be apart again.

VERSALIA: Remember, but do not cling to the hatred. We must sever present from past. For our future, for our children, repent for our past and dedicate ourselves to reform. Not only can we do this, we must. Let us build a future in Valeria, a future where we all live as one. A future of peace. Glory to Valeria!

[They rise.]

VERSALIA (to herself): Thank you, Denam.

Almorica Castle

[Vyce stares out a window.]

VYCE: Denam.... I **will** miss you.

[He recalls his life's recent events.]

[In Rhime...]

VYCE: I didn't expect the Bakram attack to come so soon. And you, the duke's loyal, scarce equipped to march, let alone repel them!

DENAM: If the Bakram expect us to lie down for the trampling, they're in for a nasty turn!

VYCE: What, you have a plan? No matter, I'll see soon enough. But there's little time. If you've some miracle on hand to rally the Resistance, best work it quickly.

DENAM: I will. When next we meet, it will be as enemies full-fledged, Vyce. Stay whole till then.

VYCE: And you, denam. Until next time.

[In Almorica...]

VYCE: But a man can repent. You did what you thought best. If I were a greater fool, I might have done the same. End this war, Denam. You owe the people of Balmamusa that much. Let that be your atonement.

CATIUA: You...you have no right!

DENAM: No, sister. He has every right.

VYCE: Farewell, Denam.

DENAM: And you, Vyce.

VYCE: Someday the gods may forgive you. But I haven't.

VYCE: ...

[A soldier enters.]

KNIGHT: There you are, Lord Bozeck. Everyone awaits you below.

VYCE: Thank you. I'll be there shortly.

[He leaves.]

VYCE (to himself): May we meet again someday, Denam...

Golyat

[In his hometown, Denam stands at the grave of his adoptive father.]

DENAM: Father. I kept my promise. I saved her.

[He recalls his life's recent events.]

[In Brigantys...]

PRANCET: Listen to me, Denam! You must save Catiua. You are the only one who can. You can lead her to her rightful destiny.... Do this for us...for Valer- *cough*

DENAM: Father!

PRANCET: Know it is not about **you**. Become a stone along the path to our salvation.... You must look with clear eyes, Denam! Make the right choice! Lead us along the true path...make our way.... Do this...only this...

DENAM: You mustn't talk. You must rest!

PRANCET: Denam.... Forgive...me.

DENAM: Father!!!

DENAM: I leave the rest to you, sister. You'll do fine.... You hardly need my help. Your coronation should be taking place in Heim about now. ...Monarch of Valeria in the name of truth. My sister isn't the only one who's gone her own way since the war's end.
[He recalls his allies and their new paths taken.]

DENAM: I must be going, father. There's a journey I must make before Lodis returns. I want to see Lancelot's homeland. The kingdom he gave his life for...

[He recalls his first encounter with the Xenobians so long ago.]

[In Golyat...]

LANSELOT: Who goes there?

VYCE: Friends of the Resistance...and no friends of yours!

LANSELOT: The Resistance?

CANOPUS: I expected a warmer welcome than this! ...Eh? They're children!

LANSELOT: Wait. Do you even know who we are?

VYCE: You're Lancelot, and that makes you my enemy!

LANSELOT: Lancelot **is** my name, true. How is it that you know me?

[Later in Golyat...]

LANSELOT: It's been four...five years now. Before the war with the empire. They had already begun their advance, and we fled - vagrants in our own land. My wife fell ill, and before I knew it...she was gone. I considered following her into death. My thoughts often strayed down that path before battle. But her music box still sang of life, and I knew it was not my time. My burden had not yet reached its end.

DENAM: I'm sorry.

LANSELOT: One young as you should never be forced to fight. But that's not the world we live in.

DENAM: Don't worry over me, father. I'll be back...

[A light snow begins to fall. Denam turns and leaves. Meanwhile, the Valerian lands prepare for winter as a mild snowfall greets them and a questionable future met with open arms and a new ruler.]

VOICE: For nearly a thousand years, the nation of Valeria endured, leaving an indelible mark on the pages of history, before at last uniting with the people of Heth.

Endings

The Xenobians' Return

[Denam stands outside his father's grave.]

DENAM: Canopus is gone back home. Taking Brynhildr with him.

[He recalls their departure.]

[The Xenobians prepare to leave.]

CANOPUS: I owe you my thanks for a great many things, Denam.

DENAM: No, we never would have prevailed without your help, Canopus.

CANOPUS: Heh heh. That's good to hear. I'm sure Lancelot and old Warren would be happy to hear it. ...If they were still with us.

DENAM: ...

MIRDYN: We don't know they're dead, Canopus. Don't you worry about it, Denam. It's not your fault they're gone. We came to this isle of our own will, you know.

GILDAS: We were here on royal duty, after all. We were here to fight alongside you.

CANOPUS: But...I should imagine you're right. They're out there, somewhere. Tide's right. High time we set sail!

MIRDYN: Farewell, Denam. I look forward to seeing you again one of these days.

GILDAS: So long, sprout! Our best to the queen!

DENAM: But, Canopus! If Lancelot should return...

CANOPUS: It's all right, Denam. It's all right. When things settle down here, you should come to Xenobia. We'll be waiting for you. Come see the place Lancelot was born.... The place he gave his life for. Promise me you'll come!

DENAM: I will.

CANOPUS: Ach, no looks from you now. Time to be a man, boy. That's right. Give a grin. Things aren't always as bleak as they seem.

GILDAS: Heh heh. Now where've I heard that before?

CANOPUS: Hey! Who was laughing when Martym planted you in the ground like a potato!

GILDAS: Anyone ever tell you you'd look good on a skewer, bird legs?

CANOPUS: Anyone ever tell you you'd look good hanging off the bow, catchin' barnacles in your beard!?

DENAM: Ha ha!

[They all laugh.]

Ravness

[Denam stands outside his father's grave.]

DENAM: Sister's made a trusted new friend...

[Ravness stands atop Coritanae, surrounded by knights. Canopus joins her.]

CANOPUS: Ravness. You step out for a bit of fresh air too?

RAVNESS: Canopus.

CANOPUS: I hear you're to be the new castellan at Coritanae. Quite an honor. And well deserved, I might add.

RAVNESS: Too much honor for a common knight - and with mixed blood besides. I feared it would invite trouble. But if I can set an example for others to follow, then I will bear it.

CANOPUS: Always thinking of others, you. Catiua herself might even take heart. How many people will judge her for her blood and not her deeds?

RAVNESS: Many and more, I'm sure. But I'll not compare my meager burden with her majesty's.

CANOPUS: She'll do well enough. She's tougher than she looks. We're all born who we are. The best any of us can do is put our heads down and press on.

RAVNESS: Right you are, Canopus. During the war, there were many who turned away from me because of my blood. But also as many who saw past that. The only important question is who we choose to become.

CANOPUS: Valeria is lucky to have you and Catiua both.

RAVNESS: I will serve her as best I can.

CANOPUS: Well and good. But you needn't be **quite** so dedicated. You're like to wear yourself out, always charging in at the head of the van. Besides...

RAVNESS: Besides, what...?

CANOPUS: A man likes to feel needed every now and again. Especially by a beautiful woman such as yourself.

RAVNESS (stepping back): I.... You.... You shouldn't make fun like that.

CANOPUS: Ha ha ha! You've your whole life ahead of you. Stop and enjoy it, eh? There'll be plenty of time to make Valeria the kingdom it should be.

RAVNESS: Our queen and our people will make it so. I'm certain of it.

Olivya

[Outside Heim, Olivya prepares to depart.]

OLIVYA: Father...

[She recalls her conversation moments earlier.]

OLIVYA: No, father, I will not leave your side now.

MREUVA: I understand how you must feel. You have done much. all that was required of you, and of your sisters as well. But your labors are done on the morn. Let me shoulder your burden. You can...you can do as you like, for once. Live your own life, Olivya.

OLIVYA: Father...

MREUVA: Do not be concerned on my account. All will be well. Go with him, Olivya.

OLIVYA: With him...
[She leaves.]

OLIVYA (to herself): Wait for me, Denam. I will be there soon.

Folcurt, Bayin and Arylicelle

[Outside Heim, Folcort, Bayin and Arycelle prepare to depart.]

DENAM: You're truly leaving? But the coronation is only a week away.

BAYIN: It is a pity I will miss the coronation, but this old body needs rest. Besides, the longer I linger here, the more they badger me to return to the academy! If I'm to teach, I prefer the countryside over the city. I plan on returning with Folcort to the lass's home and start a small school there.

ARYCELLE: I'm sorry, Denam. I feel that we should stay in Heim, to help with the transition...but home calls to me strongly these days. I never heard it during the fighting, but once things settled down.... It's as though a cord within me, drawn too taut, has snapped. When I heard that Bayin and Folcort would be leaving Heim, I decided to join them. I'll return to my homeland and take my time deciding what to do next.

FOLCURT: We all owe you a great debt. You have our gratitude. I hope you will forgive me for not returning to the order. I gave it much thought. The war may be over, but the rifts between peoples in this land run deep. Their wounds too grave to heal overnight. In the coming days it will be words, not weapons, that will do the most good for this land.

BAYIN: My regards to Catiua. We will watch over her from afar.

DENAM: Good travels to you all.

ARYCELLE: I will write once we've settled down. Farewell.

FOLCURT: I look forward to the day when we meet again.

Donnalto

[Outside Heim, Donnalto, surrounded by the orphans of the war, prepares to depart.]

DENAM: You're leaving with these children for Almorica then.

DONNALTO: They were born of Walister parents. The war may be over, but many still harbor doubts about the other clans. I think it best that these orphans were somewhere other than Heim.

DENAM: The people must put aside such foolish fears.

DONNALTO: And they will. You'll see to that, I've no doubt. But these changes can't happen overnight. The Great Father might leap from mountain to mountain, but we move one step at a time.

DENAM: Will the Great Father lift the scales from their eyes?

DONNALTO: No good hoping for miracles; they're an illusion, however sweet. The change we seek is born one day at a time. Any who can't be thankful for the days they have are unworthy of miracles. Take these children. The war claimed their parents, but not their future. They have hope. It's you who gave them that, Denam. I have no doubt the seed you've sown will bloom and bear fruit. I, for one, look forward to that day.

DENAM: As do I.

Hobyrim

[Outside Heim, Hobyrim prepares to depart.]

DENAM: So you'll be returning to Lodis then.

HOBYRIM: Lancelot and Balxephon escaped. I'll chase them to the ends of the earth, should it come to that.

DENAM: You don't think it risky, going back alone?

HOBYRIM: I've managed this far, haven't I? No doubt Lodis is more dangerous than when I left, but I'll do nothing foolish. I will sit back and wait until the time is right. But before I go...

DENAM: Yes?

HOBYRIM: I wanted to tell you how glad I was to meet you. To accomplish so much at your side.

DENAM: I couldn't have chosen a better ally.

HOBYRIM: I had forgotten what it was to dream. I allowed revenge to consume my life.

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: My time with you changed all that. With our first victory, it was as though a blackness lifted from my heart. I'll never forget the joy I felt at that. There's a sweetness to it I hope to taste again. So I will move with caution, that I may make it so. And I promise, someday we will meet again.

DENAM: Fortune favor you, Hobyrim.

HOBYRIM: May she favor us both.

Ozma

[Outside Heim, Ozma prepares to depart.]

DENAM: So you leave for Lodis.

OZMA: The islands are at peace, and Hobyrim is gone. There's no more reason for me to stay.

DENAM: Do you think that wise?

OZMA: No doubt some will attempt to brand me a traitor. But they do not worry me. I know the truth of it. Whatever the cost, I will see Lodis set on the right course. Hobyrim would have wished it so. And you have shown me how.

DENAM: Oh?

OZMA: I know now that the means are as important as the ends - that change is possible. You reminded me of the joy of fighting for a greater purpose. Tyranny clutches at the heart of Lodis. I cannot lay down my sword now.

DENAM: Fortune go with you.

Hobyrim and Ozma

[Outside Heim, Hobyrim and Ozma prepare to depart.]

DENAM: So you'll be returning to Lodis then.

HOBYRIM: Lancelot and Balxephon escaped. I'll chase them to the ends of the earth, should it come to that.

OZMA: I know quite well the dangers of returning to Lodis. Yet, with such a partner, I am not concerned for our safety.

HOBYRIM: I'll do nothing foolish. I will site back and wait until the time is right. But before I go...

DENAM: Yes?

HOBYRIM: I wanted to tell you how glad I was to meet you. To accomplish so much at your side.

DENAM: I couldn't have chosen a better ally.

HOBYRIM: I had forgotten what it was to dream. I allowed revenge to consume my life.

DENAM: ...

HOBYRIM: My time with you changed all that. With our first victory, it was as though a blackness lifted from my heart. I'll never forget the joy I felt at that.

OZMA: Nor will I. Being reunited with Hobyrim, fighting at your side.... It reminded me what it was to fight with purpose. That we can stand against tyranny.

HOBYRIM: There's a sweetness to it I hope to taste again. So I will move with caution, that I may make it so. And I promise, someday we will meet again.

DENAM: Fortune favor you both.

HOBYRIM: May she favor us all.

Oelias and Dievold

[Outside Heim, Oelias and Dievold prepare to depart.]

OELIAS: ...I plan on returning to live with my brother in Brigantys. The toll on his body was greater than I realized. Though Nybeth still troubles me, I must put such concerns aside for now.

DENAM: You have a place to live?

OELIAS: There is a church where I spent my time as an acolyte, in a small mountain village near Asyton. If it was not caught up in the tumult of war, I would expect the abuna to still be there. It is a fitting place for my brother to live out the rest of his time here...in peace.

DENAM: I'm sorry. You have suffered much.

OELIAS: It is not for you to apologize, Denam. To the contrary, both my brother and I owe you a great debt.

DENAM: That I do not see.

OELIAS: Open your eyes, then. Were it not for you, we would not be standing here today. Isn't that right, brother.

DIEVOLD: It is as Oelias says, Denam. You have done more than save our lives. You have accepted my...unnatural existence. How far Oelias and I have come because of your generosity and aid. Would that we could repay you in full - Never have I regretted the fleeting nature of this life more. I would have been proud to consider myself your ally. ...Good health, and joy to you.

DENAM: Thank you, Dievold. It was my honor to meet both of you.

[They grasp hands.]

OELIAS: Good-bye, Denam.

DENAM: Fare well, Oelias. Dievold.

Lord Ending

VOICE: In the name of the Great Father Philaha, you are hereby crowned our sovereign lord, King Denam Moren, defender of the realm. Let no man gainsay this sanctified ascension.

[In Heim, the remnants of the Resistance and Bakram convene.]

EMISSARY: What of the parley with the Walister loyals?

CHAMPION: Our emissaries are to meet a month hence.

MAGISTER: Their demands?

CHAMPION: The release of six of their officers and representation within the government.

EMISSARY: Extortion! We would encourage every band of thugs to rise up and claim their own reward!

CHAMPION: As you say. A matter for our new liege, then. Which brings up another concern -

ELDER: Now is not the time. The coronation begins within the hour, best leave this until it's finished.

[A guard enters.]

SOLDIER: Pardon, my lords. It's time.

EMISSARY: We're well aware.

SOLDIER: Abuna Mreuva. Do you know where we can find Lord Pavel? His courtiers have been looking everywhere for him.

EMISSARY: Where he always is, I should imagine. Tell the women to be patient.

SOLDIER: Yes, my lord.

CHAMPION: Our liege presents us a problem of another color...

MREUVA: I'll speak with him. You go on ahead.

[Mreuva treads the castle Heim.]

CERYA: Father!

[Cerya and Cistina rush to greet their father.]

MREUVA: Cerya, Cistina. What is it? What troubles you so?

CISTINA: Something terrible has happened in Iorumza!

CERYA: The Castellan of Almorica, Viscount Gaunda, has been murdered!

MREUVA: Who tells you this?

CISTINA: He was meant to arrive a day ago. When he did not, I dispatched a shadow. His carriage was found at the bottom of the canyon, the viscount and his henchmen's bodies inside.

MREUVA: This is dire news. Any word of the perpetrator?

CERYA: None have stepped forth to claim the deed. Though our shadows have a theory. The methods used closely resemble those employed by the Tigers of Burnham.

MREUVA: That incendiary rabble! Who knows of this?

CISTINA: At present, only myself and my sister.

MREUVA: Good. Then we keep it to ourselves until the coronation is finished. Understood?

CERYA: Should Denam not be informed?

MREUVA: I'll tell him myself. You two return to the celebration hall. Not a word of this! There are those who do not look with favor upon Denam's ascension. And Cerya, double the guard upon the hall! Check all who come.

CERYA: Let's go, Cistina.

[The sisters leave.]

MREUVA: ...

[Atop the castle walls, Denam stands alone.]

DENAM: Catiua...

[He recalls his life's recent events.]

DENAM: Sister.... Was I wrong?

MREUVA: Dwelling on thoughts of Catiua, again? The ceremony begins shortly. Your people are waiting.

DENAM: What do they wait for, abuna? Me? Or something they imagine me to be?

MREUVA: It is enough that you act the monarch now. The questions can come later.

DENAM: But I -

MREUVA: But you must. If you do not become king, these islands will plummet headlong back into war. This is something only **you** can do. You must be king. I daresay you know this as well as I. Time to go, your majesty.

DENAM: ...

[Mreuva leaves and Denam reminisces further. Meanwhile, the Valerian lands prepare for winter as a mild snowfall greets them and a questionable future met with open arms and a new ruler.]

VOICE: The war that engulfed Valeria would be known as the Heim conflict.

[The hall is crowded with friends and allies as Denam, crowned, takes the throne.]

DENAM: The war is over, and yet our troubles remain legion. Our people still suffer. They are hungry, without family or peace in their hearts. If I have one wish, it is for every man to bury his differences. We must sever the chains of time and make a break with the past. For our future, for our children. We must repent, and endeavor to reform. We must, and we can! We will build a new future, a peace where all live together...as Valerians!

PARTISAN: Down with Denam Morne! Glory to the Walister!

[A soldier bursts into the hall and fires a fusil.]

The Xenobian King

[Tristan the Xenobian ruler is given some news.]

TRISTAN: Lodis moves? You're certain?

GILBALD: I spoke with the rider myself, my lord. An army two hundred thousand strong. They don't stand a chance.

TRISTAN: The wheel turns again.... And so soon after they restored peace. King Denam draws a fatal hand.

The Dark Knights

[A vessel prepares to depart.]

SAILOR: All ashore that's going ashore! We sail for Lodis!

[Two robed figures make their way towards the ship. A third follows close behind and removes his hood. The remaining Dark Knights glance at one another.]

Coda

Episode 1 - The Songstress

[In the port town of Omish, the sailors and townsfolk are entranced by a mysterious songstress.]

DENAM: What a lovely voice she has. I've not seen a female Winged before.

GILDAS: A rare site, even in Xenobia. Though I am acquainted with one.

DENAM: Is there anything you Xenobian Knights haven't seen?

GILDAS: My acquaintance is Canopus's sister, as it happens.

DENAM: I never knew he had a sister.

GILDAS: I only met her the once myself. She was charming. Beautiful. And quite a singer. Famed throughout all of Xenobia, she was. One note, and the men would follow her around like cats after a fishmonger. You'd never know she had such a vulgar brother.

CANOPUS: A vulgar brother with ears, you bearded bastard!

DENAM: Gildas speaks highly of your sister, Canopus. She's not unlike this songstress, I'm told.

[Canopus steps forward for a closer look and is taken aback.]

CANOPUS: Iuria? What in the eight winds is she doing here?

GILDAS: Here?

CANOPUS: Iuria!

IURIA: ...

CANOPUS: Is that you? Explain yourself.

PIRATE: What's all the fuss? Don't like her singing, is it?

CANOPUS: Stand aside, scale skin!

PIRATE: Who's going to make me? You, bird-man?

[The lizardman strikes Canopus hard.]

CANOPUS: What did you call me?

[He hits back before Gildas steps in.]

GILDAS: Easy, there's no call for that.

[Another pirate strikes him.]

GILDAS: You picked the wrong fight!

[Gildas knocks his assailant, who crashes into a crowd of people.]

WOMAN: Aieeep!

[The crowd scatters save for the pirates.]

DENAM: Canopus! Gildas! Control yourselves!

PIRATE: The boy's with them, eh?

DENAM: What?

IURIA: This is no time for song.

[She flees.]

CANOPUS: Iuria, wait!

[The three hold off the unruly mob.]

[Choice 1 - How did we get into this?]

DENAM: I don't know how we got into this, but here we are. Now what?

[Choice 2 - I can't let this get out of control.]

DENAM: I can't let this go from bad to worse. but what can I do?

[Choice 1 - Sorry for getting us into this.]

CANOPUS: This is my mess. I'll get us out of it.

GILDAS: Admitting your mistake? Now there's a rare treat. Remind me to mock you properly if you actually get us out of this.

CANOPUS: Don't know when to quit, do you? If you hadn't been spoiling for a fight, this would be over by now!

GILDAS: He punched me! Honor demanded it!

CANOPUS: That's your problem. You think with your heart, not your head. No wonder you're a second-rate knight!

GILDAS: That's enough squawking out of you, **bird!**

DENAM: Stop this! As if having pirates trying to kill us wasn't enough.... We should leave while we still can!

[Choice 2 - They started it!]

CANOPUS: It was that lizard who started this! I had to defend myself!

GILDAS: He's right, Denam. Honor demanded it!

DENAM (to himself): They're not going to be any help. I guess it's up to me.

[Choice 1 - This is a fine mess.]

GILDAS: A fine mess you've gotten me into.

CANOPUS: Me? You're the one who couldn't mind his own blasted business! Bah! Quit flapping your lips at me and **fight!**

DENAM (to himself): They're not going to be any help. I guess it's up to me.

[Choice 2 - No turning back now!]

MISSING

[Choice 1 - Is this the time to run?]

DENAM: I don't like the idea of running, but there's no talking to them now. Maybe it's better if I left and gave them time to cool their heads. Canopus! Gildas! We should withdraw!

GILDAS: They do outnumber us.... What do you say, brother?

CANOPUS: You're no brother of mine and never were!

DENAM: Later!

[Choice 2 - I can't stay here.]

MISSING

The Pirate's Graveyard - Cape of Spite

[Denam spies Luria from afar, just beyond a mob of enemies.]

DENAM: Let's hope we can catch up to Luria. Hrm. Looks like some old pirates don't know when to die!

CANOPUS: Feh! We shouldn't be wasting our time with this! What's that Luria doing here, anyway.... She was supposed to be in Peshaval waiting on Gilbald's return. No end of trouble, that girl!

[They defeat the enemies.]

DENAM: On to the cavern! Luria's in there somewhere.

The Pirate's Graveyard - Bosom of the Sea Goddess

[Luria sings her song, captivating a group of monsters.]

CANOPUS: Luria!

SONGSTRESS: You should not have come here.

IURIA: Who are you, and what have you done to my sister!?

SONGSTRESS: Hardly the way to ask a lady's name.... I am Sirene. Does my song not stir you? Hmm. Perhaps this body resists me.

[She flies away.]

CANOPUS: Hold, fiend!

DENAM: Let's deal with these wraiths first, Canopus.

CANOPUS: You wait for me, Luria! I'm coming to save you!

The Pirate's Graveyard - Into the Darkness

[In the depths, Sirene stands alone.]

SIREN: My song may not work, but my voice has other uses.... Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[A horde of pirates appear from nothing.]

CANOPUS: Where have you hidden Luria away, wicce!?

SIRENE: Why, Luria's right here, with me. We fit perfectly together, you know. I've not felt such a fit ever before. And my voice...enchanted!

CANOPUS: Of course her voice is enchanting! She's a singer, you salty harlot! You're not good enough for her, fact is. You sing of death, but she sings of life, and joy, and warmth! Everything you're not. Let her go!

DENAM: Wicce Sirene! Release Luria at once!

SIRENE: No.... She's mine. Eternally mine.... I will give her to no one!

DENAM: If Luria is lost...

SIRENE: Don't fret, little boy. The girl is safe inside me. Or was it me inside her? It matters not. If she died, this body would decay, and I can't have that, can I? I'll take very, very good care of her.

DENAM: That's relief of a sort.... We need to put this wicce down and get Luria out of there!

[They determinedly attack.]

SIRENE: I-impossible! How could...I be defeat...ed...

[A wisp of smoke surrounds Sirene and she falls, transformed.]

CANOPUS: Luria!

IURIA: Brother...?

CANOPUS: Great Father, the bewitchment's lifted!

IURIA: Bewitchment? Sirene!

CANOPUS: Gone. You don't have to worry about that wicce any more.

IURIA: Gone? You killed her? Sirene's...dead?

CANOPUS: Are you in pain?

IURIA: Sirene saved me!

CANOPUS: What's that now? You're not making a lot of sense. **We** saved you.

IURIA: No, I was on my way to Valeria, after you. When pirates attacked our ship. They were about to take me for booty when Sirene came. She destroyed them all, brother! Sirene saved my life!

CANOPUS: Eh? She **took** your life, girl! Possessed your body and was probably fixing to snack on your soul.

IURIA: That's how she lives, she can't help that! I know it's wrong.... But I will mourn her, with or without you.

CANOPUS: Iuria...

Episode 2 - The Search for Warren

[The Xenobian allies meet up in Heim.]

CANOPUS: You got what you need?

MIRDYN: Of course. I'm ready to depart anytime.

GILDAS: All I need's my sword at my side.

DENAM: Canopus! I heard you were preparing to leave. Are you back to Xenobia? I thought you planned on staying for the coronation.

CANOPUS: I did say that, and that's my intention.

DENAM: Then why the preparations? Where are you going?

CANOPUS: To find Warren.

DENAM: Warren?

MIRDYN: I hadn't mentioned it to you, but Warren told me something on our way to the Hanging Gardens.

[Mirdyn recalls his last encounter with his old friend.]

[Warren sits up in his bed.]

MIRDYN: Warren, you're awake! You need rest.

WARREN: I hear you make...for the gardens. A final battle with the Dark Knights?

MIRDYN: You're as keen of mind as ever.

WARREN: Do you remember what I told you before we came to this island?

MIRDYN: That the first people we met in Valeria would lead us to the sacred blade. And that helping those people would in turn help Xenobia. We were not to doubt that fated meeting...yes?

WARREN: Yes, yes. And...one other thing.

[Back in Heim, Denam listens intently.]

MIRDYN: The prophecy Warren revealed to me then was that all five of us would return, alive, to Xenobia.

DENAM: ...

CANOPUS: I know. Lancelot's -

MIRDYN: Do not worry, Denam. The captain will return to Xenobia, however it comes to pass.

DENAM: ...

CANOPUS: Anyway, that's why we can't head back before we find Warren.

GILDAS: I know what you're thinking - that the old man was tricking us. But you're wrong.

MIRDYN: It's as Gildas says. This prophecy came not from the Star Seer Warren. It came from a greater power, a sage who took part in the very founding of Xenobia.

DENAM: So you think Warren yet lives.

CANOPUS: Aye, even if he's beyond the Chaos Gate...he's alive.

DENAM: The foundations of the Hanging Gardens were damaged in the fight. It's no longer possible to reach the Chaos Gate.

MIRDYN: Aye, but there may well be other Chaos Gates elsewhere in Valeria.

CANOPUS: There were several in Xenobia, I can tell you that. ...Every last one of them sealed off by Warren.

GILDAS: That's why the Palace of the Dead caught our eye. Its legend is told even in Xenobia - a dungen built by the dragon lords. If the legend is true, the palace may very well hold a gate.

CANOPUS: Aye, and if Warren's alive, you can be sure he's not lurking under a pile of rubble. Most likely he got stuck on the other side of the gardens [sic] gate when it closed, and now he's sitting there waiting for us to come get him.

DENAM: If all this is true, how can we know that Warren hasn't been taken by the dark, as King Dorgalua was?

CANOPUS: If he is, we'll deal with him the same way we dealt with Dorgalua.

[Mirdyn nods.]

DENAM: Let me help you, then. I want to join the search for Warren.

CANOPUS: I appreciate it, Denam.

[They depart.]

The Palace of the Dead - Level 88

[They descend deep into the dungeon, fighting many a creature. After a short break, Denam walks the halls alone.]

DENAM: I dislike the feel of this place...

[A child appears from nowhere and stands before him.]

DENAM: A boy?

BOY: Have you come to save the king, sir?

DENAM: What?

BOY: There's a king here, sir. A very powerful king. Until he was taken...

DENAM: What are you talking about?

BOY: I've been looking for him a very long time.

[The boy fades away before Denam's eyes.]

DENAM: Vanished! I dislike this place even more now.

==The Palace of the Dead - Level 98==

[Denam fights the mysterious creatures.]

DENAM: I feel something.... The air has the same tinge of evil I felt beneath the Hanging Gardens. Perhaps they were the gatekeepers.

[He hesitates and then descends further.]

The Palace of the Dead - Level 105

[Denam walks the stairs when a familiar voice speaks to him.]

BOY: The king was very sad to lose his war...

[The peculiar boy appears.]

DENAM: What? You're the boy from before!

BOY: So sad.... Even when he died he was sad. And then he was taken. Poor king. His wishes never came true.

DENAM: What are you...

BOY: The king needs help, sir.

[Once again he disappears.]

DENAM (to himself): Perhaps that boy is trapped here, too. And this king he speak of...?

The Palace of the Dead - The Chamber of the Seal

[Denam reaches a familiar setting.]

DENAM: Just like the ruins in the Hanging Gardens. Could this be a Chaos Gate?

[A darkness floods the area.]

VOICE: Is...is someone there?

DENAM: Warren? Warren! Is that you?

VOICE: Open the...gate.... Open it...and I shall be freed.

DENAM (to himself): So we need to open the gate...with what? Brynhildr? What if the dark runs as deeply here as it did in the Gardens?

VOICE: Please.... The key...

DENAM: I'm coming, Warren!

[He steps forward and raises the holy blade.]

DENAM: Behold the holy blade Brynhildr, deifacted gift of the heavens. By that name most sacred, hear my plea. Gate divine, earthly pirson of accurst gods. Throw wide your doors! The Great Father commands it!

[A light erupts from the tip, and the ground quakes as the seal is opened. Warren appears.]

DENAM: Warren!

WARREN: Why is the Chaos Gate open!?

DENAM: Wait...that wasn't you calling out for help?

WARREN: It most certainly was not.... No! He comes! King Rodrick comes!

[Another figure appears, ghostly and ogrish as Dorgalua before.]

RODRICK: It is time.... Scores to settle, dues to be paid!

WARREN: Denam! We must send him back to the abysss!

[They prepare to fight as the former king summons a host of dopplegangers.]

RODRICK: All must be destroyed.... I will have vengeance!

DENAM: What is that?

WARREN: King Rodrick. A king of Brigantys. He fought with King Dorgalua in the Great War.

DENAM: King Rodrick? But I thought he was killed in the war.

WARREN: His body is long since turned to dust. But he was drawn into the abyss by a different route than was King Dorgalua.

DENAM: How could he lose his body but still enter the gate?

WARREN: Rodrick used forbidden magics in an attempt to achieve victory. When he died, his spirit lingered on in the world above, until it was drawn to this place.

DENAM: The dark took him and the hatred within his soul.

WARREN: Fortunately, I knew a method for staving off the dark, or I would have been taken too.

[They work together, the Xenobians calling out to their ally.]

GILDAS: Good to see you out of that infernal gate, Warren! And we've Denam to thank.

WARREN: Why did you not stop him? You know full well that operating the Chaos Gate is folly!

GILDAS: Well, you've a queer way of showing your gratitude. He was bent on helping you out, and who can blame him?

WARREN: Then you're all fools. Fortune smiled on us in the gardesn, but there is no guarantee things will go so well this time.

GILDAS: Which is why we needed you to keep us safe, old man.

CANOPUS: Good to see you in one piece, Warren!

WARREN: You shouldn't have worried about me. I was already freeing myself from the Chaos Gate.

CANOPUS: Well, you sure were taking your sweet time. You were gone a whole scale, old man! There's a time for sitting around trusting in prophecies, and there's a time for action!

WARREN: An entire scale? Is that how long it's been on the surface? For me, the fight with King Dorgalua took place only three days ago. Time must flow differently here and on the surface.

CANOPUS: That, or the dark air down here has rotted your brain. Pull it together, or it's all our hides!

MIRDYN: We are glad to have you back with us, Warren.

WARREN: Mirdyn. You went along with this foolhardy rescue as well?

MIRDYN: Oh? Didn't you predict we would be coming after you?

WARREN: Perhaps I was wrong to confide in you after all.

MIRDYN: The sermon can wait until the fighting's over, if you don't mind.

[Warren falls.]

WARREN: We must...close the gate.... The dark...spills forth...

DENAM: Warren!

RODRICK: I am king.... To my enemies I bring only destruction.... Darkness, give me strength.... Let me judge them who took what was mine.... To Barnicia...Dorgalua...to this land I bring undying pain!
[The fight rages.]

RODRICK: I did not [do] one thing wrong.... I fought for country, for victory.... Why do you not understand? Victory is glory! Pride of our homeland! It is I should rule Valeria...as her rightful king!

[They finally fell him.]

RODRICK: Impossible.... I will not accept...defeat! Never!

[He falls and disappears. The peculiar boy from before appears.]

BOY: Thank you, sir, for saving the king.

DENAM: You again.

BOY: Now I can finally leave this dungeon.

DENAM: What's your name?

BOY: I'm Rodrick. Rodrick Desmoria...

DENAM: Rodrick? **You?**

BOY: Best close the Chaos Gate soon, or it'll come out, you know. So long, sir. And thanks again.

[He disappears and the ground quakes again.]

DENAM: Warren. Can you do it?

WARREN: I shall try.

[He stands in the center of the symbol.]

WARREN: Dark gateway to the abyss! In the name of all the gods, close, never to open again!

[The gate shines and they leave the deadly dungeon.]

Heim

[Denam sees his Xenobian friends again in the great halls.]

DENAM: I can't believe you're returning home so soon.... At least stay for the coronation!

WARREN: I feel it would be impolitic for a Xenobian to participate in the procession. That is to say, if you truly want for us to attend, you should extend the same offer to Lodis. Only if both Xenobia and Lodis stand in attendance at the crowning of Queen Versalia will your independence be true. If only one attends, the other will perceive it as a slight. Wars have begun over less.

DENAM: Do you think Lodis would accept, were we to extend our invitation?

WARREN: That they would. Lodis is a proud country. They would not decline an invitation to a coronation. If they come, we will be only too happy to attend.

CANOPUS: Too much talk, old man! Denam saved your life, and all you can say is if-when-but!? Whatever happens, Denam, know we will always be friends to Valeria. Give our congratulations to Catiua. And let us know if you ever need us. We'll be here swifter than the wind.

DENAM: Thank you, Warren. Canopus.

CANOPUS: Aye, Denam. Know I'll be most upset if I don't see you in Xenobia soon. You owe us a visit! And - You should see the land Lancelot risked his life to build. With your own eyes.

DENAM: I shall.

Episode 3 - A True Knight

Heim

[A vigil is held in a small building. Denam enters and meets Klaire, the young woman tasked with aiding those hurt from the war.]

KLAIRE: Lord Pavel?

DENAM: Ah, Klaire. I'm happy to see you have far fewer patients.

KLAIRE: Her majesty's doing, and yours. The herbs and poultices we need arrive daily. Our physician is very pleased.

DENAM: You've traded with the continent to thank for that. Galleons throng the seas as they once did.

KLAIRE: I've heard much talk of the new villages being built outside the city.

DENAM: Yes, and people are returning to their old villages as supplies come in. It's a slow but steady process.

KLAIRE: Some things move forward, while others...

DENAM: How is he doing?

KLAIRE: He seems pleased with the clement weather we're having. Still, he does not see anyone but myself and the physician...

DENAM: I'll give my greetings from outside, then.

KLAIRE: Denam, sir...

DENAM: Yes?

KLAIRE: I have not told anyone this, but that knight saved my life.

DENAM: What?

KLAIRE: It was in Rhime.... He rescued me from a Knight of Lodis...only to be taken by the Bakram. And after he'd shown me such kindness!

DENAM: I see...

KLAIRE: Because my father was a physician, I came to help the sick and wounded here. The day after Heim was liberated, they brought the prisoners up from the dungeons, and...

DENAM: Lancelot was among them.

KLAIRE: I.... I still haven't thanked him.

DENAM: I was in Rhime then.... If only I'd known, maybe I could have done something.

[He turns and lowers his head, remembering the chaos from Rhime. With a spark of hope, he schemes to change the course of events from that long day.]

Arkhaipolis of Rhime

[Amidst the carnage, Lancelot calls to a fallen Klaire.]

LANSELOT: Are you all right?

KLAIRE: Y-yes, I think so.

LANSELOT: I've dealt with most of the knights in this borough, but there are others afield. Can you walk unaided?

KLAIRE: Yes, I think so.

LANSELOT: That's a girl. Look sharp. Stay alive.

[He dashes onward.]

KLAIRE: Sir Knight! I didn't catch your name -

[He doesn't hear her.]

KLAIRE (to herself): I still haven't thanked him -

Delakroa Common

[Martyr stands with his Dark Knights, overseeing the town.]

MARTYM: Let's finish what remains of the Almoricans. The Bakram have the situation here well in hand.

DENAM: You'll have to get through **me**, first. Face me if you dare, Martyr!

MARTYM: Who are you, boy, and how is it you know my name? No matter. You'll singe once we have you caged. **FORWARD!** Show them what it means to stand in the way of Lodis!

[Denam's troops recognize their foes.]

GILDAS: Back for more, eh, Martyr?

MARTYM: What are **you** doing here, Xenobian?

GILDAS: Finishing what I started.

MARTYM: Bold words, hedge knight. Let's see if your steel can match them!

[The fight continues.]

MARTYM: A Loslorien Knight, wounded by a boy with the stench of the farm still on him.... But it's the wounded pride that stings. Only one remedy for that: Crush him!

DENAM: You underestimate us.... A grave error!

MARTYM: There's flint in your voice, I give you that. But you don't really think you can win, do you? I'm going to enjoy disabusing you of your delusions!

[They pummel Martyr and his allies.]

VYCE: All this, and still he gives no sign of fleeing. These Loslorien commanders are as tough as they say.

CATIUA: Fine warriors, for such foul people.

VYCE: You'll hear no argument from me.

MARTYM: Allow **me** to protest, then. Foul? Surely not.

CATIUA: You invade Rhime and then join in Barbas's rampage for good measure. You cannot lay the blame for this at his feet. There's blood enough o go around. I think "foul" more than fitting.

VYCE: Manners, Catia. You're like to hurt his feelings.

CATIUA: He is Barbas's creature. What feelings could he have?

MARTYM: You're too clever by half. I think I'll cut you down to size!

[He falls.]

MARTYM: How can these whelps be a match for Loslorien?

[Quickly he teleports away.]

DENAM: Lancelot!

Torakoria Way

[Further within the town the Dark Knight Barbas commands his men.]

BARBAS: Take the town!

[His Dark Knights spread out, sowing their carnage. The Holy Knight Lancelot appears and challenges Barbas.]

LANSELOT: No more! Is this what passes for honor in Lodis?

BARBAS: You bear the arms of Xenobia.... So this is the Holy Knight Lancelot! How I have longed for this moment! Show me the power that crushed Hyland!

[Lancelot takes a long stride forward.]

LANSELOT: Only too gladly! Let our steel sing!

[They fight as Denam arrives.]

DENAM: We're not too late!

BARBAS: Reinforcements from Almorica?

LANSELOT: Denam? What are you doing here?

[Before he can answer, Barbas summons support.]

BARBASS: Deal with this rabble.... The Holy Knight is mine!

LANSELOT: You'll find me no easy quarry.

DENAM: We're coming, Lancelot!

LANSELOT: No, Denam. I can handle Barbas. It's these other Dark knights who need meet their mortality. See what you can do about them.

DENAM: Leave them to me!

LANSELOT: Be careful.

DENAM: Good advice for us both!

[The Xenobians call to their ally.]

WARREN: Are you all right, Lancelot?

LANSELOT: A few scratches, but nothing grave.

WARREN: Your friends have rallied to you. Together there's naught we can't do.

GILDAS: Captain. I stand ready to assist you.

LANSELOT: I welcome your aid, Gildas. There was another lord commander. What became of him?

GILDAS: Slain, sir. Denam and I saw to that. Let us do the same here!

BARBAS: So the fool's gotten himself killed, has he?

GILDAS: Aye. Flee now, or share his fate!

CANOPUS: You didn't think we'd forgotten you, did you?

LANSELOT: You're a sight for sore eyes, Canopus.

CANOPUS: Always am. But that's all right, I'm used to it. What's the single combat foolishness, eh? If you must choose between life and honor, choose life.

BARBAS: This one's feathers are yet in blood. What does he know of honor?

CANOPUS: Never mind my feathers!

MIRDYN: Are you unharmed, captain? Pray withdraw. Leave this rabble to us!

LANSELOT: I still have some fight in me, Mirdyn.

MIRDYN: Yes, but a Dark Knight - and a lord commander at that. I do not doubt your arm, but is the risk warranted?

LANSELOT: If I sense the danger is grown too great, I will sheathe my sword.

MIRDYN: Thank you, sir. We can ill afford to lose you.

CATIUA: Are you unharmed?

LANSELOT: A few scratches, Catuia. But the corpse collectors will have to wait another day.

CATIUA: You came to our aid, once. I am glad we were able to repay the debt.

LANSELOT: You owed me no debt - but we can quibble over that later. Our enemy awaits!

[They fight.]

BARBAS: Interlopers! You'll pay for this intrusion with your lives! I'll deal with you later, Holy Knight.

[They defeat Barbas.]

BARBAS: Tsk, a tougher nut to crack than I thought. I've marked your face well, boy. We shall meet again!

[He flees.]

DENAM: Lancelot, are you all right?

LANSELOT: I am as I appear, and no more. Thank you, Denam. I would not have survived without your help. Perhaps I have overestimated my skill.

DENAM: We should leave as swiftly as we can. They'll be back, driving the Bakram army before them.

LANSELOT: You have the right of it. I thought it took long years to make a true leader of men, but by the look of your eyes, I see that I was wrong.

DENAM: Th-thank you, sir. I.... We should hurry.

Heim

[Denam meets with Klaire again.]

KLAIRE: Lord Pavel?

DENAM: Ah, Klaire. I'm happy to see you have far fewer patients.

KLAIRE: Her majesty's doing, and yours. The herbs and poultices we need arrive daily. Our physician is very pleased.

DENAM: You've traded with the continent to thank for that. Galleons throng the seas as they once did.

KLAIRE: I've heard much talk of the new villages being built outside the city.

DENAM: Yes, and people are returning to their old villages as supplies come in. It's a slow but steady process.

KLAIRE: Some things **are** slow, yes, while others -

DENAM: How is he doing?

KLAIRE: As right as rain! The wounds he received in the Hanging Gardens have healed splendidly. He was a bit shaken about losing - worried he's past his prime - but I've never met a man who wasn't. And he couldn't bear to lay in bed all day -

DENAM: Then, where is Sir Lancelot now?

KLAIRE: Oh dear, I'm sorry! Here I've been rattling on.... He's out front, at practice with his sword, I should imagine.

DENAM: Out front? I see. Thank you.

[Denam turns to leave.]

KLAIRE: Denam, sir...

DENAM: Yes?

KLAIRE: I have not told anyone this, but that knight saved my life.

DENAM: Ah, true indeed. Have you thanked him properly?

KLAIRE: I have!

DENAM: That is well, then.

[Outside, Lancelot practices his swordplay.]

LANSELOT: Good morning, Denam!

DENAM: A good morning to you, Sir Lancelot.

LANSELOT: As you can see, I'm fit as a fiddle. Ready to fight at first cry of the horn.

DENAM: I'm glad your wounds were not more serious.

LANSELOT: As I'm glad there's not like to be much fighting for a while.

[They chuckle and Lancelot sheathes his sword.]

LANSELOT: Catia's coronation is soon.

DENAM: I'm told you'll be returning to Xenobia before then.

LANSELOT: Aye. Brynhildr must be returned home as swiftly as possible. Though I regret I will not be able to see Catia receive her crown. I will return to this island in later days. I will see you both then, I trust.

DENAM: I look forward to the day.

LANSELOT: What will you do, Denam? Rumor has it you turned down an official command.

DENAM: Yes...I feel it best if I not linger here in Heim. Though it was for Valeria, there is no denying the blood I've shed. While some vaunt me as a hero, there are many others who would resent having me for a protector. Being here would only bring that resentment to my sister's doorstep, and that I cannot risk.

LANSELOT (pulling his sword out again): Many years ago, a man of great courage came to Xenobia's aid. He defeated her enemies, vanquished evil, and saved us all. When the warring was done and a new kingdom firmly rooted, the man and his small entourage departed the castle. That eve, he said much the same as you.

DENAM: Yes?

LANSLEOT: "My war is over," he said. "Let those who remain rebuild what has been lost."

DENAM: Yes. He laid the foundation...

LANSELOT: I would have left with him, then, but Warren stopped me. Thinking back on it now, I believe I remained in Xenobia so that I could come here, to Valeria, and meet you.

DENAM: What happened to the man who left? Where is he now?

LANSELOT: A good question. I heard he made for the Sea of Lhai. Other than that...

DENAM: ...

LANSELOT: You ought come to Xenobia, Denam. Once things have settled, of course.

DENAM: Xenobia? I...

LANSELOT: It need not be Xenobia, but you are yet young. Your journey to manhood lies before you. Leave the islands, at least once, and come to the continent. There is much you should see with your own eyes, and much to do. All you touch, all you feel, all you learn, will serve you - no, all of Valeria - well.

DENAM: The continent.... I hadn't considered it, but there is merit in what you say.

LANSELOT: Well?

DENAM: I will, then. Even if only to learn how I might better serve Valeria, I will go.

[Lanselot takes out his music box and tosses it to Denam.]

LANSELOT: I have no more need of this. I would like you to have it.

DENAM: Your music box? I cannot accept something so precious.

LANSELOT: When I have received a far more precious gift from you? My meeting with you opened my eyes, Denam. I see now the value of setting down the burdens of the past - not forgetting them - to build a new future. My memories of my wife, I keep inside myself. That has always been enough.

DENAM: Still...I cannot accept.

LANSELOT: Then let me propose something else. I will entrust the music box to your care for now. Bring it to Xenobia when you come, and we will bury it in my wife's grave together.

DENAM: I accept.

LANSELOT: I will be waiting for you, Denam.

Episode 4 - The Magnificent Twelve

Golyat

[The Golyat trio venture to their hometown.]

DENAM: Find anything, sister?

CATIUA (shaking her head): Not a thing. Someone came while we were gone. The house is as empty as a drum.

VYCE: These things happen in times of war.

CATIUA: I know that, Vyce. We did our share of taking when he had nothing.

[A gull flies overhead.]

CATIUA: Those were hard times...

[They all look skyward.]

CATIUA: I remember once, during the rains...there was nothing to eat. You brought back some mutton, Vyce. But it was going foul. I told you it wasn't fit for pigs to eat, let alone humans.

VYCE: I still feel bad about that. But when you go out, you don't want to come home empty-handed. And the Bakram were still in Golyat.... The only food to be had were their table scraps.

CATIUA: You shouldn't apologize, Vyce. Here you were, risking your hand or worse to get food, and all I could do was complain!

VYCE: Ha. If I'd known you were a princess, I'd have charged you triple for that fetid mutton!

[They all laugh.]

CATIUA: I wonder sometimes, what would have happened if the Dark Knights hadn't attacked Golyat that day? What would have become of us?

[They ponder and the fates realign if only for a moment.]

Golyat - Quayside

[In the falling snow, the Dark Knights surround a boy in Golyat and close in.]

ANDORAS: Wait! He's just a child!

KNIGHT: Our orders are to show no mercy.

ANDORAS: But he knows nothing! If he's a partisan, it should be enough to take him captive.

CHILD: P-please...help. I've done n-n-nothing wrong.

KNIGHT: Lord Windsalf, your orders!

VOLAQ: The high commander wants no witnesses.

KNIGHT: Sir!

[The Dark Knight strikes the boy down and other villagers are forced out of their homes.]

DENAM: Some villagers still remain!

VOLAQ: Who are they?

ANDORAS: Looks like we finally flushed them out of hiding! Hark to me! These are the partisans who did the killing in Heim!

VOLAQ: Almorican remnants? No, that's not possible -

ANDORAS: I'm telling you, they're our enemy. Draw your sword, Volaq!

[Denam and his friends charge to protect the remaining villagers.]

ANDORAS: You who would draw swords against the Dark Knights! You are yet a child. Throw down your weapon, and you may yet live.

DENAM: How can you say that, after all the people - all the children - you've just slain! If this is guilt, it comes far too late.

ANDORAS: Too late? Am I...too late? How could I let that child be slain.... Has my oath to Loslorien stained me so deeply!?

CATIUA: ...

DENAM: Sister? What's wrong? You're trembling. Are you ill? We should leave -

CATIUA: No, I suffer no affliction.... Only, when I think back on what happened this day.... Even though I know we are not as we were then, it frightens me.

DENAM: Courage, sister. We will not lose this fight. Think on why we are here.

CATIUA: ...You're right. We're not to witness a tragedy. Thank you, Denam. A word from you was all I needed.

[The fight continues.]

VOLAQ: These children fight better than our footsoldiers! Who are they!?

VYCE: Didn't expect a ragtag bunch of runts on a backwater island to put up an honest fight, eh? How could you? You think your night soil smells sweet as flowers. Well, you're wrong.

VOLAQ: I'll take your words as the challenge they are, "runt." Remorse will not haunt me when you lie bleeding at my feet.

[They fall.]

VOLAQ: Andoras, this does not go well! We withdraw!

[He teleports.]

ANDORAS: Hells, why had we not heard such forces were left on this island!?

[He flees.]

DENAM: This changes nothing. They'll simply return with a greater army. We need to go farther back.

Golyat - South Village

[Earlier in the morning, the Dark Knight Oz corners a lone girl.]

OZ: Stunning. Simply stunning. Your eyes...enchant me! I would take you back to Lodis, and yet, I already have slaves to spare. You don't want to be a slave, do you?

[He steps toward her and she falters, shaking her head.]

OZ: In Lodis, we possess the means to preserve a corpse as fresh as the day its soul departed. ...I'll just take your head back with me.

OZMA: Would you stop, Oz? I swear, sometimes you make me right ill.

OZ: Don't interfere, sister. I'm just getting to the good part.

[The girl uses their bickering as an excuse to flee. Oz hurls a dagger at her back before she can escape.]

OZ: Look, now you've made me waste a perfectly good trophy! the ichor must be injected while the heart still beats.

OZMA: Oz! There!

DENAM: Save the villagers first - and focus attacks on the Dark Knight captains!

OZMA: That's no local garrison...but I've not heard of any Almorican remnants in this town!

OZ: Unlike Barbas, I dislike needless conflict.

[They fight.]

OZ: You fight well for provincial rabble! Or perhaps this is merely the eagerness of a first battle? Why risk your lives to save these swine hovels, anyway?

DENAM: You attack our homes, you attack our families - and you expect us **not** to fight you with every measure of our strength!? I would ask you in turn: How can you take the lives of these people? They're not even soldiers!

VYCE: Look at this.... People fleeing for their lives, corpses everywhere! Children, girls...

OZ: Never seen a battle before, have you?

VYCE: Battle? No. this is a simple massacre. A slaughter. Does Loslorien require a certain degree of bloodthirst before they let you command?

OZ: Ha! You expect such taunts to anger me, boy? ...On second thought, why not? You besmirch Loslorien honor at your peril, fool of a wretch! I'll fillet you and cure the strips in the gutter!

OZMA: Oz! Enough of this mummery. One day you'll challenge a greater fool than yourself and pay the price.

VYCE: Your sister has all the wisdom in the family, it seems. And pretty much everything else worth having.

OZ: I daresay the lout **wants** me to kill him! Who am I to deny him?

[They fall.]

OZMA: Oz, back to the van! We must reform our lines.

[She flees.]

OZ: Forced to retreat by children!? Bah! Shed a tear for Oz, ladies. He's fallen on hard times.

[He teleports.]

DENAM: We need to go further back. We can't change history from here.

Golyat - Sailor's Way

[Earlier in the morning, the Dark Knights surround a village.]

MAN: Who're you lot!? Spoiling for a fight, are we!?

MARTYM: This man smells of swill. If you can call it a man!

BARBAS: He's so deep in his cups he can't even see the black of our steel.

MAN: I'll take a-a-all of you on! Send ya runnin' with a shiv in yer arse!

[He draws a knife but is cut down by Barbas.]

MAN (coughing): V-Vyce?

VYCE: Father!

[The young-looking Denam holds back his struggling friend.]

DENAM: No, Vyce! They'll kill you! Run! To the church, run! Go!

VYCE: Father!!!

[The villagers leave their homes to see the commotion as Denam arrives from another time.]

MARTYM: Who are they? Our reports said nothing of Almoricians garrisoned here.

BARBAS: Sellswords, most like. Paid for protection. I welcome it. These civilians cut far too easily.

MARTYM: I thought you'd say something of the sort, Barbas.

[They fight.]

VYCE: I've returned, father.... It must have been cold on the stone, in the falling snow.... Not that you deserved more. I couldn't have picked a worse father...but my father you were. Now, you can watch me as I save Golyat.

CATIUA: Vyce, are you all right?

VYCE: Far better than I imagined I would be. Though, I could live without those Dark Knights.

CATIUA: I do not want you risking your life unnecessarily!

VYCE: You're unusually concerned for my health today, Catuia.

VYCE: I just don't want to see you running off, blood gone to your head - only to get it chopped off. There is much you must do in the days to come.

VYCE: I know, I know. I'm not so enthralled with myself as that. Though it is only me who can avenge my father now. I **will** give those Dark Knights their due. Sooner or later.

[The fight continues.]

BARBAS: They put up more of a fight than I expected! Now **this** is battle! Hewing these burghers was about as challenging as chopping firewood.

DENAM: Talk your bold talk while you can. If you do not wish to suffer more losses, cease your attack and leave here at once!

BARBAS: Who's bold, now? The child tastes blood once and fancies himself a great warrior!

MARTYM: Let the child fancy what he wants, Barbas. I tire of keeping up with your headstrong lust for battle.

BARBAS: You're luck if you can hang onto my coattails, you simpering pansy.

[The Dark Knights fall.]

BARBAS: Blast! I'll not let these hedge knights drive me from the field!

MARTYM: No, Barbas! Our operation's only just begun! Think on it - there may be other forces lying in ambush. We must first report to Balxephon and the high commander!

[He flees.]

BARBAS: I've marked your face well!

[He escapes.]

DENAM: Further back.... I remember the place!

Golyat - North Village

[At the tip of the night, the Dark Knight host overlooks Golyat from a high cliff.]

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Snow?

OZMA: Odd to see snowfall in these parts. I had heard the weather here was clement.

VOLAQ: With the chill setting in, there will be few on the streets. An excellent opportunity to ferret out these partisans!

BALXEPHON: Why ferret, when we can smoke them out? Set fire to the place.

VOLAQ: What did you say?

BALXEPHON: I said set fire to the town! We'll be here till morning if we have to search every house. The Bakram will be arriving at midday. Best to burn the place to the ground if we're going to be finished by then.

VOLAQ: But, that's...

BALXEPHON: You begin to irritate me, Lord Windsalf. Take your men ahead to the rendezvous point! Now, go!

MARTYM: Let's move, old man. I'll be behind, making sure you keep the pace.

VOLAQ: Yes, sir.

[They separate. Down below, the young trio of Golyat steps out of their home.]

VYCE: Who are they? They're coming into town!

CATIUA: Denam, quickly. Find Vyce's father!

DENAM: Right.

CATIUA: I have to tell father - come to the church as soon as you're able!

DENAM: You watch yourself, sister.

[They flee and the Dark Knights notice their movements.]

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Hmm? Who was that?

[Denam arrives, fully armed with hope to change in his heart.]

DENAM: This is where it all started. I was here...and all I could do was watch, powerless, as they tore my life apart. But I'm not so powerless this time!

[He looks over the still of the town and vows to strike down all the Dark Knights.]

CATIUA: The Knights Loslorien attacked our town to find my father...no, to find me. The Wheel of Fortune began to turn for us here. And now we can change fate.... We can save so many from death!

VYCE: Looking at it now, it's obvious how unusual this whole thing was. I mean, seven officers of the Dark Knights, sent to attack a tiny port village? That's an awful lot of muscle to put toward something like this. Tartaros understood - he knew that Golyat was key to the Dark Knight's plans. And now we're here, right in the middle of it. We have to win.

DENAM: It's all right. They're tough, but not so tough they won't crack.

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: Not only do they stand their ground, but we're taking damage. How could the presence of a force this strong have been overlooked until now? Perplexing that their commander appears to be a youth - but more perplexing still is their ability.... This could well shift the balance of power between the clans. Something is exceedingly odd about this...

[Some of the Dark Knights recognize their foes.]

BALXEPHON: You.... Hobyrim! What are you doing here!?

HOBYRIM: Stopping your schemes, Balxephon! I will not permit you to claim innocent lives to satisfy base ambition!

BALXEPHON: What I do, I do for Lodis! Clearly you fail to understand. Nor do you seem to value the life I gave you! Very well, I will finish what I started and put you out of your misery. It is the least I can do for my brother!

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: A Holy Knight of Xenobia? Could he have followed us here? No, we would have heard something of this before now, surely!

HOLY KNIGHT LANSELOT: Dark Knight Lanselot! I did not expect to find you here, but I cannot say I am displeased. Your folly ends now!

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: So it is you! Our whisperers and farseers have been asleep at their posts, it seems!

[Barbas is slain.]

BARBAS: How is it possible that these **nobodies** have defeated me!?

[Martym is slain.]

MARTYM: Feh! Just my luck to die in this backwater!

[Volaq is slain.]

VOLAQ: I underestimated my foe to my sorrow. Forgive me, high commander, but I must retreat.

[Oz is slain.]

OZ: How could I have underestimated them so gravely.... I die of shame if not by my wounds!

[Ozma is slain.]

OZMA: High commander, forgive me.... Glory to Lodis.

[Andoras is slain.]

ANDORAS: I struck a devil's bargain with Lodis...

[Balxephon is slain.]

BALXEPHON: I waste my blood on this lot.... Too much remains to be done.

[Lanselot is defeated.]

DARK KNIGHT LANSELOT: You're...not from this spoke on the Wheel...are you, boy.

[He teleports before he can be struck down.]

DENAM: Father...

[Elsewhere, the Denam in the past meets his father at the church.]

DENAM: Father! Someone comes! They're here! We must flee!

PRANCET: Hmm? No, I can handle this. You must wait inside.

DENAM: But, father!

PRANCET: Trust me, son. I am in no danger.

[The three do as they're told, and Denam arrives after his conquest of the Dark Knights.]

PRANCET: Welcome home, Denam.

DENAM: Father...

PRANCET: You've put on some muscle. You look well. You look like...a man.

DENAM: All is done as you asked. My sister is queen of Valeria, and all those who wished Valeria harm have been driven from our shores.

PRANCET: That is good news.

[They embrace.]

DENAM: Father, I'm sorry...I...I could not save you. But I did all you asked, for you. I did all I could.

PRANCET: Then you have done well, Denam. But you did not do it for me. You have your own aspirations now. Follow them. They do me proud.

DENAM: Father!

[Catiua and Vyce lower their heads.]

Golyat

[Denam, Catiua and Vyce stand outside the church, eyes to the sky.]

DENAM: Father, all is done.

VYCE: You're really leaving, Denam?

DENAM: If I stay on this island, I'll only be in my sister's way.

CATIUA: In my way? Not at all!

DENAM: As long as there are people who consider my presence as a count against the queen, I'd best remain absent.

VYCE: Those blasted nobles sprang up like toadstools after a shower when the war ended.

DENAM: Besides, I made a promise to Sir Lanselot and Canopus that I would visit them in Xenobia. But I will return to Valeria and put what I learn abroad to good use.

CATIUA: I understand, Denam. I will await your return. As long as it takes, I will wait.

VYCE: Leave the protection of the queen to mee then. I'll guard her with my life.

CATIUA: Well, Vyce. How noble!

VYCE: Don't jest, Catiua. You know I've always looked out for you.

[They catch each other's eyes for a moment before spinning away. Denam chuckles.]

DENAM: It's a relief to know you're in good hands. I was never worried.

CATIUA: As well you shouldn't be. I'm more concerned about living up to our parents' expectations.

VYCE: Go, Denam. Learn. And bring back lots of stories to tell over our cups.

DENAM: Aye, that I will. I look forward to telling you much.

[They clasp hands and Denam leads them away from the church. Catuia remains alone then catches up.]

DENAM: So, what's after your coronation, sister? A wedding, perhaps?

VYCE: Mmm, yes. Very important for the monarch to have a family. Lends stability to the land.

CATIUA: Stop that, the both of you! I'll keep my own counsel on that matter, thank you very much.

Sidequests

The San Bronsa Ruins

Tower of Law Eternal - Level 3

[Denam and party reach the top of the outer ruin.]

SCOUT: Master Vepahl! The army of the false king approaches!

VEPAHL: Then we are not alone in our quest for the Great Father's miracle. Let us not delay further! Believe in me, my disciples. Believe, and the power of Philaha will work a miracle upon you!

CORPSE: We believe, Master Vepahl.

[The creatures raise mysterious objects above them and, in a puff of smoke, transform into angelic beings.]

VEPAHL: A miracle! Now, dedicate your new lives as you did your old: For the Tigers of Burnham!

DENAM: What are those? ...Angels?

VEPAHL: March forth, champions of heaven! Wipe all traces of the false king's army from the land!

[They fight.]

VEPAHL: Is not even the divine power enough to defeat you, butcher of Golyat!? ...Though it pain me to leave this unsettled, I have duties elsewhere to which I must attend.

Tower of Law Eternal - Level 10

[Denam ascends the ruin.]

VEPAHL: Children of god, who march upon the field, bereft of blood and flesh! By the power of the Great Father Philaha, grant your form once again unto the proud Tigers of Burnham!

MALE WARRIOR: These hands, this voice.... Is this **my** body?

VEPAHL: Truly a miracle! God is wise! God is glorious!

[The other creatures transform.]

FEMALE WARRIOR: Ah, warmth! This...this is what it was to live!

YOUNG WARRIOR: I cannot believe it has happened, though I feel it with every part of my being! Great Father Philaha! Praise be to you!

VEPAHL: You see? With this relic, and the power of **his** miracle, a body once lost can be reclaimed! As I predicted, this is the promised land! This is god's great revelation!

DENAM: True resurrection of the dead.... Is it possible?

VEPAHL: A pity the false king's army had to blemish this miracle by witnessing it. Attack! End their lives! This miracle belongs not to them, but to the Tigers of Burnham!

[They fight.]

VEPAHL: This...upon th very day I perceived the mystery of the miracle. Fate is cruel, and you are crueler still, butcher of Golyat!

[She flees.]

Tower of Law Eternal - Level 12

VEPAHL: Great Father Philaha! How!? How can you do this to me, your most humble servant?

[She is engulfed by two dragons and falls.]

ANGELIC BEING: Lowly beasts that crawl upon the earth, hear my words. Seek not god's miracle. These forms you claim by ancient artifice are not life. They are shadow. Take not god's name for your own. Whatsoever you may call this miracle, it is but the smallest piece of god. Test not god's charity. No matter what tales you tell your soul, you will never understand the mind of god.

VEPAHL: Don't be deceived...butcher of Golyat.... The demon pretends...to be divine.... Don't be de...ceived...

[The dies and a force of winged beings appear.]

ANGELIC BEING: Repent, mortals, for your souls are forfeit to heaven!

DENAM: Angel or no, those are fighting words!

[They fight and Denam protects his troops.]

The Rogue Diego

Port Omish

[Upon hearing strange rumors, Denam arrives at the exotic port town. A group of villagers huddle around a storyteller.]

WOMAN: By Philaha, did you truly see it!? What did the monster do next?

SEADOG: Would I lie to a pretty lass like you? Sirens, leviathans.... Any man of the sea worth his salt's seen one. If you find one who says he hasn't, he's no man of the sea! He's a landlubber, without spine or spirit!

WOMAN: If you say so! I suppose you're different?

SEADOG: Care to find out for yourself? I've no engagements later this evening. Ha ha! On with the game! Who throws the bones next?

[A pirate lurches over toward the table, eyeing the young woman.]

RAGNAR: Why not drink with us, lass? We've plenty of coin, and far less hot wind than you'll get from between his wilting whiskers.

WOMAN: Look in a mirror before you talk of wilting whiskers! All the coin in the world won't get me one step closer to the table with you.

RAGNAR: You even know who you're talking to!?

[A number of bystanders back away.]

SEADOG: Might I venture a guess? You're...a street louse with horns on his head. A milker of cows, perhaps?

RAGNAR: You'd call the pirate Ragnar a street louse!?

[Ragnar's rising voice scares away the rest of the bystanders.]

SEADOG: Then you do not deny you are a milker of cows! Yes! I knew it by the vacant lookin your eyes! You pirates are ever so, all whey and no cream. Ha ha!

RAGNAR: You scrawny little -

[Denam arrives with the hope to restore order.]

DENAM: Sheathe your sword, lest you care to see blood.

RAGNAR: And who're you!? Is this town filled with insolent wretches!? What? You're but a child! A child who plays at soldiers, from the look.

PIRATE: I know that one. He's been fighting the Bakram, he has! Captain, that's the one they call the hero of Golyat!

RAGNAR: You don't say? Our tide's coming in, boys! Grab the child. We'll hand him over to the Bakram, then find some wenches who'll take our coin!

DENAM: They're not afraid of blood, apparently. Let's show them some. Storyteller! I've an eye for a swordarm, and I doubt yours will need any help in this fight.

SEADOG: Watch as the handsome lad steals my thunder! Diego may be a man of the sea, but he can hold his own on shifting deck or solid ground.

[The storyteller Diego brandishes his weapon and teams with Denam to take down the pirates.]

RAGNAR: Watch it, old man! You'd best not be planning to steal our booty!

DIEGO: I thought stealing was your job, pirate! Rest easy. I've no interest in the squabbles of boys.

RAGNAR: Boys!? Curse your sandy piehole! I'll kill you and the Resistance brat both!

DIEGO: Wind and bluster seems to be your idiom. Take what you want, kill who you dislike - that's the pirate's way, no? But odn't make the mistake of thinking me an easy mark! Let's see what you've got!

RAGNAR: Careful what you ask for!

[Diego dies.]

DIEGO: What kind of ending...this? Where are the riches...the women?

DENAM: I...let him die.

[The brute is defeated.]

RAGNAR: Mama always told me...only go for the low hangin' fruits...and girls.

[Diego drinks by the docks, children running past him. Denam walks toward him but is halted by the beggars.]

DENAM: Sorry...can I help you?

DIEGO: Don't waste your time, boy. Throw 'em a crust of bread, and you'll never see the end of 'em.

DENAM: You're the storyteller from the market square.

[Denam turns to the children and eventually they leave.]

DIEGO: I'll bet you're wondering: How can he drink in front of them starving kids? What I want to know is: Would drinking elsewhere change anything? It won't fill their bellies, that's for sure.

DENAM: ...

DIEGO: This is the bottom of the cask, boy. Lees and dregs. Got our share of refugees, too, thanks to you and your kind.

DENAM: You're suggesting I drove those children here?

DIEGO: Refugees don't grow on trees. But don't you worry none. Just keep on with your resisting, and we'll find a way to feed 'em. Or not.

DENAM: I'm not averting my eyes from the truth. I know what I've done, and why.

DIEGO: There's a leader of the Resistance for you! More noble words in one breath than most men say in a year. Pay no mind to a scoundrel like me. I know my place. Hadn't you best be off? I'm sure a man like you's got plenty needs doing.

DENAM: I was thinking what a shame it is that a swordarm like yours languishes in a town like this.

[Denam turns to leave, abandoning Diego to his drink. He launches the bottle and a small child steps out of his house, picks it up, and takes a seat right next to Diego.]

Port Omish

[Denam finds himself in the port town and confronts the man called Deigo.]

DENAM: We meet again.

DIEGO: Ah, the Resistance boy, was it? You're looking well. But then again, so am I. What've you come for? My keen sense for the obvious tells me you're not here on holiday.

DENAM: I'm searching for Azelstan. The one they call the "dread pirate."

[The child at the end of the dock runs up behind Diego.]

DENAM: Hrm?

DIEGO: Now, there. Don't go bawling on me. He's not going to take me away.

DENAM: Take you away? You're him...aren't you.

AZELSTAN: ...Never should've opened my mouth. A word of advice, boy. Never tell a woman anything you don't want the world to know.

DENAM: So, you are Azelstan.

AZELSTAN: Been many a year since anyone's called me by that name.

[He invites Denam into his home, leaving the child outside sobbing.]

DENAM: Who was that girl? Your granddaughter?

AZELSTAN: No idea who she is. Another of the orphans 'round here, most like. She took a shine to me for some reason. I never did anything for her, mind you. She's not too good with the talking, and I guess that makes it hard for her with the other kids. ...Which makes it hard for me to shoo her away. Ha ha!

DENAM: The weak look to the strong for protection...or something more than that, perhaps.

AZELSTAN: So, what do you want?

DENAM: I want you to tell me about the Pirate's Graveyard, and the treasure that rests there.

AZELSTAN: What, you're a treasure hunter now? Tired of warring already?

DENAM: A war feeds on coin as a man feeds on bread.

AZELSTAN: Stuffing the coffers, eh?

[He walks to the window.]

AZELSTAN: Can't help you.

DENAM: Azelstan, we're trying to **end** this war! Don't you want better for those children? If you would help them, help us!

AZELSTAN: You'd best be on your way, boy. I've made up my mind. There's nothing I can do for you.

DENAM: If that's your decision. Captain Azelstan. They call you the dread pirate.... Why did you leave your ship? Your swordarm and your legs are strong as ever.

AZELSTAN: It's got nothing to do with you, boy. And don't call me "captain" again. Ever.

[Denam nods and leaves.]

Qadriga Fortress

[At the docks of the fortress, Denam happens upon a bouquet of flowers as the sun sets.]

DENAM: I wonder who left these flowers here?

SEAMAN: Some old sailor puts 'em there, every year 'round this time. Been at it for a good ten summers.

DENAM: He must have lost someone very dear.

SEAMAN: Lots of fighting, with the fortress here. Most everyone's lost somebody.

DENAM: ...

Port Omish

[Back in the port town, Azelstan is surrounded by Bakram warriors.]

KNIGHT: You'd best start talking, old man. Tell us something we can use, and I can make your past...disappear.

AZELSTAN: Don't you have a better offer than that? Town like this, a man's entitled to his past. A word of advice: Go home. And no point taking me. I'm not talking.

KNIGHT: You've got quite a tongue for an old seaman...or maybe you're just a washed-up pirate, eh? We're taking this one with us!

SOLDIER: Resistance forces spotted!

KNIGHT: What!? What're they doing out here.... Unless they're after what we're after. Keep this one under close watch!

AZELSTAN: What are you doing here, boy? There's no Goth in saving me.

DENAM: This might come as a surprise, but I don't let profit dictate all I do.

AZELSTAN: Good luck with that. So you're saving me from death.... Why?

DENAM: I know at least one person who'd be sad to see you go.

AZELSTAN: Ha! I thought your breed of fool long gone from the world. Sooner or later, those who put their necks on the block for others get the blade. But do as you like, boy.

[Azelstan falls.]

AZELSTAN: Guess even...the devil's luck...runs out.

DENAM: Azelstan! No!

[The fight ends.]

DENAM: You all right, Azelstan?

AZELSTAN: I'll live to see another damned day. Feh. I'd just as soon not owed you that.

[They adjourn to the docks.]

AZELSTAN: Thank you for your help back there. But don't think that got you any closer to the Pirate's Graveyard.

DENAM: ...

AZELSTAN: Best be running back to your friends, boy. Rough seas tonight.

[He starts to leave and stops in front of the lone child.]

AZELSTAN: You get along before the storm rolls in. Go home, or whatever it is you call it.

[She starts to go but is struck from behind and falls to the ground.]

AZELSTAN: Hey now!

MAN: Heh heh. That'll show 'im not to cross the Bakram.

[An armed man from the previous fight atop the roof laughs and collapses.]

AZELSTAN: ...Smarts, don't it? Don't worry. The pain won't last. Don't you be afraid.... You're gonna see your mama real soon.

DENAM: ...

AZELSTAN: They say history's got a way of repeating itself. That's the second little girl I've lost to war. Thought things'd be different on land. You got an explanation for this, boy? You know what killed this little girl? ...Couldn't even speak if she saw something. Why she'd have to die?

DENAM: Lives taken without reason.... That's the world we live in. You know that as well as I.

AZELSTAN: All I know's stealing and killing! I'd shed a tear for the girl if I weren't guilty of worse myself.

DENAM: Azelstan...

AZELSTAN: Don't you call me that...

DENAM: Then you decide who you are. Or you'll be stuck here, waiting for another bolt for your own back. As for me...I'm going to do what I can to make sure this doesn't happen again.

[He leaves.]

Pirate's Graveyard - Crystal Halls

[In pursuit of valuable treasure, Denam traverses the cavernous depths.]

DENAM: There's no end to the creatures in here. It's going to be tough.

[Monsters appear at his backside.]

DENAM: Speak of the devil...

[In an instant the monster falls as a familiar face strikes it down with one blow.]

DENAM: Azelstan!?

AZELSTAN: You're headed into the graveyard deeps, aren't you? Best clear a path first.

DENAM: Why have you come?

AZELSTAN: Enough time for flapping lips later. We've got bigger fish to fry.

DENAM: What made you change your mind?

AZELSTAN: I said later. Keep your eyes on the enemy. Let your gaze wander, and your life will be a short one.

[They defeat the foes.]

AZELSTAN: ...I know what I'm about now. Finally. I'm a pirate. Don't know any other way of living. Stealing, killing - it's what I do. There was never any other way for me. Boy. Take me with you. I'll fight if it means this war will end sooner. You said that's what you wanted, and I've a mind to believe you. You want someone killed, I'll kill them. Soldiers, women...anyone. If it'll end this war a moment sooner, I'll do it without batting an eye. My life's yours, boy. Use it well.

DENAM: If that's your decision.

AZELSTAN: You might have taken the high road, risen above the bloodshed. But I'm already in it up to my boots. I'll say one thing though. I hate the war that took my daughter. I want it done. That enough for you?

[Choice 1 - More than enough.]

DENAM: Then let us end this war together.

AZELSTAN: Good choice.

[Choice 2 - I can't ask you to join us.]

MISSING

Pirate's Graveyard - Ripples of Grief

[Denam and Azelstan rest after vanquishing another group of undead.]

DENAM: I can't believe this goes even deeper.

AZELSTAN: The flow of the streams has changed since last I was here...but it shouldn't pose a problem. Well, boy. What'll it be? Press onward? It won't be easy going. If you think you've seen foul things so far, there's more and worse ahead. I doubt you'll be finding that pirate's treasure, either. Time to stop and think about what you're really trying to accomplish here. Think well.

DENAM: We've come this far - it's not about the treasure. We'll continue. Besides...you're still hiding something.

Pirate's Graveyard - On Holy Ground

[Denam and Azelstan arrive at the depths.]

DENAM: This as deep as it goes?

AZELSTAN: Ah. The welcoming party's arrived.

RACKHAM: Who defiles our sacred ground...

DENAM: I feel a draft from up ahead. There's something beyond here, isn't there.

AZELSTAN: Might be.

RACKHAM: Leave.... Leave here at once.

[The ghost transforms into a ghostly pirate.]

RACKHAM: Leave...or we will take your lives as penalty for your trespass.

DENAM: Azelstan.... It's you!

AZELSTAN: It's a trick. Not very clever, though. This is one face that won't come back to haunt me.

[They defeat the ghostly foe.]

RACKHAM: Pain.... Endless pain to those who defile the sacred ground...

AZELSTAN: Don't worry. I'll lead you true.

DENAM: ...Azelstan?

AZELSTAN: Come with me, boy. I'll show you what a ghost thinks is worth protecting.

[They venture beyond the caves to a grassy clearing, where weapons litter the ground around an open treasure chest.]

DENAM: What is this place?

AZELSTAN: This is their sacred ground. Well, more of a dead end than anything. You see the chest of coins there. Take it. Better than going home empty-handed.

[Choice 1 - This is the treasure?]

DENAM: This is the treasure we've been searching for?

AZELSTAN: Not as much as you were imagining, is it? Truth be told, this chest is more a grave marker than anything.

DENAM: Like a gravestone?

AZELSTAN: Aye. This here's the place where the souls of pirates who die at sea come to rest. No one mourns them, so they wander until they find their way here. The pirate's graveyard, this.

DENAM: And the swords stuck into the ground around it?

AZELSTAN: Left here by pirates...as proof they lived. A pirate's life is no glorious affair, and neither's his death. A few manage to come ashore, take a wife, raise a family...but most don't live half so wise. After your first captain and your last crew are gone, there's no one left to remember you. That's why they leave their swords. A nameless grave beats just nameless. If you can't leave your mark any other way, you leave it here.

DENAM: Thus, a sacred ground...and a treasure worth protecting.

AZELSTAN: Or a desolate cliff strewn about with junk, depending on how you look at it. Heh.

DENAM: Is that why you came? To pay your respects?

AZELSTAN: Ha! You think my heart beats as warm as that?

DENAM: I have a hard time thinking you came all this way just to reveal the true nature of this treasure.

AZELSTAN: Aye. There was a time...when I lost sight for what was ahead. When my daughter died. I couldn't take the battle, so I came here. Maybe I was eager to join the ones who left these swords. The currents around here are treacherous things. Take your eyes off the sea for a moment, and she'll drag you down.

DENAM: ...

AZELSTAN: From the moment I entered the cave, I didn't pause to rest or to think. I just kept walking deeper and deeper. I know what this place was as soon as I stepped foot out here. I stood here a while...then went back the same way I'd come in.

DENAM: You just turned around?

AZELSTAN: I did. this here's a place for those who went the full distance. I left my ship that day. Why? Because I had nothing more to do with it, that's why. I wasn't about to sail headlong into death like the ones here...or start a new life, either. Dread pirate? I was a coward who couldn't put his daughter's death behind him.

DENAM: ...

AZELSTAN: But there is something that needs doing. Thanks for reminding me of that.

DENAM: Thank you for your help.

AZELSTAN: Sorry there's not more for you to take home than this pile of coin. With luck, some of 'em will be old enough to have taken on a bit of value.

[Choice 1 - I can't take this.]

DENAM: This coin's not for anyone to use. Least of all for war. I'll let it rest.

AZELSTAN: Well. I wasn't expecting that from you.

DENAM: Let's return. We're not meant to be here. We've things yet to do.

[They leave]

[Choice 2 - However little, it will help.]

MISSING

[Choice 2 - I cannot take this.]

MISSING

The Fallen Princess

Grimsby

[Dark Knights, led by Martym, surround a civilian.]

MARTYM: Spit it out! Where's the salvage!?

LINDL: It was bandits took it, I told you!

MARTYM: You're a greater fool than I thought if you expect me to believe that!

LINDL: Not fool enough to cross you, my lord. I'd have to be, to go selling your cargo out from under you.

MARTYM (to the sky): O, Great Father who looks down upon us! This man lies to me! Yes, he was paid handsomely, but now he hides our own property from us! Philaha on high, have you no mercy in your benevolent heart for this poor, sinful lamb? What!? You would have -me- pass judgement upon him? I see.... Great Father, though I am but a rough thing, a cast-off from your design, this I do for you!

[He turns to Lindl.]

MARTYM: Kill him.

DENAM: Hold, Martym!

[Denam arrives with his troops.]

DENAM: Let him go.

MARTYM: Oh thank you, **thank you**, great paragon of righteousness, for showing up at the **least** opportune moment.

LINDL: Help! They mean to kill everyone who dove for that ship! Everyone!

MARTYM: Your lips flap too freely! No matter. You can tell him all you want in hell.

[Denam rushes to the aid of this fusilier.]

[Lindl dies.]

LINDL: Hnnngh.... Should never have...crossed the waters...

[Martym gets wounded.]

MARTYM: Bah! You'll all pay dearly for this one day!

[Lindl thanks Denam after the battle.]

LINDL: Thank you, good sir. I am Lindl, of Balboede.

DENAM: No need to thank. It is our duty to repel the Dark Knights from this land. What was Martym about, anyway? What did he want of you?

LINDL: Ah. Ever heard of a weapon known as a "fusil"?

DENAM: I've seen one, yes.

LINDL: It was taken from a galley sunk in the waters not far from here. Neither Valeria nor Xenobia nor even Lodis possesses the means to make the fusils. They're all of them crafted in the land of Balboede - my homeland - across the waters to the south. They were to fetch a fine price, but our cargo was lost when our galley foundered in a storm...gone beneath the waves. The Dark Knights lead the effort to retrieve the fusils. All that had been gathered up till this past seven-day had already gone to their keeping. But last night, bandits fell upon us and stole what we've gathered since.

DENAM: Thus Martym's wrath.

LINDL: A fool's wrath. Killing me won't get back his fusils. Not that such trivium would stop a man like Martym.

DENAM: With us here, your life will continue to be in danger.

LINDL: Oh, I was in danger long before you arrived. You see, fusils are a different breed of weapon than your common sword or bow. It takes someone knowledgeable in the weapon's workings to wield it: A fusilier. Now I'm the only one who remains, and they're afraid I'll join the Resistance. A clever twist to fate's skein that they've driven me to you, eh? If my choice is to work for their lot or fight for Valeria's freedom, well, that's no choice at all. Besides, I doubt us meeting here was chance. What do you say?

DENAM: If you fight for Valeria, how can I refuse?

LINDL: That's the spirit. You'll not regret this.

Neimrahava Wood

[Denam encounter a familiar face.]

GANPP: I recognize you, lad! What business have you out here?

DENAM: I might ask the same of you, Ganpp. Who'd have thought you were the bandit thorn in Grimsby's side?

GANPP: You took me friends away, you did. Made me very, **very** sad.

[He whistles and beasts and bandits join his side.]

GANPP: Boys! Get out here! Me younglings will make this ground your grave.

[Ganpp or his pets die.]

MISSING

[Ganpp charges for revenge but is wounded by Denam.]

GANPP: Sorry, boys.... I'm not long for this world. You've served me another bowl of the weak broth of defeat. Burn me, boil me, whatever you like! But not the younglings.... Me boys are innocents! I'm the bad egg, the rotten core o' the apple! Punish the man, and spare the child!

DENAM: You mean what you say, Ganpp?

GANPP: You tell me what you want, you got it. I'm good for me word.

DENAM: I'll hold you to that, then. You've a fine master, younglings. Ganpp, you're with us now. I'm making you join the Resistance. Let's see if you can take care of a country as well as you take care of those creatures.

GANPP: What's this now!? You're making a friend of Ganpp? Wa ha ha ha! If this ain't a plum in me pudding! I was trying to **kill** you, boy! You sure you want me around when you set camp for the night?

DENAM: You're just another victim of this war, Ganpp - one of the Heirophant's pawns. I'm giving you the chance to use your talents for something worthwhile.

GANPP: Well that's...that's downright kind of you. You make a man feel almost...human.

[En route to Heim, Catiua falls to their enemies.]

CATIUA: I've been nothing but selfish, and I apologize, Denam.

Phidoch Castle

[Denam reports the unfortunate news that Catiua has fallen during their travels.]

MREUVA: To lose Catiua just before our assault on Heim is a grievous blow. Had I known, I would have implored her to stay within these walls more firmly.

DENAM: It's my fault.... I promised to protect her.

[A messenger walks in.]

SOLDIER: A report, sir.

MREUVA: Yes?

SOLDIER: Our division in Oeram met with an enemy attack and was destroyed, sir.

MREUVA: Destroyed!? How did it happen? Was there no warning?

SOLDIER: Our report was not clear on the matter, but sorcery of a most dire sort was involved. According to one survivor, the mage possessed a staff that made a sound like a crack of thunder - No sooner had he heard the sound than one of his companions fell to the ground, dead.

DENAM: A fusil! So the Bakram still possess some of the Balboede weaponry.

MREUVA: What sorcery is this "fusil" you speak of?

DENAM: Not sorcery, abuna. A device. They are fashioned upon the continent to the south.

MREUVA: ...?

DENAM: I must go there, now. Ready the men!

SOLDIER: Immediately, commander.

DENAM: Damn the Bakram!

Oeram

[Denam investigates the Bakram unrest.]

PHERENIAN: You who cling to your powerless gods! Prepare to witness a strength beyond any sorcery!

[They fight.]

PHERENIAN: Feh.... How could we lose...to such primitives!?

The Apocrypha

Gecho Fortress

[A band of pirates lies in wait for Denam's troops.]

BARVAN: So the grand leader of the Resistance takes pirate hunting into his own hands? Boys! They take us here, and we're all headed for the chopping block! Kill 'em all!

[The pirates leap at Denam's group who foils their plan.]

BARVAN: Someone take...me to the sea. A dry grave's no...end for a pirate.

Geyld Fortress

ANABERG: Looking for something? You'd do well to leave while you still draw breath. Or you may lose your life before finding what you seek!

[The undead host and his creatures attack.]

ANABERG: I masted time itself...but I could not stop my own time from coming.

Lahzan Fortress

[A band of Bakram hide among the ruins.]

JOSEPHINE: Never thought I'd meet **you** here, Denam of Golyat! I thought my hatred ebbed and gone, but the sight of your face brings it boiling back! I will strike you down...for my fallen brothers, and for the Heirophant!

[Denam defends himself against the vengeful Bakram.]

JOSEPHINE: G-Great Father.... Grant ye...rest for the souls of Galgastan.

Boed Fortress

[A group of bandits greet Denam coldly.]

LOBOS: What business've you got with Lobos? On second though, it matters not. You see my hideout, you have to die.

[They try their hardest to defend their home but Denam prevails.]

LOBOS: The...R-Resistance, were you? Never knew...

Qadriga Fortress

[Another group of bandits hides out.]

LEON: You call this chaos you bring us "freedom"? The Tigers of Burnham will teach you what it means to rule!

[Denam defeats the rabble.]

LEON: Better to die...than live under you.

Ndamsa Fortress

[Denam finds a struggling remnant of Galgastani forces.]

AESHAN: Denam of Golyat! I've a score to settle with you on the Heirophant's behalf!

[He battles them.]

AESHAN": My people of Galgastan.... Rise...

Coritanae Keep

[Denam, lost in thought, travels to Abuna Mreuva's room.]

DENAM: Abuna Mreuva, there's something I've been meaning to ask you.

MREUVA: Yes, Denam?

DENAM: At the Hagia Banhamuba, Sherri mentioned something called the "Apocrypha."

MREUVA: The Apocrypha? I can't say I'm familiar.

DENAM: The Dark Knights are a formidable foe. We must gird ourselves well if we are to confront them. You know this, abuna. With the Apocrypha Grimoires in our possession, the odds shift in our favor. Please, Abuna. Tell me where they can be found.

MREUVA: The Apocrypha are kept hidden for a reason. They contain a dreadful power. More than any man should wield. I know of one such man: King Rodrick of Brigantys. In the final days of the Dorgalua's Great War, Rodrick used the Apocrypha in a desperate attempt to change the tide of the battle. His foes were wiped from the face of the earth...and his own armies with them. None save the invoker survived.

DENAM: ...

MREUVA: This did not deter the king. He used the Apocrypha at every turn. You may not know it, but Brigania Flats was once a lush and fertile highland. The Apocrypha transformed it into the desolate waste it is today. Not even the laws of nature can withstand their power.

DENAM: ...

MREUVA: Yet in the end, it was the Apocrypha that brought down King Rodrick. Even as he won the war, he lost the love of his people. After the war's end, King Dorgalua ordered the Apocrypha sealed away. The danger in the Apocrypha is not the knowledge itself, you see, but rather how it is used. King Rodrick was not up to the task. Do you think you will fare better?

[Choice 1 - I'm beginning to wonder.]

CHOICE MISSING

[Choice 2 - I know I will.]

DENAM: I am not King Rodrick. I would never use such power so capriciously.

MREUVA: If that is the way you will lead, I am obliged to follow. The eight Apocrypha were secreted throughout the isles. I know the location of but six. These are enshrined in temples, and each commands one of the elements. Of the remaining two, light and dark, I know nothing.

DENAM: I had heard that the six great fortresses of Valeria were once temples.... But I saw nothing at any of them that would house so great an artifact.

MREUVA:Of course not. I sealed them where unknowing eyes would not find them. To open the temple doors requires an oracle.

DENAM: Who are these oracles?

MREUVA: The daughters of the abuna who forged the seal.

DENAM: Your daughters?

MREUVA: Bring one of them with you to each of the fortresses, and the way will open for you. Touched by the goddesses within the temple, they may be made a true oracle, though they will serve you well in battle regardless.

Ndamsa Fortress

[Cistina walks around, sensing the elements around her.]

"CISTINA': O, Great Hahnela, Goddess of Air, admit me unto your sacred sanctum!

[A door opens and Denam's group descends to the depths of the shrine where a host of enemies await.]

Sanctum of Hahnela

GUARDIAN: I am servant to Hahnela, Goddess of Air. You who would become a true oracle must face a trial. Defeat me, and prove your quality before the Goddess.

[They stand up to the trial.]

GUARDIAN: Magnificent...

Qadriga Fortress

[Olivya walks around, sensing the elements around her.]

OLIVYA: O, Great Nestharot, Goddess of Lightning, admit me unto your sacred sanctum!

[A door opens and Denam's group descends to the depths of the shrine where a host of enemies await.]

Sanctum of Nestharot

GUARDIAN: I am servant to Nestharot, Goddess of Lightning. You who would become a true oracle must face a trial. Defeat me, and prove your quality before the Goddess.

[They stand up to the trial.]

GUARDIAN: Magnificent...

Boed Fortress

[Cerya walks around, sensing the elements around her.]

CERYA: O, Great Xoshonell, Goddess of Fire, admit me unto your sacred sanctum!

[A door opens and Denam's group descends to the depths of the shrine where a host of enemies await.]

Sanctum of Xoshonell

GUARDIAN: I am servant to Xoshonell, Goddess of Fire. You who would become a true oracle must face a trial. Defeat me, and prove your quality before the Goddess.

[They stand up to the trial.]

GUARDIAN: Magnificent...

Lahzan Fortress

[Cerya walks around, sensing the elements around her.]

CERYA: O, Great Lyuneram, Goddess of Ice, admit me unto your sacred sanctum!

[A door opens and Denam's group descends to the depths of the shrine where a host of enemies await.]

Sanctum of Lyuneram

GUARDIAN: I am servant to Lyuneram, Goddess of Ice. You who would become a true oracle must face a trial. Defeat me, and prove your quality before the Goddess.

[They stand up to the trial.]

GUARDIAN: Magnificent...

Gecho Fortress

[Sherri walks around, sensing the elements around her.]

SHERRI: O, Great Vaasa, Goddess of Earth, admit me unto your sacred sanctum!

[A door opens and Denam's group descends to the depths of the shrine where a host of enemies await.]

Sanctum of Vaasa

GUARDIAN: I am servant to Vaasa, Goddess of Earth. You who would become a true oracle must face a trial. Defeat me, and prove your quality before the Goddess.

[They stand up to the trial.]

GUARDIAN: Magnificent.... A true oracle you are. Unto you I grant the revelation and power of the Goddess.

The Necromancer's Daughter

Balmamusa

[Denam and company stop at the town that started their divisive journey. There, a lone sibyl walks the undead streets.]

OELIAS: Who.... Who could have done this!? Sleep, souls. Embrace the waiting ever-world!

[She attempts to exorcise the demons but fails.]

OELIAS: No.... This does not go well. I cannot deliver them all to rest.

DENAM: You there! Are you all right!?

OELIAS: The Order of Goldscale!

DENAM: Flee while you can!

OELIAS: May the protection of the Father be with you!

[She attempts to flee but is cut down.]

DENAM: No! Blast, if we'd only arrived sooner.

OELIAS: Unh...

DENAM: She still lives. Quick, aid her!

[Denam rushes to help the woman.]

OELIAS: I am...revived. Thank you, good sir. I would...aid you in return.

DENAM: You need to mend yourself first. That will be best done elsewhere. Go, quickly!

OELIAS: May the protection of the Father be with you.

[She flees and Denam continues fighting the beasts.]

DENAM: Unusual for zombies to attack en masse like this. Perhaps the woman we saved knows something. We can ask her while we tend to her wounds.

[They meet in an empty house.]

OELIAS: I came here with...my companions, to treat and heal those caught up in this war.... The attack came without warning. The zombies.... They moved like a troop of living men. It was an organized attack.

DENAM: You believe this was not a chance event but a willful act? Someone sent those zombies on the town?

OELIAS: I fear so. But who would put the dead to...to such... *cough*

DENAM: Steady!

OELIAS: I fear that...the respite from death you have given me is but temporary.... The zombies move to attack Almorica. Please, you must protect the people there.... Give the dead their deserved rest.

DENAM: I promise we'll do all we can.

OELIAS: Thank...you. I go to my maker...in peace.

DENAM: ...

[She succumbs to her wounds.]

Qadriga Fortress

[Inside the fortress another group of undead awaits.]

DIEVOLD: Our enemy...approaches! Now we will take..what they took from us!

DENAM: Their leader is as much of a corpse as they. The dead leading the dead? Something foul is afoot.

[They fight.]

DIEVOLD: To die...again. To be killed...again. Hatred dark within me...a curse become.... Ruin to the Walisters in Almorica!

DENAM: Looks like she was telling the truth about the dead meaning ill for Almorica. We must return at once.

Golyat

[The town is quiet at night when two lurkers arrive.]

NYBETH: How many times must I say this? My goal is nothing short of a perfect restoration of soul and flesh! Achieve this, and the people of Valeria - nay, of the world entire - will be free from the fetters of mortality!

CRESSIDA: But if we restore the soul, the body withers. Revive the body, and the soul is lost. Both lead only to an imperfect death...never to what you desire! You know this, and yet you continue your foul inquiries. You're taking lives for your playthings!

NYBETH: No more impassioned an argument could I make for the vitality of my research than what you've just said! My dear Cressida, the knowledge is out there. I **know** it is. All we need do is find it!

CRESSIDA: If it's knowledge you seek, why unleash your creations on innocents? Even if they are Walister...this is massacre!

NYBETH: You mistake the manner for the mind. My animates do not blindly follow my will. Their souls **want** this bloodshed.

CRESSIDA: Souls? Naught but hatred resides in those shells of flesh. Only the vestiges of the terror they felt at their own deaths remain to drive them. Surely you know this!

NYBETH: You call them vestiges, but these remnants of the former self are the former self are the foundation upon which complete soul recovery can be achieved!

[Zombies sneak from the shadows.]

CRESSIDA: Hektor...sister...mother! How could you do this to them.... Don't you love them? Don't you love anything!?

NYBETH (shaking his head): I do love them, which is why I keep them close. Look, Moldova and Hektor remain partners for eternity! Their love will persist until their bodies decay and dust returns to dust, ash to ash.

CRESSIDA: You are mad.... Wholly mad!

NYBETH: I fear words will never be enough to convince you. As arbiter of life and death, I hereby bind you to this place!

[He prepares a spell.]

CRESSIDA: My legs.... I'm stuck! No!

NYBETH: Love...never dies.

CRESSIDA: Sister! Moldova, please!

[Moldova strikes at Cressida.]

DENAM: Necromancer Nybeth! I feared you were behind this. Who else would send the dead against Almorica?

NYBETH: Ah, if it isn't my old acquaintance...Denam, was it? I see you still fail to grasp the significance of my research. A pity. Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[More undead join his ranks.]

NYBETH: I'm afraid you mistake me. I do not direct anyone, living or dead, to attack Almorica Castle. They wished it for themselves. Particularly...that one.

[Another familiar face arrives.]

VYCE: Unh.... Uuuh.

DENAM: Vyce!?

VYCE: You...said you'd...help.... Abandoned.... You abandoned...me...

DENAM: No! That was not the way of it!

[Denam runs across the battlefield to aid the fallen necromancer.]

CRESSIDA: Why would the Resistance come to my aid?

DENAM: We couldn't leave you to that fate, whoever you may be. Now, go while there's still time.

CRESSIDA: I can't leave! I have to see this finished!

[Cressida dies.]

CRESSIDA: Mother...sister...I could have saved you. I should have...

[They fight.]

MOLDOVA: What...place is this? Hektor? Where are you?

CRESSIDA: Moldova! May you finally find peace...

CASSANDRA: Cressida.... Beloved daughter.... You...must live.

CRESSIDA: Why did this have to be? Why!? Mother! I'm so sorry...

HEKTOR: What? Where am I? My...work was complete.

CRESSIDA: Hektor! Oh, dear Hektor.... So noble a man should not be reduced to this.

HEKTOR: Why are you sad, Cressida? Do not...grieve for...me. Go...Cressida. Live. For me...and Moldova.

NYBETH: Well now, this will not do. No, not at all. I've far more important matters to which I must attend. Enough of these petty squabbles. I'm sure we'll meet again.

[He transforms into a bat and flees.]

CRESSIDA: You'd leave your dead behind, Nybeth?

[Denam finishes the rest of the enemies.]

VYCE: M-my head...why am I...not me? This...is **your** doing! You...must pay...

DENAM: Vyce...I would help you if I could. Believe me!

VYCE: Pain...my head...h-help me.... Denam!

DENAM: Vyce! No!!!

[The battlefield is cleared.]

DENAM: Vyce...I.... What else could I have done?

CRESSIDA: I will never forgive you for this, Nybeth.... I will revenge my friends upon you!

DENAM: Cressida was your name? The necromancer Nybeth is no stranger to you, is he?

CRESSIDA: No, he's no stranger. He is my father. And I am his disciple.

DENAM: You practice necromancy!?

CRESSIDA: You mean to say that I defile the bodies and souls of the departed. Until today, I might have said no, what I do is for the benefit of my people...thus I truly believed. I was wrong. Where I thought we ushered in happiness, I find only horror...and despair. My father insists it is because his research is incomplete, but how can any good come from such evil? He is merely inflicting more pain on those who deserve peace.

DENAM: Can there be no rest for those he has raised?

CRESSIDA: Even should they kill every man who never wronged them, those who return with hatred in place of their soul will never know peace. There is no past for them, no future. They live forever in the moment of their own death. I may not believe in the dream of divine salvation...but this is a nightmare.

DENAM: ...

CRESSIDA: I am guilty for tying them to this twisted mockery of a life.... I have no words to express my remorse.

[Choice 1 - Nor should you expect forgiveness.]

DENAM: Your sins against these people are too deep to be easily forgotten. But as you have realized your error and seek to make amends, I will spare your life.

CRESSIDA: Why would I seek forgiveness from you, the murderer of my mother and sister? If you had not saved my life, I would surely have taken yours.

DENAM: Then we will leave before you forget your charity.

[Choice 2 - You will not be judged by me.]

DENAM: You do not deserve to be judged here, in this place. Instead, I would judge Nybeth, who shows none of your repentance. If you would sotp him, perhaps you can help us.

CRESSIDA: You...murdered my mother and sister. But no, I will but that aside until my father - until Nybeth is slain. I will help you. It is he who defiled their memories, and he who should pay! I will aid you for the sake of those who were given an unlife they did not want.

DENAM: Thank you, cressida. Let us put bad blood aside to stop good blood from being shed.

[Cressida refuses your offer.]

CRESSIDA: Why would I help you, the murderer of my mother and sister? I thank you for your aid. But this matter is between myself and my father. I must resolve it alone.

DENAM: I see. Then we shall depart. Thank you for shedding some light on this dark matter.

Ocionne the Wyrmcaller

Belmorose Highwinds

[Denam encounters a Bakram unit while investigating a mysterious rumor.]

JILESSA: I did not think to encounter the Resistance in these marches. Ill luck that we must face them alone. The greater the glory when we present their heads on pikes to Falfaday!

[Denam fights through the Bakram troops.]

JILESSA: The butcher of Golyat.... Thought I recognized you. The Resistance must be desperate to send Denam himself out relic hunting.

DENAM: What relics are these?

JILESSA: Do no play coy. I cannot think you've come all this way simply to see the sights. Not enough that you have claimed Galgastan for your own. Now you seek to usurp the wisdom of the past besides. Your appetites are grand, butcher!

[The fight continues.]

JILESSA: Dame Ozma, is that you? I can scarce believe my eyes. Then the rumors are true.... Lodis sides with the Resistance!

OZMA: I **am** Ozma Glacius, of the Dark Knights Loslorien - no, a Knight of Lodis. But these rumors you speak of, sibyl, are just that: Rumors. Not lightly do we forsake our vows.

JILESSA: Then why do you stand among the enemy, poised to strike at us?

OZMA: It would not do to explain here. Suffice to say, I have my reasons. My quarrel is not with the Bakram. It is the Dark Knights are my enemy!

JILESSA: As I thought, a common traitor!

OZMA: I suppose I shall have to grow accustomed to people calling me that. No matter. It is putting Lodis to rights that concerns me, naught else. This battle is but one step along the path I must walk.

JILESSA: A convenient tale to tell yourself. Do you find it convinces many?

OZMA: I do not seek to convince - neither you nor anyone else! The reasons for my struggle are my own.

JILESSA: Then may your corpse grow cold alongside these Resistance pigspawn!

[She cries out with her last breath after falling to Denam.]

JILESSA: Falfaday.... Reymos...

Vasque

[In the deserted town of Vasque, a group of mercenaries wait for the word from their leader, a masked Necromancer, on what to do with a captive female warrior.]

CIELO: What now..."my lord"?

REYMOS: We have lost some few soldiers, but I will proceed to Lhazan Fortress as planned. You will remain here and refortify our position. Make no move until Falfaday and I return.

CIELO: Refortify with what? The girl and her dragon whelps did for most of my men.

REYMOS: I've arranged for reinforcements. They've met with some unexpected delay, that's all.

CIELO (to himself): I'll give a farthing for every one that makes it here alive...

REYMOS: Did you say something, Cielo?

CIELO: Not a word, my lord. What about the girl? If she's for the gallows, I might be able to put her to some...use.

[Reymos turns to the prisoner.]

REYMOS: Ocionne, was it? I want you to show us the way to the fortress.

OCIONNE: Why should I help you?

REYMOS: The choice is yours. There are other survivors in the fortress, yes? We could as easily find the fortress ourselves and kill all within.

OCIONNE: You are a wretched coward!

[Denam's company enters the town.]

CIELO: What's this?

DENAM: I thought to find their host here. I see I am not disappointed. What horror happened in this place? Or did this village fall into ruin long ago?

REYMOS: So our reinforcements ran afoul of the Resistance. Cielo, I leave this to you. We march for Lhazan.

CIELO: Begging your pardon, my lord, but I cannot defend against so many with so few!

REYMOS: You let this rabble unman you? Fool. I release you from the bonds of death. Come forth and serve your master!

[At Reymos's chant a number of undead dragons arise from the ground.]

OCIONNE: What cruelty is this?

REYMOS: Deal with them, Cielo.

CIELO: As you say, "my lord."

REYMOS: Let's be off.

[Reymos leads Ocionne and her guards away.]

CIELO (to himself): I pray these undead fiends know who their master is.

[Denam braves the undead.]

CIELO: Best leave while you can, eh? Unless you fancy joining our undead army.

DENAM: What animals are you to raze this village so?

CIELO: You're not serious, are you? Look about you. We've only been here a few days. It's a year at least since whatever happened here happened.

DENAM: If not you, then who did this?

CIELO: I'm a mercenary, not an historian. It's not seven weeks since I reached these islands. Always coin to be had where Lodis is on the move, eh? Only this time, might be I wagered on the wrong side...

[They continue to fight.]

JEUNAN: The girl you held captive. Did you find her among these ruins?

CIELO: You've a good eye. A comely one, her. Pity you and I are enemies, else I think we'd make good friends.

JEUNAN: I don't keep filth for friends. These wyrms you've corrupted - they were hers, were they not?

CIELO: Right you are. She said she wanted no armies in her village and fought to drive us out single-handedly. A bloody battle it was, but our master managed to win it in the end.

JEUNAN: So there were survivors.... Denam, there's something I need to tell you during the blood war. When we finally learned the location where the rebels had gone into hiding, the task of rooting them out fell to me. Vasque is the village where they hid.

DENAM: You did this!?

JEUNAN: I did. I took this peaceful village and reduced it to a smoldering ruin...

DENAM: Yes?

JEUNAN: Do you remember what Apollinaire told you at Coritanae? That I was one of Balbatos's attendants

[The army is overcome.]

CIELO: I don't like the look of this. Don't turn me into anything...unnatural, my lord.

Lhazan Fortress

[Denam journeys north to the fortress, where a large group of undead awaits.]

DENAM: Are these the villagers? What have they done to them?

[Denam fights through a group of undead, leaving the villagers unharmed. He ventures into the fortress and comes across the apprentice Reymos, once again cornering Occione.]

REYMOS: What will running accomplish? You wanted it to end like this.

OCIONNE: No.... Never this!

REYMOS: Armies do not come cheap. You killed much of mine. So I had to replenish my ranks. Not to worry. Their flesh is not long for this world. I should think it gone already...

DENAM: Your butchery ends here. Release her. Now.

REYMOS: You are awash in blood, and yet you call **me** a butcher? Death means nothing to you, so long as it brings you closer to your goal. Yours is a crude justice. You still refuse to accept the massacre at Balmamusa for what it truly was. Him or me, Ocionne? Whom will you choose? This butcher of Golyat who embraces the very Galgastani who burned this village to the ground. If you would avenge Vasque's dead, start with him. Or will you let this butcher succor you?

OCIONNE: That's no choice at all. I'll kill the both of you!

REYMOS: Then I will add your life to my collection.

[Denam and his group rushes to defend Ocionne.]

JEUNAN: Wyrmcaller! I must know: Are you a survivor from Vasque?

OCIONNE: You! I don't believe it! What are **you** doing here!?

JEUNAN: You recognize me.... Then I have my answer.

OCIONNE: Vile Wyrmknight of Galgastan! Today I avenge my mother and father! Make peace with your gods, if any will have you!

JEUNAN: Denam, this girl -

DENAM: I know, Jeunan. We cannot fight her. Even if she turns her blade against us, we must do all we can to save her.

JEUNAN: Forgive me, Denam. You should not be haunted by the ghosts of my past.

DENAM: No apologies. When I welcomed you among us, your sins became my own. This fight is as much mine as it is yours.

[They agree to avoid confronting Ocionne.]

OCIONNE: You may have forgotten that day, but I will never forget! Joining the Resistance will not cleanse you of your sins!

JEUNAN: My name is Jeunan Avertif. It was my men who attacked and destroyed Vasque. I have carried the burden of that day ever since. I'm so sorry.

OCIONNE: Will your apology bring back the dead? Will it bring back my parents? If you knew what you did was wrong, why do it? But it's too late now.... It's too late!

JEUNAN: I know no apology can absolve my sins. But can you give me time to make penance for them? I fight alongside Denam to end this war - a war I helped to start. It seems only fitting that I help to finish it as well. When the war is over, my life is yours. I swear it!

OCIONNE: So you can die with redemption in your heart? Never!

DENAM: He burned your village. He admits as much. But it was Balbatos who put him to it. Rebels had taken refuge in Vasque. They had to be dealt with.

OCIONNE: What of it? Suppose Balbatos did put him to it. Is he no less guilty?

DENAM: No. But his remorse is sincere.

OCIONNE: ...

[Denam defeats Reymos.]

REYMOS: The temple's secrets.... So close...

[He perishes.]

OCIONNE: Mother.... Father.... I could not...avenge you.

DENAM: Enough. This gets us nowhere. Your life is mine now.

[Without Jeunan.]

OCIONNE: No, I'll never join you. I'm tired of war, and you...you fight on, and on.

DENAM: I want only to end this war. Please, you must believe me.

OCIONNE: You ask too much. More than I can give!

DENAM: I'll not force you. We'll leave you, then. But before we go, you must promise me something. Do not charge heedless into battle. Do not throw your life away on vengeance.

OCIONNE: You've said what you will. Now go, and never come back!

[They part ways.]

OCIONNE: What will you do with me?

DENAM: Give you another chance to live. Where there's life, there's hope for vengeance. That's what you want, isn't it? But there's a price. You must give him a chance to redeem himself. Until his task his [sic] done, you are to watch him. Judge him. Agreed?

OCIONNE: You ask much. More than I can give.

DENAM: Have you not taken Bakram lives, enemies though they were? Once the battle's joined, we must see it through to the end.

OCIONNE: As you have done? As you have sworn to do?

DENAM: Yes. I will not falter now.

The Palace of the Dead

Palace of the Dead - Level 1

[An enchanter awaits Denam at the first level of the mysterious dungeon.]

FALFADAY: Well, this was unexpected. The Draconic power that rests within this place is not for the hands of the Resistance to hold. We thought to claim it first, but better to kill you now and be done with it. What need have we of the Dark Knights? Find your peace in this temple of death, boy!

[Denam fights off his new foes.]

FALFADAY: You'll...never make it to the palace...depths.

[Denam descends further.]

Palace of the Dead - Level 2

DENAM: I dislike the feel of this place.

MAN: Lovely. Only holy magic works on this lot!

[Denam spies a magus climbing the stairs and surrounded by ghostly enemies.]

RU DLUM: ...Caught between scales and a dead man.

DENAM: To his aid!

[Denam races to the struggling mage's aid.]

[Rudum dies.]

RU DLUM: A fatal...miscalculation!

[Rudlum is saved by Denam and his friends.]

RU DLUM: Thank you, good sirs. I believe I've hit something of a wall in my search for draconic magic. Perhaps you might be able to help me a bit? I'd be happy to make it worth your while. You're with the Resistance, yes? Escort me into the depths, and I'll help your cause. Fair?

[Choice 1 - You have a deal.]

DENAM: Then you are welcome to join us, Rudlum.

RU DLUM: A far warmer reception than I'll have from aught else in this foul place.

[Choice 2 - I must refuse.]

DENAM: I'm sorry, but I must refuse.

RUDLUM: A shame, that. The going only gets rougher farther down. Take care.

[They part ways.]

[Denam continues down the depths.]

Palace of the Dead - Level 3

DENAM: I've had more than enough of these dreary halls already.

WOMAN: Then why are you here?

[A lone woman stands before Denam.]

DENAM: I might ask the same of you!

[He glances around.]

DENAM: ...You came here alone?

WOMAN: Not alone...but the others are gone. Turned to cold stone.

DENAM: Where are they now?

WOMAN: Right beside you.

[Denam stares at the statue next to him.]

DENAM: This was a man?

WOMAN: Yes. He turned to stone as he lived. The guardian of this temple cursed him. All the statues here were once living flesh.

DENAM: ...Why stone?

WOMAN: This temple is holy ground.... Only the disciples of Ashmedai are permitted within.

DENAM: Then...who are you?

WOMAN: I am Xadoba.... And you are good as dead.

[She is engulfed in a cloud of smoke and transforms into a gorgon.]

DENAM: You're the guardian!

XADOBA: Fool mortal! You will grow cold and stand watch here through the ages!

[Denam fights off her horde of monsters.]

XADOBA: It is better...this way. Those who seek power are right to tread the dark paths. Walk on, over my corpse...into the darkness.

[Denam heeds her words and continues.]

Palace of the Dead - Level 5

[Denam encounters a strange elderly man and two stone-like figures.]

NYBETH: Hmm.... The primordial structures within their bodies fail. The transformation was...incomplete. Living corpse makes undead out of the dead.... While resurrect merely puts off the true death for a time. Neither is the solution I seek. I was lucky, perhaps, in the case of the Galgastani knight. Binding his soul to flesh is no mean feat! But true primordial regeneration...that approaches the divine. I achieve one half of the solution, only to watch the other fall to pieces. As futile as forging swords of glass! My apologies to you both. You were...failures. But a necessary sacrifice in the timeless pursuit of eternal, undying youth! Perhaps I will have to enlist help from another quarter - Oh? What do we have here?

[Denam recognizes one of the faces staring blankly at him.]

DENAM: S-sir Leonar?

NYBETH: Ah! I remember you! Hmm.... Denam, was it? A pleasure, to be sure! So you've come seeking draconic magic as so many heroes of old before you, yes? Fitting, fitting. All those who wish for victory in battle must ever seek a greater power! It is necessary, a prerequisite to becoming a leader among men. And quite a leader you've become. Hee! I will take our meeting here as a sign! Perhaps you'd like to see the fruits of my research? Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you to serve! Darkness to me! You did me a bad turn at Qadriga - I've been meaning to thank you for that.

NYBETH: I admit I was not expecting company. Denam of the Resistance...am I right? Nice to finally meet you in the flesh, as it were.

DENAM: I know you. You're Nybeth Obdilord - the corpse-mage from Galgastan. What have you done to Sir Leonar?

NYBETH: He and his companion were necessary "materials," shall we say, for my research into immortality. A noble cause, you must agree.

DENAM: Noble? You profane god's creation and commit sacrilege upon the dead! Release them, now!

NYBETH: How can I release something that does not exist? These "men" you see before you are naught more than piles of dirt - or soon would have been, had I left them to decay. No souls, just animated corpses.... Are you even listening to me? Perhaps this will seize your attention: Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Nybeth calls forth a number of undead allies.]

NYBETH: Now, witness the fruits of my research!

DENAM: Sir Leonar! It is I, Denam!

LEONAR: ...

NYBETH: It's no use, you know. He remembers not one whit of his former life. How could he, when his soul is gone? Tell me, do you know why the undead always seem so bent on violence? It is because death is **agony**...and they despise the living for not suffering as they do. To the undead mind - such as it is - the only way to ease their pain is to inflict the same upon you!

DENAM: So Sir Leonar is gone.... Repent swiftly, necromancer, for you join him soon!

[Cressida confronts her father.]

CRESSIDA: Commander Ronsenbach.... You are defiled by my father's sorcery. Forgive us, commander. I will not allow this sacrilege to continue!

NYBETH: Sacrilege? My dear child! Necromancy is a noble art! It is nothing less than the path to salvation of the body and soul. ...The power to overcome death!

CRESSIDA: Was it salvation you offered my mother and sister in Golyat? No...you knew it would not be complete. From the very beginning you knew they would be left in that horrible place betwixt life and death!

NYBETH: I disagree. In this matter, my heart sees **truly** as it has never seen before! I love Cassandra and Moldova. How could I not try to free them from death's bonds? No, I must strive to resurrect them, and toward this end, I use my art without hesitation.

CRESSIDA: So you cling to such dreams, ever lacking the courage to face the truth of your failure. You talk of freeing your family, but if anyone is captive to death, it is you. Let me free you from this life, father, that you may trouble the dead no more!

[Denam recognizes the other figure.]

XAEBOS: What in the hells!? This body...what demon sorcery is this!?

DENAM: Xaebos?

XAEBOS: Master Nybeth! What has happened to me? Why am I...

[He dies.]

NYBETH: Some of my subjects are...sturdier than others. Hee!

LEONAR: What is this place? What has befallen me?

DENAM: Sir Leonar!

LEONAR: Denam...? Wait.... I remember...death.

[He falls.]

DENAM: Sir Leonar!

[Denam prepares to finish Nybeth.]

NYBETH: An...unfortunate turn. Though I am not...unprepared. Demunza, lord of the abyss, grant me the destructive fist and merciful heart bound within this ring! Break your seal!

[He raises a mysterious jewel high above him, collapses and transforms though a cloud of smoke into a lifeless, skeletal version of himself.]

NYBETH: Ah, yes, a much more **fitting** form for one so intimate with death. Hee! Pure undeath is achievable, you see, provided you use the right tools...and you're not too attached to your own humanity! Something to discuss further next we meet.

[He once again transforms into a crow and disappears as Denam predicted.]

DENAM: Nybeth!

Palace of the Dead - Level 5 (Neutral)

[Denam encounters a familiar face.]

NYBETH: Ah! I remember you! Hmm.... Denam, was it? A pleasure, to be sure! So you've come seeking draconic magic as so many heroes of old before you, yes? Fitting, fitting. All those who wish for victory in battle must ever seek a greater power! It is necessary, a prerequisite to become a leader among men. And quite a leader you've become. Hee! I will take our meeting here as a sign! Perhaps you'd like to see the fruits of my research? Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you to serve! Darkness to me!

[Nybeth calls forth a number of undead allies.]

NYBETH: You gave me a bad turn at Ndamsa, but you'll fare far worse this time round! Hee!

[Some of Denam's allies face off against their father.]

OELIAS: Nybeth! Your twisted ambitions die here!

NYBETH: Oelias? Is that you? I did not think to meet **you** here. It pains me that you still do not grasp the true meaning of your father's research.

OELIAS: My father was not the monster I see before me! I will cast your soul so deep in the darkness even the gods will not be able to find you!

NYBETH: You've drawn even further away than I imagined. Is that what you threaten to all those you kill in the name of revolution? Does the blood not drip from our hands in equal measure?

DIEVOLD: Nybeth...father! Even if you believe your research is for the good of man, it is anathema, and history will judge you so.

NYBETH: An easy thing to censure me, my son. But can you look upon yourselves and say you are without guilt? Why have you not thrown down your swords? What you call righteousness is no more than a base struggle for survival. You close your eyes to the piles of corpses **you** have made, choosing to see only your shining ideals. Am I any different...perhaps! For my efforts will bring about true change! You speak of history, but I look to the future! Yes, many souls may have suffered from my inquiries, but it is a small price to pay. My sins are for my family, and I will not bow to a senseless oppressor too blind to see the value of my work!

DIEVOLD: Father, I have no ear for your words or your reasonings. What wisdom can be had from talking to a madman? I have realized one truth, however. You must be stopped before you can do another what you have done to me!

NYBETH: You have your father's gift for words, my son! In truth you move my heart! How unfortunate I cannot restore your body to what it once was...but perhaps that is as it should be, yes? No more fitting finale to this farce than combat between father and son! Hee! May it entertain you in the afterlife!

[Oelias considers her father's words.]

OELIAS: That may be, but we do not rejoice in the taking of lives...nor do we play with mortality!

NYBETH: You think I do this, my greatest work, for me amusement?

OELIAS: You claim otherwise? What possible reason could you have to rob the lives of innocents, to patch flesh upon flesh, to bind souls to decaying decaying shells?

NYBETH: You ask my reasons? I do it for the family I love.

OELIAS: For your family!? You engage in these horrors for us!? When you dragged Dievold back into this world, you left his life behind.

NYBETH: Yes, Dievold was unfortunate. But it does not change the fact that I did this for you!

OELIAS: I fail to understand.

NYBETH: Then...Dievold told you nothing? Hrm...that won't do.

[Oelias fights to reach her father.]

OELIAS: Tell me what you meant, Nybeth. How could this be for me!?

NYBETH: Since you ask, I will tell you. My dear Oelias. You are nothing other than my most precious partner...my wife.

OELIAS: I know you to be mad, but this is beyond the pale! Me, your wife!? Impossible!

NYBETH: But it is no lie! You are dead once already. It was before this warring began...a sudden death. In Dievold's case, I was mercifully able to save his head, but of you nothing more was left than ribbons of flesh. It was all I could do to stop the swift flight of your soul and bind it to this body.

OELIAS: This...body? My body!?

[Nybeth continues revealing his twisted truth to Oelias's shock.]

OELIAS: Is this true, Dievold? Is it true what he says? I must know!

DIEVOLD: ...You know it yourself, Oelias. Though he may conceal the truth at times, Nybeth is not the sort to spin such tales. I am sorry. I could not bring myself to tell you.

OELIAS: But no...I have memories. I am Oelias! I remember playing with my brother...my mother's many kindnesses.... Those memories are not lies...are they!?

NYBETH: I do not blame Dievold for his inability to disabuse you of your misconceptions. But the body you inhabit is the body of our daughter Amala! Amala...survived the tragedy, but her grasp on life was fragile. I thought...no, before thought, I decided which soul to save!

OELIAS: You chose me...

NYBETH: Yes! Because I love you! Oelias, as your life now is proof, I love you with all my heart! When I transferred your soul to Amala's body, for reasons I cannot fathom your memories were lost. In exchange, you absorbed Amala's memories into yourself...in effect, becoming Amala!

OELIAS: Wait. If what you're saying is true, how do you know I'm not really Amala? You thought you were saving your wife, when in fact you saved me! Have you any proof that my soul is Oelias's?

NYBETH: Fascinating! If one accepts the hypothesis that the self is a formation of memory - then perhaps you are **not** Oelias after all! But...ask your soul who you are, and consider the answer you receive. The soul does not lie! Yes. Though we tell tales with silvered tongue, we cannot deceive ourselves for long. One may play the saint, but it is our **actions** which divide good from evil. We profess our love for another, but is this not merely making excuse for our own irrational behavior? How can anyone else understand who we are, if they don't even accept our right to exist!? Yes, only your soul knows you. Face yoursoul! Embrace it! It's all you have!

OELIAS: I don't know what you're talking about.... I don't understand!

[After hearing enough, Denam steps in.]

DENAM: Don't let him fluster you, Oelias. Believe in your own strength.

NYBETH: Oh, that won't work, Denam. She has already seen the truth I speak! She has communed with her soul and found the answer there, whether she chooses to accept it or not.

DENAM: you truly believe what you say, Nybeth, don't you. That saddens me. So many words, grand schemes you build in your mind, when all you build with your hands is corruption. You would create life, but all you have created is the appearance of life. You profess love for your family, and yet you have lost them so completely they would rather see you dead. If your name lingers in history at all, it will be to say that here you faced the Resistance, and here you died.

NYBETH: The young warrior spins a fine tale. But is it truth or fancy?

DENAM: I can't imagine that it matters whether we defeat you here or not. It's almost not worth the effort to fight someone so...trivial. Even to consider its worth is a waste of time, seeing as how you'll likely flee again.

NYBETH: Perhaps you are right. Perhaps these truths I espouse are, in fact, falsehoods - unbeknownst to me, mind you. But what if I **am** right? Wouldn't you like to know?

DENAM: Not particularly, no. Words always pale before action, much as dreams fade before achievement. You have lost your love of family, your thirst for true knowledge, your loyalty to your homeland, and your charity toward your people. No matter what words we speak here today, you are and will remain a sad, old man who has lost all.

[Denam prepares to finish Nybeth.]

NYBETH: An...unfortunate turn. Though I am not...unprepared. Demunza, lord of the abyss, grant me the destructive fist and merciful heart bound within this ring! Break your seal!

[He raises a mysterious jewel high above him, collapses and transforms through a cloud of smoke into a lifeless, skeletal version of himself.]

NYBETH: Ah, yes, a much more **fitting** form for one so intimate with death. Hee! Pure undeath is achievable, you see, provided you use the right tools...and you're not too attached to your own humanity! Something to discuss further next we meet.

[He once again transforms into a crow and disappears as Denam predicted.]

DENAM: I knew you'd flee, Nybeth. And good riddance! But when you think back on the ideals, the companions, the family you've left behind.... Know that I will have all these things. And you will not.

Palace of the Dead - Level 22

[Further down the depths Denam encounters a woman in distress.]

DENAM: Those zombies have that woman surrounded! Wait...what is she doing down here?

BEELZEBUTH: There now, go ahead. Go on, try them!

[The zombied units surrounding the mysterious mage raise items far over their heads and in a puff of smoke transform into undead.]

BEELZEBUTH: Thus they are called the "Books of the Dead." I see! Quite impressive for a mortal accomplishment, even if the books require the temple's raw power to work their magic.

DENAM: You, down there! ...What are you?

BEELZEBUTH: Georges, I leave this to you.

[She disappears beneath the floor and an undead mage appears.]

GEORGES: As you wish, madam. Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness, be my hand!

[He summons a host of undead and zombie troops.]

GEORGES: Let us see what these mortals have to offer us by way of entertainment.

[Denam fights this mysterious mage.]

GEORGES: Bodies are fleshy, weak things.... A nuisance. and yet, without, one cannot taste the living air...

[He falls and Denam continues the dangerous trek.]

Palace of the Dead - Level 41

[Denam discovers Beelzebuth again toiling in the decrepit palace.]

BEELZEBUTH: There. This is more like it...

DENAM: The woman from before!

BEELZEBUTH: How unusual to see mortals here. Ah...you are Denam of Golyat, commander of the forces at Almorica! That explains how you were able to defeat Georges. A perfect opportunity to use the dragon lords' rings of the dead. They will resonate with the power of the temple.

[Beelzebuth's followers raise the powerful rings and transform into undead.]

DENAM: That's the same artifact Nybeth used!

BEELZEBUTH: The dragon lords were well versed in the dark. They even fashioned trinkets allowing the most ignorant to wield powerful magic. Not that any mere surface dweller could comprehend, let alone employ, it. Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[Her undead ranks grow.]

BEELZEBUTH: Now, Denam of Golyat, let us see if you live up to your reputation!

[Denam fights the mysterious mage.]

BEELZEBUTH: I bow to you, surface dweller. You fight well. If you plan on venturing further, however, know that ambition and curiosity are not your allies.

[She disappears in a ball of light.]

Palace of the Dead - Level 74

[Again Denam encounters the mysterious woman.]

BEELZEBUTH: Ah, wonderful. I was hoping we'd meet again. You and that necromancer have even more insatiable appetites for knowledge than I. Perhaps you are driven by some unquenchable desire? An ambition that fears not even death. Do not mistake me. Ambition is vital. Those without cannot prevail in the inevitable contest for survival. Espouse whatever lofty ideals you wish...we all exist in this world to satisfy our baser desires. Aaah, I feel it. That dark desire, deep within your heart! You are a fitting supplicant to this temple. You are closer to the dark than any I know!

[Her shadowy host quickly appears.]

BEELZEBUTH: I...tire of this body. Mayhaps I'll take yours. Don't worry. I'll put your companions' bodies to good use, too. There are many, many souls in need of bodies. Flesh and blood to anchor them to this world. You remember Georges? How he pesters me to find him a suitable vessel. Yes, let us dance your final dance. The time is nigh!

[Beelzebuth advances on Denam with a ghastly purpose.]

BEELZEBUTH: Your kind, too, is but another branch upon the dark lineage. You're not so different from we demons of the dark. No, your souls are born from ours...and as long as this is true, you will never claim the light!

[Denam defends his body and soul.]

BEELZEBUTH: Ah...weak. Too weak, this corporeal form. But remember. As long as this palace to the dark remains, those who dwell upon the surface will venture here to satisfy their desire for power. And when they come, I will take their bodies as my own, and once again feel warm blood coursing through my veins! We will meet again.

[Her body falls but her spirit escapes.]

Palace of the Dead - Altar of the Beyond

[Denam and company reach a narrow pathway surrounded on all sides by scorching lava. Nybeth awaits him.]

NYBETH: Impressive! To come all this way.... I half suspect you are led by the same dark that shadows my path! Did you know that I have discovered the purpose for which this temple was constructed? It was built for people like you! Ah...but I see you are not concerned with such matters. If you insist on playing the hero come to vanquish me, I shall be happy to act my part. Denizens of the abyss! From ink of blackest night, I summon you! Darkness to me!

[His undead allies appear.]

NYBETH: This conflict was foreordained, you know. All is laid out upon the wheel of fate, free from the meddling hands of mortals.

[Denam struggles to defeat Nybeth.]

NYBETH: Ah...yesss.... So **this** is the dark! I am becoming one with you now...it is.... It is ecstasy! Yes! The dark has chosen me! The bodies of the unwitting will be my vessels! I am immortal...

[He falls amidst his ecstasy.]

Credits

Square-Enix - Remaking this great game.

GameFAQs - The boards and the FAQs, particularly Zahlzeit's guide and MegatenYosi's recruitment guide

Humble Novice - Google Docs script project for Cistina dialogue, early Denam/Golyat dialogue (and all other users who contributed to that script) and reference for choice selections based on the PS1 script

Mr. Apple - Linking Endings for transcription (YouTube account name is a little risque)

Elyon - Additional optional scenes

Cyril - CODA guide

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Lastly, Kyle Johnston is a busy man. He rushed this guide out for its first version. Please, please, please do him a favor and contact him if you notice any mistakes (even if it's only one tiny grammatical error). If you would like to assist him in any way or add to the FAQ itself, please contact him. Again, his e-mail address is Gilgamesh1095@gmail.com, and can also be reached via the messageboards on GameFAQs.com.

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