

CHOSEN ONE

Written by

Olivia Colburn

INT. IRINIEL'S OFFICE - MORNING

(The following scene is in subtitled Dejorean.)

VERISIOS knocks on IRINIEL's door.

IRINIEL

Enter.

Verisios enters and bows, waiting for permission to sit from Iriniel, who is giving him half her attention. The other half goes to her work. Her office is white marble and gilded with gold, angelic and Roman in architecture.

IRINIEL

Sit.

Verisios sits.

IRINIEL

I assume you have good news for me?

VERISIOS

Yes, my lady. I... I've found him.

Iriniel looks up, paying her full attention. She is serious and overworked, but she rubs her forehead and smiles.

IRINIEL

Then perhaps there is hope after all. Can we reach him?

VERISIOS

It will be difficult, my lady, but it will be done.

Iriniel stands, prompting Verisios to stand as well. She places a hand on Verisios's shoulder.

IRINIEL

Then the end of this war is in sight because of you, Verisios. Take Mikael. Find the savior. Bring him home. We will not fall.

VERISIOS

(Flustered)

O-of course, my lady. At once.

Verisios exits, eager to get to work and please Iriniel. The door closes behind him heavily.

INT. COMPSCI CLASSROOM-DAY

VINCENT, your average high school senior, sits at his desk, squinting at the board in confusion and taking hesitant notes as MS. GREENE teaches computer science.

The bell rings.

MS. GREENE

...And that's all, folks. As a reminder, your labs are due Friday, the one two days from now, not next week. Have a good one.

Vincent sighs and packs up, rubbing the back of his head. He is having a rough time in computer science, and his lab hasn't been going well.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Vincent's friend CHET stops Vincent in the hall. Chet looks like an asshole jock and has the name to match. They talk as they walk through a crowded hallway, with students messing with lockers, blocking the hall, making out, etc.

CHET

Yo, Vince! I feel like we haven't hung out in forever, man.

VINCENT

Chet, it's been like three days.

CHET

Exactly! You busy today?

VINCENT

Yeah, sorry. I've got a club meeting after school.

CHET

A club meeting? Just skip it, dude! You were supposed to stop going to those like-

(He checks his watch)

Two months ago.

VINCENT

I kind of want to go.

CHET

Fine. What about tomorrow?

A gaggle of students blocks the way, standing in the middle of the hallway. Chet separates them and they walk through.

VINCENT

Oh, uh... I have a project due Friday. I gotta work on it tomorrow. After school Friday work for you?

CHET

Nah, man. I have practice.

VINCENT

This weekend?

CHET

I'm free.

VINCENT

Sounds good. See you then.

CHET

See you.

They separate. Chet leaves for his car, while Vincent heads on to his club.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Vincent enters and sits next to ELENA. She glances up from her sketchbook, where she is drawing clothing designs. She is dressed fashionably and is overdressed for high school but seems comfortable.

VINCENT

Hey, Lena.

ELENA

Hey.

VINCENT

Listen, uh... I have this compsci lab due on Friday, and-

ELENA

(interrupts jokingly)

You need me to do it for you again?

VINCENT

What? No, I just need some help. I'm taking notes and everything; I just don't get it.

ELENA

What unit are you on?

Vincent pulls out his laptop and checks his notes.

VINCENT

Polymorphism. (beat) I think.

Elena raises her brows.

ELENA

*That's* what you're having trouble with?

VINCENT

Come on, Lena. It's hard for *me*.

ELENA

Fine, fine. Tea's on you next time. Consider it my tutoring fee.

VINCENT

For sure. Thanks.

Vincent pulls out his drawing tablet and loads up art software. He is working on a stylized landscape. He also pulls out a sketchbook, which contains character designs, and a pencil. He takes a small knife out of his pocket to sharpen his pencil.

INT. VERISIOS'S LAB - AFTERNOON

(The following scene is in subtitled Dejorean.)

Verisios's lab is cluttered but bright. Alchemical tools litter the workbench, all glittering metals studded with gems. There is a cot in the corner and remains of food and drink; it is evident that he spends much, if not all, of his time here.

Verisios fiddles with an array of perfectly cut crystals that float in the air. Each contains the image of a different world, and each facet contains the image of a different location on that world.

VERISIOS

Yes! I've found him!

MIKAEL (O.S.)

Yeah, I haven't heard *that* before.

Mikael steps into the shot, holding up a charred cape in one hand and brushing ashes off himself with the other. Under the dirt and ashes, he is tall and graceful, a classic elven beauty. His sullen expression somewhat ruins the effect.

VERISIOS

This time it's true!

MIKAEL

(Sarcastically)

As you say, so it must be. How about you go first this time?

Mikael gives his cape a shake, and half of it breaks off, crumbling to ash. Verisios doesn't notice. Mikael drops the remains on the worktable and flicks ash off his hand, sending a few flakes fluttering down over the table.

VERISIOS

It makes more sense for you to go first. You're the fighter, after all. Besides, I have to maintain the rift.

MIKAEL

(Under his breath)

I'm sure Lady Iriniel will be impressed by your bravery.

Verisios looks up.

VERISIOS

What? Something about Lady Iriniel?

Mikael snorts.

MIKAEL

Nothing, nothing.

Mikael steps closer to the floating array as Verisios prepares to open a rift to Earth. Mikael watches as Verisios takes the crystal that holds an image of Earth and carefully centers a small chisel on a particular facet.

MIKAEL

Which one of these is Yina?

VERISIOS

Hmm? That one.

Verisios points to a particular crystal, then picks up a hammer and smashes the chisel into the Earth crystal. It makes a sound like a windchime, and a tiny rift opens.

Mikael takes the crystal to Yina and inspects it. Verisios widens the rift by pulling it open with his hands, leaving it large enough for someone to step through. Mikael pockets the crystal.

VERISIOS

Now-

Mikael pushes Verisios through the rift.

VERISIOS

You-

Verisios manages to half-turn and grab Mikael, pulling them both through the rift. It closes behind them.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Elena and Vincent are walking through the student parking lot. They stop at Elena's car.

ELENA

Sure you don't want a ride to your car?

VINCENT

Yeah, I'm good. See ya.

ELENA

See you.

Elena gets in her car and drives off. Vincent sets off in the opposite direction, heading for his car.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Vincent has walked out of school and crossed the street to a restaurant where he parks. There is not enough student parking at his high school.

He enters the lot from the back, taking out his keys to unlock his car, when Verisios and Mikael come up on him from behind.

VERISIOS

Savior!

Vincent jumps and turns around to see Verisios and Mikael. Both are inhumanely angelic and elven, with pointed ears and pale complexions. They are clearly not entirely human.

VINCENT

What the fuck?

VERISIOS

(In English)

It is you! The savior of our kind, the prophesied one!

VINCENT

Uh...

Vincent keeps edging to his car. Mikael comes around behind him, cutting off his path, but he is not overtly threatening.

VINCENT  
(Reluctantly)  
Can I help you with something?

VERISIOS  
Yes!

Verisios clasps Vincent's hand.

VERISIOS (CONT'D)  
You are destined to come with us, boy! You have been prophesized for centuries as our savior, the one who will finally end a millennia-long war between us and our oppressors!

Vincent looks around.

VINCENT  
Uh, me?

VERISIOS  
Yes!

Mikael frowns at a brand-new English phrases book, the kind tourists buy. He doesn't really know English.

VINCENT  
I'm flattered? But I'm kind of busy, so if you could just let me get to my car real quick...

He continues edging toward the car, and Mikael doesn't stop him.

MIKAEL  
(In Dejurean)  
Should I stop him?

VERISIOS  
Yes, you fool! Our future depends on him!  
(In English)  
Please hear me out, friend. If you deem our cause unworthy, I will not force you to come. Please.

Mikael stands behind Vincent once more. Vincent looks between them, then decides to stay.



VINCENT

Fine. But make it quick.

VERISIOS

Of course.

Verisios spreads his hands grandly.

VERISIOS

We are of an esteemed people called the Exalica. For thousands of years, we have warred with a cruel people, the Felastrae, who are determined to see the end of us. We're fought for survival all these years, our hope sustained by a prophecy that tells of you, the chosen one, he who will save us and let us end this war.

VINCENT

I-

VERISIOS

Only your presence is required! If time is a concern for you, let me ease your mind! On my life, it will be no time away from your home!

Mikael frowns at the English guidebook, trying to translate in real time.

MIKAEL

(In Dejorean)

Is that right?

Verisios ignores Mikael.

VERISIOS

(In English)

Please, savior! Come see my home and meet my people. I'll take you home whenever you say. All I ask is you give us a chance.

VINCENT

I... I don't know, man. I've got this project...

VERISIOS

Project? What project? What is that?

VINCENT

It's... it's for a class. I have to do it so I don't fail. I really need to pass.

VERISIOS

Is that so important as the fate of an entire people?

VINCENT

Uh... I mean, to me...

VERISIOS

Please, just visit us. If you see my home and do not sympathize with our plight, I will spirit you home personally.

Vincent hesitates, looking between his car, Mikael, and Verisios.

VERISIOS

At least come see, savior. My home is a beautiful place. It deserves not to be destroyed.

Vincent puffs up a little at "savior."

VINCENT

Well... I can leave whenever I want?

VERISIOS

On my life!

VINCENT

Fine. (Beat) Yeah, alright. I have to be back tonight, though. My car might get towed.

VERISIOS

You will be.

Verisios glares at Mikael, who tosses him the Yina crystal, and pulls out his chisel and hammer.

Vincent pulls out his phone and texts his parents, letting them know he'll be home late. When he looks up, Verisios has opened the rift to Yina. Through the rift, he can see Verisios's lab. He stares in amazement.

VERISIOS

After you, savior.

VINCENT

Wow. Wow, yeah. Okay.

Vincent enters the rift to Yina, followed by Verisios and Mikael, and stumbles into Verisios's lab.

INT. IRINIEL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Verisios bursts into Iriniel's office with Mikael and Vincent in tow.

VINCENT

Er... Hello.

IRINIEL

(In Dejorean)

Is this him?

VERISIOS

Yes, my lady.

IRINIEL

Excellent. Good work, Verisios.

Verisios is flustered by the attention. He is infatuated with Iriniel; it is one-way and will remain that way.

VERISIOS

Of course, my lady. Of course.

IRINIEL

He can't understand us, can he? A shame. Get him prepared for his role. We will need him for the coming trials.

VERISIOS

Yes, my lady.

(In English)

She laments that she cannot speak to you herself. Come, savior. I will prepare you.

VINCENT

Yeah. Sure.

They exit.

INT. VERISIOS'S LAB - EVENING

Verisios frets about Vincent, fitting him with fantastical armor, studded with jewels and gilded with gold. It does not look nearly as practical as ceremonial.

VINCENT  
You almost done?

VERISIOS  
(in English)  
Almost, almost. And... done.

He finishes latching a last strap, and Vincent stands like a fantasy hero straight out of a movie with a dummy thick budget.

Vincent spots himself in a mirror.

VINCENT  
Damn.

VERISIOS  
Indeed.

Verisios inhales deeply and turns to Mikael.

VERISIOS  
(in Dejorean)  
Do you feel it?

MIKAEL  
(uninterested)  
Not really.

Verisios snorts in derision.

VERISIOS  
Perhaps try next time. No matter. I  
can sense the strength he brings.  
(In English)  
We will feast tonight in your  
honor, savior. Come!

Vincent admires himself in the mirror one last time as he follows Verisios out, himself trailed by Mikael. With difficulty through his armor, he fumbles his phone out of his pocket to check the time.

INT. GRAND HALL - NIGHT

Vincent sits between Iriniel and Verisios. Mikael sits next to Verisios moodily-he is important, but he doesn't vibe with Verisios.

People are enjoying a feast. All are elfishly beautiful and graceful. A quartet, consisting of a flute, chimes, crystal glasses, and a single-string instrument, plays in the corner.

Iriniei silences the crowd the the barest touch of a silver fork to her glass.

IRINIEL  
(in Dejorean)  
My friends, tonight is a night of celebration. After years of war, the end is in sight, thanks to the efforts of our High Alchemist Verisios and Martial Lord Mikael.

The crowd cheers, excited but not raucous.

IRINIEL  
This night is the beginning of the end. We will be able to to forge an age of peace and prosperity for the Dejorean Empire at last. The Felastraeon scourge will be no more!

Iriniei's voice fades to the background, and Vincent leans toward Verisios.

VINCENT  
(In English)  
What is she saying?

VERISIOS  
She is celebrating your presence, savior.

Vincent shifts. He is uncomfortable.

VINCENT  
It's getting late. I need to head back soon.

VERISIOS  
All in good time, as promised. Now, be silent. It is an honor to hear Lady Iriniei speak.

Vincent subsides, and Verisios pays rapt attention to Iriniei. Under the table, Vincent checks the time on his phone. It's past nine, and he has no service.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Verisios walks Vincent through a hall to a guest room, stopping outside a set of grand doors.

VERISIOS

You will stay here for the night.  
It should have everything you  
require, but if there is anything  
else, you need only ask.

Verisios pushes open the door, revealing a beautiful room  
within. He gestures for Vincent to enter, but he hesitates.

VINCENT

Can I go home for the night? I have  
stuff to take care of back home.

VERISIOS

You do not wish to aid us in our  
glorious purpose, prophesied one?

VINCENT

It's not that. I mean, I can come  
back, right? I just gotta get home  
for the night. You said I could go  
home whenever I needed, and, well,  
I need to.

Verisios purses his lips.

VERISIOS

Of course. It is as I said, savior.  
Wait here. I will reopen the rift  
to your home and send for you.

He waves Vincent into the room once more, leading into...

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

VERISIOS

Make yourself comfortable. I will  
send for you as soon as the rift is  
open once more.

VINCENT

Sure. Thanks.

Verisios leaves, closing the door with a click. Vincent  
removes his armor and sits on the bed, looking around  
aimlessly.

Montage

-Vincent paces.

-Vincent inspects various objects in the room, many of which  
clearly alien in construction.

-The alien moon moves.

-Vincent lies on the bed.

-Vincent paces.

-Vincent tries to read a book, but it is written in an alien alphabet.

Finally, Vincent tries the door. It is locked.

He tries it again. It is still locked. He jiggles the knob, but nothing changes.

VINCENT

Oh, shit.

He crosses the room and tries the window, but it doesn't budge.

VINCENT

Man...

He returns to the door and inspects the lock. He pulls his exacto knife out of his pocket and jams the blade in, wriggling it around. The lock pops with a click, the same click from when Verisios closed it and locked him in.

VINCENT

(Mutters)

Wow, that actually works.

The hallway is clear. Vincent steps out, into...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Vincent creeps down the hall.

VINCENT

(Under his breath)

Magic lab, magic lab...

He approaches a cross intersection and hears footsteps. He presses himself against the wall and shrinks down as one of the Exalica passes right before him.

Letting out a breath, Vincent continues.

He finally comes to Verisios's lab door. The door is cracked open, and Verisios is not in sight.

VINCENT

This portal better still be here.

Vincent places his hand on the door, and a hand falls on his shoulder.

VINCENT  
Shit!

He turns to see Mikael.

MIKAEL  
(In English)  
You should not be here.

VINCENT  
Exactly! Wait-you speak English?

Mikael pulls out the English guidebook. The cover says, "1000 Useful English Phrases."

MIKAEL  
This has been most informative.

VINCENT  
Uh-great. Look, I'm just trying to get home. That other guy, uh...

MIKAEL  
Verisios.

VINCENT  
Yeah, him. He said he would send me home.

MIKAEL  
Did he, now? Let's see.

Maintaining his grip on Vincent, he pushes open the door into...

INT. VERISIOS'S LAB - NIGHT

Verisios lies on a cot haphazardly shoved in the corner. He clearly has no intention of getting Vincent home.

At Mikael and Vincent's entry, he looks up, then jumps up.

VERISIOS  
(In English)  
Wh-savior, you've escap-come here!

MIKAEL  
He claims you agreed to send him home.



VERISIOS

(In Dejorean)

You fool! He's escaped his room.  
Take him back, now! And don't let  
it happen again!

MIKAEL

(In English)

I don't work for you, little cuck  
man. Do it yourself. Or better yet,  
keep your word.

VINCENT

"Little cuck man" is a useful  
English phrase?

Verisios grows enraged.

VERISIOS

Watch your tongue, boy. I could  
disintegrate you with a bare wave  
of my hand.

Mikael is unimpressed.

MIKAEL

Let's see it then. Go on, try me.

He spreads his arms, still holding Vincent, who tries to  
scoot away.

VINCENT

Maybe don't encourage him while  
I'm... attached to you.

MIKAEL

That's right. You wouldn't be  
Iriniel's golden boy if you  
destroyed the prophesied one, would  
you?

VERISIOS

Lady Iriniel.

MIKAEL

Answer this for me, Verisios. Do  
you honestly think you'll ever have  
a chance with Iriniel, or do you  
get off on knowing she's married?

Verisios growls and traces an elegant rune in the air with  
his finger. It glows bright white, then his whole hand  
begins to glow.

Mikael simply lifts Vincent with one hand and holds him between them.

Vincent waves his hands in front of himself frantically

VINCENT

WOAH! How about we all calm down,  
yeah?

Verisios's hand continues to glow, but it does not increase in brightness. Finally, he lowers his hand and scowls.

Mikael smirks.

MIKAEL

That's what I thought. Now deal  
with this yourself. I've a long day  
tomorrow, and it's late.

Mikael throws Vincent at Verisios, bowling him over with a crash.

VINCENT

Ow! Come on, man.

VERISIOS

Fucking asshole. I have the same  
day tomorrow, you know!

Mikael waves dismissively.

MIKAEL

Why don't you go cry about it to  
Irinieel, yeah?

He exits, leaving Vincent and Verisios to collect themselves. Vincent scrambles away.

VERISIOS

There's no point, savior. You can  
thank that fool Mikael for your  
current predicament. He closed the  
rift early.

VINCENT

So you were never going to send me  
home?

VERISIOS

I was certain that you would come  
to understand our plight. For  
thousands of years-

VINCENT

I heard the first time. Asshole.

Verisios shrugs.

VERISIOS

Am I an asshole? My crime is trying to save my people. Is that so bad?

VINCENT

When you're an asshole about it, yeah.

Verisios scowls.

VERISIOS

You will understand the good you bring to my people in due time. For now, however...

Verisios traces another rune in the air, a different one from before. Again, it glows, and so does a bright nexus that explodes in a blinding flash of light.

VINCENT

Shit!

Vincent doubles over, covering his eyes and backing away. He opens his eyes, blinking rapidly. His eyes water. The camera shows his perspective—he's been partially blinded by the flash.

VERISIOS

(To himself)

Such power...

VINCENT

What the fuck?

Verisios grabs him by the arm and pulls him through the lab.

VERISIOS

Apologies, savior. I can't have you wandering around tonight.

Vincent struggles at first, but lets Verisios lead him through the lab.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Verisios shoves Vincent into the guest room, and he falls to the ground.

VERISIOS

The blinding will wear off in the morning. I wish it hadn't come to this, savior.

VINCENT

Shut up.

He rises to his feet.

VERISIOS

I recommend you get some rest. We've all a long day ahead of us.

VINCENT

So I keep hearing. Who says I'll even help you?

VERISIOS

It is not your choice, I'm afraid. I trust you can find the bed yourself?

VINCENT

Get out, asshole.

VERISIOS

As you wish.

Verisios exits, closing the door behind him and locking it once more.

Vincent waits for a moment, then fumbles his way to the door, feeling the way forward with his hands. He tries the lock once more with his knife, slower this time, and it turns with a click.

VINCENT

Yes!

He pushes the door. It barely moves an inch before it's stopped by something. It's been barred or obstructed in some way from the outside.

VINCENT

For fuck's sake.

He shakes the door to no avail. With a frustrated sigh, he tries to stalk angrily to the bed, only to walk into it and double over. He straightens quickly and lies on the bed, scowling at a ceiling he can't see. He forces himself to close his eyes and try to get some sleep.

INT. GUEST ROOM - MORNING

Verisios bursts into the room, along with a couple goons. It seems after Mikael's disobedience, he has found people who do obey him.

VERISIOS

(To goons, in Dejorean)

Get him in the armor and bring him to the stables. We ride at daybreak.

(In English)

Comply, or you will go through this blind.

Vincent scowls but doesn't overtly resist. With a subtle motion, he transfers his knife from his pocket to his sleeve.

EXT. ROYAL STABLES - MOMENTS LATER

Vincent sits atop a tall horse in his fantasy armor, markedly more displeased than at the feast. He is flanked by Verisios's goons, with Verisios in front of him. His hands are secured to his saddle, and Verisios leads his horse.

Irinieel leads the force, with Mikael at her side. Verisios is noticeably displeased by this but only glowers.

There is a small force, all on horseback. They will join a larger force.

IRINIEEL

(In Dejorean)

Today is the beginning of the end. With our magic strengthened by the prophesied one, the Felastrae stand no chance against our light. To glorious victory!

ALL

To glorious victory!

Vincent scowls and shifts restlessly on horseback.

At Irinieel's signal, the force rides forth into...

EXT. DEJOREAN CAPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

The city. The architecture is all tall, graceful lines, with arches and long lines throughout. They leave the palace in the background, a tall, white building composed of several spires.

The city is beautiful. As they ride, they pass public fountains, cross under curving walkways, go over well-maintained roads, and see fantastical greenery.

Citizens cheer for their passing. They toss gold dust and flowers from above and aside, calling out various words of encouragement.

Soon, they are at the wall. The gates are open for them and they ride through, leading into...

EXT. THE ROAD TO BATTLE - MOMENTS LATER

The force rides out of the city and toward a dark, mountainous, and fiery horizon.

EXT. WAR CAMP - AFTERNOON

They approach the war camp. There are hundreds of Exalica bustling, the sun glinting madly on their silvery armor and weapons.

As they ride in, a general approaches Iriniel, walking alongside her horse.

GENERAL

(In Dejorean)

My lady, the preparations are complete. We simply await your word.

Iriniel nods curtly.

IRINIEL

Very good. We strike at once, before they gain wind of my arrival. If we hurry, we will still have the surprise advantage.

GENERAL

Yes, my lady.

The general races away, shouting commands and directing soldiers.

IRINIEL

Is the prophesied one prepared?

VERISIOS

Yes, my lady.

IRINIEL

Very good. We strike at once.

VERISIOS

As you command, my lady.

Irinie's force rides onward, joining the main force. Before them is what seems like a blighted land. The ground is cracked and black, with bone-white trees spiking out of the landscape. Gouts of fire spew up like geysers. Low, purple shrubbery covers the ground sparsely, sometimes pulsating or glowing with dark light. Mountains line the horizon.

Above the Exalican army, the sky is clear and bright. Above the Felastraeon land, reddish yellow clouds cast a false night.

Verisios takes Vincent's horse's lead and brings him to the fore.

VERISIOS

(In English)

You see what we are up against?  
Their very presence curses the  
land. They would see all of Yina  
barren and burning.

VINCENT

That's really interesting, but I  
missed the part where that's my  
problem.

Verisios scowls.

VERISIOS

I'll forgive your irreverence for  
now, savior. Admittedly, you are...  
justifiably upset with me. However,  
does that warrant damnation for the  
millions of innocents who only long  
for the guarantee of safety? I  
wronged you, savior. Not the  
Exalica.

VINCENT

I don't see any of your Exalica  
complaining about what you did to  
me.

He peers into the broken landscape. There is no sign of the enemy or civilization.

VINCENT

Where are they, anyway? Or is your  
enemy a bunch of dead trees?

VERISIOS

They hide underground like vermin.  
The sanctity of light is...  
distasteful to them, though this  
cursed cloud cover renders the  
surface safe for them.

VINCENT

So you're attacking them in their  
turf? I thought they were  
oppressing you.

VERISIOS

Have you never heard of a  
preemptive strike, savior? They  
have pushed this far. It is time we  
take back what is ours so that our  
greatest cities may never be at  
risk.

Vincent sets his jaw and watches the alien landscape. He is  
growing more and more disillusioned with the Exalica.

VERISIOS

If we do not invade them, they will  
strike us, tunneling through the  
ground to make our land black and  
destroying our very homes. Would  
you wait until your enemy has a  
sword to your throat before  
starting to fight back?

VINCENT

They're not my enemy.

The general, now on horseback, approaches Iriniel beside  
them. He hands her a giant war axe that even he struggles to  
lift. Iriniel accepts it gracefully, as if it weighs  
nothing.

GENERAL

(In Dejorean)

At your command, my lady.

Iriniel turns to face the army.

IRINIEL

Today marks the start of a new age,  
one of peace and prosperity for all  
Exalica on Yina. Today, we reclaim  
this border. Tomorrow, we reclaim  
our home!



Iriniei raises her axe, and the army cheers. Vincent watches sullenly.

IRINIEL

Onward! For justice! For the  
sanctified light! For the Exalica!

The army cheers again. Iriniei leads the charge forward into the blighted Felastrae land. As they cross over, everything darkens.

EXT. FELASTRAEAN PLAIN - MOMENTS LATER

All is eerily silent but for the crashing of hooves and clinking of armor. Geysers of fire are seemingly random and shockingly loud up close. A few of the Exalica are singed by surges of fire, and Vincent's horse nearly throws him when one erupts too close, and he shouts. Verisios struggles to stay by him.

They go a while without any geysers. The army is still wary, but it starts to relax.

With a roar, dozens of geysers erupt at once, shooting flames and demonic beings into the air, shouting. The army's composure breaks as Felastrae are deposited on them. Horses scream and battle cries ring out.

The Felastrae are a demonic people. They are horned and have visible bone structures poking through their skin over their muscles. They are huge and violent, blasting fire against the Exalica. Their war cries are guttural and animalistic. Their skin is reddish or purplish, and they wear bone jewelry that clatters like so many clicking teeth as they battle with the Exalica.

Many horses throw their riders and flee from the battle. Verisios is thrown from his seat and pulled into the battle. By some miracle, Vincent is left alone.

Vincent wriggles the knife out of his sleeve and into his gauntleted hand, rushing to cut the straps of his armor and the binding around his hands.

IRINIEL

Stand your ground! We have fate on  
our side!

Sure enough, after the initial shock, the Exalica begin to rally. Their magical attacks, consisting of blinding lights that burn holes through the Felastrae, seem more powerful than the Felastrae fire attacks.

One of the Felastrae, ELVORIAC, points to Vincent with her blade. She is a tall, muscled Felastra, wielding a broadsword that trails fire wherever it travels. Her hair is long and braided, with shaved sides and bone trinkets woven in.

ELVORIAC  
(In Florassan)  
It's him! He's the amplifier, the  
chosen one! Slay him and we will  
overwhelm them!

Vincent doesn't understand, but it's pretty clear what she means when the enemy's attention turns to him.

Vincent redoubles his efforts to free himself from his binds and identifying armor.

VINCENT  
(Muttering)  
Shit, shit, shit...

Finally, his hands are free. An explosion beside him throws him from his horse and out of sight of the enemy.

VERISIOS  
(In English)  
Savior! Stay where you are! We will  
have this scourge contained  
immediately!

The Exalica seem to be winning. Though there are now more Felastrae than Exalica, Exalican magic is overwhelming. Verisios blinds whole swathes of Felastrae in sweeping flashes. Mikael engages one of the Felastrae, ANAXORAGANAS, in single combat, whirling with two short swords. Anaxoraganas, a smaller Felastraean, steps back quickly, throwing spells and explosions to defend themself. Mikael seems to be winning the exchange.

VINCENT  
Yeah, right.

He finishes stripping the armor, almost tripping in his efforts to get away from the thick of battle. Once the armor is off, the effects are almost immediate. The Exalican magic weakens, the light becoming dimmer and shorter-lived. Likewise, the Felastraean magic becomes more impactful against a more vulnerable enemy.

VERISIOS  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Verisios turns from his enemy, suffering a blow but charging toward Vincent.

VERISIOS  
PUT THE ARMOR BACK ON, NOW!

Vincent looks down at the armor, then back at Verisios, then back at the armor, picking up a gauntlet and throwing it directly at Verisios. He raises his arms to block it, and Vincent ducks out of view.

Vincent looks back at the Exalican army, then the Felastraeon. His captors lie behind him, his would-be killers before. He chooses the Felastraeon, running forward. He ducks between clashing forces and whirling blades, simply seeking an escape from the Exalica and the battle.

In jumping away to narrowly avoid decapitation, Vincent bumps into Elvoriac, who supports a wounded Anaxoraganas. She looks down, confused, then enraged.

ELVORIAC  
(In Florassan)  
YOU!

She raises her broadsword with a single hand.

Vincent raises his arms defensively and shies away.

VINCENT  
(In English)  
Woah, woah, wait! It's not what you think!

Elvoriac keeps her blade in the air without swinging.

VINCENT  
Please don't kill-wait, you understand me?

ELVORIAC  
(In English)  
Gift of tongues, boy. Explain before I change my mind.

VINCENT  
(Mutters)  
Jesus, that's convenient.  
(In a normal tone)  
They lied to me and held me against my will. When I tried to escape, they blinded me and locked me in my room! Look!

Vincent holds up his arms, which hold the remnants of their bindings.

VINCENT

They tied me to my horse so I  
couldn't escape! I'm just trying to  
go home. I... I just want to go  
home.

Elvoriac eyes him with an unreadable expression.

ANAXORAGANAS

That's just fucked up.

VINCENT

That's what I'm saying! Please, I  
don't care about your war. I don't  
even want to be here! I just want  
to go home and be left alone.

Elvoriac growls, and Vincent cringes backward. In a sweeping movement, Elvoriac sheathes her blade on her back and picks up Vincent by the collar.

ELVORIAC

Those bastards. Leave it to them to  
force an innocent into their  
campaign.

With a wounded Anaxoraganas and a flailing Vincent in each arm, Elvoriac bounds forward, barreling through the battle. Vincent screams as she jumps into one of the geysers, landing in...

INT. UNDERGROUND COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

...A tunnel lit by veins of fire and glowing purple crystals. She travels a while through twisting tunnels until reaching a cavern, similarly lit with glowing crystals and fire. The cavern also has small, glowing bugs, and the roots of the shrubby purple plants reach down, giving off their own light.

Felastreae flurry about; the cavern is half-command, half-infirmery. Elvoriac heads to the infirmery, dumping Anaxoraganas on one of the empty cots.

ANAXORAGANAS

Ow. I'm fine, really.

There is a bleeding cut along their forearm.

ELVORIAC

Get that wrapped and we'll talk.  
(MORE)

ELVORIAC (CONT'D)  
(Shouts)  
Daniagath!

DANIAGATH, another Felastrae, approaches.

DANIAGATH  
(In Florassan)  
Elvoriac? Is everything okay?

ELVORIAC  
(In English)  
Patch Anaxoraganas up.

Daniagath starts cleaning Anaxoraganas's wound.

DANIAGATH  
(About Vincent, in  
English)  
Is that...

ELVORIAC  
Their chosen one.

DANIAGATH  
What?

ELVORIAC  
What do you mean, what?

DANIAGATH  
What chosen one?

Elvoriac rubs her forehead.

ELVORIAC  
Never mind. Who did you think it  
was?

Daniagath looks around, blinks, and continues bandaging  
Anaxoraganas's wound.

ELVORIAC  
...Right.  
(To Vincent)  
You want to go home, right? How did  
you get here?

VINCENT  
Through a portal. But that was back  
in... wherever I was. The capital,  
I guess.

ELVORIAC

Anaxoraganas? Can you get him home?

ANAXORAGANAS

I think so. As long as he has a strong connection to where he comes from.

Elvoriac looks at Vincent questioningly.

VINCENT

I think I have that.

Daniagath finishes bandaging their arm, and Anaxoraganas flexes their arm.

ANAXORAGANAS

Then we're good to go.

Elvoriac catches the arm of a passing Felastra.

ELVORIAC

How goes the battle?

FELASTRA

We're beating them back. They should retreat soon.

ELVORIAC

Good.

She releases the Felastra.

ELVORIAC

We'll see you home personally, uh...

VINCENT

Vincent.

ELVORIAC

Vincent. We can't have those bastards grabbing you again, can we?

VINCENT

Thanks.

ELVORIAC

You ready to go, or do you need a rest? It must have been quite a shock, getting thrown into the thick of it like that.

VINCENT

I'm good, thanks. I just want to go home.

ELVORIAC

Good.

Elvoriac claps Vincent on the shoulder, who winces.

ELVORIAC

Daniagath, Anaxoraganas, you come with.

(To Anaxoraganas)

Do you have everything you need?

Anaxoraganas riffles through a bag. Inside is an assortment of crystals, alien plants, hand-made explosives, and more.

ANAXORAGANAS

...Yeah, we should be good.

Elvoriac offers Anaxoraganas a hand to stand.

ELVORIAC

Then let's get going.

Elvoriac leads the four of them to a less inhabited corner of the cavern.

Anaxoraganas takes a clear crystal out of their bag.

ANAXORAGANAS

Take my hand and focus on where you want to go.

Vincent takes Anaxoraganas's hand hesitantly. It looks like it might burn, but Vincent suffers no harm.

ANAXORAGANAS

Got it?

VINCENT

Got it.

Anaxoraganas throws the crystal against the wall, sending shards flying and leaving a ephemeral image of the restaurant parking lot in the air.

VINCENT

Holy shit. That's it.

ANAXORAGANAS

After you, then.

Vincent steps forward, the first of four into...

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The parking lot. Vincent looks around, wide-eyed, then back into the rift and into Yina as Elvoriac, Daniagath, and Anaxoraganas step through.

The Felastrae shade their eyes.

ELVORIAC

This is your home? It sure is bright.

VINCENT

Yeah, sorry. Thanks so much for this, guys. I should be good to...

Vincent notices an empty parking space where his car once was.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

For fuck's sake. My car got towed.

Daniagath shakes his head regretfully.

DANIAGATH

Dude, that sucks.

Elvoriac frowns.

ELVORIAC

You know what that means?

DANIAGATH

No.

Vincent sighs.

VINCENT

My car, it's like... a horse, but better. It's these things. I'm not supposed to leave it overnight, so someone took it. I need it to get home.

ELVORIAC

We'll help you retrieve it.

VINCENT

Nah, this is my problem. You don't have to.



ANAXORAGANAS

It's better to keep an eye on you for a while anyway, make sure the Exalica don't have a way of capturing you again. It should be difficult for them to find you again, but better safe than sorry.

VINCENT

Thanks, then. Let me see if I can find out where it is.

Vincent pulls out his phone, which is quite low on battery and full of notifications-angry and concerned texts from his parents and friends. He opens a map application and searches for where his car was towed.

VINCENT

Here it is.

He shows his phone to the Felastrae. Anaxoraganas traces the route with their finger.

ANAXORAGANAS

This is some kind of map? And this is the route?

VINCENT

Yeah. So it should be this...

Vincent's phone dies.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

...way.

Anaxoraganas pats Vincent on the shoulder.

ANAXORAGANAS

I got it.

VINCENT

Really? Thanks.

ANAXORAGANAS

Don't mention it.

Anaxoraganas leads them out of the parking lot.

EXT. TOWING SERVICE - EVENING

The four enter the towing lot. Vincent shades his eyes and scans for his car.

VINCENT  
There it is.

ELVORIAC  
Great.

She starts forward, along with the other Felastrae.

VINCENT  
Wait! We can't just go in and take it.

Elvoriac looks at him in confusion.

ELVORIAC  
Why not?

VINCENT  
There's, you know, a process to it. I have to pay someone a fine, I think.

ELVORIAC  
Pay who?

VINCENT  
Uh...

Vincent looks around and spies a small office.

VINCENT  
Whoever's in there, probably.

ELVORIAC  
That sounds ridiculous. What happens if we just take it?

VINCENT  
I don't think...

Elvoriac starts forward, along with Daniagath and Anaxoraganas. Vincent just watches, unlocking the door when they get near his car.

INT. TOWING OFFICE - SAME TIME

Two employees of the towing service sit in the office, legs propped up on the desk and relaxed. They both watch wordlessly as the Felastrae cross the lot. All four enter the car, and Vincent starts driving off the lot.

EMPLOYEE #1 gestures toward the car.

EMPLOYEE #1

You think we should, uh...

EMPLOYEE #2

Not really.

EMPLOYEE #1

Right.

They watch as the car leaves, the Felastrae clearly visible in the passenger and back seats.

EXT. OUTSIDE VINCENT'S HOUSE - EVENING

Vincent pulls up to his house and parks. He turns back to face the Felastrae.

VINCENT

Well, uh... we're here. Thanks for everything, guys.

ELVORIAC

No problem. Are you sure you'll be alright now?

Vincent exhales and runs a hand through his hair.

VINCENT

As long as those assholes leave me alone, yeah. And now I have this compsci project...

ANAXORAGANAS

Oh, they'll be back for certain, especially because they know you're the real deal. The fact that they haven't come yet only means they don't have a way to track your specific location, or maybe they're struggling to get back here. But they'll come.

VINCENT

Well, shit.

DANIAGATH

And compsci on top of that... that's tough.

VINCENT

You--what?

ANAXORAGANAS

What's compsci?

They look to Daniagath for an answer, who shrugs.

VINCENT

It's... it's telling rocks how to think.

ANAXORAGANAS

Fascinating. What kind of rocks can thing?

VINCENT

Uh... complicated ones. Look, I'm really not the one to ask. I'm barely getting by. We're doing polymorphism, and...

(He sighs)

It's so doomed. It's like... I don't even know. One thing is another, but the second thing isn't the first, and the first thing is more the first thing than the other...

Anaxoraganas considers this.

ANAXORAGANAS

Like how we're Felastrae, but more specifically, we're Florassan?

VINCENT

...What?

ANAXORAGANAS

Florassa is our country. Most of the time, that's what's most relevant to us. But we're still all Felastrae, and can be considered as such.

ELVORIAC

Like how squares are rectangles, but rectangles aren't all squares.

VINCENT

...Actually, I think that's it.

ANAXORAGANAS

That's how rocks think?

VINCENT

Only sometimes. Wow. Thanks, guys.

ANAXORAGANAS

No problem.

VINCENT

I'd better get to work, then.  
Thanks again, for everything.

ELVORIAC

Don't worry about it. We're just glad the Exalica don't still have their hands on you. They're trying to wipe us out, and you would've been quite helpful to that end.

VINCENT

Really?

Elvoriac rolls her eyes.

ELVORIAC

I bet they gave you the whole spiel about us trying to expand our borders or something, didn't they?

VINCENT

Yeah, actually.

ELVORIAC

That's so ridiculous. It's part of Yina's natural cycle, for the Ashen Lands and the Blue Skies to push and pull. The boundaries change all the time! They just use that as a silly excuse now that the Ashen Lands are expanding a tiny bit.

VINCENT

Huh.

ELVORIAC

Those bastards... anyway, we'll get out of your hair. Anaxoraganas?

ANAXORAGANAS

Right. Here.

Anaxoraganas shuffles through his bag, pulling out a blue crystal. They hand it to Vincent, who inspects it.

ANAXORAGANAS

This is a beacon, of sorts. When the Exalica find you again, smash it, and we'll get a signal.

(MORE)

ANAXORAGANAS (CONT'D)

We should be able to come get you in a couple minutes, if you can hold off that long. Luckily, they can't kill you, so the worst that'll happen is a bit of maiming.

VINCENT

Great. Can't wait for some maiming.

Anaxoraganas claps him on the shoulder.

ANAXORAGANAS

That's the spirit. We'll see you again, small, soft friend.

ELVORIAC

Until next time.

DANIAGATH

See you tomorrow.

VINCENT

See you, guys. Thanks again.

The Felastrae fumble their way out of the too small car, closing the doors with slams. Vincent looks behind him to see streaks of ash and burnt car seats where they, waving smoke and vapor away from his face.

Vincent checks his phone. There are dozens of ignored messages from his parents.

VINCENT

Shit. They're going to kill me.

He blows out a breath, rubs the back of his neck, shrugs on his backpack and exits the car, going into...

INT. VINCENT'S HOUSE - EVENING

Vincent creeps into his house, wincing at the creak of the door. The lights are off, and he sighs in relief, until the kitchen light switches on with a click. It's Vincent's MOM.

MOM

Vincent? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I called you ten times. Where were you? Didn't respond to my texts, didn't answer my calls, didn't let me know where you were. Your friends didn't know either.

Vincent groans.

VINCENT

You texted Elena and Chet?

MOM

Called them! And your teachers, too! I've been worried sick! Who were those in the car with you? I don't want you to see them again! They're bad influences! Missing school, missing all night, ignoring my calls...

VINCENT

Sorry, I--

MOM

I'm not done! You know you missed a quiz today? How dare you!

VINCENT

S--

MOM

And I asked you to cook dinner tonight! Was this all just to get out of it? I hope you're happy. We ordered takeout.

VINCENT

Wait, takeout? From where?

MOM

You don't get any! You get leftovers!

VINCENT

Come on, Mom.

MOM

You "come on," Vincent! You still haven't answered where you were or who you were with! And why were your friends glowing?

VINCENT

That's because you haven't let me--

MOM

You're going to get behind in your classes now. What if you fail?

VINCENT

I'm a senior, Mom. It doesn't really--

MOM

Your computer science class! You want to get your acceptance rescinded?

VINCENT

(Exasperated)

No, Mom! So if you'll let me, I need to go do my project due tomorrow, or I really will get my acceptance rescinded!

MOM

Fine! Go!

(Under her breath)

How embarrassing, if he doesn't go to college.

Vincent rolls his eyes as he walks around her, heading upstairs.

MOM

Did you just roll your eyes at me?

VINCENT

(Calling back)

No!

INT. VINCENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Some time has passed. It is darker now. Vincent sits in front of his laptop with the lights off in his room. There's a plate of takeout next to him, mostly finished. He rubs his eyes, staring at lines of code on the screen.

Vincent's phone buzzes. He checks his phone. Elena has texted him, asking if he needs help with compsci.

He sets his phone down and taps a few keys on the keyboard, ending with a semicolon. Finally, he hits compile, sits back, and waits.

There are no errors. The program runs without error.

Vincent leans back in his chair, pumping the air in silent victory.

Picking up his phone, Vincent texts Elena back, saying that he managed to figure it out; something helped him understand polymorphism earlier.

Vincent looks at his bed, considering sleep, then pulls his drawing tablet out of his backpack and connects it to his computer.



He starts drawing--quick sketches reveal images of the Felastrae, Exalica, and the alien landscapes.

INT. UNDERGROUND COMPLEX - NIGHT

Elvoriac, Daniagath, and Anaxoraganas return through a new rift to the underground complex.

The infirmary is filled with injured Felastrae. Some suffer burns--while they are heat and fire resistant, the Exalica deal with radiation. Some have been blinded, some permanently, some not.

Elvoriac surveys the survivors.

ELVORIAC

(In Florassan)

They've gone too far this time. I won't let them bring innocents, people from different worlds, into this war.

Anaxoraganas and Daniagath nod gravely.

INT. IRINIEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Irinieel sits at her desk, coldly regarding Mikael and Verisios, who sit before her.

The silence stretches. Verisios grows increasingly nervous, while Mikael is indifferent, sitting with his arms crossed over his chest.

VERISIOS

(in Dejorean)

My lady--

IRINIEEL

Quiet.

Irinieel taps her desk with long nails, and Verisios watches the movement, swallowing nervously.

Irinieel lets the silence stretch a moment longer.

IRINIEEL

Where is my amplifier, Verisios?

VERISIOS

My lady, I can explain. He--the Felastrae, they somehow helped him escape, and--

IRINIEL

They helped him escape? Or he got out of his bindings himself?

VERISIOS

He...

Verisios trails off.

IRINIEL

Why, exactly, was a pathetic human boy able to simply... walk away?

VERISIOS

Because...

MIKAEL

Because Verisios couldn't tie a knot.

Iriniel narrows her eyes at Mikael.

IRINIEL

Don't make light. This is your folly, too.

MIKAEL

Of course, my lady.

Mikael is clearly unrepentant.

VERISIOS

My lady, there is no explanation for my error. I--

IRINIEL

No, there isn't. So here is what you are going to do. You will find the boy again. You will bring him here, by or against his will. You will lock him in chains so tight he'll only be able to breathe. Do you understand?

VERISIOS

Y-yes, my lady.

IRINIEL

Good. Get out of my sight.

Verisios and Mikael stand.

IRINIEL

And thank me, before you go. For my mercy. I've still half a mind to find myself a new High Alchemist and Martial Lord.

VERISIOS

Th-thank you, my lady.

Irinieel cuts a look to Mikael, who presses his lips together.

MIKAEL

Thank you.

IRINIEL

Very good. Leave.

Verisios and Mikael leave the office, stepping into the corridor.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Verisios slams Mikael into the wall with a snarl. Mikael, surprised, lets it happen, somewhat bemused.

VERISIOS

This is all your fault. If you hadn't closed the rift, we could've had the chosen one back already. You'd better--

MIKAEL

I'd better?

(He laughs)

This is your problem, Verisios. Your desperation to please Irinieel led to your lack of proper preparation. Now, if you're to get back in her good graces, you'd best get to work.

Mikael shoves Verisios away with a single hand, sending him stumbling.

MIKAEL

Good luck.

Verisios stares in disbelief.

VERISIOS

Your position is at stake, too, you know! If you don't help me--

MIKAEL

My only stake in this war is the fight, little alchemist. If Iriniel sees fit to remove me from my post, I'll still fight. You, on the other hand... if she replaces you, you'll never get close to Iriniel again. I wonder, would it be worse for you if she replaced you or executed you for your failure? At least if you were dead, you wouldn't have to deal with your pathetic pining.

Verisios glares at Mikael as he leaves, Verisios's hands clenched at his sides.

MIKAEL

Good night, Verisios. I hope to see noteworthy progress in the morning. Otherwise, well... you know our lady's temper.

Mikael leaves. Verisios waits a few seconds, then punches the wall.

VERISIOS

(Too softly for Mikael to hear)

Oh, I'll find the boy. Then, I'll deal with you, Mikael.

Fade to black

The End.