

# The Land of Darkness and Light

An Illustrated Dialog Novel  
by JesusForSinners.com

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# Chapter 1



In a land of warriors and a land of legend...



...where bold people lived lives of renown...





...an army from before time moved throughout the earth.



Men would fight and die to possess the desires of their heart...



...and with every battle another legend was born.





**Old Woman:** The soldiers of Gershon had fought for three days without rest! Their food was gone...





**Old Woman:** Their water and blood mingled in the dirt. Many of them had fallen...but still they fought on.



**Old Woman:** To the right!, a legion with  
swords of fire! To the left, another legion!



**Old Woman:** ...with spears of lightening! In front of them, chariots of wind and thunder!





Young Girl 1: \*GASP!\* What did they do?!



**Old Woman:** Lesser men would have turned and run. There is no shame in survival against such an army. But Anak, King of the Gershons, is no ordinary man. He assembled what was left of his valiant soldiers and charged forward! Surrounded on three sides and impossibly outnumbered, they fought through the day and through the night, until the next morning.



**Young Girl 2:** What happened to them?!





**Old Woman:** The warriors of Gershon were dead...every man...except Anak. As the sun rose above the hills, he was still battling with the Soldiers of Light...but they could not overcome him. As that day turned to evening his enemies finally relented...and Anak was left standing. A king with no army. A defeated ruler who would not return to his people until he had avenged the blood of every soldier that died on that field.





**Old Woman:** To this day, he lives alone in the Wood Beyond the Hills. Away from his people. With vengeance his only companion.



**Talin:** Now THAT is a warrior! A true man!  
There is only honor in final victory!



**Naelid:** Yes, Talin, you would know about being  
a man more than most.





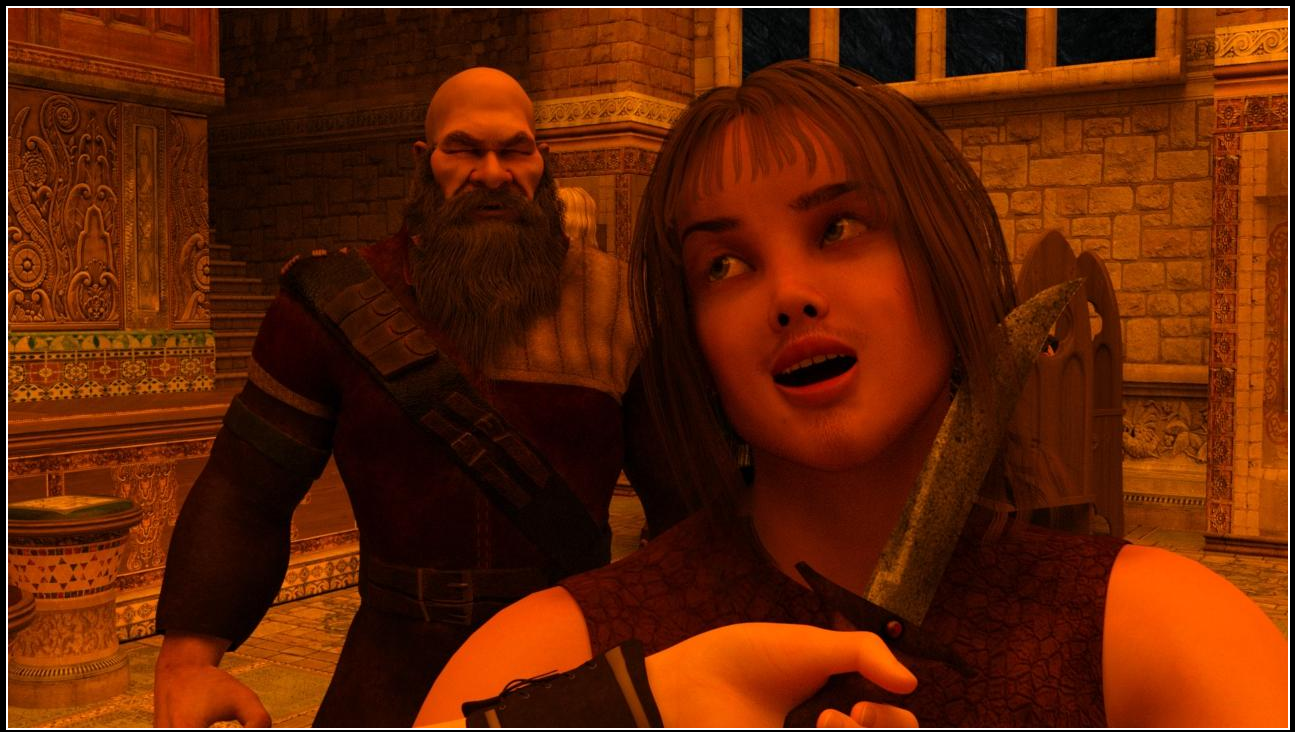
[Whoooosh!]



**Talin:** Certainly more of a man than YOU, Naelid!



**Lemic:** Better be careful, Naelid. I taught her to hold a knife before I taught her to walk!



**Naelid:** Yes, Lemic, but did you teach her to be a good wife and keep a clean house. Did she learn to cook her husband's favorite meal?





**Talin:** I do not NEED a husband! I can take care of myself!



**Lemic:** Perhaps YOU can be Talin's wife, Naelid!





**Talin:** No thank you, father. I prefer a wife with softer skin and more curves...



**Talin:** ...but it does not seem that I have earned Natty's affections yet.



**Natty:** Oh Talin, my husband will be a man of renown...with castles and riches...surrounded by people who adore him. And I will be at his side...a reflection of all that he has!



**Darej:** Perhaps you should venture to the Wood Beyond the Hills, Natty. Anak is likely in need of a wife.





**Natty:** Perhaps, Darej...when he regains his kingdom. Until then, my search will continue.



**Talin:** No need to search for that which is yours to have, Natty.



**Naelid:** Lemic, your daughter needs to heed her own words!



**Lemic:** Oh, my daughter, Talin. What son in this village is greater than you?!



**Talin:** Then when can I come and fight with you and the other warriors, father?!





**Lemic:** Soon enough, my brave daughter, soon enough.



**Darej:** Talin, why are you in such a hurry to fight and die?



**Talin:** Only the weak die. I fight and live! Others die at my feet!



**Darej:** Brave talk.



**Talin:** The only thing you know how to conquer, Darej, is the spirit herb in the fields and your mother's wine jars.



**Darej:** The wine and the herbs have never drawn blood from my flesh. Indeed, we have nothing but pleasant adventures together. And at the end of a day I retire comfortably to my bed. I have no need for dirt and blood and sweat to mar my journeys.





**Natty:** Really, Darej, will you ever amount to anything? You are a young man of no means. You will never acquire fame or notoriety if you never fight. Will you be married to your bottle and your herbs forever?



**Darej:** Natty, my dear friend, my bottle never troubles me. My herbs never demand me home at a certain hour. My life mates bring me joy unbound. Why would I look for another?





**Naelid:** Well, I will be a great warrior! The fame of me will spread to all the villages of the hills. I will conquer kingdoms and have riches beyond what any of you can imagine!



**Natty:** I can imagine a great deal, Naelid!





**Talin:** Keep your riches, Naelid. Victory and conquest are riches that cannot be spent or taken away; because victory buys freedom. If we are to be free to rule our own lives, we must be able to fight...not just against the other villages...but against those who would take away EVERYONE'S freedom!





**Darej:** Ha! Are you planning to fight the Light People, Talin? Your victories will be few!



**Talin:** I would rather die for my freedom than live as a slave.





**Natty:** As long as Darej has his wine and his herbs, he will be a happy slave!



**Darej:** Happy indeed!



**Naelid:** I will fight for freedom with you, Talin. I will be a brave and ferocious warrior! Then you will desire to be my wife.





**Talin:** There's still the issue of the whiskers, Naelid



**Naelid:** I...I can shave!



**Talin:** My wife shouldn't have to shave, brave Naelid!





**Naelid:** Oh! That maiden drives me to frustration!



**Darej:** My friend, Naelid, haven't you known the company of most of the maidens in this village? Must they ALL be yours?



**Natty:** Excuse me?!





**Darej:** I said, 'most', fair Natty.





**Naelid:** Yes, but it is Talin that I desire most. She is much different than the other maidens of the village.



**Darej:** Different, indeed!



**Natty:** We always desire that which we do not have.





**Darej:** Frustration, frustration! My friends, you must learn to find pleasure in that which we **ALREADY** have! Life has so much to give. Must we deny the pleasures of today for the longing of tomorrow?





Suddenly, a gaunt figure stumbles into the hall!



**Ulanite:** Help me...



**Ulanite:** Help me! Please!





**Nhoj:** Quick! Help him! Get him some water.



**Ulanite:** Oh, thank you.



**Ulanite:** Bless your kindness.





**Nhoj:** I am Nhoj, leader of the elders of this village. You are in Admah. From whence do you come, stranger?



**Ulanite:** I am a warrior of Ulan.



**Lemic:** From the plains of the East.



**Ulanite:** Yes.



**Nhoj:** You are very far from your home,  
Ulanite.





**Ulanite:** I cannot be far from that which I do not have.



**Nhoj:** Speak plainly, man. What is the meaning of all this?!



**Ulanite:** The kingdom of Ulan...is no more.





[Crowd mumbling]



**Ulanite:** The Soldiers of Light...they swept across the plain like locusts. The warriors of Ulan assembled for battle...but the Light People engulfed us...all of us. They entered the city. Everyone...they took everyone. No one was left.



**Nhoj:** Except you.



**Ulanite:** Yes, when I saw them coming, I.....I ran. I hid in the tall grass.





**Talin:** A coward! Why do we waste our water on an insect in the grass?!



**Lemic:** Easy, my daughter.



**Talin:** But father, the curse of his weakness might fall on all of US! Then WE will be taken away as slaves just like the Ulanites!





**Ulanite:** Child, you do not know the fierceness of these people. They have the power of the skies and the earth within them. They cast lightening with their hands and fire with their eyes. Their footsteps cause the ground to open and the rocks to crumble. Who can withstand an army like this?!



**Talin:** Better to die in battle than live in bondage!





**Ulanite:** Please help us. The Light People are moving across the plain. The kingdom of the Hagarenes will fight but they will need help. Please. Are there warriors here to help us? Brave warriors of Admah?



**Talin:** I will fight! I am a warrior of Admah!



**Lemic:** Not quite yet, my brave daughter. One more season, I think.





**Talin:** But, father! We may all be SLAVES in a season! We must fight NOW!



**Lemic:** And fight we will, my daughter. But you will remain here.



**Talin:** But, father!



**Lemic:** You may be a great warrior some day, my daughter, but you cannot yet overpower ME. I said, you will not fight for another season!





**Talin:** I may not yet be able to overpower you, father, but I am more brave than half the men in this village. Look at them hold their tongues. Will THEY fight?



**Warriors:** We will fight!



**Warriors:** Yes, we will fight as well!



**Warriors:** Long live Admah!





**Nhoj:** You forget, young one; the warriors of this village have fought the Light People many times...many times before you were even born. We have lost many...and still we fight.



**Nhoj:** As you can see, stranger, there is no shortage of warriors among the people of Admah.





**Talin:** They speak now that a maiden has loosened their tongues!



**Talin:** I will sharpen my swords and my knives, father. If the Light People come to Admah, we will ALL have to fight. I will be a slave to no one! My life is my own and I will die for it if I must. But it will be at my hands...and no one else's.







**Naelid:** Ahhh! I must have this woman!  
Imagine the kind of wife she would be, Darej!



**Darej:** Or what kind of HUSBAND!



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid, you may have to settle for  
being the QUEEN of your castle.





**Darej:** Have some wine, Naelid, my frustrated friend. It will gladly keep you company this evening.



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid, it will likely be the **ONLY** company you have this night.



**Darej:** And better company hath no man!



# Chapter 2



A warrior in the making questions a warrior of legend.



**Naelid:** Have you fought with the Light People before, Cain?



**Cain:** Yes, Naelid, many times. I was no older than you the first time I went out to battle them.





**Naelid:** Are they....are they as fierce as people say?



**Cain:** More. They move like the wind....and they scream....oh the screams....like attacking eagles. Men's legs turn to water...and their breath escapes them.





**Cain:** It is nearly the most terrible thing I have seen.



**Naelid:** Nearly? What could be more terrible?!





**Cain:** The poor souls who are taken by them.  
Enslaved forever. Their own will denied them.



**Naelid:** Have you seen them, Cain? The ones that are taken?





**Cain:** Seen them? I have talked with one!





Naelid: \*GULP\*



**Naelid:** When?! What was he like?!



**Cain:** It was my first battle...as we were making our way home. I left the others....only for a moment...I was searching for a river...for water. As I was drinking, he came up behind me.





**Cain:** He was a sickly pale...like the blood had been drained out of him. He was moving slowly...as though he had no life in him at all.



**Cain:** And then he spoke to me.



**Naelid:** What did he say?



**Cain:** He told me to leave the others and come with him.





Naelid: \*wimper\*



**Cain:** He told me to leave everything behind. He told me that my family...my life...this village....meant nothing! He told me to give it all up.



**Naelid:** How did you escape?!



**Cain:** Ha! I do not know. I said nothing to him. I was too afraid. Perhaps he pitied me for a moment.





**Cain:** But that was his mistake! Ever since then I have fought for all the things that...creature...told me meant nothing! That is why we ALL fight! We are FREE people! Our lives belong to us! No army...no king...no matter how mighty and fierce...will tell us how to live! The people of Admah are proud people! A GREAT people! And we decide for ourselves the kind of life we will live!





**Darej:** Here, here, brave Cain! Warrior of Admah!



**Darej:** I, for one, am eternally grateful for the freedoms you have secured for me. My daily joys are ensured by your great bravery!



**Natty:** And your mother's wine!





**Darej:** Ah, the blessings of freedom!



**Naelid:** I am hoping to be a great warrior some day, just like my father.



**Cain:** Do not hope, young Naelid, do! Train! Grow strong! The enemy is great and he endures through ages upon ages. We must all fight to preserve our way of life! This is the way it has always been.



**Darej:** Speaking of your father, is he preparing for the battle tomorrow?



**Naelid:** Yes, in his...usual way.





**Darej:** Ah, and who is the dutiful woman this time?



**Naelid:** You mean, WOMEN! He is expecting the battle to be especially fierce.



**Cain:** Your father is a great warrior, Naelid...and a great man. He fights so that people are free to make their own decisions. This is why we *ALL* must fight.



**Natty:** Naelid, you must have many brothers and sisters in this village that you do not even know about. If only your father collected as much gold as he did...visitors...you would stand to inherit a fortune.





**Cain:** Young Natty, it is the freedoms that we fight for that allows you to even dream of gold, and silver, and precious things. How many wealthy slaves do you know?



Natty: Hmmmm...



**Darej:** Speaking of warriors and conquests; where is your fierce maiden, Talin, tonight, Naelid?



**Naelid:** Over there with her father. Still trying to convince him to let her go tomorrow.





**Talin:** I MUST go, father!



**Lemic:** I said you will wait another season!



**Talin:** NO! I will go NOW!



**Lemic:** You will do EXACTLY as I say!



**Cain:** If she can swing that sword in battle as well as she does when she's angry; maybe Lemic **SHOULD** let her fight with us!



**Darej:** Hahahah!



**Natty:** Ha! Ha! Ha!



**Naelid:** TeeHeeHee!

# Chapter 3



In a small clearing outside the village, two young warriors hone their skills.





**Naelid:** Yaaaa!



**Talin:** Ha! You are too slow, Naelid!



**Talin:** Like this, Naelid.



**Naelid:** Whoa!



**Talin:** How am I supposed to enhance my skills when I have no real warriors to practice against?! Perhaps, Naelid, you need a sword in each hand to provide me a sufficient challenge.



**Naelid:** Were I properly motivated, Talin, you would already be begging me to spare you further embarrassment.





**Talin:** Do tell, mighty Naelid, what motivation do you seek?



**Naelid:** If I defeat you, you will be my wife!



**Darej:** Ha! Naelid, that sounds more like the penalty for losing rather than the prize for winning!



**Talin:** Watch your tongue, Darej! Your wine jar is no match for my sword!





**Natty:** Does that mean if Talin defeats YOU, you become HER wife, Naelid?



**Darej:** Ha!



**Darej:** Yikes!



**Talin:** No, fair Natty, that honor is reserved for YOU!



**Natty:** \*chuckle\*





As the young friends are focused on pressing matters, a small point of light, gently humming, appears from the darkness unnoticed.







Thinking it no more than a firefly, Darej swats away the light.







**Naelid:** Ha! Yaaa!







**Naelid:** You have no where to escape to, Talin!  
I will gladly accept your surrender!



**Talin:** DEATH before surrender!



[Wooosh!]





[Pqueesh!]



**Naelid:** Arrrgh





**Talin:** Attack! Yaaa!





**Naelid:** Uuugggh!!!!





Naelid: \*GASP\*





**Talin:** Poor Naelid. Dead at the hands of a maiden.



**Darej:** Ha! The conqueror of maidens  
conquered BY a maiden!



**Natty:** HaHaHa!





**Naelid:** Had I known blood could be drawn I would not have been so gentle with you!





**Talin:** Whatever is required for victory, Naelid. This you must learn before you can be a great warrior. Do you think the Light People will show you any mercy?



**Darej:** Yes, Talin, let us see how you fare against the Light People. Are you so great a warrior that you can defeat that which armies throughout time have not?





**Talin:** Many have resisted the Light People, Darej. I will be one of them. You, on the other hand, will undoubtedly be the very first to surrender should the Light People come to our village.



**Darej:** At least I would have my life.



**Talin:** Ha! What life is that? Bondage? Not surprising coming from a lad enslaved to his wine.



**Natty:** Surely, Talin, a warrior of freedom would not condemn others for the freedoms they enjoy.





**Talin:** Not at all, sweet Natty. But one who has no desire to fight for the freedoms they enjoy...





**Talin:** ...one who would let others do his fighting for him...one such as this has not earned his freedoms.



**Talin:** As our fathers and mothers have taught us; people have always resisted the slavery of the Light People. The people of Admah more than most. The heroes from the old stories...the great warriors among our people today...they have always fought the Light People and would not turn their will over to them.







**Naelid:** I will fight for our people and our way of life! Talin and I will fight together!



**Talin:** We must ALL fight! We can no longer hide in the blanket of childhood. Our fathers and mothers have fought for us until now but we must fight for ourselves! Now is the time, not only to ENJOY our freedoms, but to FIGHT for them as well!





**Talin:** And I for one am ready! I just hope that the great warriors of Admah have not defeated ALL of the Light People yet. I desire to prove my own worth!



**Naelid:** And I with you, Talin!





**Darej:** Yes, Naelid, the maidens of the village will be relieved to know that you are securing their freedom to call on you when you desire their company!



**Naelid:** Ha! For the freedom of the maidens,  
and the winebibbers, and those seeking fame  
and fortune!



**Natty:** Here! Here!



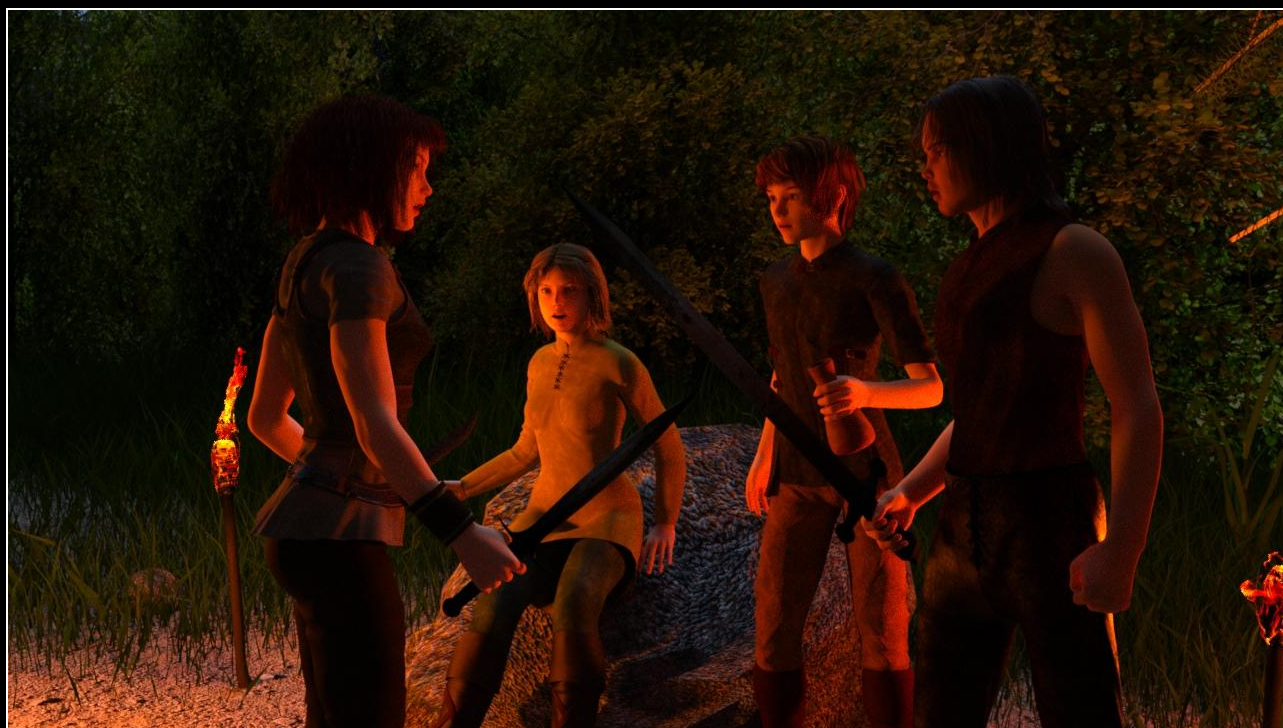
**Darej:** Haha!



[OOOOOOOGGGGGAAAAHHHHH!!!!!!]



From the village, the sound of the battle horn echoes through the trees.



**Talin:** The warriors! They are back!



**Naelid:** So soon?



**Natty:** This does not bode well, I fear.





**Talin:** Quickly! Back to the village!





# Chapter 4



[Crying]





[Aaaahhhh!]



[Ohhhhhh!]





[Crying]



[Help us!]





[Help me!]



[Crying]





**Talin:** My blood boils at the thought of those who would do this to our people!





**Talin:** THIS is why we must fight! This evil light knows nothing of mercy and freedom, only bondage and hatred! Well, MY hatred is kindled as well! We must return to battle tomorrow and avenge this shame that was brought on our people! And my father will know that I will be on the front line of the battle!





**Talin:** Where is my father?!





**Talin:** Where Is My Father?!?!



**Talin:** Where is my father?!?! If I must battle him first in order to battle our enemy, then so be it! WHERE IS MY FATHER?!?!?!?







**Talin:** Nhoj! Where is my father?! It is time for me to fight! I will not stand by and see our people brought to their knees! Where is my father?!?!?



**Nhoj:** Talin.



**Talin:** Where..is..my..FATHER?!?





**Nhoj:** Your father...Talin... Your father is a brave warrior, as his father before him...as are all your ancestors.



**Talin:** Where is he, Nhoj?!





**Nhoj:** He was at the front line...as usual...always in the fiercest part of the battle. Some of our warriors had already been taken. Others were scattered. Your father was surrounded by the Soldiers of Light. They tried to take him...but he would not go.



**Nhoj:** As they were about to overwhelm him...rather than give in to them...he pierced himself through with his own sword.



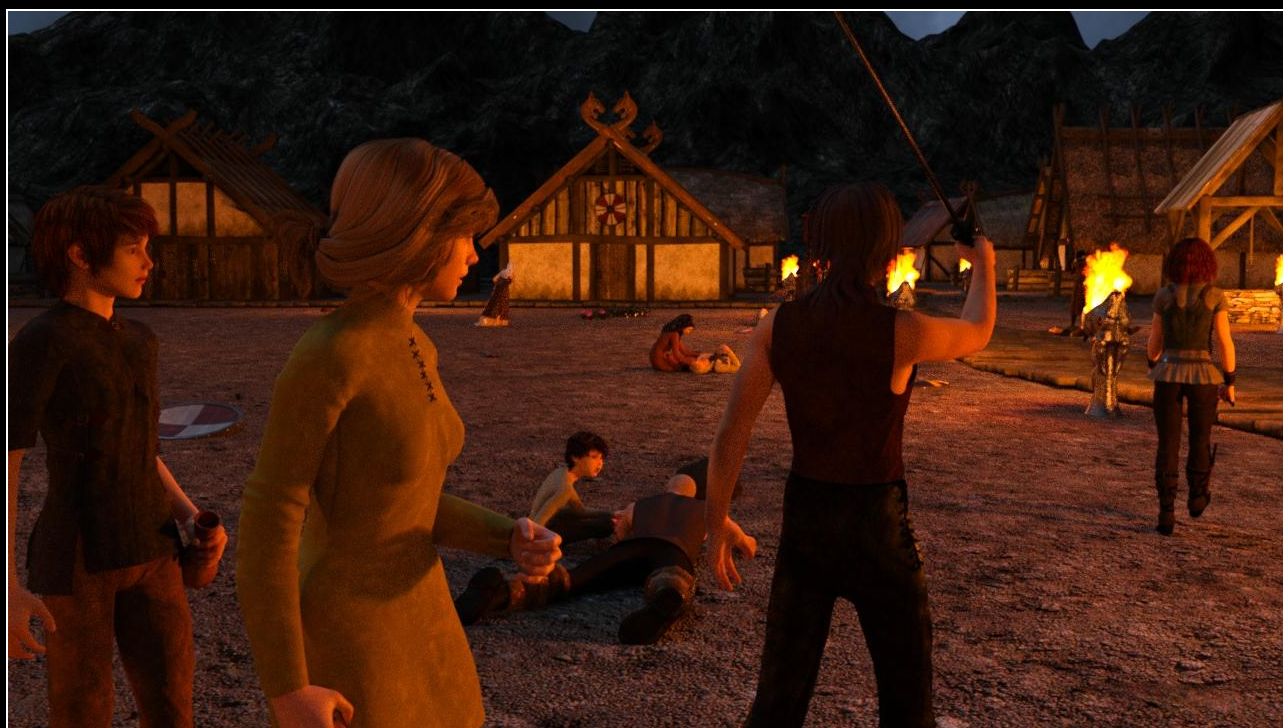


**Nhoj:** He died a free man, Talin. He would not be made a slave.



**Talin:** Any man who would dare keep me from the next battle will DIE at my hand! Even you, Nhoj.





**Naelid:** Talin! I will fight with you!



**Nhoj:** Aye, brave Talin, you will take your father's place. We will fight again...soon.





**Naelid:** I will fight too, Nhoj!



**Nhoj:** Yes, Naelid, we will need brave warriors. I am afraid the Soldiers of Light are relentless. They continue to march across the plane. At some point they will turn and come to Admah.



**Natty:** What will they do with us?!



**Nhoj:** Take away all that we have.



**Natty:** All that we have?! Our possessions?!  
Our treasures?!



**Darej:** And our freedoms. We will be slaves to  
them





**Natty:** Slaves?! I cannot be a slave! I am destined to rule OVER others...not be ruled BY them!



**Nhoj:** We will fight on, dear Natty. Some of our warriors still stand...those who were not taken and those who's fear did not send them fleeing away. Some of us will return to the fight.





**Naelid:** And others will JOIN the fight! I will not flee, Nhoj! I will go to battle tonight!



**Nhoj:** Good Naelid, you will be a fine warrior...but not tonight. Tonight we tend to those who survived...and honor those who took their lives...instead of having them taken from them. In three days time we will meet. In the evening. At the clearing in the grove. Do you know this place?





**Naelid:** Yes! Where the warriors go before battle. What happens there?



**Nhoj:** That is where the spirits prepare and strengthen us. Where we seek bravery and fierceness to destroy our enemies.



**Naelid:** I will be there, Nhoj! I am ready to fight for our people!



**Nhoj:** Yes, Naelid, it is time for all of us to fight.







**Naelid:** Fear not. Talin and I and the other warriors will protect this village. Our people will not be slaves!





**Natty:** Many of our best warriors seem to have fled the battle or fell on the field. Will you stand strong, Naelid? Will you protect us and our things and our way of life?



**Naelid:** Not to worry, Natty. All that you have will be safe. There are still brave warriors in Admah!



**Darej:** Our surviving warriors look much less brave now, Naelid. Look over there...Cain.













**Naelid:** Cain? Brave warrior, Cain?



**Naelid:** Cain? Cain...what has happened?





**Cain:** They spoke to me.



**Natty:** \*Gasp\*



**Darej:** What?!



**Naelid:** Again?



**Cain:** Yes.

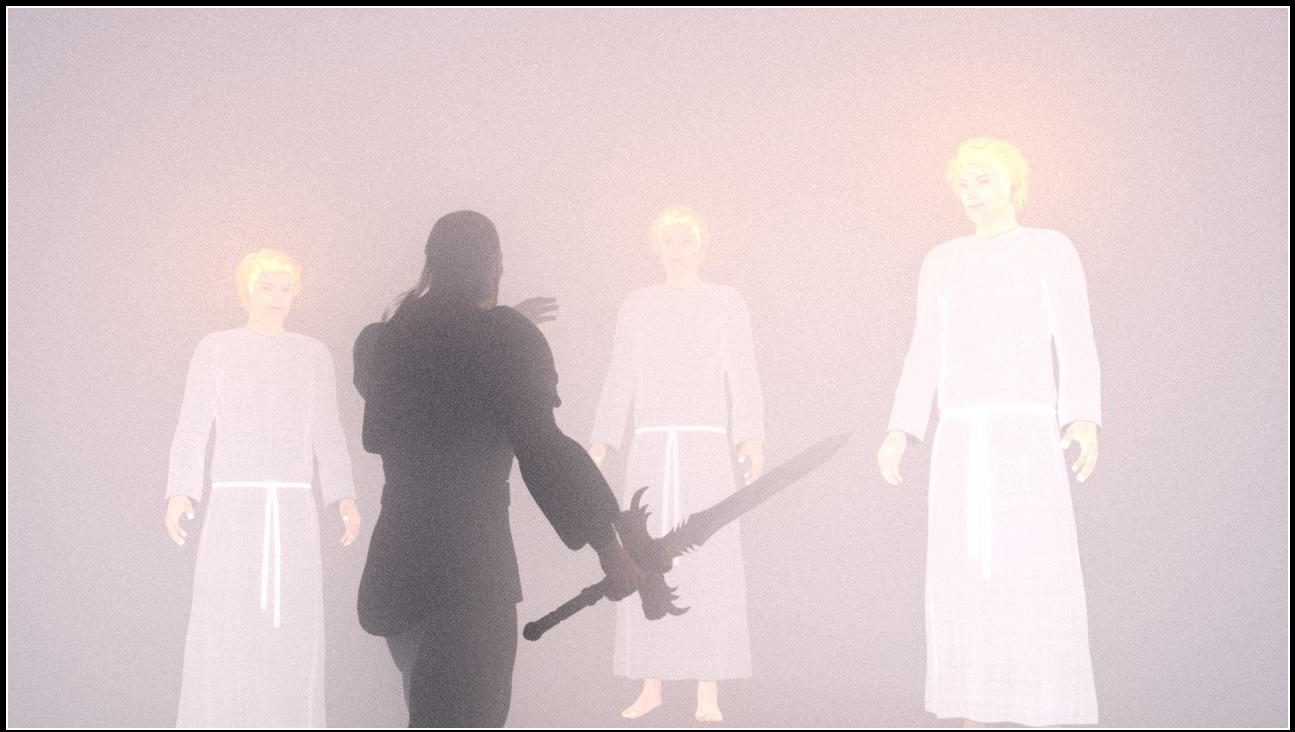


**Naelid:** What did they say?





**Cain:** They said the time is almost over.



**Cain:** They told me to give up everything or I would perish.

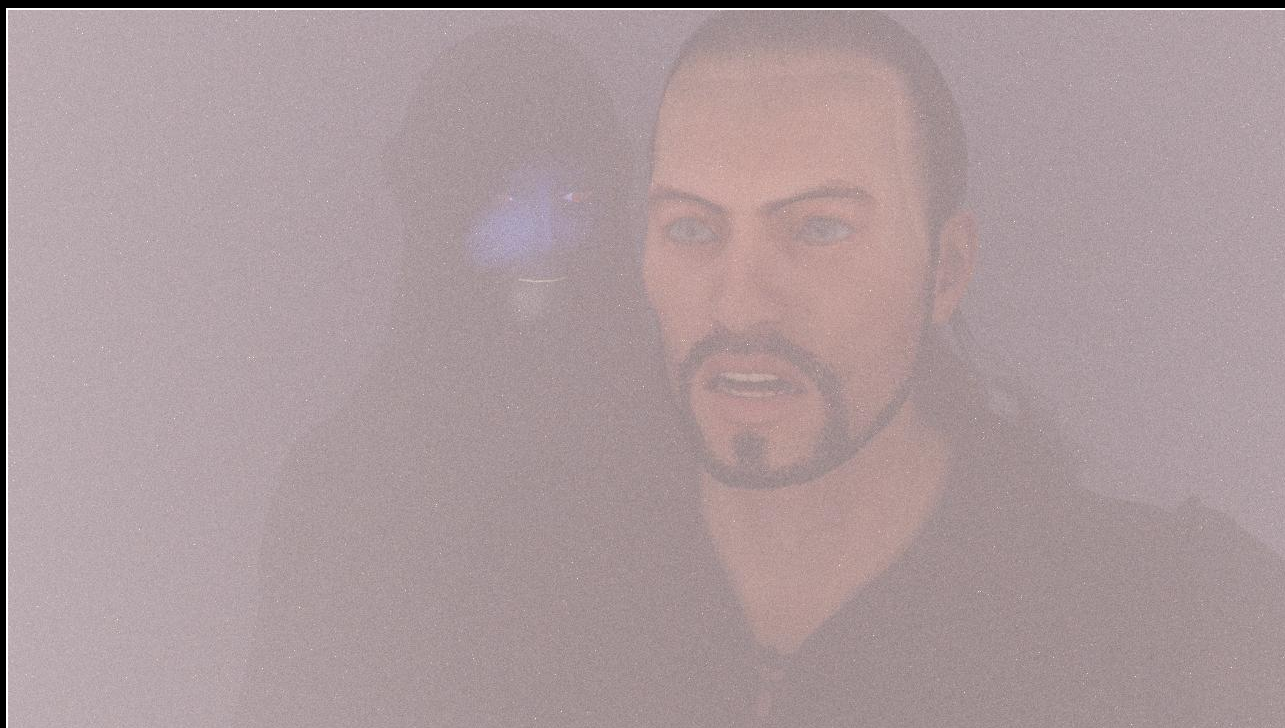




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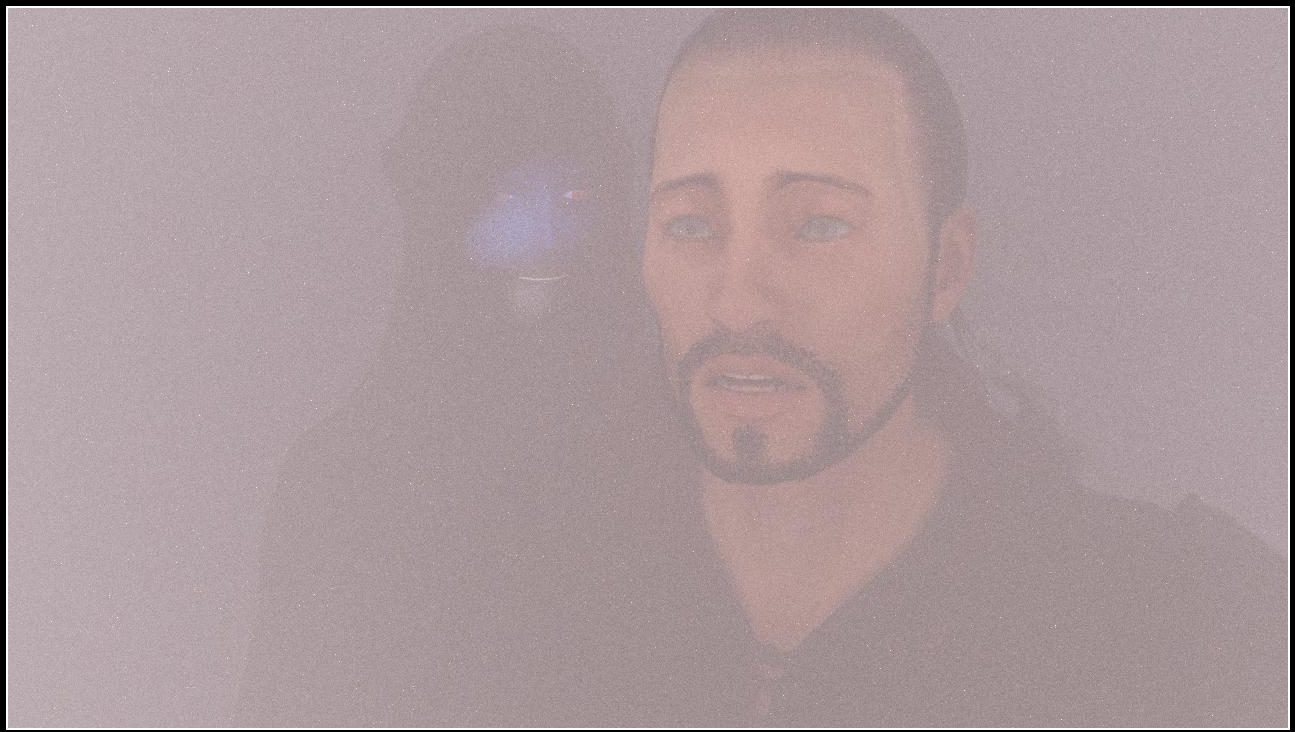


**Cain:** But I said, No!



**Cain:** I will NOT be a slave!





**Cain:** They said that wrath will cover the whole world...and darken the skies.



**Cain:** They said that I knew the hidden things...





**Cain:** ...that they had been made manifest to me.



**Naelid:** What things?





**Cain:** And then they let me go.



**Natty:** Why did they let you go?





**Cain:** I do not know...pity, perhaps.



**Cain:** Perhaps.....mercy.





**Natty:** Mercy?



**Naelid:** The Soldiers of Light show no mercy!  
They were trying to deceive you!



**Darej:** But he is here now, Naelid. They did not take him.



**Naelid:** What things do you know, Cain? What were you shown?





**Cain:** Things? The things from long ago.



**Naelid:** From the first time?



**Darej:** Huh?!



**Natty:** First time?



**Cain:** Yes...and before.





**Naelid:** Tell us, Cain. Tell us these things.



[Hummmmmmm]







**Cain:** These things you already know.





**Naelid:** What?! What are you saying, Cain?



**Cain:** Young Naelid, you search but do not see.  
You listen but will not hear.



**Natty:** Poor Cain has gone mad.



**Cain:** I am nearly broken. Please...leave me to my rest.











**Natty:** Poor Cain.



**Darej:** He was one of the bravest warriors of Admah...and now...



**Naelid:** And now nothing! Twice he has melted in the face of the Light People.



**Natty:** And you would have certainly made a better accounting for **YOURSELF**, yes, Naelid?



**Naelid:** Indeed, I would!



**Darej:** It seems as though you will soon have your opportunity, Naelid.





**Naelid:** Some of us fight while others fiddle, Darej.



**Natty:** Naelid? What did Cain mean when he said that you already know the things that the Light People showed him?



**Naelid:** Just the ramblings of a mad warrior, Natty. Fear begins in the mind and destroys the will.



**Darej:** You are not keeping secrets from us, dear Naelid...are you?





**Naelid:** You dream with your eyes open, Darej. Return to your wine and herbs and leave us warriors to our business.



**Darej:** As you command, my noble prince!



**Natty:** Naelid, Cain had spoken with the Light People before?



**Naelid:** Yes, when he was young...his first battle. He was told by one of them to leave everything and join them.



**Natty:** Is that when they told him these hidden things?





**Naelid:** Yes.



**Darej:** And before as well. Remember what he said?



**Natty:** What are these things, Naelid?



**Naelid:** We have more important things to attend to than riddles and secrets, Natty.



**Darej:** Perhaps we need to know these riddles and secrets in order to overcome the Light People, Naelid.



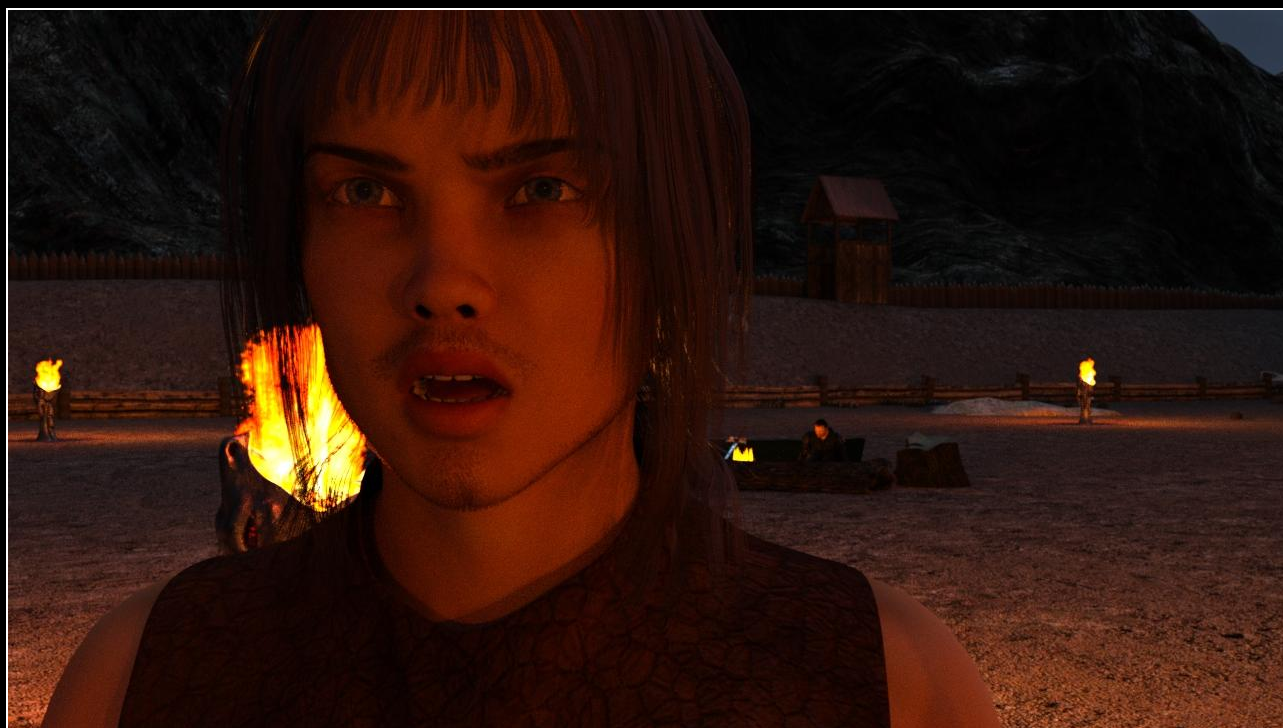


**Naelid:** I will leave you to your wonderings, Darej. As for Talin and I, and the warriors that remain; we will confront this mystery with sharp steel and an iron will!



**Naelid:** Cain is not yet fully enslaved by these evil creatures and look what has become of him!





**Naelid:** If that is any indication of what slavery looks like, I would rather die on the field, as Talin's father did, than submit myself to another.

# Chapter 5



Young warriors prepare their weapons for battle.







**Natty:** Are you nervous, Talin?



**Talin:** \*Hrmph\* I am angry...and anxious to meet the Soldiers of Light on the battle field. There will I avenge my father's death.



**Darej:** Can we come with you to the grove?



**Naelid:** The grove is only for warriors preparing for battle, Darej. You must stay here.





**Naelid:** You can help the women tend to the laundry and the children.



**Darej:** I can commune with the spirits as well here as in the grove, Naelid.



**Talin:** The grove is about more than just the spirit herb, Darej. It is about asking the spirits to strengthen us for battle. It is about homage to the ones who give us our strength and our desire to be free. And about honoring those who have fought before us. WE now join their ranks.





**Naelid:** Yes, Darej, soon you will be honoring US for ensuring the freedoms in which you so gleefully indulge.



**Darej:** And honor you I do, oh great warriors of Admah!



**Natty:** I as well! Thank you for protecting all that we have. I shudder at the thought of the Light People taking our treasures and our dreams of greatness.



**Talin:** Fear not, Natty. You will not lose your possessions nor the desires of your future, as long as the blood of the warriors of Admah runs hot. Tomorrow the Soldiers of Light will see the true fierceness of Admah! Our vengeance and our anger will drive them from the land forever!



**Naelid:** We must go now, Talin. Are you ready?



**Talin:** Yes. Ready to spill the blood of those ghostly slave masters!



**Naelid:** Let us be off then.





**Natty:** May the spirits be with you!



**Darej:** Fight on, noble warriors of Admah!  
Fight on!!!



**Darej:** Once they have reached the path we will follow behind them to the grove then, yes?



**Natty:** Most certainly.



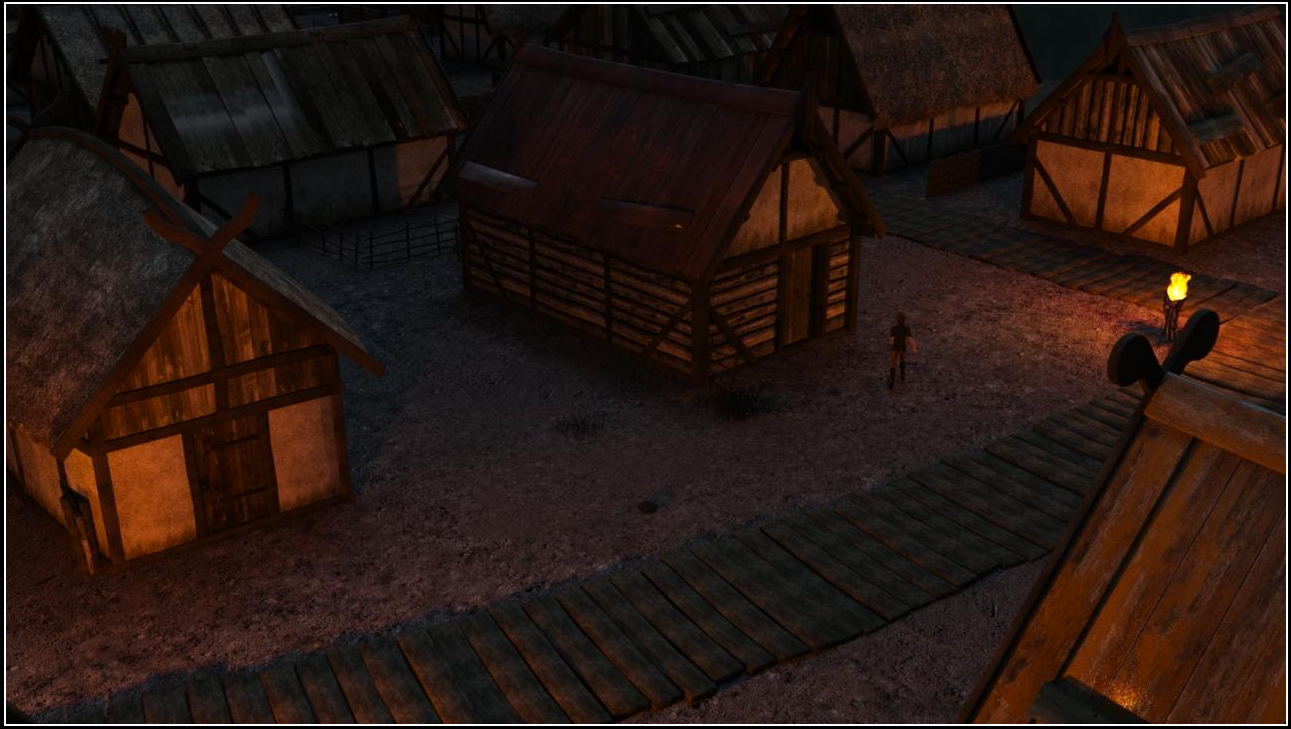
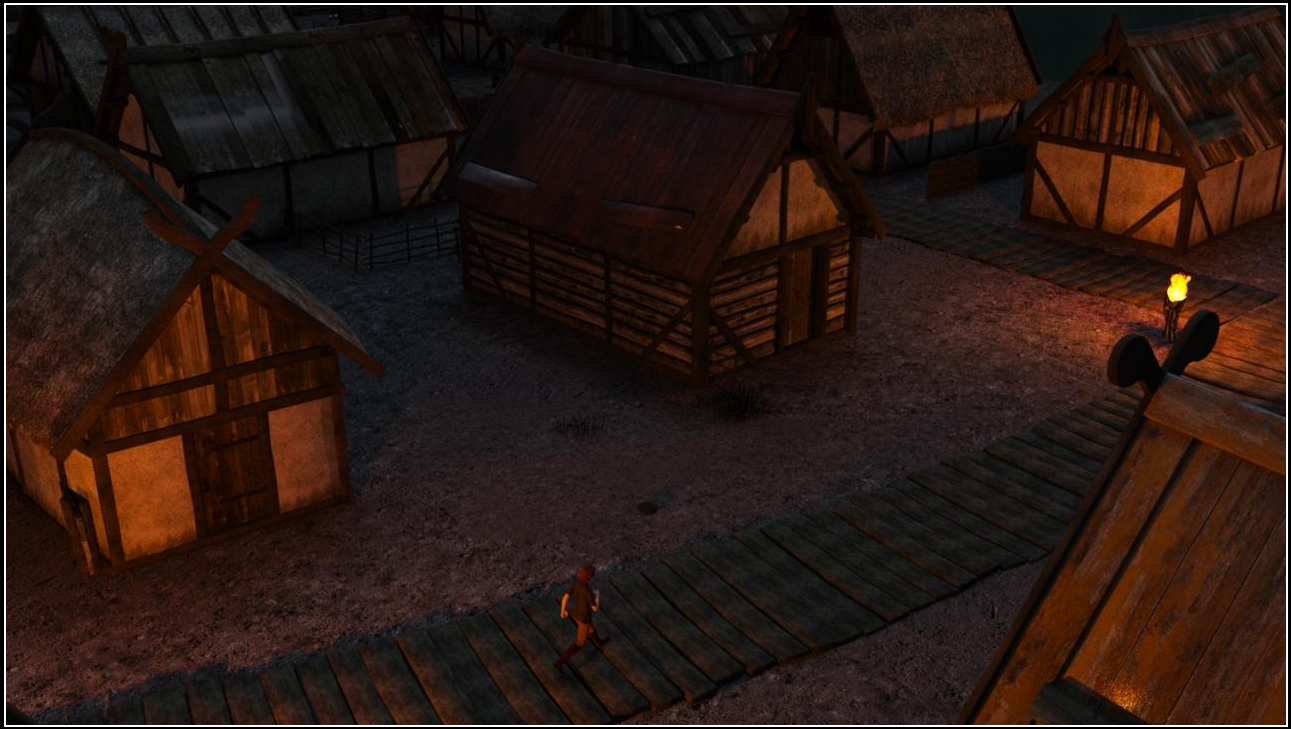


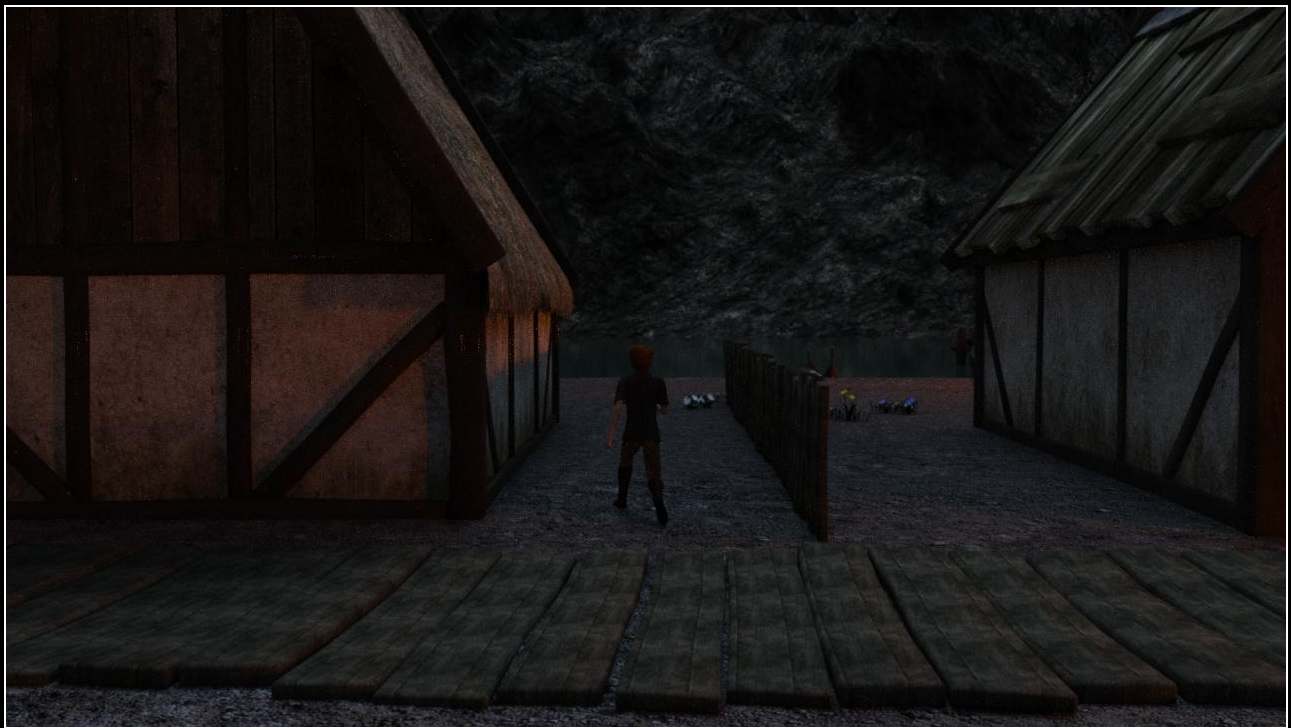
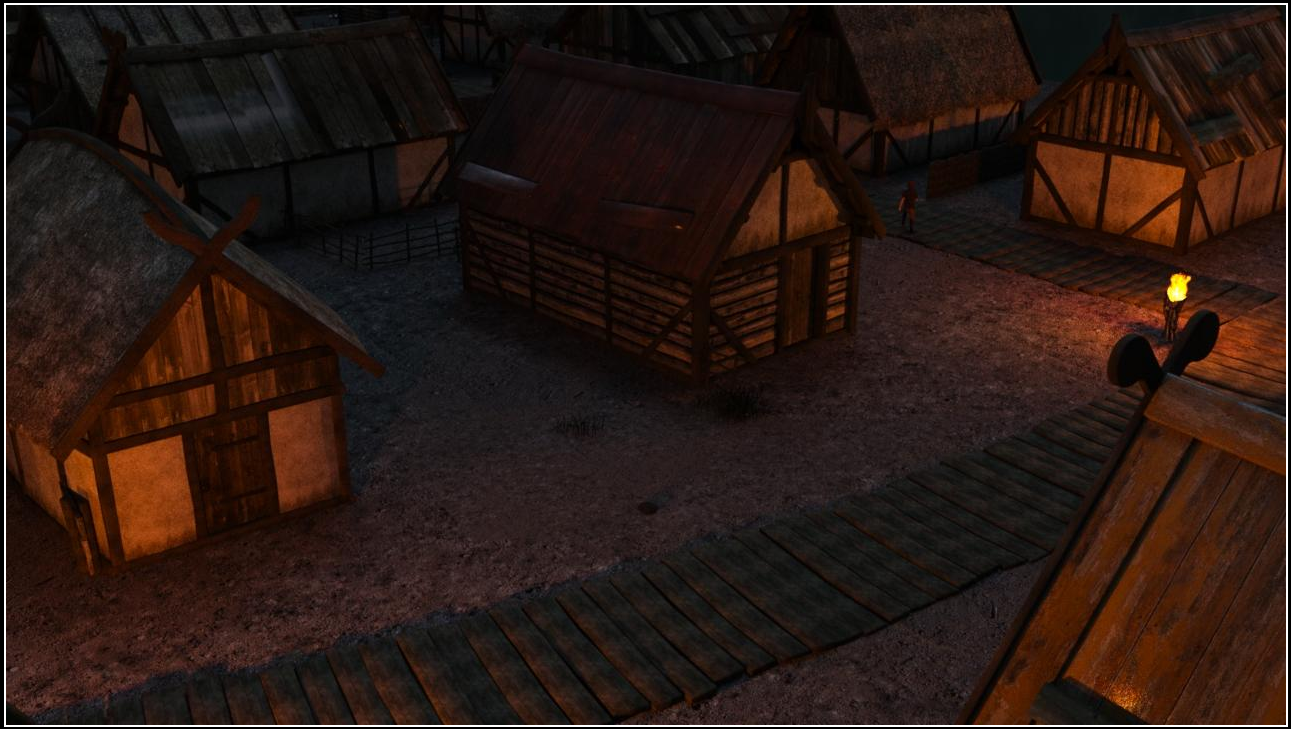
**Darej:** I will return shortly. We must have our own means of communing with the spirits.



**Natty:** Quickly, Darej!













Darej: \*GASP\*





[Hummmmmmm]



**Darej:** Cain! Aren't you supposed to be at the grove with the other warriors?



**Cain:** You know as well, do you not, young Darej?



**Darej:** Huh?



**Cain:** The hidden things. You know as well, yes?





**Darej:** Cain...I leave great mysteries to great men like yourself. I am a simple lad longing for simple pleasures.



**Cain:** Do not deceive yourself, young Darej. You are not too young to know what is true and what is not.



**Darej:** These weighty things are of little interest to me. I am still enjoying the days of my youth.



**Cain:** Young lads die as easily as old men, Darej. Do not wait until it is too late to find out the truth.





**Darej:** Do you know the truth, Cain?



**Cain:** Alas, knowing the truth and DOING that which is true are often paths that do not cross. I fear that I have traveled too far to ever see those paths meet.





**Natty:** Do hurry, Darej!



**Darej:** Can you TELL me the truth, Cain?





**Cain:** Young Darej, I fear that my mind has been poisoned for so long that I cannot discern truth from falsehood. I have only a faint memory of times when truth was with me...but I deserted it for the pleasantry of fables.



**Darej:** I do not understand, Cain.



**Cain:** If you wish to know, you must go to Ephrath. In the cave in the mountain.





**Darej:** You mean the Witch of Ephrath?! We have always been taught to stay away from that terrible place. My parents told me that the horrors of Ephrath are only surpassed by terror of the Light People! How can truth be found there?!



**Cain:** Truth is often found in the places people wish to avoid. If you want to know the truth, you must be willing to accept what you find. The truth is not always what we wish it to be but you must decide if you prefer an uncomfortable truth or a pleasant lie.





**Darej:** My wine and my herbs are pleasant enough for me now, Cain. My youth has not yet passed from my hands. I have no desire to chase it away any faster than it is already fleeing.



**Cain:** Set aside foolish things, Darej. It may not only be your youth, but your life, that passes from your hands...





**Cain:** ...as mine has already done.



**Darej:** You are a great warrior, Cain! You have many battles ahead of you. You will go to the grove now with the others, yes? To prepare for tomorrow's battle.



**Cain:** I must leave now, Darej.



**Darej:** Depart mighty Cain! To battle and to victory!!!





**Cain:** When the fables end, young Darej, we must all awaken to the light of morning.





**Natty:** Darej! Hurry or we will lose sight of them!





**Darej:** Sorry, Natty. I had to ensure that we were suitably supplied.



**Natty:** Let us go then.



**Darej:** Lead the way, my queen!



**Natty:** At least you know your proper place!





[OOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMM.....]









**Natty:** Quietly, Darej!



**Darej:** I doubt very much that they can hear us, Natty. Between the chanting and the herb, they are surely more focused on the spirits than on us.





**Natty:** Have you ever seen such a thing,  
Darej?





**Darej:** Many times, my dear Natty, many, many times.



**Natty:** Oh, Darej! I'm not talking about your boyish indulgences.





**Natty:** Look at those brave warriors. Do you think the spirits will be with them?



**Darej:** I do believe the spirits are with us  
NOW!





**Nhoj:** Spirits of our fathers and spirits of the earth! We beseech you this night to strengthen us for battle! Be with us as we defend our freedom to live our lives as we wish! Continue to give us all that we desire. Thank you for the pleasures that you bring!









**Natty:** Darej, come look!



**Darej:** As you wish, my queen.







[Hummmmmmmmm]



**Darej:** Am I seeing these things or am I dreaming?



**Natty:** We should not have come. We cannot see these things!



**Natty:** Oh please, Darej, let us leave now.  
Please!

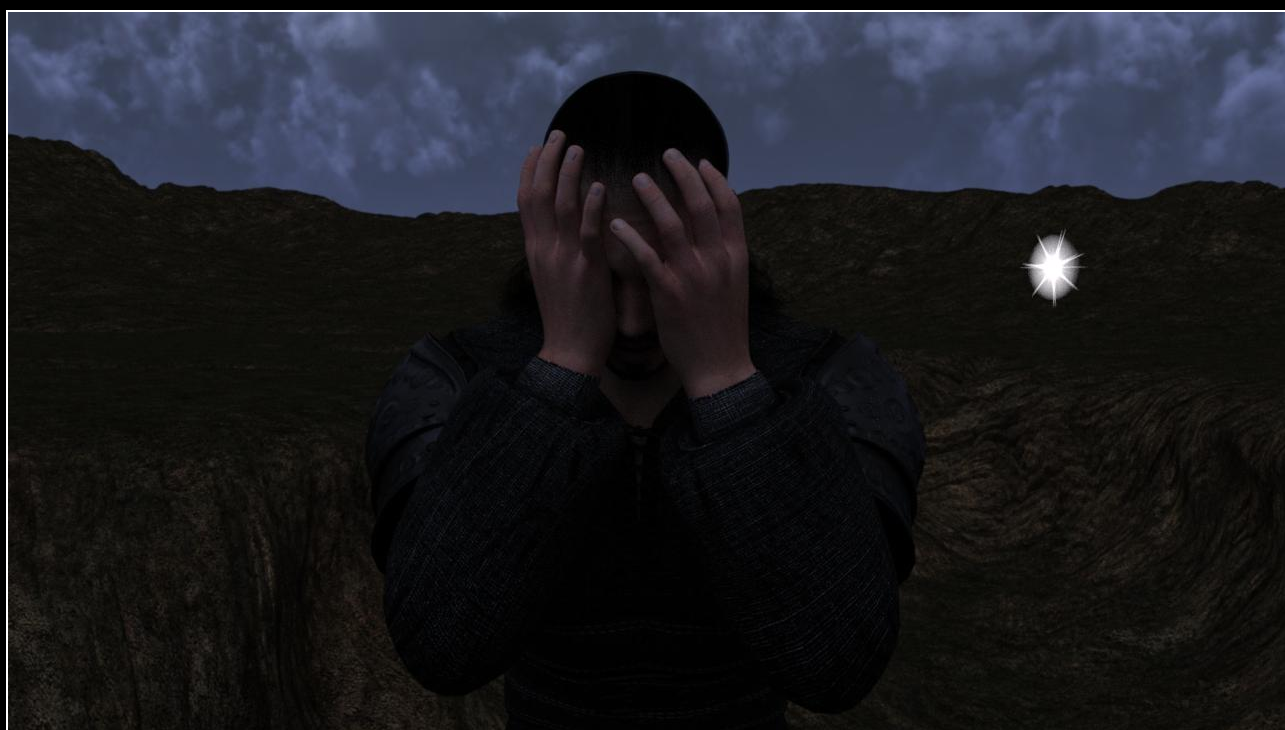




**Darej:** These are indeed weighty things.



Not far from the village at the edge of a ravine...



[Hummmmmmm]



**Cain:** I cannot. How can I surrender my will?





[Hummmmmmmmm]



**Cain:** I am not strong. Can you be strong enough for me? Are you stronger than the whole world?

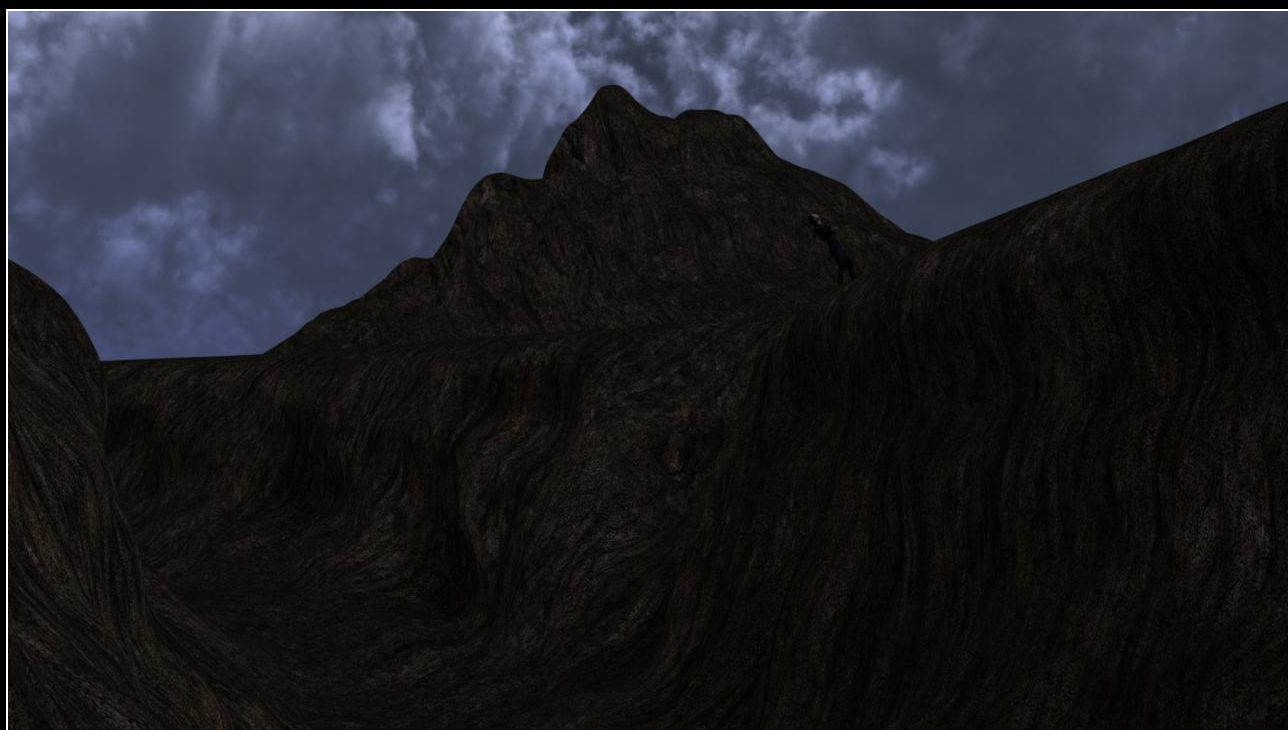


**Dark Figure:** !@&\$#\*~\*~\$&!%

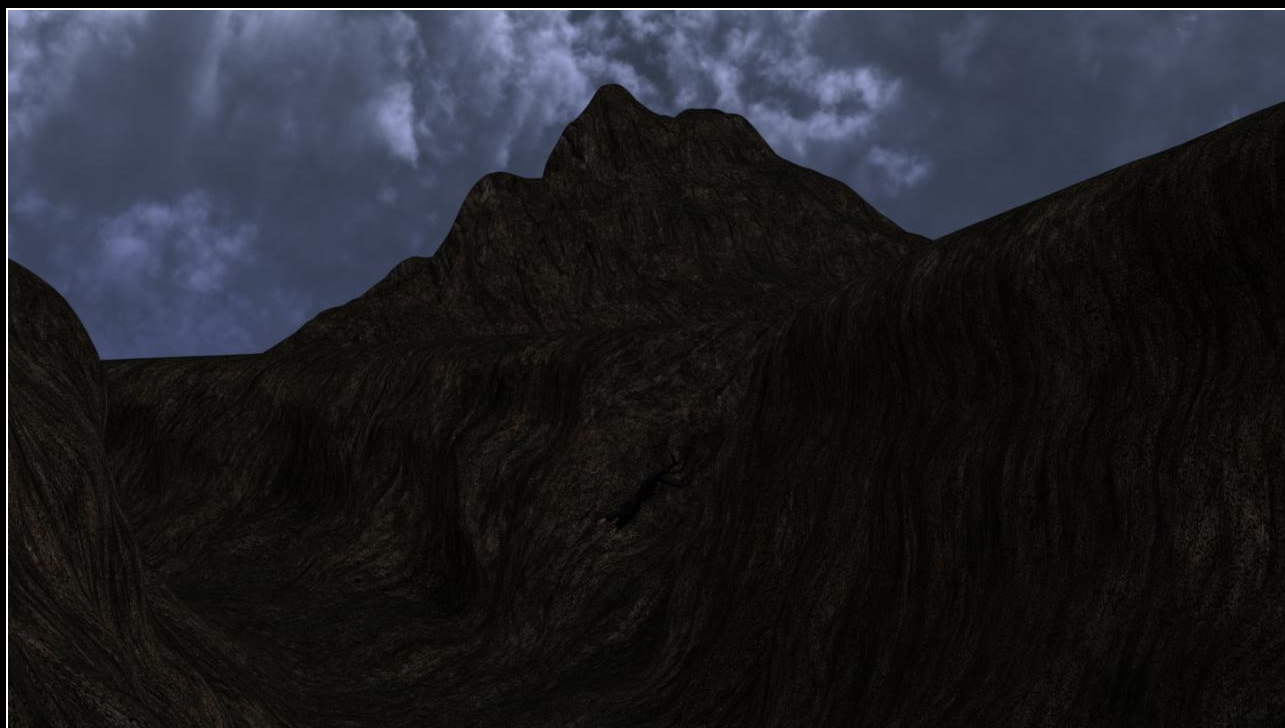




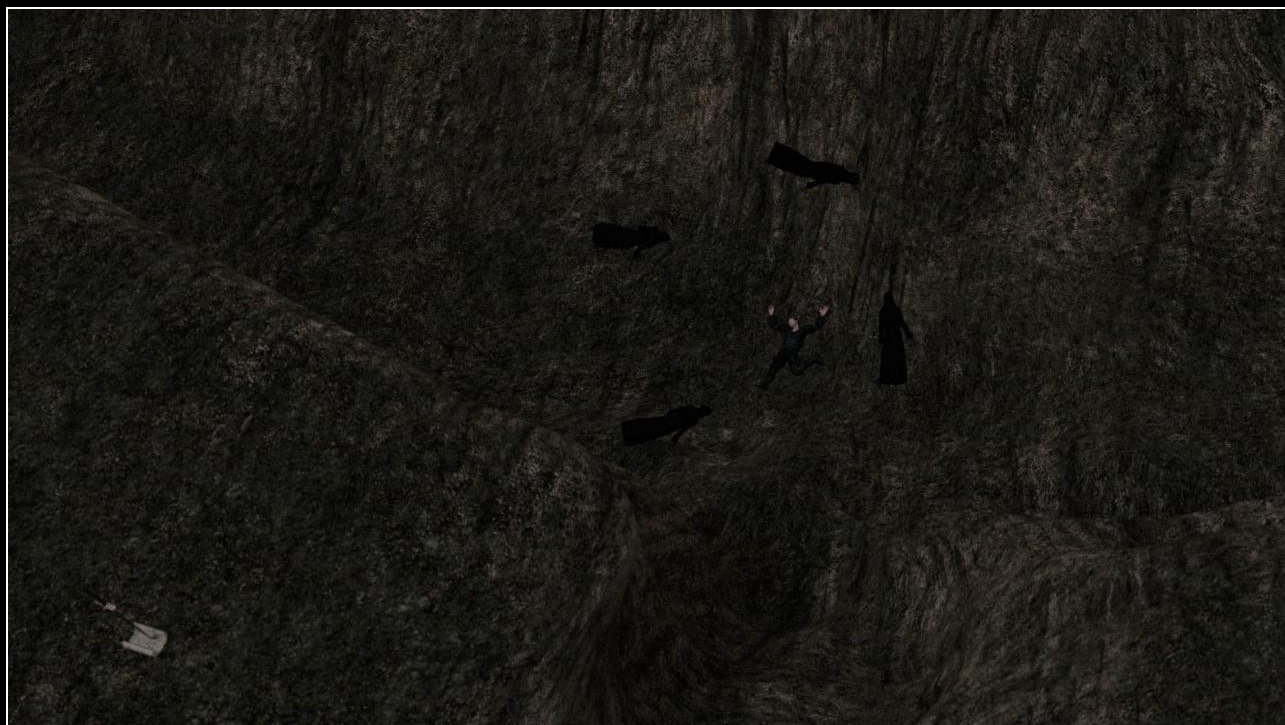
**Cain:** I cannot be a slave. I **WILL** not be a slave!







Cain: AAAAAAHHHHHHHHhhhhhhhhh.....



# Chapter 6



**Natty:** Do you think the battle is going well, Darej? There have not been any messengers returning to send us word. Do you think that is a bad sign, Darej? Darej?





**Natty:** Darej! Are you listening?!



**Darej:** Huh? What IS it, Natty?!



**Natty:** Darej, I was asking you about the battle...our warriors. Are you not concerned?!





**Darej:** I have other things on my mind at the moment, Natty.



**Natty:** Other things?! What could possibly be more important than the well-being of our warriors...and our freedoms?!



**Natty:** Oh, Darej, what if the Soldiers of Light are victorious? Do you think they will turn this way and take us captive? What will become of us? Of our things? Our future?!



**Darej:** Our future, indeed.





**Darej:** Natty, did you see those creatures at the grove last night?



**Natty:** Those dark creatures around the warriors?



**Darej:** Yes.



**Natty:** I assumed they were the spirits that help our warriors...and help us to be free.





**Darej:** Did you feel it though, Natty? Did you feel the cold...the.... I'm not sure what to call it.



**Natty:** I am not sure. I did feel SOMETHING strange.



**Darej:** Natty, how do we know that these spirits are here to help us?





**Natty:** That is what we have always been told....by everyone: our parents, the teachers, the elders, our hero warriors. The spirits give us the strength to fight for our freedoms. They are what make us a great people, Darej. Why would everyone tell us this if it were not so?



**Old Woman:** They are here! They have returned! Everyone! Come quickly!







**Natty:** I hope Talin and Naelid are alright. Do you see them yet, Darej?



**Darej:** Not yet.





**Darej:** Oh! Naelid! There he is!



**Natty:** Where?!





**Natty:** Oh! I see him! Naelid!





**Darej:** Naelid! Are you alright?! What has happened? Are we victorious?!





**Naelid:** We are....defeated.



**Natty:** \*GASP\*



**Darej:** Oh, no. What happened?



**Naelid:** It was the most terrifying sight I have ever seen. An ocean of ghostly figures blanketing the land. Every direction we turned, another wave of them crashed around us. Some of our warriors were captured.





**Naelid:** Some ran for fear. And others, like Cain, never showed up for the fight at all.



**Darej:** Cain?



**Naelid:** Yes, he was not at the grove last night nor was he on the field this morning. The Light People apparently defeated him long ago.



**Natty:** Where is Talin?





**Naelid:** They took her.



**Natty:** \*GASP\*



**Darej:** What?!?



**Naelid:** She was the first to charge them. She did not even wait for Nhoj to give the order. As soon as they came into sight, she ran toward them.





**Naelid:** We charged after her but they were upon her before we could reach her.



**Naelid:** I saw them, Natty. I saw their faces.





Natty: \*GULP\*



**Darej:** What did they look like, Naelid?



**Naelid:** They were...smiling.



**Natty:** Horrible.



**Naelid:** They so enjoy stealing the lives of their victims that they actually...smile!



**Darej:** Gastly!





**Natty:** Oh, poor Talin! What will they do with her?!



**Naelid:** I would rather not think about that. I cannot even imagine having my own will taken away...no mind to do as I please... It would have been better for her if she had died like her father. At least her torment would be over.





**Nhoj:** Everyone! Collect your possessions! We must leave the village immediately! The Soldiers of Light have turned this direction! We must escape before we are all taken captive!



**Natty:** \*GASP\*! They are coming for us! My things. I must get my things!





**Natty:** Oh, Darej, will you help me?!



**Darej:** Certainly, Natty. But what about Talin?



**Naelid:** We need to worry about ourselves now, Darej. We need to escape...and help the others.





**Naelid:** Talin is lost, Darej. There is nothing we can do for her now. We need to help the ones that remain.









**Darej:** We could go rescue her.





**Naelid:** No one has ever escaped the Light People, Darej. It would be a fool's errand.



**Natty:** And we must collect our things and escape while we can...or we will ALL be mindless slaves like poor Talin!





**Darej:** Has anyone ever TRIED to rescue someone from the Light People?



**Naelid:** No one knows where they take them, Darej. How would we even find her?





**Darej:** I may know someone who could tell us.



**Natty:** Naelid, will YOU please help me collect my things?



**Naelid:** Yes, of course, Natty.





**Naelid:** Darej, we must leave the village now. We do not have time to indulge thoughts of hopeless adventures.



**Naelid:** Darej. Our poor Talin is gone. None of us feels that loss as deeply as I. But I do not want my other friends to be lost too.





**Naelid:** Let us go. We must be on the road out of the village before the sun comes up. I do not want to watch the Light People destroy the rest of the people I care about.

# Chapter 7



The proud people of Admah find themselves nomades escaping for their lives.







**Naelid:** Have you seen Natty, Darej?



**Darej:** When I left the village she was still loading her things into her family's carts.



**Naelid:** CARTS? We are only supposed to take what we need to survive.



**Darej:** Can you imagine Natty surviving without her possessions?



**Naelid:** HaHa!





**Darej:** Naelid? Do you think the Light People will overtake us?



**Naelid:** \*Sigh\* I fear that they might. They are so swift, Darej. I have never seen any creature, man nor beast, move as swiftly as they.



**Darej:** What shall we do then? Are there warriors enough to resist them?



**Naelid:** Had we ten thousand warriors, I fear that would not be enough. No, Darej, our only hope is that the spirits protect us.



**Natty:** Naelid! Darej! Wait for me!!





**Natty:** I am so glad that I caught up with you!



**Darej:** Did you get all of your carts loaded, Natty?



**Natty:** As much as I could fit into four carts.





**Naelid:** FOUR CARTS?!?!



**Darej:** How many things did you bring?!



**Natty:** Sadly, not nearly everything. Oh, Naelid, it was heart-wrenching having to choose which things to bring and which to leave behind.



**Natty:** I hope those terrible Light People do not rummage through my remaining possessions.



**Naelid:** I would worry less about your possessions and more about US, should the Light People catch up with us.





**Natty:** Weh....well, surely you would fight them off to protect me, would you not, Naelid? My brave warrior.



**Naelid:** As much as I could, Natty, but the ferocity of these creatures is beyond imagining.



**Natty:** Wha...what do they do to people, Naelid?



**Naelid:** You have heard the legends, Natty. All the things we have been taught growing up...



**Darej:** Yes, Naelid, but you have seen them in battle. What do they actually DO to people?





**Naelid:** They steal their will, Darej!



**Darej:** Yes, yes, I know but...is there more?  
Do they do gruesome things to them?



**Naelid:** Their light is so blinding on the battle field that it is hard to see exactly what they are doing. All the better, if you ask me. The mindless enslavement is bad enough. I would not want to see what else these creatures are capable of.





Darej: Hmmmm...



**Natty:** What is that up there?





**Naelid:** Where?



**Natty:** Up there...by the edge of the cliff.



**Darej:** Good Natty. Always an eye for a new trinket.



**Naelid:** It looks like a sword.



**Natty:** We could surely use another one of those.







**Darej:** That looks like Cain's sword.



**Naelid:** Not surprising; what need has a deserter for a sword?



**Darej:** This IS Cain's sword!



**Natty:** What is that parchment?





**Naelid:** I believe I know what has become of Cain.



Natty: \*GASP\*





**Darej:** 'Our minds have been blinded.'



**Naelid:** More mad ramblings from a weak-minded coward.



**Naelid:** Perhaps...or maybe....something else.



**Natty:** What do you mean, Darej?





**Darej:** Cain spoke with me the night before last. He told me of the hidden things that the Light People spoke with him about.



**Natty:** The hidden things?! What did he say?



**Darej:** He spoke of truth...and fables. He said the truth is not always what we wish it to be but that we must decide if we want to know the truth or be comfortable with a lie.





**Naelid:** Why was he not with the other warriors? Where did you speak with him?



**Darej:** He was outside my family's home. I had run back to get something before Natty and I went to the grove.



**Naelid:** You went to the grove?!?! That is only for warriors before battle! You are not allowed to go there! What did you see?!



**Darej:** We saw you and Talin...and the other warriors. We saw those dark creatures as well.



**Naelid:** Those are the spirits that give us our strength and guide our minds and our actions. Your presence there likely angered them! No wonder they were not with us in battle!



**Darej:** The spirits do not seem to have been with ANYONE in the battles against the Soldiers of Light, Naelid! I wonder, exactly, what benefit they bring.



**Naelid:** They give us the will to be free!





**Darej:** Are we free now, Naelid? As we run from our homes?



**Naelid:** We are not yet slaves!



**Darej:** Perhaps. Or perhaps we are and do not know it. COMFORTABLE slaves.



**Naelid:** Did Cain infect you with his madness, Darej?



**Darej:** I do not know, Naelid. But I believe we need to find out what these hidden things are.



**Natty:** They sound like riddles cloaked in mysteries.





**Darej:** Yes, Natty...but perhaps they have answers that will help us escape the Light People. And maybe...maybe we can find Talin as well.



**Naelid:** I told you, Darej, no one has ever been brought back from the Light People.



**Darej:** Yes, but if we could find Talin, perhaps she could tell us what is truly happening. Cain said it was the Light People that told him of the hidden things. Perhaps Talin could tell US.



**Naelid:** Or make us slaves also.



**Darej:** But they did not kill her, Naelid. And they did not kill Cain. Does that sound like all the stories we were told growing up?





**Naelid:** We do not even know where to start looking for her.



**Darej:** I believe I know where to start. Cain told me of someone who knew the truth...someone in Ephrath.



**Natty:** Oh NO! I know what you are thinking.  
We are NOT going there!



**Darej:** But if we can find the truth there...and  
find Talin...would it not be worth the risk,  
Natty?



**Naelid:** Are you really suggesting that we seek out the Witch of Ephrath, Darej?! You really HAVE gone mad! Or you no longer put any value on your life.



**Darej:** You said yourself, Naelid; the Light People will overtake us. Even with ten thousand warriors we would still be lost.





**Darej:** Let us at least take matters into our own hands and find out what truth there is...rather than spending the remainder of our days running from a fate we cannot escape.



**Darej:** Come great warrior, Naelid! Adventure and mysteries lie before us! Let us seize the moment!!!



**Naelid:** Yes. I will help you seek these hidden things. A warrior does not shrink from a challenge!



**Natty:** Ohhhh.....





**Darej:** Come, Natty. There may be great fame and fortune ahead! Adventures are often filled with these!



**Natty:** But what of my things?!



**Darej:** Perhaps you will need a FIFTH cart by the time our adventure is over.



**Naelid:** I was thinking; when I rescue Talin, she will likely BEG me to take her as my wife!



**Darej:** Ha! Almost certainly.

# Chapter 8



As the three friends make their way through the dark woods, they cannot help but wonder if they will be the next tale in the horrors of Ephrath.







**Natty:** Can we stop and rest for a moment?



**Naelid:** I think we're almost there, Natty.



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid, but we have been walking for three days. In my life I have never walked so much. Please, I just need a moment.



**Darej:** Surely, Naelid, if we are almost there, we can afford to rest a bit.



**Naelid:** Very well. But it will be dark soon. If we do not reach Ephrath before nightfall, we will have to sleep in the woods again.



**Natty:** Ohhh.... Not another night! I did not sleep at all last night.



**Darej:** Nor I. There was an unease about me.





**Natty:** Yes! I felt it too! I fear there is something dreadful lurking over our journey.



**Naelid:** Likely the witch as we approach nearer to Ephrath.



**Darej:** It seems to have been following us for some time, though, Naelid.



**Naelid:** All the more reason for us to keep moving.



**Natty:** What do you suppose we will find when we arrive, Naelid?

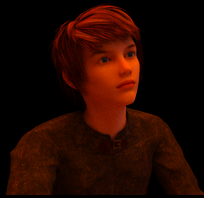




**Naelid:** According to Darej, we will find truth and hidden things.



[Hummmmmmm]



**Darej:** Indeed, Naelid. I sense that that is EXACTLY what we will find...but it will not be as we expect.



**Naelid:** Let us continue then. Natty, are you able to go a little farther?



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid. I am ready. Let us hope that there is at least one place in Ephrath with a soft mattress.





**Darej:** I would settle for a soft pile of hay.



**Natty:** As would I.







**Naelid:** There is it, the cave at Ephrath.







**Darej:** Are we going in?



**Natty:** What? Now? It is almost dark. We should rest here for the night.



**Naelid:** Perhaps at the mouth of the cave would be better.



**Natty:** We do not even know what is in there, Naelid. The witch could be in there!



**Darej:** She is right, Naelid.



**Naelid:** Well, we must meet her at some point. It might as well be now.









**Natty:** Do you see her, Naelid?



**Naelid:** No, Natty. The cave seems to go back a long ways. I am afraid we will have to go in and see what we find.

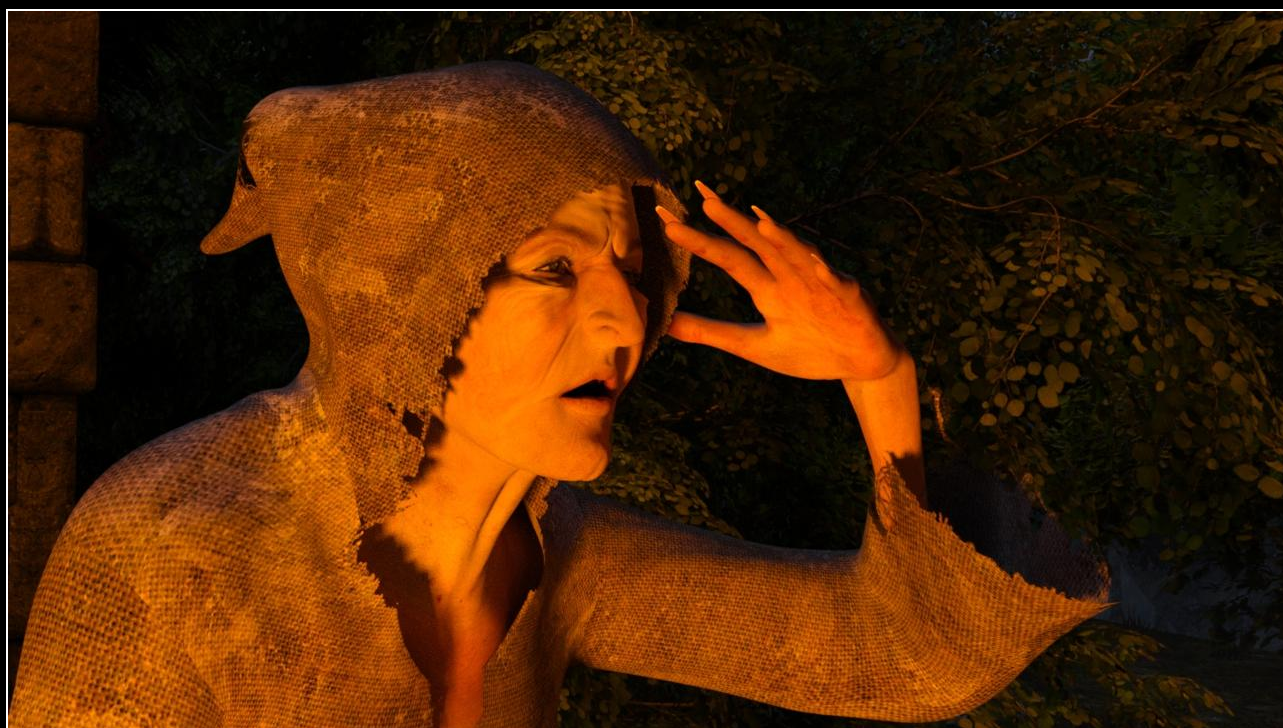


**Darej:** After you, Naelid.



**Witch:** Go right in! Grab a torch first though! Gets pretty dark in there!





**Witch:** My...that's a big one. Seems that you could find SOME use for her. Have you thought about selling her instead?





**Natty:** I beg your pardon?!



**Naelid:** Is this the cave at Ephrath?



**Witch:** Yes, that's the place. This must be your first time. A piece of advice: it is best to just get it over with quickly. No need to doddle.





**Darej:** Are you the witch?

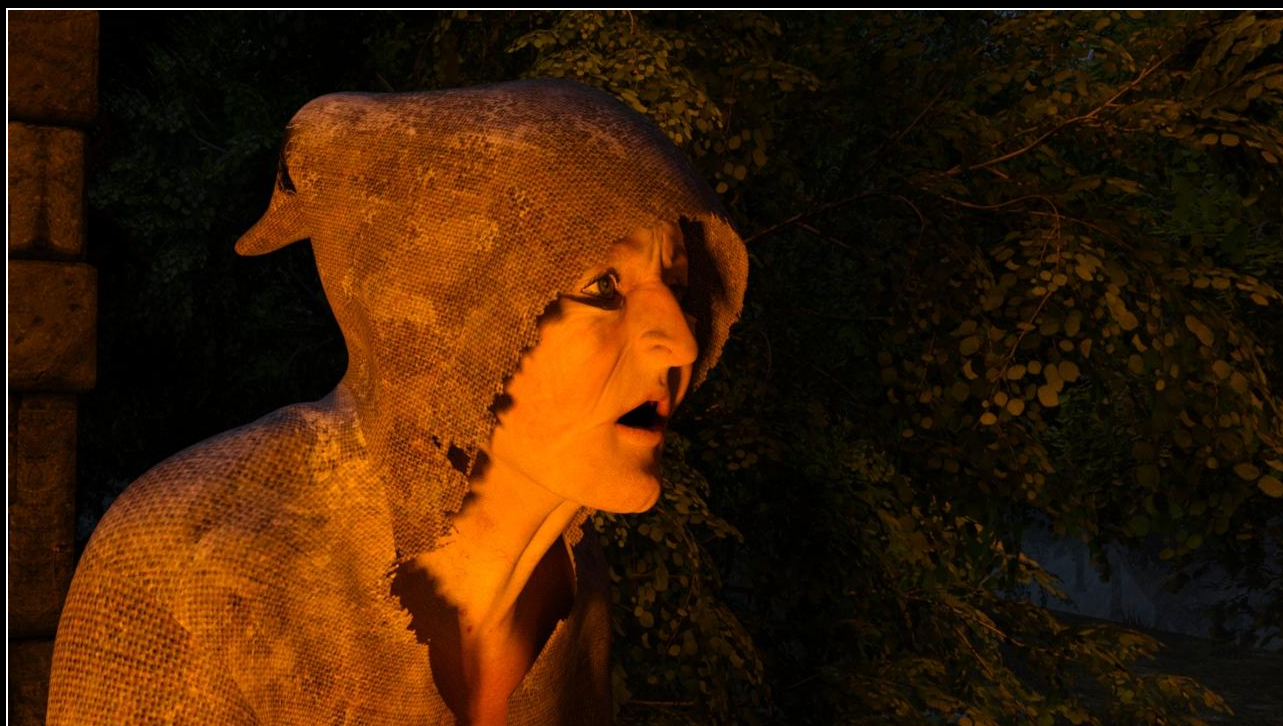


**Witch:** The witch?! Are they still calling me that? \*Argh\* You do know that that is just to scare the children, do you not?



**Darej:** Why would people want to scare children away from this place?





**Witch:** Why...you are barely more than children yourselves!



**Natty:** Are you not the Witch of Ephrath?



**Witch:** No, child. I am the caretaker of this place.



**Darej:** And what is this place?



**Witch:** Do you not know?



**Darej:** No.

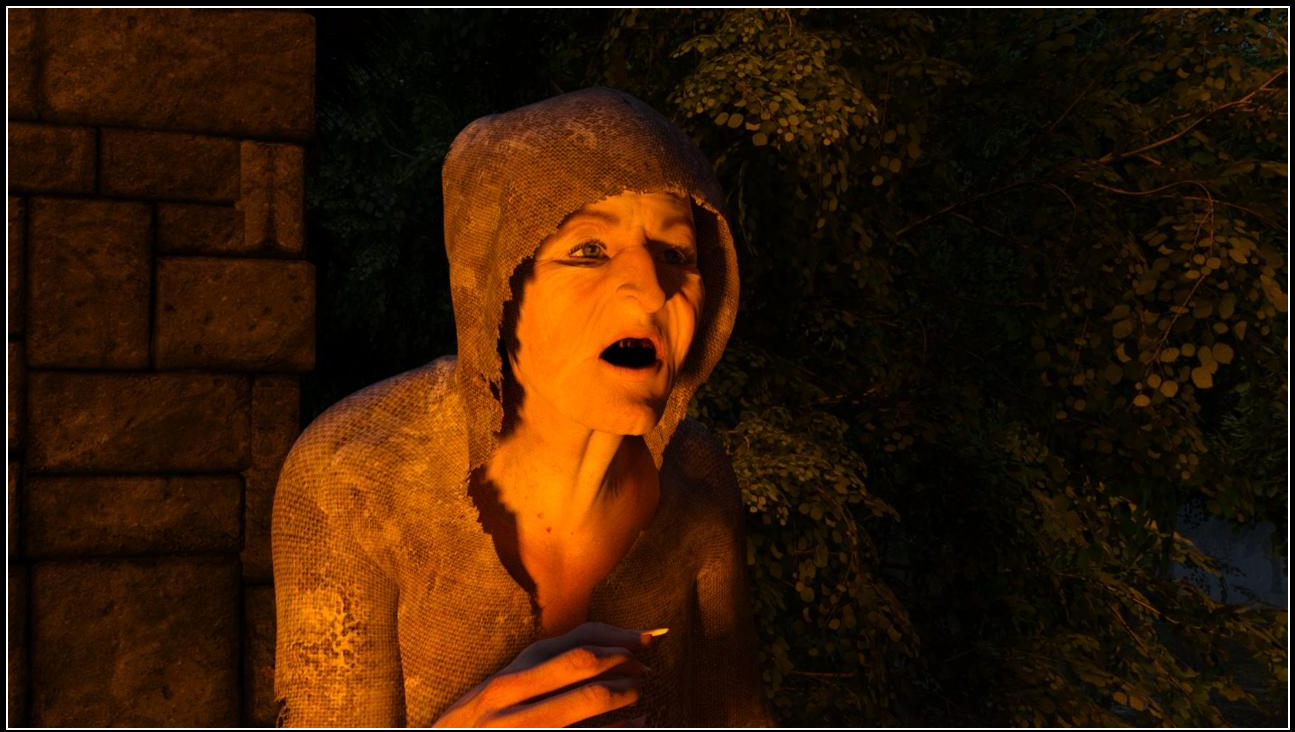




**Witch:** Then you do not WANT to know!



**Darej:** We have journeyed from Admah in search of truth.

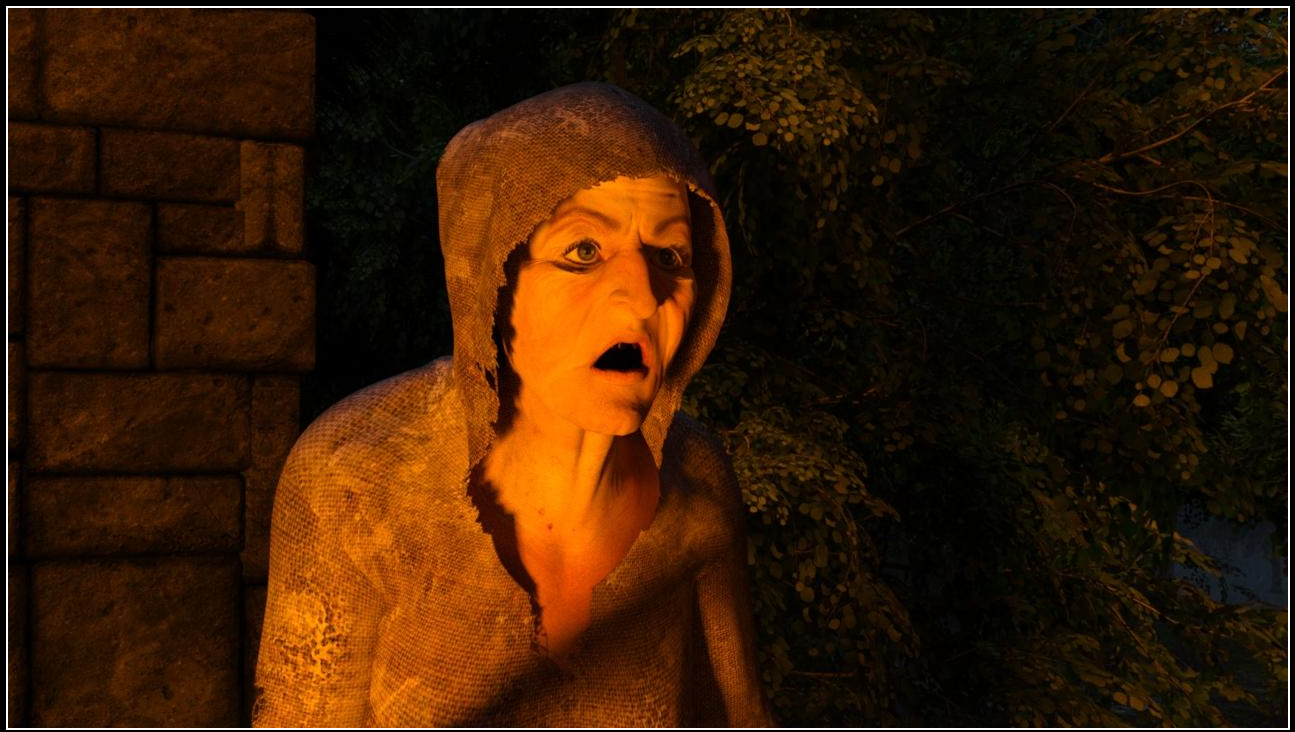


**Witch:** Ha! Many speak of seeking truth...until they FIND it! Then truth is the last thing they want!





**Naelid:** We DO seek truth...and our friend.  
She was taken by the Light People.



**Witch:** The Light People?! Who sent you here?!?!?!?



**Darej:** Cain. Cain of Admah. He told us that you would tell us of the hidden things...and that truth could be found here.





**Witch:** Cain? Yes...Cain. He knows the hidden things...as do I. But if it is truth you seek, what will you do when you find it?



**Darej:** We are not sure. We hoped that the truth would help us find our friend.



**Naelid:** And protect us from the Light People.



**Witch:** Protect you from the Light People?!  
Ha! You do not know WHAT you seek!





**Natty:** Can you show us what is in the cave?



**Witch:** Hmmmm.....yes.... There IS truth in the cave. But are you prepared for what you will find?



**Naelid:** We are! We are brave people of Admah!





**Witch:** Ha! Well...we will see, young strangers.  
Perhaps the truth will not be to your liking.



**Darej:** We have journeyed all this way. We have had to leave our village. The Soldiers of Light are marching toward our people. We have nothing more to lose.



**Witch:** Oh, you have MUCH more to lose, lad.  
Much to lose indeed.





**Witch:** Hmmmm....very well. I will take you through the cave.







**Witch:** We will discover the bravery of the people of Admah.







**Natty:** Do you feel it, Darej? That dark presence.



**Darej:** Yes, Natty. It seems closer now than in the woods.



**Natty:** I am cold, Darej. My blood has grown cold.



**Darej:** It seems the deeper we travel into this cave, the farther our lives are from us.



**Naelid:** Where are we going? Where does this lead us?



**Witch:** To the valley inside the mountain.



**Natty:** A valley INSIDE a mountain?



**Naelid:** Speak plainly, Caretaker. Where are you taking us?



**Witch:** A place where you can find some truth.





**Witch:** There! Right up there! That opening.







Natty: \*GASP\*



Darej: Oh, what a horrible site!





**Witch:** The Valley of Unwanted Children.



**Natty:** WHAT?! CHILDREN?



**Darej:** All of these are CHILDREN?!



**Naelid:** What is this place?! Why are they here?!



**Witch:** They were unwanted by their parents.  
So they were brought here.



**Naelid:** And they were just abandond here?  
Could they not have just left the cave?



**Witch:** They were not abandond here, brave  
lad of Admah. They were KILLED here.





**Darej:** But who killed them?!



**Witch:** Their parents, of course.



**Natty:** But why?!



**Witch:** They were inconvenient. Sometime children are considered a burden that limit people's freedom.



**Naelid:** Freedom?!



**Witch:** Yes, people want the freedom to live as they wish, without restrictions or hindrances...or unwanted responsibilities.





**Witch:** The good people of Admah prize their freedoms, do they not?



**Naelid:** Yes, we do, but...



**Witch:** The freedom to act can have consequences...for someone.



**Darej:** What about the consequences for the people who did this?!



**Witch:** Hmmmm....yes, young truth-seeker...consequences indeed.



**Natty:** Can we please leave this terrible place?! I do not want to be here any more!





**Naelid:** Yes, I believe we've seen enough.  
Caretaker, lead us out of here.



**Witch:** As you wish, brave lad of Admah.







**Witch:** Come...to the cottage. Warm yourselves by the fire. I will bring out blankets. You can sleep here tonight.







**Natty:** Have you ever seen anything so horrible, Darej?



**Darej:** I have not.



**Naelid:** Is this the truth we have sought, Darej?





**Darej:** Why have we been taught to avoid this place? Why the stories about the witch and the terrible things that could happen to us?





**Natty:** They did not want us to know about these things they do!



**Natty:** The things our own people do.



**Darej:** Surely, the people of Admah would never do such things!



**Natty:** I fear that is not true.





**Naelid:** What is it, Natty? There is something you are not telling us.



**Natty:** Oh, Naelid. I did not know until now about these things. I have wondered. But to know...I cannot bear it!



**Darej:** What has happened, Natty?



**Natty:** My parents have always told me what a special child I am. They told me that I was the only child they would need to make them happy.



**Natty:** It was wonderful...to be so wanted. But I was often lonely.





**Natty:** When I was younger, I asked my mother why I had no brothers and sisters.



**Natty:** She told me that I was not her only child. For a moment, I was excited! That I had brothers and sisters to play with. But I wondered where they were.



**Natty:** She told me...that when she had them,  
she did not want them.

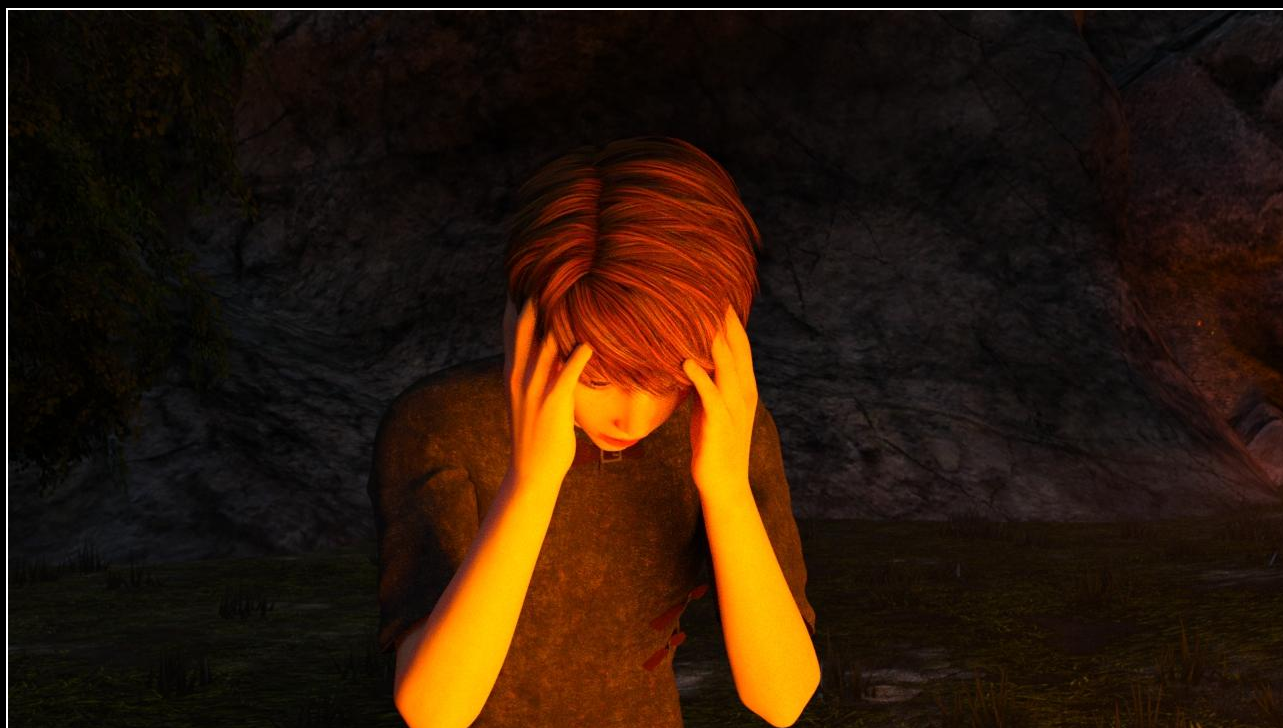




**Natty:** She had other things she wanted to do with her life and that it was not yet time for children.



**Natty:** They are in there somewhere...amongst the other unwanted children.



**Darej:** Is this what people do with their freedom?





**Witch:** Here are the blankets!



**Witch:** Mmmm..... The difficulty is not FINDING the truth but accepting it.



**Darej:** Why were we deceived about this place?



**Witch:** A question better posed to those who deceived you. But as with many things that are enjoyed; the outcome is not always desired. Then people exercise one freedom to cover the consequences of another.





**Naelid:** Is it wrong to want to be free?



**Darej:** If the consequences affect the life of another!



**Naelid:** Not all freedoms exercised affect others, Darej.



**Witch:** Ahh, but when laws are violated, it is not just the victim, but the law *GIVER*, who has been wronged.



**Naelid:** But the people are the ones that make the laws.



**Witch:** Ah, not so, brave lad of Admah. There are laws which are above all people.





**Natty:** Like killing children.



**Witch:** Like killing children.



[Hummmmmmm]



**Darej:** But who is the law giver and where do we find these laws?



**Witch:** Mmmmm.... These are the hidden things.





**Naelid:** The hidden things?!



**Darej:** How do we find them?!



**Witch:** You already have them, lad.



**Naelid:** What?!



**Darej:** Where are they?



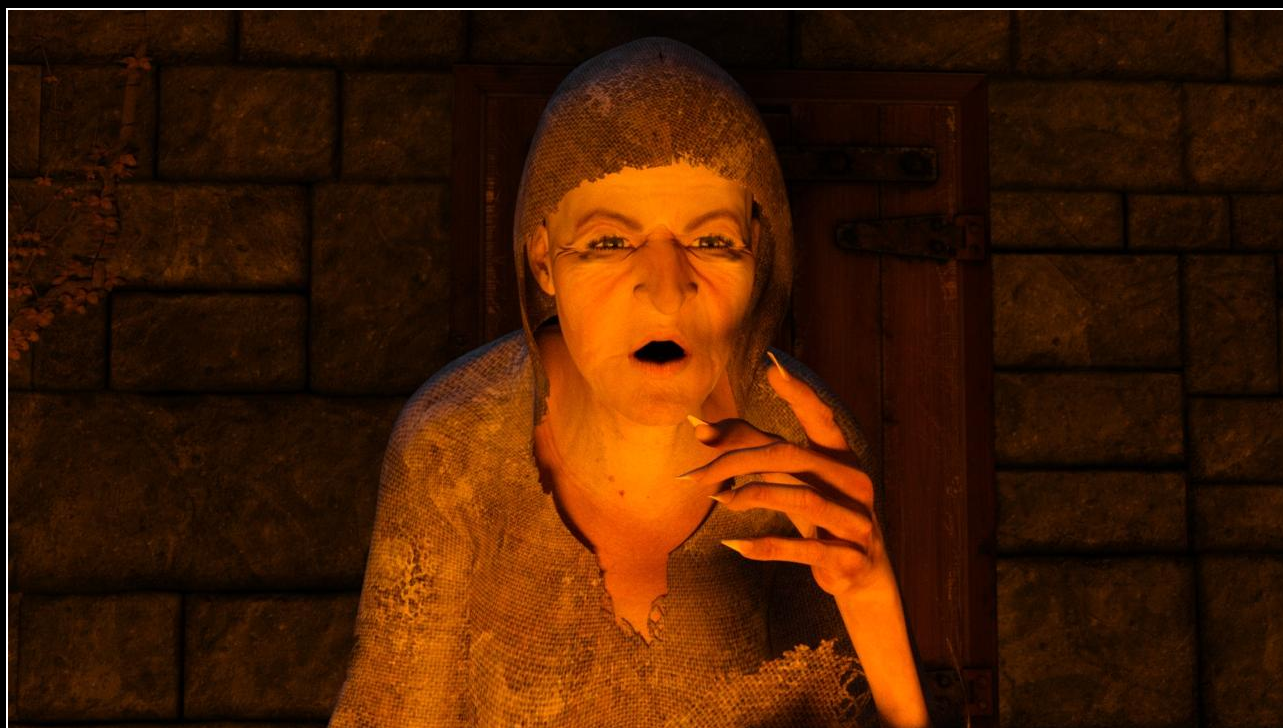
**Witch:** You already know. And more as well.  
But what if the truth you seek and the  
freedom you desire are not compatible, like  
the truth you found in the cave? Which do you  
seek? Truth or freedom?





**Naelid:** Freedom above all!





**Witch:** Mmmm...and what are you willing to sacrifice for your freedom?



**Naelid:** EVERYTHING!



**Witch:** Yeesss...everything, indeed.





**Natty:** Does this have anything to do with the Light People?



**Naelid:** Yes, I believe it DOES! They would have us sacrifice our freedom as well!



**Naelid:** Are you one of them?! Is that what this is about?! The treachery of the Witch of Ephrath enslaving people for the Soldiers of Light?!



**Witch:** Be still, brave lad of Admah. I am not a Soldier of Light.



**Naelid:** But you know them!





**Witch:** Ahhhh...indeed I do.



**Darej:** But you were not taken captive? How do you know them but yet you are here?



**Naelid:** A mercenary, no doubt!



**Natty:** Oh, sit DOWN, Naelid!



**Natty:** How do you know them?



**Witch:** They have spoken to me many times.



**Darej:** As they spoke to Cain.

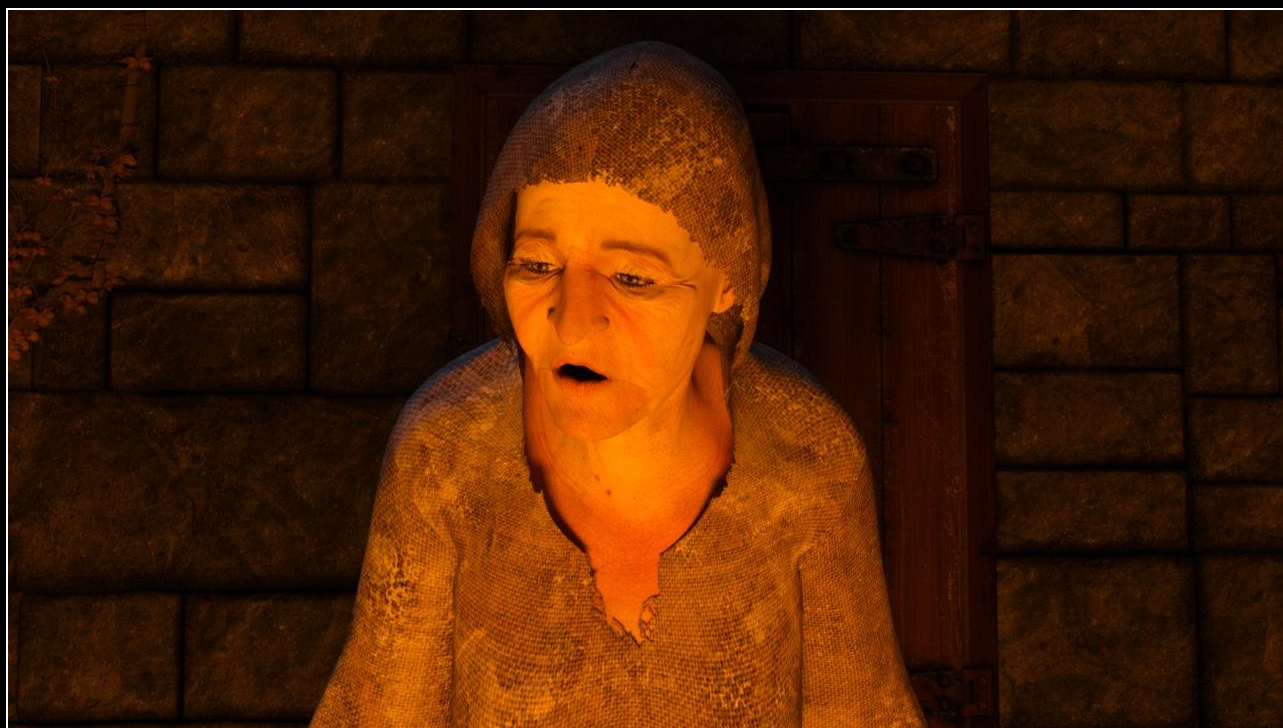




**Witch:** Yes. Cain came to me for answers.  
Alas, my answers were the same as his own.



**Natty:** What did he ask?



**Witch:** What to do?



**Natty:** I do not understand.





**Witch:** Ah, my sweet child, we are ALL prisoners of our desire to be free. We will sacrifice all in order to avoid surrender. No matter what the cost.



**Darej:** But how can one be a prisoner of freedom?



**Witch:** YOU know, lad. You can feel it.





**Naelid:** I feel no such constraints!

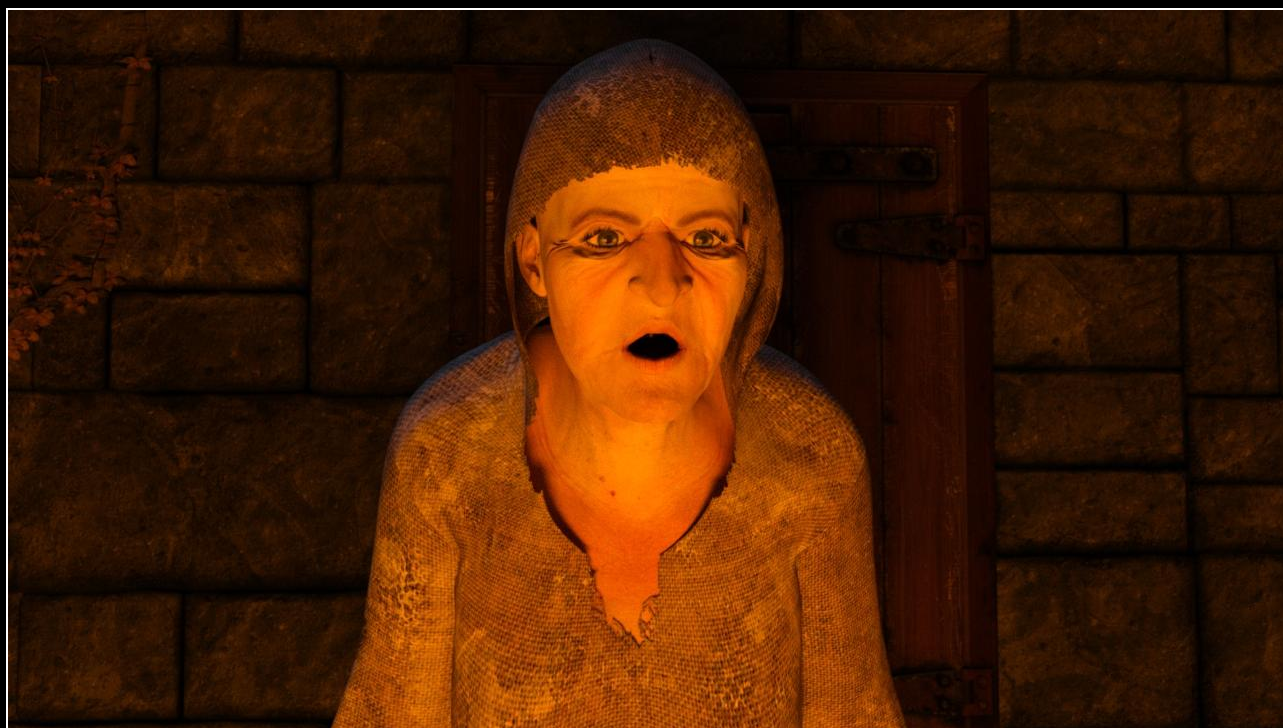


**Witch:** You are surrounded by tormentors and yet are unaware, brave one. The ones that fill your head with cries of freedom are the ones who lead you to your doom.



**Naelid:** Then I will march with legions!





**Witch:** Indeed you will...



**Witch:** ...and sadly...so will I.

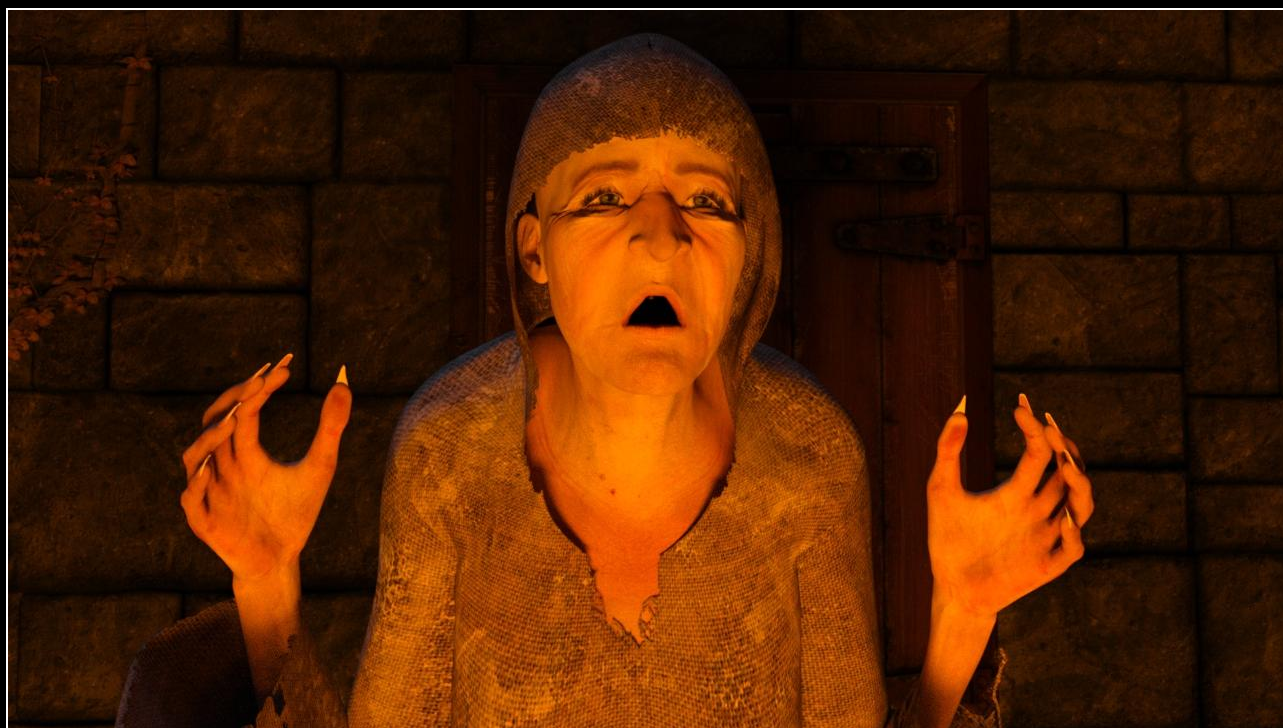


**Darej:** Do you not know how to gain your freedom?





**Witch:** Oh, I do, young lad. But letting go of false-freedom in exchange for true-freedom is a strength I do not have. I have tried many times and yet I am the jailer in my own prison.



**Witch:** Oh! Will my torment be unending?!  
Shall I ever be free?!



**Naelid:** Natty, Darej; we must leave!



**Natty:** What?!?



**Darej:** Why?!



**Naelid:** This is a bizarre place of twisted minds and twisted words. We are finding nothing here!





**Darej:** But, Naelid, we must know how to find Talin!



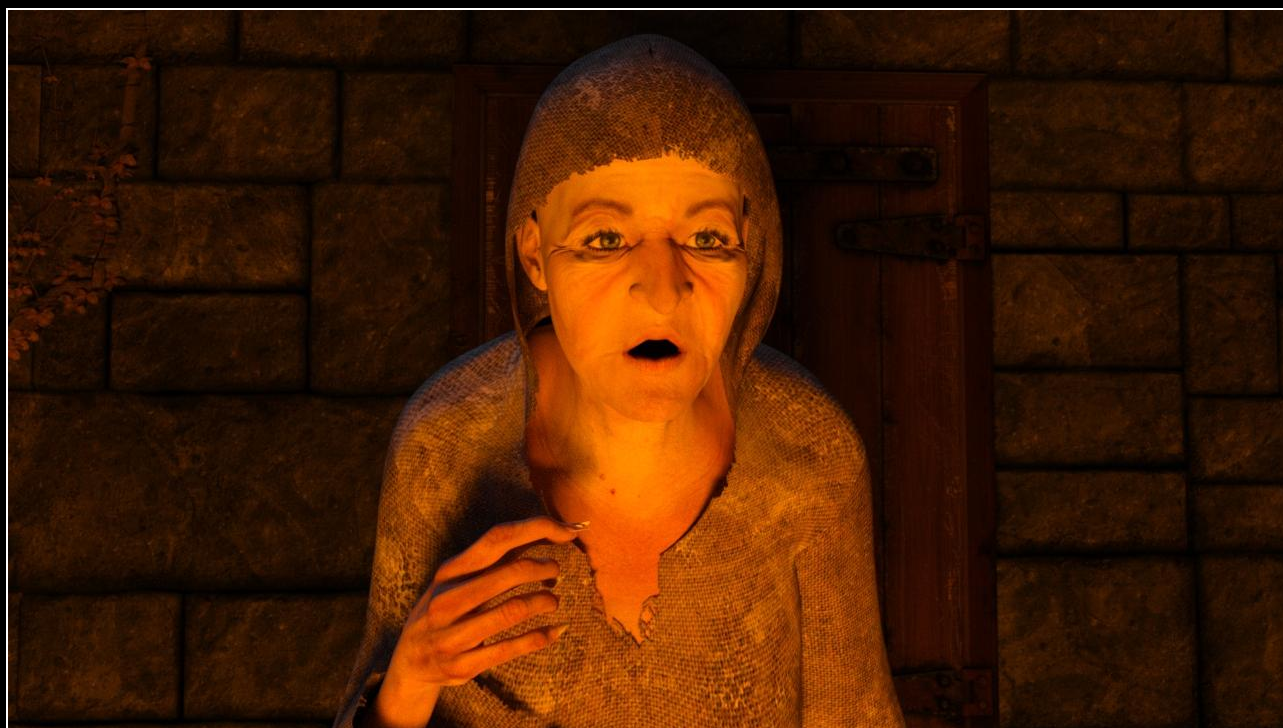
**Naelid:** This is foolishness, Darej! No one has ever returned from the Soldiers of Light! I told you in the beginning that this would be a fool's errand! We need to go back to our people and help them fight!



**Darej:** With no chance of victory.



**Naelid:** Better to die with my people than to languish in this land of confusion!



**Witch:** They will not kill her, you know. They have made her free.



**Naelid:** Free?!? She is a slave!



**Darej:** Do you know where we can find her?



**Witch:** Yes.





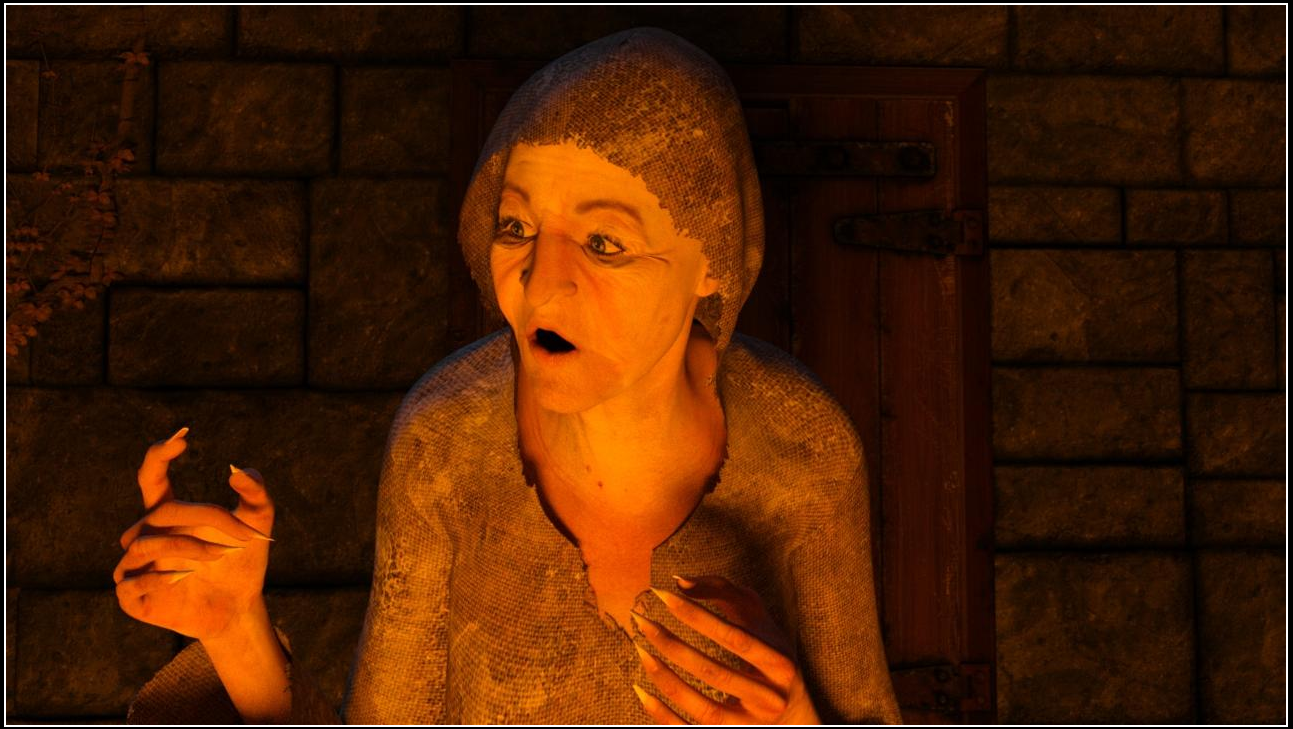
**Naelid:** Are you really going to listen to this feeble-minded hag, Darej?!



**Natty:** Where can we find her?



**Naelid:** What?! You too, Natty?!



**Witch:** They are on the other side of The Wood Beyond the Hills.





**Darej:** Thank you.



**Natty:** Yes, thank you.



**Darej:** We are ready to leave now, Naelid.



**Naelid:** Not soon enough! I will be glad to be away from this hideous place!



**Darej:** Yes! To the other side of The Wood Beyond the Hills!



**Naelid:** What?! Ohhhh, no! I am not going there!





**Darej:** Then I guess the brave warriors of Admah will have to be represented by Natty and myself.





**Natty:** I hope you find the true-freedom you seek. Thank you so much for your help.



**Witch:** Oh, my dear child, do not be afraid of the truth. And do not be deceived by those in whom you place your trust.





**Darej:** Are you coming, brave warrior, Naelid?  
Or shall all the glory be mine?



**Naelid:** Take away his mother's wine jars and suddenly he is ready to conquer armies!



**Natty:** Be well.

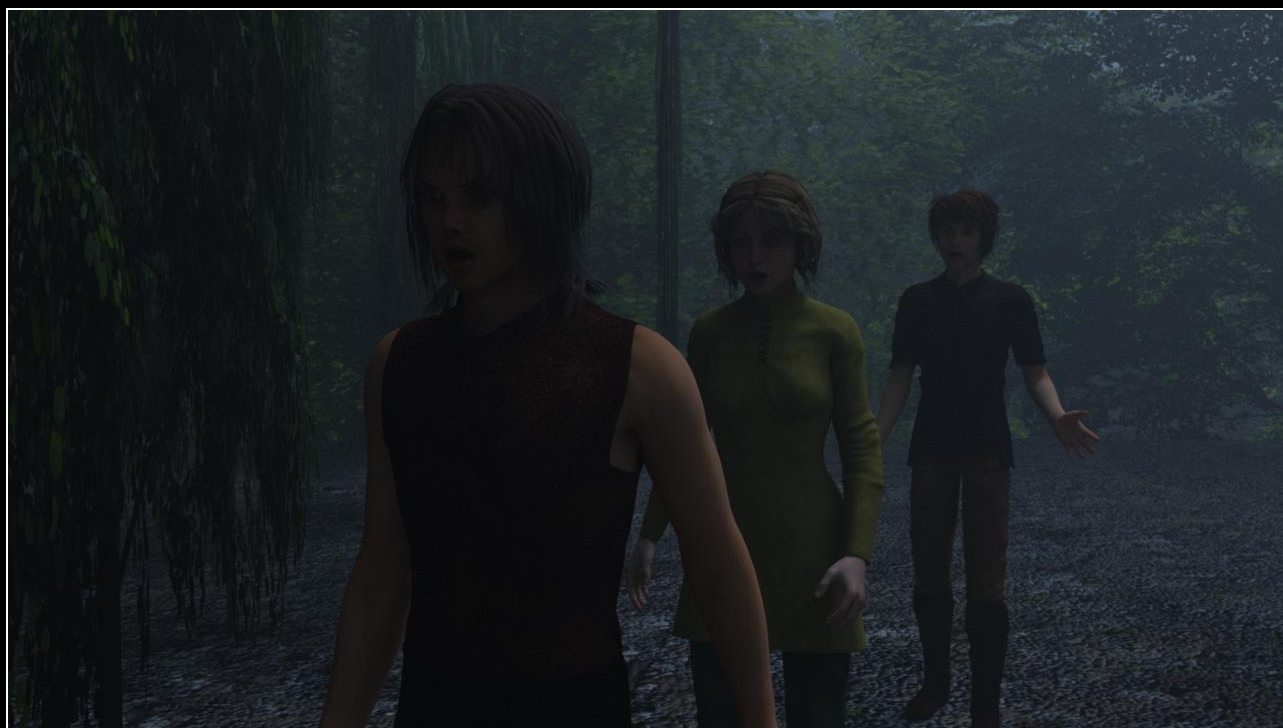




**Witch:** Oh, that they be given the strength that I have not.



**Witch:** Alas, I am undone.



**Naelid:** I am glad to have my back to that unruly place!



**Natty:** I wish to never think upon these horrible sites again, myself.



**Darej:** At least now we know where to find Talin.















**Natty:** \*GASP\*



**Naelid:** Well, at least she is now free from these things that have twisted her mind and tormented her soul.



**Darej:** I HOPE she is free, Naelid.



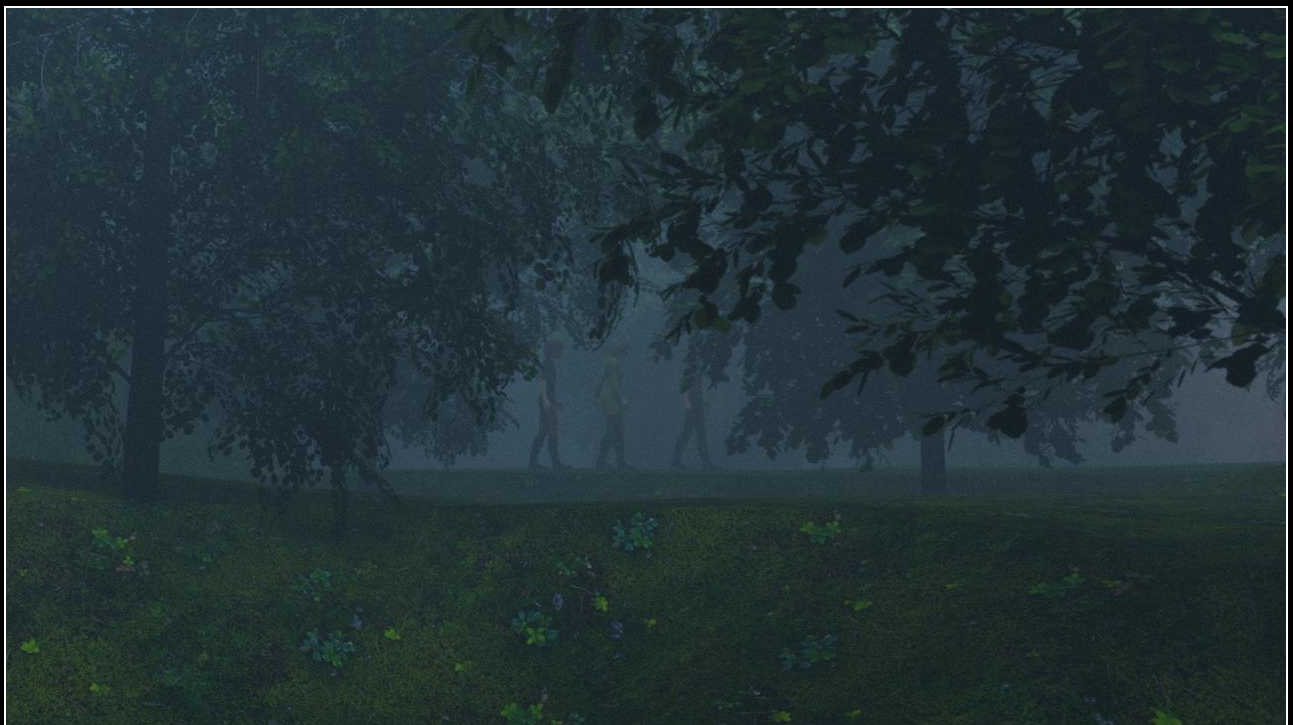
**Darej:** I feel that a great darkness has fallen over this place.



# Chapter 9



With Ephrath behind them, the three friends venture deep into The Wood Beyond the Hills.







**Natty:** Have we any food left, Darej?



**Darej:** I am afraid not, Natty. We ate the last of the bread yesterday.



**Natty:** Oh! We should have asked the witch...I mean, Caretaker at Ephrath for some food.



**Naelid:** 'Witch', is the correct term, Natty.



**Natty:** Oh, Naelid, it has been days now, are you still angry with her?



**Naelid:** I am angry with anyone who tries to take our freedoms from us.



**Darej:** Come now, Naelid, she was simply warning us not to be deceived.



**Natty:** Yes, and to find TRUE freedom.





**Naelid:** The freedom we have IS true! Do you not have the freedom to collect your bobbles and trinkets and dream of fame and richest to come, Natty? And Darej, certainly you enjoy the freedom of your wine and herbs, do you not?



**Darej:** And you the company of many maidens, yes Naelid?



**Naelid:** Indeed I do! You see, we ALL enjoy the pleasures our freedom gives us! These are the freedoms that our people have fought for! We have always been taught that these freedoms are our birthright and that the pleasures of life are to be enjoyed! Are we not all the better for them? Can you imagine your life without these things?



**Natty:** But why did they deceive us about Ephrath, Naelid? Some freedoms appear to have very dark consequences.





**Darej:** Do you remember what the Caretaker said; about the ones crying freedom being the ones who lead us to our doom? What do you think she meant, Naelid?





**Naelid:** The WITCH of Ephrath turns out to be just as terrifying as we were always told! Although her devious ways were beyond what I would have imagined. With subtlety she tried to pluck our free will from us! Thanks to the spirits for delivering us from her clever trickery!



**Natty:** Look! Over there!





**Natty:** Do you think they have food?



**Naelid:** There is only one way to find out.











**Natty:** Look! They have food! There, on the table.



**Darej:** Yes, but we have no money.





**Naelid:** Not so, Darej. We have Natty's ring.



**Natty:** My RING?!



**Naelid:** Today is a day for choosing, Natty. Your bobbles or your stomach.



**Natty:** Ohhhh! Very well. Let us eat.



**Naelid:** Ah! HE looks like he can help us!





**Naelid:** Good day, kind inn-keeper. We are three weary travelers in need of refreshment. Have you any more food this evening?



**Inn Keeper:** Have you any money?



**Naelid:** Will gold do?



**Inn Keeper:** Indeed it will! Please, young travelers, sit over there! I will bring your food right out.



**Naelid:** Are you revitalized, Natty?





**Natty:** Oh, yes, Naelid! I have not eaten so well since we left the village.



**Darej:** Was it worth your ring then, Natty?



**Natty:** It was worth THREE rings!  
Well....perhaps two.



**Darej:** HaHa!



**Naelid:** I wonder if there is a place for us to sleep here tonight?





**Floozie 1:** I know a place where you can spend the night, dashing stranger!



**Floozie 2:** And who you can spend the night WITH!



**Natty:** I hope you have ample accommodations, considering there are THREE of us.





**Floozie 2:** Oh....I'm sorry, we are simple people of the wood. We are able to help the odd stranger that comes along, however, we are not used to accommodating BANDS of travelers.





**Natty:** Strange... From the looks of you, I would have guessed otherwise.



**Floozie 1:** Are you ready to retire for the evening, stranger?



**Naelid:** Indeed!





**Darej:** Naelid, I think perhaps we should be moving on.



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid. Our appetites have been satisfied. We must continue on our journey.





**Floozie 1:** Have ALL your appetites been satisfied, young stranger?



**Naelid:** Not NEARLY satisfied!



**Darej:** Naelid! Let us go now!



**Natty:** Yes, Naelid. You forget the importance of our journey!



**Floozie 1:** Is your journey worthwhile if you cannot enjoy yourself along the way?



**Floozie 2:** Come stranger, let us show you to your accommodations.





**Darej:** I hope you have another ring. We may be stuck here for days.



**Natty:** We most certainly will NOT!









**Natty:** Naelid! We are LEAVING!



**Naelid:** If you are in such a rush, Natty, please...go on ahead. I will catch up with you tomorrow.



[Hummmmmmm]



**Darej:** Naelid, we should stay together. There seems to be darkness all around these woods.





**Naelid:** I am afraid the accommodations do not allow for us to stay together, Darej. You and Natty go ahead. I will join you in the morning.



**Darej:** Something is wrong, Naelid! THIS is wrong!





**Naelid:** WHAT is wrong, Darej? What specifically is wrong?!





**Darej:** You should not go with them, Naelid!



**Naelid:** Will YOU try to steal our freedoms too, Darej? Did the witch's sorcery take away your nerve?



**Darej:** She spoke of doom, Naelid! Something is wrong! We need to LEAVE this place!



**Naelid:** Go back inside, Darej. Perhaps the inn-keeper has some WINE to keep you company tonight.





**Darej:** Let us go, Natty.





**Natty:** Are we going to LEAVE him here?!



**Darej:** We will go down the path a ways and sleep there. If we are lucky, he will be available by morning.



**Natty:** He is COMPLETELY controlled by his desires! Has he forgotten about Talin so quickly?!



[Hummmmmmm]



**Darej:** We can all get consumed with the things we desire, Natty. Perhaps this is the prison the Caretaker spoke of.

[AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!]







**Naelid:** AHHHHHHHH!!!!!! HELP ME!



**Floozie 2:** Ha! Ha!





**Naelid:** DAREJ!!!! NATTY! HELLLLLPPPPP!!!!!!  
AAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



**Floozie 1:** Ahahahaha!



**Dark Figure:** @!\$%&\*%\*!#@!





**Natty:** Let us LEAVE Darej! Quickly! Let us LEAVE!!!!



**Darej:** Yes! Let us leave this place!!!





Dark Figure: @!\$%&\*%\*!#@!



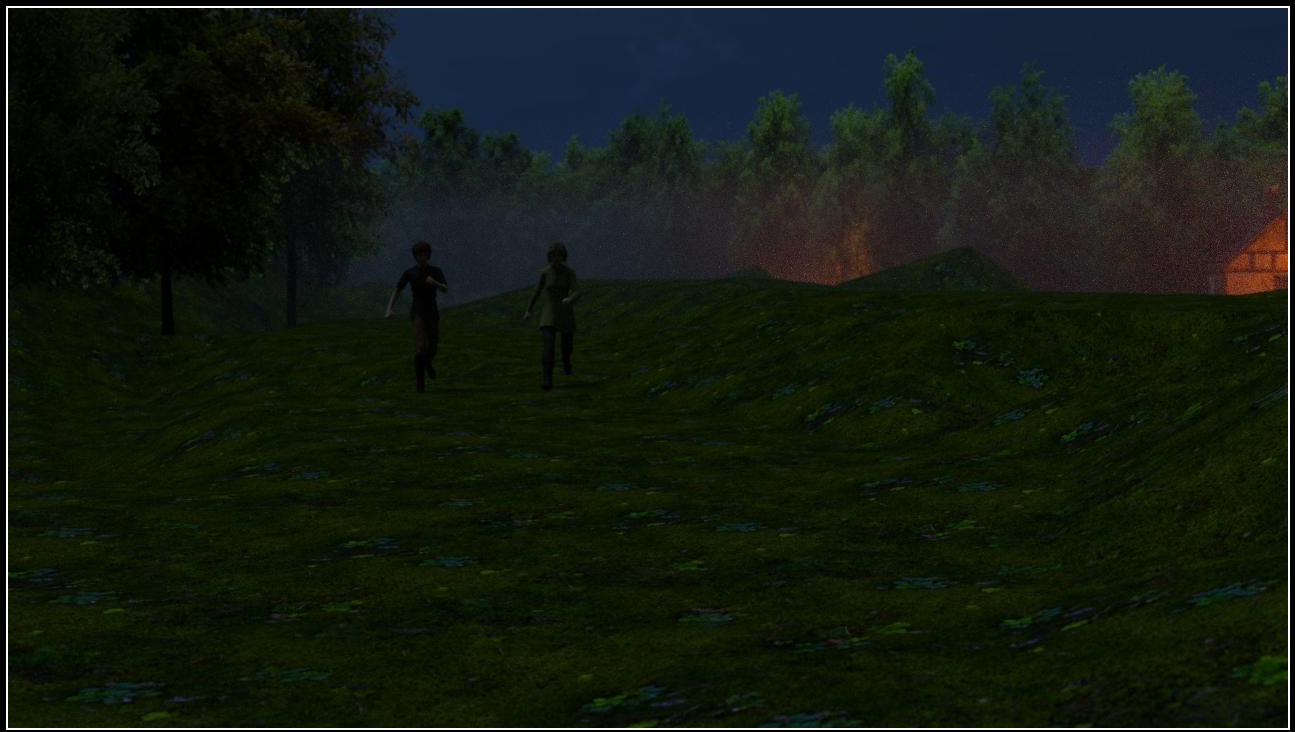
{Hummmmmmm}





**Naelid:** AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!!!  
NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!! HELP!!!!!!!!!!!







**Natty:** Did you see those terrible things pulling him into the ground, Darej?!



**Darej:** Yes! I did!



**Natty:** What WERE they, Darej?! What WERE they?



**Darej:** Did they not look like the spirits we saw at the grove, Natty?!



**Natty:** Well...yes....they did, but.... Are not the spirits here to HELP us?!





**Darej:** That is what we have been TOLD!



**Darej:** Perhaps not all the things we have been told have been for our good. Look at Naelid. Was he not simply pursuing the things that he was told he had the right to do?



**Natty:** But why would people deceive us about these things? The elders...the teachers...our PARENTS!



**Darej:** Remember the Caretaker talked about letting go of false-freedoms in exchange for true-freedom? Perhaps those who taught us could not let go of the things they craved.



**Natty:** That still does not explain why they would deceive us.





**Darej:** Maybe they were trying to deceive THEMSELVES as well. Maybe the consequences are so terrible that they prefer to tell themselves, and us, that the consequences are not real.



**Natty:** Like the consequences in the cave.



**Darej:** Yes, and more. Look what happened to poor Naelid.



**Natty:** These are terrible things, Darej!



**Darej:** Indeed.



**Darej:** Remember what the Caretaker said,  
the difficulty is not FINDING the truth but  
ACCEPTING it.



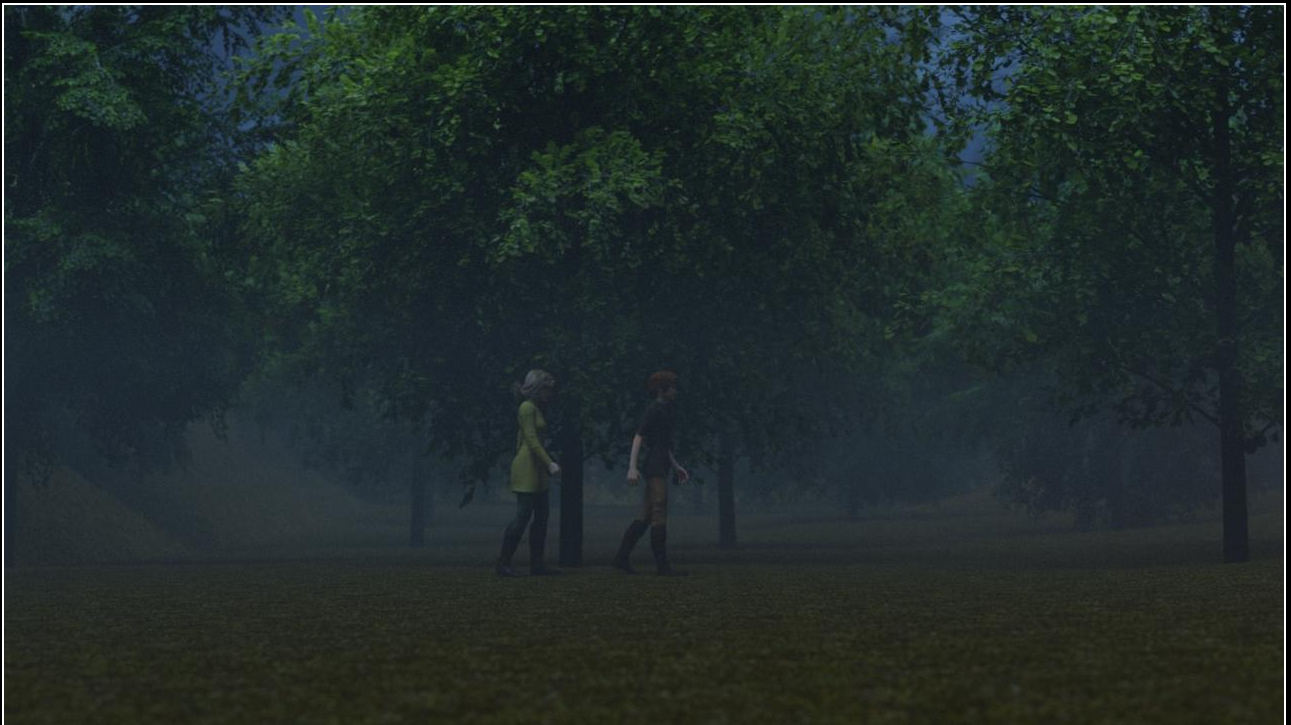


**Natty:** Oh, what horrible truths these are!

# Chapter 10



With their ranks thinned, an air of uncertainty grips Natty and Darej.





**Natty:** Do you know where we are, Darej?



**Darej:** I believe we are almost near the end of the Wood, Natty.



**Natty:** What will we find when we get there? The Caretaker did not tell us what to look for.



**Darej:** I do not know, Natty. Perhaps some sign will be given to us.





**Natty:** Perhaps the occupant of that cottage could tell us.



**Darej:** I do not think we should seek out the help of strangers once again, Natty.



**Natty:** But it has been days since we have seen ANYONE. If this person lives near the end of the Wood, should he not know what is beyond?





**Darej:** There is darkness throughout this wood, Natty. We should keep moving.

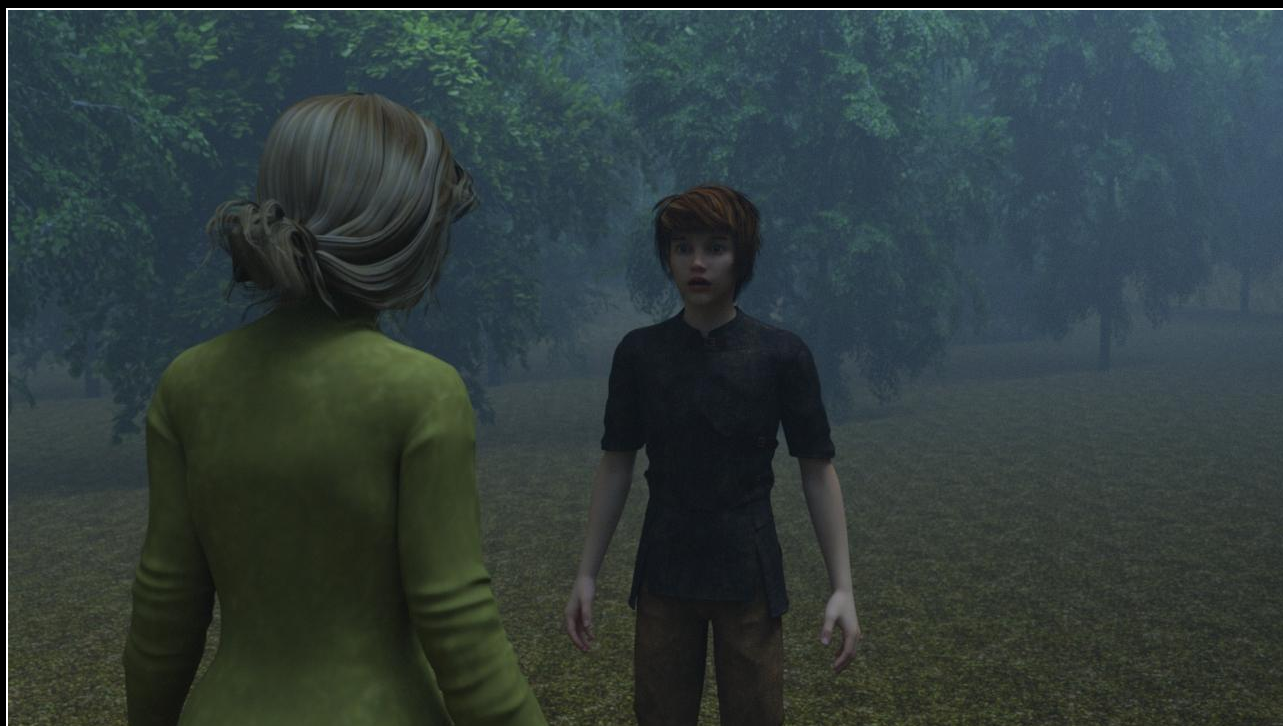


**Natty:** But Darej, I am tired...and hungry...and in need of rest.





**Darej:** Really, Natty! Must you complain about...



**Natty:** What is it, Darej?





Natty: \*GASP\*





**Anak:** I have plenty to eat, my beauty.



**Natty:** He is going to EAT us, Darej!!!!



**Darej:** No, Natty. I believe he is OFFERING us something to eat.



**Anak:** Indeed. And a place to rest as well.





**Darej:** Who are you, kind sir?



**Anak:** I am Anak.



**Natty:** Anak?!?



**Darej:** Anak, King of the Gershons?!?



**Anak:** Alas, ONCE a king.



**Natty:** Yes, but a GREAT king!



**Anak:** A king without a people, my dear.





**Natty:** Surely, your people would welcome your return. You are a great king and the legend of your bravery and power fills the land. Why, from the time of our youth, we have heard stories of your great victories.



**Darej:** Yes, Natty, but a king needs an army. We have heard the tale of your battle against the Soldiers of Light.



**Anak:** \*Growl\* Yes... The Soldiers of Light. I assure you, my lad, the day of my vengeance is soon approaching.



**Darej:** Do you not need an army in order to go to battle?



**Anak:** Ahhhh, my lad. An army I almost have. In numbers so vast that we shall wash over the land like a fog and envelope the Soldiers of Light.



**Darej:** Where does one get such an army?





**Anak:** The enemies of the Light People are legion. Across the land and throughout the Earth. There are many who are waiting to be freed from the terror of these slave masters. And those who will not fight on their own, can be easily bought for a price. Hahaha!



**Darej:** Mercenaries. But with what do you buy their services? You are a king without a kingdom.



**Anak:** Ahhh, my lad. There is much to be had in these very woods.



**Darej:** These woods? What is in these woods?



Anak: GOLLLLD!





Natty: GOLD?!?



**Anak:** Yes, my beauty. The rocks of the Wood are filled with veins running deep into the earth. The purest gold you have ever seen.



**Natty:** Wonderful!





**Darej:** You have been in these woods all these years mining gold? By yourself?!



**Anak:** Not by myself, dear lad. There are others. Those who dwell deep in the earth.



**Darej:** Deep in the earth? Who are these people?



**Anak:** Open your mind, young lad. There are more than PEOPLE in this wood.



**Darej:** Yes, as we have discovered.



**Anak:** Indeed! The enemies of the Light People are not just flesh and blood, but spirit also.



**Darej:** Yes. We have had our encounters with these as well. Perhaps we should be going now, Natty.





**Natty:** Gold, Darej! Did you hear?! GOLD!



**Darej:** Natty...



**Anak:** And more, my beauty.



Anak: POWER!



**Natty:** \*Gasp\*



**Darej:** Natty! No! Do not listen to him!





**Anak:** Power to rule the armies of flesh and the armies of spirit. A NEW kingdom! The whole WORLD as my kingdom!!!



**Anak:** And a kingdom will also need...a queen!



**Darej:** No, Natty! It is a trick! A deception!





**Natty:** Isn't it WONDERFUL, Darej! And you can be WITH us! A trusted adviser!



**Anak:** Indeed!



**Darej:** No, Natty! It isn't true! Remember!  
They are out to deceive us!



**Natty:** Ahhh, but such a pleasant deception, Darej. Can you imagine how wonderful it will be?!





**Darej:** Natty! He cannot give you the whole world! It is a lie! Why do you want these things?!



**Natty:** Because I have ALWAYS wanted them, Darej. And now...they are within my reach!



**Darej:** The TRUTH, Natty! Do you seek the truth or do you seek your desires?!





**Natty:** What if the truth is not as pleasant as my desires?



**Darej:** What if your desires are keeping you from the truth?!?!



**Anak:** Come to me, my queen!









**Dark Figure:** !@\$%#&\*#\$\$!\*@







**Natty:** AAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



**Anak:** HAHAAHAHAHAHA!!!



**Darej:** NATTY!!!!!!



**Natty:** HELP ME, DAREJ!!!!!!





**Dark Figure:** !@#\$%&\*#\$\$!\*@!#@\$@#!



**Darej:** \*GASP\*



**Natty:** AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



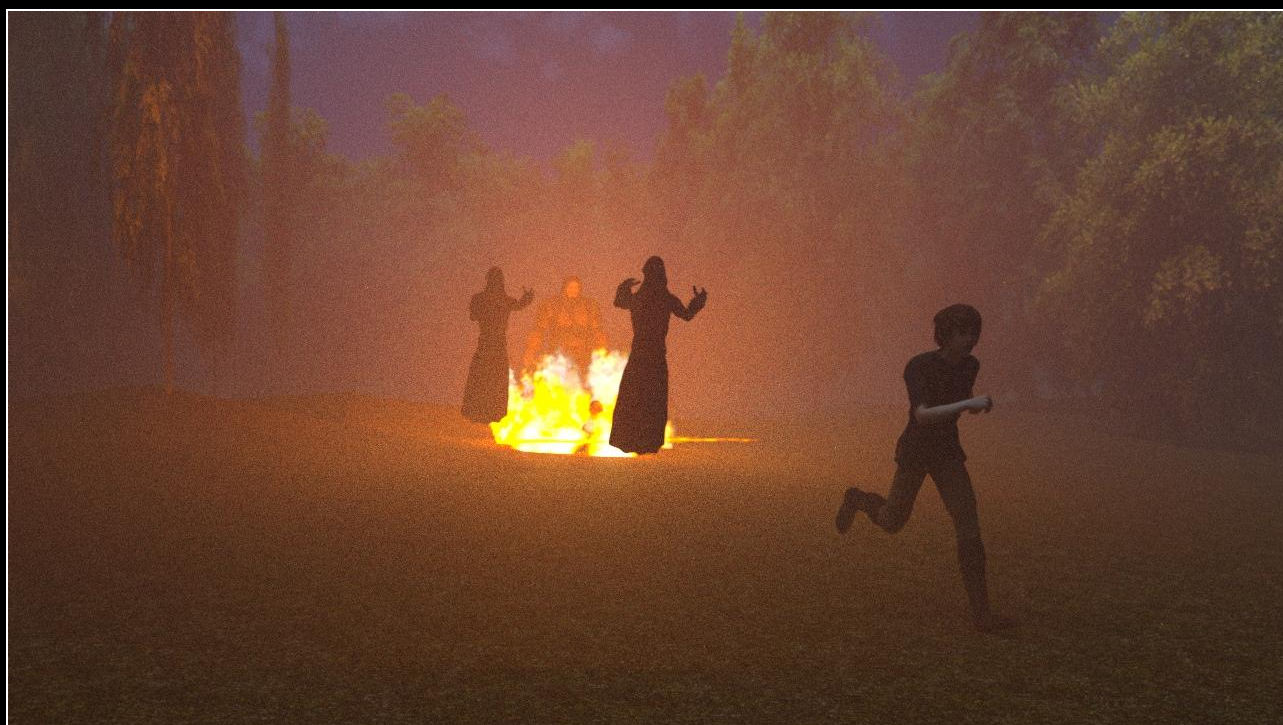






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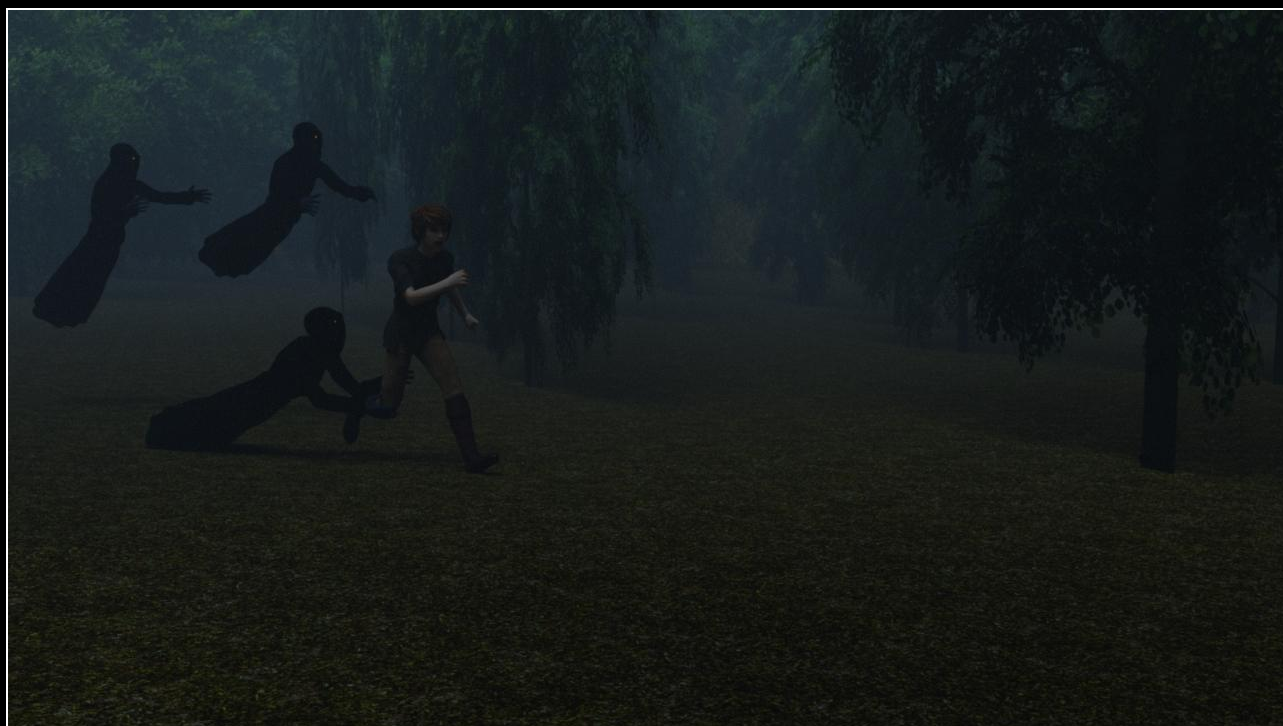
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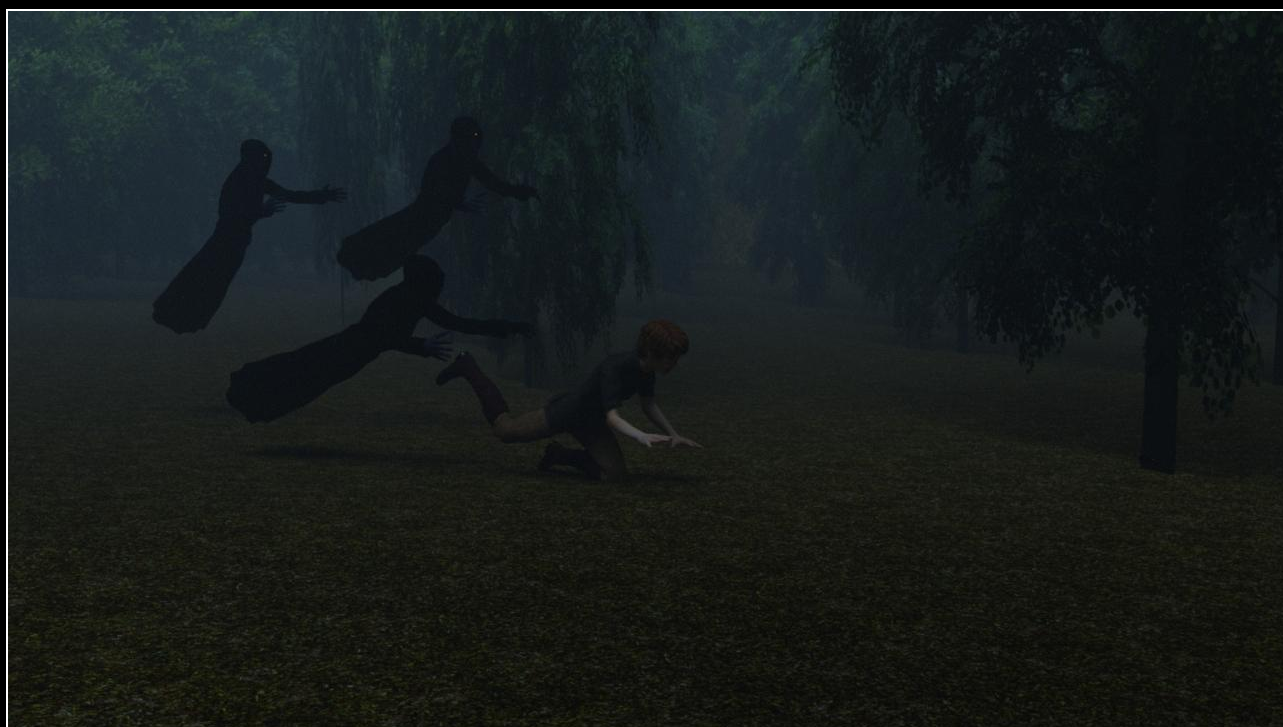


Darej: Aaaaaahhh!!!



**Dark Figure:**

!@\$%#&\*#\$!\*@!#@\$\$@#!@\$%&\$&%!@!&@



**Darej:** OUUUGGHH!





**Dark Figure:** @!\$%&\*%\*!#@!@\$#%&#!



**Darej:**

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!  
NOOOOO!!!!!!! DO NOT TAKE ME! PLEASE!  
SOMEONE SAVE ME!!!!





[Hummmmmmm]



Darej: \*GASP\*





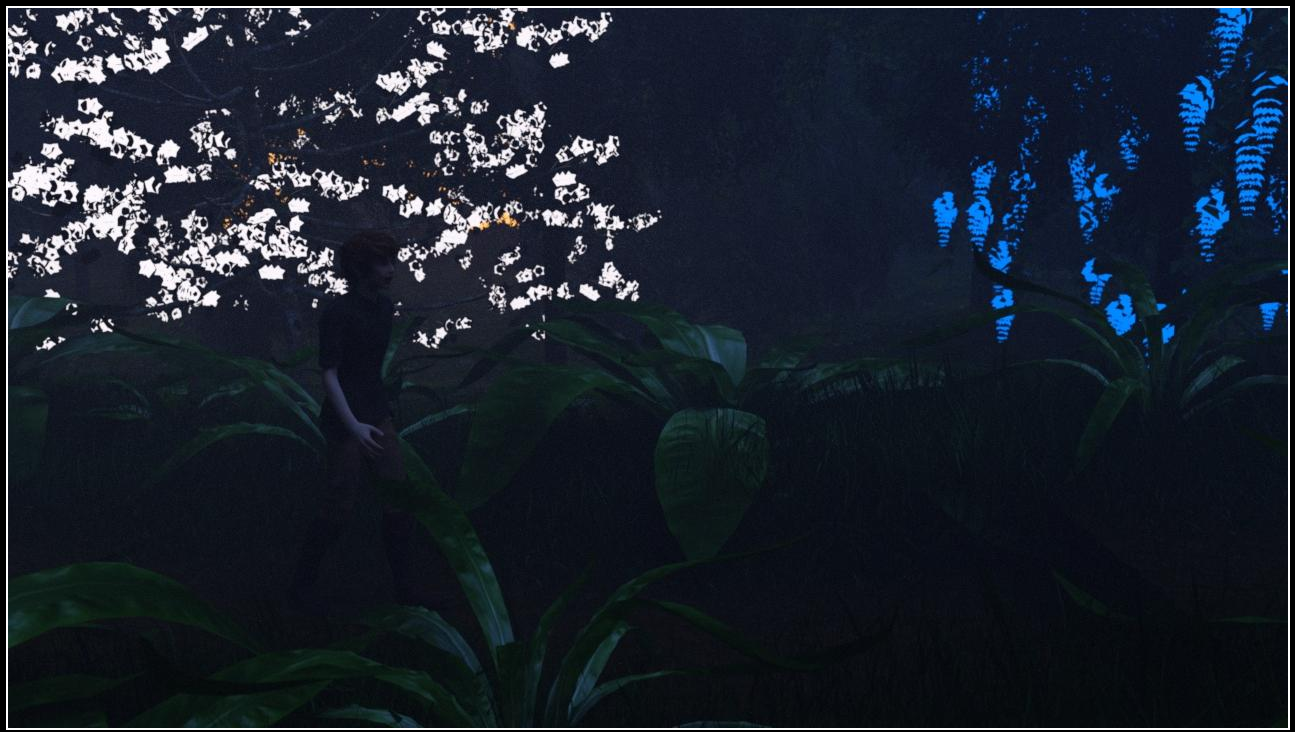




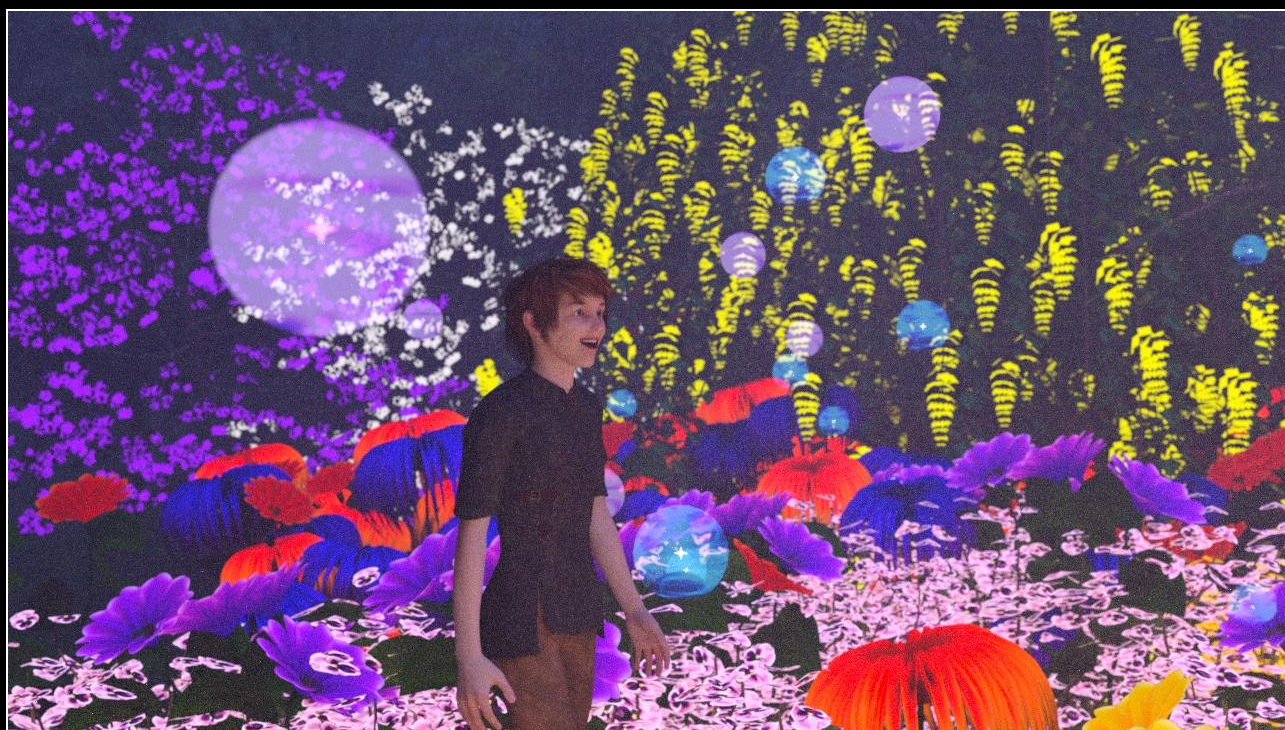


As Darej escapes into the woods, a soft sound...still music...quietly fills the air.









The gentle humming that had earlier escaped his notice...





...washes over him like a flood.







[Hummmmmmm]



And the light, that he had ignored for so long, was suddenly right  
before his eyes.





**Darej:** Who ARE you?



**PoL:** Do you seek the truth, young Darej?



**Darej:** Yes.



**PoL:** What if it is not what you want?



**Darej:** I want to know.













Darej: \*gasp\*







**Darej:** Can you tell me the hidden things?



**PoL:** Yes.



**Darej:** What are they?



**PoL:** You already know.



**Darej:** What do I know?



**PoL:** The things you desire...





**Darej:** These are wrong.



**PoL:** Yes.



**Darej:** MANY things. These things we do.



**PoL:** Many things.





**Darej:** Why do they tell us they are good?



**PoL:** To quiet their conscience. How could they do these things if they were seen by ones who still knew they were wrong?



**Darej:** So they told us lies?



**PoL:** The same lies they tell themselves.



**Darej:** But why?



**PoL:** There is a price to pay for breaking the pure law.





**Darej:** What is the price?





PoL: Destruction.



**Darej:** But why destruction?



**PoL:** If there is goodness, then there must be punishment for evil.





**Darej:** But we were told that the spirits give us our freedom and that our freedom is GOOD.





**PoL:** The spirits are enemies of The Light.



**Darej:** What?!



**PoL:** They have rebelled against the goodness of The Light and are awaiting destruction. Their desire is to lead others to destruction as well.





**Darej:** To lead us to rebellion.





**PoL:** Yes. To rebel against The Light so that you will be lost as well.



**Darej:** The spirits seem so powerful...and these desires so strong. Are we all to be overcome?





**PoL:** The time of darkness is quickly fading.  
The Light shall soon cover the whole Earth.





**Darej:** Huh? But what about the spirits? What about all the people? All of us who do these evil things?



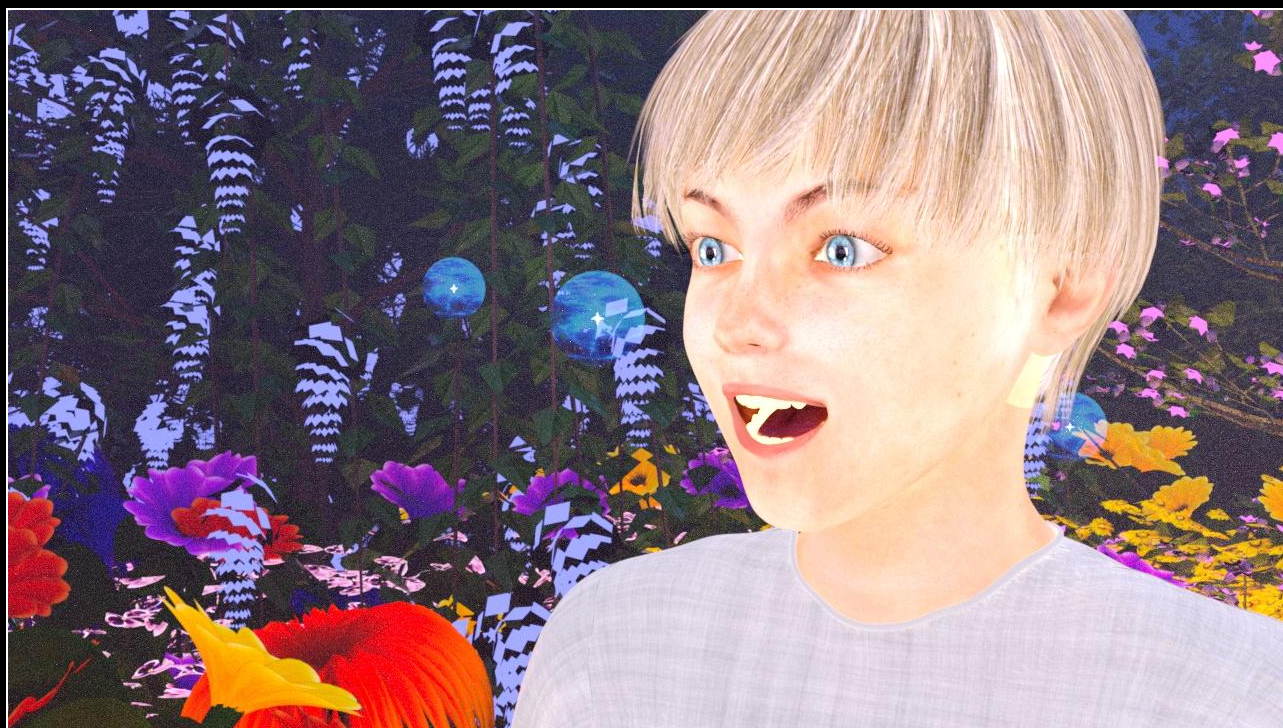
**PoL:** The Light shall cover the Earth and destroy all those who do evil. The time is fast approaching.





**Darej:** Then we are lost. What will become of us?! Who can escape this terrible judgment?!





**PoL:** You know someone who has.



Darej: Who?











Darej: TALIN!











**Darej:** Talin!!!



**Talin:** Hello, Darej.



**Darej:** Talin, you are alive! Are you a ghost?!



**Talin:** Ha! No, Darej. I am FILLED with Light.





**Darej:** You are not a slave?!



**Talin:** No LONGER a slave, Darej. I have been freed from the evil that enslaved me.



**Darej:** What evil?



**Talin:** The same evil that enslaves you now, Darej. Our desires. Our indulgences. Our unnatural affections. These things that we are told to love, are the very things that show our hatred for The Light.



**Darej:** But how do we know what is right?



**Talin:** Our conscience tells us.





**Darej:** I fear that I have so numbed my conscience that I do not know right from wrong any more.



**Talin:** Yes, the deceptions of this world confuse what we know naturally to be true. Good becomes evil. Evil becomes good. Slavery becomes freedom.



**Darej:** Then how am I to know?



**Talin:** Our King tells us. I can share these things with you. But Darej, you will hear things that are contrary to what you have been taught. What will you do then?





**Darej:** I must know the truth.



**Darej:** But, honestly, I fear I will not have the strength to change.



**Talin:** It is not OUR strength upon which we rely, Darej. Our King gives us strength. But as long as we love our lies more than the truth; strength will be far from us.





**Darej:** But what of the things I have  
ALREADY done?! I have been told that The  
Light is coming and will destroy all those who  
do evil. If this is so, then I am lost!



**Talin:** Our King is a just king and must destroy evil lest He would be corrupt.



**Talin:** But Darej, our King is merciful as well. He has already paid the price for the evil we have done.





Darej: What?



**Talin:** Trust Him, Darej, and turn from your evil ways. He will break the chains of your bondage and give you strength to leave these things. You will be TRULY free...from evil...from deception...and from the just punishment that must follow.



**Talin:** He will give you faith, Darej...and hope.





**Darej:** He would do this...for me?



**Talin:** Yes.



**Darej:** But why?



**Talin:** Because He LOVES you, Darej.



**Darej:** Who is this marvelous King, Talin?





**Talin:** He is The Light of the World.





Suddenly, in the distant sky, a brilliant light, the thunder of trumpets, and the song of a million million voices echos across the land.







**Darej:** The Light of the World!





**Talin:** He comes back NOW, Darej...for YOU!



**Darej:** To save or to destroy?



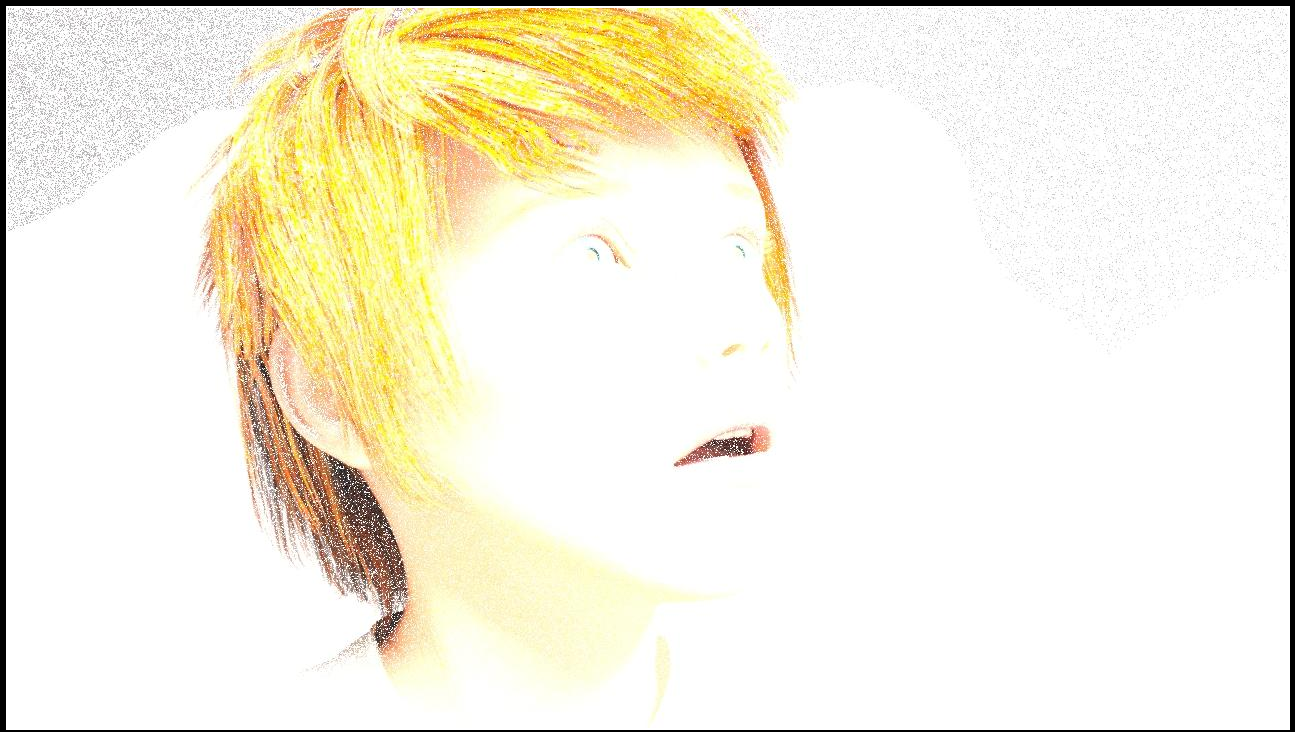


As the sky spreads and the thunderous voices approach, Darej finds himself enveloped in Light.



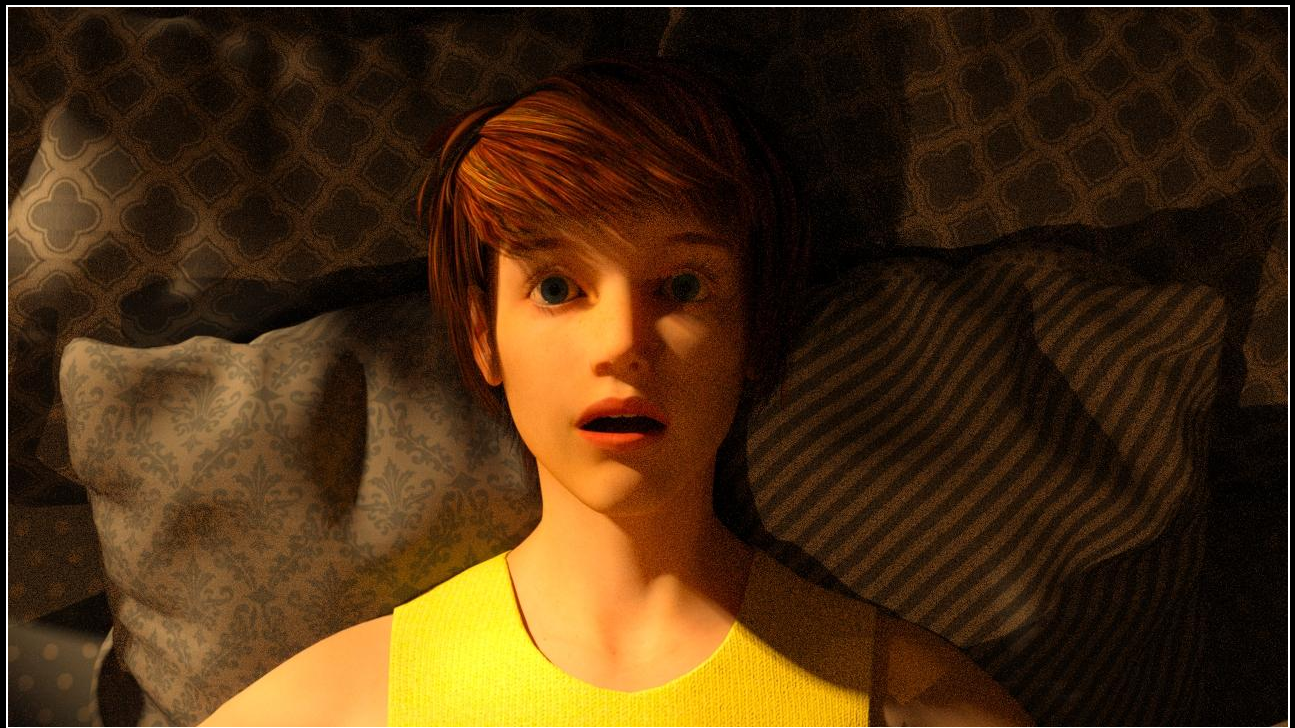
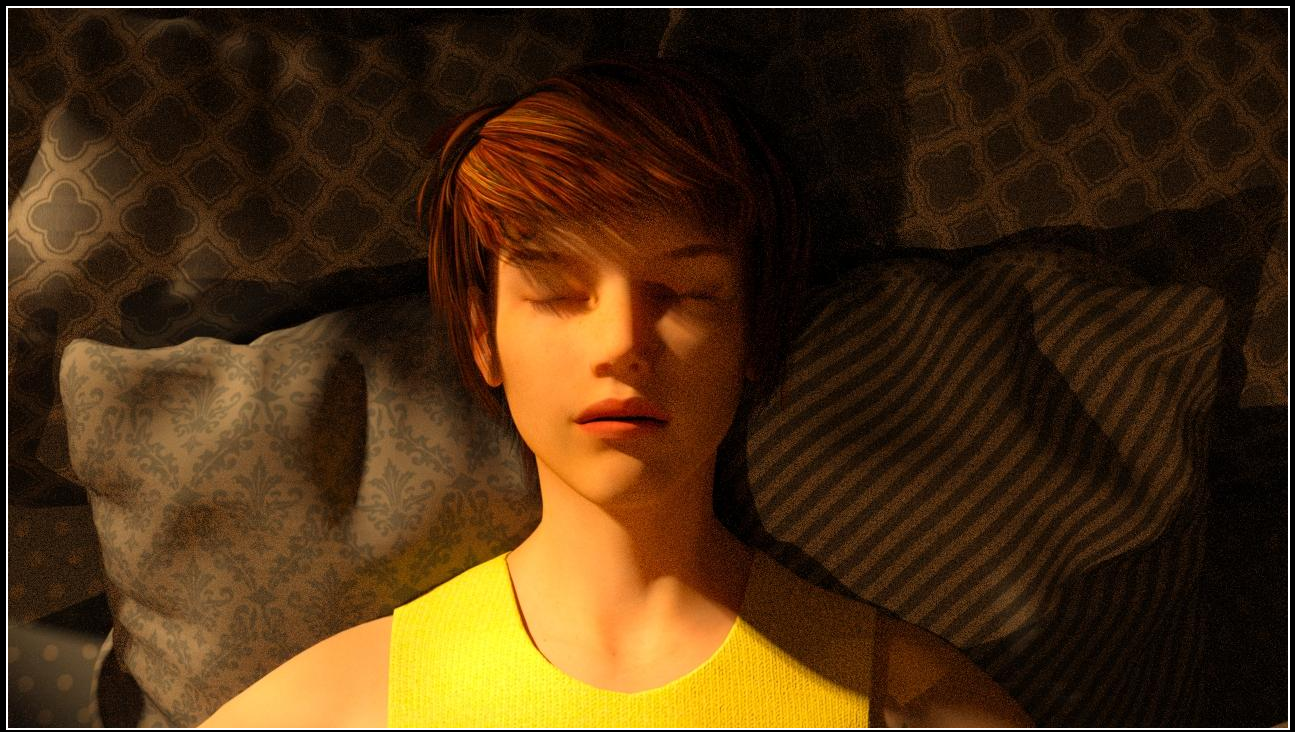






[BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!]



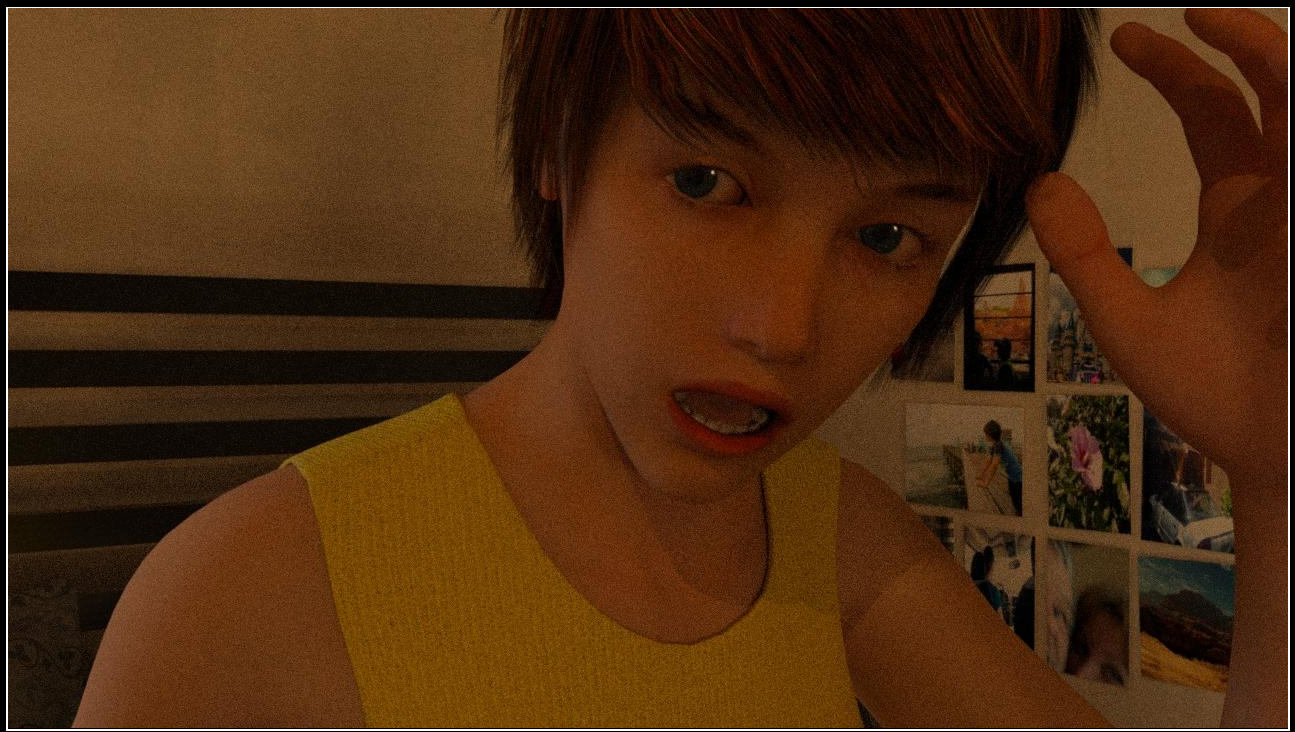


Jared: \*GASP\*





**Mom:** Get up, Jared! You don't want to be late for the first day of school!



**Jared:** What?





**Jared:** Oh, man.

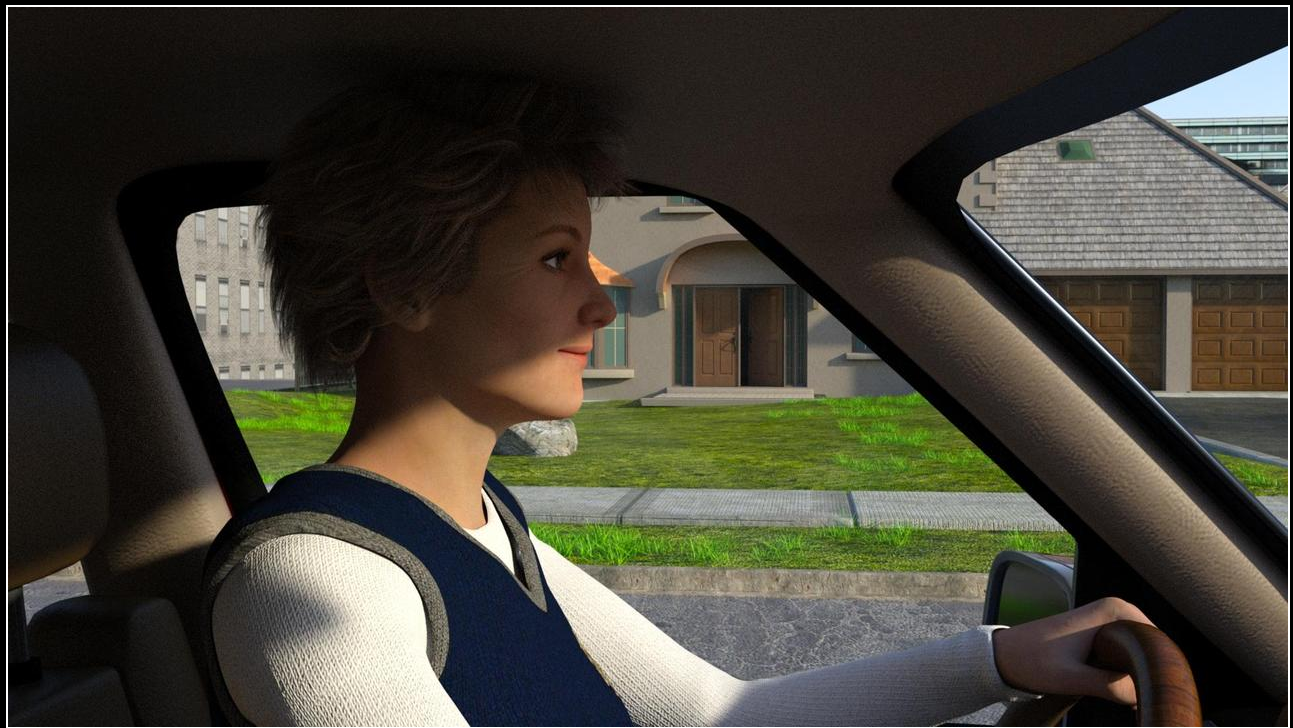


**Mom:** Hurry up and get in the shower, honey!  
We gotta go!









**Radio:** Rocky Point School District's open bathroom and locker room policy begins today. A lawsuit to block the policy was struck down in federal appeals court just last week.



**Radio:** With school beginning today, it's a new and inclusive era for our local schools.





**Mom:** Well, I for one think it's wonderful. I certainly don't want MY son growing up discriminating against LGBT people. I think it's terrific that we live in such an open and inclusive city.



**Mom:** You'll be all the better for having grown up in this environment, Jared. By the time your kids are in school, nobody will think twice about this sort of thing.

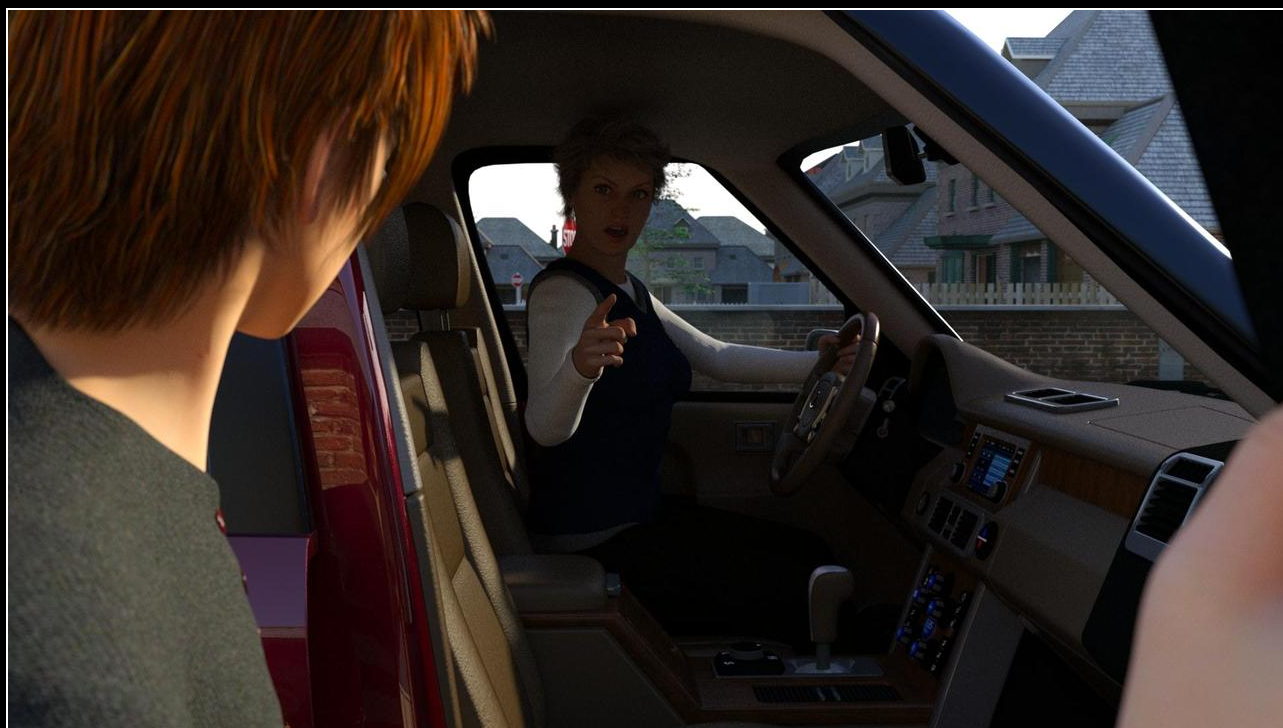








**Jared:** Yeah, but what if this stuff is wrong, mom?



**Mom:** JARED! Why would you SAY something like that?! You better behave, Jared! Don't cause any trouble! Do you want the whole city to think we're bigots?!











**Daniel:** Hey Jared! Over here!







**Daniel:** Excited about school starting?!





**Jared:** Uhhh.... Kinda.



**Daniel:** I'm already likin' the way this year's startin' out!



**Patti:** Jared!!! I'm so excited to see you!





**Jared:** Patti!



**Patti:** How was your Summer? Mine was SOOOO great! Europe is AMAZING! You should see Paris. Oh! And Milan! You've never seen so many amazing clothes in one place in your whole life!



**Jared:** Wow, that sounds...great.





**Patti:** OH! And look what I got for my birthday...CONVERTABLE!!!! We can go for a drive after school! I gotta go now though! See you at lunch!!!





**Caitlin:** Jared?





**Jared:** Caitlin!



**Jared:** How....how was your Summer?





**Caitlin:** Jared. Is that REALLY what you want to ask me?











**Jared:** No. There's something MUCH more important I need to know about.





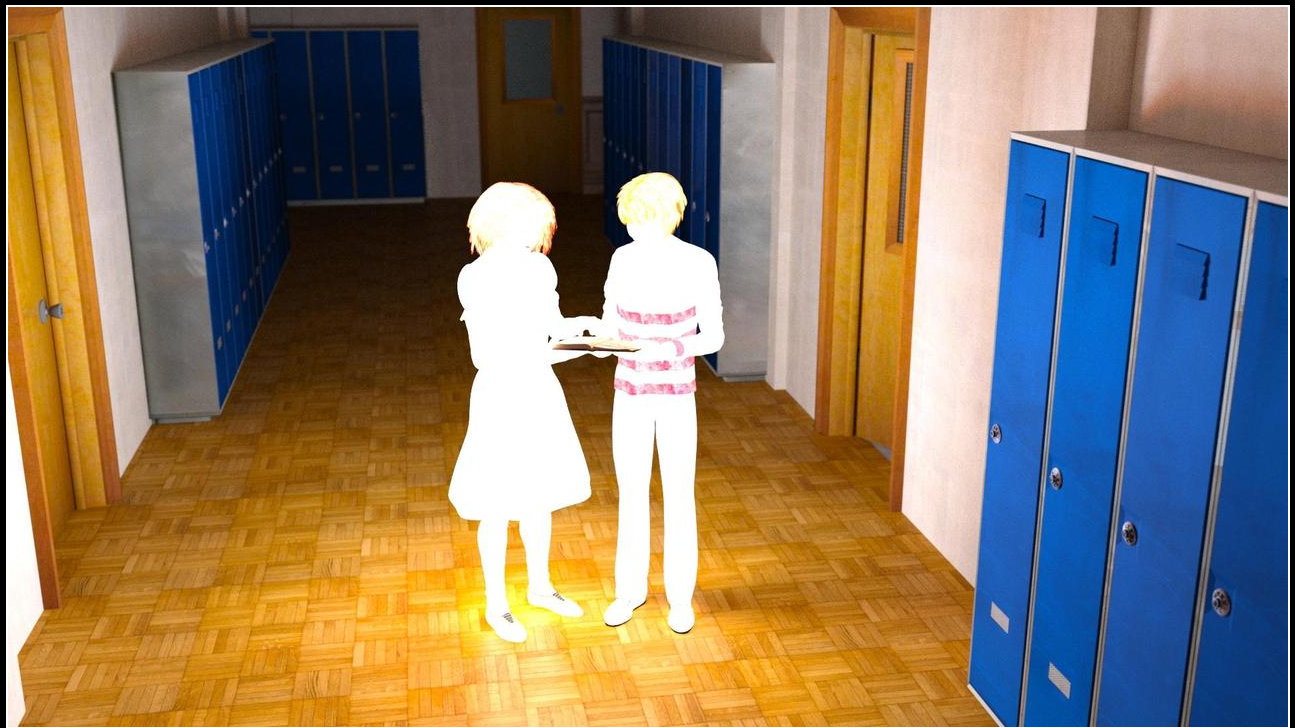














"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath The Light shined." - Isaiah 9:2

The world and your flesh is deceiving you into believing that evil is good. Even those closest to you are deceiving you if they tell you that the things that God hates (sin) are not sin at all.

Whether people want to believe it or not, you know that there is justice in the universe. God WILL punish wrong-doing because He is good.

God offers you mercy through the payment that Jesus (God in the flesh) made for your sins.

Acknowledge that you have sinned against a holy and perfect God who demands justice. Beg Him to grant you repentance (turn you from your sin) and give you an obedient faith in Jesus and the payment that He made for you.

No sin in your life, no lie from the world, no fake faith is worth an eternity in Hell.



God will save you...completely. You will know that you are truly saved because the things of the world and the sins of the flesh will be repugnant to you. You will flee from sin. You will be a new creature!

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" - Romans 6:16

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Enjoy the Illustrated Audio Drama version of this story at,  
[www.JesusForSinners.com/TheLandOfDarknessAndLight/](http://www.JesusForSinners.com/TheLandOfDarknessAndLight/)

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