THE PLIGHT OF SCOUNDREL'S FOLLY

Written by

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Based on the popular novel "ENTER ZEEP" releasing 2027

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE NOIRE CROSSING - DAWN

A RED SUN rises over a massive BLACK IRON-PLATE BRIDGE. Stretching three miles, it bridges a STRAIT OF WATER between two LANDMASSES on Eastern and Western sides.

Looming 500 feet above the waves, its huge gothic archways are spaced out across its length, to function as gatehouses for sentries.

To the West, a TALL GATE made of blue marble alloy stands, seeming to SHIMMER with many colors. Clockwork cogs and shifting gears spin on its hinges. To the East, two carved ivory pillars support a giant set of RED LEATHERY CURTAINS.

MALIS (V.O.)
(terrifyingly charismatic)
They built it to retain the illusion of cooperation between the Lungs. That, and demolishing it would be much too wearisome for the proud Marble Council.

We see the Western Gate, glimmering with an obtuse starlight.

MALIS (V.O.)
Behind the Shimmering Gate, a United Confederation of Five Counties pool their resources and artillery to ensure peace and prosperity for all the people of the West Lung.
(beat)
They live in ignorance.

Then, the Eastern Gate, its curtains flooded with crimson glow from the sun behind it.

MALIS (V.O.)
The East Lung lurks behind the sentient curtains of the Gate of Pandemonium. There, lawlessness and depravity have reigned supreme.
(beat)
Its time is just beginning.

EXT. SCOUNDREL'S FOLLY - DAY

Frostbitten winds sweep across an elevated ISLAND OF ICE. Perched atop the berg, a REINFORCED STRONGHOLD of grey stone rests behind PALISADES and an encampment of tents. ARMED MILITIAS patrol its looping, snow-covered pathways.

MALIS (V.O.)
Our time is just beginning.

A tall and muscular figure clad in orange plate armor walks through a gust of blowing snow. He wears two double-bladed swords on his back, a blonde ponytail between the crossguard hilts. His eyes are pale, his neck and jaw thick and square. This is EQUUS.

He approaches the double door entrance to the main fort of Scoundrel's Folly, pushing open the doors into a dark hall.

INT. SOLAR OF MALIS - DAY

Equus enters a private quarters deep within the bastion. There, SELINA, a dark-haired woman in purple waistcoat, stands leaning against a wall. Her green eyes shine like the emerald necklace around her neck.

She gives Equus a nod, which he returns with a bow.

SELINA
(Irish accent)
He's waiting for you.

Equus moves ahead, the rest of the room shrouded in dusky light. Behind a red-and-black tapestry patterned with zigzags, a man wearing a similar red-and-black suit sits at a marble desk, poring over an abundance of reports.

Equus drops to his knees in obedience.

EQUUS
I am yours, as ever for eternity.
What would you ask of me?

MALIS turns to face his follower. His face is pale as bone, his eyes glassy and massively dilated, but otherwise his features are suave and handsome. He wears a black leather glove on his right hand, embroidered with the symbol of the OUROBOROS.

MALIS
My dear Equus. I hope I didn't call for you at the wrong time. How are things running out there?

EQUUS
The Marleybones have arrived. Three score, at least. Goakstein leads them.

MALIS
Have you assessed their loyalty?

EQUUS
Not as of yet. They bring their crates of weaponry, and a large train of baggage.

MALIS
Spoils won without sacrifice or true passion, I wager. Their rulebook will have to change if they can ever hope to embrace the New Era.

EQUUS
Yes, Malis.

MALIS
What of our dashing corsairs?

EQUUS
The Gored Walruses have yet to arrive. They fear Mittyleg has been waylaid.

MALIS
If I find that walking ship-rat junkyard drinking and fucking at Wattersnip Port, I shall have to find a new Grand Admiral with much haste. We cannot defend this place without our fleet, after all.

EQUUS
Yes, Malis. If he has neglected the summons, I will personally behead him.

MALIS
And serve it up for me to feast upon. Now, bring me the Puffin. No doubt you'll find him luxuriating in his tent. A holiday at my expense, that's what this seems to be for our Ambassador.

EQUUS
At once.

Equus stands, bowing to his liege once more, and walks away from the desk without turning his back.

Once he has left, Malis regards Selina with a twisted smile. She returns it, somehow even stranger.

MALIS
Bring my armor and cloak, Sel.

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

An impressive room of bare feasting tables arranged in a zigzag, beneath soot-stained pillars and flat ceiling. Spiral staircases are at either side of a stone balcony.

Standing imposing atop the balcony, Malis wears RED-AND-BLACK ARMOR fashioned of molten metal. From golden clasps around his shoulders, a leathery CRIMSON CLOAK hangs, so long that it covers the entire length of floor behind him.

His gauntlets end in NEEDLE-LIKE KNIFE FINGERS, and his helm resembles half-dragon, half-vulture, with FIERY RED SLASHES for visors that seem to dance with embers. Its mouthpiece is a set of jaws, that opens and closes as he speaks, emitting a BOOMING ROAR.

Selina stands by his side, holding an emerald scepter in the shape of a clover.

Below them, Equus leads EDUARDO PUFFIN, a small man with a goatee and wearing a turquoise sherwani into the room. His hair is clean-cut, his swagger betraying illusions of perfumed confidence.

EQUUS
Presenting Eduardo Puffin, of the Marble Council.

EDUARDO PUFFIN
Formerly of the Marble Council, let's get it right.

Equus glares at him. Eduardo turns to look up at Malis with a half-grin.

EDUARDO PUFFIN (CONT'D)
That armor of yours is splendid, Kafka. I must meet your tailor very soon.

Malis' voice reverberates off the walls of the hall, guttural, and insidious.

MALIS
Deacon Glazbow will give us all a sermon soon, Magister Puffin. What concerns me now is *you*.

Puffin's eyebrows raise in sudden alarm. Malis LEAPS from the balcony, his cloak billowing behind him so that it unfurls like the wings of a devil. Puffin is frozen in terror.

The nightmarish lord lands in front of him, heavy boots CLANKING on stone floor. He dwarfs the sweating magister, and raises his clawed gauntlet.

MALIS (CONT'D)
Your commitment to Zontar has remained lax, Puffin.

EDUARDO PUFFIN
(stuttering)
I refute that entirely! I-I closed the bridge, I let *her* gas them all!

Selina smiles, watching them without blinking.

MALIS
They were leaving the New Kingdom, abandoning the New Era in its Rise.

EDUARDO PUFFIN
Y-yes, and I did it, I did not let them open the Gate. They were all weak, disease-ridden, peons...

MALIS
And we thank you for your actions. Now, prove your faith, and repeat the Seven Guidestones.

Eduardo laughs nervously. He dabs at his forehead with a turquoise handkerchief.

EDUARDO PUFFIN
I-I am a politician, and unfortunately, cannot memorize all of such matters of script...p-perhaps you could help jog my memory?

Piano Quartet in A Minor by Gustav Mahler begins to PLAY.

Malis' helm opens its teeth. He PLUNGES one needle claw into Puffin's face, STICKING right through it like butter. Puffin GURGLES, held in place upright.

MALIS
#1...Feast on the Weak. Those that cannot answer with equal passion are food for their betters.
(beat)
#2...Love Violence, Relate to Savagery. These are the purest, primal instincts of humankind.
(beat)
#3...Maintain Continental Population Under 500,000. That is what is sustainable to the Order and the future of our world.
(beat)
#4...Enslave the Masses, Work the Factories and Furnaces. Labor will strengthen the collective infinity.
(beat)
#5...Cook the Spirit, Observe the Rituals, and Practice Your Own Freedoms. True liberation of the heart and soul lies in realizing every basest desire.
(beat)
Can you still hear me? #6 - Love Pain, and Give It To Others So That They May Know Your Wrath. Replace your own flesh with rusted bolts, and transcend into the next evolution of the body.
(beat)
#7...Owe No One Loyalty but the Crimson Emperor of the Ouroboros.

Malis removes his clawed finger from the magister's face, letting the body fall. Equus has not moved an inch, and stares with blank expression, unfazed.

MALIS (CONT'D)
Prepare the trebuchets and cannon. We may be expecting visitors.

EQUUS
The Eagle Front?

MALIS
The Marble Guard will not come. They will remain as they always have - safe within Krumbholdt. Albert will have other agendas.

EQUUS
We will break them all here.

MALIS
That band shall not undo everything we have built. A New Dawn has Risen.

Malis turns, his cloak following at his feet.

MALIS (CONT'D)
Order through Chaos.

EQUUS
Order through Chaos!

SELINA
Order through Chaos.

EXT. ICY ROCK - DAY

A distance away from Scoundrel's Folly across a plain of frozen sea, hidden safe behind a cluster of boulders, sits a small cluster of FOUR TENTS around crates of supplies.

Standing behind two smaller rocks, ALBERT WEBER (60s) stands with binoculars, watching the smoke and commotion of the island stronghold. He wears the brown trenchcoat of a detective, sporting silver-grey hair and moustache.

Lowering the binoculars, he turns back to his camp. Other MEMBERS OF HIS GROUP shuffle about. They wear tactical outfits emblazoned with the symbol of a golden eagle with a sash around its wings.

AL WEBER
All parties are there. It's time, my loyal friends. This infiltration will decide the fate of Zeep as we know it. *Ready your courage*.