

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

'THE LEGEND OF THE LEGEND OF FIRESTEEL'

John P. Dowgin  
johndowgin@gmail.com  
732-718-2351

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

**IN BLACK**

A BIG, BRASH, HEROIC score plays, the sort of thing John Williams would hear and think, "Settle down, now..."

**FADE IN:**

**INT. MEDIEVAL CASTLE HALLWAY - DAY**

We WHOOSH down a torchlit marble hallway towards a pair of OAKEN DOORS, **THE HALL OF FIRESTEEL**. The doors FLY open and we keep WHOOSHING right on into--

**INT. THE HALL OF FIRESTEEL - DAY**

-- a majestic room of marble and gold, dominated by a huge MAGIC MIRROR on the wall. Smoke fills the mirror's glass, then clears to reveal the image of a BUSTLING MEDIEVAL CITY.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Bernshire, our home. Capital of the  
land of Dalmyria. And, fifty years  
ago, the realm of--

Someone off screen COUGHS. The music SCREECHES to a halt and smoke returns to the Mirror, forming a rather perturbed face.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
I'll wait.  
(coughing stops)  
All right, where were we...

The MUSIC resumes, the smoke clears, and the city's image morphs into a DARK AND CLEARLY VERY EVIL CASTLE.

Atop its battlements stands the black-cloaked SELILIUS VON GOTH (50s), as tall and craggy as the mountains behind him.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
The realm of the unfathomably evil  
**Dark Sorcerer Selilius Von Goth.**

The image morphs into CAVES. DIAMOND MINES, actually. DOZENS OF SLAVES toil under the watch of whip-bearing GUARDS.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Day and night, the people of  
Bernshire toiled in Von Goth's  
diamond mines, until one morning...

A slave pulls a MYSTERIOUS ORB from the rocky ground.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
... a slave uncovered an exquisite  
stone.

A silhouette passes the mirror, as if a latecomer were  
trying to sit in front of you. The MUSIC STOPS and the  
mirror's angry smoke face returns.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
You. Yes, you. My ticket said  
eleven, not eleven oh-five. Next  
show's at eleven-thirty. Go wait in  
the gift shop.  
(silhouette slinks off)  
Maybe buy a timepiece while you're  
in there. Seriously.

The MUSIC resumes, the smoke clears. In the mirror, Von Goth  
and ANOTHER SORCERER sit at a long banquet table, pondering  
the Mysterious Orb.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Intrigued, Von Goth summoned  
another powerful sorcerer,  
**Blackmartin the Great**, who  
identified the orb as **Vidian's  
Globe**: a charmed relic with the  
power to transform ordinary men  
into fearsome beasts.

Von Goth's guards DRAG Blackmartin to a dungeon and rack him  
to TORTURE DEVICE after TORTURE DEVICE after TORTURE DEVICE.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Von Goth imprisoned Blackmartin,  
torturing him until the weakened  
sorcerer divulged all of Vidian's  
Globe's powerful spells...

The image morphs into a GOTHIC THRONE ROOM FROM HELL, real  
nightmare fuel-type stuff. As Von Goth's guards KNEEL before  
him, he takes a BAT from a cage while reading a scroll.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
... spells which Von Goth used to  
create his army of **Sodaliens**; half-  
man, half-bat, all evil!

A mist flows from Vidian's Globe, engulfs the bat, then  
engulfs the guards, who CONTORT and SCREAM as sorcery twists  
them into horrid beings with the BODIES of MEN but the WINGS  
and HEADS of BATS: the SODALIANS.

Off-screen, a BABY wails. Again the MUSIC stops and a very irate Mirror spouts off.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Well, well, well, it's the PARENTS  
OF THE YEAR in row three! This is  
intense stuff! There's torture and  
transmogrification and... you know  
what?! You people don't deserve  
dramatic exposition! BUCKLE UP!

The MUSIC and images resume at 4X speed.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Von Goth's army pillaged the land,  
stole its riches, all that Dark  
Lord bucket list-type stuff.

Everything returns to normal speed just long enough for us  
to see HALBERD FIRESTEEL (30s), an impossibly perfect  
fantasy hero, probably an ancient Hemsworth.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
But just when all seemed lost, a  
commoner named **Halberd Firesteel**  
rallied the people. Hoo-ray.

Everything shifts back to 4x as Halberd and his sidekick,  
MYRON PEAZEY (30s), rocking the classic 'Good Wizard' robes  
and hat look, crush the Sodalians in seriously epic fashion.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
With the help of his wizard  
sidekick **Myron Peazey**, Firesteel  
defeated Von Goth and his army,  
which you probably guessed since  
this isn't "The Hall of Von Goth".

Myron Peazey casts a spell opening a FIERY PORTAL in the  
sky, sucking the defeated Von Goth and his minions into  
whatever unspeakable hell awaits beyond.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Then Peazey imprisoned Von Goth and  
his army in another dimension while  
Firesteel hid Vidian's Globe.  
Where? No one knows. Huz-zah.

A huge golden logo fills the mirror's glass: **U.H.B.** Imagine  
the DC logo with one more letter and far less subtlety.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
Finally, Halberd Firesteel founded  
the **UHB, the United Heroes**  
**Brotherhood**, to protect us from...

SPARKS FLASH in the mirror. The music SLOWS, then GRINDS TO  
A STOP, as does the Mirror's voice.

MAGIC MIRROR (V.O.)  
See what you've made me do? Ten  
yeeears ooof Maaaagic Mirrror  
schooooool foooooor...

A PERKY ATTENDANT (20s) in a UHB Tunic draws a curtain.

ATTENDANT  
Thank you for watching "The Legend  
of Firesteel"! Children under ten,  
don't forget your souvenir swords,  
compliments of the United Heroes  
Brotherhood!

Pull back to reveal the audience with whom we've been  
watching all this: a throng of MEDIEVAL PEASANTS who now  
stand and shuffle out past various tunic-clad ATTENDANTS.

ATTENDANTS  
Please enjoy the Fiftieth Annual  
Fair of Firesteel!

The attendants hand every child a wooden sword bearing a  
"UHB" logo. The lovable whippersnappers immediately start  
smacking each other, their parents' shins, anything in  
sight.

Three boys, JOSEPH, BALTHAZAR, and BIGSBY (all 10), weave  
through the crowd, each wielding two souvenir swords.

JOSEPH  
Here I come, Von Goth!

BALTHAZAR  
I'm not Von Goth! You are!

#### **INT. MEDIEVAL CASTLE HALLWAY - DAY**

The boys run past a line of peasants waiting for the next  
show and out of the castle, passing a sign as they go:

**CASTLE FIRESTEEL**  
**(FORMERLY CASTLE VON GOTH)**  
**HOURS - 10-9 | EXIT THROUGH GIFT SHOP**

**EXT. BERNSHIRE - DAY**

Title card:

**BERNSHIRE  
THE FAIR OF FIRESTEEL  
THE YEAR 931  
SUNDAY  
THREE-ISH**

It's a real Medieval Hootenanny. Entertainers and concessionaires choke the streets, selling UHB goods and SINGING FIRESTEEL SONGS. The boys wander among it all in wide-eyed joy as only ten year-olds can.

**MINUTES LATER**

The boys munch turkey legs while chilling at the base of a fountain built to resemble Halberd Firesteel.

As they eat, Joseph reads from a book titled "THE COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED FIRESTEEL LEGEND - BY MILO FEARSGUT" while Bigsby and Balthazar haggle over what look like baseball cards.

BALTHAZAR  
Come on, Bigsby, it's a fair trade!

BIGSBY  
No way. Lucius the Archer is UHB's number one hero, he's worth three of your cards!

JOSEPH  
Actually...

Bigsby shoots Joseph a "cut it out" look.

BALTHAZAR  
Actually what?

JOSEPH  
Lucius isn't the UHB's number one anymore.

BIGSBY  
That's just a rumor.

JOSEPH  
OK, well, who does Iron Warrior Armor always put in their ads?

BALTHAZAR  
UHB's number one hero.

Joseph points to a banner on a nearby wall, showing a chisel-jawed hero posing in glistening UHB-logo'd armor. The caption reads "MARIUS GLORYBLADE USES IRON WARRIOR ARMOR!"

BALTHAZAR

Bigsby, you're such a liar!

Balthazar storms off. Bigsby shoves Joseph.

BIGSBY

Why are you always butting in, Joseph?

JOSEPH

Why are you always cheating?

BIGSBY

Don't be jealous because I can afford new hero cards.

JOSEPH

I'm not. Stop shoving me.

BIGSBY

Your stupid cards aren't even real heroes.

Bigsby grabs a card tucked into Joseph's book. It's titled "Rookies of 922", and it bears the image of LONNIGAN FIRESTEEL, here early 20s. His clean look and broad smile suggests 'Game Show Host' rather than 'Swashbuckler'.

BIGSBY

No UHB seal, how pathetic! His own father founds the brotherhood, and he can't even get in!

JOSEPH

Give it back!

BIGSBY

I hear Lonnigan's here today... bet he had to buy a ticket!

Joseph tries to shove Bigsby but isn't strong enough.

BIGSBY

You going to run and tell your daddy? Oh wait, that's right...

That tears it. Joseph takes a swing, but Bigsby dodges and runs off. Joseph chases. Bigsby throws the card to the ground. Joseph dives for the card, dodging feet and carts.

PASSING VENDOR  
Watch out! Crazy kid!

Joseph grabs the card just before a passing cart grinds it into the mud. He wipes dirt off the card: it's filthy but in one piece. Joseph looks back to the street for Bigsby...

... and finds him running into the arms of HIS DAD.

BIGSBY'S DAD  
There you are, son. Having fun?

BIGSBY  
Sure am, dad!

Bigsby turns and squeezes in one last laugh at Joseph.

**EXT. ELSEWHERE IN BERNSHIRE - DAY**

We're still in Bernshire, but on the wrong side of the tracks. Fair of Firesteel banners flap in the breeze but there are no families or food carts here, just booze vendors, trinket stands, and bad life choices. Title Card:

**THE FAIR OF FIRESTEEL  
SECTION Z  
STILL BERNSHIRE  
(I CAN'T BELIEVE IT EITHER)**

On a hastily constructed stage stands RUFUS PEAZEY, 30, an affable sort with thinning hair and a nerdy demeanor. A dropcloth-covered table stands behind him, under a banner which reads "HEALING WITHOUT SORCERY: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE!"

PEAZEY  
Your companion has been wounded!  
His breathing has stopped! And  
there's no sorcerer in sight!

FAIRGOER 1 (O.S.)  
Who expeditions with no sorcerer!?

PEAZEY  
It needn't be an expedition! Most  
carriage accidents take place  
within four mildrozes of the home!

FAIRGOER 2 (O.S.)  
So call a hero!



PEAZEY

Now you don't have to! My  
techniques can sustain, even revive  
life, through... SCIENCE!

Peazey yanks the dropcloth away to reveal a VERY CHEAP HUMAN  
DUMMY. Silence. Then "boos". Then tossed fruit.

PEAZEY

(acting badly)  
Randall! Oh no! Is all lost?

FAIRGOER 3 (O.S.)

The three dilmars I paid to see you  
are lost, too!

PEAZEY

I must use the Peazey method!  
Patent pending all rights reserved!

Peazey straddles the dummy, drawing catcalls, and performs  
what resembles awkward, far-too-violent CPR, eventually  
knocking off the dummy's head.

PEAZEY

OK, that's a dummy design flaw, it  
wouldn't actually--  
(the crowd is leaving)  
Wait! Would anyone like a brochure!  
Or to acknowledge I'm speaking!

Too late, everyone's gone except for a group of five or six  
OFFICIAL-LOOKING MEN.

OFFICIAL MAN

Ahem. Mr. Rufus Sanford Peazey?

PEAZEY

That's me!

OFFICIAL MAN

Who represents Lonnigan Firesteel  
in all matters of business?

Peazey tears down his "HEALING WITHOUT SORCERY" banner to  
reveal another one behind it: "LONNIGAN FIRESTEEL CENTRAL".

PEAZEY

Gents, what can I do you for?

OFFICIAL MAN

We represent Super Slayer Swords of  
the Southern States.

(MORE)

OFFICIAL MAN (cont'd)  
We'd like to thank Mister Firesteel  
for his continued use of our  
products...

PEAZEY  
Well SSSSS swords are...

OFFICIAL MAN  
... which we must repossess, as he  
has failed to make seven payments.

PEAZEY  
... fine pieces of--I'm sorry, you  
said something bad.

OFFICIAL MAN  
Bad for you. For us, there's  
minimal value attached.

Official Men stream up on to Peazey's stage, repossessing  
BAGS OF SWORDS from behind the dummy table.

PEAZEY  
Oh yeah! Well your swords stink  
worse than a Salvokian Dung Slug!

Peazey grabs a sword from one of the men and tries to break  
it over his leg. CRACK! Something breaks, but not a sword. A  
wincing Peazey hands the sword back to the man.

PEAZEY  
Good sword. Sleep well tonight.

#### **EXT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY**

A total dive. A sign outside reads:

**2 PM - HEROIC TALES OF FIRESTEEL (LONNIGAN)**  
**3 PM - WET TUNIC CONTEST**

FIRESTEEL (O.S., PRE-LAP)  
The cliff's at our back, the gorge  
at our feet!

#### **INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN- DAY**

A crowd of drunks watches LONNIGAN FIRESTEEL (30s), the hero  
from Joseph's card. He's tall, dark, and sauced, standing  
atop a table, engrossed in a heroic tale (as are the  
drunks).

FIRESTEEL

An ancient rope bridge kept in poor  
repair by generations of Denubian  
Sand Farmers is our only escape!  
And in front of that bridge? The  
Dragon of Locmoor, his snaking body  
a rippling coiled mass of snaking,  
rippling... coiledness... waits to  
suck the cold, dead skin off our  
charred bones!

Peazey enters and sits at the bar as Firesteel leaps  
sloppily to the next table. The drunks follow him,  
entranced.

FIRESTEEL

But no overgrown crocodile is going  
to stop us! The dragon leans right,  
we break left!

Firesteel leaps to the next table, misses, hits the wall,  
and falls to the floor, taking a rack of glasses with him.  
But he quickly leaps to the next table, never missing a  
beat.

DRUNK 1

Did you survive?

FIRESTEEL

We... did!

The drunks CHEER. Lonnigan seizes on their distraction to  
sneak a sip from one of their drinks.

A group of TOUGHS enters the tavern and gathers near the  
bar.

DRUNK 2

And the princess?

FIRESTEEL

We returned her to her kingdom,  
where she repaid my heroism... more  
than fairly.

The drunks launch into CATCALLS. Peazey rolls his eyes. The  
Toughs, though, don't seem quite so amused.

HEAD TOUGH

Mister Firesteel!

(MORE)

HEAD TOUGH (cont'd)  
(everything stops)  
Did Mizeekia's Princess Drilsa  
reward you so "fairly" when you  
saved her from those nasty Jinzin  
raiders?

FIRESTEEL  
I'm, er... not sure I recall, that  
adventure being so long past...

HEAD TOUGH  
Only nine months or so past.

The Toughs elbow past Peazey and advance on Firesteel. But  
Peazey stands and throws some coins at the barkeeper.

PEAZEY  
Folks, enjoy a round compliments of  
Lonnigan Firesteel!

The CHEERING lusher move en masse to the bar, blocking the  
Toughs. Peazey grabs Firesteel, leads him towards the back  
of the room...

PEAZEY  
And be sure to come see him fight  
in his UHB qualifier match! Five  
o'clock at the Arena 9876!

... and out a 'Serving Wenches Only' door.

#### **INT. WINE CELLAR - CONTINUOUS**

Peazey and Firesteel edge their way along the liquor racks,  
Firesteel slipping some bottles into his tunic as they go.

FIRESTEEL  
How did I sound? Did I nail it? I  
nailed it, right?

PEAZEY  
"Suck the cold, dead skin off our  
charred bones". How are bones  
charred and skin cold?

FIRESTEEL  
Don't nitpick! The only words that  
would have confused that crowd were  
"last call".

PEAZEY

Look! When I write your material I try to make it sound like we've actually been on an adventure worth talking about in six months! Our dads never needed pub speeches to round up an audience, you know!

FIRESTEEL

Your presentation went bad, huh?

PEAZEY

On a scale of one to ten? Embarrassing.

FIRESTEEL

More embarrassing than when we were eleven and someone stole your clothes while we were swimming and you had to walk home naked past archery practice?

PEAZEY

Yes. And thanks for bringing that up, I was feeling far too stable today. Are you ready?

FIRESTEEL

Just gotta warm up the ol' muscles, tune the reflexes...

Firesteel stretches. Two bottles slip out of his tunic and shatter on the floor.

PEAZEY

Vodka and whiskey. Cross-training.

**EXT. A POOR BERNSHIRIAN STREET - DAY**

Firesteel and Peazey slip out to the street.

PEAZEY

Let's split up and get to the arena. Hey. Who were those meatheads in the bar, by the way?

FIRESTEEL

No idea.

PEAZEY

They sure were curious about you and Princess Drilsa.

FIRESTEEL

They were, weren't they?

PEAZEY

I was curious about you and Princess Drilsa.

FIRESTEEL

And curiosity is a fine trait.

Firesteel winks as he ducks into an alleyway.

**EXT. A RICH BERNSHIRIAN STREET -DAY**

The rich part of town. GLORIA (28), an exhausted cleaning woman, exits a house with her buckets in tow. Life is trying its damndest to beat the vigor and idealism out of her, but it hasn't managed the trick. Not yet.

As Gloria reaches her rickety horse-drawn wagon, she sees a sulking Joseph come around the corner.

GLORIA

Joseph? What's wrong?

He shrugs. Gloria runs her hand along his brow. Bruises.

GLORIA

You've been fighting again. What have I told you?

JOSEPH

Dad always said, when you see wrong in the world, try and stop it!

GLORIA

Yes. But he never said to do it with your fists.

Joseph sits on the curb.

JOSEPH

I know. I'm sorry.

Gloria turns to the wagon to refill her supplies.

JOSEPH

(to himself)

We just lost him before he could teach me what I should use.

Gloria bites her lip: that cut right to the quick. She turns back to her son.

GLORIA

Hey. Tough guy. I don't know if you  
saw this, but...

Gloria hands him a flyer. It reads: **LONNIGAN FIRESTEEL:  
ARENA 9876 - 5 PM - THREE DILMARS (MAY BE PREEMPTED BY  
FLOWER EXPO)**

JOSEPH

I saw, but I don't have three--

He looks up to find Gloria offering three dilmars (coins).

GLORIA

Be back by seven.

Joseph's eyes light up like firecrackers. He whips his  
'Lonnigan Firesteel' card from his pocket and runs off.

JOSEPH

I'm going to get it signed!

Gloria smiles, shakes her head, then starts lugging her  
cleaning gear towards the next house.

#### **INT. ARENA 9876 - DAY**

Clearly a dilapidated barn, hastily converted into a cheap  
fighting ring. Crates and hay bales provide seating for a  
sizable audience. In the ring, two barbarians beat each  
other senseless to raucous cheers.

Ringside, UHB JUDGES keep score.

Peazey navigates the throng and reaches the Registration  
Booth, manned by a JUDGE (40s).

JUDGE

Combatant's name?

PEAZEY

Firesteel, Lonnigan.

JUDGE

Death waiver?

(Peazey hands him a form)

Dismemberment waiver?

(Peazey hands him a form)

Everything else waiver?

The Judge points to a SILVER AMULET around Peazey's neck.

JUDGE

If that's magical, it had better  
not find its way onto your  
fighter's neck.

PEAZEY

Don't worry. It isn't what you  
think.

**EXT. THE FAIR OF FIRESTEEL - SECTION M - DAY**

Joseph runs past a TOWN CRIER.

TOWN CRIER

Fifteen minutes to the "UHB's  
Cavalcade of Heroes", starring UHB  
Number one, Marius Gloryblade!

Banners fly up around town bearing Gloryblade's likeness,  
the UHB logo, and arrows pointing to the Town Square.

All the other fairgoers start following the UHB's signs  
towards Town Square... but Joseph looks to his Lonnigan  
Firesteel card and keeps on running toward Section Z.

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

As cheap as Arena 9876 looks? That's how fabulous this stage  
looks. A huge crowd has gathered, expecting spectacle.

PAGE (O.S., PRE-LAP)

Mr. Gloryblade?

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

A PAGE knocks on a door whose nameplate reads "UHB #1".

PAGE

Ahem... Mr. Gloryblade?

The door opens. Two GIGGLING GROUPIES (20s) run out.

**INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Inside sits MARIUS GLORYBLADE (35), shirtless. He cuts just  
as dashing figure here as he does on an 'Iron Warrior Armor'  
banner, but in person he's also a bit reptilian.

PAGE

Ten minutes, Mr. Gloryblade.



Gloryblade waves a dismissive hand, all the acknowledgment the Page will get. As the door closes, Gloryblade looks in the mirror and pokes at some flab around his waistline.

He takes a GOLD AMULET from his dressing table drawer, closes his eyes, and speaks a MAGIC SPELL. Mist flows from the amulet to his stomach. When it clears, he has SIX-PACK ABS.

GLORYBLADE  
Dagmar Ironclad.

Gloryblade opens his eyes and, sure enough, finds DAGMAR IRONCLAD (50s) in his doorway. Ironclad's a classic King Arthur type in full armor and regalia.

GLORYBLADE  
A personal visit from the UHB  
president. Color me touched.

Ironclad enters, eyeing Gloryblade's amulet with contempt.

IRONCLAD  
UHB Bylaw 1-A. The willful use of  
sorcery, talismans, and/or magical  
spells is strictly prohibited and  
may serve as cause for union  
expulsion. Halberd Firesteel put  
that rule right up front. And  
believe it or not, it applies to  
all of our members.

As Ironclad opens the door to leave, we the crowd outside chanting "Marius! Marius!"

GLORYBLADE  
How many people are out there,  
Dagmar? Two thousand? Four? Do you  
think they came to hear you recite  
bylaws?

IRONCLAD  
I'm won't tell you again, Marius.  
Without rules, the UHB is nothing.

SLAM. Ironclad's gone. Gloryblade takes a small glass key from his pocket and holds it to the light, smiling.

GLORYBLADE  
"The UHB is nothing"... what a  
lovely ring that has to it.

**EXT. OUTSIDE ARENA 9876 - DAY**

Peazey taps his foot, waiting. The beanstalk-thin FERDY DANGARDNER (20s) passes him, leaving the arena, bags in hand.

PEAZEY

Ferdy! Where are you going? You're fighting Lonnigan in ten minutes!

FERDY

They said I've been replaced.

From inside we hear a CRUNCH, SCREAM, and CHEER. A COMBATANT flies over the arena wall and crashes in front of Peazey.

PEAZEY

I don't suppose by him?

**INT. ARENA 9876 - DAY**

The BEHEMOTH (30s) -- six foot ten, 400 pounds, and **not** model material -- stands in the arena, basking in victory.

Peazey and Ferdy rush in, Ferdy pointing at The Behemoth.

PEAZEY

Where is he, behind the bear?  
(his jaw drops)  
Holy meezencats!

Peazey runs to the judge, but before he can complain...

JUDGE

We received a last second petition from a gentleman wishing to fight Lonnigan Firesteel. This is, of course, permitted under the terms of the Everything Else Waiver.

The judge nods to a man sitting in the front row just behind the UHB judges... the Head Tough from the tavern.

HEAD TOUGH

A small donation helped.

PEAZEY

Well. As long as it was fair.

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

The crowd CHEERS as Ironclad strides onstage.

IRONCLAD

Welcome to the UHB's fiftieth Fair  
of Firesteel! When the great  
Halberd Firesteel founded this  
union, he could never have imagined  
the class of hero that would one  
day grace its ranks. Heroes such  
as... Wolfsire of Groosbane!

Down from a nearby rooftop swings WOLFSIRE (30s), a well-oiled barbarian in the Conan mold, who lands next to Ironclad and strikes a flexing pose. The crowd GOES NUTS.

IRONCLAD

Lucius the Archer!

THWACK! An arrow strikes the stage near Ironclad with a rope attached to it. Down it slides LUCIUS (20s), a blonde-haired, sharp-featured, Tolkien-esque elf. The crowd GOES BERSERK.

IRONCLAD

(to Lucius)

That was a little close.

(back to the crowd)

And the hero who is about to  
reenact the legendary duel between  
Halberd Firesteel and Selilius Von  
Goth, UHB's new Number One, Marius  
Gloryblade!

A puff of smoke; from nowhere, Gloryblade appears in full armor. The crowd GOES ABSOLUTELY CRAZY.

Actors dressed in elaborate Sodalian costumes file onstage and attack Gloryblade in a choreographed fight.

#### **INT. ARENA 9876 - DAY**

The still-quite-sauced Firesteel somersaults into the ring. He plays the crowd with an overly complex series of sword moves ending with a back somersault into a handstand.

PEAZEY

What in zooks was that?

FIRESTEEL

New victory move. You like it?

PEAZEY

It's lovely, we'll call it the  
inverted weather vane of death.

FIRESTEEL

Where's Ferdy? Behind the bear?

The Behemoth LAUGHS. Firesteel's face drops. The Head Tough steps to the center of the arena.

HEAD TOUGH

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to our main event! Combatants will be scored in the standard UHB categories; strength, style, and witty swordplay banter. In the far corner, son of the great Halberd Firesteel, rescuer of Mizeekia's Princess Drilsa, and soon to be father of Princess Drilsa's child, Lonnigan Firesteel! And in this corner, Princess Drilsa's husband, Gavin Horsecruncher!

The judge rings a BELL.

FIRESTEEL

She was married?!

PEAZEY

(nodding to the ring)

He seems to think so!

The Behemoth charges. Firesteel turns just in time for this massive hulk of humanity to SLAM him into the ropes.

UHB Judges shake their heads as they scribble notes.

The 'fight' progresses as the Behemoth knocks Firesteel all over the ring. Firesteel manages a few dodges but there's something formal about his movements, like he's more concerned with appearance than combat.

The Behemoth takes two huge swings. Firesteel ducks both, leaving them face to face as they catch their breath.

BEHEMOTH

Your death, Firesteel, will taste like sweet wine on my lips!

FIRESTEEL

Um--you'll have to uncork me first!

Peazey drops his head into his hands. The UHB judges look to one another, their eyes asking 'What the heck was that?'

The Toughs throw the Behemoth a BRIGHT, GLEAMING SWORD.  
Peazey throws Firesteel a CRUMMY OLD SWORD, truly the  
'Charlie Brown's Christmas Tree' of edged weapons.

FIRESTEEL  
The hell is this?!

PEAZEY  
A sword! It's new!

FIRESTEEL  
It's rusty!

PEAZEY  
It's new to you! Look out!

FIRESTEEL  
What do you want me to kill him  
with, tetanus?!

The battle rages, the Behemoth having his way.

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

Gloryblade finishes off the "Sodaliens" with ease, moving  
with the flair Lonnigan struggles to imitate.

Bigsby and Balthazar watch the show in awe, standing near a  
NARRATOR with a megaphone.

NARRATOR  
Not even the fearsome Sodaliens  
could stop Halberd Firesteel from  
defending freedom and justice,  
still the UHB's goal today!

"Von Goth" -- one actor on another's shoulders under flowing  
sorcerer's robes -- enters.

**INT. ARENA 9876 - DAY**

The Behemoth pile drives Firesteel, who crawls to Peazey.

FIRESTEEL  
A hammer, a club, something!  
(Peazey hands him a rake)  
You've stopped trying, haven't you?

The Behemoth grabs Firesteel, pile drives him again... and  
now we see a CRACK starting to form in the ring floor.

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

"Von Goth" scores a "hit", cutting Gloryblade. Fake blood sprays across "Von Goth's" robe.

NARRATOR

Von Goth drew blood but still,  
liberty and righteousness coursed  
through Firesteel's veins!  
(under his breath)  
Ugh, who writes this crap?

The crowd goes silent; the narrator realizes he spoke that into the megaphone.

NARRATOR

... is something the odious Von  
Goth would say when faced with such  
heroic virtue!

**INT. ARENA 9876 - DAY**

Firesteel leaps onto The Behemoth's back, then grabs onto a banner hanging over the arena, just trying to get away.

The Behemoth swings his sword at Firesteel, but cuts the banner. Firesteel falls atop The Behemoth, knocking him onto the crack in the ring floor, which SPLITS WIDE OPEN. Firesteel and the Behemoth fall right through it, CRASHING to the ground beneath the ring.

As the Toughs pour into the arena, someone tugs on Peazey's leg. He looks down to find Firesteel.

FIRESTEEL

Think we can sneak out of here?

A TOUGH (O.S.)

There he is!

PEAZEY

Probably not.

Firesteel and Peazey break into a sprint, and are soon--

**EXT. OUTSIDE THE ARENA - DAY**

-- with the toughs in hot pursuit.

FIRESTEEL

Split up!

They do so, but a moment later, Peazey stops.

PEAZEY

Wait, this only works if anyone's  
chasing me!

Sure enough, no one's following Peazey.

Firesteel breaks into a sprint and almost plows into a  
panting Joseph, who's coming the other way.

FIRESTEEL

Look out, kid!

Joseph looks at his card, then back at the man who almost  
just ran him down.

JOSEPH

Firesteel!

HEAD TOUGH (O.S.)

Out of the way!

The Toughs shove Joseph aside as they pursue Firesteel.

#### **EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

A puff of stage magic smoke, and "Von Goth" disappears.

NARRATOR

And so Von Goth and his minions  
were sent to eternal imprisonment  
in a distant dimension, locked  
forever by the Key of Skizbeck!

The crowd erupts as wires raise Gloryblade into the air.

As he rises, Gloryblade takes the glass key from his pocket.

Ironclad leans forward, trying to make out what that little  
thing in Gloryblade's hand is...

GLORYBLADE

Hope you enjoyed it while it  
lasted, Dagmar.

A terrible realization washes the color from Ironclad's  
face: something unthinkable is about to happen.

#### **EXT. OUTSIDE ARENA 9876 - DAY**

Peazey runs into a TOWN GUARD, basically a medieval cop.

PEAZEY

Excuse me, sir! A little help! My  
friend and I need to know the  
fastest way out of town!

**EXT. BATTLEMENTS - DAY**

Firesteel reaches the city walls, climbs a rope to a guard tower, and sprints along the city's battlements. But then he stops: Toughs block the path in front of him.

He turns, only to find more toughs blocking his retreat.

Both sets of Toughs charge -- *and in this moment, something about Lonnigan Firesteel changes.*

He throws a swift punch to level the first Tough, then a roundhouse kick takes out the second. Two Toughs swing at him, but Firesteel bar-arms the first, **FLIPS OVER HIM**, then uses the first Tough to knock the second off the battlements. *Away from the falsities of an arena, this man can fight.*

**EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

Gloryblade throws the key to the ground. It **SHATTERS** -- THEN **EXPLODES!** And from the flames fly **2,000 WRETCHED, SHRIEKING SODALIANS**, their shadows turning day to midnight.

**SELILIUS VON GOTH**, immense, cloaked in black, and wearing a ram's skull helmet, rises from the smoke.

VON GOTH

It's GOOD TO BE HOME!

Chaos erupts. Fairgoers try to flee. Sodalians dive, grabbing townsfolk, carrying them off into the sky. But the Sodalians aren't **MENSA** material; they crash into each other. A lot.

Wolfsire and Lucius form a human/elfen shield around Ironclad and rush him off, shoving fairgoers out of the way.

**EXT. A BERNSHIRIAN STREET - DAY**

Gloria runs out of the house she's cleaning, drawn by distant screams. **PANICKED TOWNSPEOPLE** run past her.

TOWNSPERSON

Von Goth is free!



More townsfolk run around the corner, Sodalians on their heels. Gloria hides in her wagon as they pass.

GLORIA  
Joseph!

**INTERCUTTING - BATTLEMENTS AND STREETS**

The Guard gestures to a city map as he advises Peazey.

GUARD  
Now, when you get to the end of  
this path, make your first left...

Up above, the toughs regroup and attack Firesteel.

Firesteel leaps towards a banner, grabs it, and SNAP! It tears away from the wall. He swings towards the ground--

-- WHOMP! Firesteel slams into the Guard, takes him up, drops him in a pig pen, and swings back, landing at Peazey's side.

PEAZEY  
You just worsened a worst-case  
scenario.

FIRESTEEL  
My gifts know no bounds.

Firesteel and Peazey run for it.

**EXT. STREETS OF BERNSHIRE - DAY**

Gloria drives her wagon down streets choked with panicking townspeople. She spots Joseph.

GLORIA  
Joseph! Get in! Everyone's shouting  
that "Von Goth is free"!

JOSEPH  
What?!?!

Two Sodalians SLAM down out of the sky five feet from Joseph, grab a panicked townspeople, and fly off. That's all the proof Joseph needs: he leaps into the wagon.

JOSEPH  
I know who can help! That way!

**EXT. STREETS OF BERNSHIRE - DAY**

Firesteel and Peazey weave through the chaos until, suddenly the Behemoth and all the Toughs block their path.

FIRESTEEL  
We got any weapons?

PEAZEY  
At the arena.

FIRESTEEL  
Money?

PEAZEY  
At the arena.

FIRESTEEL  
OK, what's not at the arena?

PEAZEY  
Us.

BEHEMOTH  
Taste a wronged Mizeekian's wrath!

FIRESTEEL  
Well... I wouldn't know a wronged  
Mizeekian if he bit me on the  
backside!

The Toughs knit their brows, then shrug and attack.  
Firesteel and Peazey fight off the first few but GOLLY-BOY-  
HOWDY there are a lot of them.

PEAZEY  
Any time you've got a plan...  
WHOA!

Firesteel grabs Peazey, manages to steal the Head Tough's  
sword, trips The Behemoth, and runs to a nearby catapult.

FIRESTEEL  
Hop on!

PEAZEY  
(does so)  
And?

FIRESTEEL  
I DON'T KNOW, PHYSICS!

Firesteel leaps onto the catapult next to Peazey and cuts  
its ropes, LAUNCHING our heroes into the air.

PEAZEY  
This plan SUUUUUUUCKS!

**INT./EXT. THE WAGON - DAY**

Gloria and Joseph reach Peazey's stage, the "LONNIGAN FIRESTEEL CENTRAL" banner hanging across it.

GLORIA  
How do we find him?

CRASH! Firesteel and Peazey smash through the wagon's roof. Gloria and Joseph peer inside.

JOSEPH  
Firesteel!

GLORIA  
Firesteel?

FIRESTEEL  
Where?

GLORIA  
Mr. Firesteel, we humbly beseech  
you... thee? Thou? So bad at this!

Over Gloria's shoulder, Firesteel spots the Toughs running towards the wagon.

FIRESTEEL  
(as fast as possible)  
Nice to meet you, hey, you guys  
leaving town? GREAT!!!

Firesteel grabs the reins and takes off. Joseph notices the shouting Toughs giving chase.

JOSEPH  
Are they fans of yours?

FIRESTEEL  
Oh, absolutely, some of our most  
devoted! Right Peaz?

PEAZEY  
Sadly, yes.

Gloria spots a growing red stain on Firesteel's costume.

GLORIA  
Mister Firesteel!

Firesteel sees the spot and rummages through his pockets, producing an intact bottle of liquor.

FIRESTEEL  
Oh, thank god. It's blood.

PEAZEY  
Excuse him.

Peazey pulls Firesteel into the wagon.

**INT. THE WAGON - DAY**

Peazey nurses Firesteel's wound while Firesteel nurses a bottle. Peazey scribbles in a notebook titled "INJURIES: VOLUME 17".

PEAZEY  
Flow not pulsing. This part of the  
body must not connect to the heart.

Peazey prods the wound. Blood squirts on his cheek.

PEAZEY  
Or maybe it does.

FIRESTEEL  
Any time you feel like patching  
that up, go ahead.

PEAZEY  
Don't stand in the way of science.

**EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - DAY**

The wagon speeds over the drawbridge, out of Bernshire, and into the woods, just as the SODALIAN CAPTAIN reaches the bridge's controls and closes it.

**INT. THE WAGON - DAY**

Firesteel and Peazey pass the bottle.

PEAZEY  
So what do we do now?

FIRESTEEL  
Plan B.

PEAZEY  
What's Plan B?

FIRESTEEL

Wing it till we come up with a new plan A.

PEAZEY

Oh, we've been on Plan B for years.

The Wagon comes to a stop, and Gloria and Joseph lean into the back. Gloria clears her throat while Joseph can only stare, starstruck.

GLORIA

Mister Firesteel, it is an honor...

FIRESTEEL

Hey. You say Mister Firesteel, I look for my dad. It's Lonnigan, OK? And this is Peazey.

PEAZEY

Sidekick, manager, agent, spiritual advisor, team physician.

GLORIA

Bernshire is in desperate need.

PEAZEY

(aside)

Someone order a Plan A?

FIRESTEEL

Bernshiri... ans? Bernshirites?

(Peazey shrugs)

People from Bernshire, fear not! We are your faithful servants.

Gloria and Joseph nearly burst with relief.

PEAZEY

So what's the issue? Bandits? Stray dragon?

JOSEPH

Selilius Von Goth and his army of Sodalian man-bats are free!

Firesteel and Peazey spit booze in horror.

#### **EXT. OUTSIDE BERNSHIRE'S WALLS - NIGHT**

A trap door flies open. Wolfsire and Lucius usher Ironclad through it and into a clearing.

IRONCLAD

Fine, we're out! Get off me!

LUCIUS

I told you Gloryblade was a weasel!

WOLFSIRE

Big boom. Man-bats free. Loincloth stained.

IRONCLAD

To UHB Headquarters! I want every elf, dwarf, and ranger in a six mildroze radius here tonight!

Ironclad and Lucius march off. Wolfsire does not follow.

IRONCLAD

Come on! There's heroing to do!

WOLFSIRE

891. Von Goth exiled.

IRONCLAD

What? Yes, yes, so what?

WOLFSIRE

892. UHB founded.

IRONCLAD

I know my history, Wolfsire! What--

WOLFSIRE

895. VKB founded.

At mention of the VKB, Ironclad's anger morphs to shock.

IRONCLAD

Good heavens. The villains bylaw.

#### **EXT. WOODED ROAD - NIGHT**

The wagon trots through the night. Peazey and Firesteel sit with Gloria and Joseph on the driver's bench.

FIRESTEEL

So, speaking hero-wise, it's probably best to hide. And plan. But while hiding.

GLORIA

I agree.

FIRESTEEL

Really?

JOSEPH

No, we need a plan to stop Von Goth! After fifty years of exile, he'll have one thing on his mind--

FIRESTEEL

Right! So we stake out the nearest brothel, we've got him!

JOSEPH

Nearest what?

Firesteel receives a withering glare from Gloria.

FIRESTEEL

Broth...

PEAZEY

...ery. A brothery. Place that makes soup. He'll be hungry.

JOSEPH

No, he'll go after Vidian's Globe!

FIRESTEEL

OK... and he'll look for it... where?

GLORIA

Even I know that! Where your father hid it!

PEAZEY

But he never told anyone.

JOSEPH

(showing his book)

He did, for the collectors' edition novels! He told the author, Milo Fearsgut, that he hid the globe atop Mount Azaal-Kazaar-Mazaaz, in the Temple of the Lacking Faith!

PEAZEY

We don't read enough.

FIRESTEEL

Could you give us just a moment?

Firesteel drags Peazey by the ear into the wagon.

**INT. THE WAGON - CONTINUOUS**

Firesteel whispers conspiratorially.

FIRESTEEL  
All right, here's the plan...

PEAZEY  
Finally.

FIRESTEEL  
We ditch these two and hide out in  
Slasvakia until this blows over.

PEAZEY  
What?!

FIRESTEEL  
You get a lot more for your dilmar  
in Slasvakia!

PEAZEY  
Because they only sell sheep!  
Lonnigan, this is the chance of a  
lifetime!

FIRESTEEL  
It's the chance to end a lifetime!  
If I were a union hero, that'd be  
one thing. I'd have protections,  
insurance, an IV-O-I-K plan. This  
is a cut and dry UHB job!

JOSEPH (O.S.)  
It's not. Von Goth's not VKB.

Firesteel and Peazey turn to find Joseph has poked his head  
into the wagon. Now Gloria's head joins Joseph's.

GLORIA  
He's not what?

JOSEPH  
He's not a member of the VKB, the  
Villains Knaves Brutes Guild. Von  
Goth was banished before it was  
founded. And...

FIRESTEEL & PEAZEY  
(it dawns on them)  
Union heroes can only fight union  
villains!

Gloria, shaking her head, pulls Joseph back outside.



GLORIA

Come on, Joseph. Let's leave these heroes to "plan".

FIRESTEEL

Holy crap. Lay down. Take deep breaths. Remember your mantra. What's my mantra again?

PEAZEY

Lonnigan. This is the chance we've been waiting for! Real throw-down, world-saving heroing! We do this right and forget the union, we can write our own tickets!

FIRESTEEL

We do this wrong, and someone else can write our obituaries.

**EXT. BERNSHIRE - NIGHT**

This town is SHATTERED. Roofs are smashed in, doors battered through, and smoke still pours from the smoldering Town Square as Sodalians drag prisoners off towards the castle.

**INT. THE HALL OF FIRESTEEL - NIGHT**

Von Goth smacks the Magic Mirror from the opening scene.

VON GOTH

Talk, vile reflection! Where did Firesteel hide Vidian's Globe?

MAGIC MIRROR

Sir, I don't care who you think you are, you simply do not speak in that tone to a professio-

Von Goth SHATTERS the mirror with this staff.

VON GOTH

What is this world where even furniture defies me!

The SODALIAN CAPTAIN enters.

SODALIAN CAPTAIN

My lord, the globe is not here, but we found this!

SODALIANS 1 and 2 wheel in another MAGIC MIRROR.

VON GOTH  
Gha! Such mirrors are worthless!

SODALIAN 1  
No, oh stupendous one! Look!

VON GOTH  
(reading the inscription)  
Special Collector's Edition?

SODALIAN 2  
With bonus audio commentary!

Sodalian 1 touches the mirror. The narration begins exactly as it did in the opening scene.

VON GOTH  
I don't hear the commentary.

SODALIAN 1  
You have to do it from the menu.

They fiddle with the mirror. The commentary kicks in.

FEARSGUT (V.O.)  
Hello! Thank you for listening to the "Legend of Firesteel" audio commentary. I'm Milo Fearsgut, noted Firesteel scholar.

VON GOTH  
They couldn't get anyone better for the commentary?

FEARSGUT (V.O.)  
Halberd Firesteel greatly enjoyed tennis, most don't know...

VON GOTH  
This is stupid. Skip ahead!

The Sodaliens fast forward the mirror.

FEARSGUT (V.O.)  
...but Halberd was an Aries, so...

VON GOTH  
Further!

The Sodaliens fast forward the mirror.

FEARSGUT (V.O.)  
...with two slave girls! Anyway...

SODALIAN 2  
Ho, what was that?

VON GOTH  
Skip ahead!

FEARSGUT (V.O.)  
... to hide Vidian's Globe atop  
Mount Azzal-Kazzar-Mazzaz, he  
realized he was out of scones...

VON GOTH  
AHH! Mount Azzal-Kazzar-Mazzaz!  
Mount Azzal-Kazzar-Mazzaz!  
(a beat)  
Where's Mount Azzal-Kazzar-Mazzaz?

GLORYBLADE (O.S.)  
A day's ride across the Glabanchian  
desert.

Von Goth turns to find Gloryblade in the doorway.

VON GOTH  
Who are you and how did you get in  
here?

GLORYBLADE  
Marius Gloryblade. And like this.

Gloryblade tosses THREE SEVERED SODALIAN HEADS to the floor.  
Von Goth turns to Sodalians 1 and 2.

VON GOTH  
Eliminate him in a suitably  
gruesome manner.

Sodalian 1 closes in on Gloryblade, but Gloryblade waves his  
gold amulet, MELTING the Sodalian with a spell. And when  
Sodalian 2 attacks, Gloryblade skewers him with his sword.

VON GOTH  
I'm beginning to like you. What do  
you want? Ten words or fewer or I  
flay you and bathe in your blood.

GLORYBLADE  
To help you find Vidian's Globe.

VON GOTH  
Six. Very good. But now I know  
where to find the globe. So why  
should I not rip your spine out  
through your eye sockets?

GLORYBLADE

I presume that once you find the globe, you'll try, yet again, to conquer Dalmyria? That worked out so well the first time.

VON GOTH

Are you trying to enrage me or is it something you do naturally?

GLORYBLADE

It's been fifty years since Halberd Firesteel bested you. There's now an entire union of his worshippers, each of whom has been salivating since childhood for the chance to best a Dark Wizard of your stature.

VON GOTH

Let them come! My armies will wade through their blood and offal on our road to triumph! Let them ride--

GLORYBLADE

**I could help ensure not a single one of them lifts a finger to stop you.**

VON GOTH

--by the hundreds, the thousands, we'll savage their ranks no matter how many...

A lengthy pause of the 'Wait, what?' variety.

VON GOTH

Not one?

GLORYBLADE

None would dare.

For the first time, Von Goth truly examines Gloryblade. Is he brilliant or batshit? Either way, he's interesting.

VON GOTH

I don't trust you in the slightest.

GLORYBLADE

Then we've something in common.

Gloryblade LAUGHS MANIACALLY. Von Goth LAUGHS MORE MANIACALLY. The Sodalio Captain LAUGHS EVEN MORE MANIACALLY until Von Goth backhands him.

VON GOTH  
Never laugh deeper than I.  
(the captain hushes)  
To the vision pool!

**EXT. WOODED ROAD - DAY**

The wagon rolls along, Gloria and Peazey at the reins.

PEAZEY  
Magic just never appealed to me.

GLORIA  
Come now. No interest to the scion  
of the great Myron Peazey?

PEAZEY  
When you're ten and your dad is  
sorcerer to the stars, it's fun.  
But when you're eighteen, and you  
realize dad doesn't care what the  
stars do with his magic once their  
checks clear, it... loses luster.

GLORIA  
But you help Lonnigan follow in his  
father's footsteps.

Peazey can't help but smile as he reflects on that.

PEAZEY  
Lonnigan has it in him to be the  
greatest hero this realm ever saw.  
He just... needs a little help.

A HUGE BELCH comes from inside the wagon.

PEAZEY  
OK, the actual amount of help he  
needs remains to be seen.

**INT. THE WAGON - DAY**

Firesteel BELCHES again as he reads Joseph's book, swigging  
from his flask and trying his best to ignore...

... Joseph, curled in the corner, staring awestruck at him.

FIRESTEEL  
This book weighs more than you.

JOSEPH

My father would read it to me. When  
I was a kid.

Firesteel glances to Gloria in the driver's seat.

FIRESTEEL

Halberd M. Firesteel would be  
proud.

JOSEPH

M? Your father's middle name was  
Grinsbeard.

FIRESTEEL

Just testing you. Good job.

JOSEPH

Thanks, Lonnigan Gayfloyd.

Firesteel chokes on his booze.

FIRESTEEL

How did you...

JOSEPH

After your mother's cousin,  
Gayfloyd Hays. Your father wanted  
your middle name to be Goozbecker  
but your mother had dated a  
Goozbecker.

(pause)

"Migbacker's Firesteel Lore and  
Legend". Volume six.

FIRESTEEL

Joseph, would you get Peazey?

**EXT. THE WAGON'S REINS - DAY**

PEAZEY

And if I'm right, one day we won't  
even need magic to cure disease.

GLORIA

Go on. Have you ever met a normal  
person you'd trust your health to?

JOSEPH

Peazey, Firesteel needs you!

Peazey heads into the wagon. Joseph tries to follow. Gloria  
grabs him by the shirt.

GLORIA  
A heroes' meeting is no place for  
little boys.

She glances into the wagon as Firesteel drains his flask and  
BELCHES again.

GLORIA  
Or grown men, apparently.

**INT. THE WAGON - DAY**

Firesteel waves the book in Peazey's face.

PEAZEY  
It's a book. You read it.

FIRESTEEL  
Oh, I read it all right. This Mount  
Aztec-Kazzoo-Mazur thingy? The only  
way inside it is something called  
"The Hufflegrumper's Cave".

PEAZEY  
What's a Hufflegrumper?

FIRESTEEL  
I don't know, but it doesn't scream  
"warm and fuzzy", now does it? And  
that boy scares me.

PEAZEY  
Of course he scares you. He  
believes in you.

Through the flap leading to the wagon's reins, Firesteel  
spots a road sign pointing towards "CASTLE SPRINGS". An idea  
leaps fully formed into his head.

**EXT. THE WAGON'S REINS - CONTINUOUS**

Firesteel hops into the driver's seat next to Gloria.

FIRESTEEL  
New plan. Bear left.

GLORIA  
But...

FIRESTEEL  
Von Goth is a villain of great  
might, magic, and... might.  
(MORE)

FIRESTEEL (cont'd)  
Castle Springs is home to some of  
the greatest heroes ever to ride.  
Their help would be of value.

As Gloria hangs a left, Peazey and Firesteel whisper...

PEAZEY  
But Castle Springs is a...

FIRESTEEL  
Shh. Think it through.

PEAZEY  
(the light goes on)  
Holy... you had a good idea!

FIRESTEEL  
I know. Shocked me, too.

**INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - THE VISION POOL - DAY**

A dank chamber. Sleeping Sodalians hang from the ceiling.  
Von Goth and Gloryblade enter. The Sodalians wake and fly  
about, frequently into one another.

At the room's center is a pool of dark, oily water.

VON GOTH  
Ipsim Domini, Ipsim Domini!

An image forms in the pool: the words "TRY AGAIN LATER".

VON GOTH  
Not quite riding a bicycle, is it?

**EXT. ROAD TO CASTLE SPRINGS - DAY**

Castle Springs cuts an impressive 'Camelot'-esque profile,  
overlooking a cliff and a mighty waterfall.

GLORIA  
It's glorious!

PEAZEY  
Legends live here. Grimoire the  
Bold, Falmoor the Honest...

FIRESTEEL  
Who still owes me thirty dilmars.

Firesteel dismounts, approaches the door, and bangs the  
knocker. The door opens, but no one's there.



MELCHIORE (O.S.)

Ahem.

Firesteel looks down. There stands MELCHIORE (30s), about 4'8", wielding a broom, mop, and a dusting rag headband.

MELCHIORE

Welcome to Castle Springs,  
retirement haven of the United  
Hero's Brotherhood. All resident  
heroes are currently unavailable.  
Feel free to gawk from a distance.

The door slams. Gloria mouths "retirement haven?" Firesteel bangs the door and, once again, Melchiore opens it.

FIRESTEEL

We're looking for Richter Crabtree.

MELCHIORE

Currently indisposed.

Melchiore disappears inside, but Firesteel blocks the closing door with his foot. He and his confused comrades go inside.

Meanwhile, a BLACK HORSE in a nearby stable TAPS his hooves and WHINNIES vehemently for attention that he does not get.

#### **INT. CASTLE SPRINGS - FOYER - DAY**

Melchiore displays an amazing gift for walking and cleaning at the same time, crossing the foyer while dusting marble statues and straightening portraits.

FIRESTEEL

Hold up, where is everyone?

MELCHIORE

Group vacation. Some package tour.  
"Slasvakia: A Sheeping Heritage".

PEAZEY

Vacation? They're retired!

MELCHIORE

You know what life's like for a  
retired hero? Tourists every day,  
more on weekends. "Oh mighty hero,  
we need your help! Ride again!"

(MORE)

MELCHIORE (cont'd)

Then they ride seven nights to find themselves at a book signing or a blacksmith's grand opening or some damned thing.

FIRESTEEL

Look. We're on a mighty quest and we need heroes, like the retirees, not bound by the UHB charter. So did they say when they'd be back?

MELCHIORE

Soon, they said.

PEAZEY

And that was...?

MELCHIORE

Seven years ago. They were laughing when they said it, too.

**INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - THE VISION POOL - DAY**

The Sodalians have fallen back to sleep as a drained Von Goth takes his umpteenth pass at the vision pool.

GLORYBLADE

You should write these things down.

VON GOTH

Maybe it was... Ipsim Domini, Ipsim Dominus!

The pool swirls to life.

GLORYBLADE

Most impressive. Perhaps you'll show me how to use it.

VON GOTH

And perhaps a Flaunchian Bearpig will fly from my rectum.

GLORYBLADE

Be that way. First thing's first. Find every hero in the land.

Von Goth stirs the water. Two images appear: a large meeting hall filled with heroes, and Ironclad, Lucius, and Wolfsire approaching a huge marble building.

GLORYBLADE

Grand. Ironclad has convened the  
UHB. Every hero in Dalymyria will  
be tied up for hours.

VON GOTH

The UH... who?

A third image appears: Firesteel at Castle Springs.

VON GOTH

I thought you said every hero in  
the land was at this meeting!

GLORYBLADE

Him? That's no hero. That's  
Lonnigan Firesteel.

VON GOTH

Lonnigan who?!

GLORYBLADE

Yes, yes, Halberd's son--

Von Goth waves his arms. Sodalians awake and form ranks.

VON GOTH

A Firesteel lives! Bring me the  
lungs of this whelp!

The Sodalians fly off through a hole in the ceiling.

GLORYBLADE

Oh come now, he's nothing!

VON GOTH

Then you should have no trouble  
disposing of him yourself!

A Sodalian grabs Gloryblade and drags him off into the sky.

#### **INT. CASTLE SPRINGS' RECREATION ROOM**

The group enters the castle's recreation room, which  
contains no recreation of any sort.

PEAZEY

Just like the brochure. Before it  
gets printed.

MELCHIORE

Richter didn't leave money for  
supplies. We had to sell the  
fencing mats, tai chi posters...

Another man, JONAS (30s), sits lobbing a ball against the  
wall, catching it on the rebound. He is, in every way, a  
completely average and unremarkable guy.

MELCHIORE

Jonas? We've got company.

Jonas rises and approaches.

MELCHIORE

You need heroes? Look no further!

Melchiore and Jonas strike heroic poses that do not inspire.

MELCHIORE

I'm Melchiore the Tidy!

PEAZEY

(trying that on)  
Melchiore. The. Tidy.

JONAS

And I am Jonas the Somewhat Larger  
Than Usual.

PEAZEY

The who now?

FIRESTEEL

What are you, six-two? That's  
barely taller than me.

JONAS

You're usual. I am somewhat larger.

MELCHIORE

Aspiring non-union heroes we are.  
Seven expeditions between us.

PEAZEY

Seven? As what?

MELCHIORE

Cook. But a heroic cook indeed!

GLORIA

And you?

JONAS

Swordsman!

(no one buys that)

Swordsman's assistant.

(no one buys that)

Swordsman's assistant... costumer.

Firesteel pulls Peazey aside.

FIRESTEEL

Any upside to hiring these two?

PEAZEY

If everything goes sideways, we'd  
just have to outrun the little guy.

FIRESTEEL

(to Melchiore)

You're hired.

GLORIA & JOSEPH

What!?

Melchiore and Jonas cheer, drowning out the protests.

MELCHIORE

Now. How long will we be gone?

Melchiore starts writing in a diary, Jonas whispering to him  
as he does.

FIRESTEEL

I'm guessing three days.

MELCHIORE

Will there be food?

Peazey peeks at Melchiore's scribbles.

PEAZEY

You're giving us a quote?!

MELCHIORE

You need heroes. There are two  
available. Now will there be food?

Gloria pulls Joseph aside.

GLORIA

Joseph, if Von Goth finds the globe  
while these people haggle...

JOSEPH

Mom, be patient, I know he can--

Joseph goes quiet as SHADOWS FLIT ACROSS HIS FACE.  
Meanwhile, back at the haggling...

JONAS

This dark lord's army; is it evil,  
undead, and/or of the night?

Distant SCREECHING fills the room, rapidly getting less  
distant. Everyone turns and sees the SODALIAN ARMY flying  
straight for the room's huge bay window.

PEAZEY

Why not ask them!

The Sodaliens CRASH through the window. Everyone sprints  
through a door at the end of the room, which Peazey SLAMS.

FIRESTEEL

Does this place have an armory?

#### **INT. THE ARMORY - DAY**

Even emptier than the rec room.

FIRESTEEL

Don't tell me. You had to--

MELCHIORE

Sell most of our weapons, yes. But  
they fetched a nice penny from some  
Mizeekian toughs!

The sound of BREAKING WOOD comes from outside. Firesteel and  
Peazey distribute what must be the last four swords here.  
Firesteel's hands shake. Peazey notices.

PEAZEY

Now?!

FIRESTEEL

Shut up. It's your fault I'm sober.

Peazey runs to the room's only torch and extinguishes it.

GLORIA

What are you doing!

The armory plunges into--

#### **DARK**

-- we hear the door CRASH INWARDS, then SCREECHES, METAL  
CLASHING, GRUNTING, and finally...

FIRESTEEL (IN THE DARK)  
Give it up, bat-freak!

PEAZEY (IN THE DARK)  
You're standing on my neck, dolt!

A SCRATCH as Gloria lights a match and reignites the torch.

### **BACK TO SCENE**

Firesteel stands on Peazey's neck, but twelve dead Sodalians lie about the room, dispatched by Lonnigan.

JONAS  
Holy crap!

MELCHIORE  
You are a Firesteel!

GLORIA  
How did... when did... oh my!

### **INT. CASTLE HALLWAY - DAY**

The party moves towards a door that they pray is an exit.

JOSEPH  
THAT WAS AMAZING! AND IN THE DARK!  
What moves did you use? Gizalian's  
parry?! Hausflander's gambit?!

GLORIA  
Joseph, not now!

Just as everyone's about to reach the door, a Sodianian appears behind them and SHRIEKS, calling his comrades.

Peazey throws the door open... revealing TWO MORE SODALIANS.

PEAZEY  
(slamming the door shut)  
Oh come on, how many man-bats does  
a dark lord need?

Those last two Sodalians SMASH through the door, enter the hallway, and step aside... revealing Gloryblade.

JOSEPH  
Marius Gloryblade! We're saved!

GLORYBLADE

So sweet. So wrong. But so sweet.

Gloryblade raises his golden amulet, and a SPARKING BALL OF MAGIC forms around his hands. He hurls it at our heroes--

-- but Peazey uncovers his silver amulet and leaps in front of the group. ZA-POW! Peazey's amulet repels the spell, which bounces around the hall before hitting a Sodalian, who vanishes into a mystical black ether.

GLORYBLADE

What the--

SODALIAN

Out of our way, wingless freak! You had your chance!

The Sodalians push Gloryblade aside, join hands, and FLAP their wings, blowing our heroes down the hallway towards the Sodalians at the other end of the hall.

But THWAP! Something strikes the two flapping Sodalians from behind, knocking them out cold. Their wind dies, and the heroes fall to the floor.

Gloryblade starts to turn but THWAP again, whatever knocked the man-bats out knocks him out, too.

It's the BLACK HORSE from the stable who had been trying to get our heroes' attention earlier.

FIRESTEEL

We've been saved by a horse?

GLORIA

This place is weird!

#### **EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT**

The heroes flee the castle, followed by the Wonderhorse.

PEAZEY

Grab some more horses from the stable! I've got an idea!

The heroes ride off as Sodalians pour from the castle, and we fade to...



**EXT. THE WATERFALL - MINUTES LATER**

With an unconscious Gloryblade in tow, the Sodalians screech in confusion as they fly about Castle Springs and the nearby waterfall, searching in vain for the heroes...

**INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS**

... who hide in a cave behind the waterfall, peeking through the cascading spray as the Sodalians give up and fly off towards the horizon.

FIRESTEEL

How'd you know about this cave?

PEAZEY

Richter took my dad here once. It's where he hid his booze.

FIRESTEEL

He never took my dad.

PEAZEY

Who do you think he was hiding it from?

**EXT. UHB HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT**

A massive marble citadel glimmering in the moonlight, basically 'The Hall of Justice, Medieval Edition'.

**INT. UHB'S MEETING HALL - NIGHT**

Adorned with spoils of heroism. A giant meeting table sitting center, at which dozens of armor clad heroes of various species and races ARGUE AT FULL VOICE.

The table quiets as Ironclad, Lucius, and Wolfsire enter.

Ironclad takes his place behind the 'PRESIDENT' placard, next to a conspicuously empty '#1'.

ALL

To the United Heroes Brotherhood I  
pledge my name, blood, and honor,  
from this day forward, except for  
alternating Sundays, with time off  
based on seniority.

Ironclad SLAMS down his fist. Time for business.

IRONCLAD

Who was on guard duty for the Key  
of Skizbeck this week!?

WOLFSIRE

Glivshore the Dwarf.

Two GUARDS escort GLIVSHORE (30s) into the chamber. The room  
GASPS, for Glivshore is now a six-and-a-half foot Adonis.

WOLFSIRE

Glivshore? That you?

GLIVSHORE

I'm sorry, everyone! I didn't know  
what he'd do with the key!

LUCIUS

Gloryblade did this to you?

GLIVSHORE

It was my reward. I knew he'd been  
using magic. But for the chance to  
be human, I didn't care!

IRONCLAD

But you're -- were our highest  
ranked dwarf! Why?

Another DWARF HERO rises.

DWARF HERO

Cause there's a glass ceiling for  
dwarves in this union and we all  
know it!

BEDLAM erupts, quickly ended by--

IRONCLAD

Silence! How many of you knew  
Gloryblade was using magic?

Guilty looks flash across the hall. A guard enters.

GUARD

Mister President! Villains in--

The guard freezes as dark-robed WIZARDS enter the hall.  
Heroes rise and draw swords, nock arrows, raise maces.

The Wizards remove their robes, revealing war-painted faces  
and magic mist-encircled hands. It's a standoff.

Ironclad strides to the center of the room as the leader of the wizards, DARWIN DARKMORGAN (50s), does the same.

DARKMORGAN  
Dagmar Ironclad. UHB President.

IRONCLAD  
Darwin Darkmorgan. Exalted Wizard  
of the VKB.

The two clasp hands.

IRONCLAD  
We've got a problem.

DARKMORGAN  
And we've got a plan.

**INT. THE CAVE - NIGHT**

Stew cooks on a campfire as Jonas admires Peazey's amulet.

JONAS  
Never seen a real magic repulser.

PEAZEY  
Only talisman I own.

A sweater lands in Jonas's lap. He looks up to find Gloria, who's busy KNITTING.

GLORIA  
Don't think I don't see you  
shivering. That tunic was not made  
for sleeping outdoors.

JONAS  
Really, ma'am, I'm fine...

Gloria silences Jonas with a mom glare. He grumbles as he pulls on the sweater.

Peazey notices Melchiore writing in his book.

PEAZEY  
Is that a diary?

MELCHIORE  
Indeed! I record all our adventures  
for posterity and billing purposes.  
When we retire I'll weave them into  
great literature! Or twaddle for  
beach reading. Whatever pays.

A sweater lands in Melchiore's lap. He protests but Gloria turns on the mom glare again, so on the sweater goes.

Joseph sleeps near the fire, the Firesteel book under his arm. Over the next couple lines, Wonderhorse sidles up alongside him and takes the book in his teeth.

PEAZEY

What have you got so far?

MELCHIORE

Only one line. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

FIRESTEEL

So... which was it?

MELCHIORE

Both.

FIRESTEEL

How can it be both? That's a terrible first line. Change it.

Melchiore shrugs and scratches out the line.

PEAZEY

Remember Mary Floogenstork?

FIRESTEEL

What about her?

PEAZEY

For you, the best of times. For her, the worst.

FIRESTEEL

My dad fired better help than you.

PEAZEY

Your dad had a choice.

Melchiore scribbles a new first line while behind him, unseen by the heroes, Wonderhorse noses through the Firesteel book.

MELCHIORE

"Call me Melchiore"?

FIRESTEEL

So it's all about you, huh?

As Melchiore scratches that line out, two more of Gloria's sweaters land in Firesteel and Peazeys' laps. Before they can protest, Wonderhorse WHINNIES. Everyone turns.

FIRESTEEL

Even horses like that book?

Wonderhorse kicks at a page. Peazey looks.

PEAZEY

It's a picture... of a scroll.

The commotion wakes Joseph, who runs to the book to see what Wonderhorse is getting at.

JOSEPH

It's one of the Vidian scrolls!

ALL

What does it say!

JOSEPH

Fordagal, Humphagal, Romeraimi!

LIGHT BURSTS FORTH from the book. A glowing mist forms over Wonderhorse, whose WHINNIES suddenly change into...

WONDERHORSE

... H. Popsicle Sticks! Read it,  
read it, please just...

(a beat)

Wait... wait! I can talk! YES! YES  
YES YES YES YES! Fifty years to get  
someone to read one spell! SHEESH!

PEAZEY

What in zooks?!

JONAS

I think it's magic!

WONDERHORSE

Aw, give blondie a kewpie! It's  
actually the absence of magic. The  
kid took a spell off of me.

(looks at his still very  
equine body)

Well, partially.

JOSEPH

How!? I'm no sorcerer!

WONDERHORSE

Doesn't matter if you're in a  
sorcerer's presence. And are you  
ever! I'm Blackmartin the Great!

MELCHIORE & JONAS

The wizard who Von Goth tortured to  
reveal the secrets of Vidian's  
Globe?

FIRESTEEL

You know this story too?

MELCHIORE & JONAS

Doesn't everyone?

BLACKMARTIN

(formerly Wonderhorse)  
Anyone eating that stew?

PEAZEY

Hold on. A little mist, some  
chitchat, and we're supposed to  
believe you're a great sorcerer?

Blackmartin SPEAKS in a mystical tongue. PURPLE MIST flies  
from his nostrils and surrounds the campfire, from which  
leap THREE FLAME-MEN. As everyone dodges to get out of their  
way, the flame-men form a kickline, sing a verse of RAGTIME  
GAL, and dive back into the fire.

BLACKMARTIN

No talismans, no arms, and a song  
that won't be written for nine  
hundred years. Great. Sorcerer. Now  
if no one minds, I'm famished.

Blackmartin plants his nose in the pot.

MELCHIORE

Wait, I did dishes! Use a plate!

#### **INT. UHB'S MEETING HALL - NIGHT**

Darkmorgan looks expectantly at the heroes.

IRONCLAD

What do you think, Wolfsire?

WOLFSIRE

Good plan now beat perfect plan  
later.

The other heroes nod grudgingly.

IRONCLAD  
Let it be done.

Every wizard in the room raises their hands. Magical mist flows from their sleeves and ENGULFS Darkmorgan. When that smoke clears, he's gone.

The heroes and villains regard each other warily.

IRONCLAD  
Now we wait.  
(a beat)  
So. Do dark wizards like Bingo?

#### **INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT**

The once ornate throne room has fallen into disrepair. A 30 foot-wide hole has fallen out of the floor's center.

The Sodalians watch, quaking in fear, as Von Goth hurls their Captain to the ground with a blast of magic.

VON GOTH  
Fifty years plotting vengeance  
against a world too insolent to  
accept my supremacy! My mortal  
enemy's son cornered, and you  
return empty-handed!

Von Goth's magic throws the captain into the hole at the center of the room, but he spreads his wings to catch himself from falling to his doom.

#### **INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - CROSS SECTION - CONTINUOUS**

As the Sodalian Captain starts back towards the Throne Room, we see this hole goes all the way to the bottom of the castle, cross-sectioning every floor.

And each floor is overgrown with vines, bound to which are THE PRISONERS TAKEN FROM THE FAIR, PLEADING for freedom. They're all here: the Toughs, the drunks from the bar, the UHB judges, even Joseph's friends, Balthazar and Bigsby.

#### **BACK TO THE THRONE ROOM**

The Sodalian Captain lands and kneels before Von Goth.

VON GOTH

You live only because I lack the  
energy to fricassee your brain.

A flash of light and a puff of mist appear in the middle of  
the room... out of which steps Darkmorgan.

DARKMORGAN

Lord Von Goth! What an honor it is  
to address the Dark Lord of  
Bernshire!

VON GOTH

A visitor? I told you fools to  
clear the forest of door-to-door  
religious types!

DARKMORGAN

No no no! I am Darwin Darkmorgan,  
Exalted Dark Wizard of the VKB!

VON GOTH

VK... who?

GLORYBLADE (O.S.)

The Villains Knaves Brutes guild.

Darkmorgan GASPS as Gloryblade rises from the backwards-  
turned throne, his head bandaged and bloodied.

GLORYBLADE

He's come to ask you to join it.

**EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT**

The group stares, fascinated, as Blackmartin guzzles stew  
while telling his tale.

BLACKMARTIN

Even my powers faded after sixteen  
hours in Von Goth's dungeon. I gave  
him every human to animal  
transformation spell I knew. And to  
make sure they worked...

GLORIA

He tried them on you.

JOSEPH

The story says nothing about him  
turning you into a horse!



BLACKMARTIN

That's Fearsgut for ya. He had no idea what happened to me, so he left it out. Never forget this, kid: books like that never tell the whole story.

Joseph tries to process that, but it's been a very long day, and he lets loose a monstrous yawn. Gloria scoops him up.

GLORIA

That's enough excitement for today, young man. Goodnight, gentlemen.

She and Joseph retire.

BLACKMARTIN

The kid's right about one thing, though. Tops on Von Goth's "To Do" list will be finding Vidian's Globe.

PEAZEY

But he's already got his army.

BLACKMARTIN

And he's got to fix it. The Sodalians are scary strong but not college material. A lesser sorcerer like Von Goth could work the spell on one person, but when he tried two thousand at once, he got a cadre of Yippy the Wonder Bats. We've got to stop him.

FIRESTEEL

We?

BLACKMARTIN

Darn tooting. That horny-hatted ghoul is overdue for some equine-style payback.

FIRESTEEL

All right! We've got a shot now!  
(the others glare at him)  
Not that we didn't have a shot before. Before we could, do... things, but now we can do, you know, things, I'll shut up.

BLACKMARTIN

Don't put on your happy pants yet.  
First off, until I regain human  
form, I wield only a fraction of my  
power. Otherwise I'd already have  
half as many legs. It's like that  
old saying: "Spells make the magic,  
but hands make the wizard."

FIRESTEEL

(soft, to Peazey)  
Did your dad ever say that?

PEAZEY

(soft, to Firesteel)  
If he did, I blocked it out.

BLACKMARTIN

And second, Von Goth was no  
pushover fifty years ago.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT**

Close on Darkmorgan's eyes, wide with fear. As well they  
should be: the Sodalians have him pinned to the ceiling.

BLACKMARTIN (V.O.)

Now he's got a hero for a partner.

Below Darkmorgan, Von Goth paces the room reading "VKB  
BYLAWS, EDITION 666" as Gloryblade watches from the throne.

VON GOTH

A trade union for those seeking  
world domination... unfathomable.

DARKMORGAN

Lord Von Goth, we merely follow  
your example! Your foul, rank,  
evil-infested path!

VON GOTH

My example led to these nauseating  
bylaws? Three-K! Evil hordes must  
attack heroes one at a time! Four-  
B! All castles must contain easily  
located escape tunnels!

GLORYBLADE

It's not so bad, Von Goth. In exchange for these ludicrous concessions, the UHB ceded all use of magic to the 'bad guys'. A modern hero can't use it at all.

The Sodalians drop Darkmorgan. He draws a magical sword from his robe, but Gloryblade draws and blocks. They duel.

GLORYBLADE

The perfect stalemate of good versus evil. No winners, no losers. Just an endless battle to sell tickets to.

Gloryblade tosses a spell, dissolving Darkmorgan's sword, then drives his sword through Darkmorgan's chest, pinning him to the wall like an insect.

GLORYBLADE

As long as everyone plays by the rules.

VON GOTH

But Firesteel the younger is not in this UHB! He must die!

GLORYBLADE

Actually, Selilius...

VON GOTH

Lord Von Goth.

GLORYBLADE

Of course. I've been thinking... Lonnigan Firesteel... he may be of use to us after all.

VON GOTH

Never say that again. According to this, the VKB has it copyrighted.

As Gloryblade and Von Goth leave the throne room, the Sodalians move in to finish off the screaming Darkmorgan.

#### **EXT. THE CAMPFIRE - DAWN**

Joseph wakes, rolls over... and freezes. Two rumpled bedrolls lie where Firesteel and Peazey slept.

**EXT. WOODS - DAWN**

Joseph searches with growing concern... but then hears Peazey in the distance.

PEAZEY (O.S.)  
Come on, pick up the pace!

**EXT. CLEARING - DAWN**

Joseph pokes his head through the bushes to find Firesteel and Peazey sparring with sheathed swords.

PEAZEY  
You were faster yesterday.

FIRESTEEL  
I hadn't slept three hours on rocks next to your snoring ass yesterday.

PEAZEY  
Bullpucks. You're still imitating Gloryblade's style.

FIRESTEEL  
These are the moves the UHB wants!

PEAZEY  
He's twenty pounds lighter than you! You mimic his moves, you look like a Flizbian Boarcats! But when you relax, you're the most natural fighter since--

FIRESTEEL  
Don't.

PEAZEY  
(throws his sword down)  
Fine! But last night you sliced and diced twelve Sodalians in the pitch dark because you weren't worried about how you looked!  
(a beat)  
Let's just work on some victory moves, OK?

While Joseph watches Firesteel drill a series of heroic victory dances, something behind him rustles... Gloria.

GLORIA  
You scared me to death, young man!  
Come back to camp...

But Joseph isn't having that; he runs into the clearing.

Firesteel tosses his sword aside and leaps into a back single handstand, the same move Peazey mocked yesterday.

PEAZEY

This again? You look like the cake topper at Fanzigig the Giant's wedding.

FIRESTEEL

"Inverted weather vane of death" was funnier.

Joseph reaches the heroes.

JOSEPH

That move! Do it again, but land on the tip of your sword!

Firesteel tries his leap again, this time landing on his sword's tip. He sticks it, holding the position for a moment... but then falls on his butt.

PEAZEY

That's Lingard the Huntsman's move. And he hung up his lance ten years before you were born.

JOSEPH

Halberd Firesteel called it...

FIRESTEEL

The best victory move he ever saw.

Joseph's smile goes wide. Gloria reaches the group.

GLORIA

If it's heroic trivia, he knows it.

JOSEPH

(to Firesteel)  
Teach me how to fight.

That request slaps Firesteel in the face.

FIRESTEEL

I can try. Once this is over.

Joseph smiles, oblivious to the utter lack of confidence in Firesteel's voice.

GLORIA

Lonnigan, your arm!

Blood flows from a gash on Firesteel's wrist.

PEAZEY

Sweet! I'll get my notes. Joseph,  
come on. Time for hero repair 101.

Peazey leads Joseph off. Gloria removes her scarf and wraps Firesteel's wound.

GLORIA

I hope Joseph didn't interrupt.

FIRESTEEL

No, we were done. He's a good boy.  
His father must be proud.

GLORIA

He was.

FIRESTEEL

I'm sorry.

GLORIA

You know what they say. Time heals  
all wounds.

Backlit by the dawn, she looks alive. Ethereal.

FIRESTEEL

I've been around long enough to  
doubt the wisdom of "they".

GLORIA

They have their moments. He was a  
good man. We always had food.

Firesteel nods and starts off towards camp.

GLORIA

Can you teach him? I don't know  
that I approve, but... there are  
things in this world that need  
fighting. Where would you start?

FIRESTEEL

Stance. Everything flows from  
stance. Wow. I can't believe I  
actually said that.

GLORIA

Why?

FIRESTEEL

It's... nothing.

GLORIA  
Well... show me.

He pauses, then, using his hands very gently, guides Gloria's arms and legs into dueling stance.

FIRESTEEL  
Feet a bit wider. Good. A hurricane  
couldn't knock you down now.

GLORIA  
I feel it. OK, so how do I fight?

FIRESTEEL  
See, that's where this gets  
awkward. I don't... really... know.

GLORIA  
Know what? How to fight?

FIRESTEEL  
Yes... well, no... but... there's  
no way to explain. I can tell you  
how every other hero fights, but  
for me... it's just ching, stab,  
parry, ching, flip, stab. No  
reason, no rhyme. It's... pathetic.

GLORIA  
Most would call that a gift.

FIRESTEEL  
I wasn't most people's son, was I?

GLORIA  
No. You were a great man's son.

FIRESTEEL  
We always had food.

**EXT. CAMP - DAWN**

Everyone hops on a steed. Gloria and Joseph mount the wagon.  
Firesteel tries to hop onto Blackmartin.

BLACKMARTIN  
You're joking, right?

FIRESTEEL  
I rode you yesterday!

BLACKMARTIN

You didn't know who I was  
yesterday.

FIRESTEEL

You were a horse. And still are.

Blackmartin snorts. Magic mist encompasses his saddle, which  
glows bright red, burning the Dickens out of Lonnigan's  
hand.

FIRESTEEL

OW! Fine! Stupid magic horses...

Firesteel hops into the wagon. They're off.

**EXT. DESERT - MORNING**

The heroes ride across a stark, unforgiving desert.  
Melchior rides alongside Gloria.

GLORIA

That's so interesting! I've always  
used a Worgian mop to clean marble.

MELCHIORE

No, for marble go with a Glaznian  
broom. Softer bristles.

GLORIA

I never thought of that!

MELCHIORE

You pick these things up as a  
cleaning hero.

Firesteel leans out of the wagon, reading Joseph's book.

FIRESTEEL

Hey, this thing that lives in the  
cave beneath the temple, this um...  
Hufflegrumper. What's it look like?

JOSEPH

No one knows. Rather than fight it,  
your father covered himself in mud  
and crawled along the cave's floor  
while the beast slept! It took him  
a week to cross the distance!



PEAZEY

So to avoid fighting this thing,  
the greatest swordsman of his era  
crawled for seven days?

BLACKMARTIN

(to Firesteel)

You're a good fighter, right?

Firesteel swigs from his flask and pops back in the wagon.

**LATER**

Peazey rides behind the wagon. Firesteel leans out.

PEAZEY

Kiss steel, do-gooder!

FIRESTEEL

Er... wait, I know this... Only  
mixed with your blood, rogue!

GLORIA

Um... what are you doing?

EVERYONE BUT GLORIA

Witty swordplay banter drills.

MELCHIORE

The UHB takes it very seriously.

PEAZEY

I will crush your skull, fool!

FIRESTEEL

OK, ermmmm... You will bleed like  
a broken sieve!

PEAZEY

Oh, come on!

FIRESTEEL

What was wrong with that? It has  
good imagery!

PEAZEY

Sieves don't bleed. They leak. And  
they do so broken or not.

JONAS

I used to have a banter problem. I  
just needed something to take my  
mind off it. Have you tried PSB?

FIRESTEEL

PSB?

JONAS

Pointless Swordplay Banter.  
(hands Firesteel a book)  
Trivia. Memorize what you can.

FIRESTEEL

(reading)  
The chief export of Burnia is tin?

JONAS

Throw out a fun fact, it knocks  
your enemy off his guard long  
enough to get in a stab or three.

Firesteel makes the 'huh' face. This isn't a bad idea...

**LATER**

The group approaches a mountain with a real 'Dr. Seuss'  
vibe: hour-glass shaped with a conical temple atop its flat  
summit.

JOSEPH

Mount Azzal-Kazzar-Mazzaz! It's  
exactly as I imagined!

PEAZEY

So's a nervous breakdown.

FIRESTEEL

Joseph, refresh my memory. Where's  
the entrance to the cave?

Joseph points out a spot above where the mountain widens.

JOSEPH

It's actually a volcano that  
exploded centuries ago. The  
survivors built the temple to keep  
it from erupting again, but they  
abandoned it when the Hufflegrumper  
moved in.

BLACKMARTIN

I'm all for backstory, folks, but  
there's no way horses are getting  
up to that cave.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Everyone dismounts. Tensions run high.

BLACKMARTIN

Be careful. This Hufflegrumper  
ain't to be toyed with.

FIRESTEEL

Well, as my father said, when  
fighting a Hufflegrumper, it's best  
to... Joseph, what did he say? When  
facing a Hufflegrumper?

JOSEPH

Nothing I've ever heard. Run?

PEAZEY

Write a will?

FIRESTEEL

All right. I must have been  
thinking of... all right. You all  
wait here. Watch for our signal.

The four heroes set off up the mountain's face.

BLACKMARTIN

What's your signal?

PEAZEY

Hopefully us coming back down the  
mountain.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN FACE - MINUTES LATER**

Wind batters the heroes as they climb.

PEAZEY

Should we go back for warmer  
clothes?

FIRESTEEL

Let's just get this over with!

The frigid wind just gets stronger, whipping their faces  
into contortions, until...

**INT. MOUTH OF THE CAVE - CONTINUOUS**

... they stumble onto the cave floor, panting and thawing.

FIRESTEEL

We should have gone back for warmer clothes.

PEAZEY

I hate you with every fiber of my soul.

JONAS

Is this the place?

MELCHIORE

Juuuuust maybe.

All eyes follow Melchiore's to a ROW OF HUMAN SKELETONS tied spread-eagle to the wall. Hundreds more lie strewn about.

**INT. DEEPER IN THE CAVE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Immense and carpeted with bones.

MELCHIORE

This place is filthy...

The heroes take several turns through the maze-like cavern. Firesteel turns one last corner. He gasps. The others turn and react identically, for they have stumbled into...

**INT. THE HUFFLEGRUMPER'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

A 100-foot sofa, 50-foot coffee table, bad rugs, tasteless but immense decorations. Books and magazines lie everywhere. Nothing's been cleaned in decades.

PEAZEY

It's so... tacky!

JONAS

So grubby!

MELCHIORE

This is a horrid creature!

FIRESTEEL

But look!

Firesteel points to a door on the far side of the room. A sign above it reads "TO THE TEMPLE OF THE LACKING FAITH".

A "GROAR!" comes from the sofa. This turns into a cough, then a spit. The HUFFLEGRUMPER sits up. He is a 200-foot, 20-ton ogre somewhere in the 'Sweetums the Muppet' phylum.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

What... what this? Company?

The Hufflegrumper stands. The room shakes. Our four heroes draw swords as they wish they had access to clean underwear.

PEAZEY

OK, look, we don't want a problem!

FIRESTEEL

That's right! So you just--stay--

PEAZEY

Calm!

FIRESTEEL

Stay calm! STAY FLIPPIN' CALM!

The Hufflegrumper sits on his coffee table, dejected.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

No understand. No one understand  
Hufflegrumper. Real question, does  
Hufflegrumper understand  
Hufflegrumper?

Now Peazey notices the titles of the books on the coffee table: "CONTROLLING YOUR RAGE", "INNER PEACE FOR OGRES". Lots of issues of "DALMYRIAN SELF-HELP WEEKLY".

HUFFLEGRUMPER

You visit to kill, not talk. Makes  
Hufflegrumper sad. Makes  
Hufflegrumper hurt inner  
Hufflegrumper.

PEAZEY

Uh, Mr. Hufflegrumper? Sir?

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Silence! Hufflegrumper no listen to  
your pain.

PEAZEY

We don't want to harm you!

FIRESTEEL

We don't?

Peazey elbows Firesteel in the ribs.

FIRESTEEL

We don't!

PEAZEY

Nope! We're actually from  
"Dalmyrian Self-Help Weekly"!

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Ohhh! Hufflegrumper sorry!  
Hufflegrumper know check bounce--

PEAZEY

Oh, we're not from billing! We're  
here to do an interview!

FIRESTEEL

Interview?

Peazey elbows Firesteel in the ribs.

FIRESTEEL

Interview!

JONAS

(catching on)

We have learned of your devotion to  
our magazine. We want to write an  
article about you!

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Hufflegrumper glad. Make tea.

Hufflegrumper lifts the heroes and drops them on the sofa.

MELCHIORE

And as part of the deal, you get a  
free house cleaning from Better  
Caves and Hovels!

HUFFLEGRUMPER

No!

The Hufflegrumper's roar shakes the mountain.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Mess Hufflegrumper's. You  
interview. You no clean.

The Hufflegrumper leaves for the kitchen. Melchiore  
twitches. Peazey gives Jonas and Melchiore a "what gives?"  
shrug.

JONAS

He does this all the time. Cleans  
where it's not wanted. It's how he  
got his name.

FIRESTEEL

Twenty ton ogre likes mess, twenty  
ton ogre keeps mess!

HUFFLEGRUMPER (O.S.)

Like chamomile?

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - LATE AFTERNOON**

The ground shakes as the Hufflegrumper walks.

JOSEPH

I bet Firesteel's got him right  
where he wants him!

Gloria and Blackmartin look to each other, not so  
optimistic.

**INT. THE HUFFLEGRUMPER'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

The Hufflegrumper places a giant teacup before the heroes.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Always Hufflegrumper think problem  
others. But Hufflegrumper learn  
problem Hufflegrumper. One year,  
kill 700 peasants. Very good  
September. But still feel empty.

FIRESTEEL

It's big of you to accept that. No  
pun. Ha.

MELCHIORE

You know, a good sweep might...

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Now Hufflegrumper has... outlets.

The Hufflegrumper pulls a sheet off of his end table,  
revealing about 500 human-sized sculptures. Each depicts one  
of the Hufflegrumper's victims meeting a ghastly end.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Hufflegrumper find sculpture during  
dark time in life.

FIRESTEEL

Well. That's... certainly... hmm.

PEAZEY

I admire your consistency of theme.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Hufflegrumper always say; sculpt  
what you know. You four will pose.

PEAZEY

You know, maybe a tour first...

HUFFLEGRUMPER

(leaning in again)

Sculpture tour of Hufflegrumper's  
soul. You pose. Or Hufflegrumper  
cook you. Make interview bad.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Gloria and Joseph watch for any sign of the heroes. Joseph  
doesn't seem as upbeat as before.

GLORIA

I'm sure everything's fine.

**INT. THE HUFFLEGRUMPER'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

The heroes stand amidst the Hufflegrumper's grisly statues,  
each holding a tremendously uncomfortable death pose. The  
Hufflegrumper, wearing a huge beret, sculpts in clay.

PEAZEY

Of all the dangers I thought we'd  
face, cramps were pretty far down  
the list.

FIRESTEEL

This can't take long, can it?

The Hufflegrumper crushes his work, starting over.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Inspiration lacking! Groar!

The statue next to Firesteel twitches.

FIRESTEEL

Ummm... is that normal?

HUFFLEGRUMPER

That model no stay still. He stay  
still now. Heh, heh, heh.

PEAZEY

There go cramps back down the list.



HUFFLEGRUMPER

Where other?

The Hufflegrumper points to Melchiore's now-vacant spot, then spots him sweeping around the base of the sofa.

HUFFLEGRUMPER

Upset Hufflegrumper's mess! Die!

Peazey and Jonas leap to the floor, tackling Melchiore.

The heroes sprint through the far door, up a flight of stairs, and into--

**INT. THE TEMPLE OF THE LACKING FAITH - LATE AFTERNOON**

-- a temple shaped like an inverted cone. Vines creep up the walls. LARGE HOLES have been worn through the walls by WHISTLING WIND.

And that's all. This temple appears to be completely empty.

FIRESTEEL

These people didn't find much holy!

JONAS

There's nothing in here!

PEAZEY

(looking straight up)

Wow, do I wish you were right.

Everyone follows Peazey's eyes. At the apex of this inverted cone of a temple, a hundred feet off the ground, a glass box hangs from a rope. Inside it: VIDIAN'S GLOBE and its SCROLLS.

FIRESTEEL

We all wondering the same thing?

PEAZEY

Jonas, what's the book say?

JONAS

It's a big book!

PEAZEY

Skim now, comprehend later!

The Hufflegrumper's ROAR echoes from the cave below as he SLAMS his fist against his ceiling, shaking the temple floor.

FIRESTEEL

A few inches of rock aren't going  
to hold him for long!

JONAS

Holy... no way!

PEAZEY

What? What's it say?

A gust of wind blows through one of the holes in the wall,  
lifts Jonas, and carries him to a patch of vines which he  
grabs onto to keep from falling back down.

JONAS

That! The book says your father  
rode the wind up the temple walls!

FIRESTEEL

How did he get back down!?

JONAS

The chapter's called "Ascending the  
Temple", not "Ascending and  
Descending the Temple"!

PEAZEY

You want to chalk this mess up to  
bad editing?

FIRESTEEL

Could this get any worse?

Another Hufflegrumper SLAM shakes the temple and knocks  
Jonas off the wall. The floor starts to crack.

PEAZEY

Yes! Now shut up and fly!

Peazey throws Firesteel in front of a gust of wind which  
lifts him up to the wall. As Firesteel grabs the vines, the  
temple SHAKES again, and the others dodge falling rocks.

JONAS

Even if he gets the globe, how do  
we get out of here?

PEAZEY

One catastrophe at a time, please!

MELCHIORE

Let's just hope the floor holds!

The Hufflegrumper's fist CRASHES UP through the floor.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Gloria's had enough of the booming chaos from the cave.

GLORIA

Hey! Are you a sorcerer or a gelding! Do something!

BLACKMARTIN

No need to go there! Come on!

Blackmartin gallops towards the mountain.

**INT. THE TEMPLE OF THE LACKING FAITH - LATE AFTERNOON**

The swirling winds carry Firesteel to the top of the temple as he twists and turns to avoid the Hufflegrumper's flailing fist. Here comes the globe, he grabs for it... but misses.

The wind dies, but as Firesteel falls, the Hufflegrumper backhands him towards the wall. He grabs a vine and holds on for dear life. It snaps. Again Firesteel falls, but he spots another vine, grabs it, swings back up, and lands astraddle the box.

FIRESTEEL

Huzzah, baby!

The rope supporting the box SNAPS. Firesteel falls again, this time landing on the Hufflegrumper's hand.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - DAY**

Blackmartin speaks a spell. Magic mist encircles a wide-eyed Joseph's hands.

JOSEPH

What do I do with this?

BLACKMARTIN

See that big mountain, kid! Throw the spell at it! Aim high!

Joseph does. The mist hits the mountain at its narrow center.

BLACKMARTIN

Higher would've been nice.

**INT. THE TEMPLE OF THE LACKING FAITH - LATE AFTERNOON**

While Firesteel clings to the Hufflegrumper's thrashing arm, Peazey and the others down on the floor keep dodging it.

JONAS

At least things can't get worse!

The mountain RUMBLES.

PEAZEY

From now on, if you think things  
can't get worse, you keep your  
mouth shut!

**INTERCUTTING - OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE TEMPLE - LATE AFTERNOON**

The mountain EXPLODES at its narrowest part. The top half of the mountain begins to fall.

Inside the falling temple, our four heroes go for a zero-G ride while the Hufflegrumper remains wedged in the floor.

BOOM! The temple hits the ground, sending sand and debris flying.

WHAM! Gravity abruptly reminds our heroes it exists. They're lying on what was once the temple's wall, now its floor, while the Hufflegrumper hangs over them, still wedged in what was originally the temple's floor.

The Hufflegrumper reaches for our heroes, revenge in his eye.

FIRESTEEL

Ideas are welcome.

PEAZEY

Try to taste bad.

CR... CRAA... CRAACK! The wall behind the Hufflegrumper collapses, striking the ogre in the head, knocking him out.

But the wall keeps on falling right towards the heroes, about to flatten them into pancakes.

BAM! The wall hits the floor. Dust and smoke goes everywhere. And when it settles...

**EVERYONE'S ALIVE.** One wind-worn hole in the wall has landed over top of each of our heroes.

FIRESTEEL  
Well that went pretty much  
according to plan.

A VOICE calls out through the still settling dust.

BLACKMARTIN (O.S.)  
Firesteel! Peazey!

PEAZEY  
Over here!

Blackmartin, Gloria, and Joseph emerge from the smoke.

MELCHIORE  
The volcano must have erupted!

BLACKMARTIN  
Erupted! Yes! Let's go with that!

JOSEPH  
(pointing at the ogre)  
Is that the--

THE HEROES  
Yes!

JOSEPH  
Was it as terrible as--

THE HEROES  
Yes!

GLORIA  
Joseph, please!  
(to Firesteel)  
Did you find it?

Firesteel holds up the glass box. Gloria laughs with joy,  
her face bursting into a sunrise-bright smile.

It hits Lonnigan. He did it. He really did it. He starts to  
laugh along with Gloria. Peazey, Melchiore, Joseph, and  
Blackmartin join in.

And then more voices join in the LAUGHTER. Many more voices,  
from beyond the smoke and dust.

A wind gust clears the air. Our heroes are surrounded by  
Sodaliens... and Gloryblade.

GLORYBLADE

See, Von Goth? Why risk your  
soldiers' lives when there's a  
"hero" willing to risk his?

Von Goth's image appears in a magical mid-air projection.

VON GOTH

Well done, young Firesteel. Now  
you'll be so kind as to hand over  
Vidian's Globe and its scrolls.

A Sodalian moves for Firesteel. Firesteel beans him with a  
rock. A chaotic scuffle ensues, but when it clears,  
Gloryblade holds his sword at Firesteel's throat --

-- Sodalians hold the other heroes at sword point --

-- and the Sodalian Captain holds Joseph 30 feet in the air.

GLORIA

(to Von Goth)

You monster!

VON GOTH

You're too kind. Firesteel? Hand  
Gloryblade the box or learn how  
high bookworms bounce.

Firesteel spots his own sword lying on a nearby rock.

BLACKMARTIN

Not now, Lonnigan.

VON GOTH

Ah, Blackmartin. My old friend. You  
must be lost. The nearest glue  
factory is in Slasvakia.

BLACKMARTIN

I thought even you could have come  
up with a new horse joke in fifty  
years, Selilius.

Firesteel looks to his sword.

Then to Joseph, struggling thirty feet in the air.

Then to Gloria, who can't take any more of this.

Then to Gloryblade... to whom he hands the box.

FIRESTEEL

Now let the boy go.

VON GOTH  
A capital idea.

The Sodalian Captain drops Joseph.

GLORIA  
No!

Gloria runs to catch Joseph; by some miracle she does, but the impact knocks her into a pile of rocks.

Firesteel grabs his sword and charges Gloryblade. But Gloryblade isn't just a pretty face: he parries Lonnigan's angry attacks with ease.

The Sodalians move on Firesteel.

GLORYBLADE  
HOLD. I require no assistance.

Gloryblade comes in hot. Firesteel deflects the first flurry of attacks, but a lightning fast thrust catches his arm. Gloryblade disarms Firesteel, then kicks him to the ground.

The Sodalian Captain lifts Gloryblade and the evil army flies off, Vidian's Globe and its scrolls in tow.

GLORYBLADE  
Nothing personal, Lonnigan!

Joseph CRIES OUT. Everyone turns to see him standing over Gloria's crumpled form.

Peazey sprints to Gloria's side and starts administering his brand of CPR, the 'Peazey Method'.

Joseph's eyes beg Firesteel for help. But Firesteel just stands there, frozen.

Finally Gloria COUGHS, coming to. Melchiore and Jonas sigh in relief. Joseph hugs his mother.

But the sighs fade, the hug ends, and all we have is a silent band of heroes amidst a pile of rubble.

JOSEPH  
So... what do we do now?

No one seems to have an answer for that.

FIRESTEEL  
We go home.

PEAZEY  
Lonnigan, wait--

FIRESTEEL  
Wait what? Dammit Peaze, we're  
terrible at this! T-E-R... U...  
terrible!

JOSEPH  
But Von Goth's got the globe! And  
the scrolls! So... so now...

Tears pool in Joseph's eyes as he scours the pages of his  
'Firesteel' book, looking for any answer.

FIRESTEEL  
What "now"? There is no "now"!

Firesteel snatches the book from Joseph's hands.

FIRESTEEL  
There's no secret for beating Von  
Goth in this, this... story! You  
think my father defeated him fair  
and square? That a commoner rose up  
from the masses, like some dungheap  
flower, and bested a DARK SORCERER?  
The only thing that made my dad  
special was a wizard pal who'd do  
anything for a buck! Who made him  
stronger and faster than everyone  
else for a price!

PEAZEY  
Hey! That's enough--

FIRESTEEL  
And once he was on top of the  
world, what did he do? Ban magic  
for heroes! So no one stronger or  
faster would ever come along, and  
it'd always be his name up top in  
the big fancy font!  
(rips pages from the book)  
All this book can teach you is how  
to trick the world into believing  
you're something special!

Joseph runs to the wagon, sobbing.

Firesteel looks around at Jonas, Melchiore, and Peazey...  
none of whom can look him in the eye.



He walks off into the rubble and finds a good, quiet rock pile to sit on. Alone.

After a moment, Firesteel hears FOOTSTEPS. He turns, and Gloria SLAPS him across the face.

GLORIA

That's my son. I've given him everything, done everything for him that I can. But there's one thing I can't give him. Hope. That... he gets from you. He always has. And I am not going to stand here and watch you take it from him.

FIRESTEEL

It's over.

GLORIA

Why? Because you're scared? Well so am I! But I'll never--

FIRESTEEL

-- never stop while tyrants hold hope and decency hostage?  
(holds up a torn page)  
Page twelve. I thought you'd know a fairy tale when you heard one.

GLORIA

Maybe it's just been too long since I believed in one. Or in anything.  
(grabs the page)  
I'm going to give this back to my son. It was a gift from his father.

She leaves. Firesteel almost follows her. Almost.

PEAZEY (O.S.)

You think that kid's been waiting for your dad to show up?

FIRESTEEL

(without turning to him)  
Do you, of all people, not understand what I'm saying--

Peazey circles Firesteel to face him.

PEAZEY

I understand that you need either a big hug or a bigger smack. But I don't have time to figure out which so I'll just say this.

(MORE)

PEAZEY (cont'd)  
For all his faults, at a time like  
this, your dad wouldn't be moping  
around all "woe is me. He'd ride.

FIRESTEEL  
You don't know a thing about him.  
And after all this time... you  
don't know a thing about me.

Firesteel walks off towards the horizon, heading anywhere.  
Heading nowhere.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - EVENING**

Peazey storms past everyone and mounts a horse.

JONAS  
Where are we going?

PEAZEY  
Bernshire.

MELCHIORE  
Why?

PEAZEY  
To fight.

GLORIA  
Is he--

PEAZEY  
**No.**

A long silence. One by one, the heroes mount up.

MELCHIORE  
Where's Blackmartin?

GLORIA  
He was here a minute ago--

PEAZEY  
We can't wait.

Peazey rides off, and after a moment, the others follow.

**EXT. PATH IN THE WOODS - EVENING**

Firesteel walks alone past a road sign: "SLASVAKIA - A LONG  
WAY THIS WAY".

**INT. UHB HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT**

Heroes and villains sit side by side. You can cut the tension with a knife. Lucius nocks an arrow, fires...

... and strikes a huge painted bingo board.

LUCIUS  
O-Fifty Six!

GROANS mix with CHEERS as tiles get placed on Bingo Boards.

Away from the game, Ironclad and Wolfsire (now wearing reading glasses) peruse a large book

WOLFSIRE  
Found it!  
(reading aloud)  
UHB Article seven-K. Hero captured  
for one day warrants full-scale  
rescue attempt regardless of  
captor's union status!

An excited Ironclad rushes to his chair and raps a gavel.

IRONCLAD  
I move that Darwin Darkmorgan of  
the VKB be inducted as an honorary  
UHB hero at once and be accorded  
all the rights thereof! Seconded?

WOLFSIRE  
Seconded!

IRONCLAD  
All in favor say aye!

Heroes and villains stare confused; then it dawns on them.  
"Ayes" come one at a time, then suddenly in a huge chorus.

IRONCLAD  
Motion passes! Now let's go rescue  
Darkmorgan! CHARGE!

Ironclad runs out of the room, but no one follows.

WOLFSIRE  
Not been one day. Half hour to go.

Ironclad returns and sits, head in his hands. Bingo resumes.

**EXT. PATH IN THE WOODS - NIGHT**

Firesteel passes a sign: "NOW ENTERING SLASVAKIA: LAND OF SHEEP". HOOFBEATS approach.

BLACKMARTIN

Let's recap. Von Goth's ready to take over the world, your best friend isn't speaking to you, and I'm still a horse. That's a bad hand to leave us holding.

FIRESTEEL

Peazey will think of something. He always does. He'll go to Von Goth, talk sense--

BLACKMARTIN

There's a time to talk and a time to ride, and a hero knows which is which!

FIRESTEEL

Well guess what I'm not!

BLACKMARTIN

I've known a lot of heroes in my day and you want to know something? They all fit your old man's description. Arrogant. Selfish. But brave. Nimble. Tough. And if any one of them had been in that temple this afternoon, we'd still be scraping them off the rocks. You can be an idiot. You drink too much and you couldn't out-banter a mime. But today? I never saw the like.

FIRESTEEL

Tell the kid. Make a great story.

BLACKMARTIN

Reach into my bridle.

(Firesteel pauses)

I'm not going to kiss you! Reach!

From Blackmartin's bridle, Firesteel pulls out a scroll.

**EXT. THE MOUNTAIN BASE - EVENING - FLASHBACK**

Flashback to a few scenes ago: as Gloryblade and Von Goth threaten Firesteel, Blackmartin 'magics' one of the Vidian Scrolls out of the box and into his bridle.

BLACKMARTIN  
Stole it right out from under  
golden boy's nose.

**BACK TO SCENE**

FIRESTEEL  
So what? These are no good without  
the globe.

BLACKMARTIN  
Well, actually...

FIRESTEEL  
Don't wizard-splain.

BLACKMARTIN  
One type of spell should work just  
fine without the globe itself.

Lonnigan opens the scroll. HERO SPELLS.

FIRESTEEL  
Do you just make these rules up as  
you go? Is this some special class  
at Wizard school?

BLACKMARTIN  
Pipe down and listen, Sir Gripes-a-  
lot! These spells predate the UHB  
by, oh, a few eons. They were  
written to only be invocable by a  
true hero in the presence of a true  
wizard. Ahem.

FIRESTEEL  
Cheat the world the same way my dad  
did? Not exactly what I was  
aiming--

BLACKMARTIN  
Then don't cast the spell on  
yourself, cast it on me.

A beat. Firesteel reads the spell names.

FIRESTEEL  
Speed of lightning... I suppose  
that makes you... fast?

BLACKMARTIN  
Can't slip anything past you. And  
yes.

(MORE)

BLACKMARTIN (cont'd)  
That's our best, maybe only, chance  
to reach Castle Von Goth before  
Dark Lord Happy Helmet gets that  
globe.

Firesteel's got one more question, but it takes a moment...

FIRESTEEL  
So what if I read this 'true hero'  
spell and it... doesn't work?

BLACKMARTIN  
Then we'll ride off. Find shelter  
for the night. And at least...  
you'll know.

"At least you'll know." Firesteel clears his throat.

FIRESTEEL  
(reading very lamely)  
Lipsim Varitas Averill.

BLACKMARTIN  
Oh come on, that won't cut it!

FIRESTEEL  
Lipsim Varitas Averill!

BLACKMARTIN  
PUT SOME LIFE INTO IT!

FIRESTEEL  
(with gusto)  
LIPSIM VARITAS AVERILL!

BLACKMARTIN  
THAT OUGHTA DO IT! NOW HOP ON!

Firesteel leaps atop Blackmartin, face bright with hope,  
ready to ride, to prove himself. Blackmartin takes off...

... at a perfectly normal pace.

No flashing lights, no magical whooshes, no nothing. No  
nothing at all. A long, terrible pause hangs over them both.

BLACKMARTIN  
We should... find shelter.

FIRESTEEL  
Yeah. For the night.

Blackmartin starts off. Firesteel's chin falls to his chest.  
If a hole in the ground opened right now...

But he doesn't see a hole. He sees a scrap of paper stuck in his doublet. Part of the page he tore from Joseph's book.

FIRESTEEL  
We're going back.

BLACKMARTIN  
I'm... not sure that's wise.

FIRESTEEL  
I'm quite sure it's not.

BLACKMARTIN  
So maybe... reconsider?

Firesteel hops off Blackmartin and starts back alone.

BLACKMARTIN  
Lonnigan, wait--

FIRESTEEL  
The only people who ever believed  
in me are gonna die because they  
believed in me! If I don't at least  
try to save them, just because some  
dusty spell doesn't think I can...  
then the spell is right.

Firesteel turns and goes. He gets a few steps when Blackmartin grabs his collar in his teeth.

BLACKMARTIN  
You'll never get there alone.

Firesteel nods thanks to Blackmartin, then hops into the saddle. They ride off, back towards Dalmyria. Towards Gloryblade and Von Goth. Towards certain doom.

The forest passes at a steady pace behind them.

And then, faintly at first... Blackmartin starts to glow an ethereal violet.

And the forest behind them... starts to pass a little faster.

And faster.

And Blackmartin glows brighter.

And the forest passes faster.

Now BLACKMARTIN'S FULL-ON ILLUMINATED.

Firesteel looks up; something has changed. His hair whips in the wind, Blackmartin is going 40 miles per hour, steadily increasing.

FIRESTEEL  
Whoa! Whoaa! DAMMIT WHOAAAA!

BLACKMARTIN  
I hear you! I can't WHOA!

FIRESTEEL  
Why not?!? WHY NO WHOA!

BLACKMARTIN  
Because magic, you dolt!

Blackmartin REALLY takes off. The forest is just a big green blur behind Firesteel as his butt lifts out of the saddle. He clutches those reins for dear life as Blackmartin crashes through fences, thickets, whatever's in the way.

FIRESTEEL  
GHA! TWIGS! EYES!

With all his might, Firesteel brings his feet back into his stirrups, hardly able to breath. He looks up, sees the countryside rocketing past. The hero spell worked.

FIRESTEEL  
YEEEEEEEEEE-HAAAAA! Giddy-ap!

BLACKMARTIN  
I talk, fool, just say faster!

FIRESTEEL  
Lipsim Varitas Averill, baby!

BLACKMARTIN  
No! Don't say it aga--

Too late. Blackmartin jumps to 300 miles per hour. He and Firesteel are a screaming blur, leaving flame in their wake.

In the distance, silhouetted against the moon, we see the Sodalians carrying what appear to be humans in their claws.

#### **EXT. SKY - NIGHT**

The Sodalians carry humans all right: Peazey, Gloria, Joseph, Melchiore, and Jonas. They reach Castle Von Goth, fly through the entrance...



**INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - NIGHT**

... and up through the structure, passing all the captive townspeople, bound by the vines and PLEADING for mercy.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The Sodalian Captain lands before Von Goth and kneels, offering him the globe and scrolls as the rest of the army and the captives land behind him.

VON GOTH

Is this a scroll I see before me?  
Come! Let me clutch thee!

MELCHIORE

Ooh, I'm stealing that one!

GLORYBLADE

Where is Firesteel the younger?

SODALIAN CAPTAIN

He did not ride with them.

VON GOTH

Perhaps he realizes his family's  
failure is complete and did not  
wish to witness its particulars. NO  
matter. Prepare the ritual!

**EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT**

Blackmartin and Firesteel fly across the land, heading straight for Castle Von Goth on the horizon.

**BACK IN THE THRONE ROOM**

Every prisoner in the castle now kneels in the throne room, bound to each other and the floor by a long chain.

VON GOTH

It's magic time, Marius. I'm ready  
for my new army.

JONAS

Uh, Lord Von Goth? Sir?

VON GOTH

Who is this... phenomenally average  
man who speaks to me?

JONAS

Prisoners are usually treated to a summary of the evil genius's brilliant plan, before he unleashes it. As a courtesy. And all.

Von Goth lays a hand on Jonas's mouth. When he removes it, Jonas' mouth has been SEALED SHUT.

VON GOTH

Sorry. We're not a union house.

**EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT**

Blackmartin and Firesteel hurtle towards the castle.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT**

Gloryblade addresses the prisoners.

GLORYBLADE

Bernshirians, thank you oh so much for the years of adoration, support, and money. But UHB heroes can only rise so high, and tonight I seek to rise higher. Now, to accomplish this, I will have to kill all of you. But when I weigh your miserable lives against what I want, it's really not a contest. So thanks again, and bye.

Von Goth and Gloryblade turn to the Sodalians.

SODALIAN CAPTAIN

Your magnificence, will this hurt?

VON GOTH

Excruciatingly and for a very long time. Wait, I meant to lie about that. Oh well.

(reading from the scroll)

Acralkus Ahtuna!

Magical mist and light unlike any we've seen bursts from the globe. The mist LIFTS the Sodalians and SLAMS THEM TOGETHER in the shape of a giant beast; some form the body, others the limbs. Their swords CLATTER to the floor as they SCREAM, bodies starting to MELT into one another.

With a flash of light, Gloryblade flies to the top of the beast. His body melts into the beast, forming a head.

GLORYBLADE  
I AM A **GOD!!!**

The gooey beast, still solidifying, turns to the prisoners.

GLORYBLADE/BEAST  
**AND I MUST FEED!**

MELCHIORE  
Something's gotta kill you, but I  
never thought it'd be that!

**INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - NIGHT**

Firesteel and Blackmartin SMASH THROUGH the castle wall --

**INT. CASTLE VON GOTH - CONTINUOUS**

-- ride straight up the hole bisecting the castle, and --

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

-- WHOOSH out the hole in the floor, but KEEP FLYING STRAIGHT UP. They PULVERIZE a skylight and rocket into the sky.

As glass rains down on the room, Peazey looks to the shattered skylight and smiles wide.

PEAZEY  
Only one man can blow an entrance  
like that!

**EXT. THE SKY ABOVE THE CASTLE - NIGHT**

Blackmartin and Firesteel reach their apex, then fall: Firesteel towards the castle, Blackmartin towards the lake.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Firesteel CRASHES through another skylight and lands with a THUD in front of Peazey.

FIRESTEEL  
Sorry I'm late. What'd I miss?

Gooey Hell Beast ROARS. Firesteel turns and sees it.

PEAZEY

Oh, a little of this and that.

FIRESTEEL

It's an olive loaf from hell!

PEAZEY

You hate olive loaf! Use that!

Firesteel grabs one of the Sodalian's fallen swords off the floor just as hell beast knocks him clear across the room.

Von Goth CACKLES WITH JOY from his throne.

Peazey places a hand on Joseph's shoulder.

PEAZEY

Joseph! What can we do?

JOSEPH

I don't know, I can't help!

GLORIA

There must be something! Think!

Joseph tears through his Firesteel book, looking for anything in the story that will help.

Firesteel tries gamely to fight Gooley Hell Beast, but the creature knocks him all over the room to Von Goth's delight.

Gloria nudges Peazey. He turns to her, then follows her eyes; each time Gooley Hell Beast takes a step, the bolts securing their chain to the floor SHAKE... and LOOSEN.

Firesteel lands a hit on the beast. It ROARS in pain and backhands him, sending him sliding across the floor.

Peazey gets Jonas to notice the loosening bolts, who then gets Melchiore to do so. The idea spreads among the prisoners as they exchange glances, a silent plan forming.

Gooley Hell Beast backs Firesteel into a corner, then lunges for him. With nowhere to run, Firesteel dives into Gooley Hell Beast's knee. Now he's trapped in the monster's thickening form as still visible Sodalian faces SCREAM around him.

Firesteel sticks his head out of the beast's back and tries to work himself free... but can't. Gooley Hell Beast begins to expand around Firesteel, sucking him back inside.

The beast staggers in the direction of the prisoners--

-- who stand up en masse, their combined might YANKING THE CHAIN UPWARDS, tearing it free from the loosened bolts. The chain trips the beast. It CRASHES to the floor, and the force of the jolt throws Firesteel from the creature's body.

GLORIA  
Lonnigan, the chain!

Firesteel cuts the chain. As the prisoners work themselves free, Gloria stands and turns... right into Von Goth, who grabs her and holds a sword to her throat.

VON GOTH  
You're a fiery one. We shall have much to discuss once this is over.

Gooley Hell Beast grabs Firesteel, picks him up, and drops him into its mouth.

Joseph's eyes go wide; Vidian's Globe sits unattended near the throne.

JOSEPH  
The answer's not in the book! It is the book!

Joseph runs to the throne and smashes his book's full weight down on Vidian's Globe. It CRACKS IN HALF, and when it does--

-- BOOM! Gooley Hell Beast **EXPLODES** back into individual Sodalians. Firesteel and Gloryblade fall to the floor, covered in beast goo.

Gloryblade grabs a sword and swings it at Firesteel, but Firesteel blocks the attack at Gloryblade's wrist.

FIRESTEEL  
Nothing personal, Marius.

Firesteel flips the sword into his own hand, SPINS, SWINGS, and removes Gloryblade's swelled head from his neck.

VON GOTH (O.S.)  
Impressive.

He turns to find Von Goth behind him: sword in one hand, Gloria in the other.

VON GOTH  
But are you ready for the final test of your mettle?

FIRESTEEL

The chief export of Burnia is tin!

VON GOTH

What?

POW! Firesteel punches Von Goth in his perplexed kisser.

Gloria breaks free. Von Goth tries to grab her, but she adopts the dueling stance Firesteel showed her, and Von Goth can't budge her. His surprise gives her the chance to KICK HIM IN THE GROIN. Von Goth stumbles back, waving his arms.

VON GOTH

You haven't seen the last of  
Selilius Von Goth!

A flash of light, and Von Goth disappears.

JOSEPH

Firesteel did it!

The CHEERING prisoners swarm Firesteel, who's still wiping beast goo from his face.

FIRESTEEL

OK, everyone ZIP IT! Joseph! This castle, I'm guessing it's a big deal in my dad's story?

JOSEPH

Of course! I know it like the back of my hand!

FIRESTEEL

Is there a way out?

JOSEPH

Yes! That tunnel!

FIRESTEEL

Then I need you, Joseph. You have to lead these people to safety. Can you do that?

All of Joseph's life has prepared him for this moment.

JOSEPH

Yes. I can.  
(to the townsfolk)  
Follow me!

Joseph leads the townsfolk into the tunnel with the air of nine going on thirty. Gloria turns to Firesteel.

FIRESTEEL

I'm sor--

Gloria shuts him up with a kiss, and a damned good one at that. She pulls away, her face now covered in beast goo.

GLORIA

God that's awful.

FIRESTEEL

You... you mean the goo, right?

She smiles, then runs after Joseph and the townsfolk.

JOSEPH

You kicked Von Goth in the--

GLORIA

I know. Don't ever do that.

JOSEPH

But you always said--

GLORIA

Young man, no back talk! Now you lead the town to safety this instant or so help me--

The townsfolk disappear into the tunnel.

MELCHIORE

Let's see union men pull that off!

Von Goth materializes behind Melchiore, grabs the diminutive hero, and hurls him across the room into Jonas and Peazey.

VON GOTH

As I said, haven't seen the last of me, so on, so forth.

Von Goth grabs a sword off the floor and turns to Firesteel.

VON GOTH

Your father's blood stains my sleeve, pup. Soon yours will mingle with it!

FIRESTEEL

The capital of Slasvakia is Theen!

Firesteel attacks Von Goth, but the sorcerer parries.

FIRESTEEL

I guess PSB only works once!

Von Goth and Firesteel duel, their swords disappearing into CLANGING, streaking, sparking blurs.

The Sodalians rise from the floor. Melchiore, Jonas, and Peazey grab swords and prepare to fight... but the Sodalians don't seem to care about them. They're watching the duel.

As Von Goth and Firesteel separate after a violent flurry, Von Goth realizes he's standing over half of Vidian's Globe.

He casts a spell: the half-globe shatters, but not before its mist flows over a nearby SPIDER, then over Von Goth.

Von Goth grows EIGHT ARMS, grabs as many swords off the ground, and attacks. But Firesteel blocks every strike, totally in the zone, a kick-ass medieval Jackie Chan.

Von Goth sees the other half of Vidian's Globe on the floor.

Again, he speaks his spell, Again the half-globe shatters, again the mist flows... but now through the BLOODSTAIN on Von Goth's sleeve, turning him into HALBERD FIRESTEEL.

Lonnigan FREEZES.

VON GOTH/HALBERD

What's wrong, son? Don't recognize me? Maybe you'll recognize this!

Von Goth/Halberd attacks elegantly. A still stunned Firesteel barely dodges, the attack nicking his arm.

VON GOTH/HALBERD

I wasted those mornings of your youth, boy! Look at your stance! Everything flows from stance!

Firesteel's resentment wells up in a SCREAM as he attacks wildly. Von Goth/Halberd parries, grabs Lonnigan's arm, pulls him into a clinch, and twists the blade towards his throat.

Peazey rips his silver magic repulser from his neck and HURLS it across the room.

PEAZEY

LONNIGAN! CATCH! IT'LL BREAK HIS TRANSFORMATION!

Firesteel grabs the repulser as Von Goth/Halberd's sword draws closer to his jugular.

VON GOTH/HALBERD

You disgrace my name!



That... Von Goth/Halberd reeeeeallly shouldn't have said that.

Firesteel tosses Peazey's magic repulser aside and, with a burst of strength pulled from the depths of his soul, shoves Von Goth/Halberd off, leaps to his feet, and raises his sword without any trace of fear or doubt.

FIRESTEEL

No. You disgrace mine.

Hero and villain duel with skill heretofore unseen.

The Sodalians, Peazey, Jonas, Melchiore... no one can take their eyes off this spectacle.

After a fearsome flurry, Firesteel knocks Von Goth/Halberd to the ground, but then falls to his knees. Spent, exhausted.

Von Goth/Halberd rises, gearing up for the kill. With a ROAR, he spins twice and swings for Firesteel --

-- who leaps into his oft-mocked back somersault sword-stand. Von Goth/Halberd's swing misses Firesteel, strikes his sword--

-- propelling Firesteel upright, where he spins and drives his blade deep into Von Goth/Halberd's chest.

The sorcerer reverts to Von Goth, eyes wide in shock.

FIRESTEEL

You've been defeated by the  
inverted weather vane of death.

PEAZEY

That was witty! THAT WAS WITTY!

Jonas shudders... his mouth has reverted to normal.

Now a collective shudder goes through the Sodalians. When it passes, something's changed: they're a bit less 'man-bat' and more 'man' than they were a moment ago. The Sodalians exchange looks of shock, fear... and hope.

VON GOTH

(to the Sodalians)

Kill them! Kill them all!

The Sodalians drop their swords, then turn to face Von Goth.

VON GOTH

What are you waiting for! Fools!

The man-bats join hands, raise their wings, and flap in unison. The collective wind drives the protesting Von Goth back until he falls through the throne room floor's hole.

Von Goth plummets SCREAMING, hits bottom, and EXPLODES.

A wave of energy flies into the room, and when it subsides... the Sodalians have REVERTED TO HUMAN FORM. They look to each other, tears of relief filling their eyes.

**INT. THE TUNNELS - DAWN**

There's the light of dawn up ahead, the tunnel's end!

GLORIA  
Joseph, you did it!

A ball of flame bursts into the tunnel behind them.

JOSEPH  
Less hugging, more running!

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - DAWN**

Flame bursts from the hole in the floor. The castle shakes.

SODALIAN CAPTAIN  
Let's get out of here!

The heroes and ex-Sodalians run for the escape tunnel. They've almost all made it, but another fireball BLOWS AWAY a section of floor, trapping Firesteel and Peazey in the room.

FIRESTEEL  
Go! We'll find another way!

Jonas, Melchiore, and the ex-Sodalians flee into the tunnel as Firesteel and Peazey scour the room for another way out.

**EXT. THE LAKE'S SHORE - DAWN**

Jonas, Melchiore, and the ex-Sodalians exit the tunnel, joining the townspeople as fire pours from the castle.

On the horizon behind them, the UHB army approaches.

IRONCLAD  
Never fear! The UHB is here to save you from the... big... exploding... castle?

The crowd BOOS, throwing rocks at the army.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM**

The whole room is coming down in flames.

FIRESTEEL  
Peaze, if this is it, I have to  
tell you...

PEAZEY  
You knew Drilsa was married?

FIRESTEEL  
Well, yes, but also... that time  
when we were eleven?

PEAZEY  
IF IT WAS YOU WHO HID MY CLOTHES,  
YOU BETTER PRAY WE DIE RIGHT NOW!

Another fireball tears through the room, shattering its  
windows, spewing fire into the sky.

**EXT. THE LAKE'S SHORE - DAWN**

The explosion draws everyone's attention back to the castle.

**INT. VON GOTH'S THRONE ROOM - DAWN**

Firesteel and Peaze run to the shattered window and look  
down... at the 300 foot drop to the lake.

They look to one another. After everything, this could be  
it.

FIRESTEEL  
The next time I say let's go  
someplace like Slasvakia, let's go  
someplace like Slasvakia!

PEAZEY  
Next time!

The biggest fireball yet bursts into the room. Firesteel and  
Peaze LEAP FROM THE WINDOW as the FLAMES OVERTAKE THEM.

**EXT. THE LAKE'S SHORE - DAWN**

Castle Von Goth crumbles as fireballs consume it from within. The Ex-Sodaliens and townsfolk CHEER. The UHB joins in, not quite sure why.

As those CHEERS continue, Melchiore, Jonas, Gloria, and Joseph stand on the water's edge, watching the ruins fall. They look any sign of movement, any sign of life.

The last tower collapses.

Still they look, still they hope, but... there's nothing. The castle, the lake... it's all still.

Joseph buries his head in Gloria's neck, crying. Her own tear rolls down her cheek.

And then, some distance away, in the middle of the lake, something SPLASHES. Gloria looks up and sees...

... Peazey, trying to climb on Firesteel's back.

FIRESTEEL

Get off me, you can't save the world then drown, do you know how bad that looks?

PEAZEY

I'm so sorry! Next time we're eleven don't HIDE MY CLOTHES!

Tears stream down Gloria's face as she pulls Joseph to her.

GLORIA

Joseph? You're my hero.

Melchiore and Jonas spot Firesteel and Peazey, sprint into the lake, and tackle the soggy heroes with delight.

Now the ex-Sodaliens see the heroes and CHEER. Everyone joins in, even the UHB, who still don't know why.

Joseph turns, sees Firesteel and Peazey, and CRIES OUT WITH JOY. Gloria begins a "FIRESTEEL" CHANT, which within moments grows into a crowd-wide ROAR.

Firesteel and Peazey stop. No one's ever cheered them like this before. They look at each other. Confused. Proud.

BLACKMARTIN (O.S.)

Just so we're clear...

Our saturated heroes turn and GASP. A tall, handsome, no-longer-horse-shaped wizard stands on the water behind them.

BLACKMARTIN

... we each own twenty percent of  
this thing.

Ironclad turns to Wolfsire as the crowd keeps CHANTING  
Firesteel's name.

IRONCLAD

Did we bring the new member forms?

Back in the lake, Melchiore pulls out his soggy diary.

MELCHIORE

And they lived happily ever after?

FIRESTEEL

Now that's good writing.

As the "Firesteel" chant grows LOUDER, glorious morning  
sunlight bathes the ruins of Castle Von Goth.

**T H E E N D**