

COWBOYS, WIZARDS, AND SPACE VAMPIRES!

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TITLE CARD: "COWBOYS, WIZARDS, AND SPACE VAMPIRES!"

FADE IN:

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - DUSK

The early *1900s*. We are in the center of a small town square in the American Wild West, except it looks like a nuclear bomb.

Buildings are reduced to rubble. A massive church bell lies cracked and on its side. There are small fires everywhere, and ash falls from the sky like snow.

The once-angelic boomtown is in ruin. Empty. Haunted. A bellicose wind WHISTLES through fractured columns and crumbled facades.

Two people are there in the standoff, amongst the rubble.

On one side is THE JUDGE (60s), an old man with a late-19th century Southern British accent.

He is on "all fours"; suited, stained, and bruised—nefarious laughter bubbling from his cracked and bloody lips.

On the other side, stands THE GUNSLINGER, a steampunk cowboy (or cowgirl?).

A bandana covers the lower half of The Gunslinger's face, leaving only the whites of the eyes and dark pupils showing through shadows cast underneath the brim of a brown, Victorian-style top hat. Strapped above the brim of the hat sit steampunk-inspired goggles.

Held firmly in The Gunslinger's hand, an antique revolver; uncharacteristically futuristic with an otherworldly pearlescent finish. It glows faintly. Steampunk and sacred. HUMMING. Wisps of blue plasma curl out from the barrel.

THE JUDGE

You've caused yourself to
believe--

The elderly man groans, pushing himself upright. His tie is loose, his shirt torn.

THE JUDGE

(cackling)

--that you can stop the things
that are occurring here?

As if in response, the Gunslinger performs an arcane motion over the pistol, with a flick of the wrist.

The chamber rotates, spins, slides and clicks into place of its own accord.

A pulse of undulating light radiates outward from within the pistol. The HUMMING grows even louder, and the gun speaks in a robotic tone!

THE GUN

**Target acquired*.*

The Judge points at the glowing weapon.

THE JUDGE

That's the hope?

The Judge breaks into a full-throated belly laugh.

THE JUDGE

A gun! A tool of men--

He curls his gnarled hand into a fist, emanating scintillating sparks of energy that arc and SIZZLE across his clenched, wrinkled fingers. The ground starts to tremble. The Judge's eyes take on a brilliant, white-orange glow.

THE JUDGE

--when men have not the will to
comprehend what true power is.

BEAT.

The Gunslinger cocks the pistol hammer.

A howling wind. Dust swirls. The sky darkens. Time itself seems to crawl. It feels like the environment itself is holding its breath.

THE JUDGE

(chuckles--low,
condescending)

Darling-- do pull the trigger.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Three shots fired in staccato rhythm.

The bullets spiral through the air. Shimmering plasma light-trails twist and turn in the bullets' wakes, fizzling into sacred geometric shapes.

The Judge moves faster than the bullets, a blur of shadow and light; and in less than a heartbeat, he glides forwards and STRIKES the Gunslinger *hard*.

The gun FLIES out of The Gunslinger's grip and twirls into a nearby well. SPLOOSH!

They brawl—brutal, close-range. The Gunslinger lands a savage uppercut that sends the Judge reeling—stumbling into a crater below.

BEAT.

The wind goes still.

Suddenly—The Judge springs out from the crater and into the air, rage incarnate.

INT. WITHIN THE WELL - CROSS-SECTION

The Gunslinger lets out a sharp WHISTLE. Deep within the dark waters of the well, in response to the whistling, the gun glows and HUMS. Comes TWIRLING out from the depths and—

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

flies into The Gunslinger's waiting hand.

Having reclaimed the gun, the Gunslinger spins the chamber.

Now, one final motion. The barrel of the weapon TRANSFORMS WITH A CRACKLE into a luminous, crystal blade.

The Judge CHARGES with a GROWL and leaps forward. The Gunslinger stabs. A FLASH. The shimmering blade pierces.

Then a SILENCE as the blade pierces the Judge's chest with a THUD, and the Judge's body slides down the blade, head and neck splitting open.

Then gushing like a Kurosawa blood spray effect, but sparks; neon, wild, and exploding outward.

The Judge's body stumbles. A husk. His eyes go dim.

A metallic hand emerges from the Judge's half-split face. Three webbed fingers unfold; a talon on each fingertip. Then elbows emerge. Mechanical. Robotic. Something starts to climb out of the Judge's body!

And then—a steampunk, mechanized dragon emerges; telescoping out from the wrinkled carcass of The Judge. Made of metal, gears, and chaos.

The Gunslinger's eyes widen—gaze rising as the dragon's massive size is fully revealed. The dragon's mechanical wings unfurl, light bending around its body like a fractured halo.

Overhead: a vortex. Whirling. Stormborn.

A new battle begins, the Gunslinger versus the Dragon.

The VORTEX grows at breakneck speed and swallows us.

INT. THE VORTEX - TIMELESS

Objects swirl in a roaring spiral of memory and myth—photographs, cutlery, a ball gag and straps. Relics from lifetimes past and contemporaneous.

Well off into the distance, we see the limp silhouettes of human beings. One appears to be a young woman. Another, a man in clerical clothing.

Among the debris, a leatherbound book—the GRIMORIE—flutters open. Illustrated pages break free and float in the whirling winds of the vortex.

INT. EYE OF THE VORTEX

A faded colonial white family. Among the white family, a black woman wearing white, Santería-inspired clothing. The date is partially obscured: "16XX."

A puritan crowd gathered around a woman on a stake. Flames rising. Year: "169X."

A preacher shouts thunder from a pulpit. Congregants rapt. Date: "17XX."

This last drawing begins to move and come alive, becoming a live-action scene...

INT. EVANGELICAL CHURCH - DAY

A sweaty PREACHER pounds the pulpit. The congregation howls and weeps. The offering plate passes hands.

INT. THE VORTEX

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Turn of the 18th century. We
forgot the old gods. Not all at
once, but bit by bit-- traded them
for railways, for reason, for
rifles.

More pages of drawings spin into frame:

- a steam engine
- some oddly futuristic looking firearms
- the preacher and a BARON, counting tithes in secret at the church.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But the gods didn't forget us.
They waited-- in old stone. In
dust. In dreams. In the slumbering
faith of men.

EXT. RIDGE - DAY

The silhouette of a FIGURE on a distant ridge. The figure
steps forward--the female silhouette of a beautiful, naked
woman: the goddess TIAMAT.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Magic ain't no "rabbit in a hat"--
Magic is what's left when belief
gets too heavy to stay invisible.
And when our beliefs wither, and
become brittle-- the Gods come
back. Not as stories-- but as
consequences. Some call it
reckoning. Others call it
salvation. But I call it what it
is: faith-- with a vengeance.

EXT. DUSTY WESTERN TOWN - DAY

A Wild West boomtown in bloom. Steam engines. Grit. Hope.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

By the 1900s, industry comes a'
roarin'. Folks start puttin' their
faith in machines and money.

An ANTIQUE MAP unfurls into view—one town glows: SHAMBALA.

EXT. RIDGE - DAY

Back to the ridge.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

People let got of the old beliefs.
But there's a god that won't let
herself be forgotten.

On top of the ridge, Tiamat stares down. Below the ridge, a
horde—Tiamat's army.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

You ever hear of Tiamat--
primordial goddess of the sea? The
mother of all other gods. Tiamat.

They say that-- when she was
slain-- pieces of her body were
cast into the sea.

And in those oceans her eyes
became "envy".

Among the horde are standouts: a man in armor, resembling a
steampunk plague doctor.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her heart became "lust".

Amongst the horde, a man in steampunk armor. The helmet on his head resembles a falcon.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her fists became "fury".

Amongst the horde, a towering man wearing a helmet, resembling the grim reaper.

On the ridge above the horde, Tiamat transforms into THE JUDGE—imposing, regal, wrong.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Tiamat wants to restore her body to this Earth-- so she possesses a man. A judge. Edward Mallory. And she finds herself a baron—a *rich* man—to buy herself a town. A special town. A town called "Shambala."

DISSOLVE:

On an antique map, a location glows: SHAMBALA.

SUPER: A contract is signed. The BARON smiles. Darkness spreads over the map.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And you're probably thinkin'-- what's so special about this town? Well, I'll tell ya'. Shambala's a town with a story. A prophecy-- passed down through generations.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE – DUSK

A mural is revealed—A GUNSLINGER in blue steel.

A CHILD (10) stands outside the orphanage. Watching the sky
BURN.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A town that believes-- one day, a
hero-- homegrown-- would rise to
the occasion! With a gun draw
that's faster'n magic.

A BULLET spirals past, trailing sparks. GEOMETRIC LIGHT
trails. Ripping through the scene, exposing the ANTIQUE MAP
underneath.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A hero like no other. The fabled
"Gunslinger". To save this town--
from its own darkness.

The vortex closes in.

EXT. SHAMBALA - DUSK

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Tiamat-- She don't wanna *kill* that
magic. She's gonna wear *it*. With a
caravan of cutthroats-- she's
gonna burn the heart of Shambala
to the ground. To corrupt their
belief. And resurrect her own
sacred body from the ashes.

The church burns. The poorly maintained bricks of the
nearby orphanage crumble under the heat.

CUT TO:

The antique map shows Shambala, but this time it's burning.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She's gonna loot the history.
Rewrite the myth. Raze everything
to ground-- and call it progress.

An insidious cackle, as the narrator's voice transforms
from quaint Westerner to British and demonic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She'll corrupt the old saints.
Belief. Destiny. Fate. And replace
them with the new idols: greed,
lust, and obsession.

The horde marches, superimposed over the burning map of
Shambala.

SUPER: The Judge and Baron toast.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 1. SHAMBALA BURNS"

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The town is ablaze. Flames lick the rooftops. INVADERS strike down defenders; the town's heroes lie scattered, fallen. Civilians scream and flee. Chaos reigns.

A jet-black steed gallops in. Its hooves SMOKE, glowing fiery orange. The horse slows to a halt.

Spurs—molten, orange, demonic—CLINK softly on the cobblestone as black leather shoes touch down to the ground as someone dismounts.

Black tailored pants. Dragon belt buckle. Black silk shirt. White silk tie. Wrinkled, stone-chiseled face. Empty eyes. Wide-brimmed black hat.

THE JUDGE (60s) surveys the burning town, as a HORDE of foot soldiers, raid leaders, and helmeted enforcers fans out to either side of him.

The Judge inhales deeply—pleased with the smells of soot, sulfur and destruction. He turns to his left—nods to the hulking BRUTE beside him.

The Brute GRUNTS and RAISES a menacing weapon. The horde CHARGES into the flames.

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

INANNA (female, late teens/early 20s) sprints through brush. In the background behind her, Shambala BURNS.

Her breath is ragged. Her feet pound the earth.

Something is strapped tightly against her chest. A BABY—swaddled, silent. WINDO (male, no more than 12 months). A glimmer in his eye flickers briefly. Then innocence.

EXT. SHAMBALA'S BORDER WITH THE WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Inanna crouches beside a stream. Moonlight flickers across the water. She kneels—breathing hard—hiding in the reeds, several hundred meters away from the town.

She turns to view the home she's fled, scanning the burning horizon, and gripping her rifle steady. Her eyes betray something much more ancient than her 20-some-odd years.

WINDO

We shouldn't have left.

Inanna barely reacts.

INANNA

(quiet)

We had no choice.

BEAT.

INANNA

We couldn't stay.

She dips her hand into the stream.

In the near distance: scattered campfires. Survivors.

EXT. THE WILDERNESS - NIGHT

A figure—tall, androgynous, poised—stands back to us before the burning horizon. This is HERM (mid-20s).

The camera ROTATES. Reveals Herm's BEAUTIFUL face.

EXT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Moonlight washes over the wooden sign: HERM'S. The last light before the wilderness. Muffled piano music leaks out. The town still breathes.

INT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Rambunctious piano music.

Warm, amber light flickers on old wood. Glasses clink. A fire crackles.

HERM moves behind the bar, polishing a glass. Pours a drink for a PATRON. Hair flowing, relaxed. Eyes like dusk and coals. The shotgun hangs, lovingly cradled beneath the bar—untouched. Above the bar behind Herm's head is a painting of an elderly male sheriff with a handlebar moustache, holding the glowing, celestial blue shotgun.

The patron leans in.

PATRON

The war's coming closer. Eh, Herm?
Which side are you pickin'?

Herm pours a drink, slides it over.

HERM

I pick the side that tips well.

The tavern LAUGHS. The mood is light. Music is raucous.

EXT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK CONTINUES)

Shouts in the distance. Then SCREAMS.

Herm steps outside. The sky is red. Flames lick the skyline.

A BOOM shakes the town. Smoke. Screeching. Herm looks toward the burning orphanage.

BEAT.

Herm turns back inside.

INT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK CONTINUES)

Herm gently lifts the shotgun from beneath the bar. Celestial blue glow.

They hesitate. Breathes. Loads something gleaming-ballistic, humming.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK CONTINUES)

FOOT SOLDIERS surge through alleys. BOOM!

A BLAST of prismatic light. A half-dozen soldiers are knocked backward, limbs flailing. Explosive bird-shot.

Herm stands defiant, shotgun barrel smoking. They cock the shotgun.

EXT. THE WILDERNESS - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Herm looks to the ruins of Shambala, surveying the carnage. Their eyes glint-sorrow and steel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That there's Herm. Bartender.
Entrepreneur. Shotgun artist.
Runs a clean place. Feeds the
poor. Keeps the peace. And has the
prettiest damn shotgun you ever
did see.

Herm COCKS the weapon-heavy, glowing, custom. A low HUM
vibrates.

PAN TO:

A nearby CAPSIZED TRANSPORT WAGON. A broken wheel.

Beside the wagon, two of the three MOIRAI TRIPLETS (males,
late 20s/early 30s). One bangs at the lock with the butt of
a rifle, the other stands alert-listening.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And that there's the Moirai
Triplets. One deaf. One mute. One
blind. Raised in the orphanage.
Born to mischief.

EXT. SHAMBALA MARKET - BAKERY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Triplets as children-stealing bread from the town
baker. They run out of the front door of the bakery just
out of the reach of some local constables.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They weren't evil. Just--
inconvenient.

EXT. THE WILDERNESS - NIGHT (PRESENT)

A figure lies beside the fire—a mysterious VAGABOND (late 60s). He lays on the ground resting, a wide-brimmed hat covering the top half of his face—white hair and a white beard peeking out from underneath.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And that one? Nobody knows his
name. But he's always
there—wherever trouble stirs.

The fire crackles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now I bet you're wonderin'--
where's the third Triplet?

EXT. SHAMBALA JAIL FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Two constables exit the town jail, escorting the Mute Moirai —who is SHACKLED.

The constables lead the Mute Moirai into a horse-driven wagon.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They took him for a thief. But
fate had other plans.

A woman screams.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE — NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The invasion of Shambala is underway. While the constables are busy trying to keep calm as the invaders march on Shambala and the townspeople scurry, The Deaf and Blind Morai—unnoticed in stolen police coats—jump into the driver's seat of the transport wagon and ride off.

While the chaos is erupting, they RIDE.

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS — NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They made it pretty far. Until--

CRASH! The wagon tips over on its side.

MATCH

CUT:

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Deaf Moirai BANGS on the wagon door lock. Blind Moirai stands watch—alertly listening.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Herm, the Triplets, the
Vagabond—they're all here. Away
from Shambala. No plan. Just
survival.

A RUSTLING in the leaves. GUN HAMMER COCKS. Herm aims at the sound.

BEAT.

HERM

Hey! Who's out here?

BEAT.

Inanna appears from the shadows silently—directly behind the group.

The sound of relieved SIGHs and a hammer UNCOCKING.

INANNA

(flat)

That fire will bring them.

DEAF MOIRAI

(to Blind Moirai)

You were 'sposed to keep lookout.

BLIND MOIRAI

(snickering)

I hear ya.

INANNA stares, unamused. Expression unreadable.

INANNA

Hmph.

HERM sees the baby.

HERM

Oh my stars--

Herm gently taps the Deaf Moirai's shoulder, pointing. He reads her lips.

HERM

Lil' Wind-uh.

The baby looks up innocently. Suddenly, Inanna chastises the group.

INANNA
(whispers sharp)
Hey! Shut. Up.

She STOMPS out the fire. The Triplets groan.

She raises her arms. Fingers flutter. Everyone goes silent.

Wind stirs. Then more silence.

Suddenly, a WHIRRING BUZZ—like a scream piercing the silence. An ARROW lands in the thicket nearby.

Then—MORE ARROWS. WHIZZING. THUMPING.

INANNA
We've got to go!

The Deaf Moirai and the Blind Moriai hesitate.

HERM
I'll help him. Go!

The group scatters.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

They split:

- Inanna and Windo flee one way.
- Two Triplets dash another.
- Herm stays with the trapped Moirai.
- The Vagabond? Gone.

PAN UP--

LEFT: Foot soldiers. Riders. Archers.

RIGHT: Heroes fleeing.

FIERY ARROWS pepper the ground here and there. Silhouetted DOGS prowl the landscape, searching.

EXT. FOREST BRAMBLES - NIGHT

Triplets dart, graceful despite blindness.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The two Triplets crash through the bramble side-by-side, perfectly in sync as if they know exactly where they're going. FOOT SOLDIERS chase. A soldier falters, falling right into a tripline. He crashes face-first into a hornet's nest.

The Deaf Moirai sees, smirks, and keeps running.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

INANNA crouches, rifle up. Blood smeared on her face. Three foot soldiers lay at her feet, immobile.

A MASSIVE RAID LEADER approaches.

Inanna moves fast. She lands an elbow to the Raider's jaw.

He is unfazed. She draws a hidden knife. He swipes it out of her hands. She strikes with the butt of the gun.

The Raider stumbles slightly, before striking back with a looping backhand.

He knocks her flat. Her gun skitters away.

She grits her teeth. Blood trickles.

RAIDER
You'll die trying.

She glances at Windo, still swaddled against her body.

INANNA
Not today.

She rolls, grabs the fallen weapon—FIRES—hits a large tree branch overhead. The tree branch GROANS and falls between them.

She holds Windo close, sprints. Arrows fly. She dives into the river. SPLASH! The current takes them.

WINDO'S EYES shimmer as he calmly observes.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Herm loads a SPECIAL SHELL into their MAGNIFICENT SHOTGUN.

BOOM! The LOCK BLOWS. The MUTE MOIRAI, however, remains huddled inside of the STAGECOACH WAGON.

A FOOT SOLDIER rushes forward. Herm strikes the FOOT SOLDIER with the butt of the shotgun. The foot soldier parries, swatting. Herm inadvertently drops the weapon.

Herm looks towards the shotgun on the ground. PAUSES. More soldiers are coming. Thinks better of it. DARTS into the WOODS.

Even more foot soldiers emerge—ghastly, dieselpunk, led by the Bounty Hunter EVAN EVANS on horseback.

His steed SNORTS. His HELMET GLOWS A LUSTY BLOOD-ORANGE. Falcon-like. Demonic. Evans spots the magnificent shotgun laying amongst the foliage, glowing celestial blue.

EVAN EVANS

Tidy, mate!

Evans looks at SOLDIERS. He nods. TWO SOLDIERS grab the freed Triplet and another grabs the weapon.

EVAN EVANS

I'll be with you now in a minute,
boys.

Evans hops from his horse and slings off his BLUNDERBUSS—an unholy weapon. Same UNGODLY GLOW as his HELMET.

EVAN EVANS

They say you only die once --

He COCKS the WEAPON. It gives off an UNGODLY HUM.

EVAN EVANS

--might as well make it a party.

He FIRES.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The BULLET rips through a MASSIVE TREE TRUNK that Herm is hiding behind.

WOOD CHIPS FLY everywhere, including onto Herm. Near-miss.

Herm bolts.

SEQUENCE:

Herm RUNS. Soldiers stumble. Herm ducks, weaves. PUNCHES. STRIKES. ESCAPES. The foot soldiers give chase.

Herm SLIDES into a clearing—sudden halt.

More foot soldiers. Face-to-face.

BEAT.

Then—TWHACK. A rifle butt appears from OFF-SCREEN LEFT.
STRIKES Herm in the head.

Herm drops. OUT COLD. Evans walks into frame from
OFF-SCREEN LEFT.

He gestures to the foot soldiers.

EVAN EVANS

Pack up for me—will ya, Lads?

HERO SHOT: Evans walks off, chuckling.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 2. THE BALLAD OF HERM"

INT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Everything is dimmer than before. Muted.

The piano plays, but slow—slightly off-key.

HERM tends bar, but quietly. Their face is bruised, freshly bandaged. Their once-flowing hair is now tied into a messy ponytail. Their attire—still androgynous—leans subtly feminine.

Herm wipes the same glass. Again. And again. Lost in thought.

PATRONS drink. They laugh. But the tone is different—slightly off. A joke lands. Laughter erupts, but it's aimed *through* Herm.

Herm offers a tight, practiced smile.

CAMERA SWEEPS--

The patrons are raucous, but the air is somehow stale. Somehow joyless.

EXT. SHAMBALA STREET - NIGHT

Shambala smoulders.

This is the Baron's town now. And things, they are a-changin'.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

The two Triplets sit perched in tree cover. Observing. Calm. They've stayed in the outskirts—watching the aftermath unfold from a distance.

Below them, a small patrol of foot soldiers passes. The Triplets stay motionless.

The Deaf Moirai gestures—signals with a series of subtle taps against a hollow tree trunk. Hard to separate from the forest noise. The Blind Moirai intercepts the message. Nods. Silently tugs a rope that runs to the forest floor.

Foot soldiers trip the line—WHACK—a branch swings and knocks two out. The others scatter in confusion.

The Triplets fade back into the shadows. Observing. Waiting.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They didn't run. They watched.
Played the long game. The Moirai
always did know when to move—and
when to vanish.

EXT. FOREST RIVERBED - NIGHT

INANNA crouches in the underbrush. Dirty, scraped, rifle across her lap.

WINDO—still swaddled—sleeps against her chest.

She scans the tree line. Eyes sharp. Heart pounding.

DISTANT WHISPERS. BOOTS in thick mud.

RAIDER VOICE (O.S.)

They could not have gotten far.

She holds her breath.

CLOSE ON: Her finger gently caresses the rifle trigger.

The sound of a BRANCH SNAP.

She turns—FIRES.

A foot soldier drops from above—wounded. Two more rush in at ground level.

She shoulder tackles one, SLAMMING its head into a rock. Elbows the other in the throat.

The foot soldier grasps its own neck. Inanna's a whirling dervish; a tornado. But she's tiring. Fast. She can't keep this up much longer.

She looks at Windo. Back to the river they'll go. She pulls a flare shell from her bandolier. Loads it into the rifle. Fires it into a rock face.

BOOM—DUST and LIGHT explode. Smoky embers fly everywhere, including onto the sling holding Windo to her body. Speckled portions of the sling fabric start to smoulder.

Inanna grabs Windo and leaps—diving into the river back-first. SPLASH!

Submerged. Flowing, the water surrounds her.

The current takes them.

She holds tight. Branches whip past them. The SLING holding Windo comes undone. She tries to pull Windo to herself.

But she slams into the bank at a fork in the river. The current SPLITS them—Windo spins off down a side stream on one end of the fork. Inanna barrels and spins down the other side stream.

INANNA

No!

She fights to reach Windo. She can't. She slaps the water desperately. It's too late. The current is too fast. They vanish from each other's sight, separated.

Innana screams out in agony.

SMASH

CUT:

EXT. STREAM BANK - NIGHT

Windo lies on the muddy shore near the water's edge. Alone.

A rustle in the woods. A foot soldier steps forward-cautious. Curious.

The baby opens his eyes. The eyes glow-briefly. Like stars glimpsed underwater.

The soldier pauses, spellbound.

THUNDER. CRACK! LIGHTNING strikes a nearby tree.

The soldier stumbles back, panicked, and flees.

Windo closes his eyes.

EXT. STREAM BANK - BOUNTY HUNTER'S POV - NIGHT

THERMAL vision. Footprints in mud. Torn foliage.

EXT. STREAM BANK - NIGHT

Evans walks calm. Confident.

He kneels. Picks up a discarded piece of Inanna's shawl.
Singed.

SNIFFS it audibly through the helmet.

EVAN EVANS
(low, amused)
Always the hard way.

BEAT.

EVAN EVANS
Where's the boy?

He turns his head slowly—helmet humming.

CLICK—Windo's faint signature echoes through the
sound-filtration system.

EVANS
(gleefully)
There you are.

EXT. FURTHER DOWNSTREAM - NIGHT

Evans steps through the trees. The HUD in his helmet
pings—locking onto the muddy streambed.

But there's nothing there.

EVANS
(confused)
What--?

He scans again. The tracker blinks red to indicate a hit on
the target—then vanishes.

Behind him, a shadow amongst the trees. Cloaked. Silent.

An effortless backwards JUMP, dozens of feet into the air. Silent. It's the Vagabond.

EXT. TREETOPS - NIGHT

High up in the trees the Vagabond watches from above—a tall, sinewy figure wrapped in robes, face hidden beneath the brim of a travel-worn hat.

In the Vagabond's arms: Windo, fast asleep.

The Vagabond steps backwards into the treetop—deeper into the darkness—and vanishes, soundless.

EVANS

Show yourself!

Silence. The Bounty Hunter looks all around. Up. Down. Nothing.

The HUD glitches. A targeting error.

EVANS

(quietly, to
himself)

No trace--? Fine. I'll clean the
mess myself.

He exhales, frustrated. Then turns back, walking off into the woods.

INT. PRISON STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: the shotgun—now locked in a cold metal cage. A low HUM. A faint blue glow.

Herm stands just outside the gate, bathed in moonlight and lamplight.

They reach out. Rest a palm on the metal bars—several feet from the trapped shotgun. The HUM grows as if in response.

BEAT.

A YOUNG GUARD appears behind them.

GUARD

This area's off-limits, Herm.

Herm doesn't turn.

HERM

Didn't plan to stay long.

They leave. The camera lingers on the shotgun as the blue glow fades.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 3. THE LEFT HAND OF FAITH"

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Pale, blue moonlight. People out and about. Workers repair damaged buildings.

EXT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT

A flickering neon sign barely sputters: "HERM'S." The tavern stands like a relic of memory amid the slow rot of Shambala. Shadows of townspeople filter in and out. As the doors swing open, laughter rises in waves, louder than it should be.

INT. HERM'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Dim light. Mismatched oil lamps and flickering bulbs hum overhead. Laughter, cards slapping, a harmonica out of tune. No one notices.

Herm sits at the far end of the bar, face half-lit, hand nursing a glass whose contents apparently haven't been sipped in a while. A fresh bruise peeks through loose curls of drawn-back hair.

ANGLE ON: A group of men at a nearby table roar with laughter. One pantomimes Herm's bruised face. The others cackle.

Herm watches. Says nothing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Belief's a fragile thing. Like warm breath on a mirror. Easy to disappear, even easier to forget.

CLOSE ON: The card table. The players deal with abandon. No reverence.

NOTE: In Shambala, the card deck represents a local relic of lore and legacy. Instead of hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs, the four suits of this deck are: hearts, souls, saints, and sinners. Each card drawn is a prayer, a memory, or a warning. Believed to be used by the earliest town saints as both a game and a divination tool, the deck has since become myth, ritual, and gambling—all in one.

A face-down card sits on top of the "10 of Souls". The dealer turns the card over—revealing the "Ace of Saints" card, which depicts an image of the Gunslinger.

Someone accidentally spills beer on the Ace of Saints. Everyone LAUGHS about it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In a place like Shambala, belief
was everything. A town built on
the bones and tears of old saints.
But bones get buried. Tears dry.
And people's vices can get louder
than their faith.

Herm slowly turns their gaze to the corner of the bar—an old mural of The Gunslinger, half-painted over, a drunken scribble on his face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Iconoclasts don't need a reason to
forget. Just time. And silence.
And maybe a drink.

The harmonica hits a sour note. Someone snorts. A young man with a baronial sigil raises his glass.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Without belief, things fester. Not
just wounds. But worse. Things
that wear human skin and speak in
sermons.

YOUNG MAN

To the new law!

The bar CHEERS.

Herm closes their eyes in subtle anguish.

The crowd cheers again. Herm doesn't.

EXT. BRUSH OUTSIDE SHAMBALA - NIGHT

Stillness. Then rustling. THE VAGABOND, cloaked in shadow.

In his arms: WINDO, safe. Asleep.

Moonlight glances off his wide-brimmed hat. His face
remains hidden.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But not everyone forgets. There
are still keepers of the old ways.
Quiet as snowfall. Dangerous as
forgotten memories.

The Vagabond watches the town for a moment before melting
into the trees.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - NIGHT

INANNA, scraped and bleeding, climbs an embankment. Her
eyes burn with purpose.

She reaches a ridgeline. Scans. Nothing.

INANNA
(in a sharp
whisper)
Wind... Wind, where are you?

She wipes sweat from her brow.

Then comes the faint sound of horse hooves in the distance.

She flattens herself to the ground. Her breathing thins.

EXT. BEYOND THE RIDGELINE - NIGHT-POV FROM WITHIN EVANS' HELMET

The heads-up display gyrates. The tracking system senses its target in the distance.

EVANS (O.S.)
No more games, girl.

EXT. RIDGELINE BRUSH - NIGHT

Inanna raises up and ducks into the brush, rifle clutched tight. The hunt has begun.

EXT. THE THICKETS - NIGHT

She crawls deeper into the treeline, her breath steadying as she observes a patrol far off.

One of the RAIDERS wears elaborate goggles—long lenses, winding tubes, brass audio funnels.

Nowhere near as advanced as Evan's helmet, but mechanized nonetheless. The goggles HUM, the lenses adjusting.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Helmets don't see like men.
They see belief, heat, longing.
Even doubt. And she had all of
them.

Inanna freezes. The lenses continue to whirl—almost
catching a glint off her rifle.

Then: movement behind the patrol. A dust storm. A distant
blast. The patrol's attention shifts, but not Evans'.

Inanna slips away during the commotion.

EXT. FOREST INTERIOR - NIGHT

Inanna presses deeper into the wilds.

Leaves rustle. A low growl. She turns.

A bestial creature—feral, sinewy, eyes glowing faintly. Not
beast. Not man.

She raises her rifle. Fires once. Misses.

The creature lunges—

They clash—brutal, desperate. Inanna slashes with a hidden
blade. Blood sprays. The beast hurls her into a tree. She
drops her knife, groaning.

She rolls. Grabs a broken branch—jagged at the end—and
drives it into the creature's eye.

It screams. She retrieves her knife from the ground.
Slashes its throat. Gurgling. Silence. It collapses.
Silence.

She stumbles up, chest heaving. She spits blood. Staggers away—

CRACK. A gunshot. She turns—frozen.

EVANS steps into the clearing, his blunderbuss still smoking. His helmet's lenses glint blood-orange in the pitch dark.

EVANS

Lovely, innit? When the dogs flush
the rabbit for you.

Behind Evans: Raiders. Horses. Swords, lanterns, devilish grins.

EVANS

I might not even collect the
bounty. Might just watch you die.

Inanna backs away slowly. There's nowhere to run.

SNARLS.

From the trees—MORE CREATURES. Drawn by blood. They leap—tearing into a Raider's horse. Screams both horse and man.

Inanna bolts.

EVANS

No—

But it's already chaos and he has more pressing issues. Screams. Claws. Steel. Fangs. Shooting. Carnage.

Inanna sprints into the trees—her leg limping now.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

A screaming wind howls through the canyon. The last of the RAIDERS stumble into view—armor torn, faces bloodied from the feral creatures still clawing in the treeline.

INANNA runs—barefoot, fevered, alone.

Half the bridge ahead is lit by relic sigils, veins of pale light pulsing like a heartbeat.

Behind her: chaos. Shrill cries, gunfire, beasts devouring soldiers.

She stops halfway and looks back—eyes wet, empty. No sign of Windo. Just smoke and death.

She slams both palms against the railing. The sigils ignite—blue-white—rippling down the ropes like lightning.

The bridge shudders.

Wood snaps. The relic-light flares and implodes.

RAIDERS scream as the bridge collapses in a cascade of fire and falling embers.

The relics below flicker out one by one until only darkness remains.

SNAP! SPLASH!

Inanna tumbles against the far bank and into the river, coughing, shaking. Her hands glow faintly—skin burned in perfect concentric rings.

She looks at them, terrified. She sobs as the canyon winds echo back her cry.

Submerged. Flowing, the water surrounds her.

INANNA

(looking up at the Raiders on the embankment)
Not today.

She passes out. Floating.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She who runs to water runs to the
mother. The tide claims some. But
the tide also carries them all.
Tiamat, mother of all things. Both
fury and refuge.

Inanna floats downstream. Vanishing into the dark.

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Back to the town's edge. Shadows stir. Banners fly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Shambala's soul wasn't taken. It
was traded. Every joke at the
Gunslinger's expense. Every cheer
for the new law. Every forgotten
saint.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Gunslinger's image on the Ace of Saints is now torn in
half and laid haphazardly on the table. Underneath the two
halves of the card sits the "10 of Sinners" card.

The CELEBRATION is in full swing.

EXT. THE BARON'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

An opulent study. Velvet curtains. Candlelight flickers across ledgers and maps. THE BARON stands, gazing out onto Herm's tavern below from a tall window. Behind the Baron—THE JUDGE, partially obscured in shadow. The Baron speaks without making eye contact.

BARON

This so called Gate--

The Judge steps from the shadows—cutting, menacing—interrupting before the Baron's question can land.

THE JUDGE

You must feel it-- don't you,
Baron?

The Baron turns from the window, unnerved.

JUDGE

We are near. The people ripen. And
Tiamat returns-- not as myth, but
this time as flesh-- a child--
born of ash.

The Baron drops his gaze, thoughtful. Then turns back to the tall window, watching the townspeople below.

THE JUDGE

(quiet, almost
reverent)

She's never left us, Baron. She
was merely... uninvited. Banished
from our minds, buried beneath
logic-- and progress. Polite
heresies labeled as--
"technology." But even the
forgotten wait to be remembered,
Baron. And when we've torn down
the last cathedral-- to crown
ourselves rulers of the new
faith-- then they will know-- that
the most primordial of Gods has
reopened her eyes-- and cast her
loving gaze upon them.

The two now share a glance. A dark understanding.

THE JUDGE

Tiamat does not ask for worship,
dear Baron. She asks-- for memory.

The Baron looks towards the window again. Something
approaches--distant, but inevitable.

THE JUDGE

Let the Vicar preach. Let them
tear down their own saints.

BEAT.

THE JUDGE

(with finality)

And when they beg for salvation--
Tiamat shall answer.

The Baron watches the horizon, voice low.

BARON

And when she does?

The Judge and the Baron now look down in tandem onto the town below at what approaches in the distance.

EXT. PRAIRIE PATH - NIGHT

A bone-carved carriage drawn by hollow-eyed steeds crests a hill. From its joints, fine white ash drips like snow. The wheels creak in slow rhythm, like whispered prayers in reverse.

Through the carriage window: a silhouette, still as death, seated within the carriage.

A single AUTOMATON lumbers beside the carriage, cloaked in crimson. Its head turns slowly—two faces, back to back. One male, one female. Opposing. One always shrouded.

The sound of a distant wind blowing. Somewhere, a church bell rings with no visible chapel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And now Pride rides in, humming
its own unholy hymns. One-- a man,
brittle and sulfuric. And
another-- a machine, made for
mercy's opposite. A twisted
marriage of sacraments. And woe
unto the town who mistakes these
sacraments for grace.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 4. OF ASHES & ORPHANS"

FADE IN:

EXT. SHAMBALA - NIGHT

Ash still falls like snow. The flames have died, but smoke lingers.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The orphanage is in shambles, a shoddy comparison to the well-kept buildings adjacent to it.

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

Young children sleep—too many to each of the few beds. Herm rocks a particularly colicky toddler in a ratty rocking chair.

CANDLE LIGHT FLICKERS onto peeling walls. Ghosts of laughter and old songs echo.

HERM reminisces.

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Partially huddled beneath blankets, a YOUNG HERM (11) reads to a YOUNG INANNA (4). In the corner, two of the three MOIRAI TRIPLETS (15) play a gambling game.

YOUNG HERM

"And the last dragon said--"

The Triplets snicker. One mimics a dragon with a sock.

Inanna watches quietly—always absorbing.

The Deaf Moirai rolls a pair of dice. Before they land, The Blind Moirai murmurs while pantomiming with six raised fingers:

BLIND MOIRAI

Six.

The dice land: two threes.

DEAF MOIRAI

You're cheating again.

BLIND MOIRAI

Oh yeah? How?

BEAT.

The Deaf Moirai narrows his eyes, smirking. Herm continues reading to Inanna.

YOUNG HERM

"Belief is not flint alone... it
is a fire."

Herm rests the book down, retrieves a locket whose charm depicts a flame, and places the locket around Inanna's neck.

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Herm continues to rock the child gently. The child is now sleeping comfortably in Herm's arms.

INT. OCCUPIED SHAMBALA - DAY (PRESENT)

New BANNERS wave. Foot soldiers patrol. Belief posters cover the walls—but they're sterile, propagandist.

INT. HERM'S TAVERN - DAY

Herm stands behind the bar, emotionless.

Customers shout. A GUARD tries to pawn off a prayer stone.

GUARD

Got one of the old saints, see?
Found it behind a chimney. Worth
something?

Herm stares.

The GUARD laughs. Slams the stone on the bar. It splits.

The Guard walks away.

Herm picks up the two pieces, holding them together.

INT. MAKESHIFT PRISON - DAY

The Mute Moirai sits alone in a cell. Muffled prayers echo through the vent.

INT. OCCUPIED STREET - NIGHT

The Triplets move like shadows. Deaf and blind, but perfectly synced. They touch walls. Count steps. Communicate by signing and tapping.

They reach a side gate.

BLIND MOIRAI

(signing)

Four guards. One dog.

DEAF MOIRAI

(tapping)

Lucky us. Just like the orphanage
laundry schedule.

The Deaf Moirai taps the Blind Moirai twice, then pauses,
then taps twice again to signal the next move.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Moirai Triplets as teens. One signs, another taps a
rhythm against a basket, and the third causes a
distraction—mimicking a bird call.

The Deaf Moirai lifts a loaf of bread from a vendor's
stall. The Blind Moirai silently reroutes a guard with a
gentle shoulder bump.

They slip away unnoticed, grinning.

INT. OCCUPIED STREET - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The Triplets SMIRK.

They move forward—into the shadows.

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Herm walks alone—slowly, deliberately. The wind kicks up
dust. Under their coat: bruises bloom like old ink stains.

They pass a mural—the GUNSLINGER, once proud and stoic, now
graffitied with VICAR AVRIC's black emblem: a spiral of
thorns surrounding a closed eye. A PRAYER FLYER flutters
beneath it, half-torn.

ANGLE ON: HERM'S FACE

No anger. No surprise. Just weariness.

As Herm continues, they pass the TOWN JAIL—a squat, blocky building with a brass halo of spotlights and humming voltaic fences.

A pair of GUARDS in ceremonial red stand bored out front. One sharpens his bayonet with too much flourish. The other chews on a matchstick.

A low RUSTLE.

From behind a nearby alley—a small CLATTER.

One guard stiffens. The other SIGHS.

MATCHSTICK GUARD

Probably those damn foxbats again.

BAYONET GUARD

Could be. Or it's the third time this week you left the side gate unlatched.

BEAT.

MATCHSTICK GUARD

So—you wanna go check it?

BAYONET GUARD

You're senior tonight.

MATCHSTICK GUARD grumbles. He steps off—toward the sound.

ANGLE ON: THE CORNER OF THE ALLEY

The Deaf Moirai crouches low behind a rain barrel, holding an empty tin—the source of the noise. The Blind Moirai, across the street, crouches behind a supply crate.

FLASH
CUT:

INT. ORPHANAGE - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Deaf Moirai rolls a jar down a hallway. The Blind Moirai, eyes closed, listens. A guard passes—distracted by the rolling jar.

The Deaf Moirai quickly lifts a ring of keys from a hook.

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The Deaf Moirai taps the ground—a slow rhythm.

The Blind Moirai responds by tapping himself—one tap, two, then silence.

The signal is clear.

The Blind Moirai moves.

Like a breath of wind, they melt into the shadows, heading for the side gate.

The Deaf Moirai rolls another tin—this time near the jail's front step.

The remaining guard tightens his grip, stepping forward.

In the distance, Herm disappears around a corner—unseen, but not unaware.

The guard looks out towards the gate. It's unlocked. He SIGHs and walks down the jail steps and towards the RATTLING GATE.

EXT. WILDERNESS RIDGE - NIGHT

A pale moon casts sickly light through dead trees. INANNA stands at the edge of a ridge—eyes raw, bleeding from a scrape on her cheek.

She holds her rifle too tightly. Her hands shake.

She looks out into the endless dark.

INANNA

Wind—

She chokes. Her knees buckle. She drops to the ground. Her breath ragged.

A rustle behind her. She spins, rifle raised—but it's just a RABBIT, watching her.

She lowers the gun slowly.

INANNA

I—

Her eyes shut. The wind howls through the trees.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Inanna sits beside an infant WINDO on the orphanage steps.

INANNA

I'll always watch out for you,
okay?

Inanna removes a locket from her neck and places it around the baby's neck - the charm depicts a flame. Windo clutches her pinky. His eyes shimmer.

EXT. WILDERNESS RIDGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Inanna wipes her face, hard. She gets up—limping forward. The lights of a FRONTIER TOWN loom in the distance.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - NIGHT

A thin ribbon of warm light in the distance. Lanterns line the perimeter of a hidden settlement nestled between rocky cliffs. The sign is etched in wood: "THE HOLLOWS"—flanked by carved saints, melted candles, and rusted rifles.

A woman stands at the entrance—eyes watchful, holding a lantern made of antlers and copper. Her clothing is a patchwork of hide and lace.

FRONTIER WOMAN
You're limpin'.

Inanna stops, unsure. Doesn't raise her gun. Doesn't speak.

FRONTIER WOMAN
(gesturing)
Come on in.

BEAT.

FRONTIER WOMAN
Or don't. The wolves won't wait
either way.

A wolf HOWLS in the distance. A baby CRIES nearby.

Inanna steps forward.

INT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - COMMUNAL LODGE - LATER

Inanna sits by a clay stove. Her wounds are cleaned. Her rifle lies right beside her. Fire CRACKLES softly.

Women and children move quietly—praying. Sewing. One boy burns a match over a pile of sage and mutters words not of the New Law.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH

We ain't like the town.

INANNA

(looking around)

I've heard.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH

(smirking)

We believe different.

BEAT.

She gestures to Inanna's rifle.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH

You plannin' on raisin' that thing
at somethin'?

BEAT.

Inanna breaks eye contact, looking down at the rifle.

INANNA

(gripping her
rifle)

I'm planning on raising hell.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

EVANS stands by the flames. His helmet reflects an orange firelight, as the blood-orange lenses scan the tree line.

A FOOT SOLDIER SCOUT paces towards the bounty hunter nervously.

SCOUT

Tracker's saying she turned east.
Then west. Then vanished.

EVANS

(gritting his
teeth)
She ain't a ghost. Someone's
feeding bad intel.

SCOUT

(nervous)
Might be the faith out here, sir.
Confuses the gear.

Evans taps the Talisman of Tiamat in the center of his helmet. The entire helmet—including the talisman—dematerializes. Sweat beads on his forehead. Rage simmers.

EVANS

I don't believe in confusion.

He slams two fingers onto his brow. The talisman re-appears as the helmet materializes back onto his head.

EVANS

Move. Now.

INT. MAKESHIFT PRISON - NIGHT

Dim light flickers from weak sconces. The Mute Moirai kneels on the floor of his cell—palms flat, eyes closed.

His lips move, but no sound comes.

Then—tap tap tap. A familiar sound.

A hand at the bars. The Deaf Moirai signs in a sharp rhythm. The Mute Moirai reads it, then nods once.

They communicate in silence—practiced, urgent. The Deaf Moirai exits as quietly as he came in.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY - NIGHT

The Deaf Moirai lights a match, tosses it into a barrel. WHUMP—smoke billows out in thick clouds.

Guards shout. The Blind Moirai enters the room, hands running across the wall.

The Mute Moirai grabs the Blind Moirai's hand and guides it to the lock. The Blind Moirai feels the lock mechanism, as he uses the chaos to quickly pick the back lock with a spoon, and open the door.

The Mute Moirai emerges. Hugs are brief. The plan moves forward.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

The Deaf Moirai reunites with the other Triplets. They move like phantoms.

Behind a chain-link cage, wrapped in metal and aura, sits Herm's celestial shotgun. The Blind Moirai feels for the lock and quickly picks it.

The Deaf Moirai opens the gate and reaches for the weapon—but the Mute Moirai stops him, placing a hand on the weapon first.

The blue glow returns. Faint at first. Then steady. Humming.

They smile. SCREECH. They all freeze.

At the end of the corridor: A figure. A woman (20s).

Disheveled. Beautiful. Ferocious.

Barefoot. Blood at the corners of her mouth. Her body hunched like an animal.

The Blind Moirai steps forward instinctively.

The BLOODIED WOMAN tilts her head. Neck CRACKING.

She smiles. Too many teeth. As she steps forward, the air ripples like the horizon over asphalt on a sweltering day. A soft, barely audible TEARING like a jet ripping through the clouds overhead.

The Triplets cower backwards; unsure of the next move. The sound of guards.

In an instant—the woman vanishes, leaving the last remnants of an escaping silhouette, folding into the dark with a sound like wet cloth pulled from bone.

Deaf Moirai
(signing)
We gotta go. Now!

EXT. SHAMBALA OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Herm walks, limping. In their hands, the torn pieces of the Gunslinger's image on the Ace of Saints. They put them in their pockets.

A silhouette steps out from a side alley—The Mute Moirai, shotgun in hand.

Herm sees it. Eyes soften. Lips part—but no words. The Triplet places it gently in Herm's hands. The weapon hums in response to their touch.

Herm grimaces. A cross between relief and holy vengeance. They inhale deeply, eyes closed. EXHALES and shakes out the knots in their shoulders.

The celestial blue glow returns, this time pulsating.

INT. CONFESSIONAL HALL - NIGHT

A high-ceilinged room. Quiet. The stained glass depicts local saints. Vicar Avric's silhouette is seen through the multi-hued glass.

He sits calmly in a red chair.

In the center: a lone citizen—head bowed. Knees shaking. The two-faced automaton DEACON PRXDE stands behind him—cloaked.

One face forward. One face hidden. Prxde speaks.

A deep MECHANICAL VOICE—male and female, sometimes alternating with a terrifying elegance, depending on which respective face is forward. Either voice of the automaton offers an occasional off-kilter CLICK or TICK.

Sometimes the voices meander into an eerie squeal—like thick metal shrieking as it folds in on itself.

PRXDE

Speak. Truth only.

CITIZEN

I... I took extra rations. My son was sick. I—

AVRIC

Silence!

BEAT.

AVRIC

Your punishment is--

The automaton's hand comes down—hard, cold, surgical—onto the citizen's shoulder.

PRXDE

--mercy.

The citizen collapses.

VICAR AVRIC

Shame is a rust upon the soul.

Avric closes his eyes. The room fills with faint
whispers—unintelligible. Sinful. Chanting in reverse. The
citizen is lifted from the floor by guards and ushered out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In a town with no saints, the
sinners start to look holy. And
some gods... demand confession
before resurrection.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 5. LAWS OF THE LAND"

FADE IN:

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - COMMUNAL LODGE - NIGHT

Flickering lamp light seeps through seams in patched walls. Inside, the wounded breathe easier tonight.

INT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - LODGE INTERIOR - NIGHT

Inanna sits stiffly near the clay stove, bandaged and battered, but alive. Her rifle leans within reach. Around her, women sew quietly; children pray.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH, a weathered woman with a fierce glint in her eye, ladles broth into a battered bowl.

She hands the bowl to Inanna.

INANNA
(softly)
Thank you--

BEAT.

INANNA
--for taking me in.

The Matriarch grunts.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH
(strangely casual)
We're used to strange guests.

Inanna tilts her head, puzzled.

The Matriarch chuckles low. She draws her shawl closer and the memory washes over her.

MATCH

CUT:

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - GATE - DAYS AGO

It's a brisk night. The Matriarch draws her shawl closer. A cloaked figure—the VAGABOND—emerges from the mist, carrying a bundled infant.

The Matriarch meets him with guarded warmth.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH (V.O.)

We were visited a few days ago—by
a stranger. A stranger we've
always known. He brought a baby
with 'em. Quiet as a storm about
it too.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - (PRESENT)

Inanna squints her eyes in disbelief.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - GATE - DAYS AGO

VAGABOND

Only for a night.

The Vagabond's voice sounds an awful lot like our Narrator's. He places the bundled Windo into her arms without ceremony. He starts to walk towards the gate leading out of Mercy's Hollow.

MATRIARCH

You boys gonna need a ride out of
here?

VAGABOND

(smiling)

His ride will find him.

The Matriarch watches as he melts into the darkness.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - GATE - LATER THAT NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A LUMINOUS HORSE, its mane threaded with faint blue fire, appears at the gate.

Attached to the saddle is a satchel with shimmering bells. The steed neighs and jingles the bells. The Matriarch opens the satchel. Within the satchel is a parchment note and some currency. Rocking the baby Windo, the Matriarch reads the note.

She hands the child and the currency to a midwife, and continues to read. The midwife hides Windo among the orphans. The children continue to play.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - DAWN THE NEXT DAY (FLASHBACK)

In the morning the Matriarch saunters over to the tiny bed where the infant Windo was placed to sleep.

The "infant" has become a bit older than a TODDLER—approximately 4 years old—awake, curious, staring at the horizon.

The Matriarch, astonished and shaken but obedient, saddles the horse as the instructions in the note indicate.

She lifts young Windo (4) onto the saddle and straps the child in, packs bread and water into the saddlebags, and with a pat on the horse's flank, sends them into the dawn.

NOTE: we as viewers are shown Windo's abnormal growth, however, Inanna is not explicitly being told this part.

INT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - LODGE INTERIOR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Inanna listens, stunned. Her fists clenched tightly over the coarse blanket.

INANNA

(whispers)

You sent him away on a horse?
Alone?!

MATRIARCH

There are few things more resolute
than faith, Girl.

BEAT.

MATRIARCH

Faith don't blink.

Inanna opens her mouth to retort. BOOM!

The door slams open. A SCOUT, bloodied and breathless, staggers in.

SCOUT

(urgent)

Dustwater's gone. Razed to the
ground. They took none alive. And
on their way here!

Panic ripples through Mercy's Hollow. Men take up arms.
Women usher the children to protected enclaves.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - GATE - NIGHT

People scurry in preparation. Lanterns swing wildly. A bell tolls in a ragged alarm.

Inanna shoulders her rifle, torn between duty and destiny.

INANNA

(under breath)

Windo.

The Matriarch grabs her wrist. Her gaze burns with ancient certainty.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH

Older powers favor the stubborn.

BEAT.

FRONTIER MATRIARCH

Go! Catch the boy.

She touches HER OWN BROW with two fingers, in a blessing gesture eerily reminiscent of the same arcane movements that Helmets perform when activating their own UNGODLY TECHNOLOGY. Inanna has a subtle look of confusion.

The Matriarch turns, the reassuring smile on her face descending into a grave scowl as she readies for battle.

Inanna hesitates—then runs into the shadows.

SMASH

CUT:

EXT. WILDERNESS STREAM - NIGHT

A flickering campfire. The Vagabond kneels opposite Windo, now even older—about 7 or 8 years old in frame—but carrying the mannerisms and wonder of a spirit still recently born to this physical world.

VAGABOND

(firm)

Belief ain't what they told you,
Boy. It's not bowing your head.
It's raising your chin.

The Vagabond places a pebble into the boy's hand.

The Vagabond then tosses his own pebble across the stream. The pebble skips frenetically, traveling supernaturally far—casting iridescent ripples at every point where it touches the water.

Windo watches in awe.

BEAT.

Windo closes his eyes and whips his pebble, which glimmers with faint blue light.

SPLOOSH! It falls into the stream.

WINDO

(frustrated, wiping
eyes)

Maybe the pebble just doesn't want
to.

The Vagabond drops another pebble into Windo's hand.

VAGABOND

It wants to. It's just waiting on
you to believe.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - PERIMETER - NIGHT

TORCHLIGHT. Evans and his FOOT SOLDIERS approach the Hollow.

The townsfolk mount a desperate defense—old rifles and pitchforks against cannons and culverins.

BOOM!

A fiery cannon ball crashes into the wooden ramparts, turning them instantly into flaming matchsticks.

Then, the volley of flaming arrows. Several of the townsfolk are hit.

INT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - LODGE - NIGHT

The Matriarch watches the carnage surrounding her.

Children cry in the distance. Men drag the wounded to cover. Women take up positions to replace the injured.

A RUSTLE of leaves. A ripple in the night. A shadow.

The Vagabond appears with a face drenched in rage. He draws a xiphos—a double-edged, one-handed straight shortsword—silent as vengeance. He sneers as he moves towards the attacking flank.

He whips past the stunned Matriarch at superhuman speed. Her hair and blouse FLUTTER from the gust.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW GATE - NIGHT

Evans' front line soldiers begin to methodically advance on the front gate.

The Vagabond CRASHES into Evans' ranks like a bowling ball, slicing through flesh with effortless speed. Torsos separate from legs. Arms separate from shoulders. Heads lift off from necks. BLURRING speed.

Then silence.

Evans and The Vagabond lock eyes—a recognition deeper than hatred.

EVANS

(snarl)

You.

Evans' voice CRACKLES for a moment as the helmet glitches. Portions of the mask slip into dematerialization briefly before regaining the helmet regains full integrity.

The two CLASH. Evans fires the blunderbuss. The Vagabond dodges. The bullet misses and rips through unfortunate foot soldiers in its path.

The fires of the razed town paint the horizon in sickly orange.

Evans—a monolith of hate and precision—framed by swirling ash and shadow.

Facing him across the bloodstained earth: The Vagabond—sword drawn, face unreadable.

They measure each other in silence.

Then—without breaking eye contact--

Evans lifts two fingers to the talisman embedded in the forehead of his helmet. TAP.

A low, subsonic THRUM cuts through the battlefield.

The air warps around Evans—leaves, ash, and embers swirling upward as if caught in invisible riptides.

Crimson veins of molten light burst from the talisman, snaking down Evans' clothing like living scars. RIP!

The stylish LEATHER JACKET and DRESS SHIRT explode into threads and evaporate, replaced by a TATTERED HOODED CLOAK.

CLANK! A metal war-shroud unfurls around the back of his neck, dark as a funeral banner.

WHOOMPF! Shoulder plates slam into place—jagged, dragon-scale asymmetry.

CLINK! Gauntlets coil down his arms, ending in clawed talons that flex with unnatural grace.

CLANK! Thigh guards fuse onto his body with a metallic snarl—each plate marked by faint, coiling runes of Tiamat.

THRUM! The armor glows faintly along its seams—blood-orange, alive, ancient. Not pristine—but battle-worn, as if carried from forgotten wars.

Evans' breathing deepens behind the helmet—slow and well-paced—the very air bending around his presence.

Across from him, the Vagabond shifts his stance—not with fear, but grim understanding.

One battlefield. Two combatants.

BEAT.

And then—steel meets steel.

The Vagabond is everywhere at once—a blur of precision.

Evans fights dirty: knees, elbows, hidden blades.

The Vagabond fights clean: parries, counterstrikes, feints that anticipate Evans' rage.

SPARKS fly where metal meets metal.

Soldiers hesitate, stunned, unable to keep up or find an opening to strike.

Both of the combatants' defenses are impregnable.

Suddenly—Evans triggers a smoke charge at his hip.

Thick, sulfurous fog erupts, masking his retreat.

Leaderless, the foot soldiers break ranks and scatter.

In the confusion, the Vagabond does not pursue.

The Vagabond plants his blade into the earth and kneels silently.

The ground seems to pulse faintly beneath him, as if to say: "This is sacred ground. It will not fall tonight."

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - OUTER PERIMETER - NIGHT

Ash drifts on the wind. Bells toll raggedly.

HERM and the MOIRAI TRIPLETS crouch behind the crumbling wall, breath misting, weapon clutched tight.

The PITTER PATTERN of soldiers' footsteps grows louder.

Herm looks at the Triplets. Nods.

MATCH

CUT:

EXT. SHAMBALA - UNDERGROUND MARKET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Younger Triplets slither through a collapsed stall into a hidden grate.

INT. SHAMBALA CATACOMBS (FLASHBACK)

Torchlight sputters. Rats squeal.

The Triplets move by touch and instinct—tapping and signing—through labyrinthine tunnels carved from stone and bone.

INT. TOWER CHAPEL - LOWER HALL (FLASHBACK)

Stained glass fractures rainbow light into jagged beams.

At the pulpit, a hollow knock. The Triplets emerge from underneath a worn altar. They pry up a grate nearby and climb up from the passage below.

At bottom of the pulpit: the SHAMBALA GRIMOIRE. A relic of a book. Leather cracked, clasp etched with The Gate.

The Triplets retrieve the book. The Deaf Moirai cradles the book like stolen fire.

SMASH

CUT:

INT. ORPHANAGE - COMMON ROOM - LATER (FLASHBACK)

The Triplets innocently dump the Grimoire before young HERM. Herm recognizes it immediately and gasps.

YOUNG HERM

Are you all insane? This is a town
relic.

Herm, intrigued, flips through brittle pages—depictions of defenders, a Gunslinger, catacomb maps, "The Gate Below."

YOUNG HERM (mouthing softly)

The gate... below.

Outside: GUARDS shouting.

GUARD (O.S.)

The chapel's been looted! Lock the
gates!

Herm slams the book shut.

YOUNG HERM (urgent)

Put it back. Now.

The Triplets grumble, but obey.

MATCH

CUT:

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Older, grimmer Herm watches the Triplets tighten belts, exchange nods.

HERM
Ready?

The Triplets smirk.

They slip into a misty walkway. Herm moves the opposite direction.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CHAPEL RUINS - DUSK

Citizens corralled by torchlight.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DUSK

Twisted hymns. Smoke-stained banners.

Vicar Avric sits atop altar steps, sanctimonious. Deacon Prxde looms nearby.

Herm, dressed in an unfamiliar outfit, melds into the crowd below.

INT. SHAMBALA CATACOMBS

Triplets below, hidden in the veins of Shambala.

Above their heads, a drainage grate. Faint torchlight bleeds through.

INT. CHAPEL - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

A once-sacred cathedral, now corrupted. Avric seated in an altar chair near the pulpit. Prxde at the altar steps. Guards drag a TOWNSPERSON up the aisle.

Above, half-shrouded in smoke: THE JUDGE watches seated from the balcony.

Beside him stands WRATH THE EXECUTIONER.

Wrath towers in a long, double-breasted trench coat, every seam drawn tight as if stitched from fury itself. A thick belt cinches the fabric like restraint—barely holding back the violence beneath.

His helmet is death—literal. A polished skull covering the face where a man once was, expressionless yet somehow seething. Carved in the forehead of the helm: a radiant sigil—the emblem of Tiamat—the patina half-burned, half-blessed. Whether divine or damned is a question none will survive long enough to ask.

Wrath carries a long staff—a scythe-halberd hybrid, gleaming—the physical representation of his judgment. The hooked blade curves with brutal elegance—part shepherd's crook, part executioner's scythe.

TOWNSPERSON

(pleading)

I borrowed the beads-- for my
wife-- she's sick--

PRXDE (mechanical, layered)

Mercy requires truth.

Avric leans forward in his altar chair.

AVRIC
(cold)
Verdict?

PRXDE
No mercy.

The Townsperson screams, pleading to the Judge with a look of sheer terror.

The Judge looks down onto the crowd with a deep INHALE and EXHALE. A slow, imperceptible shake of the head.

WRATH lifts the weapon effortlessly--

THWIP-- The blade cuts the air. A clean arc.

TOWNSPERSON
Wai- GLURG!

The Townsperson's head severs cleanly with a sickening CRACK. The body slumps.

The head THUMPS down the altar steps.

The spear SKITTERS across the marble floor.

Gasps. Mothers shield children. Prayers muttered under breath. Avric stands.

AVRIC (roaring)
Silence!

The townspeople in the pews begin to fall into a terrified hush.

UNDERNEATH - CATACOMBS

The Triplets move. As the turmoil ensues the Deaf Moirai lifts the loose grate. The Blind Moirai steadies. The Mute Moirai watches, poised.

INT. CHAPEL - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

A thin hand snakes up from the open grate, brushing the sacred leather of a book situated underneath the podium.

Prxde's head tilts above, sensing. The hand snatches the book and yanks it down below.

INT. CHAPEL - UNDERNEATH - CATACOMBS

The Deaf Moirai flips through pages of the book. Sounds above of Avric castigating the parishioners.

Images: The Town of Shambala. The Gunslinger who saves the day. The Defenders of the Town. The Gate.

A page-- torn clean.

The book replaced above. The grate pulled closed and sealed.

Above: Avric resettles into his throne.

Prxde's scanning whir recedes.

EXT. CATACOMBS - NIGHT

Triplets sprint into blackness. The page clutched like a burning brand.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Herm atop a rooftop.

The celestial shotgun hums, glowing bright as they stare across at the chapel windows in disgust.

INT. CHAPEL - LATER

Only Avric and Prxde remain.

Bloodstain darkens the altar steps.

Avric smiles, tapping a boot against the shifted tome at the bottom of the pulpit.

AVRIC
(murmuring)
They think they've found hope.

Prxde hums a discordant tune.

AVRIC
They've secured only their own
undoing.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 6. CROSSROADS"

FADE IN:

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

THE JUDGE watches from the balcony.

Beside him: WRATH, silent, scythe-halberd-spear hybrid gleaming. FROM THE BALCONY we look down on to the altar below.

TOWNSPERSON (pleading)
I borrowed the beads-- for my
wife-- she's sick--

PRXDE (mechanical, layered)
Mercy requires truth.

Avric leans forward.

AVRIC
(cold)
Verdict?

PRXDE
No mercy.

The Townsperson screams, pleading to the Judge. The Judge looks down onto the crowd with a deep INHALE and EXHALE. A slow, imperceptible shake of the head. WRATH lifts the weapon effortlessly.

THWIP—A blade sails through the air.

POV-- THE SCYTHE-HALBERD

We SCREAM THROUGH THE AISLE—the air splits with a supernatural WHINE.

Gasps. Townspeople blur past. Eyes wide. Hands reach.

The face of the Townperson is frozen with terror as we race toward them. Then—

BLACKNESS.

SFX: A deafening CHIME murmurs, like a massive bell rung underwater.

INT. CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

WRATH THE EXECUTIONER stands, face obscured by the executioner's helm.

The sounds of screaming bend and distort.

DOLLY IN-- WRATH'S HELMETED FACE

The flicker of FIRELIGHT catches Wrath's eyes through the skull-shaped helmet.

MATCH
CUT:

INT. FIELD - DUSK - 20 YEARS EARLIER

EXTREME CLOSE-UP-- A YOUNG JOHN (7) stares, motionless.

Behind him: screams. His father bleeds out. His mother wails.

Across the field, THREE MARAUDERS mount horses, laughing, careless.

A single DOUBLOON falls from a marauder's saddle and lands in the mud at John's feet. John looks down at it.

MATCH
CUT:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

John stands among villagers. A TOWN OFFICIAL kneels beside him. John stares, emotionless.

TOWN OFFICIAL
They'll return, Boy. So, ride with
us. Come see justice done.

The official mounts a horse and offers his hand to John. John nods, silent. He grasps the hand and is pulled up onto the horse saddle.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

TORCHLIGHT. The vigilantes lie in wait. As the marauders ride down a ridge.

SHOTS. Yells. A marauder falls from his horse, wounded.

John steps out from the darkness. A blade in hand.

He approaches the fallen man—eyes wide, but steady.

The Marauder pleads. THUNK. Blood spatters John's face.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

ADULT JOHN (now a SHERIFF) wipes blood from his gauntlets. His star gleams. A modest cabin. A bit cramped.

JOHN'S SON plays with toy guns. His WIFE serves stew. Their clothes are modest. It's clear they are not well off.

JOHN'S SON
I'm a gunslinger!

JOHN
You don't want to be.

Silence from John's wife and son. John eats his stew.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Rain PITTER PATTERS against a leather hide roof. The wife and son are asleep. John stares into the fire, cleaning a rifle.

A KNOCK. John opens the door.

THE JUDGE stands in the doorway. Smoky.

BEAT.

John takes a step back as the Judge enters in from the rain-cloak soaked, coins in hand.

THE JUDGE
I've read your letters, John.
Heard of your handiwork. Precise.
Efficient. Soulless. Very rare in
a man with something to lose.

He lays out doubloons. John stares down at the coins on the table.

THE JUDGE
One coin per soul kept clean.

RACK FOCUS: The sleeping wife and son.

John looks back at his family. Then looks down again at the doubloons.

DOLLY IN-- John's eyes.

MATCH
CUT:

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT (PRESENT)

CLOSE UP-- Wrath's eyes through the helm.

SFX: A deafening CHIME, like a massive bell ringing underwater.

Screams echo.

AVRIC

Silence!

Wrath doesn't flinch.

EXTREME CLOSE UP-- Wrath's eyes through the helm.

Same eyes. Same silence.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - OUTSKIRT RIDGE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

A thin gray light pushes through the smoke-washed hills.

The FRONTIER MATRIARCH stands on a ridge above the town, binoculars raised, her shawl whipping in the wind. Beside her, the SCOUT from earlier--arm in a sling, face drawn, squinting against the wind.

MATRIARCH

(softly)

Not even done burying the dead...

SCOUT

(nods)

I've seen 'em rest for weeks.

This? Not even a full day.

She adjusts the dial on the binoculars, the brass squealing faintly.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - OUTSKIRT RIDGE - BINOCULAR POV

Foot soldiers crawl across the distant bluff like ants.

Wagons haul massive equipment—iron-riveted CANNONS, portable shield generators, and unfamiliar crates marked with Avric's sigil.

MATRIARCH

They're diggin' in.

One figure stands apart. Evans. Still. Backlit by the rising sun.

A pale silhouette with an optic cluster glowing dimly red. STARING, as if directly looking into the binocular lenses themselves.

MATRIARCH

(hands the

binoculars off)

There. You see him?

SCOUT

(takes a long look)

Not moving. Not aiming. Just...
looking.

MATRIARCH

He ain't lookin'. He's watchin'.

The Scout lowers the binoculars, shaken.

SCOUT

(passing the
binoculars back)

Why not hit us now?

MATRIARCH

(brings the
binoculars to her
eyes)

They're waiting.

BEAT.

MATRIARCH

Or maybe deciding if it's even
worth the mess.

She lowers the binoculars and looks out over the
town-burned roofs, field hospitals at capacity, women and
children cleaning wounds with washcloths.

MATRIARCH

(softly)

Best believe-- this place don't
get two miracles.

She turns to head back down the ridge. The Scout follows.

SCOUT

(nervously)

Are we gonna run?

She stops in her tracks.

MATRIARCH
(flatly)
Run where?

EXT. HIGHWAY TO THE HOLLOW - DAWN

A broken trail snakes through the valley. Wind kicks up ash.

Herm walks with the Deaf Moirai and Blind Moirai in tow—cloaked, weather-worn, silent.

The Mute Moirai is absent.

The Blind Moirai walks ahead of the other by a few paces, feeling every rise in the earth.

Herm looks at a torn PARCHMENT PAGE, yellowed and brittle.

CLOSE ON: THE PARCHMENT PAGE

An etched diagram of The Gate—not quite mechanical, not quite sacred. A sealed arch embedded in a spiral chamber.

Runes like veins. The symbol of Tiamat scrawled in the margins. Herm looks down at the parchment.

HERM
(musing aloud)
I've heard them talk about this place like a fairytale. If it's real-- it's not just a door. It's a vault.

BLIND MOIRAI pauses in his tracks.

Herm stops and looks up. A shared, heavy silence.

BEAT.

The wind howls.

The Hollow's outer gate looms ahead—smoke still curling from its rafters. Lanterns flicker, and shadows take aim from the parapet.

HERM raises a hand.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

A GUARD shouts something unintelligible. The TRIPLETS don't flinch.

Herm steps forward—arms raised, coat flaring with the wind.

HERM

(firm, hoarse)

You'll want to open the gate.

BEAT.

Another GUARD leans over the parapet. A whistle sounds.

The Matriarch and the Scout also arrive at the front gate. Perfect timing. The guards lower their rifles.

The FRONTIER MATRIARCH squints, her face stony. She notices that one of the Triplets is missing.

MATRIARCH

Ain't there three of ya? Well.

Always good to see you,
nonetheless. Did you bring
trouble-- like usual?

HERM
(looking down at
the parchment)
Brought something even better this
time.

INT. BELL TOWER - UPPER LEVEL - NIGHT

Moonlight leaks through broken archways. Stone worn smooth
by decades of footsteps.

A long, narrow chamber winds into the uppermost floor of
the bell tower, where the once-sacred observatory has
become a war room. A subtle MECHANICAL HUMMING.

Flickering light from walls sconces dance against rusted
religious iconography. Old saints now marked with thorns.

At the center of the room: the Judge, half-shadowed,
standing beside a map-scarred table. The Vicar sits nearby,
legs crossed at the end of the long table, studying a worn
manuscript.

JUDGE
(gruff)
They will come. Through flame, or
famine. Through hope.

AVRIC
And when they do?

JUDGE
We let them make their way in.

Avric raises an eyebrow and becomes pensive.

AVRIC

You're inviting infection, your
Honor.

JUDGE

I'm inviting certainty, Vicar. No
heresy exists without exposure.

The Judge moves towards an arched window and begins staring
out onto the town.

JUDGE

Deterrence would only delay the
inevitable. But a gate left open
just enough-- invites desperation
to reveal its power.

Avric closes the manuscript, clearly wary.

AVRIC

And should they pierce too deep?

JUDGE

Then the body will cough up its
rot. And we will burn it.

The sound of MECHANICAL HUMMING builds.

DOLLY LEFT--

The BALCONY comes into full view, where a figure stands ominously.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

A figure cloaked in myth and machine, ENVY THE SCOUT stands apart like a forgotten saint forged in iron and grief.

His helmet is a lacquered plague mask of black steel, its beak etched with rivets like scars.

Twin lenses—gold-rimmed, hollow—peer out with the cold stillness of judgment.

A brown leather top hat crowns the figure—regal, precise, absurdly refined—offsetting the dreadful machinery beneath.

The prim and proper coat, cut like an undertaker's, bears no dust, no flaw. Every thread, every line, speaks of discipline—or repression.

With one hand, Envy clasps a mounted SPYGLASS—a long, brass and bone device fused with Tiamat tech.

Tendrils of YELLOW-ORANGE ENERGY seep from Envy's talisman and into the ocular end of the scope.

The energy pulses in faint rays through the lens and out of the other side.

JUDGE

Envy. Show us.

A panoramic hologram appears between The Judge and the Vicar, showing the Judge and Avric what Envy sees.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW — ENVY'S POV — THROUGH THE SPYGLASS

Blurry and out of focus. The world sharpens.

MERCY'S HOLLOW now comes into focus—warped, but crystal clear—through the divine lens.

At the front gate: Herm, the Moirai, and the Matriarch exchange words.

Beyond them: hastily repaired ramparts, watch-fires, new sentries taking positions to relieve wary guards.

SWEEP LEFT--

Farther out—on the ridgeline—Evans comes into view. He marshals foot soldiers, preparing siege tools and aligning cannons.

ZOOM IN--

Evans raises a hand, gesturing toward the Hollow. A WAR ENGINE rolls forward.

AVRIC (O.S.)
Your Bounty Hunter is restless.

JUDGE (O.S.)
He is a hammer.

BEAT.

JUDGE (O.S.)
But not every answer requires a nail.

EXT. RIDGELINE NEAR MERCY'S HOLLOW - NIGHT

EVANS—helmet on—focuses his sights on the front gate. Beside him, foot soldiers ready ignition powder.

FOOT SOLDIER
Orders?

Evans doesn't respond.

EXT. RIDGELINE — NIGHT — EVANS' HELMET POV

Evans sees the target—Herm.

Then—a TICKING RINGING SOUND in his helmet.

He stiffens as the TELEPATHIC LINK engages.

A voice—cold, emotionless, ethereal—pulses inside the helmet.

ENVY (V.O., TELEPATHIC)
Orders from the Bell Tower. Hold
your position. Do not engage.

EVANS
(low)
They're in range. They're weak.

BEAT.

ENVY (V.O., TELEPATHIC)
So then-- let them see safety.

Evans turns from the cliff, seething.

EVANS
(to soldiers)
Pack it up. Leave the engines in
place. Let 'em see what mercy
looks like.

They begin to withdraw.

EXT. LAKE - TWILIGHT

The surface of the lake is glass. A soft purple sky reflects off the water. The VAGABOND stands in silhouette, arms crossed, watching.

WINDO stands barefoot at the edge of the lake, now appearing as a young man of about 19 years old—lean and tall, his face a ghost of both innocence and power. He grips a flat pebble in his hand.

He flicks the pebble across the water.

WHOOSH—WHOOSH—WHOOSH.

The stone skips about eight times, each skip leaving behind a burst of iridescent shimmer, as if brushing the fabric of reality.

VAGABOND

(subdued, amused)

You ever see a stone out-believe a river?

WINDO

(grinning)

I didn't even try that time.

He hurls another. The lake hums briefly in response.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

A small fire crackles at the center of the clearing. Wind whispers through the trees. The flames dance in hues of blue and gold.

WINDO kneels beside the fire. The VAGABOND holds out a small leather pouch filled with ash and crushed sage.

VAGABOND

Blow slowly. Think of everything
you were-- and are now.

WINDO

And what I will be.

VAGABOND

No. What is.

BEAT.

VAGABOND

The rest finds you.

Windo closes his eyes. Takes a breath. Then blows the dust
into the fire.

A small, SWIRLING VORTEX erupts upward--dancing with dust,
color, symbols, and strange light. It lifts for a few
seconds, then collapses gently, as if absorbed back into
Windo's the direction it sprang from.

The wind stills.

The Vagabond reaches inside of a stump and retrieves a long
wooden box, scorched with Shambalan runes.

He sets the box into Windo's lap. Windo stares at it.

VAGABOND

I didn't think I'd get to see this
used.

Windo opens the box.

Inside lies a gilded firearm—half-constructed, half-born.
Bones of oak and gold, veins of light that breathe with
latent energy. This is the Construct Gun—a saintly relic.

WINDO

(quietly)

This is real? It was just a story.

VAGABOND

All stories are real. Some just
need a believer.

Windo's hands twitch.

WINDO

Only the Gunslinger can-

He picks the relic up. Light pulses from the grip, matching
his heartbeat. The runes along the barrel ignite faintly.

EXT. BRUSH - NIGHT

A rustling in the brushes.

INANNA walks through the trees, breath ragged, clothes torn
and muddy, eyes wide.

She hears talking between the two men. She's tracked them
to this location by their fire.

She nears the clearing without revealing herself.

She sees the pair standing in the firelight, the gun
glowing faintly in Windo's hands.

She recognizes the Vagabond. She doesn't recognize the
other.

Windo takes a step back. The lake glimmers behind him, mirroring the stars.

Inanna squints her eyes. What's that around the neck? Her locket?

Then she studies the features. The shape of the nose bridge and the maw. This can't be!

Inanna, baffled, walks out into the clearing from amongst the trees. Their eyes lock.

She sees the locket on a leather cord around his neck—her locket. The one she gave him when he was still a crying baby in her arms.

She gasps. He lowers the gun slowly.

INANNA

No--

She steps forward, unsure, tears threatening. Her hand trembles as she reaches out from afar as if for the locket, barely able to speak.

INANNA

Wind?

Windo nods. Then—

WINDO

(small, soft)

Hey, Nanna.

She breaks and rushes into his arms. The gun falls softly to the grass beside them. No words. Just the sound of the fire. The water. And the woods.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - RUINS - NIGHT

HERM stares through the jagged stained-glass window, moonlight cutting across their face.

Beyond the glass, the wind rustles the weeds and vines reclaiming the ruins.

The camera pushes slowly past Herm, through the shattered image of the Gunslinger, into the night. The wind becomes a low, growing hum.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - ABANDONED CATHEDRAL RUINS - NIGHT

Rain patters gently on rusted sheet metal. Candles flicker inside a half-collapsed chapel, once sacred, now scarred by war.

In the center of the nave, a torn parchment lies stretched across a rotted pew-held flat by pieces of stone and splintered wood.

Around it gather HERM, the MOIRAI TRIPLETS, and two more ragtag resistance members—a wounded monk and a former Engineer of the Hollows.

The parchment is ancient, edges curled and burned. It shows:

A crude top-down sketch of Shambala with what is now the Bell Tower marked.

A subterranean path drawn beneath it—labeled only by pictographs of fire, water, and a rising eye.

Along the sides, written in a runic hybrid: "Only the familiar hand may open the old wound. The Gate does not yield to keys, but to calling."

HERM

(quiet, resolved)

The Gate was always myth. Like
saints. Like safe towns.

BLIND MOIRAI

Then why's all what's happening
now match the fables from then?

HERM

Because myths aren't lies. They're
just-- sleepwalking.

Herm points at the pictograph of the rising eye.

HERM

This-- here. This is the Watcher
Mark. It only appears in
Gunslinger texts. And on the
chapel door, before the Judge
painted over it-- with prayers he
doesn't even believe in.

The Blind Moirai runs his fingers along the parchment,
feeling the ridges where the ink raises from the paper.

BLIND MOIRAI

So what do we do? Wait for your
Gunslinger to come riding out of
the clouds?

HERM

(sharp)

My Gunslinger? Nope. We're gonna
disrupt 'em anyway. We make it so
they have to come looking for a
fight we know how to finish.

ENGINEER

The Bell Tower's still guarded.
Every twelve hours they rotate
Helmets. And one of them guard's
Wrath--

VOICE (O.S)

The Executioner--

They fall into silence. Herm kneels beside the parchment.

HERM

(staring into the
runes)

If this Gate's real-- and if these
stories are true-- then someone
from this town--someone who still
believes in it--can open it.

MONK

Open it without the prophecy
fulfilled?

BEAT.

HERM

I'm meanin' to knock until someone
answers. Gunslinger or no
Gunslinger.

Herm stands and walks over to a broken stained-glass
window--moonlight pouring through a fractured image of the
fabled Gunslinger, pistol raised to the sky.

HERM

Shambala don't wait for heroes. We
make 'em right here at home.

CUT TO: AERIAL FLIGHT SEQUENCE

We soar...

over the sleeping woods kist beyond Mercy's Hollow,
across the craggy hills, scarred by old mining tracks and
buried war relics,
through the drifting husks of once prosperous boomtowns,
and finally arrive at the Bell Tower of Shambala, towering
crookedly from a hill of black stone and rebar roots.

EXT. BELL TOWER - NIGHT

A towering spire of cracked columns and rusted scaffolding.
Once a call to prayer—now a watch post for the Helmets.

WRATH walks the perimeter—his armor half-mechanical,
half-flesh. He wears the look of a man held together by
rage and regret.

He pauses at the edge of the Tower and scans the horizon.

SMASH

CUT:

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 7. THE GATES BETWEEN HERE AND HEAVEN"

FADE IN:

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - NIGHT

Torchlight flickers through makeshift camp canopies. The wounded are asleep. The children play quietly. The women say prayers and prepare arms. Watchfires burn low.

The air feels... still. Like breath held before a scream.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - CATHEDRAL TURNED LODGE - NIGHT

Wind blows through the broken archways. Lanterns flicker against warped stained glass.

A tattered parchment map of Shambala is pinned under stones on a barrel top.

CLOSE ON:

The Grimoire page sits atop the parchment map: The Gate, the catacombs, and the Watcher Mark etched into the margins.

Flanking Herm: Two of the MOIRAI TRIPLETS, the FRONTIER MATRIARCH, a WOUNDED MONK, a former ENGINEER, and a half-circle of a couple dozen or more grim, dust-worn REBELS: a scattering of ragged cowboys, mystics, and Shambala exiles.

HERM

(pointing to a spot
on the map)

The Bell Tower ain't just a
stronghold. It's like a lock. And
we've got the pieces to pick it.

Herm points to the parchment.

HERM

We breach the aqueducts here.

Then they gesture to the Triplets.

HERM

You go through. Find the Gate. See
if it's really the truth.

Herm looks over at the rest of the ragtag strike force and
smirks defiantly.

HERM

The rest of us-- we knock so loud
they can't help but open the door.

MYSTIC FIGHTER

(dismayed)

This is worse than a last stand.

HERM

You ain't lyin'. But it's either
we make history-- or we become the
ghosts of it.

BEAT.

Herm goes back to reading the parchment.

HERM

(reading quiet,
precise)

The Gate doesn't open to force. It
opens to "Familiarity. Faith. A
hand of the same soil."

MATRIARCH

We've all lived that myth. Doesn't
mean we're the ones to fulfill it,
Herm.

MONK

(softly)

Then why are these signs coming to
us now?

BLIND MOIRAI

Because Herm's right. The prophecy
ain't askin' for permission.

HERM

If the Gunslinger stories are
real-- then the Gate will listen.

BEAT.

The sound of HOOVES cuts through the night air like daggers
through flesh.

DEAF MOIRAI

Something's already moving beneath
us.

Lanterns sway. Heads turn.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - RIDGE ABOVE THE CAMP - NIGHT

A figure rides down the rise on a glowing steed--mane laced
with shimmering filaments of belief light.

On the saddle: Windo (early 20s)—tall, lean, locket swinging. Behind him: Inanna, arms wrapped tightly around his waist.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - JUST BEYOND THE GATE - CONTINUOUS

Windo and Inanna trot into the cathedral courtyard as guards behind them began to draw the gates closed.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - LODGE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

WINDO dismounts slowly, Construct Gun slung against his side. Glowing. Pulsing. He's otherworldly—but not distant.

He turns—face lit by the flames on a nearby watchfire, not youthful, not aged—simply chosen.

He meets the rebels' stares without flinching.

The group within the lodge look through the open archway where broken hinges are the only signs that there was once a cathedral door.

The camp goes still.

WHISPERS ripple outward.

REBEL #1
(whispering,
awestruck)
Ain't that a baby?

REBEL #2
(affirming)
Walkin' in here
with a saint's
gun--

HERM
(baffled)
Wind-uh?

MATRIARCH
(under her breath)
He ain't a boy now.

The group steps out through the opening and into the courtyard.
A long silence.

INANNA
(dismounting)
He is every story we told him.

BEAT.

Inanna notices there are only two Triplets.

INANNA
(quietly)
Where's your brother?

The Blind Moirai shrugs.

Herm steps forward, placing a hand softly on Windo's
shoulder.

HERM
Well I'm not sure what we got
ourselves here boys-- 'cept it
looks like we got ourselves a
Gunslinger.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - ENVY'S POV - NIGHT

A voyeuristic long shot of the rebels conversing, tinged blood-orange with grain as if viewing through a lens.

INT. BELL TOWER - UPPER OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The SPYGLASS hums softly, mounted atop a rusted iron tripod fused with bone. Blood-orange filaments of light pulse from its ocular crystal.

Envy the Scout stands still as a statue, one eye pressed to the scope.

The chamber is quiet. The only sound: the constant, low tick of the spyglass ocular nodes adjusting, like clock gears grinding.

Envy watches Mercy's Hollow below—campfires like fallen stars. At the ridge, Herm and Windo are in discussion. Then—

BOOM.

The heavy door SLAMS OPEN. Envy does not so much as flinch.

EVANS strides in, armored feet CLANKING across the stone floor like war drums.

EVANS
(gritting)
You called off the engines.

ENVY

(unmoved, still
peering through the
scope)

Correction-- I relayed
instructions from the Bell Tower.
The engines remain. The order was
to delay ignition.

EVANS

(snapping)

We had them! Cracked. Scattered. I
could've broken them.

ENVY

(still calm)

And in doing so, they would become
martyrs.

Evans circles.

EVANS

(tight smile)

Don't make riddles with me,
spyglass..

ENVY

(glancing at him
now)

Truths wear riddles-- that is,
until the listener is ready to
solve them-- Bounty Hunter.

Evans steps closer, voice lowering.

EVANS

(snarling)

I don't need to solve anything. I
need to end things. Steel and
flame win more battles than
confusion can.

BEAT.

The BELL chime echoes down the hall.

FOOTSTEPS.

Both Envy and Evans fall still. From the far side of the
observatory, a door opens quietly.

THE JUDGE enters. No fanfare. No noise. Just presence.
Cloaked in shadows, haloed by backlight.

Evans straightens reflexively. His bravado cools.

The Judge walks past both, toward the map table.

JUDGE

Is something the matter, Bounty
Hunter?

EVANS

(smoothly, but with
effort)

Only confusion, Your Honor.
Mercy's Hollow was ripe. The
strike force stood ready. Then the
order came to wait. I-- hesitate
to understand.

JUDGE
(softly, without
looking at him)
Then hesitate longer.

A long silence.

ENVY turns slightly toward the Judge, stepping away from
the spyglass and folding his hands behind his back.

ENVY
The Hollow is preparing. They've
gathered what they call heroes.

JUDGE
And heroes require challenges.

He lays a pale hand across the map.

JUDGE
Let them march. Let them try to
open what cannot be opened. Let
them believe. It will make the
silence louder when it falls.

EVANS
(quietly)
And if they succeed?

BEAT.

JUDGE
Then we'll know what still
breathes in the dark.

A faint wind pulls through the broken arches. The spyglass
pulses once, a ripple of blood-orange energy fading into
nothing.

JUDGE

No more disruptions, Mr. Evans.
When the time comes, you will know
it. And you will burn them clean.

Evans nods, lips pressed thin. A hunter restrained.

Evans glances once at Envy, who hasn't moved. Evans' helmet
glow flares—a knowing pulse. He turns and walks away, jaw
clenched.

As Evans exits, we hold on Envy.

Envy returns to peering again through the spyglass.

**EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW - CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - ENVY'S POV -
NIGHT**

A voyeuristic long shot of the rebels conversing, but
tinged blood-orange with grain as if viewing through a
lens.

The mechanical WINCHING of the ocular device.

SMASH
CUT:

EXT. SHAMBALA - (DREAM SEQUENCE)

The city burns. Spires crumble.

WINDO stands on a crumbling balcony—eyes black, smoke
leaking like tears.

INANNA
(shouting)
Wind! WINDO!

He doesn't respond. Doesn't even blink.

Behind him: HERM—older, scarred, rifle in hand—unrecognizing. Cold.

Inanna rushes forward—her hand passes through Windo's chest.

She GASPS.

FLASH—

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW — COURTYARD — NIGHT

Sweat on her brow. Her eyes fly open.

She sees Windo standing guard near the broken stained-glass window—peering through the fractured image of the Gunslinger.

A sound—Windo whispering the Creed into the nearby campfire.

WINDO

"I still have a choice."

Inanna exhales—like someone who's seen a ghost.

CUT TO
BLACK.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW — JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK

MONTAGE:

- Herm gives out roles.
- Fighters load up saddlebags and shake out their boots before putting them on.
- Windo wraps his face with his shawl, before rubbing the crystal necklace on his neck.
- Triplets lay stones on the map of the catacombs.
- Inanna cleaning her revolver in the dark.
- The Matriarch sharpens a curved dagger against a whetstone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They say belief is just a feeling.
But in some ways, it moves like
armor. It breathes like fire.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW FRONT GATE - DAWN

The sun rises—a fire-washed orange. The resistance mounts up.

EXT. MERCY'S HOLLOW OUTSKIRTS - DAWN

Dozens of rebels atop horses. They ride.

This is the calm before the storm.

Windo recalls the Gunslinger's Creed - a prayer about justice tempered by mercy.

CHILDREN (V.O.)

"I do not raise my gun to kill. I
raise it to remind the world and
those that would harm me... that
still-- I have a choice."

Inanna, still unnerved by her dream, scans the horizon.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Some people reckon a storm starts
with thunder. Others know-- it
starts with a silence-- something
that just don't sit right.

BLACKBIRDS scatter above them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This storm? This one started with
a whisper. With a child left at a
doorstep. With a saint's name worn
thin from too many mouths
forgettin' how to say it.

WINDO's horse gleams with celestial filaments. INANNA
behind him, arms tight.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now the wind's changin'.
Somethin's stirrin'. And every
gun, every prayer, every memory
ever buried deep-- it's comin' a
callin'. Ain't no tellin' what
waits on the other side. But when
the dust settles- we're gonna know
who still remembers how to
believe.

Herm rides beside the Matriarch. They nod to one
another--Herm, determined but with a shadow of worry in
their eyes.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD: "CHAPTER 8: LET THE WIND DECIDE"

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS NEAR THE SHAMBALA FRONT GATE - DAWN

The sky is flame-orange. Smoke curls from the treeline.

A REBEL'S BREATH fogs as they crouch behind broken barricades, lighting a crude fuse.

CLOSE ON: HERM—as they nod towards the rebel.

Herm looks forward towards the gate.

BOOM! DYNAMITE explodes against the gate. Stone cracks. Dust flies.

The rebels CHARGE - horses and riders come out from their hiding spots.

BOOM! Another charge detonates. Rebels stream in through the breeches.

MONTAGE:

- MUZZLE FLASHES light the smoke.
- Spears and bayonets are thrust into flesh.
- Foot soldiers POUR out of the gate—weapons up.
- Horses neigh and spring up on their hind legs.
- Herm on horseback barks orders and fires special ballistics into crowds of foot soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTERN AQUEDUCT - SAME TIME

The two TRIPLETS move fast, silent.

Behind the Moirai: INANNA, WINDO, the MATRIARCH, SCOUT, and many REBELS.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTERN AQUEDUCT

The aqueduct tunnel gapes open, overgrown with roots and moss.

INT. AQUEDUCT TUNNELS - MOMENTS LATER

Drips echo. Moss glows faintly, casting eerie green light.

The group moves single-file. The mystic runs a hand along the wall.

MYSTIC

This place is rememberin'.

They reach a rusted grate.

SCREAMS of a battle echo above.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHAMBALA FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

Evans watches as rebels push deeper into the rebel strike force.

Herm on horseback cutting down foot soldiers with their shotgun.

The swarm of fresh soldiers nears Herm's position.

EVANS

Second line, forward! CRUSH them!

Foot Soldiers charge forward. Evans touches the talisman on the forehead of his helmet.

ARMOR LEVEL 2 ENGAGES—neck shroud forms, shoulder plates appear, talons extend.

Suddenly, BOOM — the VAGABOND DROPS FROM THE SKY, sword-first, landing into a crouching position.

A SHOCKWAVE ERUPTS. Foot Soldiers at the center are eviscerated.

Those farther away are thrown like ragdolls.

EVANS

Huh, landed mate.

The Vagabond stands—silent. Sword humming. EVANS triggers his talisman again.

ARMOR LEVEL 3 FORMS—full plate armor. Crimson light pulses.

They CLASH. Sparks. Speed. Power.

INT. CATACOMBS - MOMENTS LATER

The aqueduct crew emerges into a vast chamber two levels beneath the chapel.

THE GATE looms ahead—a sealed stone ring embedded in the earth.

WINDO steps out from amongst the party. The Gate is silent for a moment. Then the Saint's Relic begins to hum. Runes flicker The brick deteriorates and a glowing portal activates.

Footsteps echo. WRATH and a dozen FOOT SOLDIERS enter the chamber.

BEAT.

WRATH
Judgment arrives.

A BRUTAL FIGHT. BANG! Windo shoots one foot soldier in the shoulder. BANG! BANG! He blows the kneecaps off another, before pistol-whipping a third.

Inanna fires a rifle at a charging attacker, then hurls her knife into another's throat.

The Matriarch slices the eyes of one foot soldier before puncturing the abdomen of another.

Wrath attacks like judgment incarnate. The very air trembles when his halberd swings. Even his own men are collateral.

DEAF MOIRAI
The Gate's opened!

BLIND MOIRAI
Well, it's time to do something!
Now!

Time slows down for Windo. As he tries to identify the next move, everything goes silent.

WINDO hesitates—then steps toward the Gate. It begins to GLOW.

He places his hand against the stone—and steps through.

Inanna turns—sees Wrath decapitating another soldier.

She looks back at the Gate. It's beginning to close!

INANNA

Not today.

She runs into the Gate. FLASH — the Gate pulses and SWALLOWS HER.

SILENCE.

The Deaf Moirai stares, breath held.

BEAT.

He looks forward to the ensuing battle. Behind him, the Gate darkens again as it finally closes.

INT. SHAMBALA CHAPEL - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

Dimly lit. The explosions from the earlier siege are now reduced to flickers outside the stained glass. Faint sounds outside of BATTLE.

VICAR AVRIC stalks the pulpit, gathering sacred relics and scrolls into a satchel. His hands are fast but reverent.

On the altar: the SHAMBALA GRIMOIRE, cracked and breathing softly with a pulse of light.

From beneath the altar—CLANK. The grate in the chapel floor shifts.

The Matriarch pushes the grate. The panel scrapes. The Matriarch emerges, rifle first.

AVRIC
(surprised but
collected)
You don't belong here.

MATRIARCH
And you don't belong breathin'.

Avric meets her eyes. For a breath, he seems like he might charge. Then—he falters. Retreats a step. Another. Turns—

Cocking the rifle, the Matriarch advances toward the fleeing Avric—

A hand suddenly GRABS her by the throat, hoisting her off her feet.

From the far shadows, DEACON PRXDE lumbers forth. Golem-like, hooded in crimson, mechanical joints clicking. One face forward. One backward.

PRXDE
(voice layered,
hollow)
Faithless.

SCOUT
No!

CLICK-CLACK. HERM stands in the doorway, dusted with ash, eyes burning. BOOM! A custom ballistic from the celestial shotgun.

PRXDE's arms are pulverized at the elbows—one then the other—spraying blinding SAND instead of blood.

The Matriarch drops, coughing and gasping for air, caught mid-fall by the Scout. The golem stumbles back, clicking, whirring, the arms sheared.

The Triplets begin to climb up from the chamber below. Battle sounds can be heard coming through the passage.

Herm kneels beside the Matriarch.

HERM

You okay?

MATRIARCH

(gruff)

Good as I'll ever be.

They look to the pulpit. Avric is gone.

MATRIARCH

(flat)

Coward took the Grimoire-- and
whatever's in it.

HERM

Well then, let's hope we don't
need it.

The Triplets complete their climb out from below. Rebels follow. One of the rebels is dragged back down, halfway through their climb up.

HERM

We have to go.

The group heads out of the chapel. The Golem lays slumped against a pew, sand still pouring from the gaping wounds.

INT. INSIDE OF THE GATE

Blinding white light surrounds INANNA. A high-pitched WHIRR hums in her ears. Then—the light and sound recede.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Stillness.

WINDO stands at the bottom, in the middle of the square, staring up at the crooked silhouette of the BELL TOWER.

High above, THE JUDGE watches from the balcony, his well-tailored catching the flickering torchlight.

Unseen by either, INANNA appears behind a fractured column, catching her breath.

A slow, sarcastic CLAP echoes from the tower.

JUDGE

(mocking)

How poetic. The boy returns. The prodigal myth.

WINDO steps forward, boots crunching ash.

WINDO

You built this foundation on fear.
It all comes down tonight.

JUDGE

(grinning)

Gunslinger, have you come to deliver final judgment?

BEAT.

JUDGE

Or to suffer it?

INT. CATACOMBS - THE GATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Chaos. Wrath, towering and relentless, battles the remaining REBELS. The chamber trembles with each of his strikes.

Foot soldiers and rebels litter the floor. But Wrath the Executioner is unscathed, his armor glinting with fury, his scythe-halberd slashing with terrifying grace. Merciless.

The ENGINEER kneels near his bag of explosives, hands trembling. He pulls a length of wire—

ENGINEER (V.O.)

Better the roof come down on me--
than on a thousand more.

He slams the DETONATOR. It clicks.

FLASH. Blinding light fills the chamber. We fly up until we reach—

EXT. SHAMBALA - BASE OF THE BELL TOWER - NIGHT

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION erupts below.

The ground BUCKLES. The BELL TOWER SHUDDERS.

EXT. BELL TOWER BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

THE JUDGE loses footing as the blast hits. Masonry cracks. A beam collapses.

The Judge stumbles—and falls. Down, down.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

He CRASHES into the cobblestones with a sickening THUD; ash and debris scattering everywhere. He begins to chuckle.

Windo steps forward. Inanna emerges from behind the column. Windo notices Inanna and speaks to her sternly, slightly muffled through the shawl covering his face.

WINDO

Go!

She hesitates for a moment, before heeding the warning and evacuating. Windo walks towards the center of the Square.

The final battle begins.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The wind howls, just like before. Ash swirls. The bell tower behind them leans like a crooked tooth in the dark.

WINDO stands opposite the fallen JUDGE, breathing hard. His coat flutters in the wind. His revolver glows faintly—humming with power. Saintly. Sacred.

The JUDGE coughs blood, but laughs through it.

THE JUDGE

(cackling)

You think you can stop this?

He groans, lifting himself to his knees. His eyes flicker with Tiamat's ancient fire.

THE JUDGE

You're just a boy--

EXTREME CLOSE UP --

CHIAROSCURO LIGHTING. A sliver of light CUTS ACROSS THE EYES, leaving the rest shrouded in DIM SHADOWS.

THE JUDGE

--with a gun.

Windo pulls the shawl down from his face. He spins the chamber of the gun and it clicks into place.

WINDO

(flat, resolute)

Maybe so--

Windo raises the gun, HUMMING.

WINDO

--but I won't let you destroy this town.

THE JUDGE

(chuckling)

That's your hope? You have no idea what power I possess.

WINDO

Well-- let's see, then!

He FIRES.

The Judge dodges. STRIKES WINDO hard. The gun FLIES.
TWIRLS. Falls into a nearby well. SPLOOSH.

Windo hits the ground, breathless. But he scrambles up
fast.

Now fists. Now fury.

Windo ducks, weaves—lands a punch. Another. The Judge
reels.

Windo spins, delivers a savage uppercut. The Judge falls
backward—off balance—crashing into a shallow ditch.

BEAT.

The wind goes still.

Suddenly—The Judge ROARS, lunging out, rage incarnate.

WHISTLING, a sharp, piercing tone. Deep within the dark
waters of the well, the gun GLOWS—HUMS. Comes TWIRLING out
from the depths.

The gun snaps into Windo's palm like it's returning to its
source.

FLASHES of the cold open: the pulse of light. The Judge lunges. But this time—Windo does not slay him.

The Judge charges—mouth twisted in rage—expecting the prophecy to complete.

But Windo HOLSTERS the weapon.

He sidesteps. Drops low. Grabs the Judge by the collar and DRIVES HIM into the cobblestones.

The Judge snarls as he stands to brawl. Punches. Misses.

Then Windo STRIKES BACK—not with rage, but with conviction. A blue-gold glow begins to pulsate in the crystal necklace on Windo's chest.

He PUMMELS the Judge. Fists hammering down—not to kill, but to unmake the illusion. In the fry the locket comes undone and skitters across the cobblestone.

The Judge claws upward—but his strikes land weaker each time.

THE JUDGE

(panicked, voice
cracking)

You do not control how this ends!

WINDO

I will-- and I am.

Final blow—Windo THROTTLES the Judge to the ground.

Ash kicks up. The Judge STILLs—not dead. Broken. Dethroned.

INANNA (O.S.)

Windo!

He turns. Inanna stands at the edge of the square, tears in her eyes—watching as the myth collapses into mercy. She steps forward holding the necklace in her hand.

Windo instinctively grabs at his neck, the Saint's Tear necklace now missing from it.

The Judge cackles, but this time there's a second feminine laugh in unison. A SHRIEKING LAUGHTER erupts—double-voiced, feminine and masculine, echoing off every wall.

WINDO steps back, steady but uncertain. INANNA circles wide.

THE JUDGE convulses violently. BLACK VEINS race across his skin like roots tearing through stone. His flesh CRACKS.

The sky above shifts—stars WARP like oil on water. RIP! The Judge's body rips outward in a burst of skin and bone.

From the middle of the carcass—a BLOODIED WOMAN emerges, a human representation of the goddess TIAMAT. She is not whole—this is not her final form. But she is here. Beautiful.

A ghostly umbilical thread still connects her to the dying Judge's husk—now slumped, a hollow vessel whose face speaks a combination of pain and liberation.

She hovers inches above the cobblestone, voice folding over itself like broken thunder.

BLOODIED WOMAN

Gunslinger, did you truly believe
that mercy would interrupt a God?
Belief alone is nothing.

She takes a deep breath and shuts her eyes.

BLOODIED WOMAN

Every mercy has its price. You
will not deny me a vessel. Envy!

We fly up to the Observatory on the ledge of the Bell
Tower, now cracked and fractured.

Standing near the SPYGLASS is Envy the Scout. He taps his
helmet's amulet, dematerializing the helm. Revealed is the
face of the Helmet.

It is the third Triplet. He faces the ocular device and
opens his mouth, releasing a two-tone bellowing.

Energy from his agape mouth flows through the device. The
Spyglass's crystal facets spin and align. A beam of
blinding, duotone energy shoots out from it, painting
strange sigils in the air.

EXT. SHAMBALA FRONT GATE

BLIND MOIRAI

I'd know that voice anywhere.

HERM

What's happening?!

Tears stream down the Deaf Moirai's face. Herm's face falls
as they look on in horror. The rest of the combatants look
upward in bewilderment.

***[TO DO: Write a scene where the Gate reactivates and bursts.
Increasing amounts of rebels and foot soldiers pour into the
catacombs from above to do battle. Wrath is sucked into the Gate
upon which it bursts into an explosion that expands into the
area above the underground tunnels.]***

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The temple's dome above, already cracked, seems to part like a veil, revealing a swirling vortex of light, stars, and darkness beyond reality.

Wind howls through the temple, pulling loose objects (and debris of the Judge's remains) toward the vortex.

The Bloodied Woman floats, trancelike. Windo and Inanna embrace as the winds of the vortex increase in speed.

A shockwave blasts out. Windo himself is engulfed in a pillar of blinding light from above. Inanna screams "Windo!" as an unseen force rips Windo's hand from hers.

Suddenly, and for just for a heartbeat, a spectral image of another Windo appears overlapping the real one for an instant - a figure with a charred visage and a menacing aura.

His form stretches and blurs, as if being pulled upward into the swirling portal of stars. From Windo's perspective, the Town Square seems to shrink and recede rapidly. He reaches out for Inanna, fingers just brushing hers before he vanishes.

Inanna collapses forward, grasping at empty air where Windo stood, sobbing his name. Herm rushes to catch her; both stare in shock and despair at the space their friend occupied moments ago.

The two Triplets and the Matriarch follow close behind.

Echoing female laughter fills the temple as the Bloodied Woman's silhouette stretches impossibly thin, pulled into the eye of godhood.

Envy also steps toward the swirling breach, staring at his brothers as he is raptured. He speaks without moving his lips, the voice ethereal and hollow.

ENVY

Forgive me, Brothers.

The last sight Inanna and Herm have of this scene is Tiamat's serpentine silhouette and Envy's form dissolving into the vortex, leaving.

The light snaps off and the Town Square is eerily empty except for themselves, the ruins, and an ominous quiet. Inanna clasps the necklace in her hand, the shard glows and pulses and transforms from blue-gold to amber.

INT. THE VORTEX

Windo hurtles through a kaleidoscope of light and shadow before landing with a heavy thud.

EXT. SHAMBALA TOWN SQUARE

Windo finds himself in what looks like the same Town Square of Shambala - but in this reality, Shambala is a drastically different place. This is similar to Inanna's dream: Shambala glowing under a red sky.

Windo rises unsteadily, adjusting his hat, eyes wide taking in the scenery. This is Shambala alright, but nothing destroyed. In fact, this Shambala appears far more developed.

Windo notices Herm's bar. Much fancier architecture. A beautiful neon sign. Much more unsavory patrons. Windo enters the bar. The patrons are too busy with their own debauchery to take much notice of him.

Herm is tending bar, but they appear much more sullen. Darker. Windo calls out in relief.

WINDO

Herm!

Herm wheels around and looks at Windo with confusion and suspicion. Windo is taken aback by the hardness in Herm's eyes.

Windo notices the Gunslinger effigies strewn about the bar. Effigies that once showed an ambiguous saint now show an unfamiliar depiction of the Gunslinger, one that looks menacing and domineering. A version of Windo, but one that appears to be much older.

Confused but alert, Herm grabs Windo by the elbow and ushers him into a back room.

INT. HERM'S BAR - BACK ROOM - NIGHT (ALTERNATE SHAMBALA)

The back room is dark, smoky, lined with dusty bottles and outdated tech. Herm slams the door behind them.

HERM

(low, cutting)

Who are you and what are you doing here?

WINDO

(confused, earnest)

It's me. It's Windo. We were there
together—at the Hollow, the
Gate—you handed me the plan.

Herm doesn't speak. Instead, they reach beneath the desk
and pull out a long, curved knife. Windo steps back.

WINDO

Herm--

HERM

Whatever you're playing at-- Who
the hell are you really?

WINDO

(quietly)

I thought I died in the storm.

BEAT. Herm lowers the blade slightly.

HERM

Most of us didn't make it. You
did. But you weren't the same.

BEAT.

**INT. FLASHBACK - SHAMBALA BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT (ALT
TIMELINE)**

A version of Windo, older, eyes hollow, stands over the
Judge's split carcass. Towering behind Windo is the crystal
dragon form of Tiamat. Next to him, arms around his
shoulders, is the Bloodied Woman.

BACK TO SCENE:

WINDO
I'm not him.

HERM
(quietly)
You're close enough.

BEAT.

HERM
You need to leave.

WINDO
Not until I understand where I am.
Where's Inanna?

Herm stiffens. Pain flickers across their features.

HERM
She didn't survive. Not here.

Windo sinks. The room spins.

HERM
You showed no mercy. And it cost
her.

WINDO
(gutted)
No--

Herm watches him quietly. A long silence.

HERM
(low)
If you're really not him--

BEAT.

HERM

Then maybe you can help fix what's
been broken.

INT. BELL TOWER - OBSERVATORY - SAME TIME

A silhouetted figure watches Shambala from above. A duster coat. Scorched leather. He places a revolver on the table beside him. The Saint's relic, but glowing a different color. Undulating. Glowing crimson red.

MATCH

CUT:

EXT. HERM'S BAR - NIGHT

Herm leads Windo out of the bar. He wears a long coat, its hood drawn and obscuring his face. As Windo steps out onto the Square amongst the residents he observes a figure up above at the Bell Tower, the figures silhouette black against the red sky.

It is ALTERNATE WINDO. His face is cracked like worn stone. Fire flickers in his eyes.

He watches the city below, expression unreadable.

From a distance Windo looks upon the silhouette of this alternate version of himself. His jaw clenches, his fists tighten.

WINDO
(quietly)
It's not over.

SMASH TO
BLACK.