

ROWAN

Well I'm right here, come do it.

CHAMPION

See that I won't--

ROWAN

Do it.

Champion rears up, he yanks at his bindings. He flails, and falls over, on top of Rowan.

ROWAN

That's what I thought. There's two things I want out of you. First on, who's idea was it to come out here in the first place?

CHAMPION

I was serving the King--

ROWAN

Horseshit. What, you're only a turncoat when you're fucking Haddock in the ass? And don't spin some nonsense about protecting the realm or something like that, who's idea was it Champion?

CHAMPION

What's the second thing you wanted. Make it quick.

Rowan blushes, and turns away from Champion.

ROWAN

Hell or high water, I'm not dying a virgin.

Champion rears up on his bound knees.

ROWAN

What? Oh please don't tell me you're not gay, like I'm gonna believe that.

CHAMPION

Haddock was in disguise.

ROWAN

Oh sure he was, and I'm sure I looked very womanly last night when you told me your deepest, darkest secrets.

CHAMPION

Shut up.

Rowan rears up on his knees, and leans in towards Champion.

ROWAN

Make me.

Champion huffs. He flops himself over facing away from Rowan.

ROWAN

You're a coward, Champion.

EXT. LARGE SLOT CANYON - DAY

A huge audience of Bandits stands before a stage. Champion and Rowan are bound to posts atop it. Haddock the Snake, adorned in ceremonial garb, emerges to cheers and adulation.

HADDOCK

Good morning you loathsome devils you!

The cheers increase.

HADDOCK

You've all suffered hard and come far to be here. Chased from your homelands. Cast into wilderness unknown. But today we stand on the precipice of victory! The City of Clay waits like a pig on the spit. A new stronghold to safeguard you from your harassers. A new treasure trove, ripe for the plundering. And before us we have it's chief protector!

(He points to Champion)

So what do you say to Clay's ever stoic Champion? What do you say to their steadfast savior? Their ever watchful protector?

Cheers and boos come up from the audience.

HADDOCK

And what do you say to him...

(Haddock pulls out Champion's sword)

As your inaugural kill!?

The cheers increase.

HADDOCK

As your inaugural sacrifice to usher in your new age?

The cheers increase more.

HADDOCK

Well it sounds like you'd like that.

The cheers increase more.

HADDOCK

Alright then!

Haddock swings around to Champion, he presses the sword to Champion's throat.

HADDOCK

Well this is it darling. You know there's still one shot left. I've got the crowd all riled up. I could turn them around pretty easily.

A faint mechanical sound is heard, the crowd's cheers begin to dim.

HADDOCK

Just imagine it. I pantomime hearing something from you, then I turn around and proclaim 'what a sudden twist of fate' he's decided to join us after all.'

The mechanical sound grows, the crowd's cheers dim some more.

HADDOCK

I was going to kill you in that tent you know, when we shared that little night together. What you said about King John of course, that's what really saved you. But oh, your strength, your virility, that almost did it all on it's own. We could be legendary you and I, not just on the battlefield but in the bedroom as well--

The mechanical sound stops. The crowd is silent.

ROWAN

Haddock.

HADDOCK

Oh what the fuck do you want?

ROWAN

That's not...that's not with you is it?

Haddock and Champion look towards the crowd. A tank idles in the middle of the gathered Bandits. The Bandits have cleared a space around it, they point their weapons at it.

HADDOCK

Oh how I wish it was.

The tank opens up with it's machine guns. Pink mist erupts from dozen Bandits as they're eviscerated by the bullets. The rest scatter in random directions. There is screaming and hollering.

HADDOCK

(to Champion)

Till next time darling, spare a thought for me, would you?

Haddock retreats with Champion's sword in hand.

TEOTHECOTLE and NOUVEAU TULSAN appear over the lip of the canyon. They brandish bolt action rifles and fire at the scattering bandits. They descend the canyon wall. A pair of armored personal carriers appear.

The bandits flee as the Soldiers enter the camp. A squad of Soldiers approach the stage. They are lead by JULIA REYES, 30 female, tall and academic, and JUNTUUL NAAT, 65 male, short and portly. Reyes wears glasses.

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

You are the one they call Champion, right?

ROWAN

What did he say?

The Soldiers free Champion and Rowan, Rowan staggers backwards, the Soldiers work to calm him.

REYES

My friend was asking if this man is Champion, of the City of Clay. Well friend, are you?

CHAMPION

Who are you?

REYES

I am Lieutenant Julia Reyes of the Nouveau Tulsan Civic Guard. This is my commanding officer, Juntuul Nat, 3rd level aj ts'iib of the Teothecotle Barracuda Warrior Band. We were sent here to retrieve you, given your situation we had to come in loud, and I apologize if we startled you.

ROWAN

Startled? You just liquefied a bunch of guys with a...what even is that thing?

REYES

We call it a 'tank'.

ROWAN

A tank of what?

REYES

It's an ancestral name, it's an armored weapons platform.

CHAMPION

Reyes. Who sent you?

REYES

We were dispatched by the Queen of Argillaceous.

ROWAN

The what?

REYES

This is all going to be very confusing, but you can trust us that everything is well in hand. Both of you have been through a lot, we have nurses and supplies, and we're headed back to the City of Clay. If you come with us, our nurses will attend to you, and we can be back in Clay in a matter of hours.

ROWAN

Hours?

REYES

Yes, let the nurses tend to you and we'll explain.

CHAMPION

And if we don't?

Juntuul chuckles.

JUNTUUL

(In Yucatan Mayan)

This one doesn't go limp in the net,
right?

CHAMPION

I don't appreciate being spoken to in
an unknown tongue.

REYES

No no, it's fine, he's saying he likes
you. Champion we're a day and a half's
walk from Clay. We're happy to leave
you supplies if you want to make the
walk, but if you come with us you'll
make it a lot faster.

ROWAN

How fast? You said hours.

REYES

Just four.

ROWAN

How's that possible?

REYES

These are motor vehicles. I understand
they're a novelty in this region.

ROWAN

Novelty? I didn't know that was
possible!

REYES

Well, let's give you an introduction.

Rowan heads toward the APCs with Reyes. Juntuul and
Champion exchange glances. Champion grunts and moves
towards the APCs.

JUNTUUL

(to nurses, in Yucatan Mayan)

Nurses! Break out the spare rations!
We've got a protein hound here!

Champion and Rowan climb into the back of an APC with
Rowan, Juntuul and some NURSES. Covered trucks clamor into
view, the Soldiers clamor into the trucks and into the
other APC.

INT. APC - LATER

Champion sits near the front with Juntuul, Reyes, and the DRIVER. Rowan leans forward from the seats behind them while a Nurse attempts to treat one of his wounds.

ROWAN

So it's like a mill wheel.

REYES

Well no, okay kind of, it's kind of like a mill wheel. The important part to understand is the pistons are pushed by the expansion from the fuel combusting, that's why it's called internal combustion.

ROWAN

That's crazy. And hey, I had another question actually. What do you call these?

Rowan points to Reyes' glasses.

REYES

Oh, these are my glasses. Here take a look.

Reyes removes his glasses and hands them to Rowan.

REYES

Just be careful they're delicate

ROWAN

Of course.

Rowan examines them.

ROWAN

What are they for?

REYES

I have trouble seeing long distances, they help correct my vision.

Rowan tries on the glasses. He takes them off.

ROWAN

That's crazy, I can't see anything.

REYES

Yes well they only work for me because of how my eyes work, you can see distances just fine so you don't need them.

Rowan hands back the glasses.

REYES

Here, Champion, take a look at them.

Champion takes the glasses.

ROWAN

(to Reyes)

You know they kind of remind me of a reading stone.

REYES

Oh yes, my grandfather used a reading stone. It's the same technology, but we can forge the lenses for these to design

Champion tries on the glasses, he glances out the window. He startles back, he throws the glasses across the APC Cabin.

ROWAN

Champion! Those are delicate!

REYES

No, it's find did you see where they went?

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

They landed up here, do you see?

DRIVER

(in Yucatan Mayan)

Yes yes, they're at my foot. Hold on a moment.

The driver fishes up the glasses.

ROWAN

Why'd you do that?

CHAMPION

She's a witch. There's a hex on those things.

ROWAN

No, Champion, it's like a reading stone.

The Driver hands the glasses to Reyes.

REYES

They're just curved pieces glass, fitted to match my eyes. Did you spend a lot of time indoors when you were a young child, champion?

CHAMPION

So what if I did?

REYES

A lack of direct sunlight in your early years can change how your eyes grow. There's nothing magical about them, we just have similar eyes. Here, try them again, we're almost to the city.

Reyes extends the glasses to Champion.

REYES

It's okay, just be careful with them, they're glass.

Champion puts on the glasses. He looks out the window. His eyes dart across the landscape.

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

Here it is, the city of trouble.

REYES

We're here.

Everyone in the cabin looks forward. The city comes into view, columns of smoke rise from the city. Magenta banners hand from the walls.

ROWAN

Fire!

REYES

That's nothing to worry about.

Champion rises in his seat. He bumps his head. He sees the top hatch of the APC, he struggles with the lever.

REYES

Champion, here.

Reyes opens the lever. Champion opens the top hatch and strands up.

EXT. CITY OF CLAY - CONTINUOUS

Champion watches the city around him as the convoy approaches the gate.

Atop the gates are several CITIZENS. Many of them brandish improvised weapons. Others carry bolt action rifles. Many wear Magenta scarfs and sashes. They see and cheer for Champion.

REYES

I'm glad to see them on the parapets. I was worried about the city guard.

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

What did I tell you? The city guard captain knows where his food comes from, right?

The convoy enters the city. Champion looks around. The streets are full of Citizens. They carry improvised weapons and rifles. They have magenta scarves and sashes. Magenta banners hang out of windows and across shopkeepers stalls.

The Citizens cluster around the convoy and cheer for Champion. Juntuul leans out the window and turns towards the trucks.

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

Get some bodies up here for crowd control! The big boy is a celebrity!

Some soldiers jump out of their trucks and rush in front of the lead APC, they push people off to the sides so the convoy can move through.

A young boy jumps onto the APC from a 2nd story window. He wraps a magenta sash around Champion. A soldier pulls him off. Champion takes off the sash and examines it.

The convoy rattles up to the palace. Smoke billows from behind it. Magenta banners hang in every possible place. There are signs of a recent fire in many of the windows

REYES

Well if those fires are out, what's burning now?

JUNTUUL

(in Yucatan Mayan)

Furniture, probably, furniture and bodies.

The APC stops. Reyes, Juntuul and Rowan climb out. Champion is the last out.

They ascend the stairs. Citizens and Soldiers mill about, carrying boxes and wounded men.

At the top of the stairs Champion sees the bodies of the Royal Guard and several Courtesans strewn about the courtyard. A few Citizens and Soldiers drag bodies away.

The Consort emerges from the palace flanked by an entourage of Courtesans. The Consort wears military garb that

resembles a Tulsan uniform, but in all shades of Magenta. The Consort also wears gloves with her uniform. The entourage are also clothes in Magenta robes.

THE CONSORT (QUEEN)

Champion!

She rushes to Champion and embraces him.

THE CONSORT (QUEEN)

I'm so glad you're safe. You've come at the perfect time. Come, quickly come.

The Queen leads Champion into the Palace. All follow, including some Citizens and Soldiers.

INT. THE PALACE THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Queen leads Champion through the throne room with Reyes, Juntuul, Rowan, and all the rest behind them. There are multiple bodies of Courtesans, Guards, soldiers and citizens on the floor. Citizens and soldiers drag them away while other Citizens hang magenta banners.

In the center of the room, King John sits bound and gagged to a chair. He is bloody. Citizens with rifles surround him.

The Queen leads Champion up to King John, all gather around.

QUEEN

I saved him for you Champion. It always had to be you.

Champion looks down at King John. John stares back.

CHAMPION

I'm unarmed.

QUEEN

Oh my! Someone quickly, a sword, a knife, anything!

A Solider pops the bayonet off of his rifle and hands it to Champion.

Champion takes the bayonet and examines it.

SOLDIER

It's a Bayonet, it's a dagger.

QUEEN

It's called a Bayonet, Champion.

Champion steps forward with the bayonet in his hand. A Citizen removes King John's gag.