

# 400 Years of Shadows

Written by

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EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - SUNRISE

A sliver of sun crests the horizon, spilling gold over a valley quilted with olive trees. A cluster of whitewashed homes clings to the hillside—blue shutters flung open like waking eyes.

The breeze carries the scent of earth and salt. A solitary church bell rings, its clear tone rippling across the fields, signaling morning prayer. Stillness. Sacred.

INT. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - DAWN

Candles sputter in brass holders. Their glow dances across weathered icons—faces of saints gazing out with solemn grace.

Villagers fill the pews in silence. Scarves pulled tight. Shoulders hunched from more than cold.

FATHER ANDREAS (50s) stands before them. His robe is threadbare, his presence not. Eyes soft. Haunted. Steady.

He lifts the Bible—edges worn, pages thin as breath. His hands tremble, but his voice does not.

FATHER ANDREAS

In the shadow of fear, we remember  
who we are.

A pause. The sound of wind rattling the shutters. A candle flickers out. A child clasps her mother's hand.

Still, they pray. Together.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A low drone of boots rises on the breeze.

Over the hill—Ottoman soldiers in gleaming armor descend in formation, the morning sun bouncing off steel like fire. Dust kicks around their heels.

At the front, GENERAL HASAN (40s) rides with rigid control. His face, carved from stone. Eyes scanning the village like a predator measuring breath before a kill.

He lifts a hand. Sharp. Calculated. The column splits—soldiers fan out like a net.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Chaos detonates. Doors smashed open. Screams slice the silence. The village is no longer a village—it's prey.

MONTAGE - THE INVASION:

— BOOTS CRASH through a wooden door. It SPLINTERS. A family SHRIEKS inside.

— A WOMAN is ripped from her doorway, screaming. Her two children cling to each other, wailing—paralyzed by helpless terror.

— A MAN tries to resist. A fist caves in his jaw. He's dragged, bleeding, toward the square.

— A LITTLE BOY (8) buries himself in his mother's skirts. Her arms tighten protectively around him, even as her tears fall soundlessly.

— An ELDERLY MAN clutches a Greek cross at his chest. A soldier RIPS it away. The man gasps. The cross hits the dirt with a dull clink.

END MONTAGE.

The square fills with captives. Eyes wide. Hope already fading.

In the distance, bells still ring, but now they sound like mourning.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The liturgy falters.

Distant shouts echo through the stone walls—sharp, brutal. Father Andreas freezes mid-prayer. The candlelight flickers against his face.

The villagers turn to him, panic blooming in their eyes.

VILLAGER  
(whispering, trembling)  
They've come... again.

Father Andreas lowers the Bible. His voice drops, urgent.

FATHER ANDREAS  
Hide the children. Hide the books.  
Quickly!

He rushes to the altar, drops to his knees, and pulls open a hidden panel beneath it. Inside—fragile scrolls and handwritten Greek textbooks, bundled and worn from generations of secret use.

Villagers spring into motion—tucking parchment under shawls, sliding books beneath robes. A child hugs a scroll to his chest like a lifeline.

The bells still ring—but now they sound like warnings.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Villagers on their knees. Dust clings to sweat. Breath shallow. Fear choking the air.

General Hasan dismounts with quiet command. His boots crunch across the dirt as he surveys the submissive crowd.

His voice is calm. Almost bored.

GENERAL HASAN

You cling to your language. Your  
faith. Your... illusions of  
freedom.

(pauses, cold)

But none of these will save you.

General Hasan gestures to his soldiers. Subtle. Final.

The Ottoman soldiers ignite the homes. Flames bloom. Icons shatter under boots.

From the smoke, a YOUNG GIRL (12) stumbles forward, clutching a carved wooden relic—weathered but clearly sacred. She holds it tight, shielding it with her small body.

A soldier strides over and rips it from her hands. No hesitation. No mercy. He hurls the relic into the fire.

The girl screams. Not loud—but sharp. Piercing.

Behind her, the sky darkens with smoke.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Screams ripple through the stone walls. Father Andreas listens, unmoving. His eyes close. Lips part in prayer.

He opens his eyes and turns to Nikolaos, a young man in his twenties—nervous but alert.

FATHER ANDREAS  
(quietly)  
Take the children. You know where.

Nikolaos nods. No words. Just action. He moves quickly behind the altar, revealing a narrow stone passage. The children follow, hushed and afraid, disappearing into the hidden dark.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The doors burst open.

Ottoman soldiers flood the sanctuary, their boots hammering against the stone. Candles topple. The last of the silence shatters.

They seize Father Andreas. Drag him outside.

In the square, the villagers gasp as their priest is thrust to his knees. A soldier holds a curved blade to his neck.

General Hasan steps forward, face unreadable. He leans in.

GENERAL HASAN  
Where is your God now? Will He save  
you?

Father Andreas lifts his chin. His voice is steady.

FATHER ANDREAS  
He is here, in every heart that  
remembers.

A flicker in Hasan's eyes—then a smirk. He nods to a nearby soldier.

The scimitar rises.

From the edge of the square, hidden in the shadows, Nikolaos watches. His fists clench. Jaw tight. Helpless.

Father Andreas doesn't flinch. He closes his eyes. Breathes. And prays.

The sword begins to fall—

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Flames devour the village. Roofs collapse in showers of sparks. Smoke churns into the sky like a curse.

The screams of the villagers clash with the victorious shouts of the Ottoman soldiers—chaos echoing off the mountains.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

In the dark woods beyond the firelight, a handful of survivors crouch beneath the trees. Faces streaked with ash. Eyes hollow.

Nikolaos stares through the branches, jaw set. Beside him, MARIA, 18, his younger sister—fierce despite the tears still drying on her cheeks. She leans closer.

MARIA  
(whispering)  
What do we do now?

Nikolaos doesn't look at her.

NIKOLAOS  
We fight.

His words drop like stone in water.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Faint firelight flickers on the horizon, casting a dull orange glow behind the trees. The smoldering village is distant now, but its devastation lingers in the air like smoke.

Crickets chirp—restless, off-rhythm. Even nature seems uneasy.

Nikolaos pushes through the underbrush, face streaked with soot. Maria follows close, along with ten other survivors—tired, bloodied, silent. Grief clings to them like the ash on their skin.

Nikolaos scans the shadows, alert. Every snapped twig beneath their feet makes him tense.

MARIA  
(quietly)  
Do you think they'll follow?

NIKOLAOS  
Not tonight. They'll be too busy  
stealing what's left of our lives.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The group stumbles into a small clearing. Some drop to the earth without a word, too drained to stand.

KYRIAKOS, late 60s, frail but still burning with fragments of spirit, leans against a tree, coughing into his sleeve.

KYRIAKOS

We... we should have surrendered.  
Maybe... maybe they would have spared  
the children.

Nikolaos turns sharply. His voice is low, but it cuts.

NIKOLAOS

And then what, Kyriakos? Watch them  
burn our church? March our sons  
into their wars and our daughters  
into their beds?  
(softer now)  
We've been surrendering for  
generations. What has it given us?

He looks away.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Chains.

Silence swells. No one disagrees.

Maria steps beside him. She touches his shoulder, grounding him.

MARIA

Let him be, Nikos. He's lost as much  
as we have.

Nikolaos exhales, barely a breath. The night thickens around them.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The survivors huddle close, breath ghosting in the cold air. A faint wind stirs the leaves. For a moment, the world quiets.

ELENI, 30s, a healer and mother, holds her young son close. Her voice is soft, but steady.

ELENI

Close your eyes, Petros. The night  
will keep us safe.

She hums a gentle Greek lullaby. The sound floats through the trees—thin but warm.

Around her, faces listen. Eyes shimmer with sorrow... and the faintest flicker of hope.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT NIGHT

A small, hidden fire glows under a canopy of branches—barely more than embers. The makeshift camp breathes in silence.

Nikolaos crouches near the fire, sharpening a blade with slow, focused strokes. Maria sits beside him, her features lit by orange flicker.

MARIA

What's the plan?

Nikolaos doesn't meet her eyes.

NIKOLAOS

We go to the mountains. Find others like us. Build something stronger.

MARIA

And then what? We can't win against them, Nikos. Not like this.

He finally looks at her.

NIKOLAOS

We don't have to win today. We just have to survive.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Kyriakos speaks softly to a few nearby survivors. His voice is worn but resolute. He clutches a small wooden cross in both hands, knuckles pale.

KYRIAKOS

They want us to forget. Our language, our faith, our history. But they can't take it if we don't give it to them.

His hands tremble as he raises the cross, eyes glinting in the firelight.

KYRIAKOS (CONT'D)

This... is how we fight. In whispers,  
in the dark, we teach our children  
who they are. So none of us forget.

From the shadows, Nikolaos watches. His gaze shifts from Kyriakos to the others—Eleni holding Petros close, a teen helping an elder adjust a bandage.

Nikolaos grips his knife tighter. Then he steps forward into the firelight.

NIKOLAOS

Kyriakos is right. The Ottomans  
think they've won, but they don't  
understand what we are.

He walks slowly around the fire, stopping briefly at each face.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We'll speak our language. We'll  
pray to our God. We'll remember and  
when the time comes... we'll show  
them we're still here.

In the trees, Maria watches her brother—unseen. Her eyes shimmer with pride. And fear.

A sharp crack of branches interrupts the moment.

Everyone freezes.

Nikolaos raises his hand—knife ready. Eyes narrowed. He gestures for Maria to move closer.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

(whispering)  
Put out the fire.

Dirt is flung over the flames. Smoke curls upward—then nothing. Darkness swallows the clearing.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The survivors crouch in stillness. Breath shallow. Every heartbeat feels too loud.

Beyond the trees—torchlight flickers. Ottoman soldiers move through the woods, slow and methodical. Shadows stretch with every step.

Nikolaos crouches low, knife clenched tight, his eyes locked on the glowing edge of a torch.

A boot appears just feet from where they hide. One soldier pauses—listening. He sweeps the torch left, then right.

Beat. He turns away. Moves on.

The light fades. Silence returns. No one moves. But something new settles in the dark. Resolve.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT NIGHT

The survivors release a collective breath. Tension melts into exhaustion.

Nikolaos scans their faces—worn, frightened, still trembling from what almost was. His jaw tightens. Something inside him solidifies.

NIKOLAOS

This is why we fight. So our  
children never have to hide again.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

The survivors climb a narrow, winding trail through the mist-covered mountains. Gray clouds stretch across the sky. Sunlight barely touches the earth.

Nikolaos leads the way, shoulders heavy, steps deliberate. The weight of leadership is visible in every movement.

Maria steadies Eleni, who carries Petros—his small arms wrapped tight around her neck, eyes shut against the cold.

Nikolaos surveys the horizon, face drawn and wind-chapped. His grip tightens on the blade in his hand.

MARIA

You don't have to look so grim,  
Nikos. It's not like they'll follow  
us up here.

NIKOLAOS

They will. They always do.

Maria exhales, defeated.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

The trail opens to a high plateau. From here, the valley stretches wide beneath them.

Far in the distance—smoke curls up from the ruins of their village, a bruise on the landscape.

The survivors halt. Some collapse where they stand. Others simply stare, hollow-eyed, at what used to be home.

Their silhouettes are small against the endless expanse of mountain and sky—fragile, exposed.

Kyriakos drops to his knees and makes the sign of the cross.

KYRIAKOS

Lord, give us strength.

Maria steps closer to Nikolaos, voice low.

MARIA

We can't keep going like this. They need food. Rest.

NIKOLAOS

There's a cave nearby. We'll stop there.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The group approaches a jagged, weather-worn cave, half-hidden by shrubs and twisted roots. Wind howls over the ridge, but here—there's shelter.

Nikolaos parts the foliage with his forearm, revealing the narrow entrance. He turns to the others.

NIKOLAOS

It's not much, but it'll keep us hidden for now.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A faint fire flickers against damp stone, casting long shadows across the walls. The survivors sit close, wrapped in silence and exhaustion.

Petros sleeps curled in Eleni's arms. His cheeks glow in the firelight.

Kyriakos carves a small wooden cross, his trembling hands working with quiet devotion.

KYRIAKOS

(murmuring)

When I was a boy, my father told me stories of the old heroes. Men like Leonidas and Themistocles. They fought against impossible odds, too.

MARIA

And they won.

KYRIAKOS

Not always. But their stories lived on. That's how we survived-through the stories.

Nikolaos stares into the flames, unmoving. His knife rests in his lap, knuckles white around the hilt.

Maria watches him carefully. The fire reflects in her eyes.

MARIA

You can't carry all of this alone, Nikos.

NIKOLAOS

I don't have a choice.

MARIA

Yes, you do. We all do.

Nikolaos looks at her. His eyes burn—grief barely contained beneath the surface.

NIKOLAOS

Do we? Every time I close my eyes, I see Father Andreas. I see the others. I see what they did to our home.

He stops. His voice catches.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

If I don't fight, who will?

MARIA

Fighting doesn't mean you have to do it alone.

A scraping sound echoes from deeper in the cave. Stone against stone. Everyone stiffens.

Nikolaos stands, knife in hand. He raises a finger for silence. The fire dims.

He steps slowly toward the mouth of the cave, footsteps light and deliberate. Breath tight in his chest. Darkness waiting.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Nikolaos peers into the shadows. Moonlight filters through jagged clouds, casting uneasy silhouettes across the rocks.

The sound comes again—closer. A rustle of gravel. A breath.

From the dark, a man steps forward—middle-aged, unshaven, bloodied. His clothes are torn from travel, his face gaunt with exhaustion. LUKAS (40s), raises his hands.

LUKAS

Don't kill me. I'm Greek.

Nikolaos doesn't lower the knife.

NIKOLAOS

Prove it.

Lukas reaches slowly into his coat and pulls out a small icon of Saint George. He holds it up, hand trembling.

Nikolaos stares at it. Then at him. Finally, he lowers the blade.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Come inside.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Lukas sits near the fire, hunched, devouring a piece of dry bread handed to him by Eleni. The others watch in silence. Tension still lingers.

ELENI

Who are you?

LUKAS

A soldier... or I was. Fought with the rebels down south.

Lukas swallows hard, his face grim.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

We held the pass near Thermopylae. Thought we could slow them down.

(MORE)

LUKAS (CONT'D)

(beat)

It wasn't enough.

Nikolaos leans in, searching his face.

NIKOLAOS

What happened?

LUKAS

They butchered us. Every man who fought. The ones who surrendered... they weren't so lucky.

ELENI

(softly)

I'm so sorry.

The fire crackles. No one speaks. Even Kyriakos lowers his eyes.

LUKAS

I escaped. Barely. Been hiding ever since. Heard whispers of others like me in the mountains. Thought maybe...

(to Nikolaos)

Maybe we still have a chance.

Nikolaos holds his gaze. Then nods—once.

NIKOLAOS

We do.

He rises, facing the group now. His voice steadies, gaining strength.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We'll find the others. Gather them. Train. And when the time is right... we'll show them what it means to be free.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EARLY MORNING

The survivors, now joined by Lukas, navigate a treacherous mountain pass. The rising sun casts long shadows across the jagged cliffs. Below—endless valleys, scarred by smoke and distant Ottoman banners.

Nikolaos leads, eyes sweeping the horizon. Lukas walks beside him, pointing up toward a craggy ridge. Lukas gestures ahead.

LUKAS

There's a rebel camp beyond that ridge. Hidden in the cliffs. If we can reach it, we'll have more men... maybe enough to strike back.

NIKOLAOS

How many?

LUKAS

Not enough to fight them head-on.  
But enough to survive.

The path narrows to a ledge barely wide enough for two feet. A sheer drop yawns to one side.

Petros grips his mother's hand, eyes fixed on the edge. Eleni whispers to him, reassuring but tense.

Maria glances down. Her face drains of color. She squeezes Petros's hand tighter.

MARIA

Don't look down, sweet boy. Just keep walking.

A rock slips under Kyriakos's boot and tumbles down the cliff. They all freeze.

The sound echoes—then fades. Silence.

Then—hoofbeats. Distant. Approaching. Nikolaos and Lukas lock eyes.

LUKAS

Ottoman patrol.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

The group scrambles up the rocks, ducking behind boulders and sparse shrubs.

Nikolaos crouches low, hand raised for silence. The sound of hooves grows louder.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - SAME TIME

Six Ottoman horsemen ride along the trail below—blades strapped, rifles slung, banners whipping in the wind.

The captain at their front raises a fist. The patrol halts. He scans the cliffs. Sharp-eyed. Suspicious.

His gaze catches a patch of disturbed earth. His hand drifts to the hilt of his sword.

CAPTAIN  
They were here.

The captain signals to his men, who dismount and begin searching the area.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

The survivors press against the cliff face, breath shallow. Below, Ottoman soldiers spread out like a net tightening.

Maria holds Petros close. He buries his face in her chest, trembling.

Lukas leans toward Nikolaos, his whisper barely audible.

LUKAS  
We can't let them report back.

NIKOLAOS  
Take the high ground. I'll distract them.

Lukas nods once, then slips away, climbing with practiced care. Nikolaos tightens his grip on the knife, steeling himself.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos emerges from behind a boulder, deliberately stepping on loose rocks to draw attention. CAPTAIN HARUN (30s), immediately spots him.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
(shouting)  
There!

Soldiers rush toward Nikolaos, steel drawn. Nikolaos turns and bolts, leading them away from the group.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos runs full tilt along a jagged path. Rocks tumble under his feet. Branches claw at his arms. The chase drums behind him—footsteps, shouts, the hiss of swords drawn.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE - CONTINUOUS

Lukas kneels behind a stone outcrop, his improvised bow drawn tight. He exhales slowly.

Releases.

The arrow whistles through the air and strikes a soldier in the throat. The man falls soundlessly.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos turns, cornered by two soldiers. He lashes forward, slicing one across the chest. Blood sprays the rocks.

The second soldier lunges—Nikolaos blocks the blow, blade screeching against blade.

Their struggle grinds into the cliff wall, each blow desperate and brutal. Above, Captain Harun watches, barking orders.

CAPTAIN  
Surround him!

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

From behind the rocks, Maria watches Nikolaos struggle. Her fear burns into action.

She snatches up a jagged stone—hurls it with all her strength.

The rock strikes a soldier's helmet with a dull clang. He stumbles, dazed.

MARIA  
Get away from him!

Nikolaos seizes the moment. He lunges forward and kicks the stunned soldier—sending him over the cliff's edge.

The scream fades into the abyss.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Lukas fires another arrow. The final soldier collapses, a silent heap on the rocks.

Nikolaos turns—bloodied, chest heaving—to find himself face to face with the last threat: the captain.

They lock eyes. The captain raises his sword.

Nikolaos charges with a roar—knife driving deep into the captain's chest.

The man gasps, stumbles, then drops to his knees. Falls.

Nikolaos stands over the corpse, shaking, blood on his hands, breath ragged.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - LATER

The group regathers, shaken but alive. Nikolaos cleans his blade against a patch of moss. His face unreadable.

Maria steps toward him.

MARIA

You could've been killed.

NIKOLAOS

So could all of us if they'd gotten back to their camp.

He glances at the bodies. The weight of it anchors his posture.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We can't stay here. Let's move.

They disappear into the shadows of the mountain trail.

A final shot lingers—

The captain's lifeless face, blood spreading across the stone beneath him.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT

The group approaches a hidden camp carved into the cliffs. Torchlight flickers across makeshift barricades and worn canvas tents. Armed rebels move through the shadows, silent and watchful.

Nikolaos steps forward. He raises his hands to show he is unarmed.

NIKOLAOS

We're Greeks. Seeking shelter.

From the firelight steps a broad-shouldered man—GENERAL STAVROS, 50s, with eyes like cold iron. His hand rests on the hilt of his sword.

STAVROS  
Greeks, or spies? The Turks have  
worn our faces before.

Lukas emerges beside Nikolaos.

LUKAS  
Stavros, it's me. Lukas.

Stavros squints. Then—recognition breaks through suspicion. He grabs Lukas's arm with a grunt of surprise.

STAVROS  
You're alive? Thought they left  
your bones in Thermopylae.

LUKAS  
They almost did. These people  
pulled me out.

Stavros studies the group. His posture eases, if only slightly.

STAVROS  
Then you're welcome here. For now.

INT. REBEL CAMP/MAIN TENT - LATER

A crude map of Greece lies spread across a splintered table. Candles drip wax as torches dance against canvas walls.

Nikolaos and Stavros sit across from each other. Battle lines and supply routes crisscross the map.

Stavros taps a region thick with red markings.

STAVROS  
We're scattered—pockets of men  
hiding in hills, striking when we  
can. But the Ottomans? They're  
unified. Armed. Fed. They've got a  
machine. We've got scraps.

NIKOLAOS  
Then we hit the parts that keep the  
machine running—supply chains,  
bridges, choke points. Not with  
numbers. With purpose.

STAVROS

That's the game we've played for years. Still, they push forward.

NIKOLAOS

Not like this.

Nikolaos grabs a chunk of charcoal and circles a small Ottoman outpost near their location.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

This one supplies the garrison in Tripoli. Cut it off—they're stranded. We strike, and we send a message: we're done hiding.

Stavros stares at the mark. Then at Nikolaos. A long beat. He smirks.

STAVROS

You've got fire, boy. But fire burns fast.

Nikolaos doesn't flinch.

NIKOLAOS

So does silence.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT

Maria sits by the fire, cradling a sleeping Petros beneath a worn blanket. The fire crackles softly. Around her, rebels oil blades and check gear in tense silence.

She glances toward the command tent. Worry shadows her face.

Lukas approaches and settles beside her.

LUKAS

Your brother's got the look of a man ready to set the world on fire.

MARIA

(softly)

He's always been like that. Even as a boy. Always fighting.

LUKAS

That fire's what we need. But it can burn out quickly if you don't stoke it.

MARIA

Then we'll make sure it doesn't.

Lukas follows Maria's gaze to Eleni, who stares into the dark.

LUKAS

(to Maria)

Excuse me for a second.

He rises and crosses to Eleni.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

We all have a lot on our minds.

ELENI

Yes. It never stops, even when I sleep. I hope Petros does not notice.

LUKAS

He knows he has a strong mother.

Eleni offers a faint smile. Her eyes linger on Lukas, warmer now.

ELENI

Thank you, Lukas.

INT. REBEL CAMP/MAIN TENT - CONTINUOUS

Stavros leans back, arms crossed. He watches Nikolaos with a soldier's measure.

STAVROS

Alright, boy. We'll hit your outpost. But you lead the charge. Prove to me you're worth following.

NIKOLAOS

I will.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - MONTAGE

NIKOLAOS (V.O.)

We strike at dawn. Quiet and fast. No mercy for anyone who raises a sword against us.

— Rebels sharpen swords, stringing bows with precision.

— Maria helps pack gunpowder into clay jars—crude explosives with rag-fuse tops.

— Lukas kneels in the dirt, demonstrating how to set tripwire traps. Young fighters copy him, hands shaky but determined.

— Nikolaos traces the outpost layout on a worn scrap of leather, surrounding it with small stones to mark assault points. He speaks quietly to a circle of handpicked rebels.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

The rebels glide silently along a narrow trail. Dawn creeps over the horizon, washing the jagged peaks in cold light.

Nikolaos leads, bow slung, knife at his side. He halts at a ridge—his eyes lock on the Ottoman outpost below.

A modest but fortified cluster of tents and crates. Supply carts. A handful of soldiers.

Lukas steps beside him.

LUKAS

Are you sure about this?

NIKOLAOS

It's not just about the outpost.  
It's about showing them we're still  
here.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - DAWN

The rebels fan out across the high ground. Nikolaos signals. A sharp flick of his hand.

The attack begins.

Arrows slice through the air—sentries collapse without a sound.

A clay jar sails through the sky—smashes against a cart. Flames explode upward, licking the walls.

Nikolaos charges the gate, leading a small squad inside.

Steel clashes. Blades find bone.

Nikolaos moves like he's possessed—calculated, merciless. He drops two soldiers with fluid precision, parries a third, then drives his blade into a throat.

The outpost falls in minutes.

Smoke coils into the morning sky. Rebels rush to gather weapons and food, stripping the outpost bare.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - LATER

Ash settles like snow.

Nikolaos stands amid the wreckage—sweat-streaked, chest rising with every breath.

Stavros steps through the haze, a smirk tugging at his scarred face.

STAVROS

You've earned your place, boy.

He claps Nikolaos on the shoulder.

STAVROS (CONT'D)

We'll follow you.

Nikolaos nods, eyes still locked on the burning crates.

Maria approaches, blood on her hands from tending the wounded.

MARIA

Is this what winning feels like?

A long beat.

NIKOLAOS

No. But it's a start.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

A quiet Greek village sleeps in the valley, moonlight silvering its rooftops.

Too quiet.

An owl calls out. A few windows glow dimly with firelight.

## INT. VILLAGE/HOME - CONTINUOUS

Inside, a dozen villagers—men, women, children—huddle around FATHER DAMIANOS, 60s, gentle but commanding. A single candle flickers, throwing long shadows.

Older children clutch parchment scraps. Greek letters scribbled across them.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Alpha. Beta. Gamma.

The children whisper back, barely louder than breath.

CHILDREN

Alpha. Beta. Gamma.

The priest moves to a hand-drawn Greek flag tacked on the wall. He runs his finger across the faded lines.

FATHER DAMIANOS

This is what they fear. Not our  
swords. Not our numbers. Our  
spirit. Our memory. This is what  
they want to erase.

## EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

An Ottoman patrol slinks into the village. Boots crunch on dry dirt.

CAPTAIN HARUN, cold-eyed and sharp-featured, surveys the homes like a wolf sniffing prey.

CAPTAIN HARUN

Search the homes. Find them.

## INT. VILLAGE/HOME - CONTINUOUS

The whispers die. Heavy boots echo outside. Father Damianos freezes—then gestures quickly.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Hide the children. Now.

Adults spring into motion, lifting loose floorboards to reveal a hidden compartment.

One by one, the older children slip inside, clutching their parchments like sacred relics.

LEONIDAS, 8, wide-eyed, frozen.

Father Damianos kneels, placing a steady hand on the boy's shoulder.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)  
Remember what I taught you. Always.

Leonidas nods, vanishing into the darkness below. The floorboards fall back into place.

CRASH— the front door bursts open.

INT. VILLAGE/HOME - CONTINUOUS

Captain Harun storms in. His soldiers fan out, tearing through cupboards, flipping tables, ripping the crude flag from the wall.

Harun locks eyes with Father Damianos, who stands unmoved.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
(in broken Greek)  
What are you hiding?

FATHER DAMIANOS  
Only our prayers.

Harun scans the room—spots something. A scrap of parchment poking from beneath the table. He picks it up. The Greek alphabet, hand-scribbled in charcoal.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
Prayers, you say?

He doesn't wait for an answer. Nods to a soldier.

CAPTAIN HARUN (CONT'D)  
Burn it.

EXT. VILLAGE - LATER

The adults are dragged into the center of the village.

A bonfire crackles. Parchments—burned, curling—float up like lost voices.

Villagers peer from behind shuttered windows. No one dares speak.

Harun steps forward, his voice slicing the silence.

CAPTAIN HARUN

This is what happens when you defy  
the empire. Your language. Your  
books. Your priests. All of it will  
turn to ash.

He turns to Father Damianos, who stands tall despite the  
ropes binding his hands.

CAPTAIN HARUN (CONT'D)

Do you still have faith, priest?

FATHER DAMIANOS

More than you'll ever understand.

Harun draws his sword. Places it against the priest's throat.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

From the shadows—Nikolaos, Lukas, Maria, and a small rebel  
band watch.

LUKAS

(whispering)

We can't take them all. Too many.

NIKOLAOS

We're not leaving them.

MARIA

We have to do something. He's one  
of us.

Nikolaos scans the square. His eyes land on a cart loaded  
with oil barrels, parked dangerously close to the fire.

An idea strikes.

NIKOLAOS

Get the archers in position. Aim  
for the oil.

He turns to Maria, urgent.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Stay here.

MARIA

No. I'm coming with you.

NIKOLAOS

Maria--

MARIA  
You'll need me.

Nikolaos hesitates, then nods. They vanish into the trees.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Captain Harun raises his sword over Father Damianos. Then—  
THWACK!

An arrow whistles through the air and strikes the oil cart.

BOOM. It explodes into fire and smoke, throwing Ottomans into chaos.

Nikolaos and Maria charge the square under cover of the blast. Nikolaos slices through a soldier's chest. Maria swings a flaming timber at another, knocking him to the ground.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Rebels flood into the square, weapons drawn. Steel clashes. Screams rise.

Villagers join the fight—armed with pitchforks, blades, stones—anything.

Maria frees Father Damianos, whose ropes fall away. He steps forward, voice thunderous.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
For your children! For your faith!  
Fight!

The Ottomans, overwhelmed and stunned, retreat toward the village edge. Harun glares at Nikolaos across the battlefield.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
This isn't over.

He kicks his horse and gallops away, the remaining soldiers fleeing with him.

EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERMATH

Smoke hangs over the square. Bodies and blood stain the cobblestones.

Villagers slowly gather. Relief, fear, pride—all on their faces.

Father Damianos approaches Nikolaos, eyes full of gratitude.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
You saved us.

NIKOLAOS  
No. You saved yourselves.

Nikolaos surveys the village. His voice hardens.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)  
We have to leave. They'll return.  
And not alone.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Families pack hurriedly. Bags slung over shoulders. Children clutch heirlooms. The village begins to vanish.

By the fire's dying glow, Father Damianos kneels. He picks up a scorched piece of parchment—Greek letters, still faint beneath the ash.

Across the square, Eleni approaches Lukas, who's sharpening a blade. She lays a gentle hand on his shoulder. He turns.

ELENI  
They will not win. You made me  
believe that.

LUKAS  
I'm glad you do. But I'm not sure I  
believe it yet.

ELENI  
Yes, you do. You're like my husband  
that way. His soul rests  
peacefully.

LUKAS  
If you don't mind me asking--

ELENI  
(interrupting)  
He was a fighter too, and they  
killed him. But, I have Petros. So  
I still have a piece of him.

LUKAS  
You have me... us. We are family.

She smiles, tired but steady.

ELENI

Then let's not waste what they died  
for.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EARLY MORNING

The villagers—now nearly fifty strong—trudge through the  
dense mountain forest.

Their faces are streaked with dirt and grief. Children cling  
to whatever remnants they could carry: a doll, a scarf, a  
book.

Maria helps an elderly woman carry a bundle of blankets. Near  
the rear, Father Damianos walks slowly with a group of  
children. They cling to him like he's the last piece of  
steady ground.

ELENI

How long can we keep running?

MARIA

As long as it takes.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The group pauses to rest. A stream cuts through the clearing,  
and children splash their faces with the cold water. The  
adults gather nearby, whispering in low, exhausted voices.

On a ridge above, Nikolaos and Lukas scan the valley. Lukas  
points toward a rocky rise in the distance.

LUKAS

There. That ridge leads to an old  
cave system. We used it during the  
last rebellion. It's hidden.  
Defensible. But steep.

NIKOLAOS

We don't have a choice.

Nikolaos looks down at the group—scattered, bone-tired,  
broken.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

They're not soldiers. Most won't  
survive the winter up here.

LUKAS

They will. If you lead them.

Nikolaos doesn't answer.

NIKOLAOS

I'm not a savior, Lukas.

LUKAS

No. But they think you are.

Beat.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

That's what matters.

Lukas walks off, calling to the others to begin the climb.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria approaches Nikolaos as Lukas moves off to prepare the group for the climb.

MARIA

Careful, Nikos. You might start believing your own legend.

NIKOLAOS

They need more than stories, Maria.

MARIA

Stories are why we're still here.  
Father Andreas told us who we are.  
(she meets his eyes)  
Now it's your turn.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - LATER

The group begins the steep climb up the rocky ridge. Lukas and Nikolaos help the slower members, while Maria stays at the back to ensure no one is left behind.

We see a teenage boy offering his hand to help an elderly man climb a ledge. Father Damianos sings a hymn softly to calm the frightened children. Maria carries a young girl who has fallen asleep.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EVENING

The group finally reaches the entrance of the cave system, a jagged opening partially concealed by overgrown vines.

Nikolaos and Lukas step inside first, torches in hand, to ensure it's safe.

Inside, the cave is vast and dark, with natural stone formations creating smaller chambers and tunnels. The group filters in slowly, their footsteps echoing off the damp walls.

NIKOLAOS

This will be our home for now. It's not much, but it'll keep us safe.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A small fire burns in the center of the main chamber, its light casting flickering shadows on the walls. The villagers sit in clusters, eating what little food they've brought.

Nikolaos gathers with Father Damianos, Lukas, and Maria near the fire, discussing their next move.

FATHER DAMIANOS

We can't just hide, Nikolaos. If we disappear into the mountains, they'll destroy everything we leave behind.

LUKAS

The priest is right. If we don't strike back, they'll crush every village, every family that refuses to kneel.

NIKOLAOS

We can't fight them head-on. Not yet.

Nikolaos picks up a stick and begins drawing in the dirt.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

But if we hit them where they don't expect it. Cut their supply lines, disrupt their patrols-we can make them bleed.

MARIA

And what about the villages still standing? We can warn them, help them prepare.

NIKOLAOS

That's the plan.

A young rebel scout, YANNIS (18), eager but inexperienced, rushes into the cave, out of breath.

YANNIS  
Ottoman soldiers. Heading toward  
the next village. A full battalion.

Maria looks over—Yannis has caught her attention. Father Damianos crosses himself, while Maria grabs her bow instinctively.

Yannis, still breathless, fumbles at his belt and pulls out a small leather strap with a crude wooden bead threaded on it.

YANNIS (CONT'D)  
For your bowstring. Keeps it from  
fraying in the cold.

He offers it awkwardly, eyes darting away. Maria hesitates, then accepts with a curt nod. Their fingers brush for the briefest moment—nothing more, but enough.

MARIA  
Thank you.

Yannis exhales like he's just survived a duel. He straightens, trying to look more like a soldier than a boy.

Yannis meets her gaze for just a second longer than he should, then looks away quickly—masking it under urgency. He straightens, as if standing taller in her presence, before snapping back to the report.

NIKOLAOS  
How far?

YANNIS  
Half a day's march. Maybe less.

NIKOLAOS  
We move now. Take only those who  
can fight.

Maria steps forward.

MARIA  
I'm coming with you.

NIKOLAOS  
No. Stay here and protect the  
villagers.

MARIA  
If you're going to save them,  
you'll need me.

Maria and Nikolaos lock eyes for a long moment. Nikolaos sighs and relents.

NIKOLAOS  
Fine. But stay close.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAWN

The group reaches the outskirts of the village, hiding in the treeline. They observe the Ottoman soldiers setting up camp just beyond the village. Torches light the night, and the sounds of laughter and shouted orders echo through the air.

LUKAS  
They're settling in for the night.  
Perfect time to strike.

NIKOLAOS  
We need to draw them away from the village.

MARIA  
What about those?

Nikolaos follows her gaze, a plan forming in his mind.

NIKOLAOS  
Lukas, take half the men and set fire to the carts. The rest of us will ambush their patrols when they scatter.

MARIA  
And if they don't scatter?

NIKOLAOS  
Then we'll make them.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - DAWN

The Ottoman camp is quiet, save for the crackling of a few small fires and the soft murmur of soldiers' voices. Tents are arranged in neat rows, with several supply carts parked near the edge of the camp. Armed guards patrol lazily, their torches casting flickering light.

The wheels of the supply carts, laden with barrels of grain, oil, and weapons. A faint breeze rustles the fabric of nearby tents.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos crouches behind the cover of dense trees, flanked by Lukas, Maria, and a dozen rebels. Each person grips their weapon tightly, their faces tense but resolute.

NIKOLAOS

You all know the plan. Lukas, hit the carts and light them up. Maria, you're with me. We take out the patrols.

Nikolaos looks at his fighters, his voice firm.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Move quickly. Strike hard. And if things go wrong-scatter. Survive.

They nod silently, their breaths shallow as they prepare for the attack.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas and his group creep toward the supply carts, staying low in the shadows. One of the rebels carries a clay jar filled with oil, while another carries a torch wrapped in cloth to muffle the flame.

Lukas removes the cork from the jar and pours the oil over the carts, soaking the wood and supplies. The faint smell of oil hangs in the air.

LUKAS

Get ready.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, Nikolaos and Maria silently move along the perimeter, stalking a pair of Ottoman guards. The guards speak in low tones, oblivious to the danger.

Nikolaos pulls a dagger from his belt, his expression cold and focused. Maria nocks an arrow silently, aiming carefully.

NIKOLAOS

Wait for my signal.

Nikolaos throws a small stone, drawing the guards' attention. As they turn, Maria releases her arrow, striking one guard in the throat.

The other guard reaches for his sword, but Nikolaos is on him in an instant, driving his dagger into his chest.

The bodies fall to the ground with a dull thud. Nikolaos drags them into the shadows, glancing at Maria.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Good shot.

MARIA

Let's keep moving.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas strikes the torch against a stone, igniting it. He signals to his men, who scatter as he throws the torch onto the oil-soaked carts.

Flames erupt, spreading quickly as the fire engulfs the supplies. The fire roars to life, bright against the predawn sky. Ottoman soldiers shout in alarm, rushing toward the blaze.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

The camp erupts into chaos as soldiers scramble to extinguish the fire. Nikolaos signals his group, and they ambush the scattered patrols with bows and daggers. Shadows dart between tents as the rebels strike with precision.

INSERT MONTAGE:

A.) A rebel throws a knife, striking a soldier in the back.

B.) Maria shoots an arrow through a tent, hitting a soldier emerging from the other side.

C.) Nikolaos uses a burning branch to fend off two attackers, slashing at one and kicking the other into the flames.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Captain Harun emerges from his tent, sword in hand, barking orders in Turkish. His cold, commanding presence cuts through the chaos.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
(shouting)  
Find them! Kill them all!

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas is cornered by two soldiers near the burning carts. He blocks one attack with his sword but is overwhelmed, falling to his knees. Just as the killing blow is about to fall—

Maria fires an arrow, striking the attacker. She rushes to Lukas, helping him to his feet.

LUKAS  
I owe you one.

MARIA  
You owe me two.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos moves toward the center of the camp, cutting down a soldier as he goes. Suddenly, Harun steps into his path, his sword gleaming in the firelight.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
(mocking)  
The little rebel leader. I was  
hoping to meet you.

NIKOLAOS  
Then you'll wish you hadn't.

Captain Harun and Nikolaos circle each other, the firelight casting dramatic shadows.

Harun strikes first, his movements precise and brutal. Nikolaos blocks, countering with quick, desperate strikes. The clash of steel rings out above the chaos.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

As the battle rages, the rebels begin to pull back, regrouping at the edge of the camp. Nikolaos and Harun's fight reaches its peak.

Harun delivers a brutal slash, wounding Nikolaos's shoulder.

Nikolaos stumbles but manages to parry the next blow and counters with a thrust, driving his blade into Harun's side.

Harun gasps, blood seeping through his uniform. He stumbles back, glaring at Nikolaos with hatred.

CAPTAIN HARUN  
This won't end with me.

NIKOLAOS  
No. It'll end with us.

Harun collapses, lifeless.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The rebels retreat into the forest as the remaining Ottoman soldiers try to regroup. Flames engulf the camp, smoke billowing into the sky.

Nikolaos clutches his wounded shoulder as Maria helps him walk.

MARIA  
You're hurt.

NIKOLAOS  
It's nothing. We did what we came for.

Nikolaos glances back at the burning camp, his expression resolute.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

The group stops to rest, the first light of dawn breaking through the trees. The rebels look battered but victorious. Lukas sits beside Nikolaos, who wraps his arm with a torn strip of cloth.

LUKAS  
Well, they'll feel that one.

NIKOLAOS  
But they'll come back. Stronger.

MARIA  
Then so will we.

A small group of rebels in the vast forest, their fire just a faint glow. Above them, the sky brightens with the promise of a new day.

EXT. HIDDEN REBEL CAMP - DAY

The rebels and villagers regroup in the cave system. The mood is tense but hopeful. Some tend to the wounded, while others sort through the supplies they salvaged from the burning Ottoman outpost—food, weapons, and ammunition.

Nikolaos sits against the cave wall, his shoulder freshly bandaged but his face still pale from the blood loss.

Maria stands nearby, handing out bread and water to the exhausted rebels.

Lukas approaches with a smirk.

LUKAS

You're not much of a talker when  
you're bleeding, are you?

Nikolaos manages a faint smile.

NIKOLAOS

I'll save my speeches for when  
we've won.

Lukas sits next to Nikolaos.

LUKAS

We hurt them, Nikos. But you know  
they won't let this go.

NIKOLAOS

That's why we need to move before  
they regroup.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

In a larger chamber of the cave, Nikolaos addresses the rebels and villagers. Father Damianos stands near him, his hands clasped in quiet prayer. The group listens intently, their faces a mix of fear and determination.

NIKOLAOS

The Ottomans will strike back, and  
when they do, they'll bring their  
full strength. If we stay here,  
they'll find us.

Nikolaos scans the group.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

But we have something they don't:  
the will to fight. To endure. To  
outlast them.

KYRIAKOS

But how, Nikos? They're an army.  
We're farmers and priests.

Nikolaos steps forward.

NIKOLAOS

We're more than that. We're Greeks.  
They can take our homes, our  
families, our lives, but they can't  
take who we are.

Nikolaos's words ripple through the group, sparking quiet  
murmurs of agreement.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We'll split into smaller groups.  
Strike where they least expect it.  
Sabotage their supply lines. Free  
the villages they've enslaved, and  
we'll keep teaching. Our language,  
our faith, our history.

Maria steps forward.

MARIA

We'll remind them that no matter  
how many of us they kill, they'll  
never destroy all of us. They'll  
never destroy our history, our  
spirit!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

INSERT MONTAGE.

FATHER DAMIANOS (V.O.)

They want us to forget. To become  
nothing more than shadows. But as  
long as one of us remembers, we  
will survive.

A.) A small group led by Lukas sabotages an Ottoman bridge,  
collapsing it into a rushing river below.

B.) Maria sneaks into a village under Ottoman control,  
passing messages to hidden resistance members.

C.) Nikolaos and a few others ambush an Ottoman patrol on a mountain trail, taking their weapons and supplies.

D.) Father Damianos gathers children in a hidden cave, teaching them the Greek alphabet by candlelight.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - DAY

A massive Ottoman fortress, its walls imposing and bristling with cannons. Inside, GENERAL HASAN stands at a map table, surrounded by his officers. His face is tense, his patience frayed.

OFFICER #1

The rebels strike and vanish like smoke. Every outpost from the mountains to the coast has reported attacks.

General Hasan slams his fist on the table.

GENERAL HASAN

Enough excuses! They're peasants with knives. If they can strike us, it's because we've let them.

General Hasan glares at the officer, his voice dangerously calm.

GENERAL HASAN (CONT'D)

Burn every village suspected of harboring rebels. Leave nothing standing. Let them see what defiance costs.

OFFICER #1

And the priests? The schools?

GENERAL HASAN

Destroy them all. Teach their children to kneel, or don't let them grow up at all.

EXT. MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - DAY

Ottoman soldiers flood the village, boots pounding, torches blazing. Flames leap from rooftops. Screams pierce the smoke-choked air.

A mother tightens her grip on her son's hand—until soldiers tear them apart. She's dragged away, kicking and shrieking.

The boy stands frozen, ash swirling around him. Homes collapse in fire. The villagers' faces flicker in the haze—fear. Helplessness.

EXT. CAVE - NIGHT

A messenger stumbles into the flickering firelight, chest heaving, face gray with soot.

MESSENGER

They've burned the village near the ridge. Killed everyone who wouldn't talk.

Nikolaos punches the cave wall. Stone cracks under his fist. Everyone falls silent.

Maria steps forward, voice barely above a whisper.

MARIA

What do we do, Nikos?

Beat.

NIKOLAOS

We hit back. No warnings this time.

He turns to Lukas and Father Damianos.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Spread the word. Anyone who can fight—arms up. Now.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And those who can't?

NIKOLAOS

We shield them with the ones who can.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

The rebels move like ghosts through the trees. Torches doused. Weapons drawn. A silent army of farmers, priests, and teenagers with bandaged hands.

Nikolaos leads, his shadow sharp under the moonlight. Maria walks beside him, tense.

MARIA

Do you think they're ready?

NIKOLAOS

They won't get to choose.

MARIA

We're asking them to give everything. Not everyone can carry that weight.

Nikolaos stops. Turns to her.

NIKOLAOS

And if we don't ask—what then?  
Watch their empire crush our  
children? Burn the names from our  
graves?

(softly)

I'd rather fall than kneel.

Yannis approaches. He hesitates, shuffling his feet, then steadies himself as though trying to summon courage. His eyes flicker toward Nikolaos, then back to her, betraying both nerves and intent.

YANNIS

Maria. May I speak with you... alone?

Maria looks to Nikolaos.

MARIA

I've made it quite clear I can  
handle myself, and Yannis is one of  
our own.

Nikolaos nods. Maria steps aside with Yannis.

YANNIS

Your aim is amongst the best I've  
ever seen.

MARIA

Thank you?

YANNIS

I just needed you to know. In case...  
I never get another chance to say  
it.

MARIA

I appreciate it.

She returns to Nikolaos, her eyes on the path ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

A cold wind cuts through the mist as the rebels crouch among jagged rocks, peering down at the Ottoman supply depot below.

It's no longer just a depot—it's a fortress. Rows of wagons groan under crates of gunpowder and grain. Soldiers swarm the yard, drilling, shouting. Blades glint as they're sharpened.

Nikolaos scans through a spyglass, expression hard. Lukas crouches beside him, eyes narrowed.

LUKAS

(whispering)

South wall's soft-wooden barricade,  
no stone. With enough force, we  
break it.

Nikolaos lowers the glass. Nods once.

NIKOLAOS

We'll hit them fast. By the time  
they realize what's happening,  
we'll be gone.

He hands the spyglass to Maria. She raises it—then stiffens.

MARIA

They've doubled the guard.

She adjusts the focus.

MARIA (CONT'D)

That's not a depot. It's a staging  
ground.

LUKAS

They're expecting us.

NIKOLAOS

Then they're not expecting to lose.

LUKAS

They're bracing for us now.

NIKOLAOS

Then we'll show them they should've  
brought more.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

The rebels huddle in the cold, silent but burning. Torches flicker low, wind whipping through threadbare cloaks.

Nikolaos stands before them, eyes scanning the faces—young, old, all worn by loss. He speaks low, steady.

NIKOLAOS

Three groups. Lukas, take the archers to the eastern ridge. When you see fire—rain hell.

Lukas grips his bow, nods.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Maria, you're with me. South wall. We crack it open.

Maria draws an arrow, tests the string.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Everyone else—stay hidden until the signal. When it comes, hit them from the west. No retreat.

He scans the group. The weight of this moment is carved into their faces.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We don't get second chances. This is for our dead.

Beat.

MARIA

And for the ones still breathing.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - DAWN

The trees whisper with movement. Shadows slip between trunks—silent, sure. The rebels spread like ghosts.

Up on the east ridge, Lukas crouches, bowstring taut, eyes fixed.

Down below, Nikolaos and Maria press low behind the rocks, just feet from the south barricade—dry wood, primed for fire.

Maria nocks an arrow. Her breath slows. She looks to Nikolaos.

He lifts his hand. Drops it.

NIKOLAOS

Now.

Maria's arrow flies—thunk. A sentry collapses.

A torch arcs through the air—shatters against the wall. Flames crawl, then roar. Black smoke billows. Shouts erupt from inside the outpost.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - CONTINUOUS

Confusion reigns. Ottoman soldiers scramble, barking orders, grabbing weapons—but the fire's already spreading.

Nikolaos charges through the smoke, blade flashing. His group tears into the disoriented guards.

EXT. EAST RIDGE - SAME

Lukas raises his hand.

THWACK. Arrows rain down from above—deadly, precise. Tents collapse, men scream, chaos blossoms.

EXT. WEST FLANK - CONTINUOUS

The third rebel wave hits like a hammer. They swarm the supply wagons—hacking reins, overturning crates. A wild horse bolts through the camp, crashing into tents and flinging spears across the ground.

EXT. MAIN YARD - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos moves like a storm. Clean kills. No hesitation.

Maria is with him, switching between bow and dagger, fluid as flame. An Ottoman lunges—grabs her arm. She stabs him under the ribs, point blank.

MARIA  
(gritted)  
Still think I can't keep up?

Nikolaos grins as he runs a blade through another attacker.

NIKOLAOS  
You're starting to scare me.

EXT. COMMAND TENT - CONTINUOUS

General Hasan emerges, fury carved into his face. He scans the battlefield, spots Nikolaos.

GENERAL HASAN  
(roaring)  
Bring me his head!

Soldiers rally, forming a shield wall. But Nikolaos barrels toward them—driven, unstoppable.

Maria picks off threats with surgical precision, clearing his path.

MARIA  
(yelling)  
Nikos! You don't have to—!

NIKOLAOS  
(shouting back)  
I do!

He slams into the line. Steel clashes. Sparks fly.

Hasan steps forward, drawing his blade with ceremony.

GENERAL HASAN  
So. The little rebel leader finally  
crawls into the fire.

Nikolaos wipes blood from his lip.

NIKOLAOS  
I brought the fire with me.

They circle.

Then clash.

Steel-on-steel. Hasan's strikes are heavy and trained. Nikolaos moves faster—rage in his limbs, purpose in every blow.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Smoke coils into the sky as the tide turns. The rebels surge forward.

Ottoman soldiers break ranks—panic overtakes discipline. Some drop weapons, fleeing through the smoke.

Lukas raises his hand.

LUKAS  
Loose!

A final volley of arrows hisses overhead—precision death. Soldiers drop mid-stride. The rest vanish into the trees, ghosts of an empire retreating.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Hasan clash like two storms.

Hasan feints—then slashes low. Blade bites into Nikolaos's side. He stumbles, pain flashing across his face.

But he doesn't stop.

With a guttural cry, Nikolaos parries the next strike, steps inside Hasan's guard—then drives his blade into the general's chest.

Hasan stiffens. Breath catches.

GENERAL HASAN  
(blood bubbling)  
You think this... changes anything?

Nikolaos leans in, eyes cold.

NIKOLAOS  
It already has.

He twists the blade. Hasan drops, dead before he hits the dirt.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

The smoke lingers. Embers crackle.

Rebels sift through the wreckage—tending wounds, carrying the fallen, salvaging food and weapons.

A strange, quiet stillness settles. Not peace—just the pause between battles.

Lukas approaches, blood on his sleeve.

LUKAS  
We did it.

Nikolaos scans the camp. Burned tents. Bodies. The cost.

NIKOLAOS  
This is just the beginning.

He turns toward the treeline.

The rebels follow-wounded carried, weapons in hand. They disappear into the trees, leaving behind the ruins of an empire's outpost, and a warning written in ash.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The rebels march silently through the dark like ghosts.

Torches flicker against the trees, casting long shadows on faces etched with exhaustion. The silence between them says more than any words—grief, victory, fear.

Nikolaos leads, every step deliberate. His tunic clings wet to his side, the bandage beneath soaked dark. Maria walks beside him, watching.

MARIA

You're bleeding again.

Nikolaos doesn't break stride.

NIKOLAOS

I'm fine.

MARIA

You're not.

(beat)

Stop pretending you have to do this alone.

He finally slows. Turns. For a moment, the mask slips—his jaw tight, eyes sunken. Not defiant. Just tired.

NIKOLAOS

If I stop now... it all unravels.

Maria's voice is quiet but firm.

MARIA

If you fall, it unravels faster.

(gesturing to the line  
behind them)

They're following you. But they  
need all of you—alive.

Nikolaos looks back. The wounded, limping. A rebel limps with an arm in a sling. Another carries a child on his back.

He nods. Just once.

EXT. CAVE - LATER

The rebels emerge from the trees into the rocky mouth of the cave. The ones who stayed behind rush forward—some with joy, others with tears.

Inside, the firelight reveals it all. Blood. Bandages. Fatigue. The cost.

Father Damianos kneels before the flame, leading a quiet prayer.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
Grant rest to those lost, O Lord.  
And strength to those who remain.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The cavern hums with quiet urgency—makeshift cots, whispered instructions, the clink of metal and cloth.

Nikolaos winces as Eleni presses alcohol to his side.

ELENI  
You've taken worse, Nikos. Don't be  
a baby.

NIKOLAOS  
Remind me never to let you play  
doctor again.

Eleni smirks. Maria watches nearby, arms crossed, not amused.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)  
(removing her hand  
slightly)  
You stab like you pray—with  
vengeance.

MARIA  
You should've let someone else lead  
the charge. You should've stayed  
behind.

NIKOLAOS  
And sent who? You?

MARIA  
I would've lived.  
(beat)  
You think leading means burning  
yourself to ash. It doesn't.

Nikolaos looks up at her. Wants to say something. Doesn't. Instead, he nods, just barely.

The fire crackles between them. Neither moves. Neither blinks. And everything they don't say fills the silence.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

Nikolaos doesn't turn.

NIKOLAOS  
Didn't sleep.

LUKAS  
Victory does that.  
(pause)  
Same as loss.

A beat.

NIKOLAOS  
We lost good men. Their families  
will never see them again. Was it  
worth it?

Lukas stands beside him now, eyes on the rising sun.

LUKAS  
They knew what they were walking  
into. And they walked anyway.  
(beat)  
That's worth more than most men  
ever give.

Nikolaos nods, but it doesn't land. His eyes stay fixed on the horizon.

NIKOLAOS  
They'll come back, Lukas. Stronger.  
And we're not ready.

Lukas lays a hand on his shoulder—steady, firm.

LUKAS  
Then we get ready. One fight at a  
time.

INT. CAVE - MORNING

The chamber is packed, tension humming beneath the hush.

Nikolaos stands at the center. His arm is bound, his face drawn—but his voice cuts clean.

NIKOLAOS

Last night proved one thing.

(beat)

We are not shadows. We are not whispers.

(beat)

We can strike. We are not powerless.

Murmurs ripple through the crowd. Faces lift.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

But this was just one battle. The Ottomans will will return with steel and fury. And when they do, we need to be stronger. Smarter.

He scans the group—villagers, rebels, boys gripping tools like swords.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We fight smarter. We grow stronger.

(softening)

I can't promise we'll all see the end.

(beat)

But I can promise this—if we stand together...

(beat)

They will bleed for every inch they take.

A swell of quiet cheers rises. Not loud—but solid. The sound of belief returning.

Maria stands at the edge, watching. Her face unreadable, but her eyes never leave him.

INT. CAVE - LATER

A small fire crackles in a corner chamber. Maria crouches near it, sharpening her dagger in steady strokes. Her face is calm, distant.

Yannis sits beside her, awkward at first, then settled. Silence stretches.

YANNIS

You amaze me.

Maria doesn't look up.

MARIA  
That is not necessary.

YANNIS  
Neither is being serious all the  
time.

A flicker of a smile—barely there.

MARIA  
You're right.  
(beat)  
Sorry.

YANNIS  
No apology needed.  
(beat)

YANNIS (CONT'D)  
You're... very pretty. Even covered  
in soot.

He blurts it too quickly, then instantly regrets how it sounded. His eyes drop to the fire, embarrassed. But when he dares a glance back, there's no mockery in his face — only raw sincerity.

Maria stops sharpening. Eyes him. Then, finally, a real smile.

MARIA  
This conversation just got  
interesting.

They sit in the firelight, a quiet pause in the storm ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

A jagged ridgeline cuts across the sky. The rebels move below it—small shadows threading through stone and scrub, dwarfed by the vast, unforgiving terrain.

From somewhere unseen, a soft Greek hymn rises. Wordless. Wounded. Proud.

The sound carries as the image fades to black.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - SAME TIME

A quiet Greek village cradled at the foot of the mountains.

Children dart barefoot through sunlit alleys. Linen flutters between homes. A blacksmith's hammer rings once—then again. Men sit sharpening blades that might as well be for wheat.

A moment so still it feels borrowed.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Low ceiling. Muffled clinks of mugs. The smoke of last night's fire clings to the air.

In the back corner, Nikolaos leans in over a wooden table. Maria sits across, eyes alert. Lukas flanks him, tense.

NIKOLAOS

We're not an army. Not yet.

(beat)

But if they join us—we stop being ghosts.

LUKAS

They've heard what happens to villages that say no.

MARIA

That's why they need to fight. If they wait for the Ottomans to find them, it'll be too late.

Nikolaos's gaze drifts—toward a father bouncing his toddler on one knee. A grandmother slicing bread with gnarled fingers.

NIKOLAOS

They don't need courage.

(beat)

They need to believe there's something left to protect. We just have to show them that they have something worth fighting for.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - LATER

The square is quiet.

Nikolaos stands before a ring of villagers—skeptical, weary faces. Maria and Lukas stand behind him, flanking his silence.

NIKOLAOS

I know what you're thinking. You've seen the fires. Heard the screams.

(MORE)

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

(beat)

Maybe you think silence is safer.

A mother in the crowd pulls her child closer.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

I've seen what silence buys. Ashes.  
Graves. Names whispered and  
forgotten.

He steps forward. Voice calm but cutting.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

The Ottomans want you to believe  
that you're powerless. That they're  
too strong to resist. But last  
night, we struck them. Burned their  
weapons. Took their pride.

(beat)

They bled. And they will bleed  
again.

The crowd stirs. Not loud—but something shifts.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

You don't need to be soldiers. You  
just need to stand.

(beat)

Not for glory. For your homes. For  
your children.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

If we stand together, if we fight  
as one, we can protect all of our  
homes. Our families. Our future.

He lets it hang.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

You have a choice. You can wait for  
them. Or make them fear finding  
you.

A beat. An older man, KOSTAS, steps forward, his weathered  
hands clutching a cane. His voice is gravel.

KOSTAS

I've buried friends with Turkish  
bullets in their backs.

(beat)

If this is the fight... then I'm  
standing in it.

Another man joins him. Then a woman. One by one, fear gives way to something older. Resolve.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - MONTAGE

A quiet revolution begins in the dirt and sweat of preparation.

A) Lukas stands at the edge of a field, bow in hand. He fires. Bullseye. Behind him, a ragtag group of men fumble with their weapons—some steady, most unsure. He moves among them, correcting grips, guiding stances. A farmer looses an arrow that thuds into a hay target. Lukas gives him a nod. It's not perfect, but it's progress.

B) Maria kneels in the shade of a stable, surrounded by village women. She holds up a glass jar filled with oil, stuffs a rag into the neck, then lights a match. The flame dances inches from the fuse—then she snuffs it out. The women exchange glances. One of them, trembling, repeats the process. Maria watches closely, then offers a quiet smile of encouragement.

C) From across the square, Yannis pauses his own clumsy sword drills. His eyes keep straying toward Maria, watching her steady hands and the way the women lean in to her calm authority. He nearly fumbles his grip, catching the sword just before it slips, cheeks burning when one of the older rebels chuckles at him. Still, his gaze drifts back to her — as if even in war, she's the lesson he wants most to learn.

D) Nikolaos sharpens his blade beside the well, the scrape of metal against stone rhythmic and patient. He looks up as a young boy helps his grandfather lift a training spear. Across the square, others spar in pairs, stumble, rise, try again. Nikolaos's eyes linger—not on their skill, but on their resolve. Pride flickers there... and something heavier. The burden of what's coming.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - EVENING

The sun dips behind the hills, casting long shadows across the village square. A fire crackles at the center, its light dancing across weathered faces and trembling hands. Farmers, mothers, children—they've become soldiers now.

Father Damianos steps into the circle of firelight. His robes are worn, his Bible frayed. But his voice is steady.

FATHER DAMIANOS

We fight for more than land. More  
than vengeance.

(beat)

We fight for the memory—for the  
names they tried to bury. For the  
songs they tried to silence.

He lifts the Bible slightly, not preaching—invoking.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

May God give us strength for what  
lies ahead. And may we never forget  
why we fight. And may He remind us,  
even in the darkness, who we are.

Heads bow. Not out of ritual, but reverence. Resolve crackles  
in the silence.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

A hundred torches flicker and vanish as they're doused in  
unison. Shadows climb the trail—boots crunching frost, hearts  
pounding in rhythm.

Nikolaos leads them, jaw clenched, wounded but upright. Maria  
walks beside him, eyes scanning the dark.

MARIA

They're not just following orders,  
Nikos.

(beat)

They're following you.

Nikolaos keeps walking. He doesn't answer—but his grip  
tightens on the hilt at his side.

NIKOLAOS

Let's hope it leads somewhere worth  
dying for.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - NIGHT

The rebel militia crouches beneath the stars, overlooking the  
Ottoman garrison below. The fort glows with  
torchlight—sentries on the walls, cannons aimed at every  
direction but above.

Lukas scans through a spyglass, frowning.

LUKAS

This won't be easy. Twice our  
numbers. Heavy artillery.

(beat)

They're ready for an army.

Nikolaos kneels beside him, eyes narrowing as he traces the  
ridgeline with his finger.

NIKOLAOS

Good. Because we're not one.

He gestures to a serpentine ravine twisting behind the  
garrison.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

That's our path. Lukas—take the  
archers, pin them at the gate.

(turns to Maria)

You're with me. We get inside,  
straight to their powder.

Maria smirks, loosening her blades.

MARIA

You always pick the loudest jobs.

(beat)

And I always clean up your mess.

NIKOLAOS

Someone has to keep me out of  
trouble.

Nikolaos allows a faint smile. The wind howls. Somewhere  
below, the Ottomans sleep. For now.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Lukas leans against the weathered wall, dragging a whetstone  
along his blade with steady, practiced strokes. Beside him,  
Father Damianos stands silently, eyes closed, lips moving in  
whispered prayer.

LUKAS

You're always praying, old man. You  
think God's even listening?

FATHER DAMIANOS

If He isn't...

(beat)

We'd be buried, not standing.

Lukas huffs a quiet laugh. Father Damianos turns, his gaze settling on the horizon—where the sky glows faintly with distant fire.

LUKAS

You think they'll come soon?

FATHER DAMIANOS

They never stop coming.

(beat)

The question is, how ready will we be when they do?

INT. COMMANDER'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Charred beams creak in the dim light. The walls are scorched, maps unspooled across a battered table. Smoke lingers like a ghost.

Nikolaos unrolls one final scroll, pinning it under a blade.

NIKOLAOS

This shows their supply routes. If we can hit them here, here, and here—we starve their advance.

Lukas leans over the table, pointing to another mark.

LUKAS

And when they send more men? A real army this time?

MARIA

Then we won't be enough on our own.

(beat)

We need to light fires in other villages—show them this fight is theirs too.

FATHER DAMIANOS

(quietly, cutting in)

The more who know, the greater the risk. Betrayal spreads faster than hope.

Nikolaos meets his gaze.

NIKOLAOS

We don't have a choice. Silence spreads graves.

(beat)

If we stand alone, we fall alone.

He presses a finger along the eastern edge of the map.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We send word east. Show them the  
ashes of this garrison. Let them  
see what's possible.

MARIA

And if they don't listen?

Nikolaos looks at her, voice low and unwavering.

NIKOLAOS

Then we'll make them listen.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Wagons creak under the weight of salvaged supplies. Villagers  
tie bundles to their backs, eyes full of fear, but also  
something harder-resolve.

Nikolaos stands at the gate, scanning the departing group.  
Lukas barks orders, tightening formation.

A small hand tugs at Nikolaos's tunic. He looks down. A boy,  
about 10. Barefoot. Grimy face. Burning eyes.

BOY

Can I fight with you?

Nikolaos kneels. Places a calloused hand on the boy's  
shoulder. Meets him at eye level.

NIKOLAOS

One day.

(beat)

But not yet. Your time will come.  
Stay safe. Grow strong. Remember  
what you saw here. That'll be your  
weapon, when your time comes.

The boy nods reluctantly, stepping back to his mother.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - LATER

The rebel column disappears into the trees. No drums, no  
fanfare. Just boots on earth. Faces set forward.

Smoke from the ruined garrison rises behind them, curling  
into the sky like a warning. Or a promise.

## INT. OTTOMAN CAMP - NIGHT

Lantern light flickers across weathered maps and blood-stained reports. PASHA IBRAHIM (50s), immaculately dressed, reads in silence. His jaw tightens.

PASHA IBRAHIM  
The rebels grow bolder.  
(beat)  
This... Nikolaos is becoming an  
infection.

Across the tent, his aide shifts nervously.

AIDE  
Shall I request reinforcements from  
Constantinople?

Ibrahim slowly folds the report, eyes never leaving the flame.

PASHA IBRAHIM  
No.  
(beat)  
We'll amputate the limb before the  
rot spreads.

He rises, pacing with calm menace.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)  
Burn the villages. Cut their roads,  
poison their wells. Let hunger do  
our work.

AIDE  
And the rebels?

PASHA IBRAHIM  
Leave one.  
(beat)  
Let them crawl back with smoke in  
their lungs and grief in their  
eyes.

Let them carry the message.

## EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT

The forest hums with distant night sounds. Campfires crackle. Shadows of fighters stretch and flicker on trees.

Lukas sits apart, blade in hand, grinding edge against stone. His focus is surgical.

Eleni approaches quietly, holding a bowl of stew.

ELENI

You're starting to look more and  
more like Nikolaos.

(beat)

Eat.

LUKAS

Later.

She settles beside him, silence filling the space between them.

ELENI

You think starving yourself makes  
you stronger?

LUKAS

I think losing makes me weaker.

ELENI

And starving makes you dumber.

She nudges the bowl into his lap. Lukas gives a reluctant smirk and digs in.

ELENI (CONT'D)

I'm terrified, Lukas. Every day.

(softly)

But I haven't felt this alive since  
before my husband died.

Lukas pauses mid-bite, glancing at her.

LUKAS

Alive... or reckless?

ELENI

Maybe both.

(beat)

But at least I'm not alone anymore.

Their eyes meet. For a moment, no war, no blades—just warmth.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - DAY

Sunlight slices through mist as villagers gather, silent and still. A line of Ottoman soldiers enters like a wound splitting the earth.

Mothers tighten grips on children. Fathers step forward, unarmed but defiant.

Pasha Ibrahim rides at the front, robes billowing. His gaze sweeps the village like a scythe. He dismounts slowly.

PASHA IBRAHIM  
(quiet menace)  
Where are they?

No response. Only the soft rustle of wind and the sound of a child stifling a sob.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)  
The rebels. Where are they hiding?

An old man limps forward, spine curved but head held high.

VILLAGER  
We've seen no rebels, my Lord. We  
are only farmers.

Ibrahim walks closer, face inches from the old man.

PASHA IBRAHIM  
Farmers don't feed ghosts.  
(beat)  
You shelter them. You fuel their  
fire. And fire spreads.

He turns to the crowd.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)  
One last chance.  
(beat)  
Give me names... or I burn your  
village down to its stones. You  
will pay for their sins.

No one speaks.

His expression hardens. He lifts a hand. Soldiers ready torches. The moment stretches, breathless.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The villagers stand still, spines bowed beneath invisible chains. Silence thicker than smoke.

Pasha Ibrahim surveys them with mild disdain. His fingers flick, a silent command.

PASHA IBRAHIM  
Burn it all.

Soldiers move with brutal precision. Torches ignite. Homes become furnaces in seconds.

Screams erupt. Mothers grab children. Fathers are clubbed down as they try to resist. Bodies are herded like livestock toward the square.

EXT. HILLTOP - SAME TIME

Nikolaos stares down at the inferno, the fire reflected in his eyes.

Maria's voice cuts through the horror.

MARIA

We have to do something.

NIKOLAOS

If we go now, we die with them.

LUKAS

So we do nothing?

Nikolaos doesn't answer. His jaw locks as a soldier yanks a woman through the dirt by her hair. Her screams rise with the flames. His fists curl tight enough to draw blood.

NIKOLAOS

We wait for the moment. Then we end them.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ibrahim stands calm amidst the chaos, his face bathed in firelight. A scream. A crash. He doesn't even glance.

THANASIS - skinny, maybe twenty - breaks from the crowd. Knife raised, eyes full of fury. He rushes Ibrahim.

A guard intercepts. One slash - Thanasis falls hard. Motionless.

Ibrahim steps past the corpse like it's a puddle.

PASHA IBRAHIM

This is what rebellion brings you.  
Death. Suffering.

He turns to the villagers, tone soft, almost paternal.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)  
You believe they fight for you? No.  
They fight for vanity. We offer  
order. Protection. Obey...and live.  
Defy us-  
    (gestures to the burning  
      homes)  
-and join the flames.

EXT. HILLTOP - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos breathes like a man restraining a scream. He speaks without looking at the others.

NIKOLAOS  
Take half the men and circle around  
to the eastern side. Cut off their  
retreat.

Lukas nods and slips away like smoke.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)  
You and I will come in from the  
north. Quietly. We take out the  
guards first.

MARIA  
And Ibrahim?

Nikolaos watches as Thanasis's body is kicked aside.

NIKOLAOS  
He doesn't leave this village  
alive.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Lukas and his men move through the shadows, their footsteps muffled by the dirt-slipping behind Ottoman wagons stacked with crates and barrels. One rebel douses the wheels in oil and lights a short fuse. Lukas crouches, eyes locked on the square, jaw clenched.

LUKAS  
Wait for the signal.

## EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Maria move low through the smoke, blades drawn. In the flickering firelight, they silently take out two Ottoman guards with surgical precision. Nikolaos signals Maria to cover him. She slips behind a post, bow raised.

## EXT. BASE VILLAGE - SHOWDOWN

Nikolaos steps into the chaos, sword drawn, eyes locked on Ibrahim. Flames ripple behind them. Ibrahim turns, smiling coldly.

PASHA IBRAHIM

Ah. The rebel leader himself.  
You've saved me the trouble of  
hunting you down.

NIKOLAOS

You won't leave this village alive.

PASHA IBRAHIM

Bold words. Let's see if you can  
back them up.

Ibrahim unsheathes a curved, jewel-encrusted sword and waves his guards off. The two men circle in a ring of smoke and fire.

## EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The duel begins, brutal and unrelenting. Steel clashes. Sparks fly. Ibrahim fights with ruthless elegance; Nikolaos with violent resolve. Nearby, Maria looses arrow after arrow into soldiers rushing the square.

Lukas and his men erupt from the east, igniting wagons in a fiery ambush. Explosions tear through the enemy's rear.

Villagers grab pitchforks, axes, anything they can, charging into the fray. Fear turns into fury. The square becomes a battlefield.

## EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos lands a vicious blow, knocking Ibrahim's sword aside. The pasha stumbles, clutching his bleeding arm.

PASHA IBRAHIM

Kill me, and you'll bring the full  
weight of the empire upon you.

NIKOLAOS

Let them come.

He drives the blade through Ibrahim's chest. Silence ripples out. The Ottomans drop their weapons or flee into the dark.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - LATER

Smoke rises from smoldering ruins. Wounded are tended. Families cling to one another.

Nikolaos stands at the center, blood on his blade, face unreadable. Maria approaches, dirt and ash streaked across her skin.

MARIA

We did it.

NIKOLAOS

This was just a battle. The war is far from over.

He scans the faces around him—scared, tired, but still standing.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

You've seen what they'll do to break us. But together, we can stop them. This village stands because of you. Because you fought back.

A beat—then cheers erupt, rising into the night. The fire may have scarred them, but it didn't consume them.

EXT. CONSTANTINOPLE - NIGHT

The city glows under a crescent moon. Minarets pierce the sky. Marble towers shimmer in torchlight. In the heart of it all, the governor's palace looms—opulent, fortified, a monument to empire.

INT. GOVERNOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Gold-draped walls. Silk cushions. A crackling fire casts shadows across ancient maps and war scrolls.

Governor Kemal sits alone, eyes scanning a parchment. His fingers curl around the scroll as his jaw tightens.

GOVERNOR KEMAL  
(muttering)  
Pasha Ibrahim. Dead. A garrison  
lost.

He sets the scroll down, slow and deliberate, then looks up  
at General Selim, who stands stiffly across the room.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)  
This Nikolaos... he's no longer just  
a thorn. He's building an army from  
the mud.

GENERAL SELIM  
Then we crush him.

GOVERNOR KEMAL  
No. We unmake him.

Kemal rises, walking toward a massive map pinned to the  
wall—red marks bleeding across the countryside.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)  
Torch the villages. Starve the  
soil. Take the children. Break  
their backs before they learn they  
can stand.

GENERAL SELIM  
And the rebellion?

Kemal turns, eyes gleaming.

GOVERNOR KEMAL  
Hope dies faster than men. Without  
food, they'll turn on each other. A  
starving army is no army at all.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S PALACE - NIGHT

General Selim storms into the courtyard. Soldiers fall into  
formation. Torches blaze to life. War drums begin—deep,  
primal, relentless.

This is no expedition. It's extermination.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

A sea of tents sprawls across the craggy ridge. The wind  
carries the clang of metal and barked commands.

What was once a handful of rebels is now a swelling force—focused, tired, alive.

Nikolaos stands on a rocky ledge above it all, arms crossed, gaze fixed. Below, recruits drill in the dirt, shaping chaos into an army.

Footsteps crunch behind him. Maria appears, a rolled map in hand.

MARIA

Still thinking about the village?

NIKOLAOS

Every time we win, they punish someone else. We save one place, they burn two.

MARIA

You can't blame yourself for their cruelty.

NIKOLAOS

I'm not blaming myself. I'm asking how we can stop it.

He nods toward the camp.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We've grown, but they're not soldiers. Not yet.

Maria unrolls the map beside him.

MARIA

Then let's grow faster. There are resistance groups along the coast. They've been waiting for a signal. You're it.

Nikolaos studies the map—roads, rivers, depots. His eyes settle on a port marked in red.

NIKOLAOS

Hitting the coast means cutting the Ottoman supplies.

MARIA

Exactly. Starve the war machine. Watch it rot from within.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAINING GROUND - DAY

Lukas stalks between lines of clumsy fighters. Arrows miss targets. Spears wobble.

LUKAS  
(shouting)  
Pull back, not just your arms—your  
fear too!

A scrawny teenager, THEODOROS, lets loose. His arrow thuds dead center.

Lukas breaks into a grin, slapping him on the shoulder.

LUKAS (CONT'D)  
There it is. That's a shot they  
remember.

INT. CAVE WAR ROOM - LATER

By torchlight, Nikolaos, Maria, Yannis and Lukas lean over a rough-spun map. Stones mark Ottoman forts. Lines trace caravan routes.

Father Damianos enters, silent but listening.

Yannis edges closer to the table, pointing at one of the supply routes with more confidence than experience.

YANNIS  
If we strike here—at night—their  
patrols would be blind. I could  
lead it.

He glances at Maria, almost more eager for her approval than Nikolaos'. She studies the map, silent.

Yannis swallows, adding quickly:

YANNIS (CONT'D)  
Or... maybe you'd plan it better.  
What do you think?

The moment hangs. His voice cracks slightly under the weight of wanting her respect.

LUKAS  
(pointing elsewhere)  
That depot on the coast—biggest  
target we've ever considered.  
Starve it, and the south collapses.

MARIA

Too guarded. We'll need to pull  
their eyes elsewhere.

Nikolaos straightens.

NIKOLAOS

The Ottomans think we're scattered.  
If we hit two places at once, they  
won't know where to send  
reinforcements.

LUKAS

Divide and conquer. I like it.  
I'll take the mountain pass. Make  
it loud. Make 'em panic.

NIKOLAOS

That's why I'm sending you. You  
love loud.

MARIA

And the depot?

NIKOLAOS

We slip in. Small team. Quick,  
clean.

Father Damianos finally speaks.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And when they retaliate?

NIKOLAOS

Then we bleed them again.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Two lines of rebels vanish into the trees—one up the  
mountain, the other toward the sea. Torches flicker,  
swallowed by the dark.

Nikolaos and Maria move quietly under moonlight.

NIKOLAOS

You've been quiet.

Maria shrugs.

MARIA

Just thinking.

NIKOLAOS

About?

MARIA

About what happens if we win.

She looks at him.

MARIA (CONT'D)

What victory might cost.

Nikolaos says nothing. His jaw tightens. He keeps walking.

EXT. COASTAL RIDGE - DAWN

Golden light creeps over the horizon. Below, the Ottoman depot sprawls along the coastline—tents, supply wagons, and soldiers moving in formation. The rhythmic crash of waves blends with the clank of armor and the murmur of orders.

Nikolaos lies prone on a ridge, scanning the camp through narrowed eyes. Beside him, Maria peers down, bow in hand.

MARIA

(whispering)

No margin for error.

NIKOLAOS

There never is.

He signals. Rebels shift silently into the surrounding terrain, shadows slipping between boulders and scrub.

EXT. COASTAL DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

The depot thrums with activity—barrels rolled, crates stacked, officers barking orders. An Ottoman command tent, adorned with insignia, sits at the center.

In the cliffs above, Nikolaos and Maria hunker behind stone. Yannis crouches beside them, pale and twitchy. He keeps stealing sidelong glances at Maria, as if her calm steadiness is the only thing keeping him from bolting. His grip tightens on the bowstring—not just from nerves, but from the pressure of wanting to prove himself in her eyes.

YANNIS

There's a lot of them, Nikos... Are we sure about this?

NIKOLAOS  
We're not here to fight them all.  
Just take their legs out from under  
them.

He nods toward the stacked gunpowder wagons.

EXT. DEPOT PERIMETER - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos splits the rebels into small strike teams.

NIKOLAOS  
Maria—ridge. Cover fire. We'll go  
in from the north.

MARIA  
Don't take too long.

She slips away, leading her archers through the brush.  
Nikolaos and his team descend a narrow goat path into a  
patrol blind spot.

EXT. NORTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Guards patrol lazily—until two of them crumple under swift,  
silent blades. Their bodies vanish into shadow.

Nikolaos creeps forward, crouching beside a mound of barrels.  
He gestures. A rebel uncorks a flask of oil, dousing the  
powder stores. Another plants a rope fuse.

YANNIS  
How long will that take?

NIKOLAOS  
Long enough—if we move fast.

EXT. SOUTH RIDGE - SAME TIME

Maria lies flat, eyes tracking the depot. Tents. Wagons.  
Movement.

ARCHER  
Should we fire?

MARIA  
Not yet. Wait for Nikos.

EXT. DEPOT - COMMAND TENT

An Ottoman officer steps out, scanning. Patrol's late. He stiffens, shouts an order in Turkish. A ripple of awareness spreads.

EXT. BARRELS - SAME TIME

Nikolaos strikes flint. A spark catches. The fuse begins to hiss, the glow crawling toward the barrels.

NIKOLAOS  
Fall back. Now.

EXT. SOUTH RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Maria sees the fuse spark alive. Her hand shoots up.

MARIA  
Now!

Arrows rain from the ridge—silent, surgical. Fire catches tents. Soldiers shout and scatter.

EXT. DEPOT - EXPLOSION

The fuse hits the powder. A massive blast tears through the depot. Fire erupts, sending wagons skyward. Crates explode. Chaos.

EXT. DEPOT - BATTLEFIELD

In the smoke and panic, Nikolaos's team strikes—blades flashing. Rebels dart through tents, slashing and torching supplies.

From above, Maria and her archers provide cover, arrows pinning down fleeing guards.

Lukas bursts in from the east, flanking the defenders.

LUKAS  
Miss us?

EXT. CENTER OF DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos locks swords with a burly Ottoman captain. The fight is brutal—scimitar versus short sword, power versus precision.

Nikolaos absorbs the blows, reading his opponent. Then, with swift economy, he slashes through the captain's guard.

CAPTAIN  
(in Turkish)  
You'll never win.

NIKOLAOS  
We just did.

His blade finishes it. The captain falls.

EXT. DEPOT EDGE - LATER

The depot burns behind them. The last Ottomans surrender or scatter. Rebels regroup-cut, bloodied, alive.

Maria walks to Nikolaos, sweat and soot on her brow.

MARIA  
We did it.

Nikolaos watches the flames swallow the last of the Ottoman supplies.

NIKOLAOS  
For now.

EXT. COASTAL RIDGE - DAWN

Below, the depot burns—a black wound against the golden rise of day. Tents collapse in flames, supply carts smolder. The fire crackles, distant and alive.

The rebels watch in silence from the ridge above, their faces lit by fire and morning light.

LUKAS  
That'll slow them down.

NIKOLAOS  
Not for long. They'll come back harder.

MARIA  
Then we'll be ready, hit back harder.

Nikolaos turns. The others follow. They vanish into the trees, cloaked by smoke and the rising sun.

INT. CONSTANTINOPLE - STRATEGY ROOM - NIGHT

A cavernous hall of stone and shadow. Flickering oil lamps cast a wavering light across polished steel and crimson banners. A fire burns low in the hearth, spitting embers.

At the long strategy table, maps unfurled like battle scars, General Selim drags a finger across the parchment.

GENERAL SELIM

The rebels have struck here... and here. Supply lines gone. Outposts emptied. Always one step ahead.

Governor Kemal stands at the head, unmoving. Cold fury behind his eyes.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

This isn't about tactics anymore. This is about perception. They've made us look weak. That cannot stand.

He looks up. Every officer in the room stills.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)

How many villages still obey?

A junior officer shifts in his seat.

OFFICER

Loyalty fades with every fire they light. Many call them protectors now.

Selim's fist hits the table.

GENERAL SELIM

Then remind them what fear is.

Kemal leans into the firelight, his voice low and venomous.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

Burn everything within a day's march of their camps. Homes, fields, livestock. Anyone who resists—kill them. The rest? Send them east. Let the empire decide their value.

He looks directly at Selim.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)

And Nikolaos?

Beat.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (A WHISPER) (CONT'D)  
I want his head on a spike before  
the next moon.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Fires flicker among the trees. The rebel camp breathes with quiet exhaustion—shadows of fighters hunched over food, sharpening blades, stitching worn boots. Victory clings to them like smoke, but so does the cost.

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos hunch over a rough wooden table. A lantern flickers between them. The maps they study are frayed, ink smudged from use. Their eyes are tired, their movements slow but deliberate.

LUKAS  
Another supply depot gone. You'd  
think they'd learn by now.

MARIA  
They will. And when they do,  
they'll hit back harder.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
They already are. Whispers from the  
east—villages burned. Families  
taken.

Silence. Nikolaos leans back, hand running through his hair. He stares into the darkness beyond the flame.

NIKOLAOS  
That's what they want. To break us.  
Make us doubt. Make us wonder if  
this fight is worth it.

He looks at them, voice steady despite the weight behind it.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)  
But we can't stop now. Every step  
we take, every victory, brings us  
closer to freedom.

MARIA  
And we can't let them take it out  
on the villages.

NIKOLAOS

We'll protect them. But we can't be everywhere.

He traces the map with a finger. A valley route.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

They'll move east next. Closest to their stronghold.

LUKAS

Then we dig in. Make our stand there.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Nikolaos leads a small group through dense woods. Maria, Lukas, and a handful of rebels follow in silence. Steam rises off the ground in the cool morning light.

Nikolaos leads the group, his expression resolute despite the exhaustion in his eyes.

LUKAS

If we keep hitting their outposts, they're going to start thinking we're everywhere.

NIKOLAOS

That's the idea.

INT. FOREST/TENT - DAY

A weathered crate becomes a makeshift table. Nikolaos and Maria hover over the map. Lukas lounges nearby, sharpening a blade. Father Damianos watches, arms crossed.

NIKOLAOS

They'll come looking. Stay here too long and this camp's ashes.

Lukas grins.

LUKAS

Then we keep moving. Hit first. Leave nothing.

Maria shakes her head.

MARIA

We can't keep running. Every time we shift, we lose people. We need to start thinking bigger.

Nikolaos eyes her.

NIKOLAOS

Go on.

Maria points to a mark on the map.

MARIA

This fortress. It's their hub-where they coordinate their attacks. If we take it, we do more than buy ourselves time. We cripple them.

LUKAS

A fortress? With what? Pitchforks and courage?

MARIA

We've faced worse odds.

Nikolaos studies the map in silence. The fortress stares back, a looming challenge.

FATHER DAMIANOS

If we go after that... there's no turning back.

A long beat.

NIKOLAOS

Then we make sure we're ready.

EXT. FOREST - TRAINING SEQUENCE

A rapid series of visuals captures the rebels preparing for war:

— Maria instructs new archers. When one of the younger rebels fumbles badly, Maria steps in, gently repositioning his arms. Yannis' jaw clenches—jealousy flickering across his face before he forces it down. He quickly draws and looses an arrow of his own, striking closer to the center than usual, glancing to see if she noticed.

— Lukas barks commands over sparring drills. Rebels clash with wooden swords, learning to deflect curved blades. He corrects one fighter's grip, then knocks the sword from his hands with a smirk.

— Nikolaos kneels beside a cache of improvised explosives—oil-soaked jars and powder-packed bundles. He tests a fuse, nods to the engineers with approval.

— Father Damianos moves silently through the camp, laying a hand on shoulders, whispering prayers. Eyes close. Blades are gripped tighter.

END SEQUENCE.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/PRISON - NIGHT

A dim cell buried deep in stone. A young Greek scout hangs from shackles, face swollen, clothes torn.

An Ottoman officer looms over him, unfurling a scroll—rough sketches of rebel leaders stare up in ink.

OFFICER

(low and venomous)

Where is Nikolaos? Where are they  
hiding?

The scout spits blood at his feet. His voice is raw but firm.

SCOUT

You'll never find them.

The officer sneers. A soldier steps forward, holding a glowing iron. The scout's scream cuts through the stone like a blade.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Back at the camp, the rebels gather around a fire for a final briefing. Shadows flicker across faces drawn with fatigue but lit with purpose.

Nikolaos steps forward, gaze sweeping the group.

NIKOLAOS

This isn't just another strike. If  
we take that fortress, we don't  
just survive—we change everything.

He pauses, letting the silence settle.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We're not just fighting for  
ourselves anymore.

(MORE)

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We're fighting for every village  
they've burned, every family  
they've torn apart. The lives they  
tried to erase.

Maria steps beside him, voice strong.

MARIA

We fight for the ones who can't.

Heads nod. Hands tighten around blades. Lukas flips a dagger  
between his fingers, flashing a grin.

LUKAS

Then let's give them a damn good  
reason to be afraid.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - NIGHT

The rebels reach the edge of the fortress, concealed beneath  
the cover of trees.

Nikolaos raises a hand—his signal. The group splits: Maria  
and the archers break off toward a rocky ridge; Lukas leads a  
second unit along the perimeter, toward the back gate.

NIKOLAOS

(whispering)

Wait for the signal.

MARIA

Be careful.

He nods, squeezes her shoulder—then vanishes into the dark.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and a handful of rebels scale the outer wall.  
Grappling hooks bite stone. They climb in silence, reaching  
the top and slipping over. One guard turns—Nikolaos is on him  
in a flash, blade to throat. The rebels drag the body away  
and keep moving.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Maria and her archers crouch in the brush. She lights her  
arrow. The others follow. They wait—bows drawn, eyes scanning  
the fortress below.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos kneels beside a barrel at the base of a tower. He lights the fuse and sprints back.

BOOM—

A fireball bursts into the sky.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Maria raises her bow and releases. A fiery volley arcs through the sky, crashing into the fortress—supply wagons erupt in flames.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - BACK GATE - CONTINUOUS

Lukas and his rebels charge through the rear entrance. They meet the startled guards head-on, blades flashing. Lukas cuts down a soldier, then bellows:

LUKAS

Push forward!

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos storms through the halls, dispatching enemy soldiers in brutal, efficient combat. He ascends the stairs toward the command tower.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos kicks open the doors.

Governor Kemal waits inside, sword in hand. Behind him—two elite guards, tense and ready.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

You've caused me a great deal of trouble, rebel.

NIKOLAOS

And I'm just getting started.

Kemal's eyes narrow. He gives a subtle nod. Two guards attack.

Nikolaos meets them head-on—parries, ducks, counters with speed born of rage and precision.

Steel clashes in the narrow chamber. The map table shudders beneath their feet. Flames from outside flicker through the windows, casting shadows across the walls.

Nikolaos stands in the doorway, the two guards dead.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

Do you really think you'll walk out  
of here alive?

NIKOLAOS

I didn't come here to walk out.

Kemal nods. Two more guards who've just run into the room lunge. Nikolaos dodges the first, blades clashing with a metallic scream.

He counters, drives a knee into one guard's chest, disarming him with a vicious strike.

The second swings—Nikolaos spins, slamming him into the map table.

Papers fly. The guard drops, unconscious. Kemal steps forward, eyes burning.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

Impressive. But you're not the  
first rebel to try to kill me.

NIKOLAOS

But I promise you I'll be the last.

Their swords meet—Kemal attacks with power, each swing intended to kill.

Nikolaos stays fluid, his strikes fast and smart.

Kemal's blade slices into the table, splintering wood.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

The courtyard burns. Rebels and Ottomans clash in close quarters—smoke, screams, steel. Lukas pushes forward, sword in hand.

LUKAS

(shouting)

Hold the gate! Don't let them flank  
us!

Above, Maria commands her archers from the ridge. Flaming arrows rain down, precise and unrelenting.

MARIA

Focus on the officers! Break their  
lines!

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Inside the fortress, a group of rebels moves quickly through the hallways, planting small explosive charges made from powder barrels.

A young rebel, THEODOROS, nervous but determined, lights a fuse on a powder barrel and runs to catch up with the others.

THEODOROS

Fuses are lit! Move!

BOOM—

Explosions tear through the fortress. Walls shake. Dust and debris rain down.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kemal slams Nikolaos into a pillar. Nikolaos drops to a knee, blood on his lip.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

Is this the best your rebellion has  
to offer?

Nikolaos wipes his mouth. His eyes burn.

NIKOLAOS

We're just getting started.

Kemal strikes—Nikolaos ducks, shoulder-checks him into the map table. Kemal stumbles. Nikolaos steps in, blade flashing—disarms him.

Kemal drops to his knees, breathing hard.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

Kill me, and ten more will take my  
place.

NIKOLAOS

Then I'll send them after you.

He drives the blade in. Kemal gasps, his eyes wide with shock before he collapses to the ground, lifeless.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos emerges from the war room, bloodied sword lowered.

Rebels stop—then erupt in cheers.

He raises the sword.

NIKOLAOS

The fortress is ours!

Their roar shakes the halls. Victory burns in their eyes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - SAME TIME

Maria lowers her bow. Below, the last of the Ottomans vanish into the treeline. She shares a glance with a nearby archer—muted pride passing between them.

MARIA

(to herself)

We did it.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

The courtyard bustles. Villagers huddle near supply crates while rebels hand out food and water.

Father Damianos moves among them, offering calm words.

Theodoros oversees a growing pile of salvaged weapons, cataloging and sorting.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Victory is fleeting. The Ottomans won't let this stand.

LUKAS

Then let them come. We've held this fortress once. We'll do it again.

FATHER DAMIANOS

This isn't just a stronghold to them. It's a symbol. That makes it a target.

Lukas glances up. On the battlements above, Nikolaos and Maria speak in low tones, silhouetted against the fading sky.

Eleni approaches, drawing Lukas' attention.

Father Damianos slips away into the crowd.

ELENI

I am very proud of you.

LUKAS

I'm just one man. It was a team that won this.

ELENI

I can only thank one man at a time.

She kisses him—soft and deliberate. Lukas freezes, surprised... then lets it linger.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/WAR ROOM - LATER

Once a room of conquest, now a room of resistance. Maps stretch across blood-stained tables, ringed with rebel weapons and provisions. Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos stand shoulder to shoulder.

NIKOLAOS

They'll come from the north.  
Fastest way to strike back.

MARIA

We set traps. Bottlenecks.

Make them bleed for every step.

LUKAS

I've got a few surprises in mind.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And the villagers?

NIKOLAOS

We can't keep them here. It's too dangerous.

Maria's jaw tightens.

MARIA

You want to send them back to the mountains?

NIKOLAOS

It's the only way to keep them safe.

The silence that follows is heavy.

LUKAS

Safe isn't what they want, Nikos.

They came here to fight.

NIKOLAOS  
And they will.

When the time is right.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - LATER

Villagers cluster outside the gates, wagons loaded, eyes heavy. Maria lifts a small boy into the back of a cart, her jaw set but her gaze distant.

Nearby, Eleni approaches Nikolaos. Lukas watches from afar, unreadable.

ELENI  
You're sending us away? After  
everything we've been through?

NIKOLAOS  
I'm trying to keep you alive.

ELENI  
We're alive because we fought.

She glances toward Lukas. He avoids her eyes. She swallows hard, the fight draining from her expression.

NIKOLAOS  
If we lose you... we lose the reason  
we fight at all.

A long beat. Then Eleni nods—sharp, resolute.

She turns and joins the departing villagers as they disappear into the treeline.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - NIGHT

A fire burns in the courtyard. Shadows flicker across tired faces. Rebels eat in silence, tending wounds and weapons.

Nikolaos sits apart, dragging a whetstone slowly along his blade. Maria settles beside him.

MARIA  
You're thinking about what's next.

NIKOLAOS  
Always.

MARIA

We've done the impossible, Nikos.  
We took their fortress.

NIKOLAOS

And now they'll send everything  
they have to take it back.

MARIA

Then we stand. Together.

Nikolaos finally looks at her. He nods—small, but full of weight.

EXT. CONSTANTINOPLE/GOVERNOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Torchlight dances across ancient stone.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET, 50s, ruthless and calculating, stands at the head of a long table, surrounded by officers. He speaks softly, but every word cuts.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

The rebels think they've won a  
victory. They think they've  
humiliated us.

He leans over the table, gaze cold.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

We will remind them why they fear  
us. Assemble every available  
regiment. We march at dawn.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - DAWN

First light bleeds across the horizon. On the wall, rebels stand watch—silent, unmoving. Nikolaos scans the trees. Lukas joins him.

LUKAS

You think they're coming?

NIKOLAOS

I know they are.

A distant THUNDER... low and rhythmic. Drums. Growing louder. Closer. The sound swells—an ancient promise of war—

As the screen cuts to black.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - SAME TIME

The fortress stands battered but defiant in the pale morning light. Smoke rises from the ruins of earlier fires, drifting skyward like the breath of a wounded beast.

On the ramparts, the rebels brace themselves. Faces hardened. Eyes locked on the horizon.

The distant BOOM of drums grows closer, accompanied by the measured, thunderous MARCH of thousands.

Nikolaos tightens his grip on his sword.

Maria nocks an arrow, steady hands betraying the churn in her gut.

Lukas leans on the stone, dragging his blade along a whetstone, the rasping sound rhythmic and grounding.

MARIA

Do you think we're ready for this?

NIKOLAOS

We have to be.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - LATER

Ladders slam against the stone. Ottoman soldiers climb fast.

Maria's archers let fly—a deadly hail of arrows. Still, bodies reach the top.

An Ottoman scrambles over the edge—Maria meets him with a dagger to the throat.

MARIA

Don't let them through!

Swords clash. Screams rise. The fortress becomes chaos.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

A THUNDERCRACK—an Ottoman cannonball punches through the eastern wall. Stone explodes.

Dust and debris rain down. The rebels scramble to cover the breach.

NIKOLAOS

To me! Hold the breach!

He charges, blade flashing, cutting through the wave. Rebels follow his lead, pushing back with raw fury and grit.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Maria spots General Kara Mehmet near the rear, issuing commands atop his horse.

She raises her hand—signals the archers.

MARIA

Aim for him. Take him out.

A volley of arrows slices through the sky—but Mehmet lifts his shield, turning them aside. Maria watches, eyes narrowing.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

If the archers can't, I will.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - LATER

Lukas and Yannis fight at the gate, bodies pressing against them.

Yannis falters—nearly gutted—until Lukas grabs his collar, yanks him upright.

LUKAS

Not bad, kid. Now stay alive.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

The momentum shifts. Nikolaos sees it—the Ottomans hesitating, faltering under the rebel defense.

He lifts his sword high.

NIKOLAOS

Push them back! This is our land!

The rebels roar and surge forward—

Blades swing. Boots pound. Blood and dirt fly. The Ottomans break. They flee through the breach, down the ladders, into the dark trees.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The surviving Ottomans flee into the forest, leaving shattered gear and lifeless comrades behind.

From atop a distant ridge, General Kara Mehmet watches. Expression unreadable. He turns his horse and rides away.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - DAWN

Silence. Smoke drifts gently across the field of bodies. The rising sun paints the stone walls gold.

The rebels stand where they fought—battered, breathing, alive.

Nikolaos walks among the fallen. His sword is low now. His face unreadable.

Maria joins him.

MARIA

We did it.

NIKOLAOS

For now.

Nikolaos looks at the horizon, where the remnants of the Ottoman army disappear into the distance.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

They'll be back.

MARIA

So will we.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - NEXT MORNING

Smoke curls into the pale sky.

The fortress lies broken—walls crumbled, flags torn, the courtyard strewn with twisted metal and lifeless forms. A grim silence hangs over the battlefield.

Survivors move slowly, reverently. Some lift wounded comrades onto makeshift stretchers. Others kneel beside fallen friends, eyes hollow with shock.

Nikolaos walks the length of the courtyard. His armor is scorched and spattered with blood. Sword still gripped in one hand, he steps around shattered shields and crumpled bodies, his jaw tight.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

In the cool shade of the trees, Maria stitches a deep gash on a rebel's arm. Her hands are steady, but her face betrays the weight she carries.

Father Damianos kneels beside a row of bodies. His lips move in silent prayer. A crucifix hangs heavy from his neck, catching the light as he crosses himself.

Beside him, Yannis stares at the blood on his hands. He wipes a spear clean with slow, shaking movements.

YANNIS

We won... didn't we?

FATHER DAMIANOS

Victory isn't what you take. It's what you keep.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LATER

Nikolaos sits near a fire, sharpening his blade with slow, methodical strokes. Sparks flick off the steel. His eyes are distant.

Maria walks over, two bowls in hand. She offers one to him, then sits beside him.

MARIA

You know, it's okay to celebrate once in a while.

NIKOLAOS

We haven't won yet.

MARIA

No. But we're still here. And every time we rise, we remind them—we won't break.

He looks at her, finally.

NIKOLAOS

And what happens when they hit back harder?

MARIA

Then we fight harder.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAY

High on a mist-shrouded cliff, the ancient stone Greek Orthodox monastery rises from the rock like something timeless. Weathered. Unbowed. The sound of bells echoes faintly through the clouds.

Nikolaos and the group emerge from the forest path, bone-tired, eyes drawn to the sanctuary above.

At the gate stands FATHER ALEXIOS, late 60s, his gaze sharp beneath a worn cowl. Monks stand behind him, silent and watchful.

FATHER ALEXIOS  
(in Greek)  
What brings you here, Nikolaos?

Nikolaos steps forward.

NIKOLAOS  
Refuge. And a place to make our  
stand.

Father Alexios studies him-sees the fire behind the exhaustion. He nods once and opens the gate.

FATHER ALEXIOS  
Then you're welcome. But these  
walls have stood for centuries.  
Don't let your war be what brings  
them down.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAY

The rebels enter the stone courtyard. Eyes widen at the beauty-worn murals, flowering vines, the silence of peace.

Monks pass among them, offering bread and water. A rare stillness settles over the weary travelers.

MARIA  
It's beautiful. Hard to imagine  
bloodshed here.

NIKOLAOS  
That's what makes it worth fighting  
for.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

Nikolaos kneels alone in the chapel. Shadows flicker across the ancient icons, lit only by the trembling glow of candlelight.

His sword lies beside him on the cold stone floor. His breath is slow. Heavy. Behind him, quiet footsteps echo.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
Even the strongest man needs  
guidance.

Nikolaos doesn't turn.

NIKOLAOS  
How many more will I lose, Father?  
How many more sacrifices before  
it's enough?

FATHER DAMIANOS  
I wish I had an answer for you. But  
this I know: if you stop now, every  
sacrifice will have been in vain.

Nikolaos lifts his gaze to the cross above the altar. Pain and resolve war in his eyes.

NIKOLAOS  
They won't stop until we're dust.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
Then leave them with ashes they'll  
never forget.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

Maria spots movement on the distant ridge—General Kara Mehmet, calmly watching the battlefield like a vulture.

Her fingers tremble as she draws an arrow. But not her aim.

She looses it.

The arrow slices the air—striking Mehmet's horse in the chest. The beast rears, shrieking, and throws him violently to the ground.

Mehmet lands hard. Dazed, he looks up—eyes locking with Maria's across the chaos.

She lowers her bow. Unflinching.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

BOOM.

A thunderous explosion tears through the mountainside—the Ottoman powder cache erupts, sending stone and flame skyward.

The ground quakes. Rebels and Ottomans alike stumble, deafened and stunned.

Nikolaos sees the moment. Seizes it.

NIKOLAOS  
Fall back to the chapel! Protect  
the villagers!

Lukas stumbles into view, blood streaking his face.

LUKAS  
And you?

NIKOLAOS  
I'll buy you time.

Before Lukas can protest, Nikolaos sprints into the heart of the chaos, sword raised.

Maria sees him charge. Her hand rises involuntarily.

MARIA  
Nikos!

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

The fire spreads—Ottoman supplies go up in flames, black smoke curling into the dawn.

Rebels rally on the battlements, raining arrows and stones down on the disoriented enemy.

Lukas barrels into the courtyard with a small group of fighters, roaring over the noise.

LUKAS  
Didn't think we'd let you steal all  
the glory, did you?

They crash into the Ottoman flank, turning confusion into collapse.

On the ridge, Mehmet's fury simmers behind his cold stare.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Fall back.

A signal is raised. The remaining Ottomans retreat through the ruined gates—war drums silent.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

Victory is hollow. Rebels sink to the ground where they stand, too exhausted to cheer.

Smoke hangs low. The sun bleeds orange behind the mountain peaks.

Nikolaos limps into the courtyard, leaning on Maria. He's bloodied. But alive.

MARIA

You're an idiot.

NIKOLAOS

You've mentioned that before.

Lukas joins them—bruised, battered, and still somehow grinning.

LUKAS

Well... you're not dead. I'd call that a win.

NIKOLAOS

We survived. That's all.

The camera lifts, revealing the aftermath—the courtyard strewn with bodies, shattered walls, the monastery barely standing.

A fragile silence settles. The cost of freedom, etched in stone and blood.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

The chapel is dim and silent. Survivors kneel in the pews, their faces worn from grief and fatigue.

Father Damianos stands before the altar, his voice calm and unwavering.

FATHER DAMIANOS

For those who gave their lives, we pray. For those who remain, we endure.

Nikolaos sits at the back, eyes on the floor. Maria settles beside him.

MARIA  
You saved them, Nikos.

NIKOLAOS  
For how long?

MARIA  
Long enough to keep fighting.

He finally meets her gaze—eyes tired, but something flickers behind them.

Hope.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

From a distant ridge, the monastery stands silhouetted against the rising sun—scarred but unbroken.

The surviving rebels gather at the edge, staring into the vast forest below.

LUKAS  
So... what's next?

NIKOLAOS  
We rebuild. We regroup. And then...  
we take the fight to them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - MORNING

Silence. Only birdsong and the whisper of wind through the trees.

The courtyard is scattered with remnants of war—shattered weapons, scorched stone, and the still forms of the fallen.

Survivors move slowly through the wreckage, tending the wounded, lifting the dead with care.

The camera glides across the scene—grief painted in every gesture, but purpose in every step. The monastery, battered and burned, stands like a monument to defiance.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - SAME TIME

Maria stands alone on the outer wall, staring into the drifting smoke. Her fingers clutch the stone edge.

Nikolaos approaches quietly.

NIKOLAOS  
They're gone.

MARIA  
For now.

NIKOLAOS  
They'll be back.

MARIA  
Then we'll be ready.

A long beat of silence between them. Nikolaos glances at the bow in her hand.

NIKOLAOS  
You saved my life back there.

MARIA  
You've done the same for me.

NIKOLAOS  
Still... thank you.

Maria says nothing. But the faint smile on her lips says everything.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

The rebels gather near a row of freshly dug graves. Each one marked with a plain wooden cross.

Father Damianos stands before them, the Bible heavy in his hands.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
We bury our fallen, but their  
sacrifice lives on. They fought not  
for glory, but for freedom.

He looks out at the silent crowd—tired, mourning, unbroken.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)  
Let their memory guide us, and  
their courage give us strength.

Theodoros clutches his bloodied spear, knuckles white, eyes filled with tears.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)  
May their souls find peace, and may  
we honor them... by refusing to  
stop.

The crowd murmurs its assent. Not loud. But firm.

Lukas leans close to Nikolaos.

LUKAS  
I hate funerals. Too much crying,  
not enough drinking.

NIKOLAOS  
You can drink when we've won.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

The rebels clear debris from the broken gate. They haul  
stone, hammer boards into place, stack salvaged weapons in  
the armory.

Nikolaos watches it all, standing but swaying.

LUKAS  
You should sit down before you fall  
down.

NIKOLAOS  
There's too much to do.

LUKAS  
And it'll still be here tomorrow.  
You're no good to us dead on your  
feet.

Nikolaos exhales, finally relents. He sits on a nearby rock,  
eyes still scanning the rebuilding effort.

A flicker of pride in his expression.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Sunlight spills through stained glass, casting colors across  
the stone floor.

Maria sits in the chapel beside Father Damianos.

MARIA  
Do you think we're making a  
difference?

FATHER DAMIANOS

Every step we take, every battle we fight, is a step closer to freedom.

MARIA

But at what cost? How many more have to die before it's enough?

FATHER DAMIANOS

That's not for us to decide. We fight because it's right. Because we must.

Maria closes her eyes. Then rises.

The burden still there—but her spine a little straighter. Her gaze steady. Her purpose renewed.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

The core group gathers around the firepit in the courtyard. A crude map is spread out on a wooden crate, illuminated by lantern light.

Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, Father Damianos, and Theodoros form a circle, their voices hushed but urgent.

MARIA

The ridge is secure for now, but they'll try again. They always do.

Lukas leans on his sword.

LUKAS

We hit their wagons hard. That should slow them down for a while.

NIKOLAOS

Not enough. Kara Mehmet won't stop until we're wiped out. We need to strike at him directly.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And what of the villagers? If we take the fight to Mehmet, who will protect them?

Nikolaos meets Father Damianos' gaze.

NIKOLAOS

We'll leave a small force to guard the monastery. The rest of us will move under cover of night.

Maria frowns.

MARIA

You're talking about an ambush?

NIKOLAOS

No. An assassination.

The group falls silent, the weight of his words sinking in. Lukas is the first to break the tension, smirking faintly.

LUKAS

I like the sound of that.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Do not mistake this for vengeance,  
Lukas. This is survival.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP - NIGHT

The interior of the tent is lavishly adorned with silken tapestries and maps of the region spread across a large table. A lantern flickers, casting long shadows on the canvas walls.

General Kara Mehmet stands at the map, his back to the entrance, calmly tracing potential routes of attack with his finger. His face is stern, his cold eyes studying the lines of the map with precision.

The faint sound of muffled movement outside causes him to pause. His hand hovers over his saber, resting on the table.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - SAME TIME

Nikolaos stands just outside the entrance, his sword drawn. Maria and Lukas flank him, their weapons ready. They exchange a brief glance, the unspoken plan clear.

Nikolaos takes a deep breath and nods to them.

NIKOLAOS

Stay close.

Nikolaos pushes the tent flap aside and steps inside, his movements quiet but deliberate. Maria and Lukas follow, their weapons raised.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Kara Mehmet turns slowly, his face calm and unreadable as he takes in the intruders. He doesn't reach for his weapon immediately, instead folding his hands behind his back and studying Nikolaos with an air of curiosity.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

I was wondering when you'd come.

Nikolaos doesn't respond, stepping forward with his sword pointed directly at Mehmet.

Maria and Lukas fan out, positioning themselves at opposite sides of the tent. Mehmet's eyes flick between them, his lips curling into a faint smile.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

(in Greek)

You're bold. I'll give you that.  
But boldness is no substitute for  
strategy.

NIKOLAOS

Your strategy is fear. Ours is  
freedom.

Mehmet raises an eyebrow, his tone almost amused.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Freedom? You think you're saving  
your people? All you've done is  
delay the inevitable.

MARIA

We're still here, aren't we?

Mehmet's gaze shifts to Maria, and he smirks slightly before turning back to Nikolaos.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

And how long will that last? A  
month? A year? The empire does not  
forget.

Nikolaos takes another step forward, his grip tightening on his sword.

NIKOLAOS

Neither do we.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP- CONTINUOUS

Mehmet's smirk vanishes. In one swift motion, he grabs his saber from the table and strikes at Nikolaos. The two blades clash, the sound echoing through the tent. The fight is fast and brutal, their movements precise and deliberate.

Maria fires an arrow at a guard rushing into the tent, taking him down instantly.

Lukas engages another soldier who bursts in, his blade flashing in the dim light.

LUKAS

You didn't think we'd make this  
easy, did you?

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP- CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Mehmet circle each other, their blades locked in a fierce duel. Mehmet fights with calculated precision, his strikes powerful and deliberate.

Nikolaos counters with raw determination, his movements driven by years of struggle.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

You're fighting for a dream that  
died long ago.

NIKOLAOS

Then let me show you what dreams  
can do.

Nikolaos feints left, then drives his blade forward, catching Mehmet off guard. The general stumbles back, a gash across his arm. He snarls, his calm facade breaking for the first time.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Outside the tent, more Ottoman soldiers begin to converge, drawn by the sounds of battle.

Maria steps outside, firing arrows rapidly to thin their numbers, but the reinforcements keep coming.

MARIA

We need to move!

LUKAS

Tell that to him!

Inside, Nikolaos and Mehmet continue their duel. Mehmet lands a strike across Nikolaos's shoulder, causing him to drop to one knee. The general stands over him, his blade raised for a killing blow.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET  
You've fought well. But this is  
where it ends.

Nikolaos grits his teeth, gripping his sword tightly. As Mehmet moves to strike, Nikolaos rolls to the side and sweeps his blade upward, slashing across Mehmet's chest.

The general staggers, blood staining his ornate armor.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Maria and Lukas fend off the remaining guards as Nikolaos stumbles out of the tent, his arm bleeding but his resolve unbroken.

Maria rushes to Nikolaos.

MARIA  
Are you all right?

NIKOLAOS  
Let's go.

Lukas throws a small explosive into a pile of Ottoman supplies, and the group retreats as the explosion rips through the camp, throwing soldiers into disarray.

LUKAS  
Now that's how you make an exit!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The rebels race through the dark woods, breath ragged, branches slashing past. Behind them, the Ottoman camp glows like hellfire—flames clawing into the sky.

They skid to a stop near a clearing. Moonlight catches on sweat and soot-streaked faces.

MARIA  
Did you finish it?

Nikolaos doesn't respond immediately, his expression grim. He finally meets her gaze.

NIKOLAOS

Not yet.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

Kara Mehmet staggers from the tent, blood seeping through his fingers. His officers rush to him.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

My lord, you're wounded!

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

It's nothing.

He brushes them off, eyes scanning the dark tree line. Rage simmers beneath the surface.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

They'll pay for this. Every last one of them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - EARLY MORNING

The gates creak open as the rebels return, bruised and limping. First light spills across their faces—ghosts coming home from war.

Yannis runs to greet them, eyes wide with relief.

YANNIS

You made it back!

MARIA

Barely.

Yannis hugs her. She lets him, unsure, her gaze trailing after Nikolaos.

Nikolaos walks past them without a word, heading straight to the armory. Blood stains his tunic. His eyes are hollow.

YANNIS

Is he hurt?

MARIA

Not in a way we can fix.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - DAY

Controlled chaos. Soldiers rebuild fortifications, stack crates of powder, scrub soot from armor.

General Kara Mehmet stands like a pillar amid the whirlwind, his arm freshly bandaged. He stares down at a map nailed to a crate.

An officer approaches, tentative.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

My lord, reinforcements are on their way. They'll be here within three days.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Three days is too long.

He drags his finger across the map—straight to the monastery.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

We move at dawn. Burn the forest behind us. Smoke them out.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

My lord, the forest feeds half the—

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Then let it starve. If they want war, we'll give them famine and fire. No mercy. No survivors.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - MID-MORNING

A silence hangs over the monastery like a shroud. The wind carries smoke from the burning forest, casting a hazy veil across the courtyard. Survivors move like ghosts—bandaging wounds, dragging rubble, speaking in hushed tones if at all.

Maria sits alone on a crumbling wall, her bow resting across her knees. Her eyes are locked on the horizon, where ash smears the sky.

Theodoros limps into frame, arm wrapped in a bloodied bandage.

THEODOROS

Maria?

She doesn't move. A beat. Then her gaze shifts to him.

MARIA

What is it?

THEODOROS

Do you think he made it?

Maria's breath catches. She looks back toward the fire-painted horizon.

MARIA

I think he did what he had to do.

INT. MONASTERY CHAPEL - MID-MORNING

The chapel flickers with candlelight. Father Damianos kneels at the altar, whispering prayers that feel more like pleas.

Lukas enters quietly, dragging his steps. No grin, no swagger. He drops onto a bench like the weight of the world just caught up to him.

LUKAS

You praying for him?

FATHER DAMIANOS

For all of us.

Lukas stares at the flame of a candle.

LUKAS

He didn't have to go.

FATHER DAMIANOS

That's why he did.

Maria appears in the doorway. She crosses to them, voice low.

MARIA

Any sign?

SENTRY (O.S.)

Not yet.

She nods, jaw tight, eyes searching the tree line beyond the chapel window.

SENTRY (CONT'D)

You think they'll come back?

MARIA

It's not a matter of if. It's a matter of when.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

Smoke lingers over twisted wagons and collapsed tents. Dead are dragged into rows. Officers scream orders while soldiers patch up what's left of their siege machines.

General Kara Mehmet stands at the center—bandaged, furious, unshaken.

An officer bows beside him.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

My lord, the reinforcements have arrived.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Good. Double the guard. I want no surprises this time.

He stares at the horizon, face stone.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

The next time we march, we won't stop until their walls crumble and their people kneel.

INT. MONASTERY WAR ROOM - NIGHT

The table is lit by a single lantern. Maps spread across its surface, weighed down with stones. The absence of Nikolaos is a ghost in the room.

Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos study the terrain.

Theodoros and Yannis linger by the door, quiet.

MARIA

They'll regroup here, at the base of the ridge. It's the only path wide enough for their artillery.

LUKAS

We can hit them before they're ready. Another ambush.

MARIA

Not this time. They'll be expecting that.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Then what do we do?

Maria straightens, steel behind her eyes.

MARIA

We don't go to them. We make them come to us.

A long silence. Theodoros breaks it.

THEODOROS

How?

Yannis stiffens beside him, eyes narrowing.

MARIA

What's left of the forest is still  
ours. We turn it into a trap  
they'll never walk out of.

EXT. MONASTERY COURTYARD - SAME TIME

Theodoros sharpens his spear beside a small fire. Around him,  
younger rebels fumble with blades and bows. The air smells  
like sweat and iron.

KYRIAKOS, old and silent, watches from across the flames.

KYRIAKOS

First battle's always the hardest.

THEODOROS

It's not my first.

Kyriakos raises an eyebrow, skeptical. Theodoros grips his  
spear tighter.

Yannis approaches from behind, his words dipped in poison.

YANNIS

Maria seems very impressed with  
you.

Yannis leans closer, lowering his voice like it's  
half-confession, half-warning.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

But she needs someone who won't  
falter. Someone who'd fight beside  
her no matter the cost.

His gaze lingers on Maria across the courtyard, before  
snapping back to Theodoros with a sharp edge.

THEODOROS

She values us all.

YANNIS

She respects my skills. My loyalty.

THEODOROS

And mine.

YANNIS  
Don't count on it.

Theodoros stands.

THEODOROS  
What are you saying?

YANNIS  
That there will be plenty of women  
after the war.

He walks off. Theodoros watches him go, jaw tense.

KYRIAKOS  
That, my boy... is a different kind  
of war. And I doubt you're ready  
for it.

Theodoros lets out a quiet smirk, then goes back to sharpening.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

The camp is alive with grim purpose. Soldiers grind whetstones against blades, oil mail shirts, lash gear to horses. Every movement sharp, precise. No chatter—only the rhythm of war.

General Kara Mehmet cuts through the camp like a blade himself. His presence straightens backs, stills hands, stiffens resolve.

An officer steps forward, head bowed.

OTTOMAN OFFICER  
My lord, the men are ready.

Mehmet slows, scanning the treeline beyond the tents. His gaze is a blade in shadow.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET  
At first light, we march.

He turns toward the forest. A long beat. His voice is venom wrapped in silk.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)  
Burn everything. Let them breathe  
smoke and eat ash.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAWN

Gold light spills across the ridge. Below, the forest smolders in the distance. Ash rides the breeze.

The rebels stand at the gates, weapons in hand. They are bruised, bandaged-but unbroken.

Maria steps forward. The wind lifts strands of her hair as she scans the faces before her.

MARIA

This is the day they think they'll  
break us.

Silence. Every eye locked on her.

MARIA (CONT'D)

They think we're weak. They think  
we'll break. That we'll run. That  
we're finished. But we've survived  
worse. And today-

Her voice lifts-not loud, but undeniable.

MARIA (CONT'D)

-we're still here. Because when the  
fire came, we stood in it. And now  
it's our turn. We fight-for our  
dead, for the living. For our home.  
For freedom, for what comes next.

A beat. Then: a roar from the crowd. Bows raise. Blades lift.

Maria turns to Lukas, who cocks a crooked grin.

LUKAS

Hell of a morning speech.

Maria turns to Lukas, who grins faintly.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Thick canopy chokes the sunlight. The Ottoman column marches tight, wary. The trees close in like jaws.

Above them-silent movement. Arrows nocked. Shadows shifting.

Maria kneels in a tree's crook, eyes locked on Kara Mehmet's ranks below. She lifts her hand. Holds it.

Releases.

The forest explodes in motion. Arrows rain down. The front ranks crumple. Screams tear the quiet apart.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

Ambush!

Lukas steps into view, grinning as he lights a fuse snaking through leaves.

LUKAS

Welcome to the forest, boys!

BOOM—dirt and limbs blast skyward. The Ottoman line fractures.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels surge from the underbrush. No formation—just fury. Blades clash. Blood spatters leaves. Men scream. The air smells of sweat and smoke.

Theodoros fights like he was born here—fluid, fierce, certain.

THEODOROS

They're breaking!

MARIA

Not yet. This isn't over.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Further back, General Kara Mehmet surveys the chaos like a man watching a storm from behind glass. He doesn't flinch.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Pull the front line back. Let them think they've won. Let them taste victory.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

And then?

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

We crush them when they overextend.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels drive forward, chasing the retreat. They hit a clearing—and freeze.

Too open. Too quiet.

Maria's eyes widen.

MARIA

Fall back! It's a trap!

Ottoman horns blare.

From all sides—reinforcements surge in. Steel crashes into flesh. Arrows tear from the treeline. The rebels scramble to retreat, formation cracking under the weight.

General Kara Mehmet rides into the chaos, a shadow in silver armor. His saber swings—precise, merciless. A rebel falls at his feet.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

No mercy. Not today.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels scramble uphill, boots sliding on loose soil. Smoke curls through the trees. The final ridge—narrow, steep, wired with traps—is their last stand.

Maria plants her feet, bow raised. Lukas arrives beside her, blood on his knuckles, chest heaving.

LUKAS

Well, this feels familiar.

MARIA

Then you know how it ends.

A beat. No one says it, but they all feel it—Nikolaos should be here.

The Ottomans surge up the slope. The rebels answer with fire and steel.

Hidden spikes spring from the dirt. Tripwires unleash rockfalls. Explosions erupt in the underbrush.

The ridge becomes a furnace of blood and grit.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria looses arrows with fluid precision, her eyes hard, movements automatic. Every shot drops a soldier. Around her, chaos.

MARIA

Hold the line! Don't let them break through!

Lukas barrels into a wave of attackers, blade cleaving through shields. Behind him, Theodoros drives his spear into an advancing soldier, trembling but steady.

LUKAS

Doing great, kid. Just aim away from me.

THEODOROS

I'll try not to!

From the flank—Ottoman blades. Yannis rushes in, striking two down with a vicious spin.

YANNIS

The finishing touch.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Ottoman ranks press harder. Their shield wall climbs the ridge, implacable. Arrows light the treetops—flames lick the canopy.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Break them! Push them off the ridge!

The ridge burns. The rebels are forced to retreat further, their line beginning to falter.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria spots movement—Ottoman flankers slipping through the treeline. She whistles sharply, signaling archers in the high branches.

MARIA

On the left! Take them out!

A wave of arrows drops the ambushers mid-step. No hesitation.

Maria grabs a fallen sword and joins the front line beside Lukas and Theodoros. Blood spatters her face.

MARIA (CONT'D)

We can't hold this forever.

LUKAS

Then let's make it count.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

General Kara Mehmet strides into the firestorm like a phantom. His saber sings—two rebels fall before they can raise their blades.

He locks eyes with Maria across the clearing. Points his saber.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

You! Stand down, and I'll spare the others.

Maria steps forward. Mud on her boots. Fire behind her.

MARIA

You'll spare no one.

Mehmet smirks, raising his saber.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

So be it.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria and General Kara Mehmet clash, center stage in a battlefield gone wild. Sparks fly from every strike. Mehmet fights with brute power. Maria answers with deadly precision.

A parry. A slash. Maria cuts his shoulder—he snarls, charging harder.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

You're stubborn, like him. But you'll fall, just like he did.

MARIA

He stood for something.  
(beat)  
You'll die for nothing.

Their blades meet in a blur of motion. Neither gives an inch.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Ottomans surge up the ridge. The rebels fall back to their final position—a narrow bluff lined with hidden charges. Smoke clings to the trees. Fire crackles nearby.

Lukas spots the bundled explosives, half-buried in earth.

LUKAS

Maria! The charges!

She duels Mehmet, blades flashing. At the call, she pivots—barely dodges his swing—and darts backward.

MARIA

Light it.

LUKAS

It'll take all of them out—and us with it if we're not fast enough.

MARIA

Do it.

He doesn't argue. He strikes the fuse.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels flee downhill, fighting as they go. The fuse hisses.

Theodoros shouts over the roar.

THEODOROS

Move!

Then—

A violent detonation. Fire erupts. The ridge collapses, swallowing men, stone, and flame. A shockwave rolls through the trees.

General Kara Mehmet, bloodied, stumbles to his feet. The ridge is gone. Smoke veils the battlefield.

He screams at the void.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

Smoke still rises from the forest as the rebels limp through the gates. Villagers rush to meet them—tears, laughter, relief.

Maria walks in last, streaked with soot and blood. Father Damianos steps toward her.

FATHER DAMIANOS

You brought them home.

MARIA  
Not all of them.

She glances east. The forest burns on. Nearby, Lukas helps Theodoros hobble forward.

LUKAS  
That was fun.  
(grim smile)  
Let's not do it again.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

Candlelight dances on stone. Maria kneels alone in the chapel, her bow beside her. She stares at the altar.

MARIA  
Nikos... we did it.  
(softly)  
I hope you're watching.

She presses her palms against the cold stone, bowing her head. Her breath shudders, the first crack in her armor since his death.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
You never listened. You never  
stopped. I told you to rest, to  
save yourself... just once.

Her voice breaks, barely above a whisper.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
And now I have to be you.

She wipes her eyes roughly, forcing composure back into place. When she rises, her face is pale but resolute — the grief is buried, but not gone.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAWN

A hush. Golden light spills across the courtyard. Rebels mend walls. Villagers carry wounded. The monastery breathes—scarred, but standing.

Maria watches quietly, bow on her back.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - CONTINUOUS

Lukas leans on the battlements, battered but upright. Maria approaches.

LUKAS  
Still alive. Guess that's  
something.

Maria smirks.

MARIA  
For now.

LUKAS  
And Mehmet?

MARIA  
He'll be back.

Lukas nods, eyes on the tree line.

LUKAS  
Let him. We'll be ready.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

Theodoros sits quietly, arm in a sling. Father Damianos  
kneels beside him, offering a worn smile.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
You've done well, Theodoros.

THEODOROS  
Do you think he would've been  
proud?

Father Damianos kneels beside him, placing a hand on his  
shoulder.

FATHER DAMIANOS  
He already was.

EXT. FOREST - DREAM SEQUENCE

Nikolaos stands among burning trees. Flames swirl around him.  
His face is calm. He turns toward us.

NIKOLAOS (V.O.)  
The fight is never over. It's  
passed from one hand to the next,  
carried by those who refuse to  
kneel.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

A crowd gathers around a row of wooden crosses. One bears Nikolaos's name.

Maria steps forward, voice steady.

MARIA

Nikolaos showed us how to fight.  
How to stand when standing seems  
impossible.

She scans the faces around her.

MARIA (CONT'D)

And now, it's our turn. We carry  
his legacy, and we don't stop until  
we're free.

Theodoros lays his spear at the base of the memorial.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

Maria stands on the wall, eyes fixed on the horizon. Lukas joins her, flask in hand.

He offers it. She takes a sip.

LUKAS

So... what now?

MARIA

We rebuild. We fight. And we win.

Lukas grins faintly, raising the flask in a mock toast.

LUKAS

To freedom.

MARIA

To freedom.

EXT. MOUNTAIN MONASTERY - LATER

Maria walks through the ruined grounds. Yannis approaches.

YANNIS

I never said... I'm sorry. For you.  
Nikolaos meant everything.

MARIA

You didn't have to. He mattered to us all.

YANNIS

He was with us. I felt it.

A pause. He gently takes her hand.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

You'll always have him. And me. Not a brother—but close.

His hand lingers in hers longer than expected. There's no bravado now, no teasing—just a boy trying to fill an impossible void. Maria doesn't pull away, but her eyes drift toward the horizon, caught between grief for what she's lost and the faintest awareness of what Yannis is offering.

Maria smiles. They embrace.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAWN

The sky above is clear. Quiet peace.

Faintly—we hear a rebel song rise. It grows—low, defiant, full of hope.

FADE TO BLACK.