

400 Years of Shadows

Written by

Sarantos (Stage Name)
Sam Speron (Real Name)

October 26, 2025

Version 2

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Sarantos Melogia, LLC
7157 W. Howard St.
Niles, IL 60714

Cell: 847-757-5399
Email: samsperon@gmail.com

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FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN.

The faint echo of a church bell. Wind. An older woman's voice
— OLDER MARIA (V.O.) — quiet, solemn, almost prayer-like.

MARIA (V.O.)

For four hundred years, we lived in
the shadows. Our names forbidden.
Our prayers whispered. The sun rose
but never reached us. They tried to
make us forget who we were.

(beat)

But no shadow lasts forever.

The bell grows louder—its tone swelling until it fills the
dark.

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.

Mist drifts low over the fields. The air smells of earth and
salt. A single church bell rings, its sound rippling across
the valley, signaling morning prayer. Stillness. Sacred.

INT. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - DAWN

Candlelight wavers against cracked icons—ancient faces
watching through layers of smoke. Villagers kneel close
together, shoulders bowed, scarves drawn tight. Fear has
taught them silence.

FATHER ANDREAS (50s) stands before them, robes worn thin,
faith unbroken. He opens a battered Bible, fingers trembling
slightly. His eyes lift—tired, kind, defiant.

FATHER ANDREAS

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

A gust rattles the shutters. One candle dies. A mother pulls
her child closer. The murmured prayer rises, small but
unyielding.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The peace fractures—distant boots thunder against the earth. Over the ridge, a column of Ottoman soldiers crests the hill, armor flashing like shards of sunlight. Dust coils around them.

At the front, GENERAL HASAN (40s) rides tall, his expression carved from stone. His gaze sweeps the village like a predator measuring breath before a kill.

He raises one gloved hand. The column splits, soldiers fanning out through the streets like a tightening snare.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Chaos. Doors smashed open. Screams slice the silence. Smoke curls from shattered windows. Goats bolt through narrow lanes. A pot shatters against stone. The village is no longer a village—it's prey. And the air itself seems to bleed.

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 — men forced to their knees, women clutching children who don't understand yet. Faces pale beneath the rising dust. Hope drains from their eyes before a word is spoken.

Across the valley, the bells keep tolling, but now they sound like mourning.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The liturgy falters. Voices fade to silence as distant shouts seep through the stone walls—raw, merciless.

Father Andreas freezes mid-prayer. Candlelight trembles across his face, hollowing his eyes. The villagers look to him—fear gathering like storm clouds.

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

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

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

He drops to his knees at the altar, pulling open a hidden panel beneath it. Inside: fragile scrolls, hand-copied Greek texts, ink fading with age and secrecy.

The villagers move fast—tucking parchment under shawls, slipping books into robes. A child clutches a worn scroll like a toy too precious to lose.

The bells keep ringing outside—once holy, now warnings.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The square heaves with terror. Villagers kneel in the dirt, dust mixing with sweat.

General Hasan dismounts — composed, deliberate. His boots grind across the earth as he surveys them like a man appraising livestock. Almost bored.

GENERAL HASAN
You cling to your language. Your
saints. Your illusions of freedom.
(pauses, cold)
None of it will save you.

He gestures lightly. Soldiers obey. Torches kiss rooftops. Fire blooms. Icons crack under boots.

A young girl bursts from the smoke, clutching a carved wooden relic. Her hands tremble, but she won't let go. A soldier rips it away, tosses it into the blaze. Her scream cuts through everything—small, pure, final.

The sky blackens above her.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Screams bleed through the stone. Father Andreas listens, unmoving. His eyes close in prayer—not for rescue, but resolve.

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, opens a narrow passage behind the altar. The children file through, silent shadows vanishing into the dark.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The doors burst open. Soldiers pour into the sanctuary, steel striking stone, candles toppling.

They drag Father Andreas outside into the smoke-filled square. The crowd parts. Hasan steps forward, measured, detached.

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

Father Andreas lifts his chin. His voice is steady.

FATHER ANDREAS
He's here. In every heart that
still remembers His name.

For a heartbeat, Hasan's expression flickers—then hardens. He nods once. The soldier raises his curved blade.

From the edge of the square, hidden in the shadows, Nikolaos watches. His hands shake, fury smothered by helplessness.

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

The sword falls—

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

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

The screams of villagers clash with the triumphant roars of Ottoman soldiers—chaos ricocheting off the mountains.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Beyond the glow, the forest crouches in darkness. A handful of survivors huddle beneath the trees—faces streaked with ash, eyes hollow, breath trembling.

Nikolaos stares through the branches, the fire's reflection burning in his eyes. Beside him, MARIA, 18, his younger sister—fierce even with tears drying on her cheeks. She leans close.

MARIA
(whispering)
What do we do now?

Nikolaos doesn't look at her.

NIKOLAOS
We fight.

His voice is calm, but it lands heavy—like a vow carved in stone.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Firelight flickers faintly on the horizon. The village is a distant glow now, but the air still tastes of smoke and grief.

Crickets chirp, restless and off-beat. Even the night seems uneasy. Nikolaos pushes through the underbrush, face streaked with soot. Maria follows, ten survivors trailing behind—bloodied, silent, haunted.

Every snapped twig tightens Nikolaos's shoulders.

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

NIKOLAOS
Not tonight. They're too busy
taking what's left of us.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The group stumbles into a small clearing. Some drop to the ground, wordless, too spent to care.

KYRIAKOS, late 60s, frail but stubborn flame still burning in his eyes, leans against a tree, coughing into his sleeve.

KYRIAKOS

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

Nikolaos turns. His voice cuts through the dark, low and steady.

NIKOLAOS

And then what, Kyriakos? Watch them
burn our church? March our sons
into their wars, our daughters into
their beds?

(softer now)

We've been surrendering for
generations. What's it ever given
us?

He looks away.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Chains.

Silence presses in. 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, the sound barely a breath. The night thickens around them.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The survivors huddle close, breath ghosting in the cold. 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 – a lullaby in the ruin.

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, hollow faces lift toward the sound. Eyes shimmer with sorrow... and the faintest flicker of hope.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT NIGHT

A low fire glows beneath a canopy of branches—embers breathing against the dark.

Nikolaos crouches near it, sharpening a blade with slow, focused strokes. Maria sits beside him, her face caught between light and shadow.

MARIA

What's the plan?

Nikolaos doesn't look up.

NIKOLAOS

We head for the mountains. Find others. Build something stronger.

MARIA

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

He finally meets her eyes.

NIKOLAOS

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

MARIA

You sound like a man who's already lost too much.

NIKOLAOS

Maybe I have.

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.

He raises the cross, hands shaking.

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 over the small camp — Eleni clutching Petros, a boy binding an elder's wound, faces caught between exhaustion and defiance.

He grips his knife tighter, then steps into the firelight.

NIKOLAOS

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

He moves around the fire, meeting each survivor's eyes.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We'll speak our language. Pray to
our God. Remember who we are. And
when the time comes—

(beat)

—we'll show them we're still here.

In the trees, Maria watches her brother—unseen. Pride flickers in her eyes, edged with fear. A sharp crack echoes through the trees. Everyone freezes.

Nikolaos raises his hand, knife ready, eyes slicing the dark.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Put out the fire.

Hands move fast. Dirt flies. The flames hiss out, smoke curling upward—then gone. Darkness swallows them whole.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The survivors crouch in stillness. Breath shallow. Hearts pounding too loud in the stillness.

Beyond the trees, torchlight flickers—Ottoman soldiers moving slow, methodical. Shadows twist and stretch with every step.

Nikolaos presses into the earth, knife tight in his grip, eyes locked on the wavering glow ahead. A boot stops inches away. One soldier pauses, listening. The torch swings left... then right.

Beat. He turns. Moves on.

The light fades. The forest exhales. No one moves—but something shifts in the dark. Fear hardens into resolve.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT NIGHT

A collective breath escapes the survivors. The trembling gives way to weary silence.

Nikolaos scans their faces - haunted, exhausted, yet alive. His jaw tightens. The leader he never asked to be takes shape behind his eyes.

NIKOLAOS

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

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

The survivors climb a narrow trail that winds through mist-shrouded peaks. 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, face buried 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, her breath a white ghost in the morning air.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

The trail opens to a high plateau. Below, the valley sprawls-scarred and silent. Smoke rises from the ruins of their village, a thin black bruise against the sky.

The survivors stop. Some sink to their knees. Others just stand, staring at the memory of home. Their figures are small against the vast mountains-fragile, defiant specks clinging to survival.

Kyriakos drops to his knees, 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 wind cuts across the ridge, howling through stone and shadow. The group approaches a jagged cave, half-hidden by roots and brush. Shelter carved by time itself.

Nikolaos parts the foliage with his arm, revealing the narrow entrance. He looks back at the weary faces.

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 exhaustion and silence.

Petros sleeps in Eleni's arms, his cheeks soft with firelight. Kyriakos carves a small wooden cross, hands trembling with age and 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 impossible battles 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 across his knees, knuckles white around the hilt. Maria watches him, her face lit by the unsteady glow.

MARIA

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

NIKOLAOS

I don't have a choice.

MARIA

Yes, you do. We all do.

He 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 what
they did to our home.

(beat)

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 jagged dark. Moonlight slips through torn clouds, silvering the rocks. The sound comes again—closer. Gravel shifting. A breath.

A man staggers from the shadows—mid-forties, unshaven, bloodied, eyes hollow with exhaustion. LUKAS (40s) raises trembling hands.

LUKAS

Don't kill me. I'm Greek.

Nikolaos doesn't lower the blade.

NIKOLAOS

Prove it.

Lukas reaches slowly into his coat, pulls out a small icon of Saint George. The metal catches the moonlight.

Nikolaos studies it, then him. Finally, he lowers the knife.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)
Come inside.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Lukas sits near the fire, hunched, devouring a crust of dry bread Eleni pressed into his hands. The others watch—curious, wary.

ELENI
Who are you?

LUKAS
A soldier. Or I was. Fought with
the rebels down south.

He swallows hard, eyes darkening.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
We held the pass near Thermopylae.
Thought we could slow them down.
(beat)
It wasn't enough.

Nikolaos leans forward, 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 moves. Even Kyriakos lowers his eyes.

LUKAS
I escaped. Barely. Been hiding ever
since. Heard whispers of others up
here in the mountains. Thought
maybe—
(to Nikolaos)
Maybe we still have a chance.

Nikolaos studies him, then nods once.

NIKOLAOS

We do.

He rises, facing the others. 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, make their way along a jagged mountain pass. The sun rises over the peaks, casting long shadows through the mist. Below—valleys scarred by smoke and distant Ottoman banners.

Nikolaos leads, scanning the horizon. Lukas moves beside him, pointing toward a craggy ridge 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—a ledge barely wide enough for two feet. One slip means death.

Petros grips his mother's hand, eyes fixed on the edge. Eleni whispers reassurance, voice tight with fear. 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 into the abyss. The sound echoes—then dies. Silence.

Then—hoofbeats. Faint, then nearer. 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 appear on the trail below—rifles slung, blades gleaming, banners snapping in the wind. CAPTAIN HARUN (30s) raises a fist. The patrol halts.

He scans the cliffs. His gaze lands on a patch of disturbed earth. A pause. His hand moves to his sword.

CAPTAIN HARUN
They were here.

He signals. The soldiers dismount and begin searching the area.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

The survivors press against the cliffside, frozen breath misting the air. Below, soldiers search with the precision of hunters.

Maria holds Petros close. He trembles against her chest. 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, vanishing up the rocks. Nikolaos grips his knife—then steps into danger.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos moves deliberately over loose stone, loud enough to be heard.

CAPTAIN HARUN
(shouting)
There!

The soldiers charge. Nikolaos bolts, leading them along the cliffside trail, away from the group.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

He runs full tilt — rocks tumbling beneath him, branches clawing at his arms. The sound of pursuit roars behind him: boots pounding, metal clashing, men shouting.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE - CONTINUOUS

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

The arrow whistles through the wind and strikes a soldier clean through the throat.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos turns a corner—trapped. Two soldiers block his way. He lunges, slashing one across the chest. The man crumples, blood slicking the rock.

The second attacks—blades clash, sparks flash. Their fight grinds into the cliff wall, brutal and breathless. Above, Captain Harun watches, barking orders.

CAPTAIN
Surround him!

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

From behind the rocks, Maria watches. Fear coils into fury. She snatches a jagged stone—hurls it with all her strength. It cracks against a soldier's helmet. He stumbles, dazed.

MARIA
Get away from him!

Nikolaos seizes the opening — kicks the man hard, sending him over the cliff. His scream fades into the abyss.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Lukas fires again. 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.

Their eyes lock. The Captain raises his sword. Nikolaos charges, roaring. Steel meets flesh – the knife drives deep into the Captain's chest. He gasps, staggers, and collapses to his knees. Falls.

Nikolaos stands over him, breath ragged, blood on his hands.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - LATER

The survivors regroup among the rocks. The wind howls, carrying the scent of iron and ash. Nikolaos wipes his blade clean against the moss, expression 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 below, the mountain holding its silence.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

They disappear into the shadowed trail – small figures swallowed by stone and mist. The final image lingers–

The Captain's lifeless face, eyes open to the sky, blood seeping into the stone beneath him.

EXT. REBEL CAMP - NIGHT

The group approaches a hidden camp carved into the cliffs. Torchlight flickers over makeshift barricades and canvas tents stitched into the cliff. Armed rebels move like shadows – silent, watchful.

The group approaches, hands empty, shoulders tight. Nikolaos steps forward and raises both palms.

NIKOLAOS
We're Greeks. Seeking shelter.

From the firelight steps a broad-shouldered man—GENERAL STAVROS, 50s, with eyes like cold iron, hand resting on the hilt of his sword. He studies them, every muscle a question.

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

Lukas emerges beside Nikolaos.

LUKAS
Stavros, it's me. Lukas.

Stavros squints. Recognition slices suspicion. He grunts, grabs Lukas's arm like a man checking a pulse.

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

LUKAS
They almost did. These people pulled me out.

Stavros lets his grip fall. He studies the ragged faces — children, elders, the wounded. His stance loosens, the edges of war giving way to weary humanity.

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 while torches make the canvas breathe. Lines and pins mark routes and losses.

Nikolaos and Stavros sit opposite one another. Stavros taps a region thick with red.

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 cut what feeds the machine
— supply lines, bridges, choke
points. Not with numbers. With
purpose.

Stavros watches him, the map reflecting in his eyes.

STAVROS

That's the game we've been playing.
Still — they push.

NIKOLAOS

Not like this.

Nikolaos snatches a chunk of charcoal and circles a small
Ottoman outpost near their position, quick, confident
strokes.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

This one supplies the garrison in
Tripoli. Cut it off — they're
stranded. We strike, not just to
hurt, but to tell them we won't
hide any longer.

Stavros studies the charcoal mark. He lets a slow smile creep
up—half approval, half warning.

STAVROS

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

Nikolaos does not flinch.

NIKOLAOS

So does silence.

EXT. REBEL CAMP — NIGHT

Maria sits by the fire, cradling a sleeping Petros beneath a
worn blanket. The flames crack softly, throwing restless
light across faces hardened by loss. Around her, rebels oil
blades, check gear, and speak in low murmurs — the stillness
before the storm. She looks 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 burns out fast if you don't feed it.

MARIA

Then we'll make sure it doesn't.

Lukas follows her gaze toward Eleni, who stares into the darkness beyond the firelight.

LUKAS

(to Maria)

Excuse me a moment.

He rises, crosses to Eleni.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

We've all got a lot on our minds.

ELENI

Yes. It never stops – even when I sleep. I just hope Petros doesn't notice.

LUKAS

He knows he's got a strong mother.

Eleni's expression softens. She holds his gaze for a moment, her voice barely above the fire's crackle.

ELENI

Thank you, Lukas.

INT. REBEL CAMP/MAIN TENT - CONTINUOUS

Stavros leans back, arms crossed, studying Nikolaos like a man testing steel.

STAVROS

Alright, boy. We'll hit your outpost. But you lead the charge. Prove 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.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Rebels sharpen blades, string bows, faces grim in torchlight.
- Maria packs gunpowder into clay jars, crude bombs with rag-fuse tops.
- Lukas demonstrates tripwire traps in the dirt; young fighters mimic him, nerves steadying with each motion.
- Nikolaos sketches the outpost's layout onto a scrap of leather, placing small stones for strike points, his voice low, deliberate.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

The rebels glide silently along a narrow trail. The horizon glows cold and gray.

Nikolaos leads, bow over his shoulder, knife ready. He halts - below lies the Ottoman outpost: a cluster of tents, supply carts, and a handful of guards.

Lukas joins him, eyes narrowed.

LUKAS
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

Maria kneels beside a clay jar, stuffing an oil-soaked rag into the neck. Lukas crouches nearby, threading a fuse beneath stacked crates.

LUKAS
Who needs an army when you've got
bad ideas?

Maria touches a glowing coal to the fuse until it smolders.

MARIA

Slow burn. Make them look the wrong way.

The rebels fan out across the high ground. Nikolaos raises his hand – the silent signal.

Arrows whisper through the air – sentries fall before they can cry out. A clay jar arcs through the dawn – shatters on a cart. Fire erupts, swallowing canvas and wood.

Nikolaos surges forward, leading a charge through the gate. Steel clashes, men scream. He moves with cold precision – fluid, unrelenting. Two soldiers fall beneath his blade; a third meets his knife in the throat.

Moments later, the outpost is theirs. Smoke coils into the sky as rebels strip weapons and supplies, victory raw and breathless.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - LATER

Ash drifts through the air like snow. Nikolaos stands amid the wreckage, chest heaving, face blackened with soot. Stavros steps through the haze, smirk tugging at the edge of his scar.

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, hands stained with blood from 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 below the mountains, rooftops silvered by moonlight. Too quiet.

An owl cries – the only sound before the hush deepens, heavy, waiting.

INT. VILLAGE/HOME – CONTINUOUS

A dozen villagers – men, women, children – huddle around FATHER DAMIANOS, 60s, gentle yet commanding. A single candle flickers, casting trembling shadows across the walls.

Older children clutch parchment scraps scrawled with Greek letters.

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 to the wall. His fingers trace 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 sleeping village. Boots grind over dry dirt.

Captain Harun, cold-eyed and sharp-featured, surveys the homes like a wolf scenting prey.

CAPTAIN HARUN

Search the homes. Find them.

INT. VILLAGE/HOME – CONTINUOUS

The whispers stop. Heavy boots echo outside. Father Damianos stills – then gestures quickly.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Hide the children. Now.

Adults rush into motion, pulling up loose floorboards to reveal a hidden space beneath. The older children crawl inside, clutching their parchments like 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, vanishes into the dark. The boards drop back into place.

CRASH — the front door bursts open.

INT. VILLAGE/HOME — CONTINUOUS

Captain Harun storms in, soldiers fanning out. They overturn tables, rip open cupboards, tear the 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 a scrap of parchment beneath the table. He picks it up — the Greek alphabet, scrawled 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 herded into the village square. A bonfire crackles. Scraps of parchment burn and curl, drifting upward like dying voices.

Villagers watch from behind shutters, terrified and silent. Harun steps forward, his tone sharp as steel.

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, whose hands are bound but whose gaze never wavers.

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 the square.

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. A spark of intent flashes across his face.

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.

He hesitates, then nods. Together, they slip into the trees.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

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

An arrow whistles through the air — slams into the oil cart.
BOOM. Fire erupts, a shockwave of heat and smoke. Ottomans
stumble, shouting in panic.

Nikolaos and Maria burst from the haze. Nikolaos cuts through
a soldier, blade flashing. Maria swings a burning timber,
striking another to the ground.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Rebels flood into the square, shouting, charging. Steel meets
steel. Villagers join — pitchforks, knives, stones in their
hands. Fury replacing fear.

Maria cuts Father Damianos loose. The ropes fall away. He
steps forward, voice thunderous.

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

The Ottomans, outnumbered and stunned, retreat toward the
edge of the village. Harun glares across the square at
Nikolaos.

CAPTAIN HARUN
This isn't over.

He spurs his horse and disappears into the night, his men
scattering after him.

EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERMATH

Smoke hangs over the square. Bodies lie among broken weapons.
Villagers emerge slowly — grief and defiance mixing on their
faces.

Father Damianos approaches Nikolaos, eyes full of gratitude.

FATHER DAMIANOS
You saved us.

NIKOLAOS
No. You saved yourselves.

He looks over the ruins of the village. His voice hardens.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We have to leave. They'll come
back. And not alone.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Families pack in hurried silence. Bags are slung over
shoulders; children clutch heirlooms as the village begins to
vanish into shadow.

By the fire's dying glow, Father Damianos kneels and picks up
a scorched scrap of parchment - Greek letters ghosted beneath
the ash.

Across the square, Eleni approaches Lukas, who sharpens a
blade with slow, precise strokes. 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

(softly)

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 manages a tired, steady smile.

ELENI

Then let's not waste what they died
for.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EARLY MORNING

Nearly fifty villagers trudge through dense mountain forest, faces streaked with dirt and grief. Children cling to dolls, scarves, to the smallest fragments of home.

Maria helps an elderly woman with a bundle of blankets. Near the rear, Father Damianos walks slowly with a clutch of children who cling to him like a last steady thing.

ELENI

How long can we keep running?

MARIA

As long as it takes.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

The group pauses by a stream. Children splash cold water on their faces; adults huddle in low, exhausted conversation.

On a ridge above, Nikolaos and Lukas scan the valley. Lukas points to 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 scattered, bone-tired people.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

LUKAS

They will. If you lead them.

Nikolaos stays silent.

NIKOLAOS

I'm not a savior, Lukas.

LUKAS

No. But they think you are.

(beat)

That's what matters.

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

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria falls into step with Nikolaos as Lukas prepares the group.

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 climb is steep. Nikolaos and Lukas haul the slower up ledges while Maria holds the rear, making sure nobody is left behind.

A teenage boy offers his hand to an old man. Father Damianos sings a soft hymn to calm frightened children. Maria carries a child who has fallen asleep in her arms.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EVENING

They reach the jagged mouth of the cave system, half-hidden by vines. Nikolaos and Lukas step inside first, torches cutting the dark to ensure it's safe.

Inside, the cave opens into chambers and tunnels; damp stone glitters in torchlight as the group files in, shoes scraping on cold rock.

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 main chamber. Villagers cluster in pockets, eating thin rations and trading quiet stories. Shadows shift across the walls.

Nikolaos gathers with Father Damianos, Lukas, and Maria near the flame, planning their next move.

FATHER DAMIANOS

We can't just hide, Nikolaos. If we disappear into the mountains, they'll destroy what 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 supply lines, disrupt patrols – make them bleed.

MARIA

And warn the villages still standing. 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 for something at his belt and presents a crude leather strap with a wooden bead.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

For your bowstring. Keeps it from fraying in the cold.

He offers it awkwardly, eyes darting away. Maria hesitates, then takes it. Their fingers brush – brief, charged.

MARIA

Thank you.

Yannis straightens, trying to look older, then forces his gaze back to the urgency of 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 and protect the villagers.

MARIA

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

They hold each other's eyes long enough that the cave seems to wait. Nikolaos exhales and gives in.

NIKOLAOS

Fine. But stay close.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAWN

The rebels hide in the treeline, watching the Ottoman soldiers set camp beyond the village. Torches stab at the dim air; laughter and shouted orders drift across the clearing.

Lukas leans forward, voice low.

LUKAS

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

Nikolaos scans the layout, plan forming.

NIKOLAOS

We need to draw them away from the village.

Maria follows his gaze to the supply carts.

MARIA

What about those?

Nikolaos meets her eyes, decision made.

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 camp breathes quietly - a few small fires, soldiers murmuring, tents in tidy rows. Supply carts sit on the edge: barrels of grain, oil, weapons. A faint breeze stirs tent fabric.

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, breaths shallow, then melt into the undergrowth.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas and his men creep toward the carts, low in the shadows. One carries a clay jar of oil; another holds a torch wrapped in cloth to muffle the flame. Lukas pours oil over the carts, wood soaking dark.

LUKAS

Get ready.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Maria slip along the perimeter, stalking two guards who talk softly, unaware. Nikolaos pulls a dagger; Maria nocks an arrow.

NIKOLAOS

Wait for my signal.

Nikolaos throws a small stone — the guards glance up. Maria releases. Her arrow finds a throat. The other reaches for steel — Nikolaos is already there, dagger driven home. The bodies slump; Nikolaos drags them into shadow.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Good shot.

MARIA

Let's keep moving.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas strikes his torch, ignites it, and hurls it onto the oil-soaked carts. Flames roar up, hungry and fast. Soldiers shout, scrambling toward the blaze.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

The camp erupts into chaos as soldiers scramble to extinguish the fire.

Nikolaos signals — rebels pour out of cover, ambushing scattered patrols with bows and knives. Shadows flit between tents as strikes land with brutal precision.

— A rebel's knife sinks into a soldier's back.

— Maria's arrow punches through a tent flap, felling a man as he emerges.

— Nikolaos swings a burning branch, fends off two attackers, then kicks one toward the flames.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Captain Harun emerges from his tent, sword drawn, authority like ice.

CAPTAIN HARUN

(shouting)

Find them! Kill them all!

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Lukas is boxed near the burning carts, overmatched. He blocks a blade, then drops to his knees as a second attacker closes in. An arrow whistles - Maria's - and the attacker collapses. She pulls Lukas up.

LUKAS

I owe you one.

MARIA

You owe me two.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos pushes toward the camp's center, cutting a path. Harun steps into his way, 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.

They circle, steel singing. Harun strikes precise and brutal; Nikolaos parries, counters with desperate speed. Harun lashes out - a slash across Nikolaos's shoulder. Nikolaos staggers, then drives his blade into Harun's side. Blood blooms through uniform. Harun glares with pure 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 camp burns. Smoke pillars rise into the pale sky. Nikolaos grips his wounded shoulder; Maria supports him.

MARIA

You're hurt.

NIKOLAOS

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

Nikolaos glances back once more at the smoldering camp, his expression resolute.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

The rebels rest as dawn pries light through the trees. Their faces are streaked with ash and exhaustion – victory's thin cloak. Lukas sits beside Nikolaos as Nikolaos wraps his shoulder 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. And we'll make them regret it.

A small band in a vast, waking forest; their fire a faint glow under the brightening sky and the promise of a new day.

EXT. HIDDEN REBEL CAMP - DAY

Inside the cave system, rebels and villagers regroup. The mood is taut – hopeful, wary. Wounded are tended; salvaged weapons and food are sorted. Nikolaos leans against damp stone, shoulder bandaged, face pale where blood dried. Maria hands out bread and water. Lukas approaches with a teasing smirk.

LUKAS

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

Nikolaos manages a thin smile.

NIKOLAOS

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

LUKAS

We hurt them, Nikos. But 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, the villagers and fighters gather. Father Damianos stands near Nikolaos, hands folded in prayer. Faces are a mixture of fear and iron.

NIKOLAOS

The Ottomans will strike back, and
when they do, they'll bring
everything. If we stay, they will
find and crush us.

Nikolaos's eyes sweep 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, voice steadying the room.

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.

A ripple of murmured agreement.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We split into smaller bands. Hit
where they don't expect it.
Sabotage supply lines. Free the
villages they enslave. And keep
teaching - our language, our faith,
our history.

MARIA

We'll remind them that no matter
how many of us they kill, they will
never erase all of us. They cannot
destroy our memory or our spirit.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

INSERT MONTAGE.

FATHER DAMIANOS (V.O.)
They want us to forget. To die in
the shadows. But as long as one of
us remembers, we will all survive.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Lukas's team collapses an Ottoman bridge; wood splinters, the river swallows the crossing.
- Maria slips through an occupied village, sliding secret notes and pulling a hooded hand away into a shadowed doorway.
- Nikolaos and three men ambush a mountain patrol, taking rifles and saddlebags, melting back into trees.
- Father Damianos teaches a circle of children by candlelight, small fingers tracing the Greek alphabet on parchment.

END MONTAGE

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - DAY

A hulking fortress bristles with cannons. Inside, General Hasan towers over a map table, officers gathered like an audience. The news has frayed his patience.

OFFICER #1
The rebels strike and vanish like
smoke. Every outpost reports
attacks.

General Hasan slams his fist on the table.

GENERAL HASAN
Enough excuses! They are peasants
with knives. If they can strike us,
it's because we allow it. Burn
every village suspected of
harboring rebels. Leave nothing.
Let them learn 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 a village, boots stamping, torches roaring. Roofs catch like tinder. Screams tear through smoke-choked air. A mother clutches her son until soldiers wrench them apart — she is dragged away, kicking and shrieking. The boy stands frozen, ash swirling. Homes collapse. Faces in the haze are etched with fear and a stunned, terrible 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 where his fist lands. The chamber falls into a heavy silence. Maria steps forward, voice barely 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 bandaged teenagers. Nikolaos leads; his shadow slices the moonlight. Maria walks beside him, coiled.

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? Erase the names on our
graves?

(softly)

I'd rather fall than kneel.

Yannis approaches, feet shuffling, summoning 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

(half smiling)

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 fixed on the path ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

A cold wind slices through mist as the rebels crouch on jagged rocks, watching the Ottoman supply depot below.

What was a depot now looks fortified – rows of wagons heavy with crates of gunpowder and grain, soldiers swarming the yard, blades being sharpened. Nikolaos peers through a spyglass; Lukas crouches at his shoulder.

LUKAS
(whispering)
South wall's soft – wooden
barricade, no stone. With enough
force, we break it.

Nikolaos lowers the glass and 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 and 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, silence taut and burning. Torches lick low; wind whips cloaks. Nikolaos stands before them, scanning tired faces – young and old, all carved by loss.

NIKOLAOS

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

Lukas fingers his bow and nods.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

Maria tests an arrow, string humming.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

He meets each set of eyes. The weight of the moment settles like a stone.

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 forest stirs. Shadows glide between the trees – silent, precise. The rebels fan out like ghosts.

Up on the eastern ridge, Lukas crouches, bowstring drawn tight, eyes steady. Below, Nikolaos and Maria press low behind the rocks, just yards from the south barricade – dry wood, ready to burn. Maria nocks an arrow, exhales slowly, and glances at Nikolaos.

He raises his hand. Drops it.

NIKOLAOS

Now.

Maria's arrow whistles through the air – thunk. A sentry drops. A torch arcs – shatters against the wall. Fire races upward, turning to a roar. Black smoke blooms. Shouts tear through the morning.

EXT. OTTOMAN OUTPOST - CONTINUOUS

Confusion reigns. Soldiers stumble from tents, grabbing weapons, barking orders – too late.

Nikolaos bursts from the smoke, blade flashing, rebels surging behind him.

EXT. EAST RIDGE - SAME

Lukas signals, eyes sharp.

THWACK. Arrows rain from the ridge – deadly, precise. Tents collapse. Men scream. Confusion explodes across the yard.

EXT. WEST FLANK - CONTINUOUS

The third wave crashes through like a tide. Rebels swarm the wagons, slashing reins, toppling crates. A startled horse breaks loose, charging through the camp – spears scatter, tents ignite, panic spreads.

EXT. MAIN YARD - CONTINUOUS

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

Maria fights beside him – shifting between bow and dagger, fluid, lethal. An Ottoman grabs her arm. She yanks him forward and drives her dagger beneath his ribs.

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

Nikolaos grins, parrying a strike before driving his blade home.

NIKOLAOS
You're starting to scare me.

EXT. COMMAND TENT - CONTINUOUS

General Hasan storms into view, fury carved into every line of his face. His gaze locks on Nikolaos.

GENERAL HASAN
(roaring)
Bring me his head!

Soldiers rally, forming a wall of shields. Nikolaos charges straight at them – unstoppable.

Maria fires relentlessly, arrows cutting a path through the wall.

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

NIKOLAOS
(shouting back)
I do!

He slams into the line. Steel clashes. Sparks explode. Hasan steps forward, sword drawn, movements measured and brutal.

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. Hasan fights with power and precision; Nikolaos with speed and fury. Each strike echoes through the smoke and screams.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP – CONTINUOUS

Smoke coils into the sky. The rebels surge. Ottoman ranks collapse – fear spreading faster than flame. Lukas raises his hand.

LUKAS
Loose!

A volley of arrows cuts through the air. Soldiers drop mid-run. The rest flee, vanishing into the trees – ghosts of a crumbling empire.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP – CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Hasan trade savage blows. Hasan feints – cuts low. His blade bites into Nikolaos's side.

Nikolaos grunts, staggering – then surges back, deflects the next strike, steps inside the guard, and drives his knife deep into Hasan's chest.

The general stiffens. Blood bubbles at his lips.

GENERAL HASAN

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

Smoke drifts across the wreckage. Embers crackle, tents crumble. Rebels move among the ruins – binding wounds, carrying their fallen, gathering what remains.

A fragile stillness lingers – not peace, but breath before the next storm.

Lukas approaches, arm bloodied, eyes weary.

LUKAS

We did it.

Nikolaos studies the destruction. Burned tents. Bodies. The cost.

NIKOLAOS

This is just the beginning.

He turns toward the treeline. The rebels follow – limping, bleeding, but unbroken. They vanish into the forest, leaving behind the blackened remains of an empire's outpost – a warning written in ash.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The rebels move through the dark like ghosts. Torches flicker against the trees, shadows dragging long across faces carved by exhaustion. The silence between them carries it all – grief, victory, fear.

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

MARIA

You're bleeding again.

NIKOLAOS

I'm fine.

MARIA

You're not.

(beat)

Stop pretending you have to do this alone.

He slows, finally turning. For a moment, the mask drops – his jaw tight, his eyes hollow. Not defiant. Just tired.

NIKOLAOS

If I stop now... it all unravels.

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. Wounded men limp. One carries a child on his back. Another steadies an old man. He nods once. Keeps walking.

EXT. CAVE – LATER

The rebels emerge from the trees into the rocky mouth of the cave. Those left behind rush to meet them – relief and sorrow clashing in the firelight.

Inside, the glow reveals everything: blood, torn bandages, faces lined with fatigue. 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 – whispered orders, the rustle of cloth, the clink of metal.

Nikolaos winces as Eleni presses alcohol to his wound.

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)
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.

He looks at her. Wants to speak. Doesn't. Instead, a quiet
nod. The fire crackles between them. Neither moves. Neither
blinks. The silence says the rest.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

Nikolaos stands against the horizon's pale light, not turning
as Lukas approaches.

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 steps beside him, eyes on the rising sun.

LUKAS
They knew what they were walking
into. And they walked anyway.
(MORE)

LUKAS (CONT'D)

(beat)

That's worth more than most men
ever give.

Nikolaos doesn't answer. His gaze stays 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 crowded, the air heavy with tension and purpose. Nikolaos stands at the center, arm bound, voice steady but rough.

NIKOLAOS

Last night proved one thing.

(beat)

We are not lost in the shadows.

(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.

Quiet cheers rise – not loud, but sure. Belief rekindled. Maria stands at the edge, watching him. Her face still, her eyes never leaving him.

INT. CAVE – LATER

A small fire flickers in a side chamber. Maria crouches beside it, sharpening her dagger with even, careful strokes. Her face calm – but far away.

Yannis sits nearby, awkward, trying to find his footing.

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.

MARIA

You're right.

(beat)

Sorry.

YANNIS

No apology needed.

(beat)

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 looks back, there's no ridicule in his gaze – only honesty.

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

MARIA

This conversation just got interesting.

They sit in the glow of the fire – a brief, fragile calm before the storm ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

A jagged ridgeline splits the sky. Below it, the rebels move – small shadows threading through rock and scrub, swallowed by the vast, merciless terrain.

From somewhere unseen, a soft Greek hymn drifts through the wind – wordless, wounded, proud. It carries as the image fades to black.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - SAME TIME

A quiet Greek village cradled at the foot of the mountains. Children run barefoot through sunlit alleys. Linen flutters from balconies. A blacksmith's hammer rings – steady, rhythmic. Men sharpen blades that might as well be for harvest.

A moment so still it feels stolen from time.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Low ceiling. The stale scent of fire and ale. In the back corner, Nikolaos leans over a rough wooden table. Maria sits across from him, eyes sharp. 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 eyes drift – a father bouncing his child, a grandmother slicing bread.

NIKOLAOS

They don't need courage.

(beat)

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

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - LATER

The square is silent. Nikolaos stands before a ring of wary villagers. Maria and Lukas flank him, holding the silence with him.

NIKOLAOS

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

(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 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 shifts. Doubt softens into something else.

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.

(beat)

If we fight as one, we can protect all that's left.

He lets the silence hang heavy.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

An old man steps forward — KOSTAS, weathered, gripping his cane. His voice is gravel.

KOSTAS

I've buried too many 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 else. Resolve.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - MONTAGE

A quiet revolution begins in dust and sweat.

BEGIN MONTAGE

— Lukas stands at the edge of a field, bow taut. He looses.
Bullseye. Behind him, villagers fumble, learning. He adjusts
grips, fixes stances, nods as one farmer hits true.

— Maria kneels in the shade, surrounded by women. She holds
up a jar of oil, stuffs a rag inside, lights it, then snuffs
the flame. The women trade glances; one tries it herself.
Maria smiles — approval, not softness.

— Across the square, Yannis trains clumsily with a sword. His
gaze keeps flicking to Maria, her composure, her calm
authority. He nearly drops his blade; the older men laugh. He
smiles shyly, then tries again.

— Nikolaos sharpens his blade beside the well, watching the
others train. A young boy steadies an old man's spear.
Determination ripples through the square — fragile but real.
Nikolaos's pride is quiet, tempered by the weight of what's
ahead.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - EVENING

The sun dips behind the hills, casting long shadows across
the square. A fire burns at the center — faces lit,
trembling, resolute. Farmers. Mothers. Children. Soldiers
now.

Father Damianos steps forward, Bible in hand, robes worn
thin.

FATHER DAMIANOS

We fight for more than land. More
than vengeance.

(beat)

(MORE)

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

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

He lifts the Bible, not as a sermon, but as truth.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

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

Heads bow — not from fear, but faith. The silence hums with
conviction.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

A hundred torches flicker and vanish as they're doused in
unison. Shadows climb the trail. Boots grind frost. Hearts
thrum like drums.

Nikolaos leads, upright but worn. Maria walks beside him,
alert.

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. Torches blaze along the walls —
cannons aimed in every direction but above.

Lukas studies through a spyglass, jaw tight.

LUKAS

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

(beat)

They're ready for an army.

Nikolaos crouches beside him, tracing the ridgeline with his finger.

NIKOLAOS

Good. Because we're not one.

He points toward a ravine snaking behind the fort.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

(turns to Maria)

You're with me. Straight to their powder.

Lukas eyes him, hesitant.

LUKAS

You sure you're not rushing this?

Nikolaos's jaw tenses, just for a heartbeat.

NIKOLAOS

If I stop to think, I start to doubt.

Maria smirks, checking 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.

MARIA

Or lead when you don't.

Their eyes meet – tension, familiarity, something unspoken. Then Nikolaos allows a thin smile. The wind howls. Below, the Ottomans sleep – for now.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE – MOMENTS LATER

Lukas sits sharpening his blade against a wall. Father Damianos stands beside him, murmuring 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 chuckles under his breath. Father Damianos gazes toward the faint red glow on the horizon.

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 groan. Smoke still clings to the air. Maps lie sprawled across a battered table. Nikolaos pins one down with his knife.

NIKOLAOS
Here, here, and here – their supply
routes. We cut them off, they
starve.

Lukas leans closer.

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 the fire in other
villages – show them this fight
belongs to all of us.

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.
(MORE)

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

(beat)

If we stand alone, we fall alone.

He presses a finger along the map's eastern edge.

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 groan under the weight of salvaged supplies. Villagers
shoulder bundles, faces streaked with ash and determination.
Fear lingers—but beneath it, resolve hardens like steel.

Nikolaos stands at the gate, watching them go. Lukas moves
through the line, tightening formation, barking quiet orders.

A small hand tugs at Nikolaos's tunic. He looks down. A boy,
ten, barefoot, face smudged with dirt but eyes burning
bright.

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, before slipping back to his
mother's side.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - LATER

The rebel column disappears into the trees. No drums. No
banners. Just boots striking dirt, one after another.

Behind them, smoke coils from the garrison ruins—curling into the gray sky like a warning. Or a promise.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP - NIGHT

Lanterns flicker over maps stained with dirt and blood. PASHA IBRAHIM (50s), immaculately dressed, studies a report. His jaw tightens.

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

Across the tent, his aide shifts, uneasy.

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 stands, smoothing his immaculate coat, pacing slowly.

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 murmurs. Campfires crackle. Shadows of fighters stretch and flicker on trees.

Lukas sits apart, sharpening his blade with measured precision—metal whispering against stone. 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, their silence deep but not empty.

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. He smirks, conceding, and eats. For a moment, his eyes drift toward the fire. The embers dance in them – reflections of something darker. Then he hides it behind that familiar smirk.

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 pauses, spoon halfway to his mouth.

LUKAS

Alive... or reckless?

ELENI

Maybe both.

(beat)

But at least I'm not alone anymore.

Their eyes meet across the glow of the fire. For one fragile heartbeat, there's no war – only warmth.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - DAY

Sunlight cuts through mist as villagers gather in uneasy silence. A column of Ottoman soldiers marches in – precise, merciless, their armor glinting like teeth. Mothers pull children close. Fathers stand firm, empty-handed but unbowed.

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 answer. Only wind, and a child's muffled 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 steps closer, face inches from the old man, voice low, almost kind.

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

He turns to the crowd, eyes cold and patient.

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

Silence. Not a breath moves. Ibrahim's hand lifts, a gesture more elegant than cruel.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)
Burn it all.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Torches drop into dry thatch. Homes become pyres. Screams cut through the morning air as soldiers tear through the streets, clubbing, dragging, burning.

Children cry. Fathers fall. The square fills with smoke and terror.

EXT. HILLTOP - SAME TIME

Nikolaos watches the inferno below. Flames reflect in his eyes – not light, but judgment.

MARIA

We have to do something.

NIKOLAOS

If we go now, we die with them.

Lukas laughs under his breath – too sharp, too fast.

LUKAS

Guess dying's easier than watching.

(beat)

So we just stand here?

Nikolaos doesn't answer. Down below, a woman is dragged by her hair across the dirt. Her scream pierces the wind. His knuckles split against his sword hilt.

MARIA

Nikos... this isn't your fault.

He doesn't look at her.

NIKOLAOS

Every fire they light feels like one I didn't stop.

MARIA

You talk like you lit the match yourself.

NIKOLAOS

(quiet)

Because once... I did.

MARIA

What are you talking about?

NIKOLAOS

Thessaly. We torched an Ottoman outpost. Thought it would scare them. The wind turned. Half the village burned.

Silence. Just the fire's crackle.

MARIA

You couldn't have known.

NIKOLAOS

I should have. I gave the order.

He finally looks at her – eyes hollow.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

Every time I see fire, I see them.

He steadies himself.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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 villager – THANASIS, barely twenty – breaks from the crowd with a knife. He lunges. A guard moves faster. One flash of steel – Thanasis crumples.

Ibrahim steps past his body without pause.

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 he's choking on rage.

NIKOLAOS
Take half the men. Circle east. Cut
their retreat.

Lukas nods, disappearing into the smoke.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)
You and I come from the north.
Quietly. Guards first.

MARIA
And Ibrahim?

Nikolaos watches as soldiers kick Thanasis's body aside.

NIKOLAOS
He doesn't leave this village
alive.

MARIA
And if killing him makes you like
him?

Nikolaos turns sharply, caught off guard.

NIKOLAOS
You think I enjoy this?

MARIA
I think you forget what it does to
you.

NIKOLAOS
It keeps us alive.

MARIA
At what point does survival stop
being living?

He looks away, eyes hardening.

NIKOLAOS
When we're free.

For the first time, she looks at him with fear — not for the battle ahead, but for what it's turning him into.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Lukas and his team creep behind Ottoman wagons. Oil splashes across the wheels. A rebel lights a fuse, the hiss swallowed by chaos.

LUKAS

Wait for the signal.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and Maria move through the smoke – shadows within shadows. Two guards fall before they can draw breath.

He signals her forward. She melts into the haze, bow ready.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE - SHOWDOWN

From the east – explosion. Wagons erupt in fire. Lukas leads his men through the blaze, cutting down soldiers. Villagers, desperate, grab whatever they can – pitchforks, stones, knives – turning terror into fury.

The square becomes a storm. Nikolaos strides in, blade drawn. Across the fire, Ibrahim turns, smiling.

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.

They circle – predator and prey, though neither sure which is which. Ibrahim strikes first. Fast. Precise. Nikolaos meets him blow for blow – brutal, untrained, survival honed by pain. Steel crashes. Sparks fly.

A blade catches Nikolaos's shoulder. He stumbles, teeth gritted. Maria's voice rings out through the chaos.

MARIA (O.S.)

Nikos!

He turns – one fatal second. Ibrahim slashes deep across his ribs.

PASHA IBRAHIM

You're no hero. You're just next.

Nikolaos grips a fallen torch. Swings. Flame lashes across Ibrahim's robes. The pasha screams as fire devours silk. Nikolaos lunges, driving them both to the ground. The sword between them twists. Flesh gives. They freeze.

Nikolaos looks down – his blade buried in Ibrahim's chest. Pasha gasps, eyes fading.

PASHA IBRAHIM (CONT'D)

You think this... changes anything?

Nikolaos's voice is a whisper of iron.

NIKOLAOS

It already has.

He twists the blade. The light dies from Ibrahim's eyes.

NIKOLAOS (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)

I didn't want–

He stops. There's no use finishing. Maria rushes in, breathless.

MARIA

Nikos – what did you–

He doesn't answer. Just looks at the burning village.

NIKOLAOS

Every fire they light feels like
one I didn't stop.

Around them, Ottoman soldiers drop weapons or flee. The roar of battle fades, replaced by weeping and the crackle of ruin.

EXT. BASE VILLAGE – LATER

Smoke drifts through the wreckage. The wounded are tended. The dead are counted. Families cling together in the ash.

Nikolaos stands in the center, blade still red, expression unreadable. Maria approaches – face streaked with soot and sorrow.

MARIA

We did it.

She looks around – burning homes, broken bodies, crying children.

MARIA (CONT'D)

At what cost?

NIKOLAOS

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

He looks over the survivors – bloodied, weary, but 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.

For a moment, silence. Then, faintly – cheers. Weak, but real. The sound of something refusing to die.

Among them, Lukas watches a child clutch the limp hand of a burned parent. His half-smile fades.

LUKAS

(quietly, to himself)
Doesn't feel like winning.

EXT. CONSTANTINOPLE - NIGHT

The city glows beneath a silver crescent. Minarets pierce the heavens. Marble spires shimmer like wet stone in the torchlight. At the city's heart, the governor's palace looms – opulent, fortified, gluttonous in its grandeur.

INT. GOVERNOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Gold drapes ripple in the firelight. The air smells of spice and ink. GOVERNOR KEMAL (50s) sits behind a marble desk, eyes fixed on a parchment. His fingers tighten until the scroll creases.

GOVERNOR KEMAL

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

He sets the scroll down, slow and deliberate, then looks up at GENERAL SELIM (50s), who stands stiffly across the room.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)
This Nikolaos... he's no longer just
a thorn. He's a disease.

GENERAL SELIM
Then we crush him.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
No. We unmake him.

Kemal walks to a massive wall map – veins of red stretching
through the countryside like bloodlines.

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

GENERAL SELIM
And the rebellion?

Kemal turns, his eyes hard with the calm of men who've
forgotten mercy.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
Hope dies faster than men. Starve
them – and they'll tear each other
apart.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S PALACE – NIGHT

General Selim storms into the courtyard. Rows of soldiers
fall into formation as torches flare. War drums roll through
the night – deep, primal, final. Not an expedition. An
extermination.

EXT. MOUNTAIN – DAY

A sea of tents sprawls along the ridge. Hammer blows echo
through the crisp air. What was once a band of fugitives is
now an army in motion – rough, raw, alive.

Nikolaos stands on a rocky ledge above the camp. His eyes
follow the rows of recruits drilling below, each strike a
heartbeat of defiance.

Behind him, Maria approaches with a rolled map.

MARIA
Still thinking about the village?

NIKOLAOS

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

MARIA

You can't blame yourself for their
sin.

NIKOLAOS

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

He nods toward the camp below.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

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

Maria unrolls the map beside him, the wind tugging at its
edges.

MARIA

Then we make them soldiers. There
are resistance groups along the
coast waiting for a sign. You're
it, Nikos.

Nikolaos studies the map – rivers, roads, fortresses, all
arteries of empire. His eyes stop on a red-marked port.

NIKOLAOS

If we hit the coast, we choke their
supply lines.

MARIA

Exactly. Starve their war machine
until it eats itself.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAINING GROUND – DAY

Lukas moves between rows of recruits. Arrows miss, spears
clatter.

LUKAS

(shouting)

You pull back the bow, not just
your arms – your fear too!

A scrawny teenager, THEODOROS, lets loose. The arrow thuds
dead center. Lukas grins, slapping his shoulder.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

There it is. That's the shot
they'll remember.

INT. CAVE WAR ROOM - LATER

Torchlight paints the stone walls in gold and shadow.
Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, and Yannis crowd around a rough map.
Stones mark Ottoman forts. Lines trace their trade arteries.

Father Damianos stands nearby, silent, watchful.

Yannis lingers at the edge - gaze flicking toward Maria as
she leans close to Nikolaos, whispering strategy. Something
flickers behind his eyes - longing, pride, insecurity. When
Nikolaos steps back, Yannis leans in, pointing to a point on
the map with forced confidence.

YANNIS

If we strike here - at night -
their patrols will be blind. I can
lead it.

Maria looks up, studying him. For a heartbeat, she sees
herself years ago - reckless, desperate to matter. Her
expression softens, then hardens again.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

Or... maybe you'd plan it better.
What do you think?

His voice wavers just enough to betray him.

LUKAS

(pointing elsewhere)
That depot on the coast - biggest
prize they've got. Starve it, and
their southern front dies.

MARIA

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

NIKOLAOS

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

LUKAS

Divide and conquer. Finally, a plan
that sounds like mine.
(beat, grinning)
(MORE)

LUKAS (CONT'D)

I'll take the mountain pass. Make it loud.

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 strike back?

Nikolaos doesn't hesitate.

NIKOLAOS

Then we bleed them again.

The fire crackles between them - a rhythm now matching the heartbeat of a war that refuses to die.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Two lines of rebels slip into the darkness - one vanishing up the mountain, the other toward the sea. Torches flicker and fade, swallowed by the black.

Nikolaos and Maria move under silver moonlight, their boots soft against the damp earth.

NIKOLAOS

You've been quiet.

Maria shrugs.

MARIA

Just thinking.

NIKOLAOS

About?

MARIA

About what happens if we win.

(beat)

What victory might cost.

Behind them, Yannis adjusts his bow, watching Maria with nervous focus. She catches his glance – gives a faint nod. It steadies him.

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

EXT. COASTAL RIDGE - DAWN

Golden light creeps over the horizon. Below, the Ottoman depot stretches along the rocky coast – rows of tents, wagons, and the rhythmic clang of soldiers at work. The waves crash like distant drums.

Nikolaos lies flat on the ridge, peering down through the haze. Maria crouches beside him, 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 camp bustles – officers shouting, crates stacked, fires stoked. At the center stands the command tent, draped in Ottoman red. Up in the cliffs, Nikolaos, Maria, and Yannis crouch low.

Yannis's knuckles whiten around his bowstring. He glances at Maria again – searching her face for courage.

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

NIKOLAOS
We're not here to fight them all.
(gestures to stacked
wagons)
Just take their legs out from under
them.

EXT. DEPOT PERIMETER - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos splits the team into small strike groups.

NIKOLAOS

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

MARIA

Don't take too long.

She slips into the trees, leading her archers to higher ground. Nikolaos signals his men, then descends a narrow goat path into the depot's blind spot.

EXT. NORTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Guards patrol lazily — until two drop silently, throats cut clean. Nikolaos gestures. Rebels drag the bodies away. He crouches beside a cluster of barrels, slick with oil. A rebel uncorks a flask, pouring slowly. Another winds a rope fuse.

YANNIS

How long?

NIKOLAOS

Long enough — if we move fast.

EXT. SOUTH RIDGE - SAME TIME

Maria lies prone, eyes tracking every movement below.

ARCHER

Should we fire?

MARIA

Not yet. Wait for Nikos.

EXT. DEPOT - COMMAND TENT

An Ottoman officer steps out, scanning. Patrol's late. A flicker of suspicion crosses his face. He barks an order. Tension ripples across the camp.

EXT. BARRELS - SAME TIME

Nikolaos strikes flint. A spark. A hiss. The fuse begins to crawl, glowing through the dirt.

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 - precise, deadly. Torches burst. Wagons ignite. Shouts turn to screams.

EXT. DEPOT - EXPLOSION

The fuse reaches the powder. A thunderclap of fire tears through the depot - a rolling wall of flame and splintered wood. Wagons fly. Crates explode. Smoke billows.

EXT. DEPOT - BATTLEFIELD

In the smoke and panic, rebels pour through slashing and torching supplies. Fire devours tents.

From above, Maria's archers cut down soldiers trying to regroup. Lukas bursts through the eastern gate with his own team - dirt-streaked and grinning.

LUKAS

Miss us?

EXT. CENTER OF DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER

Nikolaos ducks behind a wagon as bullets rip through the smoke. He spots the Ottoman captain - bellowing orders beside a wagon loaded with powder.

NIKOLAOS

(to his men, low)

He's the spine. Cut it, they fall.

He gestures two rebels toward the ropes strung above. Then he grabs a lantern, flame trembling. He sets it under the oil-soaked wagon.

CAPTAIN

(in Turkish, shouting)

Find him! Bring me his head!

Boots thunder through the haze. Nikolaos strikes flint - spark, smoke, ignition. The wagon erupts. A shockwave knocks men flat. The captain staggers out, half-burned, choking on ash.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(in Turkish, rasping)
You'll never... defeat us.

Nikolaos doesn't answer. Just watches the flames consume the depot, jaw clenched, eyes hollow. Maria's voice crackles in through the smoke.

MARIA (O.S.)
Nikos! We have to go!

Nikolaos turns, dragging a wounded rebel over his shoulder.

EXT. DEPOT EDGE - LATER

The depot burns behind them - flames licking the dawn. Rebels regroup, battered but breathing. Maria approaches, wiping soot from her face.

MARIA
We really did it.

Nikolaos watches the inferno, the reflection trembling in his eyes.

NIKOLAOS
For now.

He looks toward the fallen captain - half-buried beneath burning debris.

CAPTAIN
(weak, coughing)
You... kill for freedom?

Nikolaos kneels beside him, breathing ragged.

NIKOLAOS
I kill because they left me no
other way.

The captain's hand grabs his wrist - trembling, desperate.

CAPTAIN
Then you're no different.

Then - a deep, distant rumble. Maria spins toward the depot.

MARIA
The powder stores - there's more!

A second explosion rips through the far side. Flames burst skyward. Two rebels vanish in the blast.

Lukas races toward the wreckage – Nikolaos grabs his arm.

NIKOLAOS
We can't stay.

Lukas freezes, staring at the bodies, then nods – jaw tight.

MARIA
Nikos—let's go.

He doesn't move at first. Just watches the fire consume the depot, guilt and victory tangled in his face.

NIKOLAOS
Every victory feels smaller than
the last.

MARIA
Then we make the next one mean
something.

She wipes ash from her cheek, half-smiling to Lukas.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You'll brag about this for weeks.

LUKAS
Probably. That's what legends do,
right?

MARIA
You think you're a legend?

He shrugs, forcing a grin.

LUKAS
If nobody remembers our names, at
least they'll remember we laughed.

Maria tilts her head, realizing the joke isn't really one.

MARIA
Someone will remember.

LUKAS
Maybe.
(beat)
Just make sure they don't forget I
was funny.

He walks off before she can answer.

EXT. COASTAL RIDGE - DAWN

Below, the depot burns — a black wound against the rising gold of morning. Flames lick the sky. Wagons collapse, tents curl inward, and the sea hisses where fire meets tide.

The rebels stand on the ridge above, silent silhouettes against the light. Smoke drifts past their faces.

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 doesn't respond. He turns, eyes still on the blaze — the kind of stare that's part triumph, part mourning. The others follow him into the trees, their figures swallowed by smoke and sunrise.

EXT. FOREST CAMP - NIGHT

Small fires crackle in the darkness. Shadows move around them — tired, burned, half-ghosts already. Some tend wounds. Others just stare into the flames.

Maria sits apart, bow across her knees. Lukas drops down beside her with a quiet grunt.

LUKAS

You ever notice we talk less after every victory?

MARIA

Because there's less left to say.

LUKAS

Or fewer people to say it.

A long silence. Sparks rise and die in the night air.

MARIA

He thinks we're winning.

LUKAS

Are we?

MARIA

My father died waiting for someone
else to fight.

(beat)

I won't make that mistake.

She stares at the sparks.

INT. CONSTANTINOPLE - STRATEGY ROOM - NIGHT

A vast chamber of stone and silence. Oil lamps flicker,
throwing light over crimson banners and silver-plated armor.

At the center, a long table strewn with maps. General Selim
drags a finger across the parchment, voice sharp and low.

GENERAL SELIM

They've struck here... and here.
Our lines bleed faster than we can
mend them. They're always one step
ahead.

Governor Kemal stands at the head of the table, perfectly
still. His calm is heavier than rage.

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 victory
they claim. Many call them
protectors now.

Selim's fist hits the table, loud enough to rattle ink pots.

GENERAL SELIM

Then we'll remind them what
obedience costs.

Kemal steps closer to the fire, its glow sharpening the edges
of his face, 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 east. Let the empire decide
their worth.

He looks directly at Selim.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)

And Nikolaos?

A pause thickens the room.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I want his head on a spike before
the next moon.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Fires glimmer between the trees, small and cautious. The
rebel camp breathes in exhaustion - boots mended, wounds
stitched, silence replacing songs.

A cluster of rebels huddle around a fire. The flames light
their faces like old portraits - tired, resolute, barely
human anymore. Yannis pokes at the embers.

YANNIS

Before all this, I was a fisherman.
Couldn't even hold a sword
straight.

Lukas smirks faintly, stretching his legs.

LUKAS

And now?

YANNIS

Now I can't sleep unless I hear
waves - or screaming.

The laughter that follows dies halfway. Only the fire
answers. Maria sits apart, listening, her eyes lost somewhere
deep in the trees.

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos hunch over a rough wooden table beneath a hanging lantern. Maps spread across the wood - smudged, torn, overused.

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, rubbing his face. His exhaustion isn't from the fight - it's from the price. Father Damianos stares into the flame.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

Once I told a mother her son's death had meaning. That God would use it for good.

He looks up, eyes tired.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

I don't say that anymore.

Maria looks up sharply, uneasy.

MARIA

You still believe He's with us, don't you?

FATHER DAMIANOS

I believe He was.

(beat)

I'm not sure He stayed.

A long pause - flames crackle, wind sighs.

NIKOLAOS

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

He looks between them - eyes dark but steady.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

But we can't stop now. Every scar,
every step, every fire we light...
(he rubs his scarred hand)
... we crawl closer to freedom.

MARIA

We can't just talk while they burn
our villages.
(she slams her palm
against the table)
They burn – and we talk. That's all
we do.

NIKOLAOS

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

He leans over the map, tracing a path east with his finger.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

They'll move this way next – toward
their stronghold.

LUKAS

So that's where we stand?

NIKOLAOS

Unless you've got a miracle hidden
somewhere.

No one answers. Only the wind hums through the trees outside.

EXT. FOREST – DAWN

Mist curls between the trunks. The first light spills across
the camp, touching tired faces and sharpened blades.
Somewhere far off, a hawk cries – the sound of something wild
still alive.

Nikolaos stands at the edge of camp, watching the horizon.
Behind him, the others stir, wordless but ready.

The war hasn't ended. It's only catching its breath.

LUKAS

If we keep hitting their outposts,
they'll start–

He freezes. The forest whispers back – a rustle too sharp to
be wind.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
(continuing)
-thinking we're everywhere.

Nikolaos glances back, dry.

NIKOLAOS
Good. Maybe they'll start fighting
ghosts instead of us.

Lukas chuckles, but no one joins him. The silence that follows feels heavier than laughter could ever lift.

INT. FOREST/TENT - DAY

A cracked crate serves as a table. A torn map spreads across it, held down by knives and stones.

Nikolaos and Maria lean close over the markings. Lukas sits nearby, sharpening his blade. Father Damianos stands in shadow, arms crossed, listening.

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

Lukas grins, sharpening faster.

LUKAS
Then we don't stay. We hit first,
move fast, leave nothing behind.

Maria shakes her head.

MARIA
We can't keep running. Every time
we move, someone disappears.
(beat)
Feels like the forest is swallowing
us. We need to start thinking
bigger.

Nikolaos watches her carefully.

NIKOLAOS
Go on.

Maria points to a mark on the map - a jagged symbol etched in charcoal.

MARIA
This fortress. Their hub. It's
where the orders start.
(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

If we take it, we do more than
survive – we break their rhythm.

LUKAS

A fortress? With what? Pitchforks
and courage?

MARIA

We've faced worse odds.

Her voice holds steady, but her eyes flick to the tent flap –
toward the sound of children laughing outside.

MARIA (CONT'D)

If we wait, there'll be nothing
left to save.

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.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/CHAPEL – NIGHT

Candlelight trembles in the shadows of a cold stone chapel.
Nikolaos stands alone at the altar, head bowed. His
reflection wavers in the melted wax.

Father Damianos enters quietly, the sound of his steps
swallowed by the vaulted dark.

FATHER DAMIANOS

You haven't slept since we took
this place.

NIKOLAOS

Sleep's for men without ghosts.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And how many haunt you?

Nikolaos doesn't answer. His eyes stay fixed on the flame.

NIKOLAOS

Too many. One night in Thessaly, I
gave the order to burn an outpost –
thought it would save lives. It
cost fifty. Maybe more.

Father Damianos watches him, eyes softening.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Guilt can be holy, Nikos. It means
the soul still feels.

NIKOLAOS

(quiet)
Or it means I've learned nothing.

He blows out the candle. Darkness swallows the frame.

EXT. FOREST – TRAINING SEQUENCE

A quick, rhythmic series of moments – the pulse of
preparation.

– Maria trains new archers. A young rebel fumbles badly. She
steps behind him, repositioning his arms, voice calm and
steady. Yannis watches, jaw tight – jealousy flickering
before he masks it. He fires an arrow of his own. Closer to
the center than before. He glances her way – she doesn't see.

– Lukas barks commands over sparring drills. Wood swords
clash. Sweat flies. He corrects a fighter's stance, then
disarms him in one motion, grinning.

– Nikolaos kneels beside a cache of oil jars and powder
bombs. He tests a fuse – sparks, smoke, approval.

– Father Damianos moves through the camp, laying hands on
shoulders, whispering prayers. Eyes close. Blades steady.

Later, as dusk falls, Maria sits alone by dying embers. She
sharpens an arrowhead, humming a half-remembered tune – low,
haunting, wordless.

The melody drifts through the camp. Lukas pauses mid-task,
listening. For a moment, the war forgets itself.

END SEQUENCE.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/PRISON - NIGHT

A dim cell buried deep in stone. Moisture drips from the ceiling. A young Greek scout hangs from shackles, face bruised, eyes defiant.

An Ottoman officer steps into the torchlight, unfurling a scroll - sketches of rebel leaders, Nikolaos at the center.

OFFICER

(low)

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.

OFFICER

Then you'll die for his silence.

The scout's scream echoes down the corridor - a raw sound swallowed by the fortress stone. And somewhere far away, in the heart of the forest, a hawk cries again.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The fire burns low - small, fierce, defiant. Shadows of the rebels dance across the trees, faces carved by exhaustion but lit by resolve. Nikolaos steps into the glow, every eye turning toward him.

NIKOLAOS

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

He lets the silence breathe. The night hums with wind and the distant call of an owl.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

We're not just fighting for
ourselves anymore. We're fighting
for every village they've burned,
every family they've broken. For
the names they tried to erase.

Maria steps forward beside him, her voice steady, carrying through the dark.

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 that doesn't quite reach his eyes.

LUKAS

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

A murmur of approval ripples through the camp. The fire crackles – one last shared heartbeat before war. The rebels disperse. Only Nikolaos and Lukas remain. The glow of the embers paints them in half-light.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

You ever think about what happens after?

NIKOLAOS

After what?

LUKAS

After all this. If we win. If there's even a "we" left to see it.

Nikolaos doesn't respond.

LUKAS (CONT'D)

People like you get remembered.
Statues. Songs.

(beat)

People like me – just names carved
on a wall.

NIKOLAOS

(quietly)

You think I fight for statues?

LUKAS

No. But you'll get one anyway.

Nikolaos almost smiles – but doesn't.

NIKOLAOS

Then make sure they also build one
for the man who kept me laughing.

Lukas grins faintly.

LUKAS
I'll hold you to that.

They sit in silence, the fire whispering between them – two men, already ghosts in waiting.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – NIGHT

The rebels crouch at the treeline, the looming fortress lit in pale torchlight. Nikolaos raises a hand. The group splits – Maria leads her archers up the rocky ridge, Lukas and his men slip toward the back gate.

NIKOLAOS
(whispering)
Wait for the signal.

MARIA
Be careful.

He squeezes her shoulder once – no words needed – and disappears into the dark.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos and a handful of rebels scale the wall, ropes creaking softly. They crest the top – one guard turns. Steel flashes. A throat opens. Silence returns. They drag the body aside and press forward.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE – CONTINUOUS

Maria crouches low, torch in hand. She lights her arrow. The others follow – a quiet storm waiting to fall.

MARIA
(under her breath)
For them.

She raises her bow.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – COURTYARD – CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos kneels beside a powder barrel, lights a fuse, and runs.

A deafening BOOM tears through the air.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Maria raises her bow and releases. A fiery volley arcs through the night, raining down on the fortress. Supply wagons burst into flame. Chaos erupts below.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - BACK GATE - CONTINUOUS

Lukas charges with his unit, blades drawn. Guards shout - too late.

LUKAS
Push forward!

Blades flash. Smoke rolls.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos moves through the halls like a shadow. Each encounter - fast, brutal, silent.

He climbs the final staircase. The doors to the command tower loom ahead.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS/WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos kicks the doors open. Governor Kemal stands at the map table, untouched by panic. He doesn't reach for his sword. Instead, he folds the map carefully, almost reverently.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
You've caused quite a mess.
Thessaly... the farms... all gone.

Nikolaos freezes mid-step.

NIKOLAOS
What did you say?

GOVERNOR KEMAL
Thessaly. You burned it yourself,
didn't you? Trying to keep us from
taking it. I've read the reports.
Women, children... all ash.

Nikolaos's grip tightens on his sword.

NIKOLAOS
You slaughtered them.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
No. You did. You lit the fields.
They burned in them.

A stillness – broken only by the firelight outside.

NIKOLAOS
You twist what you don't
understand.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
I understand guilt when I see it.
You wear it like armor.

Nikolaos lunges – slamming Kemal into the map table. Maps
scatter like dying birds.

NIKOLAOS
You want confession? Fine. I live
with it every day. But it ends
here.

Kemal's smile doesn't waver.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
Then die with it.

He draws his sword. Strikes first. The duel explodes –
savage, close, intimate.

GOVERNOR KEMAL (CONT'D)
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.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The courtyard burns. Rebels and Ottomans clash in close quarters - smoke, screams, steel. Lukas rallies his fighters, blood streaking his face.

LUKAS
Hold the gate! Don't let them
through!

From the ridge, Maria's archers rain fire.

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 one knee, blood on his lip.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
Is this the best your rebellion has
to offer?

Nikolaos wipes his mouth.

NIKOLAOS
We're just getting started.

They clash again – steel, fury, and will. Kemal's blade slices into the map table, splitting it in two. Nikolaos twists, counterstrikes – disarms him. Kemal falls to his knees, gasping.

GOVERNOR KEMAL
Kill me, and ten more will take my place.

NIKOLAOS
Then I'll send them all to join you.

He drives the blade in. Kemal collapses.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – CONTINUOUS

Nikolaos steps from the chamber, covered in blood and smoke. The rebels see him – then erupt.

NIKOLAOS
(shouting)
The fortress is ours!

Their cheer shakes the walls.

EXT. MOUNTAIN – SAME TIME

Maria lowers her bow. Below, the last Ottomans scatter into the dark.

MARIA
(to herself)
We did it.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – COURTYARD – LATER

Villagers gather amid the ruins – rebels handing out food and water. Father Damianos moves among them, murmuring blessings.

FATHER DAMIANOS
Victory is fleeting. They'll come again.

LUKAS
Then let them come. We'll be ready.

FATHER DAMIANOS
This isn't just a stronghold to them. It's a symbol.
(MORE)

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)
They'll see this not as a loss... but
as defiance. And defiance invites
wrath.

Lukas glances toward the battlements – where Maria and Nikolaos stand in silhouette against the dying sun. Eleni approaches.

ELENI
I'm very proud of you.

LUKAS
I'm just one man. It wasn't me. It
was all of us.

ELENI
Maybe. But I can only thank one man
at a time.

She kisses him – soft and deliberate. Lukas freezes, surprised... then lets it linger. For a moment, the war disappears.

INT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS WAR ROOM - LATER

Once a room of conquest, now a room of resistance – now theirs. Maps bloodstained, tables cracked, yet alive with purpose. Nikolaos, Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos stand shoulder to shoulder.

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

MARIA
Then we turn the path against them.
Traps. Bottlenecks.

LUKAS
I'll make sure they remember every
step they take.

FATHER DAMIANOS
And the villagers?

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

Maria's eyes flare.

MARIA

You want to send them back into the mountains?

NIKOLAOS

It's the only way to keep them safe.

MARIA

Safe? You sound like them.

(beat)

First they burned our homes. Now you're sending us from what's left.

NIKOLAOS

This isn't the same.

MARIA

Isn't it? You're starting to make choices like a man who's already lost everything.

A long silence.

NIKOLAOS

Maybe losing's all I'm good at.

She stares at him – realizing he believes it. The air between them turns heavy, immovable.

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 – DUSK

Villagers load carts, eyes dull with exhaustion and fear. Maria lifts a small boy into the back of one – her expression carved from stone.

Eleni approaches Nikolaos, her voice sharp but breaking. 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 pause. She nods once – hard, resigned – and turns away. The wagons roll into the trees.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – NIGHT

The courtyard glows with small fires. Rebels eat, mend, bleed, breathe. Nikolaos sits apart, dragging a whetstone along his sword. Maria joins him, quiet.

MARIA

You're already thinking about
what's next.

NIKOLAOS

Always.

MARIA

We did the impossible. 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 – the first warmth in his voice all night.

NIKOLAOS

Together.

The camera drifts upward – past the walls, past the fires, into the dark sky streaked with ash and stars. The war breathes again.

EXT. CONSTANTINOPLE/GOVERNOR'S CHAMBER – NIGHT

Torchlight dances across ancient stone – the breath of an empire heavy with fury.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET, 60s, ruthless and calculating, stands at the head of a long marble table. The room is crowded with officers, their eyes lowered, afraid to breathe too loud.

Kara Mehmet studies a map – inked borders, erased villages, names replaced by scars.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
The rebels think they've humiliated
us. That their little victories
mean something.

He traces a finger along the Aegean coast.

KARA MEHMET
(quietly, almost to
himself)
Once, these lands sang our prayers.
Now they curse our name.

He straightens, voice sharpening to steel.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
We will remind them why they fear
us. Assemble every regiment. We
march at dawn.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – DAWN

The world glows pale and brittle – a stillness before the storm. On the ramparts, rebels stand guard, motionless against the morning light. Nikolaos scans the treeline, jaw tight. Lukas joins him, eyes tired but sharp.

LUKAS
You think they're coming?

NIKOLAOS
I know they are.

A distant THUNDER... low and rhythmic. Drums. The sound grows – thunder rolling closer, a heartbeat of war. The sky darkens with it.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – SAME TIME

Smoke coils from crumbled towers. The fortress stands battered, bruised, but breathing in the pale morning light. Rebels brace at the walls – faces grim, hands tight on steel and wood.

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 despite the tremor in her breath. Lukas drags his blade along a whetstone – slow, rhythmic, defiant.

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 like ants, a tide of metal and fury. Maria's archers unleash – arrows slicing the dawn. Bodies drop, but more take their place.

An Ottoman scrambles over the edge. Maria meets him head-on – her dagger flashes once.

MARIA

Don't let them through!

Swords clash. Screams rise. The fortress drowns in chaos.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS – CONTINUOUS

A THUNDERCRACK – an Ottoman cannonball tears through the eastern wall. Stone erupts, raining dust and death.

NIKOLAOS

To me! Hold the breach!

He charges, cutting through the surge of soldiers. Rebels rally behind him, their fury matching his.

Nikolaos spots a cracked support beam overhead – the last thing holding the wall. He ducks under a swing, drives his sword up, slicing through it. The beam collapses, crashing into the breach. Stone and debris slam down, trapping Ottomans between ruin and steel.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

They want strength? Give them weight.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Maria's eyes lock on General Kara Mehmet, commanding from horseback beyond the carnage.

MARIA

Aim for him. Take him out.

Arrows fly – but Mehmet lifts his shield, turning them aside. His gaze cuts toward her.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

If the archers can't, I will.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - LATER

Lukas and Yannis fight shoulder to shoulder at the gate – blades flashing, blood on their hands. Yannis stumbles, nearly cut down. Lukas yanks him back, kicks an Ottoman aside.

LUKAS

Not bad, kid.

(grinning)

Now stay alive.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - CONTINUOUS

Momentum shifts. The Ottomans waver – confusion rippling through their ranks. Nikolaos sees it. Points forward. The rebels surge as one. The Ottomans falter – then break, fleeing through the breach and into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The remnants of the Ottoman army stumble through smoke and trees, leaving shattered gear and blood in their wake. On a distant ridge, General Kara Mehmet watches in silence. His expression unreadable. He turns his horse and rides away.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - DAWN

Smoke drifts across the field of bodies. The rising sun paints everything gold – a cruel, fragile peace. The rebels stand among the dead – beaten, breathing, unbroken.

Nikolaos walks the field, sword dragging faintly against stone. Maria joins him, grime streaking her face.

MARIA

We did it.

NIKOLAOS

For now.

They look toward the horizon, where Mehmet's army vanishes into the distance.

MARIA

They won't stop.

NIKOLAOS

Neither will we.

EXT. OTTOMAN FORTRESS - NEXT MORNING

Smoke curls into the sky. The fortress is half-ruin, half-monument. Survivors move through the wreckage - binding wounds, burying their dead.

Nikolaos walks the courtyard alone, armor scorched, blade still in hand. Every step echoes. Every face he passes carries the same hollow stare.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Maria stitches a rebel's wound by firelight. Her hands are steady; her eyes are not. Father Damianos kneels beside a row of bodies, praying under his breath. The crucifix on his chest catches the sun.

Nearby, Yannis sits in silence, blood dried on his hands. He wipes a spear clean with slow, shaking movements. He looks to Damianos - voice small.

YANNIS

We won... didn't we?

FATHER DAMIANOS

Victory isn't what you take.

(beat)

It's what you keep.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LATER

A fire burns low. Nikolaos sits beside it, sharpening his sword - slow, steady strokes. Maria appears, two bowls in hand. She offers him one.

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 for a long moment.

NIKOLAOS

And what happens when they hit back
harder?

MARIA

Then we fight harder.

They sit in the glow of the fire, two silhouettes against the
ruin of the world.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - EARLY MORNING

Ash drifts through the air. The rebels move in silence —
fewer now, but unbowed. Maria leads, eyes fixed on the
mountains ahead. Lukas limps beside her, half-grinning
through the pain.

LUKAS

You ever get tired of running
uphill?

MARIA

Only when we stop.

They share a quiet, weary glance. The mountain looms — dark
and waiting. The road ahead disappears into mist. They keep
walking.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAY

High on a mist-shrouded cliff, the ancient Greek Orthodox
monastery clings to the rock like a memory carved in stone —
scarred by centuries, yet unbroken. Bells toll through the
fog, deep and solemn.

Nikolaos and his rebels emerge from the forest path, weary,
hollow-eyed, drawn to the sanctuary above.

At the gate stands FATHER ALEXIOS, late 60s, his eyes sharp beneath a weathered cowl. Monks stand behind him, still as sentinels.

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

Nikolaos steps forward, every word carrying the weight of the war behind him.

NIKOLAOS
Refuge. And a place to make our
stand.

Father Alexios studies him – sees the fire buried under 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 step through the gate into a courtyard painted by time – faded frescoes, flowering vines, the quiet hum of wind through stone.

Monks move among them, offering bread and water. For a fleeting moment, peace returns.

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. Candlelight trembles across ancient icons, across his face, carved by fatigue and faith. His sword lies beside him, a relic of war in a house of God. Footsteps echo behind him.

FATHER DAMIANOS
Even the strongest man needs
guidance.

Nikolaos doesn't turn.

NIKOLAOS

How many more will I lose, Father?

He runs a thumb over the scar in his palm.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

How many more sacrifices before
it's enough?

FATHER DAMIANOS

I can't tell you when it's enough.
But, if you stop now, every
sacrifice will have been in vain.

Nikolaos lifts his gaze to the cross above the altar. His voice is low, steady – forged in grief.

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's eyes catch movement on the far ridge – General Kara Mehmet on horseback, a dark silhouette against the dawn.

She draws an arrow, hands trembling only with rage. She fires. The arrow whistles through fog – strikes Mehmet's horse square in the chest. The beast rears, shrieking, and throws him hard to the ground.

Mehmet rolls, dazed, eyes finding Maria through the haze. Their stares lock across the distance – predator and prey, both still standing.

Maria lowers her bow. Unflinching.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – CONTINUOUS

BOOM. An explosion rips through the mountainside – the Ottoman powder cache igniting in a tower of flame.

The earth quakes. The monastery shakes. Rebels and Ottomans alike stumble through fire and dust.

NIKOLAOS
 Fall back to the chapel! Protect
 the villagers!

Father Damianos hesitates at the courtyard's edge, torn
 between duty and fear. A wounded rebel tugs his sleeve.

REBEL
 Father – please, the chapel!

Damianos looks toward the door, then toward the flames
 devouring the horizon.

FATHER DAMIANOS
 No more hiding.

He lifts a fallen sword. The weight surprises him – but he
 holds it steady and follows Nikolaos into the chaos. Lukas
 stumbles into view, blood streaking his face.

LUKAS
 And you?

NIKOLAOS
 I'll buy you time.

Lukas grabs his arm.

LUKAS
 That's suicide.

NIKOLAOS
 No – it's what leaders do.

Maria steps in, shaking her head.

MARIA
 You don't have to prove anything.
 Not to them. Not to me.

He turns to her. For a heartbeat, the war fades – only the
 two of them exist.

NIKOLAOS
 You once told me not to carry this
 alone.
 (a small smile)
 So I won't. I'll carry them
 instead.

MARIA
 If you go, you don't come back.

NIKOLAOS

Then you keep them standing.
Promise me.

She nods, unable to speak. Her hand trembles as she touches his sleeve. He covers it with his – brief, grounding.

NIKOLAOS (CONT'D)

You lead them now.

Then he lets go – and runs into the fire.

MARIA

(a whisper)

Nikos...

She watches him vanish into the smoke, the world collapsing around him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – CONTINUOUS

The fire spreads fast. Ottoman gunpowder burns in waves. Rebels rally on the walls, hurling arrows and stones into the confusion below. Lukas charges into the courtyard with a dozen fighters.

LUKAS

Didn't think we'd let you steal all
the glory, did you?

They slam into the Ottoman flank – chaos turning to collapse. On the ridge, Mehmet's fury simmers behind his cold stare.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

Fall back.

A horn sounds. The Ottomans retreat through the shattered gates, their drums silent for the first time.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – CONTINUOUS

Smoke drifts low over the wreckage. The sun bleeds orange across the sky. The rebels barely stand – their victory too heavy to lift.

Nikolaos staggers into the courtyard, limping, bloodied but alive. Maria catches him before he falls.

MARIA

You're an idiot.

NIKOLAOS

You've mentioned that before.

Lukas limps up beside them, grinning through pain.

LUKAS

Well... you're not dead. I'd call that a win.

NIKOLAOS

We survived. That's all.

Before Maria can answer, the faint echo of distant gunfire rolls up from the valley below. Nikolaos tenses, trying to rise. She stops him, hand firm on his shoulder.

MARIA

No more tonight. Please.

For once, he yields.

NIKOLAOS

For tonight.

She helps him sit. Her hand lingers longer than it should. The camera pulls back – revealing the monastery, half-destroyed but still standing, wrapped in smoke and silence.

The price of freedom hangs in the air – heavy, holy, and paid in full.

INT. MONASTERY – PRIVATE CELL – NIGHT

A single candle trembles against the cracked mirror. Maria stands before it – pale, blood-streaked, hollow-eyed. She pulls off her cloak. The fabric falls heavy, leaving her in silence with the reflection she can barely recognize.

Her hands tremble once before she clenches them tight. Laughter echoes faintly from the courtyard below – rough, relieved, alive. Survivors. Her eyes soften at the sound... then drop to the blood on her palms. She rubs it off, but it only smears darker, deeper.

MARIA

(whispering)

You did this. You kept them alive.

A tear breaks loose before she can stop it. She slams her hand against the wall – once, sharp – the pain pulling her back to herself. She exhales, slow and steady. Then rewraps her hands, lifts her bow, and steps out into the night.

EXT. MONASTERY WALLS - NIGHT

The fires have burned low. The ruins below glow faintly – a dying sea of embers beneath a sky full of stars. Maria stands on the wall, bow slack at her side, eyes lost in the smoke. Nikolaos approaches, limping slightly, his arm bound tight.

NIKOLAOS

You should rest.

MARIA

So should you.

He gives a small, dry laugh – it hurts to do it.

NIKOLAOS

I can't remember what rest feels like.

MARIA

That's because you keep chasing ghosts.

He looks at her – the firelight painting both their faces with the same exhaustion.

NIKOLAOS

If I stop chasing, they win.

MARIA

You think that's what they'd want?
For you to burn yourself alive in
their name?

He studies her, taken aback. She looks away, voice softer now.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You don't have to carry this alone,
Nikos.

He hesitates, then reaches for her hand. She doesn't pull away.

NIKOLAOS

If I fall, you'll have to.

MARIA

Then you'd better not fall.

They share a faint, fragile smile – two tired souls caught between wars. Then a distant horn breaks the quiet, low and mournful. Maria steps back. The spell breaks.

MARIA (CONT'D)

They'll come again. We should be ready.

NIKOLAOS

We will be.

He watches her walk away – the moment between them fading like the last ember of the fire.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – LATER

The chapel glows with soft candlelight. Survivors kneel in worn pews, faces shadowed by grief. Father Damianos stands before the altar, voice steady despite the fatigue etched in it.

FATHER DAMIANOS

For those who gave their lives, we pray. For those who remain, we endure.

Maria bows her head. The murmured prayer fills the room – until a faint boom rolls through the valley, rattling the candles. They flicker. The prayer stumbles.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)

Even prayers must learn to fight.

The words settle. The survivors begin again – voices fragile, but unbroken. At the back, Nikolaos sits with his head low. Maria slides quietly beside him.

MARIA

You saved them, Nikos.

NIKOLAOS

For how long?

MARIA

Long enough to keep fighting.

She looks up at the altar, to the same flickering flame that once reflected in his eyes.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(softly)

And when it's my turn to light the fire... I'll make sure it burns for the right reasons.

He looks at her - and something flickers there. Hope, small and human.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

From the distant ridge, the monastery rises against the dawn - scarred but unbroken. The surviving rebels gather at the edge, gazing down at the vast, mist-covered valley.

 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 a graveyard of aftermath - scorched walls, broken blades, the fallen laid out in rows.

Survivors move through the wreckage slowly, lifting bodies, tending wounds, rebuilding what remains.

The camera drifts - grief in every face, but purpose in every step. The monastery stands - battered, burning, but defiant.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - SAME TIME

Maria stands alone, her fingers pressed to the cold stone. Smoke drifts over the valley. Nikolaos approaches behind her.

 NIKOLAOS
They're gone.

 MARIA
For now.

 NIKOLAOS
They'll never stop.

 MARIA
Then we'll see who's left to fight -
and I'll make sure someone always
is.

A long silence.

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

A row of fresh graves lines the courtyard. Each one marked by a simple wooden cross. Father Damianos stands before them, Bible in hand, voice solemn and sure.

FATHER DAMIANOS
We bury our fallen, but their
sacrifice lives on. They fought not
for glory, but for freedom.

He looks over the rebels - faces tired, eyes wet, hearts still beating.

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.

He closes the Bible.

FATHER DAMIANOS (CONT'D)
Faith isn't what we pray for - it's
what we stand for.

The crowd murmurs its assent. Not loud. But firm. Lukas leans toward Nikolaos.

LUKAS
I hate funerals. Too much crying,
not enough drinking.

NIKOLAOS
You can drink when we've won.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

Rebels work among the ruins, rebuilding. Hammering planks, stacking stone, forging strength from what's left. Nikolaos watches, unsteady but standing.

LUKAS

You should sit before you fall.

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. Sits on a rock. His gaze sweeps the courtyard - exhaustion in his body, pride in his eyes.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Sunlight filters through cracked stained glass, painting the floor in shards of color. Maria sits 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 how many more have to die before it's enough?

FATHER DAMIANOS

That's not for us to decide. We fight because we must.

Maria closes her eyes, exhales, and stands. The burden's still there - but she carries it taller now.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

The core group huddles around the firepit. A rough map spreads across a crate between them. 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 come again.

LUKAS

We hit their wagons hard. That should slow them down.

NIKOLAOS

Not enough. Kara Mehmet won't stop until we're gone. We need to strike first – directly.

FATHER DAMIANOS

And what of the villagers? If we chase him, who defends them?

Nikolaos meets his eyes.

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 silence drops heavy. Lukas smirks faintly.

LUKAS

I like the sound of that.

FATHER DAMIANOS

Do not mistake this for vengeance, Lukas. This is survival.

EXT. MONASTERY COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Maria storms out into the cool air, anger simmering under her composure. Lukas follows, half-grinning, half-concerned.

LUKAS

You always walk out when you disagree?

MARIA

Only when the plan's suicidal.

He catches her arm, turns her toward him.

LUKAS
Since when do you doubt him?

MARIA
Since he stopped listening.

Lukas studies her – the grin gone now.

LUKAS
He's doing what he's always done.
Lead.

MARIA
He's bleeding out, Lukas. You saw
him. He can barely lift his sword.

She looks away, voice breaking.

MARIA (QUIETLY) (CONT'D)
He won't stop until he's dead.

Lukas goes quiet, the words sinking in.

LUKAS
And what? You think you can stop
him?

MARIA
Someone has to.

She pulls free, emotion finally cracking through.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Every time he charges forward,
someone else doesn't come back. How
many more?

Lukas takes a step closer – his voice low, almost gentle.

LUKAS
That's the cost of leading. You
taught me that.

Her eyes flare – pain and defiance tangled together.

MARIA
No. He taught me how to fight. I'm
the one who has to live with it.

She turns and walks into the dark – her shadow swallowed by torchlight and smoke. Lukas stays behind, silent – his grin gone, the weight of her truth heavy in the night.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP – NIGHT

The tent glows gold against the dark – silk walls, maps unfurled across a massive table, the luxury of empire stretched thin by war.

General Kara Mehmet stands before the map, tracing the lines of the mountains with one deliberate finger. His face is stone – calm, calculating.

Outside, faint movement stirs the silence. His hand drifts to the hilt of his saber, waiting.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP – SAME TIME

Nikolaos crouches just beyond the tent's glow, sword drawn. Maria and Lukas flank him – tense, silent. A nod from Nikolaos.

NIKOLAOS
Stay close.

He slips inside, the flap whispering shut behind him.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP – CONTINUOUS

The candlelight flickers across Mehmet's face. He doesn't turn.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
So this is the ghost they whisper
about.

Nikolaos doesn't speak. The firelight gleams off his blade – steady hand, shaking breath.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)
You've killed governors, captains...
good men. For what? A flag?

NIKOLAOS
For the ones you forgot were human.

Mehmet's mouth curls – not a smile, but something crueler.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Then show me humanity. Surrender.

A guard bursts through the tent. An arrow hits him before he finishes breathing. Maria lowers her bow. Lukas meets another guard blade for blade, steel flashing. The tent falls silent again – just the sound of wind and flame.

Nikolaos lowers his sword – not in surrender, but in control.

NIKOLAOS
You don't understand. I didn't come
to kill you.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
No?

NIKOLAOS
I came to end this.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
You're fighting for a dream that
died long ago.

NIKOLAOS
Then let me show you what dreams
can do.

He grabs an oil lamp and hurls it across the map table.

WHOOMPH. Fire explodes through the tent – borders burn, shadows dance. Mehmet draws his saber, striking through the flames. Nikolaos meets him head-on. Steel screams, sparks fly.

Mehmet's blade cuts deep into Nikolaos's side – but Nikolaos drives forward, locking them together in the inferno.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
You'll die for nothing.

Nikolaos smiles through blood.

NIKOLAOS
Then I'll die free.

He twists his sword upward – into Mehmet's chest. Both men crash to the ground as the fire consumes everything.

Maria bursts through the tent flap – sees Nikolaos sprawled beside his enemy, eyes fading but open.

MARIA
Nikos—no...

Nikolaos looks at her, but doesn't speak. He just exhales once, softly, like release.

The flames devour the map – the empire's borders curling into ash.

INT. OTTOMAN CAMP – CONTINUOUS

The camp erupts in confusion. Soldiers rush toward the burning tent. Maria steps into the open, firing arrow after arrow, cutting them down one by one. Lukas fights at her side.

MARIA
We need to move!

LUKAS
Tell that to him!

Nikolaos stumbles out of the fire, blood soaking his tunic but eyes burning with life.

MARIA
Let's go.

Lukas tosses an explosive toward the supply crates. BOOM. The blast rips through the camp, scattering men and flame alike.

LUKAS
Now that's how you make an exit!

They vanish into the dark.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

The rebels race through the trees, branches clawing at their clothes. Behind them, the Ottoman camp burns – a red wound in the distance. They stop in a clearing, chests heaving, moonlight slick on sweat.

MARIA
Did you finish it?

Nikolaos doesn't answer at first. His face is pale.

NIKOLAOS
Not yet.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

Kara Mehmet staggers from the wreckage, half-covered in blood and soot. His officers rush to him.

OTTOMAN OFFICER
My lord, you're wounded!

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
It's nothing.

He shoves them aside, eyes locked on the black treeline.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)
They'll pay for this. Every last
one of them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - EARLY MORNING

The gates creak open. The rebels limp home through fog and smoke. Yannis runs to meet them.

YANNIS
You made it back!

MARIA
Barely.

He hugs her, relief spilling into tears. Maria lets him - her eyes fixed on Nikolaos. Nikolaos walks past without a word, blood still seeping from his side.

YANNIS
Is he hurt?

MARIA
Not in a way we can fix.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - DAY

The camp is alive again - tents rising, cannons reloaded, soldiers shouting orders through smoke.

Kara Mehmet stands among them, bandaged but unbent, his eyes hollow with rage. An officer approaches.

OTTOMAN OFFICER
My lord, reinforcements are on
their way. Three days' time.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Three days is too long.

He drags a 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

Smoke from the burning forest rolls over the monastery like a storm. The survivors move in silence – bandaging, rebuilding, burying. Maria sits on a broken wall, her bow across her knees. Her eyes are locked on the horizon, where ash blurs the sky.

Theodoros limps into view, arm bound tight.

THEODOROS

Maria?

She doesn't turn.

MARIA

What is it?

THEODOROS

Do you think he made it?

Maria's eyes stay on the distant fire.

MARIA

I think he did what he had to do.

INT. MONASTERY CHAPEL – MID-MORNING

Candles flicker. Father Damianos kneels at the altar, whispering prayers into the void. Lukas enters, steps heavy, all the humor gone. He drops onto a bench beside him.

LUKAS

You praying for him?

FATHER DAMIANOS

For all of us.

Lukas stares at a candle flame, jaw tight.

LUKAS
He didn't have to go.

FATHER DAMIANOS
That's why he did.

Silence. Maria appears in the doorway, eyes red from smoke and sleeplessness.

MARIA
Any sign?

SENTRY (O.S.)
Not yet.

She nods, looking toward the forest through the cracked window.

SENTRY (CONT'D)
You think they'll come back?

MARIA
It's not a matter of if. It's a matter of when.

She grips her bow tighter – steady now, ready. The candles flicker as thunder rumbles far below. The war isn't over. It's only moving closer.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP

Smoke clings to the ruined camp – twisted wagons, broken siege towers, scorched canvas sagging under its own weight. Dead men are dragged into neat rows. The air hums with orders barked through clenched teeth.

At the center stands General Kara Mehmet, wrapped in bloodstained bandages, fury hidden beneath an icy calm.

An officer bows low beside him.

OTTOMAN OFFICER
My lord, the reinforcements have arrived early.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Good. Double the guard. I want no surprises this time.

He winces as his arm pulses beneath the cloth – the wound fresh, the pain buried deep. His voice drops, almost thoughtful.

KARA MEHMET

Fear keeps men loyal. Pain keeps them honest.

He stares at the horizon, face stone.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

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. Nikolaos's absence feels heavy, almost physical.

Maria, Lukas, and Father Damianos study the map in silence. Theodoros and Yannis hover near the doorway, listening.

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 expect it.

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.

Theodoros shifts uneasily.

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 low fire. Around him,
young rebels practice clumsy swings. Sweat and iron hang in
the air.

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, unconvinced. Theodoros grips his
spear tighter. Yannis approaches, voice smooth but edged.

YANNIS

Maria seems very impressed with
you.

THEODOROS

She values us all.

Yannis leans closer, lowering his voice like it's
half-confession, half-warning.

YANNIS

Maybe. But she needs someone who
won't falter. Someone who'd fight
beside her no matter the cost.

His eyes flick toward Maria across the courtyard before
snapping back.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

She listens to you now. You notice
that?

THEODOROS

She listens to whoever's right.

YANNIS

(quietly)
She never used to question me.

THEODOROS
Maybe you stopped giving her
reasons not to.

The words hang heavy – more pain than challenge. Yannis studies him, the fight draining out of his voice.

YANNIS
You think I'm jealous.

THEODOROS
Aren't you?

YANNIS
I just don't want to be forgotten.

Kyriakos, nearby, looks up from tending the fire.

KYRIAKOS
Then stop trying to be heard
louder, and start being worth
remembering.

Yannis absorbs it – no comeback this time.

YANNIS
You'll make a good soldier, kid.

THEODOROS
I'm not a kid.

YANNIS
You are – until you stop fighting
for someone to see you.

Theodoros lets a small grin slip. Then returns to sharpening steel.

EXT. OTTOMAN CAMP - LATER

The camp breathes discipline and dread. Soldiers oil armor, grind blades, saddle horses. No chatter – only the rhythm of inevitability.

General Kara Mehmet strides through the ranks. His presence straightens every back.

OTTOMAN OFFICER
My lord, the men are ready.

Mehmet doesn't respond at first. He looks toward the treeline – a faint haze rising from the mountains.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
At first light, we march.

A long beat. He watches the smoke curling up the mountainside, a shadow crossing his expression.

KARA MEHMET
An empire fades when it starts
fearing its own ghosts.

He turns, voice quiet but sharp enough to cut steel.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Burn everything. Let them breathe
smoke and eat ash.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAWN

Gold light spills across the ridge. Below, the forest smolders – ash twisting through the air. The rebels gather at the gates, weapons clutched tight. Wounds wrapped. Eyes clear.

Maria steps forward, wind lifting her hair.

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. That we'll
run. That we're done. But we've
survived worse.

Her voice gains strength, carrying through the mist.

MARIA (CONT'D)
We're still here – because when the
fire came, we stood in it. And now
it's our turn.

She glances at Lukas, then to the rest.

MARIA (CONT'D)
We fight – for our dead, for the
living, for our home. For freedom.
For what comes next.

Her voice cracks once, soft but fierce.

MARIA (CONT'D)

And for the ones who won't see it.

(beat)

No promises. Just one more sunrise.

The rebels answer with a roar – defiance echoing off the stone walls. Lukas grins faintly beside her.

LUKAS

Hell of a morning speech.

Maria smirks – fleeting but real.

EXT. FOREST EDGE – DAY

Maria crouches low, eyes locked on the valley below. Lukas checks the fuse trailing into the brush. He nods once. They share a breath – silent, charged.

Maria raises her hand. Holds it. Waits. Releases.

EXT. FOREST – DAY

Thick canopy chokes the sunlight. The Ottoman column winds through the trees – tight, wary, unaware. Above, shadows move. Strings draw taut. Maria watches from her perch, calm and cold. She drops her hand.

The forest erupts. Arrows scream through the air. The first ranks collapse in seconds. Chaos follows.

OTTOMAN OFFICER

Ambush!

Lukas grins as he lights a fuse buried beneath leaves.

LUKAS

Welcome to the forest, boys!

BOOM. Fire and dirt erupt skyward. The Ottoman line fractures.

EXT. FOREST – CONTINUOUS

Rebels pour from the brush, wild and relentless. The forest becomes a killing ground. Theodoros fights like he was born here – fast, sure, eyes bright with purpose.

THEODOROS

They're breaking!

MARIA
Not yet. This isn't over.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Further back, Kara Mehmet watches through the haze - impassive.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Pull the front line back. Let them
think they've won.

OTTOMAN OFFICER
And then?

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
Then we crush them when they
overreach.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels chase the retreat into a clearing - too open, too still. Maria's gut tightens.

MARIA
Fall back! It's a trap!

Ottoman horns split the air. Reinforcements flood from every side. Steel meets flesh in a brutal collision. Kara Mehmet rides into the fray, saber flashing like silver lightning.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET
No mercy. Not today.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels scramble uphill toward the final ridge - narrow, steep, lined with hidden charges. Maria plants her feet, loosing arrows with unshaking precision. Lukas joins her, blood streaking his face.

LUKAS
Well, this feels familiar.

MARIA
Then you know how it ends.

They stand shoulder to shoulder as the Ottomans surge upward.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Traps ignite. Spikes spring. Explosions shatter the slope. Maria fires again and again. Around her, fire devours the canopy.

MARIA

Hold the line! Don't let them break through!

Lukas carves through soldiers beside her. Theodoros drives his spear deep, shaking but fearless.

LUKAS

Doing great, kid. Just aim away from me.

THEODOROS

No promises!

Yannis barrels in from the flank, striking two down with a vicious spin.

YANNIS

Couldn't let you have all the fun.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

General Kara Mehmet pushes through the smoke, eyes fixed on Maria.

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.

She spots it – a smoldering fuse half-buried in the mud, one of Lukas's last charges. She shifts her stance, leading him closer.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET

So be it.

Their blades collide – fury against precision. Sparks dance. He slashes deep; she twists free.

GENERAL KARA MEHMET (CONT'D)

You're stubborn, like him. But you'll fall, just like he did.

MARIA
He stood for something.
(beat)
You'll die for nothing.

She drives him backward, boot striking the fuse.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Lukas spots the trail of smoke.

LUKAS
Maria! The charges!

She glances back, breath ragged.

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 strikes the spark.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The rebels flee downhill as the fuse hisses through the dirt.

THEODOROS
Move!

A thunderous detonation tears the ridge apart. Fire engulfs the slope, earth buckling beneath it. The shockwave flings soldiers into the trees.

When the smoke clears, Kara Mehmet stands amid the ruin - bloodied, staggering, staring at the burning ridge. He screams into the void.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - LATER

Smoke still rises from the forest as the survivors limp through the gates, greeted by villagers with tears and trembling smiles.

Maria enters last - bloodied, silent, her bow still in hand.

Father Damianos steps forward.

FATHER DAMIANOS
You brought them home.

MARIA
Not all of them.

Her eyes drift east – where the forest still burns. Nearby, Lukas props up Theodoros, both half-broken, half-smiling.

LUKAS
That was fun.
(grim smile)
Let's not do it again.

Maria looks toward the fire on the horizon. The wind catches her hair – the war not over, but the will unbroken.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

Candlelight dances on stone. The air hums with stillness. Maria kneels before the altar, her bow beside her, her shadow long across the floor.

MARIA
Nikos... we did it.
(softly)
I hope you're watching.

Her palms press against the cold stone. Her breath trembles – the first crack in the armor she's worn since his death.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You never listened. You never
stopped. I told you to rest, to
save yourself... just once.

She draws out a strip of blood-stained cloth – the one he wrapped around his arm before the final charge. Her thumb traces the dried scarlet.

MARIA (CONT'D)
And now I have to be you.

Tears fall, silent and raw. She wipes them away roughly, forcing herself upright. Her gaze finds the crucifix above the altar, its candlelight quivering.

From the silence, a memory – Nikolaos's voice, faint and distant.

NIKOLAOS (V.O.)
Then I'll die free.

Maria closes her eyes.

MARIA
Then live free. For both of us.

When she opens them again, the grief remains – but so does the fire.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – DAWN

The first light spills across the courtyard. Rebels mend walls. Villagers tend the wounded. Smoke fades to mist. The monastery breathes – broken, but alive.

Maria watches from the steps, bow on her back. A young rebel approaches, hesitant, clutching a tattered map. He hands it to her. She studies it, marks a point with her finger. The men nod. Orders ripple. The work continues.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY – CONTINUOUS

Lukas leans on the wall, battered but upright, staring out at the valley below. Maria joins him.

LUKAS
Still alive. Guess that's something.

MARIA
For now.

LUKAS
And Mehmet?

MARIA
He'll regroup. He always does.

LUKAS
Then we build faster. Sleep less.
Make him wish he'd stayed dead.

His gaze drops to the bandage on her wrist – Nikolaos's cloth, frayed but tied firm.

LUKAS (CONT'D)
You're still carrying him.

MARIA
Until they learn his name.

Lukas nods. No more words needed.

INT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY INFIRMARY - LATER

Theodoros sits on a bench, 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'd be proud?

FATHER DAMIANOS
He already was.

A shadow fills the doorway. Yannis stands there – worn, hesitant.

YANNIS
He'd be proud of both of you.

Theodoros looks up, expecting the old arrogance. But it's gone.

YANNIS (CONT'D)
You were right. Back at the
campfire. About her... about me.

Theodoros opens his mouth, but Yannis lifts a hand.

YANNIS (CONT'D)
Don't let it make you soft. The
world won't.

A faint grin breaks the heaviness. Yannis extends his uninjured hand. Theodoros takes it. Father Damianos smiles – a rare, quiet peace crossing his face.

EXT. FOREST - DREAM SEQUENCE

Flames twist between the trees. Nikolaos stands in the center, unburned, calm. His sword glows faintly in the firelight. He turns toward us – his eyes clear, unwavering.

NIKOLAOS (V.O.)
The fight is never over. It's
passed from one hand to the next,
carried by those who refuse to
kneel.

The fire burns brighter – then fades to light.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - NIGHT

A crowd gathers in the courtyard. Rows of wooden crosses catch the moonlight. One bears Nikolaos's name.

Maria steps forward. Her voice carries steady, unshaken.

MARIA

Nikolaos showed us how to fight.
How to stand when standing seemed
impossible.

She scans the faces - villagers, rebels, survivors.

MARIA (CONT'D)

He used to say the shadows would
swallow us if we stopped moving.
(beat)
But he forgot - no shadow lasts
forever.

She lifts her head.

MARIA (CONT'D)

And now, it's our turn. We carry
what he began. And we don't stop
until we're free.

Theodoros kneels, laying his spear at the foot of the cross.
The crowd bows their heads.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY WALL - 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 - whatever that ends up
meaning. You ever think we'll see
it?

MARIA

Maybe not. But someone will.

EXT. MOUNTAIN MONASTERY COURTYARD - LATER

Maria walks through the quiet ruins. The moonlight glints off broken stone and new beginnings. Yannis approaches, hesitant.

YANNIS

I never said... I'm sorry. For you.
Nikolaos meant everything.

MARIA

You didn't have to. He mattered to
all of us.

YANNIS

He was with us. I felt it.

A beat. He reaches out, takes her hand.

YANNIS (CONT'D)

You'll always have him. And me. Not
a brother - but close.

His hand lingers longer than expected. Maria doesn't pull away. In his steadiness, she sees what they've fought for - a world that still holds hope.

She smiles - small, tired, real. They embrace.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/MONASTERY - DAWN

The sky softens with gold. Faintly—we hear a rebel song rise. It grows—low, defiant, full of hope.

EXT. MOUNTAIN MONASTERY - MORNING

Light rain falls. The smoke of battle has thinned. Children - the same ones who once fled - now play among the broken stones, splashing through puddles.

A small boy tries to lift a scorched helmet. Too heavy. He sets it gently beside the row of wooden crosses.

Nearby, Lukas rebuilds a fallen wall, stone by stone. A little girl offers him a wildflower. He tucks it into the cracks, smiling faintly.

Maria stands on the monastery steps, bow unstrung at her side. The wind brushes her face. Her eyes lift toward the mountains - the first peace she's allowed herself.

The children's voices rise - singing that same rebel tune. Off-key. Imperfect. Alive.

MARIA (V.O.)
They tried to bury us in fire.
(beat)
But we learned to live in the light
— and light chases away all
shadows!

The camera pulls back — the monastery small against the
endless sky, scarred but unbroken.

FADE OUT.