

The Thief
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The Thief
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THE THIEF

WINESHOP

INT. DAY Close up of Gen.

GEN
I can steal anything.

Gen, a dark, wiry young man, is sitting at a bar talking to an informant.

INFORMANT
But did you get it?

GEN
One king's seal as promised.

The informant examines the ring, then signals the guards who stand and grab Gen.

CUT TO BLACK WITH A METALLIC CLANG
FADE IN TO PRISON WITH THE TITLE "THE THIEF"

PRISON

INT. Time passes in Gen's prison. Gen wears the jaunty yellow shirt he was arrested in. He has chains around his hands, waist, and feet. Months pass. Gen takes his manacles off and puts them back on. He sneaks around his cell as far as his chains will allow. The shirt fades and Gen gets increasingly dirty.

RETRIEVING THE THIEF

INT. NIGHT Gen is lying on his back with his feet in the air, wrapped in the chain that leads from his waist to a ring high in the wall. His position remains unchanged as we hear the tramp of feet. A lamp appears and shines bright light on Gen.

GEN
Aaaaaaaaagh!

MAGUS
(in disbelief)
This is the right one?

(CONTINUED)

GUARD

Yes, this is the thief.

MAGUS

All right. Take him out.

GUARD

Yes, Magus.

Gen disentangles himself from the chains.

MAGUS

Your name?

GEN

Gen.

MAGUS

Bring him along.

The guards take Gen out, still shackled, and they tramp down the hallways, following the magus, a tall man in his 50s. They leave the prison and enter another hallway with white walls. The brightness stabs Gen's eyes. Gen pulls away from his guards to block the light from his eyes.

MAGUS

Give him a moment to let his eyes adjust.

Gen looks around as his eyes adjust. They arrive at a doorway. The magus knocks and goes in. The guards and Gen follow.

MAGUS

You can go. Come take him back in half an hour.

The guards leave the magus and Gen in the study and stand outside the door. Gen looks around and sits in the nicest chair.

MAGUS

Get up.

Gen does not.

MAGUS

(threatening)

We might someday attain a relationship of mutual respect. For now I will have your obedience.

(CONTINUED)

Once the magus sees he has made his point and that Gen cannot move, he backs off.

MAGUS

Never mind. Stay there for now. The seat will have to be cleaned.
(pause) I saw you at your trial.
You're thinner.

Gen shrugs.

MAGUS

Tell me, have you found yourself reluctant to leave our hospitality? You said at your trial that not even the king's prison could hold you, and I rather expected you to be gone by now.

Gen deliberately sinks farther into the chair. The magus winces.

GEN

Some things take time.

MAGUS

How true. How much time do you think it's going to take?

GEN

Well...

MAGUS

I think it's going to take a long time. I think it could take the rest of your life. After all, when you're dead, you certainly won't be in the king's prison, will you?

GEN

I suppose not.

MAGUS

You boasted about a lot of things at your trial. Idle boasts, I suppose.

GEN

I can steal anything.

MAGUS

So you claimed. It was a wager to that effect that landed you in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
prison. It is too bad for you that intelligence does not always attend gifts such as yours, and fortunate for me that it is not your intelligence I am interested in, but your skill. If you are as good as you say you are.

GEN
I can steal anything.

MAGUS
Except yourself out of the king's prison?

Gen shrugs.

MAGUS
Well, you've learned to keep your mouth shut at least.

The Magus turns his back. Gen looks around the room, sees a pair of feet hiding behind a curtain, and becomes nervous.

MAGUS
You could shorten the time without shortening your life.

Gen relaxes when he sees that the magus is also nervous.

GEN
Go on.

MAGUS
I want you to steal something.

GEN
(smiling)
Do you want the king's seal? I can get it for you.

MAGUS
If I were you, I'd stop bragging about that.

The magus glances at the curtain.

MAGUS
There's something I want you to steal. Do this for me, and I'll see that you don't go back to prison. Fail to do this for me, and I will
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
make sure that you don't go back to
prison.

Gen nods.

GEN
What am I stealing?

MAGUS
You can find out the details later.
What I need to know now is that
you're capable.

GEN
I'm capable, but I have to know
what I'm stealing.

MAGUS
You'll be told. For now it isn't
your business.

GEN
What if I can't steal it?

MAGUS
I thought you could steal anything.

GEN
Except myself out of the king's
prison.

MAGUS
Don't try to be smart. You don't
pretend well. It will require some
traveling to reach my object. There
will be plenty of time for you to
learn about it as we go.(leaning
in)Don't think that I am a fool.

The king of Sounis emerges from behind the curtain. He is a short, stocky, imposing man with curly blond hair. He strides across the room and lifts Gen by his hair. Gen tries to pull down on his hand to save his hair and ends up completely off the ground.

SOUNIS
Don't think that I am a fool
either.

Sounis drops Gen who crumples onto the floor. Sounis wipes his hand on his clothes.

(CONTINUED)

SOUNIS

Get up.

Gen stands. Sounis shows Gen a small casket of gold.

GEN

My uncle used to keep that much under his bed and count it every night.

SOUNIS

Liar. You've never seen that much gold in your life.

Gen shrugs.

SOUNIS

This is the gold that I am going to offer as a reward if you fail to bring back what I am sending you for. I'll offer it to anyone, from this country or any other, who brings you to me, alive of course.

SOUNIS' THREATS FADE IN VOLUME AS THE SHOT ZOOMS IN ON GEN'S INCREASINGLY TERRIFIED FACE.

SOUNIS

If you were dead, you couldn't appreciate how it feels to be flayed, then strung up by your toes overnight. I would boil your legs in oil while cutting off each of your fingers one by one. Then I would release you...into a courtyard full of wild dogs. Then I will bury whatever is left of you, alive or dead.

JOURNEY BEGINS

INT. DAY The next morning, Gen is woken by the clang of his cell door opening. The guards remove his chains and manacles and take him out into the bright courtyard. Gen howls and covers his head with his arms to keep out the glaring sunlight.

GEN

Hephestia's fire! Gods damn, *gods* damn!

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Pull yourself together.

GEN

Gods damn you, too.

Gen watches the general noise and confusion in the courtyard as people and horses prepare to leave. Sophos, a young man with blond hair, is in the process of unpacking a brace of saddle bags and scattering the contents under the feet of a nervous horse.

MAGUS

Is it there?

SOPHOS

I'm sorry, magus. I can't find your compass in the bags.

MAGUS

Damn. Then it must still be in my study. Off you go. (shouting after him) Sophos! Look for it on the bench. (muttering) That's where it was when I told you to pack it the first time. Idiot. I had planned to leave at daybreak. Pol, get the boys mounted. I'll load the thief.

The Magus gestures for Gen to come over.

GEN

What?

MAGUS

Get on the horse, you idiot.

GEN

Me?

MAGUS

Of course you, you fool.

Magus tries to put him on the horse.

MAGUS

Put your left foot in the stirrup.
Your left one.

With the coercion of the magus and two grooms, Gen is up. Sophos has returned with a small, square leather case. The Magus mounts and the whole group (Magus, Gen, Pol, Sophos, and Ambiades) leaves the courtyard.

HEY PHIL!

EXT. DAY The party travels on horseback through the bustling city. Gen sees Philonikes passing by on foot.

GEN
Philonikes! Hey, Philonikes!

The magus grabs Gen and kicks their horses into a trot. Philonikes disappears around a corner.

MAGUS
Damn it! What do you think you are doing?

GEN
Philo's a friend of mine. I was going to say hello.

MAGUS
Do you think I want everyone in the city to know that you are out working for the king?

GEN
Why not?

MAGUS
Do you announce you're going off to steal something before you start?
(pause) Yes, you do. Well, I don't.

GEN
Why not?

MAGUS
None of your business. Just keep your mouth shut. Do you understand?

GEN
Sure.

Gen hides his smile. The party continues down the road, past the suburbs, and out of the city.

ON THE ROAD

EXT. DAY The party continues riding in the hot sun down a dusty road. Gen examines the other riders.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I'm tired. (No response.) I'm
tired. (Again, no response.)

Gen gets off the horse, stumbles to the other side of a ditch, and lies flat on the ground. Everyone else dismounts and forms a half-circle around Gen. Gen opens his eyes to look at their boots, then closes them again.

SOPHOS

What's the matter with him, magus?

MAGUS

Gods damn. We're only halfway to Methana, and I wanted to get to Matinaea tonight. He's exhausted, that's all. Not enough food to keep him going.

Ambiades, a handsome man slightly older than Gen, prods Gen with a boot.

MAGUS

No, Ambiades, just leave him.

GEN

(quietly to himself)
Oh, thank gods.

Gen falls asleep. He wakes up when Pol, a middle-aged no-nonsense soldier, nudges him with his foot.

POL

Get up.

GEN

Go away.

POL

I'll get you up.

GEN

I don't want to get up. I want you to go away.

Pol pushes Gen back onto the horse.

GEN

I hope you're bitten by something poisonous in the next bed you sleep in.

No response.

GEN

I'm hungry.

The magus rides beside Gen and hands him pieces of cheese and lumps of bread.

GEN

Why didn't you bring a cart?

MAGUS

A what?

GEN

A cart--you know, a large wooden box on wheels, pulled by horses.

MAGUS

Why would I have done that?

GEN

So that I could be sleeping in the back of it right now.

MAGUS

I didn't plan this trip with your comfort in mind.

GEN

Damn right.

ARRIVAL AT INN

EXT. The party rides through the rest of the day and into the night. It is dark when they arrive at the inn.

LANDLADY

(points at Gen)

That one. It's that one that smells so awful, and he's not coming into my winerom and I won't have him sleeping in any of my clean beds. Not if he's your lordship's son. Although I hope he's not.

The magus hands her an extra silver coin.

MAGUS

He'll wash immediately.

LANDLADY

All right. The pump's over there.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Thank you.

Pol takes sleepy Gen to the pump.

GEN GETS A BATH

EXT. NIGHT There is a pump in the middle of a courtyard walled in by a stable on two sides, a wall, and the back of the inn. Pol yanks Gen's shirt up. Gen snaps his arms down to keep his shirt. The shirt tears. Pol reaches for Gen again, but Gen steps away.

GEN

This I can do for myself.

POL

Just make sure it's a good job.

Pol begins to pump cold water. Gen strips and bends into the stream. He is covered in bruises and flea bites from prison. Sophos arrives with clean clothes.

POL

Put those down in a dry spot and fetch a couple of sacks from the stable.

Sophos sets down the clothes and goes to the stable.

STABLE

Sophos finds the magus and Ambiades there, unloading saddlebags.

SOPHOS

Pol sent me to find some sacks.

AMBIADES

Over there.

SOPHOS

Thanks.

MAGUS

Take some soap too. The cleaner he is, the less we'll have to bribe the landlady.

The magus leaves with some saddlebags. Ambiades starts to follow him, his own arms filled with saddlebags.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

Ambiades?

Ambiades stops.

SOPHOS

Soap?

AMBIADES

Check in there.

He indicates a remaining saddlebag with his head and leaves. Sophos rummages in the saddlebag, pulls out some soap and returns to Pol.

BATH 2

Pol hands Gen a sack and a block of soap. Gen rubs the soap on the sack to create a lather. He smells it and laughs because it is the magus' scented soap. Gen scrubs, rinses, and repeats. Sophos gingerly picks up Gen's dirty clothes. When Gen is done scrubbing, he tries to find the gentlest part of the stream to wash his infected wrists. Pol stops pumping and looks at the sores.

POL

Leave them. I'll work on them inside.

Pol gives Gen another sack to dry off with, then the pile of clean clothes. Gen looks for his own clothes and sees Sophos walking away with them.

GEN

Hey! Come back with those!

SOPHOS

Magus told me to burn them.

GEN

Everything but my shoes. I had them specially made.

SOPHOS

All right, but if Magus says to burn them, you'll have to give them back.

GEN

Fine, fine.

(CONTINUED)

Gen takes the shoes and Sophos leaves with the rest. Gen hops to a dry spot and dresses. He enjoys being clean in clean clothes.

GEN
(to Pol)
Gods bless the magus, he thinks of
everything, doesn't he?

Pol grunts and waves Gen towards the inn.

POL CLEANS GEN'S WRISTS

INT. NIGHT The magus, Ambiades, and Sophos sit around a table in the inn. On his way to the table, Gen steals a silver case of matches from a man in the inn. Gen braids his hair and gestures to the barkeep that he needs a hair band. She waves and smiles. Ambiades glares at Gen. The young woman gives Gen a piece of twine and sniffs in contempt at Ambiades.

GEN
She seems like a nice girl.

The magus frowns at Gen for baiting Ambiades. Ambiades continues glaring.

GEN
Very friendly.

Pol puts a lantern on the table. The barkeep brings a bowl of warm water, a cloth, and soap. Gen looks at his dinner regretfully. Pol cleans the wound on one of Gen's wrists, wraps it in a clean white bandage, and moves on to the next wrist. Pol slips a knife under the wound on Gen's left wrist and twists it open.

GEN
(Screams at the top of his
lungs)

Pol clamps his hand on Gen's arm. Gen continues screaming. Pol reaches into his bag, pulls out a wooden gag, and holds it in front of Gen's face.

POL
That's enough.

Gen stops screaming. He whimpers and whines a bit as Pol continues cleaning the wound.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Not exactly stalwart, are you?

GEN

You can take your dinner and
shove--

Pol elbows Gen to shut him up. Pol continues bandaging Gen's wrists.

BREAKFAST

INT. DAY The next morning, Sophos joins the rest of the party at the breakfast table.

POL

That one (indicating Sophos) would
sleep through cannon fire. One
morning he won't wake up until
someone spits him on a long spear.

Sophos blushes.

MAGUS

(to Pol)

Too bad you can't take Ambiades
home to be duke and let me keep
Sophos to be magus.

GEN

He's going to be a duke?

AMBIADES

If his father doesn't strangle him
first.

MAGUS

Sleeping lightly is a necessary
virtue for a soldier, and it's not
a fault in anyone else.

SOPHOS

(grumbles quietly)

So who wants to be a soldier?

GEN

Not me.

AMBIADES

Who asked you?

(CONTINUED)

GEN

He did, fuzz-lip.

AMBIADES

What would scum from a gutter know about being a soldier?

GEN

I wouldn't know, not being scum from a gutter. But my father is a soldier, and it's a bloody, thankless, useless job for people who are too stupid and too ugly to do anything else.

Silence. Everyone looks at Pol.

MAGUS

In the future, you may ignore conversation that is not directed toward you and keep your mouth closed unless specifically addressed.

The landlady walks up and is about to speak to the magus, but then looks in surprise at Gen.

GEN

(grins)

I clean up nicely, don't I?

LANDLADY

(smiling)

Yes, you do. Where did you get so dirty?

GEN

Prison.

LANDLADY

Ah. I expect you're glad to get out.

GEN

Yes, ma'am, especially because the food is so good.

LANDLADY

(laughs, then to Magus)

Was there anything else that you needed, sir?

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

No, we'll stop in Evisa for lunch,
thank you.

The landlady walks away.

MAGUS

We'd better get the horses ready.

Gen doesn't move. Magus cuffs him on the back of his head.

GEN

What? Were you specifically
addressing me? I thought I was
supposed to ignore those--

MAGUS

(leaning close so only Gen
hears)

I have a riding crop in my
saddlebags. Would you like me to
use it on you?

GEN

Lead on.

On his way out the door, Gen pickpockets a small knife from
another visitor to the inn.

LEAVING THE INN

EXT. DAY They leave the inn and mount the horses. Ambiades
holds the horses' reins. Gen stands on a table to mount his
horse.

GEN

(to Ambiades)

Bring mine over here. I'm not
moving the table over there.

Ambiades does not move. Neither does Gen. The magus and Pol
intentionally ignore the situation. Sophos graciously ends
the stand-off by taking the horse's reins and leading it to
the table. Gen mounts. The landlady gives a bundle of food
to Gen.

LANDLADY

A little something to eat while
you're riding. It's a long way to
Evisa. My youngest is down in the
prison.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

Oh. Don't worry too much. It's not so bad.

The horses move away.

GEN

(under his breath)

What a lie that was.

The magus pulls the bundle away from Gen.

GEN

Hey! That was for me!

MAGUS

I don't need you chatting up every barkeep between here and the mountains.

GEN

I didn't say a word to the barkeep. Not a word. And I was only being polite to the landlady.

MAGUS

You can keep your civility to yourself. You don't talk to anyone, do you understand?

GEN

So, so, so. Do I get my lunch back?

The magus keeps the lunch.

SOPHOS

Was it really not so bad?

GEN

Was what?

SOPHOS

Prison.

GEN

That prison was absolutely the most awful thing that has happened to me in my entire life.

SOPHOS

Oh.

Sophos nudges his horse forward.

LONG HIGH SHOT OF THE PARTY RIDING.

EVISA

EXT. DAY They stop for lunch at Evisa at a collection of tables under some trees. Gen's horse follows the magus' even though Gen tries to direct it elsewhere.

GEN

Why doesn't this damned horse go where I want it to?

MAGUS

Stop jerking on the reins like that. It won't move.

GEN

So I've found.

Gen slides off the horse.

GEN

It must like your horse more than I like you.

SOPHOS

(laughs)

It's a packhorse. It's trained to stop next to its leader.

GEN

Really? Are they that smart?

AMBIADES

Smarter than you.

GEN

(smirking)

I never heard of a horse that could steal a king's seal.

AMBIADES

That's what I meant.

GEN

Why don't you eat hot coals?

Gen walks to Pol and notices Sophos staring.

GEN

What?

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

He wants to know if you really are stupid enough to bet a man that you could steal the king's seal and then show it as proof the next day in a wineshop.

Gen turns his back on them both. They buy food. Gen filches a few coins. They eat. They ride. Gen struggles to stay on the horse.

FARMHOUSE

EXT. DAY The party arrives at a small farmhouse in near ruin. A man comes to the doorway.

MAN

I expected you last night.

MAGUS

We moved more slowly than I expected. Did you get the provisions?

MAN

Everything. There's fodder in the shed for the horses, enough for two weeks, and if you don't come back this way, then I'll take them down to the city.

MAGUS

Good enough.

The magus removes Gen's leg iron from a saddle bag and sends Sophos and Ambiades off with the horses. Pol and Gen follow the magus into the house to a room with several narrow beds.

MAGUS

(to Pol)

It's too late to start up the mountain today. We'll stay here and start tomorrow morning. (to Gen)
You should be able to rest to your heart's content.

The magus carefully locks the iron cuff around Gen's ankle.

MAGUS

I forgot to get any padding. You'll have to live without it until the boys bring in the saddle bags.

(CONTINUED)

The magus and Pol leave. Gen looks in Pol's pack and steals some matches wrapped in oiled paper and some pieces of leather. Then he goes to his bed and dozes. He wakes up, glances out a window and sees Pol teaching Sophos and Ambiades to fence with wooden swords. He goes back to sleep and does not wake until Sophos speaks.

SOPHOS

Gen. Gen. Breakfast is waiting.

Gen gets up and starts to follow Sophos out of the room. He promptly falls because he is still chained to the bed. Sophos runs back and removes the chain and padding.

SOPHOS

Oh, I'm so sorry!

GEN

Mrrmhhhhmmmp.

They go to breakfast. There is a bountiful breakfast of oatmeal, yogurt, bread, cheese, olives and oranges. Gen digs in.

MAGUS

Enjoy it. You won't eat so well again for a while.

Gen eats without complaint.

MAGUS

Gen, could you please not chew with your mouth open.

Gen obliges with a visible effort. Pol unwraps Gen's wrists and examines them.

POL

We can leave them exposed to the air today.

GEN

Yeah, they're healing good.

MAGUS

Let's start packing up.

Everyone but Gen starts packing backpacks. The magus fastens his cloak with his fibula pin. Gen stretches his muscles, bends to touch his toes, bends backward onto his hands, etc. Then he waits while the others shoulder their packs.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Gen!

Gen joins the group and they follow the magus towards a crevice in the side of the mountain.

SOUNIS 1

INT. DAY A room in the palace of Sounis. Sounis talks with one of his barons.

SOUNIS

And Eddis thinks she is safe in her mountains.

BARON

She is, your majesty. The rule of Eddis has never changed hands at the instigation of an outside force.

Sounis glares at Baron Eruchthes.

SOUNIS

Tell me, Baron Eruchthes, how much territory have I conquered during my reign?

BARON

The kingdom of Sounis is the largest it has been since we drove out the invaders two hundred years ago. You've even driven the Attolians back to the other side of the Hephestial Mountains.

SOUNIS

Exactly. Eddis won't be able to stand against me either.

BARON

The Eddisian soldiers are very well trained.

SOUNIS

The Eddisian army is filled with shepherds and woodcutters.

BARON

There are not many traversable paths into the mountains.

(CONTINUED)

SOUNIS

Trust me, Eructhes. My magus is
retrieving the key to victory as we
speak.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

EXT. DAY The magus, Ambiades, Sophos, Gen, and Pol climb
through a dry stream bed with olives and brush growing in
scratchy clumps. They clamber over fallen trees and scale
small dry waterfalls.

After a waterfall, walking.

GEN

Can we stop now? My feet are tired.

MAGUS

No. Get moving.

GEN

This is boring. How come boring
makes me so tired? (no one answers)
When can we stop?

The magus slows and looks over his shoulder.

MAGUS

Shut up.

GEN

I just wanted-

Pol shoves Gen in the shoulder blades. They continue
walking.

AMBIADES

Where are we?

MAGUS

Eddis, since the last climb.

AMBIADES

Why?

MAGUS

What do you know about the rule of
succession in Eddis?

AMBIADES

Well, they have a queen, like
Attolia, so the throne can't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES (cont'd)
 descend only in the male line. I
 suppose the rule is passed from
 parent to child, just like Sounis.

MAGUS
 And do you know if that has always
 been true?

AMBIADES
 Since the invaders.

MAGUS
 And before?

AMBIADES
 Are you talking about Hamiathes'
 Gift?

MAGUS
 I am. Sophos, do you know about the
 gift?

Sophos shakes his head.

MAGUS
 It's not surprising. Sounis and
 Attolia long ago converted to the
 invaders' religion, and we worship
 those gods in the basilica in the
 city, but once we all worshiped the
 gods of the mountain country. The
 reign of Eddis supposedly arose out
 of one of the stories in which
 Hephestia rewarded a king named
 Hamiathes with a stone dipped in
 the water of immortality.

SOPHOS
 Who's Hephestia?

AMBIADES
 Hephestia, goddess of fire and
 lightning, governs all the old gods
 except her mother, the Earth, and
 her father, the Sky. Don't you know
 any of the stories?

SOPHOS
 (shakes his head)
 My father thinks that we should
 forget the old gods. He says that a
 country with two sets of gods is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS (cont'd)
like a country with two kings. No one knows which to be loyal to. Magus, will you tell me more about the old gods of Eddis?

AMBIADES
I thought your father didn't want you to hear about them.

SOPHOS
I think he just doesn't want people to believe in them, to have superstitions. I don't think he objects to an academic interest.

AMBIADES
(laughs)
He doesn't? I thought an academic interest was exactly what he objected to. Didn't he threaten to throw you into the river tied to a stack of encyclopedias?

Everyone laughs while Sophos blushes.

SOPHOS
He doesn't think I should spend so much time on book learning, but he thinks it's all right for other people.

Awkward silence. Ambiades scowls.

MAGUS
(to Ambiades)
Knowing someone's religion can help you manipulate that person, which is why Sophos' father thinks no country should have more than one set of gods. (to Sophos) I'll teach you some stories of the old gods when we camp tonight. We need to make up the day we lost at the mountain house.

GEN
If you had wanted to move faster, you should have brought a cart for the first part of the trip. Can I have some bread?

MAGUS

No. We won't have more provisions until we get through the mountains.

GEN

You didn't bring enough.

MAGUS

You won't starve.

GEN

No, that's true. You can always give me some of Ambiades' food.

MAGUS

You'll get your share and nothing else. No one's going hungry so that you can eat.

GEN

I don't see why not. I'm a lot more important than anyone else here.

EDDIS 1

INT. DAY In the royal court of Eddis, the queen of Eddis, a short woman with dark hair who walks like a soldier, talks with her ministers.

MINISTER OF WAR

Sounis' army is growing again.

EDDIS

It has been growing.

MINISTER OF WAR

It's reaching a point. Sounis will be itching to use it. We know Sounis wants to annex land on the Attolian side of the mountains.

MINISTER OF TRADE

Surely he won't attack Eddis?

MINISTER OF WAR

He can't get to Attolia without going through Eddis, and that is the problem.

EDDIS

He won't attack as long as he thinks he can get through another way. A more matrimonial way.

The ministers look at Eddis. Eddis walks out.

STORY OF CREATION

EXT. NIGHT The group sits around a campfire.

MAGUS

(to Sophos)

We'll begin your education with the
creation and birth of the gods.

We look through the fire at the Magus as he begins to speak.

MAGUS

Earth was alone. She had no
companion.

THE SCENE BLURS AND SHIFTS.

The magus's voice is heard as we see the sun, moon, sky,
mountains, oceans, and rivers as they are described.

MAGUS

So she took a piece from the center
of herself and made the sun, and
that was the first god. But in time
he left Earth. He promised to
always send her light during the
day, but at night she was still
alone. So she took a piece from the
edge of herself and made the moon,
and she was the first goddess.
After a while the moon too went
away and the Earth was lonely
again.

So she breathed out into the
firmament, and she made the Sky.
The Sky wrapped himself all around
her and was her companion. He
promised to stay with her always,
and Earth was happy. Earth and
Sky's children were the mountain
ranges, and Hephestia was the
oldest. They had more children who
were the great oceans and the
middle sea, and their youngest
children were the great rivers
Seperchia and Skander.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

The people in Eddis, do they really believe that?

Gen laughs sharply.

GEN

In the city of Sounis do they really believe that the Nine Gods won the Earth in a battle with Giants? That the First God spawns godlets left and right and his wife is a shrew who is always outwitted? No, they don't believe that, Sophos. It's just religion. They like to go up to the temple on feast days and pretend that there is some god who wants the worthless sacrificial bits of a cow, and people get to eat the rest. It's just an excuse to kill a cow.

MAGUS

You sound very learned, Gen. What do you know about it?

GEN

My mother was from the mountain country. It's no different there. Everybody goes to the temple, and everybody likes to hear the old stories after dinner, but that doesn't mean they expect a god to show up at their door.

MAGUS

Oh?

GEN

Yes. And you made a lot of mistakes. You left out the part where the Earth cries when the Sky God ignores her and turns the oceans to salt.

MAGUS

I did?

GEN

Yes, my mother told me the stories when I was little. I know them all.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

It's always interesting to hear different versions of people's folktales, Gen, but you shouldn't think that your mother's stories are true to the original ones. I've studied them for years and am sure that I have the most accurate versions. It often happens that emigrants like your mother can't remember parts of the original, so they make things up and then forget that the story was ever different. Many of these myths were created by great storytellers centuries ago, and it is inevitable that in the hands of common people they get debased.

GEN

My mother never debased anything in her entire life.

MAGUS

Oh, don't be offended. I'm sure she never meant to, but your mother wasn't educated. Uneducated people rarely know much about the things they talk about every day. She probably never even knew that your name, Gen, comes from the longer name Eugenides.

GEN

She did, too. You're the one that doesn't know anything. You never knew my mother, and you don't know anything about her.

MAGUS

Don't be silly. Your whole life is in the court records. She fell from a fourth-story window of Baron Eructhes' villa and died when you were ten years old.

Silence.

MAGUS

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe Gen is a family name. The title of King's Thief is a hereditary one now in Eddis, and I think the current

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
thief is named Eugenides. Maybe
you're related. A cousin, perhaps,
to someone exalted.

Ambiades snickers.

GEN
Eugenides was the god of thieves.
We are *all* named after him.

Gen stomps away from the fire and wraps himself in his cloak
and blanket.

NIGHT WATCH

Gen wakes up in the middle of the night and sees Ambiades
sitting up in his blankets.

GEN
What are you doing awake?

AMBIADES
Keeping an eye on you.

Gen looks at the other three sleeping forms.

GEN
You take turns?

Ambiades nods.

GEN
Since when?

AMBIADES
Since the farmhouse.

GEN
Really? And I've been too tired to
appreciate it until now.

Gen shakes his head with regret and goes back to sleep.

SOPHOS AND GEN TALK.

EXT. DAY. The party packs up camp and covers their tracks.
Ambiades and Sophos cover the burnt space of the cooking
fire with pine needles. They resume walking down the
Attolian side of the Eddisian mountains on a narrow, exposed
path.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

Why the secrecy in the morning when anyone passing could see us now?

MAGUS

Only someone else on this trail, and the trail is rarely used. There are better ways to get down to Attolia.

GEN

I bet there are. Can't we be seen from the forest?

MAGUS

No, it's unlikely that anyone would be there.

GEN

(snort)

A successful thief doesn't depend on things being unlikely to happen.

MAGUS

A successful thief? How would you know?

The magus starts quizzing Ambiades and Sophos again.

MAGUS

Ambiades, what is the nearest mountain to Sounis?

AMBIADES

Mount Irkes.

MAGUS

Correct. And what mountain range is this?

AMBIADES

These are the Hephestial mountains.

MAGUS

Nicely done. What is significant about that one?

The magus points at a mountain.

AMBIADES

It's a volcano.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Yes, and?

AMBIADES

And it has lava inside it.

MAGUS

Sophos, perhaps you can fill in the gap in Ambiades' knowledge.

SOPHOS

The Eddisians call it the Sacred Mountain.

AMBIADES

(snaps)

What does it matter what the Eddisians call it?

MAGUS

Sophos, why don't you go walk by Pol for a while? (to Ambiades) It matters because it is part of their religion.

Sophos nods, glances at Ambiades, and goes to walk by Pol.

POL

What set him off?

SOPHOS

Identifying mountain ranges. He doesn't like that sort of thing, so he doesn't pay attention. But even so, he knows more than I do.

POL

You'll catch up.

SOPHOS

I suppose, if my father lets me stay.

POL

Oh?

SOPHOS

You know what I mean, Pol. If he finds out I want to stay, he'll take me away.

(CONTINUED)

POL

And do you want to stay?

SOPHOS

Yes. I like learning, and the Magus isn't as frightening as I thought at first.

POL

No? Shall I tell him you said so?

SOPHOS

Don't you dare. And don't tell my father either. You know my father is hoping he'll toughen me up. Don't you think the magus is nicer than he seems?

POL

I couldn't say.

SOPHOS

Well, he isn't nearly as hard on me as he is on Ambiades.

POL

Leaves harrying you to Ambiades, I notice.

SOPHOS

Oh, I don't mind, Pol. I like Ambiades. He's smart, and he's not usually so...so--

POL

High-handed?

SOPHOS

Temperamental. I think something is bothering him. Do you know where we're going?

POL

Attolia.

SOPHOS

Is that all you know? Then why are you here?

POL

Your father sent me to keep an eye on you. Toughen you up.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS
No, really, why?

POL
Just what I said.

SOPHOS
I'll bet the magus needed someone
reliable, and Father said he
couldn't have you without me.

Gen silently agrees. Sophos turns to Gen.

SOPHOS
Are you really named after the god
of thieves?

GEN
I am.

SOPHOS
Well, how could they tell what you
were going to be when you were just
a baby?

GEN
How did they know what you were
going to be when you were a baby?

SOPHOS
My father was a duke.

GEN
So my mother was a thief.

SOPHOS
So you would have to grow up to be
one, too?

GEN
Most of the people in my family
thought so. My father wanted me to
be a soldier, but he's been
disappointed.

Pol grunts as if to say that Gen's father's disappointment
was justified.

SOPHOS
(surprised)
Your father? He did?

(CONTINUED)

GEN
Why shouldn't he?

SOPHOS
Oh, well, I mean...

Sophos blushes.

GEN
What surprises you? That my father was a soldier? Or that I knew him? Did you think that I was illegitimate? I'm not. I even have brothers and sisters with the same father.

SOPHOS
What do they do?

GEN
Well, one of my brothers is a soldier, and the other brother is a watchmaker.

SOPHOS
Really? Can he make those new watches that are flat instead of round in the back?

Gen starts to answer yes, but the magus calls to Sophos.

MAGUS
Sophos!

Sophos hurries forward to join the magus.

GEN
(yelling to Sophos)
My sisters are even married, and honest housewives to boot!
(under his breath)
Mostly honest.

They continue down the mountain.

HAMIATHES' STONE

EXT. DAY They stop for lunch. Before Gen finishes his food, he speaks.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

Are there seconds?

MAGUS

No.

GEN

(with his mouth full)

You should have brought more food.

AMBIADES

You don't have to carry it.

MAGUS

Yes. Maybe we should have you carry your own share?

GEN

Oh, no, not me. I'm worn out just hauling myself up here.

SOPHOS

Magus, will you tell me about Hamiathes' Gift?

MAGUS

Of course, Sophos. Ambiadades, why don't you tell the story?

AMBIADES

Legend says, the goddess Hephestia rewarded King Hamiathes of Eddis with a stone dipped in the water of immortality. The stone freed its bearer from death, but at the end of his natural lifespan, King Hamiathes passed the stone to his son and died. The son eventually passed it to his son, and possession of the stone became synonymous with the right to rule the country.

MAGUS

Hamiathes' Gift is also responsible for the King's Thief tradition. When a usurper stole the stone and soon thereafter died, the Eddisians took it to mean that the power of the stone was lost unless it was given to the bearer and so a tradition grew up which allowed the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
throne to change hands peacefully
when another country might have had
a civil war. Gen, do you know about
it?

GEN
One person would steal the stone
and then give it to his chosen
candidate for the throne, in that
way making him rightful king. The
thief became known as the King's
Thief.

AMBIADES
But this is just a myth.

Gen silently agrees with Ambiades.

MAGUS
It's hard to say what is myth and
what is real. There may have been a
king called Hamiathes, and he may
have initiated this tradition. We
do know that there was a stone
called Hamiathes' Gift and that at
the time of the invaders, people
still believed in its power and
authority.

SOPHOS
What happened to the stone?

MAGUS
It was hidden by the king of Eddis,
and he died without passing it to
his son and without revealing its
hiding place. It has remained
hidden ever since.

SOPHOS
Do you think it could ever be
found?

The magus nods. Silence.

AMBIADES
You think you can find it?

The magus nods.

GEN

(squawks)

Do you mean that we are out here looking for something from a *fairy tale*?

MAGUS

Reliable documents did survive from the time before the invaders, Gen. They mention the stone.

AMBIADES

And you really think you know where it is?

MAGUS

Yes.

AMBIADES

Where?

MAGUS

You'll see when we get there.

GEN

And why are we going? So that you can be king of Eddis? A hopelessly backward country full of woodcutters?

MAGUS

I will give the stone to Sounis of course. He will be king. I will be the King's Thief.

GEN

I'm supposed to be King's Thief. Or do you expect me to hand you Hamiathes' Gift and then get knifed in the back? Is that why you brought Pol?

Pol doesn't react.

MAGUS

That won't be necessary. No one would mistake you for anything but a tool, Gen. If a sword is well made, does the credit go to the blacksmith or to his hammer? How much smarter than a hammer can you be if you flaunt the proof of your crimes in a wineshop?

(CONTINUED)

The magus laughs.

MAGUS

And what would you do if you were King's Thief? Chew with your mouth open in the royal presence? Chat with the court ladies dropping the h's at the beginning of your words and garbling the ends? Everything about you reveals your low birth. You'd never be comfortable at the court.

GEN

I'd be *famous*.

MAGUS

Oh, you're that already, Gen.

Ambiades snickers.

GEN

And Sounis trusts you to bring the stone back to him?

MAGUS

(snaps at Gen)
Of course.

GEN

Are you sure? Maybe *that's* why Pol is along. Maybe you're the one to be knifed in the back.

MAGUS

Don't be stupid.

GEN

And why should Sounis be king of Eddis? He already has one country. And all they have up there (Gen gestures to the mountain) is trees. A lot of trees. Does he want to build boats?

MAGUS

(regaining composure)
No, he wants the queen.

GEN

We're doing this so that he can get-

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

-married. Eddis has refused him so far, but she won't be able to if he can show that he is the rightful ruler of her country. We've warned her that at his next proposal he will be the bearer of Hamiathes's Gift.

GEN

What if no one believes in your silly Hamiathes' Gift anymore? What if we find it and everyone says, "So what?"

MAGUS

She is not so secure on her throne that she can risk offending her people's gods. No woman could be.

A moment of quiet.

GEN

He doesn't want the queen. He doesn't even want the country. He wants the pass through the mountains so that he can invade Attolia.

Pol and Ambiades nod their heads.

MAGUS

(shrugs)

It's not important why he wants the Gift. What's important is that we get it. And now I think we'd better get back to walking.

EDDIS 2

INT. DAY Eddis talks with her ministers about the message that Sounis sent.

MINISTER OF WAR

If he had Hamiathes' Gift, he would say so outright.

EDDIS

Perhaps. But would he even mention it if he did not have access to it? He must at least know where to find it.

(CONTINUED)

MINISTER OF TRADE

What will you do if he acquires the Gift?

EDDIS

What can I do? If he is given the stone, tradition states that he will be king of Eddis. I can't abandon my country to him.

MINISTER OF WAR

Then we will fight.

EDDIS

No. We cannot offend the gods.

MINISTER OF TRADE

Attolia has a cousin that you could marry. At least, he might be better than Sounis.

EDDIS

Sounis might invade anyway.

MINISTER OF WAR

If Sounis proposes marriage while in possession of the Gift, you should accept. It is the only way you can continue to rule Eddis.

Eddis steps away from her ministers and looks out a window to the mountains.

ENTERING ATTOLIA

EXT. DAY The party climbs down a steep slope to enter Attolia and the Sea of Olives. Attolia is much greener than Sounis. Gen scrambles down quickly ahead of the others.

GEN

(mimicking the magus)

"This trail isn't used much," he says. "There are better ones." I'll bet there are.

Gen slips, but regains his footing and makes it to the bottom well ahead of the others. He waits in sight in the hot sun while the others climb down slowly.

MAGUS

I am going to walk into town to buy horses and lunch. It will take me

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
at least an hour and we're still a
day behind schedule, so we'll have
to eat while we go.

The magus walks off into the trees.

SOUNIS 2

INT. DAY In the palace of Sounis, Sounis talks with Baron
Eructhes.

SOUNIS
If the magus fails to bring back
that stone, I will flay him.

BARON
Then what, your majesty?

SOUNIS
Then toss him in prison.

BARON
But what will you do with Eddis?

SOUNIS
What?

BARON
What will you do about Eddis
without the stone, your majesty.

SOUNIS
Invade.

BARON
Invade. Well, yes. There's always
that, but perhaps Your Majesty
would prefer-

SOUNIS
I'd prefer to marry the queen, but
it is doubtful that she would have
me without Hamiathes' Gift. Do you
disagree?

BARON
She has been less than receptive.

(CONTINUED)

SOUNIS

Exactly, so we invade.

BARON

Eddis is such a small country. It hardly seems worth the effort.

SOUNIS

If I am to conquer Attolia, I will need to go through Eddis. And will Eddis let me take an army through the pass?

BARON

No, your majesty. She'll take apart the bridge across the Seperchia just like they did after we drove out the invaders.

SOUNIS

So what country do I need before I attack Attolia?

BARON

Eddis.

SOUNIS

Eddis.

BARON

Surely you can wait for the magus to return.

Sounis glares at Baron Eruchthes.

SOUNIS

Two weeks. I'll give him two weeks.

LORD OF RAGS AND TATTERS

EXT. AFTERNOON Pol and Gen watch Sophos and Ambiades spar. Ambiades lands a hit on Sophos.

AMBIADES

(concerned)

Are you all right? I thought you would block that.

POL

He should have. Try it again.

Ambiades advances and hits Sophos again.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Sorry.

They reset. Ambiades hits Sophos again.

AMBIADES

Sorry.

They reset, Ambiades attacks. Sophos blocks the attack.

POL

Good enough.

Pol puts the practice swords away, then looks expectantly at Sophos.

SOPHOS

Don't match your weakness against
your opponent's strength?

POL

And your weakness is?

SOPHOS

My height?

POL

And Ambiades strength is?

GEN

(under his breath, unheard by
the others)
Years of fencing lessons.

SOPHOS

His height.

POL

Remember that.

The magus returns with horses and food. Ambiades goes to pick up his old, moth-eaten cloak which is next to Sophos' fancy new cloak. Gen sees Ambiades look with envy at Sophos' cloak. Ambiades sees Gen staring.

AMBIADES

What are you looking at, sewer
filth?

GEN

(bowing elaborately)
The Lord of Rags and Tatters.

Ambiades attacks Gen and pummels him while shouting.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES
(shouting)
My grandfather was a duke!

Pol pulls Ambiades away.

MAGUS
(to Ambiades)
You are not to injure the thief. I don't care what he says, he must be fit to work.

The magus turns to Gen.

MAGUS
A little circumspection might be wise for someone in your position, Gen. Not to mention an apology.

GEN
Apologize? What for?

Gen walks off nursing his injuries. He filches a tortoiseshell comb with long teeth, inlaid with gold, and begins to brush his hair. The magus notices Gen combing his hair.

MAGUS
(sharply)
Where did you get that comb?

Gen looks at the comb for a moment, perplexed.

GEN
I think it's Ambiades'.

Ambiades turns from saddling his horse, snatches the comb, and swings a fist at Gen's face, but Gen dodges and Ambiades hits Gen's shoulder. Gen falls.

GEN
My arm's broken!

MAGUS
Did you land on it?

GEN
No, the one he hit. He's broken my arm.

The magus walks away in disgust at the obvious lie.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

(to Ambiades)

If he had fallen on his arm, he might very well have sprained a wrist and he would then be no use to me at all. I thought I'd made that clear to you a moment ago.

The Magus cuffs Ambiades on the head with his seal ring. They start to pack up.

MAGUS

We'll ride down to the road and follow it. There's a moon tonight, and we should be able to make up some of the time we've lost.

Sophos loans Gen his own comb.

GEN

You're much too nice to be a duke.

SOPHOS

(blushing)

I know.

AMBIADES

(snarling)

So does his father.

They pack up camp and get on the horses. Gen checks his swollen lip.

GEN

You learn something new everyday.

SOPHOS

What are you learning?

GEN

To keep my mouth shut, I hope. Tell me, if Ambiades has an exalted grandfather, why doesn't he have a better cloak?

Sophos checks that Ambiades is out of earshot.

SOPHOS

(quietly)

His grandfather was duke of Eumen.

(CONTINUED)

GEN
(also quietly)
Of the Eumen conspiracy?

SOPHOS
After he tried to return the oligarchy and was executed, his family forfeited their lands and titles. I think Ambiades' father did inherit some money, but he lost most of it gambling. Last winter, when Ambiades wrote to his father and told him he needed a new cloak, his father sent him one of his old ones.

GEN
Ah. Poor Ambiades.

Sophos looks at Gen.

GEN
How can he look down his aristocratic nose at the unwashed masses when he's as poor as anyone else, and landless to boot? I bet he wakes up every morning and can't stand it.

MAGUS
Ambiades, Sophos. Keep quiet if we meet other travelers, your accents will mark you as members of Sounis' upper class. You don't need to worry, Gen.

GEN
Really?

MAGUS
Attolian gutter is indistinguishable from Sounisian gutter.

All laugh.

SOPHOS
What would happen if someone found out we're not from Attolia?

MAGUS
Nothing. Traders still do business here. Trade would go on right up
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
until there was open war; it might
not stop even then.

GEN
And if they knew *why* we were here?

MAGUS
They'd probably arrest us and turn
us over to their queen.

GEN
And she would?

MAGUS
Behead us all. Publicly.

SOUNIS 3

EXT. DAY The Sounisian army mobilizes towards Eddis.

BARON
Weren't you going to wait for the
magus to return?

SOUNIS
This is not an invasion. This is
military maneuvers. We just happen
to be maneuvering near the base of
Mount Irkes.

BARON
But that's nearly in Eddis.

SOUNIS
Eructhes.

BARON
Yes, your majesty.

STOLEN FOOD

EXT. MORNING. Pol looks in various saddlebags.

POL
Magus.

The magus goes over to Pol.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

What is it?

POL

Most of the food is missing.

The magus looks in the bag himself.

MAGUS

Damn!

The magus and Pol approach Gen. Gen stands.

MAGUS

I hope you ate well?

GEN

Not lately.

MAGUS

Hold him.

Pol grabs Gen by the arm. Gen tries to duck away. They scuffle and fall to the ground with Pol on top. Pol shifts most of his weight to Gen's head and holds him pinned while the magus beats Gen across the back with a riding crop. Gen screams curses into the grass until he can't get his breath to yell. The magus gives him a few more strokes, then stops. Pol helps Gen stand. Gen chops Pol under the breastbone, leaving Pol gasping, and advances on the magus. The magus steps back quickly and Pol interposes himself, hunched over and breathing painfully, between Gen and the magus. Gen stares at the magus too livid to speak, then spits in his face. The magus jumps back to avoid the spittle. Gen returns to his bedroll, covers his head with his arms, and doesn't move until they've packed up camp. Pol approaches Gen and touches him lightly on the elbow.

POL

(quietly)

Get up.

Eventually, Gen gets up. Pol stays out of reach and on his toes. Sophos holds Gen's horse by a stump. Gen ignores the stump and pushes the horse away from it. Sophos comes around the horse's head to offer a leg up, but Gen ignores him, puts a foot in the saddle, jumps onto the horse's back and snaps the reins sharply. He takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. He slackens the reins, but remains tense. The rest of the party mounts.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

(to Pol)

We'll swing west then to the stream
and hope to find some kind of
village somewhere along it? You
think that's our best chance?

Pol nods. The magus puts away his map.

MAGUS

This way then.

They ride in silence for awhile.

SOPHOS

Are you okay?

GEN

Oh, sure.

FISHING

EXT. DAY They arrive at a shallow river and turn back a ways
into the trees.

MAGUS

There will be a town somewhere
close. Pol and I will ride in to
get more food. Ambiades, I'm
leaving you in charge. For gods'
sakes, don't take your eyes off the
thief. Eat what food there still is
for lunch.

The magus and Pol leave. Sophos passes around pieces of
cheese. He gives Gen the loaf of bread to divide. Gen keeps
the larger portion of it.

AMBIADES

Hey!

GEN

I didn't have any godsdamned
breakfast!

They eat the bread, cheese, and dried jerky.

SOPHOS

I'm still hungry.

Gen crosses his arms.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

We could get some fish out of the river. Pol has fishing line and hooks in his pack.

Sophos looks at Gen.

GEN

Don't expect my help.

AMBIADES

We don't ever expect you to be helpful, Gen, but I'll bet you'll want some of the fish if we catch it.

SOPHOS

I could fish and you could watch him.

AMBIADES

You're terrible at fishing. You jerk the line and lose the bait.

SOPHOS

I could watch him while you fished.

AMBIADES

If he got up and walked away, you wouldn't stop him. No. What we'll do is tie him up.

GEN

You will not.

SOPHOS

How?

AMBIADES

There's rope in the magus' pack. Go get it.

Sophos retrieves the rope.

GEN

You're not tying me up. The magus said to keep an eye on me. He didn't say to go fishing.

AMBIADES

Shut up. It's your fault there's nothing to eat.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

No. You're not going to tie me up.

Ambiades reaches for Gen who rolls out of the way. Ambiades drops on Gen, slips a loop of rope over his newly healed wrists and pulls it tight.

GEN

Don't.

Gen grabs the rope, but Ambiades pulls the rope out of his hands which tightens the loop.

AMBIADES

Hold still, or I'll pull it tighter.

Gen stops struggling while Ambiades ties his wrists and Sophos ties his ankles.

AMBIADES

Be sure and make it tight.

GEN

It's too tight. You're tying my hands too tight.

AMBIADES

Shut up.

SOPHOS

Are you sure it's not too tight?

AMBIADES

Of course I'm sure. Have you got his feet done?

GEN

Ambiades, you've tied my hands too tight. I can't feel my fingers. You have to loosen them.

SOPHOS

Maybe you should, Ambiades.

AMBIADES

Don't be stupid, Sophos, he's just saying that. Look, his hands are fine.

GEN

They are not! Look.

(CONTINUED)

Gen hold his hands up. The skin around the rope is already puffy, but Sophos only sees the fingers.

SOPHOS
They aren't blue.

GEN
They will be soon.

AMBIADES
They will not. Come on, Sophos.

Ambiades and Sophos go fishing. Gen almost shouts to call them back, but stops for fear that an Attolian might hear him. Gen's hands swell and turn blue because the ropes are too tight. Ambiades and Sophos return and see Gen lying on his side, breathing quietly.

SOPHOS
Oh, no.

GEN
Damn right. Get the ropes off. Be careful!

Ambiades pulls at the knots.

GEN
Stop, Stop. Just leave them. You can cut them off. (yells) You're killing me!

Pol rushes in.

POL
Go get some more fish, both of you.

Sophos and Ambiades retreat to the river. Pol cuts the rope and starts to straighten the fingers.

GEN
Don't.

POL
They've got to be flexed. The blood has pooled.

GEN
I'll do it. Myself.

GEN
Where's the magus?

POL

He sent me ahead with some of the food. It's a good thing. He doesn't need to know about this.

GEN

Oh, yes, he does.

POL

No, he doesn't. The magus has staked his reputation and his life to find this silly stone, wherever it is, and he'll murder the person who prevents him from getting it. And that person is not going to be Sophos. His father sent me to make sure he's safe and that he learns something on this trip, but he is not going to learn what happens when you ruin the plans of a man like the Magus.

Pol grabs Gen's shirt and pulls him closer.

POL

My orders are to keep him safe and out of trouble. Whether we succeed in retrieving something from a fairy tale is not important to me. Do you understand?

Gen nods his head (yes he understands) and shakes it (no, the Magus doesn't need to know). Pol gets the relief kit, pulls out bandages, salve, and a packet of dried berries.

POL

Chew two of these. They'll help with the pain. We'll tell the Magus that one of the sores reinfected.

GEN

How long have I got?

POL

Till what?

GEN

Till we get to where we are going.

POL

How would I know?

(CONTINUED)

GEN

You know how much food the Magus bought.

(pause)

POL

Two more days.

SOUNIS INVASION

EXT. DAY Sounis is on a horse. He looks toward the mountains, then follows his troops that are marching toward Eddis.

SOPHOS' BACKSTORY

The party is on horseback again. Ambiades rides by the magus. Sophos rides by Gen.

SOPHOS

Gen, I'm terribly sorry about your hands. I didn't know Ambiades had tied them so tight.

GEN

Shut Up.

Sophos blushes.

GEN

Why do you have such a fancy cloak?

Sophos blushes again.

SOPHOS

My mother bought it for me when she heard I'd be traveling to the city to be with a new tutor.

GEN

The magus?

SOPHOS

Yes.

GEN

Where were you before?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

One of my father's villas. On the Eutoas River. It was nice there.

GEN

But?

SOPHOS

My father came for a visit and found out that I couldn't fence and I couldn't ride and I didn't like to go hunting. I liked to read instead. He threw my riding instructor and my fencing instructor and my tutor out the front gate of the villa. Then he said Pol would teach me riding and fencing and I'd live with him in the city, where he could keep an eye on me.

GEN

Pol is your father's man?

SOPHOS

He's captain of my father's guard.

Gen is impressed. A man's son has to be pretty important to him if he does without his captain so the the son can have a bodyguard.

ARRIVE DYSTOPIA

The party arrives at the edge of the dystopia, a barren, rocky lava field.

SOPHOS

What happened?

MAGUS

This is the dystopia. It is the remains of the boiling rock that poured out of the Sacred Mountain thousands of years ago. There is of course a myth to explain it, but I am too tired now even to listen to Gen tell it. So I will just say that Eugenides tried to use the thunderbolts he'd stolen from the Sky and started the fire that burned all this ground.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

He killed his brother.

MAGUS

Hmm? What was that, Gen?

GEN

His parents--not the Goddess, his mortal mother and father--had finally had children, and Eugenides killed his brother by accident in the fire; he burned in his arms. That's when Hephestia gave Hamiathes his gift.

Hamiathes saw the world burning and convinced the river god Aracthus to change his course and quench the fire.

Hephestia gave Hamiathes his gift to reward him.

AMBIADES

So now we know everything.

GEN

Did you know that when you think someone is very intelligent, you say he is clever enough to steal Hamiathes' Gift?

MAGUS

No, I didn't. Is it just among your mother's people?

GEN

I don't know. But I know what happened if you tried and got caught.

MAGUS

I don't know that either.

GEN

They threw you off the mountain.

MAGUS

(teasing)

Maybe that's what happened to your mother. Maybe that's why she left Eddis.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

Not threw as in exile.

Gen moves his hand in a long arcing motion.

GEN

Threw as in over the edge of the mountain.

MAGUS

Oh.

They all go to sleep.

MORE BERRIES

Gen wakes up and sees Pol is on watch duty.

GEN

Those berries you gave me...

POL

The ossil?

GEN

Do you have any more?

Pol pulls a small relief kit from his pack, takes out a small leather sack, pours out a small handful of berries, and gives them to Gen.

POL

Only two at a time.

GEN

Be blessed in your endeavors.

Gen pops two berries into his mouth, lies back down, and flexes his hands.

FIGHT

EXT. DAY.

MAGUS

I may have seen a fire last night.
Pol and I are going to go
investigate.

Ambiades and Sophos begin stretching. The magus leaves. Pol gives Ambiades a look, then follows. Ambiades pokes Sophos in the ribs with his sword.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Up and at 'em.

SOPHOS

I haven't finished the stretching exercises.

AMBIADES

Oh, forget them. You'll warm up as we go.

Ambiades and Sophos begin to spar.

AMBIADES

(hiding surprise)

Good block.

In the guise of fencing practice, Ambiades gives Sophos a series of bruises he won't forget for a month.

GEN

Look, every time he tries to ride over the top of your guard, he leaves his right side open. Step left to block his attack and then counter immediately to his rib cage.

Sophos drops his sword and and rubs a sore elbow.

SOPHOS

I'm sorry. I'm just not fast enough. You're a better swordsman, Ambiades.

Ambiades shrugs smugly. Sophos blushes. Gen snorts.

GEN

All it shows is that Ambiades is six inches taller than you and has a longer sword, as well as a longer sword arm.

AMBIADES

What do you know about sword fighting, Gen?

GEN

I know your guard is terrible. I know any opponent your size would cut you to pieces.

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Do you mean yourself?

GEN

I'm not your size.

AMBIADES

Coward.

GEN

Not at all. If I got up and beat on you, Pol would come back and beat on me. I have work to do, and I don't like to work with bruises.

AMBIADES

Pol wouldn't know.

GEN

Of course not.

Ambiades moves to stand over Gen.

AMBIADES

You're just a coward making excuses.

Ambiades kicks Gen in the side, lightly, but hard enough to bruise.

SOPHOS

Ambiades, you can't.

GEN

Do that again and I tell the magus.

AMBIADES

Gutter scum can't fight its own battles.

GEN

No. Gutter scum gets drafted into the infantry and fights for a worthless king, and hangers-on like you just watch.

SOPHOS

Gen, that's treasonous.

GEN

Do I care?

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Surprised, Sophos? His kind only
ever serve themselves.

GEN

Oh? And who else are you serving?

Ambiades tries to kick Gen, but he rolls away. Ambiades
tries again, but Gen catches his foot and takes him down.
The magus and Pol return. Ambiades stands up and brushes the
dust off his sword. Gen lays back down with his head on the
saddle.

MAGUS

No unpleasantness, I trust?

No one answers. The magus and Pol have a quiet conversation.

MAGUS

Sophos can stay with the horses.

POL

Not by himself.

MAGUS

Then Ambiades can stay with him.

POL

No.

MAGUS

All right. Ambiades will stay with
the horses.

POL

(nods)

The magus, Pol, Sophos, and Gen head out on foot across the
dystopia.

EDDIS INVASION

INT. DAY A courier, Crodes, enters a room in the palace of
Eddis. He kneels before the queen.

CRODES

Your majesty.

EDDIS

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CRODES

Part of the Sounisian army is
marching towards Eddis.

EDDIS

How far are they?

CRODES

They could reach our border in as
little as three days.

EDDIS

(to an attendant)

Gather my ministers.

The attendant nods and leaves.

THE MIGHTY ARACTHUS

EXT. EVENING. The party (minus Ambiades) arrives at the
Aracthus river.

MAGUS

This is it.

GEN

This is what?

MAGUS

This is where you earn your
reputation.

There is no sign of anything significant besides the river.

MAGUS

We'll have to wait until nearly
midnight. We might as well
get something to eat.

Pol unpacks. Sophos finds fuel for a fire. Pol cooks dinner
over a fire. Gen scuffs a hollow in the sand, flexes his
fingers and wrists to keep them limber, and naps.

DREAM OF MOIRA - TALLY MARK 1.

INT. NIGHT Gen dreams of a woman dressed in a white peplos
standing in the moonlight. Her white hair is held away from
her face by a string of dark red stones set in gold. She has
a white swan feather quill pen and a list.

(CONTINUED)

MOIRA

Who brings you here?

GEN

I bring myself.

MOIRA

Do you come to offer or to take?

GEN

To take.

MOIRA

Take what you seek if you find it
then, but be cautious. Do not
offend the gods.

She adds his name (Eugenides) at the bottom of a long list
and places a small mark beside it.

ENTERING THE LABYRINTH

EXT. NIGHT The magus, Pol, Sophos, and Gen are beside the
powerful Aracthus river. Gen wakes up to hear a change in
the rushing water. The river vanishes in a few slushes and
reveals a stone doorway where a waterfall had been.

MAGUS

I wanted to get here at least a day
early, to give you a chance to
rest. The water will begin to flow
again just before dawn. You have to
be out again before that, as I
believe the temple will fill
quickly. I assume you will need
these.

The magus hands Gen thieving tools wrapped in a soft piece
of leather.

GEN

These are mine.

MAGUS

Yes, they were the ones taken from
you when you were arrested. Not
being a thief, I couldn't otherwise
be sure of equipping you properly.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

You already knew then?

MAGUS

Oh, yes, the man you bragged to in the wineshop was an agent of mine. Not just a casual informer.

GEN

I need a light.

MAGUS

Pol has one for you.

Gen looks behind him. Pol gives Gen a lamp.

POL

There's six hours of oil.

GEN

Do you have a pry bar?

POL

Yes.

Pol gets a pry bar out of his pack. Gen walks to the edge of the riverbank.

MAGUS

If my calculations are correct, the water will stop for four nights in a row this year, and this is the second of them. Don't get yourself drowned on the first try.

Pol hands the pry bar to Gen. Gen steps into the water and turns back to the magus.

GEN

Do you know if anyone has tried this before?

MAGUS

I believe that several attempts have been made.

GEN

And?

MAGUS

No one came back.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

From inside?

MAGUS

No one who has been inside has returned; no member of any party where someone went inside has returned either. I don't know how it might happen, but if you fail, we are all lost together.

The magus smiles and waves a hand in a vague benediction. Gen nods and goes to the door which is made of stone and has slits in it for water to flow through, and mutters a perfunctory prayer to the god of thieves as he pushes the door open and goes inside.

GEN

Eugenides, bless this endeavor.

The door swings closed behind him.

1 IN THE LABYRINTH

INT. NIGHT Some faint moonlight enters through an irregular hole in the ceiling and bounces on the water that still covers the floor of the temple. It is the room Gen dreamt about, but without the woman, table, or scroll. Gen finds another stone door with a larger grate to admit water more easily. Gen lights his lamp, then goes through the door which swings closed behind him.

Gen enters a narrow corridor that stretches out ten feet to his right and ten feet to his left. Gen goes to the right. The corridor turns and ends in a metal door with no sign of rust. Gen unlocks the door and sees a short corridor that ends in another door. He sighs and looks for something to wedge open the door. There are no loose rocks so he uses a shoe. He tucks the other shoe in his belt. Halfway down the corridor, the lamplight reveals that the far door is perfectly smooth with no keyhole.

GEN

Gods. Oh, gods.

Gen turns back to the first door as the water washes away his shoe and the door begins to close. Gen drops the pry bar and lamp and launches himself toward the door. The door squishes Gen's fingers, but remains open. This door is also perfectly smooth on the inside. Gen opens the door and scootches through. He sits with his sore fingers in the dark, wet hallway. Moonlight comes from the grill in the

(CONTINUED)

stone door. Gen goes down the hallway to the other door and unlocks it. He feels the other side to make sure it has a keyhole, then goes through and wedges it open with his remaining shoe.

Gen empties his pockets which contain several stolen items including: a silver match case, matches wrapped in oiled paper, a small knife, a few pieces of leather, some twine, the magus' fibula pin, assorted coins, two pieces of jerked beef, and Ambiades' comb.

He chews on a piece of jerky, lights a match from the silver case and goes down the corridor. He reaches the door and the match burns down. He unlocks the door in the dark. He lights another match and walks down yet another corridor with one hand on a wall. He stubs his toe on uneven ground and drops the match. He sloshes ahead in the dark, then lights another match. There are large chunks of obsidian in the walls. Gen wanders through the maze, often without light.

When he reaches a door, he lights another match. The door is identical to the other metal doors. He unlocks it and finds no keyhole on the other side. He looks in and sees the pry bar and lamp. Having no shoes left, Gen holds the door open with his foot while he takes off his overshirt to wedge under the door. He takes off his undershirt as well and leaves it by the doorjamb just in case. He quickly snatches up the pry bar and lamp and returns to safety. He puts his shirts back on.

Gen lights the lamp and finds the back of the maze which is a wider, more carefully finished corridor with a canted floor. The lower part of the floor is under several inches of water. An assortment of bones stick out of the water. Gen trails his fingers in the water, then leaves.

He finds himself standing in front of a wall of obsidian veined with rock. He puts a hand on the black glass and tries to see through it like a window. The flame in the lamp sputters and the water begins to return. Gen panics and rushes toward the exit. At the first locked door, he spills all his tools out of his leather bag. He picks everything up with shaking hands. He opens the door and rushes to the next door, but turns back to pick up the lamp. He unlocks the next door and the water pushes it open. He drops the pry bar and wades through 6-inch deep water toward the stone door. He goes through the stone door into the antechamber where water pours in through the hole in the ceiling. He pulls open the outside door and is washed out. He lands on his hands and knees in the pool outside the maze.

OUT OF THE LABYRINTH

EXT. PRE-DAWN Gen wades toward shore.

MAGUS

Did you get it?

GEN

No. I couldn't find it. I couldn't find anything. Nothing except huge chunks of obsidian. There's no naos, no altar, no treasure room, nothing you'd expect in a temple.

The magus helps him out of the river.

MAGUS

There's still two nights left. Come get some breakfast.

They eat the eggs and coffee that Pol prepared. Gen goes to sleep.

DREAM OF MOIRA - TALLY MARK 2.

Gen dreams again of the woman in white. She is concerned for Gen.

MOIRA

Be cautious. Do not offend the gods.

She adds a second mark beside his name at the bottom of the list.

LABYRINTH PREGAME TAKE 2

Gen groans as he awakes. He stretches. The magus gives him a cup of coffee.

GEN

Gods bless you.

MAGUS

You're welcome. When you have returned to the land of the living, I have some questions to ask.

Gen scowls and drinks his coffee slowly.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Would you describe your night in the temple?

GEN

The corridors are made of solid rock. The walls sag in to make arched ceilings. There's a trap between two doors that have no keyholes on the inside. That trap was almost my watery grave.

MAGUS

Was there anything else?

GEN

(reluctantly)

There was a small pool in the back. It was filled with bones.

MAGUS

How many bones?

GEN

The skulls were in pieces, I saw parts of four or five, maybe more. Does it matter?

MAGUS

My predecessor came here, I think. But as far as I know, he came alone. The other bones would be older. I wish I knew...

GEN

Knew what?

MAGUS

Knew why whole expeditions have disappeared after this goal.

GEN

I wish I knew how the bones came to be piled in the back of the maze and none of them left in the trap at the front.

MAGUS

An astute observation. Somebody moved them?

Gen shrugs, then looks around.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I'd move camp if I were you.

MAGUS

Why?

GEN

The river turns here. We're right across from the falls. If the water came back faster than it did last night, it would jump that falls and land on top of you. You and Pol and Sophos would be washed across the sandbar and end up somewhere downriver, probably drowned.

MAGUS

We'll move. Eat some dinner.

Gen eats.

GEN

Pol, do you have any rope or twine?

Pol gives Gen a thirty foot rope.

2 LABYRINTH. PLUS ROPE.

INT. NIGHT Gen enters and finds his shoes, one bobbing in the middle of the first room and the other in a corner. He puts them on. He unlocks the metal doors and props them open with river rocks. He goes to the pool at the back of the maze. He paces the length of the pool a few times, then starts at one end and rakes his fingers through bones, silt, jewelry, and buttons. He slips one ring onto his thumb and shovels the rest back into the pool. Then he begins measuring the maze.

SOUNIS FOREST

EXT. NIGHT Sounis moves his troops into the forest on the slope of Mount Irkes.

2B LABYRINTH

INT. NIGHT The water starts rising in the labyrinth. Gen coils the rope with shaking hands and hurries to leave, but he almost runs into the first door because it did not stay propped open. He unlocks the first, sees the second door has also closed, kicks the stone door block, then kicks

(CONTINUED)

the pry bar that he lost last night with the other foot. He does not stop, but limps to the second door, unlocks it, and rushes out of the maze.

OUT OF THE LABYRINTH

EXT. MORNING Gen exits the labyrinth only slightly more gracefully than the night before.

MAGUS

Any luck?

GEN

None.

MAGUS

Dammit. What are you doing all night?

GEN

Tripping over pry bars. Where's my breakfast?

Gen eats.

GEN

(to magus)

Do you have any paper?

MAGUS

Did you want to write a letter to your sweetheart?

GEN

What makes you think my sweetheart can read? Shut up and get me a piece of paper.

The magus laughs and complies with a flourish.

MAGUS

I hear and obey, which is more than you have ever done.

Gen snatches the paper and sees Sophos staring in astonishment.

GEN

What are you looking at?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

Nothing.

MAGUS

He is merely astounded by my good humor, Gen, and my ready compliance to your grumpy requests. (to Sophos) I have the highest respect for a craftsman, and Gen is nothing if not that. Although if he doesn't bring back Hamiathes' Gift tonight, the three of us may as well drown here as go back and tell the king that we have failed.

GEN

The three of you? What happens to me?

MAGUS

Oh, you would drown in the maze.

Gen turns to the paper with a charcoal stick to mark out the measurements of the maze. The magus points out a smudge.

MAGUS

What's that?

GEN

A mistake. I keep getting my measurements turned around. The big piece of obsidian, though, is right there.

Gen marks it with another smudge.

MAGUS

If I were here to get rich, I'd be a happy man. How long is the rope?

GEN

About thirty feet.

POL

Thirty exactly.

MAGUS

So this space here might be as much as eight feet by six?

GEN

I think so.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

You think there is a room hidden?

GEN

I don't know. Every wall is two feet or three feet thick. There could be a hidden storage space anywhere. And then there are the outside walls of the maze. A secret way could lead to a tunnel a mile long. I just don't know.

MAGUS

You've checked those walls?

GEN

(frustrated)

Every inch.

MAGUS

If there were a door, you would find it, Gen.

Gen shrugs.

MAGUS

(quietly)

Did you look among the bones?

GEN

Yes.

MAGUS

Find anything?

Gen looks down at the emerald seal ring on his thumb. The magus whistles and lifts the ring off his thumb.

MAGUS

The writing on the ring itself is in the old style, pre-invader. Whoever wore it here must have had it in his family for many generations.

GEN

Or he lost it here a long, long time ago.

MAGUS

Or that. I'll put it in my bag, so that it doesn't get lost.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

You will not. The ring doesn't belong in a bag; it belongs on a finger. My finger.

Gen stands. Pol also stands.

GEN

If you want a seal ring, go get one yourself.

The magus smiles and returns the ring.

MAGUS

Oh, very well. Grave robber.

Gen laughs.

GEN

I'm trying to rob a god's temple, and you think I should worry about the ghosts of a few dead men?

Gen puts the ring back on and goes to sleep.

EDDIS 3

INT. DAY In the throne room of Eddis.

CRODES

Sounis has moved troops into the fir forest.

MINISTER OF WAR

How many men?

CRODES

We estimate at least 3,000.

EDDIS

Are they completely under the trees?

CRODES

Yes, your majesty.

EDDIS

Crodes, take this message to Sounis. Tell him to retract his men by sunset or we will burn the forest to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CRODES

My queen.

Crodes exits.

DREAM OF MOIRA - TALLY MARK 3.

INT. NIGHT The same room as before

MOIRA

Eugenides. (pause) Eugenides.

GEN

I am here.

MOIRA

(quietly)

Many have sought twice in the maze
and yet gone away. If you go a
third time into the maze, you will
not leave without what you seek.

Gen nods.

MOIRA

You will go a third time?

GEN

Yes.

MOIRA

There is no shame if you did not.

(She hesitates.)

Who brings you here?

GEN

I bring myself.

MOIRA

Then you will go?

GEN

Yes.

MOIRA

Be cautious. Do not offend the
gods.

AWAKE

EXT. DAY Gen wakes up more than an hour before sunset. He is hungry.

MAGUS

Welcome. Would you like some dried beef, some dried beef, or some dried beef for lunch?

GEN

Oh, I'll take stuffed pigeons in sauce, thank you, and some decent wine to drink. None of that cheap stuff, please.

The magus hands Gen some dried beef and old bread.

MAGUS

Enjoy your meal.

GEN

Where's Sophos?

MAGUS

I sent him after more wood.

GEN

Can he swim?

The magus and Pol look at each other, then stand and leave to search for Sophos. Gen steals more dried beef from Pol's bag. Sophos returns carrying a bundle of brushwood. Sophos sets down the firewood and sits.

SOPHOS

Gen, can you hear the river coming inside the temple?

GEN

I don't know. There's a panic that comes over me when the river starts to return, but I don't know if I can hear it exactly. And another thing, I used stones as door blocks, but they slid out.

SOPHOS

Do you think there's some...body in the maze with you?

Gen looks at Sophos. Sophos stands and looks around.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS
Where is everybody?

GEN
Looking for you. They think you've
drowned.

Sophos sits in a huff. The magus comes back in sight, sees Sophos, signals to Pol, then both Pol and the magus return.

SOPHOS
I swim very well.

SOUNIS DEFEATED

EXT. DAY A Sounisian soldier delivers a note to Sounis, then withdraws. Sounis reads the note and crumples it in his fist.

SOUNIS
Withdraw the troops. Get everyone
out of the forest.

BARON
What's happened, your majesty?

SOUNIS
You were right, for once. Eddis is
safe in her mountains. The queen of
trees and sheep will not yield to
anyone without that stone.

3 LABYRINTH

EXT. NIGHT Gen enters the maze a third time. He picks up the pry bar. In a montage, Gen goes straight to the large wall opposite the obsidian wall and searches it meticulously. He searches other walls. He searches the rear wall, wading through the pool of bones. He occasionally looks over his shoulder.

GEN
Damn it Sophos! There's nothing in
here with me.

He returns to the wall opposite the obsidian wall. He stares at it and searches it again with his fingertips, growing increasingly frustrated.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

Aaagh!

Gen swings the pry bar against the rock. It bounces off the wall and lands at his feet. He slumps to the ground with his back against the rock wall, holding his sore hand, and facing the obsidian wall. He wipes away tears and watches his reflection and the reflection of the lamplight flicker on the wall of obsidian. Gen picks up the pry bar and stands. He puts his face to the glass, trying to see through. He slams the pry bar into the glass chipping off a small piece. He swings again and larger pieces break off. Long cracks radiate out from a small hole. Gen puts his finger through the hole and wiggles it in the open space on the other side. Gen continues swinging the pry bar until the wall crumbles and there is a hole the size of a double door. He lifts the lamp and sees a staircase leading up.

He climbs the stairs into a room full of statues. They sit in rows on either side of an aisle that leads to a throne on which is seated a statue of the great goddess Hephestia. Gen notices a statue of Moira, the woman in white, in the crowd. He walks down the aisle and touches a blue robe worn by one of the statues. He continues toward Hephestia who holds a small stone, Hamiathes' Gift, on a platter on her lap.

Gen reaches out his hand to take the stone, but stops when he notices Hephestia breathe. He shuts both eyes, then opens one and looks up at her face.

Eugenides, the god of thieves, steps forward out of the shadows on Hephestia's right. He has a feather-shaped scar on his cheek.

EUGENIDES

You have not yet offended the gods.
Except perhaps Aractus, who was
charged to let no thief enter here.
Take the stone.

Eugenides places his hand on Hephestia's hand.

EUGENIDES

Take it.

Gen remains motionless except for the movement of his eyes as he looks from the stone, to the hand of Eugenides, to his face, to the stone. He hears the water returning. Finally, he looks into the eyes of Hephestia.

She looks ahead, then looks down at Gen. He snatches the stone, turns, and runs back to the Labyrinth

The gods watch impassively. Moira is hidden in the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

Gen jumps and stumbles down the staircase into the water. He drops the lamp which goes out in the water.

He emerges from the broken wall and turns down the hallway.

He runs through the maze and comes across a locked door which he opens; he does not fumble. The water is one foot deep and deepens to two feet as he opens a second door.

The water is waist-deep in the main cavern. He moves toward the door, slips and tumbles under water and slams up against the main door, still underwater. He struggles.

Water swirls over him as the scene fades to black.

SUCCESS!

EXT. DAY Gen rests, washed up on the sand. The gentle sound of the river is heard. Gen blinks his eyes at the blue sky above. Close up on Gen's face, he looks down and we follow his gaze down his arm to his hand which opens to reveal Hamiathes' Gift.

The Magus sees Gen move, but does not see the stone.

MAGUS

Well, that is good news at least.
It is a great relief to my
conscience that you are not
drowned, Gen. We are alive and you
are alive, so this expedition was
at least not the disaster of
earlier ones. If we failed to
retrieve Hamiathes' Gift, well,
perhaps someone else found it
first, or perhaps it was never
there at all.

Gen reveals the Gift.

MAGUS

You are a wonder, Gen. I will carve
your name on a stele outside the
basilica, I promise.

Gen laughs.

MAGUS

Where was it?

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I broke through one of the big obsidian walls with the crowbar and there was a stairway behind it. There was this room that had...had the stone on an altar.

MAGUS

The river came down just as you said it might and washed right across our campsite on the lower bank. So we owe you for our lives as well as for this.

The magus holds the stone.

SOPHOS

Is that really it? How can you tell?

The magus flips it over to reveal carved lettering, the four symbols of Hephestia's ancient name.

SOPHOS

But it's just a plain gray rock.

GEN

Do you have any doubts?

SOPHOS

No. I just don't understand why I am so sure.

GEN

In the story the other night, when Hephestia rewarded Hamiathes at the end, she was supposed to have taken an ordinary stone from the river and dipped it in the water of immortality.

SOPHOS

So it is just a rock?

MAGUS

Not entirely. Look carefully at it in the sun.

The Magus hands the stone back to Gen. He looks at the letters carved into the rock. There is a blue glint at the bottom of the carving.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

It's a sapphire, at least part of it is.

MAGUS

There is a description of it in the scrolls of the high priests of Eddis. Whenever anyone produced a stone, the high priest compared it to the scroll's description. No one but the priest could read the description, and so no one ever offered a successful copy.

SOPHOS

But you know the description?

MAGUS

Yes.

GEN

How?

MAGUS

My predecessor visited the high priest during a trip as ambassador to Eddis. He offered the priest a drugged bottle of wine and then looked through his library while he was unconscious. He didn't think that the description of the stone was particularly important at the time, but I found it noted in his journals after he disappeared.

Gen shudders (at the idea of drugging the high priest, a capital offense).

MAGUS

You're wet, Gen. Get into some dry clothes and get something to eat. Then if you have the strength, I'd like to get at least partway across the dystopia. The rest of our food is with Ambiades.

Gen eats some jerky.

GEN

Pol, do you have any string?

Pol gives Gen two pieces of leather. Gen re-braids his hair and uses the longer piece to tie up the end. He keeps the short piece. The magus wears Hamiathes' Gift around his neck.

BACK ACROSS THE DYSTOPIA

The party crosses the dystopia to return to Ambiades in the olive groves. They see his fire blazing.

MAGUS

He'll have the fire watch out from fifty miles away. Pol, would you go ahead and put that fire out, or at least reduce it.

Pol nods and leaves.

BACK TOGETHER

EXT. EVENING The party meets up with Ambiades and the horses at the edge of the Sea of Olives.

AMBIADES

I thought you were all dead.

MAGUS

Happily, we are not. In the morning, we will find the nearest town to buy provisions. Then we'll take a more direct route home. Now that we have the Gift, the quicker we go the better.

ENCOUNTER

EXT. DAY The party rides through the olives. As they cross a wide, shallow stream, they are ambushed by four mounted Attolian guards. Gen drags the reins of his horse to the side so that he brushes shoulders with the magus, then he turns his horse back towards the stream bank and pulls himself into a tree. Pol and the magus fight with the Attolians. Ambiades moves his horse to land, then tries to get his sword out. Sophos remains in the stream struggling to get his sword out. Pol quickly dispatches one Attolian who falls in the water.

POL

(to Sophos)

Hide in the trees!

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS
 (to Sophos)
 Forget the sword!

GEN
 (in warning)
 Sophos!

Pol is drawn out by one attacker while the magus fights off two. Sophos still has his back to the fight.

GEN
 Godsdamn.

Gen rushes along the length of his branch, flattens himself against the tree limb and reaches for Sophos. He pulls Sophos off-balance just enough to make him fall off his horse. Sophos' horse moves away, leaving Sophos exposed to the Attolian who has slipped past the magus. Sophos barely parries the blow aimed at his head, then Pol sinks his sword into the Attolian's ribcage. There is another splash as the magus finishes his opponent. Four riderless horses mill about in the river.

MAGUS
 Are you hurt?

SOPHOS
 No, I'm fine.

MAGUS
 Good. Ambiadēs?

AMBIADES
 I'm fine.

MAGUS
 Pol?

POL
 Nothing serious.

Pol was cut just beneath his elbow.

MAGUS
 And Gen? I see you found a safe
 place to wait while we were busy.

Gen opens his mouth to object, then points to the magus' shirt with a horrified expression. The magus lifts his hand, then looks and sees that Hamiathes' Gift is gone, the leather thong that held it neatly sliced. He searches for it on his person and his horse before jumping off his horse and wading into the stream.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Damn! Godsdamn!

Pol and Sophos follow him into the muddy water. Ambiades is still mounted.

AMBIADES

What happened? What happened?

MAGUS

The stone, the cursed stone. I've lost it in the fighting. Damn it, who the hell are these people?

POL

Attolian soldiers.

AMBIADES

Are they all dead?

MAGUS

Yes, they're all dead. Get over here and help me with this one.

Ambiades, the magus, Pol, and Sophos drag the bodies onto the bank while Gen sits in the tree and rebraids his hair.

MAGUS

(to Gen)

Come down and help look.

They form a line well downstream of where the fight had happened and make their way upstream until they pass where the stone might have dropped. They do not find it among the river rocks.

POL

It's gone, magus.

Everyone continues to stare at the streambed.

POL

Magus.

Everyone lifts their heads to look at either Pol or the magus.

MAGUS

Yes. We've got to go. Ambiades, get the horses and bring them to this side of the stream. Sophos, see if any of those other horses are still nearby. We should have tied them

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
up. If they have saddlebags, check
to see if there's any food in them.

SOPHOS
There are three here. There's no
sign of the fourth one.

MAGUS
There's no time to catch it now.
We'll have to go as quickly as we
can.

The magus mounts his horse.

MAGUS
I don't believe this.

Pause.

MAGUS
All right. All right. Let's go.

The magus still does not move. A shout is heard in the
distance, the stray horse has been found. After another
pause, the magus turns his horse and they all gallop away
down a path. After covering some distance, they slow and
ride through the trees.

SOPHOS
(looking over his shoulder)
They'll track us.

MAGUS
(cheerfully)
We'll have to keep ahead of them.

Gen looks at the magus.

MAGUS
A little danger adds spice to life,
Gen.

Gen is stunned.

MAGUS
I've had some time to think, Gen.
The stone itself isn't important.
Now that we have seen it for
ourselves, as well as having the
description, and we know that no
one else can produce the original,
we can make a copy.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

What about the fact that the stone is supposed to carry its own authority? You're supposed to look at it and know it's Hamiathes' Gift.

MAGUS

That will be dismissed as superstition. We'll manage. We'll manage just fine.

Gen grits his teeth.

GEN

What about food?

MAGUS

I guess we'll try to get something in Pirrhea tonight.

GEN

Tonight?

MAGUS

(snaps)

I'm sorry, but I can't pull food out of the sky for you.

GEN

You're not going to pull it out of Pirrhea either. What do you plan to do, knock on a door and say, 'Excuse us, there are four of the Queen's Guard dead, soldiers are searching every road for us, and I'd like to buy a few loaves of bread and some dried beef, please?

MAGUS

And what do you suggest, O oracle of the gutter?

GEN

I suggest that you should have brought food for five people with this miserable traveling circus of yours. Alternatively, you should have left Useless the Elder and his younger brother at home!

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES
He's not my brother.

GEN
That, was a figure of speech.

AMBIADES
And I'm not useless.

GEN
You were no help at the ford.

AMBIADES
You climbed a tree!

GEN
I didn't have a sword.

Ambiades pulls out his sword and points it at Gen.

AMBIADES
Would you like mine?

SOPHOS
Ambiades!

GEN
If I wanted it, I'd have taken it
already. Now shut up. (to the
magus) How do you propose to get
food?

MAGUS
You are going to steal it.

Gen throws up his hands.

MAGUS
When we get to Pirrhea, I'll give
you an hour and if you're not back
by then, I'll find the town center
and shout "Thief!" at the top of my
lungs.

GEN
Be sure to shout "Murderers!
Murderers!" too.

MAGUS
I'll make sure that we all go to
the block together.

ATTOLIA'S INTRODUCTION

INT. SUNSET Teleus, the captain of Attolia's guard, reports to Attolia. We cannot see her face, only the edge of her shoulder or the hem of her dress.

ATTOLIA

None of the men have returned?

TELEUS

Your majesty, we found their bodies. We have sent more soldiers to locate the Sounisians.

ATTOLIA

What about the man we had following them?

TELEUS

He was called off when we sent the ambush, your majesty.

ATTOLIA

That is unfortunate.

TELEUS

We will catch them, your majesty.

ATTOLIA

Of course you will, Teleus. Let us hope they still have the Gift when you do.

Teleus bows and exits.

STEALING FOOD

EXT. NIGHT

Gen returns to the party and tosses a bag of vegetables and chickens to Pol.

HORSE-THIEF

EXT. NIGHT They all munch on the raw vegetables that Gen stole.

POL

These horses need rest and food or we need fresh horses.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

There's a livery stable on the main road at Kahlia. We can steal a change of horses there.

Gen chokes on his spinach.

GEN

We can what?

MAGUS

We'll get the horses and ride on. We should lose them when we cut away from the main road, away from the Seperchia's pass to Eddis. They won't expect that.

AMBIADES

You're going to use the same trail back home? Why not just ride for the main pass? It's closer, isn't it? And once we're in Eddis, we're on neutral ground.

MAGUS

Once we get to Kahlia we'd be closer to the main pass, but they'll have all the roads blocked. They won't expect us to cut back inland, and we should slip by them.

AMBIADES

(hesitantly)

I think the main pass would be better.

MAGUS

It's not your job to think.

GEN

About those horses...

MAGUS

You'll do your best, Gen, and if your best isn't good enough, we'll all--

GEN

Go to the block together. You said that before. Do you have any idea how impossible this is?

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

(laughs)

I thought you could steal anything.

Gen hisses to himself...

GEN

Things don't make noise.

SILENT CRACK OF DOOM

EXT. NIGHT Gen is standing outside Kahlia. Gen notices a guard at the gate and scales the wall to avoid him. Once in the town, he finds the stable. He opens the stable gate. It stays open. Gen peeks in the stable and sees the ostler sleeping in a chair with a bottle next to him. Gen picks up five leading straps, chooses five mares, and clips a leading strap to each halter. He opens all the stall doors one by one. The horses make some small noises of inquiry. Gen leads out his first choice. He twitches the lead of his second horse as he walks by. The second horse follows obediently in a line, as do the third, fourth, and fifth choices. The other horses wander out of their stalls.

GEN

Eugenides, keep the horses quiet
and the ostler asleep.

Gen gathers the five lead lines in his hands and leads the horses out into the street. The horses' iron-shod hooves hit the flagstones, but make no sound. Gen stops in shock. The first mare throws its head back in surprise, but still makes no sound. Gen continues to lead his five chosen mares. The rest of the horses leave the stable and disperse like ghosts through the streets. Gen arrives at the town gate and meets Pol standing over the guard. Gen's voice breaks the supernatural silence.

GEN

Did you kill him?

Pol shakes his head and takes four of the horses, two leading straps in each hand. They return to the others who put saddles on the horses.

MAGUS

Was there any trouble?

GEN

No, no trouble.

(CONTINUED)

POL
Are you all right?

Gen nods. Pol takes Gen by the elbow and feels him shaking.

POL
Are you sure?

Gen nods, but requires Pol's help to get onto his horse. They ride away. Gen pulls up his horse to listen. He hears the temple gong booming in the night. The others stop as well.

AMBIADES
What's that?

GEN
The ostler woke up.

They break into a gallop. At straight places in the road, they see their pursuers. They lose them in the olive groves. It is morning by the time they reach the mountain.

HIS FATHER REALLY WANTED HIM TO BE A SOLDIER

EXT. DAY The magus dismounts; everyone else follows suit.

MAGUS
Not many people know about the trail. If we can get up the cliffside before they see us, they might not know where we've gone.

SOPHOS
Doesn't Eddis begin here? Won't we be on neutral ground?

MAGUS
Only if there are enough Eddisians to insist on it.

The magus slaps his horse with his riding crop, sending it away. The other horses follow.

MAGUS
Get moving.

GEN
Not me.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

What do you mean, not you?

GEN

I'm not going back to prison or the silver mines or some other hole in the ground. I'll take my chances in Attolia.

MAGUS

You think I would take you back to prison?

GEN

You think I would trust you?

MAGUS

The Attolians will kill you just the same, more painfully probably.

GEN

They'll be too busy chasing you.

The magus glances at Pol.

GEN

You don't have time to waste forcing me.

MAGUS

Fine! Go die on the swords of the Attolians. Be drawn, be quartered, be hanged, I don't care. Spend the rest of your life in one of their dungeons. What possible difference would it make to me?

Gen sighs.

GEN

Leave me a sword and I'll do my best to slow them down.

The magus snorts and turns away. The others also turn away, but Sophos turns back and offers his sword, hilt first, to Gen.

SOPHOS

It's not any use to me.

Gen takes the sword by the blunt part just below the hilt and raises it in salute to Sophos who hurries after the magus. Gen climbs a boulder. The rest of the party climbs up

(CONTINUED)

a cliff, Sophos first, then the magus, then Pol, then Ambiadés. Pol and the magus boost Sophos up to the top of the cliff. We see Sophos' face through some boots. He looks up and the guards drag him up.

Far below the cliff, Gen pulls himself onto the top of a boulder. The soldiers that have been pursuing them exit the trees and ride toward the cliff.

At the top of the cliff, Teleus looks over his prisoners.

TELEUS

Where's the thief?

MAGUS

Saving his own skin.

Gen peeks out, then hides again.

SOLDIER

He's planning an ambush.

A soldier raises his crossbow.

HIGH SHOT OF GEN FROM TELEUS' POINT OF VIEW. WE CAN SEE THE MAGUS, TELEUS, AND THE SOLDIER WITH THE CROSSBOW IN THE FOREGROUND AND GEN SMALL IN THE BACKGROUND.

TELEUS

The queen wanted them all alive.

MAGUS

Then don't bother to shoot him.
He'll hide there until you climb
down to arrest him.

TELEUS

He's armed.

Teleus is about to shout a warning when the Magus interjects.

MAGUS

The only thing he can do with a
sword is steal it or sell it.

As the magus speaks, Gen has started to move. Gen jumps onto the shoulders of the second rider from the front.

FIGHT. He and the rider fall to the ground. A hoof comes down inches from Gen's nose. The horse steps on the Attolian. There is much shouting. The magus is astonished.

(CONTINUED)

TELEUS

Not what you expected?

The magus shakes his head. Gen manages to run into the trees with Sophos' sword.

TELEUS

My men will cut him off.

Another group of horsemen cuts off Gen's escape so he turns back to the rocks. Gen reappears from the trees.

AMBIADES

He's done for.

MAGUS

Shut up, Ambiades.

TELEUS

They'll have to dismount to get him.

MAGUS

They won't have any trouble.

FIGHT. Gen turns out to be an amazing swordsman.

POL

(quietly to the magus)

He's Eddisian trained.

We see Gen look down at the sword protruding from his chest.

AMBIADES

Good riddance.

MAGUS

There's nothing to be pleased about.

TELEUS

Yes, there is.

Magus, Pol, and Sophos look at Ambiades. Ambiades looks sick, then pleased with himself.

SOPHOS

(to Ambiades)

You...you sold us out to the Attolians?

High shot with Gen in the background so we can see the sword being pulled out as Ambiades says...

(CONTINUED)

AMBIADES

Now you see--

Ambiades is cut off by Gen's scream. Everyone looks down at Gen. Gen sinks to the ground.

AMBIADES

Good riddance.

They all look at Ambiades for a silent moment, then Pol puts out one hand and shoves Ambiades over the edge of the cliff. Pol then attacks and takes two Attolians with him over the cliff. The magus and Sophos try to fight, but are subdued.

ATTOLIA 2

INT. DAY Teleus reports to Attolia. We still do not see her eyes.

TELEUS

We have them, your majesty.

ATTOLIA

All five of them?

TELEUS

Three, your majesty. Their soldier killed our spy and himself along with two of our soldiers.

ATTOLIA

What a shame. Ambiades was a valuable informant. Where are they being held?

TELEUS

In Profactia, your majesty.

ATTOLIA

Go then. I will follow presently.

TELEUS

My queen.

Teleus bows and exits.

PRISON (ATTOLIAN EDITION)

INT. NIGHT An Attolian prison on a small island in the middle of a river. Guards unlock Gen's cell door and the magus and Sophos enter. The magus and Sophos see Gen's still form lying in the dark.

SOPHOS

Magus?

MAGUS

Yes, I see.

The magus approaches Gen (who is pretending not to hear him), squats down next to him and touches his hand.

MAGUS

He's alive.

The magus squeezes Gen's hand.

MAGUS

(softly)

Gen, can you hear me?

GEN

Go away.

MAGUS

Gen, I owe you an apology. I'm sorry.

Sophos kneels beside Gen.

SOPHOS

How did you get here?

GEN

They had a cart.

The magus snorts, then touches the dried blood on Gen's shirt.

GEN

Don't. Just leave me alone. I'm fine. Go away.

MAGUS

Gen, I think the bleeding has stopped. I've still got my cloak. I'm going to see if I can wrap you in it.

(CONTINUED)

GEN
(not shaking his head)
No, no, no, no.

The magus slides Sophos' folded cloak under Gen's head. Gen's head swims in pain. The magus stands to talk to the guards.

MAGUS
He is badly hurt. We need clean water and bandages.

GUARD
He's not bleeding anymore is he?

MAGUS
No, which is why--

GUARD
Then he doesn't need bandages.

MAGUS
The blood must be washed away with clean water and bound with clean bandages to avoid infection. You can always kill him later, but if he dies, he can't be questioned by anyone but the gods.

The scene fades out.

PRISON ATTOLIA DAY 2

INT. Afternoon. There is some gloomy light. Sophos is hovering around Gen. Gen's shirt has been opened and he is wearing white bandages.

GEN
Where is everyone?

Sophos sits cross-legged by Gen.

SOPHOS
They came an hour ago and took the magus away. Pol and Ambiades are dead. The queen's soldiers were waiting for us at the top of the cliff. Ambiades told them about the trail. (pause) We saw everything. I've never seen someone win against that many men.

(CONTINUED)

GEN
You still haven't.

SOPHOS
No, I suppose not. But you wounded
two of them, and I think you killed
the last one.

Gen closes his eyes; he hadn't intended to kill anyone.

SOPHOS
We thought you were dead. Who
taught you to fight like that?

GEN
My father.

SOPHOS
Was he very angry when you turned
out to be a thief?

GEN
Yes. But he's used to it now.

SOPHOS
You should have been a soldier. You
were better than Ambiades ever was.
I think that's why he said, 'good
riddance,' again, and that's when
Pol--

Sophos pauses; he is crying.

SOPHOS
Ambiades didn't care. I mean, we
could see that he didn't care that
you were dead. I don't think that
he cared about anything anymore,
not about me or the magus or Pol.
And Pol--

Sophos pulls his knees to his chest and rocks back and forth
crying. Gen puts a hand on Sophos' leg.

SOPHOS
I've known Pol my entire life. I
don't want him to be dead. He has a
wife, and he has two children, and
I am going to have to tell them.

Gen closes his eyes again.

SOPHOS

Gen? Are you still awake?

GEN

Yes.

SOPHOS

The magus said that the bleeding stopped and that you would probably be all right. As long as you didn't get a fever.

GEN

That's good to know.

The magus returns to the cell.

MAGUS

Gen, how do you feel?

GEN

(lying)

Oh, fine.

The magus holds his hand to Gen's forehead.

MAGUS

I was talking with the captain of the Queen's Guard. Evidently Her Majesty is on her way to hear our story for herself. We are in a slightly difficult position.

Gen rolls his eyes.

MAGUS

I'm afraid that Ambiades was our only reliable means of convincing the Attolians that Hamiathes' Gift was lost. You know what happened to Ambiades?

GEN

Sophos told me.

MAGUS

His father's money must have run out, and he decided he'd rather be a wealthy traitor than an impoverished apprentice. Whenever we moved too quickly, Ambiades was careful to slow us down. I owe you many apologies.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

They are all accepted.

MAGUS

Attolia's soldiers have been to the temple in the dystopia.

Gen swivels his head to look at the magus.

MAGUS

The temple was completely destroyed. The Aracthus had broken through the roof and washed away most of the walls. There were still signs that there had been some sort of man-made construction at the site, but that was all.

GEN

When?

MAGUS

I can't be sure, but not more than a day or two after we left.

Gen blinks away tears.

MAGUS

Gen, it was an old temple. It would have happened sooner or later. All things man has made are eventually destroyed. I wish, though, that I had gone in with you. I'll always wonder what you saw.

The magus waits for Gen to speak. Gen is silent.

MAGUS

Won't tell me or can't?

GEN

Can't. Not that I would anyway.

The magus laughs and checks Gen's forehead for a fever. A guard comes and takes the magus to talk to Attolia.

MAGUS

I'll do what I can for you.

ATTOLIA TALKS TO GEN. GEN PUTS HIS FOOT IN HIS MOUTH...AGAIN.

INT. NIGHT The stunningly beautiful queen of Attolia arrives in the dungeon flanked by the magus and Teleus. She is tall with dark hair and is dressed in a red peplos in imitation of the Great Goddess Hephestia.

ATTOLIA

The magus of Sounis informs me that you are a thief of unsurpassed skills.

GEN

I am.

ATTOLIA

He suggests, however, that your loyalty to your own country is not strong.

Gen winces.

GEN

I have no particular loyalty to the King of Sounis, Your majesty.

ATTOLIA

How fortunate for you. I don't believe he holds you in high regard.

GEN

No, Your Majesty. He probably doesn't.

ATTOLIA

Then there's nothing to prevent you from remaining in Attolia to be my thief.

Gen looks at the magus.

GEN

Uh, there is one thing, Your Majesty.

ATTOLIA

(astonished)

What would that be?

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I have a sweetheart. Your Majesty,
I've promised to return to her.

The queen is amused. The magus is consternated.

ATTOLIA

You are promised to someone?

GEN

I am, Your Majesty.

ATTOLIA

And you will not break your
promise?

GEN

I couldn't, Your Majesty.

ATTOLIA

Surely I am a better mistress to
serve?

GEN

You are more beautiful, Your
Majesty. But she is more kind.

Attolia smiles thinly, acknowledging the burn. Gen smiles
back bitterly.

ATTOLIA

Take him upstairs and fetch a
doctor. We will give him an
opportunity to change his mind.

Attolia exits. Her peplos brushes across Gen's hand. He
winces.

RAVING - DREAM

Gen thrashes about in a fevered dream. Half images of Eddis
and Gen's father fade in and out. Images of Moira and
Eugenides fade in from darkness. Gen relives the moment
where he kills the soldier.

Moira appears and sits by Gen's bed.

MOIRA

You aren't dying.

(CONTINUED)

GEN
I wish I were.

Moira vanishes as Eugenides, god of thieves, steps out of the darkness.

EUGENIDES
(referring to the soldier Gen killed)
Lives are things to be stolen sometimes, just like any possession. Would you prefer to be dead yourself?

GEN
I would.

EUGENIDES
What then would become of your plans for fame and your name carved in stone? And would you leave your companions to die as well?

GEN
(sigh)
If only I could have died when the soldier pulled the sword out, I wouldn't be bothered by my conscience.

Long silence. Gen closes his eyes or looks at the wall.

EUGENIDES
(as if from a distance)
His wife died in the winter. His three children live with their aunt in Eia.

Eugenides fades out.

ESCAPE

INT. NIGHT The cell door opens. Neither the magus nor Sophos can see Gen because the lamps in the hallway are out.

GEN
It's me. Sophos, do you still have your overshirt on?

SOPHOS
Why?

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I want you to give it to me.

SOPHOS

Why?

GEN

Because all I'm wearing is bandages. They took my clothes.

Sophos gives his overshirt to Gen.

SOPHOS

Do you want my shoes, too?

GEN

No, I'm better off barefoot.

MAGUS

Gen, you shouldn't do this.

GEN

Get dressed?

MAGUS

You know what I mean. I thank you for opening the door, but the best thing you can do now is forget all about us. Climb back up where you came from and pretend you never left your bed.

GEN

And how will you get yourselves the rest of the way out of here? Through the front door?

MAGUS

We'll manage.

GEN

(derisively)

You will not.

MAGUS

If we're caught, we can claim that we bribed a guard.

GEN

We should get moving.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Gen, it's only been two days. Three since we were arrested. You can't manage.

GEN

I think that I am more of an asset than a liability.

MAGUS

Gen, that's not what I meant. Gen, we can't ask you to risk yourself again.

GEN

This is a change from your earlier position.

MAGUS

I was wrong before.

GEN

You're wrong now, too.

MAGUS

Gen, the queen of Attolia doesn't bear you any ill will.

GEN

I think she does.

MAGUS

All she wants from you is a promise of your service.

GEN

Well, she isn't going to get it. Can we stop discussing this just now?

Gen moves away, stepping gingerly and favoring his bad shoulder. The magus and Sophos follow.

SOPHOS

How did you get the keys? Where are the guards? And why are all the lanterns out?

GEN

(sigh)

I didn't get the keys. They took my clothes and probably burnt them. They left my lock openers and the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEN (cont'd)
other things from my pockets on a
table in my room.

They come to a corner and Gen reaches back to take Sophos' hand.

GEN
(whispers)
Be quiet and try not to pull on me.

SOPHOS
What about the guards, and the
lanterns?

GEN
The guards are at the end of the
corridor guarding a deck of cards,
and the lanterns are out because I
blew them out. This way, when they
hear us chatting like happy
sparrows in our nest, they won't
immediately be able to find us.

SOPHOS
But where are we going?

GEN
Would you shut up?

Gen bumps a wall and squeezes Sophos' hand in pain.

GEN
(whispers)
Hold on.

Gen picks the lock and pulls the door open. It rumbles, but does not squeak.

GEN
(to the magus)
Don't bang your head.

The magus ducks as they walk down a narrow tunnel and open a door that leads to a thin stone ledge on the outside of the building.

SOPHOS
What is this?

MAGUS
It's the Seperchia. Remember this
stronghold sits in the middle of
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS (cont'd)
the river and defends the bridge to
either side.

SOPHOS
I meant, what is this?

Sophos stamps his foot on the stone under him.

GEN
This is a ledge that runs around
the entire castle so that they can
maintain the foundation. We're
going to follow it to the bridge
into town. Keep your voices down.
There are guards.

SOPHOS
Why is there a door?

A short pause.

MAGUS
They dispose of bodies by throwing
them in the river.

SOPHOS
Oh.

MAGUS
Sometimes the guards will sell a
body back to the family if they
wait here in a boat.

They creep around the edge, Gen in front, the magus in the
middle, Sophos in the rear. They sneak across a bridge to
the mainland.

ESCAPE THROUGH TOWN

EXT. NIGHT There is no moon and no light from the houses.
Gen, Sophos, and the magus pick their way through the city
with difficulty. Some dogs bark as they pass by. They come
to a bridge, but do not cross it.

GEN
We stay on this side.

They continue slowly.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS
Gen, how are you?

GEN
Good enough.

The moon comes out and they move somewhat faster. They make their way out of town and follow the river.

SOPHOS
It's very dark.

MAGUS
Yes, it is.

SOPHOS
Do you think anyone heard the dog?

MAGUS
No, no one came out of the houses.

SOPHOS
Do you think the soldiers will follow us?

MAGUS
Undoubtedly.

SOPHOS
Do you think--

MAGUS
I think it might be best to keep quiet.

They go around a bend in the river and settle down to rest and sleep.

RIVER RUN

EXT. Early Morning. Gen awakes before sunrise. Sophos is still curled up asleep. The magus is looking at the river.

GEN
(calls)
Magus!

The magus turns bleakly.

GEN
What's the matter?

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

The river is running the wrong way.

Gen's heart nearly stops because he assumes the river has actually changed its course. The magus sits down and puts his head in his hands.

MAGUS

I lost my sense of direction in the town. We haven't been following the river downstream toward the pass. We've been going upstream. I have no idea where we are.

SOPHOS

What's the matter?

MAGUS

We're going the wrong way. There might be no bridges at all before we get trapped against the mountain.

SOPHOS

So what do we do?

GEN

We keep going. We can't go back without running into a search party.

SOPHOS

Do you really think that they'll search for us? Won't beheading us start a war?

GEN

She might let you two go to avoid a war or to delay one until she's ready.

SOPHOS

What about you?

GEN

No one's going to start a war over me.

They continue walking upstream pursued by Attolian soldiers on horseback.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

Gen? If you could be anywhere you wanted right now, where would it be?

GEN

In bed. In a big bed, with a carved foot-board, in a warm room with a lot of windows. And sheets as nice as the ones they sell on the Sacred Way. And a fireplace. And books.

SOPHOS

Books?

GEN

Books. Lots of books. Where would you be?

SOPHOS

Under the apricot tree in my mother's garden at the villa. I'd be watching my little sisters play, and anytime I wanted one, I'd reach up and pick another apricot.

GEN

They aren't ripe this time of year.

SOPHOS

Well, say you can be any place any time you like. Where would you be, magus?

Long pause.

MAGUS

I'd be in the main temple.

GEN

Urgh.

MAGUS

Watching the marriage of Sounis and Eddis.

GEN

Why are you so keen on this marriage?

MAGUS

The king needs an heir, and that heir needs to inherit Eddis as well as Sounis.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

He does have a nephew.

MAGUS

I'm sorry, of course he has an heir, but he needs a son of his own for the throne to be secure. Which means he needs a wife.

GEN

And why should his heir be entitled to Eddis?

MAGUS

Entitled not just to Eddis, but to Attolia as well. You would have no way of knowing, Gen, but these three countries are free only by a rare combination of circumstances. We could only drive out the invaders because they were busy fighting the Medes. While the Medes fight other empires, we are free. But when they are done, Sounis, Eddis, and Attolia must be united to oppose them or there will be no Sounis, no Attolia, no Eddis, only Mede.

GEN

You're sure the Medes will win?

MAGUS

I'm sure.

They come to a rise in the path with a large rock.

MAGUS

Sophos, can you climb this to see if anyone is following us?

Sophos climbs the rock.

MAGUS AND GEN

Do you see anyone?

SOPHOS

No.

GEN

Wait, do you see any dust?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHOS

You mean, in the air? Yes, there's a cloud.

GEN

That's horses on the road.

MAGUS

Agreed.

Sophos climbs down. They try to hurry. Gen trips and hits the ground.

MAGUS

Gen? Gen, don't faint. We'll leave the path and try to hide somewhere in the rocks. They may go past.

GEN

No. There's a bridge.

The magus looks over his shoulder and sees a makeshift bridge.

MAGUS

Do you think we can get across?

GEN

Yes.

MAGUS

Sophos, you go first. Then I'll help Gen across.

GEN

No.

SOPHOS

Should I try to walk?

GEN

No! Crawl across, and keep your feet out of the water.

Sophos crosses the log to a small island in the middle of the river.

MAGUS

We'll go together, Gen.

GEN

No.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

Gen, I won't leave you again.

GEN

I can manage. I promise.

Sophos starts to cross the second bridge made of small tree branches and debris. The magus carefully crawls across the log. As soon as he reaches the island, Gen walks across the log with ease. The search party reaches the bridge. The magus and Gen dislodge the log as a man who started to cross jumps back to safety.

GEN

Go.

The magus crosses the second bridge. Gen follows. The search party starts firing their guns. Gen points to a rope tangled in the second bridge.

GEN

(shouting over the river
noise)

Can you reach the rope?

The magus nods and reaches out to grasp the rope. He pulls and the bridge gives way. A bullet hits a rock near the magus. He slips towards the river. Sophos and Gen grab him and pull him up the bank of the river. They retreat behind some large rocks. Gen's cheek is bleeding.

MAGUS

They've taken a divot out of your
face, I'm afraid.

GEN

All my beauty gone.

MAGUS

It might heal clean.

Gen feels the feather-shaped divot.

GEN

I don't think so. We should keep
moving.

They continue moving upriver.

EDDISIAN BORDER

EXT. NIGHT Gen, Sophos, and the magus continue upstream. They cross a stone bridge which is the Eddisian border and walk straight into a group of Eddisian soldiers. There is a squat tower by an open gate. Soldiers sit around three fires in front of the gate playing dice and sleeping. Two guards sit on the stone pilings at the end of the bridge. When the two guards finally notice the bedraggled trio, they stare, then smirk. One stands and plants his spear looking suddenly official and another runs off to get the captain. The soldiers around the fires don't even look up. Gen leans on Sophos and the magus supports them both. The captain comes and looks them over and shakes his head.

EDDISIAN CAPTAIN

(to the magus)

Welcome to Eddis. (to his lieutenant) Get horses and four or five guards to take them. This is not for us to figure out. (to the two guards) Get up on the bridge where you belong.

The two guards scramble up to their positions and look out over Attolia.

EDDISIAN CAPTAIN

You three can follow me.

The soldiers around the fire begin to take notice. They stop relaxing and become professionals, eager and suspicious.

EDDISIAN GUARD

Horses, Captain!

MAGUS

That will be the Attolian guard.

EDDISIAN CAPTAIN

(to lieutenant)

I'll deal with them. You take care of these.

The Eddisian Captain gestures in disgust toward the three, then tramps away signaling more guards to attend him. A soldier removes Sophos from Gen and swings him onto a horse. Someone starts to do the same to Gen, but Gen sags to his knees.

SOPHOS

Stop! Don't do that!

(CONTINUED)

Sophos tries to get down from his horse, but is held back. The man holding Gen's arm looks at his face.

EDDISIAN GUARD

Can we get a blanket?

Another guard brings one from by a fire and they wrap Gen in it and lift him gently into the arms of the lieutenant who is mounted on a horse. Gen drifts in and out of consciousness as the group rides up into the mountains through the stone pathway carved by a river.

EDDISIAN WELCOME

It is still dark when the party arrives at the royal court. Everyone dismounts. Sophos tucks himself back under Gen's good shoulder and the magus walks beside them. People mill about in the courtyard a bit before they head into the marble entrance hall. The noise attracts more onlookers who give the trio a wide berth as the whole mass moves toward the brightly lit throne room. There is a group of women talking and playing chess at the raised hearth. The queen of Eddis stands.

EDDIS

Lieutenant, an explanation please.

The lieutenant cannot hear her over the hubbub and shrugs apologetically. She raises one hand and the crowd falls silent. The soldiers around the trio step hastily aside.

Eddis sees Gen and drops her hand.

EDDIS

Oh. It's you, Eugenides.

Sophos is shocked. The magus is not.

GEN

(whispers to Sophos)
Down the steps.

Supported by Sophos, Gen crosses the room to Eddis while the crowd backs away. Gen reaches under his braid and pulls free Hamiathes' Gift. The magus' mouth drops open.

MAGUS

(under his breath)
Gen, you viper.

Gen gives the stone to Eddis and faints.

CAMERA TILTS AND BLURS TO BLACKOUT

HOME

INT. DAY Gen awakes in his own bed and looks around his room. He appreciates his soft sheets, his carved footboard, and his view of the sacred mountains out his window. Through an open doorway that leads to the library, he hears the magus, Eddis, and Eddis' Minister of War talking.

MAGUS

When he couldn't find the stone in our possession, I believe he decided to make a reputation for himself, not just as a thief but as a Sounisian one. He mentioned an Eddisian mother in the forged court records to explain his dark coloring and any trace of an accent that he couldn't hide. He could only have hoped that it would occur to me that I needed a proficient but anonymous thief whose absence from the city wouldn't be noticed. I don't know how he would have gotten out of the prison on his own. It seems a foolhardy plan to have relied on my intervention.

EDDIS

He is a master of foolhardy plans. He considers them professional risks.

MAGUS

He could have followed us and stolen the Gift once it was located.

The Minister of War snorts.

MINISTER OF WAR

Not if he had to follow you on a horse.

Eddis laughs.

MAGUS

He does have other skills to be proud of. He showed himself to be quite the swordsman against Attolia's Guard.

The Minister of War snorts in praise.

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

I've been told that his father wanted him to be a soldier. I'd be happy to inform his father that he has a son to be proud of.

Gen unsuccessfully stifles a snort/laugh.

MAGUS

Oh, you... Of course, forgive me. I forgot your relation.

The Minister of War, Gen's father, enters Gen's room.

MINISTER OF WAR

I thought I heard you laughing up your sleeve.

Gen holds his uninjured arm up to show that there is nothing up his sleeve.

MINISTER OF WAR

I'll come by later.

He nods once in approval, then leaves. The magus enters, followed by Sophos.

MAGUS

I'm glad to see you looking better. I've decided not to give you the satisfaction of gnashing my teeth.

Gen laughs while the magus looks for a seat.

GEN

(speaking in his native Eddisian accent)

That one is most comfortable.

The magus sits down.

GEN

I'll probably have to burn it.

MAGUS

Oh, no. I've had days to get clean.

GEN

Days? (to Sophos) Push the books off the window seat and sit there. Has it really been days?

(CONTINUED)

MAGUS

It has.

GEN

What have I missed?

MAGUS

Not much. An emissary from the queen of Attolia, a few from Sounis.

GEN

What did they say?

The magus shrugs.

GEN

Tell me or I'll get up and strangle you with one hand.

MAGUS

Oh, I believe that Attolia sends best wishes that the Queen's Thief is well and hopes that she will have a chance to entertain him for a longer period sometime in the future.

Gen grimaces.

SOPHOS

She knew who you were?

GEN

She must have strongly suspected. We'd only met very briefly, but she knows my reputation better than you did.

MAGUS

She'll be plotting an elaborate revenge.

GEN

And you?

MAGUS

Am I plotting an elaborate revenge? No, I haven't been able to think of anything adequate.

Gen laughs.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

I meant, did you suspect?

The magus sighs.

MAGUS

No, not at all, at least not until you were able to make a bridge appear across the Seperchia. I wasn't certain until the captain welcomed me to Eddis--as if you belonged there and had brought Sophos and me as guests. That other bridge, did you know it would be there?

GEN

I go down every year after the floods have dropped and lodge a tree trunk there.

MAGUS

To think that I once beat the Queen's Thief with a horse crop.

GEN

Unfortunately, beating the Queen's Thief is not a rare honor.

MAGUS

Oh? Is everyone on the mountain as skilled as you are with a sword?

GEN

Ah, but I don't use a sword. I hadn't held a sword in two years, ever since I tore up my enrollment papers in the Eddisian Guard and swore not to take a sword by the hilt unless my life was in danger.

MAGUS

Ah. (pause)

SOPHOS

Gen-

GEN

No, not Gen. Eugenides from now on. I never, never want to hear Gen again in my life.

The magus laughs.

GEN

You haven't spent any time in the king's prison. And you haven't had to drink your way through every disreputable wineshop in the city of Sounis. I cannot tell you how sick I have been of cheap wine and of being dirty. Of talking with my mouth half closed and chewing with it open. Of having *bugs* in my hair and being surrounded by people who think Archimedes was the man at the circus last year who could balance four olives on his nose.

MAGUS

I remember that Archimedes. I think it was five olives.

GEN

I don't care if it was twelve.

The magus picks up a book, the second volume of Archimedes.

MAGUS

You should have a few more modern writers. Eddis has been isolated for too long. I'll send a few volumes with the next diplomatic party. (pause) You're tired. We'll go.

GEN

Wait. You haven't told me what Sounis said in his messages.

MAGUS

You'll have to ask your queen that.

Gen follows the magus' gaze to the door in which stands the queen of Eddis. The Gift hangs from a gold torque around her neck.

MAGUS

Forgive me, your majesty, for wandering away in the middle of our conversation.

The queen waves his apology aside, sits on Gen's bed and squeezes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIS

I think you need more rest.

GEN

First, I need to know what the emissaries from Sounis said.

EDDIS

Eugenides, you're tired.

GEN

I'll get up and find someone else to tell me.

EDDIS

The king of Sounis requested any information we had on the whereabouts and well-being of his magus and his heir.

GEN

The magus' heir?

EDDIS

The king's heir.

GEN

(to Sophos)

Your father the duke is also the king's brother?

SOPHOS

You didn't know?

GEN

I did not.

Eddis laughs.

EDDIS

With one move you have secured my throne *and* brought me the heir of my enemy. The court is greatly impressed. I believe I will extract a few concessions from Sounis before I send his nephew home.

Eddis smiles at Sophos who blushes and smiles back.

EDDIS

But now it is time to go. You need to be awake for the ceremony tonight.

She kisses Gen's forehead and leaves.

CEREMONY

INT.DAY An official ceremony to make Eddis Queen by Possession of Hamiathes' Gift. Gen struggles into fancy clothes and wanders through the ceremony. Gen returns to bed.

EDDIS AND MOIRA

INT. NIGHT Moira appears in Eddis' bedchamber.

MOIRA
Eddis.

EDDIS
Who's there?

MOIRA
Helen, you know who I am.

EDDIS
Moira.

MOIRA
You have the Gift.

EDDIS
Yes.

MOIRA
Will you keep it?

EDDIS
If I must.

MOIRA
It has served its purpose. It no longer has a place in this world.

EDDIS
You expect me to destroy it?

MOIRA
I expect you to return it. Take witnesses from Sounis and Attolia and bring the stone to the Sacred Mountain.

Moira vanishes.

MY QUEEN/MY THIEF

INT. DAY Gen is in bed. Gen's father enters.

MINISTER OF WAR

Sophos has spent his days here explaining to each of your cousins that your vow to never handle a sword has been respectfully retired.

GEN

People keep telling me that I've grown to look like you.

MINISTER OF WAR

Huh.

Eddis enters, still wearing the Gift.

EDDIS

The resemblance is all in the way you both hunch over and then deny that you're in pain.

GEN

My shoulder really doesn't bother me anymore. There's no reason for me to still be in bed.

Eddis laughs.

EDDIS

That's not what the physician says. You will stay in bed.

Pause.

GEN

Will you go on wearing it?

EDDIS

I couldn't stand it, I think.

GEN

Where will you put it when you take it off?

EDDIS

I'm going to take it up to the sacred mountain and throw it into Hephestia's fire.

(CONTINUED)

GEN

You'll destroy it?

EDDIS

Yes. When it is gone, Eddis' throne will descend in the same way as the thrones of other countries. Moira told me.

Gen nods.

EDDIS

It wasn't meant to go on forever and ever. It doesn't belong in this world.

GEN

In a hundred years, no one will believe it was real.

EDDIS

But you'll still be famous.

GEN

Oh, I don't know.

EDDIS

Yes, you will. (pause) Eugenides...

GEN

Yes? Stop biting your lip, and say it.

EDDIS

Thank you, thief.

GEN

You're welcome, my queen.

The End