

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

"The Dungeon at the Heart of Dawn"

MP #400-26

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DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS**"The Dungeon at the Heart of Dawn"**

FADE IN TO:

BLACK. O.S. running footsteps approach, clattering on stone.

BOBBY (ECHOING VO)

When Dungeon Master said "Tower of
of Darkness," he wasn't kidding. I
can't see a thing!

UNI (ECHOING VO)

(YELP!)

BOBBY (ECHOING VO)

Sorry, Uni . . .

ERIC (ECHOING VO)

Would ya quit foolin' around and
knock open this door?

Enormous stone blocks EXPLODE AWAY FROM CAMERA, revealing we are
INSIDE a very dark TEMPLE. BOBBY (following-thru on his club
swing), ERIC (cradling a heavy, black box in his arms) and UNI are
framed in the harsh light from an enormous, jagged hole that Bobby
has just smashed in a ten foot thick stone-block wall. (Outside
slump the eroded ruins of an ancient desert city.) Eric steps
outside, peeks around the edge of the hole.

REVERSE - EXT. STONE WALL

Eric is scowling at a gigantic closed DOOR---right next to Bobby's
CRUMBLING hole. Bobby happily pats the box in Eric's arms.

BOBBY

Allright Eric! You got it!

ERIC

Yeah, I got it---

Comes a CRACK of snapping rock, and Eric looks up fearfully at the
top of the hole. He dodges a falling stream of rocks and dust.

ERIC (CONT, scared)

---and we're gonna get it,
you musclebound pipsqueak!

He runs past Bobby as we BEGIN PULLING-AND-CUTTING BACK, revealing
hole and door are just tiny blotches in an enormous stone wall.
Cracks are shooting outward from the hole, snaking through the wall.
Big stone blocks begin falling.

ERIC (CONT)

I SAID "OPEN THE DOOR," NOT BUST
TH' WHOLE JOINT TO SMITHEREENS!

CONTINUE PULLING-AND-CUTTING BACK, revealing the stone wall is only the bottom of an immense ANCIENT TEMPLE, the "TOWER OF DARKNESS." Snaking cracks are splintering the whole shebang.

BOBBY

Well exCUUUUUUse ME, but I
couldn't see! Whatta ya think
I got in my helmet, radar??

PULL-AND-CUT-BACK STOPS ON: FULL SHOT TOWER OF DARKNESS - DAY

an unadorned, sleek, almost monolithic TEMPLE COMPLEX 1500 feet high, slowly CRASHING into itself like a dynamited highrise! (Around it spreads a vast, ancient RUINED CITY.)

ERIC (VO, hollering back)

IT SURE ISN'T BRAINS!

THE KIDS' CAMP - OUTSKIRTS OF CITY

sheltered behind the waist-high, eroded sandstone walls of a ruined structure. (HANK is asleep, head cuddled against the shoulder of an awakening, stretching SHEILA. PRESTO squats before a fire, roasting an unidentifiable blob of food on a stick. DIANA in F.G. lounges with chin in hand, idly watching the temple fall.)

DIANA

(sighs) Stand back, guys---
here comes the Charge of the
Fight Brigade!

LOW ANGLE ON ERIC

galumphing TOWARD CAMERA, the heavy box on one shoulder and giant stones bouncing from his upraised magic shield.

BOBBY (VO)

Just whatta ya mean, "brains?"

Eric runs PAST CAMERA, revealing Bobby and Uni angrily striding (not running) behind, ignoring the avalanche, glaring at the o.s. Eric. Bobby occasionally bats truck-size falling blocks aside with casual wrist-flips of his club.

BOBBY (CONT, angrily)

Y'shouldn't talk about whatcha don't got!
And DON'T CALL ME A PIPSQUEAK!

UNI

YEAH! (short, sharp raspberry)

The temple finishes collapsing behind them---almost. Bobby is NEARING CAMERA when an immense stone block . . .

BOBBY

That's tellin'im, Uni.

. . . **THUDS** into frame, filling the foreground. We can't tell if Bobby and Uni are behind it or under it!

SHEILA, HANK AND PRESTO

(As Presto disgustedly sniffs at the black, smoking gunk at the end of his stick, Eric waddles into camp lugging the heavy box.)

ON THE CUT Sheila leaps to her feet (sending Hank sprawling) and lunges TOWARD CAMERA in horror, hands pressed to her mouth.

SHEILA

(gasp!) BOBBY?!

FRONT OF BLOCK (SHEILA'S POV)

Comes the SLAM of Bobby's club o.s. A beat---then a vertical crack shoots up the stone. The two halves fall to either side. Bobby and Uni step forward between them, unharmed and unconcerned.

BOBBY

Yeah, what . . .

FULL SHOT - THE CAMP - (SLOW TRUCK IN)

Eric hefts the heavy box onto a waist-high rock near Presto, as Bobby and Uni trudge in to join Sheila. The Barbarian wearily plunks down on a block of stone. (While Hank climbs to his feet and stretches, Presto plucks the black lump from the stick, makes an "ick!" face at it and tosses it over his shoulder. It lands at Uni's feet. She sniffs it, reacts happily, looks left and right to make sure nobody's watching, then engulfs it in one CHOMP.)

ERIC

You can come over here'n knock this lock off, that's what. I want to see what's inside!

BOBBY

Nothin' doin'. Dungeon Master told us to bring him that Box of Balefire. Also said not to open it, right?

CLOSER - FAVORING UNI

Beyond, Eric picks up a crowbar-size stick, inserts one end in the box's lock as if about to pry the latch open.

UNI (mouth full)

Yeah!---(urp!)

ERIC

Aww, what can one li'l peekie-weekie hurt? How 'bout it, Hank---

ON THE GROUP - HANK IN FOREGROUND

sleepily scratching his tousled hair.

ERIC (CONT VO)

---you're the leader . . .

HANK (wearily)

Leader? (snorts) Gimme a break.

Hank wearily walks o.s., waving a hand in Eric's direction.

HANK (CONT)

I don't care, Eric. Do whatever y'want . . .

Eric snaps to attention, gives a comically exaggerated salute.

ERIC (SNAPPY SALUTE)

Yes SIR Mister Ranger SIR! (giggles)

CLOSE ON ERIC AND BOX

He wrenches down hard on the stick; the lock SNAPS off. TRUCK IN as he puts his hands on the lid, but looks up in shock at the voice of:

DUNGEON MASTER (VO, sharply)

STOP!

ANGLE PAST FOREGROUND GROUP TO DUNGEON MASTER

walking slowly down a hill of eroded sandstone ruins twenty yards from the kids, walking carefully with arms outstretched, walking as if he is approaching a ticking bomb.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT, warning)

Now move away from it . . . SLOWLY . . .

ERIC AND BOX

Eric acts as he he's been caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

ERIC (nervous embarrassment)

Th-this isn't what it looks like,
Dungeon Master, we were just---

He looks down in shock at a DEEP DEMONIC ROAR echoing from the box!

MED SHOT - DUNGEON MASTER

Lunging TOWARD CAMERA in horror!

DUNGEON MASTER (shouts)
Quickly! The lock!

ERIC AND BOX IN FOREGROUND

with Bobby, Uni and Sheila slowly, fearfully stepping back in BG. Eric fumbles in the sand for the broken lock, finds it.

CLOSE ON BOX

A DEEPLY RUMBLING, BREATHING SOUND comes from the box. Eric's trembling hands enter scene with the lock. But with a ROAR the lid slams open and a bright column of light erupts from the box!

VERY QUICK SCENE - ERIC

brightly edge-lit, flying back as if from an o.s. explosion!

QUICK SCENE - FULL SHOT CAMP (DUNGEON MASTER NOT VISIBLE)

The kids are staggering back, shielding eyes with their arms. A vertical column of intensely bright light is shooting up from the box like a thick, white laser, SCREAMING like a living beast.

FULL SHOT RUINED CITY

The beam of light pierces the sky. In the foreground, SHADOWDEMON watches from the cover of a ruined wall. He floats backward in a hesitant, horrified motion, then turns and races o.s.

CU BOX

ON THE CUT Dungeon Master's hands SLAM the lid closed, cutting off the light-beam, then snap the lock onto the latch. TILT PAN to his grim face. A beat---then he looks sternly o.s. toward:

ERIC (DUNGEON MASTER IN EXTREME FOREGROUND)

Eric is being helped to his feet by Presto.

ERIC (horrified)
Wh . . . what was THAT?!

DOWNSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER AND BOX

as Hank enters scene next to him.

DUNGEON MASTER (almost a whisper)
It was a . . . a messenger. My
pupils, you have let loose a
signal---to a being more powerful
than any you have faced before . . .

DM and Hank look up at the sky as a HEAVY SHADOW sweeps into scene.

UPSHOT PAST RUINED, ERODED STATUE - THE SKY

A sheet of black clouds is hurtling low overhead. From nowhere comes the hair-raising sound of a BASS DEMONIC MOAN.

DOWNSHOT - MED DUNGEON MASTER - (SLOW TRUCK IN)

looking at the sky; the ground behind him darkening almost to black.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)

. . . and now he knows we are here.

MATCH CUT TO:

UPSHOT - MED VENGER (INT. DARK THRONE ROOM)

Venger slowly leans down into camera, eyes widening in astonishment.

VENGER (icy cold)

Impossible!

PROFILE - VENGER AND SHADOWDEMON

Venger slowly advances on the hapless Shadowdemon, backing him up.

SHADOWDEMON

But true, Venger! They stole the
Box of Balefire!

OTS DOWNSHOT PAST VENGER

Slowly back Shadowdemon up to and through a low stone altar.

VENGER (CONT)

Quickly! It must be returned---
before he finds out!

SHADOWDEMON

Master, I---cannot. The pupils of Dungeon
Master, they . . . they opened the box!

SIDE ANGLE - STONE ALTAR

Venger places his hands on it, pushes back in shock!

VENGER

WHAT?!

FULL SHOT - INT. THRONE ROOM

A wide, low-ceilinged maze of black, monolithic stone-sculpture, shuddering to a blast of o.s. THUNDER! Small streams of dusty rocks clatter down. Venger reacts, lurches back from Shadowdemon.

HIGH ANGLE - EXT VENGER'S CASTLE - DAY

TRUCKING IN on the towers of a sleek, black, almost monolithic structure that seems to have sprouted from the obsidian cliffs on which it is perched. Two thousand feet below, ancient rivers meander across vast plains. As the tiny figure of Venger steps out onto the highest parapet, a dark sheet of black clouds sweeps with astonishing speed from horizon, across plains and toward castle.

UPSHOT - 3/4 REAR VENGER

and the roiling black cloudsheet thundering past, covering the sky.

VENGER

It is too late---he is returning!

CLOSE - VENGER AND SHADOWDEMON

Venger turns close to Shadowdemon, slowly raises a clenched fist.

VENGER (CONT)

No matter what happens, I will survive to see those accursed children punished!

CLOSE - VENGER'S HAND

opens. Crackling flames within it forms into tiny, flickering silhouette-images of our kids.

VENGER (CONT VO)

I will . . . crush them!

---as he clenches his fist over the flame-images, squeezing them between his fingers. The images rear back in poses of fear---

THE KIDS (NOT HANK AND BOBBY) (VO)

(tinny cries of alarm)

---and we MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RUINS - SHEILA, DIANA, PRESTO, ERIC, UNI

cringing away from flickering o.s. explosions, arms shielding eyes as they stagger back in the face of a HOWLING WIND AND FLYING DEBRIS.

THE KIDS (NOT HANK AND BOBBY) (CONT)

(cries of alarm) Hey, watchit!

Whatcha doing? Take it easy, Hank!

REVERSE - HANK, DUNGEON MASTER AND BOBBY

the box between them, eyes shielded from the fierce light, as Hank's flame arrows blast a crevasse at the bottom of a high block wall. Smoke, dirt and rocks are whipped away in the same wind that wildly tears at Dungeon Master's robes. Hank stops shooting, steps back.

DUNGEON MASTER (over wind)
All right---quickly, now!

FULL SHOT GROUP - POV FROM ACROSS FOREGROUND CREVASSE

Eric plows forward against the hurricane wind, shielding face with arm, as Bobby and Hank lift the heavy black box---

ERIC (over wind)
I thought only crooks buried the evidence!

BOBBY (over wind)
If the shoe fits, wear it---like in your mouth?

DUNGEON MASTER (over wind)
Pupils---HURRY!

---and heave it into the crevasse.

ANOTHER ANGLE - DUNGEON MASTER IN FOREGROUND

anxiously scanning the sky for a beat. Hank and Bobby stagger back from the crevasse, buffeted by the incredible wind. Dungeon Master urgently gestures to Bobby.

DUNGEON MASTER (over wind)
Quickly, Barbarian! Cover it!
The rest of you, follow me!

Bobby frowns at Dungeon Master, then turns to face the crevasse. He rears back with his club. TRUCK IN as he SLAMS the ground near the lip of the chasm. The impact heaves the ground like an earthquake.

UPSHOT FROM INSIDE CREVASSE - THE STONE WALL

teetering and crumbling, then avalanching down into camera, covering the scene with black. There is a LONG BEAT OF COMPLETE SILENCE.

CUT TO:

BLOOD-RED EXTREME CLOSE-UP

of Eric's cape, and THUNDERING HOWL of hurricane wind. PULL BACK as Eric stumbles AWAY FROM CAM, revealing he's last in the line of kids DM is leading away from the valley of ruins, toward BG hills.

ERIC (over wind, angrily)
Hold it right there, short stuff!

BOBBY AND DUNGEON MASTER

staggering against the wind, heading away from camera. Bobby turns.

ERIC (VO) (over wind)
Not you, the other one!

Dungeon Master stops, as Eric charges into scene FROM BEHIND CAMERA.

ERIC (CONT, over wind)
This stupid safari's not taking another
step, until you tell us what's going on!

CLOSE ANGLE - DUNGEON MASTER AND ERIC

Dungeon Master turns abruptly, looks up grimly at the towering Eric.

DUNGEON MASTER (quietly)
We are running, Cavalier---for our lives.

He turns to leave. Eric leans forward, grabs Dungeon Master's
shoulders and turns him around.

ERIC
From what?!

OTS PAST DM - UPSHOT TO ERIC

Behind him Sheila and Presto stagger into scene, cape and hair
wildly whipping. Above them the roiling sheet of black clouds
shoots along at insane speed. Eric looks at his hands gripping DM's
shoulders. He lets go, gives DM a pleading look.

ERIC (CONT)
C'monnnn, this a joke, right? You're
lookin' at old pros here! We've
beaten everything this silly Realm's
dished out, from five-headed dragons
t'one-horned Vengers.

PRESTO
Everything 'cept Purple People-Eaters!

ON BOBBY

braced against the wind, folding arms across his outthrust chest.

BOBBY (VO)
Nahhhh, I got one o' those, last week!

UPSHOT - SHEILA AND PRESTO

as Hank and Diana stagger in behind them, pushing against the wind.

HANK (over wind)
What we mean is---what's so big 'n'
bad that even you're afraid of it?

As if in response, the WIND STOPS as if cut off by a switch! The kids' eyes go wide. The terrifying silence is broken only by the BARELY-AUDIBLE, RUSHING SOUND of the hurtling clouds.

DOWNSHOT - CLOSE ON DUNGEON MASTER

taking a small, slow step back---eyes narrowing, scanning the sky.

MATCH CUT TO:

DOWNSHOT - MCU VENGER - EXT. CASTLE PARAPET (SOFT SFX CONT.)

Stepping back, eyes scanning the o.s. horizon. SLOW TRUCK BACK TO INCLUDE SHADOWDEMON IN SHOT---who grips Venger's arm and points o.s.

SHADOWDEMON

Master---there!

THEIR POV

of river plains reaching to the horizon; the vast sheet of black clouds hurtling overhead. On the horizon a bright glow of light draws closer . . . and closer . . . resolving itself into . . . a towering column of light a mile wide and three miles high, bonding the earth to the black clouds. A deep EARTHQUAKE RUMBLE begins to drown the SOFT RUSH SFX of the clouds as it moves closer, dwarfing rivers and hills. Closer still---and we see the column is composed of tightly-packed, flickering threads of lightning.

POV FROM THE GROUND - LONG SHOT ACROSS A WIDE RIVER

dotted with midstream islands and sand bars, cast into relief by the light of the THUNDERING o.s. column. The light brightens--- ---until bushes and trees suddenly explode in flame. A beat later the leading edge of the column sweeps into scene, annihilating everything in a blast of dancing lightning bolts as thick as giant Sequoias---interwoven so tightly that the scene simply vanishes in a blaze of white. The thundering roar is so intense that it CRACKLES, like the overloaded sound of a rocket launch. A long beat---and the holocaust sweeps o.s. The far background is a line of rising columns of smoke, as if from immense, distant forest fires. The foreground river and islands are crusty blackness, shot through with the red cracks of cooling lava.

EXTREME LONG SHOT - VENGER'S CASTLE (LIGHTNING-COLUMN'S POV)

SLOWLY TRUCKING IN toward the castle in a thundering, crackling roar. A few columns of lightning, GAIN IN ON THE TRUCK from either side of scene---until they cover the scene in pure white.

SHADOWDEMON

slinking back in awe from the intense light, cringing behind a buttress wall. Venger walks toward the light, confidently smiling.

PROFILE LONG SHOT - CASTLE PARAPET

Venger steps to the edge, slowly, advancing to meet the column (which enters scene from the other side, moving at the same speed as Venger's walk). The weaving bolts of lightning slow their wild dancing, smoothing themselves into vertical, pulsating streams of light---while the crackling roar quiets to a LOW RUMBLE. The two beings stop . . . and face each other for a long beat.

LONG DOWNSHOT - EXTREMELY HIGH ANGLE - VENGER

spreads his arms, slowly looks up---smiling directly into camera.

VENGER

Welcome . . . Master!

We hear a DEEP BASS RUMBLING, a frightening, demonic sound that is almost a language: the alien "voice" of Venger's master! Venger stops smiling.

VENGER

Failure? No, master.

BEGIN TRUCKING BACK as the voice "speaks" again.

VENGER

No! Dungeon Master will fall
before me!

TRUCKBACK ACCELERATES as the master's voice gibbers in rage.

VENGER

What?! But I have not failed!
I HAVE EARNED NO PUNISHMENT!

TRUCKBACK STOPS, poised, in an awful beat of SILENCE---then CAMERA PLUNGES toward the tiny castle far below with a hideous ROAR!

VERY QUICK SCENE - FULL SHOT SHADOWDEMON

dashing from his hiding place, rushing toward Venger.

PROFILE FULL SHOT - VENGER

Rears back with the rage of one betrayed, stretches out a hand---

VENGER

NO!

---and blasts a ray toward the top of the o.s. column. Comes a bare instant while Shadowdemon enters, frantically tries to pull Venger back to safety---then the scene washes white from the master's bolts! A LONG BEAT of pure white and a CRACKLING ROAR---then the trailing edge of the lightning-column moves o.s., revealing:

LONG DOWNSHOT - VENGER'S CASTLE

with the river plains two thousand feet below, scarred by a wide, black trail, bordered by distant forest fires. The thunder of the o.s. lightning column slowly fades. The trailing edge of the black cloudsheets whips o.s., revealing normal sky.

But where Venger's castle once jutted from a massive cliff is only an immense, raw gouge, dull red and black, slowly dripping incandescent pieces of rock, like slag from a hot ingot.

CUT TO:

UPSHOT - CU PRESTO'S FACE

scowling down past camera, luridly lit by the glow from his o.s. hat, garish against the SOFTLY RUSHING cloudsheets hurtling overhead

PRESTO

Awww . . . nuts.

REVERSE PAST PRESTO - UPSHOT TO ROCKY HILLS

where the kids are quickly scrambling single-file past knife-edged rocks, led by Dungeon Master. Eric (nearest camera) gestures impatiently to Presto, then turns to hurry after the others.

ERIC

Give it uuup, Presto! Nothing in that hat's gonna help us . . .

REVERSE - DOWNSHOT PAST ERIC

as he jogs PAST CAMERA, revealing Presto is last in line. (The ancient city is in the valley far below.) Several objects are piled on a rock next to Presto, who is just finishing pulling a book from his hat. He looks at it in disgust, then at the junkpile.

PRESTO

Not unless y'want one set of highway safety flares, one battery-powered emergency radio (with no batteries), or---

He disgustedly tosses the booklet atop the other junk.

PRESTO (CONT)

---one copy of "Ranger Fred's Guide to Survival in the Amazon."

He starts after Eric, hollering into his hat as if scolding a dog.

PRESTO (CONT)

. . . NO, NO, NO! STUPID, STUPID, STUPID!

As he PASSES CAMERA he angrily slams hat askew onto his head.

PANNING WITH ERIC - MED FULL

grins over his shoulder as Presto passes him, then doubletakes in shock at something behind them!

ERIC
Heyy! First smart thing you've
said all---(takes!)---WEEK?!

UNI

turning around---then taking a slow, fearful step backward.

UNI
UH---ohhhhh

UPSHOT - HANK, DIANA

looking fearfully down toward the o.s. valley.

HANK
Dungeon Master? Is that . . .

MCU DUNGEON MASTER

DUNGEON MASTER
Yes. He has found us.

REVERSE - LONG SHOT PAST DUNGEON MASTER, BOBBY AND HANK

The gigantic column of lightning is sweeping across the valley floor toward the kids' hills. Hank keeps his eyes on the thing while sidling closer to Dungeon Master. He slowly draws a flame-arrow, keeps it pointed at the ground. Bobby hefts his club.

HANK
You sure we can't, uh---
persuade him to leave us?

BOBBY
Yeah! Enough of this runnin'.

DUNGEON MASTER
No. You cannot fight him.

MCU DUNGEON MASTER

grim eyes narrowing at the o.s. lightning column.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)
Even I do not have the power.
We must flee.

GROUP SHOT (ERIC IN FOREGROUND)

Eric gesticulates with one arm, tears his hair with the other; the other kids nervously sidle closer to Dungeon Master---eyes on the o.s. valley. Diana whips out her staff as the ROAR grows louder; the o.s. lightning casts bright highlights on the scene.

ERIC (scared)
WHAT?! We already BEEN "fleein'"---
as fast as our f-feet'll fly!
 We can't fee any flaster!!

Eric looks back toward the valley---and takes in shock!

ERIC (CONT)
 (wheezy GASP of horror)

As the column of lightning roars up the hills toward the kids, Dungeon Master raises his arms in a sweeping gesture, shooting MAGICAL EFX over the group. Eric ducks, covers head with arms.

ERIC (freaks out!)
 DO SOMETHING! QUICK! BEFORE WE'RE -

CLOSER - PROFILE - THE GROUP

ERIC (CONT)
 - BARRRR-BEEEEEE -

As the lightning roars into scene, the group ZAPS out of existence.

IMMEDIATE CUT TO:

EXT. TROPICAL MEADOW - DAY

A quiet paradise, sun-bright, its peace broken only by the sound of:

ERIC (CONT VO)
 - QUUUUUUUUED!

Eric ZAPS into shot, uncovers his head and looks up in confusion.

ERIC (CONT)
 . . . Huh?

WIDER - REVEALING THE KIDS (NOT DM)

UNI (bewildered)
 Bleh??

SHEILA (quiet wonderment)
 Dungeon Master? Wh-where are we?

ANGLE INCLUDING DUNGEON MASTER

hand on one knee, pushing himself weakly to his feet with a rueful smile. Hank quickly steps in, gently helps him up.

DUNGEON MASTER (recovering his breath)
Halfway---(thank you, Ranger)---halfway
across the---Realm, approximately.

DOWNSHOT - SHEILA AND DIANA

as Presto nervously backs into shot, anxiously watching the sunny sky.

PRESTO
Only halfway? You . . .
think that's far enough?

Sheila reacts in shock, pressing up fearfully against Diana as a dark shadow sweeps INTO SCENE.

DIANA
Plenty far---except we're in the
wrong half!

LONG SHOT PAST GROUP

to a hurtling sheet of SOFTLY RUSHING black clouds. A white glow shines behind a distant range of granite cliffs. They EXPLODE apart---and the towering column of lightning marches toward us.

DOWNSHOT - GROUP - TRUCKING IN

Highlights from the o.s. lightning become brighter; the roar, louder.

ERIC (softly)
You . . . gotta be . . . kidding!

BOBBY
C'mon, Dungeon Master---who is it?
Or what is it?

CLOSER - PROFILE - GROUP

The kids fearfully stepping back closer to Dungeon Master.

DUNGEON MASTER
His name is not for your ears,
Barbarian. He is not life as we
know it. He has many identities,
on many different worlds. But
all know him as---Evil. He is---

The o.s. light becomes intense; the kids cover their heads and dive to the ground. Dungeon Master quickly gestures; they all ZAP from sight an instant before the lightning column roars into shot!

IMMEDIATE CUT TO:

HIGH ANGLE - EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - NIGHT

Our guys blink into sight atop a narrow, snowcovered summit. A spectacular view of other mountains in a Himalayan-like range surrounds them, glistening white in the light of o.s. moons. (The sky is not visible.) Dungeon Master is slumping down on hands and knees. Eric and Diana scramble to his side and help him to his feet.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT, (feebly)

. . . He . . . is the ruler of many universes, but his . . . goal is to rule . . . the entire cosmos.

DOWNSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER, ERIC, DIANA - SLOWLY TRUCKING IN

ERIC (concerned)

You okay?

DUNGEON MASTER

Thank you, yes. Transporting us all such a distance is . . . rather fatiguing, I fear . . . it is---

Dungeon Master is interrupted by a sudden ROAR and an o.s. light!

QUICK SCENE - THE GROUP

silhouetted against the wall of lightning. It is almost upon them!

VERY QUICK SCENE - DUNGEON MASTER

as he sweeps his arm in a fast, savage gesture.

QUICK SCENE - FULL SHOT - MOUNTAINTOP

Eric is falling backward off the summit as the magical efx ZAP them from sight---a bare instant before the wall of lightning hits!

ERIC

YIIIIIII---

IMMEDIATE MATCH-CUT TO:

ERIC, DM, BOBBY - OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY OF RUINS

Eric completes his fall, plops in the soft sand---

ERIC (CONT)

---IIIIIII-UMPH!

---while Dungeon Master staggers and almost collapses against Bobby. The worried Barbarian throws an arm around Dungeon Master's waist and steadies him, then doubletakes in shock at his surroundings.

BOBBY

Oh, no! We're back where we started!

GROUP SHOT

as Hank climbs to his feet, looking fearfully up toward the sky.

HANK

That thing's chased us all the way
around the Realm! Where else can
we run?

CLOSE DOWNSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER

slowly lifts his drawn face, wearily looks up PAST CAMERA to:

THE SKY

and the leading edge of the sheet of black clouds, sweeping in with
its soft, ominous rushing sound.

CLOSE DOWNSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER

DUNGEON MASTER (almost a whisper)

We will run no further. Let it
end here---one way or the other!

BOBBY (VO, scared)

Wh-what do you mean, "end?"

TWO SHOT - BOBBY AND DUNGEON MASTER

PULLING BACK as Sheila kneels into shot and puts a comforting arm
around Bobby's shoulder.

BOBBY (CONT)

Sis? What's . . . gonna happen to us?

SHEILA (quietly)

Hush, Bobby.

REVERSE - ERIC

backing toward camera in terror. He turns to camera and points
back toward the BG, REVEALING the colossal tower of lightning
sweeping toward them over the distant hills!

ERIC (freaked)

What's gonna happen? I'll tell
ya what's gonna happen!
BARBECUE CITY, THAT'S WHAT!

DUNGEON MASTER, BOBBY, SHEILA

as a WHIMPERING Uni backs fearfully into shot and huddles against a terrified Bobby.

SHEILA (sharply)

ERIC!

Eric stumbles into scene.

ERIC (freaked)

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, IT'S MY
FAULT! I'M THE ONE WHO OPENED THAT BOX!

ON DUNGEON MASTER

looking at Eric---

DUNGEON MASTER

No, Cavalier. You asked---then were
given permission to open it.

---then turns to stare at Hank.

HANK

looking at Dungeon Master in anguish. After a beat:

HANK (sotto)

I guess apologies won't make any
difference, now . . .

BACK TO DUNGEON MASTER

DUNGEON MASTER (gently)

Never abandon your leadership, Ranger---
nor your hope. (aloud, crisply:) There
is one chance, my children, if you will
give me your weapons . . .

UPSHOT PAST DM - TO HANK AND DIANA

kneeling near Dungeon Master, laying bow and glowing staff at his feet, while keeping worried eyes on the o.s. lightning.

DIANA (scared giggle)

This is all just some kind of
a . . . a test,-

FULL SHOT - GROUP

silhouetted against the advancing tower of lightning. The kids cringe back in fear, kneeling in a rough circle around DM. Bobby lays his club atop the weapons; Presto, his hat; Eric, his shield. Sheila spreads her cape atop them, covering them all.

DIANA (CONT)

- isn't it, Dungeon Master. I mean
 . . . you are gonna save us.
 (beat) Aren't you.

CLOSE - DUNGEON MASTER

but he does not answer. He leans forward, eyes closed, stretches hands out over the cape. The weapons-pile begins to glow. Twin columns of light leap to his hands. His body begins to glow.

QUICK SCENE - MCU DIANA

She glances down toward DM, then back up at the o.s. lightning.

DIANA (really scared now)
 Dungeon Master?

LOW ANGLE - TIGHT GROUP SHOT - FAVORING DM

The glow from the weapons leaps from DM's body to the kids'. Sheila throws a protective arm around Bobby, another around Uni.

DUNGEON MASTER (quietly)
 Listen carefully, my children. The instant before he strikes, he will reveal his face. You must not look upon it. No matter what happens, do not look!

The kids scrunch down low, hiding their heads. Hank throws a protective arm around Diana. All are buried in foggy light.

LONG PROFILE SHOT - THE GROUP & THE LIGHTNING-COLUMN

The leading edge of the wall of lightning moves into shot---and stops! The THUNDERING ROAR drops to a low grumble. HOLD a beat.

LONG ANGLE PAST GROUP

to the wall of lightning just behind them.

BACK TO LONG PROFILE SHOT - THE GROUP & LIGHTNING-COLUMN

PRESTO (scared sob)
 Wh-what's that thing waiting for?

LONG DOWNSHOT - THE GROUP (COLUMN'S POV)

ACCELERATING TRUCKBACK to an EXTREME LONG DOWNSHOT. At the top of the truck the camera poises for an ominous beat.

ERIC (phony-bravado holler)
 YEAH! WH-WHAT IS HE, CHICKEN?

The being's "voice" bellows in frightening tones of anger!

CLOSE DOWNSHOT - ERIC

seen through the foggy glow. Eric sits up, nervously grinning, and looks DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA.

ERIC
SORRY, JUST KIDDING, JUST---(sharp GASP!)

UPSHOT - ERIC'S POV

The black cloudsheets is parted, revealing the roiling, twisted torso of an alien monstrosity, whose lower body is the lightning column itself. Above it: the hideous FACE of Venger's Master---a nightmarish beast's head, continuously streaming and tearing away as if made of windblasted fog, its mouth grimacing wide in a hair raising BELLOW OF RAGE!

DOWNSHOT - CU ERIC

His mouth is open as if screaming in horror, but all we can hear is the o.s. monster's BELLOW OF RAGE!

QUICK SCENE - THE MONSTER'S HEAD

blasting a titantic beam of white energy down toward the o.s. kids.

QUICK SCENE - CU DUNGEON MASTER

hunching his head down with a sharp grimace of extreme effort.

QUICK SCENE - LONG PROFILE SHOT - THE GROUP

The foggy light surrounding and covering them erupts as if alive, BLASTING a beam of light---as thick as the diameter of the group surrounding Dungeon Master---up toward the o.s. monster. (The blast whips the group's hair and clothes straight up, as if they're crouched atop the business end of a vertical wind tunnel.)

EXTREMELY LONG LONGSHOT - THE RUINED CITY

and the sheer immensity of Venger's "master" jolts into perspective. The lower half of its "body" is a mile-wide pillar of lightning, its head towers fifteen thousand feet above the ground. The rushing sheet of black clouds seems thin as black gauze, blasted now by the thick beam of energy from the thing's mouth. Dungeon Master's beam, rising to meet it, is spaghetti-thin in comparison; the position of Dungeon Master and the kids is marked by an insignificant pinprick of light on the ground. **ON THE CUT** the two beams collide just below the clouds in a giant blast of energy. The white energy from above is briefly stopped---then begins to force itself down, slowly heading for the group below.

MCU DUNGEON MASTER

hair and clothing whipping in the uprushing light, head twisting to one side, teeth clenched in an agonized grimace of supreme effort.

DUNGEON MASTER (straining)
 . . . too powerful! . . . cannot
 . . . stop him!

THE "MASTER'S" HEAD

lunging down, its energy-blast brightening.

AS BEFORE - EXTREMELY LONG LONGSHOT

Dungeon Master's pitiful defense is squashed flat as the creature's energy smashes to ground. The scene disappears, engulfed in a quickly-spreading sphere of white light, as if from the explosion of a nova.

LONG HOLD OF WHITE as the THUNDER begins to soften.

SLOW DISSOLVE FROM WHITE TO:

EXTREME LONGSHOT - LIGHTNING COLUMN

now miles distant and moving farther away. The sound of its THUNDER fades to nothing. Above, the trailing edge of the black cloudsheets rolls past, following the o.s. "master." Its soft RUSHING sound fades to nothing. Finally the bright sky is broken only by a few tendrils of smoke curling CLOSE PAST CAMERA; the only sound is of a thin, cold wind.

After a beat we DIAG PAN DOWN, through more wisps of smoke. The valley that once cradled the ancient city is an enormously deep crater, its rims smoking, its black walls glowing with raw, red cracks.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. UNDERGROUND CAVERN - CLOSE SHOT - BOBBY'S CLUB

lying on a cold stone floor. Scene is dimly lit, and we hear faint O.S. WHISPERING and GURGLING, which might be the wind, or might be---other things. We do not know where we are yet. PAN from Bobby's club to the rest of the weapons, strewn over the floor. (Diana's staff is in stick form.) Over this:

BOBBY (VO, scared sotto)
Sh-Sheila? Where are you?

UNI
(pitiful little bleat)

PAN INCLUDES Bobby and Uni, huddled near an frighteningly-shaped outcrop of stone. Sheila's hand ENTERS SHOT to stroke his head comfortingly. PULL BACK to include her.

SHEILA
I'm here, Bobby. It's all right . . .

WIDE ANGLE

including the rest of the kids pushing themselves to their feet. We see now that we are in an enormous, dark cavern of scary rock formations. The ceiling is lost in darkness above; crevasses gape in the floor, crevasses glowing a cold, dim blue.

HANK
Thought that thing had us f'sure.

ERIC (scared)
Y-you mean . . . we're alive?

ANGLE FROM FLOOR

The kids begin to pick up their weapons, looking around nervously at their surroundings. (Presto walks INTO SCENE IN FOREGROUND, picks up his hat. PAN UP WITH HAT as he brushes it off and puts it on.)

PRESTO
Dungeon Master must've saved us!
(beat) But . . . where is he?

FAVORING ERIC

standing up to put on his shield, his back against tall, ugly rocks.

ERIC (nervous)
Where is he? Where are WE!

He reacts at the sound of a loud O.S. GIBBERING, then silence.

ERIC (whispers)
(gasp!) Y-you guys hear that?

WIDER

as the other kids back warily toward Eric, eyes glancing o.s. Diana reaches for her staff, Hank starts to draw an arrow.

HANK
(grim)
Yeah.

Hank stops IN FOREGROUND, tries several times to draw a flame-arrow that isn't there! He stops, looks at his bow in anguish.

DIANA, ERIC, PRESTO

Diana tugs at her miniature staff, Presto turns his hat inside-out. Both look up aghast as Hank BACKS INTO SCENE, warily glancing o.s.

PRESTO (horrified sotto)
Our weapons! (aloud) Hank, our
weapons! They're . . . dead!

They turn, startled, at a MOCKING O.S. GIBBER.

ERIC

almost jumps out of his skin as a shower of pebbles CLATTERS down the rock he's leaning against.

ERIC
(yelp of fear)

He looks up---and we SNAP PAN UP to the top of the rocks, just above his head. A shadowy form lunges forward. TRUCK IN as it steps into the light, revealing a weakened Dungeon Master! Already near collapse, he half falls, half tumbles into Eric's arms.

ERIC
UMPH!
(nervous giggle)
Heyyy, funny you should
drop in, we were just---

Eric's grin disappears as Dungeon Master FADES OUT---

ERIC (CONT)
 (gasp!) ---Dungeon Master?

---then FADES IN in Eric's arms. (The sudden reappearance of DM's weight briefly staggers Eric.)

ERIC (concerned)
 What's wrong?

DUNGEON MASTER (feebly)
 It . . . took nearly all of my
 power, and . . . all the power of
 your weapons to . . . transport
 us here, to the . . . Underworld.

WIDER - HANK IN FOREGROUND

Hank, Bobby and Diana react to an O.S. MOCKING DEMONIC CHUCKLE. They back up around the group, as if to protect DM from attack. Hank, bow held before him like a quarterstaff, glances over his shoulder to DM, as Eric gently lowers Dungeon Master to his feet.

HANK
 You okay? What about Mister Ugly,
 upstairs?

DUNGEON MASTER (feeble smile)
 He . . . thinks he has destroyed us.

CLOSER - DUNGEON MASTER AND ERIC

the worried Cavalier has one knee on the floor, finishing lowering DM to his feet. He keeps a hand on DM's arm, another on his shoulder.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)
 And he may be right. I . . . I
 can only survive a short time.

Eric leans closer in concern, tightens his hold on Dungeon Master.

ERIC (horrified)
 No! No, don't!

Dungeon Master weakly lowers his head, gestures a direction o.s.

DUNGEON MASTER (almost a whisper)
 That way, my children. You must help
 me cross the Plains of Fire. To the
 center of the underworld. To where
 I must replenish my power, and that of
 your weapons: the Dungeon . . . at
 the Heart of Dawn!

QUICK SCENE - CU HANK

snap-turns in shock at an O.S. DEMONIC GIBBER.

QUICK SCENE - HANK'S POV

of a weird shadow scuttling low behind threateningly-shaped rocks.

LOW ANGLE - THE GROUP - VERY QUICK ACTION

as Hank quickly steps backward INTO SHOT, alertly watching the o.s. darkness while snapping orders to the kids over his shoulder. The kids snap to and move out at his direction.

HANK (fast mutter to self, sotto)
. . . like sittin' ducks out here,
(aloud, fast!): let's MOVE-IT-MOVE-IT!
Diana y'got the point, Bobby with me,
Presto 'n' Sheila y'stay close
to Dungeon Master and---

ERIC

---I will.

CU ERIC

standing UP INTO SHOT, eyes leveled at o.s. Hank. A BEAT before:

ERIC (quietly firm)
I'll take care of Dungeon Master.

CU HANK

saying nothing.

CU ERIC

ERIC
I, uh . . . I owe 'im one. Y'know?

CU HANK

A BEAT before nods, then smiles.

HANK (quietly)
Me too. Thanks, Eric.

UPSHOT - CAVERN EXIT

an enormous arch, edgelit from without in lurid red. DIAG PAN DOWN to pick up the kids and Dungeon Master exiting. (Diana leads, Hank hurries into shot to join Bobby and Uni at the rear. Eric walks alongside Dungeon Master, a supporting hand on DM's shoulder.) Comes an echoing O.S. DEMONIC GIBBER, and DM abruptly stops.

3/4 REAR MCU - DUNGEON MASTER

barely turning head to look back into the cavern, as if aware of an unseen presence. A beat---then he and Eric move o.s., followed (at C.U. WAIST LEVEL) by Uni, Bobby and Hank. HOLD SCENE as Hank's shadow ripples along the rock wall and o.s. AN OMINOUS BEAT, then a amorphous shadow scuttles INTO SCENE as if following the kids. It stops . . . pauses, then quickly moves BACK INTO THE CAVERN. FAST PAN WITH THE SHADOW as it first ripples over the surface of, then disappears behind black foreground rocks. PAN GAINS AHEAD TO:

A SECLUDED ENCLOSURE OF TALL ROCKS

A few pebbles lie atop a flat foreground rock. From o.s. comes a tiny, pale beam of sputtering energy. It strikes one of the pebbles, washes against it feebly. The scuttling shadow that had scared the kids moves INTO SHOT, revealing it is---Shadowdemon! PUSH IN as he watches the pebble. The energy beam can only push it a few inches, until it rolls off the rock. The beam dies.

FULL SHOT - VENGER

lowering his hand from having fired the beam, braced with the other hand against a rock. He leans back in defeat, head bowed.

VENGER (bitterly)
Our escape cost my power as well.

CLOSER

Shadowdemon enters, places a hand behind Venger's back, helps him lean forward, away from the rock. Venger shrugs off the help, and Shadowdemon lurches back, shunned. Venger pushes himself away from the rock, stands tall and proud.

VENGER (coldly)
But I am still strong enough to defeat
Dungeon Master.

He looks at the cowering Shadowdemon, then stares regally into space.

VENGER (less icy)
You have done well, Shadowdemon. You
have frightened the fools into leading
the way to the Heart of Dawn.

He slowly walks toward camera, eyes narrowing in hate.

VENGER (CONT, deadly cold whisper)
But I will be first to drink of
its power. (beat) The first to have my
revenge.

IMMEDIATE CUT TO:

BLAST OF RED FLAME

filling scene with a SHRIEKING ROAR, diminishing to reveal:

EXTREME LONG SHOT - PLAIN OF FIRE - ESTABLISHING

A huge subterranean world---a lunar landscape of lava flows and basalt, lit by molten lava rivers. Steam rises from fumaroles.

DOWNSHOT - KIDS, UNI AND DUNGEON MASTER

making their way down a steep slope, paralleling a deep chasm. PULL BACK to establish foreground boulders looming over the kids' trail. A tall shadow ripples along rocks INTO SCENE and stops, its shape curving around the distant kids, framing them menacingly.

REVERSE - UPSHOT - THE BOULDER

the size of a small car, perched among other loose rocks.

DUNGEON MASTER AND ERIC - 3/4 REAR

DM stops, again half-turns back, as if aware of something.

UPSHOT - THE BOULDER

A BEAT---then the boulder inches forward as if being pushed from behind. ANOTHER BEAT---and it topples INTO CAMERA!

ON THE GROUP - FAVORING DUNGEON MASTER

They look up, react to the O.S. SOUND. PUSH IN on Dungeon Master as he raises both hands. SPARKLE EFX leap from them O.S.

UPSHOT - AVALANCHE

THUNDERING straight toward us. Dungeon Master's magic forms a SPARKLING wall that divides the falling rocks into two streams.

ON THE GROUP

huddled tight together, Eric covering self and Dungeon Master with his shield, as the avalanche passes them on either side.

CLOSER - DUNGEON MASTER AND ERIC

Dungeon Master drops weakly to his knees and FADES OUT. Eric reacts.

DUNGEON MASTER

(weak cry)

MAGIC WALL

disappearing, allowing one last, huge rock to tumble down.

UPSHOT - PAST ERIC TO BOULDER

Dungeon Master FADES IN beside Eric as the boulder rolls toward them! Eric hugs DM tight against him and ducks behind shield.

PRESTO

LEAPING OUT OF SHOT in a flying tackle!

PRESTO

LOOK OUT!

UPSHOT - PAST DM AND ERIC TO BOULDER

Presto pushes DM and Eric O.S. as the boulder rolls INTO CAMERA.

ON EDGE OF CHASM

Presto, Eric and DM roll to the edge. Eric makes a frantic grab for Presto, but misses---Presto tumbles over the edge!

ON HANK, BOBBY, SHEILA

reacting in horror as they rush forward PAST CAMERA.

SHEILA

PRESTO!

UPSHOT - CHASM'S EDGE

First Hank, then Bobby and Sheila peer over the edge INTO CAMERA.

REVERSE ANGLE - EXTREMELY LONG DOWNSHOT

of a chasm of staggering depths. Presto is standing on a tiny rock ledge maybe fifty feet below the kids, face and outstretched arms pressed against the sheer wall. We see the stones still falling below him, shrinking to dots in the distance. Diana and Uni scramble to the edge and look down; Eric stays with DM.

HANK (calls down)

YOU ALL RIGHT?

CLOSE - PRESTO

face pressed against the sheer wall.

PRESTO (falsetto warble)

YEAH---JUST F-FINE!

Presto opens his eyes, gingerly peeks down . . . then slams his cheek back against the wall, eyes jammed closed. Comes a small stream of pebbles and dust falling past, and Presto looks up.

LONG SHOT - MID-CHASM POV

of Hank hanging over the edge, Diana, Bobby and Sheila holding his legs, reaching down with his bow to Presto. He's not even close.

PRESTO

NO GOOD, HANK! WON'T WORK!

CLOSER - DIANA, BOBBY, SHEILA

hauling Hank back up onto the ledge.

SHEILA

C'mon, guys! Somebody think of something!

ERIC (scared)

I th-think Dungeon Master's---gone!

The kids react o.s. as we PAN OVER to where Eric kneels, an arm around thin air. A beat---then Dungeon Master fades in.

DUNGEON MASTER (weakly)

Not yet, Cavalier . . . not quite.

ON PRESTO

PRESTO (calls to kids)

THERE'S YOUR ANSWER---YOU GUYS'LL
HAVE TO COME BACK FOR ME!

HANK (VO)

FORGET IT!

PRESTO

YOU FORGET IT! IF Y'DON'T GET
DUNGEON MASTER TO THAT "HEART OF
DAWN"THING, NONE OF US'LL
SEE ANOTHER SUNRISE. (long beat)
WELL?

ON HANK AND DIANA

kneeling on the ledge. Diana looks up sadly, questioningly to Hank.

CU HANK

head bow in a beat of anguish. Then:

HANK (sotto)

I gotta do it.

BACK TO HANK AND DIANA

Hank calls down to Presto as he stands---

HANK (calls down to Presto)
WE'LL BE BACK! Just---DON'T MOVE!

---then he exits.

DIANA
And---DON'T LOOK DOWN!

---and she exits.

CLOSE ON PRESTO

eyes scrunched closed.

PRESTO (feeble giggle)
DON'T WORRY!

But his eyes pop open at the sound of an O.S. CRACK!

ON PRESTO'S LEDGE

barely wide enough and long enough for both feet. The side of the ledge nearest camera gives another CRACK---and a couple inches of ledge crumble o.s.

CLOSE ON PRESTO

cheek pressed against the cliff, a terrified grin on his face. His hands gingerly slide up into scene, gently pat the cliff face.

PRESTO
Nice rock . . . g-good rock . . .

WIPE TO:

EXT. PLAIN OF FIRE - LONG SHOT HANK AND SHEILA

walking, seen from a cleft between two rocks. QUICK PAN BACK PAST FOREGROUND ROCKS to another cleft, through which we can see Eric helping Dungeon Master walk along. SLOW PAN UP to peek over top of rocks, revealing Diana and Bobby at rear of group. HOLD SHOT. Diana suddenly stops, turns as if to look toward camera---but our POV "ducks" in a SNAP-PAN DOWN to behind rocks. HOLD as a shadow ripples THROUGH SHOT in a direction opposite to the kids' line of travel.

ON OBELISK

of obsidian, covered with runic carvings, rising beside a vast lake of bubbling lava---the far shore of which is lost in the distance. TILT-PAN DOWN to the ground close to camera. Venger's shadow, a silhouette of raised wings and horned helmet clearly visible, falls over a large stone rock on the ground. TRUCK IN ON ROCK. Venger's hand enters shot, lifts rock o.s.

ANGLE ON OBELISK

A BEAT---then the rock flies into scene FROM BEHIND CAMERA, smashing against the obelisk with a DEEP, ECHOING GONG.

LOW ANGLE - DIANA

with the other kids and Dungeon Master ahead of her. All stop and look back ABOVE CAMERA. In the distance, Hank leaves Sheila at the head of the line and hustles TOWARD CAMERA---toward Eric and DM.

DOWNSHOT - LAVA LAKE

POV past obelisk, as the lava begins to bubble.

QUICK SCENE - ERIC AND DUNGEON MASTER

Hank slams to a stop with hand on Eric's shoulder and worried eyes on the o.s. Diana---

HANK (clenched-teeth sotto)
Get 'im outta here! Now!

---then charges o.s. toward her. Eric helps DM o.s., the other way.

UPSHOT - DIANA

stepping back warily, glancing left and right ABOVE CAMERA. Beyond, Hank runs toward her, passing Presto, Bobby and Uni, urgently waving them to follow Eric and DM.

HANK (snapped, urgent sotto)
Get outta here! Stay with Eric!

LONG DOWNSHOT PAST DIANA

standing on a rocky rise above the obelisk and lava lake. An expanse lava near the obelisk is boiling furiously as Hank ENTERS SHOT BELOW CAMERA, stopping next to Diana.

CLOSE - DIANA AND HANK

she leans to him, eyes on the o.s. lake.

DIANA (sotto)
Whatcha think?

HANK (sotto)
Last time I heard a gong like that,
it was in a movie on TV. (beat)
"King Kong." Just before he came
crashin' through the jungle, 'member?

Diana grins, then both react as the O.S. BOILING SOUND CUTS OFF.

LAVA LAKE

quiet but for spreading ripples. An ominous beat . . . then the lake fairly explodes with an eruption of SALAMANDERS breaking the surface, charging onto shore and INTO CAMERA!

QUICK SCENE - ERIC, DM AND KIDS

at the entrance of a high, wide tunnel, looking back in shock!

QUICK SCENE - UPSHOT, LEAD SALAMANDER

charging into camera, swinging an underhand blow that catches---

---HANK

on his bow and sends him flying o.s.

QUICK SCENE - DIANA

leaping high over two charging salamanders.

CLOSE - DUNGEON MASTER (TUNNEL ENTRANCE)

weakly stumbles forward, raising a GLOWING arm to shoot magic o.s. But Eric's hand swings INTO SHOT, pushes DM's hand down. PULL BACK to reveal Eric on one knee next to DM, steadying him with arm around his shoulder.

ERIC

NO! You're too weak!

HANK

pushing himself to his feet, then reacting in shock!

HANK

DIANA, LOOK OUT!

MED FULL - DIANA

ducking the grasp of one charging salamander. PAN WITH HER as she takes three strides and leaps high o.s., ahead of another pursuer.

UPSHOT

as Diana arcs into scene, rolls into a tuck and drops. PAN DOWN WITH HER as she grabs the blackened branch of a dead tree. She swings around it once---then vigorously bounces up and down until the branch SNAPS off. PAN DOWN WITH HER as she drops ten feet to the top of a high pile of rocks, brandishing the branch high.

DIANA

Hank! Get Dungeon Master outta here!

REVERSE - LONG OTS PAST FOREGROUND DIANA

to a horde of salamanders approaching her; Hank in the far distance.

DIANA (CONT)

I can take care of these bums . . .

UPSHOT - MED HANK

with DM and the high tunnel in the far background. He lunges forward.

HANK

NO!

UPSHOT - DIANA

leaping from her rock straight INTO CAMERA.

DIANA (triumphant battle cry)

YEAHHHHH---

FULL SHOT - DIANA AND SALAMANDERS

PANNING DOWN as she drops into the center of the horde---

DIANA (CONT)

---HOOOOOOO!!

---but foreground rocks, MOVING UP DURING THE PAN, block a clear view of her landing place or the ensuing battle.

MED HANK

tears in his eyes, turning his head away in anguish at the O.S. SOUND of ENRAGED SALAMANDER ROARING. He turns---then runs o.s.

LONG SHOT - TUNNEL ENTRANCE

As Hank joins the group the remaining kids hesitate, then move quickly into the tunnel and o.s., Eric helping Dungeon Master. From o.s. come the SNARLS AND ROARS of enraged salamanders.

FADE OUT.

A BEAT OF BLACK, then . . .

AGAINST BLACK BACKGROUND the hideously distorted head of a GOBLIN shoots UP INTO SCENE, angrily screaming DIRECTLY AT CAMERA.

UGGAR (outraged bellow)

DO YOU THINK I JUST FELL OFF
THE ROCKPILE? This gunk is---

His head rears back to make room for his gnarled hand---lifting up INTO SCENE an (apparently!) offensive chunk of crusty yellow rock.

UGGAR (CONT)
 LOUsy, NOgood, USEless,

FULL SHOT - UGGAR - INT. CENTRAL MINE CAVERN

Uggar, Goblin leader, is chewing out several sullen GOBLINS who stand behind a cart filled with similar yellow rocks. (Beyond, goblins dig ore from yellow veins in the rock; others load it into carts. The enormous cavern is a warren of tracks, scaffolds, and entrances to other tunnels.)

UGGAR (CONT)
 ICKY-POCKY RICKY-TICKY **GARRRBAAAAGE!!**

He hauls way back and smashes the rock to power on the ground.

LONG DOWNSHOT - THE MINES

In the distance Uggar rants & raves at his abashed underlings, who trudge away, pushing their cart of substandard ore. In the mid-foreground is the silhouette of Venger, in the close-foreground that of Shadowdemon, both edge-lit by the light of the mine beyond, both with backs to camera.

SHADOWDEMON (OVER)
 It is too dangerous, Master!
 If they even suspect you
 are powerless . . .

VENGER (OVER)
 Indeed. (beat) If I should
 fail, Shadowdemon, know this:

Venger half-turns back, almost
 looking at Shadowdemon.

VENGER (CONT OVER)
 ---you have served me well.

UGGAR (UNDER)
 (distant hollering)
 If it LOOKS like gunk,
 and it SMELLS like gunk,
 the chances ARRRRE . . .
 it IS gunk! I DON'T
 WANNA SEE IT, Y'UNDERSTAND?
 Don't waste th'time
 t'BRING it to me,
 Y'UNDERSTAND?! And
 th'tunnels you goofheads
 GOT this goo? Close 'em
 off--NOW! ARRRGH!!

Venger looks back toward Uggar.

FULL SHOT MINE - UGGAR CLOSE IN FOREGROUND

he and the others snap-turn in shock at the sound of:

VENGER (VO)
 UGGAR! YOUR MASTER SPEAKS!

REVERSE - UPSHOT VENGER

wings swept high, majestically silhouetted atop a high rock.

VENGER (CONT)
 I have a task for you---now!

SLIGHT DOWNSHOT - UGGAR

stepping forward defiantly . . . menacingly.

UGGAR

(dripping sarcasm)

Welllll! It has been long since you
have . . . graced us with your
presence, Venger! Is your power
still as strong as when you
enslaved us?

His horns CRACKLE with power, and a POWERBOLT ZAPS toward Venger.

UPSHOT - VENGER

Staring down coldly, not even flinching as the powerbolt decimates a rock formation beside him. Now he slowly, ominously, raises one hand toward the o.s. Uggar.

VENGER

Shall I show you how strong
my power is?

MCU UGGAR

His horns CRACKLE again. Fear and bloodlust struggle within him; fear wins. His horns cease CRACKLING. He lowers his head, sullenly glares up at Venger from beneath angry brows.

UGGAR

(exhales) What would you have
of us . . . ~~Master~~.

MED VENGER

lowering his hand with a small, cold smile. His bluff worked!

WIPE TO:

INT. DUNGEON ENTRANCE - FULL SHOT OF:

a gigantic, ironbound DOOR slowly being pushed open from without.

CLOSER ON DOOR

The kids and Dungeon Master squeeze through, dwarfed by the door.

DUNGEON MASTER

We are almost at the Heart of
Dawn, my children.

EXTREMELY LONG DOWNSHOT

The giant door is set in the sheer face of a quarter-mile-wide WELL, with a stone staircase spiraling down the side, ending at a brightly shining archway set in the wall. The group, almost invisible against the bottomless well's immensity, starts down the stairs.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)

The entrance lies at the bottom of the stairs. All we must do is get past the Guardian.

An ECHOING ROAR rises from the pit.

ON ERIC AND DUNGEON MASTER

Eric, hand on DM's shoulder as he helps him along, stops so abruptly that Bobby barges into him from behind. Eric looks over the edge.

ERIC

Ga-ga . . . guh-Guardian?

UPSHOT - SHEILA AND UNI

Looking down PAST CAMERA into the pit.

UNI

UH-ohhhhh . . .

WIDE DOWNSHOT - GROUP AND PIT

as a gigantic WORMLIKE CREATURE, mouth a sphincter lined with serrated teeth, rises from the pit. TILT PAN UP TO FOLLOW as it ROARS PAST CAMERA, until it menacingly towers high above us. A beat---then its head lunges down like a striking snake!

HANK (VO)

ERIC! LOOK OUT!

QUICK SCENE - DOWNSHOT ERIC, BOBBY, DUNGEON MASTER

Eric shoves DM and Bobby down the steps toward the o.s. Hank.

QUICK SCENE - GUARDIAN'S HEAD

mouth gaping as it hurtles DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA.

ON ERIC

eyes on the o.s. monster as he leaps backward up the stairs, a bare instant before the thing's giant head SMASHES into stairs and wall!

QUICK SCENE - HANK AND SHEILA

crouched low on the stairs, grabbing Bobby and DM.

CLOSE - WORM'S BACK

rushing UP and O.S. TO ONE SIDE as it rises for another strike, revealing LONG SHOT KIDS AND STAIRWAY---or what's left of it! The worm's strike has dug a craterlike wound in the stone wall twenty yards wide. An equal stretch of stairs is missing. Eric is hanging from the end of the stairs above, DM and the kids are clustered on the portion below---not far from the shining archway at the stairs' end. Eric swings a leg up, crawls up to relative safety.

UPSHOT - WORM

Head poised high above us, then lunging down INTO CAMERA.

ON DUNGEON MASTER

weakly raises a hand toward the o.s. worm. The SPARKLE EFX begin, but stop as DM collapses on the stone steps, fading to invisibility.

DUNGEON MASTER

(cries out)

LONG DOWNSHOT - ERIC

dodging up the steps as the worm strikes. Its head rears back for another strike, revealing more of the stairway is gone.

ON SHEILA, HANK, UNI, BOBBY

crouched around a transparent DM---then he flickers back to solidity.

SHEILA

Dungeon Master! He's almost gone!

CU HANK

looks up in anguish toward---

CU ERIC

He looks up fearfully at the o.s. ROARING worm, then looks back.

ERIC (gulps)

Y'heard what she said! MOVE OUT!

ANGLE ON HANK, BOBBY, UNI, SHEILA, DUNGEON MASTER

Hank scoops up DM in his arms, turns and leads the way down the steps.

MCU ERIC

watching the kids leave, then looking up fearfully toward:

UPSHOT - THE WORM

towering above us, then lunging down DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA.

SMASH CUT TO:

UPSHOT - INT. CRYSTAL CHAMBER

ON THE CUT a FLASH OF LIGHT reflects from one of the BG walls of pure crystal, casting into momentary silhouette Hank (carrying DM) and the kids, charging UP INTO SCENE to a stop CLOSE TO CAMERA. Dungeon Master looks o.s. ABOVE CAMERA. He feebly points.

DUNGEON MASTER (weakly)
There, my children. The Heart of Dawn!

REVERSE - LONG SHOT PAST KIDS

The gigantic chamber's walls glow prismaticly in the radiance from a foggy, bright light in the far BG. We can see suggestions of ruined temple-like structures, barely visible in the wash of light. The kids react, looking ABOVE CAMERA at the sound of:

VENGER (VO)
STOP THEM!

UPSHOT - CRYSTALFALL

a jumble of crystal shards and blocks, atop which stand Venger and Shadowdemon---and down which are scrambling Uggar and several goblins. Uggar stops in foreground, lets loose a POWERBOLT.

ON KIDS

ducking as the bolt SHATTERS a spur of crystal near them.

CLOSER ON THEM

Hank sets Dungeon Master down beside Sheila, Bobby and Uni.

HANK
Get going! I'll stop Venger!

BOBBY
But---

Hank shoves Bobby and Sheila, half-dragging DM, forward.

HANK
Go on!

UPSHOT - MED VENGER

confidently advancing TOWARD CAMERA.

HANK

turning with an angry, determined scowl, hefting his bow like a club.

ON UGGAR AND GOBLINS

Uggar lets loose another POWERBOLT.

ON HANK

falling to the ground as the bolt ZAPS the bow from his hands and o.s. PULL BACK as Venger ENTERS SHOT, towering over him. The goblins and Shadowdemon are in BG.

VENGER (to goblins)
Stop the others!

UPSHOT - MCU VENGER

leering down into camera.

VENGER (CONT)
This one is mine!

PANNING WITH SHEILA, BOBBY, UNI, DM

the o.s. light is brighter here, streaming past them with a FAINT RUSHING WIND SOUND. Uni glances behind them and reacts.

UNI
(bleat of fear)

STOP PAN as Bobby and Sheila look back at:

UGGAR AND GOBLINS

charging INTO CAMERA.

BACK TO KIDS

Bobby pushes Sheila and DM toward the light---

BOBBY
Go on, Sheila! I'll hold 'em off!

LOW ANGLE PAST BOBBY AND UNI

ENTERING to strike angry-cop poses, facing the approaching goblins.

BOBBY
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!

UNI
YEAH!

REVERSE - BOBBY AND UNI

a POWERBOLT from o.s. incinerates his club, leaving only a charred stop. Bobby and Uni look at it, then each other in disbelief---then at the o.s. goblins in anger!

WIDER

several goblins surround Bobby and Uni; Uggar and Shadowdemon hurry THROUGH SCENE after Sheila and DM. Bobby hitches up his pants and takes a swaggering John Wayne step toward the nearest goblin.

BOBBY

Destruction of private property, eh?
Allright, ALL YOU CREEPS'RE UNDER ARREST!

PANNING WITH SHEILA

half-carrying, half-dragging DM. The o.s. light is like a SOLAR WIND now---luminescent clouds stream past them, blowing their hair. Shadowdemon and Uggar GAIN INTO SHOT behind them. TRUCK IN as Uggar grabs Sheila's cloak, tearing it. She stumbles, releasing DM. PAN WITH DM and TRUCK IN CLOSE as falls and rolls over on his back.

DM'S POV - UPSHOT UGGAR AND SHADOWDEMON

leaning OVER CAMERA.

SHADOWDEMON

Farewell, Dungeon Master!

Uggar sends a POWERBOLT INTO CAMERA.

ON DUNGEON MASTER

as he makes a gesture, and a shield of SPARKLE EFX barely manages to deflect the bolt. His eyes close, his head slumps as he FADES OUT.

ON SHEILA

arms held by two goblins, reacting to DM in horror.

SHEILA

Dungeon Master! NO!

CUT TO INT. PIT - UPSHOT PAST ERIC

to the guardian-worm rearing up and back for another strike.

REVERSE ANGLE - ON ERIC

revealing the worm has smashed all but a small section of stairs. The disheveled Eric has little room to dodge.

CUT TO EXT. PLAIN OF FIRE - DIANA

backing away from camera, looking fearfully at her broken stub of a treebranch. Salamanders slowly advance FROM BEHIND CAMERA, backing Diana farther into a BG cul-de-sac of rock.

CUT TO EXT. CHASM - PRESTO

A bit of his ledge CRACKS off, leaving barely enough to stand on!

CUT TO INT. CRYSTAL CHAMBER - GOBLINS, BOBBY, UNI, SHEILA

being led away by Shadowdemon, Uggar and his goblins. PAN BACK to the area where DM disappeared and PUSH IN. Dungeon Master slowly fades in again. He rolls over and begins to crawl toward the light, hair and clothes streaming in the RUSHING wind.

MCU VENGER

standing UP INTO SHOT, lifting a helplessly dangling Hank.

VENGER

Your time has come, Ranger!

But Hank is looking back o.s. toward the light with a grim smile.

HANK

You mean your time, Venger!

Venger looks toward the light and reacts in shock!

HIS POV - LONG SHOT - RADIANCE

A flickering, blinding heart of light shining through the glowing fog---very Spielberg. DM is a tiny, crawling silhouette.

AS BEFORE - VENGER

VENGER

NO!

PULL BACK as he drops Hank and runs o.s. toward the light.

ON HEART OF DAWN

The source of the radiance---a pool of glowing liquid fire. Barely visible in the ROARING solar wind, DM crawls INTO SHOT.

ON VENGER

staggering toward the Heart of Dawn, forcing his way against the glowing wind.

VENGER

STOP!

CLOSER - HEART OF DAWN

Dungeon Master pulls himself onto the ledge surrounding the pool as Venger lunges INTO SHOT a nanosecond too late: DM avoids him by falling into the pool.

LONG SHOT - HEART OF DAWN

as Venger is blown back past camera by a BLINDING ERUPTION OF LIGHT.

VENGER
(CRIES OUT)

ON SHADOWDEMON, GOBLINS, BOBBY, SHEILA, UNI

Shadowdemon streaks toward the light and the o.s. Venger. The others shield their eyes from the blinding radiance. The goblins holding the kids stagger back---then flee away from the light.

ON VENGER

lying on the floor as Shadowdemon enters, kneeling beside him. Venger looks o.s. toward the fleeing goblins.

VENGER (enraged)
COWARDS! COME BACK!

They both look up in surprise as the fierce SOLAR WIND suddenly reverses direction, blowing back toward:

THE HEART OF DAWN

Venger and Shadowdemon silhouetted in foreground as the luminous fog SCREAMS FROM BEHIND CAMERA, passes over them and streaks toward the distant pool.

CLOSER

revealing the silhouette of Dungeon Master, standing in the pool, drawing the light into himself. He absorbs the last of it and steps forward from the pool, comes out of silhouette, his old self again.

ON HANK, SHEILA, BOBBY AND UNI

stepping TOWARD CAMERA in wonderment (Hank holding bow). They glance at each other, then explode in cheers!

UPSHOT - VENGER

standing UP INTO SCENE alongside Shadowdemon, glowering at DM.

HANK/BOBBY/SHEILA/UNI (VO)
All right! HE MADE IT! YEAHHH-HOOO!

ON DUNGEON MASTER

smiling as he makes a gesture with his MAGICALLY GLOWING hands.

EXT. PLAIN OF FIRE - ON DIANA AND SALAMANDERS

as before, cornered in the cul-de-sac, the salamanders closing in. Just before they grab her, EFX surround her and she vanishes.

CLOSE ON DUNGEON MASTER

gestures again . . .

EXT CHASM - ON PRESTO

as the last of the ledge crumbles away beneath him, and he falls.

PRESTO
(trailing cry)

Dungeon Master's EFX surround him and he vanishes.

INT. CHAMBER

as Diana and Presto MATERIALIZE alongside Hank, Sheila, Bobby and Uni.

PRESTO/DIANA (ad lib)
Hey! We're okay! ALLRIGHT!

Dungeon Master ENTERS SHOT, smiling up at Hank---who is looking over the other's heads as if trying to spot somebody o.s.

HANK
Are we, uhh . . . missing somebody?

DUNGEON MASTER (chuckles)
Pardon---my error . . .

INT. WELL - ERIC

a ratty mess perched on a single surviving section of stairs. He crouches behind his dented, bent shield as the guardian hurtles INTO SHOT FROM BEHIND CAMERA and SMASHES into the spot where Eric stands!

CU ERIC (BG NOT VISIBLE)

crouched behind shaking shield, eyes scrunched closed. SILENCE. After a beat he opens one eye---then reacts in awe. PULL BACK to majestically FRAME HIM in the sparkling crystalline walls.

ERIC (awed whisper)
I guess this is what Heaven's like!

VENGER (VO)
Guess again, fool!

WIDER

Eric leaps back in shock toward DM and the kids, as Venger and Shadowdemon enter.

ERIC
YIIII!

Dungeon Master instantly turns to Hank, who is already lifting bow.

DUNGEON MASTER
Ranger! Your bow!

MCU HANK - TRUCKING IN

as he blasts an arrow o.s. toward:

VENGER

The streak of fire wraps around him, pinning his arms.

HANK AND DUNGEON MASTER

in foreground; other kids behind. Hank is looking happily toward Venger, while Diana draws her glowing staff, Eric grins at his shiny new shield, Bobby taps his glowing club on the ground and Presto peeks into his glowing hat. DM smiles at the o.s. Venger.

PRESTO/DIANA/BOBBY (ad lib)
Hey, all right! We're back in business!

PAST DM AND HANK - TO VENGER AND SHADOWDEMON

Venger struggles futilely to breaks his glowing bonds.

VENGER
Fools! You have won nothing! We are
doomed to hide forever in this accursed
Underworld---while he whose name can
not be spoken, rules the Realm!

Hank turns to the o.s. kids, slapping bow in palm like a billyclub.

HANK
Well, now. Who's for heading topside
for a little heart-to-heart chat with
big ol' whats-his-name, hm?

BOBBY/SHEILA/DIANA/PRESTO/ERIC/UNI
(ad-lib cheers of enthusiastic agreement!)

ON VENGER

as Dungeon Master ENTERS SHOT, smiling up at him.

VENGER

You are all insane!

DUNGEON MASTER

Nevertheless, we shall face him, with
all our power combined---including yours!

Blinding POWERBOLTS arc from Dungeon Master's hands to Venger, suffusing him. PUSH IN on Venger as beams of magic force ZAP from his hands and burst the energy bonds.

THE KIDS

as Dungeon Master moves INTO SHOT, arms gesturing as if to herd them together. DM and the kids jostle themselves into a rough circle, shoulder to shoulder around Uni, facing outward.

DUNGEON MASTER

A little closer together, I think . . .
that's it. All of us may be attacked
the very instant we return.

MCU DUNGEON MASTER

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)

That is, those of us who are not
afraid to return . . .

VENGER

scowls for a beat, then moves o.s., followed by Shadowdemon.

ON BOBBY

club at the ready, Uni peering out behind him. He moves over to make room for Venger (visible from waist down). Bobby looks up toward Venger's o.s. face in disgust, then snaps into a battle-ready pose---grimly facing outward, club held at the ready.

ON VENGER

sneering at Bobby, then looking down at someone on his other side.

DOWNSHOT - ERIC (VENGER'S POV)

staring up at camera nervously, then pops into a big, cheesy grin.

CLOSE - VENGER

slowly looks up to glower sullenly at space from beneath his brows.

FULL SHOT - THE GROUP

shoulder to shoulder, facing outward, Shadowdemon and Uni in the center. Dungeon Master raises his hands; a glow suffuses the group.

DUNGEON MASTER

Make ready, my children . . .

Hank draws a flame-arrow, Bobby raises his club, Venger lifts brightly glowing hands, Diana draws her glowing staff.

DUNGEON MASTER (CONT)

NOW!

EXT. REALM - DOWNSHOT - DAY

They ZAP into view in soft grass and colorful bushes. PUSH IN on the group as they step back, closing the circle even more tightly. But the attack doesn't come. One by one, they lower their defenses, warily stepping away from the circle, scanning the sky.

UPSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER (IN FOREGROUND) AND VENGER

semi-silhouetted by the bright binary suns. There are no clouds.

VENGER (realization)

He is . . . gone?

He glares down at Dungeon Master.

VENGER

Expect no gratitude from me, old man. I shall not rest until I have destroyed you all!

He opens his wings---and vanishes in a burst of EFX. PAN OVER as Hank, Sheila and Bobby back INTO SHOT from different directions, worriedly watching the sky.

SHEILA

Is he . . . really gone?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes. No doubt to wreak terror and destruction on other worlds. (beat) Still, we may have a little time.

SHEILA

Until when?

DOWNSHOT - DUNGEON MASTER - TRUCKING BACK

turns from Sheila, grimly looks up PAST CAMERA at the sky.

DUNGEON MASTER
Until he returns.

DOWNSHOT GROUP - TRUCKING BACK

revealing they're standing in a small patch of green in the middle of a field of blackened, blasted devastation.

EXTREME LONG DOWNSHOT GROUP - TRUCKING BACK

revealing the devastation extends all the way to the horizon. An OMINOUS MUSIC CUE SWELLS, and we . . .

FADE OUT.

THE END