

Heirs to the Throne

By

Ka-Chung Hung

[kachunghung@gmail.com](mailto:kachunghung@gmail.com)

FADE IN

EXT. WESTDALE CASTLE - DAY

A well built castle is seen. A HOODED MAN with a cloak rides into a courtyard and dismounts, entering the castle.

INT. ANTECHAMBER BEFORE THE THRONE ROOM - DAY

Same hooded man approaches a few plate clad knights who attempt to bar his passage into the throne room. He stops a few feet in front of them. Suddenly a voice echos from the right.

JACK (O/S)

What are you two doing?

JACK (22) appears from a side passage. He's wearing mostly leather armor and carries a longbow on his back. He pauses for a second as he walks over to directly face the stranger.

JACK

I don't believe it.

He smiles as he pulls the man into a hug, then pushes his way pass the guards.

JACK

Come on, they're this way!

As the pair cross the threshold, once again the room quiets down. The nobles parts, revealing a path towards the throne. When the pair gets to the front, both KING Maric (65) and QUEEN ISABELLA (62) are already on their feet. Jack salutes and clears his throat.

JACK

Your majesty, may I present to you-

Maric raises his hand slightly, and Jack's sentence dies before it can be completed. Isabella seems to want to approach the hooded man, but chooses not to.

KING MARIC

Well?

ETHAN (21) can be seen among the crowd of nobles forming a semi circle a ways behind the scene. He is well kept, shaven and dresses as a prince is expected to: the most comfortable clothing that declares his position to all that looks upon him. However, out of all the nobles, he's the only one that has a weapon at his side.

The man reaches around his back and pulls off the cloak in one motion, bringing out a large metal shield with the Northern Kingdom's emblem on it. He tosses it onto the ground between him and Maric and pulls down his hood. It is LINKIN (22), Exiled Prince of Westdale. He is ruggedly handsome, with a five o'clock shadow and not so neatly trimmed hair. Maric stares at the shield for a moment, then gives Linkin an almost bored look.

KING MARIC

That's too bad, I didn't think you would survive.

He looks at the rest of the room.

KING MARIC (CONT'D)

It has been a long day. I think I will have to be glad of my son's return on the morrow. Good day.

He turns and exits the room with some guards. Everyone excepts for Linkin bows as Maric exits, then Isabella throws herself into a tight embrace with her son. As the room's occupants swarm him, Linkin's eyes never left his father's figure, and neither the scowl leave his face even as his father's back disappeared out of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT WESTDALE VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Linkin walks along a busy market street with Jack, both joking around in plain leather clothing. Jack suddenly realizes something, opens his mouth but decided against speaking it. Linkin picks an apple from a nearby tree and eats it.

LINKIN

Jack, you're my best friend. If you have something to say, there should not be distance between us.

JACK

(Unsure, hesitant)  
You're not concerned about Eastmarch?

LINKIN

I am not the king yet, why should I be concerned?

JACK

Well, when your dad exiled you, they were only satisfied with that punishment because they think you'll probably die out there.

LINKIN

But I didn't.

JACK

Yea, and that's the problem.

Linkin gives Jack a "what the hell" look.

JACK (CONT'D)

No, I am glad you are alive. Look, Eastmarch was very upset before...

LINKIN

Well, that's understandable I guess. I mean I did kill their precious little prince.

JACK

You didn't just kill him, you killed him in a "friendly duel."

LINKIN

There was nothing friendly about that duel.

JACK

Well King Horan is going to hear about your return, and if he's the same man as he was six years ago...

Linkin's expression darkens considerably.

LINKIN

Well, that'll make two kings who don't want me back.

Jack looks at Linkin questioningly.

JACK

What makes you say that?

LINKIN

(Getting angrier as he goes)  
He looked almost bored, which would be acceptable if I was gone for a few days, not years. My own father tossed me to the wolves the same

(MORE)

LINKIN (cont'd)  
 night Horan sent his little  
 "request." He didn't even shed a  
 tear for me. Dear father just  
 yawned, handed me a rusty sword and  
 had the guards toss me out of the  
 castle.

JACK  
 Look Linkin, your father loves yo-

LINKIN  
 He shows more enthusiasm for his  
 prize horse than he does to me. I  
 would imagine more for Ethan as  
 well...

JACK  
 If your father wanted Ethan to  
 replace you, wouldn't your brother  
 already be heir by now?

Linkin isn't listening to Jack at this point, muttering  
 angrily to himself. Jack rolls his eyes, then notices the  
 sky and quickly grabs Linkin.

JACK  
 Hey, it is almost mid-day.

LINKIN  
 (Confused)  
 So?

JACK  
 The meeting for the Ascension  
 Festival is today?

CUT TO:

INT. WESTDALE CASTLE THRONE ROOM - DAY

A much less crowded throne room is seen, with most of its  
 occupants' attention upon the scene in the middle of the  
 room. There are only older, more influential nobles  
 present. Maric sits on his throne while addressing the  
 DIPLOMAT in front of him, who is clad in Eastmarch nobility  
 clothing. Ethan stands by Maric's right hand.

DIPLOMAT  
 (Outraged)  
 This is ludicrous! Our terms were  
 that you would either hand him to  
 us or kill him.

KING MARIC

(Calm)

I seem to recall Horan being satisfied with an exile.

DIPLOMAT

My liege expected your son to return only upon the pain of death! You said it yourself!

KING MARIC

I did, and I gave him a quest that very well should have killed him. However, I could not have known that he would survive, let alone succeed.

DIPLOMAT

(bloating with anger)

Well, King Horan's terms remain the same! You will hand over the criminal or face the consequences of your actions!

Ethan begins drawing his sword, but Maric stops him with a gesture.

KING MARIC

I understand Horan's... offer. However, I am a man of my word, and I told Linkin that if he accomplished his task, then may he return.

DIPLOMAT

(Sarcastic, loathing)

Then you have traded your kingdom for your son. Good day.

The Diplomat storms away. Ethan turns to Maric.

ETHAN

Father, was that wise? Eastmarch has a rather large army at our borders already. Perhaps if we acquiesce to their terms...

KING MARIC

So you would trade your own brother for the kingdom?

Ethan pauses, then continues.

ETHAN

No price is too high for the security of the kingdom, Father.

KING MARIC

True, but it wouldn't have mattered either way. Horan's been looking for an excuse to invade since his son's death. He will not rest until all of Westdale pays in blood.

Just as the Diplomat reaches the door, Linkin bursts in. He walks briskly up to the throne and bows.

LINKIN

Father.

KING MARIC

(Not really regarding Linkin)  
You are late. But no matter, we have completed most of the planning.

LINKIN

I am sorry, I was-

KING MARIC

No matter, your brother's efforts have allow your ceremony to stay on schedule in your absence.

He gestures to Ethan, gets up and begins walking towards a central table with a lot of parchment on it.

KING MARIC (CONT'D)

He had no such trouble getting here.

LINKIN

Then maybe he can teach me his masterful ways of punctuality.

ETHAN

Ah, we all did miss your sarcasm brother. I am sure it will serve you well during your reign as king.

LINKIN

Oh, I'm sure you did Ethan, just enough to feel bad while you feasted with every noble in the land while I starved in the streets.

Maric, at the table, turns to give both his children a look until they are both silenced.

KING MARIC

Are we finished?

Both sons nod; Maric turns back to the table. The other nobles of the court are obviously uncomfortable.

KING MARIC

Good. Now, I am not sure if the grand hall will be able to fit all our guests, but we may be able to move the ceremony out to the jousting fields.

ETHAN

We'll need to start the preparations immediately then, the rainstorm from last week left a lot of mud.

Linkin sets the chart down.

LINKIN

Can't we just throw some hay over it?

There's a pause as everyone got thrown off by him.

ETHAN

Dear brother, we are hosting one of the largest ceremonies in the kingdom for all the major nobles of the land, not a horse grooming tournament.

Linkin looks at his father.

LINKIN

I don't quite understa-

LORD UNDERFIELD

With respect to the newly returned prince, my new leather boots would be utterly ruined if exposed to mud.

Some of the other nobles nod in agreement. Linkin stares at them. Maric quickly speaks up.

KING MARIC

Well, perhaps we should begin preparation immediately then. Ask the stewards to oversee the drainage of the fields at once.

ETHAN

What of the feast then father? We will need a rather large sum of food in order to feed everyone, including the peasants.

KING MARIC

Do we not have enough food in the castle stocks?

ETHAN

Of course, but some of the nobles have particular tastes. I do believe that Lord Handown only eats freshly killed doe.

Linkin laughs; everyone stares at him. He stops as he realizes that Ethan is serious about the food.

LINKIN

Wait... were you serious? Was he serious?

KING MARIC

(Ignoring Linkin)

Take a hunting party with you, but be careful of any Eastmarch raiding parties. And bring your brother along.

Linkin begins to get up, but Ethan shakes his head.

ETHAN

Father, if I want to get some pigs from the mud pits for the commoners, rest assured I will know where to find Linkin. If you will excuse me, I have a prize deer to bring home.

He turns to walk away.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Lord Underfield?

LORD UNDERFIELD (42) nods and follows Ethan out of the room with several other nobles in tow. Linkin glares at the back of his brother while Maric sighs. The rest of the room turns back to the table as the party departs.

As they walk out of the keep, Ethan turns to Underfield.

ETHAN

I fear for Westdale if that imbecile ever becomes king.

LORD UNDERFIELD

As do I my lord, as do I.  
(In a softer voice)  
In fact, I would be much more assured of the kingdom's security if you were the heir my liege.

Ethan stops abruptly, and turns to Underfield. He sees the other nobles in the party nodding in agreement. Eyes narrowed with suspicion, he observes Underfield closely.

ETHAN

(In a low, warning voice)  
What do you mean by that Underfield?

LORD UNDERFIELD

(Calm, his face betraying no emotion)  
I simply stated, as I am sure my compatriots will agree, that you would be much more suited for the throne than your brother.

ETHAN

Careful Underfield, you're straying very close to treason.

He observes the other nobles. Some seem nervous but stand their ground. Others have hardened determination in their eyes.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Besides, that's not even possible. The law states that the oldest son always inherit the position of his father.

LORD UNDERFIELD

Why yes. That is correct. However, there is a separate clause to that law. One few notices at all.

Another pause.

ETHAN

Tell me more.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOUSTING FIELDS - DAY

A large clearing is seen surrounded by massive stands on three sides. The clearing is paved with wooden boarding on the ground, but there are weak spots and small gaps on it. The last side holds a covered stage where two thrones sat. The stands are already filling with people. Behind the stage Maric, Isabella, Linkin and Jack are behind the stage with various people. Maric is speaking with an adviser while Isabella and Jack are helping Linkin with his armor.

KING MARIC

(In a low, but calm voice)

Very well, I want a war council as soon as the festival is over.

NERVOUS ADVISER

But my liege, the Eastmarch's army is already in our borders.

KING MARIC

Then rally the troops now, we must be prepared to march by the end of today.

His advisers bows quickly and hurries away. Isabella approaches her husband and puts a gentle hand on his arm.

QUEEN ISABELLA

Is something wrong dear?

KING MARIC

(Distracted)

What? No, no. Well, let us begin then?

QUEEN ISABELLA

Would you like to say something to your son first?

She turns, showing Linkin and Jack behind her. Maric nod and they head towards the young men. As they near, Isabella closes the space and embraces Linkin.

QUEEN ISABELLA

You look very handsome dear.

She fixes a piece of armor on his shoulder to make it straighter.

LINKIN

(Slightly embarrassed)

Mother! I got it.

She finishes and returns to Maric's side. Maric, still distracted, turns to his wife.

KING MARIC

Yes, the boy looks fine. Can we proceed now?

LINKIN

Wow father, I am surprise you even mustered up the interest to be here in person.

QUEEN ISABELLA

Say something to him.

KING MARIC

(Finally noticing Linkin)

Oh good, his armor's on. We should begin now.

He offers his arm impatiently. Isabella sighs and takes her husband's arm. They follow two guards up to the stage. At this point most of the stands are full. A deafening cheer greets the couple. Then King Maric raises one hand, and the crowd quiets. A HUSKY HERALD (32) wobbles up to the front of the stage.

HUSKY HERALD

The King and Queen would like to thank each and every one of their subjects for joining them on this very special occasion. The Ascension Festival!

As he speaks a line of royal guards forms up in the middle of the clearing. They turn to face one another, creating a path between them from on the clearing to the stage.

HUSKY HERALD (CONT'D)

As tradition dictates, the order of succession falls upon the eldest son of the king. I would like to be the first to confirm what you

(MORE)

HUSKY HERALD (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 may have heard in the taverns and  
 markets: Our Prince Linkin has  
 returned from his exile,  
 triumphant!

He roars the last word and raise his right fist, a deafening cheer erupts. Without waiting for it to die down this time, the Husky Herald unclenches his right fist and holds his hand out towards the other side of the clearing.

HUSKY HERALD (CONT'D)  
 I present to you, the Prodigal Son,  
 PRINCE LINKIN!

Linkin strides forward, fully armored without a helmet, from the back of the clearing. The honor guards unsheathe their weapons, and hold them high as Linkin passes. The Prince walks up to the stage and kneel. Maric stands and waves his hand. The Husky Herald duly steps aside, and for the first time that day, complete silence fill the air. Maric strides forward off the stage, until he stands in front of Linkin. He places a hand on his son's shoulder.

KING MARIC  
 I, King Maric II, Sovereign liege  
 of Westdale, Pride of the West,  
 demands the name and position of  
 the subject before me.

In the stands, spectators struggle in silence to get a better view of the anointing. Even the royal guards are preoccupy with the presence of the two royalty. No one notices the back of the clearing.

LINKIN  
 (Still Kneeling, head down)  
 My lord and king. I am-

He catches himself mid sentence, shakes his head at the mistake, then begins again.

I present myself, Linkin, the  
 prodigal son, Prince of Westdale,  
 Eldest son of King Maric II, before  
 my liege.

KING MARIC  
 Do you, Linkin, son of Maric, swear  
 upon the pain of death, to serve  
 the people of this kingdom, to  
 never place yourself or your own  
 interest above the well being of  
 the state?

LINKIN

I do.

Maric places his other hand on Linkin's other shoulder.

KING MARIC

Do you swear to always be equally  
just to both the nobility as well  
as the commoners of the land?

LINKIN

I do.

Maric cups Linkin's face with his hands.

KING MARIC

Do you swear, if the circumstances  
arise, that you would make the  
ultimate sacrifice in security of  
this kingdom?

LINKIN

I solemnly do.

Maric raises both hands to his crown and begins to lift it.

KING MARIC

Then by the power invested in me as  
the Lord and Liege of Westdale, I  
declare you the-

ETHAN

(Shouting)

I CHALLENGE THAT CLAIM!

Maric freezes, his hands still on the crown upon his head. Linkin's eyes widen as all heads turn towards the back of the clearing. There Ethan stands in full armor, along with a band of knights and armored nobles. At Ethan's right hand was Underfield, holding a polite smile that doesn't reach his eyes.

KING MARIC

(Recovering from the shock)

...What is the meaning of this?  
Ethan what are you doing?

The party begins to march forward. The royal guards quickly reassembled to form a phalanx around Maric and Linkin. Linkin, standing now, draws his broad sword from his back. Some of the crowd cheered, others booed. A fist fight broke out in one of the sections.

LORD UNDERFIELD

My lord Ethan have decided that his brother ascending to the the throne is not in the best interest of this kingdom, and we-

He waves at the others around him.

-find ourselves agreeing to that notion. Therefore it is with great regret that Ethan has decided to declare the Edict of Overture.

LINKIN

(Under his breath)

Treason.

Maric's eyes widen.

LORD UNDERFIELD

You do remember what the Edict of Overture calls for my liege?

A drop of sweat rolls down Maric's face.

KING MARIC

(Barely above a whisper)

Trial by combat.

LINKIN

Fine!

Linkin pushes the royal guards in front of him out of the way and strides forward. Ethan unsheathes his long sword and shield and does the same, while his party stands around 20 feet away from the line of royal guards. The Queen is distraught and tries to fight her way towards them.

QUEEN ISABELLA

No! I will not allow this! I forbid-

One of the royal guards grabs her before she can reach the two and begins dragging her back towards the King.

QUEEN ISABELLA

(Struggling, pleading)

Get your hands off me! I am your queen! Stop this now!

She looks to her husband with tears in her eyes, but Maric only stares at his two sons helplessly. Linkin and Ethan meet in the middle, about five feet from each other and begin circling.

LINKIN

So this is how it is, Ethan? You would betray your own blood just to be king?

ETHAN

(Scoffs)

This is the most loyal thing I have ever done for the kingdom. If father had his way it will burn to the ground by sunset of your coronation brother.

The two exchange a few blows.

LINKIN

Loyal? Showing up with armed men to a civil ceremony is loyalty?

The brothers fight in earnest now. Isabella continues to futilely fight to reach her children. Maric watches with a hand on his chest, still shocked.

LINKIN

Tell me Ethan, how many statues were you going to build of yourself if you succeeded? Were you going to make a festival day each year commemorating you murdering your own family?

ETHAN

(In between breaths)

Shut. up. and. fight!

Ethan's fury drives forward. Linkin takes advantage by ducking under an attack and grabbing his brother, slamming him into one of the weak spots in the boardwalk. Ethan loses his sword as they both hit the mud underneath and looks up to see his brother's foot on his chest plate, a knife lifted to plunge into his throat

Just before Linkin can deliver the death blow however, one of the nobles from Ethan's side kicks Linkin in the chest, sending him flying back into the mud. The royal guards surge forward.

A few men drag Ethan to safety as the two sides met in the mud, weapons clashing. Linkin shoves off the guards helping him up and picks up his broadsword to strike at the nearest noble as the field erupted into fighting.

Neither of the brother notices the figures of their parents on the ground behind the fighting, nor did they see the fear in their mother's eyes or the pain in their father's expression.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL LEADING TO THE ROYAL BEDROOM - DAY

A dimly lit room can be seen with a king's size bed in the middle. Isabella can be seen sitting in a chair near the head of the bed, holding the occupant's hand. She wears a simple gown without a crown. Around the bed stands a cluster of advisers, doctors and servants.

In the bed, Maric lays dying. He looks much older and frail now. His breathing is heavy, and with every breath his face scrunches up with pain.

The door opens and Linkin enters. He approaches his mother, and only when he's very close does she notices him. She turns to her husband.

QUEEN ISABELLA  
(Softly)  
My love, Linkin is here.

Maric stirs but his eyes remained closed.

KING MARIC  
Lin-Linkin?

QUEEN ISABELLA  
Yes dear, Linkin, your son.

Maric opens his eyes and with great difficulty lifts his head and looks at Linkin. He rests it down again.

KING MARIC  
Leave... us.

Queen Isabella looks uncertain, but Linkin reassures her by placing a hand on her shoulder. She then raises and steps out of the room, followed by the others.

Alone now, Linkin sits and leans in close to his father.

LINKIN  
I'm here father.

KING MARIC  
You must not... you must not allow  
the kingdom to be divided.

(MORE)

KING MARIC (cont'd)  
 Eastmarch has already mustered its  
 armies against us. Westdale will  
 not survive the onslaught that is  
 coming.

LINKIN  
 ... That choice lays with Ethan  
 father, not me.

Maric seizes Linkin's collar quickly and looks into his sons  
 eyes. There is intensity there despite the pain he's in.

KING MARIC  
 That choice lies with the King of  
 Westdale!

They look at each other for a moment, then Maric sinks back  
 down into the bed.

I do not have long now Linkin. You  
 must reconcile with your brother.  
 Only a united kingdom will have a  
 chance at surviving the coming  
 battle.

LINKIN  
 Of course you would want me to do  
 that father.

Linkin's angry tone shocks Maric, who looks at his son as if  
 seeing him for the first time.

LINKIN  
 As soon as I do that, I should also  
 step down and let Ethan lead the  
 armies. Then he can move on to  
 leading the kingdom and I can go  
 back to whatever shithole I was in  
 during the exile right?

Maric's shocked expression continues to spread across his  
 face. He tries to speak but Linkin cuts him off.

LINKIN (CONT'D)  
 You never believed I could rule the  
 land myself. That is why you did  
 not even think twice before having  
 the guards out of the castle.  
 That's why you never even bother  
 trying me in front of the kingdom  
 before exiling me, like anyone else  
 accused of a crime. Did you even  
 cared at first when I had returned?

Maric reaches out for Linkin, but Linkin ignores the gesture.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

Well? Do you not have anything to say for yourself?

KING MARIC

I... I...

Maric's hand falls. His eyes frozen, staring blankly past Linkin. It takes a moment for Linkin's anger to subside, then he realizes what happened and regrets fills him.

LINKIN

Guards!

The party that departed, as well as a few guards and Jack, rushes into the room. They surround the bed with commotion. In all this, Linkin stands silent and still, staring at his late father.

FADE TO CUT

INT. DARK CASTLE ROOM - DAY

Linkin sits on the single bed in the middle of an even more dimly lit room than the royal bedroom, broken bottles lay around him. He looks broken, with streaks of tears marking his cheeks.

Just then a door opens and light floods into the room on Linkin. Two figures stand at the doorway.

LINKIN

Leave me!

Jack and Queen Isabella ignore the command. They are both wearing the same outfit as before. Queen Isabella begins to move to her son's side, but Jack impedes her, shaking his head. She shoves Jack off and heads to her son; Jack follows quickly.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

I said leave me!

QUEEN ISABELLA

I raised a son to lead a kingdom,  
not to cry in self pity. So I will  
be damned if I leave him alone now.

Linkin, recognizing her voice, looks up and sees the two.

LINKIN

What do you want mother?

QUEEN ISABELLA

I want my son back.

LINKIN

You can probably find him out and about, inciting riots and starting rebellions.

JACK

You know that's not what she means Linkin.

Linkin gives a hard look at Jack.

QUEEN ISABELLA

I know it doesn't seem it, but your father loved you dear-

LINKIN

Yea he loved me, that's why I could not even say goodbye to my own mother before he left me nameless and penniless on the streets.

JACK

What about the Ascension Festival?

LINKIN

Just formalities he did to please the courts.

QUEEN ISABELLA

Bullshit.

Jack and Linkin are both stunned at hearing the Queen curse. She doesn't miss a beat when she turns to Jack.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Bring it in.

Jack, still amazed, turns and walks out of the room. He returns with a large object covered in a tarp. He places it in front of Linkin, who looks at it curiously, despite his mood.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

You thought your father never believed in you? That he always favored Ethan over you for the throne?

Linkin doesn't take his eyes off the object.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Show him.

Jack grabs the tarp and pulls it off with one stroke. Under it, a exuberant set of ebony armor laced with gold stood. It is the exact size as Linkin, everything tailored to perfection. On the helmet, a golden crown is forged on it, giving no doubt that the man under the suit is the same one that sits on the throne. A new broadsword of similar style is strapped to the back of it.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Your father, had this commissioned the day after he exiled you. This took four years to complete.

Linkin stands up and walks over to the armor in a daze. He reaches out and touches it tenderly, as if caressing a lover. He takes a gauntlet gently and puts it on. It fits perfectly.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Not a single doubt ever reached your father's mind that you would return. And now Horan is burning a warpath towards us, destroying everything in his path. Westdale needs a king if it will survive.

She studies her son carefully, Linkin still stares at the gauntlet on his hand.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Your father told me one last thing before he passed.

Linkin looks up at his mother.

QUEEN ISABELLA (CONT'D)

You are a better heir than he could have ever hoped for.

CUT TO:

INT. WESTDALE CASTLE HALLWAY - DAY

A much brighter stone hallway is seen, lined with plain armor and tapestry.

Linkin walks down the hallway quickly and with purpose; at his right hand, Jack, in leather armor and with longbow,

follows with a group of commanders behind them. Linkin is dressed in his new black and gold armor but without the helmet, the rest are in various armor from plate to chainmail. The only noncombatant of the group is Isabella.

LINKIN

Get the throne room ready. Have all the garrisons gathered and armed by midday. Lord Hood?

LORD HOOD

Yes my liege?

LINKIN

Take Lord Manor and Lord Livingston with you and extend an offer of peace to my brother's men. When he's come around they'll need to be armed and moving into position already. How long until Horan arrives Jack?

LORD HOOD (38) nods and moves away with the two nobles. The rest moves away in another direction with the exception of Jack and Isabella.

JACK

Sundown by latest my lord.

LINKIN

Work with the armory and see to it no one goes into battle tonight with a rusty sword or broken armor.

JACK

Yes, sir.

He begins to move away, then turns his head back.

JACK (CONT'D)

You think Ethan will really come around?

Linkin pauses, stares at his mother, then back to Jack.

LINKIN

Yes. Yes he will.

Jack nods and hurries away. The two walk in silence until they reach a large wooden door. Linkin moves to open it but then stops. He turns to his mother.

LINKIN (CONT'D)  
 Mother, will you go down to the  
 stocks and make sure everyone's fed  
 and watered? Can't have soldiers  
 fighting on empty stomachs.

Isabella starts to protest but Linkin cuts her off.

LINKIN  
 (Sincerely)  
 Please mother, we're either going  
 to work through this ourselves or  
 kill each other in there. Either  
 way, it's better if I do this  
 alone.

Isabella purses her lips, but doesn't argue. She moves quickly to hug Linkin, who gives her a small smile and she walks away from the door.

Linkin takes a deep breath then knocks.

ETHAN (O/S)  
 Who is there?

LINKIN  
 It's me.

There's a tense moment as Linkin waits, his hand moves unconsciously towards the weapon on his back, but then he thinks better of it and moves his hand back down to his side.

ETHAN (O/S)  
 What do you want?

LINKIN  
 To talk.

ETHAN (O/S)  
 Fine.

Linkin opens the door to see Ethan fully armored as well, with his shield leaning on a wall and his sword unsheathed in his hands. The room is decorated finely and comfortably, with the bed being strangely plain next to a window to the courtyards outside.

Ethan's grip on his sword tightens as he looks at the Linkin's new armor. Ethan has the same look in his eyes as during the ceremony, but Linkin's only contained sadness.

ETHAN

Well?

LINKIN

What did I do to make you hate me so much?

ETHAN

No I am not going to- wait what?

LINKIN

Why do you hate me Ethan?

Ethan, taken back by the unexpected question, is confused as to what he should say. He takes a second to answer.

ETHAN

I... do not hate you Linkin. I just don't think that you'll make the best ki-

LINKIN

I can see it in your eyes.

ETHAN

(Trying to change the subject)  
Look, if this is some move in order to make me come around to supporting you then-

LINKIN

You really think I'm here as anything but your brother right now Ethan?

Ethan opens his mouth, then closes it again. He breaks eye contact. Linkin watches him for a moment, then Ethan speaks again, in a softer tone.

ETHAN

You haven't been my brother for the last six years Linkin.

LINKIN

You know that wasn't my choice.

ETHAN

But it was your choice to duel that kid from Eastmarch though.

Linkin doesn't answer. Ethan looks back at him, bitterness holding back the tears in his eyes.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Six years I had to step into your shoes Linkin. Six! I had to take up a sword when the bog people invaded from the Southern Marshes for four years. I had to negotiate for food when the famine broke out afterwards. I had to talk to the families of the dead when the plague came through three years ago. Where were you huh? Where was my older brother when we all needed him?

Linkin is shocked by how much had happened while he was gone. Ethan can't control his tears now as they roll down his cheeks.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I didn't ask to be heir Linkin, but I did what I needed to because I was the only one who could. And when you came back, they just pretended none of that mattered. I didn't get shoved back to your shadow Linkin, I never left it.

Ethan suddenly rushes forward and grabs Linkin by his chestplate collar.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

That's why I hate my brother Linkin, and that's why you'll only take the throne over my dead body!

Ethan looks intensely through his tears at Linkin. Linkin stares back and feels the pain on his brother's face. He makes a decision.

LINKIN

(Softly)

I don't want it.

It takes a moment for the words to absorb.

ETHAN

What?

LINKIN

I don't want the crown.

Ethan seems to be at a loss of words.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

All this time I thought [beat]  
You're right Ethan, you would make  
a better king than me.

Ethan scans Linkin's face, trying to sense out any sarcasm or deception. He finds only sincerity.

ETHAN

Really? No duel to the death? No  
massive ceremony involving the  
entire kingdom?

LINKIN

Not unless you want one Ethan.

Ethan lets his brother go and moves to a table. He cleans himself up with the bowl of water and a cloth on the table. Just then a COURT MESSENGER (16) runs in.

COURT MESSENGER

My lords! The throne room is  
ready.

Ethan looks at the messenger then back to Linkin, confused.

ETHAN

Ready for what?

CUT TO:

INT. THRONE/WAR ROOM - DAY

The throne room is rearranged into a command center. The central table have a figure of castle on it, as well as other figures representing the armies around/in Westdale. The nobles leading are gathered around it while servants run back and forth.

Linkin and Ethan both walk through the double doors to the table, the nobles either salute or give a quick nod of acknowledgement to the brothers appearances. Both nobles that supported Linkin and Ethan are there, though they refuse to stand on the same side of the table.

Linkin takes the place at the head of the table where Jack stands. Ethan stop by Linkin's right, unsure of the situation.

LINKIN

What is the situation now Lord  
Hood?

Hood down the table points to several figures on the table.

LORD HOOD

The Eastmarch army just crossed the Perimeter River, and we've see their vanguards from the top of the battlements. We were worried that they would send a preliminary strike force but it would seem that Horan wants to muster all of his forces to have the hammer fall on us at once.

LINKIN

How bad is it?

LORD MANOR

They outnumber us 5 to 1. Ten to one with cavalry.

LINKIN

Then it's an even fight. Do they have siege weaponry already?

LORD HOOD

They have everything from siege ladders to catapults. The only thing missing is a bloody ram.

LINKIN

Horan is not going to wait until they build one. They'll attack tonight, as soon as they move all of their forces into formation.

LINKIN moves a few figures around the table, then looks to everyone at the table.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

We'll divide our forces in quarters. A quarter will be in reserve behind the walls, led by Lord Manor.

Lord Manor nods.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

Another quarter will flank the enemy troops in the middle of the battle from the forest. I'll lead that party with Lord Hood.

Lord Hood salutes.

LINKIN (CONT'D)

Ethan, you lead the rest on the walls with Lord Underfield. You have more experience than me as a commander, so you'll be in charge of most of the forces. Understood?

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTDALE CASTLE WALLS - NIGHT

Hundreds of troops line the Westdale walls. All armed and ready. Beyond the wall thousands of Eastmarch soldiers wait. Some have torches lit, others don't. Linkin and Ethan paces the walls, fully armored, inspecting the troops.

ETHAN

You sure you'll be alright down there?

LINKIN

Nothing but a bar brawl with weapons Ethan. Don't worry though, I'll leave some for you.

They embrace.

LINKIN

Take care of yourself E.

ETHAN

You too Linkin.

As Linkin descends a nearby stairway, a shout rings out from down the wall.

NERVOUS SOLDIER (O/S)

They're coming!

Ethan hurries back down the wall just as the first volley of rocks from the Eastmarch catapults fire. He gets in place and yells to the troops.

ETHAN

Steady!

The rocks fall. Most impact the wall and shakes it. Some crashes on top, crushing the soldier above. Others fly overhead. One sails right above Ethan's section; he doesn't flinch.

The Eastmarch army rushes forward, siege ladders in hand. As they rush the wall, ladders swings up and soldiers begins to climb.

Ethan runs forward and front kicks a ladder just as the first man was able to reach the top, killing all below it.

By now the Eastmarch soldiers have reached the top of other ladders and hand to hand combat begins. Ethan looks right and sees a particular section being overwhelmed by the attackers. He grabs Underfield from nearby.

ETHAN

To me men! For Westdale!

Ethan dispatches another attacker and takes a moment to look over the wall. Linkin's forces are making steady progress through the Eastmarch army, but a massive figure leading the core of the Eastmarch forces heads to intercept them. He turns and heads towards the nearest stairway.

CUT TO:

Linkin charges forward, followed closely by Lord Hood and his men, into the fight.

Linkin proceeds to fight several Eastmarch soldiers, killing one after another in a brief struggle with each. Then he sees a towering figure approaching.

In full plated armor, KING HORAN (42) stands at least a half foot taller than anyone else on the battlefield. He holds a sword and a massive mace that would take a normal person two hands to carry. He strodes across the battlefield towards Linkin.

A group of Westdale soldiers gets in Horan's way and he cuts them down mercilessly to get to Linkin.

Linkin readies himself as Horan closes the distance between them. Horan lifts his sword up and brings it down. Linkin lifts his broadsword to block it.

Horan's blow brought Linkin's broadsword down with his, the tip of Horan's sword cuts through the front of Linkin's helmet. Linkin rolls out of the way and rips his damaged helmet off, revealing a cut where the blade had hit his helmet. Horan pauses and the two circle each other.

KING HORAN

What you took from me, I will now  
take from your father.

LINKIN

Come and get it then.

The two go back and forth, but it was evident as Horan presses forward, that he has the advantage. What he lacks in speed he makes up for in the strength of his body and armor. Linkin's blow becomes sloppier, and he doesn't see the uppercut from Horan's mace.

The uppercut catches him square in the chest and sends him flying backwards. Linkin loses his broadsword in the process and he lands on a pile of dead soldiers. He spits out some blood as Horan stands above him.

As Horan lifts the mace to crush Linkin skull, Ethan springs out of nowhere and slices at Horan's left knee. The blow does not penetrate, but the armor piece on the knee buckles and loosens.

Horan turns and engages Ethan, who begins to draw Horan away from Linkin. The knee piece, first loosen, falls from the leg as the two fights. Horan does not notice this.

ETHAN  
(Shouting)  
Linkin, run!

This brings Horan's attention back to Linkin, who has just untangle himself from the mess of bodies he fell on. Horan takes a step and swings the mace down on Linkin.

Ethan throws himself between them, taking the mace with his shield up, leaving his midsection exposed. The blow shatters his arm underneath and the prince staggers. Horan's sword came from the other side and impales Ethan through his abdomen.

Both freezes as they realize what's happening. Ethan stares down at the sword in his stomach, and his eyes widened.

Ethan's long sword falls from his outstretched hand, but before it hits the ground Linkin catches it. He spins and slices straight through Horan's exposed knee, dismembering him. As the giant fell to the ground Linkin took the last of his strength and drove the sword through the Eastmarch's king's neck, pinning the sword upright to the ground.

Linkin spins back to his dying brother, now laying upright on the same pile of bodies Linkin was on. Linkin rushes to him and pulls Ethan's helmet off. Ethan raises his hand, too weak to speak and the two grip each other's hands.

LINKIN  
No no no no! E! You can't! You  
have a kingdom to lead!

Ethan gives his brother a weak smile and a nod. Then his hand falls from Linkin's.

CUT TO:

A bandaged but well dressed Linkin sits on the throne, a crown rests on his head. The throne room is nearly empty. He gets up after much thoughts and strides to two tables where his father and brother laid. They both are well dress, and looks at peace. His father is crownless.

His mother, in all black, sobs quietly into her hands as she stands near the two bodies. He wraps his arms around her and she turns and looks into his eyes, then moves her gaze up and adjusts the crown on Linkin's head.

The crown is different from Maric's. Isabella wipes her eyes and walks over to her late husband. She gives a kiss onto his cheeks, and moves to Ethan. She laid her head upon her son's stilled chest.

Linkin walks over and cups his father's hand and looks at the sign by the table. It reads "King Maric II of Westdale." He smiles sadly, releases his father's hand, places it back and walks over to his brother's body.

Their father's crown rests upon Ethan's head, and the sign by him read "King Ethan I of Westdale." Linkin gently lifts his mother from his brother's body, picks up Ethan's sword and shield by the table, and places it on the body with both of Ethan's hands on the sword.

Linkin takes a moment and wonders if he should say something while Isabella sobs on his shoulder. Then decides against it and turns away. He leads his mother to the double doors at the far side of the throne and the two quietly slips out. The door closes with a click.

FADE OUT

THE END.