

"Them, with the talon mark? Call themselves the Kirkos band. They all follow the Young Hawk, Vaughn. Why'd--hic!--why'd t~~h~~ey call 'im' that? Well the 'Hhawk' part's gotta do with that hooked nose, for one--Hah! That, ~~and he's never failed a mission since bein' commander--or~~ so they say...but he's refused plenty. Half the inner city won't talk to him. As proud and deadly as a raptor, or so he insists, dumb as a bird, too, I say, refusin' good money 'ya see? Young? You really don't know nothin'! Oh, another beer? Where was I... young! He's a fledgling, hah! Been runnin' that band for six months now despite only being half the age of 'ol Telamon, had the company before him, ya see? Aye, old one crossed our proud little raptor and never came back, so now we've got the midget hawk hoppin' about chest puffed out, too big for his boots, with his flock'a pidgeons followin' him, ha!"

--A very drunk bar-goer to Cyrus immediately before being knocked out by Vaughn himself.

Premise:

This story concerns a mission Vaughn has undertaken after a number of years of expeditions with the Telamon Expeditionary Company, ~~who also employed his parents--the company his parents (and he) is part of.~~ This expedition requires a deep trek to a singular, titanic, petrified tree within the bounds of the "Tantalus" section of the disruption. The tree is home to Outsiders that have stored a powerful pre-disruption relic called the Gi, which is capable of manipulating large swaths of stone. Things have been difficult for the expedition and tensions are already at a breaking point. Vaughn has developed deep friendships with some members of the Company, while others--including the commander--have grown to resent and even hate his aggressive, cocksure attitude, particularly as he disagrees vehemently with the commander's plan for assaulting the Outsider base, which involves bombardment with a device called the Pyre and a frontal assault.

Outline

Overall goal: Provide an origin story for Vaughn's leadership position and give a sense of his character. Effectively portray-

Scene 1:

- **Setting:** The Telamon company prepares in a makeshift basecamp the night before the assault.
- **Goals:** Establish the forest as an extremely strange and deadly place. Establish the coming attack's challenges and contrast Vaughn's aggressive, instinctual leadership and willingness to change with the rigid methodology of the commander. Split the remaining members along lines of loyalty. Bind audience sympathies to Vaughn's way of thinking. Establish stakes.
- **Arc:** A planning session in which Vaughn's concerns about the commander's plan are ignored and the recent death of another party member is minimized pushes Vaughn over the edge, precipitating a physical altercation between him and the commander, after which he makes a speech outlining his plan and leaves to undertake it.

- **End on a minus:** the groups are split and weakened, divided between leaders.

Scene 2

- **Setting:** inside the trunk of the petrified archwood tree. Vaughn and his small group of companions undertake a dangerous climb and face a deadly foe.
- **Goals:** Firmly establish Vaughn's character and usual pattern of speech and action. Briefly display his views on the Forest, and showcase his fighting style.
- **Arc:** His group ascends the tree through a series of grapples and tunnels. They face a jury-rigged automaton guarding the entrance to the Outsider camp, but are just able to defeat it and enter the Outsider settlement without raising a general alarm.
- **End on a plus:** Vaughn's plan has succeeded in allowing a surgical assault
- and there is no sign of the commander or his crew interfering.

Scene 3

- **Setting:** In the treetop structure of the outsider village. Vaughn's team performs a rapid, controlled assault.
- **Goals:** Establish the strangeness of the Outsiders and magic. Establish character attitudes towards relics (as rare, powerful artifacts)
- **Arc:** Vaughn's team manages better after the battle with automaton. They barely managing to maintain a relatively low profile, but are able to take the Gi without raising a general alarm. Just as they do, the commander's assault starts and blows their cover while also endangering them.
- **End on a minus:** Everything goes to shit.

Scene 4

- **Setting:** inside the trunk of the petrified archwood tree. Vaughn and his small group of companions perform a rapid flight harried by the Outsiders, they are attacked by an enraged, bloodied commander.
- **Goals:** Bring the conflict between Vaughn's POV and the commander's to a head with a satisfying, high-stakes resolution.
- **Arc:** The fleeing party just manages to reach the bottom of the tree, exhausted, with the outsiders still on their tail. They are "saved" by the commander, mad with frustration and pain, who dispatches their pursuers with uncontrolled magic. He and Vaughn clash, with Vaughn winning despite suffering fairly serious injury and being accused of causing the deaths of those who followed the commander. He and his companions limp away with the Gi.
- **End on a (small) plus:** Vaughn is able to hold his own and the mission is completed, though the journey back remains.
- **Coda/moral:** Vaughn gains leadership, but has a real sense of responsibility added to his attitude.

Introduction: A lizard works its way up the side of a strange, sick-looking tree, silhouetted by distant firelight and the sound of indistinct voices. It passes a row of glowing fungus and other strange objects. (three layers of detail--fore-mid-BG info). The lizard freezes, then bolts--startled by a large, graceful shadow that glides past. The camera follows the shadow with focus before settling on a camp of about sixteen people surrounding a glowing magitech device, which seems to be acting like a cookfire. Suddenly, one looks up and a bolt of energy flies past the creature, wiping the camera frame.

Frame resolves on The barrel of a strange-looking gun glowing white-hot, and pans back to reveal a young, rakish-looking man with long hair and a faint glimmer in his eyes--despite his otherwise haggard, dirty appearance. Others, all grim-faced, surround him. They all return to what they were doing quickly and stiffly, conspicuous gaps in their ranks. A man still sitting at Vaughn's right, hulking and imposing, speaks.

Telamon

(angry) Looks like that Lamia hasn't learned to fear us yet. We'll need double guard tonight. Lysander, you'll be taking watch--and (he gestures to Vaughn) keep that idiot son of yours up with you. He thinks just because he's quick he can hold something over on us. I'm not losing any more good people to rookie mistakes.

Vaughn stares down the commander for a few seconds, then takes a firm step forward.

Vaughn

Rookie mistakes? So I was the one that decided we shouldn't check the last camp just 'cuz there'd been no problem last time you were through, you complacent old--

We observe various reactions from the group. Solemn disquietude from many of the others, including a few near a large gap, and a surprising degree of excitement from a younger woman seated near Telamon. The party seems almost evenly split between the two men.

Lysander pulls him down forcefully before he can get farther. The Commander snorts derisively

Lysander(whisper)

Don't trouble yourself with those words, son. He's really angry with himself. He has to stay tough. We'll be sure to keep everyone sa--

Vaughn("quiet")

Don't make excuses for that trash. He's old, stubborn, and stupid. The unholy trifecta.

Berenike

Dammit, V, you're part of a *team* here, same as all of us. Nothin' goods' gunna come from making a stink every time you disagree with him. Stop being a brat.

Vaughn

Oh? So we should follow him around 'cuz he's old? We've lost four so far! Lyra choked on Organ fungus spores because he refused to believe you saw them (he gestures to Lysander). Yannis and Dimitrios got left behind after he insisted on going *though* that razor grove just to save a few hours travel--only to get us lost again.

He glances to the surrounding forest sharply and fires another burst of energy. A faint wail sounds.

Vaughn

Screw off, we're talking!

He sits again and continues in the same tone.

Vaughn

And then that *abomination* took Savas right out from under our noses because he forced him to stay up almost thirty hours straight. Now he stops us in the middle of an open clearing and breaks out the Thermastra. We might as well have a "free lunch sign" hanging over us.

Over time Vaughn's voice and articulations have grown, so that he is now nearly shouting. Everyone in the circle is looking at him. Telamon swaggers to his feet and crosses the fire in a few lazy steps. Leaning forward, at least a head taller than Vaughn and twice as thick.

He speaks in a mock-calm voice.

Telamon

I've been about as patient as I can be with you, boy. Your parents think you're some prodigy, but I know your type. We lost those people 'cuz a rookie like you has us all distracted. I shoulda' sacked both your parents for even mentioning bringing a brat like you along. Now, you're going to shut up and do as your told.

He turns away and addresses the group.

Telamon

Things've been hard this mission, aye. Likely, tomorrow, they'll only get harder--but remember why we're out here (long beat, gross smile) the reward! Our client wants that Gi-device, and we're gonna get it no matter the cost. Now, you've all been asking what the plan is. After all, we're going up against those forest freaks in own of their own strongholds. Well, the answer is this: We're gonna shell them with this wonderful little present (he nods to a young woman sitting on his side of the fire).g

The girl happily pulls out a small device from a pack next to her, and presents it. A round of surprised exclamations sound.

Telamon

Yes, this is a pyra, and it is in full working order. We'll get at least ten minutes worth of bombardment over a mile radius with this before we move in. There'll probably be noone left to fight by the time we're done.

Most of the group looks surprised and impressed by this, but Vaughn cuts through their hopeful mutterings.

Vaughn

So you're going to announce our presence for miles around and wait almost ten minutes before moving in to take the Gi? How stupid are you? You know that village is on a petrified Titan oak (he gestures to a moon-silhouetted mountain towering some miles distant) You won't kill all the outsiders, and they'll know you're coming. Worse, you'll probably attract some other horror or even destroy our objective. Not to mention, you'll have to grapple across miles of open space or trek for a day through the woods.

Telamon whirls on him, hand dropping to his belt for a dagger, murder in his eyes, but Vaughn already has a sword leveled at his throat. The rest of the group jumps up and begins babbling all at once, but Vaughn and Telamon keep their eyes locked. After a few seconds, Telamon speaks

Telamon

Shut up, all of you. Boy, That was the last straw. You get yourself and your attitude gone before I stop that tongue of yours from spouting any more insubordination. See how well you do without a group to keep your ass safe.

Vaughn

I'll do just that (he sheathes his blade and steps back) but I ain't going alone. Everyone, I've talked to most of you over the past few days and you know the situation. The commander here's clearly got his mind set on dying tomorrow, or on the way back out of here--and I don't plan on joining. Do you?

Vaughn steps back to his packs and begins gathering things. People stand confused, though Telamon snorts and throws himself down on the other side of the fire disgustedly. Vaughn