

Red Rising — Essential Scenes Map [Book 1]

12 scenes that tell the complete story of Book 1. Cut for a 20-minute visual experience.

Scene 1: “The Helldiver”

Chapter: 1 (Helldiver) | Why Essential: Establishes Darrow’s world, his skill, his love for Eo, the oppression of Reds. The foundation of everything.

Key Characters: Darrow, Uncle Narol, Eo (in his thoughts)

The Passage: > The first thing you should know about me is I am my father’s son. And when they came for him, I did as he asked. I did not cry. Not when the Society televised the arrest. Not when the Golds tried him. Not when the Grays hanged him. Mother hit me for that.

On Mars there is not much gravity. So you have to pull the feet to break the neck. They let the loved ones do it.

I smell my own stink inside my frysuit. The suit is some kind of nanoplastic and is hot as its name suggests... Despite the voices in my ear, I am alone in the deep tunnel. My existence is vibration, the echo of my own breath, and heat so thick and noxious it feels like I’m swaddled in a heavy quilt of hot piss.

Visual Notes: Claustrophobic underground mining tunnels, sulfurous yellow light, a lone figure on a massive drill machine. Sweat, grime, the oppressive heat made visible through steam and distortion. Mars underground — a world that has never seen sunlight.

Narration Excerpt: “The first thing you should know about me is I am my father’s son. On Mars there is not much gravity. So you have to pull the feet to break the neck. They let the loved ones do it.”

Scene 2: “Eo’s Song and the Hanging”

Chapter: 5 6 (The First Song / The Martyr) | Why Essential: THE inciting incident. Eo’s forbidden song, Augustus’s cold fascination, and her execution. This is why everything happens.

Key Characters: Darrow (bound, watching), Eo (on the gallows), Nero au Augustus, Podginus (Copper magistrate)

The Passage: > No one is offended that I’m bloody and beaten. But when Eo is dragged atop the gallows, there are cries. There are curses. Even now she is beautiful, even drained of the light I saw in her three days ago. Even as she sees me and lets the tears come down her face, she is an angel.

As the thirteenth lash falls, as I mumble for her not to do it, Eo stares into my eyes one last moment and then she begins her song. It is a quiet sound, a mournful sound, like the song the deep mines whisper as wind moves in the abandoned shafts. It is the song of death and lament, the song that is forbidden.

Podginus glances embarrassedly over at ArchGovernor Augustus, who descends on golden gravBoots to watch more closely. His shining hair glistens against his noble brow. High cheekbones catch the light. Those golden eyes examine my wife as though a worm had suddenly sprouted a butterfly's wings. His scar curves as he speaks with a voice dripping power. "Let her sing," he says.

But never has Eo been more beautiful to me than in that moment. In the face of cold power, she is fire.

Visual Notes: Underground Common, thousands of Reds packed together, gallows center frame. Augustus descending on golden gravBoots like an angel of death — glowing, alien perfection against filth and rust. Eo's voice rising, echoing through the cavern. Cut to black as the rope goes taut.

Narration Excerpt: "But never has Eo been more beautiful to me than in that moment. In the face of cold power, she is fire."

Scene 3: "Burying Eo Under the Stars"

Chapter: 6 (The Martyr) | Why Essential: Pure grief made physical. The most tender scene in the book. Darrow's love and loss crystallized.

Key Characters: Darrow (carrying Eo), the women of the Webbery

The Passage: > I take my wife in my arms and together wend our way from the square to the Webbery. A nightshift is working their final hours. The women watch in silence as I carry Eo to the ventilation duct.

Women begin to cry, and as I pass they reach to touch Eo's face, to touch mine and help me open the ventilation duct. I drag my wife through the tight metal space, taking her to where we made love beneath the stars, where she told me her plans and I did not listen.

I dig a hole near the base of a tree. My hands, covered with the dirt of our land, are red like her hair as I take her hand and kiss her wedding band. I place the outer bulb of the haemanthus atop her heart and take the inner and put it near my own. Then I kiss her lips and bury her. But I sob before I can finish. I uncover her face and kiss her again and hold my body to hers till I see a red sun rising through the artificial bubbleroof.

Visual Notes: Dark procession through tunnels. Women's hands reaching in silence. Then the hidden garden — trees, butterflies, artificial sky. Close up on Darrow's hands digging, red dirt matching her red hair. The haemanthus flower placed on her heart. A red artificial sun rising.

Narration Excerpt: "My hands, covered with the dirt of our land, are red like her hair as I take her hand and kiss her wedding band."

Scene 4: "The Lie — Mars Revealed"

Chapter: 8 9 (Dancer / The Lie) | Why Essential: The worldbuilding revelation that reframes everything. Darrow learns the surface of Mars is already terraformed — his people are slaves, not pioneers.

Key Characters: Darrow, Dancer

The Passage: > The lift stops. The doors open. And I am blind.

Behind the glasses, my pupils constrict to adjust to the light. When at last I'm able to open my eyes, I expect to see a massive glowing bulb or a flare, some source to the light. But I see nothing. The light is ambient, from some distant, impossible source. Some human instinct in me knows this power, knows this primal origin of life. The sun.

Beyond the glass sprawls a city. The city is one of spires, parks, rivers, gardens, and fountains. It is a city of dreams, a city of blue water and green life on a red planet that is supposed to be as barren as the cruelest desert. This is not the Mars they show us on the IC. This is not a place unfit for man. It is a place of lies, wealth, and immense abundance.

Mars's red and barren surface is scarred with the green of grass and struggling woods. The sky above is blue, stained with stars. The terraforming is complete. This is the future. It should not be this way for generations. My life is a lie.

Visual Notes: Elevator ascending. Blinding light — a boy who has never seen the sun. Then the reveal: panoramic shot of a gleaming Martian city, blue sky, flying Golds in the distance. The contrast between this paradise and the tunnels below is staggering.

Narration Excerpt: "The terraforming is complete. This is the future. It should not be this way for generations. My life is a lie."

Scene 5: "The Carving — Red into Gold"

Chapter: 12 (The Carving) | Why Essential: Body horror transformation. A miner's body reshaped into a golden god. The birth of a weapon wrapped in beauty.

Key Characters: Darrow (being carved), Mickey (the Carver), Evey (the winged Pink)

The Passage: > My body begins to change. I thicken. My muscles become strong and corded in the concentration machine. Gradually, strength builds. My shoulders grow broader, rounded; I see tendons emerge in my forearms; a tense mass of hard muscles bind my torso, like armor.

And me? It's hard to look at myself in the mirror. I'm what I know the devil to be. I am arrogance and cruelty, the sort of man who killed my wife. I am Gold. And I am as cold as it. My eyes shine like ingots. My skin is soft and rich. My bones are stronger. I feel the density in my lean torso.

"You're beautiful," Evey says quietly, touching my golden Sigils.

"Red is rising, Mickey."

Visual Notes: Dark medical cell, Mickey's twelve fingered hands working. Time lapse transformation montage. The mirror reveal — camera behind Darrow, golden eyes staring back. The face of the enemy looking out from his own reflection.

Narration Excerpt: "I'm what I know the devil to be. I am arrogance and cruelty, the sort of man who killed my wife. I am Gold."

Scene 6: "The Passage — Killing Julian"

Chapter: 19 (The Passage) | Why Essential: The moral crucible. Two naked boys, one ring. Darrow must kill an innocent to infiltrate Gold society. The scene that makes him a killer.

Key Characters: Darrow, Julian au Bellona, Proctor Fitchner

The Passage: > "There are also two of you. Alas, only one spot is available in your class." He tosses a golden ring emblazoned with the wolf of Mars and a star shield of the Institute onto the dirty stone ground. "I could make it ambiguous, but you look like rustyheaded lads. Only one comes out alive."

I don't want to do this. I can't explain how badly I don't want to hurt Julian. But when has what I wanted ever mattered? My people need this. Eo sacrificed happiness and her life. I can sacrifice my wants. I can sacrifice this slender princeling. I can even sacrifice my soul.

Rage overtakes me. My face goes numb. My heart thunders... I break his nose with a straight. God, my hands are strong... My Helldiver knuckles shatter his reinforced sternum.

I mutter my wife's name as I fall to cradle his head. His face has become like a blood blossom.

Visual Notes: Bare stone room, single light. Two naked boys. The golden ring on the ground between them. The fight — brutal, clumsy, nothing like the elegant duels of Gold. Darrow's fists, cracking bone. Julian limp on the floor. Blood pooling like a haemanthus flower.

Narration Excerpt: "I don't want to do this. I can't explain how badly I don't want to hurt Julian. But when has what I wanted ever mattered?"

Scene 7: "After the Passage — A Killer's Guilt"

Chapter: 20 (The House Mars) | Why Essential: The emotional aftermath. Darrow alone with what he's done, understanding why Golds rule. Character defining.

Key Characters: Darrow (alone), then Roque, the House Mars survivors

The Passage: > There's stillness in my soul as I look at the broken boy. Even Cassius would not recognize Julian now. A cavity is carved into my heart. My hands tremble as the blood dribbles off them onto cold stone. Rivers along the golden Sigils upon my hands. I am a Helldiver, but the sobs come even as the tears are gone.

This is not who I am, who I want to be. I want to be a father, a husband, a dancer. Let me dig in the earth. Let me sing the songs of my people and leap and spin and run along the walls... Let me wash dirt from my hands instead of blood.

Freedom costs too much. But Eo disagreed. Damn her.

I must not become like them. I'll remember that every sin, every death, every sacrifice, is for freedom.

Visual Notes: Stone hall, water dripping. Darrow naked, blood lathered into his skin, trying to wash it off. Cannot. The metaphor made literal. A young man sitting in a cold corner, utterly alone. The wolf tapestry watching.

Narration Excerpt: "This is not who I am, who I want to be. I want to be a father, a husband, a dancer. Let me wash dirt from my hands instead of blood."

Scene 8: "Meeting Mustang"

Chapter: 26 (Mustang) | Why Essential: Introduces the other half of the series' heart. Mustang is brilliance, challenge, and the first Gold who sees Darrow as an equal. Their banter is instant electricity.

Key Characters: Darrow, Cassius, Mustang (Virginia au Augustus)

The Passage: > A girl on a dappled mustang watches us from the edge of the glen... She is small, delicate. Her smile is not. It mocks us.

"Lo, Mars," she says smugly, looking at the sigil on our jackets.

"Well, this is swell." I kick a stone with my shoe. "Lo ... Mustang. Nice sigil. And horse."

She's all laughing eyes and a smirking mouth in a face shaped like a heart. Hair so golden it sparkles in the sun and flows down her back in braids.

"Fancy a roll in the mud, do we? Well, how about I promise to let you up here with me if you give me more clues as to where your castle squats?"

Visual Notes: Highland glen, misty, loch in background. A girl on horseback backlit by sunlight, watching two battered boys with amused superiority. Her golden hair braided, face streaked with war paint. Sparring with words instead of swords.

Narration Excerpt: "She's all laughing eyes and a smirking mouth in a face shaped like a heart. Hair so golden it sparkles in the sun."

Scene 9: "Cassius's Betrayal"

Chapter: 33 (Apologies) | Why Essential: The consequences of the Passage catch up. Cassius learns Darrow killed Julian. Their brotherhood ends with a sword through Darrow's gut.

Key Characters: Darrow, Cassius au Bellona

The Passage: > "A holo that shows you killing Julian, brother."

"Because you killed my brother?" He spits. "There is no we, you feckless quim. Get off your gorydamn horse."

"It's how you killed him." He's quiet for a moment. "We come as princes and this school is supposed to teach us to become beasts. But you came a beast."

With a little flick of his wrists to move my sword sideways, he steps in and drives his ionBlade through my armor into my belly... Dignity leaves me and I begin to whimper like a dog. Throbbing pain blossoms... I fall back moaning. Cassius leaves me bleeding and sniveling in the mud.

My blood goes out. With it go Dancer's hopes, my father's sacrifice, Eo's dream... The mud is dark and cold. This hurts so much. Eo. I miss her. I miss home.

Visual Notes: Riverside at night, snow falling. Two boys facing each other in mud, swords drawn. Moonlight on wet steel. The duel — quick, brutal. Cassius walking away. Darrow curling around the wound in dark mud, alone. Blood and snow mixing.

Narration Excerpt: "We come as princes and this school is supposed to teach us to become beasts. But you came a beast."

Scene 10: "Mustang Hums Eo's Song"

Chapter: 34 (The Northwoods) | Why Essential: Darrow's lowest point becomes his rebirth. Mustang — a Gold — hums the forbidden song that killed Eo. The dream is alive in the enemy's daughter.

Key Characters: Darrow (wounded, delirious), Mustang (nursing him)

The Passage: > I cry silently. I want Eo. Why can't I have her?... I couldn't win. I couldn't beat Cassius, not to mention the Jackal. I was the best Helldiver; I'm nothing here.

When I wake, Mustang sits by the fire. She knows I'm awake but lets me pretend otherwise. I lie there with my eyes closed, listening to her hum. It's a song I know. It is a song I hear in dreams. The echo of my love's death. The song sung by the one they call Persephone. I hummed by an Aureate, an echo of Eo's dream.

I weep. If ever I've felt there was a God, it is now as I listen to the mournful chords. My wife is dead, but something of hers lingers still.

Visual Notes: Cave mouth in winter. Small fire, furs. Mustang silhouetted, humming. Darrow lying still, tears rolling silently. The forbidden song of a Red wife, hummed by a Gold girl in a snow covered highland. The moment Darrow realizes Eo's dream isn't dead.

Narration Excerpt: "My wife is dead, but something of hers lingers still."

Scene 11: "The Jackal Cuts Off His Own Hand"

Chapter: 41 (The Jackal) | Why Essential: Defines the Jackal as one of fiction's great villains. Pure horror, pure will. And Pax's sacrifice — the cost of underestimating a monster.

Key Characters: Darrow, The Jackal/Adrius, Pax, Sevro and Howlers

The Passage: > Then he starts to cut. Tears stream down his face as the blood first wells. He's sawing and Pax can't even watch. The Jackal is halfway done when he looks up at me with a sane smile that convinces me of his complete insanity. His teeth chatter. He is laughing, at me, at this, at the pain. I've not met anyone like him. Now I know how Mickey felt when he met me. This is a monster in the flesh of a man.

Pax launches himself forward, not onto the Jackal, but onto me. His weight crushes me, and his body covers mine... Ten impacts as the Jackal stabs at Pax trying furiously to get at me like some rabid animal digging in the dirt, digging through Pax to kill me while I'm down.

Blood drips onto my face, warms my body. It is my friend's.

Visual Notes: A boy pinned by a dagger through his hand, calmly sawing with a stolen blade. Teeth chattering with laughter. Then chaos — explosion, the gentle giant throwing himself as a shield. Blood dripping onto Darrow's face. Silence.

Narration Excerpt: "This is a monster in the flesh of a man."

Scene 12: "Rise — Augustus Claims His Prize"

Chapter: 44 (Rise) | Why Essential: The ending. Darrow has won the Institute but kneels before the man who killed his wife. The final words are a promise of war disguised as an oath of fealty.

Key Characters: Darrow, ArchGovernor Augustus, Mustang, Sevro (watching)

The Passage: > "I think, my lord, that it would present some interesting opportunities." I look up into his eyes, hoping he mistakes the fury there for excitement.

So I kneel before him, as is their way. And as is their way, he sets his hands upon my head. The words creep from my mouth and their echo is like broken glass into my ears.

"I will forsake my father. I will abandon my name. I will be your sword. Nero au Augustus, I will make my purpose your glory."

"Darrow, Lancer of House Augustus. Rise, there are duties for you to fill. Rise, there are honors for you to take. Rise for glory, for power, for conquest and dominion over lesser men. Rise, my son. Rise."

Visual Notes: Mountain top, spring snow melting. Darrow kneeling before Augustus as dozens of Golds watch. His fists clenched. His jaw tight. The man who hanged his wife setting hands on his head like a benediction. Darrow's golden eyes — fury mistaken for ambition. The slingblade banner — Lambda's working tool turned weapon — flying over every castle.

Narration Excerpt: "I will sharpen myself into a sword. I will give my soul. I will dive to hell in hopes of one day rising to freedom."

All passages extracted directly from Red Rising, Book 1 by Pierce Brown. No text invented.