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Last Knights

By Michael Konyves

During the long, dark period
of the Great Wars,
an elite class of soldier
rose from battle.
Their unbreakable code was simple...
possess a noble heart of courage,
right conduct, and absolute devotion
to one's master.
From out of those years of bloodshed,
an empire would emerge.
Its power would assimilate
persons of every color,
creed, and faith.
This uncontested rule eroded
the traditions of the great knights,
but not for all.
Lay down your swords, you may walk free.
I'm the official envoy of the Emperor.
I carry a message for Lord Bartok.
I welcome you to the castle.
I will take the message.
The message is for you master.
Anyone who wishes to speak
with my master must first speak with me.
Do you believe that the words
of the Emperor are fit for a mere retainer?
I have no doubt that your arrogance
is effective in other houses.
Therefore, it is a mistake
I am willing to forgive.
What is your name, foot soldier?
I'm certain that the Emperor himself
would want to know who has been
so charitable toward his envoy.
An introduction would have been
the right place for you to start.
I am Commander Raiden
of the Seventh Rank.
Your name is well known to me.
Forgive my presumption.
My Lord.
This comes directly from the capital?
Sealed before my eyes
by the Emperor himself.

Very well.

I am ordered to the capital
to meet with Minister Gezza Mott
to review new protocols and duties.

This is a farce!

The new protocol is the bribe
expected of me at that meeting,
and for no other reason
than to remain in his good favor.
This minister's influence has grown
considerably since your last term.
He is favored to succeed
as First Council.

I will not tolerate this kind of bribery,
either in my own pocket or in my capital.

- What are your thoughts?

- I follow you, My Lord.

Since when do you speak
anything but truth?

Say what you think.

Well, if it's truly the injustice
of corruption which upsets you,
then perhaps you might have been
so passionately moved to act
before you arrived in your own court.

What exactly do you mean by that?

I mean that it would be prudent to examine
if this is simply a matter of pride.

It's not a matter of pride,
it's a question of dignity.

- So you will refuse the duty.

- I refuse the extortion!

My Lord, corruption within the capital
is nothing new.

How is this different
from any other absurd new tax?
When a man like that can demand
a bribe out in the open,
with no fear of recourse,
we're headed for a dangerous time.

What?

You think I hold on to an idealism
that no longer exists?

Perhaps.

- Sir?

- I'm fine.

- Let me call the physician.

- He's examined me.

When? What did he say?

You will not speak of this to them.

My beautiful ones return.

And how did your studies go today?

Lilly's music instructor has said
that she's the most advanced student.

- Of course she is.

- I think he's exaggerating.

And I think he's

an astute judge of talent.

Either that or he's prepared

to request a raise in his wages.

Now, will you play something for me?

Good.

Not all confrontations will be one-on-one
as now practice sessions.

I was not aware we were practicing
such a scenario.

There are never warnings in battle.

Not all adversaries will adhere
to the warrior's code as we do.

You must always be on alert.

We must begin preparations
to leave immediately.

We've been summoned to the capital.

Lieutenant, will I be
joining the convoy?

That is the Commander's decision.

With all respect, sir,

I believe I'm ready.

If the Commander made decisions based
on what others believed about themselves,
half these men would have my position.

Gather the men

to prepare for our journey!

You startled me.

How long have you been standing there?

Hours.

Your humor is not on par
with your stealth.

It is an unfair advantage
to use your skills upon your wife.
Trust me, it is you
who has the advantage over me.
And what might that be?
I heard the official messengers
had arrived.
I take it they didn't carry good news.
Why do you say that?
You may be able to hide your presence
from me, but not your thoughts.
We are summoned to the capital.
I thought you were not expected
until the turn of the season.
- It is a request from our new minister.
- For what purpose?
Nothing worth disturbing
our evening for.
You mean you do not wish to discuss it.
No, I mean I will soon be apart from you
and I can think of many better things
to occupy our time with.
It's difficult to argue with that logic.
Come with me.
My great-grandfather,
a ferocious warrior.
Not well-liked, but he was responsible
for expanding our lands
into the province it is today.
My father...
he alone was responsible for protecting
these lands during the Great War.
You would've taken pleasure
in knowing him.
My son.
I have no heir.
I will be the tenth
and last generation buried here.
30 years ago this month,
and against all counsel,
it was idealism that led me
to invite you into my home.
A young man with an empty soul,
muddled by drink,

and as dark as the graves
of those who crossed his path.

But it was idealism
that saw through all of that
to the man I see before me.

Now you give me better advice
than I give myself.

When I have departed this world,
these lands will be in your care.

- My Lord.

- My name will be yours to uphold.

But your sword is to be passed to an heir.

I am merely your retainer.

You are the heir to my spirit.

Our bond has been earned, not inherited.

- No, sir...

- Take the sword.

- You be safe.

- Of course.

Be well, my love.

- You ready, Commander?

- Yes, My Lord.

We have the gift

for Minister Gezza Mott?

Yes, it's all taken care of.

- Gabriel.

- Commander.

- Thank you for this great honor.

- I knew your mother and father well.

If they were still among us,
they would be very proud.

- So it begins again.

- So it does.

Sit down. Sit down.

Sir, may I ask you a question?

Of course.

You've known the Commander
a long time, yes?

Since I was your age.

Is it true he was not born
into the military class?

He comes from peasant stock.

Orphaned as a young boy,
entire family died of the fever.

Is that when Lord Bartok took him in?
No. Much later, when he was a young man.

- Why do you ask?

- Stories circulate about him.

They say he was cruel and murderous
without conscience or honor.

For many years,

he was given to the drink.

The dark fog made him violent.

Does knowing this

change your respect for him?

One is to be admired

for rebuilding thyself,

not judged.

Now get some rest.

Long journey ahead tomorrow.

Welcome, Lord Bartok.

- Your journey went well?

- Quite.

It can be long.

It seemed short.

I see you've come bearing a gift.

It's customary for an official visit.

- A robe.

- A fine robe.

You may also keep the box.

Did your retainer attend to the gift?

No, I chose it personally.

Very well. We'll begin early tomorrow.

There is obviously much to do.

I look forward to your review

of the new protocols.

Yes, and in addition to that, we'll get

the chance to discuss the challenges

which face the future

of the Bartok lands.

I don't think he liked the color.

If I'd known what you'd intended,

I would've insisted you bring something more.

More? I gave him the box too.

This is not a matter of amusement.

He has taken this as a personal insult.

- Tomorrow I will bring a more suitable gift.

- You will not.

And in my presence, you will refer
to the Minister's demand
as it really is... a bribe.
Adopting the language of the pretense
only serves to ease participation in it.
My Lord, I think that perhaps now
is not the time to take such a hard stand.
And if I ease my approach now,
at what crossing would you recommend
I stand my ground?
When they've taken half my land?
When it comes to a point
where I have to exercise my own tyranny
over those beneath me
to support the bribes of those above?
Who does he think he is?
Perhaps he did not understand
what is expected of him.
He understands perfectly.
Does he arrive here planning to make
a name for himself at my expense?
Or is he so filled up with pride
that he has no room for humility?
Here, dog, a silk for your filth!
Where are we expected?
There is something I wish to show you.
Such a fine sword.
May I?
This is a nobleman's blade.
Where did you come by it?
It was a gift...
from my master.
I have never heard of such generosity
from lord to retainer.
It seems you have won.
It is my favorite room here
because it exemplifies the great virtues
of generosity and humility...
qualities necessary to operate smoothly
within the workings of the capital.
A quality all the other noblemen
whom I have received seem to grasp.
Are you beginning to understand
the points of our talk?

Yes.

Very impressive.

You really intend giving all this away?

I'm reaching the end
of my patience with you.

We can play this game
as long as you like,
but you'll receive no bribe from me.

Is that what this is to you? A game?

How do you think the Emperor would respond
to his command being thought of as a game?
Since you're only threat seems to be running
to the Emperor like a pouting child,
- you should ask him as soon as possible.
- I need not ask.

You were ordered to this review
by the Emperor, and yet you reject his word.
I reject any attempt by you to exert
some delusional power over me.

It is you who live
under illusion, not me.

I offer you no threat but a promise.

I will not only take
your property and standing,
but I will turn everything connected
to the Bartok name into dust.

And when I'm done,
it will be as if neither you nor any
generation before had ever existed.
You should be careful not to overstep.
Something wrong?

I have known many like you, men who...
once their hairs bleed grey
and their spines cut them like daggers,
come to revise their own history.

Truth is that your innermost fear
is in fact your most striking attribute.
You are irrelevant.

You have neither cast a shadow
nor left any footprints
upon the great legacy
of the Bartok clan.

Your only achievement
was being born into nobility...

and you somehow
failed to reproduce even that.
Guards! Guards!
You draw your blade
on a minister of the Emperor?
Minister, your father-in-law approaches.
What happened? All I've been told
is that you were attacked.
I cannot say too much at this time.
But we are about to witness
the wrath of the Emperor.
You have been summoned
before our most glorious
and wise Emperor.
The prisoner who stands
before you is Lord Bartok.
He has committed the crime
of attacking a loyal minister
of the Emperor.
The prisoner will now be permitted
to address his peers
before our master passes judgment.
What has just been said of me is true.
I offer no argument
nor dispute the simple facts.
But they hardly begin to cover
the scope of my true crimes.
Honor requires more than admission,
so I offer a full confession
and the whole truth.
For far too long, I failed to recognize
my own hypocrisy.
I ignored my own cowardice,
conveniently hiding behind a position
of political compromise.
And for what?
To retain the meager wealth
and rank that men desire.
So I come before you a condemned man
for having finally stood up
to injustice.
My shame and regret
is that I failed to do so
before it arrived in my own court.

We supply the armies,
we build the roads,
we employ the nation.
Still, we remain silent
while our coffers are emptied
and our freedoms eroded.
There will be times
where we are powerless to injustice,
but there must never be a time
when we fail to protest.
This man, Gezza Mott,
is a cancer, growing.
And the only proper thing to do
is to cut it out.
You all know what I speak of.
Each one of you has been subjected
to his extortion.
But my words are not in judgment
of my fellow noblemen,
they are a warning.
I urge you to consider
what you are doing,
for we are helping this man
to forge the very chains that bind us.
Which brings me to the confession
of my true crime,
so that I may redeem my honor.
My crime
is only that I failed to kill Gezza Mott
when I had the chance.
We have enjoyed hundreds of years
of peace under my family's rule.
We brought order where there was chaos,
peace where there was nothing
but war and bloodshed.
My subjects accept their roles,
content in the knowledge
they serve the greater good.
If you think your words will move
your fellow noblemen to dissent,
then you're sorely misled.
Are you prepared to receive
my judgment and regain your honor?
I am prepared to receive your judgment,

but my honor is intact.
You dare to contradict
the word of the Emperor?
All those in your house
shall be evicted from your lands.
The Bartok clan is no more.
And your delusions of self
require more extreme measures.
Your crime and defiance
to the ordinances of the capital
shall be repaid with nothing less
than your head.

- You cannot do this!
- How dare you address the Emperor directly!

My Lord, a judgment of this kind
is unprecedented for a nobleman.
This display of arrogance
cannot go unanswered.
What do you suggest?
Your Commander is fiercely loyal
to you, Lord Bartok.
And so it is fitting
that you should meet your end
by his sword.
Should you refuse the order,
all of Lord Bartok's blood relations
shall be executed as well.

- Minister!
- First Council,
the word of the Emperor has been spoken.
Commander!
Let him pass.
- You will do this.
- No.
I'm already dead.
I will take death at your side
rather than participate in this spectacle.
I know you will,
but how will that serve us?
My Lord...

- I cannot do this.
- It's already done.
Think only of what follows.
The spirit of our clan

will endure through you.

Commander Raiden!

The Emperor's word is not a request
that requires your decision.

Remember this, Raiden,
the wounds of honor
are self-inflicted.

Draw your sword.

My Lord...

- please.

- Commander...

draw your sword.

Your devotion to the code
is absolute, is it not?

- Yes, My Lord.

- Then, as your lord and master,
I order you to complete this duty.

From this moment on,

be no more grieved
about what you have done.

This will quiet any whispers of dissent
for quite some time.

We must deal with Commander Raiden
with a quick and firm hand.

Do you offer this for our master's
benefit or your own?

Did you see how he stood before you?

He's a rabid dog, that one.

We control the warriors through
their absolute loyalty to their masters.

How do you think two million

of them would react

if we eliminated one of their own
for exemplifying...

- ...the virtue of loyalty?

- What if he should seek vengeance?

He is not to be touched.

There are already too many disavowed
looking for a reason to act.

If you come upon real proof
that he intends to move against you,
then I will order his death.

But not until then.

- Is that understood?

- Yes, Master. Until then.
Shall I see to the eviction and the
subsequent dispensing of the Bartok lands?
The lands should be divided equally
so as not to favor
one nobleman over another.
Of course. But I will not bother our master
with the details at this time.
I will attend to it myself.
I'm certain you will.
You must keep aware
of the Minister, My Lord.
I know you do not approve of Gezza Mott,
but his ambition and greed
serve my interests well.
Yes, My Lord.
Hannah.
Father.
Auguste! I hear your crops
were plentiful this season.
Yes, they were.
So the lands I took and gave over to you
proved sufficient in replacing
the dying ones you had when we first met?
They have.
Perfect.
Now tell me, you knew Lord Bartok.
What do you know of his retainer?
I did not know Bartok that well,
though we had a few dealings.
As to this Raiden,
I only know of him through rumor.
Tales of his violent past.
You spent time with him.
What is your assessment?
I would be shocked
if he were to let this go.
I ask that you send me
a thousand of your men
to increase my security
until this is over with.
- A thousand?
- Yes.
- That is more than half my retainer.

- All of whom you have because of me.
Would you prefer to return
to the impoverished state you were in
before I graciously
took your daughter as my wife?

No, Minister.

You will oversee the eviction.
After that, and for as long as it takes,
I want eyes upon Raiden
every minute of the day.
When he decides to strike,
we will be ready.

Sir!

Are we going to let this happen?

- We won't leave without a fight!

- Yeah!

Everyone must pack
their things and leave.
Palace guard is already on its way.
We're simply to be thrown out
into the street with nothing?

How are we supposed
to support ourselves?

Commander, are we to understand
that you would have us do nothing?

Our master is dead.

I'm no longer your commander.

From now on, you owe allegiance
to no one but yourselves.

Gentlemen,
you are disavowed.

Don't touch her!

These people are losing their home.

You will treat them with respect.

Where are you going?

I'll have a drink here!

Round for my friends.

That's all of it? Well, it's barely enough
to meet our expenses.

Tonight we'll treat ourselves to a good meal
in the city. It will do you good.

All right. Well, I'll be on my way.

The roads into the market
will already be busy.

Did you see?
Your father gave me my own brand.
That's wonderful. He's never taken
to an apprentice so quickly.
And I hope soon to stop saying "apprentice"
and start saying son.
Now add your mark. We have to be going.
Once they have done installing the panels,
we will continue with the floors.
Yes, sir.
Cannot find a dagger like this
anywhere in the land.
Token of my deep respect.
Support such as yours
is how our nation grows in strength.
You can be certain your request
for tax relief will be heard.
Thank you, Minister.
- Are you almost done?
- Yes.
Perhaps my body would have the strength
to rid itself of this memento
if I had a physician of real skill.
I have followed the proper treatment.
Something seems to prevent
the wound from closing.
Is that what you offer
as an explanation?
"Something"?
Get out!
Why did you send a servant away?
You do not allow for interruptions
when in conference.
Did you consider
that the servant is required
to taste everything she brings me
for the threat of poisoning?
No? Or perhaps you were fully aware...
- ...and you feigned ignorance.
- Of course not.
And I'm expected to take your word
simply because you're my wife?
The tea's getting cold.
It appears the tea is not poisoned.

How is the gate coming along?
This iron gate is capable
of holding back an entire army.
Perhaps, once it is installed,
we could release some of the extra guards
on loan from your father-in-law.
Providing for them has brought us outside
the parameters of our budget.
The cost will not be an issue.
The cost of the pavilion now stands
at five times the approved estimate.
Without the gold leaf...
As stimulating as your accounts
of my accounting are,
I need a word in private
with my commander.
What news have you for me?
- More of the same.
- And his men?
Scattered about.
Finding employment where they can.
- Has he had any contact with them?
- No.
And yet he still remains in the capital.
We have eyes upon him
every moment of the day and night.
He's patient.
But his act doesn't fool me.
Nor should it you.
Prod him.
Find out what he's hiding.
Please follow me. Look who is here.
- Lieutenant.
- Please sit, everyone.
- Bring us some more to drink.
- Gabriel.
So, what do you say
about my establishment?
- Certainly it is a good fit for you.
- A perfect fit.
And you, how are you keeping yourselves?
I'm managing the fishing boats
of a wealthy merchant.
Gabriel is working for them also.

That would explain
your distinctive fragrance.
And the reason my wife
allows me to remain here alone.
No other woman will touch me.
Perhaps without compensation.
- Half price for you.
- No, thank you.
I will accept that offer.
Once you begin paying for your drinks,
I will consider extending
my discounts to others.
Gentlemen, to your prosperity.
- That way you will further increase mine.
- Hear, hear.
Cheers.
And you, Jim?
I work when I can.
Maybe there's some work at the harbor.
Should I inquire?
No. Such... such a labor's not for me.
Between your poverty and his smell,
I must be sitting with the two
loneliest men in the capital.
Indeed, we're the two loneliest men.
He spends most of his days here now.
Thought you told me he had
fallen back to his old ways,
I find it hard to believe.
He appears to be better
than usual tonight.
- I must be going.
- Please, do not leave on account of him.
It sickens me to be in his presence.
Lieutenant. Lieutenant!
Where you going?
Come and have a drink with me.
I'm no longer your lieutenant.
Raider, wake up.
Here, drink this.
Let us get you home.
I'm fine.
- Let me help. You can barely walk.
- I don't need your help.

I'm fine.

You will not find anyone better than me
to teach your son how to wield a sword.

I gave you my offer.

And I don't see anyone else
here bidding on your talents.

So do you accept my offer?

'Cause I have no more time to waste.

Yeah, good luck with your son.

He's gonna need it.

And then I saw him coming
out of Gezza Mott's front gates.

How? He would have never been allowed
within the Minister's walls.

He's working as a metal worker's apprentice
and has an entirely new identity.

- I questioned others in the square about him.

- He must've been in desperate need of work.

I'm certain that the Minister
would pay handsomely to know
that one of Bartok's men
has created a false identity
in order to work right under his nose.

Shall we?

The first thing I'll do
with my newfound fortune
is obtain lodging closer
to drinking establishments.

- I like the sound of that.

- And then I'll earn my...

You're late.

Jim saw you leaving Gezza Mott's today.

He was gonna bring that information
to Gezza Mott with hopes of a reward.

I was left with no other choice.

- It is my fault.

- Not your fault.

Jim was willing to sacrifice
your life for his own rewards.

That's it, we cannot have
any more mistakes.

Do you have the credentials?

Gezza Mott's compound is now
the most fortified complex in the nation.

Gaining entry is not only going to be difficult, it is probably impossible. The only point of direct access is here, at the main gates. The drawbridge is raised at sundown, when the day workers must exit. It must be operated at both sides at the same time in order to cross. We have to take control of it from the outside, here, and the inside, here. Past the main gates, soldiers' barracks. 250 soldiers sleep here every night, fully armed and ready to fight. We won't be able to fend them off if we wake them. Once past the soldiers' barracks, we must enter the garden maze. It's the only way to traverse the compound unseen. Not only do I have to prune every tree, but since the Minister's chambers are set so high, I have ensure the gardens look good from above. That brings us to the pavilion. It is the only point of cover before the castle. If we are able to survive the torrent of arrows raining down upon us, we'll finally reach the iron gates of the residence. Absolutely impossible to open from the outside.

- Sir, I must be going.
- Yes, of course.
- Where you going?
- To see his girl.

Why are we spending time on this when we could be hearing the young one's tales of innocence lost? Leave the boy be. Mind yourself. Here are the forged documents necessary for working inside the compound. I must do some repairs

to the roof of your watchtower.
The previous carpenter
did not do very good work.
With the wages they pay us,
who could blame him?
I sold three baskets today.
Something wrong?
I'm tired of eating nothing but rice.
If I was not the only one working,
perhaps we could afford something else.
Why are you still doing this?
There's no shame in feeling grief,
but destroying yourself
will not bring Lord Bartok back.
Spare me your insight.
That is all we have left.
- Why not stay in with me? Just one night!
- And watch you weave more baskets?
Please, Raiden!
Please.
I cannot do this for much longer.
Where is it?
- Where is it?
- What?
Your sword.
Oh.
Here it is.
I'm leaving.
I agree.
This is not the type of establishment
for a respectable woman.
I'm leaving you.
I have struggled with the hope
that you'd come back to me,
return to being the man I married.
But that you'd sell your sword
only proves you never will.
If you have something to say to me
to make me think otherwise,
now is the time.
Sir,
the Minister has been summoned.
His wisdom and loyalty
will forever be remembered.

Come with me.
Before his passing,
First Council recommended
I pay attention to
your dealings with the noblemen.
He believed your methods are exceeding
political and moral propriety.
There is a balance to be maintained
between dominance and patronage.
Your initial gesture as First Council
will be a new tax relief
for both the citizens and the noblemen.
It is the great honor of my life
to serve you in this capacity.
Your appointment also brings to an end
any and all bribes demanded
of the noblemen.
In your capacity as Minister,
there was sufficient distance between us
that I could allow you such freedom.
But no more. It is not needed.
And this obsession of yours with Raiden
will cease immediately.
You surround yourself
with more security than I.
It's an embarrassment to you.
He has already destroyed himself.
Accept that you've emerged
the stronger with some dignity.
Yes, Master.
I thank you for your guidance
and wisdom.
Does he not understand
that I'm under siege?
My Lord, I believe Raiden
is no longer a threat to you.
- Why?
- He has sold his sword.
And?
A warrior disposing of his sword
can only be interpreted in one way.
He has abandoned all attachment
to his former self.
You think to pacify me with this?

Who cares about a piece of metal?
Do you think
you can obscure your failure
to expose him by using this juvenile
warrior's code as justification?
Leave me.
I will decide what need be done.
Show yourself. Show yourself!
Show yourself!
My husband requests you.
These unfolding paths
have been quite interesting,
when you consider them.
As I ascend to the apex of my ambitions,
he sinks further into the abyss.
In recognizing that symmetry,
if you were him,
could you allow such a personal disgrace
and affront to go unanswered?
No.
So I've come to realize that we're dealing
with someone of such profound internal damage
that he has simply
not been pushed far enough.
Find me Lord Bartok's family.
Do you take issue
with anything asked of you?
Not at all.
And for this price,
there's not much
I would take issue with.
Commander.
I have a... surprise for you tonight.
A new selection.
And listen, no negotiating on this one.
She's still a virgin.
Raiden.
Raiden.
You have come for me.
What is wrong?
You have come to take me,
have you not?
Raiden.
Please! Please!

Please! No! No!
Raiden! Raiden!
Raiden!
Raiden, help me!
No!
No!
Don't leave me.
It is over.
There is nothing left to do.
Are you sure?
Perhaps he simply
didn't care for the girl.
Are you listening to me?
His master's daughter
was presented to him as a whore,
and he did nothing.
He cares for nothing.
Not honor, not his family, not himself,
and certainly not you.
At last,
I'm free of this.
Well done!
Well done!
I've marked where the urns are buried.
You did well.
We have planned,
we have sacrificed,
we have waited for the right moment.
And now...
it is time.
Auguste, welcome.
I see you come bearing quite the gift.
I wanted to give you something special
to recognize
your well-earned appointment
and to thank you for returning my men.
Of all the gifts I have received,
this is my favorite.
I'll have a short visit with my daughter
before my journey home with my guards.
Yes, yes, that will be fine.
Honor is something
that all men are born with.
It cannot be taken from you,

nor can it be granted.
It must only not be lost.
We now stand at the door
of our final great act.
Tonight, our enemy will bear witness
to the unbreakable code of the Seventh Rank.
We will reclaim what they tried to take.
We will restore the name
of our master...
the voice of our people...
and the spirit of our nation.
Guard! Guard!
Hold them as long as you can.
- It is him!
- Stay in your chambers.
Why did I ever trust you?
I told you, you imbecile!
Remain in your chambers!
Open the flaps! Ready the archers!
Lord Bartok was my oldest
and dearest friend.
I knew you would not allow
this disgrace to go unavenged.
My master told me that should I be left
without anyone to trust,
that I could always trust you.
I offer my help in any manner you need.
But with a condition...
you ensure my daughter's freedom
from that man.
- I give you my word.
- Tell me what you need.
Find somewhere safe to hide.
Wait.
Thank you.
Let's go!
Did I do well?
You fought well.
You fought well.
We have come for Gezza Mott.
I can no more back down than you.
You think you're a hero?
You will be remembered only
as a traitor and a disgrace.

Only time will tell
how we are remembered.
Something you...
no longer have.
Who is it? We're closed.
Your father's honor has been reclaimed.
The Bartok name will never be forgotten.
Thank you.
To wage an attack on the First Council,
the flagrant disregard of my power...
it will not go unanswered.
The only question is,
how severe the punishment,
how many generations of each
should I wipe out.
The only reason you are all here
is because I am without a First Council.
Now will someone speak their mind?
My Lord, it would be prudent
to recognize
that to the people,
these men are heroes.
Heroes?
To the people, these men stand
for the virtues that made our nation great.
Virtues once exemplified
by all warriors.
Now...
hardly to be found in any.
If your punishment
is seen to be unjust...
you chance turning these warriors
into martyrs for a cause against you.
However,
if we treat them with the respect
befitting an honorable warrior,
we align these heroes with us.
I cannot allow such transgression
to go unpunished.
Everyone must be reminded that no one
can stand against the Emperor.
My Emperor...
may I offer a solution?
I have one more request.

If we are to succeed,
the Emperor's first instinct
will be to take the heads
of each of my men and their families.
You are correct.
But, as with all his decisions,
he will first seek advice.
Without a First Council at his side,
he will be open to the voices of others.
You mean to say mine.
My men accept that death will be waiting
for them upon completion of our task.
They are warriors of the Seventh Rank.
They will not ask for a reprieve.
But I ask it for them.
And not yourself?
These warriors are nameless to most.
But one stands apart.
One is known to all.
Commander.
What is this?
You are to assume command at the castle.
No. Commander.
Commander, you cannot do this.
We stand with you.
I stand with you.
Lieutenant, your devotion
to the code is absolute, is it not?
Yes.
Then as your commander,
I order you
to take control of the Bartok clan.
It is with benevolent wisdom and esteem
that the Emperor proclaims
these noble warriors
as heroes of the people.
They are a shining example
and a reminder
of those values that bind us
as one great nation.
However, no matter
what the circumstance,
an attack on a member
of the Emperor's council

is by law considered
an attack on the Emperor himself
and our great nation.
I'm sorry.
I am so sorry
for all you've had to endure.
Acting the part was not difficult.
Wondering if I was
truly losing you was...
unbearable.