

DARK GOD
(title is still a work in progress)

Episode 01:
"I'm Here For My Gold!"

A half-hour Shonen-style Animated TV Show!

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EXT. THE SOUTHWEST SLUMS - NEW COLUMBUS - DAY

Cracked pavement. Fading paint. Dark alleys. Clouds of smog hang in the sky above.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW - NEW COLUMBUS - CONTINUOUS

Huge steel buildings churn smog into the sky. They form the center of a monstrous city, sleek at its core and crumbling away at the edges.

EXT. THE SOUTHWEST SLUMS - NEW COLUMBUS - CONTINUOUS

Five rough and tough young men corner NORMAN WHIZ (12) and his twin brother MALCOLM (12), both scrawny, covered in dirt and dust, with disheveled hair.

Norman is slightly smaller. He trembles with fear, holding a fully stuffed brown paper bag.

ROYCE 'ARR (26), chiseled body, serious demeanor, thick leather boots, and a cowboy hat on his head, stomps up to the boys.

ROYCE

(in a low, gentle voice)
Ain't nuthin' to be 'fraid of,
kiddies. I'm just a slum'dweller
like y'all. Now how's about you
give me all your food and all your
money, eh?

The boys back up into the wall, cowering. Royce's men LAUGH.

ROYCE'S GOON #1

I'd do what he says...

ROYCE'S GOON #2

Last one who didn't is layin' with
the worms now...

The goons LAUGH LOUDER.

Norman hugs the paper bag more tightly.

Malcolm puts a hand on his brother's shoulder, looking scared too.

MALCOLM

Do as he says, Norm. It's okay.

NORMAN

But muh-mama, she needs...she
said...

ROYCE

Hurry it up now, I ain't got all
day!

Royce glares, looking impatient.

Malcolm tries to take the bag from Norm, but Norm won't let
it go.

MALCOLM

Just gimme the bag, Norm. Give him
what he wants so he don't hurt us.

Norman sheds tears.

NORMAN

N-no, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

(pressuring)
Norm.

NORMAN

Mama needs to eat!

ROYCE

I've had enough waiting.

Royce cracks his knuckles. His goons chuckle.

ROYCE'S GOON #1

Oh, you kiddos are in for it now.

ROYCE'S GOON #2

Show him, Royce. Show him what
makes you the Lion of New Columbus!

Royce CHUCKLES. Smiles wide.

ROYCE'S GOONS

(cheering)
Royce! Royce! Royce!

MALCOLM

Norm, just--

Royce throws a punch, connecting with Malcolm's face.

Malcolm CRIES OUT. His head smacks into the brick building
behind him.

Blood trails down his face. Royce winds up and punches Norman.

Malcolm is crying. Norman hugs the paper bag tighter, SCREAMING as Royce's fist bloodies his nose.

ROYCE

Stupid kiddos! This'll teach ya.
 (His goons CACKLE. He punches the boys over and over)
 When Royce the Lion asks for sumthin', you give it!

He SCREAMS in fury, and the scream turns into a ROAR.

Suddenly, his teeth transform, growing sharper and longer, like the fangs of a lion. When next he punches Norman, his fist has grown golden brown tufts of hair.

Norman drops the brown paper bag. Royce pulls back his fist and flexes his fingers, which have turned to lion claws.

Royce's gang CHUCKLES. Royce picks up the paper bag, then steps away from the twins.

ROYCE (CONT'D)

Alright, your turn, my cubs! Beat 'em up till they're unconscious. Or dead! I don't care which.

Royce walks off. His goons pounce, beating up the twins until they're on the ground, SCREAMING.

INT. AN EXQUISITE CATHEDRAL - DAY

The twins' SCREAMS are drowned out by the RINGING of church bells.

The buzz of EXCITED CHATTER fills the air. Domed ceilings, stained glass windows, pews made of redwood that shines like new.

The church is packed with men in suits and silver ties, and women in dresses of varying muted colors, most carrying little umbrellas that hang over their heads, attached to the backs of their dresses.

A PASTOR stands at the front.

PASTOR

Ah-hemm. We are gathered here today, on this wondrous day, to celebrate the union of two families, forever drawn together through time. Will the groom, Mr. Robert Messenger, please enter?

WEDDING MUSIC begins, played by a band of dapper young men and women.

MR. ROBERT MESSENGER (27), dressed in a sky blue tuxedo with an impeccable pink tie, walks the aisle. He is groomed to perfection, with a slick mustache and a short ponytail.

His parents walk on either side of him, looking just as splendid, though in more muted colors.

He reaches the front and takes his place. His parents leave him, settling into the pews on the left side.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

And now, will the bride, Ms. Damea Truth, please enter?

The doors swing open once again, admitting a lovely lady in a brilliant white wedding dress. She walks the aisle, twirling a multi-colored umbrella over her head as she approaches the groom and the pastor.

Her parents accompany her. Like the groom's parents, they leave her at the front and take their places in the pews, this time on the right side.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

On this harmonious day, we join together in holy matrimony the Messenger and the Truth...

As the pastor speaks, from below there comes a very quiet sound that goes *THUMP! SWISH!* over and over again. At first, the sound is so faint that nobody seems to notice it.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Across countless generations they have been together, and now the soulmates join once more. The Messenger, Mr. Robert, will you please recite your vows?

Robert nods, smiling.

ROBERT

Oh Damea, I shall forever be there for you. Through thick and thin, whatever happens, I will lend an attentive ear when you are in times of sorrow, I will share in your joy when the good times come.

(he takes her hands in his)

I will love you with all my heart every day, and when we grow old I will love you even more. At all times, I will speak the truth, and when it is hard to hear, I will be there to comfort you. Until death do us part, I shall be yours, and from one end of the Baklas Belt to the other, I will always communicate with you, so that you may know our love will never fade.

Damea smiles.

PASTOR

And now, the Truth, Ms. Damea, will you please recite your vows?

DAMEA

Robert, I will cherish you with all my heart. I will endeavor to make you aware of my every thought, and I will share in your times of joy and sadness as well, just as you share in mine. Together we shall be soulmates, united until death, and with me you shall never feel alone.

The sound from underneath the church is growing louder now. The crowd looks around, distracted. It's not clear where it's coming from.

THUMP! SWISH! THUMP! SWISH!

The priest hesitates, the next words caught in his throat. He eyes the people in attendance. Nothing is out of the ordinary.

He CLEARS HIS THROAT.

PASTOR

Ah-hem, everyone, please remain silent until the reception. This is a special time for Mr. Robert and Ms. Damea.

(MORE)

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 (beat. The noise hasn't
 stopped. The priest now
 speaks louder, over it)
 AND NOW, IF YOU PLEASE, THE RINGS?

MUSIC plays, drowning out the mysterious sound as a young boy approaches with the rings on a pillow. The priest takes them, then distributes them to the bride and groom, who slip them on.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 Mr. Robert Messenger, do you take
 Ms. Damea Truth to be yours, to
 love and to hold, to cherish until
 death do you part?

ROBERT
 I do.

PASTOR
 And Ms. Damea Truth, do you take
 Mr. Robert Messenger to be yours,
 to love and to hold, to--

Before the pastor can finish, the floor between Robert and Damea bursts open, revealing the blade of a shovel.

The shovel is thrown into the air.

Everyone looks up. It could come down on either the pastor, Robert, or Damea.

Eyes wide, they all cover their heads and SCREAM LIKE SISSIES.

It hits the pastor in the head and he collapses.

Then FREDDIE (17) climbs out of the hole in the ground and looks around in wonder.

The wedding guests GASP, taken aback. Freddie is dressed in casual attire, covered in dirt, and his clothes are wrinkled and his hair uncombed.

A moment of silence as both he and the wedding guests stare at each other.

Then Freddie grins and opens his mouth.

FREDDIE
 (loud and drawn out)
 I'M HERE FOR MY GOLD!

A moment of stunned silence follows his proclamation. He gazes around the room, a big grin on his face.

Then, the wedding guests erupt into BICKERING and SHOUTING.

The RAUCOUS noise drowns out Freddie's voice as he LAUGHS, then turns to look at the bride and groom, the big grin never leaving his face.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Ooh, a wedding! Congratulations.

He strides up to the bride and groom. They stumble away from him, the bride cowering behind the groom as he grabs a broom to defend them.

Freddie spits in his hand, then extends it to shake.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

My name's Freddie. What's yours?

THE BRIDE

(whispering)

Oh my god, he's coming after us.

THE GROOM

Worry not, darling. I'll hold him at bay.

THE BRIDE

Oh, you're so brave.

THE GROOM

(waving the broom)

Back! Back, dirt-man!

FREDDIE

(frowns)

Hey, that's not very nice. Is that what you call everyone who's got a little dirt on them?

THE GROOM

It's what I call your kind. Now back, go back where you belong.

FREDDIE

(confused)

Where I belong?

THE GROOM

Yes! Underground.

FREDDIE

I can't do that! I moved out.

THE GROOM

What?

FREDDIE

(laughs)

Well, it's a funny story, you see, ever since I was eleven years old, I really wanted to set out and strike it rich by discovering gold, only my grandma told me I wasn't old enough and my mom was just sleeping all the time and my dad was who knows where? So then I had to wait until I got older--

Freddie is interrupted by LOUD, SHUFFLING feet as a group of armed guards charge into the room.

GUARD #1

Remain calm, everyone! Hurry and clear the area! We'll take care of the dirt-man!

The wedding guests make a beeline for the exit, SIGHING in relief as they leave.

WEDDING GUEST #1

Thank the holy Solus. Finally, the guards are here.

WEDDING GUEST #2

How did he even get in? I thought the city was supposed to be impregnable!

WEDDING GUEST #3

We should all lodge complaints with Flares! He's the chief of the guard. I won't rest until he starts actually doing his job, the slacker!

The rest of the wedding guests nod in agreement, muttering their discontent over the incident as they leave.

THE GROOM

Over here, guards! Help us!

The guards rush towards Freddie, the groom, and the bride.

GUARD #1
Back, dirt-man! Leave those
innocent people alone.

FREDDIE
(turning to face the
guard)
Why does everyone keep calling me
dirt-man?

GUARD #1
(raising a spear)
If you don't want a fight, I'd
suggest you go back home.

Freddie CHUCKLES.

FREDDIE
You know, I used to do quite a bit
of fighting down in the mines,
we've got all sorts of carnivorous
monsters we have to contend with,
they're way bigger than you.

He CRACKS his knuckles.

The rest of the guards fall in line alongside guard #1.

GUARD #1
Careful. He's too confident. He's
got something up his sleeve.

Freddie grins.

FREDDIE
Ah! So you're smarter than you
look, soapy guy.

GUARD #1
(confused)
Soapy guy?

FREDDIE
Yeah, you like? I figured you need
a nickname since mine is apparently
dirt-man.

GUARD #1
Look, dirt-man, I don't know what
you think you're doing but there's
no way you can infiltrate the city
of New Columbus and live to tell
about it. We'll strike you down
right here and now. Men, get ready.
(MORE)

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

On the count of three, we attack.
Raise your spears and prepare to
strike in a unified assault.
Whatever he's planning, he can't
possibly beat us if we work
together. Now, one...

Guard #1 notices that Freddie is standing by the hole he came
in from with his shovel in hand.

FREDDIE

Okay, I get it, you don't know
anything about gold. Bye-bye
everyone, have a good wedding!

GUARD #1

Get him, guards! Don't let him get
away!

Freddie jumps back in the hole.

GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

I said get him! Get him, guards!
Charge!

Nobody's moving.

GUARD #2

So are we still counting to three,
or...?

Freddie SHOUTS IN JOY as he descends the tunnel.

INT. ROYCE'S DIGS - DAY

A spacious room, lavished with light. Empty.

Couches, tables, and a desk are filled with discarded junk
like fast food wrappers, beer cans, playing cards, unlit
cigars, and papers.

There's a shut door at one end of the room. The sound of
someone PISSING comes from the other side of it.

LAUGHTER comes from the other side of a different closed
door. That door opens, admitting Royce and his goons.

ROYCE

Alright, my cubs! How much loot do
I have? Count it up!

His goons CHEER, throwing open a bunch of paper and cloth
bags, tossing the loot all over the floor.

They begin counting.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
Anthony! Where you at? Hurry up and
get out here!

Royce struts up to his desk. He looks around, curious.
Silence.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
Anthony! Don't make me get...

WHIMPERING sounds come from the other side of the door behind
Royce. Royce grows silent, a curious look on his face.

The sound of PISSING STOPS.

Royce turns around. Stares at the door. Curiosity becomes
fear.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
Anthony?

ANTHONY (O.S.)
S-sorry, boss! One second.

ROYCE
What's going on in there?

A big THUMP.

ANTHONY (O.S.)
Um, I, nothing.

ROYCE
Don't lie to me.

ANTHONY (O.S.)
Er, well, I spilled it.

ROYCE
Spilled what?

ANTHONY (O.S.)
My, um, my pee.

ROYCE
Anthony, you turd.

ANTHONY (O.S.)
Please don't be mad.

ROYCE
(through clenched teeth)
I'm. Not. Mad. Open the door.

The door opens.

Reveal: ANTHONY YIKES (14), nerd extraordinaire. He wears big glasses, has a bowl cut, and his shirt is tucked in. His clothes are full of holes and all raggedy.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
How many times have I told you not
to piss in there?

ANTHONY
(looking at the ground)
Uh, sorry.

ROYCE
C'mere, I'ma wring your neck!

Royce GROWLS, lion teeth revealing themselves.

Anthony SHRIEKS, runs around the desk while Royce chases him.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
That's my bedroom you pissed in,
you moron!

ANTHONY
I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Please don't
hurt me. Please boss.

ROYCE
Go in the outhouse next time!

ANTHONY
It's scary out there.

ROYCE
You're an idiot, you stupid idiot!

ANTHONY
I'm sorry!

ROYCE
You're gonna clean up that piss
after I kill you, you hear?

ANTHONY
AH!

ROYCE'S GOON #1
 Hey boss, look at this! We got one
 of those fancy things that go bang!

Royce stops in his tracks, turns to face his goon, who holds up a gun.

ROYCE
 A gun!

He rushes over to the goon, Anthony forgotten.

Nerdy Anthony leans over, hands on his knees, breathing hard. He nervously watches Royce and his goons as Royce takes the gun in hand, gawking at it.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
 Amazing. I thought the city folk
 kept these locked up tight.

ROYCE'S GOON #2
 Must be our lucky day.

Royce SNICKERS.

ROYCE
 Ain't that the truth? With this gun
 and my god powers, we'll destroy
 damn Andre and take all his
 territory!

Royce's goons CHEER.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
 Now then, time to get to work.

Royce twirls the gun around on his index finger, turning on his heel, and he struts to his desk.

ROYCE'S GOON #3
 Need us to do anything, boss?

ROYCE
 Yeah. I'm gonna need everyone.
 Gather around, boys! That includes
 you, Anthony, or I'll poke out your
 eyeballs.

Anthony jolts to attention. He's standing near Royce's bookshelf, admiring the books.

He trudges over to Royce and his goons.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
 Seriously, Anthony. I can't believe
 you're trying to read books again.
 What did I tell you about that?

ANTHONY
 (sheepish)
 Books are for losers.

ROYCE
 Exactly right! Real men do things
 in real life. Now, hand me my city
 map and my special pen.

Anthony dutifully opens the drawer next to Royce. Royce could
 have easily reached it. He sets the map and pen down on the
 desk near Royce.

ROYCE (CONT'D)
 (drawing on the map)
 This is where Andre is. This is all
 his territory.
 (he circles a huge plot of
 land on the outskirts of
 the city)
 Tonight, it's up for grabs. I'll
 kill him and we'll take what's
 ours!

Royce's goons CHEER.

ROYCE'S GOON #1
 So where do we come in, boss?

ROYCE
 I'll tell ya. I'm going to do the
 shooting. I need all of you to help
 me distract his men. Anthony! You
 listening?

ANTHONY
 Yes boss.

ROYCE
 Good. You're the bait.

Anthony shakes.

ANTHONY
 Bait? What? I dunno, boss, I'm no
 good at this stuff.

ROYCE

You'll do it or I'll hang you
upside down and stick your head in
a bucket of your own piss.

ANTHONY

(nervous as all hell)
Oh no! Not that again!

ROYCE

The rest of you, accompany Anthony.
He's going to do his nerd thing and
pretend like he's the brains of the
operation. Once you get everyone,
and I mean everyone's attention,
you run like hell. They will chase
you. Then, I'll swoop in and kill
that damn Andre!

ROYCE'S GOON #1

Damn Andre!

Everyone CHEERS.

ROYCE

(all serious)
We leave at sundown.

EXT. THE SOUTHWEST SLUMS - NEW COLUMBUS - EVENING

With the sun coming down, Royce's four goons march down the
street. A nervous looking Anthony walks in the center of the
group, with a suit jacket and sunglasses.

ROYCE'S GOON #1

Stop shaking, Anthony.

ROYCE'S GOON #2

Yeah, you're going to ruin the
plan.

ANTHONY

Sorry, I can't help it.

ROYCE'S GOON #2

Stupid nerd.

ANTHONY

(taking deep breaths,
mumbling)
I can do this. C'mon. I just gotta
believe in myself.

As he mumbles to himself, he looks down at the ground. Deep beneath the dirt, there comes the faint sound of digging.
THUMP! SWISH! THUMP! SWISH!

EXT. UNDERGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Freddie digs with his shovel, pushing further along in a horizontal direction, piling the dirt behind him as he plows forward.

He doesn't look tired at all. In fact, he's like a machine, just repeating the digging motion over and over in a rhythmic fashion.

FREDDIE

Ah, there's nothing quite like a good dig!

Freddie smiles, looking up.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

But you know what? I think it's time to come up for some air!

INT. ANDRE'S DIGS - DAY

A lavish penthouse suite. Expensive looking couches are occupied by scantily-clad women with expensive jewelry on most of their bodies, even nose-rings.

ANDRE SCHLUNK (61), with a built physique despite greying hairs and wrinkled skin, sits on one of the couches between two ladies, smoking a cigar.

He lets out a puff of smoke, then lowers the cigar, grinning.

ANDRE

Nice view, ain't it, ladies?

Suddenly, the double doors swing open, admitting a big HENCHMAN.

HENCHMAN

Sorry to barge in, boss, but it's urgent.

ANDRE

Always with the interruptions when I'm having a good time.

(sighs)

Well, what is it?

HENCHMAN

Group of strange men headed straight for us. Looks like another gang, and they're out in big numbers.

ANDRE

Well, you go out and take care of them, then.

HENCHMAN

Course boss. There's just one thing, thought you would like to know...

ANDRE

What's that?

HENCHMAN

Boss of 'em is some nerdy looking guy. I reckon he's the one we been hearing stories 'bout. Y'know, the one who cracked the code for the big bank vault at Goliath Central.

ANDRE

(smiling)

The Calculator. So he's blessed us with his presence, eh? Maybe we should welcome him in politely.

HENCHMAN

Really boss? What for?

ANDRE

We could use a man of his talents in our gang. Have Franz meet him out front.

HENCHMAN

Franz and who else?

ANDRE

Just Franz. Tell him I'll see The Calculator in here, if he'll meet with me.

HENCHMAN

Right, boss. I'll do just that.

ANDRE

(smiling)

Good. And one more thing.

HENCHMAN

What's that?

ANDRE

If he turns me down, tell Franz to
kill him.

The henchman leaves. Andre glances out the window again,
looking upon the smoggy city of New Columbus. It's mostly
slums for as far as the eye can see.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

As I was sayin', ladies, I've got
the best view in the whole
southwest quadrant. Ain't that
nice?

EXT. OUTSIDE ANDRE'S DIGS - A SHORT TIME LATER

A wiry, frizzy-haired eclectic man with glasses grins. This
is FRANZ (27).

He stands across from Anthony and Royce's other goons.

FRANZ

I'm Franz.

Royce's goons draw swords.

Franz jabs a finger at Anthony.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

Andre wants a meeting. Just you and
him. What do you say, nerd?

Anthony turns to Royce's goons, looking sheepish.

ANTHONY

Uh, uh, I dunno, hey guys, what do
I say?

The goons SNICKER, pointing their swords in Franz's
direction.

FRANZ

If you refuse, I'm under orders to
kill you.

ROYCE'S GOON #1

You? Kill us? We outnumber you four
to one!

Anthony shakes, stepping backwards, all nervous.

Franz smiles wide.

FRANZ
Numbers ain't everything.

Royce's goons chuckle.

ROYCE'S GOON #1
Let's get him, cubs! Let's show him
what makes us...Royce's lion pack!

Royce's goons CHEER.

Franz blanks.

ROYCE'S GOON #1 (CONT'D)
Surely you've heard of Royce the
Lion.

Franz shakes his head.

ROYCE'S GOON #1 (CONT'D)
WHAT? YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF OUR
BOSS?

FRANZ
Clean out your ears, I said I never
heard of no idiot lion.

ROYCE'S GOON #2
C'mon, you must've heard his name
somewhere.

FRANZ
No.

ROYCE'S GOON #3
He rules Dolph Street, and has
expanded his territory into half of
West 34th as well.

FRANZ
(chuckles)
That all?

ROYCE'S GOON #1
No, it's not all! Soon, we'll kill
your boss, and then the Lion will
rule all of southwest New Columbus!

Franz bursts out LAUGHING.

Royce's goons grow angry.

ROYCE'S GOON #1 (CONT'D)
 You think that's funny?

Franz can't stop LAUGHING.

ROYCE'S GOON #1 (CONT'D)
 (angry as hell)
 I'll show you what's funny!

Royce's goon #1 lunges at Franz with his sword. Franz stops laughing in an instant, sidesteps the sword. The rest of the goons close in on him.

FRANZ
 (calmly)
 Burn.

At once, steam bursts forth from every inch of Franz's body.

The steam envelopes the charging goons. Through the steamy air, Franz is visible crouching low to the ground. The swords swing through the air above his head.

As the steam grows thicker, the goons CRY OUT in pain. The swords fall and CLATTER against the stony road.

Royce's goons back away. Their skin is turning red from the heat, and in some cases starting to blister and peel away.

Franz stands up, eyeing the goons and Anthony.

Royce's goons fall on their butts, GASPING, COUGHING, and CRYING.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
 Better finish you off. You're
 causing a ruckus.

Franz twirls his fingers, creating more steam.

Anthony watches in horror. The steam shoots out of his hands like jets from a geyser, slamming into each of Royce's goons one by one. Head shots.

And just like that... all is silent. Royce's goons aren't moving.

Franz twirls his fingers.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
 Cool.

The steam floats away. Franz eyes Anthony with commanding eyes.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

So do you work for this Lion fellow too, Mr. Calculator?

Anthony trembles. He looks like he wants to speak, but can't.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

Whatever. I don't care a lick 'bout it, long as you agree to meet with Andre, we're cool. So, you ready to come along?

Anthony starts spouting GIBBERISH. He backs up, then trips over his own two feet, falling to the ground.

ANTHONY

I'm nobody! Please! I'm just a nobody! Don't hurt me.

FRANZ

Nobody? Don't play dumb with me. Boss Andre says you're The Calculator.

ANTHONY

What?

FRANZ

I don't know what he wants with you, but there's no use pretending you ain't him.

ANTHONY

The, um, Calculator?

FRANZ

That's right.

ANTHONY

Oh, that guy, Royce was talking about him, he was in the paper.

FRANZ

As I already said, no use playing dumb with me.

ANTHONY

I, uh, er, well...

Franz LAUGHS.

FRANZ

Just come along. Make yourself useful, and I promise Andre--

Franz is interrupted by a SHOUT. One of Royce's goons is still alive, crawling to his feet.

ROYCE'S GOON #1
 Royce! ROYCE!
 (crying)
 Help! Your cubs need your help!

FRANZ
 (eyeing the goon)
 Oh, for crying out loud.
 (lifts a hand)
 Burn.

Steam shoots from his palm, swallowing up the goon's head. His scalp burns red, his hair falls out, and he collapses again, this time dead for good.

Franz marches toward Anthony.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
 (extinguishing his steam)
 Cool.

This time, a LION'S ROAR interrupts him.

Feet POUND against cobblestones, and a figure shapeshifts, growing powerful legs, thick with fur, a well-built chest, and a mane around his face.

Royce rushes towards his goons, Franz, and Anthony, anguish painted on his face.

ROYCE
 My cubs! What did you do to them!

Franz rolls his eyes.

FRANZ
 Ah, you must be The Lion.

ROYCE
 (roaring)
 You'll pay!

FRANZ
 Don't waste my time. I'm here for The Calculator, and if you value your life you'll turn around and head back to your little hideaway, unless you want some steam burn.

Royce BURSTS into tears.

ROYCE

How could you? You burned them all!
 You monster!
 (crying)
 I told them to run, not fight! I
 told them to run, damn it!

FRANZ

Let's hurry along, Calculator. It
 ain't good to keep Andre waiting.

Franz offers his hand to Anthony. Anthony hesitates, looking at Royce, as if for permission.

Royce's tears become anger, and he hurls himself at Franz, GROWLING and SNAPPING huge lion teeth.

Franz darts out of the way, noticing the approaching lion before he's taken more than three steps. Royce changes direction, SNARLING with determination.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

Very well. Burn.

Steam pours from Franz's hand, hitting Royce head on.

Royce HOWLS, but pushes through the steam.

His fangs SNAP down on Franz's arm.

FRANZ CRIES OUT, then slams a fist into Royce's face. Royce backs up, WHIMPERING, a big bruise on his cheek, surrounded by scorch marks from the steam.

Franz glows with steam, taking DEEP BREATHS. Blood drips from his arm where Royce bit him.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

Damn Lion. You'll pay. You'll bur--

Suddenly, a BLAST OF DIRT flies out of the ground, hitting Franz in the mouth, shutting him up.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

Ack! Gah!

He spits the dirt out. A shovel is thrown into the air.

Royce, Anthony, and Franz look up. The shovel could come down on any of them.

Anthony SCREAMS like a SISSY.

The shovel hits Royce in the head. He passes out.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

What the hell?

There's a hole in the ground between Anthony and Franz.
Freddie leaps out of it.

FREDDIE

WOO HOO! I'M HERE FOR MY GOLD!

Franz looks confused and annoyed. Freddie's eyes sparkle with wonder.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey, why's everyone lying on the ground? Are they taking naps?

Freddie checks one of them out.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Damn. Looks like they got burned.
Was there a fire here?

FRANZ

Who the hell are you?

FREDDIE

(laughing)

Oh, I'm sorry, where are my manners? Name's Freddie. Nice to meet ya. Hey, that guy there is a lion.

FRANZ

You knocked him out with your shovel, dirt-man.

FREDDIE

Oh, did I?

(laughs)

Well, he'll wake up. Let's see, hey, you have steam coming out of you. You might want to get that checked on. It looks painful.

FRANZ

It's not.

FREDDIE

What? Really? But you have blood dripping down your arm.

FRANZ
 (annoyed)
 I don't have time for this. Step
 aside.

FREDDIE
 Oh. Okay.

Freddie steps aside. Franz glares at Anthony.

ANTHONY
 (freaking out)
 No, please! Just leave me alone.

FRANZ
 You want to die, Calculator? If
 not, keep quiet and do what I say.

FREDDIE
 Hey, that's not a very nice way to
 speak with someone.

FRANZ
 Keep out of this and scram, dirt-
 man. It ain't none of your
 business.

FREDDIE
 Call me dirt-man all you want, but
 I draw the line at kidnapping.
 Wait, are you kidnapping him?
 That's what it looks like.

FRANZ
 (rolling his eyes)
 Why in the great Lune's name does
 everyone keep getting in my way
 today?

Franz raises his hands.

ANTHONY
 Careful, man, he has these weird
 steam powers. I think he's a god.

FREDDIE
 (confused, incredulous)
 What?

ANTHONY
 You're no match for him, we have to
 run.

Freddie's eyes bulge out of their sockets.

FREDDIE
YOU'RE A GOD!?!

He rushes over to Franz, examining him from every angle.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
My dirt! I've never seen a real
live god up close. I've got so many
questions. First off, do you pee
and poop like us mere mortals?

THUMP! Franz whacks Freddie across the nose. He stumbles
backwards, looking hurt.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Ow. That hurt.

FRANZ
Stay out of my way, dirt-man.

Franz twirls his fingers, building up steam.

ANTHONY
Dirt-man, run!

Franz releases a big blast of steam, headed straight for
Freddie...

Except Freddie is already running. He grabs Anthony by the
arm, dragging him along at high speed.

FREDDIE
(eyes popping out of his
head)
Ah! Shit!
(running, panting)
What in the dirt is that guy's
problem?

Freddie weaves around a bend, coming up on empty streets.
Steam sails through the air behind Freddie as Franz gives
chase.

Freddie glances over his shoulder.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Ah, shit, this isn't good!

Franz launches more steam blasts. Freddie zigzags to avoid
them. Anthony SCREAMS as he's dragged along on the ground
like a piece of heavy luggage.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

So what the dirt is this about him being a god? The hell does that mean?

ANTHONY

(shocked)

Y-you don't know?

FREDDIE

Course not, that's why I'm asking.

ANTHONY

(nervous)

Oh, must be because you're a dirt man.

FREDDIE

Do they all shoot steam like that?

A blast comes dangerously close to hitting Freddie in the ear.

ANTHONY

N-no, I don't think so. Um, there are many different types of gods, each with a unique power. All of the inner city folk are gods, it's how they rule over us, us normal humans are nothing compared to them.

FREDDIE

So you're saying he gets to walk all over you just because he has some steam powers?

ANTHONY

Um, well...

FREDDIE

What's he want with you anyway?

ANTHONY

He thinks I'm the Calculator.

FREDDIE

The what?

(steam shoots overhead)

Oh dirt, he's gaining. Hang on tight!

Freddie pumps his legs faster, rocketing way ahead of Franz.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Thank god for all those years I
spent chasing deer.

ANTHONY

What? Why were you chasing deer?

FREDDIE

Oh, it's a long story.

(he laughs)

Let's see. All started with my
grandma, when she asked me to do
it.

EXT. THE TUNNELS OF BAKLAS BELT - DAY - FLASHBACK

A withered old woman, DENISE (86) stands in front of a 10-
year old Freddie. The tunnel is dark, with only dim lights
from a few torches throughout.

DENISE

Sweetie, I'm going to need you to
go and hunt for us, please.

FREDDIE

But doesn't papa usually do that?

DENISE

(shaking head)

I told you, your father isn't
coming back.

FREDDIE

But grandma, I'm too young to hunt.

DENISE

I know sweetie, but my legs are
weak, your mother isn't fit to
help, and your sisters are even
younger than you are.

FREDDIE

Are you sure papa won't come back?

DENISE

(frowning, serious)

I'm sure. I'm sorry, Freddie.

(she hugs him)

Now, you just have to find a deer.
Chase it down, and stab it with
this knife.

Denise hands Freddie the knife.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Stab it in the neck, okay? It will die if you stab it there. Push the knife in as far as it will go. Then you carry it back here, okay? Don't rush. It will be heavy, so take your time, and whenever you get back we will celebrate, okay?

Freddie nods, looking scared.

EXT. FOREST - A SHORT TIME LATER

A deer stands near a patch of grass. Freddie watches as it leans down, takes a bite, and chews.

FREDDIE

Gotcha, deer.

He adjusts his grip on the knife. Charges after the deer.

The deer hears his POUNDING FOOTSTEPS, looks, then runs.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey, come back here! Hey! Hey! Ah, damnit! I gotta run faster!

EXT. FOREST - A FEW YEARS LATER

Freddie (now 12) spies a deer, darts after it.

The deer turns, sees him.

FREDDIE

Gotcha!

The deer runs. At first it puts some distance between itself and Freddie. Then, Freddie pumps his legs harder, closing the gap.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You can't outrun ME!

Freddie leaps onto the deer, stabbing it multiple times with the knife.

EXT. FOREST - A FEW YEARS LATER

Freddie (now 14) chases down another deer, closing the gap even faster.

EXT. FOREST - SOME TIME LATER

Freddie (15) chases down yet another deer. This time he runs right past it, then circles back around. He's not even broken a sweat. He strikes it in the neck with his knife, killing it with one blow.

EXT. THE SOUTHWEST SLUMS - NEW COLUMBUS - BACK TO PRESENT

Steam shoots out of Franz's outstretched hand, rocketing toward Freddie. It whizzes by on his right, singeing his shirt.

FREDDIE

Ah, shit! Too much steam. Hey Anthony, you sure I can't fight this guy?

Silence.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Anthony?

Anthony has passed out. Freddie stops.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Alright. Guess it's time to fight this guy.

Freddie turns around. He positions himself in between Franz and Anthony.

FRANZ

Tired of running, dirt-man? Ready to give him up?

FREDDIE

(laughing)
No way, soap-man.

Freddie glares at Franz, turning serious.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I just decided I'm sick of all your steam.

Freddie runs toward Franz.

Franz grins. Easily lifts a hand, palm facing Freddie.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Burn.

A jet of steam shoots toward Freddie.

There's a DARK FLASH, and Freddie disappears. The steam shoots through empty air. A shadow races along the ground, toward Franz.

LAUGHTER. It sounds like Freddie.

FRANZ

What's going on? Where are you?
(eyes widening as he spots
the shadow that's almost
upon him)

Oh no. You're a--

Freddie shoots out of the shadow.

WHACK! He nails Franz in the face with the back of his shovel.

END OF PILOT SCRIPT.