

When Eagles Burn

written by

John Stone

The Lion Throne (c) 2024

FADE IN:

EXT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Keen eyed PETER DREYFUS (40's) spots a hand carved mahogany, Baroque THRONE, set in brown velvet with ivory buttons, characterised by EAGLES.

The old bespectacled PROPRIETOR approaches from inside the dimly lit shop and offers a smile.

PROPRIETOR

A lovely morning for it, isn't it?

PETER DREYFUS

Yes, it is.

(scratches head in wonder)

I was just curious about this old chair you have in your window. D'you happen to know how old it is by any chance?

PROPRIETOR

That's a very good question you ask, my friend.

(pauses)

Come inside. I'll have a look for the proof of its authenticity.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. COLOSSEUM - NIGHT

A gargantuan FIGURE dressed in a black robe dons an EAGLES HEAD. He bites the head off a live RATTLE SNAKE as he stands in front of the throne.

Thousands of FOLLOWERS kneel before him, they are dressed in red robes and Aztecian masks.

He discards the rest of the snake then raises his arms and prompts them to rise as he looks up and across the huge volcanic mountains. GREEN and RED LASERS light up the night sky.

He addresses them with a tremendous-

SHRILL CALL!

The throne sets ablaze and a FIREBALL engulfs the colosseum. Everything in its wake burns as he flies over his followers.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - CONT'D

The Proprietor leads him through to the rear of the shop where there are more artefacts.

INT. SMALL KITCHEN.

A small table with two chairs set aside. A carafe of coffee sits on the table, along with two mugs.

PROPRIETOR

Sit down, my friend.

PETER

Thanks.

During his awkwardness Peter takes a seat. The Proprietor sits down and searches his gaze.

PETER /

Do you have the paperwork, then?

PROPRIETOR

I do, in fact.

(knowing pause)

The problem is that you may not understand a single word of it.

PETER

(aback)

Oh. Why?

PROPRIETOR

It's written in Nahautl - the language of the Aztecs.

PETER

Oh really? So how did you happen to come by it, then?

PROPRIETOR

I purchased it at an antique exhibition many years ago in Monterrey. I remember the seller telling me it belonged to one of his Aztecan ancestors.

PETER

In Monterrey?

PROPRIETOR

Yes. Apparently it was kept at the Palacio Del Obispado before it burned down during the last century. It's been rebuilt since then.

PETER

Can I see proof of provenance?

PROPRIETOR

Of course.

PETER

Thanks.

PROPRIETOR

Just give me a moment. I put it somewhere, but my memory's not as sharp as it used to be.

(gets to his feet)

I'm sure it's inside a drawer down in the basement.

He disappears out back.

INTERCUT:

BASEMENT

The Proprietor opens cabinet drawers as he searches for proof of origin.

SHOP FRONT

Peter begins a full inspection of the throne as he turns it this way and that.

END INTERCUT.

The Proprietor returns with the official authenticity mark stamped upon a headed piece of paper. He waves it at Peter.

PROPRIETOR

Here. I have it.

Peter studies it carefully.

PETER

Looks genuine to me.

(pauses)

So, what's your price?

PROPRIETOR

Make an offer.

PETER

(aback)

Right. I see.

(ruminates)

Well, you must have some idea
what you want for it.

PROPRIETOR

Two-thousand.

PETER

(aback)

One.

PROPRIETOR

Eighteen-hundred and we'll say no
more about it.

PETER

Twelve and we have a deal.

PROPRIETOR

Fifteen, and that's my final
price.

PETER

Done.

They shake on it.

PROPRIETOR

I'll write you out a receipt.

PETER

Excellent.

They step out back.

PROPRIETOR

There is something you should know, first. I don't really know if it's relevant or not.

PETER

What is it?

PROPRIETOR

I remember the seller telling me that he discovered his cat's remains on the seat one morning when he got back from a business trip. It had been decapitated.

PETER

Did you believe him?

PROPRIETOR

Not really. I think he was attempting to add a bit of intrigue so I would purchase the thing.

PETER

Well, it sounds like you're doing your best for me to withdraw my offer.

PROPRIETOR

You can still change your mind. I'm not trying to force your hand in any way.

PETER

I'll collect it later today, if that's okay with you? I have some errands to run.

PROPRIETOR

That's fine. I close at six.

They complete the transaction. Peter exits the shop bearing a huge grin.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Two DELIVERY MEN in brown coats enter the spacious tiled hallway as they carry the Throne. Peter leads them towards the study.

PETER

Careful with it if you please.
It's antique. I don't want to
scratch it.

HEAD DELIVERY MAN

Where'd ya wannit, Chief?

PETER

The study. It's just at the end
of the hall here.

STUDY.

Wall to wall book cases fill the classically furnished room.

They place the Throne down in the centre of the room.

PETER /

Thank you.

Delivery Men exit.

A dim light emits from a tall lamp situated behind a worn
leather armchair.

Peter gazes at the throne in awe as he rubs his hands
together with glee.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. STUDY - CONT'D

Peter as a young boy lies in bed, fear upon his little face.
His grey bearded STEPFATHER spoons him.

END FLASHBACK.

Peter grits his teeth bitterly before he exits the room.

CU: The throne's Eagle Heads glow.

EXT. MANOR HOUSE

A black Bentley pulls onto the driveway. Peter climbs out and
with a sigh he begrudgingly opens the rear door for his
ageing MOTHER.

They enter the house.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

She removes her fur coat to reveal a purple dress and pearl necklace.

Peter sits down on the throne. He crosses his legs and stares at her coldly as she sits down on a leather winged armchair.

MOTHER

What's wrong?

PETER

Nothing. I'm fine.

MOTHER

You look like a little boy in that silly chair. What made you want to buy that?

PETER

It's antique, that's why.

(taps arm rests)

So what d'you think? D' you like it?

MOTHER

A bit too ornate for my liking.

PETER

Hand carved - Genuine mahogany.

He caresses the Eagle Heads as he continues to stare at her.

PETER /

It's been lacquered- Look.

MOTHER

Dontcha you mean knackered. It looks to me like it should be in a museum.

PETER

It's come all the way from Mexico.

MOTHER

Well maybe you should send it back... where it belongs.

PETER

It was kept at the Palacio Del Obispado in Monterrey by all accounts.

MOTHER

I bet you paid a fortune for it, as well. Somebody saw you coming. You silly fool.

PETER

Actually, I saw one very similar to this in Antique Monthly. The price tag on that one was 5K... this is in better condition.

A protracted silence they they stare at one another coldly.

MOTHER

You remind me of your father sitting there. He thought he was clever as well.

PETER

Interesting you say that.

MOTHER

Why?

PETER

Because I wanted to have a chat with you about that.

MOTHER

He used to cross his legs like that.

He quickly jumps to his feet and pours himself a brandy.

PETER

Sherry, Mother?

MOTHER

Oh, go on then... as you're having something.

He pours her a glass of sherry.

PETER

D' you want to know who you remind me of?

MOTHER

No, but I'm sure you're going to tell me anyway.

He hands her the sherry then casually sits back down.

PETER

Mutton. You look like a wrinkly old mutton dressed as lamb. But then you always did, even when I was a child.

MOTHER

Don't flatter yourself, Peter. It makes you look bitter.

PETER

Oh, so you agree then?

MOTHER

You've never shown me any respect. I wouldn't expect you to start now, would I?

PETER

That's right.

MOTHER

Is that why you brought me here, to insult me?

PETER

No, it isn't actually. I wanted you to see my new seat before you pop off.

MOTHER

Wishful thinking. I'm not going anywhere.

PETER

Why did you let him come in to my room?

MOTHER

I'm not sure I know what you're talking about.

PETER

Don't give me that shit! You know very well what I'm talking about.

MOTHER

I beg your pardon?!

PETER

That's right. You were too busy flaunting yourself to see what was going on right under your fucking nose.

MOTHER

Your father's the one you should be blaming, not me.

PETER

Father, or stepfather? Which one are you referring to? Because I'm referring to stepfather.

MOTHER

What?

PETER

Why did you turn a blind eye?

MOTHER

Rubbish! I never did.

PETER

You knew, didn't you?

MOTHER

No! Not until you mentioned it.

PETER

You didn't give a flying toss.

MOTHER

That's absurd!

PETER

I spied you having sex on that chair you're sitting on. At it like fucking desperado's, the pair of you! You couldn't get enough of each other to see what was going on right under your fucking nose.

MOTHER

(bitterly)

He never loved me. He used me to get to you.

PETER

State the obvious, why not?

MOTHER

He was a bigamist you know. Why'd you think he kept swanning off to Africa. He had wife and two children in Nairobi.

PETER

Sons?

MOTHER

They are.

PETER

Why didn't you stop him? You could've stopped him, but you chose not to. Why?

MOTHER

You're exaggerating.

PETER

I was ten years old for Christ sake!

MOTHER

I thought he idolised me, that's why. I couldn't bear to lose him.

PETER

What about me?! I'm your son!

His eyes become suffused and begin to shrink as his nose morphs to become a yellow beak while his face contorts with rage during a process of metamorphosis.

She sits agape as she spots the rapid change.

MOTHER

(terrified)

Take me home. I want to go home.

His piercing shrills cause her to close off her ears as she sinks to her knees.

The throne slides across the floor and blocks her way out as he shrills become volumetrically louder.

MOTHER
(frantically)
PETER, PLEASE STOP!

The Eagle Heads catch fire and glow as she screams out her pain.

MOTHER
PETER, PLEASE STOP THIS! YOU'RE
FRIGHTENING ME!

PETER
(amplified voice)
PAY! AND YOU WILL PAY!

Peter flies over her and digs his talons deep into her skull as he lifts her off the floor.

SHRILL!!

The throne ignites and a FIREBALL ensues as it shifts from side to side and crashes into furniture with Peter and his Mother completely lost during its ferocious contempt as it becomes aflame.

Shrills and screams palpable as she lies on the floor and burns with the Eagle on top of her.

EXT. GUTTED MANOR HOUSE - MORNING

CU: The throne appears completely in tact as it stands alone in its smouldering surroundings.

FADE OUT.

THE END