

Crown of Greatness

A steampunk archeological looter seeks riches inside a cave, but
finds greatness instead.

18-DE02-W07

FADE IN:

EXT. PATH TO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE - DAY

A simple unkempt dirt trail leads to the mouth of a small unnoteworthy cave of a dull brown mountain.

A group of three steampunks climb toward it. In the lead, is DAVEY T. He sports a TOP HAT adorned with gears and a smile of a con-man. He unrolls an old amber colored SCROLL. Inside is a digital MAP, it pinpoints their coordinates in relation to the cave. His eyes light up.

DAVEY T.
I'm almost there.

Just behind him walks, EVY, a beautiful woman who wears a loaded double shoulder pistol holster. There is no doubt she has used them. She and Davey look at each other and exchange loving excitement. They speed up.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)
Let's move, Brute.

Behind them is BRUTE, his large muscular size matches his name. On his back is a LARGE BASKET. Inside it, sits MAMA, her thin gray hair braided to the side.

BRUTE
Alright, Davey T.

He struggles to speed up.

EXT. MOUTH OF THE CAVE - DAY

Evy looks at the cave with wonder and excitement.

Davey holds the map. The screen starts to glitch and go in and out. He puts it away in his shoulder bag. As he does, a leather bound BOOK falls. Evy picks it up inquisitively and starts to thumb through it.

DAVEY T.
Alright old woman, you're up. There is too much riding on this. You are not going to mess this up for me, you hear me?

MAMA

(stern)

Don't call me that. Call me Mama. And I will lead you up there like I said.

Evy tucks the book in the back of her waistline and stares inside the cave.

EVY

(sotto)

We're going to be rich.

She runs in.

INT. JUST INSIDE THE CAVE - DAY

Inside, the cave stretches up for miles. Jagged pure black rock winds through many paths that snake up and circle the perimeter. Yellow crystal veins glow marbled throughout the walls. A waterfall comes from an unseen source above and flows elegantly through a chasm in the rock floor.

The whole group stops to admire it, especially Mama.

MAMA

It isn't an easy trip up. Not everyone made it during the races. True greatness is difficult to obtain.

DAVEY T.

I am not like the others who have failed. The Crown of Greatness will be *mine*!!

Mama remains calm.

EVY

It's all the way to the top?!

Mama chuckles adorably.

MAMA

No, not all the way up. Just mostly. It's -- up there.

She points, but no one can tell where. Davey turns a gear on a a LANTERN and it illuminates a wide area.

DAVEY T.

Let's go.

Brute lets out a big sigh and moves.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

The group begin their hike.

MAMA

I had almost forgotten the beauty of this place. I used to run around here as a young woman.

EVY

If you've led others to the top, how can it still be up there?

DAVEY T.

They didn't have what it takes. They lost sight of the goal. But I won't.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

They continue to climb. Brute sweats buckets. He grabs water from a fancy copper water bottle and drinks.

Evy steps on a rock, it cracks in half. She loses her balance. Her feet struggle to stay under her as she heads toward the edge.

Davey panics and runs to her aid. Her front foot stops just on the edge. Yellow pebbles glow as they fall and fall toward the unseen bottom. Davey grabs her and pulls her back from the edge. He questions her with his eyes. Her eyes reassure him.

The group takes a breather. Brute wipes his brow. He steps with even more care.

INT. CAVE TRAIL - FORK

Davey and Evy get to a fork in the trail. They stop and look back at Mama. Without being able to see where they are going, she shouts --

MAMA

Go left!

EVY

Is she just guessing?

DAVEY T.

Would you rather we go to the right?

Evy passes him toward the left. Her shoulder intentionally bumps his. He smiles.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

Davey walks next to Evy as they talk. Brute and Mama lag behind.

DAVEY T.

Snake said to call him the second we reach the bottom. I think he's more excited about the auction than we are. He said all of his contacts demanded an invitation. This thing is going to change everything for us, Evy.

Evy nods with a grin. They hold hands. Mama tries to get more comfortable in her basket.

MAMA

So how long have you known your boss?

BRUTE

Since we were kids. We used to read archeology books together. We wanted to travel the world and learn it's secrets.

INT. CAVE TRAIL - WATERFALL

They approach the powerful waterfall. It flows two feet from the wall, onto the path and off the side.

DAVEY T.

This water is the most dangerous part of the journey up.

Evy pulls out a DARK COPPER CYLINDER. She squeezes between the wall of water and the rock wall.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

This part of the race excites me most. One moment you could be doing fine, in the lead, then one slip on a wet rock and you're falling to your doom.

Evy makes it to the center of the falls, pushes a button on her cylinder and places it on the ground. Steam shoots out the sides of the cylinder as a beam of light goes up twelve feet, spreads out farther than the falls and curls up on three sides. The water lands on the light shield and runs off the open side toward the center of the cave.

BRUTE

Wow.

Evy curtsies.

MAMA

What happened? Wow what?

She tries to turn and see, but can't. The group walks under, completely dry.

DAVEY T.

(to Evy)

Thank you, my dear.

They kiss. Once the group passes the falls, Mama sees the contraption in action.

MAMA

Oh! That is nice. Wow is right.

She reaches backward and pats Brute on the back. He smiles. They continue to walk up the path.

INT. CAVE REST AREA

Davey sits with Brute. Mama sits outside of her basket leaned against the rock wall nearby. Evy reads the book she got from Davey.

Davey looks over at Evy.

DAVEY T.

How'd you get that?

Evy

You dropped it. How old were you when you wrote this? This is your handwriting, right?

DAVEY T.

High School - when I first researched this place.

Evy

You spend a lot of time bad mouthing people like you in here. 'Those sell outs shouldn't even be listed among the archeologists. They don't want to learn, only money.' What happened to you?

She laughs.

DAVEY T.

I'm not a child, that's what happened. Without money, you're nothing, Evy.

(MORE)

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

You know that. Now give it back. I have notes in there I need.

She reluctantly tosses it back to him and he puts it in his pack.

BRUTE

Remember imagining being in places like this? Not driven by money. We were going to document the beauty we would find and share it with the world. We were going to be great researchers.

DAVEY T.

We are.

BRUTE

Are we?

He points above Davey. There is an ornate SCULPTURE of baby eagles in a nest carved into the rock wall.

BRUTE (CONT'D)

Look at that. It's easily 300 years old, and we don't even care.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

The group walks.

On the walls are portraits made from the yellow crystal and black rock. They shine majestically.

Davey stops. He thinks, then pulls out a very mechanical camera. Evy continues to walk.

Mama realizes where they are.

MAMA

Oh! Brute, please turn around. How I've missed these.

He turns and she stares at them like old friends.

Davey takes a picture, a puff of steam escapes through the camera. Evy stops as she realizes he has stopped.

EVY

Now we care?

DAVEY T.

Why not? These are winners of the great competition.

(MORE)

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

Their greatness forever documented. It's said they even gained eternal understanding and access to unlimited power. Soon, I will be among them.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

The group reaches another fork in the road.

DAVEY T.

Right or left?

Brute sets down the basket and faces her forward while he takes a rest and stretches his shoulders.

MAMA

Neither.

EVY

Neither? We're not going back and you better answer. Right or left!

MAMA

Sometimes the answer doesn't come in the way you expect. The answer is neither. Look up.

She points up and to the right. Davey moves the lantern and lights a third path eight feet above the path floor.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You have to go up there.

Davey enjoys the surprise. He begins to climb the side of the rock wall.

BRUTE

Now I've got to climb too??

INT. CAVE TRAIL

The trail is steep.

DAVEY T.

(panting)

The end is supposedly very difficult to climb. They weren't kidding.

The group breathes hard except for Mama. She giggles as she sits in her basket.

INT. CAVE TRAIL

The trail is noticeably more steep, the group really struggles to move forward. Mama enjoys it.

BRUTE

(labored breaths)

You... knew it was... going to get worse... didn't you, Mama.

DAVEY T.

Shut up... and keep moving.

He looks up and sees a flat area coming up. He points happily.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

There!.. Are last!... The crown!

INT. PINNACLE

They get to a podium. Completely out of breath. Brute sets Mama and the basket down. Davey T. walks up to a stone table. On it is the CROWN made of the yellow crystal that is around them. It's marvelous.

He walks up slowly. Stands in front of it. He checks something in his book, then takes in the moment. Evy's eyes are glowing. Davey exhales, carefully positions his hands, then reaches down to pick it up.

His hands pass through it. He is shocked. He repositions his hands again and again, but it does not work. He moves his hands around angrily, they go through it every time.

DAVEY T.

Noo!! What is this?!

Brute laughs. Davey glares at him.

BRUTE

We don't get to take it! Just document and observe!

He continues to laugh as Davey looks at Mama.

MAMA

The crown isn't what you thought. It's beauty is beyond this world. But if all you came for was to steal it and sell it, you'll never see it's beauty.

DAVEY T.
I'm going to throw you off, you little
crippled good for nothing worm.

Brute stands defensively in his way.

Davey reaches over to Evy and draws her pistol. He takes
a step toward Brute, who stands in shock.

Evy
Babe, what are you doing?

DAVEY T.
This was my big chance. This is her
fault! Move Brute!

BRUTE
Davey --

Davey raises the weapon at him.

DAVEY T.
Move.

BRUTE
Come on. Davey T. think about this.

Davey points the pistol at his head. Evy goes toward
Davey.

Evy
Babe, come on --

DAVEY T.
No!!

He points it at her. She freezes.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)
This isn't how it was supposed to happen!

From around Brute, Mama walks.

MAMA
Davey. Put down the weapon!

DAVEY T.
What?!?!

He takes a step back onto a rock. It cracks, and he
loses his balance. He falls backward onto the steep
declining path. He tumbles down.

He hits a rock - his ankle snaps. He cries out in pain as he stops. The book falls from his bag. He looks up at Evy and Brute, then at the book, then at the gun in his hand.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

What was I --

Thoughts race through his head. He drops the pistol.

Evy and Brute run down to him. He tries to stand, but can't and falls back to the ground. He crawls, like a child, up toward them.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. My love, Brute, please forgive me.

He looks up at them with tears in his eyes. Brute sticks out his hand.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

I don't deserve your help.

BRUTE

You don't have to.

Davey reaches and picks up the book and looks at it.

DAVEY T.

Who have I become?

Evy reaches down to help him.

He takes their hands, they help him up and carry him back to the top. He looks over at Mama as she stands next to the crown.

DAVEY T. (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have tried to throw you off.
I'm sorry.

MAMA

I forgive you. Our religion demands it.
Here, greatness requires humility.

Davey looks over at the crown glow. Evy walks over to it.

DAVEY T.

What am I going to do now?

MAMA

Start over. With a different foundation.

BRUTE

We write about this, like we dreamed about when we were kids - even get published. I could get a PhD.

DAVEY T.

What about Snake? He's expecting the crown.

EVY

I can handle Snake.

Evy waves her hand through the crown. She chuckles as she inspects it.

EVY (CONT'D)

This is amazing.

BRUTE

Mama, I've got to know. How are you walking?!

MAMA

I could always walk. You just assumed I couldn't and I let you believe it. I knew how hard this is to climb.

Brute smiles and shakes his head.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You're still going to carry me down, right?

BRUTE

I guess so.

MAMA

Davey, you did research about us, but you didn't understand. We would all run the race to the top, but not so others would lose. Getting to the top with the crown was the prize. Don't you see? It isn't something you can sell or buy. It's a chance at rebirth.

Davey moves toward the crown, Brute helps him.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You have that chance now too, Davey T. Don't miss it just because you're not the child you were when you wrote in your book.

Davey looks around at the beautiful yellow crystals glowing in the darkness. He starts to understand.

DAVEY T.

Mama, tell me more about your people.

MAMA

I'd be happy to. We're Christian --

FADE OUT.