The background of the image is a detailed digital illustration of a medieval castle at night. The castle features intricate stone carvings, arched windows, and a central tower with a dome. Warm, golden light emanates from the castle's windows and torches, creating a strong contrast with the dark, blue-toned night sky. In the lower-left foreground, a person is riding a white horse towards the castle. On the steps leading to the main entrance, a lone figure stands, possibly a guard or a messenger. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and historical grandeur.

THE ART OF  
SWORD & SORROW

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## Introduction

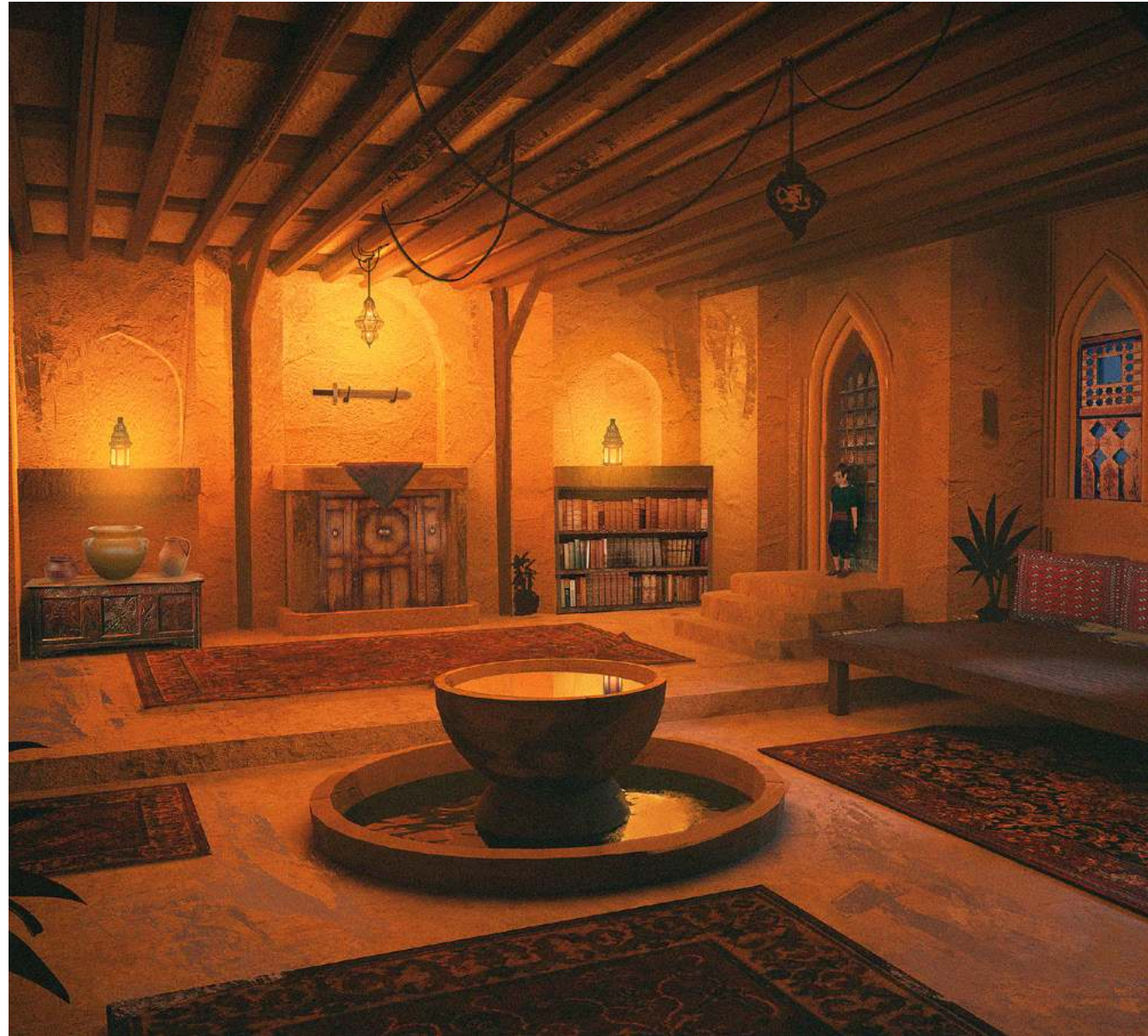
The sound of a singing woman from the main theater fills the whole town, and other cries in the city do not prevent us from hearing this sound. But as we move forward, the sound of singing decreases, and finally, it stops when we arrive at the end of the dead-end. A carriage passes quickly through narrow streets of the middle of town. It passes in front of the main temple. As the carriage room stumbles, the shouts of its riders rise into the air. A stone labyrinth is visible through the gate of the main temple. It is open, and the guards are standing in front of it. The small number of pedestrians cling to the walls, opening the way for the carriage. Karen - a twenty-eight-year-old man with a wound on the left side of his face, which leads to his upper lip; under this wound, there is a yellow gemstone instead of his canine tooth - is driving a carriage and ignoring everything around him. His eyes are staring straight ahead and frowning.



## Story

Once upon a time, there lives a six-year-old boy in the beautiful city of Mesopotaniama by the mighty Foraat river. He lives with his loving parents and his two adorable sisters: the -8year-old Targol and the -14year-old Torang, all are kind, lively, and full of joy, living an innocent life, free of the all the fuss that is the adults' world. Well, it was not always like that. Ever since Sultan has taken over the city and usurped the throne, the people have been offered two simple choices, obey, or perish. Hope has been slowly dying in the heart of the city. Karen's father, Behrouz, however, and a handful of other citizens, they would rather stand on broken legs than to kneel before a tyrant. They will go to the end of their ropes to take their lost days back. He and his brother, Mahan, have secretly been trying to form a resistance group to put an end to this cruelty.

It's Karen's 7th birthday today. His father says it's about time that he finally has the family heirloom, an antique, wooden sword. Suddenly, they hear the shocking sound of their door getting broken. Royal soldiers walk in with their blades drawn. Sultan has commanded them to run their blades red on the blood of the rebels. Awestricken and dismayed, Karen hears his mother's and sisters' agonizing screams, they have been cornered by the soldiers. Karen hurtles and throws himself as a shield to protect his family. The last thing Karen sees is the silhouette of Ash'ath raising his blade...



“KAREN? KAREN!” Karen hears someone calling his name, he opens his eyes. Before him is fire raging through the houses, and blood seeped into dirt. perplexed, he catches a faint glimpse of Mahan, his uncle, panting. He had run all the way to his brother’s house the moment he realized what was going on. Mahan takes Karen to Mahuza, a secluded village in foot of the mountain, a haven of numerous Persian Jews, and then entrusts Karen to his old mate, Brochim.

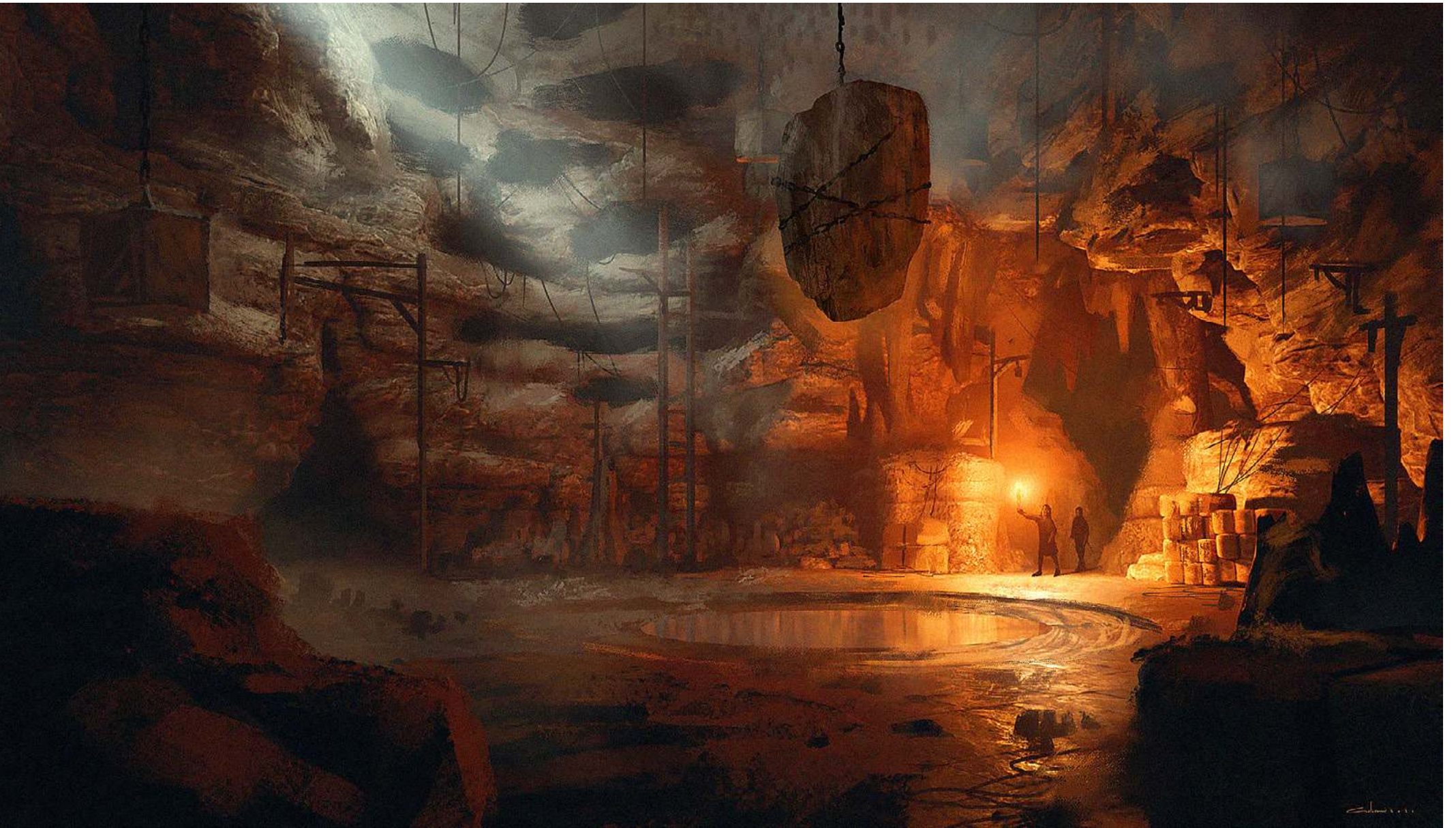
Karen grows up under Brochim’s care ever since, and his loving wife, Anika, and his dear daughter Andia, and of course his nephew, Javid, a shy -9year-old boy, who tragically lost his parents to an avalanche. Karen is a good-natured bright boy, and his friend Andia, feels safe enough to invite Karen to her hideout in a cave in the heart of the mountain. In the cave they inadvertently drop the lantern on the hay and the next minute they find themselves trapped in a wildfire. Karen who’s already been caught in fire once, keeps his head and manages to find a way out. Then pulls the crying Andia out of the cave. From that day on, they grow fond of each other and get closer and more intimate day by day. Javid, however, does not like this at all. He believes he would have got more attention from dear Andia if Karen didn’t show up. He has always fancied being with Andia, but now, it seems she’s getting further and further away from him every day.

Time passes, and 13 years later, a few days past the Karen and Andia’s marriage, Sultan has grown old, and is training his son, the heir to the throne, to be the next king. To crack the whip of citizens and make sure no soul will ever dare to defy his rather spineless son, starts killing and public executions once again to set an example. Just like 13 years ago, Ash’ath is again commanded to eradicate any sign of disobedience. He murders hundreds of families throughout Mesopotamia. Brochim hears the word in the village and starts to worry about Karen. He decides to send Karen and Andia with Javid back to Mahan, Karen’s Uncle. Afterall, Mahan is now well respected in the city and has a few social underdogs, so he should be able to take good care of Karen and Andia. Javid who has set up a caravan for himself now, swears to protect them with his life. They all say farewell to Brochim and Anika and depart.

It’s nighttime now, and they have camped to stay the night. They suddenly notice dark figures in the shadows, they are bandits. Karen rushes to help the caravan guards fight off the bandits, not knowing that a bandit is headed off to kidnap Andia, and nearly succeeds. At the last moments Andia screams out Karen’s name, this makes him rush to save Andia. In a long but successful chase, Karen manages to catch the bandit eliminate him. He then reunites with Anida and holds her in his arms, and that’s when they promise to always be together till the end of time. The caravan eventually arrives at Madain city, and Karen and Andia stay with Mahan. Delighted to his nephew in good shapes, Mahan starts over his work and begins to invite people who have long lost hope to form a resistance force, in hopes of breaking free of this unjust. 8 years pass, Sultan finally kicks the bucket, and his son, not quite as vigilant as his father, takes the crown. Karen and Andia have a -6year-old son named Keyvan by now, and Javid has sold his caravan and lives with Mahan ever since. Now that the main menace is down, they decide that it’s time to strike, and maybe reap what they have sown in the heart of people all these years.

In a secret nighttime meeting, the resistance leaders distribute all the tasks that should be carried out among themselves. Karen gets tasked to shelter the families in a safe place, so if the movement fails, the families can stay safe. Mahan is the leader of the main resistance forces and has already arranged with several tribes around the city to join the forces and take the city at a certain time. Behnam and Behdad, two of Mahan’s trusted associates, will take the weaponry in an invasion with a few men. Javid and Johnmehr, will deliver the weapons to Mahan and the resistance forces outside the city.

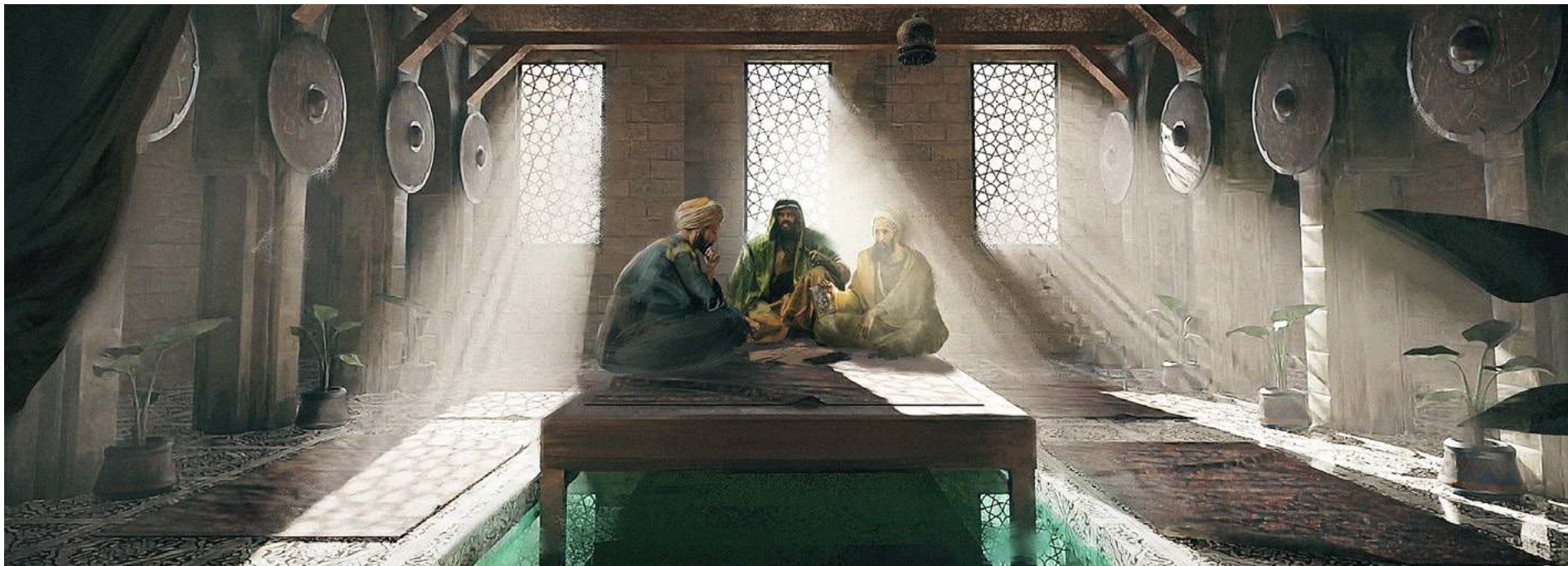




Mahan also asks Karen to take the responsibility of leading the forces if anything happens to him, and Karen accepts. At the end of the session, they all swear on the confidentiality of the operation. On the other hand, though, Ash'Ath who has already smelled a rat, heads off to the city streets to make sure nobody is up to something.

They begin the operation. While Karen moves house to house to ask the resistance members' families to move to the safehouse, Behnam arrives and informs Karen that the seizure on the weaponry has failed and Behdad is now jailed. Karen is shaken up but doesn't flinch. He heads off to jail and snatches a guard's keys. Then silently makes his way to Behdad's cell, rescues him and his companion Arzhang. Before getting out and parting ways to continue the movement, Behdad informs Karen that upon his initiation to seize the weaponry, he saw extra royal soldiers at the weaponry waiting for him, and that they might know the plan. This disheartens Karen and thus, he goes back to tell the Mahan and the leaders. They have all gathered up at Johnmehr's house and according to the plan, all will be joining the forces outside the city in no time. Karen remembers his own family, he left them with Javid, so proceeds to ask Javid that if Andia and Keyvan are in the safehouse. Javid answers that he couldn't get them to agree to leaving their house. This scares Karen. He sprints out to bring Andia and Keyvan. On the way, he sees several men walking on the far side of the street, and they look like royal troops. Karen climbs up on a rooftop and gets closer, he overhears them talking about how they are going to ambush Karen and his family and catch all of them off-guard. Karen is stupefied hurtles towards home, unaware of the puncture on the next roof. As he inadvertently steps on it, he lands on the ground face first and gets knocked out.

Royal guards, however, make it to Karen's house and proceed to knock the door. Keyvan, thinking that the waiting has finally come to an end and father has come back for them, cheerfully opens the door. The smile freezes on his face upon seeing the guards. Andia exclaims: "RUN KEYVAN" and tries to escape. While Soldiers are chasing her, Keyvan has crawled into a hiding spot in the house, scared with his eyes closed.



He remembers the day when he first asked Karen about the wooden sword hung on the wall. He hears his father's voice telling him that with this sword, he protected his family one day in his childhood, and holds it precious. Inspired by his father, Keyvan's spirits gets emboldened. He picks up the wooden sword and gets out of the house. Right when the guards have cornered his mother, Keyvan arrives, holds it against the soldier and tells them that he would never allow them to hurt his mother. The guards make a mockery of the kid but see no choice other than getting rid of him too. One of the soldiers, swings at Keyvan...

As the rim of the blade closes in on Keyvan, it lands on Karen's blade. He has made it there. He's outnumbered but it won't be a tussle. he takes them out, one by one. He hugs Keyvan and Andia and asks them about why they didn't agree to leave the house. To everyone's surprise, Andia tells him that Javid asked them to stay in the house until Karen returns. Karen is aghast by the news, but there are bigger issues to take care of. He tells Andia that he has to go to the city gate, the forces have already been stationed and he can't leave them all alone. Andia nods with woe and farewells him.

Following the plan, Karen makes his way back to the gate. Sneaks into the watch tower and takes the guards out, opens the gate and with uses a mirror to reflect the moonlight on the eastern side of the plaza as a signal. After a few seconds, he sees a carriage approaching. Behdad is riding it, and Behnam, Johnmehr and Javid are in the carriage, hidden under a blanket. They cross the gate and disappear in the darkness. Karen climbs down the watchtower and just before the gate is closed, he slides out. In search of his comrades, he carefully treads in the darkness. He sees a dim silhouette of a carriage under a tree. There they are! Behdad has not gotten off the carriage yet. Karen greets him but hears no answer. He gets closer and realizes there are bloodstains on Behdad's shirt. That's when his lifeless body falls off to the side.

Karen starts to notice his own shadow is cast on the carriage, there's a light behind him. He cautiously turns around, only to find himself surrounded by the royal army. As soon as he sees Ash'ath approaching, he shouts for help. Upon hearing him, his comrades draw the blanket to get out. Behnam attempts to draw his sword, but at everyone's horror, Javid stabs him right then and there. Karen is infuriated and begins the fight. Johnmehr joins him and they fight the soldiers back-to-back. Javid has now joined Ash'ath, just standing further away, talking hatefully of Karen. That's when he reveals his unspoken but never-to-be-forgotten grudge for Karen.

Karen is stunned and demoralized. Did he nourish a viper in his bosom all these years? His hands start shivering. Johnmehr falls to the swords, and this disheartens Karen even more. This puts him in a tight spot. He knows if he gives up, Mahan and all the resistance members are going to perish. He makes a run for the carriage to get to Mahan. Before Ash'ath and Javid find their horses, Karen hops on and smacks the horse and races towards the resistance camp. In a perilous chase, he takes down a few soldiers on horsebacks with a bow. The camp is in a dilapidated outpost near the river. Karen makes it to the fort on knife-edge and luckily sees Mahan waiting, He rushes and informs Mahan that Javid is a traitor, and the plan has gone very sideways. Mahan shouts for all the troops to escape along the river. Before going, Karen suddenly remembers that Javid knows about where Mahan's family, Bahareh and Lady Delaviz, are staying, so they might not be safe. As soon as they run out to scape, they realize they are already in a siege. Ash'ath appeaches, calls Mahan and Karen out for their blind trust, and that they have no chance to escape. Mahan arm himself up and intends to fight Ash'ath, but Karen persuades him that his family is in danger and this war is already lost. They hop on the carriage and try to make a run for the city.

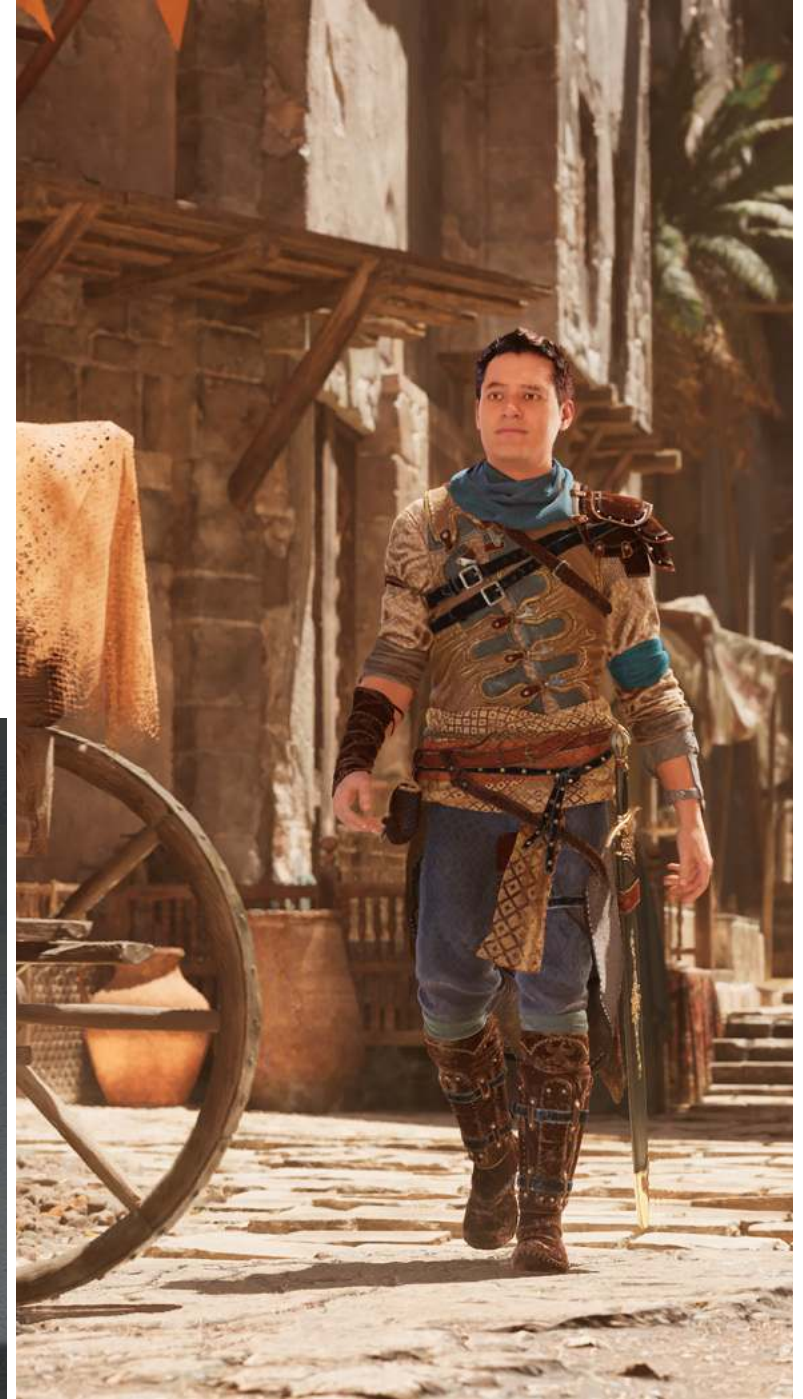


The endless shower of arrows and javelins finally manage to break the carriage's wheel and flings Mahan and Karen onto the cold ground, breaking Mahan's leg. This is a grave hindrance, enough for the royal troops to close in. With all their remaining might, they fight the soldiers. After a few swings, Javid joins the battle and engages in a conversation with Karen. He talks about how Karen has ruined his life, stolen his only true love, made him eternally miserable and that he doesn't deserve any of it. Karen enrages and tells him that he tarnished an entire city and killed his own comrades, and the fact that the soldiers were going to kill Andia herself because of him. Disturbed by the news, Javid yells at Ash'ath for breaking his oath on not hurting Andia and has betrayed him. Ash'ath disregards his exclamation and tells him that their lives mean nothing against Sultan's will, then beckons his soldiers to kill him. In an instant, Javid is blasted with spears. Fatally injured, he crawls into Karen's arms, crying and begging for forgiveness in his last breaths.

Now that Mahan is sure they are not going to show any kind of mercy, asks Karen to leave him and save his family. Karen does not accept, but with his exclamations, Karen says farewell, picks up a spear and levers it to vault over the enemies. Before Ash'ath or any of his troops can do anything, he hops on a horse and rides towards His uncle's family. Mahan, on the other hand, fights till his last breath and honorably dies on the battlefield. Karen eventually escapes with Andia and Keyvan, along with his uncle's family and takes residence in a faraway land named Shoush. He realizes he still has not accomplished his purpose. He asks Andia to allow him to form another resistance so he can make the world a better place for their son, Keyvan. Being aware of Karen's heartfelt determination, Andia sorrowfully but confidently farewells him on the road less traveled, because however unforeseeable, it is profuse in love and hope for a better future, a future free of injustice.

## Characters

**Karen:** Karen loses his family to a tyrant when he is only six. An old, nearly rotted wooden sword that symbolizes all he dreams off, his father, family, and resistance against cruelty. Love, however, is not a strange concept to him. Despite his everlasting Grief for his lost family, he falls in love with Andia. Love and Family do wonders for his journey deep into sorrow. The unbelievable will to follow his father's footsteps is embedded in his mind. His quiet and joyful life with his wife, Andia and his son, Keivan, is his biggest consolation. In Karen's story of Sword and Sorrow, follows him from age six to late twenties, as you will witness the transformation of a scrawny but bright six-year-old scared child, to a strong, merry young man.





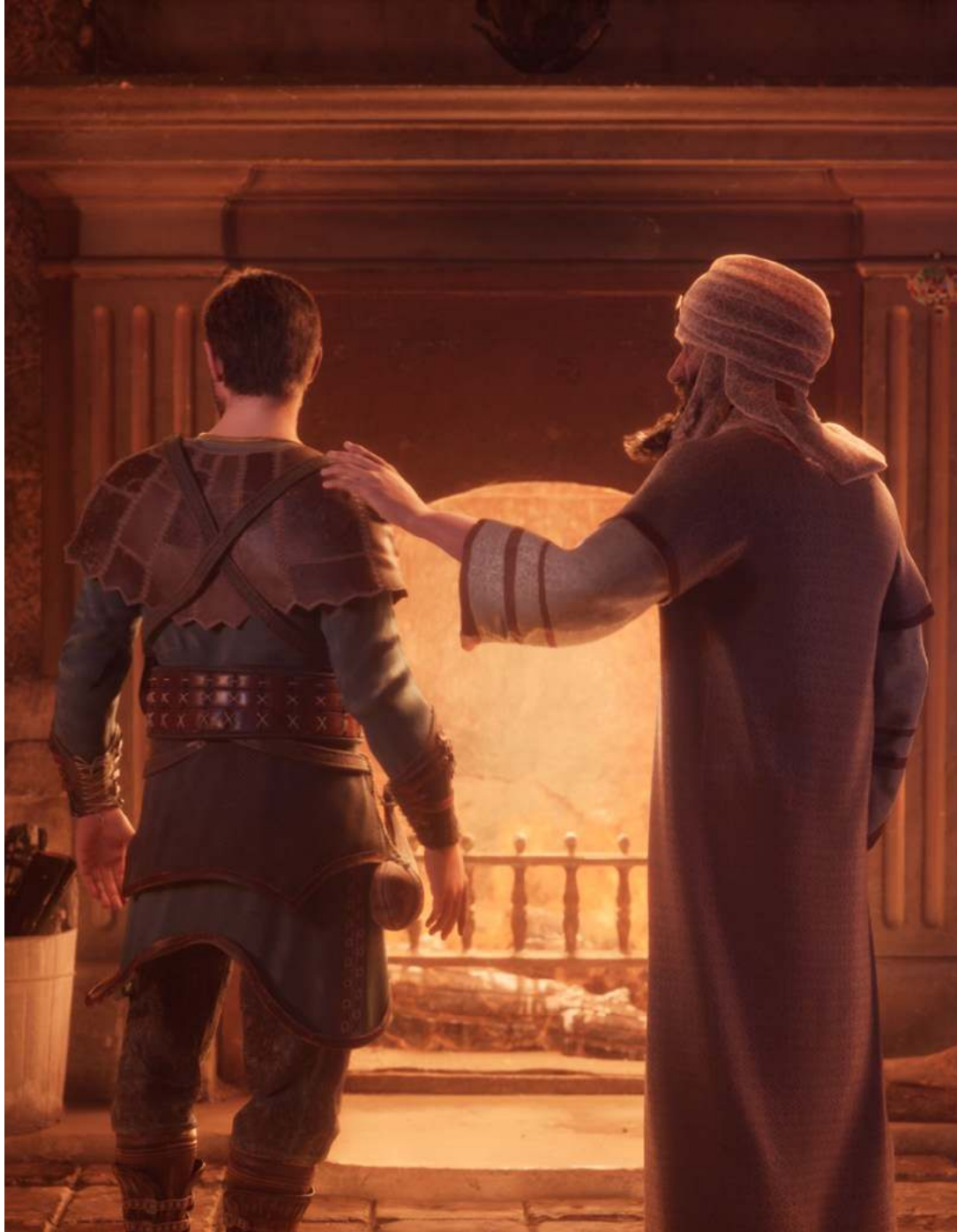


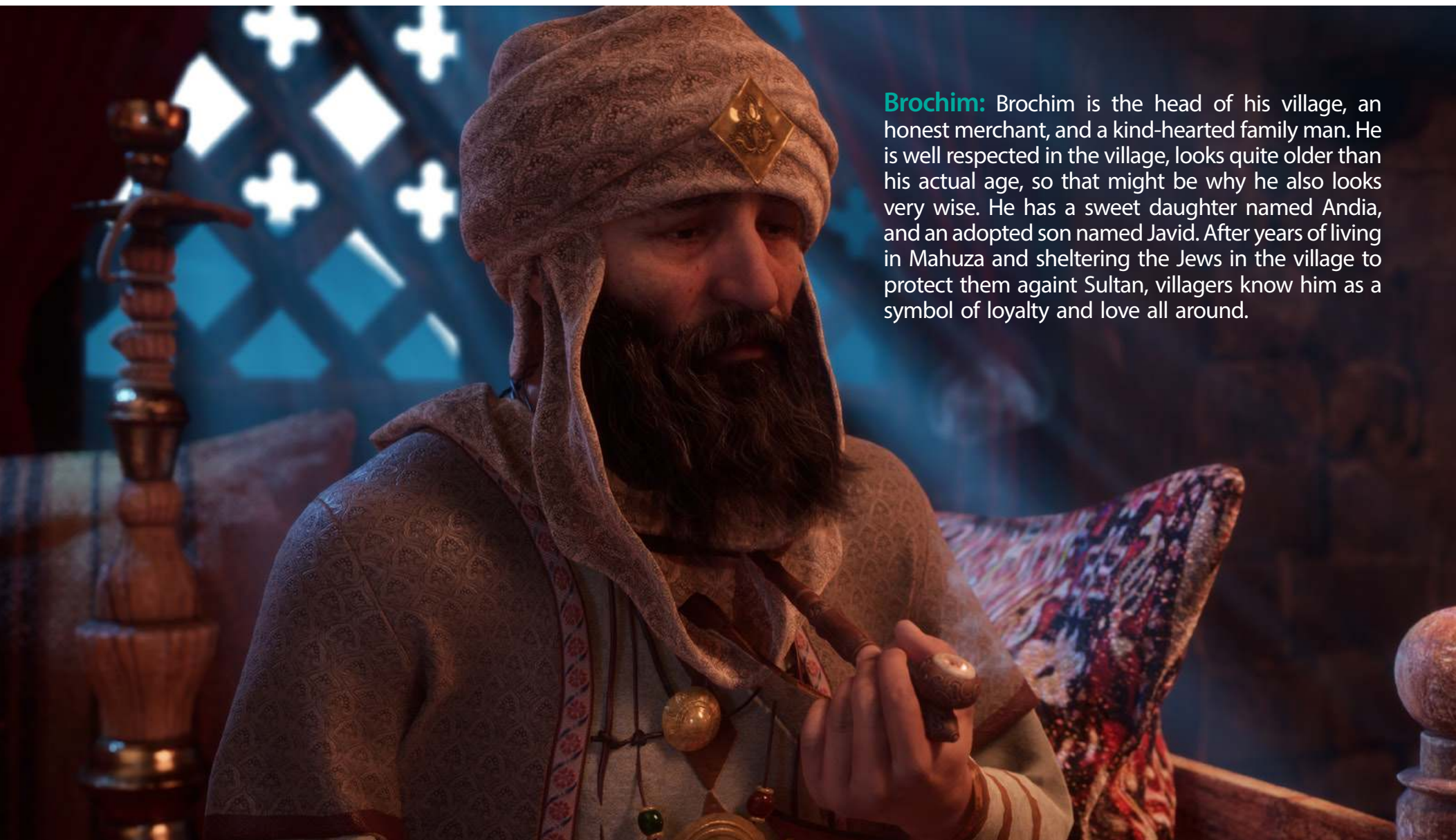




**Mahan:** Karen's uncle, and his brother's (Karen's father) faithful and committed comrade in upholding the justice against Sultan, Mahan shares the same dream. He is a burly, thoughtful man in his fifties, and leads the resistance against Sultan after his brother. He's a true warrior, stern and unrelenting, but also good-natured and nurturing, whose warmest feelings is for his only daughter, Bahareh, and his wife, Lady Delaviz.



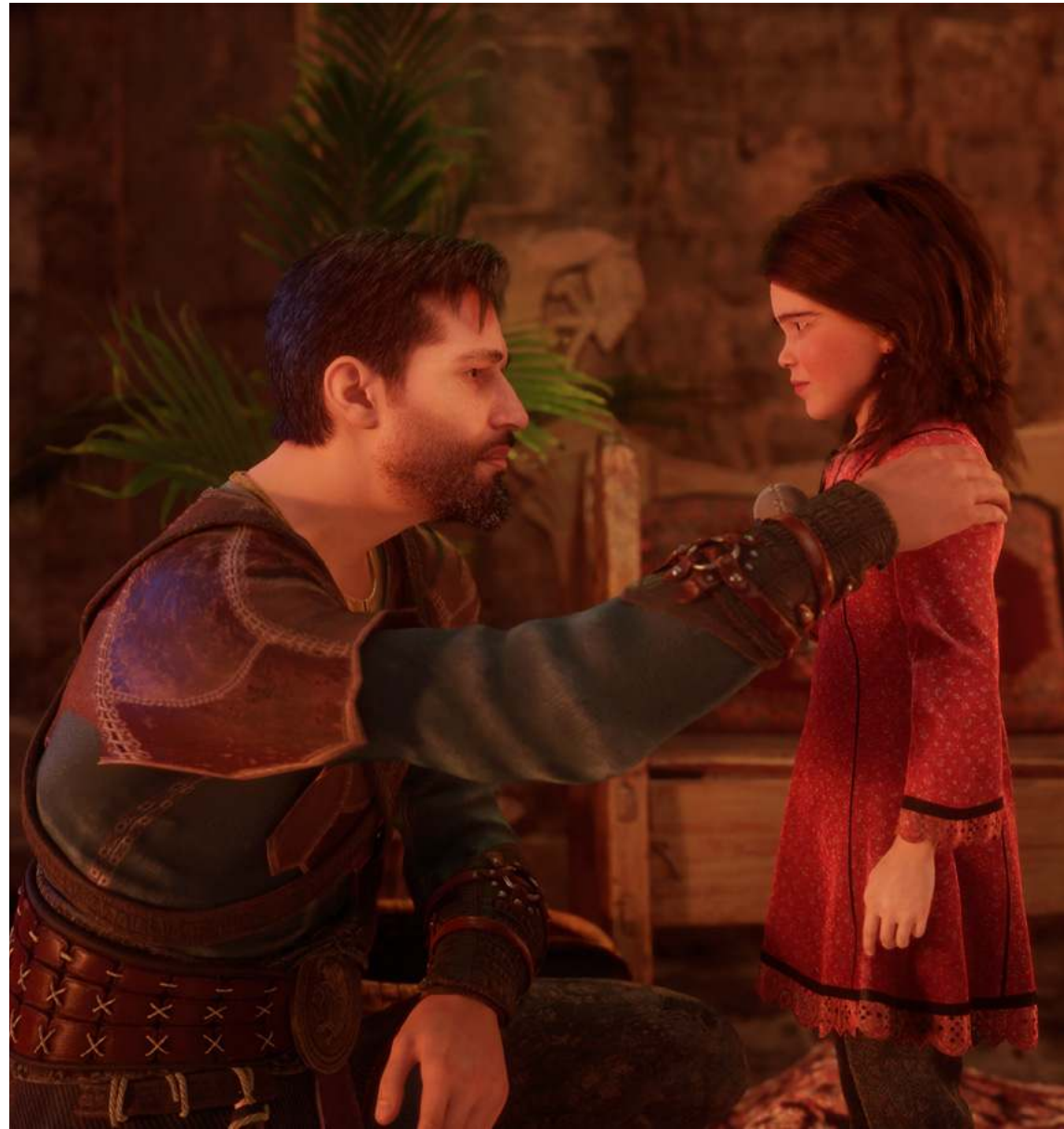




**Brochim:** Brochim is the head of his village, an honest merchant, and a kind-hearted family man. He is well respected in the village, looks quite older than his actual age, so that might be why he also looks very wise. He has a sweet daughter named Andia, and an adopted son named Javid. After years of living in Mahuza and sheltering the Jews in the village to protect them against Sultan, villagers know him as a symbol of loyalty and love all around.

**Andia:** Brochim's sweet girl. The sheer resistance and love she offers to the story of Sword and Sorrow is a crucial part of this drama. Like Karen, we will follow her story starting from age five to his late twenties. Andia is presumably one of the most beautiful women of Madain and the kindest mother that her child, Keyvan could've asked for.





**Javid:** Brochim's Nephew, who sought shelter from Brochim after losing his parents in an avalanche. Being a clumsy but caring boy, he revered Andia and loved getting her attention. He knew he had a rival the moment Karen was brought to Brochim by Mahan. The course of his life compelled him to be alongside Andia and Karen in *Sword and Sorrow*. He was handsome, even more than Karen, athletic and intelligent, but his mind remained entangled with the burning envy that would never leave any room for peace.









**Sultan:** the mighty Sultan of all Mesopotamia and the land of Pars. An Ambitious, sharp and nimble-witted man in love with power, Both for himself and his children. A man of focus that will leave no stone unturned in search of power. His golden armor well fits his immense figure and decisive demeanor. His gritty voice is crystal clear, and that presumably saved a lot of his associates' lives, because does not like to repeat himself.

**Ash'ath:** Supreme General of Sultan. High commander of the royal army and Sultan's hand. A Fierce leader, unrelenting violent man and an obedient puppet for Sultan. He was never seen expressing his feelings, not even his wife. Anyone who dares to resist Sultan's hand, be it men, women or children, has signed their own death warrant.

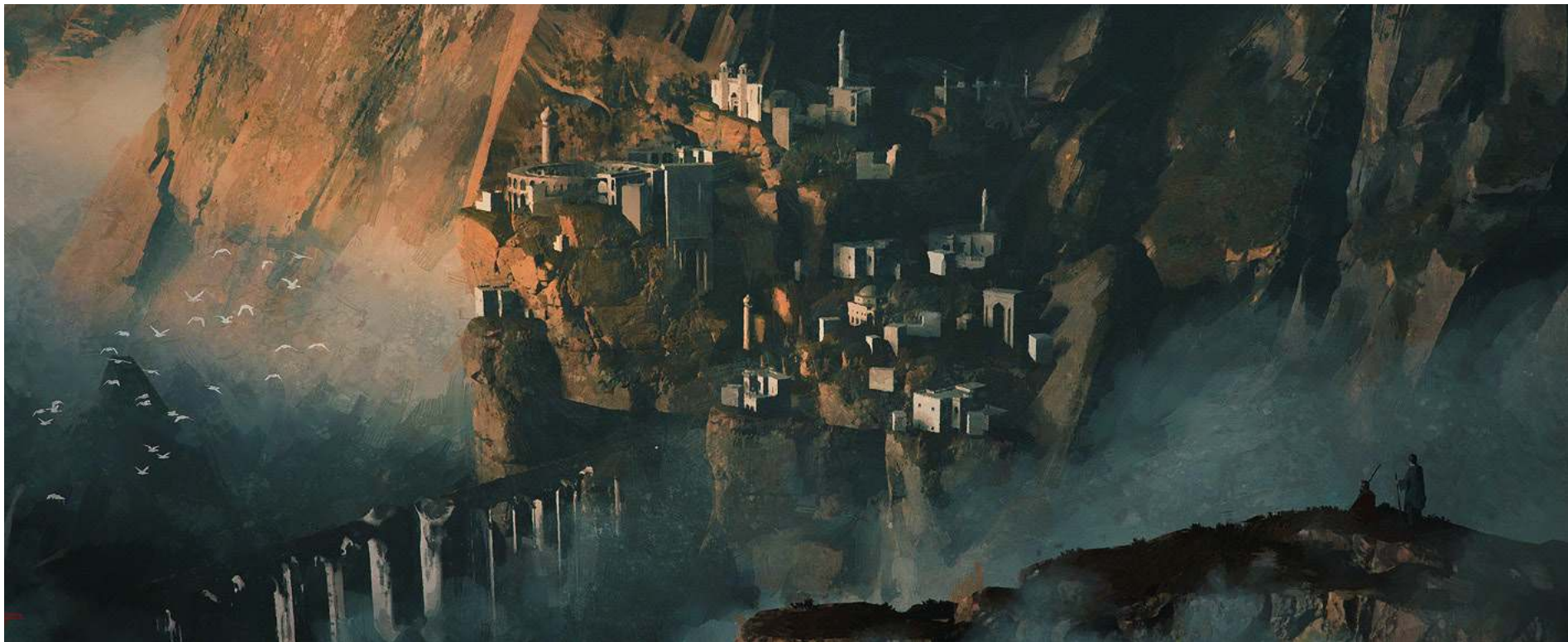


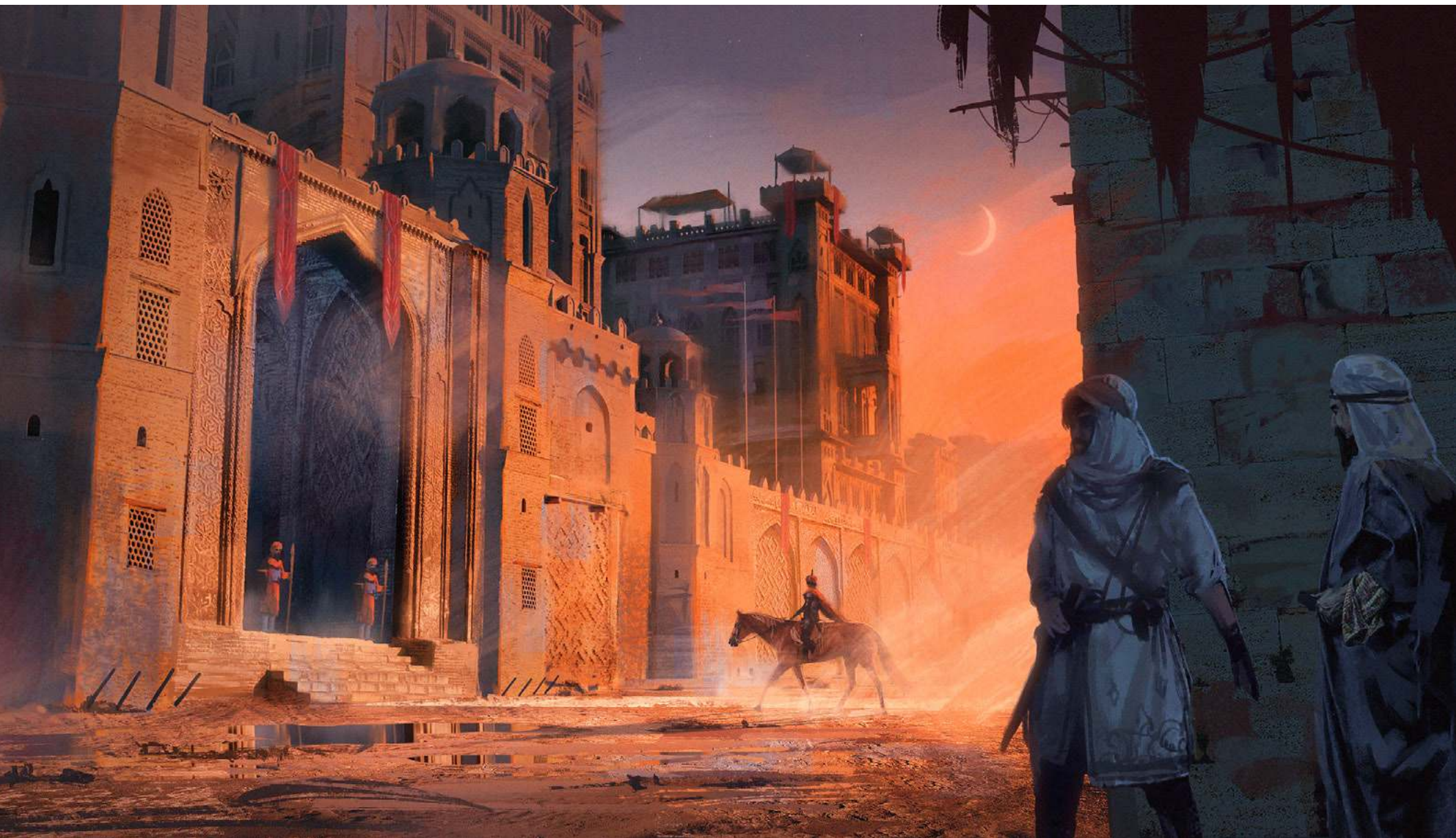


## References

Sassanid architecture refers to a style that is the origin of Persian architecture, which reached its climax in the Sasanian Empire. Sasanian Empire (from 224 C.E. to 651 C.E.) was the era of the flourishing of Persian civilization. Also, Sasanian Empire was the last great Empire of Iran before the invasion of Muslim Arabs. Some experts consider this architecture a subcategory of Parthian architecture that differs dramatically from the other periods. After the domination of Arabs, the façade (architecture), domes, and symbols were confiscated by the Muslims and introduced as Islamic architecture. All of the Sassanid structures are belong to the imperial period of Sasanian and built before Islam.

Considering the narrative of the animation is taking place in the early years of Arabs domination, Sassanid architecture is the most significant reference of it. In the section on how we create the visual graphic of *Sword and Sorrow*, we will talk about this in detail.





## Environment

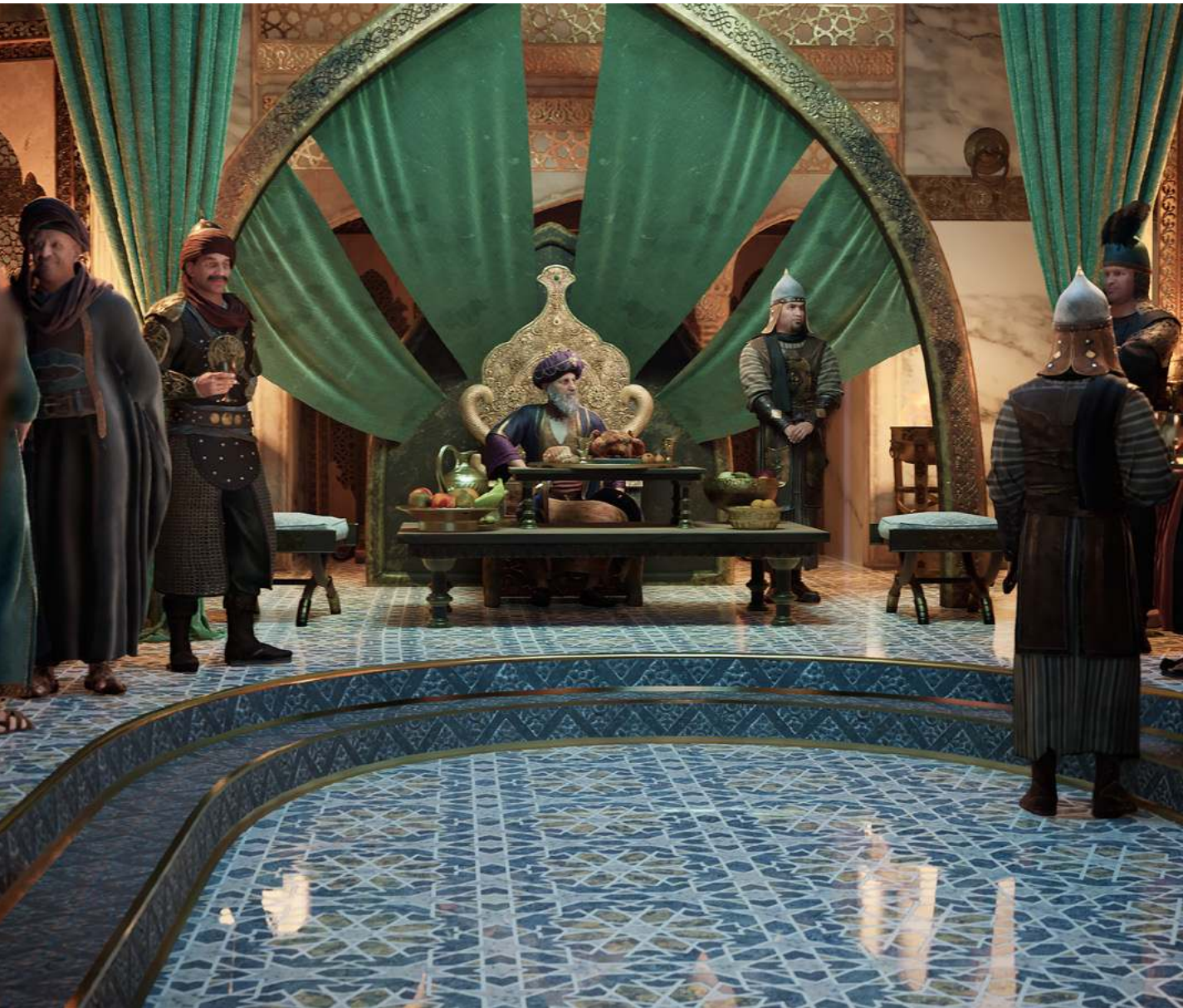
Several components influenced the visual space of the *Sword and Sorrow*.

The first component is Persian architecture throughout the Sasanian Empire and the presence of Arabs in Iran. Despite the passage of more than one thousand years, there are still reliable structures from that period. Undoubtedly, as soon as the audience encounters a narrative of this period, he will imagine the period with magnificent buildings like Taq Kasra, Green palace of Damascus, Yazd's and Amol's fire temples, Sarvestan Sasanian Palace, Derbent (a city in present-day Russia), and Shapurkhast castle. Despite the unique narration and space of the «*Sword and Sorrow*» and its theme, which is proper for young adults, maintaining the historical context was necessary to arouse the audience's sympathy.

The other efficient component in *Sword and Sorrow's* graphical design was to create the maximum feelings through space creation, character design, and of course, the animation of the work (including body and face animations) considering the young adult audiences. The action story of *Sword and Sorrow* with drama's streaks is a different story, which involves concepts like love, justice, freedom, equality, and revenge; thus, tending to such a story demands maximum capacity. Therefore, selecting photo-real space for *Sword and Sorrow* and exaggerating in space creation and here assets, some characters' animations, and battle scenes create its graphical space. This slight exaggeration and fantasy







in a photo-real atmosphere was our narrative keyword for breaking a live-action work with a photo-real one.

Finally, to achieve desired results and create maximum feelings for the audiences and guarantee the quality of the narration, we prioritize some of the techniques of the day in the visual atmosphere of *Sword and Sorcery*. Techniques including:

- Employment of custom Metahuman base (body, UV, Topology, Skeleton Structure, Morph, Proportions) for improved lifelikeness, more homogeneity and expressive emotions of characters.
- Exportation of Alembic files to xGen and then Unreal Engine for maximized rendering quality and improved hair and fur physics.
- Utilization of the Unreal Engine programming section to build environmental implements to ease the layout process and diversify the environments.
- Using real-time operating system (RTOS) rendering, resulting in a quality equal to offline renderings of the same level.





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- More editing power thanks to high rendering speed.
- Use of systems such as Niagara in Unreal Engine for improved crowd behavior and environmental dynamics.
- Use of distinct render layers for compositing without any hindrance of production speed.



- Use of special effects in compositing and layout process in Unreal Engine, resulting in easier editing and feasibility of managing effects.
- Synchronization of 3D applications with rendering for higher editing power.

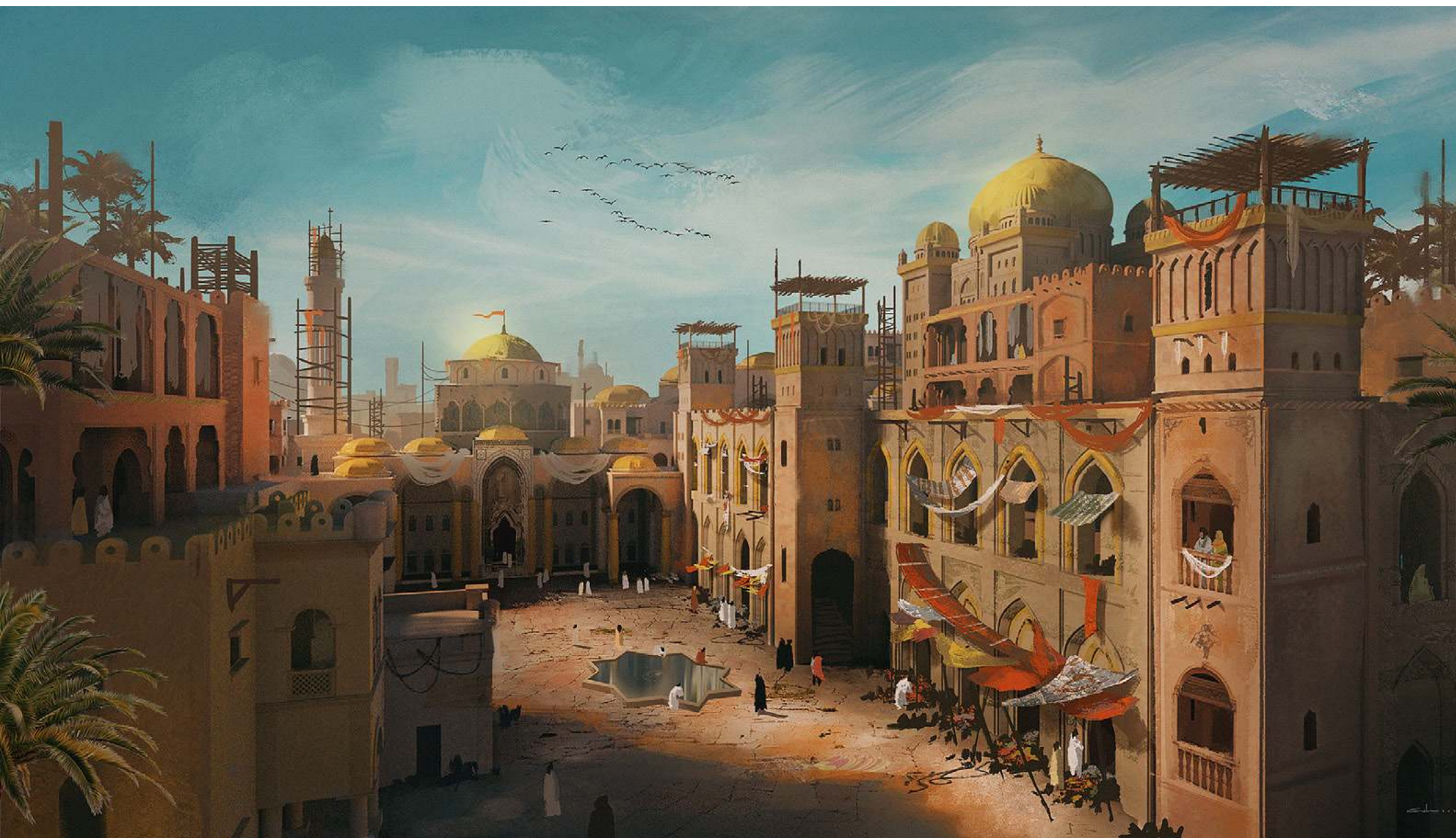


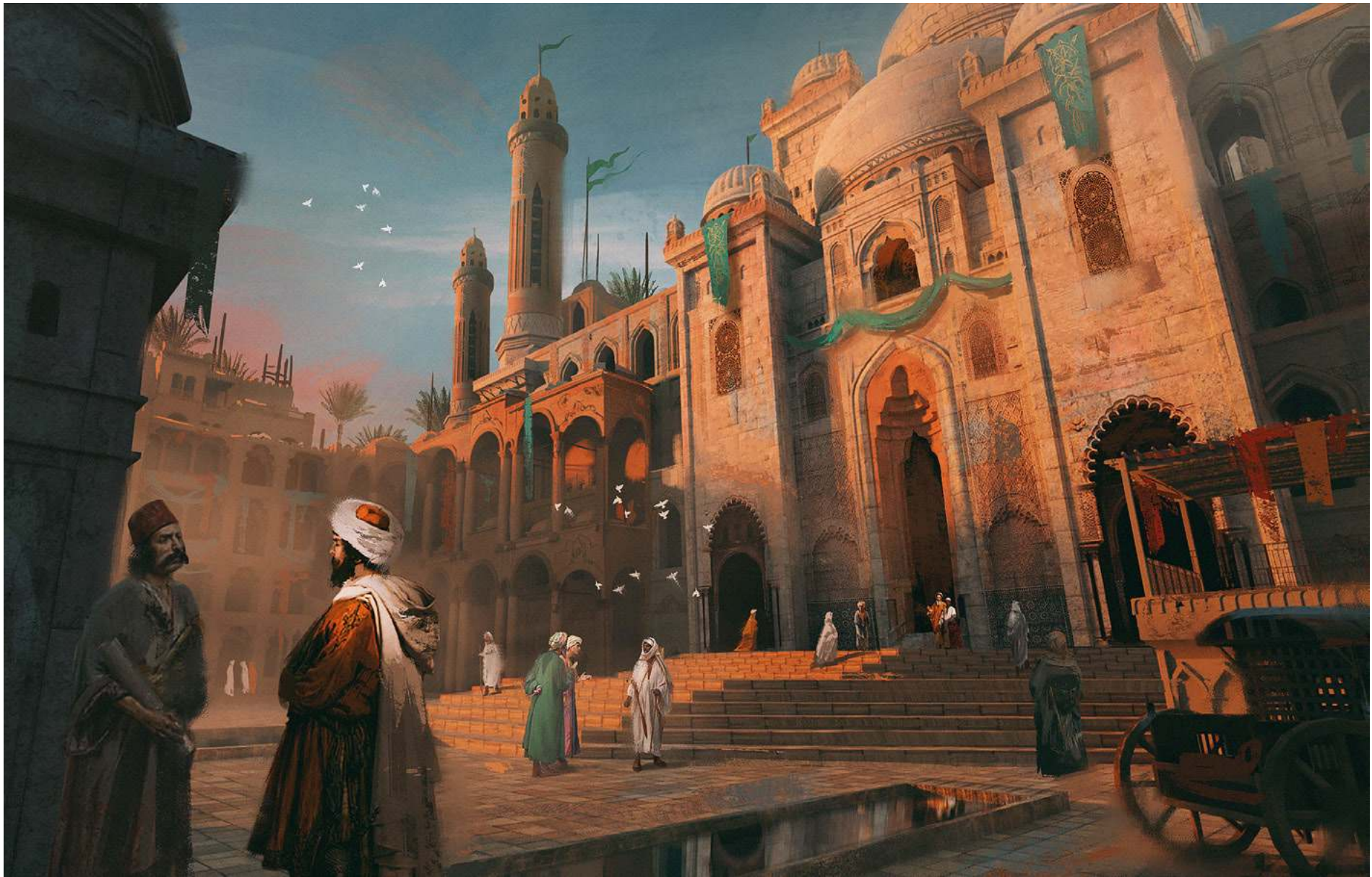


















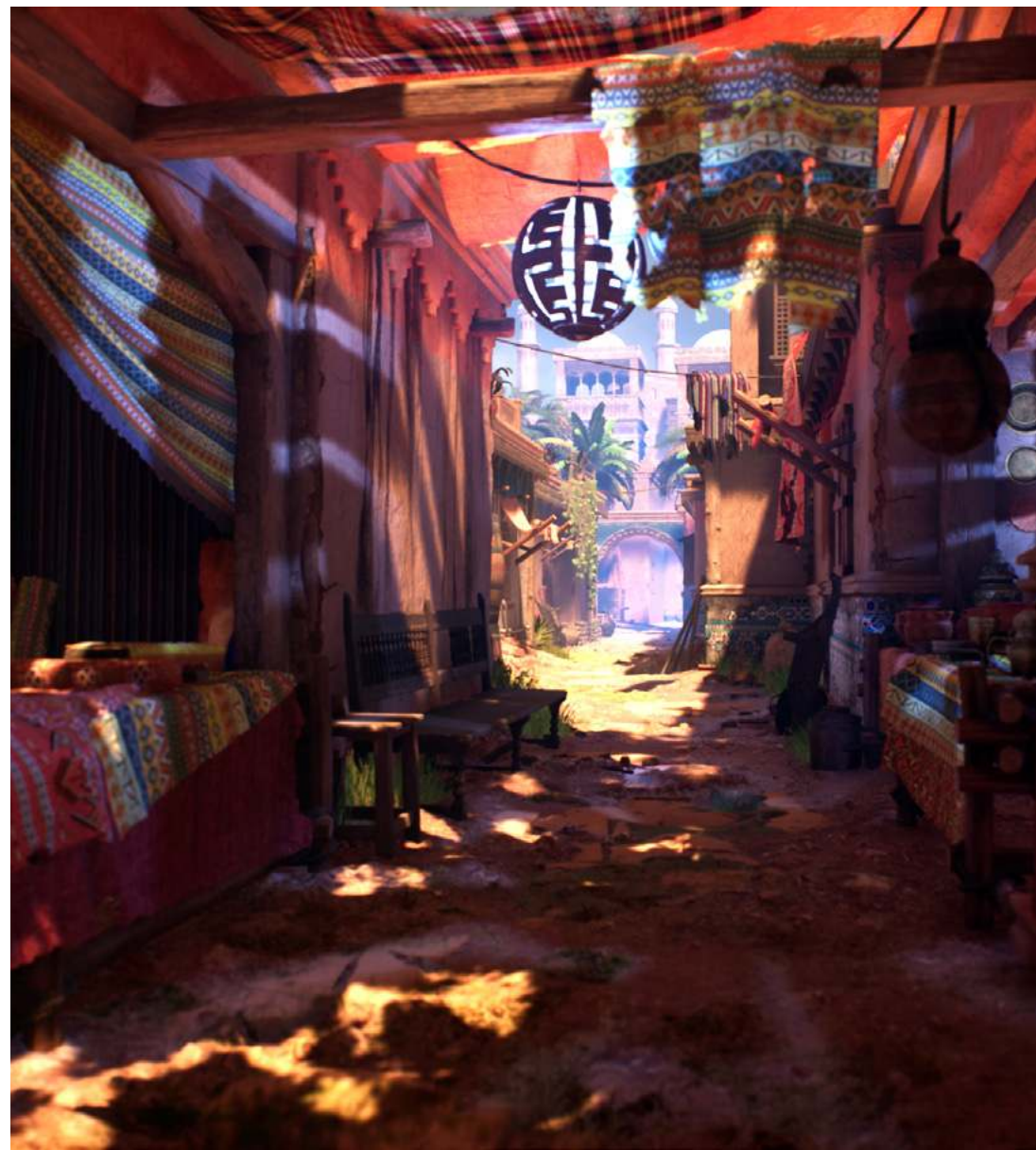


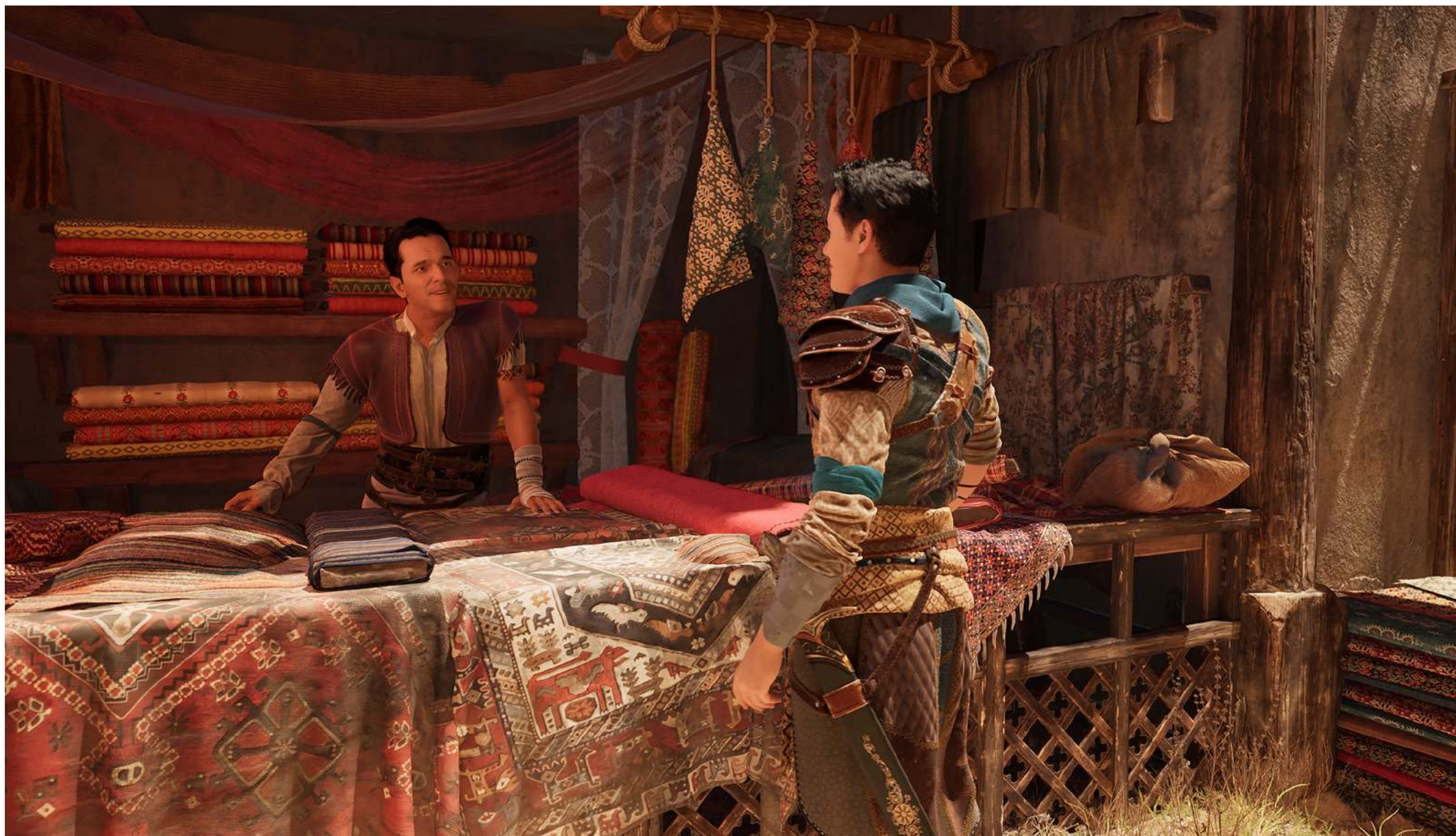












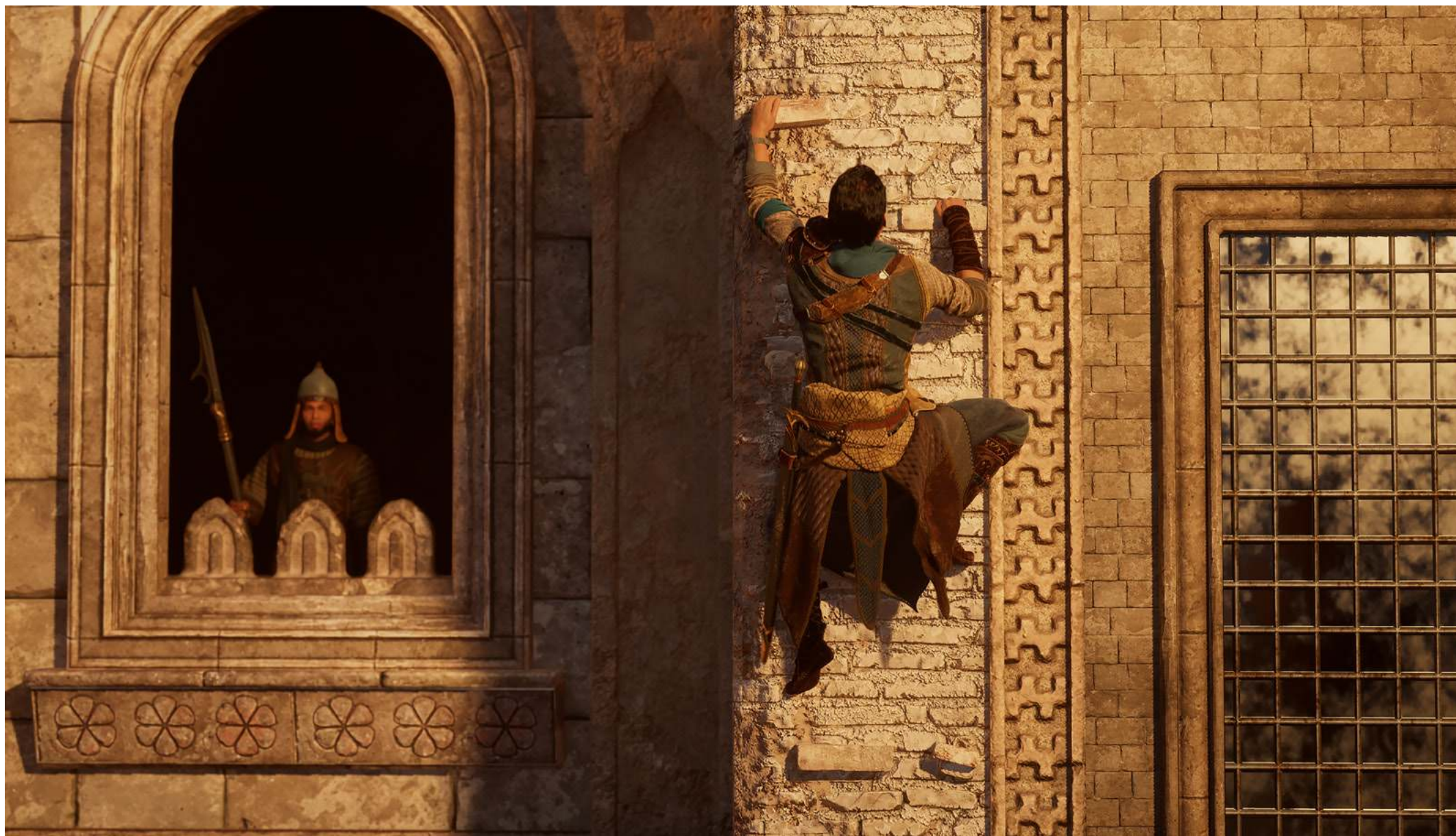


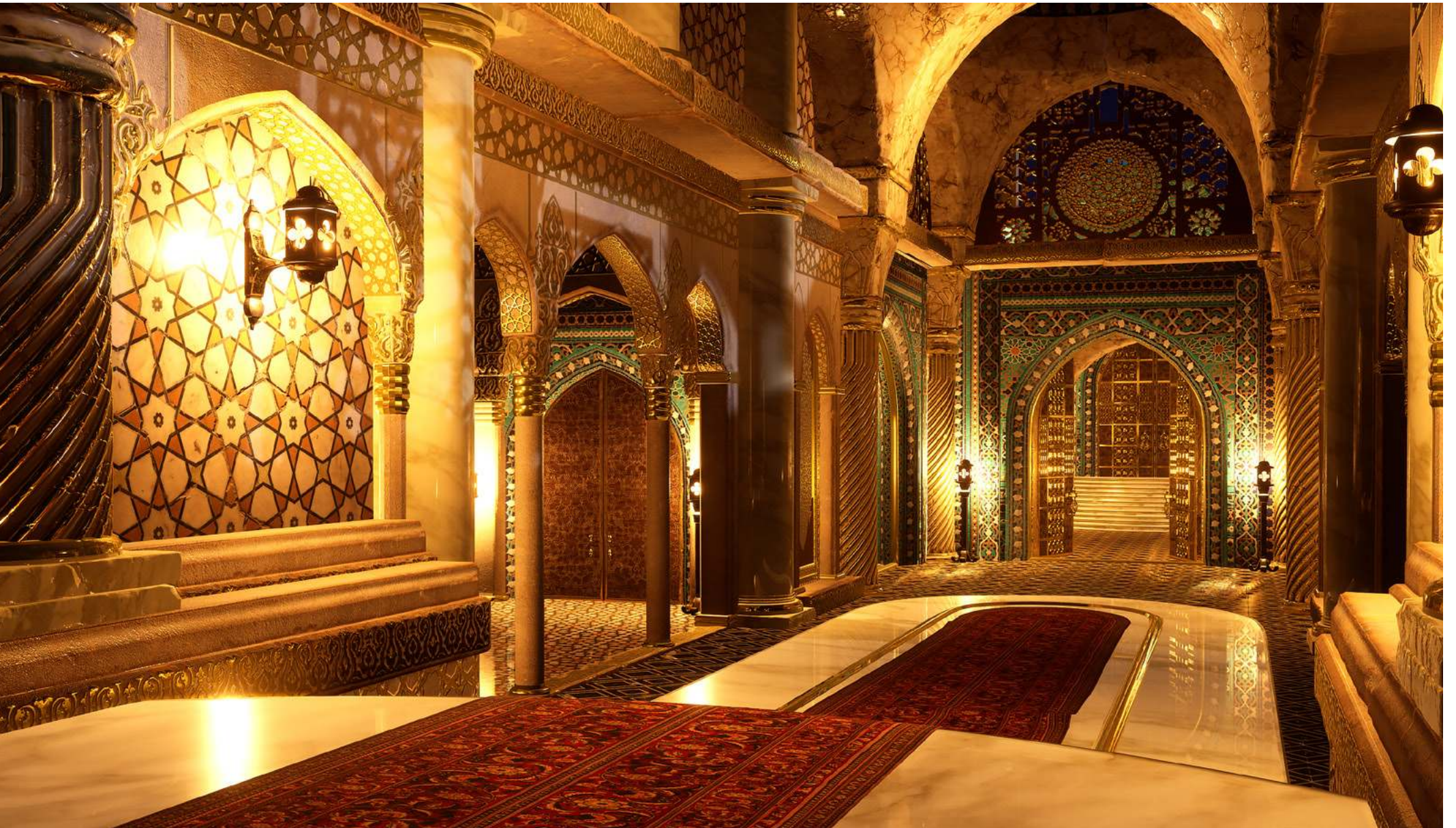


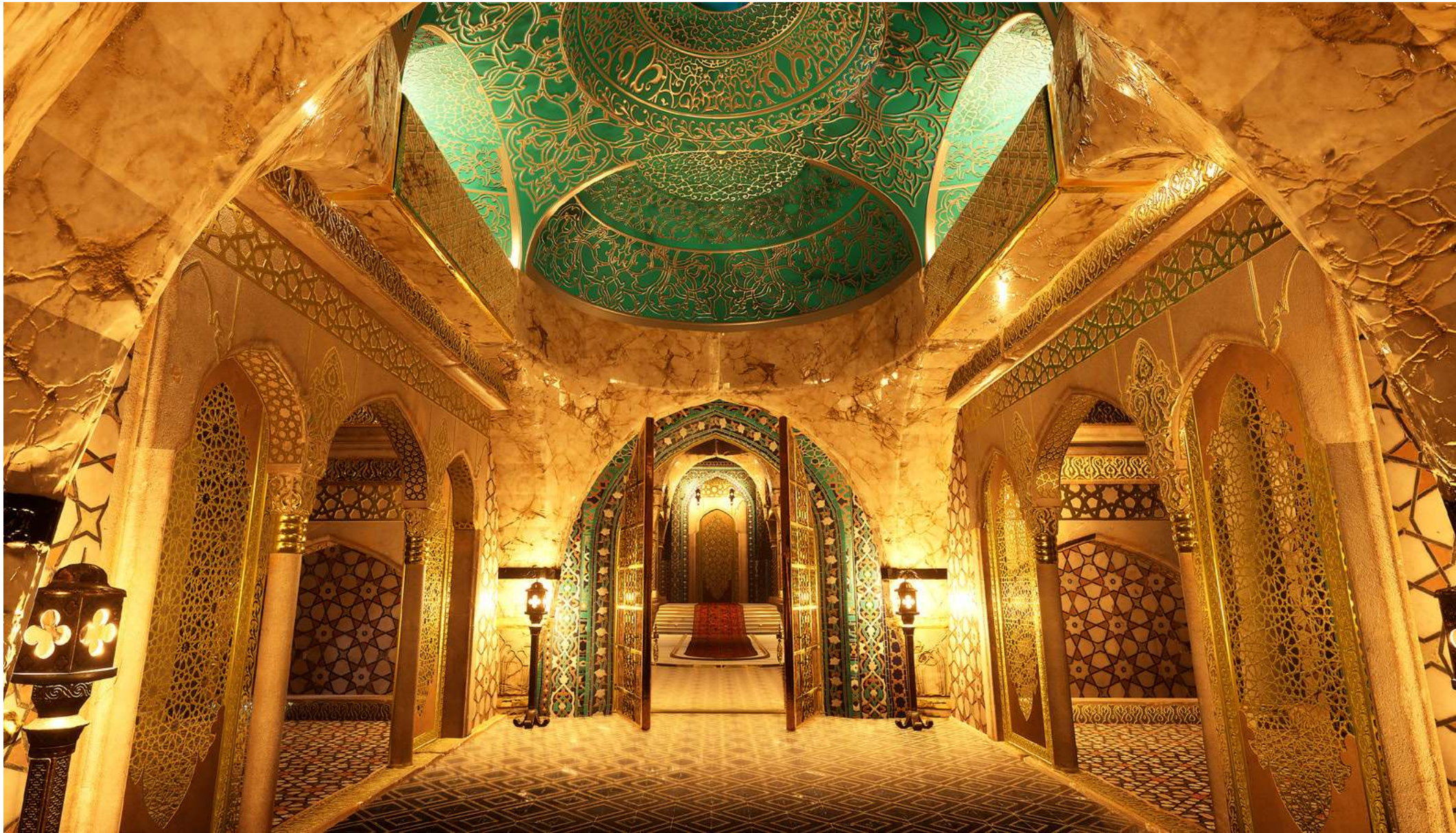






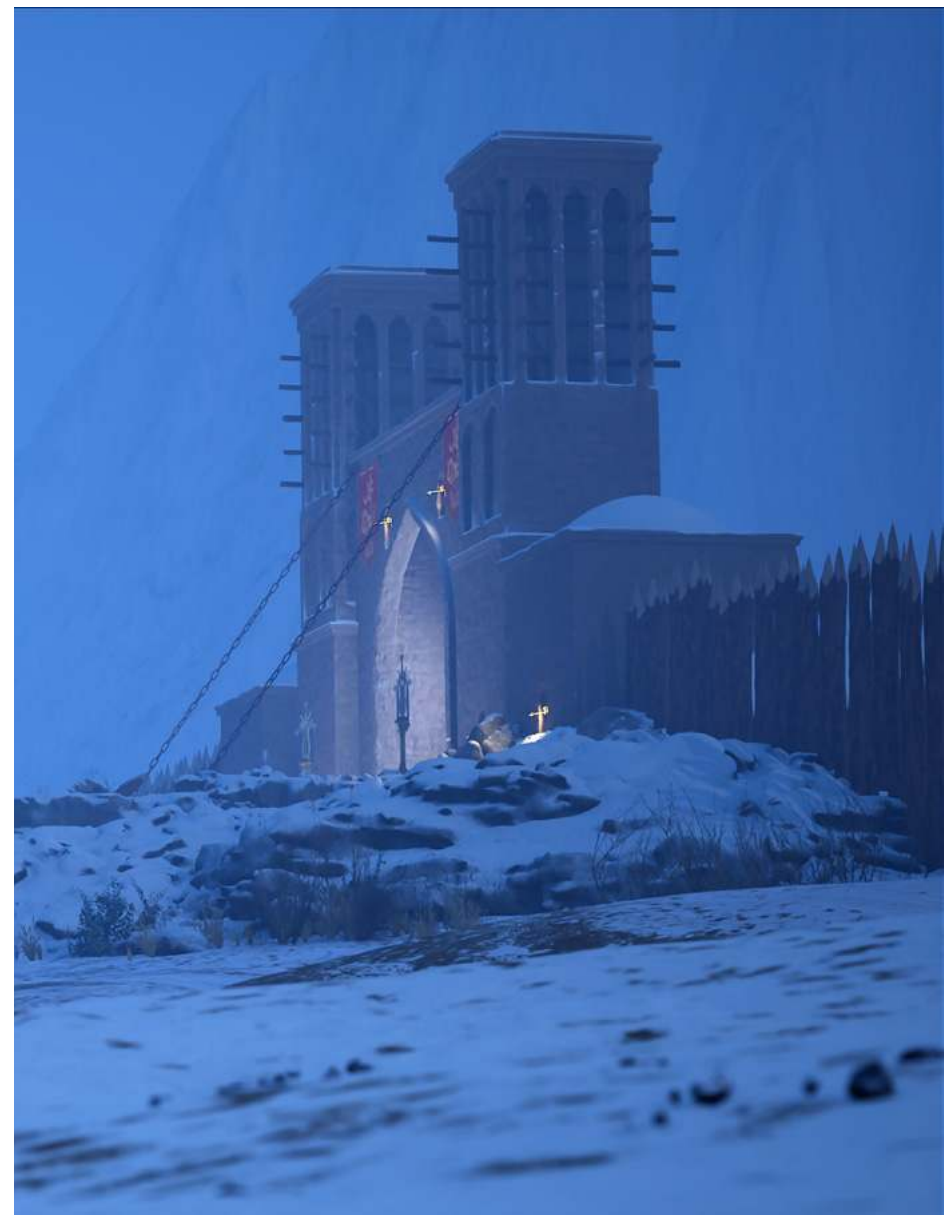










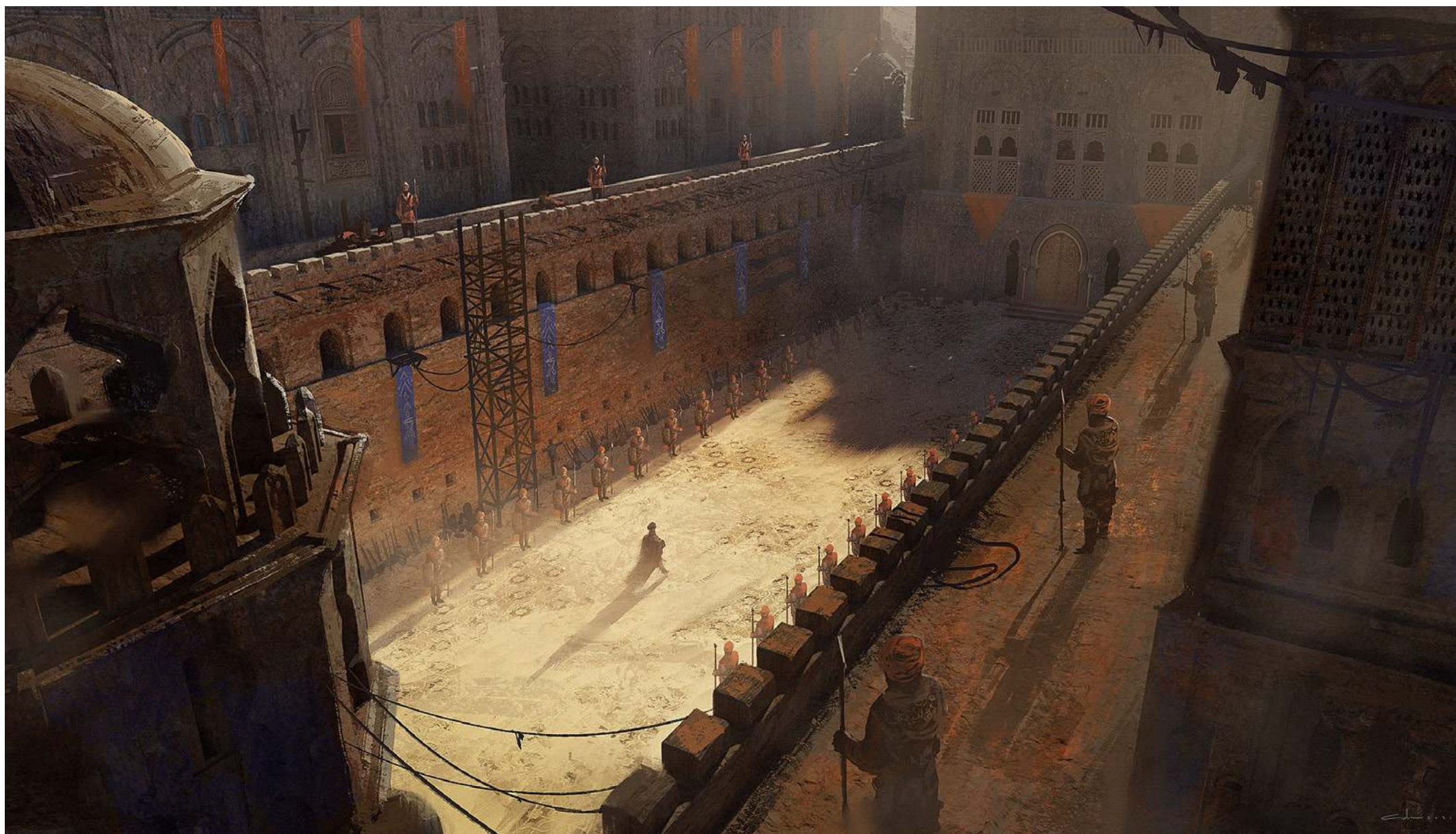








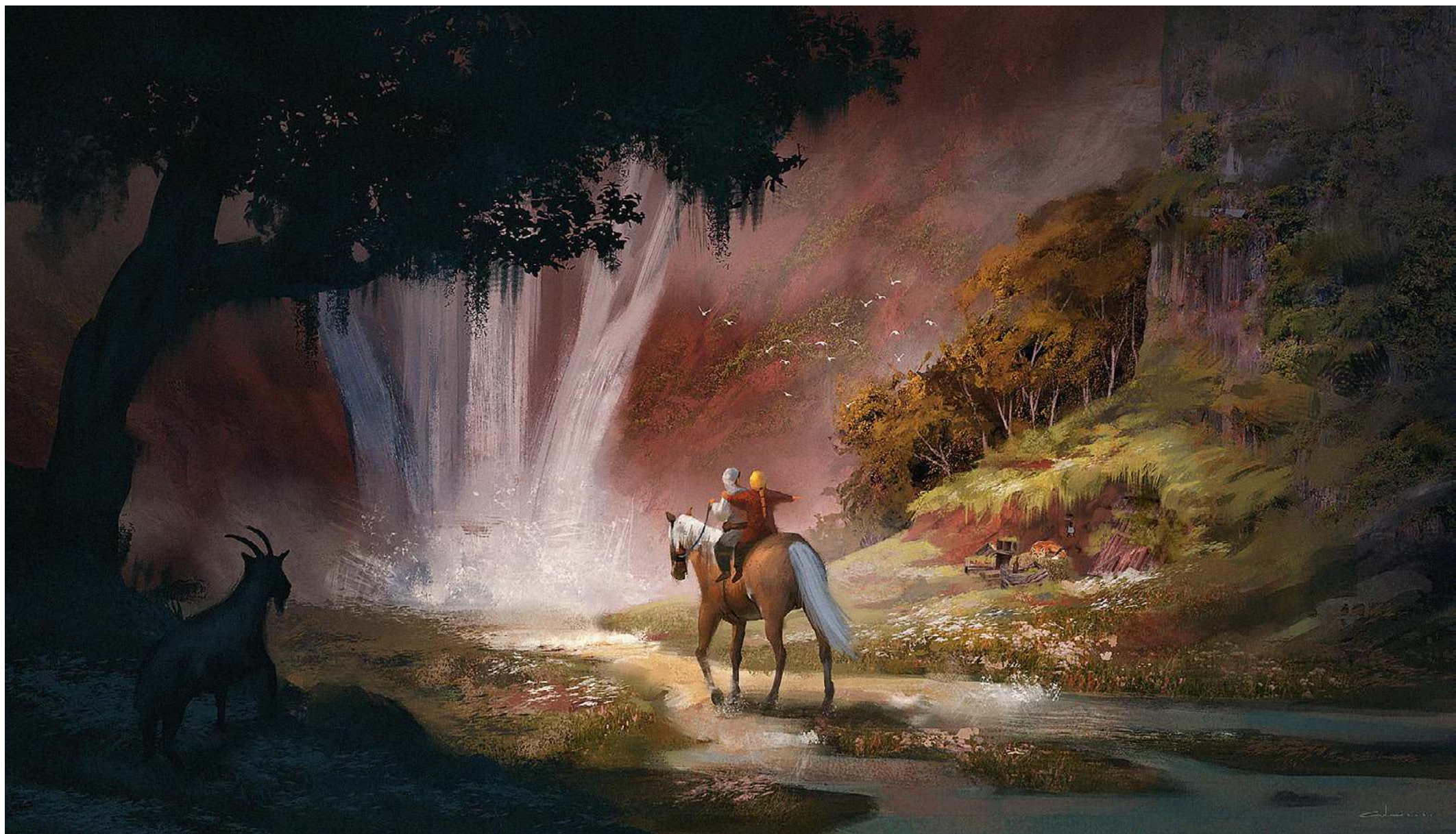
























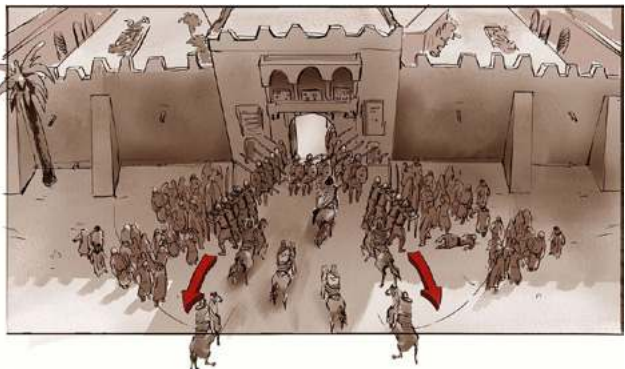


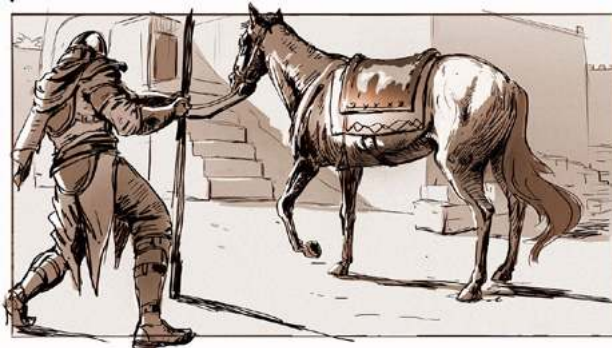
## Storyboarding

After finishing the screenplay of the *Sword and Sorrow* and before the process of designing the storyboard, the emergence of an abstract image of the outcome in the mind of the director and art director to create harmony between narration, space creation, and characters' acts, was team's priority. Therefore, after doing the necessary action, we put the design of the storyboards on the agenda. First, we specified the position of the cameras and designed the mise-en-scène. Then the details of the environment and acts of characters. So, more than 1200 shots in the form of 42 sequences were pictured to develop other production processes based on these storyboards and their story reel. Besides applying SFXs, we also added the original tones in the story reel of the project so that there is a better and more accurate output in the layout stage, and to have the possibility of checking, changing, and modifying the quality of narration in each stage of production.











## Representative Image of the Project

### ▶ Film identity

- › Original title: Sword and Sorrow
- › Directed by: Emad Rahmani . Mehrdad Mehrabi
- › Country: Iran-Turkey
- › Year of production: 2022-2021
- › Running time: 01 h 26 min

### ▶ Technique

- › Category: Feature film
- › Techniques used: 3D computer
- › Version: Original English version with French subtitles
- › Target public: Teens, Adults, Young adults
- › Looking for distributor(s), sales agent(s), investor(s)

### ▶ Credits

- › Directed by: Emad Rahmani . Mehrdad Mehrabi
- › Production: Permanent Way
- › Production manager: Moien Karimi
- › Artistic direction: Armin Rangani . Benyamin Shojaei
- › Technical art director: Milad Aligholia
- › Script: Emad Rahmani
- › 3D Modeling: Abtin Khaleghi . Mohsen Dehnavi . Ali Vahedi
- › Environment Artist: Mohsen Dehnavi . Abtin Khaleghi . Behzad Jenabzade
- › 3D Character Modeling: Benyamin Shojaei . Shahrokh Rastakhiz
- › Rig and Skin: Farid MohammadPanah
- › Storyboard: Armin Rangani
- › Layout: Ali Zarei
- › Sets: Milad Aligholia
- › Animators: Parsa Peyvaste . Bardia Shabanian . Mohammad Tahani  
Farshid Karimzadeh . Hossein Naseh . Mohammad Zarrin . Farshad Rezaei
- › Camera: Mehrdad Mehrabi
- › Compositing: Seyed Milad Siadat
- › Music: Arash Aghababaei
- › Sound: Shahin Pejhan
- › Editing: Mehrdad Mehrabi
- › Voice: Hesam Sadegi . Maryam Choobdar . Meysam Niknam



## Key Players



Emad  
**RAHMANI**

Writer & Director



Mehrdad  
**MEHRABI**

Director



Moien  
**KARIMI**

Production Manager



Armin  
**RANGANI**

Art Director



Milad  
**ALIGHOLIA**

Technical Director | VFX Artist



Abtin  
**KHALEGHI**

3D Modeling Supervisor



Mohsen  
**DEHNAVI**

Environment Art Supervisor



Benyamin  
**SHOJAEI**

Art Director | 3D Character Modeling Supervisor



Ali  
**ZAREI**

Layout



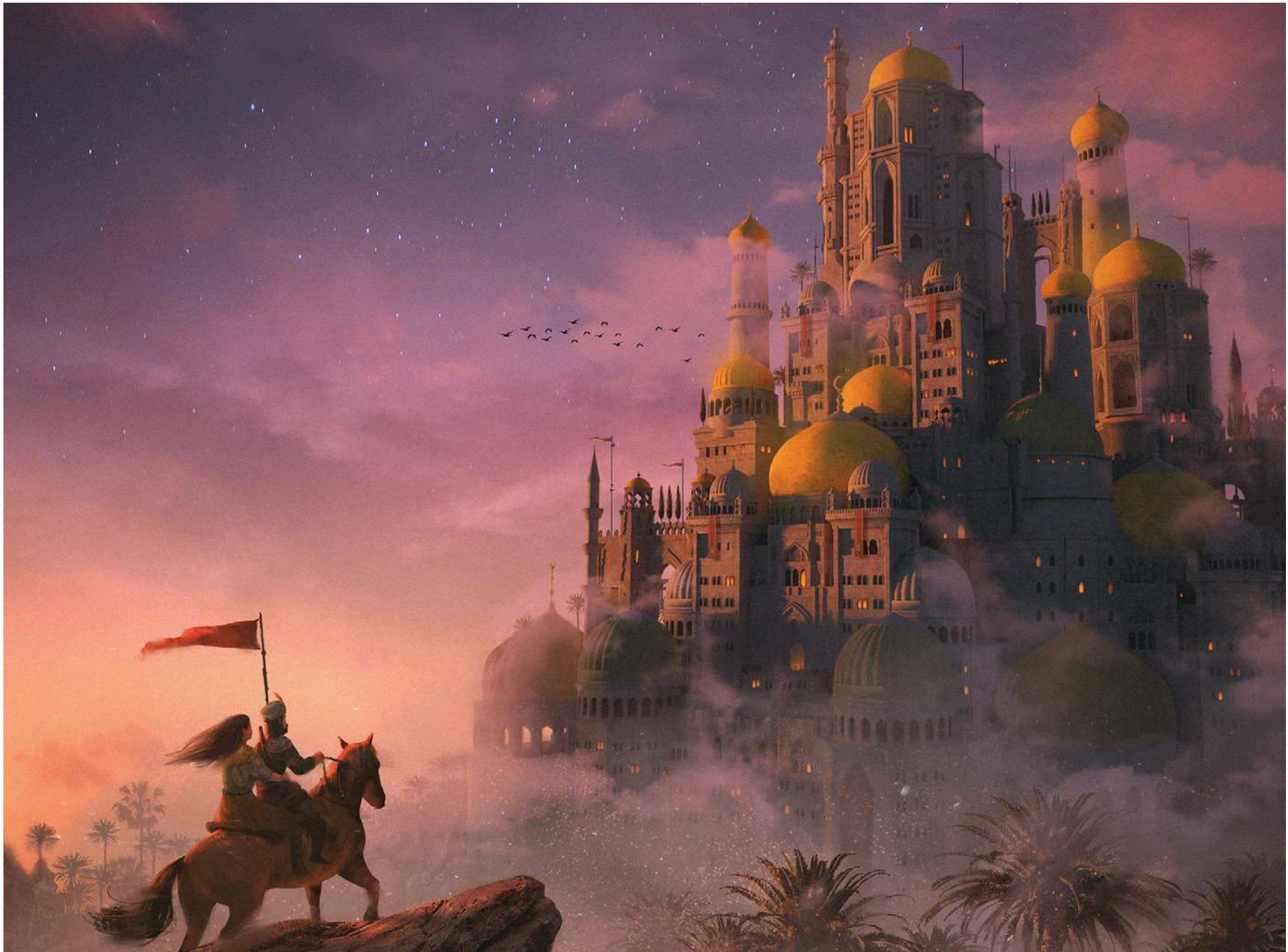
Parsa  
**PEYVASTE**

Animation Supervisor



Shahin  
**PEJHAN**

Sound Supervisor









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