

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

BRAHMS, robe dirtied and face contorted in slight fear, is kicked from under the legs and falls onto a pile of rotting cabbage from a side market.

A DARK FIGURE wearing a black robe whose face is hidden in a shadow stands above Brahms and looks down at him. The setting is mostly dim but is lit up by street lights.

Brahms tries to rise up but is pinned to the ground by the dark figure. He tries to reach for the weapons in his robe but can't. Instead, he reaches up to pull back the figure's hood to reveal a young man - barely a man - a boy. His eyes were intense and intent on murdering.

YOUNG MAN

Scythe Johannes Brahms, you are accused of abusing your position and multiple crimes against humanity.

Brahms gasps with evident anger.

BRAHMS

How dare you! Who are you to accuse me?

Brahms struggles under the young man's grip.

YOUNG MAN

I think you know who I am. Let me hear you say it.

BRAHMS

I will not!

The young man powerfully jams a knee onto Brahms's chest and the scythe admits defeat.

BRAHMS

Lucifer. Scythe Lucifer. But you are no scythe. You are nothing but a failed apprentice, and you will not get away with this.

YOUNG MAN

Tonight, you gleaned a young woman by blade.

BRAHMS

That is my business, not yours!

YOUNG MAN

You gleaned her as a favour for a friend who wanted out of a relationship with her.

BRAHMS

This is outrageous! You have no proof of that!

YOUNG MAN

I've been watching you, Johannes. As well as your friend - who seemed awfully relieved when that poor woman was gleaned

Suddenly, the young man steals a knife from Brahms's robe and holds it against the scythe's neck.

YOUNG MAN

Do you admit it?

BRAHMS

Go on, slit my throat. It will add one more inexcusable crime to your record. And when I am revived, I will stand as witness against you - and make no mistake, you will be brought to justice!

YOUNG MAN

By whom? By the Thunderhead? I've taken down corrupt scythes from one coast to the other over the past year, and the Thunderhead hasn't sent so much as a single peace officer to stop me. Why do you think that it?

Brahms expresses visible surprise at this.

YOUNG MAN

If I take your life now, you would not be brought back to life, I burn those I remove from service, leaving nothing but unrevivable ash.

BRAHMS

I don't believe you! You wouldn't dare!

Brahms's feigned courage wavers and more of his internal fear is shown on his face.

YOUNG MAN

You won't be dying today, Scythe Brahms. Not even temporarily.

The young man retracts the blade.

YOUNG MAN

I'm giving you one chance. If you act with the nobility of a scythe, and glean with honour, you won't see me again. But if you continue to serve your own corrupt appetites, then you will be left as ash.

The young man leaves, as if he had vanished.

A COUPLE stands in his place, looking down at Brahms, horrified.

MAN

Is that a scythe?

WOMAN

Quick, help me get him up!

They lift Brahms from the rot. The scythe's peach velvet robe stained with green and brown, as if covered in mucus. Brahms holds out his hand for the couple to kiss his ring, granting them a year of immunity from gleaning. The couple leaves and Brahms brushes himself off before walking back towards his home, stained, bruised and bitter.