

Season 1 Episode 3: REBELS UNITE!

The screams drowned out all civility in the Hall of the Salavene Church. There was nothing civil about a mob of angry followers, all searching for the assassin who attacked. Trevon simply stared from atop the balcony in shock, watching the blood continued to pool around the High Priest's corpse.

The doors to the hall slammed open as men armed to the helm stormed in with swords and bows drawn. "Everyone get back!" they said, shouting. "I said *get back!*" One other yelled, probably because the mob didn't notice them at first. From behind the soldiers came three individuals in fine silk clothing. All of them bearing the King's sigil—a mountain resting within a circle.

"Make room!" one of the men in silk roared. "There," the one in the center pointed, "that's him!" It took Trevon a second to realize who the man was pointing at: Trelok, the High Priest.

Blood boiled beneath Trevon's skin. These men were likely responsible for the death of his master. He didn't move, however, just stood in place as the three men in silk walked in the center aisle to the stage ahead. The soldiers stayed close to the men in silk, while the rest watched the angry mob closely. None of them seemed interested in the balcony. Right then, Trevon wished he had brought the bow he had fashioned when he was a child.

When they stepped on stage, one of the men in silk leaned over to carefully observe Trelok's wound. Then, straightening up, he said, "You, Trelok son of Birch, have been charged with Blasphemy, citing a riot, treason, and initiating a rebellion to overthrow the King of our realm. Do you understand the charges as they have been given to you?"

Only a hoarse voice responded, but Trevon couldn't hear what was said. Then he realized something: his master was alive! He *had* to help him.

Gripping the edge of the balcony, Trevon quickly planned out an attack that *should* allow him to retrieve his master and exit the church as safely as possible. Just as he placed one foot on the edge of the balcony, a hand held his shoulder, stopping him.

"Not yet," a man whispered from behind. "There will be time for that later."

Turning quickly, Trevon looked for the source of whoever spoke. There was no one there. The pressure on his shoulder eased until it remained nonexistent. *What was that? Who was that?*

Trevon looked at the stage just as Trelok's near-lifeless body was lifted on a wood board and carried out. The mob shouted as their Priest passed them, the blood from his body leaving a trail behind the progression. When sight of his master disappeared below, he turned to a descending stairwell.

When Trevon reached ground level, the mob was still talking amongst themselves, but immediately began yelling and asking questions—all of them directed at him. He squeezed his eyes and lowered his head, the noise too much for him. He needed time to think. Time to reflect on what has transpired and what it would mean for the town of Salavene.

As quick as his trembling feet would allow, he ran to his room and shut the door behind him. If only it would keep the mob's agitated yells down. There was no way he could find a solution to this problem with all that racket.

Going to his bed, he took his clothes off and fell onto his bed. After pulling up the covers, he rested his eyes and remained thoughtful.

Citing a riot? Initiating a rebellion? The reality of the situation was daunting. And blasphemy? Sure his story was different from the one the Empire promotes, but isn't that taking it a bit too far?

Too overwhelmed with the day's events, he put his questions to the side and concentrated on falling asleep. After thirty uncomfortable minutes, he did.

It was still daylight out when Trevon awoke, but the sun was nearing the horizon. The screaming no longer came from within the church; it came from outside! Getting up and rubbing his eyes, Trevon approached the window. His mind went on full alert when he noticed a stable on fire across the road. A long line of villagers were hurling buckets of water at the fire, but nothing seemed to be working.

Throwing on his church robes, Trevon hurried through the main hall to the outside. From there, he rushed to join the bucket brigade. He stood over by a well, where one empty bucket after another was given to him. He filled each bucket and passed it along. He worked tirelessly through the next hour, but the fire continued to spread throughout the village. Five houses were now consumed in a fiery blaze. It was as if the inferno was controlled by magic.

Later on in the day the fires started to go out. The whole group had to dry out three wells out of four in the town just to accomplish the feat. In the end, with the sky now dark and menacing with thick clouds, ten houses were completely destroyed, some were taverns, smithies, the stable, and residential houses that accompanied some of the wealthier citizens.

Trevon watched as grieving men and women poured out their sorrow for the victims that were burned in the buildings. When the villagers began gathering whatever belongings they could, Trevon assisted with carrying whatever dead bodies that remained to the burial site at the far end of the town.

How did this happen? thought Trevon as he carried the legs of a burned body and hurled the dead man into a grave. Everyone who was buried was given a short eulogy, but most of them had no family ties nearby, nor did some of them even hold residence there in the first place.

As Trevon got to work in helping bury the man's body, he noticed the town's mayor walking towards him from a short distance away. He appeared stern, as if he had found the person responsible for the blaze. And indeed he had, for when he came close enough, with two guards following him, he said in a gruff tone, "You! Trevon! You will come with me!"

"Sure," muttered Trevon as he stabbed the pointed end of the shovel into the ground and followed. The mayor led the way, but the guards stayed close on either side of Trevon as he walked.

Trevon passed many people, all of them angry but most were sad, overwhelmed in their grief. Then, the closer he came to the mayor's building, the more he noticed the angry glares that were directed at him. After a short while, from out of nowhere, someone punched him in the face and knocked him to the ground.

The guards immediately blocked the assailant's path, but made no move to arrest him. "You did this!" the man screamed, pointing passed the guards at Trevon. "You and that blasted Priest! Why couldn't you have just kept to yourselves? Why couldn't you both have lived without involving other innocent people in your crimes? This is all—" His words were lost as he was pushed gently back into the crowd.

The mayor approached and helped Trevon up, whereupon, he said, "He's right, you know. This is entirely your fault, and the fault of your master." He sighed one good time and continued up the steps to his palace. Without turning around, he said, "Those *followers* who were present during the attempted assassination attacked a nearby military outpost." Once at the door, he turned to allow his two guards to open it for him and he said, "You and your master brought about a doom on this town. For that you must be punished."

Trevon followed the mayor into the palace's main hall. From there, they turned left to a side passage that wound deep into a dungeon. All the prisoners in the town were kept here to be tried by a civil court. The mayor, Butch, acted as the judge and jury.

They stopped a dark jail cell. It was opened, and Butch extended a hand into the cell. "Well? Do I need to use my guards to force you in, or will you do so willingly?"

Trevon stepped towards the cell, but felt a heavy foot slam against his back, causing him to fall face-first on the rocky floor. "My son was among the victims, rebel. Remember that."

The cell was closed shut and locked.

Now alone in his dark cell, Trevon crawled over to a wall and leaned his back against it. *How did this happen?*

The next few days were trying for Trevon. Every day was excruciatingly long. Thoughts of his punishment tormented him. Images of a noose hanging over a trap door haunted his mind. Flogging was even worse, so he hoped the first option was available to him.

After a while Trevon could no longer tell what time it was. There were no windows, no way to gage how many times the sun rose and fell from the sky. Had a week passed? Two? Was it a month? He did not know. He was sure the town was trying to make its necessary clean-up before prosecuting him, but he wished it would all end. The fear of death, The fear of pain from the whip. It all made him suffer. Was that enough of a punishment for his crime? Perhaps not; at least, not in the eyes of those who lost loved ones.

When the time came, Trevon had grown a beard of two inches. The same guard who had kicked him was the one to give transport. "It's time, rebel—time to face the horror."

Trevon tried to get up from the floor, but he stumbled forward. Grunting with agitation, the guard opened the cell door and tried to pick Trevon up. He couldn't. "Fine, then I will drag you there."

Gripping the collar of Trevon's shirt, he tugged as hard as he could. Trevon flipped to his back and was dragged through the rocky dungeon to the stairs at the very end. Eventually the pain of being dragged up each step had given him the strength to push himself to his feet. "There you go—all you needed was a little motivation."

Trevon walked with support of the guard's shoulder. They traversed the main hall to the other side, where the court room was kept. Once inside, Trevon noticed immediately all the faces which stared at him with what he considered to be pure hatred. Up ahead, sitting high and mighty upon his gilded throne, was the mayor of Salavene. With all the shouts and accusations from the crowd, Trevon could not tell he was seated until Butch yelled for the crowd to be quiet.

When the crowd settled into their seats, Butch made his opening remark, "Trevon, son of Tresk, you have assisted in the rise of a rebellion, which then led to the attack of a military outpost just outside of our town which has long since protected us from incursion. You are also being charged with slander against the capital and blaspheming the main product which has become our Empire's religion. In addition, you are being charged as an accessory to the murders of fifty-three residents and non-residents of Salavene. How do you wish to plead in this case?"

Just as Trevon was about to speak, the back of an armored hand smacked against the side of his face. Then, Butch said, "You can just sit there, mister Trevon, and shut up. As a traitor to not only our fair town but also our Empire, you have absolutely no right to plead your own case, nor are you entitled to any sort of defense."

"Normally," he continued, "we execute all traitors to the Salavene State, especially those against the Empire. However," he leaned forward and stared down upon Trevon like he was a vicious and ugly insect, "I want you to remember your deeds and let them haunt you for the rest of your miserable life. All fifty-three people you assisted in killing will be on your hands, and the deaths of those who were at the military outpost."

"Now, we can begin with the trial." Butch leaned back in his chair comfortably. "Are there any who wish to give voice?"

It turned out that every family member—save for those who had no family close by—wanted their turn to speak. Every account of their loved one's final moments in life were heart wrenching. Many of them cried on the stand and pointed at Trevon like he was a beast that came straight out of the depths of the darkest doom, one that was let loose to terrorize planet Ishtar.

When they were all finished, Butch said, "Now, I think we can proceed to the sentencing. Usually we allow this part to take place the following day, but since I don't want to see you for the rest of my life, I think I will make this quick and simple. Trevon, son of Tresk, I hereby sentence you to life in solitary confinement. But that is not all: Every year starting tomorrow, people who have lost the lives of their loved ones will be granted two lashes upon your back. This will take place in the town square just outside the palace so all can learn from your foolish mistake."

“What!” screamed Trevon. “That’s outrageous!” The armored hand met with his cheek again, throwing him off the seat. The guard who hit him was quick to position him in the chair.

“What is outrageous, Mister Trevon, was the amount of people who had to die so that your master could preach his lies.” After one long stern look, he gave his attention to the guards and said with pure disgust in his tone, “Take this creature away and prepare him for the whipping he will receive.”

“No!” screamed Trevon, who jumped from his seat and tried to get away. He pushed the guard next to him and jumped past. From there, he ran down the center aisle, but was immediately overwhelmed by the crowd that was standing on either side of him. He struggled against the strength of the angry mob until a blunt object struck the back of his head. Darkness consumed him as he fell unconscious.

The next few weeks were spent huddled in his isolation cell. The fact that he knew what was coming to him was a small comfort compared to the reality of the situation; he could very well die half-way through the whipping. Two lashes per victim, with fifty-three affected people. That’s one hundred and six lashes upon his back; half-and-half—front and back—if they decided to do so. That would, at least, allow him to live through the torment. No doubt Butch’s spellcasters would enchant a concoction to keep him awake through the entire process.

All we were doing . . . inspiring hope and bringing faith back to those who had lost theirs, Trevon thought, remembering what he was told as a child growing up under Trelok’s tutelage. Everything about the proposed religion was given to him by his master . . . even, he knew, the actual story his master was in the process of giving before all this happened.

By the end of the second week, activity in the isolation cell block was increasing. A shudder ran through the block followed by a massive explosion. Still no light could be seen. But right then, as Trevon got up from his prone position, a massive shudder knocked him back to the ground. It resonated from somewhere to the left, the next cell.

People were yelling: “Where is he at?” It was a female voice, one that Trevon did not recognize.

A male voice soon followed: “I don’t know. Our contact said Trevon would be here.”

“I think it’s too late for that—look, the army approaches!” the female replied with a hint of humor in her voice.

The male responded with an edge of anxiety to his voice, “Let’s get out of here! We cannot take them all on!”

The group rushed out of the cell block and into the open streets of Salavene. More explosions and screams continued until all was silent, except for the footsteps of the soldiers and their metal boots and chainmail armor. Some of them were talking, but Trevon couldn’t understand what was being said.

Who was that? thought Trevon. *They were obviously looking for me, but why would they risk themselves for my sake?*

The rest of the day was uneventful, so Trevon decided to get whatever rest he could—he had no idea when the whipping would be held, but he knew he wanted to be fully rested for the event.

The next few days went by slowly. Trevon’s thoughts directed towards his impending fate, daunting as it was. He wondered if the rebels—if that’s who they were—would try to rescue him again, or would they simply give up. *They thought I was in that cell they broke into; perhaps they think I left to a different prison?*

The very next day Trevon was awakened rudely with a swift slap to the face. “Get up, scum! It’s time!”

Groaning, Trevon warily got up from his cot and was guided out his cell. The Mayor, Butch, along with four guards, awaited him. Looking to the guard who woke Trevon up, Butch asked, “Is the prisoner ready?”

Trevon was shaken once, and then the guard replied, “As ready as he is ever going to be. Right, scum?”

“Excited,” muttered Trevon.

“See?” continued the guard. “He’s ready for anything!”

“Then let’s get going,” said Butch, who turned with his guards and started exiting the isolation cell block with Trevon close behind. The walk led them through the main hall to the outside, where a whipping post was erected for the occasion . . . then the great sea of eyes that immediately turned to the door as the group exited the palace.

The guard leaned to Trevon’s ear and asked, “How do you like the audience? They have been anxiously waiting for their chance to maim you since the trial. Perhaps, if you beg them, they will go light on you.”

“Never,” muttered Trevon, who felt his heart rate increase at the sight of the pole. Once there, he was strapped with his legs separated on either side of him. His shirt was then ripped from his body with a wild *jerk*, and everyone stepped back.

“Trevon, son of Tresk, you have been condemned to the whipping post for a minimum of one hundred and six lashes—fifty-three to your back and fifty-three to your chest. Let’s get started.”

Within seconds, the feeling of an icy rope with barbs popped against his back. He flinched, his back reflexively moving away from the cold sting of the whip.

Two, three, four.

The pain was intense: how could he withstand all one hundred and six? As best as he could manage, Trevon tried to think about something else to ease himself of the—

Five, six, seven, and then ten, twenty, thirty . . . forty.

Trevon’s vision became clouded; the pain of his back was numb, but still so very cold. The older wounds felt hot when exposed to the air. Tears flooded down his eyes just as much as the blood

left his back. Light-headed and disoriented, he painfully waited for the remaining lashes before they decided to turn him for the other half of the punishment.

Fifty, fifty-one, -two . . . -three.

Trevon felt lax, his body now only suspended by the rope which bound him to the pole. Someone approached him—one of the guards—who began to undo his restraints. Once they were off, he collapsed to the ground, his whole body shaking.

How did I deserve this? he asked himself. No answer came.

A familiar whistling sound came from afar. Images of his fallen master flashed through his mind. He immediately jumped up, screaming from the pain of the wounds on his back and in the rage—he actually felt as though the event was playing itself over again. Then the familiar *thump* as a man fell to the ground beside him. Looking over, he noticed the guards head had a small bolt sticking out of his skull.

Everyone in the assembly froze—all except the guards, who immediately shoved their Mayor back into the palace.

Thud! Thud!

Two round-shaped objects bounced against the ground nearby and exploded, releasing a thick grey smoke into the air. The chaos that ensued thereafter was deafening. The entire assembly scrambled to whatever safety they could find. Almost by chance, they ran into the guards assembled around their prisoner.

A firm hand grabbed Trevon from the ground and rushed him through the crowd. Groans of pain came from him, but he could not see who it was guiding him through the mob. His vision was hazy, his eyes watery from the torture he had just endured. His only comfort was that he would not have to deal with another fifty-three more. He would probably not survive it.

More explosions, this time louder, erupted from the town square. Everyone was screaming; the entire world was in absolute chaos. So much so, that Trevon had no idea he had left the town until darkness surrounded him and the group stopped for a second.

Trevon felt cool rocks press against his chest as he was laid belly-down on the ground. Someone was tracing a finger over his back. A woman whispered in a strange language that not even he could understand. Then, like icy water falling across his back, the pain from his wounds dissipated. The film of tears over his eyes went away, restoring clarity to his dark world.

“Hurry,” said a male voice in a hushed tone. “They could be here any second.”

“We will be caught regardless if we don’t stop this bleeding—now shut your mouth!” exclaimed the woman quickly. When she was finished, she sighed and leaned over to take a look at Trevon’s face. She looked like a Lekolai—the angled features of her face attested to this—but the magic she had just used was unlike anything a Lekolai could accomplish . . . and her eyes. Those pupils were not horizontal like a Lekolai’s, but vertical like an Elf’s.

When Trevon opened his eyes he noticed a large smile upon the elf-woman's face. Then, as harshly as before, she yanked him up to his feet and said, "Get moving; we don't have much time."

Trevon warily complied without a word. He wobbled for a few seconds, but could eventually keep his balance and ran alongside his rescuers.

"Where are we?" asked Trevon weakly.

"Just be quiet and follow us," replied the elf-woman quickly.

There were torches lining the network of caves, but eventually the light stopped, as did Trevon when he noticed the darkness. A grunt of agitation sounded ahead of him and a hand grasped his, followed by the same elf-woman's irritated tone, "Keep going! We cannot stop for anything."

"Do we need to carry him?" asked the male elf.

"No, keep going." The elf-woman was getting impatient by the second.

The running continued for an endless amount of time. The wounds on Trevon's back began to dry and crack like scabs, allowing fresh blood to ease down his back. The muscles in his legs began to sore, and he could barely keep up.

"Come on!" urged the elf-woman. "Not much farther now."

A light could be seen around the next bend, reflecting off of the crystals that remained untouched by Lekolai hands. Then a sound . . . like wings but many of them was getting louder by the second.

"Duck!" yelled the elf-man. Everyone fell to the ground as a large fleet of bird-like creatures flew through the darkness to the void behind them.

"What was that?" asked Trevon, getting up after the fleet passed.

"Those," explained the elf-woman, "are sentries. They patrol the tunnels. Now let's go."

The group continued their run, short-lived as it was. Just around the next bend, Trevon had to raise his arm to shield his eyes from the blinding light, which reflected off of the large crystals that formed the mouth of the cave's exit.

The group slowed to a walk as they emerged into a wide-open area. Opening his eyes and lowering his arm, Trevon gasped at what he saw: A large collection of crystals the size of houses formed a medieval castle that dominated much of the underground chamber. Many Lekolai—or elves, as the case might have been—walked in and out of these crystals and formed up at the cave's entrance. All of them bore hard expressions, evidence of time underground and their brewing distrust of what had become their government. Each wielded a sword or bow, but with the craftsmanship the likes that Trevon had never seen before.

Turning around, the elf-woman said with a hint of pleasure in her voice, "Welcome, Trevon, son of Tresk, to Evalancia. The last rebellion stronghold."

