

# WARBORN

JOSEPH FARR

Based on Characters Created By Joseph Farr

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TITLE: BLADES DRAWN PILOT EPISODE - SEASON 1, EPISODE 1  
TEASER: A FATEFUL ENCOUNTER

1

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

1

The ancient forest looms, shrouded in mist that clings to gnarled roots and broken paths. The setting sun casts jagged shadows, painting the scene in hues of blood and ash. The faint rush of distant water mingles with the rustle of unseen creatures. A crow's sharp caw cuts through the heavy silence.

KAELEN DRAKEMOORE (late 20s, rugged, scarred, his clothes worn from hard travel) strides down a narrow path, his boots crunching softly against the dirt. His sharp eyes scan the shifting shadows, his hand resting instinctively near the hilt of a well-worn sword. Every movement is deliberate, every step calculated -- a man accustomed to danger. A faint CRUNCH of leaves behind him. He halts, his body tensing like a coiled spring. Slowly, he exhales, muttering under his breath, his tone dry but wary.

KAELEN  
(quietly)  
Always another ambush...

For a flicker of a moment, his grip tightens on the sword hilt -- a quiet betrayal of weariness before the mask of indifference returns. An arrow whistles through the air, narrowly missing his head and embedding itself in a nearby tree. He spins, drawing his sword with a steely ring.

REVEAL: A BANDIT AMBUSH

Six BANDITS emerge from the shadows, their crude weapons gleaming in the dim light. They form a semicircle, cutting off Kaelen's path. Their leader, SCARRED BANDIT (burly, his face marked by a jagged scar and a grin full of menace), steps forward, his voice rough and mocking.

SCARRED BANDIT  
Kaelen Drakemoore. Been hearing  
about you. Thought you'd be taller.

Kaelen's gaze flicks over them, calculating. His sword lowers slightly, but his stance remains poised -- a predator deciding which prey to strike first.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
And here I thought the forest  
couldn't get uglier.

The bandits exchange uneasy glances, but the SCARRED BANDIT lets out a bark of laughter, motioning for his men to advance.

SCARRED BANDIT

Bold. I like that. Let's see if you've got the steel to back it up.

Kaelen lunges forward, his blade slicing through the air with deadly precision. The fight is brutal, every movement a dance of survival. He ducks under a wild swing, countering with a precise slash across a bandit's thigh. Another bandit rushes in from behind -- Kaelen pivots into a patch of slick mud, his boots skidding slightly as he shifts his weight, using the stumble to drive his shoulder into the attacker's chest.

The bandit topples back with a pained grunt, and Kaelen's blade finishes the job. Kaelen steadies his breathing, his stance unyielding as the remaining bandits regroup, circling him like wolves. Their labored breaths and the snap of twigs underfoot amplify the tension.

A whistle cuts through the clearing. A bandit chokes, collapsing as a dagger embeds itself in his throat. From the tree line, SERAPHINA MORRAYNE (mid-20s, fiery red hair, green eyes full of mischief) steps into the clearing. She flips a dagger effortlessly in her hand, her gaze scanning the scene as if measuring the worth of every life there.

SERAPHINA

Six on one? Doesn't seem fair.

Kaelen spares her a glance, unimpressed.

KAELEN

(flatly)

I had it under control.

SERAPHINA

(mocking)

Sure you did. That's why you're down to what -- three?

The bandits hesitate, unnerved by the arrival of a second opponent. The SCARRED BANDIT growls, waving his men forward.

SCARRED BANDIT

Kill them both!

The fight resumes with ferocity. Kaelen and Seraphina move in tandem -- his brute force complemented by her agility. She sidesteps a swing, her dagger finding its mark, while Kaelen blocks a blow meant for her, countering with a devastating strike.

As the last bandit flees into the woods, Kaelen sheathes his sword, his breathing controlled but heavy. Seraphina wipes her dagger on a fallen bandit's shirt, grinning.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Efficient, wasn't it?

KAELEN  
(annoyed)  
Unnecessary.

SERAPHINA  
(snickering)  
You're welcome, by the way.

Kaelen kneels beside the SCARRED BANDIT'S body, rifling through a small pouch. He pulls out a handful of coins and a crude map.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
(teasing)  
Stealing from the dead. How noble.

KAELEN  
(ignoring her)  
Better than leaving it for  
vultures.

He pockets the coins and examines the map, his brow furrowing slightly. Seraphina steps closer, her curiosity piqued.

SERAPHINA  
(nods toward the map)  
What's that? Directions to your  
treasure trove?

KAELEN  
(studying the map)  
Something worth finding.

For a moment, Seraphina's smirk falters as her eyes flick to Kaelen's sword. The grin quickly returns, but the tension lingers.

Kaelen starts walking toward the path again. Seraphina falls into step beside him, spinning a dagger idly. He scowls but doesn't stop her.

KAELEN (CONT'D)  
(irritated)  
We're not traveling together.

SERAPHINA  
(innocently)  
Of course not. We're just...  
walking in the same direction.

KAELEN  
(stern)  
Go your own way.

SERAPHINA  
(mock-serious)  
What, and leave you to fend off  
another ambush? That'd be boring.

KAELEN  
(sighing)  
You're impossible.

SERAPHINA  
(smiling)  
I've been called worse. Most of it  
true.

After a few steps of silence:

KAELEN  
(sighing)  
Kaelen.

SERAPHINA  
(mock cheerfully)  
Seraphina. Now we're best friends.

KAELEN  
(deadpan)  
Keep dreaming.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Oh, I will.

The camera lingers on the forest clearing. The mist snakes back into the scene, curling around the fallen bodies like a predator claiming its prey. In the dense shadows, a pair of unseen eyes narrow, tracking the pair's retreat. A soft jingle of a chain is followed by a deep growl.

**END TEASER**

ACT I

2

SCENE TWO: THE HOWLING HARPY

2

INT. THE HOWLING HARPY - NIGHT

The warm, flickering glow of lanterns spills over the rough wooden tables, blending with the smoky haze that hangs heavy in the air. The tavern is alive with chaos: drunken laughter, the sharp clatter of dice, the occasional burst of anger over a lost bet. Barmaids, dressed in low-cut bodices and skirts hiked just high enough to attract attention, weave through the crowd, dodging lecherous hands with practiced grace while balancing trays of sloshing mugs.

Near the door, a DRUNKEN PATRON stumbles into a barmaid, his hands wandering where they shouldn't. The barmaid shoves him back with surprising strength, sending him sprawling onto the sticky floor. Two burly BOUNCERS grab him by the arms, dragging him toward the exit as he protests slurred apologies. The door creaks open, and the patron is unceremoniously tossed into the street. A ragged bard in the corner plucks out a discordant tune on his lute, his voice hoarse but persistent.

A pair of shady-looking men watch a dice game with keen interest, their hands hovering close to concealed daggers. KAELEN and SERAPHINA step through the door, their arrival momentarily drawing glances from the tavern's patrons.

KAELEN's imposing stature and worn gear mark him as a seasoned traveler, while SERAPHINA's sharp eyes and fluid movements suggest danger wrapped in charm. Her leather jacket is slightly open, teasing a glimpse of the corset beneath, which only adds to the aura of unpredictability she carries. The room, full of grimy merchants, grizzled guards, and shady locals, quickly loses interest in them and resumes its clamor.

Kaelen strides toward the bar, his gait purposeful. He tosses a coin down onto the counter, the metallic clang cutting through the noise. The BARTENDER, a heavysset man with a sour expression and arms thick as tree trunks, barely glances up as he pours a mug of ale.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
Keep the change.

SERAPHINA slides up beside him, her smirk mischievous as she flicks a coin onto the counter with practiced ease.

The bartender eyes her with vague suspicion before pouring a second mug and sliding it over.

SERAPHINA  
(to Kaelen, raising her  
mug)  
Here's to surviving ambushes and  
awkward traveling companions.

Kaelen takes a swig, his expression flat as he stares into the middle distance.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
Here's to quiet drinks.

Seraphina raises an eyebrow, her tone playful but probing.

SERAPHINA  
Is this whole brooding thing  
permanent, or just for me?

Kaelen glances at her but doesn't answer, his focus returning to his drink. The BARTENDER watches the exchange with mild disinterest before turning away to serve another patron. The camera pans across the dimly lit tavern. In one corner, a group of GUARDS argue over a dice game, their voices rising above the din.

At another table, a MERCHANT gestures animatedly, his complaints drowned out by the bard's rambling tune. The mood is a chaotic mix of tension and camaraderie, the kind of place where alliances are made -- or broken -- over a single bad hand. One of the barmaids sashays between tables, her skirts swishing as she leans in close to a customer. He whispers something in her ear, and she responds with a coy smile, slipping a coin from his hand into her bodice before walking away.

Kaelen's gaze sweeps the room, his eyes narrowing slightly as he zeroes in on a table near the back. A group of rough-looking MEN sit hunched over a game of cards, their movements quick and deliberate. One man, thin and wiry with a scar running across his cheek, glances up and locks eyes with Kaelen for a brief moment before returning to his cards.

Seraphina notices his distraction and leans in, her voice low and teasing.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
What's the matter? Some other gal  
catch your eye?

Kaelen doesn't reply, his eyes flicking back to his mug. Instead, his gaze drifts to another figure near the far wall: a thin man in a threadbare cloak, sitting alone at a table with a set of dice in his hand. His gray-streaked hair and wiry frame make him look frail, but his movements are deliberate, his eyes keen as they follow the dice tumbling across the table.

The DRUNKEN GUARD at the dice table slams his hand down with a loud thud, scattering the dice. His face is red, his voice slurred with anger.

DRUNKEN GUARD

(accusing)

You're cheating, you silver-haired  
bastard!

THALRIC VERIDAN (mid-30s, wiry, with prematurely gray hair and an air of quiet detachment) sits calmly, his expression unreadable. His voice is soft, cutting through the guard's bluster with precision.

THALRIC

(calmly)

If I were cheating, would I still  
be losing?

The room chuckles, but the drunken guard is less amused. He grabs Thalric by the collar, dragging him to his feet with a violent jerk. The dice clatter to the floor as the table tips slightly.

SERAPHINA nudges Kaelen, her voice dripping with amusement.

SERAPHINA

(to Kaelen, whispering)

Think we'll have to save this one?

Kaelen takes another drink, his voice low.

KAELEN

(serious)

We're not getting involved.

The tension at the dice table escalates as the drunken guard raises his fist. Thalric doesn't resist, his sharp eyes flicking toward a half-empty mug of ale on the table.

THALRIC

(calmly)

If you're going to hit me, at least  
finish your drink first.



The room laughs again, but the guard's fist begins to fall -- only to stop mid-swing as KAELEN steps forward, his hand gripping the man's wrist with a vise-like hold. Building Suspense The tavern falls silent.

Kaelen's voice is low but carries a dangerous edge.

KAELEN  
(low, dangerous)  
He's not worth the trouble. Sit  
down.

The drunken guard glares at him, his pride clashing with his survival instincts. Kaelen tightens his grip slightly, and the guard's resolve falters. With a growl of frustration, he shoves Thalric away and slumps back into his chair.

At the far end of the room, a SHADOWY FIGURE watches the scene unfold. They linger for a moment before slipping out the door, their movements deliberate and silent. A single coin clinks softly onto a nearby table as they disappear into the night. Aftermath Seraphina leans against the bar, her grin widening.

SERAPHINA  
(to Kaelen, teasing)  
I thought we weren't getting  
involved.

Kaelen glances at her, his tone flat.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
He was bad for the ale business.

THALRIC straightens his cloak, giving KAELEN and SERAPHINA a measured nod. His voice carries a dry wit as he smooths his collar.

THALRIC  
(sincerely)  
My thanks. It seems my charm wears  
thin after the first insult.

SERAPHINA chuckles, leaning forward slightly.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
No worries. I have that effect on  
people, too.

THALRIC chuckles softly, retrieving his dice from the floor. As he straightens, he gestures toward an empty table near the bar.

THALRIC

(casual)

Care to join me? I promise not to gamble away your purses.

Kaelen hesitates, his gaze flicking to Seraphina, who shrugs with an amused smirk. Reluctantly, he follows Thalric to the table. KAELEN and SERAPHINA follow THALRIC to the table. The bartender delivers another round of drinks as they sit, their weapons never far from reach.

SERAPHINA

(to Thalric)

You don't look like the brawling type. What's a guy like you doing in a place like this?

THALRIC

(smiling faintly)

Observing. Learning. Occasionally winning a coin or two.

KAELEN

(flatly)

And losing more often, I'd wager.

THALRIC

(nods)

The house always wins. But sometimes, the lesson is worth the cost.

KAELEN studies him carefully, but SERAPHINA seems intrigued, her grin playful. As the conversation continues, their contrasting personalities become clear. KAELEN remains guarded, answering questions with as few words as possible. SERAPHINA needles both men with sharp wit, her amusement barely concealed. THALRIC observes them both, his calm demeanor unshaken.

THALRIC (CONT'D)

(leaning back)

You're not from around here.

SERAPHINA

(mocking)

What gave us away?

THALRIC

(smiling)

The way you carry yourselves. You're either looking for trouble -- or running from it.

KAELEN sets his mug down firmly, his tone firm.

KAELEN  
We're looking for work. Nothing  
more.

THALRIC  
(considering)  
Then perhaps I can help. I hear  
there's a caravan hiring escorts in  
Junction.

SERAPHINA raises an eyebrow, exchanging a glance with KAELEN.

SERAPHINA  
(amused)  
What's the catch?

THALRIC  
(shrugging)  
No catch. Just an opportunity to  
earn coin without starting a tavern  
brawl.

As the trio continues talking, the camera pans to a shadowed corner of the tavern. A figure watches them intently, the faint glow of the lanterns catching the edge of a dagger tucked into their belt. Moments later, the figure slips out the door unnoticed. The faint jingle of coins hints at a transaction -- a warning, perhaps. Back at the table, KAELEN finally nods, finishing his drink.

KAELEN  
(to Thalric)  
If you're coming with, don't slow  
us down.

THALRIC smiles faintly, raising his mug in a silent toast.  
SERAPHINA leans back, twirling her dagger idly.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Oh! Looks like we've got ourselves  
a trio.

KAELEN grunts and cuts his eyes toward her for a second, then shakes his head, going back to his drink. THALRIC chuckles softly, his eyes flicking toward the tavern door where the shadowy figure exited.

THALRIC  
(softly, almost to  
himself)  
(MORE)

THALRIC (CONT'D)  
It seems the dice are already  
rolling.

The camera lingers on their table, the faint tension between camaraderie and suspicion palpable. The bard's discordant tune plays softly in the background, a bittersweet counterpoint to the building storm.

3 SCENE THREE: THE ROAD

3

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAWN

The morning light pierces through the dense canopy, dappled patches of gold illuminating the forest floor. The air is crisp, the stillness broken only by the soft crunch of boots on gravel. A gentle mist lingers, curling around the trio as they walk down a narrow path bordered by towering trees.

KAELEN leads the way, his hand resting near the hilt of his sword, his sharp eyes scanning their surroundings with practiced vigilance. Behind him, SERAPHINA strides casually, her dagger spinning deftly in her hand, its blade glinting in the morning light.

THALRIC lags slightly, his steps deliberate, adjusting the straps of his pack with a distracted air. SERAPHINA quickens her pace, closing the distance between herself and KAELEN. Her smirk carries a spark of mischief as she glances at him.

SERAPHINA  
(smirking)  
So, Kaelen, do you always wake up  
this charming, or is it just for  
us?

KAELEN doesn't look at her, his voice low and dry.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
Focus on the road.

SERAPHINA raises an eyebrow, spinning her dagger in a lazy arc.

SERAPHINA  
(teasing)  
Oh, I'm focused. But you're not  
exactly the chatty type, are you?

KAELEN finally glances at her, his expression as impassive as ever.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
Not much to say.

Behind them, THALRIC suppresses a chuckle, his tone soft but amused.

THALRIC  
(calmly)  
Perhaps he prefers to let his sword  
do the talking. Though, I suspect  
it's a limited vocabulary.

SERAPHINA laughs, casting a playful glance at Kaelen.

SERAPHINA  
(mockingly)  
What's the word for "brooding"? Is  
that in your sword's dictionary?

Kaelen exhales sharply but doesn't rise to the bait, his focus returning to the path ahead. The group approaches a bend in the road. Deep wagon ruts cut through the dirt, their edges hardened by time. Broken branches and trampled undergrowth hint at recent movement -- or trouble.

Kaelen halts abruptly, raising a hand. The trio stops, their senses immediately heightened.

KAELEN  
(low, firm)  
Hold up.

He crouches, inspecting the tracks in the dirt. His fingers brush a scuffed patch of ground, his expression tightening.

SERAPHINA  
(quietly)  
Bandits?

KAELEN straightens, his tone grim.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
Wagons. Heavy ones. Could be a  
caravan.

THALRIC steps closer, his gaze shifting to the disturbed underbrush.

THALRIC  
(smoothly)  
Or something less... organized.

SERAPHINA narrows her eyes, her grip tightening on her dagger.

SERAPHINA

(sotto)

Great. Just what we need -- more surprises.

Kaelen nods, his voice steady but firm.

KAELEN

Stay alert. And quiet.

As they move forward, the cheerful sounds of birds and rustling leaves fade into an eerie stillness. The mist clings more tightly to the ground, curling like restless spirits around the trees. Kaelen's gaze flicks to the tree line, his hand hovering near his sword.

KAELEN (CONT'D)

(sotto)

The woods are too quiet.

A faint rustle in the distance makes Seraphina pause. She glances at Kaelen, her unease palpable.

SERAPHINA

(softly)

This doesn't feel right.

THALRIC nods, his voice tinged with concern.

THALRIC

Quiet woods often mean loud trouble.

Kaelen pauses as a flock of birds bursts from the canopy ahead, their wings cutting through the still air. His hand tightens instinctively on the hilt of his sword.

KAELEN

(sotto)

Something's wrong.

Suddenly, FIGURES burst from the underbrush, shouting as they charge. They are lean and ragged, desperation etched on their faces. Their weapons are crude -- rusty blades, splintered clubs -- but their movements are fueled by hunger and desperation.

Kaelen reacts instantly, drawing his sword in a single fluid motion. The steel arcs through the air, slicing into the first attacker with a clean, practiced strike.

KAELEN (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Hold your ground!

Seraphina springs into action, her movements fluid and precise. She sidesteps a charging bandit, driving her dagger into his side before spinning to face another. Her voice carries a mix of adrenaline and amusement.

SERAPHINA  
(smirking)  
So much for a quiet morning.

Thalric stays near the rear, his hands weaving intricate patterns as he chants under his breath. A faint shimmer of energy surrounds him, deflecting an incoming arrow. He raises a hand, sending a blast of force into a group of attackers, scattering them like leaves.

THALRIC  
(muttering)  
Always the loud ones.

The fight is chaotic but controlled. Kaelen moves with lethal efficiency, his strikes deliberate and devastating. He parries a wild swing, countering with a brutal slash that sends his opponent sprawling.

Seraphina dances through the fray, her daggers flashing in the dappled light. She uses the terrain to her advantage, vaulting onto a fallen log to gain the high ground. From there, she throws a dagger, striking a bandit in the throat before leaping down to engage another.

Thalric remains calm, his magick precise and purposeful. He mutters another incantation, and a faint ripple of light disarms an attacker, their blade dissolving into dust. He winces slightly, shaking his hand as though casting off a lingering ache.

One bandit, his face gaunt and his voice ragged, shouts as he lunges:

DESPERATE BANDIT  
We don't have a choice!

Kaelen sidesteps the attack, his expression hardening as his blade strikes true. The bandits falter, their confidence shaken as their numbers dwindle. The last few exchange nervous glances before turning to flee.

Kaelen lowers his sword slightly, his gaze following them into the trees.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Well, that was fun.

THALRIC raises an eyebrow, his tone dry.

THALRIC  
I assume that's your way of saying  
"terrifying."

Kaelen wipes his blade on the tunic of a fallen bandit, his expression unreadable.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
Search the bodies. Quickly.

The trio works methodically, rifling through the bandits' crude belongings. Kaelen finds a pouch of coins, its contents jangling faintly as he tucks it into his coat. Seraphina discovers a map, its edges frayed and stained. She unrolls it, her eyes narrowing as she studies the crude markings.

SERAPHINA  
(nods toward the map)  
Looks like they were watching the  
same caravan we were.

Thalric steps closer, peering over her shoulder. His tone is thoughtful.

THALRIC  
This isn't just a trade route.  
Someone planned this.

Kaelen glances at the map, his expression hardening.

KAELEN  
They knew the route. And they're  
desperate enough to attack again.

Seraphina folds the map, slipping it into her belt.

SERAPHINA  
(smirking)  
Then I guess we're ahead of  
schedule.

Before they can move, a distant HOWL echoes through the forest. It's deep and guttural, not the sound of wolves but something far more menacing. The trio freezes, exchanging uneasy glances.



SERAPHINA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Tell me that's not what I think it  
is.

Thalric listens intently, his face unreadable.

THALRIC

Whatever it is, it's close.

Kaelen tightens his grip on his sword, his voice steady but  
urgent.

KAELEN

Move. Now. Let's get some distance.

The trio sets off at a brisk pace, their movements silent and  
deliberate. The camera lingers on the bloodstained road and  
the shadows shifting in the forest. The distant howls grow  
louder, a chilling reminder of the dangers yet to come.

**END OF ACT I**

ACT II

4

SCENE FOUR: INTO THE TAVERN

4

EXT. BORDER TOWN - NIGHT

The trio approaches the outskirts of a rough, weathered border town. The streets are uneven, lined with ramshackle buildings whose roofs sag with age. Lanterns flicker in the windows, casting a warm glow that barely dispels the surrounding darkness. The hum of voices and occasional bursts of laughter echo from the largest structure -- a seedy tavern with a weathered sign that reads, "The Broken Cask."

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

Nothing like the smell of stale  
beer and bad decisions.

KAELEN

(dryly)

Fits you perfectly.

SERAPHINA

(mock hurt)

You wound me, Kaelen.

THALRIC

(amused)

Let's hope they have decent tea.

Kaelen and Seraphina both glance at him, incredulous. He shrugs, unapologetic.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE BROKEN CASK - NIGHT

The warm glow of lanterns flickers across the rough-hewn walls of the tavern. Smoke coils lazily toward the rafters, mingling with the clamor of drunken voices, the occasional thud of a mug on wood, and the off-key tune of a bard struggling to keep rhythm in the corner. The air smells of stale ale and sweat, the floor sticky beneath well-worn boots.

Kaelen pushes through the crowd, heading toward the bar. Seraphina trails behind, her sharp eyes scanning the room. Thalric lingers near the entrance, observing the patrons with quiet curiosity.

SERAPHINA  
(leaning toward Kaelen)  
Careful. A place like this,  
everyone's either looking for a  
fight or looking to rob you blind.

KAELEN  
(glancing at her)  
Sounds like your kind of people.

SERAPHINA  
(smirking)  
Flattery will get you everywhere.

Kaelen reaches the bar, catching the attention of the barkeep -- a burly man with a scarred face and a perpetually sour expression.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
Three ales.

BARTENDER  
(sizing him up)  
Got coin?

Kaelen tosses a few coins onto the counter. The bartender nods, sliding three mugs toward him. Seraphina appears at his side, snatching one and taking a long swig.

SERAPHINA  
(sighing)  
That's better.

KAELEN  
(eyeing her)  
You're paying me back for that.

SERAPHINA  
(teasing)  
Put it on my tab.

Kaelen and Seraphina settle at a small, uneven table near the back of the room. Kaelen slides into his seat with the practiced ease of someone used to keeping his back to a wall.

Seraphina drops into the chair opposite him, immediately tossing her boots onto the edge of the table with an exaggerated sigh.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)

(mock exhaustion)

Now this is what I call an ambush --  
bad lighting, sticky floors, and  
terrible music.

Kaelen casts her an unimpressed glance, pulling his mug closer and taking a long sip of ale. His gaze briefly flicks toward a corner where two men lean in close, speaking in hushed tones. Their eyes dart toward the table before turning away just as quickly.

Seraphina's eyes flit around the room, scanning the crowd. Her gaze lingers on Thalric, who stands awkwardly by the door. He's half in shadow, his arms crossed in what might be an attempt to look inconspicuous, but his poorly chosen vantage point only draws more attention. He fidgets slightly, shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)

(leaning forward,  
smirking)

Speaking of ambushes... What's with  
the magick-boy over there? He's  
trying so hard to blend in, he  
might as well be juggling fire.

Kaelen glances toward the door, catching sight of Thalric's attempt at casual observation. He shrugs, his voice even.

KAELEN

(flatly)

Sometimes people are just weird.  
Not my problem unless they make it  
my problem.

Seraphina chuckles, leaning back and spinning her dagger idly in her hand.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

What a refreshing lack of  
curiosity.

Kaelen returns his focus to his mug, uninterested in debating further. Seraphina grins but keeps one eye on Thalric as the odd man finally seems to make up his mind and starts toward them.

Thalric approaches their table, his movements deliberate but lacking the grace of someone accustomed to these kinds of surroundings. His sharp, calculating gaze sweeps over Kaelen and Seraphina, lingering just long enough to suggest he's already assessing them.

Without waiting for an invitation, he pulls out the chair beside Kaelen and sits down with an air of quiet resignation. Kaelen slides a mug toward him without comment. Thalric eyes it suspiciously, his pale fingers curling around the handle as though it might bite.

Thalric sniffs the mug, his expression pinched as though offended by the very idea of the liquid inside. He takes a tentative sip, and his face twists in mild revulsion.

THALRIC  
(flatly)  
This is not tea.

Seraphina bursts into laughter, her voice carrying above the tavern's din. She sets her dagger down, leaning her elbows on the table to fully enjoy the moment.

SERAPHINA  
(laughing)  
Welcome to reality, magick-boy. We can't all sit around sipping fancy brews while the world tries to kill us.

Thalric sets the mug down with exaggerated precision, his gaze calm but his tone clipped.

THALRIC  
(sardonically)  
And here I thought I was stepping into a haven of refinement. Clearly, I misjudged the decor.

Kaelen hides a faint smirk behind his mug, taking another sip.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
It's ale. Drink it or don't, but stop sniffing it like it's poison.

At the far end of the room, a SHADOWY FIGURE sits partially obscured, their posture casual but their eyes fixed on the trio. They tap the edge of the bar twice, sliding a folded parchment into the bartender's hand. The barkeep nods subtly, his expression neutral as he pockets the note. The figure rises and slips toward the door, the faint clink of coins heard as they disappear into the night.

Back at the table, Kaelen shifts in his seat, his voice low but tinged with exasperation.

KAELEN (CONT'D)

(cutting in)

If you two are done, we've got  
bigger things to focus on.

The trio lapses into a brief silence, the din of the tavern filling the gap. Kaelen's sharp gaze flickers around the room, noting the subtle movements of patrons whose interest lingers a second too long. Seraphina, restless as ever, resumes spinning her dagger, the blade catching the light with every turn. Thalric leans back slightly, his arms still folded, his expression calm but observant.

SERAPHINA

(playfully, breaking the  
silence)

So, Thalric, you always this  
cheerful, or do we just bring out  
the best in you?

THALRIC

(seriously)

I find that cheerfulness is often  
inversely proportional to survival  
rates.

Seraphina lets out a bark of laughter, shaking her head.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

Oh, I like you.

Kaelen sighs, his tone flat.

KAELEN

(quietly)

We'll see how long that lasts.

The camera lingers on the table, then shifts to the shadowy corners of the tavern where murmurs of conversation and stolen glances hint at growing danger.

DISSOLVE TO:

5

SCENE FIVE: THE OFFER

5

INT. THE BROKEN CASK - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Broken Cask is alive with noise and chaos. The tavern is packed with patrons -- merchants, travelers, and shady figures. Smoke from a dozen pipes curls toward the rafters, mingling with the scent of stale beer and unwashed bodies.

Laughter and arguments create a constant hum, punctuated by the occasional crash of a mug slamming on wood.

In a dimly lit corner, Kaelen, Seraphina, and Thalric sit around a battered table. A small, flickering oil lamp casts long shadows across their faces.

Kaelen studies the crude map taken from the bandits, its edges torn and smeared with dirt.

Seraphina leans back, her boots on the table, a playful smirk on her lips as she sharpens one of her daggers.

Thalric sips from a chipped mug, his nose wrinkling at the tavern's overpowering stench.

SERAPHINA

(nods toward the map)

Still not sharing what's on that?  
Secrets don't exactly scream  
"teamwork," you know.

KAELEN

(sighs, showing her)

A caravan route skirting the Wastes  
of Grimgard. Guard job. Decent  
coin.

THALRIC

(amused)

A caravan along the Wastes? Either  
the cargo's valuable, or the  
route's suicidal.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

And here I thought you were just a  
wanderer with no direction.

KAELEN

(flatly)

It's called survival.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

Admit it, you like having a plan.

Kaelen doesn't rise to her bait. He leans back, studying the tavern's clientele. A group of rough-looking men play dice in one corner, while a pair of merchants argue loudly over the price of grain. A bard plucks a discordant tune on a lute, mostly ignored by the patrons.

Before they can continue, a nervous figure approaches their table. The MERCHANT, mid-40s, with a slight hunch and a weathered face, clutches a wide-brimmed hat in his hands. His eyes dart around the room, lingering on the shadows as if expecting someone to leap out.

MERCHANT

(excited, but hushed)  
Pardon the interruption, but... I couldn't help overhearing. You're looking for work?

SERAPHINA

(leaning back, skeptical)  
What's it to you?

MERCHANT

(desperate)  
I need guards. My caravan leaves at dawn, heading east toward Fortis.

KAELEN

(cutting in)  
What's the cargo?

MERCHANT

(hedging)  
Just supplies. Food. Textiles.

Seraphina raises an eyebrow, her dagger spinning lazily between her fingers. Thalric exchanges a knowing glance with Kaelen, who folds his arms and leans forward slightly.

KAELEN

(serious)  
If it's just supplies, why are you hiring guards in a place like this?

MERCHANT

(looking around nervously)  
The Wastes... they're dangerous. Raiders, beasts, magickal...things. No one's willing to take the job.

SERAPHINA

(smiling faintly)  
Except us, apparently.

MERCHANT

(eagerly)  
You won't regret it. I'll pay well. Triple the usual rate.



THALRIC  
(sipping his drink)  
Triple? Either you're very generous, or you're hiding something.

MERCHANT  
(protesting)  
No, no! It's nothing like that!

SERAPHINA  
(slyly)  
That's what people say right before it turns out to be exactly like that.

Kaelen leans forward, cutting off Seraphina's teasing.

KAELEN  
(gruffly)  
We'll take the job -- if your coin's good. But don't lie to us.

MERCHANT  
Good... and I won't. As I said, we leave in the morning. See the Caravan Master.

The merchant hesitates, his gaze shifting between them. Finally, he nods and retreats, blending into the crowded tavern. Seraphina watches him go, her expression thoughtful.

SERAPHINA  
(amused)  
Well, he seems trustworthy.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
And desperate.

THALRIC  
(casually)  
Desperation often leads to bad decisions -- for him and us.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Oh, come on. You can't tell me you're not curious. Triple pay, a dangerous route... sounds like fun.

KAELEN  
(skeptical)  
"Fun" gets people killed.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

So does staying broke. Unless  
you've got a secret stash  
somewhere?

Kaelen shakes his head, leaning back and crossing his arms.  
Thalric sets down his mug, his tone more serious now.

THALRIC

(softly)

The Wastes don't just kill you.  
They unmake you. Raiders and beasts  
are the least of our concerns. If  
we're going, we need to be ready.

KAELEN

(nods)

Agreed.

SERAPHINA

(mock offense)

You're both such killjoys. Fine,  
we'll go, but if this turns into a  
mess, I reserve the right to say,  
"I told you so."

KAELEN

(deadpan)

You were the one who wanted to go.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

Details.

The camera pans out, capturing the trio silhouetted against  
the warm light of the tavern. The hum of conversation and the  
clatter of mugs fade as the scene shifts focus to the world  
beyond the walls. A cold wind sweeps through the streets.  
Outside, the moon hangs low over the trees, casting long  
shadows. In the distance, the faint outline of the Wastes  
looms -- dark, mysterious, and foreboding.

6

SCENE SIX: CAMPFIRE

6

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The moon hangs low in the sky, casting silvery light over a  
small clearing surrounded by dense, shadowed trees. The trio  
has set up camp just outside the village, a modest fire  
crackling at the center of their makeshift site.

Its flickering glow illuminates their weary faces, casting long, shifting shadows that blend with the surrounding darkness.

Kaelen sits on a fallen log near the fire, methodically sharpening his sword. Each stroke of the whetstone creates a faint rasping sound, his focus unyielding as sparks occasionally fly. His expression is calm but intense, his eyes reflecting the firelight.

Seraphina lounges nearby, reclining lazily against a tree trunk. She idly flips one of her daggers in her hand, the blade spinning in rhythmic arcs that catch the glow of the fire. Her sharp eyes follow the blade, but her attention seems split between her weapon and her companions.

Thalric sits cross-legged on a blanket spread over the forest floor. In one hand, he holds a tin cup filled with his usual steaming brew, its smell so pungent it competes with the campfire's woodsmoke. His other hand toys absentmindedly with a trinket -- a small, intricately etched charm that faintly glimmers in the firelight.

Seraphina breaks the silence, her voice cutting through the quiet night.

SERAPHINA

(smiling, nodding toward  
Kaelen's blade)

You keep that up, and you'll have  
nothing left but a toothpick.

Kaelen doesn't look up, his tone dry and measured.

KAELEN

(flatly)

A dull blade gets you killed. Sharp  
is better than shiny.

Seraphina smirks, flipping her dagger once more before letting it rest in her palm.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

And here I thought brooding was  
your deadliest weapon. Guess I was  
wrong.

Kaelen glances at her briefly, unimpressed, before returning to his task. Seraphina chuckles softly, clearly entertained. Seraphina stands abruptly, stretching her arms with a dramatic yawn.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
(announcing casually)  
I'm off to find that stream we  
passed earlier. Could use a wash  
after today's... festivities.

Kaelen glances up briefly, then returns to his blade, his  
tone flat.

KAELEN  
Stay within earshot.

SERAPHINA  
(smirking)  
What, worried about me? How sweet.

She winks, grabbing a small bundle from her pack before  
disappearing into the trees.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

The stream sparkles under the moonlight, its gentle burble  
the only sound in the tranquil clearing. The water reflects  
the silvery glow of the moon, shifting and rippling like  
liquid light.

Seraphina sets her belongings on a smooth rock and steps out  
of her leathers with practiced ease, folding them neatly. She  
dips her foot into the cool water, sighing softly before  
wading in. The moonlight plays across her figure as she  
bathes, her movements unhurried and confident.

She cups water in her hands, letting it cascade over her  
shoulders and down her back. Her practicality shines as she  
methodically cleans herself, but there's an undeniable grace  
to her actions, a quiet moment of vulnerability untempered by  
self-consciousness.

Kaelen approaches the stream silently, his boots crunching  
softly on the underbrush. His sword is in hand, his sharp  
eyes scanning the surroundings with precision. He pauses as  
the sound of splashing reaches his ears. His brows furrow,  
his focus shifting toward the water. Seraphina notices him  
almost immediately, her tone dripping with playful  
irritation.

SERAPHINA  
(calling out)  
If you're here to join me, at least  
take your boots off first.

Kaelen freezes, clearly uncomfortable, his gaze firmly fixed on a nearby tree.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
I thought I heard something.

SERAPHINA  
(teasing)  
Oh, you did. It's me. Rinsing off  
the stink of bandit guts.

She pauses, a sly grin spreading across her face.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
(playfully)  
Tell you what: if you're willing to  
scrub my back and do a good job, I  
might even owe you a favor.

Kaelen's expression tightens, and he turns abruptly, heading back toward the camp without another word.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
(laughing, to herself)  
Such a gentleman.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Kaelen returns to the fire, resuming his seat on the log without explanation. Thalric raises an eyebrow, his curiosity piqued.

THALRIC  
(softly amused)  
Trouble in the woods?

Kaelen doesn't reply, his focus returning to his sword. A few minutes later, Seraphina saunters back into camp, her damp hair glistening in the firelight.

She's wrapped in a lightweight cloak, her expression smug as she catches Kaelen's pointed effort not to look at her.

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
Relax, magick-boy. He didn't peek  
for long.

Thalric chuckles, lifting his cup in a mock toast.

THALRIC  
(to Kaelen)  
A true gentleman.

SERAPHINA  
(nods in agreement)  
That's what I said.

Kaelen sighs, muttering under his breath as he continues sharpening his blade. Thalric sits cross-legged on his blanket, a small iron pot balanced precariously on a makeshift tripod over the campfire.

The pot lets out a faint hiss as steam curls upward, carrying with it an unmistakable, pungent aroma. Nearby, a neat leather satchel sits open, revealing rows of tiny glass jars and cloth-wrapped pouches, each meticulously labeled in Thalric's precise handwriting.

Seraphina leans over slightly, her nose wrinkling as she waves a hand in front of her face.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)  
(grinning)  
By the dead gods, that stench could kill a troll. Are you sure you didn't just brew up something you scraped off a corpse?

Thalric picks up one of the jars, unscrewing the lid to reveal dried, twisted leaves that look more like shriveled insects than herbs. He measures a small pinch into the pot with careful precision.

THALRIC  
(dryly, without looking up)  
I'll have you know, these are rare leaves harvested at the exact moment the morning dew dries. A delicate process, requiring skill and patience -- qualities I wouldn't expect you to understand.

He glances at her with a faint smirk, raising an eyebrow. Seraphina snorts, folding her arms as she watches him stir the pot with a long-handled spoon.

SERAPHINA  
(teasing)  
Right. And what about the other stuff? What's in there? Snake venom? Rotwood bark? A touch of necromancy, perhaps?

Thalric sets the spoon aside, lifting the pot carefully and pouring the steaming liquid into a battered tin cup. He swirls it lightly, inspecting the murky contents as though evaluating a fine wine.

THALRIC

(smoothly)

Strengthens the willpower, sharpens the mind, and annihilates the appetite. Truly, a marvel of alchemy.

He takes a slow sip, his face tightening into a grimace as he swallows. Kaelen glances up from his whetstone, watching the scene with mild amusement.

KAELEN

(amused)

Might as well be poison.

Thalric inclines his head, acknowledging the jab, and takes another reluctant sip.

THALRIC

(sardonically)

An acquired taste. Some call it resilience. Others call it survival. I simply call it tea.

Kaelen snorts faintly, returning to his blade.

Seraphina, still grinning, leans forward to peer into Thalric's open satchel. Her fingers twitch as though tempted to rummage through it, but she stops when Thalric gives her a pointed look.

THALRIC (CONT'D)

(archly)

Curiosity killed the thief, you know.

SERAPHINA

(mock hurt)

Who said anything about stealing? I was just wondering how much corpse-scraping you've got packed away in there.

Thalric sighs, gesturing toward the satchel.

THALRIC

(smoothly)

If you must know, each jar contains carefully cultivated ingredients.

(MORE)

THALRIC (CONT'D)

Dried ashthorn leaves for clarity,  
rotted rootstalk for stamina, and a  
pinch of bitterling petals to...  
balance the flavor.

SERAPHINA

(laughing)

Balance the flavor? That's rich,  
considering it smells like you  
boiled a skunk.

Thalric raises his cup in a mock toast, his tone laced with wry humor.

THALRIC

(smiling faintly)

And yet, I'll live to see another  
day. Which is more than I can say  
for those who refuse such "skunk"  
in times of need.

Seraphina chuckles, shaking her head as she leans back against the tree.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

Well, if you keel over, at least we  
know what did it.

Thalric gives her a faint smirk, taking another sip of his tea as the conversation shifts to other matters. The faint hiss of the cooling pot lingers in the background, a quiet testament to Thalric's peculiar but oddly endearing habits.

The conversation lulls as the fire crackles, sparks dancing upward toward the night sky. Kaelen sets the whetstone down and inspects the edge of his blade, holding it close to the firelight. Satisfied, he sheaths it with a soft metallic hiss.

KAELEN

(serious)

We leave at first light. The  
caravan won't wait, and I don't  
plan on missing a payday.

Seraphina groans, tipping her head back dramatically.

SERAPHINA

(mocking)

Oh, the noble pursuit of coin.  
You're really committed to this  
whole drill sergeant act, huh?



Kaelen doesn't rise to the bait, his voice calm but firm.

KAELEN

(flatly)

The sooner we're on the road, the less chance something decides to ambush us. Caravan or not, the Wastes aren't kind to stragglers.

Seraphina sits up, her playful grin sharpening as she tosses her dagger into the air and catches it effortlessly by the hilt.

SERAPHINA

(mock thoughtful)

Oh, I don't know. I hear ambushes can be good exercise. Keeps the blood pumping.

Kaelen gives her a flat look, and she shrugs innocently.

SERAPHINA (CONT'D)

(grinning)

Besides, it's not like we're the subtle type.

Thalric chuckles softly, setting his cup aside.

THALRIC

(amused)

And here I thought survival was about avoiding unnecessary fights. Clearly, I've been misinformed.

Seraphina flashes him a toothy grin, leaning forward conspiratorially.

SERAPHINA

(teasing)

Don't worry, magick-boy. Stick with me, and I'll keep you alive.

Thalric smirks faintly, his tone cutting but good-humored.

THALRIC

(dryly)

I'll be sure to inscribe that on my gravestone.

The trio lapses into a comfortable silence, the fire casting flickering patterns on their faces. Seraphina pulls a small whetstone from her pack, casually sharpening her dagger while sneaking glances at her companions.

Thalric leans back slightly, gazing up at the stars visible through gaps in the canopy.

THALRIC (CONT'D)

(thoughtfully)

It's strange. The stars don't change, no matter how much chaos unfolds beneath them. Makes you wonder if they even notice us, or if we're just shadows passing in the dark.

Seraphina snorts, rolling her eyes.

SERAPHINA

(dryly)

Leave it to you to make stargazing sound depressing.

Kaelen, seated quietly with his arms crossed, speaks up, his voice low and deliberate.

KAELEN

(gruffly)

The stars don't care. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't.

His words hang in the air, and Seraphina glances at him, her grin fading slightly as she studies his face. Thalric looks thoughtful but says nothing, his gaze returning to the sky. The peaceful moment is interrupted by the distant sound of a low, guttural howl. The trio tenses immediately, their hands instinctively moving toward their weapons. The firelight seems dimmer now, the shadows deeper.

SERAPHINA

(quietly, to no one in particular)

Please tell me that's not as close as it sounded.

Thalric stands, brushing off his robes and gripping his staff tightly.

THALRIC

(smoothly)

I'd love to, but lying isn't in my nature.

Kaelen rises, his expression sharp and focused.

KAELEN  
 (firmly)  
 Get some rest while you can.  
 Tomorrow's going to be worse.

The camera lingers on the fire as it crackles softly, the orange glow reflecting in their wary eyes. Beyond the clearing, the forest looms, dark and impenetrable, the faint sound of movement echoing through the trees.

7 SCENE SEVEN: DAWN DEPARTURE

7

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAWN

The first rays of sunlight pierce through the dense canopy, casting golden beams across the forest. The campsite is quiet but alive with the sounds of nature awakening -- birds chirping, leaves rustling in a gentle breeze. A faint mist lingers low to the ground, curling around the trio as they prepare to leave. Kaelen stands by the fire, extinguishing it with dirt. His movements are efficient, his focus unyielding as he kicks the last embers into submission.

KAELEN  
 Move faster. We don't want to keep  
 the caravan waiting.

Seraphina lounges against a tree, her daggers laid out on a cloth as she meticulously cleans them. She watches Kaelen with a faint smirk, clearly in no rush.

SERAPHINA  
 Damn you're intense, you know that?

Kaelen straightens, dusting his hands off as he fixes her with a flat look.

KAELEN  
 And you've got the discipline of a  
 stray cat.

Thalric, sitting cross-legged nearby, carefully repacks his belongings. His hands move with practiced precision, each item placed with almost ceremonial care. A steaming cup of his infamous tea sits beside him, its pungent smell wafting through the clearing. He picks it up and takes a sip, grimacing slightly.

THALRIC  
 An early start is sensible, I  
 suppose.

(MORE)

THALRIC (CONT'D)

Though, I'd wager the caravan  
master is as punctual as a drunken  
bard.

Kaelen tightens the strap on his pack, his voice sharp and  
deliberate.

KAELEN

Doesn't matter. We'll be there  
first.

Seraphina finishes with her daggers and stands, sliding them  
into her belt with a theatrical flourish. She adjusts her  
gear with a mix of flair and practicality, her smirk growing  
wider.

SERAPHINA

Fine, fine. Let's go save the world  
one poorly-paid job at a time.

Thalric picks up his pack with a slight wince, the movement  
drawing a flicker of irritation across his face. He adjusts  
his robes and sips the last of his tea with a resigned sigh.

THALRIC

Ah, nothing like the promise of  
danger and underappreciation to  
rouse the spirit.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAWN

The trio walks down a narrow dirt path that winds through the  
forest, their boots crunching softly against the ground. The  
mist clings to the air, gradually thinning as the sunlight  
grows stronger. Kaelen leads the way, his eyes scanning the  
surroundings with a practiced vigilance.

His hand occasionally brushes the hilt of his sword, a reflex  
born of habit. Behind him, Seraphina walks with a casual  
confidence, her steps light and fluid, her hands never  
straying far from her weapons. Thalric follows a few paces  
behind, his gait measured and deliberate as he hums quietly  
under his breath.

SERAPHINA

So, what's the plan if the caravan  
doesn't show?

KAELEN

We find another job.

SERAPHINA

And you thought robbing robbers was  
a good idea?

THALRIC

I suspect Kaelen's backup plan  
involves fewer words and more  
swordplay.

Kaelen glances back at Thalric, his expression flat.

KAELEN

It's worked so far.

SERAPHINA

Yes, because running headfirst into  
trouble always ends well.

As they round a bend in the path, the forest begins to thin, giving way to rolling fields bathed in soft morning light. A faint breeze stirs the grass, carrying with it the distant sound of activity. In the distance, faint figures and wagons can be seen on the road -- a small caravan preparing for departure.

THALRIC

Well, it seems punctuality may yet  
surprise us.

EXT. CARAVAN MUSTERING AREA - MORNING

The trio approaches the caravan, a modest line of wagons and pack animals surrounded by a handful of rough-looking guards and merchants. The air buzzes with activity -- merchants shouting instructions, guards checking weapons, and drivers securing their loads. Dust rises with each step of the pack animals, catching the early sunlight.

The CARAVAN MASTER, a stout, grizzled man with a no-nonsense demeanor, stands near the lead wagon, barking orders at a young assistant. His sharp eyes flick toward the trio as they approach, narrowing slightly as he sizes them up.

CARAVAN MASTER

You the ones looking for work?

KAELEN

That's right.

The caravan master eyes them critically. His gaze lingers on Kaelen's worn gear, Seraphina's casual confidence, and Thalric's frail appearance. A skeptical frown tugs at his lips.

CARAVAN MASTER  
You don't exactly look like the  
dependable type.

Seraphina steps forward, her smirk firmly in place.

SERAPHINA  
Oh, we're very dependable. Just ask  
the last group of bandits we met.

Kaelen shoots her a look, but the caravan master cracks a faint smile despite himself. He folds his arms, his tone grudgingly approving.

CARAVAN MASTER  
You'll get half now, half when we  
reach Junction. Keep the wagons  
safe, and don't cause trouble.

He tosses a small pouch of coins to Kaelen, who catches it effortlessly and tucks it into his belt without comment.

KAELEN  
We'll hold up our end.

The caravan master nods curtly and moves off to bark more orders. Seraphina watches him go, a mischievous glint in her eye.

SERAPHINA  
See? He likes us already.

Kaelen ignores her, turning to glance over the wagons and guards.

KAELEN  
Stick close to the wagons. We don't  
need you wandering off.

THALRIC  
Perish the thought.

The trio moves to join the other guards near the center of the caravan. As they take their positions, the faint sound of a distant howl drifts through the air. It's low, guttural, and haunting, a sound that carries far despite the morning calm. The guards glance uneasily toward the horizon, their hands hovering closer to their weapons.

SERAPHINA  
(sotto, to Kaelen)  
Still think this is going to be an  
easy job?

Kaelen tightens his grip on his sword, his gaze fixed on the distant hills.

KAELEN

No.

The camera lingers on the trio, their silhouettes framed against the rising sun as the caravan begins to move. The faint creak of wagon wheels and the muffled sound of hooves on dirt accompany them as the group sets off into the unknown.

8

SCENE EIGHT: ON THE OPEN ROAD

8

EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE FIELDS - DAY

The caravan snakes its way along a dirt road bordered by gently rolling fields. The morning mist has burned away, leaving a crisp, clear sky. The wagons creak and groan under their loads as the pack animals plod steadily forward. Merchants ride atop their wagons or walk alongside, chatting in low tones.

Kaelen, Seraphina, and Thalric walk near the middle of the caravan, their eyes scanning the horizon. Other guards keep watch from various positions, some riding horses, others walking with wary gazes fixed on the tree line that borders the road. Seraphina tosses a casual glance toward the guards ahead, her voice carrying just enough mischief to lighten the mood.

SERAPHINA

(lazily)

So, are we supposed to look intimidating, or is this more of a "stand around and hope nothing happens" kind of job?

Kaelen doesn't look at her, his tone sharp and direct.

KAELEN

(flatly)

Stay sharp. Bandits won't wait for you to decide.

Seraphina smirks but pulls out one of her daggers, spinning it idly in her hand as they walk.

SERAPHINA  
(eyeing Thalric)  
And what exactly are you going to  
do if we're attacked? Hit them with  
your tea kettle?

Thalric raises an eyebrow, his voice calm but tinged with  
amusement.

THALRIC  
(smoothly)  
A tempting strategy, but I assure  
you, my repertoire extends beyond  
beverage-related warfare. And what  
was your plan? Charm them into  
submission?

SERAPHINA  
(grinning)  
It's worked before.

Kaelen finally glances over his shoulder, his tone clipped  
and commanding.

KAELEN  
Both of you, quiet.

They fall silent, but Seraphina's smirk lingers as she flips  
her dagger deftly. The caravan continues, the dirt road  
winding through the open fields. The early warmth of the sun  
chases away the last remnants of mist, leaving the air crisp  
and clear.

Merchants chat quietly with their drivers, the hum of  
conversation blending with the steady rhythm of hooves and  
wheels. Kaelen's sharp gaze scans the surroundings, his hand  
brushing the hilt of his sword with a reflex born of  
experience.

Seraphina notices the motion and chuckles softly.

SERAPHINA  
(quietly, to Kaelen)  
Always ready to pounce, aren't you?

Kaelen doesn't respond, his focus unwavering. Thalric adjusts  
his pack and speaks up, his tone wry but thoughtful.

THALRIC  
There's a fine line between  
vigilance and paranoia, you know.  
Though, I suspect you've made peace  
with it.



Kaelen gives him a sidelong glance but says nothing.

EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE FIELDS - LATER

The group rounds a gentle bend in the road, and the landscape begins to change. The open fields give way to patches of woodland, the road narrowing slightly as trees encroach on either side. Seraphina breaks the silence again, her tone half-serious.

The forest looms ahead, its shadowy interior a stark contrast to the sunlit fields. The caravan slows slightly as the drivers eye the tree line, their voices dropping to hushed tones. The tree canopy casts long shadows across the road, the air cooler and tinged with the earthy scent of moss and leaves.

Kaelen stops briefly, scanning the road ahead. His hand hovers near his sword, and his jaw tightens as if bracing for what lies beyond. Seraphina steps closer, her smirk fading into something more thoughtful.

SERAPHINA

(quietly)

Looks cozy. Nothing bad ever happens in places like this, right?

Kaelen finally speaks, his tone low and serious.

KAELEN

Stay close to the wagons.

Thalric adjusts his robes, glancing toward the treetops with a faint frown.

THALRIC

(sotto)

Lovely. Nothing like dense foliage to inspire confidence.

The caravan master rides up from the rear, his sharp eyes narrowing as he surveys the forest. He exchanges a quiet word with one of the forward guards, then calls out firmly.

CARAVAN MASTER

Keep moving. No stopping until we're through.

The caravan resumes its march, slower now as it ventures into the forest. The camera lingers on the tree line as the last wagon disappears into the shadows, the sound of creaking wheels and hoofbeats fading into the depths of the forest.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

9

SCENE NINE: INTO THE FOREST

9

EXT. FOREST ROAD - LATER

The caravan ventures into the dense forest, the sunlight from the open fields fading into a dim, greenish hue. The thick canopy above filters the light, casting shifting patterns of shadow across the dirt road. The air grows cooler and heavier, carrying the damp, earthy scent of moss and fallen leaves. The guards tighten their grips on their weapons, their eyes darting toward the tree line as if expecting movement. The creak of the wagons and the soft thud of hooves are the only sounds now -- the chatter of merchants and drivers has dwindled to uneasy silence.

Kaelen moves closer to the wagons, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword. He scans the shadows, his expression tense but unreadable. Seraphina falls in step beside him, her earlier playfulness replaced by quiet alertness. She reaches down to adjust a dagger at her hip, her fingers lingering on the hilt.

SERAPHINA

(quietly)

This feels... off.

Kaelen nods, his eyes never leaving the tree line.

KAELEN

(flatly)

It is.

Thalric lingers a few paces behind them, his gaze flitting between the treetops and the road ahead. His face is calm, but his furrowed brow betrays unease.

THALRIC

(sotto)

It's always the quiet places that shout the loudest.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The caravan slows as the road narrows, the overgrown trees forming a natural tunnel around them. The lead guard raises his hand, signaling a halt. The wagons creak to a stop, and the caravan master rides forward, his voice low but firm.

CARAVAN MASTER

What is it?

The forward guard points to the surrounding forest, his voice hushed but urgent.

FORWARD GUARD

(low voice)

The birds... they've gone quiet.

The caravan master's jaw tightens as he surveys the path ahead. Kaelen steps forward, gesturing for Seraphina and Thalric to follow. The three exchange a glance as they join the guard, their unease mounting.

SERAPHINA

(whispering)

It's a perfect spot for an ambush.

Thalric crosses his arms, his tone dry.

THALRIC

(sotto)

How reassuring.

Kaelen draws his sword slowly, the steel glinting faintly in the weak light. He speaks without turning, his voice calm but commanding.

KAELEN

Stay with the wagons. Eyes on the trees.

Seraphina and Thalric nod, falling back to their positions. The caravan master motions for the guards to spread out, forming a loose perimeter around the wagons. The tension is palpable as the caravan begins to move again, slower this time.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The group moves cautiously, their footsteps muffled by the dirt road. Every creak of a wagon and snap of a branch seems amplified in the silence. Seraphina's sharp eyes dart between the trees, her hand hovering near her dagger.

SERAPHINA

(sotto)

If this gets any creepier, I'm charging extra.

Thalric's lips twitch in the faintest hint of a smile, but his focus remains on the treetops, his fingers tracing the edge of a carved charm hanging from his belt.

Suddenly, from the dense underbrush ahead, a figure bursts out -- a ragged-looking man, his clothes torn and his face streaked with dirt. He stumbles into the road, his arms raised in a frantic gesture.

RAGGED MAN

Help! Please, don't --

Before he can finish, an arrow WHIZZES through the air, striking him square in the chest. He collapses with a gurgled cry, blood pooling beneath him.

KAELEN

(yelling)

Ambush!

EXT. FOREST ROAD - FIGHT SEQUENCE

Chaos erupts as bandits emerge from the trees, their ragged forms darting between the shadows. They wield crude weapons -- rusty swords, clubs, and spears -- but their movements are quick and coordinated. The guards shout warnings, drawing their weapons as the bandits charge. The caravan master bellows orders, wielding a hefty club as he strikes down a bandit climbing a wagon.

Kaelen deflects an attacker's blade with a brutal parry, countering with a powerful strike that sends the bandit sprawling. He moves with precision, cutting down another as he steps toward the front of the caravan.

KAELEN

(to guards)

Hold the line! Protect the wagons!

Seraphina ducks low, her daggers flashing as she slashes a bandit's leg, sending him crashing to the ground. Another lunges at her, but she sidesteps gracefully, plunging her blade into his side with a satisfied smirk.

SERAPHINA

(taunting)

Oh, you came prepared. How sweet.

Thalric steps back toward the wagons, his fingers weaving intricate patterns as he chants under his breath. A faint shimmer of light surrounds him, and an advancing bandit's blade bounces harmlessly off an invisible barrier.

THALRIC

(muttering)

Let's see how you fare against  
something sharper than your wits.

He raises a hand, sending a pulse of energy that knocks a group of attackers backward, their weapons clattering to the ground. The fight rages around the wagons, the sounds of clashing steel and desperate shouts filling the air. One of the merchants cowers beneath a wagon, clutching a broken plank like a weapon, while another hurls a rock at an advancing bandit.

Kaelen engages the leader of the bandits -- a hulking man wielding a two-handed axe. Their weapons clash with a deafening ring, sparks flying as Kaelen matches the brute's strength with controlled precision.

Seraphina notices Kaelen's duel and grins, dispatching another bandit with a swift throw of her dagger.

SERAPHINA

(taunting)

You're awfully confident for  
someone who can't count. There's  
three of us.

The leader growls, his attention momentarily divided. Kaelen uses the opening, delivering a powerful strike that disarms him, sending the axe clattering to the ground. The remaining bandits, seeing their leader fall, hesitate.

Kaelen steps forward, his sword leveled at the nearest one.

KAELEN

(icy)

Run.

The bandits break, retreating into the forest as quickly as they appeared.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - AFTERMATH

The caravan regroups near the wagons, the guards checking for injuries as the merchants emerge from their hiding places. The ragged man's body lies motionless in the road, an eerie reminder of how quickly chaos erupted. Kaelen wipes his blade clean on a fallen bandit's tunic, his expression unreadable. Seraphina retrieves her dagger from another body, twirling it absently in her hand.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

Well, that's one way to break up a dull morning.

Thalric straightens his robes, brushing off dirt with a faint grimace.

THALRIC

(dryly)

Your priorities never fail to astound.

Kaelen glances toward the trees, his grip tightening on his sword.

KAELEN

(grimly)

This might not be over. Stay sharp.

The caravan master approaches, nodding curtly to Kaelen.

CARAVAN MASTER

Good work. Keep it up, and we'll make it through.

Kaelen nods, returning his focus to the forest as the caravan resumes its journey. The camera lingers on the bloodstained road, the scattered bodies, and the ominous shadows of the trees before tilting upward toward the canopy, where faint rays of sunlight break through.

10

SCENE TEN: THE AFTERMATH

10

EXT. FOREST ROAD - MIDDAY

The forest road is still and heavy with the aftermath of battle. The air smells of iron and damp earth, the silence broken only by the low murmurs of the caravan. Blood stains the dirt road, mingling with splintered weapons and the occasional, muffled groan of a wounded guard. Kaelen strides near the wagons, scanning the tree line. His hand hovers near his sword, his tension palpable.

Seraphina lingers at the back of the group, wiping her daggers clean with a bloodied cloth. Her gaze drifts to Kaelen, her usual smirk softened by something she doesn't quite acknowledge.

Thalric trails in the middle, his steps measured as he adjusts his robes and mutters faint incantations, a faint glow still clinging to his fingers.

## EXT. GUARD ENCAMPMENT - MAKESHIFT FIRE

The wagons are pulled into a tight circle near a clearing off the road. Guards fan out, setting up a perimeter while merchants whisper nervously among themselves. Kaelen, Seraphina, and Thalric sit near a small campfire. The firelight dances across their weary faces, casting flickering shadows on the dark forest floor. Seraphina leans back against a log, spinning a dagger idly between her fingers.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

Well, six out of ten, I'd say.  
Points for chaos, but it lacked a  
certain... drama.

Kaelen doesn't look up, his focus on sharpening his blade.

KAELEN

(flatly)

You're rating ambushes now?

Seraphina shrugs.

SERAPHINA

Why not? You've got to appreciate  
the little things.

Thalric glances up from his cup of tea, his voice dry.

THALRIC

Amusing. Do you plan to review  
death itself when it finally comes  
knocking?

Seraphina grins, flashing him a toothy smirk.

SERAPHINA

Why not? I'll make sure to leave  
you notes if you go first.

Kaelen looks up briefly, fixing her with a pointed glare.

KAELEN

(serious)

This isn't a game.

Her grin falters briefly, though she masks it with a casual shrug.

SERAPHINA

(sotto)

Doesn't mean I have to mope about  
it.



Nearby, ALYS (mid-20s, freckled, honey-blonde hair) sits on a low crate, her shoulder bared as she inspects a shallow cut. The linen shirt beneath her armor is stained with blood, the fabric torn. Thalric approaches with his satchel in hand, his tone calm but clipped.

THALRIC

Let me see that.

Alys hesitates before nodding, sitting straighter as Thalric kneels beside her. He pulls a small jar from his bag, unscrewing the lid to reveal a viscous green salve.

ALYS

(grimacing)

That stuff smells worse than the bandits.

Thalric raises an eyebrow, dipping two fingers into the jar.

THALRIC

And yet it works wonders. Hold still.

He applies the salve with precise, deliberate movements, his touch firm but gentle. Alys hisses as the mixture stings, her hand gripping the edge of the crate.

ALYS

(through gritted teeth)

You always this lucky?

Thalric glances up, his tone dry.

THALRIC

Lucky?

Before Alys can respond, Seraphina saunters over, her grin sharp and teasing.

SERAPHINA

(to Thalric)

Funny, I was going to ask the same thing. How is it you end up with the pretty ones, and I get stuck with Kaelen?

Kaelen, standing nearby, doesn't even flinch, though his jaw tightens slightly. He keeps his attention on the tree line, pretending not to hear. Thalric, unfazed, dabs at Alys's wound with a clean cloth.

THALRIC  
 (smiling faintly)  
 Perhaps the universe favors skill  
 over... blunt force.

Alys smirks at that, but Seraphina isn't done. She steps closer to Kaelen, her voice dropping to a playful purr.

SERAPHINA  
 (mock whisper)  
 Then again, maybe he's not as fun  
 to patch up. Too much gloom, not  
 enough... gratitude.

Kaelen finally turns, his eyes meeting hers. His tone is low and even, but there's a flicker of something dangerous -- and maybe amused -- beneath it.

KAELEN  
 (flatly)  
 You're not exactly a bundle of  
 thanks yourself.

Seraphina's grin widens, her gaze lingering on him for a beat too long.

SERAPHINA  
 (slyly)  
 Who says I'm not grateful?

Kaelen holds her gaze for a moment, the tension crackling like the remnants of a fire. Before the moment can stretch further, Thalric clears his throat, cutting through the brewing tension and breaking the spell.

THALRIC  
 Perhaps some rest is in order.  
 We've still a long road ahead.

Thalric finishes tending to the wound and Alys retrieves a fresh tunic from her pack, putting it on and getting dressed.

ALYS  
 I know I'm grateful.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST EDGE - LATER

The group reconvenes as the caravan prepares to move again. The guards stand closer to the wagons, their grips tight on their weapons. Kaelen approaches the caravan master, his voice firm.

KAELEN

How soon? The caravan master wipes his brow, nodding toward the drivers.

CARAVAN MASTER

Soon. Won't make it far before nightfall, though.

Kaelen glances toward Seraphina and Thalric. Seraphina sharpens her dagger, her movements quick and precise, while Thalric adjusts his satchel, the faint glow of magick fading from his hands. Kaelen speaks, his voice calm but edged with authority.

KAELEN

Stay sharp. Don't let your guard down.

Seraphina flashes him a wry smile, her voice light but laced with subtext.

SERAPHINA

Always a ray of sunshine, aren't you?

Kaelen doesn't respond, though his lips twitch faintly as he turns back to the forest.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The caravan resumes its journey, the wagons creaking forward into the shadowy embrace of the forest. Kaelen walks near the front, his posture rigid and alert. Seraphina lingers just behind, her playful demeanor masking a watchful tension. Thalric brings up the rear, his staff glowing faintly in the dim light. The camera pans upward, following a single ray of sunlight breaking through the canopy before fading into the shadows.

11 SCENE ELEVEN: THE AMBUSH

11

EXT. WOODED ROAD - NIGHT

The caravan creaks forward along the shadowed road, the pale moonlight barely filtering through the dense trees. Lanterns sway on the wagons, casting faint pools of light that fail to dispel the oppressive darkness. The silence presses heavy, broken only by the soft crunch of wheels on dirt and the distant rustle of leaves.

Kaelen strides ahead of the lead wagon, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword. His sharp eyes scan the tree line, his posture rigid with anticipation.

Seraphina walks alongside the second wagon, spinning a dagger between her fingers. Her gait is deceptively casual, but her gaze flickers to the shadows, her every movement poised for action.

At the rear, Thalric rides on the last wagon, perched atop a pile of supplies. His staff rests against his knee, and he fiddles with a faintly glowing magickal trinket.

SERAPHINA

(to Kaelen, teasing)

You're wound tighter than a snare.  
Something on your mind, or is this  
your charming default?

Kaelen doesn't look back, his voice low and focused.

KAELEN

Keep your eyes open.

Thalric glances up from his trinket, his voice cutting through the tension with dry amusement.

THALRIC

If he ever relaxes, I'm fairly  
certain the world would end.

Kaelen's jaw tightens, but he says nothing. The oppressive quiet deepens. Then -- A SHARP WHISTLE pierces the night. The caravan freezes. For a moment, all is still. Chaos erupts.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - THE RAIDERS STRIKE

A volley of arrows rains down from the tree line, striking the wagons and the ground around them. Horses rear and whinny, their panic spreading as drivers shout in alarm.

KAELEN

(yelling)

Take cover!

Masked figures emerge from the shadows, armed with crude weapons and bellowing war cries. The RAIDERS rush the caravan. Kaelen draws his sword in one fluid motion, intercepting the first raider to reach him. Steel clashes against steel as he parries a wild swing, countering with a precise slash that drops the attacker.

Seraphina vanishes into the shadows, only to reappear behind a raider. Her dagger plunges into his back with surgical precision. She ducks under another clumsy swing, finishing the attacker with a brutal upward thrust.

SERAPHINA

(grinning)

I was hoping for a quiet night.  
Silly me.

Thalric leaps off the wagon, his staff raised. He mutters an incantation under his breath, and a shimmering barrier springs to life, deflecting a fresh volley of arrows aimed at the drivers.

THALRIC

(muttering)

It's always an ambush.

The caravan master crouches behind the lead wagon, trembling.

CARAVAN MASTER

(panicking)

We're doomed! They're everywhere!

Kaelen deflects another blow, sparing a sharp glance toward the master.

KAELEN

(gruffly)

Get your men under control, or we  
really will be.

Kaelen engages a raider wielding an axe. He sidesteps a heavy swing, slicing across the man's arm before delivering a fatal thrust.

Seraphina leaps onto a wagon, gaining the high ground. She throws a dagger that strikes a raider in the throat before vaulting down to engage another.

Thalric mutters a quick incantation, sending a pulse of energy that throws a group of raiders backward. Their weapons crumble to dust, and they scramble in confusion. The raiders regroup, their LEADER stepping forward -- a hulking brute with a spiked mace. He points toward the trio, barking an order.

RAIDER LEADER

Press the attack!

The raiders charge with renewed ferocity. The trio fights fiercely, but their efforts can only slow the inevitable.

EXT. WOODED ROAD CONT.- THE BETRAYAL

The caravan master scrambles into the lead wagon, shouting frantically at the driver.

CARAVAN MASTER  
Go! Get us out of here!

The lead wagon lurches forward, followed closely by the others. Kaelen catches the movement, his eyes widening in realization.

KAELEN  
They're leaving us.

Seraphina glances over her shoulder, her voice dripping with venom.

SERAPHINA  
Fucking Cowards.

KAELEN  
(shouting)  
Get back here!

CARAVAN MASTER  
I'm not dying for you!

The final wagon bursts into flames as a lantern shatters in the fray. The fire spreads quickly, casting eerie shadows across the carnage.

The raider leader points at the trio, his voice booming.

RAIDER LEADER  
Kill them all!

Kaelen, Seraphina, and Thalric exchange a glance.

KAELEN  
(urgently)  
We're outnumbered. Time to go.

Kaelen cleaves through one last attacker, clearing a path toward the tree line.

SERAPHINA  
(mocking)  
And miss out on all this fun? Fine,  
but you owe me a drink.

The trio retreats into the forest, their breaths heavy but measured. The shouts of the raiders fade behind them, the glow of the burning wagon flickering against the dark trees.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The trio weaves through dense underbrush, their pace quick but cautious. Kaelen leads, his sword drawn. Seraphina follows close behind, her daggers glinting faintly in the moonlight. Thalric lags slightly, his breath labored, the strain of his magick showing.

SERAPHINA

(to Kaelen)

Next time we take a job, remind me to ask if the employer's a spineless coward.

Thalric lets out a faint chuckle, his voice tinged with exhaustion.

THALRIC

I thought that was a given.

Kaelen halts abruptly, scanning their surroundings. His sharp gaze locks on Seraphina.

SERAPHINA

(softly)

You're bleeding.

Kaelen glances at the gash on his arm, brushing it off.

KAELEN

It's nothing.

Seraphina's eyes catch something ahead -- a faint shimmer of moonlight reflecting off stone. She points.

SERAPHINA

There.

EXT. FOREST CONT.- RUINED STRUCTURE

The camera pans to reveal an ancient stone structure, its facade crumbling and overgrown with vines. Symbols etched into the stone walls seem to pulse faintly in the moonlight, their purpose lost to time. The entrance looms like a dark, gaping maw.

THALRIC

(eyeing it warily)

I've got a bad feeling about this.

Kaelen steps forward, resolute.

KAELEN  
We don't have a choice.

The trio moves cautiously toward the structure, their silhouettes vanishing into the shadows. The camera lingers on the entrance, faint whispers emanating from within, growing louder as the screen fades to black.

13 SCENE THIRTEEN: TEMPLE DISCOVERY

13

INT. ANCIENT TEMPLE - NIGHT

The darkness swallows the trio as they step cautiously into the temple. The air is cold and thick, carrying the scent of damp stone and decay. Their footsteps echo in the vast emptiness, each step reverberating off unseen walls. Faint red light pulses from deeper within, casting eerie shadows that dance and shift unnaturally.

THALRIC  
(whispering)  
This place... it's ancient.

Kaelen unsheathes his sword, the faint metallic sound sharp against the heavy silence.

KAELEN  
(flatly)  
And dangerous. Stay alert.

Seraphina runs her fingers lightly along the carvings etched into the walls. The images depict brutal battles, warriors clashing in bloody skirmishes under the watchful gaze of a towering figure with glowing eyes.

SERAPHINA  
(muttering)  
Who is this?

Thalric turns sharply at her words, his voice tight with unease.

THALRIC  
(softly)  
Bellatorix. The God of War.

Kaelen glances over his shoulder, his tone skeptical but tinged with curiosity.



KAELEN  
 (stern)  
 You recognize this?

THALRIC  
 (solemnly)  
 Only from stories. Bellatorix was  
 chaos made flesh. He didn't just  
 fight wars; he consumed them,  
 fueled them.

Seraphina pulls her hand back from the wall as though the  
 carvings have burned her.

SERAPHINA  
 (mocking, but uneasy)  
 Great. A temple dedicated to the  
 guy who perfected killing. Lovely  
 choice for a hideout.

Kaelen's expression darkens as he takes in the images.

KAELEN  
 (flatly)  
 The gods have been dead for 300  
 years. It's just an old --

He stops abruptly. Ahead, the red glow intensifies, spilling  
 from a massive stone door left slightly ajar. The light  
 pulses faintly, casting long shadows that seem to shift  
 unnaturally.

KAELEN (CONT'D)  
 (nods toward the door)  
 Whatever's behind there is causing  
 this glow.

Thalric hesitates, his fingers tightening around his staff.

THALRIC  
 (gravely)  
 We shouldn't be here.

Kaelen steps forward, his gaze fixed on the door. The others  
 exchange uneasy glances but follow.

Kaelen pushes the door open with a loud GROAN, revealing a  
 massive chamber beyond.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE CHAMBER - NIGHT

The trio steps into a vast chamber, its vaulted ceiling disappearing into darkness. The walls are adorned with murals depicting the rise and fall of kingdoms, their rulers slain in the pursuit of ultimate power. At the center of the room, an altar rises from the floor, its surface cracked and worn with age.

Above the altar, three crimson shards hover in the air, their jagged edges shimmering as though forged from liquid fire. They pulse with an unnatural light, bathing the room in a flickering red glow.

SERAPHINA  
(awed but cautious)  
What in the hells...

Kaelen steps forward, his sword vibrating faintly at his side.

KAELEN  
(quietly)  
It's...reacting.

He takes another step, the shards' glow syncing with his heartbeat. Kaelen freezes, his brow furrowing as he stares at the shards.

KAELEN (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
It...it calls to me, promising  
strength. Power. A purpose.

Thalric stays back, his voice sharp and urgent.

THALRIC  
(directly)  
Kaelen, don't.

Kaelen steps closer, as if in a trance. The shards' pulsing intensifies.

THALRIC (CONT'D)  
(pleading, grabbing  
Kaelen's arm)  
You don't understand! This isn't  
power -- it's a curse!

Kaelen wrenches free, his gaze locked on the shards. He raises his sword. As the blade crosses the threshold of light, the shards explode outward in a burst of crimson energy, filling the room with blinding brilliance.

The trio is thrown to the ground as the room quakes violently. Dust and debris rain from the ceiling. The shards streak through the air, circling Kaelen like angry spirits. The air crackles with energy, heat scorching their skin even as the light blinds them.

Kaelen's hands burn against the hilt of his sword, his body trembling as the shards fuse into the blade. The transformation is violent.

Metal groans and twists, the blade reshaping itself into a sleek, blackened masterpiece. Its edges glow faintly crimson, and it hums with barely contained power.

Kaelen staggers to his feet, gripping the transformed weapon.

SERAPHINA

(coughing, pulling herself  
up)

What the fuck just happened?!

Kaelen doesn't respond, staring at the weapon in his hands with a mix of awe and dread.

THALRIC

(standing, voice shaking)

You've awakened something...  
something that should have stayed  
buried.

The ground beneath them rumbles violently. The murals on the walls glow faintly, responding to the weapon's presence. The whispers from earlier grow louder, overlapping into an unintelligible chorus of despair and rage.

SERAPHINA

(alarmed)

We need to get out of here. Now.

The glowing weapon pulses in Kaelen's hands. The whispers briefly coalesce into a single, rumbling word:

WHISPERS

Warborn...

Kaelen's eyes widen, his grip tightening on the sword.

THALRIC

(barely audible)

What have you done?

The temple begins to collapse. Chunks of stone rain down as the trio scrambles toward the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANCIENT TEMPLE - NIGHT

The trio bursts out of the entrance just as the temple behind them collapses inward. A cloud of dust and debris billows into the air.

They stand panting, their faces illuminated by the faint crimson glow of Kaelen's transformed sword.

SERAPHINA

(quietly, to Kaelen)

That wasn't just some magick trinket. You've brought something back. And it's not going to stop.

Kaelen doesn't respond, his gaze fixed on the weapon.

KAELEN

(softly)

What have I done?

The camera lingers on Kaelen's face, lit ominously by the weapon's glow, before fading to black.

**END EPISODE ONE.**