

MOLLY
About what?

JENSEN
Making your own fate.

He points at Harlow. Molly is immediately flustered.

MOLLY
I...uh...we...I mean...that's not
the same.

JENSEN
(Grinning)
I think it is. You two do seem to
fit pretty well together.

MOLLY
Maybe.

JENSEN
Just think about it, okay?

MOLLY
I will.

She watches Harlow and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE CAVENDISH- EVENING

The wizards are gathered around a large brazier. There's blue flame coming up out of it. In it, there's an image of Molly, Harlow, Jensen, and Rose walking along a trail deep in the forest. The wizards all watch except for Emmerick who stands in the back and pretends not to see. In the flame, Molly trips over a root in the ground and is caught by Harlow which once again turns her into a stammering mess.

Hozor waves a hand angrily through the flame and it extinguishes. He turns and and glares at Emmerick. The other wizards follow suit.

HOZOR
Did you think we wouldn't find out
about this, Emmerick?

Emmerick doesn't make eye contact and looks sheepish.

EMMERICK
I mean, I hoped you wouldn't. At
least not until she proved herself.

HOZOR

She clearly hasn't done that yet.

EMMERICK

I'm sure it'll be fine. As long as someone defeats the dragon, we'll be good right? No harm, no foul?

HOZOR

Maybe. As long as your merry band of idiots don't go sticking their noses where they don't belong.

EMMERICK

They won't! Trust me. Molly just wants to finish the quest and go home. No side adventures.

HOZOR

It's not your false champion that I'm worried about.

Hozor waves his hand at the brazier and the flame jumps up. This time there's an image of Harlow looking down the sight of her crossbow.

HOZOR

I'm still trying to figure out why you thought it was okay to send her of all people on this quest. Especially after last time.

EMMERICK

(Trying to save himself)
I mean, I just thought...maybe someone with...er...with a little experience could help Molly! Yeah! She's not the ideal champion clearly so she can use all the help she can get.

Hozor glares at Emmerick, clearly not buy any of it.

HOZOR

You had one job, Emmerick. One job. Summon the champion.

EMMERICK

I summoned A champion.

Hozor pinches the bridge of his nose.

HOZOR

You'd just better pray this works out because if it doesn't, it won't just be your seat at stake but the entire council of wizards!

Hozor slashes his hand through the flame while staring at Emmerick, as if it's a threat. Then he stalks out with the other wizards following, leaving Emmerick alone and cowering. He stares into the unlit brazier.

EMMERICK

(To himself)

Come on, Molly, don't let me down...

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Molly is laying on her back on the ground, holding her sword in front of her. Harlow brings her sword down and Molly blocks it. Harlow puts more force into it, leaning into it and Molly does her best to push back. Just when it looks like she might have to give up, Harlow lets up. Molly lets out a huge sigh of relief and tosses her sword to the side, clearly exhausted.

MOLLY

So were you actually trying to kill me that time?

HARLOW

No, if I wanted to kill you you'd already be dead.

MOLLY

That's comforting I guess.

Harlow laughs and stabs her sword into the ground. She lays down next to Molly, hands behind her head.

HARLOW

I wouldn't be a very good mercenary otherwise. And I'm a very a good mercenary.

MOLLY

Fair enough.

They're both comfortably quiet for a moment. The forest is peaceful and the sun shines through the trees. Molly reaches over and runs a hand over the hilt of her sword.

MOLLY

You know, back home no one would ever believe I was doing any of this. Learning to sword fight, taking on a dragon...hanging out with a badass mercenary.

Molly nudges Harlow's shoulder. Harlow looks contemplative.

HARLOW

Why's that?

Molly sighs and stares up, watching the sky.

MOLLY

I'm kind of a nobody. I've never amounted to much and probably never will. Nobody would ever see me as any sort of hero. Or even see me at all.

HARLOW

(Almost to herself)

I see you.

Molly looks over at her but Harlow is staring up, lost in the sky. Molly smiles. Another quiet moment between them. Then Harlow turns to her.

HARLOW

What's it like where you're from?

MOLLY

Kind of like this actually.

Harlow cocks an eyebrow.

HARLOW

You've got wizards and dragons and badass mercenaries?

Harlow grins. Molly laughs.

MOLLY

No, I meant the trees. There's a lot of trees where I live. The Pacific Northwest is kind of known for it.

HARLOW

Do you like it?

MOLLY

I do! Good food, good beer, lots of trees. What else could you ask for?

HARLOW

Sounds like my kind of place.

MOLLY

Maybe I could show you around after this dragon situation is taken care of.

Molly gives her a tentative smile, not sure if she's crossed a line. Harlow smiles back.

HARLOW

I'd like that.

Molly's smile becomes more relaxed.

HARLOW

So have you always lived there?

Molly shakes her head and turns back to look at the sky.

MOLLY

No, I grew up in a small town in the middle of nowhere where all anyone cared about was high school football, church, and other people's business.

HARLOW

Not ideal, I'm assuming. What made you leave?

Molly shrugs.

MOLLY

I didn't have a reason to stay. My parents disowned me, my sister was in jail and I was basically an outcast in the community so as soon as I got custody of Taylor we split. I didn't want her growing up in that particular slice of hell.

HARLOW

And you've raised her all by yourself this whole time?

MOLLY

Pretty much.

HARLOW

Well, I think that makes you a hero.

MOLLY

Nah, I'm just trying to do right by her, you know? Give her a better life and future than I ever had.

HARLOW

And that's what makes you a hero. Not all this sword and magic junk.

Molly looks unconvinced.

MOLLY

If you say so.

HARLOW

Trust me. I've been around. I know a real hero when I see one.

Harlow smiles a playful smile. Molly laughs.

MOLLY

What about you? What's your story, badass mercenary Harlow Ravenscrest?

Harlow shrugs and turns back to the sky.

HARLOW

Pretty similar to yours, actually. My parents didn't approve of me so I left as soon as I could to do my own thing. I tried being a pirate for awhile because I'm good at fighting and shooting things but it turns out I'm not good at taking orders or being stuck on a boat with other people. So I jumped ship and became a mercenary.

MOLLY

How's that working on for you?

HARLOW

Like I said, I'm a very good mercenary. But sometimes...it gets lonely. Sometimes I feel like people don't see me either.

She says the last part quietly but Molly hears loud and clear. She smiles and move her hand just enough so it brushes against Harlow's.

MOLLY

I see you.

Harlow turns back to Molly and they share a smile. Harlow reaches to take Molly's hand but before she can, Rose runs up. They both quickly move apart, hoping Rose doesn't notice. She does but pretends not to.

ROSE

Hey, uh, sorry to interrupt but Emmerick is in the fire. He says he needs to talk to you, Molly.

Molly rolls her eyes.

MOLLY

Oh great. What does Merlin want now?

ROSE

I don't know but he seems agitated. Or more agitated than usual, I should say.

MOLLY

All right, all right, I'm coming.

She gets up and then offers Harlow a hand. Harlow takes it and Molly pulls her to her feet. Molly moves to follow Rose but Harlow keeps hold of her hand.

HARLOW

So...

They're standing very close and Molly is very flustered.

MOLLY

So...yeah...uh...good talk.

HARLOW

Yeah, good talk.

She smiles and lets go of Molly's hand but as Molly turns away she smirks and leans in close.

HARLOW

You know you're kind of cute when you're flustered.

Molly stops dead in her tracks. She's a complete mess. Harlow, on the other hand, wears a playful smirk. She knows exactly what she's doing. Molly finally pulls herself together just enough.

MOLLY

(Louder than necessary)

Well! Better not keep the wizard waiting! You know how they get!

She walks very fast towards the campfire, pointedly not looking at Harlow who is still smirking to herself. They make their way to the campfire where Emmerick's face is visible in the fire. He looks irritated. Molly takes a deep breath to compose herself.

MOLLY

Wizard dude. Hey. What's up?

EMMERICK

So the other wizards found out that I summoned the wrong person and, uh, it did not go over well.

MOLLY

So?

EMMERICK

So I really, really need you to get this quest done as quickly and smoothly as possible. No side adventurers, no screwing around. Just get it done.

MOLLY

What do you think I'm trying to do, bro?

EMMERICK

I know, it's just the council of wizards made it very clear that if this quest doesn't go well it could have cataclysmic consequences.

Molly looks terrified.

MOLLY

Oh wow, no pressure or anything then.

EMMERICK

Look, just get it done, okay?

MOLLY

Yeah, okay! Calm down, dude.

EMMERICK

I can't calm down! I've got the whole council of wizards breathing down my neck because my idiot champion just might destroy the whole world!

Harlow steps up and points her sword at the fire, looking annoyed.

HARLOW

Whoa, hey, that's going a little too far. Back off Molly. This is your screw up, not hers.

EMMERICK

Oh don't even get me started on you! Don't think the wizards didn't ream me for letting you come along.

Molly looks confused.

MOLLY

What's that supposed to mean?

HARLOW

It's not important.

She glares at Emmerick.

HARLOW

You're lucky you're not here in person.

EMMERICK

Yes, yes I am because unlike you I get to go drink myself to sleep now. Good luck and remember, the fate of the world is unfortunately counting on you!

Emmerick's face disappears. Molly continues to look terrified.

JENSEN

Well that was a little disconcerting.

Rose puts a hand on Molly's shoulder.

ROSE

You okay?

Molly lets out a long breath.

MOLLY

I just...that made this whole thing seem more serious, like world ending? I don't know if I can do this.

ROSE

Hey, you're not doing this alone. We'll be right here with you the whole way.

JENSEN

We've got your back.

Harlow lifts up Molly's chin so she can look in her eyes.

HARLOW

I've got you. I won't let you fail. I promise. Okay?

Molly holds Harlow's gaze for a long moment. Then she seems to relax a bit and smiles.

MOLLY

Okay. But I'm going to hold you to that.

Harlow smiles back.

HARLOW

Deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEADOW - MORNING

Molly, Harlow, Rose, and Jensen stand in a sunny meadow looking at the entrance to a rather ominous forest. There's a wall of thick branches and an archway entrance. Molly looks uneasy.

MOLLY

So, uh, anyone know anything about these Birdfolk? What are we getting ourselves into here?

ROSE

From what I've read, the Birdfolk are very mysterious and deal in riddles and puzzles.

MOLLY

Okay, puzzles. I can handle a good puzzle. I'm a boss at sudoku.

ROSE

I don't know what that is but I don't think these are the kinds of puzzles you're thinking of. The Birdfolk's puzzles are meant to get right to the center of your mind.

HARLOW

Yeah, I met a ranger in a pub once who'd gotten lost in the Forest of the Birdfolk for months and he...was not quite all there. He said it was like a labyrinth where he didn't know what was real.

Molly look terrified at this.

MOLLY

You guys are not making me feel better about going in there.

JENSEN

We can do this. We'll do it together, right?

ROSE

Right!

HARLOW

Well, we certainly can't trust Molly to do it by herself so we'd better do it together.

Harlow grins and nudges Molly. Molly rolls her eyes dramatically.

MOLLY

Gee, you really know how to make a gal feel confident.

HARLOW

We'd better get to it. The sooner we do the first task, the closer we'll be to finishing the quest.

MOLLY
Trying to get rid of me,
Ravenscrest?

Harlow seems taken aback for a moment, then she notices Molly's smirk. She smiles and lowers her voice.

HARLOW
I don't think I could get rid of
you even if I wanted to.

Once again Harlow is well aware of what she's doing and Molly is flustered.

MOLLY
So, uh, yeah. Birdfolk with trippy
mind mazes. Who's ready to do this?

Harlow draws her crossbow.

HARLOW
Right behind you.

Jensen draws his sword and nods. Rose snaps her fingers and summons a fireball in her hand.

ROSE
Ready when you are.

Molly draws her own sword, looking uneasy. She glances at Harlow who gives her a smile and a nod. Molly takes a deep breath.

MOLLY
Okay, let's do this.

Molly walks forward through the archway.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP DARK FOREST - CONTINUING

As soon as Molly, Harlow, Jensen, and Rose step through the archway, it closes up behind them. The sunlight from the meadow is gone now, leaving them in a deep, dark forest with no way back. Molly glances back at the wall of branches.

MOLLY
I'm sure that's fine.

JENSEN
Nowhere to go but onward.

Rose shakes her hand and makes the fireball bigger, illuminating their surroundings. It doesn't make things more cheery. They walk on, all on high alert.

They finally come to a bit of a clearing with a stump in the middle. It's eerily quiet. After a moment, a giant bird, ANAWK, dressed in a fancy waistcoat and monocle, flies down and lands on the stump. He regards the group.

ANAWK

I am Anawk, knowledge keeper of the Birdfolk. Step forward, Molly Owens, champion of Dragonsmore, and begin your trial.

Molly steps forward and everything starts to go black. She turns to look at her friends but they've disappeared. The forest fades away as well, leaving just her and Anawk in the dark.

ANAWK

A true hero must be able to overcome his fears and weaknesses. Can you overcome yours, Molly Owens?

Anawk fades away and Molly is left alone. All around her misty images begin to play out a montage of traumatic moments from Molly's past. Her parents disapproving of her, a rejection letter from a comic book company, an ex-girlfriend leaving her. Molly spins around, sword raised, overwhelmed. The images shift and become ghostly forms all the people closest to her. She see Rose and Jensen first.

GHOST ROSE

You'll never be a real champion.

GHOST JENSEN

You can't finish a quest. Who do you even think you are?

Next a ghost version of Taylor appears.

GHOST TAYLOR

You're not my mom. You never will be. You're a joke. I would have been better off on my own.

Molly looks like she about to cry. A ghost version of Harlow steps forward.

GHOST HARLOW

I can't believe you ever thought you'd be good enough for me.

(MORE)

GHOST HARLOW (CONT'D)

You're a fool if you think there
could be anything between us.

Ghost Harlow steps back and Molly is surrounded by the memories and ghosts. Everyone is talking at once. Molly swings her sword through them but it does nothing. The voices get louder. Molly drops her swords and falls to her knees, defeated, hands on her head.

MOLLY

I can't. I can't do this...

The voices are deafening. Molly is slowly being engulfed by the darkened but then, out of nowhere, a hand appears on her shoulder and one very real voice cuts through the chatter.

HARLOW

Hey.

Molly looks up and sees Harlow, the real Harlow, standing there. Harlow pulls her to her feet. Molly looks at her but can't quite focus. The other voices are still in the background.

HARLOW

Hey. Look at me. Whatever you're
seeing, it's not real.

Molly tries to focus on Harlow.

MOLLY

Are you real?

HARLOW

I'm real. I promise.

Harlow puts a hand on Molly's cheek.

HARLOW

I'm real, you're real, but
everything else? Not real. Just
focus on me, Molly. Don't listen to
anything else.

Molly finally is able to focus on Harlow and the voices are all but gone. She puts a hand over Harlow's.

MOLLY

Well, you feel pretty damn real.

HARLOW

That's my girl.

They share a smile. Molly takes a step back and shakes her head as if trying to shake away all the voices.

MOLLY

Man, that was intense. You were right about this place messing with your head.

HARLOW

Yeah, it's pretty crazy.

MOLLY

What did you see?

HARLOW

You disappeared and then I was alone, I could barely see...

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP DARK FOREST - A FEW MINUTES EARLIER

Harlow, crossbow drawn, is surrounded by trees and only a dim light coming through them. She looks around, on high alert. Whispers that sound like Molly's voice start to come from every direction.

HARLOW (V.O.)

I heard your voice but it sounded like it was coming from everywhere.

Harlow spins around, looks between the trees.

HARLOW (V.O.)

I had to really concentrate to figure out which was a really you.

Harlow stops, closes her eyes, and takes a deep breath. All the voices fade away except one. She bounds off after it, dodging branches. Finally she comes to a fork in the path. One way leads out to the sunny meadow, the other is dark but it's where Molly's voice is coming from. Harlow glances at the meadow but then runs towards Molly's voice.

HARLOW (V.O.)

Once I figure out which voice was really yours I followed it until I found you.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. DEEP DARK FOREST - DAY

Molly puts a hand on Harlow's shoulder.

MOLLY
Thanks for finding me. I don't know
what I would have done without you.

HARLOW
Maybe that was the point.

MOLLY
Like a test?

Harlow shrugs.

HARLOW
Probably, knowing the Birdfolk.

She picks up Molly's sword and hands it to her.

HARLOW (CONT'D)
Come on, let's go find the kids.

Before they can move, the forest fades away and huge walls of hedges sprout up and surround them. When everything settles, they find themselves in a giant hedge labyrinth.

HARLOW (CONT'D)
That was unexpected.

Molly sighs.

MOLLY
Of course this isn't going to be
easy.

Molly looks at the hedges.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
Unless...

Molly takes her sword and starts hacking at a hedge wall. Her sword bounces off.

HARLOW
It's a magic hedge.

MOLLY
It's a magic hedge. Of course.