

The Swordbearer Saga
Part One:

When Dark Reigns Fall

An
Original Screenplay
By

Tim Morell

Contact: Tim Morell
Morellmedia@gmail.com
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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE STORM CLOUDS - NIGHT

Mist and rain swirl in the darkness as bursts of LIGHTNING illuminate the clouds, followed by the SOUNDS of distant THUNDER.

It is a slow, slow descent through the clouds. Suddenly

A BOLT OF LIGHTNING -

shatters a TREE LIMB along a forest path with a THUNDEROUS CRACK

EXT. A FOREST PATH - NIGHT

A large BLACK GELDING, named FALCWREN, rears anxiously as the lightning crashes into the tree above him, illuminating the concern on his rider's rain drenched face.

ELDRED

Easy, Falcwren.

He's an older man, sixty or more, whose stubbled beard is spattered with mud despite the high collar on his cloak.

His short, unruly hair is hidden beneath a sodden, wide-brimmed hat. His name is ELDRED.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - NIGHT

Eldred pulls up sharply. A STONE TOWER has been reduced to a smoldering ruin. A LONG SWORD, with Runes inscribed on the blade, lies broken on the ground.

As he looks down at the sword the runes begin to disappear, as though they are being washed away by the rain.

Eldred scans the clearing and the forest beyond. In the distance he sees a FLASH OF PALE BLUE LIGHT. He spurs the horse forward.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

ORRIN throws himself behind a large rock as THREE BLUE SPHERES of light explode around him.

One of them strikes a tree and engulfs it in pale fire. The others strike the ground near the rock.

Orrin's face is burned red and his long grey hair is singed. As the explosions stop, he gets up and hurries on.

EXT. FOREST/A LOW HILL - NIGHT

MORDEUS stands on top of the hill. The rain and wind whip at his robe and at the cloak of the tall warrior, KALOC, who stands below him. Both are bathed in a pale, blue glow which emanates from behind them at the base of the hill.

Mordeus raises his hands and three spheres separate from the light. He thrusts his arms forward and the spheres streak off into the darkness.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The spheres of light pass over Eldred's head. He chases after them.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Orrin sees the spheres racing through the trees and raises a gnarled WOODEN WAND. A BEAM OF LIGHT leaps from the tip and destroys the first sphere just as Eldred arrives.

The second sphere strikes a nearby tree and the blast knocks Orrin down. His wand falls from his grasp as the last sphere hurtles towards him. Eldred draws his own wand.

ELDRED

Orrin!

Eldred destroys the sphere just before it reaches Orrin but can't stop the blast from ripping into the man's body. Eldred leaps from his horse and rushes to Orrin's side.

Orrin's burned and bloodied hand grasps Eldred's.

ORRIN

You, you are the last.

He dies.

ELDRED

Now it begins again

EXT. FOREST/A LOW HILL - NIGHT

Mordeus and the warrior turn and walk down into the light. It closes behind them like a door and vanishes.

EXT. FORTRESS - DAY

SIEGE WEAPONS and bodies litter the muddy plain in front of the city; FIRES burn within its walls.

EXT. INSIDE THE FORTRESS WALLS - DAY

RAVENWOLF gallops down the battle-torn street on a roan-colored horse.

He is a dark, powerfully built man in his 30's. His battle leathers and helmet are worn and dirty and splattered with blood.

His aide-de-camp, BALDWIN, a man in his 40's, rides with him followed by the bearded and brutish BLEYS and a troop of bodyguards.

They come to a BARRICADE of WAGONS and BOXES. The scene is littered with the dead on both sides.

BLEYS

Some of you men, clear a path here.

The Troopers dismount to tackle the job of moving the wagons.

Beyond the semi-circle of the barricade is about twenty yards of open space leading to the central keep.

Ravenwolf's soldiers lay scattered among the dead.

BALDWIN

They made a good fight of it.

RAVENWOLF

(angrily)

They weren't supposed to fight
at all!

The troopers move one of the wagons and Ravenwolf spurs his horse forward.

EXT. THE CENTRAL KEEP - DAY

The group rides up and dismounts. Men-at-arms step forward to secure their horses.

More dead soldiers, wearing RAVENWOLF'S COLORS, lie in haphazard piles on the steps. Ravenwolf turns angrily to the man holding his horse.

RAVENWOLF

Where is he?

SOLDIER

Inside, My Lord.

Ravenwolf strides up the steps into the keep followed by Baldwin, Bleys and the bodyguards.

INT. FORTESS/THRONE ROOM - DAY

The hall is small and dirty. The seat of power for a minor king.

CASSIO sits in the throne on a dais at the far end of the hall surrounded by his cronies.

He's a lean, hawk-faced man who wears his long black hair in a topknot which allows it to hang down his back.

Two prisoners are on their knees in front of him with their hands tied behind their backs. One is MIRKO, the deposed king; soft and spineless.

The other is SYLVANDER, a younger man made of sterner stuff. Both are bruised and bloody. Mirko still wears his cheap IRON CROWN.

CASSIO

I should kill you both for all the trouble you've caused me.

MIRKO

It wasn't my fault. It was him. He's Captain of the Guard, he gave the orders.

CASSIO

But you're his King, Mirko.

MIRKO

No, I'm not. He's a mercenary. I only pay him.

Cassio slides from the throne and kneels in front of Mirko.

CASSIO

And what would you pay me not to kill you?

MIRKO

Anything, anything you want.

CASSIO

We've already taken everything you've got. You've nothing left to bargain with. And what about you mercenary, what would you give me?

Sylvander spits in his face. Cassio draws his knife and drags Sylvander to his feet. He's about to slit the man's throat when Ravenwolf enters.

RAVENWOLF

Is that how you need them, Cassio, with their hands tied?

Cassio doesn't lower his knife.

CASSIO

He cost me half my command
getting in here.

RAVENWOLF

Maybe I'll give him the other
half and he can teach them how
to fight.

The two men glare at each other before Cassio pushes
Sylvander to the floor and motions to the men on the dais.

They push their way out, knocking Mirko over as they leave.
One of them, a young man named FLYNN, hesitates. His
loyalty is to the king, but he follows the others out.

Ravenwolf helps Sylvander to his feet.

RAVENWOLF

What's your name?

SYLVANDER

Sylvander.

RAVENWOLF

If I let you live, will you fight
as well for me as you did for him?

SYLVANDER

Better.

Ravenwolf motions for Bleys to cut Sylvander's bonds then
steps onto the dais.

Guards drag Mirko to his knees and set him in front of
his conqueror, his hopes buoyed by Sylvander's amnesty.
Ravenwolf takes the crown from his head.

RAVENWOLF

You should have kept your word.
Hang him.

MIRKO

No, My Lord. Please. Please.

Mirko is dragged off begging and screaming as Ravenwolf
lifts the crown above his head.

SOLDIERS
Ravenwolf! Ravenwolf! Ravenwolf!

INT. FORTRESS/THRONE ROOM -NIGHT

Baldwin stands on the balcony, drinking from a goblet.

A body, with a crown on its head, can be seen hanging from a MAKESHIFT GIBBET in the courtyard below.

Ravenwolf, washed and with a change of clothes, sits on the throne drinking. The remains of dinner litter the table in front of him.

BALDWIN
He would probably be alive right now if he had signed the treaty.

RAVENWOLF
I doubt it.

BALDWIN
Do you think Rajnac will sign?

RAVENWOLF
No, he's got too much to lose.

BALDWIN
So, what he won't give you'll take. He's stronger than the others, it won't be easy.

RAVENWOLF
It never is.

BALDWIN
But that hasn't stopped you.

RAVENWOLF
I've grown tired of this constant warring. I'll bring all the Northern Kingdoms under one crown and be done with it. Perhaps then we can have some peace. We're almost there. I'll not give it up now.

Baldwin comes over and pours them both another round.

BALDWIN

I suppose you're right. Besides,
once you've been a king what else
can you be? You must die a king.

RAVENWOLF

Like Mirko?

BALDWIN

Aye, like Mirko. You know, it
occurs to me, Rajnac isn't going
to be too pleased with anyone who
brings him that treaty. I hope
you sent someone expendable.

RAVENWOLF

I did.

BALDWIN

Who?

RAVENWOLF

That priest, Akalis.

INT. RAJNAC'S CASTLE - NIGHT

AKALIS, a man of about 40, walks briskly ahead of two
guards. His face is lean, ascetic and cunning. They arrive
at a large set of doors and enter.

INT. RAJNAC'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

RAJNAC sits on his throne at the far end of the hall. He's
a heavyset man with short, dark hair. A deep scar runs down
one side of his face.

Another man stands behind the throne. He's taller than
Rajnac and has long, straw-colored hair. His face is marked
with war paint. His name is GALLENTE. Rajnac holds up a
SCROLL to Akalis as he enters.

RAJNAC

Do you know what this says?

AKALIS

The same as the others I imagine.

Rajnac opens the scroll and reads from it.

RAJNAC

That Rajnac, Lord of Quandar,
does hereby agree to recognize
and pay tribute to Ravenwolf of
Bourne, High Lord of Asongata
and King of the Red Throne of
Zalgarra as the One True
Protector of the lands of the
Northern Kingdoms and does so
consent to relinquish all claims
of sovereignty within those lands.
If I signed this, I'd be nothing
but a puppet.

AKALIS

That's what he wants.

RAJNAC

What he'll get is your head in a
sack with this wrapped around it.

AKALIS

That won't stop him.

RAJNAC

Then he'll pay in blood for every
step he takes across my borders.

AKALIS

Perhaps, but it's a price he's
willing to pay. He wants what
you have. Even with Gallentes
army behind you, you can't
keep it from him.

RAJNAC

Then let him come and be damned.
I'll see him in Hell before I
sign this.

He throws the scroll at Akalis.

AKALIS
There is another way.

RAJNAC
I'm listening.

AKALIS
Within Ravenwolf's circle are those who share your contempt for his arrogance and thirst for power. Given the proper assurances they might be convinced to act on your behalf.

RAJNAC
How?

AKALIS
I'm told assassin's steel cuts as deeply as any other.

RAJNAC
You could arrange that?

AKALIS
I know someone who can.

GALLENTE
Can you trust him?

AKALIS
No, but I can buy him, which amounts to much the same thing.

RAJNAC
Why are you doing this?
What's in it for you?

AKALIS
Service to others often has its own rewards.

Gallentes whispers into Rajnac's ear.

RAJNAC
If it fails, I'll have your head in that sack.

AKALIS

If it fails, Ravenwolf will probably save you the trouble.

RAJNAC

Especially if he finds out it was you who turned Mirko against him.

AKALIS

Especially so.

You've just read the opening scenes of

**WHEN DARK REIGNS FALL,
Part One of THE SWORDBEARER SAGA**

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