

FADE IN

EXT. TEMPLE OF ILITHARIAN DAY

SOREN AND CREW are standing on the steps of a large temple with marble columns and angelic statues. Ciaran is sharpening one of his knives while Theodora is holding herself up in a handstand. Celeste is sitting cross-legged with her staff in her lap and meditating. Soren and Elathil are sitting on the steps talking.

ELATHIL

The money's good, I'm not complaining about that. I'm just saying I've done escort duty before. It's not great for XP.

SOREN

Maybe not. But you know the rules. We each get a turn to pick the contract. It was Celeste's turn and she wanted to help the paladin.

ELATHIL

Ex-paladin.

SOREN

Regardless, he wants an escort for his atonement quest. We do a good deed and get rewarded for it. No downside.

ELAZAR the fallen paladin and his companion, ORIANA enter. Elazar is tall and muscular with angular features and short brown hair with dark eyes wearing plate armor. Oriana is a half-elf with short blond hair and a scar on her cheek and chainmail. Elazar approaches the party.

ELAZAR

Hail. I recognize the priestess. Which one of you is Soren?

Soren stands up and approaches Elazar with his hand extended.

SOREN

That would be me, sir knight. Soren Oraeus, at your service.

Elazar looks at Soren's hand but does not take it at first. There's an awkward pause before he finally shakes Soren's hand once and then withdraws his own. Soren and crew look at each other.

SOREN (CONT.)

Right. Well, you already know our healer, Celeste Everwyn. This is our frontline warrior, Theodora Kethrael. Our tracker Elathil Caeldrelian, and our troubleshooter Ciaran.

ELAZAR
 (to Theodora)
 Kethrael, you say?

THEODORA
 House Kethrael, the mercantile house. But
 please, call me Theo.

Elazar says nothing and looks to the others.

ORIANA
 (to Ciaran)
 I don't believe I caught your last name?

CIARAN
 Never had one. Officially, anyway.

Elazar and Oriana look at one another but say nothing.

ELAZAR
 Very well. My name is Sir Elazar Varin. This is
 my companion, Oriana Lightbringer. Now that
 introductions are complete, we should make haste.

SOREN
 Now? No disrespect, but shouldn't we have some
 kind of plan? Where are we even going?

Elazar and Oriana turn to leave without the party.

ORIANA
 We'll explain on the way. Now come.

The party look at each other. Ciaran in particular has a sour look on
 his face. The party exit following Elazar and Oriana.

TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. FOREST DAY

The party with Elazar and Orianna in front are trekking through the
 foliage of a dense forest. Elazar is using his blade to cut through
 branches in their path. Elathil is not with them.

ELAZAR
 Try to keep up. The elf is the only one who
 seems fit to clear a path.

CIARAN
(grumbling)
I'll clear a path right up your...

ORIANA
What was that?

CIARAN
I said I'm a city boy. Camping was for avoiding
the heat.

ELAZAR
I would think staying indoors would do more to
keep you cool in the summer than traipsing
through wilderness.

CIARAN
Oh my gods, I'm talking about keeping a low
profile, evading the city guards.

Elazar and Oriana stop.

ORIANA
Are you saying you're a criminal?

ELAZAR
(to Soren)
This is unacceptable! I will not be sullied
further by associating with some guttersnipe!

THEODORA
Hey, who the hell do you think you are to talk to
him like that?

CIARAN
Okay, three things. One, I went straight. Two,
I'm Chaotic Neutral, not Evil. Three, the ship
already sailed on losing your paladin status.

ELAZAR
You insolent-

CELESTE
Stop!

Everyone turns to Celeste in surprise. She hesitates upon becoming
the center of attention but straightens up and steps forward.

CELESTE (CONT.)
We are your escorts for your atonement, but you
are not in charge of this party.

ORIANA

Neither are you. Clergy of your sort are hardly leadership material.

SOREN

I'm the party leader. Ciaran and Celeste are valuable allies and more importantly my friends. If you have a problem with them, you can release us from the contract and continue on your own.

Oriana, Elazar and Soren stare each other down.

Without a word Elazar returns to clearing the trail. The party look at each other and follow.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING NIGHT

The party are seated around the campfire. Elathil and Ciaran are pitching tents. Soren is stoking the fire while Celeste cooks stew in a pot over the flames. Theodora is cleaning her blades. Elazar and Oriana are pitching their tent away from the others.

THEODORA

I can't imagine why the gods turned their back on him.

SOREN

Theo...

ELATHIL

She's got a point. I could hear that little shouting match back there and I doubt I was the only one.

CIARAN

Something tells me you're not talking about all your woodland friends.

ELATHIL

No. A group of something came through a couple days ago. Hard to tell what.

THEODORA

Why didn't you say something earlier?

ELATHIL

I wanted to find more details first, but...

SOREN

But what?

ELATHIL

There's something really big out here. There are spots where it looks like trees were uprooted... but I couldn't find the trees.

The party look at one another in silence.

Soren turns and marches over to Elazar and Oriana.

SOREN

I think it's time you told us what we're doing out here.

ELAZAR

We are here to reclaim a temple for Ilitharian. The consecration of the site will return me to favor in his eyes.

CELESTE

Why would the god of valor have a temple in the middle of the wilderness?

ORIANA

It is not your place to question the gods.

THEODORA

I don't know who pissed in your holy water, lady, but priestess or not, you keep this up and I'll slap you from here to the seventh heaven.

ORIANA

Priestess? I'm a favored soul. While the clergy sit on their hands and debate philosophy I'm doing the real work in Ilitharian's name.

CIARAN

Like climbing the highest mountain so you can look down on us from it?

Elathil is looking around as they argue. He draws his bow and nocks and arrow.

ELATHIL

Can everyone shut up for a minute?

Elazar grabs Ciaran by his shirt and gets in his face.

ELAZAR

(to Ciaran)

Learn your place, thief. You shouldn't wag that insolent tongue at your betters.

Ciaran slips free of Elazar's grip.

CIARAN

My betters? I started at rock bottom and clawed my way up. You started at the top and couldn't hack it.

ELAZAR

You disrespectful little-

ELATHIL

Seriously, shut up! We've got-

Elathil is cut off as GOBLINS erupt out of the underbrush and swarm the camp.

Soren quickly intones a resonant incantation and fires five birdlike missiles of brilliant red energy from his fingertips. Each one strikes a different goblin, killing them.

Two goblins holding a length of rope between them charge out of the brush and trip Ciaran, Celeste and Elazar by sweeping their legs out with the rope.

CIARAN

(singing)

I can make me disappear! Have no fear!

Ciaran fades out of view as Celeste scrambles to get back up and two goblins pounce on Elazar, holding his arms to the ground.

Elathil fires two arrows in rapid succession and kills both of the goblins holding Elazar down before one jumps on his back and starts choking him.

Celeste runs up to Elathil with her staff and delivers two hard whacks to the goblin's skull before it lets go of Elathil's neck and drops to the ground. They smile at one another before a dagger flies out of the dark and lands in Celeste's arm. Elathil nocks another arrow and fires at the goblin standing on a boulder and throwing more daggers at the party.

Theodora twirls out of the way of a sweep from one goblin's axe at knee level. Two try to flank her, but she jumps over their swings and lands on their heads, balancing for a moment before back-flipping off of them. The force pushes them off-balance and they fall into the campfire causing their hair and clothes to catch fire. The two burning goblins run off into the woods howling.

Elazar and Oriana stand back to back with swords drawn and cleave through every goblin that comes at them. A net drops from the trees on top of them.

Ciaran drops out of invisibility to put a knife in the back of one of the goblin's hastily tying the net. The others turn to throw daggers and rocks at Ciaran, who simply uses the goblin he just stabbed as a shield.

Soren reaches into one of his coat pockets and pulls out a tuft of fleece. He speaks an incantation and makes sweeping gestures with his hands and a huge black and red bear appears in the middle of the camp. It raises to its hind feet and lets out a terrifying bellow.

At the sight of the bear the goblins turn and flee back into the woods. The bear prowls the edges of the camp, roaring until no more signs of the goblins can be seen.

Soren waves a hand and the bear dissipates like mist in the wind.

ELAZAR

You shouldn't have dismissed that beast. We could have hunted those vermin down.

ORIANA

It was an illusion, Elazar.

ELAZAR

Bah! We could have finished them easily.

SOREN

But it worked.

ELAZAR

You're a wizard! Just lob a fireball at them.

Celeste finishes casting a cure spell on her wound and starts to cure Elathil.

ELATHIL

That would start a forest fire, you moron. Silarin's oath, no wonder you lost your paladin status.

ELAZAR

Don't speak to me of matters you know nothing about.

SOREN

Then now would be a good time to tell us how you fell.

Elazar and Oriana look to one another. She nods to him and he turns to face the party.

ELAZAR

Oriana and I were escorting a prisoner to his trial in Serain. He did everything in his power to make the task more difficult. Within a day of the city, he escaped.

ORIANA

We chased him down, but it wasn't easy. He killed a traveler on the road. We caught him as he was stealing the poor man's clothes.

ELAZAR

We subdued him, but... In a moment of weakness, I forced him to his knees and separated his miserable head from his shoulders.

The party stare in silence. Ciaran snorts and goes back to his tent. Theodora walks up to Elazar and slaps him in the face before storming off to her own tent.

Elazar says nothing and walks off to his tent with Oriana following him.

Elazar looks back over his shoulder at the others.

ELAZAR (CONT.)

We requested your help because we knew about the goblins in this forest. There will be too many of them for us to defeat alone.

With that Elazar and Oriana duck into their tent.

The rest of the party go to their tents with Elathil taking first watch.

EXT. FOREST DAY

The party are marching in silence with Elazar and Oriana in front. Elathil is watching their rear for another ambush.

The group stops by a stream and begins preparing a fire to make lunch. No one is making eye contact.

Soren goes through his pack and starts to become more alarmed.

CELESTE

Is something wrong?

Soren empties the contents of his pack onto the ground and sighs.

SOREN

Kind of. My flasks of alchemist's fire are missing.

Everyone turns to look at Soren.

ORIANA

What do you mean "missing?"

THEODORA

Missing. As in, "Not here anymore."

SOREN

The goblins probably stole them during the ambush last night. At least if we see smoke we'll know where they are.

CIARAN

Does anything ever upset you?

Soren shrugs in response.

ELAZAR

By this time the goblins will be competing with anything that moved into the temple. Having grenade weapons would give them an edge.

ORIANA

Then it seems our task has become more urgent.

Oriana stamps out the fire that Celeste was building.

ELAZAR

Let's get moving. We're not going to let the temple fall into the grubby paws of those monsters.

ELATHIL

Haven't been on a forced march since I left the militia. Fun, fun, fun.

THEODORA

(to Soren)

You want to say something to them?

SOREN

They're not wrong. If the goblins take the temple, getting it back will be that much more difficult.

There's some grumbling from Theodora and Ciaran but the party gather up their things and follow Elazar and Oriana deeper into the forest.

MONTAGE

The party cross over a wide, but shallow stream.

Soren helps Celeste climb down a small cliff.

Elathil scans the ground for tracks and points in one direction.

The party pitching camp at night around a small fire as Celeste reads from a scroll and the surrounding foliage recedes to give more space.

The party walking past the shores of a small lake.

Passing through thick foliage, Ciaran deliberately lets a tree branch he moved whip back and smack Elazar in the face.

Celeste harvests some wild herbs while Elazar and Oriana wait impatiently.

The party stand at the top of a hill overlooking the forest, which goes on for miles. The sun is sinking below the horizon.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HILLTOP CAMPSITE NIGHT

The party have setup camp. Theodora is gathering firewood as Celeste cooks. Soren is leafing through a spellbook. Oriana and Elazar are sharpening their swords. Elathil is restringing his bow. Ciaran is not present.

ELAZAR
(to Elathil)

There cannot be order unless everyone plays their part. You seem to understand that better than most.

ELATHIL
Better than you, anyway.

ELAZAR
Explain.

ELATHIL
This whole trip you've been acting like you're better than us, Ciaran especially.

ORIANA

We don't owe him any deference. If he has reformed, good. But his past deeds are no less real.

ELATHIL

And what deeds are those specifically?

Beat.

ELATHIL (CONT.)

Thought so. Society works when people play their part, but we have a responsibility to help them do that. Ciaran never had that until he joined the party. The system already failed him once. The least you can do is quit being a prick to him.

Elathil finishes with his bow and gets up to help Celeste hand out dinner.

ELATHIL (CONT.)

Now that I think of it, where is Ciaran?

CELESTE

He offered to get some ingredients. There's a type of flower that glows by moonlight that grows in this region. I use it for protection potions.

ELATHIL

Shouldn't he have gone with somebody?

THEODORA

He rushed off before Celeste could stop him. You can probably guess why.

Theodora casts a glare at Elazar and Oriana.

A high-pitched shriek comes out of the darkness causing multiple roosting birds to take wing into the night and the camp to jump to their feet in alarm.

SOREN

That was Ciaran's Sound Burst spell!

THEODORA

Damn it! Let's go!

Elathil points in a specific direction.

ELATHIL

That way!

The party rush off with Elazar and Oriana remaining behind.

ELAZAR

Wait!

The party exit into the darkness.

EXT. FOREST NIGHT

Ciaran's wrists and ankles are bound and a troop of GOBLINS are carrying him off. He has a black eye and blood trailing from his nose.

CIARAN

You do know that this will end badly for you,
right? Ninth level adventurer, party of similar?
Odds are against you, you know?

Ciaran tilts his head back and sees the party rushing through the trees to the bottom of the hill after the goblins.

CIARAN (CONT.)

Told ya so.

Elathil pulls ahead of the group with a burst of speed and fires three arrows in rapid succession. Two of the goblins are taken down and the other gets an arrow in his leg causing him to fall. The goblins all drop Ciaran to the ground.

Ciaran reaches over and uses the short sword of one of the fallen goblins to cut his bonds on his wrists. He draws one of his knives from his hip and cuts the bindings on his legs.

Theodora descends on the goblins with her blades whirling. With a single elegant sweep of her sword, she slices the throats of three goblins. The rest start to retreat.

Soren speaks a resonant incantation and waves his hand over a muddy yellow and brown ball in his palm. The ball hovers over his palm and bursts into blue flames that quickly change to a frosty fog. He thrusts his hand out and the ball speeds toward the fleeing goblins. When it lands in their midst, there's an explosion of ice crystals and freezing winds that kill the remaining goblins.

CIARAN

What kept you?

Theodora punches him in the shoulder with a relieved sigh.

THEODORA

What did I tell you about scaring us?

Ciaran laughs as Celeste places her hands on his cheeks and casts a healing spell on him. Elathil is looking off into the distance.

ELATHIL

Guys? Do you see that?

They all turn to look where Elathil is. A plume of smoke is rising up in the distance deeper into the forest.

SOREN

I don't think that's a campfire.

The party turn and swiftly run back toward camp.

EXT. HILLTOP CAMPSITE NIGHT

Elazar and Oriana are staring at the smoke in the distance as the party re-enter the camp.

ELAZAR

I take it you saw the smoke too?

CIARAN

No, no, it's okay. I didn't expect you to help, much less express concern for the ex-con. I'm fine, by the way.

Oriana and Elazar cast a scowl at Ciaran and draw their blades.

ELAZAR

We're closer to the temple than I thought.

ORIANA

We need to go. Now!

Without hesitation, Oriana and Elazar both take off down the hill.

SOREN

I was going to suggest some reconnaissance and strategic planning, but okay.

Celeste quickly douses the campfire and the party rush to catch up.

EXT. FOREST TEMPLE NIGHT

The temple is a single building with multiple stories and a large courtyard surrounded by henge stones. A swarm of GOBLINS are battling with a group of six TREANTS. Fires are burning in the underbrush that has choked the courtyard. The goblins are crawling all over the treants and attacking them with axes. Two of the treants are on fire and trying to extinguish the flames even as the goblins keep attacking and trying to bring them down.

The party burst onto the scene.

THEODORA

Gods above! Soren, Celeste! Area spells! Now!

SOREN

Wait, I've got one spell we can all make use of.

Soren reaches into one of his pockets and pulls out a thin shaving of wooden root. He speaks a resonant incantation and the root crumbles away into dust that whirls about everyone in the party.

SOREN (CONT.)

That lasts only about a minute. Go!

Theodora, Elazar and Oriana charge forward into combat, their movement supernaturally fast.

ELATHIL

Oh, I'm going to enjoy this.

The rest of the party charge into combat. Elathil races into the fray, firing off three arrows in rapid succession, each one striking and killing a different goblin. He leaps up into the air, his speed carrying him further and higher. He knocks a goblin off of one of the treants with a flying kick, stabilizes himself in the branches, and fires off another two arrows.

Ciaran charges toward one of the fires.

CIARAN

Everyone cover your eyes.

(singing)

Blinded by the light!

Ciaran holds his hands out to the fire as he sings and the fire transforms into brilliant flashes of red, blue, yellow and white lights. Half of the remaining goblins howl and cover their eyes as they stagger blind. One of the treants uses the opportunity to punt a goblin, which goes sailing over the treetops.

Theodora leaps with a forward flip over the axe swing of a goblin and runs toward one of the henge stones. Two goblins follow after her. She runs directly up the stone and backflips off of it, landing behind the two goblin and skewers them. A cluster of goblins outflank and surround her. She's on defense, but some of their attacks draw blood.

Celeste utters a prayer and the ground splits open as a 10'-long CELESTIAL STAG BEETLE with a silvery carapace and metallic pincers climbs out. Celeste points to the fight and the beetle charges into the goblins attacking Theodora.

Theodora grabs one of the beetle's legs and hops onto its back, holding on with her knees and stabbing a goblin as it climbs on.

The beetle grabs hold of a goblin in its pincers and throws it into one of the henge stones with a loud splat.

Elazar and Oriana are standing back to back and rotating in place as they mow down one goblin after another, their speed augmented by Soren's spell.

The beetle runs up to the two of them and Theodora dismounts.

THEODORA

Until your paladin mount gets back, use that Ride skill on someone other than Oriana.

Oriana blushes and scowls at Theodora but she and Elazar both climb onto the beetle which tramples its way through a cluster of goblins.

Soren speaks a command word and his ENCHANTED ROPE lashes out and wraps up a goblin that was preparing to pitch another flask of alchemist's fire.

He fishes out another ball of guano and sulfur from his coat and casts another icy Fireball spell, targeting a cluster of goblins near the largest of the fires. The blast kills the goblins and extinguishes the fire.

Celeste jabs a goblin in the face with her staff, knocking it back. She clutches her holy symbol and utters a prayer. Loose rocks on the ground around her rise up and begin orbiting her, morphing into sharpened stone blades. She points at a goblin clinging to the back of a treant and one of the stone knives flies out and embeds itself in the goblin's back.

Ciaran and Theodora team up as the Haste spell wears off. They flank one goblin after another, trading off who gets the killing blow.

Elathil springs off the branches of a treant onto a henge stone and uses his higher ground to rain arrows down on the goblins.

ELATHIL

Ah, this is like therapy.

Soren takes a small glass cone out of his coat. He recites a resonant incantation with a few elaborate hand gestures and holds his hand out. The glass figure shatters into a wide, cone-shaped blast of ice and freezing wind. All of the goblins caught within are frozen solid and drop over dead like tipped statues.

A goblin sneaks up behind Soren, ready to put its axe in his back when a stone knife sails through the air and stabs it in the head. Soren turns in surprise and sees the dead goblin along with Celeste standing not far away.

The few remaining goblins retreat.

The party regroup as the treants stamp out the last of the fires. Elazar and Oriana dismount from the giant beetle. The TREANT LEADER, who resembles a sycamore, steps up.

TREANT LEADER

You have our thanks, strangers.

Celeste steps forward with an awed smile and bows low.

ELAZAR

Don't be so quick to bend knee to these things, child.

The party are all surprised by this as Elazar and Oriana march up to the treant leader.

ORIANA

We are here to reclaim this temple.

ELAZAR

You have defended it from the goblins well, but now you must stand down in the name of Ilitharian.

Celeste looks around and her eyes go wide.

CELESTE

Wait, this isn't an Ilitharite temple. This is a temple to Ohen! You can't just take it!

TREANT LEADER

The priestess speaks truth. We have watched over this temple for many, many seasons. At least three of your generations. It was and always has been dedicated to Ohen.

ELAZAR

I am aware.

ELATHIL

Who the hell is Ohen?

SOREN

El, he's the human god of nature. As part of the Green Assembly, Celeste reveres him. It's where she got the Plant domain from.

ELATHIL

(to Elazar)

After all the shit you've given us, now we find out you're trying to take a temple that was never your god's to begin with? How the hell did you get a Quest spell telling you to do that?

ELAZAR

There was no Quest spell.

CELESTE

What?!

ORIANA

We prayed and fasted for three days after the gods turned on him. When we learned of this abandoned temple from a contact in the adventurers' guild, we knew it was an omen.

CIARAN

See, this is why I'm not religious.

ELAZAR

Converting this temple will redeem me in Ilitharian's eyes! I know it! You signed a contract to help me do it!

THEODORA

A contract that you negotiated in bad faith.

ORIANA

Yet you took it anyway.

Celeste looks as if she's about to cry. Soren puts a hand on her shoulder.

SOREN

I have to agree with the others. We won't help you.

Elazar and Oriana stare down the party then look to the treants.

ELAZAR

Then we will burn this grove to the ground and
rebuild on the ashes!

The treants angrily begin to advance on Elazar.

CELESTE

Wait!

Everyone turns to Celeste.

CELESTE

There is... one other way. Meet me at dawn in
the temple. I'll commune with the gods and... we
can broker a peaceful solution. I promise.

Elazar looks at Celeste, then around at the party and the treants. He
sheathes his sword to Oriana's surprise.

ELAZAR

Very well. We'll meet at dawn. Oriana will keep
an eye on your companions to see that no tricks
are in store.

Elazar exits. Oriana glares at the party a moment then follows.

CIARAN

Please tell me you're not giving that thick-
skulled theocratic throwback the temple.

TREANT LEADER

This temple is not his to take. We cannot allow
him to steal it.

CELESTE

Trust me.

Celeste walks into the temple building and disappears in the deep
shadows.

IMAGE MATCH DISSOLVE

EXT. FOREST TEMPLE DAY - DAWN

Elazar cautiously approaches the temple. The treants are standing
near the henge stones, glowering at him, but they don't move.

Elazar enters the temple.

INT. FOREST TEMPLE DAY - DAWN

Elazar enters. Celeste is sitting on a blanket before the dusty stone altar at the end of the hall. Cobwebs fill the corners and the floor is littered with dirt, dead leaves and other natural debris.

Elazar sits cross-legged in front of Celeste.

ELAZAR

Let's begin.

Celeste nods and clutches her holy symbol as she begins to chant softly.

Rising up from the earth behind Elazar as if an extension of the ground itself forms a 6' tall EARTH ELEMENTAL. Celeste says a few syllables in a guttural language before Elazar can react and the elemental grabs him in a bear hug.

ELAZAR

You treacherous whore!

CELESTE

I'm sorry. Please hold still.

Celeste takes out a charcoal pencil and reaches for Elazar's face.

EXT. HILLTOP CAMPSITE DAY - CONT.

Oriana is nervously pacing the camp. The rest of the party seem similarly anxious. Soren is sitting in meditation. Ciaran is plucking on his lute, playing no real tune in particular. Theodora and Elathil are stirring the coals of the fire and trying to cook breakfast.

Elathil's ears twitch and he looks to the forest as Celeste walks into view.

Elazar follows her a moment later looking sullen. There is a symbol drawn on his forehead in charcoal.

Oriana rushes up to Elazar and looks at the mark. She touches it, but it doesn't smudge. Her eyes go wide and she rounds on Celeste and hits her in the face, knocking her down.

ORIANA

You liar!

The party move to stop her, but Elazar grabs her hand and pulls her back.

Oriana is shocked. Elazar shakes his head.

THEODORA

Just what the hell is going on here?!

Soren looks at the symbol on Elazar's forehead as he helps Celeste back to her feet.

SOREN

That's a Mark of Justice.

CELESTE

If he commits a violent act while the mark is still on him, it will trigger a curse to rob him of his strength. I'm not high enough level to cast Quest. This was the best I could do.

ELAZAR

I will return to Erinol and speak with the high priest. I will pursue my redemption as I should have. If I must wear the mark until I have proven myself... so be it.

Oriana looks to Elazar. For the first time, her features soften and they embrace one another.

ELAZAR (CONT.)

You all may go. I hope that if we meet again... I will be a better man.

Celeste turns and runs back toward the temple. Soren follows her while the rest of the party move to break camp in silence.

EXT. FOREST TEMPLE DAY - CONT.

Celeste is sitting on the temple steps puffing on her pipe with tears on her face and her cheek swollen and bruised where Oriana struck her when Soren enters and sits beside her. She doesn't make eye contact.

CELESTE

I'm sorry.

SOREN

For what?

Celeste takes another toke off her pipe, but coughs it out with a sob.

CELESTE

Everything. I should have read that contract more closely. I got you all in trouble, I lied to a paladin... I made such a mess of things.

SOREN

I could tell you it's not your fault. I'd rather tell you this. You've met my dad, right?

CELESTE

Yeah?

SOREN

When my brother and I were growing up, we never thought much of the fact our dad owned a business. Then I went to the Academy and Johann started apprenticing in the shop. His business boomed after I left and I couldn't figure out why. When I came home, I asked my dad about it. You know what he told me?

Celeste shakes her head.

SOREN (CONT.)

He could have done it anytime. He didn't because he didn't want to miss the experience of raising his sons. I learned something that day.

CELESTE

What?

SOREN

Shiny things come and go, but XP is forever. I don't regret anything about this trip. And you shouldn't either.

Celeste slowly smiles. She offers Soren her pipe, which he accepts.

SOREN (CONT.)

This is a temple to Ohen. I think it's only fair to let you decide what to do with it.

Celeste looks out at the treants on the edge of the forest and her face brightens up.

DISSOLVE

EXT. TEMPLE FOREST DAY

TITLE: THREE WEEKS LATER

The temple has been restored. Priests, priestesses and acolytes from the Green Assembly are doing chores to maintain it. A wooden cottage stands to one side with the apparatus for making wines and ciders.

The party are exiting the cottage with a crate being carried on a floating disc of magical energy.

CIARAN

I had no idea treants could bear fruit.

ELATHIL

Sometimes, yeah. I never actually thought to make booze with it.

SOREN

The sheer novelty of it should bring the church a lot of revenue. Nice of them to offer us a free case every month.

CELESTE

Considering we reclaimed the temple and set up the mutual defense pact with the treants? Steward Hilde was all too happy to do us a favor.

THEODORA

Turning this place into a waypoint for religious pilgrims was pretty brilliant. You really turned this around.

Celeste blushes at the compliment and the knowing smile Soren gives her.

CELESTE

Thanks. We should head home. The hierophant is arranging for the ceremony to make me a Pathfinder and-

Celeste is interrupted as a letter appears in a puff of smoke in front of Soren and drops into his hands.

Soren opens the letter and reads the note inside. His eyes go wide as his jaw drops. A huge smile creeps up on his face.

CIARAN

Soren? You're creeping me out. What's up?

SOREN

I've been invited to compete in Arcanapalooza!

FADE OUT