

# Episode 1: An Offer of Revenge

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From set *Outlaws of Thunder Junction*

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The sun set over Omenport. Bursts of amber light slipped past the triangular rooftops, casting pointed shadows across the coarse desert grass that ran through the middle of town. Clusters of cacti were dotted around the wooden buildings, and a single fountain sat in the middle of the plaza, water bubbling with magic to keep it permanently cool. The mission bells rang out as they did every evening at sundown, and still, Archie Dixon checked his pocket watch, again and again.

Two Sterling Company guards stood beside a nearby carriage. One of them gnawed lazily at a piece of sugarcane clamped between his teeth. The other kept his eyes fixed on the Omenpath, watching the portal for movement.

Archie tucked his watch in his vest pocket and let out an exaggerated sigh. It wasn't the first time he'd been hired by the Sterling Company to transport goods across Thunder Junction, but most couriers believed punctuality was of the utmost importance—and Archie had been waiting by the fountain for over an hour.

If it had been another job with another employer, he might've left by now. But the Sterling Company paid well. They'd also provided two armed guards to escort him across the desert, *and* they'd offered an additional fee in exchange for Archie's silence. He couldn't ask questions about who he was meeting or what he was transporting, but money was money, and gossip didn't put food on the table.

Still, he hated when people were late.

Archie was reaching for his watch again when the Omenpath rippled to life, making him stiffen in place. Shades of fluorescent blue crackled like lightning, and a glowing figure appeared.

A man stepped over the threshold, features hidden by a black bandana. Not that it would've mattered; Archie didn't recognize the man any more than he recognized the style of clothing he was wearing.

The stranger was from another plane entirely.

The man's gaze drifted across the barely cobbled plaza before landing on the Sterling guards. He marched across the wide path in silence, stopping several feet away. In his outstretched fist was a burlap sack.

Archie took the bag without a second glance and hurried inside the carriage.

The Sterling guards climbed quickly to the raised driver's seat. One of them flicked his bit of sugarcane into the sand and grabbed hold of the reins, where two brown horses turned their ears back in anticipation. Archie barely rapped his knuckles against the roof when the carriage set off, leaving the masked man and the portal behind.

The horses dragged them across the dusty landscape for miles, a single lantern hung at the front of the carriage to light the way. It battled the growing darkness until it was all Archie could see outside the window.

He clutched the bag to his chest, trying to find the horizon where the desert mountains met the starlit sky. He hoped the quiet was a good sign, but deep down, he knew better. His employer would never have provided two Sterling Company guards unless the job carried risks.

He anticipated bandits—but what found him in the desert was much worse.

A wall of fire erupted in a swooping blaze, creating an impenetrable circle around the carriage. The horses reared in alarm, and the vehicle shuddered to a stop, causing Archie's head to crack against the window frame. He winced, eyes fluttering, and watched in horror as the two guards leapt to the sand and drew their weapons.

"What is it?" Archie asked hurriedly, stomach filling with dread.

"Hellspurs," one of the guards muttered.

The other tightened his grip around his thunder rifle in response.

Several figures appeared through the wall of fire, unaffected by the flames that hissed and snapped around them. They fired their weapons at the guards without warning, sending blasts of energy scattering across the sand. Nearly a dozen holes appeared across the side of the carriage, and the Sterling guards fell immediately.

When the only sound left in the desert was the crackle of fire, the strangers lowered their weapons.

The group parted down the middle, making way for a large figure who stalked forward, spurred talons clinking beneath him. Firelight cascaded over the dragon's looming frame, making the scales across his body appear to flicker. There was no mistaking the leader of the Hellspurs. Not in the desert, where his name carried so much fear.

*Akul.*



The dragon clacked his strange mandibles, pulled his tail back, and cracked it against the carriage like a whip, splitting what was left of the vehicle in two.

Archie sat in a pool of blood, still clutching the bag. His mortality was slipping away with every staggered breath, eyes wide with panic.

Akul barely seemed to notice him at all.

The dragon plucked the burlap sack from Archie's dying grasp and puffed his chest in triumph. "Finally. The last key is mine."

With a single claw, he sliced the bag open. A few lumps of coal tumbled into his open palm, and he hissed, golden eyes blazing with rage.

Akul snarled, crushing a fist around the coal until the fine black powder seeped through his claws. He spun, tail thrashing, and roared into the vast desert.

Inside the broken carriage, Archie Dixon watched the Hellspurs take a few steps back as Akul set fire to the sand around him. Archie felt the flames grow close, but his mind was already fading. As he took his last breath, he had the strange and sudden urge to check his pocket watch.

For all he cared about punctuality, he never expected to be so early to his own death.

Archie blinked for the final time—and somewhere in the distance, far beyond the desert blaze, the real key was getting farther away from Akul's reach.

Annie Flash adjusted her wide-brimmed hat and squinted across the sun-beaten terrain, her forehead creasing with heavy lines. She'd been following the rising smoke since daybreak and could finally see the charred source in the distance with her naked eye.

Beneath her, Fortune gave an impatient huff.

She pressed a gloved hand to the animal's neck and leaned over the saddle. "Don't worry. I'll make it up to you with all the apples and sweet grain you can eat once we get home—but those ruins out there are likely how we're going to afford it."

Fortune shook his curled horns in response, clearly unimpressed. Annie cracked a smile. It wasn't something she did often, but there was something about long trail rides that made her more willing to let her guard down.

Annie nudged Mister with her heel, and they rode toward the smoke. She'd seen plenty of carriage fires during her early days with the Freestriders. She could tell the difference between an accident and an ambush—and this was certainly no accident.

But one look at the split in the carriage told her exactly *whose* work this was, too.

Akul had been here.

Grimacing, Annie cast her golden eye across the burned landscape, checking for illusions. Confident she was alone, she dismounted and moved for the remnants of the carriage. She kicked through the wide pile of ash, and several bones scattered to the side.

She tried not to wonder whom they belonged to. Curiosity had never done anything except make her a bigger target.

Reaching for what was left of the seat, Annie gave a tug and revealed a hidden compartment. A lockbox sat inside, untouched. With a pocket knife from her belt, she wedged the lid open and found several stacks of cash.

Attacks like these only seemed to happen for one of two reasons: money or revenge. But something wasn't sitting right in the pit of her stomach.

Even though she knew better than to wonder, she did it anyway.

As far as the Hellspurs were concerned, a carriage fire as an act of revenge was far too tame; Akul preferred making a show of things, often in public. But they left the money behind—which meant they were after something else. Something bigger than a box of cash that could feed a whole family for a month.

*What's he after? Annie's thoughts hammered. And how many carriages did he burn to find it?*

A pang of dread roiled through her. She hated that a monster like Akul was wreaking havoc on the plane, hurting innocents along the way, and still coming out victorious. But she also made up her mind a long time ago to stay as far away from him as possible. Because as long as those innocents weren't the people she'd come to call family, she didn't care. *Couldn't* care.

Akul wasn't someone she'd ever cross again. But she was happy to take the money he'd left behind.



Annie picked up the lockbox, tucked it safely in one of the saddlebags, and brushed a glowing wisp of mane from Fortune's eyes.

"Think you can get us back to Saddlebrush before midday?" she asked, watching Fortune bow his head in response. She climbed back into the saddle and took the reins in one hand. "Alright, then. Dinner's on me."

Annie pinned her gaze far beyond the next valley, left iris glinting with magic. Even though it was still miles away, she could see the outline of the tiny town in the wastes she called home. Saddlebrush was far from the prettiest town on Thunder Junction, but Annie found it had other charms—mainly how far it was off the grid. She'd come to appreciate the quiet, and the anonymity that came with it.

Annie led Fortune to a watering trough outside the town's general store. The minute she was back on her own two feet, she swung the saddlebag over her shoulder and walked up the crooked, dust-worn steps.

"Afternoon, Mr. Towning," Annie said, pinching the tip of her hat in respect and letting the wooden doors shutter closed behind her.

A man with pepper-gray hair stood up from behind the counter, hands tightened around a crate of vegetables. "I didn't expect to see you today! I've got a delivery going to your ranch in the morning—unless of course you're here to make changes." With a grunt, he set the crate onto a nearby shelf, stepped away, and immediately pressed a hand to his back. "Things don't move the same when you get older," he said, wincing. "But I suppose it's better than the alternative."

Annie placed the lockbox on the warped countertop with a *thud*. "Can't do much about those old bones of yours, but this oughta cheer you up."

Mr. Towning lifted the lid and immediately brightened. “You’re too good to me.”

Annie watched him divide the cash into two equal parts. He placed his share in a safe behind the counter, and Annie packed hers in a satchel at her hip.

“You sure no one is going to come looking for this kind of money?” he asked, spinning the dial of the safe.

The image of the burned carriage flashed in Annie’s mind, but she had a rule when it came to discussing where and how she found her loot.

“No one’s gonna waste good hours trekking through the wastes to look for a box they didn’t even realize was missing,” she pointed out. “Besides, me and Fortune didn’t see a soul out in that desert. Whoever left that money is long gone by now.”

He nodded, face softening. “I’m not sure our little town would’ve survived this long if it hadn’t been for you. We’re real grateful to you. Always have been, always will be.”

“Here I was thinking I’ve been paying to keep you all from selling me out to the highest bidder.” Annie lifted a brow. “If I’m the town’s hero, we should probably renegotiate this fifty-fifty cut.”

Mr. Towning’s laugh boomed through the small shop. “Well, now, you know what they say; if it ain’t broke ...”

Annie motioned across the counter at the basket of produce along the wall. “How about some of those apples, then? I promised Fortune I’d pick up sweet grain while I was here, too.”

He reached for the shiniest red apple of the bunch and tossed it over the counter. Annie snatched it in the air with her cupped hands.

“Tell Fortune it’s on the house,” he said. “I’ll get the rest sent over in the morning.”

Annie tipped her hat and turned for the door. “Always a pleasure.”

She rode to the outskirts of Saddlebrush and arrived at their small ranch just shy of sundown. She stopped near the fields on the way to the house, where Fortune joined the other animals to graze. Sometimes he’d disappear alongside the last rays of sunlight—here one moment, gone the next. Though Annie never knew where he went or what business he got up to, he’d always come back. There was an unspoken understanding between the two of them.

Annie watched him for a moment. His markings were like her other palominos, but Fortune wasn’t a creature Annie had a name for. His intelligence matched any human she’d ever met—though Fortune’s sense of direction was another thing entirely. They were well suited to one another that way; Annie provided Fortune assistance in navigating the desert, and Fortune offered her a dependability she hadn’t had in some time.

Annie moved away from the gate, gripping tight to the strap of her satchel, and trudged back up the dirt road toward her house. She’d been so fixated on Fortune and the memories of her past that she nearly made it to her porch before realizing someone was standing at the bottom of the stairs.

Her hand immediately moved to the knife tucked at her hip, fingers twitching. The man in front of her was dressed like someone from the city, with a crisp, tailored suit and overly polished boots. His wavy blond hair was swept up and over, and there was a smugness in his brow that Annie took an immediate dislike to.

“What are you doing on my property?” she demanded, voice sharpened at the edges.

The stranger flashed his teeth. “Are you the notorious one-time outlaw who goes by the name Annie Flash?”

She flinched at the reference, preferring not to think about her days working with criminals. Not after what happened to her nephew. “Who’s asking?”

The man’s smile persisted. “I came all the way from the city to meet you in person. I suppose you could say I’m a big fan.”

“That’s only half an answer,” she said coolly. Her left eye flashed with a hint of orange, and she saw the man for who he really was beneath the illusion. She knotted her brows in a frown. “What business does a fae have out here in the wastes?”

The man’s grin curled with mischief, and he shapeshifted back into his natural form—ink-black hair, pointed ears, and a pale face that appeared to be dusted in silver. He gave a mock bow. “Pleased to make your acquaintance, Annie Flash. My name is Oko—and your ability to see through illusions is *exactly* why I’ve been looking for you.” He tilted his head as if he was admiring a painting. “I was told an angel gave you that eye. A rare gift indeed.”

“It wasn’t the illusion that gave you away.” She folded her arms. “It’s the fact that your shoes don’t have a speck of dirt on them, despite your claim of traveling across the desert to find me.”

Oko laughed. “When faced with a choice between accuracy and appearances, I prefer the latter.”

“Whatever game you’re playing is of no interest to me. I’m retired. Now get off my porch.” She started to move past him, but Oko fixed his eyes on her satchel, making her pause.

“If money doesn’t interest you, perhaps revenge will,” he offered, voice so much like a dangerous purr. “I’ve been putting a team together to steal something important from an outlaw you may know as Akul.”

Annie tensed, unable to hide the visceral reaction at the sound of his name.

Oko looked pleased. “I heard a rumor there may be some unfinished business between the two of you.”

“You heard wrong,” Annie spat. She turned then—to the fields and the ranch and everything she’d built for herself since the day Akul almost killed her nephew—and curled her hands into fists. “I won’t go backward. I don’t need revenge to find peace.”

Oko studied her with the kind of calculation that always seemed to follow ambition. After a moment, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small matchbook with the name of a saloon printed on the side. “Here—in case you change your mind.”

Annie took it only because she hoped it would make him leave quicker.

“If it was this easy for me to find you, imagine how easy it will be if the Hellspurs ever decide to come looking.” Oko said. “You must really love this town to go to such great lengths to protect it.”

Annie squared her shoulders. “Is that a threat?”

Oko pressed a hand to his heart; a gesture of sincerity. “Of course not. I’m only pointing out the obvious.” When he dropped his hand, his smile returned. “If you change your mind, come and find me at the saloon. I promise I’ll make it worth your while.”

Annie watched Oko disappear down the path, grip tightening around the matchbook in her palm.

It was a mistake to stay in one place for so long. She’d put down roots without even meaning to.

Nothing stayed buried in the past forever—and now her old ghosts had followed her to the only place left in the world that she truly cared about.

Kellan lifted the last of the metal posts onto the elevator shaft and took a step back. He watched the machine raise the equipment onto the next level of the partially built relay tower.

Pointed lanterns hung all around him, trailing down wires and ropes like a cascade of starlight, glittering in defiance against the darkening sky. It hadn't been long since the sun disappeared behind the canyon, but the air was still thick with heat.

Kellan wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand and looked over his shoulder at what was quickly becoming his new favorite view. The Omenpath sat wedged between the enormous rock-face, crackling with blue energy. It was hard to believe it had only been a few weeks since he'd stepped through the portal.



Even in the daylight, Omenport looked nothing like Eldraine. But Kellan didn't look at the orange and yellow landscape and feel homesick. He felt *hope*.

"Oy—new kid!" a voice bellowed from in the pit. Kellan looked down to find one of the overseers waving her hand in the air. "These pallets aren't going to move themselves!"

Kellan apologized, sheepish, and hurried down the ladder to help with the next load of parts. He lifted one after the other, mind once again drifting to thoughts of traveling to other towns, when a broad-shouldered man holding a crossbow pushed his way past Kellan with a grunt.

There was no mistaking a Sterling Company mercenary. The guard followed Ral Zarek like a shadow, even though he'd most likely been hired to protect the building site rather than Ral himself.

Ral—along with Niv-Mizzet, back in Ravnica—was developing a way to communicate through the Omenpaths, and the unfinished relay tower was practically a giant, sparkling target. There were plenty of outlaw societies who'd be interested in its technology—and not just on Thunder Junction, but on

other planes, too. Whoever gained control of the communications hub first would no doubt find themselves unimaginably wealthy.

The Sterling Company had already invested in Ral's research. Now they needed to protect it.

"Evening, Mr. Zarek," the overseer said. "Didn't expect to see you on site this late."

"I wanted to talk to you about the installation of the optical repeater," Ral said before prattling off a series of questions and specifications that Kellan had a hard time following.

Kellan turned back to the metal stacks. He hadn't taken this job out of an interest in relay towers and Omenpaths. Kellan kept himself busy sorting through the building equipment. He loaded them onto the empty platform one by one, mind wandering with every passing minute, until a loud *bang* broke him from his trance.

At the base of the tower, a technician tugged in horror at a piece of misaligned hardware, trying to remove it from the massive connector. There was another *bang*, and lightning burst from the metal. Sparks flew from the control unit, but the bulk of the energy shot skyward, following along the relay tower's unfinished frame until it scattered into the sky in at least a dozen different directions.

High up on the scaffolding, one of the bigger sparks hit a lantern, making the glass explode. A nearby worker threw his hands up to shield his face, stumbling backward toward the edge of the platform. He teetered, fighting to regain his balance, before releasing a sharp cry.

From the height of the tower, the man fell.

Some of the workers in the pit screamed. Others pointed in shock.

Kellan didn't hesitate. Golden dust burst from his feet as he flew toward the man and wrapped his arms around him midair, plucking him from the sky like a piece of fruit before lowering him gently to the ground.



RAYMOND BONILLA

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The worker sputtered a few words of gratitude, teeth chattering with fear, when Ral appeared. His eyes darted from the tower to the man, then back again.

Ral gestured toward the mercenary with irritation. “Accidents like this could set our progress back by days. Is it too much to expect competency on a project like this?” He pinched the bridge of his nose, inhaling deeply. “Never mind. As I was saying before, I’d like a full report on the electrical conversion prior to the installation ...” He marched away without another glance toward the fallen worker.

A group of technicians hurried to the control unit to fix the fault before another surge of power was released. Looping an arm around the man, Kellan helped him find a seat against a stack of metal crates so he could catch his breath away from the commotion.

Kellan pulled a leather canteen filled with water from his hip. “Here—drink this.”

“You’re too soft-hearted to be working on a job like this,” the man pointed out before taking a gulp.

“Because I didn’t let you fall?”

“No—because you’re still standing around here checking on me when you know full well the boss is going to dock your pay for it.”

Kellan looked across the pit where the overseer was deep in conversation with Ral. “I didn’t take this job for the money.”

“You’re a strange one. Even for a fae.” The man lifted his chin. “Why *did* you take this job?”

Kellan hesitated before taking a seat on the crate beside him. “My last boss, Ezrim—he told me my dad was on this plane. I—I’m trying to find him.”

The man frowned. “Your dad is working on the relay tower?”

Kellan ran a hand through his thick hair, laughing nervously. “No. But Ral offered to hire me, and he knows plenty of people in Omenport. It was too good of an opportunity to miss.”

The worker made a face and tipped the last of the water back in one hurried motion. When finished, he released a whistle through his teeth. “You know, most people come to this place to escape something. Maybe if you haven’t found your father yet, it’s because he doesn’t *want* to be found.”

“I don’t think he’s hiding from anything. I think he’s *looking* for something,” Kellan admitted.

“Well, if that’s the case, I’m sure he’ll be happy to see a familiar face when he finds out you’re here.”

Kellan forced a smile and nodded, ears burning as he kept one vital piece of information to himself: his father had no idea what Kellan looked like, because they’d never actually *met*.

The man returned the canteen. “I better get back up there. Workday’s almost over. And not that I don’t appreciate your help, but if it’s all the same to you? I’ll take the stairs this time.”

Kellan watched him disappear around the corner and thought of the last time he’d said goodbye to a friend. It brought a familiar pinch back to his chest. He tried to push it away, deciding it was better to finish stacking the metal posts than it was to think about how lonely it felt to be on a new plane without a single person he knew. Even his father was technically a stranger.

*Only for a little while longer*, Kellan assured himself.

He stood up and turned back for the post he’d left moments before when he found a tall figure blocking his way.

The overseer waved a hand at the mess of partially stacked equipment. “Finish up here. Your new shift starts in the morning.”

Kellan frowned. “New shift?”

“Mr. Zarek thinks someone with your skillset should be on his security detail instead of working out here in the heat. He’s going to visit the Sterling Company headquarters in a few days—and you’re going with him.”

“To Prosperity?” Kellan asked, heart thumping.

The overseer scowled. “This ain’t a field trip, kid. You’re going to look after the boss.”

Kellan nodded quickly. “I understand,” he said, even though hope was swelling up inside his chest like a balloon.

She turned sharply for the elevator. “Better get a move on. I want this mess cleared before the night crew arrives.”

Kellan’s excitement was impossible to contain. Prosperity was by far the wealthiest town on Thunder Junction—and places with money were usually a hive for gossip. The odds of at least *someone* in the city having information about Oko were bound to be high. Especially if Ral was willing to help ask around.

Ral Zarek was an important person in Omenport. Maybe he was important in Prosperity, too. Planeswalkers, in Kellan’s experience, tended to be pretty important everywhere they went.

There were so many questions Kellan wanted to ask his father—about his fae heritage, his powers, and whether Oko ever felt pulled in two directions the way he did. There were so many missing years between them. So many memories they should’ve shared but hadn’t. Kellan knew there was a chance his father wouldn’t feel the same way. Maybe he’d reject him, or refuse to see him at all. He’d heard the stories about Oko being a notorious trickster and having a reputation for being untrustworthy.

But Kellan was never one to believe rumors, and he'd rather trust in someone's potential than shun them for their past mistakes. Besides, he was Oko's son, and that meant something.

It *had* to.

Kellan was ready to meet his father.

And Ral Zarek was going to help make it happen.