

Soulstry

by

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OVER BLACKNESS:

AVALYN (V.O.)

For as long as I can remember, I've
been suffocating.

A brief pause.

AVALYN

No...Mo-MOM!

INT. AVALYN'S DORMROOM - NIGHT

AVALYN ZINDLER (16, light skin, scorched waist-length red hair, green eyes, a white, plain nightgown) lunges forward in bed, gasping for air. A cold sweat runs down her face.

A small translucent MIND'S EYE CRYSTAL nestled in her forehead between her eyebrows glows brightly. Its crimson glare lights up the dark.

Avalyn's roommate, JAYNA SIMONS (16, brown skin, surprised expression, same outfit, dormant identical Mind's Eye crystal), peeks her head out of a mangled set of blankets across the room.

JAYNA

Hey, you alright?

Avalyn's jagged breathing stings, keeping her from responding immediately. She nods weakly and then rests her head in her hands, applying pressure against the crystal.

Gradually, she starts to slow down her breathing...

AVALYN (V.O.)

Every breath consumed is a risk
taken, a part of myself that yearns
for independence.

The glow begins to fade, and the crystal gradually pulls back to a clear dormant state similar to Jayna's.

...and then on one final deep breath...

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE, RAHZ MILITARY ACADEMY - DAY

IF I SEE THE DRILL SARGEANT HERE GO AHEAD AND INTRO HIM HEREperson.
Avalyn coolly exhales, opening her closed eyes to the man before her. Beside her stands Jayna, along with other cadets, all with stern, focused eyes locked onto the same person.

Guards with rifles at the hip are stationed behind several of the shooting lanes a good 10 feet, ready for whatever was to happen in the coming minutes.

DRILL SARGEANT ROGER TYRELL (composed, weathered, scars on his face, gruff white beard, flawless grey and white uniform, bold blue eyes, silver watch on right wrist) stands before them all.

I'M NOT A FAN OF PUTTING DESCRIPTIONS IN () - AND AS IS - THEY'RE KINDA GOING ON LONG... () GIVES YOU A SENSE THAT YOU CAN MAKE THEM LONG W/O WORKING THEM INTO DESCRIPTION/ ACTION

SET ME
UP
WITH A
LINE
ABOUT
THE
SETTING
-
"CADETS
STAND
IN
SHOOTI
NG
LANES-
AWAITI
NG
THEIR
TEST" OR
SOME
SUCH

TYRELL

Welcome to the final stage of your exam cadets. In a minute, you'll head off to your alphabetically assigned shooting range.

LOSE
PARENTHESIS
HERE - JUST
DESCRIBE THE

An ASSISTING OFFICER rolls over a cart with a closed briefcase and a cloth cradling a SOULCORE gemstone (a fist-sized spherical, halfway-transparent crystal void of color).

CORE

TYRELL

First, however, each of you will pick up a case containing handgun components and a Soulcore with which to power it.

He gestures towards a table next to the crowd with a collection of identical cases and gemstones.

TYRELL

You will be evaluated on three points. Your speed in constructing the weapon, your evocation prowess, and your marksmanship. In the event of a summoning...

He gestures towards the guards lining the back of the shooting range.

TYRELL

These men will gun down any spirits as they appear. Now, should your Mind's Eye alert you to an unfavorable mental state, that won't directly influence your evaluation. However, should you summon a spirit, you WILL fail. Immediately. Any questions?

THE DESCRIPTION
HELPS BUT I MIGHT
CONDENSE AND
LEAVE A LITTLE FOR
US TO DISCOVER. EX:
"IN THE EVENT OF A
SUMMONING, YOU
WILL FAIL" - AND WE
DON'T KNOW WHAT
THAT IS YET - BUT
WE WILL LEARN
WHEN IT HAPPENS
AND YOU CLARIFY
IT FOR US WHEN IT
HAPPENS. MAKE
SENSE?

A brief pause. Then a curt nod from Tyrell.

TYRELL

You'll have 3 minutes to collect your materials and get to your post. Go.

He starts a timer on his watch.

Avalyn approaches the table along with the others and grabs a handgun case with her left hand. In her right, she picks up a Soulcore and looks into it.

Staring right back is a gleaming, menacing eye, composed of what looks like timeless, frozen dust. Avalyn's face turns to a scowl.

AVALYN (V.O.)
The independence to free myself of
my past, present, and likely
future.

NOT SURE WE'RE
GONNA CONNECT THIS
VO AS A
CONTINUATION OF
THE PREVIOUS B/C OF
HOW LONG IT TAKES
TO SHOW UP.

Tyrell notices Avalyn's hesitation.

TYRELL
Zindler. Is there a problem?

Avalyn hurriedly turns away, not looking directly at the instructor.

AVALYN
No sir, no problem.
(to herself)
Just bad memories.

AVALYN'S SHOOTING LANE

Avalyn places the materials on the table in front of her, and opens the case.

TYRELL (O.S.)
Ready!

She looks up. There is an intense gaze in her eyes. She's switched gears, gauging the distance of the target 25 yards ahead of her. Then she focuses on the parts below.

She takes another deep breath.

Tyrell, checking his watch.

TYRELL
...Begin!

A flurry of tinkering fills the range as each cadet hurries to assemble their given weapon. Avalyn moves with a speed unlike the other trainees.

GOOD

Mag, Guard, Bolt, Pin, Trigger...In mere seconds, she has arrived at the final piece: the Soulcore.

Lifting it to her face, she closes her eyes.

AVALYN
(whispering)
A bullet, ripping through space.

We hear the echo of something not there, something speeding through the air.

AVALYN
(whispering)
Power, control, destruction.

She begins to take a deep breath.

AVALYN (V.O.)

The independence to conquer one's
spirit...

She exhales, only this time something is different. A spectral flow of energy seeps out of her mouth in exhalation, rushing, bonding to the Soulcore as if hungry for it.

As though given new life, the Soulcore erupts with an intense sapphire hue, the eye within emblazoned in a swirling storm of particles sizzling the chilly air.

MUCH
BETTER
HELPING
US GET IT

Without a moment to lose, Avalyn jams the Soulcore into an open slot on the weapon (where a magnum's chamber would normally be) and takes aim.

I'D MOVE THIS
TO AFTER
"BANG-BANG-
BANG" - AND
MAYBE
COMBINE/
CONDENSE
WITH THIS
PARAGRAPH

Each time the trigger is pressed, an aura around the Soulcore collects in front of it and is propelled along the barrel of the gun, only to be replenished by the Soulcore moments after.

BANG. BANG-BANG. Shot after shot explodes from the gun's barrel as steel-blue streaks of light singe down the lane, shredding the target.

The target is left peppered with small flames and scorched charcoal wounds.

Just slightly dropping her aim, Avalyn examines her handiwork.

Two lanes down, another NERVOUS CADET has finished piecing together their gun.

AVALYN (V.O.)

...or to accept its ravaging maw.

As the cadet breathes in, clearly uncertain, their Mind's Eye glows crimson. They breathe into their Soulcore, but the outflow of energy sweeps past the dust-filled gem, flooding his lane and expanding into its own dust cloud.

In the center of the cloud, one can make out a pair of yellow eyes gradually materializing. Then a sharp jaw emerges from the depths of the dust.

SOMEWHERE IN
HERE MAYBE SAY
- "A
SUMMONING"
OR SOME SUCH
TO BRING IT
HOME. PER MY
SUGGESTION
ABOVE ABOUT
LEAVING SOME
OF IT FOR US TO
FIGURE OUT -
AND HERE WE
DO

As the jaw opens up, a SCREECHING CRESCENDO as of incoming artillery can be heard. The dust cloud immediately begins collapsing into a central point: The birth of a SPIRIT is coming.

Several cadets panic. Screaming. Shuffling. The armed guards at the edge immediately begin readying their weapons.

The cadet who cast it is stunned, terror in his eyes. His Mind's Eye is searing his skin, but he can't move.

Avalyn's bears the same unchanging scowl.

WHY THE APOSTROPHE "S" - HER MIND'S EYE SCOWLS? CLARIFY

REMIND ME
IT'S IN HIS
FOREHEAD
OR
WHATEVER
"HIS
FOREHEAD'S
MIND'S EYE"
OR SOME
SUCH

JUST HAVE HER DO IT FAST - VS. THIS BUILD UP - WHICH FEELS LIKE IT TAKES TOO LONG..⁵:

Before the soldiers can do the same, Avalyn's already aiming her weapon at the threat. She fires another projectile of blue energy, piercing the spectral mass and triggering a screech of pain from the manifesting spirit.

A brief moment, and then BOOM. An explosion electrifies the dust cloud, disintegrating every particle.

Escaped steam spews from the side of her handgun, marking the end of power flow. The blue glow within the Soulcore dies and the vibrant eye within once again reverts to a look of frozen dust.

Avalyn lowers her weapon, and enjoys a sigh of satisfaction.

TYRELL (O.S.)

I counted 10 shots Private Zindler.

Avalyn turns around to see the drill sargeant approaching her, hands behind his back. Avalyn immediately salutes.

TYRELL

Most impressive.

He then shouts at the rest of the cadets.

TYRELL

For those of you finished, well done! You may exit at your leisure. Otherwise, return to your stations! The exam will resume in 2 minutes.

FACES

As cadets scrambled to reposition themselves, Tyrell faced Avalyn once more.

TYRELL

Eager to enter the field?

Tyrell grins at her.

AVALYN

Yes sir. To join my brother and honor my father's work.

He nods, understanding.

TYRELL

Of course. They've both been integral to this country's success in the war, and your brother especially since I trained him. Can I expect the same from you?

Avalyn grins in response.

AVALYN

I hope to make you proud sir.

SHOULD YOU BUTTON THE SCENE WITH SARGEANT WASHING OUT THE CADET WHO SUMMONED THE SPIRIT? TO CAP THE SCENE - AND SHOW THE CONSEQUENCE?

6.

Tyrell gives a gruff chuckle and walks back to the sideline. Avalyn makes her way to the exit, showing a small smile. A deep breath in, and-

INT. PRESENTATION ROOM, RAHZ MILITARY ACADEMY E - DAY

Avalyn exhales with a smile.

She stands among her peers in a large auditorium, facing a stage where instructors and academy administrators and other military personnel are seated.

Two large banners on either side of the stage bear the mark of Rahz: set against a white background, a magnificent winged man, made visible solely through a deep black outline, cradles a sphere containing a menacing red eye.

TYRELL (O.S.)
(announcing)
Private Avalyn Zindler!

Avalyn steps forward to greet the summons, and a cacophonous crowd of applause echoes around the hall as she marches onto the stage.

Tyrell, waiting for her halfway down the stage, pulls out a thin cylinder casing from among several on a table and proffers it as she approaches. She bows to accept the cylinder and then steps in to shake Tyrell's hand.

TYRELL
(whispering)
Welcome to the Corp Private
Zindler. We're lucky to have you.

AVALYN
(whispering)
Thank you sir.

She breaks the hand shake and salutes.

AVALYN
It's been an honor, sir.

EXT. RAHZ SOUTHEAST SECTOR - DAY

Avalyn and Jayna are in uniform, walking along the streets of Rahz. It's busy and there's a decent number of people on the sidewalks, each with a Mind's Eye crystal.

The city looks relatively clean. The roads are all paved, and 1920s age cars sputter along.

To Avalyn's right, a group of kids are playing in a park, complete with a playground. Parents and babysitters watch nearby on benches.

The adults and many of the older children bear identical crystals in their foreheads, but some of the younger kids do

not.

JAYNA

I can't believe we're done!

Jayna stretches her arms out into the sky.

JAYNA

It's such a relief. I tell ya, the sooner I can get out of here and onto the frontline, the better. Gotta distinguish myself.

AVALYN

(snickering)

The "frontline"? It's a culture war. Half the battle is being fought on their own turf.

Avalyn gestures all around them.

AVALYN

We're surrounded on all sides by complete madness.

JAYNA

You got that right. Wasn't THIS area annexed only last year? So far as I can tell, summoning is just history here now.

As they glance around, they can see a variety of devices all powered by the ubiquitous Soulcores. For example...

A CAMERAMAN stands on a bridge breathing into a Soulcore embedded in a sort of Kodak camera before taking a photo of a posing family.

DID A KID WITH
A SOULDCORE
MAKE THAT
HAPPEN? MAKE
IT CLEAR. AND
USUALLY WE
DO THINGS IN
3'S

Teenagers are in a nearby soccer field. The ball is about to fly out, but it stops in mid-air, a pink aura surrounding it. One of the other kids grabs it and the aura disappears. They toss it overhead back in and the game resumes.

JAYNA

Suppose we've all got your father to thank for this.

She gestures at the scene.

JAYNA

(news headline voice)

Meldrick Zindler, Archon of Rahz and inventor extraordinaire!

AVALYN

Now wait. He may have had a vision for it, and he did design the Soulcore and Mind's Eye crystals,

(MORE)

AVALYN (cont'd)
 but the condition this city is in
 is entirely above and beyond his
 expectations. Every time I see him
 he's telling me how excited he is
 about the latest way some random
 person is changing Rahz for the
 better. Dad was simply the enabler.

JAYNA
 Uh-huh. Well one of these days,
 could you ask him to build a Mind's
 Eye that actively scratches my
 back, rather than scorching my
 head? A nice itch when I need it
 would clear any negative thoughts
 outta my mind pronto.

Avalyn laughs.

AVALYN
 I'll be sure to bring it up at our
 next family dinner, whenever that
 happens.

Jayna puts her arm around Avalyn, hugging her a bit, and the
 two continue walking leisurely passed the city's various shops and venues, revealing more of the city's daily life

Eventually they arrive at...

EXT. SOUTHEAST MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

The building stands tall and wide, an outlier amongst the smaller buildings surrounding it. Clearly well funded, the police station has several cars parked out front.

A few people are heading in and out of the building, officers, detectives, couriers, and escorted, bound criminals.

AVALYN
 Ready for your first day?

JAYNA
 You betcha.

The two walk inside.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE, SOUTHEAST MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

Avalyn and Jayna stand at attention in a messy office. Behind the desk sits the police chief MAJOR BILL KING (50s, bald, brown mustache, glasses, tired look about him) leaning back in a chair.

IS THE CITY
 FUTURISTIC?
 NOT 100%
 CLEAR ON
 THAT... AT
 THE TOP OF
 THIS CITY
 SCENE -
 LOCK IT IN
 FOR US...

CARS ALSO
 1920S
 STYLE
 OR...?

AVALYN

Private Zindler and Private
Simmons, reporting for duty as
ordered, sir.

FOR LESSER CHAR'S LIKE
THIS GUY I'D INCLUDE HIS
TITLE IN HIS CHAR CUE,
"MAJOR KING" - MAYBE
ALSO "DRILL SARGEANT
TYERLL" - ETC.

KING

At ease ladies. Appreciate the
enthusiasm, but I personally don't
care too much for the formalities,
'least when I can help it.

LOSE "ED" They relaxed, though uneasily, looking a little confused.

KING

They train you on Cutters?

AVALYN

No sir. The pistols we used were
Miranda P3's.

JAYNA

And P4's, sometimes.

KING

Well then, get used to something
different. Factories are so busy
tootin' out cores that the only
handguns we've been graced with in
the last decade is the good ole'
Cutter.

GOOD DIALOGUE
WITH A SENSE OF
HISTORY - THAT
WE'RE NOT PRIVY
TO YET BUT WE'RE
GETTING UP TO
SPEED

He treats them with a wide smile, and holds up his own
pistol. Its an ancient piece of work, but a Soulcore frame
has been hollowed into the chamber and filled with a gem
that's surface is just as dust-filled as its insides.

GOOD DESCRIPTION

KING

Head to the Armory and pick one up,
each of ya. Talk to Eric.
Fuzzy-haired guy. He'll get you set
up. Then come back here and I'll
partner you up.

AVALYN AND JAYNA

Yes sir!

INT. LOBBY, SOUTHEAST MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

People are hustling around the work place, carrying papers,
boxes, moving between hallways and in and out the front
double-doors.

Criminals and citizens alike wait in chairs to meet officers
for their respective reasons.

Avalyn and Jayna stroll through, looking around.

JAYNA

Armory...Armory...where the hell
are we supposed to find it if
there's no map anywhere!

AVALYN

Relax. Let's just ask someone,
alright? Not a problem.

JAYNA

I don't wanna look like an idiot
rookie on the first day.

AVALYN

Well, we are rookies, and we must
look pretty silly already, gawking
about.

CORNELIUS (O.S.)

Avalyn?

SAME ISSUE W/
THE()
DESCRIPTIONS

The two of them spin around towards the entrance. CORNELIUS
(20, red and black operations uniform, identical scorched
hair, though about 2 inches long, green eyes, slender, but
with toned muscles) approaches.

AVALYN

Oh, wow! What are you doing here?

LOSE THE PAST
TENSE HERE

She gave a formal salute, to which Jayna followed suit.

CORNELIUS

Sadly, I'm here for work. Just
returned from an op. It's nice to
see you.

AVALYN

Likewise. You seem to have an idea
of where you're go...

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S
HER BOTHER

LOTS OF PAST
TENSE IN
HERE - IS
THIS BEING
ADAPTED
FROM
ANOTHER
SOURCE
YOU'RE
WRITING - IS
THAT WHY
YOU SLIP
INTO PAST
TENSE?

She took another look over her brother and realized he was
holding a tether to a pair of handcuffs. The one wearing
them was completely covered from head to toe in a dark
cloak.

AVALYN

Why are they dressed like that?

Cornelius glanced back behind him at another man in the same
red and black uniform, carrying another tether connected to
the same handcuffs.

CORNELIUS

I'm afraid people might panic if
they could see what she looks like.

Avalyn and Jayna were still confused.

JAYNA

"She"?

Jayna moved in closer and saw under the person's hood. VERITA is revealed (15, long black hair covers half of her face, youthful appearance, a bestial left eye and a gagging device covers her mouth).

JAYNA

For Rahz sake man, she's just a little girl! Look at her, all chained up and covered like this.

CORNELIUS

(whispering)

She is NOT a "little girl". She's a member of the ENEMY, and I would advise you not to get too clo-

Verita headbutts Jayna, giving her a nosebleed.

JAYNA

OW! Filthy brat! Yeah, done defending her now.

Holding her nose from the pain, Jayna promptly kicks Verita in the gut, causing her to double-over.

CORNELIUS

(turning to Avalyn)

Who is this?

AVALYN

This is my friend Jayna. Jayna, my brother Cornelius.

JAYNA

THE Cornelius Zindler?

Jayna's eyes grow wide and she suddenly tries to present herself more formally, bloodied nose and all.

JAYNA

Absolute pleasure to meet you, sir.

CORNELIUS

Yeah, nice to meet you, but I gotta get going. Sorry Avalyn, talk later? Got to get this prisoner in for questioning.

AVALYN

Oh, sure...

Cornelius starts to rush off with his partner and Verita.

AVALYN

Oh wait, which way's the Armory?

Cornelius points towards the hallway opposite the way he's headed down.

AVALYN
(muttering)
Thank you brother.

The two walk onwards down to the Armory. USE THEIR NAMES SINCE
MANY CHAR'S HERE

JAYNA
So that was a Clansmen.

JAYNA
Apparently.

INT. ARMORY, SOUTHEAST MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

OVERALL IT'S IMPROVED AND FLOWS. GOTTA TWEAK THE PAST TENSE STUFF IN THE
LAST PAGE OR TWO. OTHERWISE, IT'S BETTER, CLEARER, AND FLOWS PRETTY WELL I
THINK. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, K?