

Soulstry

by

Will Nations

817-296-5864
willnationsdev@gmail.com

OVER BLACKNESS:

AVALYN (V.O.)

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

A very brief pause.

AVALYN

No...Mo-MOM!

INT. AVALYN'S DORMROOM - NIGHT

AVALYN ZINDLER (16) lunges forward in bed, gasping for air. She has scorched waist-length red hair, green eyes, and a white, plain nightgown. A cold sweat flushes 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.

A surprised face peeks out of a mangled set of blankets across the room revealing Avalyn's roommate, JAYNA SIMMONS (16), with identical outfit and Mind's Eye crystal covering her brown skin.

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...

The room is plain and organized, meeting the standards of a military living space. A pair of desks, closets, beds, and bedside tables fill it out with a single door on the far wall.

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...

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE, RAHZ MILITARY ACADEMY - DAY

Avalyn coolly exhales, opening her closed eyes. Beside her stands Jayna, along with other cadets, all with stern, focused eyes locked forward.

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

TYRELL

Welcome to the final stage of your exam cadets. You'll be Evo-firing. Handgun components and Soulcore power source are provided.

He points at a table beside him filled with closed briefcases and individually cloth-wrapped SOULCORES, fist-sized, spherical, halfway-transparent crystals void of color.

DRILL SARGEANT TYRELL

Grades will be based on speed, evocation, and precision. Should you summon, you will fail immediately. You have 3 minutes. 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.

Tyrell notices Avalyn's hesitation.

DRILL SARGEANT 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

She approaches one of the lanes, her name written on a sign slapped against the wall.

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

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

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.

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.

BANG. BANG-BANG. Each pull of the trigger, the Soulcore bursts with energy that collects in front, erupts along the barrel, and explodes out the other end, only to be replenished by the Soulcore moments afterward.

With each shot, steel-blue streaks of light singe down the lane, shredding the target and peppering it with 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.

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. A summoning: 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 forehead, but he can't move.

Avalyn's turns, and 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

As cadets scramble to reposition themselves, Tyrell faces 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

Tyrell gives a gruff chuckle and walks back to the sideline.

DRILL SARGEANT TYRELL
Woods! Excellent job promoting your
classmate. Now get out of here!
You're done.

Avalyn makes her way to the exit, showing a small smile. A deep breath in, and-

CUT TO:

INT. PRESENTATION ROOM, RAHZ MILITARY ACADEMY - 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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.

DRILL SARGEANT 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 stretches her arms out into the sky.

JAYNA
I can't believe we're done!
(sighs)
I'm ready to just get out there on
the frontline. Gotta distinguish
myself soon.

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 Kodak-like camera on a stand before taking a photo of a posing family.

TEENAGERS are in a nearby soccer field, kicking a ball around. 4 silver poles stand just outside the field's corners about two feet off the ground.

A stray kick sends the ball flying outside. The two corner poles for that side of the field light up, and the ball immediately stops in mid-air before exiting the field, a pink aura surrounding it.

One of the kids grabs it and the aura disappears. They toss it back in overhead and the game resumes.

Avalyn and Jayna admire the sight while walking until their alerted by a rapidly growing whirring sound.

HOVERBOARD KID (V.O.)

Excuse me!

A kid is flying down the sidewalk on a hoverboard, a green aura emitting from a pointed control device resting in his hand.

At the same time, a car is driving along the road coming their way.

Jayna moved to step out of the way, but there wasn't enough time.

Just as the car is sweeping by, the kid hovers onto the side of the car and drives beside Jayna. He's reaching the end of the car though.

He pushes himself off the board, leaping back towards the sidewalk. He grips the controls harder and the green aura bursts for a moment. Suddenly, the abandoned board flies back under his feet as he lands.

The kid fist pumps as he speeds down the concrete.

JAYNA

Be careful you crazy punk!

She points at the kid.

JAYNA

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

(sarcastic headline)

Meldrick Zindler, Chief Soulgineer
of Rahz!

AVALYN

Now wait. He may have designed the
Soulcore and Mind's Eye crystals,
but this country is entirely beyond
his expectations. Even when I do
see him, he'll suddenly start going
on and on about how excited he is
with the new ways So-And-So 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? Clears negative thoughts just
as quickly.

Avalyn laughs.

AVALYN

I'll be sure to bring it up at our
next family dinner,
(darkly)
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. 23RD PRECINCT MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

The building stands 3-stories tall and a block wide, an
outlier amongst the smaller 1-story buildings surrounding
it. The police station has several cars parked out front,
also 1920s style.

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

Criminals are escorted among them, hands bound behind them
with a unique gagging device blocking their nose and mouth
save for screened air slits.

AVALYN
Ready for the first day?

JAYNA
You betcha.

The two walk inside.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE, 23RD PRECINCT MILITARY POLICE STATION -
DAY

Avalyn and Jayna stand at attention in a messy office.
Behind the desk sits the police chief MAJOR BILL KING (52)
leaning back in a chair. Bald, brown mustache, glasses, and
a tired look about him, his eyes are locked on an open file.

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

MAJOR KING
At ease ladies. Welcome and all
that. Not a fan of formalities,
'least when I can help it.

They relaxed, though uneasily, looking a little confused.

MAJOR KING
You trained on Cutters?

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

JAYNA
And P4's, sometimes.

MAJOR KING
Course not. 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.

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.

MAJOR KING
Here are yours.

He folds up the file, places it into a drawer, and from
inside pulls out two black gun holsters with Cutters tucked
within, placing them onto the desk.

MAJOR KING

Pieces of crap. Synch 'em, load 'em
and your done.

Avalyn nods and picks hers up carefully, weighing it in her hands and examining the Soulcore. Just as King's had been, the handgun was clearly in need of dusting and polishing.

She then pressed the Soulcore against the crystal on her forehead.

Her Mind's Eye lit up white for a moment, emanating a low hum. Two seconds later, the Soulcore responded in kind, lasting another second before the pitches jumped up in unison and then stopped.

Jayna was also finishing up as Avalyn noticed something about her Cutter's Soulcore.

The frozen eye within appeared scattered and less clearly defined, as if it were breaking apart.

AVALYN

This Soulcore is about to die sir.
Shouldn't we replace it?

Looking up from her examination, she noticed Jayna had the same suspicious look as she peered into her own Soulcore.

MAJOR KING

Not my problem. You want better
equipment, get it yourself.

JAYNA

You're joking. What happens if
we're in a firefight somewhere?

King bursts into a laugh.

MAJOR KING

What do you think partners are for?
Now go on.

JAYNA

Wait, what about partners, task
assignments, protocols?

MAJOR KING

I'm a little busy here. Partners?
Just use each other for now. Or ask
someone else. No protocols for
recruits 'cept get on the street
and learn from your peers.

They stand there, dumbfounded.

MAJOR KING

That means go. On patrol. Now. If you really wanna be useful, you can take these papers to the front desk while you're at it.

He hands Avalyn a stack of papers of his desk. And picks up another file to peruse.

They still haven't moved, looking at each other. He looks up again.

MAJOR KING

Are you deaf? What are you waiting for?

They resentfully turn about, open the door, and make their exit.

King frustratedly sighs.

MAJOR KING

Newbies.

INT. LOBBY, SOUTHEAST MILITARY POLICE STATION - DAY

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

Bound criminals with unique gagging devices covering their noses and mouths sit in chairs awaiting their fate. Several citizens are also waiting in separate chairs, waiting to meet with officers.

Avalyn and Jayna stroll through, their new Cutters strapped to their hips. Avalyn is carrying a stack of papers as Jayna panics.

JAYNA

This is a disaster! That man, as our superior. What are we gonna do? What am I gonna do? There's no going UP from here.

(shaking Avalyn)

And why are you so relaxed?!

AVALYN

If I didn't know any better, I'd say you weren't confident in your skills without a weapon.

JAYNA

Wha-, no! I can handle myself perfectly fine.

AVALYN

Well, we're rookies. It's expected that we wouldn't have strong

(MORE)

AVALYN (cont'd)
opportunities at first. Just wait.
Before you know it, we'll be
joining my brother's squad and
racing through the wilds on the
"frontline".

JAYNA
We better! Or I'm gonna have to
hold you responsible. You're the
one with the connections around
here.

Avalyn sticks out her tongue at Jayna.

CORNELIUS (O.S.)
Avalyn?

The two of them spin around towards the entrance.

CORNELIUS (20) approaches. He wears a red and black
operations uniform, and has Avalyn's scorched hair, though
only about 2 inches long. Green eyes. Slender, but with
toned muscles.

AVALYN
Oh, wow! What are you doing here?

She gives a light salute, to which Jayna follows 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...

She takes another look over her brother and realizes he's
holding a tether to a pair of handcuffs. The one wearing
them is completely covered from head to toe in a dark cloak.

AVALYN
Why are they dressed like that?

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

CORNELIUS
(to his partner)
I got this. You got the car?

The man nodded and proceeded out the double doors. Then
Cornelius turned back to Avalyn

CORNELIUS
I'm afraid people might panic if
they saw her full appearance.

Avalyn and Jayna are still confused.

JAYNA
"Her"?

Jayna moves in closer and sees under the person's hood.

VERITA is revealed (15). Long black hair covers the left half of her youthful face, and the same gagging device with screened slits for air covers her nose and 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
Clansmen spy, so you might want to
step ba-

Verita headbutts Jayna, giving her a nosebleed.

JAYNA
OW! Filthy brat! Yeah. I see what
you mean.

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
Wait, THE Cornelius Zindler?

Jayna's eyes grow wide and she suddenly throws herself into a formal salute, bloodied nose and all.

JAYNA
Absolute pleasure to meet you, sir.

CORNELIUS
(Uncomfortably)
Yeah, sure. Likewise.
(to Avalyn)
I've been asked to bring her
straight over to headquarters as
(MORE)

CORNELIUS (cont'd)
per orders from Dad, so that's
where I'm headed.

He flicks his head towards the entrance.

AVALYN
Dad? What for?

JAYNA
(excitedly)
Research? Interrogation?

CORNELIUS
Sorry guys. Need to know. Another
time. I'll catch you later Avalyn.
I put in a good word for you with
the major, so sit tight. We'll be
seeing each other sooner than you
think.

He winks and starts leading Verita away towards the doors.

Jayna looks at Avalyn enviously as Avalyn watches her
brother walk away, but seeing her expression, she goes into
friend-mode and puts her hand her shoulder.

JAYNA
Come on. You'll see him soon,
right? Let's head back.

Suddenly, an escorted criminal between Avalyn and Cornelius
elbows his escorting officer in the gut and kicks him in the
crotch.

He races towards the exit.

CRIMINAL
Move!

He knocks into Verita, propelling her out of Cornelius'
grip.

Verita's face slams into the corner of a desk, cracking the
device over her nose and mouth and causing it to fall off.

Not realizing this, Cornelius tries to catch him, but
misses. Officers closer to the door converge on him, pinning
him down to the ground.

CRIMINAL
Let go of me!

In the confusion, Verita comes to her senses. As Cornelius
looks back at his prisoner, his eyes widen, recognizing what
happened.

CORNELIUS
No...

Before anyone else can respond, Verita pushes against the floor with all four limbs, leaping into Cornelius and kicking off of him to land on a table effortlessly.

The cloak is flung off of her, fully exposing her face.

Her black hair falls down to her shoulders, but the fullness of her face can now be seen, revealing a wild yellow bestial eye. She grins mischievously as she exhales over her bound hands.

Cornelius moves to grab a gun from his own hip holster, but he's too late.

Little pointed worms of yellow light jet out from her breath to pierce her bindings and then fly all across the room.

They converge on Cornelius's weapon's already-charged Soulcore and shatter it, to his dismay.

Avalyn pulls out her Cutter and begins evoking it with bullets.

AVALYN
Power, destruction...

VERITA
Luna, lights!

The worms of light immediately dart about the room, destroying all of the lights and flooding the space with darkness.

A deep blue hue erupts from Avalyn's Cutter as she evokes a new clip, but the light is only strong enough to illuminate the exact area she is in.

Given the sudden appearance of spirits and the loss of light, the station lobby falls into chaos.

Criminals and citizens alike shout screams of panic. People can be heard bumping into one another.

A tumble behind Avalyn.

JAYNA
Hey, get off me!

Jayna's on the floor as someone has fallen onto her.

Avalyn shoots above the doorway, using the projectile's light to inform her of an empty path, and then, seeing nothing in her way, rushes to the door, Cornelius right beside her.

Arriving, they hurry to block the way.

A shadowy figure comes flying through the air, targeting the opening between them.

Cornelius catches it and slams it into the ground. Avalyn aims her weapon down at it.

Turning it over, they flinch. It's the cloak, worn by a tangible shadow completey covered in eyes. The moment it's seen, it starts laughing, fading away into the cloak's natural shadows.

CORNELIUS

Wha...?

Before they realize it, Verita is leaping through the doors above them.

VERITA

(playfully)

Bye

The worms of light follow behind her in the air, tracing her trail as she escapes.

CORNELIUS

Damn it!

Avalyn runs after her, shortly followed by Cornelius.

JAYNA

Wait!

Getting up, Jayna rushes through the doors as well, the papers they were to deliver left forgotten.

EXT. STREETS OF RAHZ - DAY

Cars and people move along the streets as normal, getting in the way as Avalyn tries to keep up with Verita while Cornelius and Jayna follow closely behind.

AVALYN

Move it! Police!

She can only barely keep a fix on Verita's path through the crowd.

Verita then turns down an alley.

CORNELIUS

Avalyn, cut her off.

AVALYN

Got it.

Avalyn passes the corner to proceed around the block, increasing her speed.

The moment Cornelius and Jayna turn the corner though, a bright flash of light blinds and disables them.

Avalyn stops herself and turns around, running back and stopping at the edge of the alley.

The two of them have their eyes tightly shut, hands shielding their tightly shut eyes.

AVALYN

You guys alright?

JAYNA

Ahh, my eyes!

CORNELIUS

Don't worry. Just go.

He flicks a small card out from his uniform's chest pocket and speaks into it.

CORNELIUS

Agent in need of assistance.
Clansmen fleeing north from Dithers
and Benton. Two officers down,
blinded.

He then chucks the card into the air, and it speeds quickly through the skies, carrying the message.

She dips her head in and out of the alley, testing a response. Then, not seeing any flash, she peeked out for a real look.

The worms of light swirl and hover in the air. Upon her glance, they shift into a circular pattern perpendicular to her and Verita's voice flows from the center.

VERITA

Better luck next time Rahzian.

AVALYN

Oh no you don't.

She shoots at the swirling mass and it scatters, fading into the air.

Irritated, she dashes down the alley in pursuit.

Coming out the other end, she looks around but can't seem to find the fugitive.

Then screams fill the air northeast of where she's facing.

She runs across an opening in the street and then down the road to her right.

Rounding another corner, she spots Verita for a split second diving over the far end of a bridge ahead of her, a stunned and frightened family staring after her.

She holds the gun up to her face.

AVALYN

An explosion, propelling, flying...

She breathes into the Soulcore and the color shifts from a blue hue to a light purple one.

Aiming the gun below her, she pulls the trigger.

A massive empty force blasts against the concrete, cracking it and sending her flying up into the air.

In mid-air, she aims behind her and slightly down, firing once more to propel herself passed the buildings beside her and over the edge of the river below.

A pair of walls extend down from the bridge to a sewer lane below, enclosing the river in a canal.

On the side furthest from Avalyn, claw-like gouges trace a path from the bridge down to the sewer line.

A little further down the river, she spots Verita speeding along the sewer lane.

One shot parallel with the river later, and Avalyn flies ahead of Verita.

Allowing gravity to do the work, she falls towards the river.

RAHZ CANAL

A few meters above the water, Avalyn shoots again, opposite Verita, and charging towards the wall.

Just before slamming into it, she shoots the wall, blasting more cracks into the stone, landing on her feet, and cutting off Verita's route.

She aims the gun at Verita this time.

AVALYN

Stop! You're under arrest. This shot won't kill you, but it'll hurt like hell and will probably break some bones.

Verita laughs, a wild smile on her face.

She rushes at Avalyn, running along the wall and jumping into the air for a pounce.

Avalyn pulls the trigger.

A blast of energy ripples through space, but just before it meets Verita in mid-air, the worms of light appear from behind her and form a shield in front.

The light shield takes the brunt of the attack and shatters, falling around Verita.

Avalyn's eyes widen. It's too late for another shot.

Verita tackles Avalyn, pushing her to the ground on her back.

Avalyn scowls up at her attacker, but her expression quickly switches to one of fear and disgust.

Before her very eyes, Verita stretches out her right arm, and it morphs into a large bestial limb with long claws.

Avalyn can see the bloodlust in Verita's eyes. This is the end.

Avalyn looks away, flinching. But Verita's arm has stopped, claws hovering mere inches from Avalyn's throat.

Verita, looks over her shoulder to find a white flowing aura wrapping around her arm, preventing her from thrusting all the way forward.

She traces the aura back and around to over the river where a large spirit hovers above the water, staring at her calmly.

The spirit looks like a mythical Eastern dragon, a wolf, and a buck combined: a long face, antlers, long whiskers, fur, sharp teeth, and composed entirely of spirit aura, it easily stretches 20 meters long.

Verita cautiously bows her head in reverence.

Avalyn peeks up at Verita, amazed she's still alive. She follows Verita's gesture, and notices the spirit on the river as well.

SIRAPH

Young one, you are not to be her
executioner, but her guide on the
Marked journey.

Verita looks up with a shocked expression.

VERITA

What?

Her grip weakens and Avalyn immediately takes this chance.

Lifting her right hand with the weapon, she takes a shot at the large wolf-dragon, but the blast passes right through, unphasing it.

AVALYN

No way...

Verita immediately increases the pressure with her left hand, slightly choking Avalyn.

VERITA

How dare you attack the Siraph!

She immediately tears at the Soulcore in the gun, cracking it open. The aura energy gushes out into the air.

Verita has a pained expression as she rests her eyes on the dead Soulcore.

VERITA

I'm sorry.

Without so much as a concern about being shot, the Siraph moves forward and lightly breathes onto Avalyn's right hand.

A reddish-gold mark carves itself painlessly onto her palm, wrapping around the back of her hand.

It looks like a swirl of particles, identical to a spirit's summoning, with an eye present at the same place on the front and back.

The Siraph then looks directly into Avalyn's eyes. Avalyn remains terrified, angling away from it as much as she can under Verita's pressure.

SIRAPH

Do not be afraid, Marked One. A blessing has been bestowed unto you, changing you in more ways than you realize.

With her other hand, Avalyn tries to rub and scratch off the Mark, to no avail. Her breathing escalates as panic sets in.

AVALYN

What the hell did you do to me?

Paying her no mind, the Siraph looks up at Verita who is staring at the Siraph with tears in her eyes.

VERITA

Please, Siraph. Please don't ask this of me.

She's breaking down, tear drops falling onto Avalyn's face. Avalyn doesn't know what to make of it.

SIRAPH

Peace Verita. The world shall survive truth by your faith. Guide the Marked One as you once were.

VERITA

I can't Siraph. Not a Rahzian, I just-

She starts choking up

SIRAPH

You must Verita. For you are the
only one who can.

The Siraph breathes into her face and she shudders, sighing a moment. She starts pulling herself together and nods despite sniffing, clearly in emotional pain.

VERITA

Okay.

The Siraph nods in return, and then begins to fade away, disappearing entirely.

Verita then looks back at Avalyn, hatred quelling the turmoil in her eyes. She starts to get up, pulling Avalyn with her.

VERITA

Alright, it's time to go. Follow me
if you wanna stay sane.

Avalyn resists her efforts.

AVALYN

No way. Let go of me.

VERITA

We don't have time. Hurry up, or
else-

CORNELIUS (O.S.)

Avalyn! Catch!

Avalyn and Verita look up.

RAHZ CANAL BRIDGE

Cornelius is up on the bridge. He takes one of the cards, presses it against his Miranda P4, and the two merge into a single ball of light.

He throws it at Avalyn, and it shoots straight at her.

RAHZ CANAL

A few meters before reaching her, it materializes into the weapon again, and Avalyn catches it, a grin appearing on her face.

She raises the Soulcore to her mouth.

VERITA

No, DON'T-

Avalyn breathes onto the Soulcore and a light purple aura revitalizes weapon.

She's suddenly assaulted with screams and woes emanating from the Soulcore. The eye embedded in the chaotic storm of particles appears larger than she's ever seen it before as its screeches buffet her ears.

She drops the weapon, plugs her ears with her hands, and starts screaming herself. She's screaming louder than she ever has in her entire life.

Avalyn crumbles to her knees, doubles over, and then falls onto her side in a fetal position, sacrificing one of her ears' failing protection to grasp her tight chest with her left hand.

Tears are streaming down her face. Her eyes are panicked, confused. Terrible pain and torment.

A grunt is heard as Verita's claws come crashing down onto the dropped weapon's Soulcore, shattering it. The aura rushes out as the soul within is expelled.

The screams and pain suddenly vanish and Avalyn starts taking in large gulps of air as she breathes while in shock.

She looks around herself in confusion, noticing that she's now on the ground, but doesn't move due to exhaustion.

RAHZ CANAL BRIDGE

Meanwhile, Jayna has caught up to Cornelius on the bridge and already charged her weapon.

JAYNA

Avalyn, watch out!

She fires 3 blue shots of hot energy out of her Cutter.

RAHZ CANAL BRIDGE

Two land in the water by the sewer line while the third approaches Verita's position.

Verita leaps back to dodge. A fourth shot is now coming her way, and she backs off further.

Seeing her situation, she turns to flee, leaping into the air several meters and using her right hands' claws to propel herself back up to street level by thrusting herself up the wall.

She disappears beyond their sight.

RAHZ CANAL BRIDGE

Cornelius looks down at his sister with concern, but tears his face away and back up to the point where Verita vanished.

CORNELIUS
Avalyn's friend, Jayna?

JAYNA
Yeah?

CORNELIUS
Take care of her, will you?
(murderous)
I've got business to take care of.

He whips out a second Miranda P4 from inside his uniform, breathes a fiery hue into his Soulcore, and then rockets through the skies in pursuit as flames scorch his path.

RAHZ CANAL

Jayna is running down the sewer lane towards Avalyn, a set of stairs visible in the background.

JAYNA
Avalyn! Avalyn?! Are you alright?

She kneels down beside Avalyn, fingers brushing hair out of her face.

Avalyn's eyes are vacant, off to the side.

JAYNA
Come on, speak to me girl.

Avalyn turns to look at Jayna's face, a pained look in her eyes.

She can see Jayna's concern, but her vision blurs as she passes out.

JAYNA
Avalyn? No, no, AVALYN!

She pulls a card out from a pocket just like Cornelius'. We can hear her speak with a weaker and weaker voice as we pull back.

JAYNA
This is Private Jayna Simmons.
Officer down. Repeat, officer is down. Ambulance requested at...

ABOVE THE CANAL

A beam of light can be seen shoot up into the sky and fly in the direction of the police station.

Pause for effect.