

ASH AND ROSE

S1E1

"Not Entirely a Monster"

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EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Along a dirt path, a lone woman, ASH (20, street-smart, Irish accent, looking out for who she likes and no one else), walks, hood over her head, toward an old tavern.

Against one wall of the tavern, several horses in armor are roped to a hitching post, heavy packs bearing a raven with large pronounced talons draped over their saddle bags.

Ash keeps talking over her right shoulder, but we can't see to whom.

ASH
Keep quiet and stay hidden.

ALWARDA (V.O.)
Why not let me take care of this.

ASH
'cause if I hand you the reins, I
don't know if I'll get 'em back.

She pulls off her hood and steps through the door. To her right, we see...

No one.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

A bustling night, a busy BAR MAID rushes between tables of unruly guests, many large MERCENARIES celebrating another day of living.

Through the front door steps Ash, scanning the room.

Her eyes rest on a rugged brute (DARRIUS, 30s) gulping down a massive flagon of ale at the bar. The fancy trimming on his tabard denoting his higher rank.

Bingo.

Ash moves toward him, scooping 2 full tankards off the Barmaid's serving platter, leaving 2 gold coins, currency of the Nimorian empire called Serets (Sare-et), in their place.

The Bar maid is too frazzled to notice.

Just as the brute drains his last few gulps, Ash plops the fresh tankards down in front of him.

ASH
A round for a minute of your time?

She flashes a toothy grin. He eyes the drink, then her.

DARRIUS
'ard to say no to free ale.

ASH
Smart man.

They clack tankards and both take a big swig.

ASH (CONT'D)
Now um...

DARRIUS
Darrius.

ASH
Darrius, strong name. I'm Ashlynn,
but ye can call me Ash.

She winks. He, however, just takes another swig, unaffected.

DARRIUS
Well, Ash, most people who ply me
wit drink want sumthin. So spill
it.

ASH
Straight to business, I like that.
(beat) Yer the leader of the
Terrible Talons, aye?

She gestures at his tabard. Seeing the front of it now, it bears the same edgy raven emblem as the horses' bags outside.

DARRIUS
Aye.

ASH
And you've just recently become...

She turns to the whole bar

ASH (CONT'D)
THE TRIUMPHANT VICTORS OF THE
BATTLE OF FORT VILCUS!

The mercenaries in the bar erupt into cheers, spilling their drinks all over themselves and their tables.

The bar maid sighs.

Ash turns back to Darrius.

ASH (CONT'D)

True?

Darrius nods

Ash looks down at her drink, taking a breath in.

In the drink, we get a tiny peek at Ash's reflection. The right side of her face seems off. There are green, thorny vines growing across it.

She turns back to Darrius.

ASH (CONT'D)

I'm after someone who happened to be there. Not a fighter, just a traveler. Now, I ain't find 'im floatin' around town, and I ain't find his corpse neither. I know yer men are tough and honorable and--

DARRIUS

Cut the shite.

ASH

I figure ya ain't total monsters so I'm hoping he ain't dead. I wanna know if ye saw someone walking about with a rose bracelet on, and which way he went.

Darrius makes a show of looking into his drink, swirling it about. Really making Ash wait for his answer.

DARRIUS

That sounds like... Valuable information. More valuable than this swill.

Darrius gestures at the now half-empty tankard.

Ash brushes her cloak aside to reach into her pouch. Darrius clocks the ash leaf shaped clasp on the pouch. A clasp made of *solid gold*.

Ash notices this and tries to distract him with what she reached for. A jingling pouch of coins.

ASH

Will this do?

DARRIUS

It might. But that fancy buckle--

Ash slaps a hand over the clasp, her face turning to stone.

ASH
Not for sale.

DARRIUS
Everything's for sale.

Ash reaches down and pulls out a few more loose Serets, dropping them on the table.

ASH
Not this. But, you can have that to forget what you saw.

Her winning grin returns.

Darrius scoffs before scooping up the coins.

DARRIUS
I'll ask the men.

Darrius steps back into the bar. Ash watches him go.

ALWARDA (V.O.)
Your little attachments are going to cost us.

ASH
(sotto)
Shut it.

ALWARDA (V.O.)
I mean why not just torture the brute and dispose of him after?

Ash turns back to the drink on the bar.

In her reflection, half her face is overtaken by ALWARDA (appears 20s, looks hauntingly alien in a beautiful way, rose bud surrounding his right eye, fitting that a rose god could be such a prick).

ASH
Because I don't like killing people. 'sides, the way ye do it tends to draw eyes.

Unseen by Ash and Alwarda, the large men are scooting the non-mercenaries out of the bar. The barmaid shrinks behind the counter.

Ash is too busy shout-whispering at her drink to notice.

ALWARDA
Livestock shouldn't be so uppity.

ASH
I ain't "livestock", weed.

ALWARDA
And I'm not a "weed", swine.

Darrius clears his throat and Ash looks up, only now noticing how empty the bar has become.

All 6 of the other Talons have their eyes right on her.

DARRIUS
I asked the men.

ASH
And they'll tell me what I wanna know so I can be out of yer hair?

DARRIUS
They think that clasp'll make a fine gift for the Terrible Talons.

The men chuckle.

ASH
Look, I ain't partin' with it. But if yer ready to be honorable men...

She trails off as Darrius crosses the room, chest puffed.

He stops directly in front of her, a full head and a half of height on her.

DARRIUS
Honorable men? Here I thought we just ain't total monsters.

Ash looks up at him. Darrius smirks.

Ash kicks at the side of his knee, breaking it at the joint. As Darrius comes crashing down, she lands a punch right on his temple, putting him on his ass.

The other men are frozen in place for a moment, shocked by her gusto.

ALWARDA (V.O.)
Good hit! Think you can do that 6 more times?

The other men compose themselves and charge at Ash.