

SLAYER ACADEMY

"Face Off"

by
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TEASER

FADE IN:

1

INT. CAMPUS - BARBARA'S OFFICE - DAY

1

Sat behind her desk and scrolling through some paperwork is BARBARA, the headmistress not looking up at the two people sat facing her - SOFIA and TYSON.

A long beat passes. Tyson glances at Sofia, as if to ask what to do, and she shrugs - she's still waiting too.

BARBARA
(not looking up)
If you two keep fidgeting, I'll
have to ask you to go and wait
outside.

Tyson quietens down, but Sofia scowls.

SOFIA
I'm sorry, did I suddenly become
nine years old in the last few
seconds?

Barbara ignores the sharp remark and looks up at last, holding Sofia's gaze before looking across to Tyson. He flashes her a hopeful smile.

BARBARA
So let me get this straight...

She leans forward across the desk, interlacing her fingers.

BARBARA (cont'd)
... you had a dream that allowed
you to 'speak' to Tyson, using his
apparent powers of telepathy, and
then when you found him he was
being attacked in the street by a
vampire, which you slew and brought
him back here for his own safety?

SOFIA
That's right.

BARBARA
Forgive me for saying it, but it
all seems a little...

SOFIA
Plausible?

BARBARA
(eyes her)
Contrived.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

(firm)

Well, it's not. Tyson needed my help. There's no telling how many more vampires and demons out there are trying to get their hands on him, to use his abilities for their own ends!

TYSON

And anyway, there's only so long a boy with psychic powers can live on the streets after seeing his foster parents get killed before he starts drawing attention to himself.

Barbara studies the two of them - she can sense something isn't quite right about this story.

BARBARA

So you've been homeless now for how long?

TYSON

(quickly)

Six months.

BARBARA

Isn't there anybody we can call to let them know you're safe? Social services must be looking for you if your last family was murdered, and I can't justify-

SOFIA

(quickly)

We don't think that's a good idea.

TYSON

We don't?

(off Sofia's glare)

We don't. Because of, you know, the...

SOFIA

(covering)

... fact that Tyson believes his social services rep is the one who ratted him out to the vampires.

BARBARA

That's a very serious allegation. What proof do you have?

TYSON

Well, you know... I am psychic.

Barbara stares at him, and he tries that winning smile again. She's not looking too convinced - but after a beat SIGHS resignedly.

BARBARA

Alright, he can stay with us. For now. I'll find something useful for him to do in due course, but the second I get anyone from the police or welfare sniffing round here, he goes back with them. Is that clear?

SOFIA

Crystal.

BARBARA

Alright. Off you two go.

With a nod, Sofia stands, and Tyson follows her out of the room. They pass GREG as he heads inside.

GREG

Oh, hi.

SOFIA

Hi. Bye.

Greg blinks - and the two youngsters are gone.

BARBARA

Any news on the Chinese situation?

Greg snaps back to attention, heading over to Barbara and passing her a folder.

GREG

I'm afraid so - and I don't think you're going to like it.

Barbara opens the folder, as we cut to:

Overlooking a section of the Great Wall Of China, bathed in light from the surprisingly full moon. All is silent until loud FOOTSTEPS echo from off screen.

A young Chinese girl hurries into frame, about seventeen with long black hair. She turns back every now and again to see if she is being followed.

She's looking the other way when she runs into another figure with a THUNK, stumbling backwards to the ground.

A MONK dressed in long dark robes stands before her, several dots carved into his forehead.

The girl shivers, starting to back away from the eerie monk as he slowly raises his head, and as his misshapen brow gives way to piercing yellow eyes and fangs, the monk HISSES - it's a VAMPIRE!

The girl SCREAMS, scrambles to her feet and tears off in the other direction, but the vampire is upon her in an instant, quickly grabbing her arm and pulling her close. He grins as he WHISPERS into her ear.

VAMPIRE

(subtitled Mandarin)

It's useless to scream... but
you're welcome to give it a try.

He BITES DOWN hard on her neck, and she does indeed let out a piercing SCREAM.

It doesn't last long, the scream dying as her strength leaves her, and she loses consciousness in moments, wilting into the monk's arms.

He effortlessly scoops her up, carrying her off screen as we cut into:

A large, circular underground chamber. It's brightly decorated in reds and golds, with many large statues and mounted displays of weapons lining the room.

On the floor before two giant doors are about twenty or so other MONKS (and yes, folks, they're vampires too) kneeling in prayer. They chant slow, haunting words which echo around the chamber as the Vampire enters the room, the girl in his arms.

A vampire dressed in silk robes and a large hat with beads attached to it steps into frame. He is the head of the clan, HSU YI, and the Vampire Monk bows respectfully to him, offering the girl out to him.

HSU YI

(subtitled Mandarin)

Ah excellent, I see you have bought
another one. Tell me... did she
scream?

VAMPIRE

They all do.

(smirks)

Eventually. I have a feeling she'll
be screaming a lot more before the
night is through, my lord.

The Vampire's eyes greedily linger on the girl, but he's snapped out of it as Hsu Yi SLAPS him across the cheek.

HSU YI

You are not to touch her. She must
not be killed until it is time.
Just throw her in with the rest.

The vampire bows, backs away from Hsu Yi and heads over to the left of the room, where a large steel CAGE is built into the wall. Inside it are about twelve other GIRLS - some are cowering in fear, some are simply out cold.

As the vampire opens the cage, ignoring the terrified WHIMPERS of the girls as he places the girl he's holding on the floor, before he SLAMS the cage door shut. A couple of the girls crowd round the new arrival.

Hsu Yi begins to walk up and take his place in front of the praying monks, raising his arms reverently.

HSU YI (cont'd)

The time is near. We have almost
gathered enough of the tainted to
release the great dragon spirit.
Embodied with its power, I will
become the single most powerful
entity in the universe!

As the crowd of monks continue the chant, Hsu Yi turns to the door behind him and raises his almost skeletal hands.

HSU YI (cont'd)

Great dragon spirit, I beseech
thee! Guide us to the path of
enlightenment and freedom. No
longer will we be in the shadows,
we will be bathed in holy light!
The manuscripts are in place, and
we have almost gathered all of the
impure. Accept them as sacrifices.
Let the power flow through us!

As he begins to CHANT along with the other monks, the door opens a fraction, accompanied by a loud SCREECH.

Hsu Yi grins, the chanting growing in intensity as a baleful orange GLOW forms on the other side of the door - and a huge serpentine EYE appears, staring back out into the chamber!

There is a low, deep GROWL, before we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

4 EXT. CAMPUS - PLAYING FIELDS - DAY

4

It's a beautiful sunny day on campus, everyone appears happy and upbeat - even the lately somber Sofia, who heads down the steps from the main quadrangle and out onto the grass.

She spots a huge crowd of girls surrounding someone up ahead, and can't help but smirk as she heads over.

Tyson is sitting on a bench over by the edge of the track circuit, making small talk with a bunch of giggling SLAYERS - well, at least Tyson is making small talk, the girls all seem to be giving him googly eyes and batting their eyelids.

TYSON

I swear, it was like-

(noticing Sofia)

Oh, hi Sofia. Am I needed somewhere?

SOFIA

Um, no, I haven't...

Tyson begins mouthing the words "help me" at her, and at last she gets it.

SOFIA (cont'd)

Actually... erm, Mrs. Griffin needs to see you in her office.

TYSON

(playing along)

Goo- I mean... bad, because I have to leave you wonderful girls.

He bustles his way out of the crowd, joining Sofia who raises an eyebrow at his popularity before we cut to:

5 INT. CAMPUS - CORRIDOR - NEXT

5

Sofia and Tyson continue to walk side by side past various classrooms. She checks over her shoulder to make sure they're all alone.

SOFIA

I think we can stop walking now.

TYSON

Are you sure?

SOFIA

Don't worry, I think your fan club's lost the scent for now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA (cont'd)
Have to admit, never saw you as
much of a womaniser.

Tyson chuckles a little and begins wearily rubbing the back
of his neck.

TYSON
I never have been. I guess I've
just got the whole 'being a boy in
a group of boy-deprived girls'
thing going on.

SOFIA
I suppose so. You're the first boy
our age to be around here since...
well, ever, actually.

TYSON
Please tell me you weren't being
serious with the Mrs. Griffinness.

SOFIA
I just assumed a couple of love
bites would be the last thing you
needed right now.

TYSON
Are you still worrying about
someone coming looking for me?

SOFIA
Well, yes, I mean, your parents
must be-

TYSON
Parent. I never knew my mum.

SOFIA
Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

TYSON
It's fine. I mean, it's not like
I'm upset or anything. From stories
my dad told me, she was a drug
abusing gambler that went running
for the hills the minute I came out
of her womb.

SOFIA
My parents are both dead. That's
how I wound up here.

TYSON
(surprised)
Wow, never thought I'd see someone
here with an even more depressing
story than mine.

SOFIA

Believe me, you're going to see a lot of weird stuff around here. Aside from all the demon ninjas and aristocratic European witches vaporizing each other, everyone here has a story. We have Slayers from pretty much every known country in this place.

(thinks)

Except Monaco, for some reason.

TYSON

Principality.

SOFIA

(beat)

Look, my point is that not every story here has a happy ending neatly tied up in a little bow.

TYSON

Do I want to hear them?

She shrugs her shoulders.

SOFIA

Doubt it. View this place as a fresh start, like... like being a mushroom placed in a bunch of other mushrooms. You absorb everyone else's flavour, but I... have no clue where I'm going with this, because I'm terrible with analogies.

TYSON

(chuckles)

Well, don't you worry about me. I can feel I've joined you guys at a fairly crucial time, so I-

SOFIA

Hold that thought for a minute, I need to go grab something from my backpack. Wait right here.

Sofia exits hurriedly into a nearby door, and Tyson is stood there hanging.

TYSON

(to self)

Wow, didn't know I could scare them off that fast... why wasn't that working earlier?

(CONTINUED)

He looks over, and something catches his eye. It's ALITA, carrying a bundle of books down some nearby stairs. She's dressed casually, her hair loose round her shoulders.

He stares, her long flowing hair catching the sunlight in glorious slow-mo, and from the look on Tyson's face it's clear he just saw the light. And it was good.

GREG is sitting on a nearby desk, still sporting a lingering few cuts and bruises from his beating a few weeks ago. SKYE stands around telling a story to him and FRANKIE.

SKYE

I mean, it was pretty tragic. She was there one minute, and the next she was just on the floor. Boom.

FRANKIE

Did she look like she was in a lot of pain?

SKYE

I wish I could say no, but...

(clears throat)

What's worse is that Alita's totally shut herself off. She's even quieter than normal, if that's possible.

GREG

I hear that's going around this time of year.

Greg slowly rises to his feet, but grimaces in pain and clutches his injured stomach.

SKYE

Woah, Greg, slow down a bit there. You're still not a hundred percent.

Greg gives in and sags back into his chair, letting out an annoyed HUFF.

GREG

God, I could use a fag right now.

Skye throws a shocked face at him.

GREG (cont'd)

What? No! 'Fag' as in cigarette!

SKYE

Is that another one of those English colloquialisms?

GREG

(grins)

There are stranger ones. Ever heard of spotted dick?

SKYE

Say what now?

Sofia enters from the door, registering the odd expressions everyone is wearing.

SOFIA

Do I even want to know what you lot are talking about?

FRANKIE

It depends if you know what the 'ell they are talking about!

GREG

(quickly)

It's nothing. How's Tyson?

SOFIA

He's doing great. Better than I did on my first day, anyway. Has anyone seen Alita?

FRANKIE

Last I saw of 'er, she was studying or something. She would not put this little orange book down.

SKYE

She's still pretty torn up about that Trina girl dying last week. She's hardly said a word to anyone since it happened.

Sofia suddenly looks very guilty, and quietly takes a seat as the conversation continues around her.

GREG

I wonder why Katrina's death affected her so much? It's not like any of us really got a chance to get to know her.

SKYE

Well, Alita's a mystery sometimes. Anyway, what's the what today?

GREG

Actually, Barbara told me we have to meet her for a mission briefing in... well, now, really.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE

Does Alita know?

GREG

I'm not sure. Can one of you go and make sure she does?

FRANKIE

I suppose so. It will be a *bon* opportunity to do a little snooping of my own, see what she is getting up to. You know, because I am so concerned about 'er.

SKYE

(dryly)

Obviously.

Frankie exits through the door, followed by Skye grabbing her coat from a nearby table.

SKYE (cont'd)

I'll go too, make sure she doesn't steal anything. Cause you know how the French are with...

(beat; shakes head)

... and I'm gone.

Sofia and Greg are left, and there's a beat of awkward silence. Greg offers a hopeful smile as we cut to:

Alita is sitting on her bed, writing in her new little orange book. Push in at the elegant Japanese symbols she writes.

ALITA (V.O.)

I have a lot of catching up to do, since lately a lot has been happening in my life. I'll start at the beginning. My mother was not...

Suddenly, she is knocked out of her concentration by Frankie and Skye appearing at the door.

SKYE

Hey, *chica*.

ALITA

(nods)

Hello.

SKYE

Mrs. Griffin needs to see us all in the mission briefing room, so let's get our moves on.

ALITA

We have another mission?

SKYE

Unfortunately. What you doing there?

Alita closes her book abruptly and tries to obscure it from view.

ALITA

(quickly)

Oh, I'm... well, writing letters.
To my brother.

FRANKIE

(suspicious)

Writing letters? In a locked diary?

Alita looks guilty for a moment, but then collects herself.

ALITA

Um, they are simply reminders... to
write notes to my brother.

FRANKIE

Ah, I see. So you wouldn't mind if
I were to take a *petit* look, *non*?

Frankie reaches for the notebook, and Alita tries to grab it first - but Skye butts in, nudging Frankie aside.

SKYE

Why don't you go fix your hair or
something? It seems to be weighing
your head down.

(change of tone)

C'mon, Allie, let's go to the war
room.

With a scowl at Frankie, Alita tucks the book into her bag and follows Skye out of the room, into:

Greg and Barbara are both standing in front of a large board in the gray metallic walls of the mission briefing room, with the girls sitting at separate desks before them. Sofia stares out through the window, other things on her mind.

BARBARA

Now girls, I know you're a little
on edge with all this business with
the rogue Slayers going on, so I
thought that this mission would be
a good change of pace for you.

(CONTINUED)

SKYE

So what is it this week? We bustin' a demon crackhouse, or are we travelling to Egypt to fight a band of vampire mummy-hybrids bent on destroying the world?

(beat)

Which is gonna be pretty hard, considering they don't have their internal organs any more.

(thinks)

How do you kill a mummy anyway?

SOFIA

(without looking)

Fire.

Frankie pops some bubblegum and begins slowly chewing on it again, rolling her eyes at Skye's comments.

BARBARA

All sarcasm aside, Skye, this is still a fairly serious mission. We've received word of a vampire clan stealing young girls in China.

GREG

Given that the girls are taken alive, and so far we've had no reports of any bodies, we believe they're being held somewhere, presumably for a sacrifice or some other kind of ritual.

SOFIA

Are we talking eight year old girls, or Slayer aged girls?

GREG

That's exactly it - these girls could in fact be Slayers, in which case it's important that they be bought back to the Academy.

ALITA

And besides, vampires do not enjoy the taste of small girls. Their blood hasn't fully matured, and-

GREG

(interrupts)

Alita, please don't continue.

ALITA

(beat)

I apologize.

(CONTINUED)

SKYE

So, this clan, any idea what they need the girls for?

BARBARA

We're not positive, but we have a hunch it has something to do with a nearby Hellmouth our Council teams out there have picked up the energy signatures of.

SKYE

So all Sofes has to do is wave her magic scythe and it'll be locked, right? End of evil plan?

GREG

You got it.

Sofia again looks uncomfortable, but the briefing is flowing too quickly for anyone to notice.

SKYE

One problem - does anyone here speak Chinese?

GREG

Um, what kind?

BARBARA

Mandarin.

GREG

Oops. I forgot to mention which one on my C.V. I guess.

BARBARA

Well, that doesn't matter, I'm sure you'll find a way to get by. Once you meet our people out in the field, they'll tell you anything more you need to know. Right, girls, that's all. The flight leaves in four hours, so pack light.

As the girls get out of their seats - with a pensive Sofia waiting till last - we cut to:

The rival academy girls, DELANEY, RACHEL and DANA, are all sitting at a round table in a small circular room, listening to KIRA and HAMISH.

KIRA

So, through the proverbial grape vine we've got word of a Hellmouth in China. Some vampire clan is trying to open it, apparently.

RACHEL

What do you want us to do about it?

KIRA

It just so happens that the clan in question are in possession of a set of powerful scrolls, the scrolls of Xin.

DELANEY

How powerful?

KIRA

Put it this way, these scrolls have the power to make you shut the hell up when I'm talking, and that really does take some doing.

Rachel sniggers a little, but shuts up as Delaney throws her a stone cold look.

KIRA (cont'd)

The scrolls are able to release the spirit of a great dragon that lived centuries ago. Your mission is to get to those scrolls and make sure the vampires don't get a chance to use them.

HAMISH

Aye, it's a fairly low key mission so it'll just be the bog standard, kill-the-evil-vampire-monks-and-open-the-Hellmouth job.

DELANEY

(raises hand)

Why do we need to open the Hellmouth?

KIRA

Think of it as a very effective diversion. Those brats from the Academy are bound to show up at some point, so it'll help to have a smokescreen in place.

RACHEL

Is that all we need to know?

(CONTINUED)

KIRA

No. Apparently, the monks are gathering Slayers as an offering to the dragon spirit. If they start their ritual and execute the captives, you won't be able to stop them from unleashing the dragon.

DANA

(blurts out)

The heads don't belong in that place! I want them!

Everyone turns to Dana, who is rocking back and forth a little and scratching at her forearms. Kira smiles.

KIRA

I've instructed Dana on what to do about that part of the situation.

(claps hands)

Well, that about wraps it up, so go get yourselves ready. You leave in one hour.

As Rachel, Hamish and Dana leave, Delaney stays behind. Kira looks up and sees her hesitating.

KIRA (cont'd)

You can leave now. Wait, let me rephrase that... get out.

DELANEY

I can't believe you even like her over me.

KIRA

Dana? Oh, sometimes it's just handy having a serial killer around.

(meaningful)

Takes care of the tasks others just can't seem to complete.

DELANEY

(sighs)

What's she gonna do, pop the girls heads off like they were Barbie dolls? Jesus, mom, could you have made her any more psychot-

Kira furiously rounds on Delaney, looming over her.

KIRA

(fierce)

Don't you dare call me that again!

(CONTINUED)

Delaney blinks, startled by Kira's sudden and angry reaction. Kira steps back, takes a beat to compose herself, then looks at Delaney again.

KIRA (cont'd)

(cold)

Now get out of my sight. And for God's sake, don't mess this mission up. I've had enough reminders lately of what a disappointment you are to me, so don't give me any more excuses to regret bringing you into this organisation!

Delaney begins to tear up slightly, and makes a quick exit, turning her back and walking out of the door before a single tear runs down her cheek. She slams it shut, and on this we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

10

EXT. STREETS OF CHINA - DAY

10

Close in on a large archway, entering into a bustling street market full of heckling stall keepers and crowds of pedestrians. Through the middle of the hustle and bustle, Greg leads the girls as the squeeze through the thick crowds.

SKYE

So lemme get this straight - we have to walk around in circles asking random people who don't even speak the same language as us where to find a group of vampire monks, who are a few slayers short of a ritual which is gonna end the world?

A beat as the girls all turn to Greg. He coughs nervously and tries to look authoritative.

GREG

It's not one of my better plans, I'll admit, but-

SOFIA

It does all seem a bit far fetched, Greg. Even for you.

ALITA

I'm sorry that my knowledge of the local dialect is not sufficient.

GREG

Don't worry. Our Council contact out here is an experienced bounty hunter, he knows the area so he can show us around. We need to meet him nearby in a little while.

SKYE

Bounty hunter?

GREG

Granted, it wasn't the safest option, but if we're going to save these Slayers in time, we need to bend the rules a little. Until then, I suggest we take what we can get and ask around a little.

FRANKIE

Would a little shopping hurt?

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA
Honestly, Frankie...

GREG
As long as it's productive. Since we packed light, we're going to need some extra supplies, so shop around and see what's on sale - food, some spare weapons, things like that.

FRANKIE
Meaning?

GREG
(sighs)
Knock yourselves out.

ALITA
I know what kinds of items we will be able to find here. Follow me.

Frankie smiles and then turns to a nearby stall, along with the rest of the girls. Greg is left hanging.

GREG
(mutters)
Oh, what I wouldn't give to be seventeen again...

Greg is nudged as another group of people barge past him, and as he unsuccessfully tries to get their attention, we cut to:

11 EXT. MARKET STALLS - NEXT

11

Skye and Sofia are walking by a dense market street, passing by a couple of people riding bicycles.

SOFIA
Was it really wise to leave Alita and Frankie alone together?

SKYE
What do you mean?

SOFIA
Well, I suppose leaving Frankie alone with anybody is asking for trouble.

SKYE
Aw c'mon, we both know Frankie and Alita have changed a lot since they got to the Academy.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

What do you mean? Alita's still incredibly shy and Frankie's still amazingly aloof. Not seeing a great deal of change there.

SKYE

I mean, like, Frankie's attitude towards other people. She used to be a bitch to everyone, but now she's only a bitch to those she really hates. It hasn't brought the numbers down by much, I'll admit, but it's a start.

SOFIA

And Alita?

SKYE

Definitely coming out of her shell. I mean, apart from these last few days, she's actually been socializing and laughing along with the rest of us.

(beat)

And, uh, you know...

SOFIA

What?

SKYE

Well, just, you know, you and me... talking. It's good. After what-

SOFIA

That's still not something I want to talk about, if that's alright with you. We're here to do a job, and I'm not about to jeopardise that because of our... personal issues.

Skye is obviously hurt by Sofia's words, but tries not to show it.

SOFIA (cont'd)

And what about you?

SKYE

What about me, *cabron*?

SOFIA

Well, I can see how you've changed. Your persecution complex hasn't reared its ugly head just lately, which is a relief for all of us.

(CONTINUED)

SKYE

Hey, it's not like you haven't changed. Miss Pristine got a little dirtier this year, don't you think?

SOFIA

It's a tough environment. And tough environments create tough people.

SKYE

Good answer.

(beat)

So... China, huh? Reckon this mission's going to be a cakewalk?

SOFIA

Normally this'd be a calm before the storm kind of thing, but past experience tells me something bad's bound to happen eventually.

SKYE

Tis the life of a slayer, honey. Well, that and the killing and death... and looking totally hot whilst doing it.

A long pause - and then Sofia can't resist a little grin, as we cut to:

Alita is sitting cross legged, praying in front of a small shrine in clearing surrounded by hanging flowers and arch ways. She is slowly chanting words under her breath, her eyes closed and her expression peaceful.

Further back, Greg and Frankie are watching her. Frankie winces and rubs her belly, which Greg notices.

GREG

Are you alright?

FRANKIE

(caught)

Uh... I am fine. Indigestion.

(off Alita)

What is she doing?

Greg holds a finger to his lips for Frankie to lower her voice.

GREG

Alita's using her tracking skills to find the demons. She needs as much tranquillity as possible.

FRANKIE

So it is a spell?

GREG

Not a spell *per se*, more of a Buddhist chant, if I understand the way she explained it. She's drawing power from the Earth and using it to channel her mind into purity.

FRANKIE

And this 'elps us find the missing girls 'ow, exactly?

GREG

A Slayer's tuned in to all kinds of paranormal energies, Frankie. This will help Alita sense any unnatural entities in the area. Just open your mind a little, Frankie. You'd be surprised what you could find.

(beat)

Although, having said that...

Frankie scowls and hits him on the arm, as Alita stops her prayer, rising to her feet and heading back over to them.

GREG (cont'd)

Did you find anything?

ALITA

I'm sorry, but I did not. There is an impure wind today and it is clouding my tracking skills.

GREG

Oh, right.

ALITA

(smiles)

That was a joke, Greg.

GREG

It was?

(blinks)

Of course it was.

ALITA

I just meant I was unable to sense anything.

GREG

Well, don't worry about not being able to pick anything up, hopefully we'll be able to get everything we need from the bounty hunters.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE

Until then... more shopping?

GREG

Very well. But for supplies, not clothes.

FRANKIE

Bon! Come along, Alita, let us go buy me some stuff.

ALITA

I did have my eye on a very nice bracelet a few stores back...

GREG

Hey! Ten minutes, that's all you two are getting. Use it wisely.

Frankie sticks her tongue out at him, before grabbing Alita and dragging her off through an archway as we follow them:

Frankie zig-zags from market stall to stall, with Alita following behind. Frankie pauses in front of a cooked poultry stand. Frankie sniffs in the aroma and smiles.

FRANKIE

Hey, shall we buy some chicken wings? I am *tres* peckish!

ALITA

No, I am a vegetarian.

FRANKIE

Since when?

ALITA

Have you not noticed by now?

A beat. Alita nods her head as she registers Frankie's puzzled expression.

ALITA (cont'd)

Of course you haven't.

Frankie moves on as Alita notices something from the corner of her eye. She heads over to a nearby stall which is selling an array of jewelry and trinkets.

Alita picks up a pendant with a little dove for a charm. Alita stares at the pendant for a moment, before we suddenly:

WHITE OUT:

14

INT. HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - FLASHBACK

14

We fade in on a real dove, sitting in a cage in a modest household. A cradle sways gently a few feet away from the bird cage, with the newborn Alita laying down inside it.

The house is also very different from Alita's home in Japan, displaying many modern conveniences and urban features their current rural house does not have.

A WOMAN steps into view, smiling down on baby Alita. It's obvious from her appearance that the woman is not an Asian native - she has long light brown hair, is quite young and has a striking beauty to her.

This is Alita's mother, NINA. She moves closer towards the cradle, then starts to speak with a Hispanic lilt.

NINA

I hope you like the name 'Alita.' I
don't think your father approves
just yet, but he'll come around.

She crouches down, her fingers tracing gently over Alita's skin as the infant gurgles happily.

NINA (cont'd)

I told him where it came from, all
about how doves have one wing a
little smaller than the other, and
how it suited you so well.

(sighs)

I'm afraid you're probably going to
have it pretty tough at first,
Little Wing. Your father's family,
they're... well, they're
traditionalists. They're already
fussing about you not being a
hundred per cent Japanese, but I'm
not going to let any of them ever
make you think your father and I
love you any less.

Nina stands, keeping her gaze on Alita.

NINA (cont'd)

You're going to grow up to be a
beautiful little girl, and an even
more beautiful young woman after
that. Doves don't let anything stop
them becoming the most elegant
birds in the sky, and nothing's
ever going to stop you either.

Nina looks up at the bird cage, then moves closer to it, opening the hatch and letting the dove jump onto her hand.

(CONTINUED)

She moves towards the open window, and release the already flapping bird into the sky. As she smiles with satisfaction, she begins to hum a melodic tune, slowly drifting through the house and back towards Alita's cradle.

She hears a NOISE at the doorway as somebody steps inside, and she turns to look, frowning at this unseen new arrival.

NINA (cont'd)
What are you...

Nina's eyes widen, and she steps protectively in front of the cradle.

NINA (cont'd)
No... no! Please, don't hurt-

BANG! She's cut off by a loud GUNSHOT, and as she jerks backwards, blood blossoming from the wound on her blouse, we SMASH CUT back to:

Alita snaps out of her flashback as a set of firecrackers POP and BANG nearby. Her head quickly darts around the vast market until she notices she's back from her daydream, still a little worse for wear.

GREG (O.S.)
And that's why you should never eat
at KFC.

Alita looks up - the others have all returned, their bags stuffed with goodies and supplies.

SOFIA
(grimaces)
Lovely. Well, now that you've completely grossed all of us out with your eating habits, do you mind taking us to these bloody bounty hunters so we can get on with things?

GREG
(checks watch)
He should be here any minute, actually. Everybody present?

The girls look at each other, and back to Greg.

GREG (cont'd)
We're off then. I've found out how to get to the rendezvous at last, so follow me. Oh, and here. Take one of these each.

Greg passes out a small walkie-talkie to each of the girls as they head through the thinning crowds, with Alita trailing behind the others slightly.

Pulling back a little, we reveal that Alita is holding the dove shaped pendant tightly. She stares at it for a beat, then clamps her hand around it as we cut to:

As the sun begins to set on the busy Shanghai skyline and the people begin to retire for the night before the crazy nightlife fever kicks in, the girls appear in a dimly lit back alley, with only a simple flickering and buzzing neon banner overhead to provide them light.

SKYE

Greg? You might wanna rethink the whole 'darkened alley, bad part of town' approach to this mission.

GREG

Skye, I already told you, if we're going to stop this ritual in time we have to take a few short cuts. I'd have thought you'd be the one least worried about getting your hands a little dirty.

SKYE

Dirty? No. Bleeding? Yes.

SOFIA

How much longer are we expected to wait for this chap to show up, anyway? We've been here since-

VOICE (O.S.)

Eager one, ain't ya?

Emerging from the shadows behind them, a tall, muscular Caucasian man comes into frame. His grizzly features, long coat and suspiciously bulging backpack would indicate he's our bounty hunter, DANTE.

GREG

You must be Dante.

DANTE

Who wants to know?

GREG

(offers hand)

Oh, sorry, how rude of me. I'm Greg Pierce from the Slayer Academy.

DANTE
(off girls)
These your chicks?

Sofia opens her mouth to say something liberal, but Skye gives her a little nudge. Dante inspects them, sizing each one up.

DANTE (cont'd)
I've seen worse. Blonde one's
pretty hot.

Frankie looks a little creeped out, and Greg quickly speaks up as she starts to answer Dante back.

GREG
Um, we'd just like to get where
we're going.

DANTE
Whatever. You got the bounty, I can
give you the hunter. Simple as.

Greg reaches into his jacket and takes out a thick brown envelope, passing it to Dante. He opens it and peers inside, smirking at the loot before tucking it away.

DANTE (cont'd)
The ritual's being done in an
abandoned palace just outside
Shanghai. I can take you there, but
I ain't goin' no further.

GREG
Alright. Please, lead the way.

Dante takes one last disapproving glance at the girls, then leads them further down the alley, and we cut to:

A tranquil lake, wrapped in swathes of mist and reflecting the glossy moon overhead. The perfectly still image holds for a beat - and the disintegrates into ripples.

A rickety old rowboat glides into view, with Dante at the oars and the rest of the team arrayed front and back.

Sofia is standing up at the front of the boat, her eyes fixed on something off screen and letting the adrenaline kick in, whilst Alita, enjoying the serenity of the water, is sitting at the back, trailing one hand into the water.

Dante is putting a lot of effort into the rowing but seems to have it all under control.

Greg, however, doesn't seem to be having the best trip, and is huddled up at the rear of the boat, wearing a slightly seasick face. Dante glances back at him.

DANTE
(mutters)
Wuss.

Skye and Frankie sit just behind Dante, Skye a little less neatly than Frankie, as they continue a conversation.

SKYE
And then, I find the thing floating
around in my sock the next morning!
How gross is that?

FRANKIE
(wrinkles nose)
Merde! Can I push you in?

SOFIA
Ssh!

They look up at Sofia, who is squinting as though trying to focus on something in the distance.

SOFIA (cont'd)
I thought I could see...

SKYE
Relax, Sofes, there's nothing out
there. I've got vampire night
vision, and even I can't see a
fricken thing.

Dante casually looks up - and just as he does, the lake is suddenly bathed in brilliant red light.

The girls and Greg all scramble to their feet, and in a slow pan around the boat, the mist has parted to reveal an immense Oriental PALACE seemingly floating on the lake up ahead, glowing a warm red and lighting up the lake around it.

Looking like a stack of wide, triangular shapes, the palace stretches up into the night sky, with four tall towers at each corner of the structure and a high outer wall surrounding it.

GREG
What in the world...

As the boat draws closer, a long pier comes into view, bobbing gently on the water, with lanterns in a neat row lighting the way towards the palace. The palace itself is supported on several pillars just poking up from the water's surface, with dozens of huge lily pads hiding them.

DANTE
(deadpan)
That's it.

ALITA
It's... stunning!

GREG
It'll be in pieces if we don't get
this mission right. Dante, how
exactly do we get into this thing?

DANTE
Hey, you paid me to take you here,
not to get you in the palace. I'll
only show you the way in if I get
paid double.

GREG
I don't have that kind of money!

DANTE
Say 'sayonara' to me then...

Dante settles back into place and grabs the oars - and
Frankie GRABS him in an unexpected headlock from behind!

FRANKIE
(seethes)
Listen 'ere, *mon amis*! I did not
come 'alf the way across the globe
to 'ave a lowlife like yourself try
to cheat us. Now, you will tell us
the way to get in, or else you will
know what it's like to be 'it on!

Alita glances anxiously to Greg, but he nods - it's alright.
Frankie's got this under control.

DANTE
Will you let me go if I tell you?

Frankie grins, but doesn't loosen her grip.

DANTE (cont'd)
There should be a secret wall
somewhere along the left side of
the palace. If you open that,
you're into the lower chambers.
From there, you're good to go.
(shifts)
Will somebody get this tart off me?

SOFIA
Where are the vampire cult? Are
they inside the palace?

DANTE

No, underneath it!

SKYE

And what about the scrolls?

DANTE

To open the Hellmouth?

SKYE

No, to make French toast. Yes, to open the fricken Hellmouth!

DANTE

I'm not sure. There should be one in each of the four towers. Something to do with the sun as part of the ritual.

GREG

So we need to get those scrolls away from here before sunrise...

Greg thinks - then realises that Frankie still has Dante in the headlock.

GREG (cont'd)

Okay, very good, Frankie. You can let him go now.

Frankie reluctantly releases Dante, who rubs his sore neck and glares back up at her.

DANTE

I told you everything I can. Now, if you'll excuse me I need to leave before Sticks here tries a "death by pleasure" thing on me.

FRANKIE

Over this vampire clans' dead bodies!

Frankie then sniffs her arm and grimaces.

FRANKIE (cont'd)

And please, take a bath before we come back!

On Frankie's determined face, we cut to:

The team are making a treacherous walk along the narrow sides of the palace grounds, looking for any way in as they follow the thin platform running round the tall walls.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

Can't we just climb these walls? We must have something we can use as a makeshift grappling hook.

GREG

Yeah, that'd be a good idea... if it weren't such a bad idea.

SKYE

Speaking of bad ideas, what the hell was that back there, Frankie?

FRANKIE

(grins; shrugs)

People don't count on me being deadly, as I am so very sexy.

Alita frowns, peering closely at the section of wall in front of her and comparing it to the neighbouring segments.

ALITA

Um, I think we're near the hidden wall.

GREG

Really? How can you tell?

ALITA

This part looks a little different to the rest. Perhaps if I...

Alita carefully places her hand on a section of the wall - but as soon as she does, a trapdoor in the floor opens up, and the team are dumped into the pit below with a series of SHRIEKS!

As the Slayers are carried down a large metallic chute, complete with added screams, they wind up in a darkened room, all exiting the chute with tremendous speed and falling in a heap on the floor.

Flaming torches like the walls, and there are several exits besides the chute that just deposited them down here.

Skye is the first up, groaning as she dusts herself off and starts helping the others to their feet.

SOFIA

(winces)

Allie, next time you think of doing something like that... don't.

ALITA

I am sorry. But look! We're in the lower chambers.

GREG

Who says doing things the hard way is overrated?

SKYE

What's next on the agenda, Muldoon?

GREG

I don't know, I guess we find a way out of the lower chambers and up into the main courtyard. Follow me.

Greg grabs a torch from a nearby holder for his own use, and begins to lead the girls up a narrow spiral staircase.

EXT. PALACE - FIRST FLOOR ROOF - NEXT

Greg leads the way out of the staircase and on to the side of a long, curved roof, which appears to be the first floor.

GREG

Okay, here's what we're going to do. We'll each take a scroll to save time. Sofia, you take the nearest, Alita, you take the second, Skye, you third and I'll go with Frankie to the fourth. You see any kind of life, human, demon or otherwise, do something bad to it. We'll all meet back in the courtyard and then go looking for the missing girls. Got it?

SOFIA

Understood.

The girls split up, and we stay with Sofia as she scurries across the roof, heading for the closest tower up ahead.

EXT. PALACE - TOWER - NEXT

The tower is, like the main palace, essentially a series of roof sections laid on top of each other, but they're close enough together for Sofia to be able to jump up and grab the bottom of the next roof up.

With a swing of her legs for momentum, she flips and grabs the other side with her legs, pulling herself on to the next roof.

22

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

23

EXT. PALACE - TOWER - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

23

Sofia and Delaney stare at each other in surprise for a beat, then quickly fumble to draw their weapons - Sofia with the Scythe from across he back, Delaney with a jet black sword.

SOFIA

What the hell are you doing here?

DELANEY

What the hell are you doing here?

DELANEY

I asked first!

SOFIA

I asked first!

The girls warily circle one another - the roof they're on isn't all that big, so any fight could quickly lead to a swift fall to the courtyard far below.

SOFIA

Let me guess, you're here for the scrolls?

DELANEY

(smirks)

Sorry, your answer must be in the form of a question.

SOFIA

(wearily)

Oh, grow up!

Delaney nods her head towards the doorway in the middle of the roof.

DELANEY

Reckon you can beat me to that?

SOFIA

I don't need to 'reckon' anything, Delaney. I know I can.

DELANEY

You're pretty confident for somebody who should be dead!

SOFIA

It's a new habit.

A beat - and we're off. Sofia streaks towards the doorway, pulling away from Delaney - but she doesn't notice Delaney pull up to a stop with a grin.

Sofia reaches the doorway and throws it open - inside is a small stone plinth, but there's nothing on it.

(CONTINUED)

DELANEY (O.S.)
And the winner is...

Sofia turns - Delaney already has the scroll. She waggles it impishly towards her, then tucks it back into the satchel slung over her shoulder.

DELANEY (cont'd)
Time me. If I get to the rest in
under five minutes, I'll get the
first round of drinks in.

Delaney races for the edge of the roof, but Sofia is quick enough to block her path.

SOFIA
You're not going anywhere now.

DELANEY
Sounds like a bet to me!

Delaney grins - then turns and LAUNCHES herself off the roof as if she were a bird in flight!

Sofia gasps and darts over to the edge of the roof - and watches in amazement as Delaney deftly grabs the edge of the nearest roof, pushing herself off it.

She passes a tall tree in mid-air and grabs hold of that, swinging round it and launching herself again at the castle walls - landing neatly on top of it.

She looks up at Sofia, now a long way above her, and with a mock salute she takes off, running towards the next tower.

SOFIA
(sighs)
Why do I learn other people can do
these things at the worst possible
times?

Sofia looks for another way down, but she has no option but to take the long way round. She gingerly lowers herself over the edge of the roof, her feet hanging in the air.

As she tries to carefully inch her way around the side, she misplaces her foot and almost falls, swinging by one hand until she can grab a hold of the roof again!

SOFIA (cont'd)
Oh, bollocks to this!

As Sofia grimly tries to swing one foot round to get some leverage, we cut to:

24

EXT. PALACE - CORRIDOR - NEXT

24

Greg and Frankie are following a long open-rooved corridor, Greg glancing over his shoulder as he hears FOOTSTEPS echoing down towards them.

GREG
(whispers)
Frankie?

Frankie steps to his side, her rapier at the ready.

FRANKIE
Trouble?

GREG
Could be palace guards. Stick to
the shadows, don't make a sound.

As Greg backs away slightly, he spots somebody moving towards them from the closest end of the corridor, and he tenses up.

DANTE (O.S.)
Greg? Is that you?

Greg shines his torch towards the darkness, and it is indeed Dante. The bounty hunter strides casually towards them.

FRANKIE
What are you doing 'ere?

DANTE
I couldn't leave you here alone.
I'm gonna help you find these
scrolls.

GREG
That's very generous of you. Thanks
very much.

Dante nods and steps towards them, passing through one of the long shadows falling across the corridor - and re-emerging as none other than Rachel!

FRANKIE
Rachel!

RACHEL
In the flesh.

Frankie steps protectively in front of Greg as Rachel draws two long duelling daggers from her belt.

GREG
What happened to the real Dante?

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

He's down by the river. Face down, in fact. You know, Dante was known as the devil's son, but what you're looking at right now is the result of what happens when you make a deal with the devil.

GREG

So this whole mission is what, an ambush?

RACHEL

'Ambush' is such an ugly word. And I really hate when things are ugly. Just like how this situation's gonna get in about five seconds.

She advances a step, but Frankie is still having trouble getting her head round the shapeshift she just saw Rachel perform.

FRANKIE

What... are you?

RACHEL

That's for me to know, and you to stay up all night boo-hooing, 'cause you'll never find out.

GREG

What did you do with the scroll?

RACHEL

Oh, you mean this one?

She reaches into her coat pocket and pulls out an ornate scroll, identical to the one in Delaney's possession.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Don't worry, it's perfectly safe. See, we already have two scrolls and unless you can get the other two, which is highly unlikely considering your little Japanese friend's probably in a million pieces right now, you have no chance of stopping this ritual. We win, you lose. It's as complex as second grade math.

FRANKIE

(menacing)

Give us the scroll, you filthy *chien*!

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

(scoffs)

Like that's gonna work! 'Ooh, help me Mommy! The scary little French girl wants to pull my hair!'

Rachel grins - then quickly pulls out a small GRENADE from her pocket and tosses it towards Frankie and Greg.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Don't forget to hold your breath!

Frankie SHOVES Greg back out of the way - but it's only a smoke grenade, which detonates with a soft THUD and fills the corridor with thick white smoke.

Greg and Frankie emerge from the cloud, coughing and spluttering.

GREG

This really isn't our day...

FRANKIE

Let us 'ope Skye 'as 'ad more luck than us!

Greg pulls out his walkie talkie and speaks into the receiver.

GREG

Red Tiger to Phoenix, come in.

He waits for a reply as we cut to:

Skye is looking out of the window of a high up turret in the next tower, holding her walkie talkie to her mouth.

SKYE

For God's sake, Greg, it's Silver Hawk to Blue Phoenix! Get it right!

GREG

(filtered; through phone)

Did you get the scroll or not?

Skye raises her other hand - and she's holding the third scroll.

SKYE

Yeah, I got it. Can't see what all the fuss was about, really, it was just sitting on this stone thing, not even a guard in sight!

GREG

Good stuff. Watch yourself out there - the rival Slayers are here and they're after the scrolls too.

SKYE

Which ones?

GREG

Knowing our luck, all of them. We just ran into Rachel, so that leaves Delaney and-

CRASH! The door to the small room Skye is in suddenly buckles, and she spins round just as it is KICKED open.

GREG (cont'd)

Skye? Skye! What's going on?

Skye steps back, reaching for her sai - and Dana steps through the shattered doorway.

SKYE

Oh, crap...

Dana tilts her head to one side as she sees Skye - then starts to GRIN the grin only a truly crazy person can do.

DANA

Heads don't belong...
(laughs)
Heads don't belong!

SKYE

(beat; into walkie talkie)
I'm gonna have to call you back.

Skye tosses the handset away as Dana advances on her, and as Dana slowly draws her own sword, we cut to:

Alita hurries along the top of the high, narrow palace wall, approaching the base of the next tower.

Just like the first tower, a small structure forming the tip of the tower stands in the centre of the roof, but it's going to take some climbing to get up there. Luckily, a spiral staircase runs around this tower, almost to the top.

ALITA

(pleased)
No problem.

She starts forward - and is suddenly BARGED to the ground as Delaney flies out of nowhere and tackles her!

(CONTINUED)

Delaney is first up, scampering away from Alita as she flips back to her feet.

DELANEY

Boo!

ALITA

(raises eyebrow)

'Boo'?

DELANEY

(beat)

Okay, I'll admit. Sounded better when I thought of it.

Delaney steps back, her sword in her hand. She glances up towards the roof of the tower, then back to Alita.

DELANEY (cont'd)

So it's you versus me for the last scroll, huh?

Alita strikes an offensive combat stance, not in the mood to swap quips. Delaney seems almost disappointed by this.

DELANEY (cont'd)

What, no comebacks?

Delaney puts her dukes up and Alita comes charging at her. She throws a downward strike, but Delaney steps back, narrowly missing and throwing a PUNCH of her own.

Alita retaliates with a swift KICK to Delaney's mid section and an UPPERCUT, knocking her to the floor.

Delaney rolls through and launches a SWEEP to Alita's legs, but Alita simply backflips, grabbing Delaney's arm.

She throws a couple of punches to Delaney's face, and takes her down. Delaney tries to kick Alita in the face, but Alita grabs her foot and SHOVES Delaney back with tremendous force.

Delaney rolls back, gets to her feet, wipes a little blood from her lips and smirks.

DELANEY (cont'd)

Okay, I'll admit, you fight a hell of a lot better than your mom did. I heard she never even fought back.

Alita's face falls as she realizes what Delaney just said.

ALITA

(stunned)

What.. what do you know about my mother?

(CONTINUED)

DELANEY

(pretends to think)

I heard she was a great singer. Hit
a high 'F' when that bullet went
through her chest.

Alita pales - but then pure, unadulterated anger spreads
across her features. She literally SNARLS at Delaney.

ALITA

You!

DELANEY

'Me' what? Hey, don't look at me
like I killed her, I'm only a few
years older than you! But one thing
I do know is she-

She's cut off as Alita TACKLES Delaney to the ground with a
yell, and begins pounding her fists into the struggling
Delaney.

ALITA

Who was it? Who killed her?

DELANEY

I... don't... know!

Alita is in tears, her usually contained emotions spilling
out of her, but as she lands a final PUNCH which knocks
Delaney senseless she finally comes to her senses.

Alita stands, stepping away from the nearly-unconscious
Delaney, who COUGHS weakly, her face spattered with her own
blood.

Alita looks down at her bloodied hands, shocked at her own
actions, but after a beat she clenches her fists and looks
skyward to the tower.

Choosing her duty over personal matters she heads towards the
tower, but not before looking back at Delaney.

ALITA

(subtitled Japanese)

I'll see you in hell.

She turns towards the turret and begins climbing the spiral
stairs as we cut back to:

Greg impatiently waits at the rendezvous point along with
Frankie and Sofia. They look up as Skye comes bounding
towards them, noticeably worse for wear. She reaches into her
pocket and pulls out the glistening scroll.

(CONTINUED)

SKYE

Here. And don't say I never get you anything nice.

She tosses the scroll over to Greg, who readily accepts it.

FRANKIE

(eyes her)

What 'appened to you?

SKYE

Ran into a snag. Nothing I couldn't handle.

Frankie raises an eyebrow as we cut to:

INT. PALACE - TOWER - NEXT

The same room Dana confronted Skye in, but Dana is sprawled on the floor, out cold. Looks like we missed one hell of a fight in here.

EXT. PALACE - COURTYARD - NEXT

Skye looks round - there's one missing.

SKYE

Where's Alita?

The second she says this, Alita jumps down from the roof with the grace of a ninja and lands right in front of the girls.

GREG

Allie! Are you okay?

ALITA

I've been in worse shape.

SOFIA

And the scroll?

Alita smoothly reaches into her jacket, takes out the scroll and hands it to Greg.

ALITA

I had to go through Delaney to get to it. I believe I have made myself a new enemy tonight.

GREG

(smiles)

You did a wonderful job, Alita. Remind me to give you a gold star when we get back home.

SKYE

Not to rain on the proverbial parade here, but we only have two scrolls. Don't we need all four to seal the Hellmouth?

SOFIA

Skye's right. Without the others, they're just ancient relics. We need to make a trade of some kind.

FRANKIE

Maybe if we 'ad a way to contact those other Slayers, we could-

HAMISH (O.S.)

No need.

The team spin around to see Hamish and Kira standing a few feet in front of them. The Slayers are instantly on guard, but neither Kira nor Hamish look in the mood for a fight.

SOFIA

(viciously)

What do you two want?

KIRA

Now, now, simmer down. We simply want a negotiation. We understand that you people want to close the Hellmouth, which I am in no way opposing...

SKYE

Ha! And I'm Nicole Richie!

HAMISH

Listen to her, lass. She could fry you like a platypus in a second if she wanted to.

GREG

(wary)

What's in it for you?

KIRA

The scrolls, of course. We give you the two we have, you use them, then we get all four back.

SKYE

So you want us to just give you a free upgrade?

FRANKIE

I do not think so.

(CONTINUED)

HAMISH

Once the scrolls have been used,
the power will leave them forever.
We simply want them for decoding
purposes. Don't forget, we're as
much as an academy as you are. We
crave knowledge just as much as you
do.

SOFIA

Forget it! We'll never-

GREG

East side palace wall, ten minutes.

KIRA

(nods)

We'll see you there.

Kira and Hamish disappear in a BLAZE of magic at a CLICK of
Kira's fingers. The girls turn to Greg, stunned.

SOFIA

(splutters)

What the hell are you doing? You
can't seriously think that they're
just going to use the scrolls to-

GREG

Sofia, I know what I'm doing. It's
a military tactic, a little
something called "knocking the
opposition out and stealing the
scrolls back."

SKYE

Oh, that's a good plan. Shame the
bad guys probably thought of it a
long time before we did.

GREG

Look, we're out of options here.
The sun comes up in...

(checks watch)

... thirty minutes, and I want
these scrolls as far away from here
as possible by then. The sooner we
seal the Hellmouth and rescue the
girls, the quicker we can whisk
these things out of here.

The girls are obviously unhappy with the plan, but with
reluctant nods all round we cut to:

30

EXT. PALACE WALLS - LATER

30

Ten minutes later we're at the top of the tower wall, Greg, Skye, Sofia and Alita walking to a point in the middle of the tower, with Kira, Hamish, Rachel and a battered Dana and Delaney opposite them.

Sofia heads out into the middle of the wall, carrying two scrolls as Delaney doing the same. She's still pretty ragged from Alita's beating earlier, but if she's in pain she's making an effort not to show it.

DELANEY

So how do you want to play this,
Pintsize? We give you the scrolls,
you close the Hellmouth and then
you give them straight back?

SOFIA

You know I don't trust you.

DELANEY

Aw, relax. I'm a woman of my word.

SMACK! Delaney throws a massive punch, almost flooring Sofia then and there.

DELANEY (cont'd)

But you know, occasionally I talk
with my fists.

A startled Greg is momentarily caught off guard, until:

KIRA

Somebody get the damn scrolls!

As both sides rush for the goods and clash head on, Delaney grabs all four scrolls and bolts from the battle.

GREG

Sofia, stop her!

Sofia drags herself to her feet, clutching her bruised face. Ignoring the fight raging around her, she fixes her sights on Delaney and sprints after her, as we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

31 EXT. PALACE WALLS - NIGHT

31

Delaney is sprinting towards a staircase leading back down into the courtyard. She glances over her shoulder and sees Sofia breaking away from the battle on the walls, in hot pursuit.

DELANEY

(grins)

Glad you decided to make this more interesting for me...

Sofia begins to gain on her, and with one big jump just barely grabs Delaney's ankle, making her fall to the ground.

32 EXT. PALACE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

32

Delaney hurtles towards the dusty ground of the courtyard, but her razor sharp reflexes kick in and she bounces from surface to surface, ricocheting off a statue and cartwheeling back through the air.

She stumbles but rolls through, the scrolls tightly in her possession. She gets to her feet as Sofia catches up to her at last.

DELANEY

Does I really bug you that much that you had to leave a perfectly good fight just to come after me?

SOFIA

What can I say? You bring out the best in me.

DELANEY

You're not getting these scrolls back.

SOFIA

I'll worry about that later. Right now, I'm going to settle for pounding you into submission, and then we'll see where we are.

(smirks)

Although it looks like I've got a way to go before I catch up with what Alita did to you!

Delaney scowls, and Sofia pushes the taunt a step further.

DELANEY

She got lucky.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

She got lucky quite a few times, by the looks of you.

DELANEY

Hey, screw you! I'm the thief, remember? You and your budget fashion model friends are the muscle around here.

SOFIA

Yes, but aren't you meant to be a Slayer too? I'd have thought you could handle yourself in a fight a bit better than the evidence would suggest!

Sofia throws a quick kick to Delaney's gut, which she retaliates with a punch. She grabs Sofia's leg and flips her all the way round, grabbing Sofia from the back and bringing her close to her ear.

DELANEY

You know, the mood here is all wrong. Just give me a minute.

Delaney pushes her to the ground. She moves back a little, looking at Sofia who's slowly rising from the ground.

Delaney sweeps her arm in a circular motion - and a BLAZE of coloured energy crackles into life all around her, like a miniature fireworks display!

Sofia shields her face as the energy spits a hail of SPARKS towards her, before looking back up at Delaney in surprise.

SOFIA

So... you're a witch too, then?

DELANEY

Oh, I'm a lot of things, squirt.

Sofia is forced to beat a hasty retreat as Delaney launches several BOLTS of energy at her, but the effort clearly weakens Delaney, and she staggers backwards.

Sofia turns and sees Delaney wilting, grinning and drawing her Scythe once again.

SOFIA

I'm sure if Skye were here, she'd be making some wisecrack about 'your powers grow weak, old man'...

Sofia advances on the wilting Delaney - but doesn't see Delaney surreptitiously grin to herself.

(CONTINUED)

DELANEY
(mutters)
Sucker...

Suddenly, part of the energy circling Delaney turns around in the air and launches itself at Sofia, turning into a FIREBALL that narrowly misses her!

Sofia has to dive to avoid it, and as she looks back up, she sees Delaney sprinting towards a large set of double doors at the foot of the central structure of the palace.

SOFIA
Bugger it!

Delaney throws the doors open and disappears inside, and Sofia races after her into:

33 INT. PALACE - GREAT HALL - CONTINUOUS

33

The palace interior is as impressive as the exterior suggests - a high-ceilinged room is filled with torches, statues and huge, sweeping banners, along with enough gold to make Fort Knox leave the party early.

A wide stone staircase leads down into the depths from the centre of the room, and as sounds of combat echo up into the main hall towards Sofia, it doesn't take a huge leap of logic to figure that's where she needs to go next.

34 INT. PALACE - STAIRCASE - NEXT

34

Sofia hustles down the torch-lined staircase, pausing as she sees a shape sprawled on the floor - it's one of the monks! He's out cold, and as Sofia peers down into the depths, she sees more of the cult members laid out ahead of her.

35 INT. PALACE - UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - NEXT

35

Sofia reaches the bottom of the staircase, finding herself in a long corridor carved out of the rock itself.

She carefully peeks out, checking for any signs of life - more torches light the way towards a larger chamber up ahead. Small ponds line the corridor on either side, with incense burners mounted over them.

Sounds of distant CHANTING can be heard from within the large chamber, and Sofia realises this is where she needs to be.

SOFIA
So this is where all the palace
guards went...

Sofia steps out into the tunnel - and with a meaty THWACK she's hit in the face by a surprise attack from Delaney!

(CONTINUED)

Sofia staggers Back, then throws a kick which is blocked by Delaney, but Sofia flips her other leg round, hitting Delaney square in the face.

Delaney stumbles backwards and Sofia presses her advantage, but Delaney is quick to block her punches and kicks.

DELANEY

You just don't know when to admit defeat, do you?

SOFIA

Funny, I hadn't noticed much defeating going on around here!

Sofia throws a punch which Delaney dodges, and with a CLAP of her hands, Delaney causes a small FLASH of light to flare in Sofia's face.

Sofia Staggers backwards, dazed, and Delaney has all the time she needs to line up a powerful roundhouse kick, blasting Sofia off her feet and throwing her backwards.

Sofia lands in one of the nearby ponds with a SPLASH, the fight knocked out of her at last.

Delaney checks that Sofia is stunned, blowing a stray lock of hair out of her eyes.

DELANEY

And that's the way you do it, princess.

As Delaney runs towards the next chamber, we cut to:

Hsu Yi is standing on a high pedestal in front of the door containing the Hellmouth and the dragon spirit. He's dressed in ceremonial robes and reading from a holy scripture.

The captive girls are still in their cage, guarded by two armoured vampires brandishing huge spears.

HSU YI

Hear me, elements! Take the scrolls as a blessing from the devil and release the great dragon spirit. Fill us with...

He hears a murmuring from the monks behind him, and turns to see Delaney standing boldly in the entrance to the chamber, her trademark smirk firmly in place.

DELANEY

Sorry, honey, but when you make a deal with the devil, the darker angel always wins.

HSU YI

Seize her!

Delaney backs off a little as a crowd of the vampires advance on her, but as she steps back again to look for a way round them, she bumps straight into a dripping wet and very pissed off Sofia!

SOFIA

(seethes)

You... are... dead!

Sofia grabs Delaney by the throat and begins to choke her, holding her up against a nearby wall. Delaney tries to struggle out, but Sofia notices her already dimming eyes darting to the side.

As she looks over, she sees the vampires, all with various weapons staring right back at her. They don't look sure of what to do - so they're enjoying the catfight taking place before them.

SOFIA (cont'd)

Um... oh, dear.

She reluctantly releases Delaney from the choke hold, and Delaney falls to the ground, rubbing her neck.

DELANEY

(off vampires)

Yeah, well spotted, genius! Got any bright ideas?

SOFIA

Beyond fighting our way out of this? I'm working on it...

Delaney stands up, spots a sword on a nearby display on the wall and grabs it. She and Sofia exchange looks, silently agreeing that they must fight together.

With a ROAR, the vampires charge at the two girls, and Sofia and Delaney whirl into action - Sofia's Scythe swings left and right, beheading vamps and dusting them, while Delaney CLASHES swords with three more, kicking them back.

DELANEY

Any chance the rest of your pals are gonna show up any time soon?

(CONTINUED)

Sofia has to duck as a vamp swings a spear towards her, SLICING it in two with the Scythe and ramming the rest back into the vamp, who GULPS before he DUSTS.

SOFIA

Just assume we're on our own!

DELANEY

That ain't much-

Delaney is GRABBED round the throat by a particularly huge vampire, who sneers as he lifts her into the air. Delaney struggles against his iron grip, dropping her sword, but the vamp's just too damn strong.

VAMPIRE MONK

(subtitled Mandarin)

You will pay for your defiance of-

FOOM! The vampire suddenly DUSTS, depositing Delaney on the ground - and revealing Sofia, the stake point of her Scythe raised.

SOFIA

Sorry, I don't speak Chinese.

Sofia glances down at Delaney - then grabs her hand and pulls her to her feet, before breaking off to tackle some more incoming vampires.

Delaney looks up to see Hsu Yi advancing menacingly towards her, but she's forced to fend off some more vampire attacks before she has a chance to move again.

The vampires grapple Delaney, keeping her in place as Hsu Yi comes to stand before her, reaching out his hand - and taking her satchel!

DELANEY

No!

(to Sofia)

Hey! Little help?

Sofia is in trouble of her own - she's pinned by one of the burly armoured vampires, trying to keep his spear point from piercing her belly!

The guard is overpowering her, and the spear tip is inching perilously close to Sofia - until with a CRASH, Alita comes streaking into frame, dropping the guard with a flying KICK.

Frankie and Greg are next in, helping the exhausted Sofia to her feet as Skye gleefully launches herself into the mass of vampires.

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

What happened? Where's Kira and the other Slayers?

GREG

They took off - they must have been running a diversion for Delaney. Are you alright?

FRANKIE

Because you look terrible.

SOFIA

I'm alright - stop that one! He's got the scrolls!

She points to Hsu Yi, who is heading back towards the seal, opening Delaney's satchel and taking out the scrolls.

Alita sprints towards him, neatly sidestepping a lunging vampire, but as she launches herself at Hsu Yi, he smoothly turns and GRABS her out of the air.

Hsu Yi THROWS Alita to the ground, backhanding her as she tries to get back up.

He slowly walks up the steps to the huge doorway and places all four scrolls onto slots on the surrounding podium. He gets into position and begins a mystical chant.

Back in the mayhem below, Frankie notices the girls in the cage frantically waving for her to help them. She grabs a nearby pole, BREAKS it over her knee and grabs the sharp end.

She then rushes the huge vamp guarding the cage, ducks under a punch and STAKES him. She runs to the cage door, grabbing a clip from her hair and fidgeting with the lock.

The girls inside babble at her in thick Chinese to help, but Frankie raises a hand to shut them up.

FRANKIE

Be quiet! I cannot do this if you are all yapping at me like a pack of dogs!

The girls inside all look terrified, but quieten down as Frankie gets to work. Frankie finally gets a CLICK out of the lock, and with a huge pull she wrenches the cage door open.

FRANKIE (cont'd)

Now come on! Allons-y!

She guides the girls out, but not before Hsu Yi ends his chant up by the doorway. Frankie looks over in alarm.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE (cont'd)

Baise moi...

His head tilted back and his eyes closed, the doorway opens a fraction and a gout of FLAME bursts out, enveloping Hsu Yi and slowly spinning around him. He opens his eyes suddenly, and on this the candles around him extinguish.

The huge doors fly open with a BLAST of lightning, and a shockwave blasts out from them, knocking everyone in the chamber but Hsu Yi to the floor.

Sofia manages to raise her head up - and her eyes widen in shock at what she sees!

A colossal, ghostly DRAGON is emerging from the open doors, already halfway towards the chamber's roof. It glows a fierce, luminescent orange, and Hsu Yi starts to LAUGH, throwing back his arms to welcome the spirit.

SOFIA

Come on! We have to...

She trails off as she looks round - the rest of the cult are heading for the hills, scrambling over each other in their efforts to escape the terrifying dragon spirit!

As the dragon lets out a tremendous ROAR that shakes the entire chamber, Greg bravely makes his way over to the cowering girls Frankie rescued.

GREG

Frankie, get them out of here!

As Frankie leads the girls out in a long line, Alita, Skye, Delaney and Sofia look on in horror at the dragon, its long, coiled body still pouring out of the doorway.

Hsu Yi stands, cackling, in front of it, turning to face the girls with victory all over his features.

HSU YI

It is done! The spirit has been released! Now the dragon will become a part of me, and there's nothing you brats can d-

CHOMP! The dragon's jaws suddenly clamp around Hsu Yi, swallowing him whole!

DELANEY

I thought that thing was supposed to be a ghost?

SKYE

Guess it's been taking lessons...

(CONTINUED)

The dragon raises its huge head - and its eyes narrow as it sees the girls before it.

SOFIA

Er...

ALITA

Get down!!

Alita shoves the group back to the ground as the dragon spirit ROARS again, then swoops towards them.

The girls hit the deck - but the dragon soars over them, heading straight for the entrance to the chamber and streaking out of sight in moments.

After a beat, the girls start to get up, with puzzled looks all round.

SKYE

What the hell just happened?

GREG

Er... I'm not sure. I think we may have made a slight miscalculation...

The chamber starts to RUMBLE again, and the group look to the ceiling - as dust and soil starts to spill down from huge CRACKS that snake across the roof!

SOFIA

Let's get out of here!

She starts towards the entrance, but hears a SHOUT of pain from behind her. She turns to see Delaney has been pinned by a falling chunk of ceiling.

The others are too far away to help, and after an agonising moment of indecision, Sofia dashes back over to Delaney.

Delaney is trying and failing to shove the rock off her leg, and reacts with surprise when Sofia appears and adds her grunt to the rescue effort.

DELANEY

What are you doing?

SOFIA

Saving you, what does it look like?

DELANEY

(confused)

What for? Aren't we meant to be mortal enemies or something?

(CONTINUED)

SOFIA

It's not because I like you, so
don't get any ideas. I just don't
need another death on my
conscience.

With a final HEAVE, she gets the boulder up and Delaney
slides her leg free, and the two girls race for the exit as
more of the chamber COLLAPSES behind them.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - NEXT

Debris falls everywhere as the girls run out of the palace,
and no sooner are they clear than the front wall of the
palace COLLAPSES!

As the dragon spirit BLASTS out of the rubble in a
spectacular fireball, demolishing the building around it as
it thrashes from side to side.

Frankie carries on, rushing the rescued girls towards the
dock, but the others hang back to watch the spectacle.

With a last ROAR, the dragon bursts out of the remains of the
palace, rising into the night sky and striking a dramatic
pose for a second, before unfurling itself and soaring into
the heavens. In a moment, it's gone.

GREG

I guess it did destroy everything
in it's path after all!

SKYE

Guess what Spike once told me was
right. You know you're great when
you bag your first dragon.

Sofia smiles, but is snapped back into reality when a sudden
JOLT hits the floating palace. It's beginning to sink!

GREG

Quick, we need to get out of here!

SOFIA

(looks round)
Wait, where's Delaney?

The girls take a look around, but she's nowhere to be found.

GREG

Forget her. At least she didn't get
away with the scrolls, right?

SOFIA

(mutters)
That ungrateful cow...

ALITA

Can we discuss this later? We need
to get away from here, quickly!

With Alita leading, the girls rush to the main gates.

EXT. PALACE DOCKS - NEXT

As Frankie loads the girls on to the boat they arrived in,
Greg launches himself into the back as it sets sail.

With Skye taking the oars, the boat speeds away at full
force, with all the girls firmly in place and watching as the
palace crumbles into the sea.

As the girls breathe a collective sigh of relief at a job
well done, we push in on Alita, staring out into the vast,
black waters.

ALITA (V.O.)

And that's the story of my life so
far... although I did not find my
mothers killer, I am one step
closer to discovering the truth. My
story is our story.

As the last remnants of the once magnificent palace sink into
the lake, we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAMPUS - RECEPTION - DAY

Back on dry land and in England, Greg is talking to Barbara
as Sofia and the others are seen heading off towards the
dorms in the background.

GREG

So, overall, a success. I think.
We've left the Slayers we rescued
in the custody of the Council
branch in Shanghai, so they're safe
and sound.

BARBARA

Did you actually find the Hellmouth
you were supposed to close?

GREG

I think the palace was the
Hellmouth.

(beat)

I think. Can we concentrate on the
successful parts of the mission?

BARBARA

(smiles)

Of course.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BARBARA (cont'd)
The rival Slayers didn't get away
with the scrolls, for one thing,
and whatever the spirit you saw was
there for, it seems to have done
our job for us.

GREG
Lucky for us. I can't think of many
people who get to see a real live..
well, dead dragon in action!

Barbara grins, and as she and Greg head back towards the
staff room, we cut to:

Alita steps out through the doors at the foot of one of the
staircases, heading out onto the main quad.

She doesn't spot Tyson sitting up on the stone steps at the
rear of the assembly hall, but he spots her. He jumps to his
feet and hurries over to her, casually slowing back down as
he reaches her.

TYSON
Hey. Alita, right?

Alita turns to look at him, hesitating for a moment and then
nodding.

ALITA
Yes. You are Sofia's friend Tyson,
right?

TYSON
(winning smile)
The one and only. Listen, uh, could
I ask a favour of you?

ALITA
Go ahead.

TYSON
Well, you know, I'm still pretty
new around here, and this is a
pretty big place. I keep getting
lost, and Sofia isn't always around
to help me find where I need to be
going, so...

ALITA
So you need a guide?

TYSON
Not a 'guide' as such, just
somebody who knows the place better
than me.

ALITA

A helper, then.

TYSON

Something like that. So what do you say? Sofia's got a lot on her plate at the moment, and I figure this is a good chance for me to get to know some new people.

Alita considers this for a moment, then nods again.

ALITA

Very well.

TYSON

(beams)

Excellent.

ALITA

Where do you need to get to first?

TYSON

I'll start with wherever you're going. I'll figure the rest out from there.

The attempt at flirting passes right over Alita's head, but Tyson stays with her as she heads across the quad, and as the two walk away from us, we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW