

EXT. VALLEY - DAWN

Atop a lush hill is FLÒRAIDH (45) - gruff and scarred in a battered tunic - a lone figure standing tall and stoic under a banner of deep green. At the foot of the hill, an ornately decorated horse and rider come to a halt with a WHINNY. CAITROINA (43) - the spitting image of Flòraidh, only clad in shining armour and a blue cloak - raises a hand in greeting.

CAITROINA

Hail, Flòraidh! Chieftain of the  
Southlands!

Caitroina's golden sabaton-boots THUD and CLINK onto solid dirt.

Flòraidh looks down at Caitroina with cold eyes.

Caitroina trudges up the hill, continuing her horse's trail through the grass: it leads back to an overwhelming army camp: rows and rows of tents that stretch to the horizon.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

Daughter of giants! Mother only to  
death!

Caitroina summits the hill. Her sabatons squelch into wet mud, halting her stride.

Flòraidh's eyes now stare level at Caitroina's.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

Is there no welcome party?

Flòraidh draws her sword and holds it at the ready. She stands alone, and behind her the Swamplands are in stark contrast to Caitroina's army. Huts dot the flooded marshes with precious few homes still standing. Dead and drooping trees spread like a virus across the plains.

FLÒRAIDH

Welcome home sister.

Caitroina brushes aside Flòraidh's sword and walks past her, SQUELCHING through muck to gaze over the Swamplands. She takes a long, deep breath: sampling the air.

CAITROINA

I never forgot the smell.  
Vile.

Flòraidh's mouth twitches as she fights back a smirk.

Caitroina turns back to Flòraidh with a scroll in her hand.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

And so quiet.

(she offers the scroll)

The Queen names us two as stewards  
of the Swamplands.

Flòraidh regards the scroll with suspicion.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

You can hear the Swamps sing again,  
if you only surrender.

Flòraidh's eyes flick to meet Caitroina's.

FLÒRAIDH

You insult me.

CAITROINA

I know. I would prefer it to  
killing you.

Flòraidh's resolve wavers, just a little.

Caitroina's eyes plead with Flòraidh to take the scroll.

Flòraidh stares, tempted.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

A great many years have passed  
since we parted.

Caitroina steps closer, the scroll now crossing with  
Flòraidh's blade.

FLÒRAIDH

(whisper)

A lifetime.

CAITROINA

Reunited as stewards we could  
rebuild our home the way it was and  
greater still. Our songs old and  
new would shake the ground from  
here to the sea. And you would  
never face an army alone.

Flòraidh's hands tremble.

CAITROINA (CONT'D)

I would know my sister once again.

Flòraidh tears her eyes from the scroll and stares down  
Caitroina.

Flòraidh tightens her grasp of her sword.

FLÒRAIDH

My sister knew that our chieftains  
cannot surrender.

CAITROINA

Flòraidh...

FLÒRAIDH

Kill me now or turn your army  
homeward.

Caitroina steps forward, bearing the scroll as a pointer.

CAITROINA

Do not be a child, Flòraidh, this  
army is not mine. It answers to the  
Queen.

FLÒRAIDH

Then what good can a Queen's  
steward do for the Swamps?

Caitroina steps back and snarls in irritation. She draws her  
own sword and raises it.

Flòraidh's eyes close and her sword calmly lowers, ready for  
the blow.

Caitroina freezes.

The two sisters stand as still as statues under the banner,  
silhouettes against the dawn's cold light. Eventually  
Caitroina's arm moves and...

Caitroina STABS her sword into the ground.

She walks past Flòraidh, towards her waiting horse.

Flòraidh opens her eyes and bows her head in disappointment.

Caitroina pauses halfway down the hill. She turns back as if  
to speak, but finds no words.

Caitroina rides away from the hill, Flòraidh standing with  
her sword drawn under the banner.