

The Swordbearer Saga
Part Three:

The Red Desert

An
Original Screenplay
By

Tim Morell

FADE IN:

EXT. PORT OF TIKRIT - DAY

It is a large port on a southern sea; a city of DOMES and MINARETS and the center of trade from all points of the compass.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

The BOATS along the dock load or unload cargo. One ship stands apart. Its weathered hull and faded sail give the vessel a look more suited to sheltered coves and dark nights than busy ports in the middle of the day.

The ship's CAPTAIN sits atop a pile of crates eating an OVERLY RIPE MELON. He's heavy for his size and his clothes, once fine linen, are ill-fitting and worn.

He watches the unloading with disinterest until a BLACK WAR HORSE, named FALCWREN, is led down the gangplank. The Captain wipes his mouth and goes to examine the animal.

CAPTAIN

What do you think a horse
like this would be worth?

SAILOR

400, maybe 500 Rials.

CAPTAIN

With the right buyer we could
get twice that. Who owns him?

RAVENWOLF (OS)

I do...

(MORE)

The Captain turns. RAVENWOLF stands behind him. He's a tall, powerfully built man in his 30's with rugged features and black hair that falls loosely around his shoulders. He's carrying a SADDLE.

RAVENWOLF (CONT'D)

...And he's not for sale.

CAPTAIN

You've not heard my offer. I'm
sure we can agree on something.

ELAN comes down the gang plank and stops next to Ravenwolf.
She looks pale and nauseated.

She's about 20; small, lean and athletic with green, almond
shaped eyes and long, softly curling brown hair.

She wears a leather cuirass over a woolen shirt that fits
her like a short dress and knee length pants.

Like Ravenwolf, she wears a long sword, short sword, and
daggers. She has several BRACELETS on each wrist

RAVENWOLF

There's nothing to agree on.
The horse isn't for sale. What
do I owe you for his passage?

The Captain gauges the weight of Ravenwolf's coin purse.

CAPTAIN

350 Rials.

RAVENWOLF

How much is that in Centars?

CAPTAIN

200.

RAVENWOLF

Our passage only cost ten. How
could the horse's be two hundred?

CAPTAIN

I told the wench when we sailed
I would charge the standard rate,
plus whatever it cost to feed him.
Of course, had I seen the horse
before we left; its size. What
with his appetite and the other
horses on board we barely had
enough feed for the crossing.

RAVENWOLF

I've had him nearly a year and have yet to see him eat more than a few handfuls of feed at a time, and you say he's eaten 200 Centars worth of food in 14 days?

CAPTAIN

Well, there you are. After going so long with so little wouldn't you be hungry?

Ravenwolf puts his hand to the hilt of his short sword. Elan puts her hand on his to keep him from drawing it.

ELAN

We'll give you 60 Centars.

CAPTAIN

Hah! What do you think I'm running here, a charity? 190.

ELAN

100.

CAPTAIN

175, and not a Centar lower. That is my final offer. Take it or leave it. Of course, if you can't pay the law entitles me to keep the animal, as compensation you understand.

Ravenwolf grabs the Captain by the front of his shirt.

RAVENWOLF

You thieving jackal. If I make you half-a-size smaller will your price go down to match?

CAPTAIN

Ahmed! Tusk!

Two beefy crewmen move to the Captain's aid.

RAVENWOLF

If they come within ten feet of where we stand, I'll tear your head off and feed it to my horse, to go along with everything else he's eaten.

ELAN

I've seen him do it.

The Captain waves the men off.

RAVENWOLF

Now, what do I owe you?

CAPTAIN

I tell you it's like cutting my own throat, 150.

RAVENWOLF

Maybe you didn't...

ELAN

Pay him. If you don't, he'll keep the horse.

Ravenwolf releases him and pays the money.

CAPTAIN

It's been a pleasure doing business with you. I hope you will consider us again should you decide to make the return voyage.

Ravenwolf gathers the saddle and leads the horse off.

RAVENWOLF

(to Elan)

You should have let me kill him.

CAPTAIN

Set to you bilge-rats, you'll have to work harder than that if we're to make the next tide.

EXT. WHARF - DAY

As Ravenwolf and Elan lead Falcwren down the wharf they pass a crowd gathered by one of the ships. An inhuman SCREECHING can be heard from the boat. They stop to look

ON THE DECK OF THE BOAT -

Several crewmen use ropes to try and get control of a young DRAGON. An open hatch and a smashed cage at the end of a block and tackle tell the story.

The dragon is about four feet high and the men have gotten ropes around its neck and wings but they still are struggling to keep it on the deck.

ELAN

What is that?

RAVENWOLF

A dragon.

ELAN

I've heard of them but have never seen one before.

RAVENWOLF

I had to kill one once.

ELAN

Like that?

RAVENWOLF

No, bigger, much bigger.

ELAN

A trader came to our camp once and said he knew of a clan high in the Eastern Mountains who had learned to tame them and rode them like horses in the sky. Can you imagine?

RAVENWOLF

I would have to see such a thing to believe it. They're vile creatures with black hearts.

One of the men loses his grip on the rope and the dragon makes another bid for freedom but is pulled back.

RAVENWOLF

They should just kill it and be done with it. Let's find a stable.

EXT. LIVERY - DAY

The din from the anvil and forge drown out Ravenwolf's haggling with the LIVERYMAN. Elan adds her voice but, in the end, Ravenwolf must again dig deep into his purse.

EXT. MARKET PLACE/VARIOUS - DAY

Ravenwolf counts the change from the cheese, bread and APPLES he's bought and tosses an apple to Elan.

RAVENWOLF

Enjoy that. It may be the last we'll get for a while.

ELAN

How much is left?

RAVENWOLF

150 Centars, out of more than a 1000, but in a city like this it shouldn't be too hard to get what we need.

They continue through the marketplace, barraged by merchants shouting in a dozen different languages.

They pause to watch a Street Magician whose tricks seem more real than feigned.

Elan starts to move on. Ravenwolf points them in a less congested direction.

RAVENWOLF

Let's go this way.

They pass an enclosed SEDAN CHAIR stopped in the street.

The chair's inner curtain is parted and a hand with a large BLUE SAPPHIRE RING motions to the ATTENDANT.

The Attendant, fawning and feral, puts his ear to the curtain. The hand gestures towards Elan and Ravenwolf as they disappear into the crowd.

Clear of the main market, Elan starts laughing quietly.

RAVENWOLF

What?

ELAN

That boat captain, would you really have twisted off his head?

RAVENWOLF

It would have been no less than he deserved.

ELAN

No, I suspect not but I find it hard to fault a man who can cheat me so soundly, especially on horses. And you were no help at all. I've never seen a worse trader.

RAVENWOLF

I've never had occasion to learn. I usually just take what I want.

ELAN

As you did when you were King? Are you sorry that you gave up your throne?

RAVENWOLF

No, I'd had my fill of it, and I found something I valued far more.

He gently touches her face. She takes his hand and kisses it. Ravenwolf sees FOUR MEN come around the corner behind them. Something in their look makes him take notice.

He sees the same look on SIX MEN loitering across the street. He yanks Elan aside and reaches for his sword.

Before he can free it, he's buried under an onslaught of bodies.

Four men attack Elan. She drops one with a well-aimed kick and a right cross, but can't keep from being dragged away.

ELAN
Ravenwolf!

RAVENWOLF
Elan!

One-by-one he throws the men aside. They vanish into the crowd.

He puts the last man through the top of a merchant's stall and draws his sword but Elan is gone. He drags the man from the booth's debris and sticks the sword to his throat.

RAVENWOLF
Where have they taken her?

The man speaks freely, but in a language Ravenwolf doesn't understand.

He turns to the MERCHANT who is shouting about the destruction of his stand.

RAVENWOLF
What is he saying?

The Merchant is too caught up in his own protest to respond. Ravenwolf releases the kidnapper and runs off.

AN ALLEY -

Ravenwolf dashes through and emerges into a crowd on

AN ADJOINING STREET -

Ravenwolf goes up then down. He sees Elan's sword belt lying at the entrance to another alley. He picks the belt up on the run and charges down.

A SECOND ALLEY -

As he nears the end of the alley, he's knocked over by a THIEF entering on the run from the other direction.

The Thief falls on top of Ravenwolf, pinning him. Though smaller than Ravenwolf the men are not unalike in that they both have black hair and brown tunics. Several JEWELLED NECKLACES can be seen stuffed beneath his shirt.

The Thief hits Ravenwolf and scrambles away. Ravenwolf grabs at him. He misses but comes away with a necklace.

The Thief disappears down the alley. Ravenwolf gets up and finds himself surrounded by a troop of SOLDIERS. They roughly disarm him and bind his hands.

CORPORAL

Thought you could get away,
didn't you?

The Corporal punches Ravenwolf and takes the necklace.

RAVENWOLF

I'm not the man you were chasing.

CORPORAL

You seem a little out of breath,
been running hard?

RAVENWOLF

The man you were after knocked
me over and ran down the alley.

CORPORAL

And gave you this to buy your
silence no doubt. Take him away.

RAVENWOLF

I'm not the man you want.

Ravenwolf snaps the leather tie binding his wrist and lays into the soldiers.

He's able to dish out a fair amount of punishment before the soldiers overwhelm him and deliver a vicious beat down.

CORPORAL

That's what they all say.

You've just read the opening scenes of

THE RED DESERT
Part Three of **THE SWORDBEARER SAGA**

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