

ARCHER'S KEY: THE APPROACH

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

A small fire provides a warm glow to the makeshift campsite beside the rusted shell of a vehicle. SUSAN, a mousey woman in her 20s, sleeps with her back to the fire. GREGORY, a bookworm of a gunsmith in his 30s holds a small child, SAMUEL, roughly 1-2 years in age who sleeps fitfully. He's staring into the fire, frowning.

GREGORY

I don't know why you brought me  
along.

MAIRI, a red-haired woman in her 20s in mismatched armor sits just a short distance away, staring down the road with a rifle in hand. She sighs.

MAIRI

You want the truth?

GREGORY

Of course.

Mairi shifts, turning to look over her shoulder at Gregory and the child. She shrugs.

MAIRI

Someone needed to carry the kid. I  
need Susan to scout ahead and I  
can't fight if I'm holding Samuel.

Gregory scoffs, clearly not amused. He hunches his shoulders and stares resolute into the fire. Mairi turns back to her watch.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Mairi and Gregory walk down an old highway, the asphalt broken in more places than not. Young trees grow from the cracks and the long abandoned vehicles sit at awkward angles. There's few signs of use, but not by anything more than wagons and people on foot.

The grass is brown and the trees are losing their leaves. There's a ridge line that leads into a valley alongside the road and Susan is jogging from it up to meet the others. She slows as she approaches, catching her breath.

SUSAN

(winded)

Don't push yourselves too hard. We  
won't make it there today.

Gregory's steps slow as he looks at the messenger, shifting the child from one arm to another. Between the child and the heavy backpack he wears and his glasses askew, he looks tired. Compared to the two younger women, it's clear that he's not used to this sort of life.

GREGORY

You sure?

SUSAN

Of course I'm sure. This sort of  
thing is my job, isn't it?

Mairi leaves them to their -- friendly -- bickering and steps away. Not far, but enough to look both behind and ahead. She surveys the landscape through eyes squinted against the sunlight. There's tension in her shoulders and she holds her gun tightly.

Susan takes a long drink out of a canteen that she wears at her hip before speaking again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I found a path down in the valley.

Without waiting for further answer from the other two, Susan moves away and heads off the road, leading them along the ridge line. Greg follows suit, shifting Samuel to his opposite shoulder. After a short delay, Mairi turns to follow as well.

She checks over her shoulder frequently.

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

It's more of a ravine than a valley, with close trees and dense undergrowth. Susan leads them down a gentle path. They move slow, but with sure footing. Mairi stops every so often to look over her shoulder.

Greg complains every so often, muttering under his breath.

Without warning, Gregory turns and shoves the child into Mairi's unsuspecting grasp. She's lucky the gun is on a sling because she has to drop it to take Samuel.

Free of the burden, Gregory sits down heavily and removes his shoe, shaking out a rock.

GREGORY

(annoyed)

This is why I prefer to stay home.

MAIRI

Just think about the facilities at  
the Abbey, Greg.

Susan, antsy from the delay, looks over and brightens. She's caught on.

SUSAN

Hey, yeah. You're the one always  
talking about their munition  
production.

Gregory groans, but smiles in spite of himself as he pulls his shoe back on. Once it's laced, he gets to his feet and takes the child back from a relieved Mairi.

GREGORY

I have always wanted to ask the  
brothers about their preferred  
method for hunting rounds.

Mairi looks over her shoulder as she replies. She's spotted someone in the distance -- a shadowed figure cresting the ridge -- but is trying to keep the others from being alerted just yet.

MAIRI

(without emotion)

See, this isn't such a bad trip  
after all.

They continue down into the ravine, heading into further shadows. Many of the trees are losing their leaves, but there's enough evergreens to block out the light of the setting sun.

Mairi lingers behind, keeping track of their tail. She releases the safety on the gun.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

When they crest the other side of the valley it takes them to a different part of the road; bypassing a large section. In the distance looms a city, looking not unlike a massive fortress. Buildings and walls built close together for an imposing facade while various towers and roofs jut up from behind them. It sits near enough the shore that the dark waters are a forboding backdrop.

Mairi looks back to find the figure is closer and has been joined by another. She swears under her breath and raises her gun to her shoulder.

MAIRI

Susan... Greg. Run. No matter what,  
we have to get that child to the  
Abbey.

The other two look back and Susan yelps before turning to run. She is quicker than Gregory, who stumbles a few steps before he gets his stride.

The figures in the distance are covered in black: clothing and various pieces of armor, such as vests. They have guns themselves, but Mairi takes one out with a single shot before either can fire at the trio.

Return fire breaks against a tree near her head as she scurries back, letting off a few more rounds in answer. None hit.

As they near the Abbey, Mairi still exchanging fire with their pursuer, a gate opens. From the gate appear men in gray gear, with guns of their own. They form a firing line, causing both Susan and Gregory to hit the ground in fear. Samuel lets out a loud cry.

Two of the men in gray lower their weapons, breaking from the line to run forward to the two on the ground.

BROTHER

Quick, come with us.

The speaker helps Susan to her feet, while the other takes Samuel from Gregory who awkwardly gets up. One of the lenses in his glasses is broken.

SUSAN

(shouting)  
Mairi!

Mairi looks over at the shout. Her expression is something of bewilderment and surprise at seeing the men of the abbey arrayed as they are. She doesn't move right away and it's long enough for her to take a round to her shoulder.

The man in black is quickly taken down as Mairi yells, stumbling forward towards the line. A few of the brothers close around her, supporting her as the group is led into the abbey and the massive doors close behind them.