

The Kingdom of Ash - Pilot

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INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Claude, a Cloud Goliath, 10, sits outside an office, nervous.

The door reads; "Grubbo, Circus Extraordinaire".

Behind it, Mr. Grubbo talks with Claude's father.

GRUBBO
Do you have the money?

FATHER
Well... no... but I will!

GRUBBO
No.

FATHER
If you just give me more time!

BANG

GRUBBO
I gave you time, Armsterike!

(beat)

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
I want the boy.

FATHER
You want... my son?

GRUBBO
A fine young man, great strength.

(beat)

FATHER
Fine.

The response strikes Claude.

(beat)

The door opens.

FATHER exits the office.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Claude...

CLAUDE looks up, tears in his eyes.

(beat)

FATHER leaves.

Grubbo, a goblin, steps out.

GRUBBO
Come in, son.

CLAUDE sits for a moment. In shock.

(beat)

CLAUDE rises and enters the office.

GRUBBO closes the door.

CUT TO: CIRCUS BACKSTAGE

INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - DAY

Claude, 15, enters the performer area.

Greeting him is an entire circus cast.

ACROBAT
Claude!

Everyone turns to see him.

ALL
Hey!!

As they all raise mugs of various drinks in salute.

CLAUDE
How's it going guys?

ACROBAT
We're just getting ready for lunch,
join us?

CLAUDE
Of course! I'm starving!

CLAUDE laughs with his chest.

GRUBBO walks in.

GRUBBO
Boy!

CLAUDE turns, knowing GRUBBO is speaking to him.

CLAUDE
Yes, Mr. Grubbo?

GRUBBO motions to follow, and walks back out.

Everyone else hangs their heads.

(beat)

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Rain check?

ACROBAT
Of course...

CLAUDE follows GRUBBO.

CUT TO: ALLEY BEHIND TENT

EXT. CIRCUS TENT - DAY

CLAUDE enters the alley.

GRUBBO is standing. Waiting.

Two other Strongmen stand next to a hooded man kneeled between them.

GRUBBO
Mr. Smith here decided not to make good on his bargain.

MASKED MAN
No! If you just--

GRUBBO backhands the man.

GRUBBO
We'll be with you when it's your turn.

(beat)

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
Like I was saying, boy, he didn't make good. You know what to do.

CLAUDE lowers his head.

CLAUDE
Yes, sir.

GRUBBO leaves.

The two strong men grab the hooded man's arms.

The performers in the cast area hear the screams.

CUT TO: GRUBBO'S OFFICE

INT. GRUBBO'S OFFICE - EVENING

A mother and father sit across from GRUBBO.

GRUBBO
So... how are we going to solve our
little...

He taps his desk searching for the word.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
Predicament.

FATHER
Sir, if you just give us another
we--

GRUBBO slams his fist on the desk.

GRUBBO
We are here because I already gave
you a week!

The room falls silent.

(beat)

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
I have been more than lenient with
you two.

He lights a cigar. Exhaling a cloud of smoke at the parents.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
It's time to settle your debt.

MOTHER
We don't have anything.

GRUBBO
The girl.

(beat)

FATHER
What?

GRUBBO
Give me the girl, and your debt is
paid.

FATHER
No. You can't have my daughter.

(beat)

GRUBBO taps his desk with his long nails.

GRUBBO
How unfortunate...

The mother grabs the father's arm.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
I thought we had an understanding.

He motions to the Strongmen behind him.

They move to the parents and pick both of them up.

The parents are carried out of the room.

GRUBBO takes a drag from his cigar and follows them out of
the room.

A young girl, 8, waits in the hall.

The door to GRUBBO'S office swings open.

The young girl hops out of her chair.

The strongmen carry her parents out.

The father struggles.

FATHER
Let go of me! Belle!

Tears drown his words.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry...

MOTHER
We love you baby... we love you so
much!

Her face is drenched from her tears.

BELLE
Mom... dad...

GRUBBO stands in the doorway.

GRUBBO
They aren't your parents anymore,
child.

He grabs her arm.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
I'll show you where you'll be
staying from now on.

He starts dragging her the opposite direction.

She struggles against the goblin.

BELLE
MOMMY!!! DADDY!!

CUT TO: PERFORMER AREA

INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

CLAUDE, 16, is moving heavy set pieces to where they go.

(beat)

BELLE tumbles through the tent opening.

GRUBBO
Welcome home.

BELLE is crying.

GRUBBO leaves.

CLAUDE watches, and puts down the scenery he was carrying.

BELLE
Mommy... daddy...

CLAUDE recognizes that pain.

He walks over to her and kneels down.

The 7 foot 6 goliath extends a hand to the child.

CLAUDE
Hey. My name's Claude, what's
yours?

She looks up through her tears.

Gray skin, white splotches, and the warmest smile.

BELLE
I'm... Belle.

CLAUDE
That's a pretty name.

She continues to sob.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
I know...

(beat)

She rushes him wrapping her arms around CLAUDE's neck.

She let's all of her tears out into his shoulder.

CLAUDE rubs her back trying to comfort her.

After a minute she speaks into his shoulder.

BELLE
You're soft like a cloud.

CLAUDE lets out a giant's laugh.

CLAUDE
Then you can call me Cloud.

She squeeze him tighter.

BELLE
Cloud...

(beat)

CUT TO: CENTER RING

INT. CIRCUS TENT CENTER RING - EVENING

GRUBBO stand in the middle of the ring.

A spotlight flicks on over him.

CHUNK

GRUBBO
Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome home!

The crowd cheers.

There are a decent number of empty seats.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
Thank you all for coming out
tonight! What you're about to
witness is nothing short of a
spectacle!

His voice booms throughout the tent.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
We have high flying, death defying
stunts!

A light illuminates the air above him, as two acrobats
perform a trapeze routine.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
Body bending acrobatics!

Half of the ring lights up showing acrobats doing pole vault
flips.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
And the strongest men alive!

The other half of the ring lights up, showing Cloud, 20, and
other strongmen lifting and crushing impossible objects.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
This is a show you're sure to
remember!

The crowd cheers.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
Enjoy!

Outside the tent, colorful lights and whimsical music extends
to the outside world.

CUT TO: BACKSTAGE

INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A little girl, Belle, 10, bounces with excitement.

The curtain to the center ring opens.

BELLE
CLOUD!!

CLOUD enters wearing a giant's smile.

BELLE (CONT'D)
You were awesome!

CLOUD
Mehhh, it was nothing, just
routine.

BELLE puts her hands on her hips and her face fills with
attitude.

BELLE
You. Were. Awesome.

CLOUD looks at her face.

CLOUD
There's no arguing with you is
there?

BELLE's attitude drops straight into a smile.

BELLE
Nope!

CLOUD laughs loudly.

CLOUD
I guess I was awesome then.

They hug as everyone else walks in, they all smile and
continue walking.

(beat)

She pulls out a piece of bread.

BELLE
I figured you'd be hungry.

CLOUD laughs as he takes the bread.

CLOUD
You know it!

As he takes a bite, GRUBBO enters from the center ring.

CLOUD and BELLE look to GRUBBO.

GRUBBO looks at BELLE.

GRUBBO
Don't you have work to do, child?

CLOUD stands up, his goliath frame towers over GRUBBO's goblin self.

CLOUD
She was waiting for me.

GRUBBO takes his cane.

CRACK

He smacks CLOUD in the knee.

The goliath drops instantly.

GRUBBO gets uncomfortably close to CLOUD.

GRUBBO
Don't forget who owns you, boy.

CLOUD swallows the pain.

He smiles right in GRUBBO's face.

CLOUD
Never.

GRUBBO looks from CLOUD to BELLE then back.

GRUBBO
Don't let her become a problem.

GRUBBO walks away.

BELLE
I'm sorry, Cloud.

CLOUD
Nah, he's just a butthead.

BELLE laughs.

CUT TO: PERFORMER AREA

INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - DAY

The performers, CLOUD, and BELLE are in the performer area.

Some discuss performance.

Some gamble over cards and dice.

Some play music.

Some dance.

CLOUD and BELLE sit off to the side, watching their friends.

(beat)

The door swings open.

Dread enters before anyone else.

GRUBBO walks in.

He scans the room until he finds CLOUD.

GRUBBO

Boy!

GRUBBO turns and heads back out the door, leaving it open behind him.

BELLE

What does he want now?

CLOUD

I don't know, but I'll be back.

BELLE

Promise?

CLOUD

Always.

CLOUD gives her a smile, then follows GRUBBO.

GRUBBO stands in the hallway.

He checks his pocket watch.

(beat)

CLOUD exits into the hallway.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

Yes, sir?

GRUBBO puts away his watch.

He looks up to CLOUD.

Turns.

Walks.

GRUBBO
I have a job for you.

CLOUD
Figured.

GRUBBO stops.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Sorry... what do you need?

GRUBBO continues walking.

GRUBBO
Some debtors decided that hiding in
the city was better than paying off
their debts to me.

CLOUD walks slowly to not outpace the goblin in front of him.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
You're going to skip the show
tonight, and go collect.

CLOUD balls a fist.

CLOUD
Yes, sir. When do I leave.

GRUBBO
Now.

A strongman with GRUBBO hands CLOUD a letter.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)
There's the names. Find them.
Collect.

CLOUD takes the letter.

CLOUD
Yes, sir.

CUT TO: PERFORMER AREA

INT. CIRCUS TENT BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

CLOUD enters the performer area.

The air is heavy.

Everyone is sitting.

No music.

No dancing.

No games.

CLOUD looks around.

CLOUD
Where's Belle?

No one can look at him.

One man pours a mug of ale and slides it in CLOUD's direction.

CLOUD is frozen.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Where. Is. Belle.

No one moves an inch.

CLOUD punches a hole through the wall.

(beat)

ACROBAT
Claude...

CLOUD
My name is Cloud.

The room somehow falls even more silent.

He looks up. Tears welling.

ACROBAT
Just... breathe...

CLOUD
No. I kept breathing through this
bullshit for ten years...

He turns to them, a face that says determination.

Eyes that scream pain.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
I'm done.

He leaves the performer area.

No one follows him.

CUT TO: GRUBBO'S OFFICE

INT. GRUBBO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

GRUBBO is pouring over a book.

Writing, adding, subtracting, counting.

THUMP

THUMP

THUMP

Something is coming.

(beat)

The world goes silent.

GRUBBO never looks away from his book.

(beat)

BOOM

The door explodes off the hinges.

Behind it, one determined goliath.

GRUBBO keeps writing.

GRUBBO

I told you not to let her become a
problem.

CLOUD walks in without a word.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)

You let her get to your hea--

CLOUD grabs the desk and throws it against the wall.

GRUBBO (CONT'D)

What is your problem bo--

CLOUD wraps a giant hand around the goblin's upper body.

One firm grip around chest, shoulder, and neck.

GRUBBO struggles for air as he's lifted from his chair.

CLOUD lifts the goblin above his head, closer to the ceiling than GRUBBO ever thought he'd be.

(beat)

CLOUD

I. Quit.

CLOUD releases him.

CRACK

CLOUD's other fist meets GRUBBO's chin on the way down.

With the force of a giant's rage, GRUBBO is sent straight back to the ceiling.

THUNK

THUMP

GRUBBO lays motionless on the ground.

As CLOUD leaves, he sees a great sword he had just collected.

He grabs it, attaching it to his back.

He walks out of the office.

Out of the circus.

He never looks back again.

END OF ACT 1

INTRO

EXT. FOREST PATH

MONTAGE

CLOUD walks the forested path.

Day and night cycles.

A gentle score plays.

CLOUD ages 3 years.

He exits the forest.

The path winding up a hill.

Behind him, a sign uncovers with the wind.

"Kingdom of Ash ahead"

END INTRO

ACT 2

EXT. HILL - DAY

CLOUD crests a hill.

The world starts to quiet.

Birds disappear.

Insects disappear.

The wind fades.

A thick fog rolls in.

Somewhere in the distance,

-donnnng-

A bell ringing somewhere far away.

CLOUD continues walking.

No destination.

No plan.

No goal.

He just walks.

He looks up from the path.

A large stone tower surrounded by fog as far as the eye can see.

He continues walking.

Step.

Step.

The fog around him begins to thin slightly.

The glow of a fire breaks through from the side of the road.

CLOUD glances towards it.

An old man sits in a patchwork cloak.

OLD MAN
You heard the bells.

CLOUD stops.

CLOUD
I'm sorry?

From under the hood, a smile peeks out.

The old man reaches his walking stick to a spot nearby,
tapping the ground.

OLD MAN
Sit.

CLOUD looks for a moment.

(beat)

CLOUD walks over to the fire.

He sits where the old man tapped.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Which are you? A pilgrim? A fool?
Or a sell-sword looking for work?

CLOUD laughs through his nose.

CLOUD
None of them...

He stares into the fire.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
All of them...

The old man sits patiently, listening.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
I'm just a wanderer, nothing more.

(beat)

The smoke rolls into the sky.

(beat)

The old man laughs.

OLD MAN
Pilgrims search for answers.

CLOUD listens intently.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Fools think they'll survive those
answers.

CLOUD turns back to the flames.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
And a sell-sword doesn't care what
the answers are.

The old man laughs again.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
To be all of them and none of them
is rare, indeed.

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Those are the words of a man who is
lost...

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Or one that has suffered loss...

CLOUD's gaze drops to the ground.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
What did you lose, giant?

CLOUD hesitates his answer.

(beat)

CLOUD
A friend...

The old man studies CLOUD.

(beat)

-donnnng-

A bell in the distance rings.

(beat)

OLD MAN
Good.

CLOUD
I'm sorry?

OLD MAN
Not your loss... your answer.

CLOUD looks at him with confusion.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Most say "honor" or "glory"...

CLOUD listens.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You said, "a friend".

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Connections last longer than
concepts in Vael.

CLOUD looks at him with confusion again.

The old man reaches into his cloak.

CLOUD tenses.

(beat)

In between them, the old man places a small black stone.

Smooth as glass.

But moving smoke fills it.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Take it.

(beat)

CLOUD hesitates.

Then grabs it.

The hill disappears.

CLOUD sits at the campfire with the old man at the base of a
hill.

A large black stone reaches into the sky.

An army between them and the hill.

All kneeled.

All facing the hill.

One man stands atop the hill in front of a large bell.
Despite the distance, CLOUD sees the figure turn toward him.
The figure raises a sword pointing at CLOUD.
The army stands and turns.
An army of shadows in plated armor.
(beat)
Everything fades back to the fog covered hill.
The stone has disappeared.

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
It seems--

CLOUD
What was that?

The old man pokes the fire.

OLD MAN
We don't remember his name.

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Just the terror he's caused.

(beat)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
My name is Rowan.

(beat)

ROWAN
Welcome to Vael, Cloud.

CLOUD
How--

A thunderous sound from the fog,

THUMP

THUMP

And the sound of steel against stone,

SHHHHHHHKKKKK

ROWAN
It seems you have company.

CLOUD looks around.

He dives into a bush just barely big enough to hide him in the remaining fog.

THUMP

THUMP

SHHHHHHHHK

From the fog a man that rivals CLOUD's size.

He approaches ROWAN.

(beat)

The large man towers over ROWAN.

LARGE MAN
Another?

ROWAN
Another.

(beat)

The LARGE MAN locks his eyes on the bush hiding the Goliath.

LARGE MAN
If I wished you dead, that bush
would not save you...

(beat)

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Come out.

CLOUD whispers to himself,

CLOUD
Well...

CLOUD disappears--

CLOUD'S JAUNT--

Air rushes into the spot where his body occupied.

CLOUD appears behind the LARGE MAN.

(beat)

CLOUD (CONT'D)
I'm not such a push over myself.

(beat)

ROWAN chuckles

ROWAN
Dramatic, aren't you?

The large man laughs.

The fog has faded slightly more.

LARGE MAN
Cloud giant...

(beat)

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Confident...

He turns to face CLOUD.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Or simply reckless.

The large man looks at CLOUD's empty hands.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Confident.

CLOUD
What are you trying to say,
exactly?

(beat)

LARGE MAN
You chose conversation before
action.

(beat)

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
That is a breath of fresh air in
Vael.

CLOUD
Just because I can hurt people,
doesn't mean I want to.

(beat)

ROWAN laughs.

ROWAN
That sounds like those bells didn't
ring without a reason...

The large man nods to ROWAN.

LARGE MAN
I am Sir Aldren. It is my duty to
guard the gate.

ALDREN points behind cloud.

The fog has receded to a wall down the hill.

A great gate chained shut.

Despite distance, each link is distinct.

ALDREN
Before you lays a choice.

(beat)

ALDREN (CONT'D)
You have seen the warning. You
stand before a kingdom that
swallows names, memories, and even
souls.

(beat)

ALDREN (CONT'D)
You may answer the call of the
bells.

ALDREN steps off the road.

ALDREN (CONT'D)
Or you may continue your journey,
wherever it may lead you.

(beat)

ALDREN (CONT'D)
But know this... Should you choose
to enter the kingdom without
conviction... you may fall to his
mercy as well.

The valley goes almost still.

The landscape itself waits for the answer.

CLOUD looks around.

Ash.

Everywhere.

CLOUD
Why does this place feel... dead?

ALDREN studies CLOUD.

Then kneels to the ground, grabbing a handful of dirt.

It sifts through ALDREN's fingers, into dust.

No wind carries any dust, it falls to the ground.

ALDREN
Because it is.

He stands.

ALDREN (CONT'D)
Vael developed the intention of
defeating death.

The grass stops slightly further down the hill.

ALDREN (CONT'D)
Kings feared losing kingdoms...
Scholars, their knowledge...
Lovers, each other... Parents,
their children...

(beat)

ALDREN (CONT'D)
So the found a way to end endings.

ALDREN turns toward the fog buried city.

ALDREN (CONT'D)
Then he arrived.

The figure from the black hill flashes in CLOUD's mind.

ALDREN (CONT'D)

He silenced the bells... and the
people... No one remembers how...
only that it happened.

ROWAN

The bells were meant for
remembering. Now... there's nothing
to remember...

(beat)

CLOUD

What do you mean?

ALDREN

The people have been reduced to
their roles... death was taken...
life was taken...

(beat)

ROWAN

The only thing left is serving him.

ALDREN

For eternity.

CLOUD studies the tower protruding from the fog.

Then the gate.

ALDREN (CONT'D)

Answer me another question, Cloud.

CLOUD nods.

ALDREN (CONT'D)

If you could get your friend back,
would it be for them to have life
again... or so you could avoid
death?

CLOUD hesitates for a long moment.

Then he looks at ALDREN.

CLOUD

I miss her greatly... but in death
is the most peace she could have...

(beat)

CLOUD (CONT'D)
To answer your question, Sir
Aldren... I wouldn't have her come
back at all.

The two old men look at each other.

Then back to CLOUD.

ROWAN
It is rare air today, Aldren.

ALDREN
It is...

ALDREN reaches into his satchel.

He pulls out a key.

Large, the head a broken crown, the handle bearing a bell.

The size of CLOUD's forearm.

ALDREN looks at the key.

ROWAN as well.

(beat)

ALDREN (CONT'D)
Your presence has been requested...
Will you enter the Kingdom of Ash?

CLOUD looks at the key.

Then the fog-engulfed city.

CLOUD
What's on the other side of that
gate?

(beat)

The men look at each other.

ROWAN
We don't remember.

BOOM

The gate shakes in the distance.

ROWAN (CONT'D)
Today seems to be full rare air.

ALDREN
The choice remains yours, Cloud.

(beat)

CLOUD grabs the key.

ROWAN raises his head.

The key vanishes into bronze lights.

CLOUD
What?

ALDREN begins walking to the gate.

ROWAN stands and follows.

ROWAN
I believe you have a gate to open.

(beat)

CLOUD follows.

CUT TO: GATE

EXT. KINGDOM GATE - DAY

BOOM

RATTLE

The massive chains shake with the door.

CLOUD
What is it?

ALDREN
I'm not certain.

BOOM

RATTLE

ALDREN draws his weapon.

CLOUD throws a handful of caltrops in front of the gate.

Then he draws his great sword.

BOOM

RATTLE

ALDREN motions for ROWAN to get behind him.

ROWAN stands behind the massive man.

(beat)

The world falls silent.

(beat)

The gate seems to breath inhale,

Then,

BOOM

CHINK

Pieces of chain fly overhead.

A hole begins to tear into the door.

Inside, darkness.

(beat)

A shadow appears before the hole in the door.

ALDREN and CLOUD tighten their grips.

A silver boot steps out.

Then a full man dressed chest to toe in silver plate mail.

(beat)

He shields his eyes from the sun.

Then looks down at the caltrops.

Then to CLOUD and ALDREN.

The man carefully walks around the caltrops.

His sword resting in it's scabbard.

(beat)

CLOUD

Uh... hey.

SILVER KNIGHT

Hello.

ROWAN turns to CLOUD in astonishment.

CLOUD

You, uh... do that often?

The silver knight looks at the destroyed gate.

SILVER KNIGHT

Can't say I do...

(beat)

SILVER KNIGHT (CONT'D)

My name is Sir Lucien.

(beat)

ALDREN relaxes entirely, putting his blade away.

ROWAN

Lucien! How could we forget.

ALDREN

It is good to see you well, Sir Lucien.

LUCIEN

Rowan! Aldren! How long has it been?

ROWAN

We... don't know...

LUCIEN

Of course... no matter. Who is this?

CLOUD sheathes his sword.

CLOUD

Name's Cloud.

LUCIEN feels realization.

LUCIEN

Wait... did you...

CLOUD

Oh-ho no... that was you!

LUCIEN
I didn't mean the gat--

A voice booms from the darkness

VOICE
WHY IS THE GATE OPEN?

(beat)

LUCIEN
It... followed me...

He draws his sword focused on the gate.

CLOUD
Ok... that's not ominous as hell.
What followed you? What's in there?

Sweat starts it's way down Lucien's forehead.

LUCIEN
I... can't remember...

CLOUD
Neat...

BONGGG

A bell echoes from the gate.

Another voice comes from the darkness.

FEMALE VOICE
Not this one.

(beat)

CLOUD
What the hell is happening here?

ROWAN
I wish we could remember.

CLOUD
Yeah... should've seen that one
coming.

CLOUD approaches the gate.

An endless darkness fills the gap between the doors.

(beat)

CLOUD (CONT'D)

Hello?

ROWAN turns to ALDREN and laughs.

ROWAN

Still confident?

ALDREN

Maybe slightly reckless.

Suddenly, shadows in the darkness.

One.

Then five.

Then tens.

THUMP

THUMP

THUMP

THUMP

Marching. Straight toward the gate.

CLOUD backs up to where he initially waited.

Three swords drawn amongst the men.

THUMP

THUMP

The marching continues to grow louder.

(beat)

Suddenly, knights appear from the gate.

Two rows of ten.

The line the gate's entrance.

Then one old woman, dressed in all white, exits the gate.

OLD WOMAN

Master Cloud, The Queen requests an
audience with you.

The knights stand at attention. Waiting.

CLOUD
Ok, you guys all have a weird way
of starting friendly
conversations...

ROWAN
Yet you keep talking.

CLOUD looks at ROWAN in reluctant acceptance.

OLD WOMAN
But first...

She pulls a white lily from her robes.

It is pristine.

As if it were just pruned moments ago.

She extends it to CLOUD.

CLOUD begins to reach for it.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
I just ask, what was your friend's
name?

CLOUD is caught off guard by the question.

(beat)

CLOUD retracts his hand without the flower.

CLOUD
A kingdom that eats memories... and
you are asking for one of mine.

(beat)

CLOUD (CONT'D)
I think I'll keep that to myself
for now, thank you.

(beat)

She puts away the flower and bows.

FEMALE VOICE
Good...

(beat)

CLOUD
Ok... what?

OLD WOMAN
This way, Master Cloud.

She heads back through the gate.

The knights remain.

CLOUD looks over to them.

Their helmets are filled with a mist-like shadow.

CLOUD
So... are you guys trapped or...
something else?

ALDREN approaches one.

ALDREN
Both.

He grabs the helmet and removes it.

The shadow retreats into the armor, leaving behind nothing
but ash.

(beat)

The ash collapses in on itself.

The knight remains standing.

ALDREN walks over to CLOUD with the helmet.

Inside it is a name.

"Ulric"

ALDREN (CONT'D)
They were people... now they only
remember their loyalty to The
Queen.

He walks back and returns the helmet.

The shadow refills it almost instantly.

ROWAN
The people have forgotten all but
their strongest conviction. Bakers
still bake, smiths still forge,
scribes still write... but most of
them couldn't tell you their names.

CLOUD looks around at the knights.

CLOUD
Are they all like this?

(beat)

ROWAN
Not this exactly...

ALDREN
But all of us face the same
problem.

(beat)

FEMALE VOICE
Come and speak with me, Cloud.

ALDREN, ROWAN, and LUCIEN are all waiting. As if they know
CLOUD's decision.

(beat)

CLOUD
Well... guess we are meeting the
ominous voice.

ROWAN and LUCIEN laugh.

CLOUD makes his way to the gate.

Still an endless darkness.

He looks back at the others.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Here goes...

He steps through the gate.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Nothing...

CLOUD stands in a dark room.

Seven large bronze bells hang above.

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
Stay together... please?

Chink

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

Dang it...

CLOUD looks at her.

A little girl.

All alone in the middle of the room.

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

Come on... almost...

CLOUD

Hello.

LITTLE GIRL

AH!

Chink

CLOUD laughs

CLOUD

Sorry...

She jumps up to face cloud.

Just an 8 year old little girl.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to--

She puts both hands on her hips.

LITTLE GIRL

Who are you?

(beat)

CLOUD laughs.

CLOUD

I'm Cloud, what's yo--

LITTLE GIRL

Where did you come from?

CLOUD

From...

He turns around to point...

At a solid wall.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Out...side...

She looks at the wall.

LITTLE GIRL
Ha ha, very funny. The door's over
there cheater!

She points to the opposite side of the room, where she was
facing initially.

(beat)

CLOUD gives a belly laugh.

CLOUD
I guess it is, isn't it?

LITTLE GIRL
Jeez, who doesn't walk through
doors...

CLOUD notices a small bone bell in her hands.

Its covered in cracks and wrapped loosely with twine.

CLOUD steps closer and kneels down.

CLOUD
What's your name?

(beat)

She looks at the ground.

LITTLE GIRL
I... don't know...

(beat)

CLOUD
That's ok... what do you have
there?

She holds it up like she forgot she was holding it.

LITTLE GIRL
My bell... but it's busted...

CLOUD sees her disappointment.

He extends a hand.

CLOUD
May I try?

She looks up at him.

LITTLE GIRL
Really?

CLOUD chuckles.

CLOUD
I can't promise I'll fix it, but I
can try. But if I do will you
answer a question?

She gives a solid nod.

LITTLE GIRL
Mhmm!

She quickly puts it in CLOUD's hand.

CLOUD looks at it.

Undoes the twine.

Then tries to wrap it back up with the fragments in place.

(beat)

She bounces as she waits.

CLOUD finishes wrapping the bell and ties a knot.

(beat)

Chink

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
Aww...

CLOUD
I'm sorry, kiddo.

LITTLE GIRL
It's ok, you tried, thanks.

CLOUD stands up looking at the walls.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
What was your question?

CLOUD
I didn't fix your bell, though?

LITTLE GIRL
So? I don't remember the last time
someone tried, so... what's your
question?

CLOUD laughs.

CLOUD
I just wanted to know why you were
in here all by yourself.

She looks at him like that was a dumb question.

LITTLE GIRL
Because I wanted to meet you
before...

(beat)

CLOUD
Before what?

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
Before the grown-ups start lying to
you...

CLOUD
Do they do that a lot?

LITTLE GIRL
Yeah...

(beat)

CLOUD
Can I ask you another question?

LITTLE GIRL
Sure!

She lights up with a smile.

CLOUD
What's going on outside?

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
I don't know... but it's scary...

CLOUD
I had a feeling...

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
Can I ask you a question, Cloud?

CLOUD
Anything.

(beat)

She hesitates asking.

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
Will you forget me too?

CLOUD is taken aback.

He thinks.

(beat)

CLOUD
Tell ya what... how about we give
you a name?

She lights up.

LITTLE GIRL
Really?

CLOUD
Yeah, like a nickname until you
remember yours.

LITTLE GIRL
Yes! But what?

CLOUD looks around the room.

The seven bronze bells.

The little girl's broken bell.

He smiles.

CLOUD
Hm.. fitting...

LITTLE GIRL
What's fitting?

CLOUD
What about Belle?

(beat)

LITTLE GIRL
Belle... buh-elll... I'm belle...

(beat)

BELLE
I love it!

CLOUD laughs a belly laugh.

CLOUD
Well then, it's nice to meet you
Miss Belle, I'm Cloud.

She rushes him with a hug.

He hugs her back without hesitation.

CLICK

The doors open.

BELLE backs away from CLOUD.

Light pours into the dark room.

Then a shadow.

Step.

Step.

Step.

CHHK

Light fills the room, bouncing off of the bronze onto the walls.

MAN
Master Cloud.

CLOUD
I love ominous people knowing my
name!

He laughs.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
You know mine, what's your name?

ROYAL ARCHIVIST
I am the Royal Archivist.

BELLE follows him around the room with her eyes.

CLOUD
Cool title, I asked for your name.

The Archivist stops in his tracks.

(beat)

ROYAL ARCHIVIST
I... don't remember...

(beat)

He snaps to.

ROYAL ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)
But I do have a story...

He approaches a mural.

Carved into the wall is seven bells surrounding a person with the face chiseled off.

ROYAL ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)
These bells--

CLOUD
Archy!

(beat)

BELLE giggles.

BELLE
It's perfect!

ROYAL ARCHIVIST
I'm... sorry?

CLOUD
Archy! Archy the Archivist!

ARCHY
Did... you just give me... a name?

CLOUD
I mean... a nickname... but yeah!

(beat)

BELLE is beaming.

BELLE
My name's Belle!

CLOUD smiles.

ARCHY
You step into a cursed kingdom...

CLOUD
Yep.

ARCHY
And before you get a single
answer...

CLOUD
Uh-huh..

ARCHY
You start naming people that can't
remember their own?

CLOUD
Sounds like what just happened,
yeah.

(beat)

ARCHY starts laughing.

He wipes away a tear.

ARCHY
In all my years...

(beat)

ARCHY (CONT'D)
You're different.

He smiles at CLOUD.

BELLE
I like him!

CLOUD laughs.

CLOUD
So what's with that mural, Archy?

Archy turns to the mural.

He places a hand on one of the bells.

ARCHY
I remember help carve it...

CLOUD
You did that?

ARCHY
Not just me. Smiths, scholars,
archivists, masons, many people...
over many years...

CLOUD
So what happened to the face?

ARCHY's hand drifts to the chiseled off face.

ARCHY
I remember an order to do it... I
think...

CLOUD
Who would do that?

ARCHY
Him.

(beat)

CLOUD remembers the figure on the hill again.

CLOUD
Who was that person?

(beat)

ARCHY
I don't remember.

The room is still.

CLOUD
What about the bells?

ARCHY straightens.

ARCHY
The bells... Held memories...

CLOUD
Like, past tense?

ARCHY
Unfortunately...

(beat)

CLOUD
Then he happened, huh?

ARCHY
Yes. Now the bells are silenced...
all but one.

CLOUD
Why leave one?

ARCHY
It's never been found.

CLOUD
Really?

ARCHY
Not that I can remember.

(beat)

CLOUD
So they were ritualistic?

ARCHY
In a way, but ultimately no.

(beat)

ARCHY (CONT'D)
We shared everything with them... I
remember them listening...

BELLE
They sounded pretty too!

ARCHY smiles and chuckles.

ARCHY
Yes... yes they did.

(beat)

ARCHY (CONT'D)
Why are you here, Master Cloud?

CLOUD
Well, I thought I was invited...

ARCHY laughs.

ARCHY
I'm aware of that... I meant why
did you approach the gate instead
of walking on?

(beat)

CLOUD
I... don't know... but now it feels
like you're all trapped...

ARCHY
We are. Prisoners of our own minds.

CLOUD
So. Those bells held memories?

ARCHY
Correct.

CLOUD
Why not have someone ring them?

ARCHY grins.

ARCHY
If only it were that simple.

CLOUD
Why isn't it? You have to have a
book or a record or something.

Realization hits ARCHY.

ARCHY
A book...

He rushes to a bookshelf carved into the wall.

He crouches and reaches into the bottom shelf.

A secret compartment opens.

He pulls out a box.

On it is the symbol of a bell and an inscription, ARCHY reads
it.

ARCHY (CONT'D)
'For the one who Promises'... Will
you promise to try?

CLOUD looks at the box, then back to ARCHY.

CLOUD
I promise.

(beat)

ARCHY opens the box.

A key.

On the handle, a book.

ARCHY
The Library... I forgot about the
library...

He pulls the key out and sets the box down.

ARCHY (CONT'D)
Surely you saw the tower.

CLOUD
Yeah, about the only thing I could
see.

ARCHY
Right... Take this key.

He gives it to CLOUD.

CLOUD
What's in there?

ARCHY sighs.

ARCHY
I'm not entirely sure... I just
remember it's important...

In the distance a bell rings.

DONNNN--

Suddenly a voice comes from everywhere.

VOICE
WHO TAUGHT THEM TO REMEMBER?!

BELLE hides behind CLOUD.

ARCHY closes his eyes, begging it to leave.

CLOUD looks at their faces.

Then he looks upward, smiling.

He stretches back, cupping his mouth with his hands.

CLOUD
THE ONE YOU WON'T FORGET!

ARCHY and BELLE look at him in wonder.

Silence.

(beat)

VOICE
Impudent child...

Then a different voice, softer, weaker.

VOICE 2
Find me...

(beat)

CLOUD
Who was that?

ARCHY is staring at CLOUD.

He snaps to.

ARCHY
I haven't the slightest clue...

BELLE
You yelled at him...

CLOUD
Yeah... I didn't like how he made
you feel.

BELLE smiles as tears well up in her eyes.

She hugs his legs as tight as she can.

ARCHY
I believe... you've made yourself
into a problem, Master Cloud.

CLOUD smiles at him.

CLOUD
Good... Now, about the queen.

ARCHY pulls out a pocket watch and checks the time.

ARCHY
Yes. I think it's about time for
dinner, won't you join us?

BELLE
Yeah! Come on! The Queen makes the
best food!

GRRRRRRRR

CLOUD grabs his stomach.

BELLE giggles.

ARCHY chuckles.

BELLE (CONT'D)
See, your tummy agrees!

CLOUD smiles at her.

CLOUD
Yeah... I guess it does. Lead the
way, Miss Belle.

She looks at him, still adjusting to her new name.

Then she walks out of the room with all the dignity of a
sophisticated princess.

ARCHY
This way, Master Cloud.

They make their way out of the Bell Room, and down the
stairs.

ARCHY and BELLE lead him through the halls.

BELLE dragging CLOUD by the hand and showing off every
painting in the palace.

None of them have faces.

Not burned.

Not cut.

Gone.

BELLE mimics all the postures making silly faces.

CLOUD watches every stop and laughs.

ARCHY reaches for a door.

ARCHY (CONT'D)
Allow me to introduce...

He opens the door to a dining hall.

A woman places a bread basket on the table.

A warm face, blue apron, and flour covered hands.

ARCHY (CONT'D)
The Queen.

THE QUEEN
Oh, stop it...

BELLE
His name is Archy now!

THE QUEEN
Really?

BELLE
Yep. And I'm Belle!

THE QUEEN
Oh?

BELLE
Yep, Cloud gave us nicknames!

THE QUEEN
Did he now?

She studies CLOUD.

BELLE
Mhmm!

She nods.

THE QUEEN
Come in, come in, dinner's getting cold.

She stops.

Wipes her hands on her apron.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
It's a pleasure to meet you, Cloud.

CLOUD
You as well...?

She laughs.

THE QUEEN
Come. We can talk over dinner.

GRRRRRR

(beat)

BELLE leans in to THE QUEEN.

BELLE
You said the magic word...

THE QUEEN
It appears I did.

She laughs.

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)
Maybe if Cloud is too nervous, his
stomach will find the table
instead.

BELLE
Come onnnn...

CLOUD starts jerking his stomach towards the table.

He looks at BELLE like he's surprised.

BELLE is confused.

CLOUD jerks again, he looks at BELLE.

CLOUD
I think it smells the food.

And he jerks again, grabbing the door.

BELLE giggles.

THE QUEEN smiles at BELLE.

ARCHY tries to hide his smile.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
Ok, ok, you convinced me.

They all make their way to the table.

ARCHY sits next to THE QUEEN.

BELLE sits next to a chair that is larger than the others.

THE QUEEN

We added that one for you.

Directly across from THE QUEEN.

CLOUD sits.

THE QUEEN fixes him a plate and puts it in front of him.

CLOUD

Thanks.

THE QUEEN

Of course!

CLOUD pokes the food.

(beat)

THE QUEEN (CONT'D)

Afraid it's poisoned?

CLOUD freezes.

THE QUEEN laughs.

CLOUD

Sorry...

THE QUEEN

I can't say I blame you, but I
promise it's just a home cooked
meal.

CLOUD takes a bite.

It's the best thing he's tasted in years.

In moments the plate is empty.

Everyone stares at him.

(beat)

CLOUD realizes everyone is looking at him.

CLOUD

I... am so sorry...

THE QUEEN laughs.

THE QUEEN
It's a good thing I prepared for a
giant's appetite.

She motions to a servant.

Moments later plates carrying piles of food cover the table.

CLOUD
Woah...

THE QUEEN
Please, eat to your stomach's
content.

CLOUD begins inhaling food.

A short time later.

CLOUD
I'm sorry, Ma'am? Your Majesty?
Queen? What do I call you?

THE QUEEN
Any of those work fine.

CLOUD looks at ARCHY and BELLE.

CLOUD
Archy... Belle... Your Majesty...
It doesn't have the same ring to
it...

BELLE is beaming, waiting.

ARCHY looks up from his book over his glasses.

THE QUEEN
And what would you propose?

CLOUD
How about something like...
Queenie?

BELLE's head shifts to THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN
Queenie?

CLOUD

Yeah, ya know, keep the royal aspect, but make it more of a nickname than a title.

ARCHY

You really have an issue with titles, don't you?

CLOUD

Yep.

QUEENIE

I like it... Not too formal, not too official... Yes. Queenie it is.

BELLE

YAY!!

QUEENIE smiles at BELLE.

ARCHY scribbles into his book.

CLOUD

It's nice to meet you Queenie, I'm Cloud.

QUEENIE smiles a little more.

QUEENIE

The pleasure is mine, Cloud.

CLOUD

So... what can you tell me about what's happening?

The room goes silent.

(beat)

QUEENIE

Not a lot sadly...

CLOUD

Well, what do you remember?

(beat)

QUEENIE

I remember being Queen. I remember I had a husband... and a son...

CLOUD

But that's where it stops, huh?

QUEENIE
Precisely... I remember they
existed... but not their names...

She begins to sob.

QUEENIE (CONT'D)
I can't remember their faces,
Cloud...

(beat)

CLOUD
I'm sorry...

She breathes in deeply.

Then out.

QUEENIE
It's not yours to be sorry for.

CLOUD
Doesn't mean I can't carry some of
it.

She looks at him, astonished.

QUEENIE
Cloud...

(beat)

QUEENIE (CONT'D)
Will you help us?

CLOUD looks around the table.

CLOUD
Well, we have a magic key, an
impossible gate opened, and a
little girl missing her name...

(beat)

CLOUD (CONT'D)
I don't think I'm here just to
visit, Queenie.

A smile crawls across her face.

BELLE
Promise?

QUEENIE's smile fades.

CLOUD
Problem with promises?

QUEENIE
A problem with hoping they're
remembered.

CLOUD sits there contemplating.

(beat)

He stands up and grabs his sword.

Everyone watches him, confused.

CLOUD
Sorry about your floor.

A stone floor becomes his focus.

He drives his sword into it.

He writes;

"Cloud's To-Do; Memories" with an empty box next to
'memories'.

CLOUD (CONT'D)
There. Now it's literally set in
stone.

BELLE laughs.

ARCHY
That does seem rather hard to
forget.

QUEENIE
Agreed... Cloud?

CLOUD
Yeah?

QUEENIE
Thank you...

CLOUD smiles ear to ear.

CLOUD
Always.

The word shocks QUEENIE.

CLOUD yawns.

BELLE

I think Cloud's belly is tired now.

She giggles.

CLOUD

I think it's actually my butt this time.

QUEENIE and ARCHY chuckle.

CLOUD jerks his butt toward the door.

BELLE giggles harder.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

Queenie, where... uhh..

QUEENIE

Do you sleep?

She laughs.

QUEENIE (CONT'D)

Follow me, Cloud's butt.

BELLE is holding her stomach laughing.

QUEENIE leads CLOUD to his room.

QUEENIE (CONT'D)

We just put it together, I hope it's comfortable.

She opens the door.

A goliath sized bed waits.

The softest looking bed he's seen in years.

A quilted blanket sits on top.

CLOUD starts examining it.

Thinking of the circus.

CLOUD

This is a beautiful quilt.

QUEENIE

Thank you, I made it myself.

CLOUD looks at her.

QUEENIE (CONT'D)
Get some sleep, Cloud. I hear
you're heading to the Library
tomorrow.

CLOUD
How did you--

QUEENIE
You'll understand tomorrow. For
now, rest.

CLOUD sits on the bed.

CLOUD
Queenie?

She stops before leaving.

QUEENIE
Yes?

CLOUD
I don't know what I'm going to
do... but I know I'll try... I
promise.

A small smile grows across her face.

QUEENIE
That's all I can ask. Goodnight,
Cloud.

CLOUD
Goodnight, Queenie.

The door closes with a soft,

CLICK

Outside the window, the darkness he saw earlier, but thinner.

Figures of buildings almost visible.

CLOUD rests his sword against the nightstand.

Then blows out the candle.

FADE TO BLACK.