

"WAR OF THE KEEPERS"

CUTSCENE -- "THE DUTY OF MEN"

**EXT. KEEPER OUTPOST - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT**

RILEY, 22, sits alone by a shrinking fire at the edge of a tree line. He looks out into a black sea of pine and bush.

From behind -- heavy steps approaching. Riley doesn't turn.

A THICK BLOCK OF WOOD is tossed into the pit, sending embers into the air, bringing the flames back to life.

RILEY  
I was waiting for it to die.

EAMON  
It wasn't ready to die.

EAMON, 50s, drops a WHOLE LOG to the ground. Sits down on it.

EAMON (CONT'D)  
And despite your best efforts to  
the contrary, neither are you.

Silence, a moment. These two share a fire, not its warmth.

RILEY  
I had it under control--

EAMON  
You were swarmed. If Ronan and I  
hadn't found you, I'd have only  
your spirit to keep me company.

RILEY  
Ghosts aren't real, Dad.

EAMON  
They are. They float in your heart.  
Live in your head. They're as real  
as we make them, long as we have  
our dead to haunt us.

Eamon's anger hangs in the air.

EAMON (CONT'D)  
You ran dead into that horde.

RILEY  
I'm not afraid of them. I'm not  
afraid of anything.

EAMON  
If you fear nothing at all, son, I  
wouldn't name you brave.

Riley looks away from his father. Eamon won't give an inch.

EAMON (CONT'D)  
You're poisoned by your own venom,  
but do nothing to find a cure.

RILEY  
Aye, I've got the same venom I was  
born with. Hasn't left me yet.

EAMON  
You've not given yourself the  
patience. Our greatest virtue.

RILEY  
No virtue of mine. Patience is a  
burden. Gets in the way.

Eamon faces the flame, breathing something hellish back in.

EAMON  
My son. My boy. You've been robbed  
of all hope. Left only with rage.  
You believe it's all you need to  
fight our enemies. But I know...  
and your siblings knew--

RILEY  
I buried my siblings! No one robbed  
me, Dad. Whatever I had, it was  
just... buried along with them.

Beat.

EAMON  
Your siblings knew... there is more  
than rage. More than hope. When you  
fight, you must remember that you  
are more than what the world means  
to make you.

Riley tilts. *What?*

EAMON (CONT'D)

Whatever we endure, one thing is  
unchangeable in every man: whether  
we are kind men, or mean men.

Riley scoffs.

RILEY

We all kill to live. Young, old.  
Brave, craven. Mean. Kind.

EAMON

Kind men defeat their enemies. They  
watch over their own. They don't  
tear limb from limb, they don't  
throw their lives away. And you,  
Riley, have neither the heart of a  
butcher nor the wits of a fool.

RILEY

Our world, Dad, all men are  
butchers or fools. All good men.  
All bad men... Men like me.

Eamon eases, something softer replacing his anger. His fear.

EAMON

You know, my father once told me  
that our world is one ruled by mean  
men, with kind men living in it.

Riley laughs, softly.

RILEY

He had wisdom, then.

EAMON

He missed the grander idea.

Riley finally looks to Eamon again. Waiting for him --

EAMON (CONT'D)

I don't know which man used to rule  
the world. It matters little. The  
monsters take us all, no matter who  
we are. But I know this, son: it is  
the duty of mean men to be kind  
when they can...

Eamon reaches over and grips Riley's shoulder, eyeing him.

EAMON (CONT'D)

And kind men to be mean when they  
must.

Riley can't look away anymore. Won't. Tears escape from his eyes. He wipes them clean, but wills himself to smile.

RILEY

I'll try.

EAMON

You better.

Eamon rises. Makes his leave.

EAMON (CONT'D)

Hell of a day tomorrow.

Riley shakes it off. He extends his arm toward the fire --  
ABSORBING THE FLAMES back through his finger tips.

END SCENE