

# **Celestial Blade Of The Fallen Knight**

## **#Chapter 2: The Broken Voice - Read Celestial Blade Of The Fallen Knight Chapter 2: The Broken Voice**

### *Chapter 2: The Broken Voice*

The bell atop the Watchman's Spire tolled five strokes before dawn, the clapper straining to be heard through the muffling of overnight snow.

Soren woke on the inhale of it, not with alarm, he'd learned that lesson young, but with the bone-deep certainty that somewhere in the city, someone had died badly.

The sound lingered, as if the air itself was trying to cough up the memory.

He shivered, catalogued the sensation, then sat up in the gloom of his loft. The walls sweated with last night's fog; each plank of the roof creaked in pain each time the wind battered at it.

Soren nudged the coal-cage open with his heel and poked at the char, prodding it to one last pulse of warmth before it surrendered to grayness.

He fished a heel of bread from the rafters, gnawed it in silence. Sleep hadn't come easy, for reasons he refused to give voice. Instead, he glanced to the loose board near his boots.

The shard slept there. Safe, if a thing like that could ever be safe. He dared not touch it just yet.

Outside, Nordhav's air was clotting with the sickly sweetness of slop buckets, undertoned by salt and the tannery's sharp bite.

Sounds carried in the cold: a bucket being splintered in the alley, a woman's cough dropped in a barrel and left there, the workmen's curses tumbling down from the canal works.

Soren shrugged into his jacket, patched and blackened, and took to the lane, careless whether his shadow ran ahead or trailed behind.

He spotted Kaelrin half a block distant, knuckling at his nose with red-chapped hands.

Kaelrin's hair always managed to look freshly singed, and today it was cut harsh at the sides with a topknot gone to entropy.

He was haggling with a fishmonger, voice pitched only for the vendor's ears; but from Kaelrin's posture, a coil, never fully unspooled, Soren gauged that every passerby was being measured for threat.

He drifted through the thinning crowd, content to let the market spill its noise and bodies between them.

At a turn, he saw the city's high banners, the dark blue of House Ashgard, streaming rigid above the square.

Near the base of the flagpole perched a makeshift pulpit, boards lashed together by either optimism or a very specific order from the city's clergy.

A man in a sun-bleached cassock stood atop the rig, hood thrown back to better weaponize the ice pick of his jawline. Soren noted the priest's eyes: blue, bright and mean, like fire polished to the edge of extinction. He was already mid-sermon, the crowd a loose cluster that looked more likely to scatter than convert.

"—the souls caught in steel," the priest shouted, voice slicing the fog. "It is not the dead that haunt us, but the memory they anchor! Every blade calls to its own, drags us back to the war like an infected wound. You trade in relics, you barter in ghosts. Worse, you tempt the Whispers of the False Flame, and corrupt even the purest will. Repent!"

The word hung there, freezing.

Kaelrin snorted somewhere behind him. "Funny how the holy men get warmer homes and thicker boots, but still envy the condemned their haunts," he muttered.

Soren ignored him, transfixed by the priest's hands, long and callused, the tendons banded with blue, and wrapped in ceremonial linen that showed more repair than original cloth.

A city crier, skin the color of uncut iron, voice like horseshoe on stone, shouted from the steps, "House Ashgard seeks sons for its outer watch! The Choosing Grounds open in three days. Any youth between twelve and sixteen may stand for testing. Winners earn bread, coin, and name. Losers..." His smile lacked for nothing. "Losers are free to try again, next year."

The line drew a brittle laugh from the crowd, a sound with no root.

Soren caught the glances: some longing, some hollowed to habit, a few edged with envy so raw it made his teeth itch.

He kept his own eyes down. No one here wanted to see another street rat rise. Not unless he fell harder on the way back down.

Soren retreated from the press and ducked down the alley behind the gruel vendor's stall. He could hear Kaelrin tracking him, boots sloshing the melt. When they were alone, Kaelrin stopped, waited for Soren to speak.

"Think you'll try for the watch?" Soren asked, voice bland as bread.

Kaelrin's mouth curled, uncertain whether to smirk or spit. "You really think they'd take one of us? They want sturdy farmstock, not gutter trash. Unless..." He flicked a glance at Soren's right hand, then away. "Unless you've got a secret, Soren."

Soren flexed his fingers. The knuckles looked normal again, save where last night's charcoal pressed dark in his skin. He nodded once, let the silence build, then said, "Secrets are for selling. I don't have any worth that much."

Kaelrin made a noise, flat and skeptical. "I heard about the gutter, yesterday. You were there?"

Soren shrugged. "Everyone's always somewhere. I saw nothing."

But he had seen. The vision of the Remnant-bonded's sword still gnawed at his mind.

The way it moved, hungry, alive and alien. No one would believe it, not when their own skeletons were more trustworthy than the city's rumor. He tried to dismiss it, and failed.

They parted at the canal. Kaelrin hiked up his collar and wandered north, muttering a half-curse, half-blessing that sounded almost like goodbye.

Soren followed the water's twisted run, past the brewery and the charred shell of what used to be a lampwright's.

He counted his steps, matched them to the slow beat of the bell when it tolled again, this time, six.

Back at the loft, Soren sat in the dusk light, staring not at the sword hilt hidden beneath the floor, but at the way his breath fogged into nothing.

The silence was a presence. At last, he knelt and lifted the loose board, unwrapping the sword just enough to brush his thumb along the edge.

It scraped his flesh, but not from any sharpness.

The steel vibrated under his fingers. The cold from outside seemed to recoil, as if the air itself considered this thing an infection.

He remembered the priest's words: "barter in ghosts." He almost laughed. Instead, the noise that escaped him was something uncertain, crushed down.

He wrapped the sword tight, pressed it back beneath the plank, and told himself it was only metal, a broken, useless shard. Told himself he would never touch it again.

He lay down. He listened to his own heartbeat. He waited for the dark to explain itself, but when it finally did, it was in a voice that sounded almost like his own, echoing from the place behind his eyes where memory and fear were stitched together by instinct. It said only this:

*You touched war, and it touched back.*

Soren jerked upright. He was alone. The sword remained hidden, silent, and so did he.