

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD - Book 1 - PRINCES OF IORDEN

EPISODE 3 - "A Little Blood"

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THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD - BOOK 1 - PRINCES OF IORDEN

**ACT ONE:**

1

INT. HALLWAY IN CASTLE GUERNATAL -  
VERY EARLY MORNING 1

NARRATOR

There exists a peculiar corridor deep in the heart of Castle Guernatal. It could not be called "secret" necessarily, as it is known to many of the castle's servants. No, "peculiar" describes this corridor best. It shares a wall with the chambers of some mid-ranking military officers. Due to some peculiar twist of engineering, sounds from these offices occasionally drift through the wall and out to the corridor. To be sure, these sounds are so faint that they can barely be heard by someone walking in the corridor.

Gwendolyn was not walking down the corridor. She was, in fact, crouched behind a particular office, ear pressed firmly against the wall. The low, urgent whisper behind the wall almost certainly belonged to Lord Ardel Redmoor. Gwen strained to hear the conversation but instead heard heavy, booted feet coming down the hallway towards her. Gwen jumped up. As she stalked away from the sound, she heard more footsteps, approaching from the other direction. Gwen panicked, and took a rather rash course of action. Namely, she found a nearby laundry chute and dove in. She fell for 30 feet, and was "lucky" to land in a large vat of soapy water and dirty bedsheets.

2

INT. ARLENE'S BEDCHAMBERS - A FEW  
MINUTES LATER 2

NARRATOR

Some thirty minutes later, a drenched Gwendolyn sat in Arlene's bedchambers. The highborn lady was toweling her servant's hair with a plush towel.

ARLENE

Poor dear.  
(WHISPERS)  
You're certain he said "kill?"

GWEN

(WHISPERS)  
Yes, m'lady. "Kill on sight and leave no witnesses." I didn't hear who they were talking about, but your brother was terribly upset that they couldn't find him.

ARLENE

(WHISPERS)

This, Maid Corelan's nightmares, our visit to the Bishop...my brother is planning something awful.

GWEN

(WHISPERS)

I'm sorry I couldn't hear any more.

ARLENE

(WHISPERS)

That's all right, Gwen, you've done quite enough for one week. Thank you.

(NORMAL VOLUME)

Have you been working on your letters like I showed you?

GWEN

Yes, m'lady. If I may say so meself, I think I'm starting to get the hang of it.

ARLENE

Would you like to try reading one of the histories with me?

GWEN

I would love that, m'lady!

NARRATOR

Although, as usual, the formality of their conversation was exaggerated, Gwen's joy was pure and genuine.

ARLENE

Go to the librarian, and request any history you'd like.

GWEN

I'm going to ask for "The Knights of the Wood and Hrdlxx the Warrior Dragon.

NARRATOR

In her excitement, Gwen practically ran towards the door. Arlene giggled at the girl's excitement, but her joy was cut short when the door slammed open. Gwen had to stop suddenly to avoid being hit by the flying door.

ARDEL

(TO ARLENE)

Oh good, you're awake. Would you please join me in my solar, dear sister?

(TO GWEN)

Get us wine.

NARRATOR

Gwen ran off quickly, her face bright red. She kept her head down to avoid eye contact with Ardel as she passed.

ARLENE

Brother, at this hour?

ARDEL

We're celebrating. There's been good news, for the first time in nearly a fortnight.

ARLENE

Oh?

ARDEL

I believe congratulations are in order. You're engaged to be married.

3

EXT. BRIARHELM BARN - EARLY MORNING

3

NARRATOR

That day, the sun had also risen on the farm that was, until very recently, owned by Bowen Briarhelm. Billy, Jen, and Nelson found that the daylight did nothing to brighten their view of the events of the previous night. In fact, the light only served to illuminate the carnage that still surrounded the farm.

Regan sat by an old well, methodically pumping water onto the bloodstained blade of her sword and scrubbing with a rag. Brennen emerged from the forest, carrying a shovel caked in mud. He glared at the rogue, but walked a wide path around her. Mercenary corpses remained littering the ground.

BILLY

Man, we gotta get back home.

JEN

I never thought I'd miss Pennsylvania.

NELSON

Aren't you a little curious about all this "Anointed One" stuff?

JEN

I think I'd rather be somewhere where people aren't trying to murder me with a sword every few days.

BILLY

I don't mind the fights. I just...wanna go to an Arby's or some shit, you know?

NELSON

Yeah, but no one wants to help us get home until they get the prophecy stuff figured out.

JEN

I think we may have to start figuring this out on our own.

YELLOWYYN

(O.S.)

I'd remind you that to run off anywhere without our protection would certainly mean your doom.

BILLY

Hey, asshole, are you not letting us fight just so you can hold that over us?

YELLOWYYN

It's no fault of mine if your inferior human faculties render you ill-equipped for combat.

NELSON

...Yellowyyn, I'm starting to think you might be a racist.

YELLOWYYN

What does that mean?

BILLY

It means you don't like humans just because they're humans.

YELLOWYYN

Nonsense. Humans can be very useful. I had a human nanny, you know.

NELSON

Well, but, that doesn't really--

YELLOWYYN

--Billy, Nelson. You'll need to search these bodies for anything useful. Especially jewelry.

BILLY

You did not just say that.

LITTLE WHILE LATER

NARRATOR

As the boys set to their unpleasant task, Jen took the opportunity for some solitude in the barn's loft. She retrieved her iPhone from her handbag. The device was unable to accomplish its primary purpose of communication with other similar devices. However, a warlock by the name of Jobs had long since mastered the art of convincing humanity to purchase devices without purpose. Thus, Jen was able to spend quite some time with the non-functioning device. She was perusing images - don't ask me how images got on the device, I still don't understand - of herself in Northeast Pennsylvania. She had reached an image of her infant self with her father when Billy returned from his looting. He had gore spattered all over his arms and shirt.

JEN

All done?

BILLY

Yeah. It was rough, but I toughed it out.

JEN

I woulda helped.

BILLY

Nah, don't sweat it. It's guy stuff.

NARRATOR

Billy peeled off his sweat -- and blood --soaked shirt. Ever a bit narcissistic (although unable to spell it), Billy took a moment to admire his own body.

BILLY

I gotta say, I been getting a good workout since we got here. What do you think?

JEN

Yeah, I mean I'm all right with a sword now.

BILLY

No I mean me. What do you think about me?

NARRATOR

Jen looked just slightly disappointed.

JEN

You were always better than me.

BILLY

I mean how do I look?

JEN

You look good. You always look good, baby.

NARRATOR

To Billy, this was as good as an invitation. He leaned in close to kiss her. At that distance, however, Jen could no longer pretend to ignore the stench of Billy's earlier work, and flinched away.

JEN

Did you throw up again?

BILLY

No.

JEN

Aww, honey...

BILLY

I didn't!

JEN

It's okay. You're not supposed to be used to maimed bodies.

BILLY

...you got any of those breath tabs in your bag?

JEN

Yeah, but I'm running low. I didn't think a toothbrush was advanced technology.

NARRATOR

Billy placed the green strip into his mouth and, believing the problem solved, tried for the kiss once again.

JEN

Woah. I think we could each use a bath.

BILLY

Together? Yeah I could get into that.

JEN

Maybe apart for now. It's been a while.

BILLY

We did it right after a game that one time.

JEN  
You didn't have someone else's blood all over you.

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EXT. BRIARHELM BARN - SIMULTANEOUS5

NARRATOR  
Meanwhile, outside the barn, Nelson sat with the pile of loot, assiduously sorting the goods by purpose, size, and color. Yllowwyn and Nia stood nearby, watching the boy work.

NIA  
You could have at least waited for their bodies to get cold.

YLLOWYYN  
It's doing them no harm now.

NIA  
It does you harm to forget the dignity of others. Even your enemies. Nelson, that goes for you too.

NELSON  
I think if they ever invent smell-o-vision, a lot less games are gonna reward you for looting dead bodies. It's not even funny to take off their clothes.

NIA  
...Galadon's mercy, boy. What stories have you heard?

NELSON  
*Skyrim* is more of an open-world adventure than a coherent story--

YLLOWYYN  
--These men forsook their own dignity by their actions in life. It's not in my power to give it back in death.

NARRATOR  
At this moment, Jen burst of a barn at a walk so brisk it was nearly a run. A moment later, Billy appeared behind her in pursuit.

JEN  
Because it's gross. I'm sorry.

BILLY  
A little blood never hurt anybody.

REGAN  
(O.S.)  
Blood is like fucking.

NARRATOR

Regan strolled up to the group.

REGAN

Most people don't realize how badly they need it until I've left them curled up somewhere, sticky and unconscious.

SEVERAL BEATS OF UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.

NELSON

I'm troubled by how arousing I find that.

BILLY

Dude.

6

INT. ARLENE'S BEDCHAMBERS -

SIMULTANEOUS

6

NARRATOR

In Arlene Redmoor's bedchambers, Gwen fastened the final button on Lady Redmoor's dress. The dress was beautiful and lavish, all in white. The woman underneath looked terrible. Her face was ashen, paler even than the silks she wore. She appeared to not have slept in months, although only one night had passed since Ardel delivered his "good news". Worst, however, was the expression on her face. Her face showed no joy, but also no anger, no fear. It was simply, terribly blank.

GWEN

You look so beautiful, m'lady! Antonin Mooncrest is a lucky man.

NARRATOR

Arlene stared silently at the far wall.

GWEN

He's a good match. I've heard he is handsome and kind.

NARRATOR

Although Arlene remained silent and still, hot tears ran down her face. Gwen ran to offer comfort.

GWEN

There, there, m'lady. It's all right to be a bit scared.

ARLENE

I'm going to be sick.

NARRATOR

Arlene ran for the chamber pot and was, indeed, sick. Gwen held her lady's hair and veil clear from the filth, and rubbed Arlene's back comfortingly. They stood in silence for a moment.

ARLENE

(RECOVERING)

High-born girls are supposed to dream about their wedding day. Did you ever dream about marriage?

GWEN

I mean, in a way. I don't know. But then I never had the chance to wed Antonin Mooncrest. Marriage must be wonderful with a good man, who you love. And what's not to love about Lord Mooncrest?

ARLENE

Have you ever been in love, Gwen?

GWEN

Oh, I don't think so. My friends used to tell me when you love a boy it feels like a hummingbird in your guts every time you see him. I never felt that way about a boy. I felt that way when I met you, but that's just nerves, ain't it? What lowborn girl wouldn't be nervous meeting a lady like you?

ARLENE

What highborn girl would be nervous meeting her handmaiden? And yet, when you arrived at my father's house...

GWEN

What did you have to be nervous about?

ARLENE

Perhaps 'hopeful' is the better word. Before you my brother was my only playmate. I remember he had a boy doll and a girl doll he used to play with, and he would have me pretend I was the girl doll. Some days it was fun, but other days he would poke the doll, or twist her arm, or pull her hair. He'd tell me to scream for her, and get horribly cross if I didn't. So I would. One day, he threw the doll into the fire. He told me "scream like you're burning to death!" I ran out of the room crying, and he followed me down the halls, laughing, and yelling "burn! burn!" But when you came, I think I just...sensed that you had a kind soul. I was excited. I felt hopeful.

A MOMENTARY IMPASSE IN THE CONVERSATION.

GWEN

...And that's probably what you're feeling now. It's just nerves troubling your stomach. I'll fix you some ginger tea.

ARLENE

No, Gwen. It's different. My life is over when I wed.

GWEN

Now what kind of talk is that?

ARLENE

(FRANTIC)

Lord Mooncrest will seek annulment, my brother will be called gracious for taking me back into his house, and I will never escape him.

GWEN

Annulment? Why ever would he do that?

ARLENE STEADIES HERSELF.

ARLENE

I have been unchaste, Gwen.

GWEN IS AT A LOSS FOR A BEAT, BUT COMES UP WITH...

GWEN

Your husband needn't learn of your every youthful folly.

ARLENE

But his family may ask for blood proof.

GWEN

I have heard that sometimes the maidenknot can be broken when a lady rides a horse.

ARLENE

I know. So does Ardel. That's why he never let me ride.

GWEN

Wait. He knows? How does he know?

ARLENE

Please, Gwen, I can't.

GWEN

Of course you can, m'lady. You tell me everything.

ARLENE

You will hate me. And I don't know what I will do without you.

GWEN

I swear to you, there is nothing you can say that would make me leave your side.

ARLENE TAKES AN AGONIZING FEW BEATS TO COMPOSE HERSELF.

ARLENE

Ardel and I came of age shortly before you came to us. At our Nyy'lynni feast...I never had wine before. But my brother and cousins kept telling me to drink. It was so exciting, to be treated like a woman for the first time. I remember one of my cousins...A boy had never looked at me like that before, you see. I smiled back every time I caught him. I should have looked away, not given him the wrong idea, but I was flattered! What girl of 13 years wouldn't be? I remember the first few dances I had with him, but after that it's all black. In the morning, Ardel told me what happened. I said I needed his help. He laughed in my face! He said "yes, you do," and laughed that awful laugh of his.

A BRUTAL BEAT AS THE GRAVITY OF THIS SINKS IN.

ARLENE

When I told my father about Ardel burning the doll, he said "that's the way of boys. But he is your brother, and when you need him, he will be there for you." Blind old fool. My brother is a monster, and my father was the last one who could have protected me. He refused to see it, the gods damned fool.

GWEN GIVES ARLENE A MOMENT TO BREATHE.

GWEN

Pardon me, m'lady, but if you don't remember, how do you know it happened as he said?

ARLENE

When I woke I was sore...there. And when Ardel told me...he waved a bloody sheet in my face! He's been threatening to end my life with shame since then. I tried to forget. I didn't think the day would come so soon.

SHE COLLAPSES, CRYING.

GWEN

It's all right, m'lady.

ARLENE

God, what you must think of me.

GWEN

I think you're the victim of your brother's cruelty.

ARLENE

I could have stopped drinking, I could have not smiled back, I could have--

GWEN

--And your cousin could have not had his way with you! Which is the greater evil? The theft of your honor, or a smile?

ARLENE

Do you think less of me?

GWEN

Do you think so little of my love for you?

ARLENE

How could anyone love me?

GWEN

How can anyone not? I remember the first time I felt homesick, you sensed something was wrong. I thought you'd be upset, but you took me into your arms, and I never felt so at home.

ARLENE

Thank you, Gwen. Sometimes we all need to be flattered.

GWEN

I mean no flattery, m'lady.

ARLENE

I am certainly not all of those things, all of the time.

GWEN

But you are. And I've seen you at your most wretched. Remember when your Lord father insisted on serving salmon in the Mooncrest fashion?

THIS, FINALLY, GETS A CHUCKLE OUT OF ARLENE.

ARLENE

(CHUCKLES)

I'm still sorry about that, Gwen.

GWEN

I hear your brother got the worst of it. The fish tried to escape from every hole it could find.

ARLENE

(THROUGH LAUGHTER)  
Gwen, behave.

GWEN

It must've hated your brother as much as everyone else does.

ARLENE

(A BIT FRIGHTENED NOW)  
Hush! If he heard, you--

NARRATOR

--Gwen grabbed her lady's face with both hands and looked her straight in the eyes. The serving girl's eyes were steel.

GWEN

Fuck. Him.

ARLENE

Gwen!

GWEN

He's played his last card, m'lady. What can he do to you now that he hasn't done already?

NARRATOR

Though Arlene continued to weep, the truth of Gwen's words gradually began to wash over her.

SILENCE

A RELIEVED GIGGLE ESCAPES.

GWEN LAUGHS TOO.

THE LAUGHTER BUILDS TO EXULTATION. SCORE SWELLS

**END OF EPISODE ONE.**

**EPISODE TWO:**

7

EXT. BRIARHELM BARN - LATE MORNING7

BILLY

Are you seriously still mad?

JEN

I'm not mad, I just don't wanna talk about it.

NARRATOR

Had Billy possessed the relevant insights into the human mind, he would have realized that when one human asks another, incredulously, whether they are still mad, the meaning behind any answer the other gives will inevitably be "yes." Then again, had Billy possessed said insights, he may not have made Jen mad in the first place.

NELSON

Hey guys.

NARRATOR

Had Nelson possessed the relevant insight into human socializing, he would have known better than to be caught between two people in the midst an "are you still mad" dance. But, being Nelson, he wandered up to Billy and Jen, and stood directly between them. They each muttered something that may have passed for "hello", and proceeded to stare intently at their own feet.

NELSON

...Something wrong?

BILLY

No, Nelson, this has been fucking perfect. I can't think of a better way to spend a week.

NARRATOR

At this, Billy returned to studying his toes. Jen retrieved her iPhone device, and used it to distract herself. She accessed the device's store of music - again, don't ask me. She found an item titled "Dad's Tape". The device listed 10 items labeled "track 1" through "track 10". Jen did not instruct the device to play this music; she simply stared at the words. As the silence stretched on, the tension slowly dissipated. Eventually, Billy felt safe enough to speak again.

BILLY

What do you even do on there, anyway?

JEN  
I dunno. Just look at stuff. Pictures, music. I go on Twitter a lot. It doesn't update or anything but it reminds me of home, you know?

BILLY  
What was the last tweet you got?

JEN  
You know Stacy Wallace?

BILLY  
You mean that crazy Jesus girl?

JEN  
Yeah. The one who hangs around practice and calls us the slut squad. She retweeted 50 Cent.

NELSON  
I didn't know Fiddy was still relevant.

JEN  
Since when does that matter on Twitter?

BILLY  
What did "Fiddy" have to say?

NELSON  
Yeah, I'm not sure how I feel about you calling him 'Fiddy.'

JEN  
Quote - Masturbation is a sin you stop right now fool exclamation mark, exclamation mark, exclamation mark. L-O-L God is watching you.

NELSON  
He shoulda taken his own advice and spared us that movie he made.

BILLY  
...Alright, knob-cheese, that was pretty good.

NARRATOR  
The children's bonding moment was interrupted by the arrival of Brennen. He was still covered in mud, and was trailed by the rest of the party.

BRENNEN  
We need to leave within the hour. If these men found us more will follow. Kalth'yr, search the woods, see if they brought horses.

BILLY

Where the hell are we going now?

BRENNEN

Castle Guernatal. The sooner we restore His Majesty's royal line the sooner we can see about getting you all home.

REGAN

Route-wise, I recommend--

BRENNEN

--You'll go the way I choose and keep your mouth shut about it.

REGAN

Easy now. I'm gonna be your Queen some day.

BRENNEN

Today is not that day.

(TO EVERYONE)

Make whatever preparations you need to leave.

NARRATOR

The group dispersed to do just that. Yllowwyn strode off in the direction of the woods, his bow already out and an arrow nocked. Billy, with a grumble, began assembling and packing his armor. Jen, however, pulled Nia aside.

JEN

Can I talk to you in private for a second?

8

INT. ARLENE'S BEDCHAMBERS - MORNING

8

NARRATOR

Back at Castle Guernatal, Arlene had shed her wedding dress. Back in sensible clothing, she and Gwendolyn attempted to puzzle through the rest of Ardel's scheming.

ARLENE

My brother covets power. He'd never surrender his power over me unless it was to gain yet more power.

GWEN

What could he gain by marrying you to House Mooncrest?

NARRATOR

A moment passed as Arlene considered the assets at Lord Mooncrest's disposal, before a thought hit her.

ARLENE

An army. Mooncrest commands an army.

GWEN

But every soldier in the realm will be needed to fight Traft. There'll be nothing for Ardel to rule if the orcs burn it all.

ARLENE

You're right, even my brother would see that.

NARRATOR

The two returned to thoughtful silence. Arlene's hands idly reached towards the book which Gwen had fetched from the library. True to her word, Gwen had chosen a tome entitled "The Knights of the Wood and Hrdlxx the Warrior Dragon". Arlene stared at the spine, a thought forming.

ARLENE

The Knights of the Wood. They're not protecting us because they consider the Guernatal dynasty fallen. And, presumably, they don't consider Felghir powerful enough on their own to take the High Crown. But Mooncrest's army combined with the resources of Castle Guernatal might be enough to establish a new dynasty.

GWEN

Why not marry you to Felghir, then?

ARLENE

Gunther's Lords hate Felghir. They would sooner die than see the crown pass to his house.

GWEN

But why would His Majesty pass the crown to anybody?

ARLENE

He wouldn't...My god, Gwen. Ardel's going to try to steal it. And we need to stop him.

9

EXT. BEHIND THE BRIARHELM BARN -

NEARLY CONTINUOUS

9

NARRATOR

At the Briarhelm farm, as most of the party was preparing to depart, Jen and Nia were standing alone, away from the group. Jen had asked Nia for a word, but rather than using any, the girl was standing awkwardly, and repeatedly looking around to make sure nobody was within earshot. Once, twice, three times, she opened her mouth to speak, but cut herself short and checked over her shoulder.

NIA  
What's troubling you? Is Billy not treating you kindly?

JEN  
No, nothing like that. What do you do around here when...I'm not sure how you say it...you know, once a month?

NARRATOR  
Nia clearly did not take Jen's meaning.

JEN  
Once every moon...

REGAN  
She means she's gonna bleed soon.

JEN  
Jesus, can you stop that?!

NARRATOR  
Regan's stealthy arrival had once again startled both Jen and Nia. She did, however, bridge the communicative gap.

NIA  
(TO REGAN)  
The girl asked for privacy.  
(TO JEN)  
Is that what you mean though? You will bleed soon?

JEN  
Yeah, I mean, I think so. It's been kind of hard to keep track. But that's what you call it? Just 'bleeding?'

NIA  
In polite society it is referred to as one's affliction.

JEN  
That's...kinda weird.

REGAN  
In my society we call it "Oh gods fucking damn it! Already?!"

NARRATOR  
Nia glowered at Regan's impropriety. The impropriety, however, managed to crack a smile and a stifled chuckle from Jen, for the first time around the rogue. Nia pretended not to notice.

NIA

I have some myrrh and sanctified honey with me, and also some spare cotton. You can roll up the cotton, bless it with the myrrh and honey, and place it inside.

REGAN

Or you can save yourself a lot of energy, and just boil a rag and put it under your smallclothes.

NIA

I know we weren't all raised well, but--

REGAN

--We can't all afford myrrh.

JEN

Hmmm. That's interesting. I'd be worried about the pH balance, but honey does kill some bacteria and yeast...Seeing as how we can't count on regular bathing, I think I'll go with the rag. Thanks.

NIA

Jen, your body is a gift from Galadon. You should honor him by honoring it.

REGAN

Yeah, well why doesn't Galadon plug up my--

BILLY

(O.S.)  
Hey, babe?

NARRATOR

Billy chose a very opportune moment to come searching for Jen. If he noticed Regan's dismissive eye role, he chose to ignore it. I suspect, however, that he did not even notice it.

BILLY

Oh, hey. You all right?

JEN

Fine honey, we're just talking.

BILLY

What about?

JEN

Just, you know, girl stuff.

BILLY

What kind of girl stuff?

NARRATOR

I'm told of a bard from Billy's world who once penned the proverb, "if my answers frighten you, Vincent, you should cease asking scary questions."

REGAN

(EGGING ON)

Jen's gonna bleed soon.

BILLY

...Ewwwwwwwwwwww.

REGAN

What happened to "a little blood never hurt anybody?"

BILLY

Yeah but that's different. This comes out of her, you know...

HE LOOKS AT THE THREE WOMEN, UNSURE OF WHAT WORD TO USE.

NARRATOR

At this point, Billy's face grew quite red as he stammered. Regan took obvious joy in the boy's discomfort. Eventually, Jen ended his misery by supplying the word.

JEN

Vagina?

NIA

[SHOCKED, NERVOUS LAUGHTER]

REGAN

(THROUGH LAUGHTER)

What?!

JEN

What?

REGAN

What was that word?

JEN

Vagina?

MORE LAUGHTER.

REGAN

That's the funniest word I've ever heard.

JEN

That's what you call it where we're from.

NIA

It isn't!

NARRATOR

Now Jen's face was the one turning red. Unable to speak, she simply nodded emphatically.

NIA

That sounds like something a warlock would name his stronghold.

REGAN

Sounds like something an Orc yells when he has a tooth pulled.

BRENNEN

(O.S.)  
Gather 'round!

REGAN

Before we go, say it one more time?

JEN

Vagina.

REGAN

(STILL CHUCKLING)  
Look, girly. Call it whatever you want. But don't expect anyone to take your cunt seriously when you call it that.

10

EXT. BRIARHELM BARN - NEARLY

CONTINUOUS

10

NARRATOR

The women composed themselves as they walked to the front of the barn. There, Brennen and Yllowyn were waiting. The elf was sitting comfortably on the back of a beautiful chestnut mare. Brennen stood holding the lead of another horse, and a third grazed calmly nearby. Billy and Nelson were standing a respectful distance away, but Jen was drawn to the majestic animals. She reached up and stroked the face of the nearest horse.

JEN

(QUIETLY, TO THE HORSE)  
You're beautiful.

BRENNEN

Under the circumstances, I think it wise to opt for speed over stealth. The Kalth'yr and I know how to ride. Can you, Nia?

NIA

It's been many years. I don't think I could be counted on in an emergency.

NARRATOR

Regan, however, quickly vaulted up onto the back of the nearest horse. The motion wasn't pretty, but it was effective.

REGAN

I been on a few horses in my day.

BRENNEN

None that you acquired legally, I presume?

REGAN

I commandeered them in the name of the queen.

BRENNEN

(TO THE KIDS)

You three said you could not, aye?

NELSON

So is this the riding tutorial?

BRENNEN

We haven't the time. You'll need to ride with us. Jen, ride with Yllowyyyn.

BILLY

Fuck. That.

YLLOWYYN

Would you prefer to ride with me?

BILLY

Make Nelson do it. He's all hot for your pointy ears anyway.

YLLOWYYN

I'd rather not, he's very strange.

BRENNEN

Nelson, ride with Regan. Nia, with them, lest Her Highness gets in a hostage-taking mood again.

NARRATOR

This prospect reminded Nelson of certain facts about male anatomy, which, for some reason, were potential causes of embarrassment.

NELSON

I'm gonna ride with both of them on the horse?

REGAN

No, you're gonna lay underneath and hang onto its cock.

NELSON

Like, between them or something?

YELLOWYYN

One of the horses will need to carry three, and you're the lightest.

NELSON

I don't think that's a good idea.

YELLOWYYN

General, perhaps the two boys can ride with you.

BILLY

That's really gay, dude.

YELLOWYYN

Nelson and Jen, then.

BILLY

Not happening.

YELLOWYYN

Billy and Regan.

JEN

Unh uh.

YELLOWYYN

Regan, Jen, and Nia.

*BILLY*

*Nope.*

*JEN*

*Nope.*

BRENNEN

Everyone has thirty seconds to get on a gods damned horse or else I put the horse on you.

NARRATOR

Eventually, the party settled on a satisfactory riding arrangement. Brennen and Jen shared the front horse. Behind them, Nelson sat between Regan and Nia. The boy was focusing very intently on the ground beneath them. Yllowwyn and Billy brought up the rear. Billy had tried to ride without touching the elf at all. He fell at the very first step of the horse. Now he rode with his arms around Yllowwyn's waist. It is impossible to gauge which of them was more upset with this arrangement.

Two hours passed uneventfully as they rode along monotonous countryside. Suddenly, Yllowwyn called forward.

YLLLOWYYN

General, I hear the faint sound of weapons but I can't tell from where.

BRENNEN

Let's halt.

REGAN

Fuck me.

NARRATOR

At this, Regan also became aware of certain facts about Nelson's anatomy.

REGAN

(TO NELSON)  
Really?

BRENNEN

Kalth'yr, dismount and scout over that hill. Everyone else, keep your voices down.

NIA

(WHISPERS)  
If the worst comes to pass and they are foes, what do we do if they are enemies?

NARRATOR

General Brennen gave Nia a hard stare, and then wordlessly turned towards the hill and the retreating figure of Yllowwyn. The elf reached the crest of the ridge. It felt like an hour before Yllowwyn moved, but only a few minutes passed before he turned and gestured for Brennen to join him.

As the general reached the crest of the hill, he could see what Yllowwyn had seen. In the valley below,

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Brennen saw a field of tents, hundreds of them neatly regimented. Above each tent, flapping proudly in the wind, stood a black raven on a field of red.

YELLOWYYN

Leif of Felghir has called his banners.

**END OF EPISODE TWO.**

**EPISODE THREE:**

12

EXT. FOOTHILLS - EARLY EVENING 12

REGAN

Problem General?

NARRATOR

Brennen and Yllowwyn had just returned from scouting the nearby hill, their faces ashen.

BRENNEN

It seems there's a large encampment of Felghir soldiers in the valley below.

NELSON

Why are they camped in a valley? Doesn't low ground put them at a severe tactical disadvantage?

YLLOWYYN

It's a good question, actually.

BRENNEN

Aye, but not as pressing as how we're going to get past them.

NIA

Can't we just ride around?

BRENNEN

Getting fully around this valley would take us nearly two days out of our way. Their presence here makes it even more urgent that we return to Castle Guernatal quickly.

YLLOWYYN

We need to get off the road now. I hear riders approaching. Sounds like a scouting party.

REGAN

Shit. Fuck, all right, I know a way. Follow me.

NARRATOR

Without waiting for a response, Regan kicked her horse into a canter. Nelson and Nia, still sharing the mount with her, had to quickly grab on to avoid falling off. Brennen and Yllowwyn exchanged a quick glance, but really had no choice but to mount their own horses and give chase.

SIMULTANEOUS

NARRATOR

In Castle Guernatal's throne room, King Gunther's court was assembled to consider the threat of the rebel General Traft--the same rebel general whose march had sent Gunther's court into a panic nearly a fortnight ago. Currently, the king was taking the testimony of a hunched old man. This man had come from the hamlet of Silberg, a silver-mining town located far to the west, in the foothills of the Black Mountains. The old man scratched at his wild untamed beard, and continued his tale.

OLD MAN

They come in the middle of the day, when most of the men was down in the mines. All hissin an hollerin an clanging their spears. We got our garrison of civic guard, you know, but they got cut down right quick.

NARRATOR

Every ear in the room was clinging intently to the old man's words. Arlene Redmoor, however, furtively scanned the room as she listened, searching for some hint of court intrigue.

OLD MAN

They killed everyone who tried to run or fight. At dusk they rounded us all up in the center of town and burned up e'rything while we watched.

NARRATOR

All the standard members of the King's Court were assembled, save for Brennen and Yllowyyn of course. Arlene saw King Gunther, surrounded by emissaries of the four other high Princes of Iorden; Felghir, Mooncrest, Riverblood, and Ironhurtz. Next to them sat the Head Priest, with a large retinue of clergy members.

Arlene noticed the holy men whispering intently at each other, counter to their typical exemplary decorum.

OLD MAN

Then their lord comes out--

GUNTHER

--General, you mean. General Traft.

OLD MAN

Whatever you call 'im--

GUNTHER

--Whatever he is called in my hall, it will not be a noble title.

OLD MAN

Yes, Your Grace. I meant no offense, Your Grace. You'll hafta forgive me. Out east we ain't got much manners. (TRYING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD)  
Alls we know is to call the guy with the most swords "sir."

SOUND: long silence punctuated by a far-off cough

GUNTHER

You may continue your testimony of events.

OLD MAN

Of course, Your Grace. So he - Traft - gets up and he starts giving a speech. To be honest, Your Grace, I didn't rightly understand most of what he said. But one thing is that he kept saying he'd freed us. Seemed funny he'd say that since he'd just burned down our homes and killed a lot of us.

NARRATOR

At the edge of the dais sat the king's treasurer. Arlene knew this man to frequently fall asleep during any proceedings that did not involve money. Thus, his nervous fidgeting and profuse sweating disquieted her. As she studied the man, she noticed an ostentatious ring that she couldn't recall having seen before.

OLD MAN

All the while he's got this mining axe he's been waving around. When he got done talkin', his orcs dragged up the mayor. An' Traft asks him "who do you serve?" The mayor says "Galadon, the realm, and the King."

NARRATOR

Arlene then saw that that court philosopher, Lord Corelan, had brought his daughter to the day's events and was holding her tightly. She remembered that this was the girl who had been having nightmares about soldiers.

OLD MAN

Then Traft put the pick of the axe through the mayor's head.

CROWD

[REPULSED GASPS]

ARLENE

(WHISPERS, TO ARDEL)

Brother, would you excuse me? It...troubles me so to hear such things.

ARDEL

(WHISPERS, TO ARLENE)

Yes, fine. If you must be a child do it out of my presence.

OLD MAN

Killed him on the spot like it wasn't nothing.

14

EXT. CAVE MOUTH - EVENING

14

NARRATOR

Regan reined in her horse by a rocky crag. Their gallop had taken them to the next hill over, remaining on the side far from Felghir's army of course. Now, as the other two horses caught up, the party found themselves at the mouth of a rather dark cave. Some sounds of water, dripping from somewhere, echoed inside.

YELLOWYYN

What is this place?

REGAN

Gang I did a few jobs with used to hide out here. They probably all been hanged by now but I think I remember my way around well enough.

BRENNEN

And if they haven't been hanged? Will they be a problem?

REGAN

Oh they'd slit my throat in a heartbeat if they knew about the bounty. But they're shit fighters and I'll take my chances with them over a whole fucking army.

NARRATOR

Oddly enough, this assessment did not seem to comfort the three children. It was, however, good enough for Brennen, who gave a curt nod. Leaving the horses outside, he led the group into the cave. Inside, the cave was pitch black. Nia conjured a small glow from the tip of her staff.

15

INT. CAVE - A FEW MINUTES LATER 15

YELLOWYYN

This place stinks of death.

NELSON

This looks like prime vermin-of-unusual-size territory to me.

BRENNEN

Aye, you needn't be an elf to detect a foul stink in this cave.

BILLY

Yeah, but enough about Weenie's mom's--BWAH

NARRATOR

With a loud thud, Billy slipped on a wet patch of cave and hit the ground hard. Jen and Nia both rushed over to see if the boy was hurt.

BILLY

Fuuuuuuuuuck.

NARRATOR

As Nia brought her tiny light close to Billy, it became apparent that there was blood on the boy's hand.

JEN

Billy, you're bleeding!

NIA

I don't think that's his blood...

NARRATOR

Nia's light revealed that Billy had slipped in a small puddle of fresh blood. She moved her staff closer to the wall. A large patch of the rock was dripping with a fresh smear of blood that ran down a side cave.

NIA

Well, this bodes ill.

BRENNEN

Kalth'yr, go down there with Nia and Regan. See what's bleeding. Don't engage unless attacked.

NARRATOR

Those three set off down the side tunnel, Nia taking her staff and its light with her. Soon, Brennen stood in utter darkness with Nelson, Jen, and Billy.

JEN  
You all right, baby?

BILLY  
Yeah, no big deal.

SOUND: Some LEATHER CREAKS and CHAIN MAIL JINGLES.

JEN  
Billy, not now. Jesus.

16

INT. SMALLER CAVE SECTION - A FEW

MINUTES LATER

16

NARRATOR  
A few minutes later, Nia, Regan, and Yllowyyyn were still following the trail of blood down the side tunnel.

YLLOWYYN  
I hear shallow breathing up ahead. Someone is alive in here, but barely.

REGAN  
Am I the only one who smells shit?

NIA  
I do.

REGAN  
What's the matter with your nose, splinter-pole?

YLLOWYYN  
Your kind always smell of your own feces, it's hard to tell the difference.

REGAN  
I wonder what you'll smell when I put my boot--

NIA  
--Oh, Galadon's mercy.

NARRATOR  
The light from Nia's staff revealed disembodied human entrails. As she raised the staff they saw the body to which those entrails had until recently belonged. A lightly armored woman, still breathing, and crawling laboriously towards the end of the cave, where a neat line of similarly armored corpses sat with their throats cut.

Nia, Regan, and Yllowyyyn knelt beside the dying woman.

REGAN

What happened here?

(THE WOMAN SPEAKS BARELY AUDIBLY THROUGH A  
DEATH-RATTLE.)

DYING BANDIT

Ambushed.

REGAN

By who?

DYING BANDIT

Aerona? Do you remember me?

REGAN

Of course. Your name is...starts with a...

DYING BANDIT

Gailin.

REGAN

Right, Gailin. Gailin, who ambushed you?

DYING BANDIT

Aerona?

REGAN

I'm here.

DYING BANDIT

Kill me. Please.

REGAN

Gailin, I need to know who did this. Think.

DYING BANDIT

Red banners. Don't know. Sorry.

NARRATOR

Resignedly, Regan wrapped the woman's head up in her arms. If you didn't know Aerona Regan, it may have looked almost sisterly.

REGAN

You did good, Gailin.

NARRATOR

With a quick, practiced motion, Regan snapped the woman's neck.

NIA  
Fear neither cold, nor darkness of night...

17

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

17

NARRATOR  
As Nia prayed, Brennen and the young humans awaited her return in the pitch-black.

NELSON  
Wait, Jen, don't you have a flash on your phone?

BILLY  
Oh, yeah, good thinking, choad-puddle!

JEN  
I do, but it takes a lot of battery, and I don't have much left.

BILLY  
I think this is a little more important than Twitter, Jenny.

NARRATOR  
This discussion was interrupted by the appearance of a faint orange from deeper within the cave.

BRENNEN  
Wait.

MALE VOICE  
(DISTANT)  
Well you can make your own fucking biscuits if you don't like mine, you fucking ingrate!

BRENNEN  
Draw your weapons. But don't do anything unless I do it first.

NARRATOR  
Had you been in that cave then, you would have heard leather creak as Brennen unslung his massive axe, then a sword slide free of its sheathe, then a second, then--

NELSON  
--Balls!--

NARRATOR  
--a horrendous racket as Nelson accidentally sent his scabbard careening down a hole and into some water below. The source of the glow quickened it's approach.

BILLY

NELSON, STOP MAKING NOISE YOU FUCKING BONER!

BRENNEN

(WHISPERS)  
Shut. Up.

VOICE

Who goes there?

NARRATOR

Brennen squinted through the dark to see six soldiers silhouetted against a torch. He could make out a crossbow aimed at him.

VOICE

Identify yourselves at once!

BRENNEN WEIGHS HIS OPTIONS FOR A SECOND.

BRENNEN

You're addressing General Brennen, commander of His Majesty's Royal army. If you answer to House Felghir, I'm of much greater value to you alive than dead.

NARRATOR

The soldiers whispered amongst themselves for a moment.

THE SOLDIERS WHISPER AMONGST THEMSELVES. WE CAN'T HEAR WHAT THEY SAY.

VOICE

(NERVOUS)  
General Brennen? Don't worry, sir, we're for Lord Redmoor. We answer to you.

BRENNEN

Why don't you come down here so we may speak face-to-face?

SOUND: More whispering.

VOICE

(NERVOUS)  
We've been ambushed by bandits in this cave, sir. Are you alone, sir?

SOUND: more creaking leather

YELLOWYYN

Stand down if you truly answer to him.

NARRATOR

Yllowyyn, Regan, and Nia, emerged from the side cave, weapons readied and illuminate by Nia's magic torch.

On hearing Yllowyyn's elvish accent, and finding themselves no longer clearly in a position to make demands, the unidentified soldiers lowered their weapons and approached.

To Brennen's relief, the light revealed uniforms with the crest and colors of house Redmoor.

SERGEANT

Forgive us, General. Between Felghir's camp and the bandits...

BRENNEN

Dark times. I'm afraid I must ask what you are doing in this strange place.

SERGEANT

Scouting mission. Half of my men are on their way back to Castle Guernatal to inform Lord Redmoor about Felghir's movements. That's *Ardel* Redmoor.

BRENNEN

Yes, I know who Lord Redmoor is.

SERGEANT

And His Majesty of course. We stayed behind to see what else we could learn.

BRENNEN

Very good. I hope you told your men to make haste.

SERGEANT

Of course, General.

BRENNEN

And what news of Traft?

SERGEANT

So far, he seems to be taking his time to establish a foothold in the west. But who can say with an infidel like that? May I ask what brings you this godsforsaken hole?

BRENNEN

You may ask, but I must decline to answer, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

Well...if you'd like to rest your bones and have a hot meal, we've a camp a little further down.

SIMULTANEOUS

NARRATOR

As Brennen and his party followed the soldiers deeper into the cavern, Arlene Redmoor conferred with her handmaiden Gwen in her bedchambers.

ARLENE

The girl was having nightmares about soldiers because my brother's soldiers threatened her. Whatever he's planning, it's happening.

GWEN

Poor Maid Corelan.

ARLENE

Threatening children to control their parents is craven and depraved, even for my brother.

GWEN

You were younger when he started with you, m'lady.

ARLENE

So I was...He passed me in the hall today, Gwen. He caught my eye for just a second. It was like I forgot everything we said him playing his last card. I was just a scared little girl again.

GWEN

A lifetime of fear doesn't vanish over night. But when the time comes, you will find the courage you need. I know you will.

ARLENE

I pray you're right.

GWEN

And by Galadon's grace, His Majesty's army won't be so easily -- Have you seen General Brennen at court lately?

ARLENE

Brennen. Of course. He wouldn't be bribed or bent. That's who my brother plans to kill. I need you to warn Brennen's second-in-command.

NARRATOR

Brennen himself, had laid down to rest with the rest of his party, beside a subterranean lake where the Redmoor scouts had made camp.

Unfortunately, neither Gwen nor Arlene were there to warn Brennen when the Redmoor men drew knives and crept towards the slumbering General.

**END OF EPISODE THREE.**

**EPISODE FOUR:**

20

DREAM SEQUENCE: COUNTRY COTTAGE -TIME UNCLEAR

20

NARRATOR

Brennen dreamt of a cottage from his youth. He was chopping firewood, with his battle-axe strangely enough, when two horses appeared on the horizon - one white and one black.

One carried the wounded young girl who had become common in Brennen's dreams as of late, and the other carried the similarly ubiquitous demon. Strangely, the two were not locked in any kind of conflict. They simply rode together, and when they reached Brennen, the girl addressed him.

YOUNG GIRL

There are seven things you must know to save me. The third thing is: the vessel must crack, but it shall not break.

NARRATOR

Brennen looked warily at the demon, but it sat calmly on its mount.

YOUNG GIRL

Trouble coming, Brennen. Wake up. WAKE UP!!!

21

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAKE - EARLYMORNING

21

NARRATOR

Brennen groaned, and the Redmoor soldiers standing over him quickly sheathed their knives.

Regan, who had gone to some trouble to merely appear to be sleeping that night, closed her open eye.

BRENNEN

What is it?

SERGEANT

(AT A LOSS)

...Breakfast, General, if you'd like some.

BRENNEN

You need six men to wake me up for breakfast?

SERGEANT

You'll have to pardon my men. They've never seen a war hero in person before.

22

INT. same - a few minutes later 22

SOUND: Grease frying

NARRATOR

Brennen was not without suspicions, but saw no reason to decline the offered meal. He did, however, watch them prepare it and waited to eat until they did.

REGAN

General, can I have a word? You too, Ms. Holy. His Majesty's business. Best discussed in private.

BRENNEN

Aye.

SERGEANT

You talk about His Majesty's business with whor--camp followers?

BRENNEN

No insult meant, sergeant. But I'll decide with whom I discuss His Majesty's business.

SERGEANT

Dangerous times, General. A man can't help but be wary.

NARRATOR

Regan realized she would need to defuse the tension, or at least redirect it.

REGAN

You caught us. We were gonna fuck. I was trying to be polite about it.

NARRATOR

She could not help but take some joy in the profound discomfort she read on the faces of Brennen, Nia, and the soldiers.

REGAN

"His Majesty's business" is what the General calls his axe. He likes the handle right up the old stink hole. Yes sir, nothing like biscuits and buggery to start the day off right, that's what he always says, dont'cha General?

NARRATOR

Brennen was too mortified to speak.

REGAN

So please, a bit of privacy.

NARRATOR

Regan leaned close to Brennen's ear as though to whisper a lover's secret.

REGAN

(WHISPERS)

I know you can hear me, elf. So listen up and don't take your eyes off those motherfuckers.

23

INT. AN ALCOVE BY THE LAKE -

CONTINUOUS

23

NARRATOR

Yllowyyn's hand covertly crept a little closer to his knife, and Regan pulled Brennen behind some rocks.

BRENNEN

You dare mock me after what--

REGAN

--Those men were ready to stab you right before you woke up. I heard the phrases "fat reward," and "kill on sight, leave no witnesses." You know what that's about?

NIA

Were you planning to inform us of their plans before they succeeded?

REGAN

I was waiting for the best tactical moment.

BRENNEN

You mean you were waiting to see if you'd be better off letting them kill me and escaping while they did.

REGAN

...Well I never accused you of being stupid.

24

INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL MAIN HALL -

SIMULTANEOUS

24

NARRATOR

At around the same time, King Gunther Guernatal was addressing his court in light of "good news" he had gotten from Ardel Redmoor about an alliance with House Redmoor.

GUNTHER

Let us take a moment to congratulate Maid Redmoor on her betrothal, and to praise Lord Redmoor for his foresight.

NARRATOR

Arlene faked a smile as her brother beamed.

GUNTHER

This is a time to forge alliances, not fan the flames of war. Especially if House Ironhertz falls to Traft, as it sadly seems it will. This is a lesson that Leif Felghir will soon learn to his woe. Are Mooncrest's men in place, Lord Redmoor?

ARDEL

Our enemies will be crushed, Your Grace.

25

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LAKE -

SIMULTANEOUS

25

NARRATOR

In the cave, Brennen, Nia, and Regan had rejoined Yllowynn and the Redmoor soldiers by the fire. As they ate, they all did their best to conceal their mutual distrust.

BRENNEN

Fine biscuits.

NARRATOR

Nia reached for another biscuit a bit too quickly, and everyone jumped, but caught themselves. They then pretended that that had not just happened.

Several yards away, one more Redmoor soldier supervised the three young humans. Nia carefully monitored this situation out of the corner of her eye, as Nelson clumsily practiced with his sword.

JEN

Nelson, can you maybe do that a little further away from us.

NELSON

Oh, sorry.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Stay here. And put the sword down.

BILLY

Why's he gotta stay here?

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Because I said so.

NARRATOR

Nelson stuck the sword in his belt.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

You ain't got a scabbard?

NELSON

I dropped it.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Fucking brats. Your swords ain't even been blooded, have they?

BILLY

Oh yeah? Well...blood is like fucking, because...when...I had sex with your mom and I'll stab you.

BEAT OF SILENCE.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Ha! Try it.

26

INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL MAIN HALL -

SIMULTANEOUS

26

NARRATOR

In the main hall of Castle Guernatal, Ardel Redmoor furtively signaled the Court Treasurer. With a final wipe of his sweating brow, the man stood and cleared his throat.

TREASURER

I wonder if we could have a report on what Your Grace has been doing to protect us from our foes, if it please.

GUNTHER

Has that not been the subject of the last hour's discussion?

TREASURER

We've heard quite a bit about what Your Grace's bannermen have been doing. But disturbingly little about what House Guernatal has been doing.

GUNTHER

You would be well-advised to mind your tone, my lord.

TREASURER

Where has General Brennen been for the past fortnight?

GUNTHER

Have you forgotten your oaths?

TREASURER

Have you forgotten yours?

GUNTHER

I could call your words seditious and no one who heard them would disagree. Explain yourself or face the consequences.

TREASURER

Let it not be said that I did not give Your Grace a chance to confess your crimes.

GUNTHER

CRIMES?! How dare you?! GUARDS! GUARDS!!

NARRATOR

Despite Gunther's bellowing, not a single Guernatal man came forwards. Instead, after a moment had passed, two guards in Redmoor colors approached the bewildered king.

GUNTHER

Where in Selbirin are my men?

ARDEL

It's all right Your Grace. Guards, arrest The Lord Treasurer.

TREASURER

Not until I've had my say. Shortly after news of the war came, Lord Guernatal asked me to arrange the transfer of our Talisman of Dominion to House Felghir.

NARRATOR

Talismans of Dominion will be explained in depth later in our tale, but for now suffice it to say that this lie, believed whole-heartedly by the court, was considered deeply disturbing.

Arlene Redmoor looked more disturbed than most, however, although her disgust was directed at her brother rather than the King.

GUNTHER

That is a bald-faced lie and you'll hang for it!!

ARDEL

This is a most grievous accusation, my lord. Have you any evidence?

TREASURER

Of course not. He ordered me to burn all correspondence.

ARDEL

If this is true then why did you wait to come forward?

TREASURER

Like all of you, I had hoped to give the King the benefit of the doubt, that there was some reason. But as time passed I could no longer deceive myself.

HEAD PRIEST

I'm afraid there have been troubling Selbiric portents as well.

GUNTHER

Portents? What portents?

HEAD PRIEST

Many of the servile class, as of late, have come to me with dreams.

NARRATOR

Suddenly, Arlene recalled the fabricated dream that Gwen had been made to describe, and, with a sickening shock, realized its import.

She sat up straight and took a breath as though to speak -- her brother caught her eye. She trembled under his menacing gaze.

She found herself wondering "Why, oh why, did His Majesty's guards not come?"

27

INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL BARRACKS -

SIMULTANEOUS

27

NARRATOR

Her handmaiden, Gwen, had just discovered the grisly answer to that question. At the sight of dozens of throat-cut Guernatal soldiers dead and bloody in their bunks, she vomited on the floor of the barracks. She was once again forced to flee when she heard frantic chatter heading her way.

28

INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL MAIN HALL -

SIMULTANEOUS

28

HEAD PRIEST

I wish I could ignore what the sum of these dreams seems to suggest. But I must acknowledge the possibility that the King is a traitor.

NARRATOR

There were cries and gasps in the hall. The King stood, furious, but Redmoor's men detained him.

Arlene knew this was her chance. She dug down into her heart, searching for her courage. If you've ever had a nightmare where you could save yourself from danger by screaming, but somehow could not find the breath, well, so had Arlene Redmoor. She tried once more to speak, but any flickers of courage were snuffed out in the shadow of her brother's malicious eyes.

She sank back into her chair, trembling and defeated, as Ardel snickered, and turned his gaze towards the court philosopher.

This unfortunate man kissed his young daughter, swallowed his pride, and stood to speak.

DOCTOR

Circumstances seem dire, my lords. But, perhaps some good can come of them. I think it fair to say there is sufficient reason to appoint a Lord Regent while we investigate any possible wrongdoing by His Majesty.

NARRATOR

To Arlene's despair, there was a noticeable murmur of approval.

DOCTOR

Furthermore if the regent were powerful enough, we might re-gain the protection of the Th'ar lo-Hyy1.

CROWD, VARIOUS

(AD LIB.)

Hear hear! Mind him!

DOCTOR

Lord Redmoor has served this Kingdom well, and showed great foresight in joining his house with that of Mooncrest. With the army of Marcus Mooncrest and this stronghold on his side, he might just be recognized.

SOUND: APPLAUSE in the hall.

ARDEL

Please, my lords, I could not dream of such responsibility.

NARRATOR

Bitter tears wet Arlene's cheeks. They were tears of helplessness, of a life lived in pain and fear, of the belief that she would never find the strength to do anything good for the world.

SIMULTANEOUS

NARRATOR

Now, it is said by some that only simple minds get bored. I don't suppose that's true in all cases, but back in the cave Billy was indeed quite bored.

BILLY

Well this is boring as fuck. Jen snap me that rock. Nelson, go long.

NELSON

This setting seems better suited to riddles than football.

BILLY

Just shut up and catch.

NARRATOR

Jen bent over in front of the stone. I'm told that this stance was a reasonable imitation of the Pennsylvanian game called "football."

JEN

Billy, just so you know, this rock is a lot heavier than a football.

BILLY

Whatever, I'm the quarterback, I'll adjust.

JEN

Kinda slimy too.

BILLY

Okay, you don't know how to do this. Nelson! Come back, play center. Jen, go catch.

NARRATOR

Now Nelson bent in front of the stone, as Jen shook her head and ran away.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

What the fuck are you doing?

BILLY

Hike!

NELSON

[GRUNT]

NARRATOR

Nelson threw the stone to Billy backwards between his legs. Billy pretended to hand the stone to...no one, for some reason, then wound his arm back and snapped it towards where Jen--

BILLY

--Shit!

NARRATOR

As Billy released the rock, it slipped out of his hand and smashed the Redmoor soldier in the face.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

You shit!!

NARRATOR

Seeing their comrade bleeding, the other Redmoor soldiers jumped up and drew their weapons, but not as fast as Regan. She kicked embers from the campfire into their eyes. She, Brennen, and Yllowyyn made short work of the blinded ruffians.

But the one Billy had hit was still standing, and charged at the boy.

BILLY

Blitz! Blitz! Nelson, block!

NARRATOR

Nelson tried to stop the sprinting soldier, but was knocked right over. He did, however, manage to hold onto his legs. When Billy tried to tackle him, the two boys were somehow able to trip the bigger man.

The soldier fell on top of Nelson. He tried to rise but soon noticed the blade of Nelson's still-unsheathed sword protruding from his gut.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

AHHHHHHHH!

BILLY & NELSON

(IMPROV, AD LIB.)

AHHHHHHHHHH! Holy shit! What the fuck?!

NARRATOR

Brennen ran over and pulled the screaming, bleeding man off of Nelson.

BRENNEN

Why did you want to kill us?! Answer me! In the name of the King!

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Fuck your king. He'll fall.

NARRATOR

Without another word, the soldier's eyes went dark.

Billy and Nelson both stared in silence at the blood covering Nelson and his weapon.

They both looked ill, as Nia mentally searched her extensive knowledge of scripture for some useful words of comfort.

REGAN

A little blood never hurt anybody, right?

NARRATOR

At this, the boys vomited. Jen and Nia tried to comfort them. Unfortunately, Brennen knew there was little time for comfort.

BRENNEN

We need to split up. I fear some of House Redmoor's soldiers may be in mutiny. I need to get back to my men. And His Majesty. Aeron, you know your way through to the other side of these caverns?

REGAN

Yeah.

BRENNEN

We need to get out past the encampment, and make haste back to Castle Guernatal.

REGAN

Sorry, but what if your King does fall? I take it we won't be very welcome there.

BRENNEN

If the throne is usurped, you and I won't be welcome anywhere. We must try to stop it.

JEN

What about us?

BRENNEN

Is there anywhere back in the city that they can wait safely for a few days?

REGAN

I know some places where people won't ask questions.

BRENNEN

That will have to do. Tell the Kalth'yr how to get there. Everyone else, gather your things. We must leave for Castle Guernatal as soon as we can.

30

MONTAGE - VARIOUS AROUND CASTLE

GUERNATAL

30

NARRATOR

Unfortunately for Brennen, as he made these very plans, Redmoor's men were donning Guernatal uniforms and setting up patrols on all major roads to the Castle.

**END OF EPISODE FOUR.**