

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

Chapter 4 - "Monsters"

Audioplay by Christian T. Madera

Based on the Teleplay by Zach Glass & Christian T. Madera

Third Draft
2013

iordic.princes@gmail.com

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

SOUND: ROPES CREAKING IN THE WIND

1

Ext. Castle Ironhertz - Around Noon

1

NARRATOR

House Ironhertz was dead. And not in a vague, metaphorical sense. They had been hung by their necks from the ramparts of their own castle - men, women, and children.

Over the castle walls, the anvil of House Ironhertz lowered, and the miner's axe of the rebel General Traft raised.

SOUND: RAGING FIRE, AND SCREAMS

Below, the surrounding village burned.

2

Ext. Path to Castle Ironhertz -

Simultaneous

2

This was all unbeknownst to the town smith, as he drove his wagon through the foothills of the Black Mountains towards what he believed was still his home.

The smoke he saw over the horizon did not trouble him. Quite the opposite, for today was, to his knowledge, a feast day. Thus, the smoke made his mouth water. Until he came over the last hill, and saw his village razed to the ground and swarming with Orcs.

That's when things suddenly got very dark. The smith hopped down to flee, but a faceless figure in a black hooded cloak blocked his way.

OPENING CREDITS.

EPISODE ONE:

3

Int. Subterranean Lake - Morning 3

NARRATOR

We rejoin our party beside the underground lake where we left them. They all looked rather distraught over the admittedly wicked man who had just died on the end of Nelson's sword.

BILLY

Nelson. Dude. I can't believe you just killed a guy.

NELSON

Me?! You killed him!

BILLY

Your sword, bro.

NELSON

Your tackle!

BILLY

You tripped him.

JEN

Neither of you meant to kill him.

BILLY

Well he's still fucking dead.

NIA

That it upsets you is a sign of your humanity. Something to be proud of in this day and age.

REGAN

I think this is yours, Nelson.

NARRATOR

Regan handed Nelson his waterlogged scabbard.

REGAN

Maybe next time don't throw it down a fucking cave. And you'll wanna give your sword a flick.

NARRATOR

Nelson looked down at his still-bloody sword as though he had never seen it before.

REGAN

Flick your wrist and get some of the blood off your sword, then wipe the rest off. Else that shit'll dry up and get stuck next time you need it.

NELSON

...Huh?

REGAN

Give it here.

NARRATOR

She flicked the drying blood off the sword and wiped it on her sleeve.

REGAN

And girly, I wanna talk to you before I go.

JEN

Talk to me?

REGAN

How long you known me?

JEN

I dunno, like a week?

REGAN

I'm looking you in the eye and I ain't tried to kill you or fuck you, so yeah, safe bet I wanna talk to you.

4

Int. Elsewhere In The Cave - A

Minute Later

4

NARRATOR

Regan pulled a wary Jen behind some rocks so that the two could speak privately.

REGAN

That was the second time in as many days that your boy toy coulda gotten you killed.

JEN

He killed that guy that was gonna kill us. Sort of. And he made those other guys fight the other night.

REGAN

He was stupid and got lucky. Both of those fights coulda gone really bad really fast.

JEN

Billy does things his way, and somehow it always seems to work out.

REGAN

No, it doesn't. If it did, you'd be back in wherever-the-fuck, talking about your vagina, and not here getting life advice from a thieving, murdering fugitive.

JEN
It's not his fault we're here.

REGAN
You're smarter than him, but he makes all the decisions.

JEN
Our relationship is--

REGAN
--none of my business? Trust me, I wish it wasn't but it damn well is now.

JEN
I mean, I guess I think a man's supposed to be in charge, you know? And it's kinda nice to get taken care of.

REGAN
When I was a little girl, there were these two cats that would always come around our house. It was just me, my Ma, and my sister then. Ma could barely feed us. But she always left some scraps for us to give to the cats. She wanted us to learn charity or compassion or some shit. We named them Maggie and Catie. I liked Catie better. She'd always eat out of your hand, let you pet her. Maggie'd never do that shit. She'd take food once in a while, but she wouldn't pretend to be your friend for it. Rather go hungry I guess. When Ma died, Catie followed me to the orphanage. She pawed at my window every night for had to be three weeks. The window that was bolted shut. Stupid fucking cat. Then one night she didn't come. I was on garbage duty the next morning. They told me a stray cat died trying to get into the pantry and I had to take it out. I knew it was Catie before I even saw her. I brought her out back where they kept the trash, and I cried over that stupid fucking helpless cat. While I was out there, I seen Maggie walk by with a pigeon in her mouth. We locked eyes and fuck me if the damned thing didn't nod at me. That was the last time I ever cried.

5

Int. Yet Elsewhere in the Cave -Simultaneous

5

NARRATOR
Elsewhere in the cave, Brennen, Nia, and Yllowwyn had their own private conversation regarding the imminent split of the party. The talk had recently turned to Brennen's recurring dreams, and Nia's academic opinion thereof.

NIA

"My killer has died as well, but has not yet joined me," "the King has loved the enemy," and what was the third?

BRENNEN

"The vessel must crack, but it shall not break."

NIA

That last one sounds vaguely familiar. As though I read it in a footnote once, and forgot it the next day. I'll see if I can do some research in the city.

YELLOWYYN

I doubt they'll have many books wherever the thief is sending us.

BRENNEN

Wait for a messenger to come for five dawns. If none comes by the sixth, take the children to the Elders, and trust no one on the way. And Nia, look after the boys.

YELLOWYYN

No harm will come to them, General. I swear on my house.

BRENNEN

No harm? You mean apart from what they've already endured?

NIA

I'll give them the best counsel I can. Go with Galadon, General.

6

Ext. Craggy Hole - A Little Bit

Later

6

NARRATOR

After the relevant farewells were bid, Brennen found himself scaling a steep egress from the cave on heels of the so-called "thief queen" and actual princess, Aerona Regan. As much as he hated those facts.

SOUND: CLIMBING SOUNDS

REGAN

(IN CAVE)

And why would these guys mutiny?

BRENNEN

(IN CAVE)

Hard to say. Redmoor's garrison is a vicious, selfish, and stupid lot.

REGAN

(IN CAVE)

I'm sure you've said the same about me.

NARRATOR

Regan emerged from the hole, with her ubiquitous bedroll tied to her foot. She saw six horses in Redmoor regalia tied to stakes and grazing.

BRENNEN

(IN CAVE)

I never accused you of being stupid.

NARRATOR

Brennen also pulled himself out of the cave, and untied one of the recently killed men's horses. Regan did the same, but of course, could not let this transpire without comment.

REGAN

So you're fine with stealing horses when you need one?

BRENNEN

These horses were the property of traitors. They are now forfeit to the crown. That's the law.

REGAN

So, armed robbery, then?

7

Int. Cave Mouth - Simultaneous

7

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, the rest of the party had returned to where they originally entered the cave. Yllowynn had heard the clamor of battle outside, and so ventured out to scout, but had just now returned to report his findings to the humans.

YLLOWYYN

The Mooncrest and Redmoor armies slaughtered the Felghir host.

JEN

So that's...a good thing for us?

YLLOWYYN

I can't tell anymore. The horses are gone though.

NIA

I feel the fool for hoping otherwise.

YELLOWYYN

It's about a day's walk back to the city.

NARRATOR

Everyone instinctively looked to Billy, waiting for some obscene complaint to be muttered.

BILLY

(OUT OF IT)

Huh? Oh, that...yeah, that sucks.

8

Ext. Creek - Around Noon

8

NARRATOR

Some hours later, Brennen and Regan were forced to stop and water their horses by a creek.

REGAN

It was overdue. Them boys need to toughen up or they're dead.

BRENNEN

Aye, they do. But it's still more tragedy than they deserve.

REGAN

What fucking tragedy? If they didn't kill that guy, he'da killed them.

BRENNEN

Anyone killed is a tragedy.

REGAN

If you're still sore about Bowen--

BRENNEN

--Of course I am, that's not the gods-damned point.

REGAN

Then please, spare me the goody-goody hand-wringing. I expect better from a fucking General. There are monsters in this world, Brennen. I've met plenty and I'm sure you have too. Men so twisted and evil that the world is better off without them.

BRENNEN

Aye. Is that not a tragedy?

NARRATOR

Regan responded by spurring her horse into a gallop.

- Late Afternoon

NARRATOR

It took them a few more hours to reach lands officially held by Gunther Guernatal, that is you recall, Brennen's liege-lord and Regan's grandfather.

As they neared the first Guernatal outpost of their journey, everything was, ostensibly, in order. From a distance, Brennen could make out two Guernatal officer's uniforms. But, given Brennen's belief that there had been a mutiny, he was cautious.

SOUND: HOOVES SLOW FROM GALLOP TO WALK

REGAN

Do they need to know we're coming?

BRENNEN

No, but I need to know what's happening with Redmoor's men.

REGAN

Are they men you can believe?

BRENNEN

Don't know yet, can't see their faces.

REGAN

Understand something, Brennen. If this little homecoming goes to shit, I'm out. I won't seek vengeance against you if it's not your fault, but you won't see me again. A lifetime of wealth ain't that much if you die tomorrow.

NARRATOR

Brennen trotted his horse forward to get a better look

BRENNEN

I know them. Forgot their names but I know them by sight. Good men.

REGAN

Horseshit. No such thing.

BRENNEN

I've put my life in their hands before.

REGAN

And you don't know their names?

BRENNEN

The benefit of an army bound by honor.

NARRATOR

By now, Brennen and Regan had reached shouting distance of the officers. Although Brennen could not recall their names, they clearly knew their General's.

OFFICER 1

HAIL, GENERAL! WELCOME HOME.

BRENNEN

Thank you, commander. Good to be home.

OFFICER 1

(RE: REGAN)
Who's this?

BRENNEN

New squire.

OFFICER 1

They gave you a girl squ--

REGAN

--Either of you got a silver piece and want your cock sucked?

BRENNEN

[*CLEARs THROAT*]
Has anything happened with Redmoor's garrison?

OFFICER 1

Happened, sir? No, they're vicious, selfish, and stupid as ever.

[*SPITS*]

OFFICER 1 (cont'd)

Shall we return to the castle? Everyone is awaiting news of your mission.

NARRATOR

You might recall, as Brennen did, that his mission was meant to be secret.

BRENNEN

(VERY TENSE)
What mission?

REGAN

What the fuck's going on, Brennen?

OFFICER 1

I'm sorry, sir. They have my wife.

NARRATOR

Redmoor crossbowmen leapt from hiding and shot the horses out from under Brennen and Regan. They jumped clear, but were surrounded and severely outnumbered.

But Regan, ever resourceful when it came to trickery and murder, had managed to produce a small clay pot from some unseen pocket, which she now held over her head.

REGAN

Shoot me and everyone dies.

END OF EPISODE ONE.

EPISODE TWO:

10

Ext. Gaudy Mansion OutsideArmstrungard - Evening

10

NARRATOR

As much as I'm sure you'd like to hear what became of Regan and Brennen after their capture by Redmoor forces, I'm presently going to turn to what the rest of the party was doing all of this, because...well, because I want to, damn it. I'll not apologize for my impeccable sense of dramatic pacing.

While Brennen and Regan approached the fated outpost, the remainder of our party approached a property on the outskirts of Armstrungard owned by an acquaintance of Regan's. When explaining the nature of this property to Nia, Regan had been asked...

SOUND: CHANGE AMBIENCE TO INDICATE A QUICK FLASHBACK CUTAWAY

NIA

So, it's a boarding house then?

REGAN

(EASIER TO LIE)
Sure! You can say that.

SOUND: END FLASHBACK

NARRATOR

They were greeted by an employee of the establishment who yelled down from a second floor window. Had this indeed been a boarding house, she probably would have greeted newcomers at the door instead.

TOPLESS WOMAN

WHAT'S YOUR FANCY, FRIENDS?

NARRATOR

She probably would have also been wearing clothes.

NIA

Oh dear.

YELLOWYYN

(TO NIA)
Allow me.
(SHOUTS UP)
GOOD EVENING. WE WERE SENT BY A FRIEND OF MADAME BAILEY. IS SHE UP FOR ENTERTAINING?

TOPLESS WOMAN
SHE'S ALWAYS UP FOR ENTERTAINING. 'OW MANY YEARS DO
THOSE THREE 'AVE THOUGH?

YLLLOWYYN
BEG YOUR PARDON?

TOPLESS WOMAN
IT'S 13 TO DRINK AND 15 TO SCREW.

YLLLOWYYN
...PERHAPS YOU HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD OUR INTENTIONS.

TOPLESS WOMAN
WELL, WE CATER TO ALL. WATCH THIS.

11

Int. Madame Bailey's Office - A Few

Minutes Later

11

NARRATOR

I'm choosing not to describe to you the demonstration that ensued, for, although shame is not known among the sprites, the traumatized facial expressions of Billy, Jen, and Nelson following this demonstration reinforced my knowledge that shame is a very powerful human emotion.

Once they were safely inside the office of this property's owner, Nia did her best to contextualize what had just been seen.

NIA

...So, you see, the expression of erotic love needn't always be aimed towards procreation.

YLLLOWYYN

Or constrained by standard human anatomy.

NARRATOR

The children's discomfort was amplified by the decor of the office, of which the unifying aesthetic was a pre-occupation with sexual organs.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING

BAILEY

Good evening to you. I understand you were referred to me by a mutual acquaintance.

NARRATOR

The office's owner entered. Aside from her well-worn evening gown, she bore an uncanny resemblance to the Bailey who had sold our travelers armor nearly a fortnight ago.

BILLY

Hey aren't you the armor lady?

BAILEY

No, my sister runs the armory. I get that a lot though.

YELLOWYYN

Might I ask how you came to be acquainted with Ms...

BAILEY

She helped me deal with a few...pushy customers. I feel a bit indebted to her.

YELLOWYYN

We were told you could furnish us with temporary lodging.

NIA

Ideally in a...family-friendly section of the house.

YELLOWYYN

Which we would pay for of course.

BAILEY

I'd be glad to. Just three rules: Any services rendered must be arranged through myself, you break it you buy it, and Sergeant McShane is always right.

YELLOWYYN

Who's Sergeant McShane?

BAILEY

City guard. Thing is, my business is in something of a grey area far as the law is concerned. Sergeant McShane makes sure the relevant authorities see us in the right light.

YELLOWYYN

We shall follow your rules under your roof.

NIA

If I could be so presumptuous as to ask for one more favor - I was hoping you had someone who could do a small chore for me.

BAILEY

Of course! Man or woman?

NIA

Well I suppose it doesn't matter so long as they can read.

BAILEY

Read? Well, to each her own. I'll send someone to your room.

NARRATOR

Madame Bailey winked at Nia as she left.

NIA

Oh, Galadon help me, what did I just ask for?

12

Int. Room in Madame Bailey's -

Night

12

NARRATOR

Later that night, as the party settled into their newfound quarters, Billy and Nelson found themselves stuck alone together. They could only go so long without addressing the killing that transpired the past morning.

NELSON

I know it's good that it happened but it doesn't feel good that we did it.

BILLY

That's what being a man is though, right? You do the stuff other people aren't strong enough for.

NELSON

I don't know if I wanna be that kind of strong.

BILLY

Someone's gotta be.

NELSON

Yeah. That blows.

BILLY

Just try not to think about it for a while.

NELSON

I can't shut off my brain like you can.

BILLY

Oh, your genius brain is so high above mine?

NELSON

I didn't mean that.

BILLY

I'd be smart too if my parents taught college.

NELSON

Or if you actually studied.

BILLY

We don't all get affirmative action, Nelson.

NELSON

Are you...Seriously?! You think I'm better off than you? You wanna switch places with me when we get back?

BILLY

Well not for everything but, like...

NELSON

You know both my parents are dead, right?

BILLY

Yeah, but...ah, there's no but, man. That's my bad.

NELSON

Yeah, well...I think around here we're equally fucked for once.

BILLY

Ha! No bullshit, I kinda thought you'd be more okay with the thing.

NELSON

What thing?

BILLY

You know...

NARRATOR

He pantomimed a stabbing motion.

NELSON

Why would I be okay with that?

BILLY

I dunno. Cause everyone shits on you and you play a lot of videogames. I half expected you to shoot up the school one of these days.

NELSON

Well, turns out I haven't been desensitized to violence after all. Plus, I'm Black, you know. It's only videogames' fault when a white guy shoots up the school. If I did it, they'd find some article my Dad wrote defending Islam or something.

NELSON (cont'd)
That what your Dad taught?

NELSON (cont'd)
Cultural anthropology.

BILLY
I don't even know what the fuck that means.

NELSON
He studied other societies and cultures so he could show how fucked up ours is.

BILLY
What would he say about this fucking place?

NELSON
I don't even know.

BILLY
You know what's fucking with me man? I know we had to do that. But like even if we get back home, I'll never have not killed someone. Like the part of me that's never killed anyone is gonna stay in that cave and it's never gonna come home with me.

A BEAT AS THIS TO SINKS IN.

13

Int. Hallway in Madame Bailey's - 13
Simultaneous

NARRATOR
Now, I've mentioned before that Jen had grown quite attached to a device which she called an "iPhone," and which I admittedly do not understand.

As she stood in the hallway outside the bedrooms, she stared with great melancholy at a message informing her that whatever sorcery powered the device had at last expired.

She threw the device in her "handbag," took a breath, and knocked on the door containing Billy and Nelson.

14

Int. Room In Madame Bailey's - 14
Continuous

SOUND: DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES

JEN
Hey.

BILLY
Hey.

NARRATOR
She sat down next to Billy and kissed him on the cheek.

JEN
How you guys holding up?

BILLY
Fine.

JEN
You sure? You seemed pretty upset before.

BILLY
I'm fine.

JEN
You can talk to me you know. It's all right.

BILLY
How is it all right?!

NARRATOR
Jen stared at Billy for a moment, before standing, and storming out of the room.

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS

BILLY
Shit.

15

Int. Nia's Room In Madame Bailey's
- Simultaneous 15

NARRATOR
Nia, meanwhile, had just finished compiling a list of research materials when there was a knock on her door.

NIA
Come in.

NARRATOR
Jen entered, somewhat sheepishly.

JEN
Am I interrupting anything?

NIA
No, come and sit. How are the boys faring?

JEN
Not well, I don't think.

NIA
Poor things. I'll talk to them as soon as I send out for these books.

JEN
Not sure how far you'll get. When Billy's upset he doesn't really talk about anything.

NIA
I think he is afraid to seem weak.

JEN
Yeah, I just think that maybe if I ask him the right way...

NIA
You mustn't blame yourself. You're a very caring soul, Jen. I hate that you must be in this place.

JEN
My phone just died.

NIA
Your what?

JEN
It's like a...diary that a lot of people from home wrote in. And I can't read it anymore. That was, like, it, you know? Last thing I had that was still like home.

NIA
Why can't you access it?

JEN
How do I explain this? So, lightning. People where I'm from actually study it a lot.

NIA
Some do here as well. Would a lightning enchantment let you access the diary?

JEN
It might, actually. I didn't even think of that.

NIA
I'm sad to say I don't know any. But I'm sending out for books. I can look for a spell that might help.

JEN
I know it must seem crazy but that would help me a lot.

NIA
I don't want to get your hopes up. Lightning spells are especially tricky. And can have some blasphemous associations.

SOUND: KNOCK ON DOOR

NIA (cont'd)
Yes?

NARRATOR
Both women were surprised to see a very handsome man enter the room wearing very little clothing.

JEN
Hello.

NIA
Oh my. I'm afraid your attire may not be appropriate for what--

NARRATOR
--He removed what remained of his clothing without hesitation.

jen
Holy shit!
NIA
Galadon's grace!

NIA
No no no, more clothes not fewer.

NARRATOR
He looked at her, utterly confused.

NIA
We are not going to have relations. Do you understand?

NARRATOR
Now, he nodded in understanding, having had many patrons who had not wanted carnal relations with him. These patrons had, however, typically expected him to have carnal relations with his hand, which he presently set to with wild enthusiasm.

JEN
Okay, so that's happening, and, just, wow.

NIA

I need you to get some books. Can you -- my god, are you dizzy? You can't possibly have enough blood to -- Can you read?

NARRATOR

He nodded yes without missing a beat.

NIA

I'm going to give you a list -- can you please stop that and put your clothes on?

JEN

Well he doesn't need to get dressed for you to give him the list.

NIA

Please get dressed.

NARRATOR

Looking more confused than ever, the man ceased his performance and tried to replace what little clothing he had entered with. In his present state, it didn't quite fit.

JEN

Maybe you should make him some ice.

NIA

Have Madame Bailey give you some street clothes. Then take this list to the library at the College. Pray, bring back the books on it as soon as you can. Thank you.

NARRATOR

Nia handed the man the list, looked him up and down once more, and, with some regret...

NIA

[SIGHS]

NARRATOR

...shooed him towards the door.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSES

THERE IS AN AWKWARD SILENCE.

JEN

So, that was--

NIA --I haven't had a bath since I left the city, so I should probably--

JEN --Right, yeah no me neither.

NIA A cared-for body is a well-ordered body so if you'll--

JEN --totally!

NIA --just excuse me.

NARRATOR
This uncomfortable exchange was interrupted when a young girl ran into the room and dove under the bed. Nia and Jen exchanged befuddled looks before Jen dropped to her knees to address the diminutive intruder.

JEN
Hi, honey. Are you lost? Where's your mommy and daddy?

NARRATOR
The girl was silently crying. The door opened again, and the handsome man who had recently left entered again, closing the door behind him and blocking it with his body. He looked terrified.

NIA
What in Iorden--

PROSTITUTE
SHHHHH!

NARRATOR
Jen looked to Nia, troubled. From the hallway, they could make out two pairs of footsteps - one of heavy boots and the other of a fashionable woman.

BAILEY
(O.S., FAR-OFF THROUGH DOOR)
You know how fickle children can be.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS REACH CENTER. KNOCK ON DOO

BAILEY (cont'd)
(THROUGH DOOR)
Nia?

NARRATOR

The man pointed towards the girl under the bed and desperately shook his head "no."

BAILEY

(THROUGH DOOR)
Am I interrupting anything?

NARRATOR

Jen realized what needed to be done, steeled her nerves, took a deep breath...

16

Int. Hallway In Madame Bailey's -

Continuous

16

JEN

(THROUGH DOOR)
[EPIC, SCENERY-DEVOURING FAKE ORGASMIC MOANS]

SOUND: DOOR CREAKS OPEN

NIA

Sorry, our young Jen has grown quite fond of the errand boy you sent.

NARRATOR

-lied Nia, as she poked her head out to address Madame Bailey and the well-groomed city guardsman she was with.

NIA

How much do I owe you?

BAILEY

On the house. You haven't by chance seen a little girl running around tonight, have you?

NIA

Afraid I haven't.

BAILEY

The poor dear's gone missing at bedtime. If you see or hear anything, please let me know.

NIA

I surely will.

BAILEY

Thank you. Oh and where are my manners? Nia, this is Sergeant McShane.

NARRATOR

Nia struggled to feign a smile.

NIA

Pleasure.

17

- Nearly Continuous

Int. Nia's room in Madame Bailey's

17

NARRATOR

As Nia closed the door to her room behind her, she saw Jen sitting on the bed with the man, comforting the girl. This was the first time she had a chance to notice the striking resemblance between the girl and the man. It was also the first time she had ever seen such fury in Jen's eyes.

END OF EPISODE TWO.

EPISODE THREE:

18

Ext. Castle Ironhertz, Outer Hold -Afternoon

18

NARRATOR

Now, to understand much of what follows in our tale, you will need to know a bit about what had been happening in the west with the rebel general Traft. I wish there were a better time to explain this, but soon, things are going to get very interesting indeed for our party of travelers. So, best to tell you about Traft now.

You'll recall the unfortunate blacksmith who was taken prisoner on his way back to the now ruined Castle Ironhertz. What? You didn't think I'd introduce you to a man just as tragedy befell him, only to never speak of him again, did you? What sort of lunatic would do such a thing?

In any event, we rejoin the blacksmith as his cloaked captors led him through the ruins of his hometown.

SMITH

[SOBS QUIETLY]

NARRATOR

He wept for the devastation he saw, and for the many mutilated bodies of the men charged with defending the town. Then they came to the town square.

SOUND: PEOPLE SNARLING AND GROWLING

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The smith had of course heard stories of Orcs before, but had counted himself fortunate that he had never seen an Orc. Until now. Now he saw pointed teeth and ashen skin and gruesome war paint. In short, he saw everything the stories warned of. Which is, of course, the great power of stories...but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Though the rest of the surviving townsmen were encircled by several dozen Orcs, the smith was led past them towards a recently erected tent.

NARRATOR

This was General Traft's command tent. In it, Traft had counsel with chieftains of the various Orc tribes which comprised his army.

CHIEFTAIN 1

The Civic Guard will be here by night. If we hold until morning, our reinforcements will defeat them, and we can attack Blackhold.

ALL IN ROOM

[SPIT ANGRILY]

TRAFT

How many brothers survived this last attack?

NARRATOR

...said Traft, in a tongue that I am doing my best to translate. Its name meant 'army,' and it had been created so that the clans could converse in their camps. It was...well, they were still working on it.

CHIEFTAIN 2

Many brothers fell before the Templars could open the gate.

CHIEFTAIN 3

I dislike the Templars, brother general.

CHIEFTAIN 1

What did he say about my mother?

CHIEFTAIN 2

"Templars." He dislikes the Templars. Remember? "RrretmA?" means "cares-for-things." "RrretmAa" means "cares-for-people."

CHIEFTAIN 3

Respect, brother. But I don't know why my mother is involved.

TRAFT

(TO HIMSELF)

Oh, Garedian help us, we need to fix this language.

(TO CHIEFTAIN 2)

Continue your report, brother.

CHIEFTAIN 2

Near to 400 brothers remain. I'm less concerned with numbers than with arms. They have Easterner steel.

TRAF T

That is being worked on.

NARRATOR

As if on cue, the cloaked things - Templars, Traft called them - just then entered the tent with the smith in tow. Traft switched to the common tongue of the human realms of Iorden.

TRAF T

Just as I said. Leave us, please.

NARRATOR

The smith looked at this half-Orc general he had heard so much about. His body was sinewy, his tanned head was shaved, and his face was decorated with Orcish war paint. Six hills clan, specifically, but of course the smith didn't know that.

TRAF T

Have a seat.

NARRATOR

The smith looked around and saw no chairs. Traft casually tossed aside his weapons - a double-headed scythe and a miner's axe - and sat on the ground. Cautiously, the smith followed his lead.

TRAF T

I don't think it's rude if I assume you know who I am.

SMITH

You're General Traft.

TRAF T

Sorry to say, I don't know who you are. I know what you do, but I don't know who you are. What's your name?

SMITH

It's Smith.

TRAF T

HA!! No shit? You're a smith and you're called 'Smith?'

SMITH

My father was called Smith. So was his father.

TRAF T

That ever bother you?

SMITH

I'm not ashamed of what I do.

TRAF T

You shouldn't be. But I mean does it ever bother you that they name you after what you do for them?

SMITH

I...I don't think I understand.

TRAF T

You will, hopefully. Let me get right to it, Smith the smith. I know there's a pretty sizeable arsenal near here. I know it was promised to the Civic Guard, but I'm pretty sure they ain't claimed it yet. I know you know where it's at because you put it there. I'm very keen to acquire that arsenal, Smith the smith, and I'd kindly appreciate if you told me where to find it.

SMITH

(FRIGHTENED)

What happens if I don't?

TRAF T

Well, I'll be forced to retreat, the Civic Guard will take this castle, and I'll keep on with this war for a while longer. Probably lose eventually. They'll flay me to death, and that'll be the story of me.

SMITH

I mean what happens to me?

TRAF T

Well, I reckon you'll live out the rest of your days about the same as you been doing.

SMITH

You're not gonna torture me?

TRAF T

How much they paying you for that arsenal, Smith?

SMITH

...A fair price.

TRAF T

Gimme a number, maybe I can do you better.

SMITH

I'm not gonna betray the realm for some extra gold.

TRAF T

You know what alchemy is, Smith the smith?

SMITH

That's when you make gold out of something else?

TRAF T

Right. Out of something more common, or else what's the sense? It's quite the power.

SMITH

No one's ever done it.

TRAF T

But they have. The Princes of Iorden, and their Elf overlords, have mastered alchemy. They figured out how to turn your sweat into their gold. They use the steel that you break your back to make, so that they can defend their lands.

SMITH

When they defend their lands, they defend everyone.

TRAF T

And how defended do you feel right now? They collect taxes on the lands they hold, don't they? And profit off the fruits of those lands? Do you see any of that profit?

SMITH

I get enough to feed my family.

TRAF T

You ain't got a family. You'da already asked about them.

SMITH

When I did, I mean.

TRAF T

What happened to them?

SMITH

They returned to Galadon.

TRAF T

If I remember, there was a pretty bad fever swept through the foothills about five or six years ago. I'm guessing that's what got 'em.

SMITH

It was an Orc raid. Down by the river when they went to get water.

TRAF T
...I'm sorry to hear that, Smith.

SMITH
You're sorry? Then put a stop to it! Take your monsters back across the mountains where they belong!

TRAF T
Why do you think those raids happen, Smith?

SMITH
How should I know? Savages.

TRAF T
Do you know how I was conceived, Smith?

SMITH
I wasn't there.

TRAF T
But you musta heard tell.

SMITH
Orc raid.

TRAF T
Please continue.

SMITH
Well, you know how people talk...

TRAF T
I'm sure I do. Tell me what they've said.

SMITH
They say that an Orc...well, your mother was alone...

TRAF T
An Orc raped my mother and that's where I come from, right?

SMITH
That's what they say.

TRAF T
There were probably around 50 Orcs in that raiding party. A dozen or so got it in their heads to start raping. My father wanted to stop them. He hid my mother - a human woman he didn't know at all - and fought off a dozen of his peers before the Chieftain came through and broke up the fight. That is the story she told me, on her deathbed.

SMITH

So maybe some Orcs have some decency in them. What's your point?

TRAF T

My point, Smith the smith, is to be wary of stories you hear. Especially ones that help the powerful stay in power. Those Princes I strung up - I asked each of them, "who do you serve?" First few thought it'd be brave to say, "galadon, the realm, and the king." After I hung a couple, they started saying they'd serve me, or they'd serve whoever I wanted them to. Now that really made me sore. They jumped from serving the people who had power over them most of their lives, to serving the man who had power over them right then, namely, me. No one thought for half a gods-damned second that maybe they should serve someone with less power than them. You see, Smith, everyone in this world has to choose who they're going to serve. Unfortunately, you're gonna have to choose a little sooner than you might like.

NARRATOR

Now Traft straightened up and looked Smith straight in the eyes.

TRAF T

They weren't gonna pay you for the arsenal were they? They was gonna claim a "Crisis of the Realm," and take it all for free.

NARRATOR

Smith blinked first.

TRAF T

That's what I thought. What if you still had a family? You'd be counting on payment for those weapons to feed them. What about your friends who mine the iron and coal for your steel. Don't they have families? Shouldn't they see some of the wealth that the Princes of Iorden gain with the iron they mine? With the steel you make?

SMITH

Hard work is its own reward. And there's honor in living within modest means.

TRAF T

Did Hans Ironhertz's wife ever have to go outside the walls to get water?

SMITH

It's a lady's right, to be safe in her family's castle.

TRAFI

Who gave her that right? Who denied that right to your wife?

SMITH

Galadon.

NARRATOR

Smith traced the circle around his heart.

TRAFI

Dubious theology aside, how do they hold onto that right?

SMITH

It's just the way of things.

TRAFI

What if before I come through here, y'all just marched up to the inner hold and demanded to stay?

SMITH

I imagine they'd tell us to leave.

TRAFI

And if you didn't? If you stayed, and started pounding on the gates? Can you imagine any way that wouldn't end with y'all getting cut down?

SMITH

I suppose I can't.

TRAFI

They'da cut your own wife down with steel you made. The blood of commoners is the not-so-secret ingredient in their alchemy. Before me, every war you saw was between once Prince and another. That is what they do, with the steel, and gold, born of common sweat. Not bread for your belly, not a home for your family, not shoes for your children. Instead of feeding you, they feed the monster they created: War, so that they may become more powerful.

SMITH

But you started a war.

TRAFI

My war, Smith, is for the people who've never had power. I can't promise that no evil will come of it. I can't even promise that the results'll be good, all

(MORE)

TRAFI (cont'd)

told. But I can promise this'll be the first war you'll see not fought for the strong to get stronger. So here's my question for you, Smith. Smith the man. Smith the townsman. Smith the sculptor of steel. Smith the widower, whose wife contracted a fatal case of not being born to the right family. Who do you serve? The Princes, who've proven in no uncertain terms that they do not serve you? Or will you serve those who actually need your help?

SMITH

How do I know who you actually wanna help? You're a chaos-worshipper.

TRAFI

Well, Smith, it's my word against theirs. So, what you need to ask yourself is if you believe what they've told you in the past. That answer you gave, as to why your wife had to die - that it's their right, that it's the order of things, that Galadon willed it. You need to ask yourself whether you're really satisfied with that answer.

20

Ext. Foothills - A Few Hours Later

20

NARRATOR

The small detachment of Civic Guard had traveled non-stop since dawn. They were relieved to finally reach the hill marked on the map that Smith had given to them when he pledged the weapons. They fumbled around for a while to find the well-concealed tarp, and then excitedly pulled it back to reveal...

...An empty hole. Then the ambush came.

SOUND: SHRIEKS, SCREAMS, AND SWORDS CLANGING UNDER DIALOGUE

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The realization that haunted these Guardsmen in their dying moments was not that the Orcs had found them, but rather that the Orcs who beset them were armed, not with stone weapons, but with well-made steel.

END OF EPISODE THREE.

EPISODE FOUR:

21

Ext. Cottage Near Castle Guernatal- Around Noon

21

NARRATOR

We'll now rejoin Brennen and Regan. You'll recall that the pair had been ambushed, but Regan had managed to stalemate an otherwise hopeless confrontation by brandishing a small clay pot.

REGAN

You fuckers know what this shit is? Ever heard of thunder dust? Yeah you have. You shoot me, I drop this, and we get blown to Selbirin.

OFFICER 1

Don't be a fool, girl. They can just walk out of range.

NARRATOR

...said a Guernatal officer, regarding the several Redmoor crossbow men with sights on Brennen and Regan.

REGAN

Yeah, but the General still gets turned to Shepherd's pie.

OFFICER 1

They want him dead. Their orders are kill on sight.

REGAN

Sure. But I'll bet whoever put them up to it is gonna wanna see some proof. So they need a recognizable corpse. So you're just gonna head right back that way, and we're gonna head back this way.

BRENNEN

No we're not.

REGAN

What?!

OFFICER 1

What?!

BRENNEN (cont'd)

We're going to the castle.

REGAN

Have you lost your fucking mind?

BRENNEN

Take us to His Majesty, tell us who started this mutiny, and I'll petition for your lives to be spared.

REGAN

Hang on. I've got the thunder dust. So we're going where I say.

BRENNEN

I'm the body they're keeping you alive for. We go where I say. And I say the castle.

SOUND: PRE-LAP: ARLENE YELPS

22

Int. Arlene's bedchambers - A

Little While Later

22

NARRATOR

Arlene's yelp was in response to an ear piercing that Gwen had just performed for her.

GWEN

It's all right, m'lady. Worst of it's over.

NARRATOR

Gwen pulled the needle through, and with it some fine silver thread. She fastened a knot around her lady's ear to shape it into a point. Like an elf's.

GWEN

I still don't know why you poor highborn girls have to go through all that for a wedding. I think your ears are perfectly fair the way they are.

ARLENE

[CRIES]

GWEN

Oh, no, no! I didn't mean -- they look beautiful.

ARLENE

(THROUGH TEARS)

I failed us Gwen. I could have stopped him, had I any courage at all.

GWEN

It wasn't the right moment.

ARLENE

Then when is? He's more powerful than ever now.

GWEN

Ardel's not as clever as he thinks he is. We'll get another chance.

ARLENE

And I'll fail again like I've failed all my life.

GWEN

You haven't failed all your life.

ARLENE

Haven't I?! Then show me one gods-damned thing I have to show for my successes!

NARRATOR

Gwen looked down, hurt.

ARLENE

I didn't mean to shout at you, Gwen.

GWEN

You needn't apologize. You may speak to your servants however you wish.

ARLENE

You must realize by now that you're more than a servant to me. Please don't stay cross with me. You're the only one who's ever truly shown me kindness...

GWEN

You've worried yourself sick these last few days, m'lady. Why don't we take a walk in the garden?

NARRATOR

Arlene laid down on her side.

ARLENE

Will you lay with me, Gwen? Just for a little while.

NARRATOR

After a moment of surprise at this novel request, Gwen obliged.

ARLENE

Did my embrace truly mean that much to you? Back when you were homesick?

GWEN

Of course, m'lady. I knew I'd found a home.

ARLENE

What's that feel like?

NARRATOR

Gwen moved herself close to Arlene and put an arm around her. Both closed their eyes, drinking in a feeling that almost resembled safety.

ARLENE

Tell me I'm good.

GWEN

(WHISPERS, SOOTHING)
You're good.

ARLENE

Tell me I'm worth something.

GWEN

(WHISPERS, SOOTHING)
You're worth the world.

ARLENE

Tell me I'll be happy one day.

NARRATOR

Almost without realizing she was doing it, Gwen placed a gentle kiss on Arlene's neck.

Their eyes jolted open, and Arlene whirled around to look at Gwen. The two looked at each other with the same look you might see when a doe spots a hunter. Before either could say or do anything further--

SOUND: TOWER BELLS

GWEN

What's going on?

ARLENE

Emergency court meeting.

23

Int. Guernatal Royal Study - A Few

Minutes Later

23

NARRATOR

The emergency meeting had been called as a result of some important news Ardel Redmoor had gotten from one of his advisors.

ARDEL

Captured? My orders were kill on sight. Now I'll need to arrange a whole show of a trial. Give the men who captured him their 100 gold pieces. Then have them killed for disobeying my orders.

SOUND: BELLS AGAIN

Later

NARRATOR

Arlene and Gwen entered the main hall through an upper-level gallery and looked down at Ardel, sitting smugly in the throne he had recently usurped from Gunther Guernatal.

There was palpable shock in the court when the main doors flew open and Brennen strode in, shackled.

BRENNEN

Your Majesty, I have been--

NARRATOR

--That was when he saw Ardel Redmoor, sitting where Gunther Guernatal should have been.

BRENNEN

You impudent ingrate! How dare you presume to sit in that throne?! Where is His Majesty?

NARRATOR

Regan, also shackled, was led into the hall behind Brennen.

ARDEL

He awaits trial for treasons against the realm, blasphemies against Galadon, and issuing orders which would bring dishonor.

BRENNEN

You're a liar. None of this will stand.

ARDEL

General Brennen of Blackhold, you are charged with conspiracy to commit treason against the realm, conspiracy to blaspheme against Galadon, carrying out dishonorable orders and - oh why not - consorting with prostitutes in a manner unbecoming an Officer. How do you plead?

BRENNEN

I'll die before I'm judged by the likes of you.

ARDEL

You are now charged with obstructing an investigation of this court. Do you deny leaving this castle under clandestine orders from Gunther Guernatal?

BRENNEN

There's a special rack in Selbirin for traitors you up-jumped shit.

COMPANY

[Disapproving MURMURS.]

ARDEL

You are now charged with addressing nobility in an obscene manner. You will face trial in the morning. Take him away.

NARRATOR

Two of Ardel's men tried to follow this order, but they could not get Brennen's considerable heft to budge.

BRENNEN

Get your hands off me you fucking swine.

ARDEL

That's two counts of obscenity.

NARRATOR

It finally took six men to drag the raging general away.

ARDEL

You...

NARRATOR

...Meaning Regan...

ARDEL

You are charged with vagrancy, lewdity, and seducing an officer of the military. How do you plead?

REGAN

Bite my cunt.

COMPANY

[GASPS AND FAINTING SOUNDS]

ARDEL

In the morning you will be hung from your neck until dead.

REGAN

And give my asshole a couple licks while you're down there.

COMPANY

[EVEN MORE EXTREME GASPS]

REGAN

What? That's just common courtesy.

25

Int. Castle Guernatal Dungeon -

Night

25

NARRATOR

His Majesty High King Gunther Guernatal was sitting on the stone floor of a dungeon cell in no way fit for royalty when he heard the heavy footsteps. Soon he was face to face with the captured general in whom all his hopes for salvation had once rested.

26

Same - A Little While Later

26

NARRATOR

They sat in silence for several minutes, before Gunther decided what he wanted to say.

GUNTHER

It's not your fault.

BRENNEN

If I had gotten her back a bit sooner...

GUNTHER

You couldn't have predicted Redmoor's betrayal.

BRENNEN

[SPITS]

GUNTHER

I'm supposed to be the one with a mind for politics.

BRENNEN

Vicious men triumph because they do things virtuous men would never think of.

GUNTHER

It would have been nice to meet her.

BRENNEN

She's...she's of a different world than you or I.

GUNTHER

No doubt. What's her name, by the way?

BRENNEN

Aerona Regan.

GUNTHER

Aerona? That's a name from the old times. Her Grandma loved all the stories from the old times.

BRENNEN

But it's blasphemy to praise the false idols of the past.

GUNTHER

Indeed. But the thing about women is that the blasphemous ones are often--well, never mind all that. You never got to read much history did you?

BRENNEN

Never found the time.

GUNTHER

Mm. How could you? I always had you out killing someone or another for me.

BRENNEN

It was my greatest honor to serve.

GUNTHER

I know, friend, I know. I should have knighted you. I'm sorry about that. I was always waiting for the right time to deal with all the backlash.

A SLIGHTLY TENSE SILENCE.

BRENNEN

So who was this Aeronia from the old times?

GUNTHER

Well, they pronounced it Eye-urrrr-Ron-uh then. Back before the Elves brought peace and men were just warring tribes, she was a famous warrior queen.

BRENNEN

Sounds about right.

GUNTHER

Oh?

BRENNEN

She's violent, devious, ruthless, uncompromising, doesn't give a damn about anyone but herself...

GUNTHER

So, you're saying...

BRENNEN

If only she gave a damn about anyone but herself, she'd be a perfect Queen.

27

Int. Another Part of the Dungeon -
27

Simultaneous

NARRATOR

Elsewhere in the dungeon, a somewhat dense Redmoor soldier left Regan standing in a corner with her hands shackled behind her back while he tried fruitlessly to open and examine her bedroll.

He was thus distracted when Regan squatted and scooted her manacled hands behind her to the back of her knees. In the same motion, she sat and rocked backward, and passed the chain under her feet, and then stood instantly and effortlessly. If it looked like a thing she'd practiced many times, it was.

She crept up behind the soldier...

SOUND: CHAIN JINGLES VERY QUICKLY--

SOLDIER

[chokes]

SOUND: POP OF A BLOOD VESSEL AND SPRAY OF BLOOD

28

Int. Nia's Room in Madame Bailey's
28

- Simultaneous

NARRATOR

We shall take a turn from that grizzly scene back to Madame Bailey's. You'll recall that, in order to protect a young girl, Jen had recently proved herself a passable thespian.

Her performance was at least convincing enough to make Billy come running, and to barely notice the young girl in the room when he saw the scantily clad man.

BILLY

What the fuck's happening, Jen?

YELLOWYYN

Sometimes at the peak of erotic excitement--

BILLY

--Weenie, shut the FUCK UP!

(TO JEN)

I leave you alone for ten minutes and you're nailing this guy?!

JEN

No, that's not -- Christ, Billy, everything is not about you!

DEAD, HEAVY AIR

NELSON

What's that kid doing here?

NIA

Close the door.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING

NIA (cont'd)

Jen's "performance" was a ruse to keep Sergeant McShane away.

NELSON

Which one is Sergeant McShane again?

YELLOWYYN

If I recall, he is city guard and friend to our host.

PROSTITUTE

He's a monster. He knows sons and daughters of whores have nowhere else to go. That's why he comes here.

BILLY

Wait, comes here for what?

JEN

He's a child molester, Billy.

BILLY

Woah. Shit. Are you sure?

PROSTITUTE

I'm sure.

YELLOWYYN

No offense, but are we expected to merely take your word?

JEN

(RE: THE YOUNG GIRL)

I saw the way she looked when she came in here. Whatever he wanted with her, it wasn't anything good.

NELSON

So what do we do?

BILLY

We kick his fucking ass is what we do.

YELLOWYYN

Why not just report him to his superiors? Surely they would disapprove.

PROSTITUTE

Then we'll all be in jail and the kids'll be in orphanages. It's no better for them in there.

NIA

We should leave this place.

(TO THE PROSTITUTE)

We can escort you two as far as--

PROSTITUTE

--You think I'm here because I got better options?

NIA

Yllowyyyn, take the children elsewhere. I'll stay here to hide these two until McShane leaves.

JEN

What about all the other kids?

NIA

I can only hide so many in this room before someone notices.

JEN

We need to stop him or it's just gonna keep happening.

NIA

This world is filled with evil. The righteous must choose their battles. We cannot win this one.

JEN

I refuse to believe that.

NIA

Well we certainly can't do anything tonight. Let's try to get some sleep, and think on it in the morning.

NARRATOR

Jen stroked the young girl's hair.

JEN

You're going to be all right. I promise.

29

Int. Castle Guernatal Kitchen - A 29

Little While Later

NARRATOR

Back at Castle Guernatal, Gwen searched the cavernous pantry for some sweet to cheer up her mistress. As she moved aside a small barrel--

SOUND: CAT HISSES

GWEN

Ingrid! Get!

NARRATOR

A mangy cat skulked away deeper into the shelves.

SOUND: (FROM ANOTHER ROOM) A MAN'S PAINED GROAN AND THEN FRIGHTENED SCREAMING

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Sensing the commotion outside was nothing good, Gwen looked frantically for a place to hide in the pantry. She found a barely remembered service door that led through some tunnels and out of the castle. She had no intention of leaving, but she breathed a sigh of relief at having a way out if the need should--

REGAN

Move.

NARRATOR

Gwen wheeled around to see a Mooncrest-style sword pointed at her. Holding it was the very determined-looking woman she had seen in court a few hours before.

REGAN

Move or you die.

GWEN

You're the one they brought in with the General.

REGAN

And I'll be leaving by myself, right through that door. Maybe over your corpse but that's up to you.

GWEN

You escaped.

REGAN

I can see you're a little slow so I'm gonna give you one more try.

GWEN

How many men did you kill to escape?

REGAN

As many I had to. If you move right the fuck now you won't be one of them. If not, I will put this sword through you and you will die. Got it?

GWEN

You can save the King and the General.

REGAN

But I won't. Last chance.

GWEN

Help us. I beg of you.

REGAN

(MOSTLY TO HERSELF, RESIGNED)
Fuck. I tried.

NARRATOR

Gwen closed her eyes as Regan raised her sword--

SOUND: CAT SCREECHES

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The mangy cat leapt at Regan. Reflexively, Regan flicked her sword towards her feline assailant. Two bloody halves of Ingrid the cat fell to the ground.

REGAN

Shit.

NARRATOR

Strangely, and for the first time in many years, it took concentration for Regan to not look shaken.

REGAN

Was that your cat?

GWEN

Wasn't really anyone's, but I fed her.

REGAN

Sorry about that. So do I have to kill you too?

GWEN

No. You can help instead.

REGAN

You're not gonna be a hero. You're just gonna be dead. Servants don't make it into the songs.

GWEN

Ardel Redmoor is a monster. Good people will suffer if he's not stopped.

REGAN

Good people suffer no matter what. I don't need to suffer too. Sorry, sweetheart. Do yourself a favor and close your eyes.

GWEN

No.

REGAN

Have it your way.

NARRATOR

Regan raised the sword once more--

GWEN

--Look me in the eyes. Understand the pain and despair that's brought me to this. Does that make you feel nothing?

REGAN

Nope.

GWEN

I'm sorry. I imagine in your shoes I'd say the same, but I'm sorry.

REGAN

Oh gods fucking damnit, what are you so eager to die for?!

GWEN

Love.

REGAN

Love? Love?! Are you fucking -- LOVE?! You scrape up everyone's shit so they'll feed you! How could you possibly be so fucking stupid as to love anything?

GWEN

Only other choice is to hate everything. That's not living.

REGAN

You get that off some horseshit preacher?

GWEN

Me sister. Before she died.

BRENNEN

Just tell me I served you well, and I'll die content.

32

Few Minutes Earlier Int. Castle Guernatal Kitchen - A 32

NARRATOR

Regan could not help but feel a bit sorry for the serving girl she had just met, for though Gwen was very much alive, like as not she would have to clean up the trail of Redmoor corpses Regan had made on her way back through the kitchen and back down to the dungeon.

33

Continuous Int. Castle Guernatal Dungeon - 33

REGAN

Hey General!

NARRATOR

As she committed herself to a decision she sorely hoped she would not regret, Brennen's eyes snapped up at the sound of the last voice he ever expected to hear.

REGAN

I think we're due to leave.

END OF EPISODE FOUR.

EPISODE FIVE:

34 Time Unclear Dream Sequence: Country Manor - 34

NARRATOR

Nia dreamt of her childhood, of riding ponies on her father's lands with her sisters. It was a fond memory, which made the black silhouette dancing frantically on the horizon all the more worrying in comparison.

Nia jumped as a small hand brushed her leg. She looked down at a small girl she had never seen before. The girl seemed unperturbed by the gaping puncture wound in her chest.

YOUNG GIRL

There are seven things you must know to save me. The fourth thing is: I shall ride to safety on the wings of the Storm.

35 - Continuous Int. Nia's Room in Madame Bailey's 35

NARRATOR

Nia's eyes popped open in the armchair in her room at Madame Bailey's. She was moist with cold sweat. Across the room in her bed were the prostitute and his young sister.

36 Simultaneous Int. Bath in Madame Bailey's - 36

NARRATOR

Elsewhere in the house, Jen bathed in a brass tub. She found her anger had improved her concentration. If you had looked closely, you would have seen the fine hairs on her arm stand on end, though the skin around them was not raised as it would have been were she cold.

BILLY

Hey babe?

NARRATOR

Jen opened her eyes to see Billy standing in the doorway.

BILLY

I'm sorry. I'm kinda...messed up right now.

JEN

Yeah. Me too.

NARRATOR

Billy sat near the tub.

JEN

You wanna talk about it?

BILLY

Not really. But not because of you or anything. I just don't know what to say.

JEN

That's okay.

BILLY

You seemed pretty pissed before.

JEN

We don't have to talk about everything. I just...neither of us was ready for this place. We need each other. It's okay for me to have your back sometimes.

BILLY

I know. But it's like...a crisis is when a man has to be a man the most.

JEN

Your dad tell you that?

BILLY

TV.

JEN

To be honest, I was getting pretty tired of the men on TV.

NARRATOR

She leaned in gently to kiss Billy--

SOUND: STATIC ELECTRICITY CRACKLES

BILLY

Ow!

JEN

What?

BILLY

Got shocked. That was weird.

JEN

Come here.

NARRATOR

She kissed him passionately as she removed his shirt.

37

Middle of the Night

Int. Castle Guernatal Dungeon -

37

NARRATOR

In the dungeon of Castle Guernatal, Regan opened the cell that held Brennen.

REGAN

On your feet, grandpa. Don't make me regret this.

NARRATOR

She dropped his weapons on the floor in front of him.

BRENNEN

Get His Majesty.

NARRATOR

Regan opened the adjacent cell. She and His Majesty, High King Gunther Guernatal saw each other for the first time.

GUNTHER

Is this her, Brennen?

BRENNEN

Aye.

GUNTHER

Let me look on you.

REGAN

So this is my grandpa...grandpa?

BRENNEN

You should kneel before His Majesty.

REGAN

We should get the fuck out of here. Please tell me you know a better way than straight up the stairs.

38

Passage - Late Night

Int. Castle Guernatal, Secret

38

NARRATOR

Brennen led them through the same tunnel he used when last he left Castle Guernatal.

REGAN

Why'd you say my name like that?

GUNTHER

Aerona?

REGAN

Yeah, that's what my ma used to say when she was mad at me.

GUNTHER

That's how it was said in the old times. Your grandmother used to love stories about the old times.

REGAN

You mean before you fucked her and left her to starve?

BRENNEN

See what I mean?

GUNTHER

You could do to learn some manners, girl.

REGAN

Gods, I shoulda just left you behind.

BRENNEN

(MOCKING)

I see you went back for your bedroll.

REGAN

I sleep better with it.

BRENNEN

You never struck me as one concerned with creature comforts.

REGAN

I sleep better with it.

BRENNEN

Here we are.

NARRATOR

The light from the torch Brennen carried revealed a lever on the wall, and a faint outline of a doorway.

GUNTHER

It breaks my heart to retreat from my own house, Brennen.

BRENNEN

We'll be back before long. And I'll bring you the head of that usurping little shit.

NARRATOR

Brennen pulled the lever and the wall slid open--

SOUND: POURING RAIN

--A Redmoor soldier was waiting in the pouring rain with a crossbow. Brennen and Regan reflexively dodged his bolt as Regan sent a razor star whistling through the soldier's throat.

GUNTHER

[GROANS AND COUGHS]

NARRATOR

They looked back and saw the bolt buried in Gunther's chest. He coughed blood and fell to his knees as Brennen ran to catch him.

BRENNEN

Don't worry, we'll get you to a doctor. I'm sure we can find one in Armstrungard.

NARRATOR

But the King's eyes were empty.

BRENNEN

You just need to stay awake for a little while.

REGAN

Brennen...

BRENNEN

Be quiet and help me move him.

REGAN

Brennen, you know damn well--

BRENNEN

--Shut up.

REGAN

He's dead, and we will be too if we don't leave right now.

NARRATOR

Three Redmoor pikemen came to block the apparently not-so-secret exit.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Halt! In the name of The Lord Regent!

NARRATOR

Brennen looked them in the eyes for half a moment, and then unleashed a terrible and inhuman sound.

BRENNEN

[INHUMAN ROAR]

NARRATOR

The faces of the soldiers turned to pale terror. They dropped their pikes and turned to flee, but Brennen was on them. He swung his axe once, and cut the three men clean in half.

Through the rain, Brennen could make out two men trying clumsily to run away through the mud. This time, he recognized the two Guernatal officers who had aided in his capture immediately.

He hit each in the leg with a throwing axe and trotted up to the now lamed men.

OFFICER 1

General! Mercy please.

NARRATOR

He ripped off both of their helms, quickly and deliberately.

OFFICER 1

They had my wife. What could I--[muffled]

NARRATOR

Brennen grabbed each man around the mouth and lifted them off the ground, one in each hand.

OFFICER 1

(MUFFLED)

My wife will starve--

NARRATOR

He brought their heads together with terrible force.

OFFICER 1

(DAZED)

No. Please.

NARRATOR

Again. And again. And again.

SOUND: CRACK. CRUNCH. EACH SUCCESSIVE BASH BECOMES MORE AND MORE OF A SQUISH.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

When he held only two fistfuls of bloody pulp, only then did he let the bodies fall into the mud.

The excitement of battle and exhaustion in his arms meant that he noticed the arrow strike his arm as a

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

detached observer. He saw the archer on the ramparts frantically trying to reload and planted a throwing axe squarely in his chest.

Before more could replace him, Brennen made haste back to the secret exit.

SOUND: SWORD SLASH AND IMPACT

He arrived in time to see Regan deliver a killing stroke to the last of four Redmoor soldiers.

BRENNEN

There'll be more coming.

NARRATOR

Regan produced a large clay pot.

REGAN

Not through this door.

NARRATOR

Brennen saw that the creek into which the sewage pipe entered was running white and furious in the downpour. He hoisted Gunther's body over his shoulders...

BRENNEN

Into the creek.

NARRATOR

...and dove in. Regan lobbed the pot down the corridor, and dove in as well, as her pot exploded and collapsed the tunnel.

Redmoor cavalry tried to give chase, but the mud was disastrous for their horses. Arrows fell ineffectually into the water, and archers watched with despair as three shapes disappeared in the torrent.

39

Int. Nia's Room in Madame Bailey's

- Dawn

39

NARRATOR

The sun was just rising on Madame Bailey's when there was a knock on Nia's door.

NIA

Who is it?

NARRATOR

The young girl Nia was hiding darted under the bed.

JEN
It's Jen.

NARRATOR
Nia cautiously cracked the door to check, and then let Jen in.

JEN
I saw him outside. Getting ready to leave.

NIA
McShane?

JEN
Yeah.

NIA
Good. When he does, we can depart this wicked place.

JEN
That won't fix anything. It's gonna keep happening.

NIA
We'll have saved one child. At least for a while. Please, Jen. Let it go. This is the kind of wickedness so vile and rotten that it pollutes even those who combat it.

NARRATOR
Jen looked over to the prostitute and his young sister, desperate for something to say.

JEN
I'm sorry.

PROSTITUTE
What are you sorry for?

JEN
I don't know. Everything.

PROSTITUTE
I do like some things about my life.

JEN
I know what--I just wouldn't have liked it if someone looked at me the way I was looking at you.

PROSTITUTE
You're not me.

JEN
No. I coulda walked away.

NIA
You should go and gather your things. Tell the boys as well.

40

Ext. Shallow Creek - Dawn

40

NARRATOR
Regan awoke on the banks of a small lake to the sound of Brennen groaning...

BRENNEN
[GROANS]

NARRATOR
...and popped up with her sword ready.

REGAN
What's happening?!

BRENNEN
I'm fucking old is what's happening.

NARRATOR
Brennen ripped the arrow out of his arm and held his hand over the bleeding wound.

REGAN
You just fought harder than most young men I've seen.

BRENNEN
Aye, and I did it with the body of one fucking old one.

NARRATOR
That's when he saw the lifeless body of the former High King, His Late Majesty Gunther Guernatal. As he painfully remembered all that had brought him to the banks of this lake, his face betrayed a furious kind of despair that very few people could understand.

REGAN
I'm sorry about the King, Brennen. There was nothing you--

NARRATOR
Brennen leapt to his feet and unslung his axe. Regan instinctively went for her sword, but Brennen dropped his axe at her feet.

BRENNEN

The King is dead.

NARRATOR

He knelt.

BRENNEN

Long live the Queen.

REGAN

...Sorry, what?

BRENNEN

I await Your Grace's orders.

REGAN

Okay, first, stand up because that's fucking weird.

NARRATOR

He did.

REGAN

All right, now sit down and let's deal with the hole in your arm.

NARRATOR

Regan unraveled her bedroll to reveal a small armory of very nasty-looking things. And, of course, her longsword, half-sword, and dagger.

REGAN

I told you I sleep better with it.

NARRATOR

From among the weapons, the likes of many of which Brennen had never seen, despite his decades on the fields of battle, she produced some bandages.

REGAN

So, uh, by royal decree, I...what the fuck do we do now?

BRENNEN

First we find the children. Then, we may need to appeal to the Elves directly. Tell them the High Throne has been usurped. If only we could have gotten Gunther's Talisman of Dominion.

REGAN

What's that?

BRENNEN

Talismans of Dominion are Elven artifacts. Very beautiful. Given to each of the great houses to signify that the Elvish High Council will recognize their rule.

REGAN

And there was one of these back at the castle?

BRENNEN

Aye. Kept in a heavily guarded vault, far below ground.

REGAN

Was it, by any chance, like a platinum egg with all kinds of jewels and shit on it?

BRENNEN

Aye! How did you-- You stole it didn't you?

NARRATOR

Regan unwrapped the cloth bundle she had carried since the castle to reveal the exact artifact Brennen had just described.

REGAN

I'm not gonna escape from a castle and *not* stop by the vault.

BRENNEN

[LAUGHS HEARTILY]

BRENNEN

You know something, Your Grace? If I ever had a daughter...I'd pray to every god there is she'd turn out nothing like you. All the same, I think we can get along.

REGAN

I think I know what you mean.

BRENNEN

The night we met, at the tavern. That was clever, with the brandy.

REGAN

Please. A cheap desperate trick. Beating two men to death with each other? That was inspired.

BRENNEN

[SCOFFS GRUFFLY]

NARRATOR

Now Brennen grew very somber.

BRENNEN

Does it trouble you, how easy it is to kill?

REGAN

At least I'm alive to be troubled.

BRENNEN

Before we spoke of monsters. Men so twisted that the world is better off without them. I'm one of them.

REGAN

If you're a monster, I don't wanna know what I am. But I'm starting to think the world needs us.

BRENNEN

What good can a man possibly do, when all he knows is how to destroy?

REGAN

He can destroy bad people - the people who make it so that I had to be this way or die. I don't want anyone else to get backed into that corner.

BRENNEN

In songs it's always virtuous men who vanquish evil. Truth of it is, though, you can't fight evil and live without becoming a bit evil yourself.

REGAN

That's why you and I are so well suited for it.

41

Int. Jen's Room in Madame Bailey's

- Early Morning

41

NARRATOR

In her own room at Madame Bailey's, Jen looked at her ashen visage in a looking glass. She splashed water into her mouth in a futile attempt to wash out the sick taste.

She tried to steady her breathing, but found she could not stop shaking. She searched her mind for a peaceful memory. Cheerleading. The applause of a crowd directed at her. Her teammates congratulating her in the locker room.

The Locker Room. Her hand mindlessly found the dirk she had left on her dresser, and she felt a strange sense of calm.

