

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book 1 - PRINCES OF IORDEN

Chapter 7
"The Last Douche Domicile"

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based on the Teleplay by
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PROLOGUE

1 EXT. BLACK MOUNTAINS - BEFORE SUNRISE

1

Note: The following will be done all with sound.

Start with some very LONELY BIRDSONG, and then begin DOZENS OF CLOSELY-SPACED CLINKS as pickaxes hit stone in near unison.

This CLANKING repeats throughout the scene.

SOMEONE IN ARMOR patrols by on HORSEBACK. Hoofsteps move slowly from one side of our sound field to the other.

As the hoofsteps reach the FAR LEFT of our sound field, RAPID FOOTSTEPS take off running from the CENTER and HEAD FAR RIGHT.

ELF VOICE

Styyma!

FOOTSTEPS continue.

A THRUM and WHIR - a repeating crossbow firing and reloading itself. There's a PAINED GROAN, The footsteps STOP SHORT, and a BODY HITS THE GROUND.

PART ONE

2 EXT. MYDGYYL-LY'YT - EARLY AFTERNOON

2

NARRATOR

Most forests emerge gradually from the surrounding landscape; the White Forest erupts from the plains like a volcano from the ocean. The trunks of the Whitewood trees grow so close that a human could barely fit a finger between them. The carpet of razorvine which coats and connects the tree trunks stops even that finger from reaching through.

Over the years, the Elves have worked to accentuate the appearance of a wall. Where the tree bark has been shaved off, the sun glints a blinding white. Elven artists have shaved beautiful patterns and designs into their walls, accentuated by plates of carved silver and gold.

The main gate, 100 feet tall and wide enough for 20 horses abreast, is flanked by watch towers and parapets. By design, the land surrounding the forest wall is kept barren, so that no approach from any direction can go unnoticed.

3 EXT. MYDGYYL-LA'AT - CONTINUOUS

3

NARRATOR

This morning, a small cart bounced along the road to the main gate, as fast as its old horses could pull. The cart was spotted at 900 yards by an Elvish sentry. At her signal, a bowl-shaped mirror was turned towards the sun, and flashed a message across the sky. Other watch towers spotted this signal, and repeated it. A HUNTING HORN sounded, and every archer on the battlements nocked an arrow.

4 EXT. ROAD TO THE WHITE FOREST - SIMULTANEOUS

4

HOOVES THUNDER FURIOUSLY

NARRATOR

Within the cart, Brennen and Jen clung to consciousness, but just barely. Billy administered to the girl, applying ice to her wounds as best he could, while Nia tended to the old knight. Nelson and Regan could only look on in apprehension as Yllowyyn urged the horses on.

Jen gasps SHORT, PAINED BREATHS

BILLY

Hang on, Jen.
(to Yllowynn)
Come on, Weenie! Floor it!

NELSON

They're horses, they don't have pedals.

BILLY

It's a metaphor, crotch-hole!

NELSON

No it isn't.

NIA

Both of you be quiet and ice Jen's throat! I need to focus.

NELSON

At least the cart is holding up.

REGAN

NELSON GODS DAMMIT! Don't talk about equipment until the job is done!

NARRATOR

As if on cue, the rear axle of the cart began to CREAK and GROAN.

REGAN

In the old times they used to believe in wood sprites, water sprites, whatever sprites.

The rumbling gets LOUDER.

REGAN

Where I come from, we believe in fuck-up-your-plans sprites. And fuck-up-your plans sprites have one sacred, inviolable law.

Too LOUD to ignore now.

REGAN

You do not talk about equipment you're depending on. And if you blaspheme against the fuck-up-your-plans sprites, they will FUCK UP YOUR PLANS!

NARRATOR

I have met sprites of all sorts, river sprites and wood sprites, sprites of war and of love, even one sprite of terrible jokes.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

I've never met a fuck-up-your-plans sprite, so I cannot tell you if they are real or not. Regardless, some force of nature seemed to honor Regan's augury, as precisely at that moment, the cart's axle shattered entirely.

Everyone GRUNTS as they get THROWN to one side of the cart. There's a TERRIBLE CREAKING as the rest of the cart is pulled to a breaking point.

YELLOWYYN

This cart won't make it to the gate.

REGAN

If we take Brennen and Jen on horseback, can the rest of you hoof it the last quarter mile?

NIA

Go! We'll be fine.

5 INT. ARLENE'S BEDCHAMBERS - A FEW HOURS EARLIER

5

NARRATOR

That same morning in Castle Guernatal, Arlene and Gwen lay huddled together in Arlene's bedchambers, half-asleep and recovering from the previous night's horror. As if she could hear Rickard's screams in her dream, Gwendolyn awoke suddenly.

Gwen GASPS herself awake.

NARRATOR

Frantically, Arlene's right hand grabbed the late Rickard Redmoor's knife, surreptitiously stowed under her pillow.

ARLENE

What is it? Are you all right?

Gwen lets out a SIGH of relief.

GWEN

M'lady.

NARRATOR

With her left hand, Arlene stroked her handmaiden's hair, calming her.

ARLENE

Have you had a bad dream?

NARRATOR

Only gradually did Arlene's right hand loosen its grip.

GWEN

Maybe. Can't remember.

ARLENE

My poor Gwen. What you've been through. I'm so sorry.

NARRATOR

Arlene returned the knife to its hiding spot, and hugged Gwen close to her.

GWEN

You know we need to leave here, don't you?

ARLENE

I wish we could, but we can't.

GWEN

Why not?

ARLENE

Be serious, Gwen.

GWEN

I've thought about it all night. The wedding is our best chance. Maybe our only chance. You know how your brother's men love their wine.

ARLENE

You must know now that I would do anything to keep us safe--

GWEN

--I know, m'lady. I saw you last night. I know you'll do anything and it frightens me so. Who knows what you'll need to do next?

ARLENE

But this is madness you're talking about. And likely suicide.

GWEN

I've seen what it's done to you to stay here. How is it not madness to let that continue? How is it not suicide?

ARLENE

After tonight we will live in Lord Mooncrest's House.

GWEN

Have you considered that your brother might try to keep me here?

ARLENE

I swear to you, Gwen, I would die before I left you to him.

GWEN

That's what I mean. I don't want you to die for me. I want you to live for me.

ARLENE

You're speaking in riddles, Gwen.

GWEN

I may not have all the right words m'lady, but you understand me. You do.

ARLENE

Maybe life will be better at House Mooncrest.

GWEN

Will you be happy there?

ARLENE

I don't know.

GWEN

You have the most beautiful soul I've ever seen, m'lady. And it's been starved and strangled all your life.

NARRATOR

Gwen put her hand over her lady's heart.

GWEN

I can hear it crying out for help. Can't you?

ARLENE

Yes.

GWEN

M'lady, look in my eyes and tell me what you think your life will be like at House Mooncrest.

NARRATOR

With a deep, almost determined sadness, Arlene met Gwen's gaze.

ARLENE

Lord Mooncrest has shown me great kindness thus far.

NARRATOR

Behind Gwen's eyes, her heart dropped, but she didn't look down.

ARLENE

But, I do not know the man.

NARRATOR

It was Arlene who looked down.

ARLENE

I don't know his motives or desires. I would need to trust him.

GWEN

And if you tell me you do, I will follow you to his house, and serve you dutifully the rest of my days. But I don't think you will say that.

ARLENE

Galadon help me, Gwen. I don't think I can trust anyone anymore. Save for you.

GWEN

Then come away with me.

ARLENE

And after we left? How would we eat? Sell all the jewelry we can carry out of here? That will last us maybe a year or two.

GWEN

That's longer than we've ever had.

ARLENE

That's assuming we aren't murdered and robbed. And after the jewelry runs out, then what? Don't you think I considered this every day of my youth? Don't you think I thought "tomorrow's the day I run away" more times than I can count?

GWEN

Then why didn't you?

ARLENE

I grew up, Gwen.

GWEN

No, m'lady. You was just beaten down. That's different.

ARLENE

I'm wise enough to know which feelings there's no sense in speaking.

GWEN

There's always sense in giving our hearts a voice. Even if it's just to ourselves. Please, m'lady. Especially today, let's not pretend about anything.

ARLENE

There's such terrible anger in me Gwen. But it's hopeless anger. There's nothing out there for me. No way for a Lady to survive except to continue being a Lady. Nothing to sell but herself.

GWEN

I would never let you sell yourself.

ARLENE

Not like that. But when all's accounted for, what's the difference? That a whore can be free of a man come morning? A Lady's husband is supposed to feed her, clothe her, shelter her. And in exchange she gives him her body, her children...and she's named a shrew if she doesn't give him her heart and mind as well.

GWEN

Good man or not, that's what'll be asked of you at House Mooncrest. You know that.

ARLENE

Anywhere we go, Gwen, we'll be at the mercy of one man or another to survive.

GWEN

Surviving's not the same as living.

ARLENE

This is a world of men. They chart the course of all lives.

GWEN

Then let me be your man.

ARLENE

What does that even mean, Gwen?

GWEN

I can do anything for you that a man can.

ARLENE

You can't hold lands unless you inherit them. Do you have any noble kin you've neglected to tell me about?

GWEN

I can work. I've been working for you these last ten years, done almost any job you can name.

(MORE)

GWEN (cont'd)

And I can learn any others. I've heard in the cities women can make a living as garbage collectors!

ARLENE

Garbage collectors, Gwen? Have you forgotten that your parents sent you out of their home to us? That they would rather lose their daughter than see her live the life of a worker out there?

GWEN

No I'm sure I've never forgotten that, m'lady. And before you say it, I haven't forgotten what that life is like neither. But that was before I knew you.

ARLENE

You know how I feel about you, Gwen.

GWEN

Do I? Or do we hide from each other behind proper words, for fear of the bastards who run our lives?

ARLENE

I...You know that you're the bright spot of my life. That doesn't mean we can live happily thereafter if we run away.

GWEN

I don't care about thereafter. I'd rather live well than long. That's what I realized in that pantry the other night. I'd rather die after one happy week with with you, than spend the next 40 years slowly watching you die.

ARLENE

(moved, tearing up)

It's one thing to say that, Gwen, but to actually face it...

GWEN

I had three days sitting in a dungeon I never thought I'd leave to think on it, so please m'lady, believe that I know what I ask.

TEN BELLS ring out.

ARLENE

Is it ten bells already?

GWEN

Gods damn the bells.

ARLENE

The Bishop will be here soon for the cleansing.

GWEN
Then gods damn the Bishop.

ARLENE
Gwen.

GWEN
Why must our lives be run by everyone but us?

ARLENE
I must get ready.

GWEN
I realized something else in that pantry.

NARRATOR
Gwen closed her eyes, as if it would make this next part easier.

GWEN
I love you.

A beat like the flash before an atomic bomb goes off.

ARLENE
Gwen, I...

GWEN
I love you the way I was always told I'd love a man one day. I didn't realize until the pantry, but now that I see it, I know I've loved you from the moment I met you. And I'm just as sure that you feel it too.

NARRATOR
The windows didn't suddenly shatter, but you'd be forgiven for fearing they would under the hurricane force of this elementally simple sentiment.

GWEN
You don't need to say it back. Say nothing for now if you must. But I beg of you, don't lie to me. Grant us a moment of not pretending.

ARLENE
I don't know what to call it, I don't know what to do with it, but I know I'm scared of how strongly I feel it. Of where I feel it.

GWEN
Then come away with me. I'll figure out how. Just be ready. Permit us one chance at happiness. We're owed it.

NARRATOR

They were interrupted by a knock on the door. Gwen, however, would not let off. Her eyes remained locked onto Arlene's.

GWEN

(whispers)
I offered up my life for us without a second's thought. Do this for me. Live with me, if just for a while.

NARRATOR

Arlene hesitated for only a moment, before frantically nodding her head in agreement. A smile overtook Gwen's face, as she quickly, passionately kissed her lady before diving away to some chore. Hiding her own smile, Arlene turned and opened the door.

6 EXT. GATES OF THE WHITE FOREST - AFTERNOON

6

Horses GALLOP MADLY.

NARRATOR

At the gates of the White Forest, the approach of two horses was closely monitored by a good dozen Elvish sentries, longbows armed. Yllowyyn and Regan each rode a horse; Jen and Brennen were tied across the horses like sacks. Five paces from the gate itself, Yllowyyn reined in.

SENTRY

KA'AS?

YLLOWYYN

YLLOWYYN SYM, KALTH'YR LO-GUERNATAL.

NARRATOR

Thus announcing himself to the sentries, Yllowyyn dismounted his horse, and approached the gate. He maintained eye contact with the nearest sentry, and displayed his open palms, fingers splayed in front of him. When the Kalth'yr reached the gate, he extended his hand towards the sharp razorvine which clung to the wood of the gate.

In a quick motion, Yllowyyn drew his palm across the plant, drawing a trickle of blood. The blood dripped off the vine and into a wooden receptacle below. Far above, the sentry peered down through a reed, as if he could somehow inspect the blood through the device. Whatever the sentry saw, it satisfied him--somewhat. He nodded to his comrades.

SENTRY

LYGI LO PARAATH'YA?

YELLOWYYN

URK KY'AAD LO DYM...

NARRATOR

Oh, sorry, allow me to translate.

YELLOWYYN

Have I not passed the Blood Trial?

SENTRY

Verily you have, sibling woodsman, but wartime protocols are in place.

YELLOWYYN

Well do I know it. But even in wartime, my blood does not change. The Forest is my birthright.

SENTRY

And yet with children of men do you travel.

NARRATOR

As the Elves...negotiated, Brennen, now fully unconscious, fell off of the horse's back. Regan needed all her strength to haul the large old man back up. Regan, of course, could not understand Hyyl'lyg, and was beginning to lose patience with their lack of admittance into the forest.

REGAN

(straining)
Problem?

YELLOWYYN

(to Regan)
There's no problem, I'll handle it.

NARRATOR

The elf returned to speaking Hyyl'lyg.

YELLOWYYN

(to the Sentry)
I am a Kalth'yr. Of course it is with children of men I travel.

SENTRY

Of course, but what is their need to enter the Forest?

YELLOWYYN

Here two loyal servants of the realm lie, gravely wounded in their attempts to maintain order. Medicine is needed.

SENTRY

And those other three walking behind you?

YELLOWYYN

Retainers of the wounded. Of hospitality they are also in need, though less dire.

SENTRY

Check with my superiors, I must.

YELLOWYYN

To you am I known, sibling woodsman. The child of Wynn lo-Dyyk and Ba'at lo-Yl am I.

SENTRY

Yes, to me you are known but they are not.

YELLOWYYN

Please sibling woodsman. Much longer we cannot afford.

NARRATOR

Now Jen began to slip of her horse, her face turning a disturbing shade of blue. Yllowyyn barely grabbed the back of her shirt to keep her from hitting the ground

REGAN

No problem? Really? Seems like a fucking problem to me!

YELLOWYYN

On my name and my house for their passage I vouch.

NARRATOR

You see, Elven culture places a great deal of importance on the concept of family honor, and truth be told, it was quite rare for an Elf to risk even his own honor, let alone his family's, for the sake of a human. Despite his surprise, the sentry raised his left fist into the air, and flashed a signal with his hand. Open and closed, open and closed, and suddenly a team of Elves was pulling at a winch, and the gate slowly, ponderously creaked open.

7 EXT. PATH INSIDE THE WHITE FOREST - NEARLY CONTINUOUS

7

NARRATOR

Moments later, the unconscious forms of Brennen and Jen were lifted into into the back of a golden cart by six Elves dressed in identical silver robes and veils. Regan and Yllowyyn stood behind, although Yllowyyn exchanged some final words in Hyyl'lyg with one of the veiled Elves before the cart was drawn away into the forest.

REGAN

What'd she say?

YLLOWYYN

They'll be seen by the best physician here.

REGAN

But?

YLLOWYYN

She made a point of not promising anything. And she advised that prayer couldn't hurt.

REGAN

Let's go then.

NARRATOR

Without a second thought, Regan turned to follow the cart, but Yllowyyn darted in front of her.

REGAN

Excuse you.

YLLOWYYN

I must insist that you mind your manners while within the forest. My people will not suffer a daughter of man to profane this sacred place. In ANY way.

REGAN

I know when to keep my head down, okay? I have dignity, not stupidity.

YLLOWYYN

Do you know what happened at the gates?

REGAN

You shed blood on that tree, and it wasn't good enough for the guy at the door. Seems to me like you weren't Elf enough for the Elves.

NARRATOR

This verbal jab may just as well have been a slap.

YLLOWYYN

I vouched for your passage on my name and my house. For as long as you're here, your crimes are mine and your debts are my family's. Counter to all good sense, I have staked my family's entire reputation on your behavior. So that the children may be helped. Do not betray my good faith, or we shall all be truly beyond hope.

NARRATOR

The Elf and the rogue locked eyes, neither one breaking the gaze. The tension was broken, as it often was, by Billy.

BILLY

(O.S.)
Yo! Wait up!

BILLY

Where's Jen. Is she okay?

YLLOWYYN

I was wondering if you all'd ever arrive.

BILLY

Yeah well I had to stop off real quick and throw your mom the old--

NARRATOR

--Regan elbowed Billy in the gut, hard, not once looking away from Yllowyyn. She raised an eyebrow at the Elf as though asking if he were satisfied, before addressing the doubled-over boy.

REGAN

--What'sa matter, you out of breath? I thought you been training. C'mon, Jen's this way.

8 INT. WHITE FOREST INFIRMARY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

8

NARRATOR

Some time later, Yllowyyn found himself in an area of the forest whose name translates roughly to "hospital waiting room". Well, the name translates more directly to "place of boredom and death-stench", but my bacterial compatriots in your realm tell me "hopsital waiting room" is a better idiomatic translation. Like everything else in the White Forest, this room was shimmering. Vials of luminescent liquid lined the walls.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Periodically, an Elf in silver robes and veil would emerge from a back room, take one such vial, and return from whence she came. Yllowwyn was conversing, in his own language, with a high-ranking physician.

PHYSICIAN

To give these substances to Memyet, typical it is not.

YLLLOWYYN

There lies the last retainer of a Great House of men. No typical Memyet is he.

PHYSICIAN

A tremendous price would these fetch in the human realms. Fit to pay it he does not seem.

YLLLOWYYN

Known to you my parents are. Repaid will you surely be.

PHYSICIAN

It is not as if this medicine grows on trees.

YLLLOWYYN

Appologies, Wise One, it was my understanding that--

PHYSICIAN

(laughing)

--Forgive this Physician's morbid humor. Of course this medicine grows on trees!

NARRATOR

You see, the Elven medicine in question was indeed derived from the sap of a particular tree found only within the White Forest. It did, literally, grow on trees. This fact, although well known to most elves, was not widely propagated among humans. This was intentional on the part of the Elves, although Yllowwyn only just now noticed the oddity in that.

YLLLOWYYN

Very clever, Th'ayyd. It does appear to be rather plentiful, many vials do I see--

PHYSICIAN

--Really though, I will expect payment by moon's end. My daughter has requested that we extend our home, so she may have a second play room of pure Whitewood. The medicine may grow on trees, but wealth certainly does not.

END OF PART ONE.

PART TWO:

9

9

10 EXT. UNCLEAR - DAY

10

NARRATOR

A short distance beyond the walls of Castle Guernatal, some members of Ardel Redmoor's personal guard rode. Tied across the back of one horse was a figure bound, gagged, and head covered in a burlap sack. The party was followed by a hunting hound. As they reached a small clearing, the guards called a halt. The guards dismounted and threw their captive none-too-gently onto the ground. They quickly tied each of the captive's limbs to the saddle of a different horse, via a small length of rope. Only then did they remove the sack from his head, revealing Rickard Redmoor.

REDMOOR SOLDIER

Your cousin says he's sorry about your "accident."

NARRATOR

Rickard's eyes widened, but he barely had time to scream. A guard put a wooden whistle to his lips and blew. No sound could be heard by human ears, but the hound heard. The dog went mad, jumping and barking and howling at the sound. The horses, spooked by the hound, bolted in all different directions. Rickard Redmoor was torn limb from limb.

11 EXT. WHITE FOREST - MORNING

11

NARRATOR

Nelson stood in a beam of moonlight, dappling through the canopy of the white forest. The boy stood on the porch of a house-sized structure, carved into the trunk of an enormous tree. The bark had been stripped from the tree, exposing the shimmering flesh below. In the pale moonlight, the effect was as though tiny pin-points of light shone throughout the trunk of the tree. The effect reminded Nelson of something he called "christmas lights", although the effect was entirely natural.

NIA

(O.S.)

You should get some rest, you know.

NARRATOR

Nia emerged from the structure, and joined Nelson outside.

NELSON

Tried. Couldn't sleep.

NIA

Nor could I.

(Reassuring)

Elven medicine is second to none. They couldn't possibly be in better hands.

NARRATOR

Rather than looking the cleric in the eye, Nelson found some twigs that had fallen onto the railing which surrounded the patio. He attempted to arrange the twigs as he spoke.

NELSON

I haven't slept well since I've been here. My dreams have been really intense.

NIA

Oh?

NELSON

I mean I still don't remember them but when I wake up I feel like I just went through a lot, you know? Like I never get any rest.

NIA

And you have no recollection as to the content of these dreams?

BILLY

(O.S.)

How 'bout you thoroughly examine deeeez nuts, ya tree-fart.

NARRATOR

The door of the tree structure opened again. Billy emerged this time, if by "emerged" you mean "was hoisted into the air by two elves in the silver veils, and thrown out the door and onto his backside".

NIA

For the last time, would you please mind your tongue?

BILLY

Some asshole in there's taking Jen's clothes off!

NELSON

They're doctors, Billy.

BILLY

I don't give a shit who they are.

NIA

Do you understand that Jen would certainly be dead without the help our hosts are giving us?

BILLY

Yeah, but...they don't have to be so fucking douchey about it.

NELSON

This place is, like, off a little. It's exactly like I expected it, but then not.

BILLY

Of course you had ideas about what magical tree forts should be like.

NELSON

No it's kind of a lot like Rivendell. It's this bad-ass, mystical Elf city that we had to ride to for safety. But Elrond in *Lord of the Rings* is just like the coolest dude. Everyone here is all beautiful and has bitchin' armor and all that, but they're just... well...

BILLY

Douchey.

They both LAUGH a bit at this. STRESS LAUGHTER.

NARRATOR

My bacterial friends tried often to explain to me how exactly the Elves of the White Forest resembled a feminine hygiene product from Billy's realm. But understanding long eluded me. Yet, somehow, the children all found this description quite apt.

NIA

(FRUSTATED)

I'm going to see if the physicians can tell me any more. Try not to get us thrown out?

FOOTSTEPS fade away as Nia walks back into the structure.

BILLY

Hey, man, I meant to tell you. You stepped up with me back in that church place. That was pretty legit.

NELSON

You mean right before we got our asses handed to us?

BILLY

It's like Coach says: You don't ever complete 110% of the passes you never throw.

A beat.

NELSON

...That...doesn't really--

BILLY

--I know. Man. Why'd I ever respect that guy so much? He was a fucking moron.

BRENNEN

(O.S., from structure)
[Groans]

NARRATOR

From within the structure, a noise emerged that could only be General Brennen awaking. The children rushed into the building.

12 INT. SMALL ROOM IN CASTLE GUERNATAL - DAY

12

NARRATOR

At Castle Guernatal, Antonin Mooncrest held council with his uncle Julius in a room which had been co-opted as a sitting room for the Mooncrests. The Mooncrest sigil had been hastily strewn about, next to the more permanent Guernatal markings.

JULIUS

Perhaps Lord Rickard truly is ill.

ANTONIN

I think it's more sinister than that. You can tell when Redmoor thinks he's being oh-so-clever by the way his lip twists up. The idiot.

JULIUS

It may be time then to reconsider your designs, nephew. Whether Lord Rickard is gravely ill or his cousin sent him away, we've lost our best source of reconnaissance in House Redmoor.

ANTONIN

All the more reason to act. If Ardel discovered that Rickard was acting on our behalf he may try to move against us.

JULIUS

No he won't. He needs our army, there's no way around that.

NARRATOR

Antonin Mooncrest, Arlene's Redmoor's betrothed you recall, stood and paced the room.

ANTONIN

When we embarked on this course, I expected to find Ardel Redmoor petulant and uncouth. Instead, I found a man so abject that his mere existence shook me to my soul. When our forebears were granted lands, they swore to protect the innocent, same as Redmoor's. And here is this man who poisons the world with every breath he draws. We are honor-bound stop him.

JULIUS

You've a noble heart, nephew, but you must be pragmatic. Redmoor needs our armies but we need his allies at court.

ANTONIN

Allies that are only his to give because Gunther is killed. Galadon help me, Uncle, it wouldn't shock me to learn he had a hand in that.

JULIUS

Then prove it. If you can turn his allies to ours, you have my blessing to seek satisfaction from Redmoor. Until then, we must tread lightly. Traft wants nothing more than for the Princes of Iorden to tear each other apart until none can stand against him. And if you think Ardel Redmoor is abject...

ANTONIN

I worry for Arlene.

JULIUS

What of her?

ANTONIN

I'm worried her brother has yet more cruelty in store for her.

JULIUS

Today? On the day of her wedding?

ANTONIN

Today especially.

JULIUS

He won't risk doing anything to embarrass us.

ANTONIN

My concern is not for reputation or propriety.

JULIUS

Well it should be.

ANTONIN

Many would call it improper for a second son to run a Great House while the firstborn yet lives.

JULIUS

Watch yourself.

ANTONIN

I mean no accusation, you know I've supported you all along. But that's precisely my meaning. There's proper and there's just and sometimes they're at odds.

JULIUS

You don't need to put on airs about justice. Every man's been tempted to impropriety by a fine piece of arse like Maid Redmoor--

ANTONIN

--but that's not--

JULIUS

--but we've a realm to think about! A thousand thousand subjects.

ANTONIN

Yes, Uncle. And the moment we start thinking of our subjects as *pieces* on a game board is the moment all is lost.

13 INT. WHITE FOREST INFIRMARY - CONTINUOUS

13

NARRATOR

In the White Forest, Brennen sat up on his infirmary couch. He was drenched in sweat, but it was clear his fever had broken, thanks to the miracle of Modern Elven medicine.

REGAN

Morning, beautiful. How'd you sleep?

BILLY

What about Jen?!

YELLOWYYN

Give the salve a moment...

NARRATOR

As if on cue, Jen awoke, coughing. Billy was immediately by her side, engulfing her in an embrace.

BILLY

Holy shit I thought I lost you.

JEN

(ad lib.)
What's...where...?

BILLY

Some Elf house.

NARRATOR

He kissed her.

YELLOWYYN

You're in the home of a great physician called Ba'a nyyr-Lyk--

BILLY

--Once more on that one?--

YELLOWYYN

--to whom we owe a debt.

BRENNEN

Which I swear on my title we shall repay as soon as we're able.

NARRATOR

Just then, the physician entered the room. He addressed a question, in Hyy'l'lyg, to Yllowyyn. But Nia responded in kind before Yllowyyn could. The Physician seemed both shocked and saddened by her answer.

PHYSICIAN

Nyyr, memyet.

NARRATOR

With something like affection, he traced a circle in the air around Jen, and then exited the room.

NELSON

What was that about?

YELLOWYYN

He was troubled by the injuries on Jen's neck and wished to learn how she came by them.

NIA

At which time I informed him that Jen had the horrid misfortune of facing a Templar of Discord in combat.

JEN

I don't remember that, did I lose that much time?

YLLLOWYYN

You must have.

JEN

I remember the knight--

NIA

--We all witnessed that, yes? Jen's fight with the Templar?

REGAN

Spooky motherfucker came out of nowhere.

YLLLOWYYN

While he was occupied with Jen, I loosed a shaft into his back.

REGAN

Mmm I dunno, pretty sure I got him with a razor star.

BILLY

I hear Weenie puts shafts in a lot of dudes from behind.

NARRATOR

Jen still looked disoriented, but the rest of the party appeared to have understood Nia's meaning sufficiently for the cleric to drop the subject. Except for Billy of course. He was still fixated on Yllowwyn's shaft.

BRENNEN

Kalth'yr, when do you think we can get an audience with the High Council?

YLLLOWYYN

I've already made arrangements. They've agreed to hear us on the mid-day of the morrow.

NARRATOR

Billy, already bored with that brief, brief discussion of politics, had turned his attention back to Jen. Their intentions turned very immodest, very quickly.

BILLY

Sweet, so what's the rooming situation?

REGAN

Keep your batter in the pan there, little pony.

BRENNEN

If I may, I would advise we rest meanwhile. Safe haven after a trying ordeal is a blessing most old soldiers dare not hope for. Praise Galadon for that. You look like you haven't slept yourself.

REGAN

Course I have. What do you think, I just waited in here all night?

NARRATOR

She had.

BRENNEN

You'll want to be well-rested for the Council Meeting.

REGAN

And why's that?

BRENNEN

(Of course)

Why that's where we'll declare your regency.

REGAN

SHHHHH! Did that fever fry your brains?! What the fuck are you trying to do?

NARRATOR

Regan's face showed the expression of a cornered cat. Brennen's and Yllowyyn's, simply confusion.

BRENNEN

Was that not our plan?

REGAN

Wasn't my plan!

BRENNEN

What about all we said of destroying bad men?

REGAN

That's the kinda shit you do from the shadows. Walking into a room full of Elves and telling them "I'm Queen" in the middle of a civil war is a whole 'nother level of attention. Best case scenario: they believe us and now we've got every standing army in Iorden up our asses.

YLLOWYYN

But we'd have the Th'ar lo-Hyyl on our side.

REGAN

Worst case scenario: they think we're full of shit and put us all to death for it.

BRENNEN

Your claim is just. You've the High Throne in your blood. Not to mention the Guernatal Talisman of Dominion.

REGAN

All that proves is I'm a bastard and a thief.

YELLOWYYN

You have more than a day to think on your course. In the meanwhile, there's something else.

BRENNEN

What's that?

NARRATOR

Yllowwyn hesitated, his usual confident demeanor was lost for the first time in Brennen's memory.

YELLOWYYN

Sir Brennen, have you ever been honor-bound to do something which you found very distasteful?

BRENNEN

Every man has in his time.

YELLOWYYN

And yet there's no choice at all in fact, for to forsake duty would be tenfold more bitter.

BRENNEN

Very well-said, Kalth'yr. What are you bound to do?

YELLOWYYN

Since we're here and you're my guests...I'm afraid we must dine with my parents.

14 INT. YELLOWYYN'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

14

NARRATOR

The home of Wynn Lo-Dyk and Ba'at Lo-Yl, the parents of our dear Yllowwyn, was simply opulent. The mansion was carved into the heart of one of the largest trees in the White Forest, the trunk hollowed out to create a living space. As such, every surface shimmered and glowed in the manner of the White Forest as a whole.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The great room in the center was tastefully decorated, but in a way that the family's wealth and prestige could not be ignored. An entire taxidermied elephant sat in the corner. Paintings by the most famous Elven artists adorned the walls. A massive mahogany table sat in the center of the room, the dark wood even more striking in the context of the White Forest. A massive crystal chandelier hung from above, and precious jewels of every kind accented everything. Yllowyyn's parents sat at a smaller table in their foyer, as a small army of human servants buzzed around in preparation for the upcoming meal.

BA'AT

Sapphire, you missed a spot on the tusk there.

NARRATOR

He liberally sipped a brown liquid from a bejeweled chalice.

WYYN

(into another room)

Jade? Are you quite sure the roast will be ready soon? Yllowyyn will be here any minute now.

BA'AT

(to Wynn)

And where is that blasted elder youngling?

WYYN

You worry too often these days, husband.

NARRATOR

Ba'at went for another sip, but his spouse grabbed his wrist.

WYYN

And drink too much.

BA'AT

Lately I have a feeling...call it a premonition if you like. That everything is coming to an end. I can feel the lights that have shone on Iorden for these many centuries being slowly extinguished. It's as if whatever beauty there is in this world is slipping through our fingers like so much sand.

WYYN

That's no premonition, dear. That's just called getting old.

NARRATOR

At this moment, the massive doors to the hall creaked open. If you ask me, the Elves intentionally design their doors to creak dramatically. It's rather ostentatious. Upon reflection, this may explain Billy's epithet for the Elves. While the word may have at some point been involved in feminine hygiene, I now agree that the best possible definition of a 'douche' is "one with the skill to build quiet doors, who makes them creak anyway just for effect."

Sorry, I digress. The doors creaked open, and Yllowyyn entered. He greeted his parents with perfect formality; he stood in the doorway and bowed low, before entering and sitting, cross-legged, on the ground in front of his parents. They in turn responded formally, only briefly touching the top of his head with their right hands. They spoke in Hyyl'lyg.

YLLOWYYN

(Elvish, subtitled)
Parents.

WYYN

Youngling.

YLLOWYYN

Is not my sibling here?

WYYN

She's only gotten worse since you left. Always off with her friends. Protest this, delay gratification that.

YLLOWYYN

A mere phase it is.

WYYN

You've not been here, child. The youth grow more intolerable each day.

BA'AT

When we had your age, we'd pass our summers with harmless orgies down by the Lake of Homes Forgotten.

WYYN

That was a more decent and innocent time.

BA'AT

Galadon only knows what they do now. Dark times indeed. And the fall of Guernatal does little to brighten the forecast.

YELLOWYYN

Yes, on that subject--

--Door CREAKS

NELSON

Duuuuude.

BILLY

Yo Weenie's parents are loaded.

NARRATOR

As you may have guessed, the children had just entered the hall. They did not bother to hide their amazement at the beautiful room, their mouths literally agape in wonder. Brennen, Regan, and Nia did a better job concealing their reaction...but only just. Jen's joy was tempered, however, when she noticed the stuffed elephant. Yllowyyn switched into the common tongue.

YELLOWYYN

(Common tongue)

Parents, allow me to introduce my traveling companions. I believe you've heard the name Brennen of Greyfield.

BA'AT

Yes, even we Elves know that name.

WYYN

My spouse and I welcome you to our home, General Brennen.

BRENNEN

And I thank you.

YELLOWYYN

In fact, he's Sir Brennen Willemsen, now.

BA'AT

Is that a fact? Knighted by whom?

NARRATOR

Yllowyyn opened his mouth to speak, but Regan caught his eye, and almost imperceptibly, shook her head in warning. The Elf hesitated, and then began again.

YELLOWYYN

It was one of the last acts of King Gunther.

WYYN

A blasted shame, that whole ordeal.

BA'AT

Yllowyyn still owes us an explanation as to how that happened on his watch.

BRENNEN

I assure you, your son executed his duties with great skill and perfect honor. There was nothing he could have done. I'll gladly provide a full account.

BA'AT

Yes, well, it can wait until bread is broken.

BRENNEN

Of course.

WYYN

And who are these others?

YLLOWYYN

Retainers of Sir Brennen's: Nia of Seahold, his chaplain...

NIA

Honored to be your guest.

REGAN

Margaret of Armstrungard...

YLLOWYYN

...his arms-bearer. And three squires. Jennifer, Nelson, and William.

BA'AT

Squires, all?

NARRATOR

Yllowyyn's father looked curiously at Jen. A moment of uncomfortable tension opened, as Regan realized her usual "prostitute" excuse would probably not help here. The tension was broken, however, by Yllowyyn's mother.

WYYN

Good! About time they started having female squires. I declare, the rulers of Memyet can be positively backwards.

BA'AT

The vitality of youth is always refreshing to have in this house, especially in your kind, who are so close to nature. Feel free to make use of the couches in our parlor after supper. I'm sure you'll all want to copulate vigorously with each other.

JEN

Uh.

NARRATOR

As you can imagine, the children were quite unsure how to conduct themselves within the bounds of Elven sexual propriety.

JEN

Why don't we see how we're feeling after dessert?

BA'AT

As you will. Shall we? Our supper shall be ready soon.

15 MONTAGE: VARIOUS AROUND CASTLE GUERNATAL - NOON

15

Over everything a BELL CRIES TWELVE.

NARRATOR

While the party dined like Elven aristocracy, the nobility in Castle Guernatal was preparing for a wedding. Arlene Redmoor dressed herself for her marriage. She donned her wedding gown...and every item of jewelry she could fit on her body.

The serving class of the Castle made all necessary arrangements in the great hall, while a troupe of minstrels tuned their harps and lutes. The servants all wore plain brown cloaks with hoods up, lest any other maid detract from the beauty of the bride. In this way, Gwen was, ostensibly, indistinguishable from all the others.

Arlene, shaking with nerves, touched a lonely finger to her lips in remembrance of the past morning's kiss. She sighed, and stood, making sure the honed and deadly dagger she'd hidden under her gown was still in place.

END OF PART TWO.

PART THREE

16 INT. TABERNACLE AT CASTLE GUERNATAL - AFTERNOON

16

HEAD PRIEST

And so did Galadon decree, in the earliest days worth telling, that as He created order throughout the world, so should men create it with their own houses.

NARRATOR

Arlene Redmoor and Antonin Mooncrest stood before the High Priest, in the great tabernacle of Castle Guernatal. Gwendolyn stood a few feet behind, holding her lady's veil and train. The rest of the court was assembled behind them.

HEAD PRIEST

Lady Arlene, would you enter into that most sacred order and accept this man Antonin as your Lord and husband? And keep that order pure from any chaos which would sully it, in paucity and plenty, in good health and ill, for all the rest of your days?

NARRATOR

Arlene hesitated, for just a moment. But then, reflected in the polished silver of the altar to Galadon, Arlene saw Gwendolyn's face, hovering next to her own reflection. She gazed at that face, and found it gave her strength.

ARLENE

I would.

17 INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL MAIN HALL - NIGHT

17

NARRATOR

And so the formalities of the wedding concluded in due course, and the celebration began. The newlywed couple sat at a table at the head of the hall. Antonin ate and drank well, but Arlene only pushed the food around her plate while anxiously surveying the dance hall.

ANTONIN

May I have the pleasure of our first dance?

ARLENE

I look forward to it greatly, but, pray let me wait a while longer. I was so excited this morning that I could not break my fast, and now I fear the wine has gone to my head.

NARRATOR

Arlene's eyes searched the hall for Gwen. She was, as I've said, visually indistinguishable from any of the other servants working the evening. But Arlene picked her out, knowing she'd be mingling with the guards stationed by the door, rather than distributing drinks to the gentry.

GWEN

You look a mite thirsty, my good man.

MOONCREST GUARD

Well I certainly thank you, my kind girl.

GWEN

When do you get off duty?

MOONCREST GUARD

I imagine we'll get a few hours leave after the bedding. What about you?

GWEN

What about me?

MOONCREST GUARD

When do you get off?

GWEN

Not nearly often enough.

NARRATOR

With a wink, Gwen whisked herself back into the kitchen.

18 INT. YLLOWYYN'S PARENT'S DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

18

NARRATOR

In the White Forest, the party sat around Yllowwyn's family table. One seat at the table remained conspicuously empty. That did not, however, stop anyone from devouring the almost-perfect-looking food. As he ate, Nelson studied a tapestry which hung prominently on the wall.

WYYN

I see you've noticed our tapestry, young...Oh, I'm sorry what was its name again?

YLLOWYYN

Nelson.

NELSON
Huh?

BILLY
(whispers, to Jen)
Did she just call Nelson an 'it'?

WYYN
I see you've noticed our tapestry, young Nelson.

NELSON
Oh! I'm...I'm sorry.

NIA
(whispers)
Hyylyg does not sex its pronouns. It's a common translation error.

JEN
(whispers, explaining)
That means that--

BILLY
(whispers, defensive)
--I know what it means. I've done all that stuff. All the sex stuff.
(thinks he's in trouble)
It was before I knew you though.

WYYN
Not at all! We display it for guests to admire.

NELSON
It's incredible. What are those boats?

BA'AT
It tells of the first of our people who found Iorden - the ancestors of all Hyylyet here today.

NELSON
Hyylyet?

BA'AT
Have you had no schooling at all, child?

YELLOWWYYN
It is what we call ourselves.

NIA
The direct translation in our tongue, Nelson, is 'wood folk.' As compared to us, who are called *Memyet*, which means 'river folk.'

NELSON

So you guys aren't from here originally?

WYNN

Oh Selbirin, no. Our home - *Y'ykaas* in our tongue - is far, far away. The first Hyylyet of Iorden sailed from *Y'ykaas* but were lost in a tempest before making shore.

JEN

Like, a thunderstorm?

NARRATOR

Something about the mention of a storm caught Jen's attention. Something about the fact that Jen cared caught Billy's attention, so he pretended to listen.

WYNN

Yes, the tales of the thunder are quite vivid.

JEN

Has anybody ever gone back?

BA'AT

Several attempts were made to navigate back to *Y'ykaas*, none successful. And before long, the oceanfarers we came with were lost beneath the Sea of the Ancestors.

WYNN

And so do all Hyylyet lament the loss of *Y'ykaas*, and honor the memory of home with their art.

JEN

And so you guys just...stopped trying a while ago? Is there any, like, research or anything that I could--

NIA

--Jen, the Loss of Home is a very painful memory for the Elves. You may ask me what questions you wish at some later time. Forgive her, *Th'ayyd'i*, she doesn't mean to be rude.

JEN

Sorry. I, um...thank you, for the medicine.

BRENNEN

Aye, truly we are forever in your debt.

WYNN

I certainly hope not! Galadon willing this business with the throne will get sorted out soon, and you'll find yourself in funds once more.

BA'AT

Yes, Sir Brennen, perhaps we could hear more of what transpired.

BRENNEN

Of course. It began with Ardel Redmoor, curse his name and house, who--

NARRATOR

--Brennen's story was interrupted by a loud creak... that damn door again.

VOICE

Th'aluum?

NARRATOR

A young female Elf fairly danced into the room. Her face was covered by a dark cloth veil.

YLLODYK

Yllowyyn?!

(in Elvish)

What a lovely surprise! Too seldom do I say it but you are the best younger sibling. The BEST!

NARRATOR

The girl, Yllowyyn's sister, rushed to her brother's side and hugged him. Yllowyyn, taken aback by this display of affection, awkwardly patted his sister on the head.

YLLOWYYN

Good it is to see you as well, sibling. I--

YLLODYK

--There are Memyet here?

YLLOWYYN

Don't stare as if you've never seen one before.

YLLODYK

None of their breed before have I seen.

NARRATOR

She switched to the common tongue.

YLLODYK

Hello there!

NELSON

(infatuated)

Hi.

BILLY

Sup.

YLLODYK

What is that cooking? It smells delectable! I swear I am famished!

NARRATOR

Just as abruptly as she had entered, the girl sprinted out of the room and to the kitchen. She didn't let the distance, nor the food in her mouth, interrupt her conversation, however.

YLLODYK

(O.S., mouth full of food)
This is a-mazing!

WYYN

Would you like us to have Onyx heat that up for you?

YLLODYK

No need to trouble the help.

WYYN

It must be cold by now.

YLLODYK

Good this way.

JEN

Sorry, who is that?

YLLOWYYN

That is my sibling. Yllodyk.

Billy barely holds in a SPIT-TAKE
and COUGHS VIOLENTLY on his food.

NARRATOR

Although they surely could not understand Billy's mirth, Yllodyk's parents excused themselves from the table and followed their daughter into the kitchen. They spoke in hushed tones, in Hyyll'lyg.

YLLODYK

(still chewing)
What?

BA'AT

Veil off, child.

YLLODYK

No, it's bright in here.

BA'AT

Let me see your eyes.

WYYN

You've been chewing Cannib Root with your friends again!

YLLODYK

So what if I have?

WYYN

Were we not clear about that matter before? We've a mind to send you to bed without supper.

NARRATOR

Yllodyk proceeded to shove yet more food in her mouth.

YLLODYK

I already ate.

BA'AT

Enough is enough. You are not to leave this house for a fortnight.

YLLODYK

Oh, like you don't drink a pint of wood essence every evening of the week.

WYYN

You will mind your tongue in mixed company!

YLLODYK

So now you care what Memyet think? I'm surprised you let them in your house, the way you talk about them.

BA'AT

You shall sit down, child, and mind your manners or else you shall stay in this house for two moons instead of two weeks.

YLLODYK

I'm so tired of this. You don't understand me at all.

WYYN

We certainly don't. Now take a seat.

NARRATOR

The three filed back into the main dining hall. Those who did not understand Hyyl'lyg were enjoying their meals contentedly. Yllowwyn and Nia, however, looked sufficiently embarrassed.

BA'AT

My elder child apologizes most deeply for her...
tardiness. She had something "very important" to tend
to.

WYNN

Sir Brennen, your tale was interrupted. Would you like
to continue?

BRENNEN

Yes, thank you. As I was saying, it began with Ardel
Redmoor, who--

--Yllodyk GIGGLES.

NARRATOR

Yllowyn's sister was deeply, thoroughly amused by the
patterns formed by swirling the soup in her bowl.
Everyone at the table glared at her, though she failed
to notice.

BRENNEN

Ardel Redmoor, who conspired most foully to spread
slanders against--

--A LONGER GIGGLE.

WYNN
Yllodyk!

YLLODYK

(still giggling)
Oh. Sorry.

BILLY

(whispers)
Dude, Weenie, I think your sister is high as balls
right now.

BRENNEN

He spread wicked slanders against His Late Majesty,
Peaceful be his rest, which led the court to--

YLLODYK

(to Jen)
--And what was your name, dear?

JEN

Oh, I'm Jen.

YLLODYK

Jen? I adore it! So primal.

JEN
Uh, if you say so.

YLLODYK
Where are you from, Jen?

JEN
Funny you should ask that, because--
--Brennen *CLEARs HIS THROAT*.

BRENNEN
Fate of the realm at stake, in case you've forgotten.

JEN
Right, sorry.

BRENNEN
Redmoor's slanders led the court to suspect King Gunther of treason, enough to imprison him pending an investigation and appoint a Lord Regent. Somehow, and I am not sure by what guile or sorcery, he got himself appointed Regent.

YLLODYK
(whispers, to Jen)
May...May I touch your hair? Human hair is just, like, so exotic, you know?

NELSON
(under Brennen)
Uhhh, not cool.

YLLODYK
(under Brennen)
It's, like, blowing my mind right now.

NARRATOR
As Brennen attempted to re-repeat his tale, a servant came to the table, handed a scroll to Wynn, bowed deeply, and returned to the kitchen.

WYNN
I'm terribly sorry, you'll have to excuse us. Th'ayyd Ry'y lo-Th'yyt has returned and requests an audience with the High Council immediately.

BA'AT
Yllowyyn, I trust you'll keep our guests entertained and your sibling...busy?

BRENNEN
If you've but a moment, I'd humbly request the chance to quickly finish my account.

WYYN

You'll have an audience with the council in the morning, Sir Brennen.

BA'AT

This way you need only tell it once.

19 INT. CASTLE GUERNATAL MAIN HALL - NIGHT

19

NARRATOR

At Arlene Redmoor's wedding, Gwendolyn surreptitiously passed a cup of ale to another guard--this one employed by the bride's house rather than the groom's.

GWEN

I will see you later, won't I?

NARRATOR

She brushed her hand along the guard's shoulder as she returned to the kitchen.

The minstrels launch into a JAUNTY TUNE.

NARRATOR

At the dais, Arlene took a deep breath, and then pasted a smile onto her face and turned to her husband.

ARLENE

I think I should very much like to dance now, my lord.

ANTONIN

Splendid!

NARRATOR

The couple joined the dance floor. The dance appropriate for the current melody involved couples frequently switching partners. This allowed for a brief few moments of conversation before moving to a new partner. Were Nelson present, I'm sure he would have made reference to some story I've never heard of.

ANTONIN

So glad you're feeling better, my lady.

ARLENE

Much, my lord.

NARRATOR

And with that, the married couple moved on to their next dance partners. Meanwhile, Gwendolyn had returned to chatting with the first guard of the evening.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The second guard, who had been watching Gwen go, couldn't help but notice this, and chose to share some words with with his colleague.

MOONCREST GUARD

Oi! What d'ya think you're playing at?

REDMOOR GUARD

My own business. And I don't play.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, Arlene had her empty few seconds of conversation with a low-ranking Lady of the court.

LADY

A beautiful wedding for a beautiful bride.

ARLENE

Oh, thank you.

LADY

And just what we needed after all the unpleasantness.

MOONCREST GUARD

The wench is coming with me.

REDMOOR GUARD

That's not what she told me!

MOONCREST GUARD

(to Gwen)

What was you talking to him for, ye tart?

GWEN

I only did because I wasn't sure you were serious.

MOONCREST GUARD

Oh, I'm serious!

REDMOOR GUARD

So am I!

NARRATOR

A number of wedding guests had by this point taken notice of the quarreling guards. Arlene had noticed as well. In fact she was watching so avidly that she hardly noticed who was her next dance partner.

ARDEL

Enjoying yourself, my dear?

Arlene stifles a SURPRISED GASP.

ARDEL

What's the matter? Nervous for your wedding night? You should be. You think because of that ridiculous horse stunt your husband will believe in your purity?

NARRATOR

The song reached the beat for partners to switch. Ardel Redmoor refused to switch.

ARDEL

He'll know you for the whore you are anyway. He'll know you by the way your gash reeks of your wantonness.

NARRATOR

As they danced, Arlene furtively reached her free hand behind her back, to where she had hidden the dagger.

ARDEL

He'll know you as the gods know you. As I've known you since we first bathed together as children.

NARRATOR

Her shaking fingers found the hilt.

ARDEL

And he shall loathe you for the rest of your days.

NARRATOR

Arlene slowly drew the dagger from its sheath.

ARDEL

Now get out of my sight.

NARRATOR

Ardel fairly threw his sister across the dance floor, heedless of the fact that it wasn't even appropriate to the music. Arlene caught her breath as she slid the dagger back into its sheath. Meanwhile, Gwen's friends were becoming better acquaintances.

MOONCREST GUARD

Do you really want to die tonight, you pasty shit?

REDMOOR GUARD

Before I thought my cock was hard for her, now I know it's for killing you.

MOONCREST GUARD

If you kill me, there'll be no one to fuck your mother's arse when she's begging for--

NARRATOR

This quip was interrupted by a fist to the face. In a flash, the two men were rolling across the dance floor, throwing haymaker punches with abandon. Pandemonium erupted in the dance hall. Highborn folk ran screaming in all directions. Other guards around the hall rushed towards the fight; the responsible ones to break it up, the more drunken ones to join in. In the panic, Gwen stole to Arlene's side, and threw a plain, rough brown cloak over her wedding fineries. Now indistinguishable from a pair of servants, the two darted away to the kitchen, and from there, out into the night.

END OF PART THREE.

PART FOUR:

20 EXT. BROOK IN THE WHITE FOREST - DEEPEST NIGHT

20

A SMALL WATERFALL dominates the soundscape, over the other SOUNDS OF THE WHITE FOREST.

NARRATOR

Jen sat alone by a small pool in the White Forest, dipping her toes in the water and listening to the peaceful sound of the waterfall.

REGAN

(O.S.)
Come here often?

JEN

Gah! Jesus Christ we get it, okay?! You move quietly.

NARRATOR

Regan had, obviously, interrupted Jen's peace.

JEN

I don't know who you've been hanging out with who told that shit was okay, but it scares the crap out of normal people.

REGAN

No need to be scared, I'm unarmed.

NARRATOR

Jen raised an eyebrow at the rogue.

REGAN

I'm only lightly armed. May I?

JEN

Do I really have a choice?

REGAN

I'm making an effort here.

JEN

Okay, fair enough. Sorry.

NARRATOR

Regan dropped to her haunches next to Jen. For a moment the two watched the water in silence.

REGAN

I think we uh...what's the expression? "Got off on the wrong foot."

Jen CHORTLES despite herself, and soon it breaks into full-on LAUGHTER.

REGAN

What, did I say it wrong?

JEN

No, it was right, it's just...you've got a prodigious talent for understatement.

NARRATOR

The silence returned. Maybe the setting contributed, waterfall and all, but it was an oddly peaceful, companionable silence.

REGAN

I kinda like this spot.

JEN

It's not bad. You can hear yourself think.

REGAN

And the Elves can't hear you talk. Even better.

JEN

So uh, what's up?

REGAN

Up?

JEN

Why'd you come here?

REGAN

Well, I followed you.

JEN

Not creepy at all.

REGAN

I think maybe I might want your advice.

JEN

Advice? You want my advice?

REGAN

I said maybe.

JEN

What does that...see, this is your problem. You talk in little like riddles or something.

REGAN

I don't do riddles.

JEN

Not riddles but like you do this thing where you're the only one who knows what you mean.

REGAN

Maybe that's the point.

JEN

I know it's the point, I'm not stupid. But you can't ask someone for advice and then have a conversation just with yourself.

NARRATOR

Despite the criticism, Queen Regan actually smirked.

REGAN

You know, like a week ago you never woulda had the guts to tell me the terms of our conversation.

JEN

You know how people try to get you to do something by saying "what's the worst that can happen?" Yesterday I felt myself asphyxiate to death. That's it. That's the worst that can happen. Everything seems a lot less scary now. I'm more scared of...not doing anything.

REGAN

The worst thing I seen happen to somebody--

JEN

--You know what? Don't need to know.

REGAN

I won't lie, I am glad you survived.

JEN

Gee, thanks.

REGAN

My point is don't go thinking it means you know shit now, though. You don't.

JEN

You know I'm pretty tired of people treating me like that.

REGAN

Prove them wrong.

JEN

I shouldn't have to.

REGAN

And I should be municipal cunt-kiss inspector for Free Wine City but here we are.

JEN

What did you wanna talk about?

REGAN

Eh. Nevermind.

NARRATOR

Abruptly, Regan stood.

JEN

Wait, wait, after all that?

REGAN

You don't know anything, you can't help me.

JEN

What the fuck even are you?

REGAN

Well I'm not some little girl who doesn't know anything, that's for sure.

JEN

Hey screw you, okay?

REGAN

I don't screw kids.

JEN

Stop that.

REGAN

So you do want me to screw you?

JEN

Fuck you.

REGAN

Fuck me?

JEN

Yeah, fuck you! Do you ever shut the fuck up?

REGAN

Fuck me? I'm the fucking Queen. You're just a stupid fucking girl. Fuck you, stupid girl. What the fuck do you know?

NARRATOR

Regan was nearly gone from the clearing when Jen, looking out over the waterfall, spoke quietly.

JEN

I know your cat story was bullshit.

NARRATOR

A tight smile passed over Regan's face, showing as much pain as gratification. She hid her expression again before returning to the waterside.

REGAN

What was that?

JEN

The story you told me, where you were at the orphanage and you had to bury your cat. It wasn't your cat. It was your sister.

A beat.

REGAN

And what gave you that idea?

JEN

Your story just never fit together right. You talked about your sister in the beginning but never said what happened to her. Plus honestly, I don't know if anyone picks up a sword and starts killing everything because their pet died. A sister though?

REGAN

Maybe I just really liked that cat.

JEN

When you knighted Brennen you said your middle name was Margaret. You even used it as your alias with Yllowyyn's parents. You're Maggie, not the cat. Which would make your sister Catie.

A few more beats.

REGAN

I did really have a cat. It really did die. The gods have this great way of teaching you the hardest lessons over and over again.

JEN

Feel ya there.

REGAN

And I really did like that cat.

JEN

But your sister...

REGAN

...Catie was my soul, I think.

JEN

(deeply moved)
Sorry.

REGAN

(numb)
You didn't kill her. And you just earned a spot in my small council. So what do I at this meeting today?

NARRATOR

Jen, already surprised by Regan's candor, was not prepared for the abrupt change of subject.

JEN

You mean do you tell them you're--

REGAN

--Shh.

JEN

(quieter)
Tell them you're Queen?

REGAN

Yeah. What do you think?

JEN

I think you should do it.

REGAN

Would you?

JEN

Yes.

REGAN

So we're still horseshitting each other, then?

JEN

I'd wanna do it. Whether or not I actually could...I still think you should do it.

REGAN

Why?

JEN

You can do more good that way.

REGAN

Good? What does that mean? Good for who?

JEN

Just good. Just regular good. Good for everybody.

REGAN

What's in it for me?

JEN

That's not why you do good stuff.

REGAN

That's not why you do good stuff. Why should I put *my* neck on the block?

JEN

There's a lot of Caties out there. The more good there is in the world, the more of them get to grow up.

REGAN

That's a nice little thought. But I don't just say "I'm Queen," and then save the world. Even if the Elves do back me up, there's a lot of killing between here and the throne.

JEN

That hasn't stopped you before.

REGAN

Could be me that gets killed. Or you. Or Billy.

JEN

Since I've been here it's a rare day anyway when someone isn't trying to murder us with swords.

REGAN

Fun, huh?

JEN

Oodles.

NARRATOR

Regan's face again stretched into a crude mockery of a grin, and then she turned once more to leave.

JEN

Hey. Why me?

REGAN

Brennen's a good man, but he pretty much just does what he's told. I wanted the goody-goody answer but I wanted to hear the smart version of it.

JEN

You were testing me before, saying I didn't know anything. Seeing what I'd do.

REGAN

Lo and behold my lords and ladies. She grows smarter before our very eyes.

JEN

Did you think I'd pass?

REGAN

Didn't know for sure. That's why I tested you.

JEN

Yeah but, you know, if you were a gamblin' gal.

REGAN

I think probably I'da bet on you.

JEN

Why?

REGAN

I was impressed by your little heist there, where you relieved Jamie McShane of his heartbeat.

NARRATOR

Jen looked down at, suddenly feeling ill with guilt.

REGAN

That and the uh... *bzzt*, I'm thinking maybe you're a fighter after all. Not a good one. Yet. But you're a lot stronger than you look.

JEN

I wanna tell you something. About myself.

REGAN

Why?

JEN

I'm tired of being scared of it. I wanna tell someone.

REGAN

Yeah, but, me?

JEN

Trust me, the irony is not lost on me. But I just realized you're the only person who's ever called me strong.

REGAN

All right, if you--

JEN

--Quiet before I wuss out. I was eleven when my dad left. That was right around when I got into cheerleading. My mom said it was good for me to be friends with the "nice girls" on the squad. And to have "adult supervision" after school. Mr. McCreary was the junior high cheerleading coach. I guess a coach is like, uh..

REGAN

Someone the rules said you had to listen to.

JEN

Yeah. Exactly, when you put it that way.

Jen pauses one last time.

JEN

He used to watch me in the locker room. He'd keep me back after the other girls had left, give me some two minute cheerleading pointer that I already fucking knew, and then he'd go "great. You can get changed now." Every time, just like that. And he'd stand in the doorway, just to make sure I knew I couldn't get around him. He didn't say anything but I got it. The best part is, the first time it happened he actually started by talking to me about my dad and whether I was doing okay. I really thought he cared, until...yeah.

She EXHALES for a beat.

JEN

I think maybe people knew, but at the same time no one knew. You know how that goes. Shannon kept making these comments to me like how I got all the attention from men. I think she was actually, genuinely jealous. Bitch.

REGAN

What did you wanna get from telling me that?

JEN

You never lived in a small town. Everyone gets so judgey. If you try to tell them that something about their tiny little world is totally fucked, it's your fault for rocking the boat. No one ever said it out loud but there might as well have been a goddamn billboard on the highway. "Don't make trouble, little girl." I just wanted to say it outside of that bullshit. You're a lot of things Maggie.

NARRATOR

Regan raised an eyebrow at this new address, but permitted it.

JEN

But you're not the kind to judge a gal for starting trouble.

NARRATOR

The two looked out over the waterfall. After a moment, Regan turned to Jen, raised a hand--and gave Jen two firm pats on the cheek. This was the most affection Aerona Regan had shown to any person in many, many years.

REGAN

You should get some rest, girly. Might be I'm gonna start some trouble soon.

21 INT. TOWER IN CASTLE GUERNATAL - LATE, LATE NIGHT

21

NARRATOR

Later that night, a rather drunk Antonin Mooncrest stumbled up the spiral staircase towards his new bride's bedchambers. His journey up the staircase was rather arduous, impeded as he was by the alcohol. He reached the top eventually, however.

22 INT. BEDROOM IN CASTLE GUERNATAL - CONTINUOUS

22

NARRATOR

He was surprised to see that Arlene Mooncrest, nee Redmoor, was not in her chambers. His confusion soon turned to righteous indignation, as his mind very quickly constructed a story as to what became of his wife.

ANTONIN

Ardel Redmoor, you son of a whore!

23 EXT. GREAT COUNCIL CHAMBER - MORNING 23

OMIT

24 EXT. GLACIAL PLANE - MORNING 24

NARRATOR

On a frosted road southwest of Castle Guernatal, a horse-drawn wagon clomped slowly through the night. It's freight was a shipment of food, all stowed in barrels and sacks. Two armed men rode in front and four more escorted it on horseback. They were all of them clad in the simple raiments of the Civic Guard's Freehold garrison.

None noticed the well-honed knife that cut through one of the sacks from within. As you may have guessed, this was the knife that had belonged to Rickard Redmoor, until his cousin Arlene took it from him.

25 INT. GREAT COUNCIL CHAMBER - MORNING 25

NARRATOR

As the sun rose above the White Forest, Brennen, Regan, Nia, and Yllowwyn found themselves standing in front of the most massive tree any of them - apart from the Elf of course - had ever seen. The trunk itself could have fit one of Billy's "Football fields". The bark of this tree had been replaced entirely with worked silver, carved to depict the great heroes and battles of the Elven histories. At precisely the appointed time, the massive doors creaked open slowly. Of course they creaked.

Within sat Fifteen regal-looking Elves, including both of Yllowwyn's parents. This was the Council of Elders. They were all dressed entirely in gold; not the color, but actual metal. They bid Brennen begin his tale, from the beginning.

BRENNEN

My Lords. Imagine if you can, what life is like for a rabbit--

NARRATOR

--Sorry, its a very long story, let's skip to the interesting part.

BRENNEN

So, left with no other options, His Late Majesty sought to flee his own House, with my help, and that of my... armsbearer, Margaret. In our attempt, we were beset by men-at-arms in the employ of Lord Redmoor. It was one of these men who killed King Gunther. Last I had heard, Redmoor was trying to lay the blame upon my armsbearer.

NARRATOR

The Elven Council, not prone to haste, considered the story. The High Chancellor of the Council, more ancient than any two others in the room combined, sat like a statue, although his eyes were as sharp as a hawk. Regan, too, surveyed the room with eagle-eyes. Every fiber of her well-tempered body tingled, as if she were ready to start a fight with the whole council--or to flee on a moment's notice.

Finally, a council-member spoke. Yllowyyn's mother, as it happened.

WYYN

And was the Kalth'yr to House Guernatal present for any of these events?

NARRATOR

For once, the Kalth'yr lo-Guernatal looked like a small child, being admonished by his mother for playing in the mud.

YLLOWYYN

I was not. But I can vouch with the utmost confidence for Sir Brennen's character, and his loyalty to the King.

BA'AT

Unfortunately, this is one of the rare times when loyalty has dangerous potential. Supposing, just for a moment, that His Late Majesty, did in fact have plans counter to the laws of men, is it conceivable that Sir Brennen would deceive to conceal this?

NARRATOR

Regan opened her mouth, as if to retort, but the old general pre-empted her.

BRENNEN

I would do anything for His Majesty. But no man triumphs if Ardel Redmoor rules.

NARRATOR

At this, every member of the Council turned to the High Chancellor.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The old Elf remained still as a statue, considering. Finally, his head bowed, barely a fraction of an inch.

WYYN

I think I may speak for the Council in saying we are sufficiently dubious of the legality of Redmoor's rule. We would endorse any action you take to unseat him.

NARRATOR

Brennen and Yllowyyn both relaxed visibly at this. Regan, however, did not.

BRENNEN

That is most excellent news, Th'ayyd. Sadly, as I have said, the better part of my armies has been slain or scattered during Redmoor's coup. We had hoped that, given this, along with the encroachment of General Traft onto civilized lands, we might humbly plead assistance from the Knights of the Wood.

BA'AT

We thought you might. The council will let the High Commander Th'ayyd Ry'y lo-Th'yyt speak to that.

RY'Y

Gratitude to the Council for for the floor.

NARRATOR

You might recal, Commander Th'ayyd Ry'y lo-Th'yyt from Brennen's re-telling of the time he met the rebel Traft, sixteen years prior. The commander stood, assessing the poor health of her former colleague. Brennen looked as if he had aged 50 years in the past 16. Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, of course, hadn't even aged a night. Regan marked her very well.

RY'Y

If I have understood your testimony correctly it seems House Guernatal was indeed gravely wronged when Lord Redmoor assumed Regency.

BRENNEN

Not wronged, Th'ayyd. Ruined.

RY'Y

But it has never been the charge the Th'ar lo-Hyyl, nor of any Elves of that matter, to settle the feuds of men.

NARRATOR

Brennen tried valiantly to hide the disappointment from his face.

BRENNEN

Of course, Th'ayyd. But as we have said, we think the unlawful destruction of my armies, combined with the threat of Traft, creates a...a...

NIA

Extenuating circumstance.

BRENNEN

Aye.

RY'Y

I'm very sorry about your men, Sir Brennen. I'm certain they were brave fighters, who deserved longer lives and more honorable deaths. And we are watching the half-Orc carefully. But the Concordat is very clear. The Th'ar lo-Hyyl will not enforce the inheritance laws of men unless there is a viable line of succession.

NARRATOR

Regan's muscles tensed, nearly imperceptibly. Her eyes scanned each of the 15 Elves on the Council, as if searching for some hint of their thoughts.

RY'Y

Now, if you were to make us aware of some person of procreative age, with some tenable claim to the High Throne, this would be a different conversation. But until then, this is a feud between Houses and we simply haven't the resources to intervene in every one of those.

NARRATOR

Brennen, his old soldier's discipline evident, kept his eyes affixed to Commander Ry'y lo-Th'yyt. Nia, however, couldn't help but flick her eyes, quickly, over to Regan. For herself, Regan's gaze bore into the back of the Commander's head.

WYYN

Sir Brennen, do you know of any such person?

NARRATOR

Fifteen pairs of Elvish eyes bore down into the old general's face, which had turned to stone. He was too disciplined to look to his Queen, though he was entirely at the mercy of her decision.

Aerona Margaret Regan studied the room, and her breathing slowed. Now, I've friends who are bush sprites in the northern deserts.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

They had long told me one of the most magnificent experiences in this world is to behold is a stalking lioness, as she decides whether the moment is right to pounce. An instant too soon and she will be spotted and evaded. An instant too late and the opportunity will elude her. The instincts required to make such a decision are a marvelous, perfect creation of nature.

I knew then the awful beauty of which my friends spoke. Regan had reached her decision. She drew a deep breath to speak.

MUSIC.

END OF CHAPTER.