

THE BASTARD EXECUTIONER



Episode #101

"Pilot"

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NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

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REPAY NO ONE EVIL FOR EVIL, BUT GIVE THOUGHT TO DO WHAT IS HONORABLE IN THE SIGHT OF ALL. IF POSSIBLE, SO FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL.

- ROMANS 12:17/18

BUT IF THOU DO THAT WHICH IS EVIL, BE AFRAID; FOR HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD, A REVENGER TO EXECUTE WRATH UPON HIM THAT DOETH EVIL.

- ROMANS 13:4

PLAYERS

FREEMEN & FAMILY

Wilkin Brattle: 27, white, British descent. Tall, dark, imposing. Emotionally deep, spiritually tortured. Former knight in the charge of King Edward I. He now lives a simple agrarian life.

Petra Brattle: 25, white, Welsh descent. A kind, simple beauty. Wilkin's wife. She is seven months pregnant.

Jacob Nevett: 50, white, Welsh descent. Stocky, proud. Hardened by labor. A farmer. Petra's father.

Toran Prichard: 30, white, Welsh descent. Thick, tenacious. An archer under Madog Llywelyn in the last major Welsh rebellion. He put down the bow and picked up the hoe. Wilkin's best mate.

Eva Prichard: 30, white, Welsh descent. Doughy and pessimistic. Toran's wife.

Rhys Prichard: 11, white, Welsh descent. Frail, but eager. Toran's only son.

Ash y Goedwig 17, white, Welsh descent. Wiry, smart. A trapper. An orphan "of the woods". May be insane. Friend of Wilkin.

Berber the Moor: 35, black, Moroccan decent. A large, educated man. Converted Muslim. A farmer. Friend of Wilkin.

Aron, Calo, and Ellis Caine: 25, 28, 32, white, Welsh descent. Brothers. Unruly, competitive. Farmers. Friends of Wilkin.

NOBILITY & COURT

Baroness Lowry "Love" Ventris: 22, white, Welsh descent. As cunning as she is kind and beautiful. From a wealthy Welsh family, she married Ventris at 17 to protect her family's land. Her noble duties always in conflict with her Welsh pride.

Baron Erik Ventris: 50, white, British descent. Stout, wise, overbearing. A former High Constable in the army of King Edward I, he was given title and land for years of victorious service.

Milus Corbett: 48, white, British descent. Lean and mean. He was one of Ventris' Marshals in the army. Now, serves as his Chamberlain, Chancellor and Justiciar. Friend and drinking mate.

Isabel Kiffin: 20, white, Welsh descent. Tall, slight. Awkward and innocent. Lady Love's handmaiden and trusted confidant.

Jonas the Collector: 40, white, British descent. Medieval accountant. Determines and collects taxes for Ventris.

CLERGY

Father Ruskin: 45, white, Scottish descent. Brawny. Gentle, with bottled fury. Former soldier under Wallace. Left the military for the seminary. Priest, rector and teacher of the court.

COMMANDERS & KNIGHTS

Randulf Corbett: 35, white, British descent. Not as lean, but equally as mean as his father, Milus. Serves as shire Reeve. The Sheriff. Hunts and prosecutes those accused of crimes.

Leon Tell: 29, white, British descent. Fierce, but plagued by Catholic guilt. He carries both pennon and banner in his field.

YEOMANS & FAMILY

Gawain Maddox: 30, white, Welsh descent. Tall, dark, formidable. Malicious with a broken soul. He has a cross-shaped burn on his right cheek. An Executioner by trade.

Jessamy Maddox: 28, white, Welsh descent. Pretty, hardened by abuse. Gawin's wife.

Luca Maddox: 11, white, Welsh descent. Withdrawn by abuse. Gawin's son.

Pippa Maddox: 5 months, white, Welsh descent. Gawin's infant daughter.

OUTSIDERS

Annora of the Alders: 55, Sephardi descent. Prescient, mystical and beautiful. She offers predictions, cures and potions.

The Dark Mute: Unknown age and descent. Travels with Annora, says nothing. Other than Annora, no one's ever seen his face.

Gruffudd y Blaidd: 40, Welsh descent. Smart, fearless, of noble blood. The Wolf. Leader of the Welsh rebels, *Byth Encil*.

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PROLOGUE

In BLACK we hear the primal SCREAMS of a man as we --

SMASH UP ON:

EXT. RURAL FIELD - BRITAIN/SCOTLAND BORDER - DAY

A Scottish LONGSWORD runs through the back of a British KNIGHT, his armor and mail is torn and hangs off of him.

As the tip of the blade PIERCES through his CHEST, we see the image of a DRAGON, gnarled and scarred. It's been BRANDED on his right pectoral. The man goes silent and drops to the bloody grasses. His armor bears the SEAL of King Edward I.

This entire sequence is UBER VIVID. Images, color, sound. It almost feels like animation. A bit unreal.

We are mid-battle, rather, mid-slaughter. SIXTY SCOTTISH SOLDIERS swarm a BRITISH battalion of twenty men. The five remaining Brits take on the assault with unwavering bravery.

The British knight leading the charge is WILKIN BRATTLE, 22, tall, thick, his lack of beard reveals simple good looks. His battle-hewn BROADSWORD also carries the seal of Edward Longshanks. Wilkin swings the heavy blade like an extension of his arm. His technique, equal parts skill and power. He drops Scots as if always two moves ahead. A 14th century Neo slicing through a medieval *Matrix*.

But the offensive is too overwhelming. The rest of Wilkin's battalion falls. Now surrounded, he takes the HILT of a sword to the face, knocking him to the ground. Then an adrenaline-fueled SCOT stands over him, lets out a BATTLECRY and drives his sword through Wilkin's mail into his torso.

Wilkin gazes up at the SUN as he GASPS for breath. The solar glow grows brighter and brighter. Eventually flooding his surroundings in WHITE LIGHT. The luminosity washes away the incursion. Suddenly Wilkin is alone. He sees a CHILD'S HAND reaching down to him. Blinded by the light, he can't see the face of his savior, but he grabs the hand as it pulls him to his feet. His wounds healed, he now sees the CHILD. It's a girl, maybe eight or nine. Her face olive in color, her hair white. She radiates. The child is the source of the light.

Wilkin realizes he's in the presence of an ANGEL. He drops to his knees, eyes cast down --

WILKIN
I am... I am your devoted servant...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The child says nothing. Wilkin dares to look up at her. She smiles warmly at him.

WILKIN

Am I... Is this heaven?

The child speaks in the voice of a GROWN WOMAN --

ANGEL CHILD

You have a destiny to claim.

WILKIN

Tell me... heavenly one. Tell me what you will have me do --

ANGEL CHILD

It is time to lay down this sword, Wilkin Brattle. Your savior needs you to live the life of a different man.

WILKIN

Yea... Yes... I understand...

With that, Wilkin drops his head and WEEPS. When he raises his eyes, the child is gone. So are his wounds.

He stands among the bodies of his fallen brothers. Nineteen of them, brutally slaughtered. Limbs, heads, organs strewn across the once green field, that now runs red with British blood. As he stumbles through the carnage, Wilkin reaches the man we first saw impaled. Sickened by the sight, Wilkin reaches down to shut the eyes of his mate. As he does, the dragon scar COMES TO LIFE, flies off the man, turning into a vicious BLACK AND RED GNARLED DRAGON. It attacks Wilkin, spitting FIRE and CLAWING at his face. Wilkin SCREAMS --

INT. WILKIN'S ABODE - WEST RIVER RIDING - DAY

Wilkin snaps up from the vivid dream, drenched in sweat. Present day, he is 27, bearded, hair longer, skin darkened by labor in the sun.

Now the world is not so vivid. Colors muted and dull.

Wilkin sits on the edge of his straw bed, grounding himself in reality as he takes in his simple home. After a moment, he settles and pulls off his soaked night shirt. There's a WOODEN CROSS on a leather strap around his neck. Wilkin rubs it reverently, then unconsciously touches a scar on his chest, the DRAGON BRAND. As he puts on another shirt we see a thick SCAR on his torso. The spot where he was stabbed. Wilkin drops his head and SILENTLY PRAYS.

A moment later, PETRA BRATTLE, his pregnant wife, enters with fire wood. She wears a beautiful CROSS, carved from rough SAPPHIRE, strung with leather around her neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Even in peasant garb, she exudes beauty. Petra sees Wilk's sweat-soaked garment, clocks his state of mind. She knows --

PETRA

The dream?

Wilkin ends his prayer and shakes off the disturbance --

WILKIN

You're my only dream.

He stands and embraces her. Wrapping her in his strong arms.

PETRA

Will you ever tell me what you see?

WILKIN

I see only my lovely Petra...

He begins kissing and nuzzling her, making her laugh as she pushes him away --

PETRA

Please. How can you want for such a cow?

WILKIN

Oh, but a beautiful cow it is.

Wilkin "MOOS" and pursues her. Grabbing her and kissing her rounded belly --

PETRA

Kicks fierce as his father this morning.

WILKIN

How do you know it's a he?

PETRA

Annora insists your first born will be an heir.

WILKIN

Ah... we're taking divine council from the witch now, are we?

PETRA

She's a healer, not a witch. And her herbs help my weakness and sleep.

WILKIN

And the silent, hooded one, does he offer dirt-scratched visions of our son's fate?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETRA

Yea. Insists he'll be as pious and mule-headed as his father.

WILKIN

I'm not mule-headed. I just devote to the thing at hand.

As Petra exits --

PETRA

Good. After you eat, devote to filling the barrels. We're near out of water.

EXT. WILKIN'S ABODE - VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wilkin follows Petra --

WILKIN

Think that would be the task of a strong cow.

She playfully smacks him as he continues to "MOO" and pursue her. As they play, we see their VILLAGE.

A dozen other simple HOUSES surround a COMMON PEN for animals, a large OUTDOOR TABLE for mass and gatherings, a HEARTH for roasting. At the entrance of the village, a STONE HOVEL, for storing alfalfa. On the hovel, a CROSS that signifies this village is pious and accepts visiting priests.

In the distance, ALFALFA FIELDS and a thick FOREST. Beyond that, perhaps out of sight, a west flowing RIVER. Wilk's world is primitive but idyllic.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - MASTER BED CHAMBER - VENTRISHIRE - DAY

BARON ERIK VENTRIS grinds on top of LADY LOVE VENTRIS. She's on her belly. His GUTTURAL GROANS relay a certain burden and lack of enjoyment. Lady Love's eyes are shut, she's equally burdened and clearly not enjoying the sexual routine. The Baron finishes with a GRUNT and labored sigh.

He rolls off his wife and sits up on the side of their large feather bed. Love's eyes open, she paints on a pleasing face as her husband buttons up his undergarment --

VENTRIS

I'm sure they're wasted seeds. Like the rest.

LADY LOVE

God will bestow us with a child in his time, Erik.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VENTRIS

Then let God waste hours laying
swollen meat inside a barren hole.

Lady Love refrains from commenting as Ventriss pulls on his night shirt and exits the chamber. As the door shuts, Lady's facade drops. She hangs her head in exhaustion. Not from the mechanical sex, but from the game of faux adoration.

Then a gentle KNOCK on the door --

LADY LOVE

Come.

ISABEL KIFFIN enters, takes in her Lady's dark demeanor --

ISABEL

Good morning, Baroness.

LADY LOVE

Morning.

Lady walks to the window, pushes opens the lead-lined glass --

She looks out and sees the NOBLE COURT, the COURT VILLAGE and beyond the stone walls of the castle, the hills and forests of Ventrishire, Wales. It's formidable and idyllic.

Isabel watches her. Knows her state of mind, but is uncertain how to comfort. Then, sweetly --

ISABEL

Should I draw a bath, m'Lady?

LADY LOVE

I need more than a bath, sweet Isabel.
(to herself)
So much more.

Off Love's deep disillusionment, we --

BURN INTO:

OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

ACT ONE

FADE UP ON:

EXT. RIVERBANK - WEST RIVER RIDING - DAY

ANNORA picks herbs from the swampy bank as the DARK MUTE sits on a rock, reading a leather-bound BOOK. Annora joins the Mute, dropping her plants into a carry basket.

Suddenly, she catches a STRONG BREEZE, shuts her eyes and lets it fill her body and mind, as if receiving divine intel. The Mute turns to her, he's watching from under his hood. The wind stops, Annora opens her eyes, enlightened --

ANNORA

It has begun.

On that word, we see Wilkin and Petra appear through the trees, a heavy WATER CARRIER, balanced on Wilkin's shoulders.

Wilkin spots Annora and the Mute in the distance --

WILKIN

Your pagan confidant awaits you.

PETRA

As does your fur-covered squire.

Petra references ASH y GOEDWIG as he approaches from the opposite direction. He walks the riverbank with a SHEEP in tow. Dressed in ANIMAL FUR and SKINS, he scans the ground as he talks to someone. Actually, he's talking to the sheep --

ASH

I'm looking... calm yourself. No, it's too cold. I'll catch the death --
(turns to her, appalled)
I'll sheer you raw, you bring that up again. Last time I share a secret with a ewe. You.

Wilkin and Petra join Ash --

WILKIN

Something wrong, young friend?

ASH

G'day, Wilk, Petra.
(re: sheep)
She's being a bit of crankypox.
Demanding cane roots. That phase of the moon I guess.

Wilkin shakes his head as he unburdens himself of the rig.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETRA

Well, perhaps Miriam just needs a little rest.

ASH

That's all she does is sleep. Sleep, eat, and shit.

WILKIN

That's because it's a sheep.

ASH

Eh, wit. And a beautiful one...

Ash looks into Miriam's big brown eyes, strokes her head.

ASH

Sorry, honeypot... I know...

PETRA

Ah... Love spreads like a sweet, healing balm.

WILKIN

Yea... then it gnarls the fur and draws maggots.

Petra kicks water at her man as he begins to fill the buckets.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - GARDEROBE (BATHROOM) - DAY

Ventris sits on the wooden seat, relieving himself of yesterday's waste, as he confers with MILES CORBETT. A HOUSE SERVANT waits off to the side. Ventris, mid-shit, mid-rant --

VENTRIS

How many troops were sent with the tax collector?

CORBETT

Full knights this ride, ten of them. Most with banner.

VENTRIS

Good. The bandits will be in for a bloody surprise.

CORBETT

And if it's the rebels?

VENTRIS

The Byth Encil wouldn't steal a mere piece of the bounty. This is an assertion of condition. It's righteous peasants, setting their own rule of tribute. More dangerous than rebels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Then we crush them, m'Lord.

Ventris stands. The servant immediately comes to him with RAGS, and WIPES his ass clean as he continues --

VENTRIS

We best. Their boldness spreads. If they run us again, steal my taxes... we will have more luminary thieves than servants to wipe my shit.

The servant finishes. Ventris strides out, Miles follows. The ass wiper dumps the rags in a basket. It's a living.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

As Wilkin finishes filling the buckets, TORAN PRICHARD, on horseback, rides in with urgency. Informs Wilk as he nears --

TORAN

Brother Wilk, I've heard from our friends in the Darby Birch. Scout rode in at dawn to warn us.

WILKIN

Collectors? Already?

TORAN

Yea. More brutal than ever. Doubled the tax. Doubled the guards. Be here by daybreak.

Wilkin looks at a concerned Petra. Toran, awaiting orders --

TORAN

What say?

WILKIN

Find the Moor, I'll get Jacob and the brothers. We'll need to ride now, catch them in darkness.

ASH

I want to fight, Wilk.

WILKIN

No, lad.

ASH

I'm of age. Clever. I want to help.

TORAN

If we're doing this by night, no one knows the paths better than our witless trapper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASH

Yea, oh. I know every twig from here
to the far Alders. Please...

Wilkin studies the teen. Then --

WILKIN

You can ride with us. But you don't
fight. And the sheep stays here.

ASH

I get a hood, yea?

Toran pulls a big KNIFE, trots toward Ash and Miriam --

TORAN

Yea. I'll make you one of sheep skin.

Ash panics. Petra intervenes, at Ash --

PETRA

Go fetch my father. He's in the fields.
The Caine boys should be with him. Tell
them we meet at the hovel.

ASH

Yea, oh. Wit haste, ma'am.

Ash and ewe run to the woods. Petra playfully reprimands Toran --

PETRA

You're a cruel one.

TORAN

He's sarding mindless beasts and I'm
the cruel one?

WILKIN

Task at hand, mate.

TORAN

Yea, on.

Toran rides off. In the distance, Annora and the Mute begin
to walk down the riverbank towards Wilk and Petra.

Petra gets quiet as she helps Wilkin secure the buckets on
his shoulders. He senses her apprehension --

WILKIN

I know that look.

PETRA

You should. I wear it often.

(off his nod)

Ventris is sly and brutal.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETRA (cont'd)

It's only time and point before you catch his wrath.

WILKIN

Yea, wit. I would've stopped months ago...

PETRA

But you don't.

WILKIN

Sorry, my angel. It's not just about returning the chattel anymore, it's about giving them a taste of hope.

(beat)

When we ride back to the villages, return their shillings and wares... the light that turns on in their weary eyes... The song of cheers... For just a moment, their burdens are lifted. Giving them that can only be divine.

PETRA

Thieving is now God's work? What scripture tells that lesson?

WILKIN

We only throw harm at those in practice of war. And we take back from Ventriss only the sum that's unjust. How can fairness not be God's desire?

Petra looks at her man, his determination is pure.

PETRA

My sweet, man. The dreamer always in battle with the soldier.

(kisses him)

I'm afraid I know who wins that fight.

Before Wilkin can respond, Annora and the Mute join them --

ANNORA

Good morning, farmer. Fair dame.

Wilkin gives a nod. Annora approaches Petra, re: the baby --

ANNORA

How's our gentle lytling doing today?

PETRA

Very active.

ANNORA

A life eager to see the sunlight.

Annora sees an open CUT on Wilk's shoulder from the carrier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANNORA

Need to cover that wound.
(re: water in the buckets)
The spill layer swims with sickness.

Annora reaches into her basket, takes out some HERBS as the Mute helps removes the rig from Wilk's shoulders --

WILKIN

I'm fine.

ANNORA

And in three days time you'll be weak
and fevered.

Annora mixes the herb with river mud. Then takes a STICK and scrapes the top layer of Wilk's wound. Wilkin, uncomfortable, looks at Petra. She gives him a "just do it" look. Annora applies the mud salve and lays a large leaf over the cut.

ANNORA

That will keep it.

PETRA

Thank you.

Wilkin gives a forced nod. Annora returns the nod, then goes to the river to wash her hands. Wilk and Petra head to the forest. As Annora watches them walk away, the Mute has used his WALKING STICK to WRITE in the river mud: THE OTHER ?

Annora takes the stick she used on Wilkin, examines the blood, then puts the tip in her mouth. As she tastes it, she shuts her eyes, sees something in her mind. Then --

ANNORA

He's in service.

INT. CASTLE PRYCE - DUNGEON - PRYCESHIRE - DAY

A POOL OF BLOOD forms at the feet of a MAN. PAN UP and reveal GAWAIN MADDOX, ripping the SKIN OFF the man's back.

The victim is CHAINED to a wall, a rag in his mouth keeps the screams to a MUTED GROAN. Two more MEN chained next to him, awaiting their punishment.

Gawain finishes slicing off the skin with a sharp BLADE. He's brutal, emotionless and precise.

The PRYCESHIRE REEVE and a GUARD stand behind. The Reeve documents the task in a JOURNAL, dictates other sentences --

PRYCESHIRE REEVE

Quarter pieces for the other two
thieves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAWAIN

Double shillings for that.

PRYCESHIRE REEVE

Double? Your services are new to Baron Pryce, punisher. You do yourself a pained misstep to overreach --

GAWAIN

Smaller slices are tedious work. More blood to navigate. No different than my pay in the South.

PRYCESHIRE REEVE

Finish the task. A fair rate will follow.

The Reeve walks away, passing LUCA MADDUX, Gawain's son, as he stands over two LEATHER BAGS of torture tools. The boy trying his best to not turn away from his dad's brutal work. Then the victim manages to SPIT OUT the rag and SCREAM. Gawain turns to his son, who is now terrified.

GAWAIN

Did you soak the rag in dumb paste?

LUCA

I... The pot wouldn't fit in the bags father. I can fetch --

Before he can finish the sentence, Gawain brutally BACKHANDS Luca, sending him to the dirt floor. The guard laughs.

GAWAIN

Lazy, little piss-leech.

The boy scrambles to his feet and runs down the corridor.

GAWAIN

Stupid and weak.
(to himself)
Stupid and weak...

Gawain resumes his torture --

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - BOOK AND MAP ROOM - DAY

Ventris and Corbett sit at a large table in a library-like room. Books, maps, battle memorabilia. We see Ventris' COAT OF ARMS, proudly displayed on the wall. They drink WINE as they scan a hand-drawn MAP of WALES. Mid-strategy --

VENTRIS

Time is a most aggressive foe, Milus. We need to press forward. The favor of our rule changes with the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Especially with our puffed-up, boy
king handing out land like candy --

A KNOCK --

VENTRIS

Come.

RANDULF CORBETT, Milus' son and Ventrishire Reeve, enters
with a POUCH OF GOLD COINS. Places it on the table --

RANDULF

M'Lord, Baron Pryce's envoy has
delivered the tariff. Wishes to speak
with you.

Ventris and Milus share a smile. Then, on the move --

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - CORRIDORS, STAIRWELLS - CONTINUOUS

We follow the men as they WALK AND TALK through the castle.
In and out of adjoining rooms, halls, winding staircases --

VENTRIS

I assume he bares no gifts with this
desire for an audience.

RANDULF

Gifts, Baron?

VENTRIS

Pheasant, aged wine, virgin whore?

RANDULF

Why would he offer such --

Corbett, frustrated by his son's inability to sense humor --

CORBETT

What does he want?

RANDULF

Once again, making a heated point of
the growing tariff.

VENTRIS

If Pryce wants access to the sea,
he'll pay for it.

RANDULF

What happens if he refuses?

CORBETT

We'll have just cause to assert power.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RANDULF

Into Pryceshire? His battalions
outnumber ours.

VENTRIS

Pryce is a man of books. Thinkers die
in battle.

RANDULF

And what of our King? Where will
Edward sit in this dispute?

VENTRIS

Where our King's plush bottom always
sits. In the middle, waiting like a
flowered girl to soothe the victor.

CORBETT

With a mouthful of young, noble seed.

They exit a large wooden door --

EXT. CASTLE VENTRIS - NOBLE COURT - CONTINUOUS

The men walk through the Baron's court and gardens.

EXT. CASTLE VENTRIS - DRAWBRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Ventris, Corbett, Randulf cross the drawbridge and approach --

EXT. THE COURT VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Beyond the moat and high castle walls is the court village.
A small town of freemen and serfs who serve the Baron.
Blacksmith, Meadmaker, Weaver, Merchants, etc. This area is
surrounded by a LOWER WALL enclosed by a large WOODEN GATE.

As the men cross into the village they see Baron Pryce's
EMISSARY and two GUARDS, in noble riding gear, outside the
Village Hall. Before he reaches the messenger, Ventris
stops, tasks Randulf --

VENTRIS

Tell Pryce's man the tariff just went
up again. A third.
(off Randulf's look)
For disturbing my... religious studies.

RANDULF

I... Do you not wish to have that word
with him?

VENTRIS

He's beneath me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RANDULF

But, my Lord... You realize you taunt him by coming this far and --

CORBETT

The taunt is the message. Deliver it.

RANDULF

Yes. Sorry father. My Liege.

Randulf heads to Pryce's men.

VENTRIS

Our Reeve seems to question our tactics for prosperity.

CORBETT

He has his mother's nervous spine.

Pryce's man, enraged, begins to walk toward Ventriss. Randulf DROPS him with a brutal LEFT HOOK.

VENTRIS

Ah... But his father's wild temper.

CORBETT

Thank our gracious God for that.

Pryce's emissary burns a look at Ventriss. Baron and advisor give a dismissive wave, head to the castle. Good to be Lord.

INT. WILKIN'S ABODE - DAY

Wilkin on his knees, in prayer. The conflict in his head is too complex for it to be a silent conversation --

WILKIN

I know my actions at times challenge the boundaries of your proclamation, heavenly father. It's never in boldness or defiance. I'm forever in your service. I take the urges of my heart as divine speak. Move in their direction. If this is not your will. If I'm wrong, please show me.

Wilkin bows his head. Waits for inspiration.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - WEST RIVER RIDING - DAY

At the table, near the grain hovel, Wilk's brigade prepares for their ride. Along with Toran and Ash, we meet JACOB NEVETT, BERBER THE MOOR, and the CAINE BROTHERS, ARON, CALO, and ELLIS. All the men prep less than noble steeds as FAMILY attend. Women, children and elderly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see their horses are equipped with old, scarred WEAPONS. Swords, daggers, bows, etc.

Berber speaks to an elderly BASQUE WOMAN in Basque --

BERBER

Ez lan oso gogor, maitea Jasmina.

She waves off his concern, kisses him on the cheek.

Aron and Calo Caine both go for the same OLD SWORD --

ARON

Give it here. You carried da's cutter last ride.

CALO

B'cause you don't have the arm to swing it, punykin.

ARON

Fat elf --

With that, Aron dives at Calo. Brothers wrestle as Ellis and their GRANDFATHER watch. Ellis intervenes, pulls them apart.

ELLIS

I'll use that blade to chop off your pricks, you two keep up the rabble.

Petra dodges the Caine row, hands Jacob his water pouch --

PETRA

You should be whittling me toys, not playing hero, old man.

JACOB

Whittling is for the lame of mind, my motherly daughter.

PETRA

Be certain that's not how you return.

They embrace. The love is deep.

EVA and RHYS PRICHARD help Toran secure a bedroll and QUIVER of arrows. He takes in his wife's dower expression --

TORAN

No need to wear the funeral mask. I'm not dead yet, Eva.

EVA

The mask is for me. You'll be the death of me, you reckless mule.

Toran kisses her and turns to his son --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TORAN

Keep her heavy on the mead while I'm away, boy. She's bearable that way.

RHYS

I will, da.

Rhys embraces his father. Strong bond.

TORAN

Love you, lad.

Wilk exits his house, joins his posse. Kisses Petra --

WILKIN

We'll be back before the half moon.

PETRA

Yea. I'll be here. Twice the cow.

He kisses her belly, talks to his unborn child --

WILKIN

You stay in there. No catching your mother with an eager birth.

EVA

Running the laws of nature now, farmer?

WILKIN

Never, dear Eva. I leave the control of all things earthly to the women.

As Wilk mounts his horse, we see no sword or dagger, just a heavy hand-carved OAK CLUB. Size of a small baseball bat.

PETRA

God keep you safe.

WILKIN

Always.

With that, they RIDE. Leaving the village in a haze of dust.

EXT. FOREST - OUTSIDE DARBY BIRCH - DAY

Ten KNIGHTS in light gear (mail, minimal armor) ride at a moderate gallop, two across. Horses strong and groomed. A small CARRIAGE in the middle, driven by JONAS, the collector, holds coins and goods. It's a formidable, armed procession.

EXT. ROCKY BEACH - COAST OF VENTRISHIRE - DAY

Lady Love is waist deep in the cold water, wearing only an undergarment. Isabel watches nervously from the shore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Horses behind, carry BLANKETS. Love wades deeper, her eyes shut as the cold water cleanses body and soul. Unaffected by the freezing temperature, she SUBMERGES and disappears.

ISABEL

God in heaven, I hate when she does that...

After a long moment, Lady does not resurface. Isabel panics --

ISABEL

M'Lady. Lady Love!
(beat)
Ah, Shite...

Isabel starts for the water, then Lady RISES. Takes a deep gasping breath. Isabel stops, a doting caretaker --

ISABEL

Can you please not give yourself to the sea. I die a child's year every time --

LADY LOVE

I'm fine, dear Isabel.

Lady makes her way to shore. Isabel wraps her in blankets --

ISABEL

Don't know why you insist on this barbaric ritual.

LADY LOVE

I've been swimming in this water since I was born. The chill refreshes my spirit. Reminds me of who I am.

ISABEL

The baroness who caught her death?

LADY LOVE

The Welsh girl who once loved everything her gaze could hold.

The two women share an historical look. Isabel, the friend --

ISABEL

Sorry, Love.

LADY LOVE

Me too.

They embrace. Isabel continues to wrap Lady Love in warmth as they head to the horses. Then, playfully --

LADY LOVE

Perhaps, now a proud and naked Lady of Coventry ride through the village.

(CONTINUED)

ISABEL
(re: her nipples)
Yea, on. Your good gifts eagerly
point the way.

The women laugh like they did as children --

EXT. TRAIL ROAD - PRYCESHIRE - DAY

SUN SETS on a road leading away from Castle Pryce. It's a larger castle than Ventris. More ornate. On the road, Gawain, in a HORSE-PULLED WAGON, counts his PAY. His wife, JESSAMY MADDOX, reins the horse and BREAST-FEEDS PIPPA MADDOX. Luca rides in the back of the cart with their belongings.

Gawain, distracted by the infant, looks at his wife with disgust.

GAWAIN
Boy! Take the reins.
(at Jessamy)
Feed it in back. The suckling cuts me
like a jagged pus-skewer.

Jessamy and Luca share a look, exchange places. They clearly live in a state of terror in the presence of their provider.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - FOREST - MIDDLE VENTRISHIRE - NIGHT

In a small clearing, we see the soldiers and Jonas gathered around a fire. A few knights watch the surrounding woods as others finish up a meal. Mood is cautious but calm.

Three knights head to the woods, one tasks those remaining --

LEAD KNIGHT
We'll take first guard as soon as we
shit out mead and bird.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Lead knight squats, taking a shit. The other two flank him nearby, pissing mead. Suddenly a FWWWIPP breaks the silent night, as an ARROW EXPLODES out of the NECK of one of the pissing guards. Drops dead. A moment later, another SNAP and the other pisser drops to the ground, arrow through his HEART.

The lead knight hears the second man fall, turns and sees his downed comrades. As he hurriedly pulls himself to his feet, he is met by Wilkin's club as it CRACKS his skull. He drops into a pile of his own shit, his head literally SPLIT in two.

Wilkin, Toran, Berber, Jacob and the Caine brothers, in hide and canvas HOODS, appear from the darkness. Toran and Jacob with the bows. Wilkin waves them forward. Guerilla mode.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Jonas and the knights douse the cooking fire and prepare for sleep. Suddenly a barrage of FLAMING ARROWS lights up the camp. Several torching the knights. In the chaos, the misfit brigade charges in, catching the knights off guard. Wilkin cracks heads as Toran, Berber, Jacob and the brothers rush them with swords and daggers. Some of the knights manage to arm themselves, but the fight is short and bloody.

In the mayhem, Jonas dives under the wagon. He watches as the last of his protection is taken down. Then Toran spots the collector, points him out to Wilkin. Wilkin pulls Jonas out --

WILKIN

We meet again, tax man.

JONAS

Please... spare me still...

WILKIN

Same condition, you tell your greedy Lord, if he keeps biting like the wolf, we keep laying the traps.

JONAS

I... I see no faces. I never know who to say sends the message...

TORAN

The woodland ghost and his hungry goblins.

CALO

We eat nesh, little penny hoarders.

The hooded men tease and terrify Jonas as he runs to a horse and flees. When he's out of sight, they remove their hoods.

BERBER

I will find our hapless trapper.

Wilkin looking for a reason to leave the bloody scene --

WILKIN

I'll join you.

EXT. TRAIL - FOREST - NIGHT

Ash, HOODED, in his usual SKIN AND HIDE, waits by himself in the distant woods. Talking to a MOTH on a tree --

ASH

What? Yea, too? I'll own that skill some day, little wings that vanish...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly he hears a horse approach --

ASH
My friends return.

On that, the moth flies away as Ash leaves his hiding place and steps into the trail. Only to be met by the collector. Jonas' horse spooks and REARS UP. Ash stunned, stumbles back, his HOOD SLIDES UP, revealing a good deal of his face. Jonas gets a look in the bright moonlight, then takes off.

Ash pulls down his hood and runs. Faster, faster. Until, he SMACKS head on into Wilk and Berber. Ash panics, then sees --

ASH
Hey... Yea, oh. Sorry...

WILKIN
What happened? Why are you running?

ASH
Nothing... Just a yearn for my mates.

Wilk and Berber share a look, as Ash scampers ahead.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - FOREST - NIGHT

Wilk, Berber and Ash near the camp, pushing through brush. As Wilk peers through branches, he sees the CARNAGE of their attack. Bodies cut up and burned. He stares ahead and --

FLASHES BACK TO:

EXT. RURAL WOODS - BRITAIN/SCOTLAND BORDER - DAY

This scene takes place shortly after the opening sequence. Wilkin, now in a thicket of trees, watching covertly, as two men ride through the carnage. As they get closer, we see they are a younger VENTRIS and CORBETT. Both in armor of Edward I.

EXT. RURAL FIELD - INTERCUT

Ventris and Corbett take in the massacre with satisfaction as VULTURES eagerly circle above --

CORBETT
Destiny has met your ambitious warrior.

VENTRIS
As well as the Scots' long blades.

CORBETT
Should I find the body?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VENTRIS

No. If we bring him back slain, we immortalize him. Wilkin Brattle will no longer inspire favor in our King.

CORBETT

But he will with buzzards and wolves.
(at the circling vultures)
Feast on, my friends! King-fed meat.

The men share a smile and ride off.

Wilkin has overheard the traitorous confession. Now adding betrayal to his growing list of emotions as we --

BACK TO:

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - FOREST - NIGHT

As Wilk snaps out of his dark memory, Berber sees his distraction. Ash watches the following exchange --

BERBER

Your spiritual disturbance gets deeper, my friend.
(off his look)
You have helped many a poor souls.
Perhaps it's time to consider yours.

Wilkin buries his vulnerability, kindly --

WILKIN

I'm good.

Wilk moves into camp. Toran and Jacob dig through the bounty as Jacob and the Caines enter with their horses and gear.

Berber and Ash watch as Wilkin walks through the dead bodies.

ASH

He's not good, is he?

BERBER

None of us are.

Wilkin kneels over a slain knight, who stares up at heaven with open dead eyes. To God, not the knight --

WILKIN

Forgive me.

As Wilk shuts the man's eyes, we --

SMASH TO:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE UP ON:

EXT. LUMBER MILL - DARBY BIRCH - DAY

Wilkin and the others, in HOODS, ride into the outpost. See primitive tools used for chopping trees. In the distance, through the trees, we can see part of another VILLAGE.

On a few of the rocks and trees we see a SYMBOL: A DAFFODIL INTERSECTED BY A DAGGER.

The Darby Birch VILLAGERS gather around as the hooded bandits circle them. The mood is upbeat and joyous. Toran drops their money and goods in the middle of the group.

TORAN

We give our Baron his fair share. But the size of that piece, we decide.

CHEERS and tribute as they retrieve their coins and goods. The HEAD VILLAGER appeals to the men --

VILLAGER

Need not hide your faces from us.

WILKIN

We hide them to protect you.

VILLAGER

At least let us thank you with food and drink. Or bolt of wood.

WILKIN

We need nothing. Give your thanks to God.

Wilkin watches their hope sing, then gestures to his men, let's go. The posse rides away.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - BOOK AND MAP ROOM - DAY

Lady Love sits in a plush chair, devouring a BOOK, as Ventris drinks and reviews LEDGERS. He's a guy who keeps count. Then Corbett and Randulf enter with Jonas. Urgent intrusion --

CORBETT

Forgive us, Baron. M'Lady. There's been another attack. Hooded thieves. Ten men slain. Again, no harm brought to our collector.

Ventris, enraged, swipes the wine jug off the table, SMASHING into the wall. Lady Love keeps her composure.

(CONTINUED)

VENTRIS

How many?

JONAS

Seven, as before. They took us in darkness. Deadly ghosts. There was another this time, deeper in the woods. He spooked my horse. Saw a flash of his face. A young one.

RANDULF

How do you know he was a bandit?

JONAS

He was hooded. His clothing was different, all hides and fur, but he was with them. A watcher perhaps.

VENTRIS

The young one, what kind of fur?

JONAS

It had sheen, beaver pelt I'd say.

VENTRIS

Costly vesture for a peasant bandit.
(at Lady Love)
Beavers. What rivers do they dam?

Lady Love on the spot, hesitates, then answers --

LADY LOVE

The colder ones. West to the sea.

Ventris grabs a MAP, spreads it on the table. Corbett, Randolph and Jonas join him, they scan Ventrishire.

VENTRIS

West... Gwynedd or the minor turns we know...

CORBETT

Here. Branches of the Dunoding run west. Touch the far end of the shire.

VENTRIS

We've settlers there?

RANDULF

Alfalga farmers, I believe.

JONAS

Yes. Quarterly collections. A days ride in fair weather.

Ventris and Corbett share a look. Then at Randolph --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VENTRIS

Full battalion. My charge.

(at Jonas)

You ride with us. You can pick out
the watcher. Make sound guesses of
the others without their clever hoods.

JONAS

(less than enthusiastic)

Yes, my Liege.

Randulf and Jonas exit. Corbett advises --

CORBETT

You facing these men on an unfamiliar
field gives me concern, dear Erik.

VENTRIS

That's why you will be at my side,
dear Milus.

CORBETT

(with a smile)

An honor.

LADY LOVE

And if the collector tells you what
you want to hear, what then, Baron?

VENTRIS

Why trial and process, of course.

LADY LOVE

Of course.

Ventris kisses her cheek, exits. Lady Love and Corbett --

CORBETT

I know your distress is undoubtedly
about the safety of your husband,
m'Lady, but an ignorant eye may see it
as concern for the welfare of outlaws.

LADY LOVE

Well, I thank my maker that I'm in the
presence of a man who never leans
towards ignorance.

CORBETT

Indeed. Knowledge is my service.

LADY LOVE

And you should share some of that
knowledge with my husband. Remind him
that no commoner wants rebellion. It
only comes after hope, fairness, and
reason are extinguished.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CORBETT

And tell me, dear Baroness. How is it that someone of your privilege may come to know the plight of common men?

LADY LOVED

Well, unlike some within these walls, I live with open eyes and open heart.
(pointed)
If you keep taking from these people, Milus, you'll break them. And we both know there's nothing more dangerous than a man who has nothing to lose.

Corbett studies his worthy opponent, before he can respond --

LADY LOVE

Keep my husband safe. I'm depending on you, good Chamberlain.

Lady Love exits. Corbett enjoys the competition --

EXT. BROOKSIDE - MIDDLE VENTRISHIRE - DAY

As late afternoon falls, Wilkin slows the pack near a clearing by a fast-running BROOK. Hoods are all off.

WILKIN

Let the horses drink. Rest.

BERBER

We should camp here. Night closes. May be the last fresh water before we reach Heaven's Eye.

WILKIN

Yea. I'll take the Caines, gather wood.

TORAN

Trapper, let's put your godly gifts to work.

ASH

Yea, oh. These middle woods grow rabbits big enough to ride.

TORAN

No need to mount them. Want to skewer them over fire, not with our pricks.

The men LAUGH as they dismount.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - CHAPEL - DAY

Lady Love sits alone in the small, ornate chapel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The setting sun pouring through the STAINED GLASS gives the space an ominous red glow. She stares up at the window, lost in a memory as Father Ruskin enters. Sits next to her --

FATHER RUSKIN

Afternoon devotion, m'Lady?

LADY LOVE

I needed a place to think.

FATHER RUSKIN

I saw the Baron ride off with a small legion. Should we be alarmed?

LADY LOVE

The bandits. Or rebels perhaps. So much unrest boils beyond these walls, Father.

FATHER RUSKIN

That troubles you deeply, I know. Makes you feel helpless.

LADY LOVE

I made the sacrifices that were necessary. I don't regret anything.

FATHER RUSKIN

Your devotion to God and your beloved Wales is deep. And yet, saddens me. You should be swathed in adoration. Dancing, singing, downing mead and hum. Having a mad time of it.

LADY LOVE

How does a man of deep pious learning, bear such a frivolous view on life?

FATHER RUSKIN

Ah, you see my mind craves knowledge. My soul craves God. But my heart -- it will always crave love. That's His desire for all of us. To be joyous.

LADY LOVE

I find my joy in small comforts. For now, that's more than enough.

FATHER RUSKIN

Yes. I'll leave you to your thoughts.

Love grabs his hand, vulnerability of her age breaks through --

LADY LOVE

Please stay. Sit with me. I can feel your love-filled heart. Truly. It's one of my small comforts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Father Ruskin pats her hand. Stays. Makes her feel safe.

EXT. FOREST - MIDDLE VENTRISHIRE - DUSK

Ventris, Corbett, Jonas, ten KNIGHTS, one of them, LEON TELL, ride hard as day slips into night. Cutting a determined path through virgin woods. A non-stop journey.

EXT. BROOKSIDE - NIGHT

Wilkin grooms the horses near the water as Toran, Ash, Berber, Jacob and the brothers work around a fire. Berber grills rabbits as Ash drops the pelts near the supplies. He spots Wilk's CLUB with the bows and quivers. As Ash sits --

ASH

Why does Wilk use oak and not a blade?

ELLIS

There are many things we don't know about our friend.

JACOB

Even Petra has learned not to ask. She knows little of his life before he came to the river.

ASH

The fight skill he's taught you... that was learned on a field of battle, not alfalfa.

TORAN

We've all tales best kept locked in our head.

ASH

Do you think he's killed many men?

BERBER

No more questions, boy. You share our fire and food, you share our respect.

ASH

Yea, oh. Sorry.

Aron tosses him a CHUNK of meat --

ARON

Chew on that. Should keep your prattle hole busy.

The men smile, except Toran. Topic of battle spins him. He walks over to Wilkin as the others eat. Private --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TORAN

Should eat before the vultures pick it
to the bone.

WILKIN

I will.

Wilk works as Toran watches. Both men aware of what's on
each other's minds. Wilk breaks the silence --

WILKIN

Ventris will keep doubling his guards.

TORAN

Yea. We can't do this alone anymore.
(off Wilkin's look)
You saw the markings on the trees?
Byth Encil is growing in numbers.
They'd welcome our skill.

WILKIN

I serve God and family, not cause or
crown.

TORAN

You think the gates of heaven fly open
b'cause you down a man with wood
instead of steel?

WILKIN

Perhaps not. Judgment finds us all.

TORAN

We've both watched men die by the work
of our hands, Wilkin. In service of
God or king, doesn't matter. We're
driven by a deeper burn. We need to
feel that, or we wither.

Toran gives his friend a caring squeeze on the shoulder, then
heads back to the others. Wilkin continues his chore,
letting Toran's truth swim in his head.

EXT. FOREST - OUTER VENTRISHIRE - NIGHT

Ventris and battalion GALLOP through the darkness. On task.

EXT. ANNORA'S HOUSE - THE ALDERS - NIGHT

In a clearing, inside a thick of Alder trees, the Mute sits
near a fire. He's writing on parchment with a sharp TWIG,
dipped in the belly of a DEAD CROW, blood as ink. Behind
him, a CART next to two HORSES, in front of a thatched HOUSE.

Annora exits, joins the Mute, a primitive ROSARY in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNORA

It is time, beloved.

The Mute puts down the stick and slides off his hood. We see his face for the first time. It's a gnarled mass of BURN-SCARRED flesh. No hair grows on his head or face. His lips bear the markings of STITCHES as if once sewn shut and only a small portion of his mouth opens. But his eyes are untouched, they jump out from the horror like two brilliant green lights. It's a hideous and somewhat magical sight. The Mute nods, lets out a barely intelligible --

DARK MUTE

Qui, mon amour...

Annora kisses his grotesque face. Then as he walks to the house, she drops to her knees and silently prays --

INT. WILKIN'S ABODE - NIGHT

Petra stirs in her bed, awakened by the distant sound of HORSES. She sits up as the equine din grows to a THUNDER. Suddenly her door bursts open and LEON TELL, storms inside. She lets out a gasp as the knight scans the small space.

LEON

Where's your man?

PETRA

Where's your right?

The knight grabs her and pulls her outside --

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Ventris, Corbett and Jonas watch as Leon drags over Petra. Followed by Randulf bringing Eva and Rhys. The other knights gather the families of the other men.

RANDULF

Just the women and elders here.

VENTRIS

Where are your farmers?

No one answers. Randulf BACKHANDS Eva. Petra blurts a lie --

PETRA

They're hunting. Lord Ventris. Skins to carry the harvest.

VENTRIS

In the dark? Do I seem a fool?
(at Randulf, re: Rhys)
Slit the boy's throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVA

No!

Randulf pulls his ANELACE, puts it to Rhys' throat --

PETRA

Stop!

VENTRIS

Where are they?

Petra hesitates. Corbett clarifies --

CORBETT

A lie bleeds two throats.

PETRA

They went to the Darby Birch.

VENTRIS

With their hoods?

Petra turns a desperate eye towards Eva. The hesitation enrages Ventriss. He grabs the long dagger from Randulf. Before the Baron can draw the blade across Rhys' young neck --

EVA

Yea. With hoods.

VENTRIS

How many?

EVA

Eight.

CORBETT

Who rides with them? The rebels?

PETRA

No one.

CORBETT

You expect your Baron to believe that a pox-dowed band of farmers has been knelling his noble ranks.

PETRA

He should. His ranks seem only fit to strike women and children.

Ventriss burns a look at Petra, then without warning, casually SLITS Rhys' THROAT. Eva SCREAMS. Petra runs to the boy.

VENTRIS

End them all. Burn it to the ground.

Jonas, stunned, watches Rhys dies. Petra spits at them --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETRA

Devils! Curs! They'll hunt you down
and cut out your stone hearts.

VENTRIS

Make this one a sight for deep memory.
Kill her, cut out the child and place
her at the hub to welcome the heroes.
Let's see their hoods hide that pain.

As the knights go for Petra, Eva and other villagers rush the soldiers. Scratching and gouging eyes. Petra sees her opening, runs to the woods. Corbett laughs at the move --

CORBETT

Fetch her.

Leon takes the task, pursues Petra. Jonas, horrified --

JONAS

My Lord... This is a breach of law.
Both God and King... It's madness.

VENTRIS

Relieve our collector of his moral
conflict.

On that command, Corbett runs a SWORD through the collector.

EXT. FOREST - WEST RIVER RIDING - NIGHT

Petra runs as the knight follows. Darkness and her condition make speed difficult. Before long, the knight is upon her. Leon throws her to the ground. Petra's undergarment ripped, her belly in view. She pleads as Leon draws his sword --

PETRA

I beg of you. Please... Find the God
you defend. Have mercy. Not for me,
but for the innocent heart beating
inside... Please...

Leon looks down at Petra, a mix of God-fear and guilt grips him. Then he sees the SAPPHIRE CROSS. Leon yanks it off her. Looks at it, sees its value. Then --

LEON

Run. Don't ever come back here. Or
anywhere in this shire. You'll be
sure as dead.

Petra, still terrified, slowly climbs to her feet --

LEON

Go!

Petra runs.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - NIGHT

Leon joins the nobles as the houses are SET ON FIRE. Bodies of the dead villagers being laid out near the hovel.

CORBETT

Where's the irreverent whore?

LEON

Mad bitch drowned herself. Dead as a rock. Current took the body. Should I follow it down river?

VENTRIS

No. She'll wash up at another bend. Let the knaves find her, then they'll know this was not just a yarn of lore.

CORBETT

The farmers will see the smoke. They won't ride into a waiting attack.

VENTRIS

I want them alive. For now. Let them suffer this, and fill the ears of traitors with horrid tales of woe.

Corbett nods as Ventris watches the village burn. Satisfied.

EXT. FOREST - WEST RIVER RIDING - NIGHT

Petra exhausted, drops down on a gnarled and twisted tree trunk. She catches her breath, tries to calm herself. Then she hears TWIGS SNAP as someone approaches. She turns, fearfully scans the darkness.

We NEVER SEE the stranger, but she does. Her face reads more confusion than fear --

PETRA

Oh... It's you...

As she stands, we see an ORNATE DAGGER flash in the moonlight. On the handle, an inlaid symbol of a LION-SNAKE hybrid.

Then, without warning, the formidable blade PIERCES Petra's belly. Stunned, she GASPS as the dagger SLICES UPWARD.

Petra drops to her knees as BLOOD POURS from the nearly foot-long gash. She stares at the horror, then she falls on her side. As she lands, a fetus's HAND slips out the gash.

Mother and child, dead. It's undoubtably, the dark ages --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE UP ON:

EXT. FOREST - OUTER VENTRISHIRE - DAY

Wilkin leads the misfits. Horses move at a moderate clip. As they reach a clearing, they see SMOKE billowing in the distance. The men stop, take in the sight, then realize --

WILKIN

The village!

Wilkin breaks into a HARD GALLOP. His men follow.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - WEST RIVER RIDING - DAY

Wilkin and his men enter the village. The houses smoldering, BURNED to the ground. At the foot of hovel, below the cross, the DEAD VILLAGERS and Jonas, laid in a deliberate row. In the center, propped up on the hovel, is Petra. Splayed belly open, the DEAD FETUS, a GIRL, between her legs, in full view.

The men, stunned, dismount and head to the carnage. Wilkin spots Petra and his child. The horrid image stops him cold. He lets out a guttural MOAN, drops to his knees and SOBS --

WILKIN

No... Oh, God... No...

Toran, Jacob, Berber, the Caines, run to their loved ones.

Ash hangs back, giving the grieving men reverent space. He knows Jonas saw his face, he may be the reason this happened.

Toran finds his wife and son. Takes his boy in his arms --

TORAN

Sweet boy. My Rhys...

Jacob lays Petra down. Places the infant on her chest --

JACOB

God... May God take you... dear child.

Wilkin, head bowed, rocks silently, deep mournful meditation.

Toran's grief snaps to rage --

TORAN

Savage. This was Ventris. His collector as proof. Devil noble...

Wilkin begins to speak, inaudibly at first, then louder --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILKIN

You've left me. Taken everything...

As his eyes turn to heaven, we realize it's an irate prayer --

WILKIN

Damn your holy destiny. Your hate is unforgivable. Devil Christ. Damn you.

Then Wilkin rises, heads to his burned home.

EXT. WILKIN'S ABODE - CONTINUOUS

Wilkin pushes through the scorched wood, finds a corner of his dead home, drops to his knees and begins to DIG feverishly. Then he hits something buried in the dirt. He uncovers a ROLE OF HIDE and carries it out of the rubble.

EXT. VILLAGE HUB - CONTINUOUS

Wilk lays the role on the ground and unwraps the contents. It's a leather BELT with a BROADSWORD, DAGGER and SCABBARDS. On the ornate handles of both weapons, the SEAL OF EDWARD I. Wilkin ties the belt around his waist and sheaths the blades.

Toran and the others now watch Wilk head to his horse.

ELLIS

The sword. Crest of Edward the First.

BERBER

Yea, true...

Toran joins them. They watch Wilk ride away, full gallop.

ASH

Where does he ride?

TORAN

(realizes)

To meet the devil.

Toran runs to his horse. Berber picks up the cue --

BERBER

He goes to face Ventris.

JACOB

As are we.

CALO

Our families...

ELLIS

The dead can wait.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Berber, Jacob, Ash and the Caine brothers follow Toran. They all ride off to join their friend.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - BARON'S DRESSING CHAMBER - DAY

Ventris is undressed by two SERVANTS. Days of riding have taken a toll. Lady Love sees his pain, dismisses servants --

LADY LOVE

Go.

They nod and exit as she begins to MASSAGE his neck and shoulders. Ventris, vulnerable, welcomes her touch.

LADY LOVE

You are all knots and coil. Hope it was worth the days of pain that follow.

VENTRIS

Bandits will no longer plague us.

LADY LOVE

You met them with fierceness?

VENTRIS

Better. I took everything from them. Their only possessions are the burned and bloody consequences of their crime.

Love knows what that means. She squelches her concern. Erik gently kisses her hand as she works his muscles --

VENTRIS

Hands soft as mink, strong as a bear.
My perfect Welsh princess.

Feeling so far from perfect, she continues to massage him.

EXT. FOREST - OUTER VENTRISHIRE - DAY

Toran and the others catch up to Wilk. He halts, confronts --

WILKIN

Go home. See to the dead. This is my fight. I brought this on.

TORAN

We all earned the horror that found us. We all feel the same pain.

BERBER

We're with you, brother Wilk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILKIN

I've no plan but vengeance. I'll lead you to a fight that will most certainly end in a bloody death.

JACOB

A risk not heavy enough to sway us.

WILKIN

Crazy old man...

His men steadfast. Wilkin realizes their pain is as substantial as his --

WILKIN

Yea, then. To Castle Ventris.

The men whip their horses and ride off in a fury --

EXT. HEAVEN'S EYE - MIDDLE VENTRISHIRE - DAY

A clearing at the center of the shire. Trails leading in all directions. Gawain's wagon sits on the edge of the clearing. The executioner is on the ground, drinking from a clay jug.

He watches Jessamy and Luca prepare a meal. The infant in a basket near them. Suddenly Luca BURNS HIS HAND while grilling a wild BIRD. The boy recoils and drops the game in the fire.

JESSAMY

Careful, boy...

LUCA

Sorry, ma.

Gawain, half-drunk, goes to them as Jessamy lovingly pours mead on the wound. Gawain invades --

GAWAIN

Pull the bird before it's mud and ash.

Jessamy snaps to his command, grabs the stick and pulls the game bird from the flames. As she tries to wipe off the ash, Gawain grabs it, inspects it, then tosses it back in the fire --

GAWAIN

It's shit. Like the lot of you.

JESSAMY

Sorry --

GAWAIN

Don't mother the damn boy. Let him feel the pain of his mistake.

Jessamy positions herself between Gawain and her son --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSAMY

He feels it. I... I won't tend it.
(off his look)

Please. Enjoy the drink. We've
another bird. I'll feed you in short.

GAWAIN

Don't put rule on me, whore.

Gawain SLAPS her. Grabs her by the hair and drags her to the wagon. Luca knows better, he turns away and tends to his baby brother as Gawain throws his wife to the ground --

GAWAIN

Up the garment. Give me the trench.

Gawain begins to take off his pants. Jessamy, exhausted --

JESSAMY

Please Maddy... let me just make you --

GAWAIN

Off with it! Or I'll tear it from
your chewed, leaking tits.

Jessamy tries to hold back the tears as she pulls up her frock, preparing for her dutiful rape.

EXT. HILLSIDE - MIDDLE VENTRISHIRE - NIGHT

Wilk and his men have dismounted. The big moon lights up the epic visage as horses drink from a CREEK. Toran and Berber join Wilk as he splashes water on his face.

WILKIN

We give the horses some rest. Then we
ride through night.

Toran and Berber share a look. The weight of their tragedy still heavy on their shoulders.

BERBER

We've not eaten in over a day. We
should face death with something in
our bellies.

TORAN

Vengeance won't wane with the sunrise.
We should rest, my friend.

Wilk hears their need. Nods.

BERBER

I'll let them know.

Berber leaves Wilk and Toran. Toran admires Wilk's sword --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TORAN

How long were you in service to Longshanks? Perhaps we've met on rival sides of the billman.

WILKIN

That was another man. Or at least, I thought it was. You were right. I fool myself by blessing my need to kill with the sign of the cross.

TORAN

You've no right mind to give it thought. Blood boils and tells your head lies. Don't hold them.

WILKIN

They hold me.

TORAN

So do we, brother.

Wilkin feels his love. A deep, heartfelt --

WILKIN

Thank you.

Wilkin and Toran embrace, the bond of spilled blood --

EXT. HEAVEN'S EYE - NIGHT

Gawain empties the clay jug with a final swig. He pulls a KNIFE from one of his bags and staggers over to his sleeping family that lay in bedrolls under a CANVAS TENT attached to the wagon. Is he going to murder them? No, his mood has shifted from rage to sadness and remorse.

GAWAIN

This is mine... my punishment...

Gawain MUTTERS quietly as he walks an uneven line to the smoldering fire. He lays the blade in the flames. He's near tears as he removes his shirt. We see his torso is covered with CUTS and BURNS. Self-inflicted wounds that all bear a resemblance to the cross on his cheek. Then Gawain takes the knife, it's tip glowing REDHOT --

GAWAIN

Forgive me...

He SOBS quietly as he lays the blade against belly skin. He grits his teeth and mutes his MOAN as the metal SIZZLES on flesh. Punisher punishes the evil man he's become --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE UP ON:

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - DINING ROOM - DAY

Lady Love picks at some fruit as Isabel puts up her hair --

ISABEL

I know sparrows that eat heartier than you.

LADY LOVE

Victuals keep my mind deep and clear.
That's what gets me in trouble.

Then from the hallway outside the dining room, they hear --

CORBETT (O.S.)

I've news of interest, m'Lord.

VENTRIS (O.S.)

Interest me as I eat.

Ventris enters, followed by Corbett and Randulf.

CORBETT

Scout came through from midshire this morning. Spotted a pack of eight men camped at a brookside last night. One with a sword baring Longshanks' mark.

VENTRIS

Traveling in which direction?

CORBETT

Castle Ventris. I assume our bandits.

VENTRIS

Taking their vengeance right to my gate? Are they that mad with grief?

CORBETT

Or soldiers perhaps. Willing to die in service of their sorrow.

RANDULF

Should I pull up the bridge?

VENTRIS

No. Suit up a fresh twenty men. I'll meet this warrior bandit in journey. Away from anyone who might document his foolish play as valiant.

Corbett nods and exits. Lady Love gently suggests --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY LOVE

You shouldn't ride today, my Lord.
You'll be crippled by nightfall.

VENTRIS

I welcome the pain. Reminds me of who
I am.

Ventris grabs a chunk of meat, a bottle of wine and exits.
Isabel is lost in the flow of information --

ISABEL

The bandits come to us?

LADY LOVE

He's taken their minds and souls.
They come to give up their hearts.

ISABEL

That answer gives me deeper puzzle.

LADY LOVE

Our good Baron burned their village,
killed their families. And now he
confronts their pain head on. And my
noble spouse sends another brave stand
of Welshman to their graves.

Isabel drops on a bench. Both women, unnerved by the chaos.

EXT. GRASS FIELDS - INNER VENTRISHIRE - DAY

The farmer bandits ride through the tall grass. Wilkin,
leading the way, he scans the landscape as if sensing
something approaching. Toran notices his concern, but before
he can investigate, they spot Annora in the distance. She
stands in the middle of a beaten trail, like a sentinel.

TORAN

The witch?

Wilk rides to her, the others fall in behind.

WILKIN

What brings you to the east, woman?

ANNORA

Same thing that brings all of you.
Fleeing the darkness.

TORAN

Did you witness the massacre?

ANNORA

No. But I'll witness yours unless you
alter your intent.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNORA (cont'd)

(off their looks)

Ventris rides to meet you. Twenty men.
He'll butcher the lot of you. And your
blood will spill without meaning.
Useless drink for these dry fields.

BERBER

How do you know that?

ANNORA

(re: Wilkin)

The same way he knows it. The
presence of evil arrives long before
the man who carries it.

WILKIN

There's nothing can be altered. We
face what's ahead.

ANNORA

But you don't need to face it alone.

Toran and the others watch Wilk as he locks eyes with Annora.
It's as if they are trying to read each other's thoughts.

EXT. HEAVEN'S EYE - DAY

Gawain and family pack up their wagon, as the noble battalion
thunders into the eye. Ventris slows his troops, approaches --

VENTRIS

Who are you, traveler?

GAWAIN

Gawain Maddox, m'Lord. Come up from
the south looking for work. Punisher
by trade.

Ventris and Randulf share a look. Then --

VENTRIS

You have tools in possession.

GAWAIN

Yea, all wit.

VENTRIS

Ride with us, we may need your
services.

GAWAIN

And my family?

RANDULF

Ride the west trail north, it leads to
Castle Ventris. They can wait there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gawain gives Jessamy a look, as if to say, "do it".

EXT. GRASS FIELDS - INNER VENTRISHIRE - DAY

Ventris and his battalion ride through the chest-high grass. Up ahead they see Wilkin standing in front of his men. The Baron halts his army as Wilkin walks forward and calls out --

WILKIN

Do you remember me, Constable? I'm
the knight you sent to his death at
the hands of the hoarding Scots.

Ventris studies Wilkin, stunned. To himself --

VENTRIS

Impossible...

RANDULF

You know this man, my Liege?

Ventris snaps out of his awe, stays hard, back at Wilkin --

VENTRIS

If you're indeed that knight. You're
either a deserter or a ghost.

(beat)

If not dead then. Then dead now.

WILKIN

I live with the terror of your betrayal
every day. But I'll spare you that
pain. Death will quiet your mind.

Then Wilk raises his sword over his head. With that, WELSH REBELS rise up from the high grass like angry weeds. Forty or more men, from 14 to 60. FACES PAINTED yellow and white. Daffodil and dagger symbol on many of them. Armed with old swords, clubs, long sticks, axes, etc., they now surround the knights. Their leader, GRUFFUDD y BLAIDD, steps out front --

GRUFFUDD

Time to go back to hell, Marcher Baron.

Gruffudd lets out a SHRILL WHISTLE. On the cue, from behind the rebels, FLAMING ARROWS fly at the knights. Falling short, they do their job and IGNITE THE GRASS below their horses. The steeds panic, throw the men. With the battalion in chaos, Wilkin calls the charge --

WILKIN

Deus vult!

Wilkin, his men and the rebels rush the soldiers. The combat is brutal, messy and primitive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wilkin takes on several knights at a time, defeating them with skill beyond their comprehension. Working broadsword with one hand, dagger with the other. A two-handed killing machine.

As Wilkin fights, he experiences --

FLASHES OF:

EXT. RURAL FIELD - BRITAIN/SCOTLAND BORDER - INTERCUT

Wilkin fighting the Scottish ambush.

He's lost in the past and present battles of his life as blood spills in both.

EXT. GRASS FIELDS - DAY

Toran, Berber and Jacob driven by rage, strike fast and fierce.

Ash moves through the maze of soldiers like a ferret, delivering stealth STABS to legs and feet.

The rebels lack skill, but their ferocity and fearlessness unnerve the knights.

Gawain's horse rears up, throws him to the ground. He panics as he sees the encroaching threat. Then, as he turns to run, a long stick PIERCES his throat. On the other end is a BOY, maybe 14. Rage gleams in his eyes as he THRUSTS the deadly branch through the executioner's throat.

Calo sees his brother Aron in trouble, he freezes, unsure how to help. Ellis sees the same danger, rushes in to help the youngest Caine. In the rescue, both Aron and Ellis are slain. Calo goes numb with fear and remorse.

Ventris cuts down rebels like a sickle through wheat. He's a fearless and skilled warrior. He drops Jacob, then makes pulp of several rebels.

Randulf, seeing the inevitable, slips away from the fight. Crawling like a cowardly insect through the tall grass.

Wilkin drops another knight, then finds himself face to face with Lord Ventris.

WILKIN

Not ghost, nor deserter.

Wilkin and his former leader fight. Both men, incredibly skilled. Ventris, feeling the pain of his age, begins to lose ground. He's having difficulty withstanding the power of Wilk's blows. Wilkin presses, sensing his weakness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then in a swift Passatto Sotto, Wilk gets inside and disarms Ventris. The Baron's sword flies from his hands. Without missing a beat, Wilkin flips the sword to his left and delivers a fierce RIGHT CROSS to Ventris' jaw. The Noble falls on his back. Exhausted, hurt, beaten.

Wilkin stands over Ventris. Knights all dead. Toran, Berber, Ash, Gruffudd and the remaining rebels surround Wilkin and the Baron. Ventris, defiant till the end --

VENTRIS

Now you seal your fate. Killing me sets London afire. They will hunt down the hooded bandits and crush your toy rebellion.

WILKIN

I've no rebellion. Just a need to see you die.

Wilk puts the sword to Ventris' heart.

VENTRIS

Without last rites? You wear the cross of our Savior. Are we still not men of God?

And with that, Ventris gets inside Wilk's head. Taps into his moral conflict. Toran sees Wilk's hesitation --

TORAN

Finish it, brother Wilk.

Wilk struggles with the kill. He closes his eyes, as if searching for some divine guidance. The distraction gives Ventris his opening. He pulls a RONDEL from his leg armor and lurches up, STABBING Wilk in the side of his belly. Wilkin drops his sword and MOANS in pain. Toran leaps onto Ventris, driving his dagger THROUGH THE TOP OF THE BARON'S HEAD. The force CRACKS skull bone as the tip of the blade exits Ventris' chin. The noble drops dead, as Wilkin falls to his knees, BLOOD oozing from his side.

Wilk looks out at the carnage, lost in remorse as the CAMERA RISES UP to reveal the battlefield.

Over forty men lay dead and bloody in the tall grass. Including Jacob, Aron, Ellis, Gawain, twenty knights and many rebels.

It's fucking medieval --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE UP ON:

EXT. GRASS FIELDS - INNER VENTRISHIRE - DUSK

Wilkin lays unconscious near a fire as Annora spreads a MUD BALM on his wound. Toran and Berber hover. Calo, off by himself, still lost in the battle. Toran presses Annora --

TORAN

How is he? Will he heal?

ANNORA

Only blood runs, no other humours. He will heal, be whole once again.

Gruffudd joins Toran and Berber. The men split off to chat.

Annora watches the men as they walk away. In the clear, she takes a BLADE and begins to CUT OFF Wilk's hair.

Toran, Berber and Gruffudd exchange fears as they walk --

BERBER

Ventris was right. His murder will send the King's army. They'll hunt us down, let us serve as grim reminders.

GRUFFUDD

We've been hunted for centuries. Each time we rise up stronger.

TORAN

Yea, but they'll put this slaughter on the peasant bandits. They'll be no rock unturned to find us.

Back at the fire, we see Wilk's hair CHOPPED SHORTER. Now Annora SCRAPES off his BEARD with the now, wet blade.

Berber goes and helps the rebels load their dead on the noble horses. Toran and Gruffudd --

TORAN

I need a name to offer my thanks.

GRUFFUDD

Gruffudd.

TORAN

You're the one they call, "the wolf".

GRUFFUDD

I'm called many hard things. Most by my wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Toran smiles as he shakes the rebel's hand.

TORAN

Thank you, Gruffudd. Noble horses and weapons should serve you.

GRUFFUDD

Yea, on. They will. Godspeed for your man's sound return.

Toran gives him a nod. Gruffudd collects his rebels and heads to the forest in the distance.

At the fire, Wilk's beard all but gone, facial skin exposed. Annora heats the end of the blade in the fire. Now GLOWING RED, she pulls out the blade and places the tip on Wilk's right cheek, BURNING a thick VERTICAL LINE.

Ash approaches the fire with more wood, sees what Annora is doing and panics. Calls out to his friends --

ASH

Toran! Moor!

Annora, unfazed by the reveal, burns a HORIZONTAL MARK across the vertical one, as Toran and Berber run to Wilkin.

TORAN

Crazy witch!

Toran rips Annora off his friend. Berber studies Wilk --

BERBER

What devilry is this?

TORAN

What've you done to him?

Annora stares down at Wilk, says nothing.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - HIGH CORRIDOR - DAY

Corbett exits a tower room BUTTONING his garment, followed by a MALE PAGE doing the same. They head in opposite directions. As he walks the long hallway, Corbett spots Randulf, flanked by Leon and a KNIGHT, walking towards him --

CORBETT

The Baron has returned?

RANDULF

No. But I've news of his need.

(tells the lie)

At Heaven's Eye we saw the markings of the rebels. Lord Ventriss sent me back to secure more troops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Sent you back? Alone?

RANDULF

Not to spare arms he may need. I
welcomed the risk of riding apart.

Corbett studies his son. His dishevelled garb, sweating brow.
Not convinced he hears the truth, he still gives heed --

CORBETT

Then gather what men we can spare.

RANDULF

Yes, sir.

Randulf walks away, Corbett shares a look with Leon. Both
have doubts about the story --

EXT. GRASS FIELDS - NIGHT

Wilkin awakes. Strains to sit up. Spots Annora near the row
of dead nobles. Her feet and hands BOUND.

Then Wilkin becomes aware of his hair and face. Picks up his
sword, tries to catch a reflection. He winces as he touches
the brand on his cheek. It's an imperfect CROSS.

Toran and others urgently approach, gladdened by the sight --

TORAN

You join the living.

WILKIN

(re: his face)

Who did this?

TORAN

The witch. She offered no reason.

WILKIN

Help me up.

They pull him to his feet. Wilkin, sword in hand, slowly
walks to Annora. The body nearest her is Gawain. With cut
hair and beard, Wilk now bears a RESEMBLANCE to the punisher.
Branded cross on their right cheeks makes the intention clear.

WILKIN

Cut her binds.

Ash looks at Toran. Toran nods. As Ash cuts her free --

TORAN

She's mad, Wilk. She was trying to
kill you. We should put her down --

(CONTINUED)

ANNORA

I'd never allow harm to come to you.

WILKIN

Why did you scrape and scar me?

ANNORA

To save you.
(re: Gawain)
Your only chance to live is to be
supposed dead.

TORAN

No more of your twisted words, witch.

WILKIN

Leave us.

Wilk nods to his mates. They walk away. Wilk kneels to her.

WILKIN

Who are you, woman? Truly. What's
your interest in me?

ANNORA

You've a story to live out that will
forever mark your place in time. And
somehow I know I'm to tell it with you.

WILKIN

My story is over.

ANNORA

No, it's just begun. The angel spoke
the truth.

WILKIN

The angel?

ANNORA

The bright child who came to you.

WILKIN

How... I've never whispered a word of
that to anyone.

ANNORA

I hear your voices.
(quotes the angel)
It is time to lay down this sword,
Wilkin Brattle. Your savior needs you
to live the life of a different man.

Wilkin looks at his familiar sword. Annora glances downward.
Then Wilk follows her gaze to Gawain. The different man.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE UP ON:

EXT. ROAD - OUTSIDE CASTLE VENTRIS - NIGHT

Wilkin rides with Ventris' horse in tow. Baron respectfully propped up on the steed. Toran pulls a WOODEN CART, draped in canvas. We can't see what's under it. A somber ride as they approach the OUTER GATE of the court village.

WILKIN

Unhitch the cart at the gate, brother.
Then go join the others at the caves.

TORAN

I think I'll finish the ride, friend.
(off his look)
A plan hatched by a witch, what's to worry.

WILKIN

We deliver the dead. Tell the tale.
And ride off. Free men, no price on
our head. It's a sound devise.

TORAN

Yea, on. Simple enough an executioner
could carry it forth.

WILKIN

Right. And what say of your purpose?
What name for you? Sneermonger?

TORAN

Well... my da wanted to call me
Marshal, for Sir William. Mum thought
it too destined to war.

WILKIN

Mum got the name, da got the destiny.

TORAN

Yea, indeed. And what of your da?
You never tell of anything.

WILKIN

Nothing to tell. I don't have one.

And on that, the village GATE opens for bastard and mate --

INT. VILLAGE HALL - THE COURT VILLAGE - NIGHT

A large, simple space. Benches, tables. A CROSS hangs in front. It serves as church, school, dance, and meeting hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lady Love listens as Father Ruskin leads CHILDREN in a beautiful CATHOLIC HYMN. The kids welcome Lady's presence.

Suddenly, Isabel enters, visibly upset --

ISABEL

Pardon, Baroness...

(the singing stops)

Outsiders have come... You should...

They bring sad news...

Lady Love can tell by her tone, she rushes out --

EXT. MAIN ROW - THE COURT VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Torches light the dirt street as Wilkin and Toran ride through the village. Two KNIGHTS escort them as VILLAGERS gather around. Lady Love intercepts the spectacle. One of the knights respectfully delivers the news --

KNIGHT

Sad tidings, m'Lady. These men come with our Baron. Killed in battle. They've news of the act.

LADY LOVE

Bring him down.

The knights and SQUIRES take Ventris from the horse, gently lay him at Lady Love's feet. Although being married to this guy was brutal, she's a deeply compassionate woman who honors the sanctity of marriage. Her grief is genuine.

The village is silent as she kneels next to Ventris and takes his hand. Father Ruskin goes to her, in her ear --

FATHER RUSKIN

My deepest condolences, Lady Love. Let's bring you inside so you can mourn in peace.

Lady Love nods and stands. The priest tasks the squires --

FATHER RUSKIN

Bring the Baron to the sacrament room.

As the young men scramble to obey, Lady Love turns to Wilkin --

LADY LOVE

Who are you?

Wilkin dismounts, comes forward. When they get near each other, something visceral happens as they lock eyes. A deep connection that catches them both off guard. Then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILKIN

Gawain Maddox, m'Lady. Punisher by trade. From the southern land.

(re: Toran)

This is... Marshal, a steward who travels with me. We met the Baron at Heaven's Eye. Called upon us to ride with him. We watched him and his men defeat a band of hooded thieves.

Toran pulls off the canvas from the wagon. We see eight DEAD BODIES all wearing the misfits's HOODS.

TORAN

They cut down the eight of them.

WILKIN

But before the Baron could rally, rebels attacked, forty or more. Caught them tired and out of formation.

TORAN

Your husband fought gallantly, but the numbers were too steep.

WILKIN

I'm sorry.

EXT. CASTLE VENTRIS - DRAWBRIDGE - INTERCUT

Corbett, Randulf and two other NOBLES cross the drawbridge and head to the activity in the village --

Love watches as the priest takes the HOODS OFF the bodies to give a blessing. It's Jacob, Aron, Ellis and five rebels --

LADY LOVE

Old men and boys...

WILKIN

Yea. Your mail-clad soldiers were too heavy to carry.

Corbett listens to nobles gossip. Randulf studies Wilkin --

LADY LOVE

And what brings an executioner to Ventrishire?

WILKIN

Work, m'Lady. I travel. Go where services are needed.

Randulf puts it together. Unnerved by Wilk's lie, he pushes his way through the crowd. Corbett hangs back, out of sight, he too is processing Wilk's FAMILIAR FACE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Randulf goes to Wilkin, sees the scam --

RANDULF

He lies! This man is not the executioner. He's one of the thieves.
(re: Toran)
As is that one.

Lady Love and Father Ruskin share a look. Then, Toran, without missing a beat --

TORAN

You're the liar, sir. I've travelled with Gawain for many years. You can dispatch a messenger to Glamorgan. Get word of the truth.
(re: Wilkin's face)
There's been no other face looks like this one.

WILKIN

We just came to deliver the dead. Out of respect. We'll leave if it upsets your court.

RANDULF

You'll stay and be quartered.

FATHER RUSKIN

The remedy for this dispute is already here.

The priest references the crowd. In the back, Jessamy and children nervously watch. Ruskin clarifies to Lady Love --

FATHER RUSKIN

The wife and children of Maddox. Sent here to wait for his return.

LADY LOVE

Come forward. Tell us the truth.

Wilkin shares a "WTF" look with Toran. Then, as Jessamy approaches, Wilkin sees Pippa, the INFANT DAUGHTER in her arms and Luca at her side. Wilkin's heart sinks, unaware the man had a family. Jessamy slowly walks forward, unnerved by the attention. Afraid to say anything.

Wilk meets her, remorse gripping him. The sight of the infant cracks open his pain. He WEEPS softly as he gently strokes the baby's head. Jessamy says nothing as she studies his vulnerability, his beauty, his gentleness.

Then Wilkin leans to her ear, whispers a contrite --

WILKIN

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jessamy looks into his eyes, in that moment, makes a choice --

JESSAMY

My love... Good Maddy, thank God
you've come back safe.

She embraces an awed Wilkin. The crowd reacts with JOYOUS CHEERS. Then Jessamy extends her hand to Luca, pulls him close. The boy catches on and wraps his arms around his mother and new daddy.

Randulf goes ballistic --

RANDULF

This is lunacy! She conspires with
him.

Then from behind them we hear a booming --

CORBETT

Such tragedy lands on my name this
night.

Corbett makes his way through the crowd. He goes to Ventriss as the squires place him on a PLANKED BOARD to carry.

CORBETT

My dearest friend. A life snuffed,
not by a fitting battle but by the
ambush of painted dogs.

Corbett turns to Wilk, they stare each other down. Both, in full recognition of the other. Then Corbett goes to his son.

CORBETT

And my son. Caught between two tales --

RANDULF

I speak only truth. These men are the
bandits we pursued. We did battle in
the grass fields beyond the eye.

Corbett burns a cold eye at his son, then --

CORBETT

I myself and honored knights heard you
tell of how you were dispatched before
any such fray.

RANDULF

Yea, I did... but --

CORBETT

So, then. You are either a false
accuser or you deserted your commander
in battle. Both come with the
punishment of death. Which is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RANDULF

Please... father... do not do this...

CORBETT

I do what God has entrusted me to do.

He leans in and KISSES his son, whispers, deep loathing --

CORBETT

You shame me, coward.

Then Corbett calls in the knights --

CORBETT

Take him!

The knights grab Randulf. He pleads, then snaps --

RANDULF

Don't betray me father... Please...
(off Corbett's coldness)
Damn you. Damn your hatred...

One of the knights silences Randulf with a brutal GUT PUNCH.

Corbett turns to Lady Love --

CORBETT

My shame is only outdone by my
sadness. My deepest sympathies,
Baroness. I am in your service,
whatever the need.

LADY LOVE

Thank you, Milus.

Corbett turns to Wilkin --

CORBETT

I'll do haste with the trial. It is
fitting that the man falsely accused,
be the one who is skilled to take off
his head.
(beat)
Welcome to Castle Ventris,
executioner.

Wilkin and Corbett share a weighted nod.

Then Corbett leads Lady Love away. Wilkin watches, his head
swims with the battling deceptions.

Then a hand on his shoulder, it's Jessamy. She smiles at
him. Already living in their make-believe marriage --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

FADE UP ON:

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - CHAPEL - DAY

Wilkin sits alone in the noble's chapel. Deep in prayer. Lady Love enters. Sees him. Hesitates. Then goes to him. Wilkin snaps out of his devotion as she approaches, stands --

WILKIN

Morning, Baroness. The priest, he said I could come early for prayer. I hope that's not imposing --

LADY LOVE

Please, sit. I welcome the chapel's use. Few spend time here, but me.
(re: his pew)
Do you mind?

WILKIN

Please.

She sits in the same pew. An acceptable distance.

LADY LOVE

I wouldn't think one of your trade would complicate things with prayer.
(re: cross brand)
Or perhaps it takes you in deeper. May I ask how this happened?

WILKIN

It was given by a holy woman. A reminder of my need for faith.

LADY LOVE

Your steward gave the impression it distinguished you for some time. Yet, the burn looks fresh.

WILKIN

I renew the vow when my faith wavers.

Love doubts the story, but something about him comforts her.

Corbett quietly opens the door of the chapel, he sees Wilk and Lady Love. He hangs in the doorway, a silent observer.

The intimacy is making Wilk anxious, he shifts uncomfortably in the pew. Lady notices BLOOD seeping through his garment.

LADY LOVE

You're bleeding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILKIN

Yea, on. I was stabbed. An angry
branch on the ride last night.

Love moves closer, reaches for his shirt --

LADY LOVE

May I?

WILKIN

In here, m'Lady?

LADY LOVE

No better one to heal you than Him.

He nods as she picks up his shirt, sees the nasty STAB WOUND.

LADY LOVE

The physicker should look at this.

With that, she TOUCHES the area around the wound.

On contact, Wilkin and Lady experience a FLASH OF AN INFANT.

They look at each other, unsure of what just happened but sure
it shouldn't be discussed. Wilk pulls down his shirt --

WILKIN

I'll find the physicker.

LADY LOVE

No, stay. Finish your devotion. I'll
have him find you.

WILKIN

Thank you.

She smiles at him, doesn't want to leave, but then stands.

Corbett retreats into the hall, having seen their connection.

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - CHAPEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Corbett waits for Lady Love to exit the Chapel. Walks toward
her as if he just entered the hall --

CORBETT

Baroness, a word please.

(off her nod)

I sent an emissary to London. One to
Erik's brother in Coventry. I'm sure
our King will offer comfort and
guidance on how we proceed.

LADY LOVE

We proceed by burying my husband.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORBETT

Yes. I've had Father Ruskin begin the arrangements.

LADY LOVE

Thank you, Milus. That gives me comfort.

As she starts to walk away --

CORBETT

Another thought, my Lady.
(off her turn)

This executioner. His arrival, although it brought sadness, it could turn to good fortune.

LADY LOVE

How so?

CORBETT

If we secure him and his steward a position, we gain someone to hunt the offenders and another to carry out the correction. With all the unrest in these regions, it sends a sound message. Ventrishire will not suffer lawlessness.

Lady Love likes the idea of Wilk staying --

LADY LOVE

That's well advised, dear Chamberlain.

CORBETT

Good. I'll draft the letters.

Lady Love gives him a courtly nod and walks away. Corbett's polite front fades as he heads into --

INT. CASTLE VENTRIS - CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Corbett walks a deliberate pace. His steps ECHO. Wilkin turns, sees his former commander and exits the pew. Corbett engages, having little respect for the holy place --

CORBETT

I have news, Soulette. The trial was swift. The guilt clear. We'll stage the execution outside the hall. Midday. Make your tools ready.

Wilk takes in his casual coldness --

WILKIN

He's your son. There must be some due leniency to offer. A father's mercy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORBETT

He has no father, as I have no son. The coward's death is already in the ledger.

WILKIN

And you're the final word of justice here?

CORBETT

As well as chancellor and advisor. You'll learn that nothing passes through this shire without me touching it.

WILKIN

I'm afraid that's a lesson I'll have to miss. I move on after today.

CORBETT

Ah, but that's my news, executioner. You and your steward will stay on. Your positions are now standing.

WILKIN

I'm a journeyman. A traveler.

CORBETT

No longer. You have a home now.

Wilkin and Corbett lock eyes. Wilk drops the pretense --

WILKIN

Why are you doing this?

CORBETT

I need a strong man to help rule this shire.

The Noble places a hand on Wilk's chest, feels the dragon brand under his shirt.

CORBETT

One with the heart of a dragon.

Wilk says nothing as Corbett exits. Then he drops in a pew, lost. He stares up at the cross, no words. No prayer.

EXT. ROCKY CANYON - COAST OF VENTRISHIRE - DAY

A secluded canyon that leads to caves and rock formations. One large boulder has been primitively carved into an IDOL.

Calo sits, staring at the fire. Still in shock. Berber hands him a mug of hot cider --

BERBER

Drink. You need warmth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALO

Thank you.

BERBER

Your kin are dead, but you're
surrounded by brothers.

Calo nods as Berber heads back to the rocks. Ash is asleep, curled up like a child next to their belongings. Amongst their limited possessions, Wilk's broadsword and dagger.

Berber sees Ash hugging a hide bag like a stuffed animal. The large man smiles at the teen, covers him with a blanket --

BERBER

Sleep with good ghosts, wild one.

The CAMERA PANS off the sword and finds a NARROW OPENING in the rocks behind the clearing --

INT. ANNORA'S CAVE - DAY

The narrow opening creates a doorway into the cave. Allowing a small spill of SUNLIGHT to creep in. It barely illuminates the Dark Mute as he scribbles on the wall with a piece of stone. We can't see the writing. Then from the darkness --

ANNORA (O.S.)

The union has begun.

The Mute stops writing and lights a TORCH. Now we see that the walls of the cave are FILLED with ANCIENT WRITING. Unrecognizable glyphs and script. A stone Gnostic gospel.

Annora steps into the flickering light. NAKED. Her body covered in the same ANCIENT WRITING that is on the walls. SCRAPED into her skin. Primitive tattoos. She goes to the Mute, unties the corded belt on his robe and pushes it off his shoulders. CAMERA FOLLOWS the robe to the floor. As the Mute steps toward Annora, all we see is the back of his left CALF and FOOT, both BURNED and SCARRED like his face. The couple slips into the darkness. Freaky shit gonna happen.

Then the CAMERA PANS across the Mute's robe. See a SCABBARD attached to the belt. In it, the dagger with the LION-SNAKE symbol. The weapon that killed Wilkin's wife and child.

We begin a cover of the Beatles', LET IT BE, as we begin our MUSIC MONTAGE --

EXT. MAIN ROW - THE COURT VILLAGE - DAY

COURT MEMBERS, KNIGHTS and VILLAGERS have gathered in front of the Village Hall. In the center of the crowd is a large OAK BLOCK, 4 feet long, 2 feet wide, 2 feet high.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Randulf, legs and hands BOUND behind him, is bent over the block. His head STRAPPED to the edge of the oak with strips of leather pulled through iron eyelets. Semi-conscious, he MUTTERS, quietly SOBS. Clothes torn, face and body beaten and bruised. Clearly the knights continued their beatdown.

Luca stands near the oak block, several weapons at his feet. An EXECUTIONER'S SWORD -- simple, wide blade with a straight handle. EXECUTIONER'S AXE -- a long handled decapitator, with a fan-shaped blade. KNIVES, in case the first cut isn't clean. Toran stands behind the boy. Uneasy with the lie.

The crowd parts as Lady Love and Corbett enter the execution stage. Isabel trailing behind. Corbett reveals no remorse. The Baroness hides her discomfort, plays the noble part as they sit on a bench, front row seats.

Wilkin follows the nobles, wearing simple brown clothing and a SASH, adorned with Ventris' COAT OF ARMS. He slowly moves to his victim. Shares a troubled look with Toran.

LUCA

Blades have been grinded, sir.

Wilk gives Luca a caring nod. The boy beams. After a long moment, Wilkin picks up the SWORD. Struggling with the task, he shuts his eyes, says a simple, whispered prayer --

WILKIN

Help me...

Then as Wilk opens his eyes he spots the CHILD ANGEL in the crowd. She smiles at him, then turns and moves into the anxious mob. Wilk sticks the sword upright in the dirt and follows the child. The crowd, confused, gives him passage as he pursues. Then he catches up to the child, grabs her by the robe, but as he holds the cloth to stop her, she's gone. Now, in his hand is not a robe, but a fairly clean SHIT RAG. Holding it, is Leon, the knight who spared Petra.

LEON

You'll need more than one rag,
headsman. Little Rand was stuffed like
a goose. His shit will pour like a
fountain when head hits dirt.

The knights LAUGH as Wilkin looks up at Leon. He spots Petra's SAPPHIRE CROSS around his neck. Wilkin's eyes go dark as he backs away, rage building like a wild storm. Then, focusing the anger, the bastard executioner strides back to the block, pulls the sword from the dirt and without hesitation, in one swift, powerful move --

Wilkin Brattle CUTS OFF THE HEAD of his victim.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT