

PENNY DREADFUL

Episode 203

"THE NIGHTCOMERS"

by

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INT. SIR MALCOLM'S MANSION-VANESSA'S ROOM - MORNING

The scorpion blood glyph in the morning light. The door to the room ajar.

Vanessa enters in a robe, fresh from washing her hair.

She stops.

Surprised to see Ethan standing there, waiting. Looking at the glyph.

ETHAN  
(re: the glyph)  
What is this?

VANESSA  
It's no concern of yours.

ETHAN  
Isn't it?

He looks at her.

She sits on her bed, emotion coming. He's kind.

ETHAN  
Let me help you. Tell me what's going on.

VANESSA  
It's something I've not told anyone...

ETHAN  
Then tell me.

She looks at him.

The story is a burden to her. It's difficult. But there is trust with Ethan. And a need between them.

VANESSA  
It all began several years ago and far from here... The moors of the west country ... I went in search of answers to who I was. To a woman I came to know as The Cut-Wife of Ballentree Moor ... She was the first witch I ever met.

EXT. MOORS-COTTAGE - EVENING

Several years before the events of our current story.

Vanessa stands in the pouring rain. Wrapped in a dark shawl.  
A single carpetbag by her side. The rain beating down on her.

She does not move.

A barren, storm-swept moor.

A small decaying cottage before her. Light from inside. Smoke  
from the chimney. One gnarled tree out front.

She just stands there.

Then someone looks through the shutters at her ... A pair of  
eyes peering out.

Then the shutters snap closed again.

Vanessa stands.

The rain beats down.

EXT. MOORS-COTTAGE - DAY

Day now.

Vanessa waits.

She has not moved.

The door to the cottage opens. An OLD WOMAN emerges. She does  
not acknowledge Vanessa.

She's imposing. Closely-cropped hair. Amazing eyes. Smokes a  
clay pipe.

She tosses a bucket of slop to the side.

Returns to inside the cottage.

The door slams.

EXT. MOORS-COTTAGE - NIGHT

Night again.

Vanessa stands. Shivering.

She has not moved.

The woman in the cottage peers out between the shutters  
again.

Those powerful eyes.

Closes the shutters.

EXT. MOORS-COTTAGE - DAY

Day again.

Vanessa is weaker. But will not budge.

The door to the cottage slowly opens.

Darkness beyond.

An invitation?

Vanessa picks up her carpetbag and approaches the cottage.

And then stops abruptly.

She sees there's a CAIRN OF STONES on either side of the path to the door. Pagan glyphs on the stones. Druid symbols and Old Latin.

She cannot pass.

A laugh from the darkness inside the cottage.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Night again.

She stands there, frustratingly close.

The door remains open. There's a fire burning in the cottage so she can make out glimpses. Low ceiling. Old beams. Dark.

No sign of the Old Woman.

Vanessa is simply too tired to stand anymore. Even her iron-will has limits.

She sits.

The door of the cottage slams shut.

She has failed.

She pulls herself up again.

Stands unsteadily.

Waits.

EXT. COTTAGE - SUNSET

Day again, almost to night. Sun sinking.

Vanessa is weak. Swaying.

Sweat pouring from her. Legs shaking.

She waits.

The cottage door swings open again.

And the Old Woman steps into the doorway. Puffing on her clay pipe.

Looking at Vanessa now.

That's progress anyway.

She slowly walks to Vanessa. Takes in every inch.

She stands before Vanessa.

Then she thrusts her hand out. Feels under Vanessa's skirt to see if she's a virgin. Probes. Her eyes never leaving Vanessa's.

Her inspection complete the Old Woman quickly bites down on her own thumb -- drawing blood -- and makes a mark on Vanessa's forehead. A pagan symbol.

She says something to Vanessa in the *Verbis Diablo*.

OLD WOMAN  
*Verbis Diablo...*

The words mean nothing to Vanessa.

The Old Woman glances to the cairn of stones.

OLD WOMAN  
You can move now.

Vanessa steps forward, past the cairns protecting the path to the cottage.

OLD WOMAN  
You want me to kill your baby?

VANESSA  
What? No.

The Old Woman has a thick, rural West Country accent. And speaks in old idioms long since antique even then.

OLD WOMAN  
You come for the love poultice then? You want a dandy man to be wooing you like.

VANESSA  
No.

OLD WOMAN

Then the age? The head-stammers?  
The pain in your joints when you  
take your man, or knell to the God?

VANESSA

No, I--

OLD WOMAN

Why are you here? You're not like  
them others.

VANESSA

I'm not. I'm like no others ... I  
am like no others. That's why I'm  
here.

The Old Woman looks at her.

Judging. Sensing.

OLD WOMAN

I have a scar on my back. Tell me  
how I got it ... Tell me.

VANESSA

How am I to know?

The Old Woman bangs her fingertips to Vanessa's forehead  
hard. Holds them there ... There's nothing gentle about this  
woman.

OLD WOMAN

Right there. You go right there  
inside your mind. Close those eyes.  
And you feel my spine through my  
fingers. You do this or you turn  
around and take your pretty cunt  
elsewhere's. Do this I tell you!

Vanessa concentrates mightily. Tears coming.

The Old Woman feels Vanessa's power.

OLD WOMAN

That's it, girl. Good. You're  
strong-willed, and agile like the  
scorpion ... Feel around my skull  
with your claws. Yes ... Behind my  
eyes. You feel my bones ... down my  
spine...

VANESSA

Yes...

OLD WOMAN

You feel my old spine inside my back. Now feel out to my skin, to my past, to my pain...

VANESSA

Yes...

OLD WOMAN

What do you feel?

VANESSA

A woman. Her nails on your back-- No, not her nails. Hotter, burning...

OLD WOMAN

Yes...

VANESSA

Burning -- Burning my skin--

Vanessa screams. Pain.

Her eyes snapping open.

The Old Woman removes her fingertips from Vanessa's forehead.

VANESSA

A branding iron.

The Old Woman turns and walks toward the cottage. Stops and turns to her.

OLD WOMAN

You can enter now. Leave everything you were outside this door. Everything you are, bring with you.

Vanessa picks up her carpetbag and follows her into the cottage...

INT. COTTAGE - SUNSET

Inside is more like a cave than a cottage. It's surprisingly large and rambling, but chaos seems to reign here.

Poultices and herbs and dangling pagan totems hang from the rafters alongside pots and pans and various animal skins ... Uneven rows of shelves filled with what we would now recognize as the stuff of herbal medicine.

Cooking pot in the large 17th century hearth. Cooking implements hanging ... Staircase leading up to a loft-like bedroom for the Old Woman.

A few other old chairs around and a ratty sofa-bench from the time of the English Civil War.

The Old Woman tosses her a rag:

OLD WOMAN

Clean that off your face. Makes you look like an animal. I know you been with a man so you're closer to the beasts than the angels, yeah?

Vanessa cleans the Old Woman's blood mark off her forehead.

The Old Woman dishes up a single dish of stew from the cooking pot, for herself, sits and eats as:

OLD WOMAN

Why you on the moor? No one come here without they want to see me. Unless you're a poacher, which you don't look.

VANESSA

I came to see you.

OLD WOMAN

You can sit.

Vanessa does so. Relieved to be sitting after so long.

VANESSA

Even where I come from, we've heard of you...

OLD WOMAN

Ah. I'm famous, hear that?

VANESSA

They say you have powers.

OLD WOMAN

What they call me, where you come from?

VANESSA

The Cut-Wife of Balentree Moor.

OLD WOMAN

You know why they call me that? Because when the girls need a little baby killed inside them they come to me. I cut it out. Cut-Wife. Fetching name, you think?

VANESSA

I don't think so.

OLD WOMAN

The local people come here. Only when they can't go no-place else. They hate me for what I do. But they come. For this, for that ... (she nods to her herbs) ... For all that ails mankind, girl.

VANESSA

My name is Vanessa Ives.

OLD WOMAN

We're not courting. I don't want your name.

She leans back. Looks at Vanessa. Waits.

VANESSA

... I came because I think you can tell me why I am like I am.

OLD WOMAN

And how's that? How you are?

VANESSA

Cursed.

The Old Woman laughs.

Vanessa is not deterred.

VANESSA

I believe I'm cursed to see things ... not of this world. I have a friend named Mina who reached out to me, in my mind. I saw her, but she was not there. She needs my help.

OLD WOMAN

Then go find you a constable. Thee and me got nothing to talk about here. You want a salve for your heart-ache I can give you that. You want herbs to ease the gout I can give you that. You want to poison your baby brother I can give you that, and laugh while I do it ... But if you think you are touched by the demon then you best walk out that door. Because what I can give you for that is only knowledge you don't want, little girl.

VANESSA

Who branded you?

The Old Woman stops, looks at her.

VANESSA  
Who did that to you?

Vanessa probes, concentrating.

VANESSA  
Someone you loved ... Someone you  
trusted. Someone you kissed once  
... a woman ... a sister. Your  
sister. If I'm right, then let me  
stay.

The Old Woman looks at her for a long moment. Then stands.

Walks to a cluttered cabinet and gets a special box. Brings  
it back to the table.

Opens it.

We recognize the Tarot Cards that Vanessa has been using the  
whole series: the disquieting blend of man and animal.

The Old Woman slowly shuffles them as she looks at Vanessa.

OLD WOMAN  
You want to learn?

VANESSA  
Yes.

OLD WOMAN  
Everything?

VANESSA  
Yes.

OLD WOMAN  
You're not frightened?

VANESSA  
No.

OLD WOMAN  
Why you want to learn the arts?

VANESSA  
To find out what I am.

OLD WOMAN  
And if the answer you don't like?

VANESSA  
Better to know.

OLD WOMAN  
Not really.

The Old Woman expertly fans the cards out on the table. Face down.

OLD WOMAN  
Look at them ... What do they say  
to you?

VANESSA  
Nothing.

The Old Woman slaps her. Hard.

OLD WOMAN  
I said look at them.

Vanessa concentrates.

OLD WOMAN  
What is your friend's name?

VANESSA  
Mina.

OLD WOMAN  
Have you kissed her?

VANESSA  
Yes.

OLD WOMAN  
Do you trust her?

VANESSA  
Yes.

OLD WOMAN  
Would she do you harm?

VANESSA  
Never.

OLD WOMAN  
Have you kissed her?

VANESSA  
I said yes.

OLD WOMAN  
Feel her lips now ... Feel her ...  
Put your hand over the cards, like  
so, just your fingers... Now let  
them move ... Believe.

Vanessa does so.

VANESSA  
What do I do now?

OLD WOMAN  
You'll know.

The Old Woman leans back. Those amazing eyes watching closely.

Vanessa's fingertips move slowly over the cards. Then she feels something. Like a jolt within her.

She puts her fingers on a card.

VANESSA  
Do I turn it over?

The Old Woman looks at her.

OLD WOMAN  
There's no need.

She stands wearily. Climbs the stairs to her bedroom.

OLD WOMAN  
There's stew in the pot. You can sleep on the sofa.

And then she's gone.

Vanessa sits for a moment.

Then flips the card over.

*The Devil.*

A sinister man holding a bat like a lover.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Vanessa and the Old Woman move through a dense forest near the moor. The Old Woman on her morning chores.

Sunlight filters through the foliage. It would be beautiful on another day, for another conversation.

OLD WOMAN  
... Casting the tarot is a gift.  
When you know the Arcana you can hear the echoes of time in your ear.

VANESSA  
And the meaning?

OLD WOMAN  
You'll learn. They are never always as they seem.

VANESSA  
The Devil card?

OLD WOMAN  
(smiles)  
Not always the demon from Hell or  
the throat slit at midnight. It can  
mean other things ... Tell me what.

VANESSA  
Evil.

The Old Woman laughs.

OLD WOMAN  
Do better.

VANESSA  
A dark lover approaching, bringing  
terror. Irresistible, part of you,  
but not ... The whisper of  
something ghastly and beautiful.

OLD WOMAN  
That's more the feeling.

She bends down and plucks up some roots. Tosses them into the  
basket Vanessa carries.

OLD WOMAN  
Mandragora. Used to expel the  
stillborn baby. And brings sleeping  
terrors, in the right amounts.  
Nightshade botanical. Remember it.

They continue.

VANESSA  
Were you born with the gift?

OLD WOMAN  
I learned it. You were born with  
it.

VANESSA  
How do you know that?

OLD WOMAN  
Cause I see your pain, girl. You  
always been like you are. Even as a  
little thing. You know that. Come  
on, we got work. Old woman alone  
works hard. The peasants -- (she  
spits disdainfully) -- they pay me  
little for my craft. Fuck them.  
Worse than animals.

She notes a yellow flower as they pass.

OLD WOMAN

Cow bitter. Tansy. Brings on the woman's bleeding. Crushed in a cup of branch water.

They come across a rabbit struggling in one of her traps. Its leg snared.

OLD WOMAN

Break its neck.

Vanessa looks at her.

The Old Woman gazes back. Another challenge.

Vanessa kneels and takes the rabbit.

It struggles in her hands.

She tries to break its neck. Not well.

She wrenches at it.

Snap.

The rabbit finally lies still.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Thud.

The Old Woman throws the dead rabbit on the single table.

She gets a knife. Artfully cuts off the rabbit's head, slits its belly, grabs its legs and pulls off the fur in a single smooth yank. All of which during:

OLD WOMAN

Put those on the shelves by their like. Keep the Nightshades together, yeah?

Vanessa unpacks the various herbs and roots on the messy shelves, by others like them.

OLD WOMAN

Tell me about your mother. No. I'll tell you. She's dead. But she was very much like you. Strong-willed. Imperious. Fucked other men -- not you father.

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

You saw them at it? Your mother and these men.

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

Did you like watching?

VANESSA

No.

The Old Woman snorts.

OLD WOMAN

You did. Your little secret, gave you power, eh?

The Old Woman begins to prepare the rabbit carcass for cooking. Wipes it with a cloth. Starts seasoning its red flesh with herbs, pepper and salt.

As:

OLD WOMAN

You're in danger, you know that? You bring danger here too, but I'm an old woman, for me it brings spice to my last days. But for you... Give me the salt there ... You have to learn to protect yourself.

VANESSA

From whom?

The Old Woman looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

Legions.

VANESSA

Legions of what?

OLD WOMAN

So many names I die before I go through them all.

VANESSA

(snaps)

Well, why don't you start with a few?

OLD WOMAN

There's your mother's eyes.

VANESSA

Stop it.

OLD WOMAN

But not when she died. Her eyes were different then, weren't they?

VANESSA

You're a terrible woman.

OLD WOMAN

Not half so terrible as you.

The Old Woman liberally salts the rabbit carcass as:

OLD WOMAN

I knew it the first time I felt you, this danger ... I wanted to scream and bolt the door. Curl up in my little bed and sleep and sleep. But you came closer. I felt you, every step across the moor. They felt you too. They'll be here soon ... I felt you walking to my door. Felt you standing there ... "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes."

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The rabbit is on a spit in the old hearth.

The Old Woman cuts off a slice. Tosses it on Vanessa's plate. Then cuts a bit for herself. The Old Woman eats only with a knife and spoon, as in an earlier era.

Vanessa does her best.

OLD WOMAN

This girl you kissed. Mina. How you supposed to help her?

VANESSA

I don't know. But she appeared to me for a reason.

OLD WOMAN

Everything have a reason, does it?

VANESSA

This did.

OLD WOMAN

You going to save her?

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN  
From what?

VANESSA  
I don't know.

OLD WOMAN  
That makes the saving difficult,  
eh?

The Old Woman suddenly stops.

Alert.

OLD WOMAN  
Stay here. Do not move from that  
seat, hear me?

She stands. Prepares herself.

Goes outside. Shuts the door.

Vanessa instantly moves to the shutters and peers out...

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Three WOMEN in the shadows. Beyond the cairn of stones.  
Ominously still ... Vanessa cannot make out any faces or  
details.

The Old Woman goes to the Women.

We recognize one of them: Evelyn Poole. She looks exactly as  
she does now. No younger, no older. Exquisitely dressed for a  
country outing.

The other two women -- WITCHES -- coil and shift dangerously  
as the Old Woman approaches. She does not blink in the face  
of the threat.

She stops before Evelyn. Careful to stay inside the cairn of  
stones.

EVELYN  
Sister.

OLD WOMAN  
Sister.

EVELYN  
How's your back?

OLD WOMAN  
Old wounds don't hurt.

EVELYN  
Don't they? ... Send her out.

OLD WOMAN  
I am not in the giving vein.

EVELYN  
(amused)  
When were you ever?

She speaks a few words in the *Verbis Diablo*. The Old Woman answers.

EVELYN  
*Verbis Diablo...*

OLD WOMAN  
*Verbis Diablo...*

EVELYN  
I'm pleased you still remember the old tongue.

OLD WOMAN  
Once heard, never forgotten.

EVELYN  
But you're so very old. Isn't your mind slipping a bit?

OLD WOMAN  
And you are young as ever.

EVELYN  
Yes. That's rather the point.

OLD WOMAN  
Give up your soul for that sure. So with that you still live, eh?

EVELYN  
God, sister, how you speak. Like a talking potato. You never change. Except of course in every way that matters ... Do send her out, don't be obstinate. There's still plenty of flesh on you for burning.

OLD WOMAN  
And why her so much?

EVELYN  
Because she is the one the Master seeks above all. As you must have sensed, old woman. Now bring her to me.

OLD WOMAN  
You cannot pass the stones. This we both know, so stand here until you rot.

The other two witches suddenly hiss -- straining toward the Old Woman -- but cannot pass the cairn of stones--

The Old Woman steps back, actually alarmed at their sudden violence.

EVELYN

Why don't you come to me then? Kiss me, sister. As we did in the old times...

Her voice is mesmeric. Her eyes dangerous. A spell of enchantment.

EVELYN

When we were a coven of sisters, coiled together like adders, like adders on the sands of Egypt, like hawks over Golgotha, like all things that join together and find strength as one. As it was before when you too were young and smiled and had such dreams ... Come to me, sister...

The Old Woman takes an inadvertent step forward ... Almost past the cairn of stones...

EVELYN

Embrace me. The Master awaits you. He'll kiss you and hold you fast, enfolding your body like a lover...

The Old Woman takes another hypnotized step -- just about to pass the cairn of stones -- when--

Vanessa flings open the door to the cottage--

VANESSA

No!

The two Witches recoil at the very sight of her--

Evelyn's eyes shoot up--

The Old Woman stops--

VANESSA

Leave her.

Vanessa's power is incredible. That otherworldly strength and intensity. Her head lowered, her whole body tense, her eyes blazing.

Vanessa remains standing in the doorway.

Evelyn retreats further into the darkness, not wanting Vanessa to see her face ... This is not the time for this confrontation.

The Old Woman collapses to her knees.

EVELYN

Sister ... She is wasted on you.  
Give her to me.

OLD WOMAN

You have no power in the circle.

EVELYN

You can't protect her forever. And  
how long can you last? Those bones  
are brittle. Do you really want  
this to be your last battle?

The Old Woman glares up at her.

OLD WOMAN

It is the only battle.

Evelyn and the others retreat into the darkness.

Gone.

Vanessa goes to the Old Woman, helps her stand.

The Old Woman now seems very much that. Tired, weak,  
shattered in spirit.

Seeing the inevitable end.

Vanessa helps her inside.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Vanessa helps the Old Woman in.

Vanessa shuts the door. Bolts it.

OLD WOMAN

Don't bother with that. They can't  
come in ... Finish your food. We'll  
talk tomorrow. Say your prayers  
tonight.

She goes to the steep stairs up to her loft-like bedroom.

But then stops, the stairs seem very steep tonight.

Vanessa goes to her, takes her arm. A look between them. The  
Old Woman allows Vanessa to help her up the stairs...

INT. COTTAGE-LOFT - NIGHT

Vanessa helps her up. She's never been up here before. Heavy slanting beams from the 17th century.

All manner of religious and pagan totems fill the walls and hang from the rafters. Everything from crosses and Greek Orthodox icons to Druid glyphs and animal bones hanging in symbolic positions.

OLD WOMAN  
My totems. For protection.

VANESSA  
Do they work?

OLD WOMAN  
Yes. But I can't remember which ones.

Vanessa lights a candle. Wordlessly helps the Old Woman get ready for bed. Undressing her.

Vanessa stops when she sees the terrible scar of the brand across the Old Woman's back. A pagan symbol.

Then she helps the Old Woman into her nightdress. Helps her into bed. It's all very caring. Like mother and daughter.

VANESSA  
Do you want the light?

The Old Woman shakes her head.

OLD WOMAN  
We must prepare for battle. When it comes, it comes fully and to the end.

Vanessa blows the candle out...

The whip of smoke taking us to...

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

... Something inexplicable.

A beautiful pasture with a herd of cows lazily grazing.

Then we see Evelyn Poole casually walking through the cows.

She gently touches one of the cow's soft ears as she passes.

Almost immediately the cow falls. An ungainly heap.

Dead.

Evelyn continues strolling past the cows.

Which shall live and which die?

She touches another cow's ear.

It falls. Dead.

We see her lethal ring-knife is in operation.

But why?

She continues strolling.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Vanessa and the Old Woman are preparing dinner, a rustic stew. Vanessa does most of the cooking. Stops the Old Woman from adding more salt.

VANESSA

Too much salt.

The Old Woman relents. Vanessa continues cooking. Then, almost casually:

VANESSA

Who were they?

OLD WOMAN

Who?

VANESSA

You know who I mean.

OLD WOMAN

Nightcomers ... Witches.

Vanessa looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

My sister. My coven of yore.

Vanessa continues cooking, confident the Old Woman will continue in her own time.

When Vanessa's back is turned the Old Woman throws a dash more salt in the stew.

OLD WOMAN

In these parts, away from the city, away from all things like that, we learn such things as we used to know when the Old Gods walked. We were Daywalkers then, harmless dabblers in herbs and healing.

VANESSA

And then?

OLD WOMAN

My sister followed another path like. The coven followed. I did not. So they cast me out, burned me as a traitor ... They became those as walks at night, following the Devil for what he promises them ... (she spits) ... Deceiver. Father of Beasts.

VANESSA

What does he promise them?

OLD WOMAN

What does everyone seek? Power, youth, beauty, love, to walk alongside such as know the great midnight arts.

She looks at Vanessa.

OLD WOMAN

Those arts you know. All those sacred midnight things.

There's a sudden knock on the door.

Vanessa jumps -- alarmed.

OLD WOMAN

Don't fret so, girl. They can't pass the stones. Only them that's full humankind can do that.

She opens the door.

A TEENAGE GIRL stands outside. Shivering. Terrified.

The Old Woman looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

You have a little baby you need cut, yeah?

The girl nods. Tears.

OLD WOMAN

What you have for me then?

The girl holds out a silver locket in a shaking hand. The Old Woman takes it. Feels the weight.

OLD WOMAN

What else?

The girl pulls three eggs from her dress.

OLD WOMAN  
Yeah, come in.

The Old Woman takes the eggs, sets them on the table. Then she opens a box and tosses the locket inside alongside a number of such trinkets and tributes.

The girl enters. Weeping now.

OLD WOMAN  
(to Vanessa)  
You go upstairs.

VANESSA  
No, I'll help.

OLD WOMAN  
Get that tarpaulin. In the corner.  
And the bucket there.

The girl stands terrified as the Old Woman prepares. Gets water and a series of knives and primitive abortion tools.

Vanessa gets an old, heavy tarpaulin.

OLD WOMAN  
On the floor.

Vanessa spreads it on the floor. It's stained black from many years of service.

OLD WOMAN  
Was a sail on a ship long time ago.  
It's waxed for them storms, you  
know, at sea ... (to the girl) ...  
Pull up your skirt and lie down.

The girl meekly obliges. Vanessa puts a pillow under her head. The Old Woman notices the humane gesture.

VANESSA  
What do you want me to do?

The Old Woman lights her clay pipe.

OLD WOMAN  
Get ready with the bucket.

The girl moans sharply. It's horrible.

OLD WOMAN  
Be quiet ... Think about this next  
time you let that dandy man put his  
hand in your skirt. You foolish  
child, you foolish girl. What will  
I do with you girls?

She kneels next to the girl, rolls up her sleeves.  
Efficiently preparing her implements.

OLD WOMAN

What will I do with you girls?

She goes to work.

Vanessa watches. Then her eyes go to the girl's. The girl  
looks at her.

Their faces.

VANESSA

Look into my eyes.

The girl does.

VANESSA

Just look at me. Don't look away  
... God. Forgives. All.

We cut to--

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The girl's screams echo from the cottage.

We cut to--

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

Ferocious dogs.

Hunting mastiffs. Killers.

Barking loudly, agitated.

They are roaming outside an impressive Tudor Manor House.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

The barking can be heard inside.

The dogs, and the mansion, belong to SIR GEOFFREY HAWKES. Old  
rural money. Lord of the Manor. Dressed for riding. Roguishly  
handsome and casually cruel.

HAWKES

Beasts ... Only hushed when they're  
at their feeding.

He calls out the window:

HAWKES

Quiet them down!

Shuts the window. The dogs keep barking. Turns again to his unseen companion.

HAWKES

You don't know how long I've been trying to get the land. It's a homestead deed from Cromwell. Cromwell himself I mean.

EVELYN

I know who you mean.

She's there. Beautifully dressed for riding. Wandering, taking in the splendid Tudor antiques.

EVELYN

But, my darling, you own most of the county. Surely you can get that one woman out?

HAWKES

Not by law. I've offered ten times it's worth. Old witch won't be moved.

She wanders past the window. Glances out. The barking dogs are suddenly silent.

EVELYN

Seems such a shame. For a man like you, a man of prestige, not to be able to graze his cattle to the river of his choice. Seems a kind of weakness. I do not admire that.

He goes to her, romantically enchanted.

HAWKES

My dear, one piece of land means nothing to us. Far as your eye can see, it's mine.

EVELYN

I suppose I'm something of a completist.

She kisses him.

EVELYN

It doesn't matter. Shall we ride?

He gets his riding gloves and crop.

HAWKES

The grazing rights won't mean much  
anyway if the cattle keep dying.

EVELYN

What do you mean?

HAWKES

There's some kind of blight. The  
surgeons haven't a clue. Lost four  
head last night. Whole county'll be  
ruined if that keeps up.

EVELYN

Oh, I'm sure you'll figure  
something out ... Darling?

He takes her hand and leads her out.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

Hawkes and Evelyn are riding. His hounds keep pace,  
occasionally darting after rabbits and other easy prey.

Hawkes and Evelyn stop.

A horrible spectacle in front of them.

Dead cows. Two dozen. Most of this herd.

She looks to him, feigning concern.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Vanessa and the Old Woman walk, the daily ritual of  
collecting medicinal herbs and checking the rabbit snares.

The Old Woman is teaching her an incantation in the *Verbis  
Diablo*.

VANESSA

*Verbis Diablo...*

OLD WOMAN

*Verbis Diablo...*

VANESSA

*Verbis Diablo...*

OLD WOMAN

(corrects her)

No ... *Verbis Diablo* ... But you  
must remember such incantations are  
dangerous and you must never speak  
the Devil's language idly.

(MORE)

And such things as this I teach you  
are only for your protection. Let  
this language not become easy in  
your mouth or soon it will no  
longer be your mouth -- but his.  
And it will tell only lies.

VANESSA

For he is the Father of Lies.

OLD WOMAN

If you believe in God, better you  
pray with all you got in you. Only  
if all else fails, you speak the  
Devil's tongue. But mark, girl:  
it's a seduction and before you  
blink twice it's all you can speak -  
- and so does a Daywalker becomes a  
Nightcomer.

The Old Woman plucks a leaf from a plant. Holds it up.

VANESSA

Comfrey. Protection of travellers.

OLD WOMAN

How?

VANESSA

Blanched and then crushed. Hidden  
in the left pocket.

They stop when a hay wagon with locals clatters near them.  
Ignorant farm-folk.

The locals see them, cross themselves as they approach.

The Old Woman stands to her fullest height, glares at them  
fixedly.

As the wagon rattles past one of the men SPITS on her.

The wagon continues on.

OLD WOMAN

They send their girls to me, but  
for this very service they despise  
me ... So it is always for those  
who do for women.

She sees a grim humor in this. But she's bothered.

They continue on.

But the Old Woman stops again, unusually contemplative. More  
the old woman than the ferocious Cut-Wife.

OLD WOMAN

Old as I am, I know nothing ... Why people in this world hate what is not them. Why they fear all they don't know. Why they hate themselves most of all ... For being weak. For being old. For being everything all-together that is not god-like ... Which of us can be that? ... Monsters all, are we not?

VANESSA

Some perhaps more than others.

The Old Woman looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

And you most of all?

VANESSA

You tell me.

OLD WOMAN

Is that what you feel?

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

Then it will be true, as long as you feel it so.

She walks on.

Vanessa stands, watching her.

The Old Woman, seemingly stooped now, so old, walking away.

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Most of the dogs are sleeping. Some prowl, watchful.

INT. MANOR HOUSE-BEDROOM - NIGHT

Evelyn stands in a sumptuous dressing gown of green.

EVELYN

Get on your knees.

Hawkes, naked, kneels before her.

EVELYN

Do not be ashamed of your desires. There is no pleasure, no degradation, I do not savor.

She picks up his riding crop.

EVELYN  
Bow your head.

He does so.

EVELYN  
To the floor.

He does so.

She runs the tip of the crop over his shoulders.

He moans.

EVELYN  
Stop it. I shall tell you when you  
can speak. Until then you will  
listen. Mute. Plaything. Toy.  
Slave. Beast. Fucking. Man.

A beat.

EVELYN  
What would your vassals think,  
seeing you like this? Brought low  
and servile. Would they laugh at  
you? I think they would. So weak.  
Letting your cattle die, your  
estate die, while an old woman  
laughs at you. Can you hear her  
laughing? I can.

She quickly slaps him with the crop. He quivers with  
enjoyment but makes no sound.

EVELYN  
They're a superstitious lot, your  
neighbors. Those thick tenants  
working your land with their hands  
in shit up to the elbow. They can  
be led. They can kneel too. They  
were born to it.

She slaps him hard with the riding crop.

And again.

EVELYN  
Look at me.

He looks up at her.

EVELYN  
You will do as I instruct ... And  
then you will know pleasure.

She raises the crop quickly.

Slashes it down brutally.

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Outside the dogs hear the beating.

They bark and leap and howl in a wild paroxysm of excitement.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Vanessa is downstairs, making breakfast. Her eyes go to the tarp in the corner.

Then she hears a crash from upstairs. The wash stand tipping over. Someone falling.

Alarming.

She hurries up the stairs...

INT. COTTAGE-LOFT - NIGHT

The Old Woman is on the floor.

Her hands pathetically grasping the wooden floor, something like panic in her eyes.

Vanessa hurries to her.

LATER:

The Old Woman is in bed.

Her amazing eyes dimmed. Her voice weak. Her body giving up.

Vanessa sits with her.

OLD WOMAN

It was going to happen, girl.  
Sooner. Later. But it's now. I've  
not had a happy life, but it has  
been my life.

VANESSA

Let me get a doctor, please.

OLD WOMAN

For this ailment, there is no cure.  
Not the surgeon or the poultice. I  
have lived too long is my ailment.

VANESSA

Nonsense. You're strong as a pirate.

OLD WOMAN

Then cast my tarot.

A beat.

OLD WOMAN

You already have.

VANESSA

And did not you teach me that the cards have many meanings?

OLD WOMAN

Don't be fresh.

Vanessa forces a smile.

OLD WOMAN

Get my pipe.

Vanessa does so.

Lights it for her. Hands it to her. The Old Woman smokes. Looks at her for a moment.

OLD WOMAN

I want you to stay here.

VANESSA

What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN

I want you to live here after I'm gone. I make this your land.

VANESSA

... I can't.

OLD WOMAN

Because of your friend?

VANESSA

Yes ... If I truly have a calling, it's helping her.

OLD WOMAN

You have a calling already. You came here to learn. I have never known a Daywalker with such power. And how will you use it?

VANESSA

To help my friend.

OLD WOMAN

One girl ... Balentree Moor is a poor, forgotten place. With many girls who need help. This place needs its Cut-Wife.

Vanessa looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

I don't envy anyone my life. The things I have seen, and done. But there's always them that need us, Vanessa.

The first time she has used Vanessa's name.

OLD WOMAN

Leave me to sleep. You think on it, eh? ... And don't use such a shy hand with the salt. It's weakness.

She turns away.

Vanessa rises and goes.

EXT. BALENTREE CHURCH - DAY

The village church is as poor as everything else in the county.

Pigs root in front.

INT. BALENTREE CHURCH - DAY

Sir Geoffrey Hawkes sits with the local parish MINISTER. An older and unforgiving man.

MINISTER

You mean Papistry?

HAWKES

I mean far worse than Rome. I mean sorcery.

MINISTER

And what proof do you have?

HAWKES

What proof do you need beyond the blight on the cattle? The very herds I want to cross that bitch's land. You think this is mere happenstance? Those cattle die, this town dies.

MINISTER  
... She is an evil woman.

HAWKES  
And you know what she does there?

The Minister nods.

HAWKES  
The sanctity of life, sir.

MINISTER  
Yes.

HAWKES  
And is it necessary for me to remind you that your pastoral employment relies entirely upon my good will? As does the employment of every blessed man, woman and child in Balentree ... What you eat, I deign to give you.

MINISTER  
(nods)  
Sir Geoffrey.

HAWKES  
You shall stand at my side in this.

MINISTER  
As in all things, I hope.

Hawkes stands.

HAWKES  
Come to the tavern tomorrow night.  
We've God's work to do.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Vanessa is walking down the road through the forest, deep in thought. She carries the basket of herbs and roots.

She barely notices as Hawkes rides up. Imperious on his steed.

He reigns it sharply. Looks down on her.

HAWKES  
You're the little quim with the witch.

She does not respond.

He slowly takes off his riding gloves.

HAWKES

I heard about you ... She didn't  
tell me you were so pretty.

She does not respond.

He jumps off his saddle and goes to her.

Takes her neck firmly in his hand.

HAWKES

Answer me, girl.

She glares. Does not answer.

He strokes her face.

HAWKES

You know who I am? This is my land.  
That makes you a poacher. I can  
have you branded. Right there.

He presses a finger hard into her forehead.

She glares. Does not answer.

HAWKES

We do such things here. We do such  
things ... as you never could  
imagine. Eh, girl? Quiet girl.

He puts one of his big hands over her mouth. Terrible.

As his other hand thrusts under her dress. Feeling up her  
thigh.

HAWKES

Quiet girl ... Quiet girl ... Maybe  
I'll make you scream.

Then--

Vanessa rears her head back--

And bites into Hawkes' hand with every bit of fury in her.

He screams in agony.

Blood pouring from his hand. Coating her teeth and mouth.

He swings for her.

But she's too fast, backs up.

Then from her dress, suddenly--

A knife.

At his throat.

He stands. Frozen. Her mouth covered in his blood.

A beat.

VANESSA

Scream for me.

His terrified eyes.

VANESSA

Go on, child. Scream for me.

She presses the blade.

He screams. Loud and long. It echoes through the forest.  
Birds take flight.

She stands back from him. Surveys him.

VANESSA

Come not near me or mine again, eh?

He spins and jumps to his horse.

Gallops off.

Vanessa stands.

She spits out his blood.

INT. COTTAGE-LOFT - NIGHT

Vanessa sits with the Old Woman, feeding her soup.

The Old Woman's weaker now.

OLD WOMAN

May the angels bless the Lord  
Protector, Mr. Cromwell. Granted  
the land to me in perpetuity. Not  
even the high-and-mighty Sir  
Geoffrey can steal it off me, long  
as Parliament sits, this pile of  
dung is mine.

VANESSA

When you say he granted it to  
you...

OLD WOMAN

To me, girl. After the second  
battle of Newbury this was. He was  
on the run.

(MORE)

I gave him succor here, having no love of the Royalists, for they had none for us poor folk or women folk. Ugly man really. Big warts on his face.

VANESSA

... What year was this?

OLD WOMAN

As I recall, 1644.

Vanessa looks at her. The Old Woman says nothing more.

Vanessa brings up another spoon of soup. The Old Woman shakes her head. No more soup.

VANESSA

You must eat.

OLD WOMAN

I must do nothing but die. I am overdue for that, my Little Scorpion ... Have you thought about what I said? Staying here?

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

... And are you set for London to help your friend?

VANESSA

I honestly don't know ... But I'll wait.

OLD WOMAN

Until I'm dead.

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

Small mercies.

The Old Woman lies back, looks at her.

OLD WOMAN

Truly, I don't know if your heart is good or bad. But I have to show you something ... You see that big book? With the glyph on the side. Bring it me.

Vanessa gets a thick, old book with a pagan symbol on the spine from a bookcase filled with old books.

The Old Woman takes it. Almost with a kind of fear.

OLD WOMAN

Of all the texts, of all the  
spells, this is the most cursed.

VANESSA

What is it?

OLD WOMAN

Forbidden. The Poetry of Death ...  
If ever the day comes when my  
Little Scorpion is crushed and  
beaten, if her God deserts her  
completely, only then does she open  
it. And on that day she will never  
be the same. She will have gone  
away from God, forever.

The Old Woman looks at her deeply.

OLD WOMAN

You will be tempted, in the years  
coming on, eh? The Nightcomers will  
tempt you. Do not walk by night.  
Once you cross over, once you open  
this book and read its terrors, you  
can never return.

VANESSA

I understand.

OLD WOMAN

I don't think quite you do ...  
Within you there is an especial  
gift, sought by many. They'll rob  
you of it given a slight-ways  
chance ... Hold fast, girl, hold  
fast.

A horse screams in the distance. Then a painful sort of dying  
howl.

OLD WOMAN

Poor animal. They become trapped in  
the mire, can't get out. I've seen  
whole pit ponies go down in days  
past. They struggle, and the more  
they struggle the faster they sink.  
One wrong step is all it takes.

VANESSA

For us all.

OLD WOMAN

For us all.

VANESSA

Then may the Lord God bring us safe footing until we're home.

OLD WOMAN

Better still, may He let us know when we are home.

Vanessa appreciates the point.

OLD WOMAN

Now put this cursed thing back and bring me my box.

Vanessa returns the cursed book to the shelf and gets a very old metal dispatch box. Brings it to the Old Woman.

OLD WOMAN

There will be something in here for you. After I'm gone, you understand?

VANESSA

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

Now go down. Leave the candle.

Vanessa goes.

The Old Woman opens the dispatch box.

Looks at what it contains. We don't see it.

EXT. BALENTREE TOWN - NIGHT

A wretched little town, beset by poverty. Horses, mules, and old carts outside the grimy tavern.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Evelyn Poole, resplendent in green, watches from the back.

A town meeting of sorts, ale and beer freely flowing. Men and women, some children.

The Minister we met with Hawkes holds the floor. Hawkes next to him.

MINISTER

... My father told me the stories. So did all of yours. And God tells us our duty in Leviticus: "*A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death.*"

(MORE)

*They shall be stoned with stones;  
their blood shall be upon them."*

Profound words indeed. The crowd murmurs assent.

HAWKES

Will I picture you a future, lads?  
That woman, unchecked, leads to my  
ruination. I'll have no choice but  
to close the manor and find me  
better grazing land eastward. What  
happens to you then, Jack?

JACK

We sell off.

HAWKES

And who's to buy? Who's to buy any  
of it, Jack? ... (to others) ...  
Spencer? Hugh Martin? Gil Taylor?  
Tell me? Who'll buy your land? This  
dead land where nothing can graze?  
You'll be properly like the bloody  
Irish then, digging out spuds with  
your fingernails. Starving day by  
day as your little ones die afore  
you.

The crowd protests.

Evelyn catches Hawkes' eye. She nods to the bar. More drink.

HAWKES

Fill their tankards now.

The crowd is pleased.

HAWKES

So we ask you then, the Minister  
and me. What do we do when there's  
a battle needs fighting? When our  
homeland is invaded?

WOMAN

We fight.

HAWKES

We fight. Like the good Devon men  
and ladies we are. We fought the  
Norse and the Romans and the  
Roundheads didn't we then? So are  
we to do anything less now?

The crowd roars "No." A frenzy growing. Blood-lust and  
patriotism and drink.

HAWKES

No! We take up the pikes and the shovels and the cleavers like we did before, like we learned from our fathers, and we fight for what is ours!

The crowd roars.

HAWKES

Drink up, lads, drink up!

The crowd bangs tankards, roars ... We see a familiar face amidst them. The teenage girl who went to the Old Woman for the abortion.

As the mob builds to a crescendo, she bolts up:

TEENAGE GIRL

Burn the witch!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Not many miles away, it's quiet. Candles burn. Smoke from the chimney.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Vanessa sits quietly.

On the table before her two things: the Tarot Cards and the Daguerreotype of her and Mina as children.

A choice to be made.

She makes it.

She takes the tarot cards and puts them back into the box from which they came.

Then she goes up the stairs...

INT. COTTAGE-LOFT - NIGHT

Vanessa emerges from downstairs. The Old Woman waiting, looking at her.

Vanessa sits with her.

OLD WOMAN

And when do you go?

VANESSA

After.

OLD WOMAN

I won't pretend I'm not sorry. What will they do now? All those poor, stupid girls of mine, eh?

VANESSA

I can come back.

OLD WOMAN

You won't. You're a selfish girl.

The Old Woman stabs Vanessa's forehead hard.

OLD WOMAN

Too many books you have in your head. You think you're going to be a hero. Like El Cid, eh? Like Joan d'Arc. You are not. None of us are.

VANESSA

I think I am nothing but a woman who must do something.

OLD WOMAN

So you can sleep at night. Fuck your sleep you selfish bitch. May you never pass a happy night.

She turns away sharply.

They sit in a painful silence.

Then...

A sound.

Horses approaching. Carts. Voices.

Vanessa stands. Goes to the window.

Hawkes and his drunken mob approaching. Torches.

VANESSA

My God...

The Old Woman knows exactly what's happening.

OLD WOMAN

Help me up.

VANESSA

What? No! We must--

OLD WOMAN

I will meet them on my feet.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

From outside they hear nothing but an ominous silence now. The torch light flickers through the shutters.

The Old Woman stands with Vanessa's support.

A terrible end is coming. They both know it.

OLD WOMAN

Stay inside when I go. Bolt the door.

VANESSA

I will walk with you.

The Old Woman accepts it.

She looks at Vanessa very deeply. Final words.

OLD WOMAN

Now you watch yourself close,  
Little Scorpion ... And remember  
this I speak now, eh? When Lucifer  
fell, he did not fall alone. They  
will hunt you until the end of  
days.

She puts her hand on Vanessa's heart.

OLD WOMAN

Be true ... My name is Joan  
Clayton.

With that she unbolts the door and walks out. Proudly, on her own.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The Old Woman emerges.

Vanessa stands with her at the door.

Facing them.

A silent mob. Torches. Terror.

Evelyn Poole stands well back of the cairn of stones, not wanting Vanessa to see her, watching from the rear of the crowd.

Someone calls:

VOICE

Witch!

Then silence.

The Old Woman says nothing. Pulls herself up to her fullest, ferocious height.

HAWKES

We have resolved you to be guilty of Necromancy and being in league with your Master, the Devil. As it was before in God's own time, let it be so now.

But no one moves.

Now that the moment is here the crowd hesitates at the barbarity of it. The reality of it.

But then we see a CHILD silently picking up a rock.

Flings it.

It hits the Old Woman in the head.

And the floodgates are unleashed.

The mob surges forward.

They are drunken. And they are evil.

Vanessa instinctively tries to protect the Old Woman.

But three men hold her back.

As the mob takes hold of the Old Woman.

She offers no protest.

They drag her roughly across the yard. Slapping and kicking and spitting at her.

Vanessa fights like a tiger, but the three drunken men hold her firmly.

The mob drags the Old Woman to Hawkes. Her nightdress is torn. She's bleeding. Her eyes glare.

Hawkes looks at her. Then lashes her soundly across the face with his riding crop.

At this prize bestiality the mob turns to frenzy.

They scream and cheer and pummel the Old Woman as she is roughly dragged to the single gnarled tree out front. It's inarticulate animal blood-lust.

Vanessa watches in horror.

They fling the Old Woman to the tree and tie her with rough ropes. Biting into her skin.

A bucket of black pitch is thrown over her. Then another.  
The Old Woman locks eyes with Vanessa.  
Vanessa holds her gaze.  
As the teenage girl steps to the Old Woman.  
She holds a torch.  
The Old Woman does not look at her.  
She just looks at Vanessa.  
As the teenage girl throws the torch at the Old Woman's feet.  
And she burns.  
She does not cry out.  
She burns.  
Her eyes never leaving Vanessa's.  
Vanessa's face.  
The crowd is silent by now.  
Evelyn Poole watches from the rear of the crowd. Pleased.  
The Old Woman burns.  
Vanessa's face.  
The Old Woman is dead.  
But this night's horrors are not done.  
Hawkes nods to the Minister, who shoves a branding iron into the flames to heat it.  
Hawkes turns and walks to Vanessa. She struggles, to no avail.  
Hawkes nods to the three men holding Vanessa and they spin her around and rip off the back of her dress brutally, flinging her to her knees and hold her there.  
The Minister approaches with the now red-hot branding iron.  
Hawkes leans close to her, whispers.

HAWKES

Go on, child. Scream for me.

The Minister shoves the red-hot branding iron -- shaped like a cross -- into Vanessa's back.

Vanessa screams in agony.

The crowd roars its approval. The climax to this barbarous night.

Evelyn watches from the back of the crowd, her eyes alive with pleasure as Vanessa screams.

The hissing branding iron is removed. A bloody cross-shaped wound. The men holding Vanessa release her. She collapses.

Hawkes turns and strides off.

One of the men who was holding Vanessa spits on her and they go. The crowd going with them.

Vanessa sobs.

Shattered.

We fade to...

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Later.

Vanessa is inside. Huddled on the floor. Her back a seething mass of scar tissue and blood.

She pulls herself up, every movement agony.

Prepares herself and peers out from between the shutters.

Moonlight outside.

The scorched tree. The remains of the Old Woman burned away or carried off by the mob.

The crowd is gone.

But in the distance Vanessa sees...

Three figures. In the distance. The silhouettes of Evelyn and the two other Witches. Watching.

Waiting.

Vanessa closes the shutters. Bolts the door.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Day now.

Vanessa is dressed for travel. She stands taking in the suddenly lonely cottage. The hanging herbs. The table. The tarp for the abortions.

She has the single carpetbag she arrived with packed and ready.

She goes upstairs, her back still in agony...

INT. COTTAGE-LOFT - DAY

She goes to the metal dispatch case.

Opens it.

Inside...

A Parliamentary land deed, fully notarized. Oliver Cromwell's spidery signature.

The owner's name "*Joan Clayton*" has been scratched out.

Neatly printed instead "*Vanessa Ives.*"

She takes the land grant.

Then her eyes go to the forbidden book. The one with the pagan symbol on the spine.

She looks at it for a moment and then goes.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Vanessa puts the land grant in her carpetbag. Prepares to go.

One last look around.

Then she goes to the shutters. Looks out. Sees no one. She's safe during the day, for the moment.

She leaves. Shutting the door behind her.

A moment.

And then the door opens again, she returns.

She goes to the special box. Removes the Tarot Cards.

Puts them in her bag.

And goes.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

That one gnarled tree is scorched black now.

Vanessa locks the door and then walks to the cairn of stones. Kneels. Cuts her thumb. Drawing blood.

She adds a new symbol in blood to the stones. A rough pagan symbol that looks like a scorpion. The glyph we saw her drawing in Episode 201.

She stands. Looks at the cottage.

Her cottage.

And goes.

EXT. MOORS - DAY

From afar, we see Vanessa walking over the moors.

Step by step to her future.

We hear the Old Woman's voice:

                  OLD WOMAN (V.O.)  
          "When Lucifer fell, he did not fall  
          alone. They will hunt you until the  
          end of days ... Be true."

Vanessa walks out of the frame.

The lonely moors.

We snap to black.

End of Episode 203.