

THE COVEN
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FADE IN:

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE - DAY

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 1649

Mist swirls along the banks of a gently flowing river, flanked by lush, green pasture.

An old and impressive stone bridge spans the wide waters.

MARY (18) a bold, impulsive girl with more spirit than is good for her, swans up with a basket of eggs.

She sings a plaintive tune, "Róisín Dubh".

Her foot reaches out to step onto the bridge. She hesitates and looks around nervously. Her tune dies in her throat.

She watches a crow land in the middle of the bridge. It hops about and cries before flying away.

The bridge seems to grow and darken.

Mary steels herself and sprints across the bridge as fast as she can, eggs bouncing in her basket.

She reaches the far side and stops. She sighs with relief and a broad smile spreads across her face.

The smile vanishes as she looks down at the cracked eggs.

She tuts as she picks broken shells from the basket and throws them irritably to the ground.

She looks back over the bridge and is puzzled to see a plume of ominous black smoke rising in the distance.

After a moment watching it she resumes her song and continues on her way.

EXT. IRISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The sky is grey and menacing.

A line of Cromwell's infantry and canon trudges across a muddy field. They are battle-weary and covered in the blood of war.

Officers on horseback marshal the foot soldiers.

In the distance behind them a ruined town belches black smoke into the iron grey sky.

A CAPTAIN trots his horse back along a line of pikemen.

He canters up a hill to a prominent group of officers silhouetted on the skyline, where he reins-in.

He removes his helmet and nods.

The leading figure nods in return. He is CROMWELL (50), stern, imperious, ruthless.

CAPTAIN

Sir! Most of the rebels have fled north - but a small band have taken-up defensive positions in the monastery at Trim.

Cromwell adjusts his seat and stares into the distance.

CROMWELL

We don't have time to engage every feeble gang of rebels.

Cromwell fixes his gaze on the Captain.

CROMWELL (CONT'D)

We must get to Wexford before Ormonde can reinforce its garrison.

The Captain squirms in his saddle.

CROMWELL (CONT'D)

Colonel Reynolds!

REYNOLDS (mid 30s), an arrogant, greedy, misanthrope, turns his horse to face Cromwell.

REYNOLDS

Sir?

CROMWELL

Take your regiment to Trim. Deal with the rebels there. You can have a squadron of cavalry and one battery of canon. That should suffice.

REYNOLDS

Yes sir!

Reynolds bows, dons his helmet and gallops off.

Cromwell turns to his staff officers.

CROMWELL

Come, gentlemen, to Wexford!

Cromwell spurs his horse down the hill, followed by the other officers.

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE: PRESENT - DAY

A MAN (early 60s) stands on the bridge with a mobile phone to his ear. Tall and skeletal, penetrating eyes, grey moustache, he is dressed in a smart suit and overcoat.

He puts the phone in his pocket and leans on the parapet as he surveys the view along the river.

He spies the overgrown ruins of an ancient building just up from the bridge and with a small tilt of the head, turns to stroll over to them.

EXT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

A squat, dirty-looking cabin with rough stone walls and a thatched roof sits alone on a narrow lane near the river. Behind it is a muddy field where pigs forage.

Mary reaches the front door and pushes it open.

A horse WHINNIES and Mary looks round in surprise.

A wild-eyed, ragged rebel, CIARÁN (early 20s) swarthy, athletic and smouldering, collapses off his horse near the cabin. Distraught and exhausted, he lies there and weeps.

The horse gallops off.

Mary rushes to Ciarán. She cradles him in her arms.

CIARÁN
Drogheda's fallen... Cromwell
butchered everyone!

Mary closes her eyes and sighs painfully.

MARY
Let's get you inside.

Mary looks down at her hand, covered in blood.

MARY (CONT'D)
You bleed!

CIARÁN
I must get to Tyrrellspass.

MARY
You're in no state to go
anywhere. You need rest. Come

The Mary looks around nervously as she helps Ciarán into the cabin.

The cabin is dark and spartan, with an earth floor and a single wooden bed in the corner.

Mary eases Ciarán onto the low bed.

Ciarán tries to rise. He cries out in pain.

CIARÁN

No! I must get to Dillon!

Mary gently pushes him back down.

MARY

Stay!

Mary looks into his troubled eyes. She searches his bruised face.

Ciarán passes out.

Mary tenderly brushes the hair out of Ciarán's eyes. She is transfixed.

The noise of many HORSES HOOVES thunder over the nearby bridge, accompanied by SHOUTS.

Mary looks up with fear in her eyes.

She rushes to the door.

A TROOP OF CROMWELLIAN CAVALRY gallop up to the cabin.

They halt in front of it.

MORTIMER (40s) rides forward. Cherub-like in appearance, he is as cruel and cold as the bitter wind - with a conscience to match.

He looks down contemptuously at Mary, then turns to a TROOPER.

MORTIMER

Search the hovel!

The Trooper dismounts and shoves Mary aside to get into the cabin.

A flicker of fear crosses Mary's face.

Mortimer looks back at Mary. She glowers up at him.

MORTIMER

You people! How can you live like this?

MARY

We have to - because you have
taken everything else from us!

Mortimer smiles coldly.

MORTIMER

The punishment for harbouring
rebels is death - you know that?

The Trooper comes back out.

TROOPER

Empty sir!

Mortimer looks furious as the Trooper remounts his horse.

Mary smirks at Mortimer.

MORTIMER

Come on!

Mortimer gallops off, followed by the Cavalry Troopers.

Mary watches them go and breathes a sigh of relief.

She rushes back inside.

The cabin is empty.

She goes to the bed and glances round the room.

She spies straw on the bed covers and smiles.

She looks up into the thatch.

MARY

They've gone.

The thatch stirs and suddenly a body falls down onto the
bed with a loud groan.

The figure struggles to sit up and shakes his head. It is
Ciarán.

CIARÁN

I've put you in danger. I must
go!

MARY

Your horse is fled, you are
wounded and there are soldiers
out there who will kill you if
they find you. You're staying
here.

Ciarán sighs deeply and nods.

He looks into Mary's eyes. His heart races.

CIARÁN
I... I owe you my life.

Mary laughs gently. Her eyes twinkle.

She sits down on the bed and takes Ciarán's hand.

MARY
That you do!

EXT. VILLAGE CHURCH - DAY

A muddy square lays in front of the church with an intricately carved stone high cross at its centre.

The Cavalry Troop noisily enter and rein in.

Infantry pikemen flood the square shouldering their fifteen foot long pikes.

SHOUTS echo all around.

Local villagers reel back in fear.

Two battered REBELS are thrown to the ground at the feet of Reynold's horse, their hands bound.

Reynolds looks down and sneers triumphantly at them.

Two soldiers, with coils of rope around them, burst into the church and climb the stairs to the bell tower.

A PRIEST (40s) rushes out from the church. He is still lean and alert from his life before God's calling.

Shocked, the priest watches as the ropes are dropped from the church tower and nooses on the end of them are tied around the rebels' necks.

REYNOLDS
(shouts)
Captain Mortimer!

Mortimer dismounts and steps forward.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
Hang them!

Mortimer looks at the tower and smiles.

The priest steps between the rebels and Reynolds.

He raises his arms.

PRIEST

Stop! Stop! You can't do this!

Reynolds sneers and turns his horse into the priest, forcing the priest to step back.

He leans forward and strikes the priest across the face.

The priest falls to the ground.

He looks up at Reynolds, his right eye welting.

Reynolds glares down at him like a demon.

REYNOLDS

Get out of my way- papist - or
you will join them!

Reynolds looks over to Mortimer.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Do it!

The two rebels are hauled up the front of the church. They kick desperately as the life is choked out of them.

Eventually their kicking ceases and their bodies dangle from the tower, swinging gently.

Reynolds turns to address the shocked crowd.

REYNOLDS

Behold the fate which awaits any
who defy the laws of Parliament!

Reynolds glares down at the priest.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

I want their heads hung from that
cross - as a warning to these
savages!

INT. LOCAL MUSEUM: PRESENT - DAY

The man, photocopied guide pamphlet in hand, stands in front of the stone high cross, battered and weathered.

He looks up from the pamphlet and studies the cross with great interest as he circles it.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

Reynolds removes his helmet and strides into the entrance hall. He stops and scans the dark, wooden-panelled room but is singularly unimpressed by it.

He removes his gloves and places them inside his helmet, which he thrusts towards a waiting soldier.

His boots echo off the stone floor and leave a muddy trail behind him as he saunters over to the glowing fireplace to warm himself.

Mortimer removes his helmet as he enters.

MORTIMER

All the rebels in Trim have now
been killed.

Reynolds nods approvingly.

REYNOLDS

Bring me the royalist.

Mortimer smirks as he bows to Reynolds and leaves.

Reynolds turns to and bawls at a terrified serving girl.

She is EMER (17), meek, gentle and sister to Mary.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

And wine!

She scurries away in fear.

Mortimer returns and smiles.

He steps aside as JONES (early 30s) is roughly thrown to the floor by two BRUTAL LOOKING SOLDIERS.

Jones is half-dressed in white cotton shirt and velvet pantaloons. He has an air of arrogant disdain which masks an inner courage.

He gets up and stands defiantly as the soldiers laugh.

REYNOLDS

Ah, Viscount Ranelagh! So pleased
you could join us. Pray, where is
your delightful wife?

JONES

Far away from here!

REYNOLDS

Pity. I would have enjoyed her
company very much! (beat) and...
your mistress?

JONES

I have powerful friends, Colonel
Reynolds-

Reynolds wags his finger and smiles sickeningly.

REYNOLDS

Not anymore you don't - Arthur.

Emer hurries over to Reynolds with a flagon and a goblet.

Reynolds seizes the goblet and gulps greedily.

JONES

I have not taken-up arms against
Parliament!

REYNOLDS

Maybe not. But you were the
King's man.

JONES

So were you - once.

Reynolds' smile vanishes.

REYNOLDS

But now I am a Parliamentarian -
and you... you are not!

Reynolds gestures flamboyantly around the room.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Your king gave you all this..

Reynolds' face is pure spite.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

And I am taking it away from you!

Jones stands tall. His face set like stone. He holds
Reynolds' gaze.

JONES

You have no authority-

REYNOLDS

Oh, but I do!

Reynolds turns to Mortimer as he points to Jones.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Throw him out.

MORTIMER

With pleasure!

Mortimer smiles and bows to Reynolds.

He gestures to the brutal looking soldiers who grab Jones
and drag him out by the shoulders.

JONES

Get your filthy hands off me!

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

The brutal looking soldiers hurl Jones in the mud.

Mortimer lazily unrolls a scroll of parchment. He sighs as if reading it is burdensome.

MORTIMER

By order of Parliament you are hereby stripped of all lands and titles previously bestowed upon you. You will, from this day, be considered outlaw and traitor to the Commonwealth. Take yourself henceforth from this place - never to return.

Mortimer rolls up the scroll and looks into the distance as he drops it contemptuously on Jones' head.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

If it was me - I'd hang you!

Mortimer laughs callously as he strolls away.

A mud-covered Jones gets up slowly. He brushes muddy hair out of his eyes, which shoot daggers at Mortimer's back.

EXT. MANOR HOUSE: PRESENT - DAY

The Manor House is a shell. The roof is gone and the windows are boarded up. Ivy snakes up the crumbling stonework. Corrugated iron covers the doorway.

The Man stands in front of the ruins and studies the building with a pained expression on his face.

He reverently touches the stones.

He closes his eyes and breathes in the smell of decay.

He pulls at a rotten wooden board and climbs inside the building.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Mary hurries past the High cross.

She stops and looks up at it.

The two rebel heads hang from it.

Mary covers her mouth and gags.

She turns and runs towards the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Mary hesitantly enters the dimly lit church.

She shakes as she genuflects towards the tabernacle behind the altar.

The priest appears from inside the sacristy, his right eye badly swollen.

He dries his hands on a cloth and fixes his eyes on Mary.

She looks shocked.

PRIEST

Please forgive my unsightly appearance. What is it my child?

MARY

Father! I...

The priest steps towards her softly. His face looks grotesque in the candle light.

MARY (CONT'D)

I... I need your help. Please.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - NIGHT

The blood red sun sets, casting long, brooding shadows.

The priest kneels next to the unconscious Ciarán and studies his face.

PRIEST

Drogheda you say?

MARY

Yes father.

The priest examines Ciarán's wounds.

PRIEST

You have done a fine job, Mary.

Mary smiles gratefully.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

He will certainly live.

Mary's sisters, Emer and NUALA (18) petite, fresh-faced and innocent of heart, burst in.

The priest and Mary look round at them sternly.

They see Ciarán and stop giggling.

The priest gets up and turns to them.

They reel back in shock at his swollen face.

PRIEST

Tell no-one of this man - do you understand?

Nuala and Emer glance at each other, then nod earnestly to the priest.

The priest places his hand reassuringly on Mary's shoulder.

PRIEST CONT'D)

Mary. Care for him as best you can. I will go to Tyrrellspass and arrange for him to be moved.

MARY

Yes father.

The priest smiles weakly at Mary, then casts a severe, almost callous look at Ciarán.

PRIEST

I've seen what this Englishman, Reynolds, does to rebels.

He turns and leaves quickly.

EXT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

Nuala and Emer close the cabin door and stroll, arm in arm, towards the village.

NUALA

He's very handsome, isn't he?

Emer nods enthusiastically.

EMER

Mary seems to like him.

NUALA

I think you're right there!

They giggle.

EMER

Are you still up for going tonight?

Nuala gives her a confused look.

NUALA

Tonight?

EMER

The new moon? The Hag's Chair?

NUALA

Lord! I forgot all about that!
Sure - I don't know.

EMER

Aw, come on! You promised!

Nuala's face breaks into a teasing smile.

NUALA

Oh, all right.

Emer hugs her sister and the two giggle.

They walk past a group of scary looking English infantry
SOLDIERS lounging by the roadside.

The girls hurry past uneasily as the soldiers ogle them.

One soldier lies on his back studying a golden ring with
a large, round sapphire in the centre. He is TAYLOR (late
30s) the type of monster who would batter someone to
death with their own wooden leg.

The soldier next to him, JOHNSON (mid 20s), lazy,
lecherous, easily-lead stares at the ring greedily.

JOHNSON

Cor! Where d'you get that?

Taylor sits up and hurriedly puts the ring away in his
pocket.

TAYLOR

None your beeswax you poxy turd!

Johnson looks away petulantly.

He spies Nuala and Emer and a greedy, rotten-toothed
smile spreads across his dirty face. He can't take his
eyes off them.

He kicks Taylor and nods for him to ogle the girls.

TAYLOR

Nice!

The two soldiers exchange vile smirks.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - NIGHT

A cosy red glow from the fire illuminates the faces of
Mary and Ciarán.

Mary washes Ciarán's wounds as he stares forlornly into the fire.

Mary stops and studies Ciarán's face with concern.

MARY

Tell me about Drogheda.

Ciarán looks up at her, tears in his eyes.

CIARÁN

They slaughtered everyone. Men, women, children - babies. I could see the bloodlust in their eyes.

MARY

How did you escape?

CIARÁN

I ran. They broke through the southern wall and somehow got across the river - thousands of them. We couldn't hold them back. Everyone ran. I was lucky - I got away

Mary gently stokes hair from his eyes.

MARY

Have you fought in many battles?

Ciarán laughs bitterly.

CIARÁN

Drogheda was my first.

Mary suddenly gets up and looks around the room.

MARY

Where are Nuala and Emer?

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE - NIGHT

Nuala and Emer stand in the darkness facing the bridge.

Nuala has a sack over one shoulder and carries a lantern.

They are frozen to the spot.

EMER

Well? Who's going first?

NUALA

We'll run together.

EMER
I'm not running! I'll trip over
in the dark!

Nuala shudders.

NUALA
Do you think he really is there -
waiting for us?

EMER
Sure, I hope not!

Emer grabs Nuala's hand.

EMER (CONT'D)
Come on - we'll hold hands.

NUALA
Ready?

The girls hurry nervously over the bridge.

EMER
Don't stop Nuala! And don't look
over your shoulder - or he'll
appear right behind us!

They reach the other side of the bridge and sigh with relief.

They freeze as they here the CRUNCH of footsteps behind them.

They look at each other, terrified.

Fionnula holds-up the lantern and looks behind her.

EMER (CONT'D)
Nuala - no!

A distorted face materialises in the light and the girls scream and run.

The voice of the priest booms out.

PRIEST
You are two very foolish girls to
be out so late!

Emer stops running and turns back. She calls to Nuala.

EMER
Nuala! It's alright! It's the
Reverend Father!

The girls walk back to the priest with bowed heads.

PRIEST

Now I don't want to know what
you're doing but I will say this
once - and once only. It is not
safe out here for you. Go home!

NUALA

Yes Father.

The sisters shuffle slowly back to the bridge and stop.

Nuala turns to the priest.

NUALA (CONT'D)

Where are you going Father?

PRIEST

That is no concern of yours!

The priest turns and strides off into the darkness.

EMER

Come on. We should do as he says.

NUALA

I'm not going home!

Nuala turns and dashes off towards a dark wood.

Emer huffs.

EMER

Nuala! Wait for me!

Emer glances around then hurries after her.

EXT. DARK WOOD - NIGHT

Nuala and Emer tramp noisily through the trees.

Emer, her shoulders hunched, stumbles as she tries to
keep up.

Her cloak snags on a bramble and she angrily pulls at it.

EMER

Slow down - would yer!

NUALA

Keep up - would yer!

EMER

Nuala - don't be so nasty to me!

Nuala stops and huffs.

Emer trudges laboriously up to her and sighs.

There is a sharp CRACK from the other direction.

The girls spin round in surprise.

EMER
What was that?

Nuala looks all around her with the lantern raised.

NUALA
Probably just a fox, or a badger.
(beat) Or maybe it was a wolf!

EMER
Don't say that!

NUALA
No - there aren't many wolves
around here. Perhaps it was a
ghost - or even a banshee!

Nuala cackles.

Emer trembles, her eyes huge.

EMER
That's not funny Nuala! I really
want to go home.

NUALA
Sure, I'm not stopping you!

Emer looks nervous.

EMER
I'm not going back on my own!

NUALA
Well come on then!

The girls arrive in a clearing dominated by a mossy rock covered in strange carvings. It is The Hag's Chair.

They place objects from a sack on the stone: a mirror, two apples a knife, an ivy crown and the lantern.

An owl HOOTS and the girls freeze.

They look at each other and laugh with relief.

EMER
Who do you want to see?

NUALA
I'm not saying!

EMER
Sure I don't know who I'll see!

NUALA
It'll be old Tom McMahon for you!

EMER
Urgh! Don't say that! He's like a
wrinkly auld goblin!

The girls giggle.

EMER
I know who you want to see Nuala!

NUALA
Who's that then?

EMER
The rebel!

Nuala hits Emer.

NUALA
I do not!

EMER
You do too! I've seen you looking
at him!

Nuala huffs and thrusts an apple at Emer.

NUALA
Here - cut it in half.

Nuala passes the knife and Emer cuts the apple in half
then Nuala does the same.

NUALA (CONT'D)
Who's going first?

EMER
Oh - Me! What do I do?

NUALA
Put on the crown of ivy. I'll
hold the mirror and you stand
with your back to it. Eat half of
the apple and close your eyes.

Emer stuffs the apple half in her mouth and crunches. She
tries not to laugh.

She talks with her mouth full.

EMER
Now what?

NUALA
Close your eyes and say the rhyme

Emer swallows hard.

EMER

New moon, true moon. Tell unto me
who my true love will be!

TAYLOR O/S

Here I am - darling!

The girls scream in fear as Taylor and Johnson rise out of the undergrowth and run at them.

Johnson grabs Nuala by the hair and throws her on her back before he jumps on top of her and rips her clothes.

Taylor holds Emer around her throat as he leers at her.

Emer sinks to her knees, choking as she frantically grabs at Taylor's arms.

Her desperate eyes search for Nuala.

Nuala struggles desperately.

She knees Johnson in the groin and he doubles over in agony.

Nuala grabs the knife from the rock and plunges it into Johnson's chest.

He yells horrifically and tries to grab it as he pitches forward onto the ground.

Nuala pulls out the knife and advances on Taylor brandishing it wildly.

Taylor lets go of Emer and stands to face Nuala.

Nuala stalks carefully towards him. She doesn't take her eyes off him.

Taylor smirks at her.

TAYLOR

There there my pretty. Put the
knife down.

Nuala advances slowly and notices Emer crawling away.

Taylor makes a lunge for Nuala but the knife flashes and he reels back cradling his arm.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

You'll pay for that you little
bitch!

Taylor's eyes search for an escape route.

He suddenly darts into the black woods.

Nuala runs to Emer.

They huddle together and cry.

Nuala looks over coldly at Johnson's lifeless body and drops the knife.

EXT. DARK WOOD - DAY

THREE CAVALRY TROOPERS surround The Hag's Chair. They lean down from their horses and watch a FOURTH CAVALRY TROOPER intently.

The Fourth Cavalry Trooper kneels on the ground over the corpse of Johnson.

The Fourth Cavalry Trooper stands and turns to the other three. He looks like he's about to be sick.

He holds up a bloodied knife in one hand and a silver hand mirror in the other for the Troopers to see.

EXT. THE HAG'S CHAIR: PRESENT - DAY

The trees have all gone, but the stone looks the same as it did three hundred and fifty years before, except the moss is gone.

The Man walks around the stone, fascinated by it.

He reaches out and touches it.

He frowns and pulls his hand back.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Mary closes the church door and hurries across the market square.

There is a furious commotion behind her.

She instinctively looks around.

A rickety cart, surrounded by angry villagers drives slowly up the lane.

Soldiers roughly push the villagers away from the cart.

As it passes Mary, she sees two girls tied-up, gagged and bloody, lying in it.

Taylor, holds his bloodied and bandaged arm to his chest. He sits over the girls and sneers. He spits contemptuously on them.

Mary recognises Nuala and shouts in panic.

MARY

Nuala! Nuala what's going on?

Nuala sits up, her eyes pleading to Mary.

Taylor strikes her across the face and knocks her down.

Mary makes to rush forward but is stopped by the point of a sword pressing at her throat. The sword is held by Mortimer on horseback.

MORTIMER

Where do you think you're going?

Mary looks up with pure hatred in her eyes.

MARY

That's my sister!

The priest pushes through the soldiers to Mary.

PRIEST

Captain - please! Leave this poor girl be.

Mortimer lowers his sword and looks mockingly at the priest.

MORTIMER

Ah - the papist preacher! Again you interfere!

PRIEST

Be on your way Mary. Go home - now!

The priest guides Mary away from the soldiers. He shoots her an earnest look.

Mary stumbles off in shock.

She lurches past the corpse of Johnson, tied over a horse.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I demand you tell me where you are taking those girls.

MORTIMER

You? Demand?

PRIEST

They are honest girls - from a
good family!

MORTIMER

They are - criminals!

The priest freezes. He eyes Mortimer coldly.

Mortimer smiles cruelly.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

They are to stand trial for the
murder of one of my men.

He gestures to the corpse on the horse.

The priest considers it then turns back to Mortimer.

PRIEST

Who accuses them?

MORTIMER

That is none of your concern -
priest.

PRIEST

They are not capable of murder.
Who accuses them?

Mortimer turns his horse into the priest and trots off.

The priest is forced to step back.

He watches the cart trundle along towards the Manor
House.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The heavy door creaks open and casts a weak light into
the bare cellar. It is dark - save for one tiny, barred
opening - and dripping with damp.

Rats scurry around the floor. Their shrill cries echo.

Nuala and Emer are thrown on the floor in a heap. Their
hands are still tied behind their backs and their mouths
are gagged.

They huddle together and whimper.

A silhouetted figure casts a black shadow over the girls.
The figure holds up a lantern, revealing the twisted,
leering face of Taylor.

Taylor's low laugh gets louder and higher, rising to a hysterical crescendo.

The door slams shut. There is nothing but black.

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - DAY

In the gloomy, oak-panelled room, a brooding Reynolds sits at a large, polished oak table. Before him a sumptuous spread of food and a pewter flagon of wine.

He pours himself a goblet as Mortimer strokes his chin and watches him intently.

Reynolds takes a deep drink and screws-up his face. He hurls the goblet across the room.

REYNOLDS

Urgh! Is there no decent wine in this God-forsaken country?

Mortimer raises an eyebrow.

MORTIMER

You seem somewhat out of sorts Colonel.

Reynolds gives him a black look and leans back in his chair.

REYNOLDS

I have just received orders from Cromwell. We are to march for Wexford - immediately.

MORTIMER

Forgive me if I seem impertinent, but I take it you are not happy to be leaving?

Reynolds grabs a chicken leg and bites into it.

REYNOLDS

These estates are the richest in the whole country. If I leave now, they will slip through my fingers. Parliament will grant them to some bow-legged London adventurer - and I'd get nothing.

MORTIMER

You could ask Cromwell-

Reynolds throws the chicken leg on the table.

REYNOLDS
Cromwell? He'd sooner grant them
to that lackey of his - Ireton.

MORTIMER
Well, they are family...

REYNOLDS
We are not leaving!

Reynolds thumps the table and sends the dishes flying.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
Only by staying here can I ever
hope to lay claim on these lands!

He gets out of his chair and paces the room.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
After Wexford, we'll no doubt be
ordered back to Dublin for the
winter - never to return here.

Mortimer watches him intently.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
I cannot refuse Cromwell's orders
and hope to keep my command.

MORTIMER
Or indeed your head...

Reynolds stops pacing and raises an eyebrow to Mortimer.

Reynolds walks to the window and stares out.

REYNOLDS
I need an excuse to keep me here
without interference from
Cromwell - or anyone else.

Reynolds turns to face Mortimer.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
If I tell him I'm having trouble
destroying the rebels he'll send
reinforcements and that won't do.

MORTIMER
So, you need an excuse that
Cromwell will accept. One that
guarantees he will leave you
alone to deal with.

REYNOLDS
Exactly!

Reynolds resumes his pacing.

A sly smile spreads across Mortimer's face.

MORTIMER

Then I believe I have the perfect solution to your problem.

Reynolds stops and turns to Mortimer.

REYNOLDS

You do?

MORTIMER

Oh yes.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

Mary tends the wounds of Ciarán, who lies on the bed.

She weeps quietly.

Ciarán sits up with great difficulty.

CIARÁN

Why do you cry?

Mary hangs her head.

Ciarán gently reaches out and lifts her head.

Their eyes meet.

MARY

The English - they've taken my sisters.

Tears stream down Mary's cheeks.

Ciarán pulls Mary's head toward his shoulder.

Mary sobs.

The priest appears hesitantly in the doorway and noisily clears his throat.

A flustered Mary pulls away from Ciarán and stands.

MARY

Oh, father!

The priest nods sadly.

PRIEST

I'm glad to see you are awake, Ciarán.

Ciarán studies the priest's face intently.

CIARÁN

How do you know who I am?

PRIEST

You are Ciarán Nangle, a cousin to the true Baron of Navan. Many years ago I served your family.

CIARÁN

It shames me to say that my cousin has fled this land.

The priest nods slowly.

PRIEST

Indeed. Many have done so - but many more have stayed. You are not alone Ciarán. (beat) Now, we must get you out of here - and soon. The countryside is swarming with English patrols.

Ciarán looks desperately from Mary to the priest.

CIARÁN

No! wait! I want to stay - and help here!

PRIEST

It's too dangerous - for all of us! (beat) And besides... I doubt there's anything you can do. I, on the other hand...

The priest takes Mary's hand.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Mary - I promise you I will do everything in my power to save your sisters. I will go and talk to this Reynolds now.

Mary smiles weakly at him as he turns to leave.

INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

Reynolds marches down the main staircase as he puts-on his gloves.

Mortimer walks beside him.

There is a commotion outside and an OFFICER enters.

The officer bows to Reynolds.

OFFICER

Sir! There is a papist priest
outside who wishes to speak with
you. He is most earnest!

Reynolds stops on the stairs a few up from the officer.

Mortimer stops next to him.

REYNOLDS

What does he want?

OFFICER

To plead for the release of the
two girls.

Reynolds smiles at Mortimer.

REYNOLDS

Does he indeed! (beat) I will not
speak with him -the stench of
popery sickens me! Tell him that
they are to stand trial tomorrow.
There will be no release!

OFFICER

As you wish, sir!

The officer bows again and leaves.

Reynolds smiles at Mortimer.

REYNOLDS

And we don't want to give the
game away just yet, do we?

Reynolds and Mortimer laugh as they walk out through the
front door.

They stop and watch with amusement as the priest is
roughly bundled away by soldiers.

The priest struggles.

He spies Reynolds, points at him and shouts.

PRIEST

Judge ye not - that ye be not
judged! For with the judgment
thou pronounces - so thou will be
judged, and the measure thou
gives will be the measure thou
receives.

Reynolds hesitates. Uncertainty flashes across his eyes.

He looks to Mortimer.

Mortimer smirks. He leans in to Reynolds and whispers.

MORTIMER
We must rid ourselves of this
turbulent priest!

Reynolds stares blankly at the priest and nods slowly.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - NIGHT

Ciarán sits on the bed and gazes into the glowing fire.

The door opens slowly.

Ciarán is startled. He looks up, ready to rush at the intruder.

The priest's troubled face appears around the door.

Ciarán looks relieved.

CIARÁN
Father!

PRIEST
Where's Mary?

CIARÁN
She went to get turf.

The priest sits next to Ciarán and sighs heavily.

PRIEST
They won't release them.

Ciarán nods slowly.

CIARÁN
Do you know what's to happen to
them?

PRIEST
They're to be tried in the
morning - for murder.

Ciarán looks into the fire.

CIARÁN
Then they'll hang!

The priest nods.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Most likely, yes. (beat) But we
should not give up Hope.

Ciarán looks scornfully into the priest's eyes.

CIARÁN

Hope? What use is hope, against
such a cruel enemy? I have seen
what they are capable of.

PRIEST

As have I. But hope is God's
greatest gift to us. Without Hope
we cannot fight evil.

Mary appears in the doorway with a basket of turf. Her
eyes are red, her face drawn.

Ciarán looks up at her sympathetically.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The two girls wail and cry in the pitch dark.

Taylor's cruel laugh echoes around the room.

TAYLOR

I told you I'd get yer, my
pretty!

The door creaks open and an orange glow illuminates the
girl's terrified faces.

Nuala turns her head towards the door and screams.

EXT. VILLAGE MARKET PLACE - DAY

In front of the church sits a wooden dais. Upon this is a
single chair behind a thin, wooden table.

A ring of soldiers armed with pikes struggle to hold back
dozens of feral-looking villagers.

Reynolds marches arrogantly onto the dais and sits in the
chair. He throws a doglock pistol roughly onto the table.

Mortimer stands behind him, eyeing the crowd coldly.

Reynolds gestures to a group of soldiers who drag the two
girls into the space in front of the cross.

The villagers hurl abuse at the soldiers.

REYNOLDS

(shouts)
Silence!

Mortimer unravels a scroll and reads loudly.

MORTIMER

Fionnuala O'Connell and Emer
O'Connell. You are hereby charged
that - on the night of the fifth
of October of this the first year
of the Commonwealth of England -
you did wantonly and evilly, by
the use of witchcraft-

The crowd gasps in horror. There is a rumble of anger.

Mortimer smirks as he drags-out the pause.

He shouts to be heard over the noise of the crowd.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

By the use of witchcraft,
enchantment, charm or sorcery you
did inflict upon Thomas Johnson
death by murder and that you
attempted the same upon Matthew
Taylor!

The two girls shake and sob as the crowd erupts.

The troops push the crowd back violently.

Reynolds stands and fires his pistol into the air and the
crowd freezes.

REYNOLDS

Silence!

The priest pushes through the crowd and stands in front
of the girls.

He holds up his hands for quiet, then turns angrily to
Reynolds.

PRIEST

This trial is a mockery! These
girls are not witches!

He pulls a piece of paper from his coat and holds it up.

REYNOLDS

This court has the full authority
of Parliament. I have here a
commission from General Cromwell
- who is deeply troubled by this
murder.

Reynolds throws himself back into his chair with a smug
look on his face.

PRIEST

There has never been a witch trial here before. We have never needed one!

The crowd nod and shout their agreement.

REYNOLDS

A man has been murdered and sorcery was witnessed! It is clear to me that witchcraft has taken hold here! It is my duty to rid this land of such a monstrous evil.

Reynolds points to the priest.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

What do you have to hide - Priest? Do you protect witches?

PRIEST

I have nothing to hide.

REYNOLDS

Then you will not object to hearing the evidence!

The priest stands impotently, his face red with anger.

The crowd jeers at Reynolds.

Reynolds nods to Mortimer.

MORTIMER

Bring on the witness, Matthew Taylor!

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

Ciarán sits on the bed with Mary's head resting on his knees.

Her eyes are red and watery.

CIARÁN

You should go. Be near your sisters.

MARY

No. I promised the priest I'd look after you.

CIARÁN

He told me about your father. He was a brave man.

MARY

For all the good it did him.

CIARÁN

He died fighting - to free this
land.

Mary scoffs.

She sits up and wipes tears from her eyes.

MARY

He was tortured to death by Monro
and left his family with nothing.

CIARÁN

What happened to your mother?

Silently, Mary gets up. Her chin quivers uncontrollably
as she crosses to the fire and throws another sod of turf
on it.

MARY

She died two years ago.

CIARÁN

I'm sorry. How did she die?

Mary turns and looks out through the window to the
bridge.

MARY

She drowned. (beat) So it's just
the three of us now. I couldn't
bear to lose my sisters too!

Mary throws another sod on the fire and watches it spark.

MARY (CONT'D)

And what about you? What's your
story?

CIARÁN

Not much to tell really.

Mary gets up and crosses to the bed and sits next to
Ciarán.

MARY

Oh come on! Your cousin's a
baron!

Mary pats Ciarán's knee.

Ciarán frowns.

CIARÁN

Distant cousin. After the Forty One Rebellion Thomas, the nineteenth Baron was, attainted as a traitor by King Charles and the little land my father had was taken from him.

Ciarán laughs bitterly.

CIARÁN CONT'D)

Everything we had was given to Arthur Jones, the Viscount Ranelagh.

Mary nods slowly.

MARY

And now Reynolds has kicked Ranelagh out...

CIARÁN

Yes. With the King dead, everything is up for grabs. (beat) And these English thieves think they can just take what they like!

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Taylor climbs the dais with difficulty. His arm is in a sling and he is pale and sweaty.

The crowd go quiet.

MORTIMER

Matthew Taylor - did you witness the death of Thomas Johnson?

TAYLOR

I did sir!

MORTIMER

And are you willing to swear that these two standing before you were responsible for his death?

TAYLOR

I am sir

Mortimer hands Taylor a bible.

MORTIMER

Take this Good Book, in your right hand.

TAYLOR
I... I can't sir!

Taylor looks down at his bandaged hand.

MORTIMER
Then do you swear before this
court that you will give honest
account of all that you saw?

TAYLOR
I swears it, sir.

MORTIMER
Kiss the book!

Taylor quickly kisses the bible.

Mortimer turns his face to the accused.

MORTIMER
This man has sworn before us all
that he will bear true witness to
the foul events of that evil
night.

Mortimer turns back to Taylor.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Now - in your own words - what
happened the night Johnson died?

Taylor swoons.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
A chair for the witness!

A chair is lifted onto the dais and Taylor sits in it.

He takes a deep breath.

TAYLOR
Me and Johnson - we's billeted
near the village. That night we
sees these girls sneaking off
towards the woods. Well, we
follows 'em.

MORTIMER
Why? Why did you follow them?

TAYLOR
It was late - near midnight. We
reckoned they was up to no good.

Mortimer looks to the crowd as he points to the accused.

MORTIMER

Two girls sneaking into the woods
at midnight! (to Taylor)
Continue.

TAYLOR

We follows 'em up into the woods
- to this odd-looking stone. We
thought it was like, y'know -
what you see in a church.

MORTIMER

An altar stone?

TAYLOR

Aye, that's it sir! Only t'was
old and covered in strange
carvings. Anyways - we watch as
they starts to pull things from a
sack and puts them on the stone.

MORTIMER

What things?

TAYLOR

We couldn't rightly see from
where we was, so we crept closer.

Mortimer holds up a sack.

MORTIMER

Was this the sack you saw?

TAYLOR

I dunno sir. Might be...

MORTIMER

This was the sack found at the
stone the following morning, when
Johnson's body was discovered!

Mortimer pulls objects theatrically from the sack and
holds them up to the crowd then places them on the table
in front of Reynolds.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

A silver mirror - so the image of
the Devil may appear to them!
Three half- apples - the fruit by
which Satan tempted Eve! A crown
of ivy - symbol of death and
decay! A lantern to guide him to
them! And - a blood-stained knife
- to cut out their victim's
heart!

The crowd gasps.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Do you recognise these objects?

TAYLOR
Yes! They was all on the stone!

MORTIMER
What happened then?

TAYLOR
We - me and Johnson - we tried to
grab the girls.

MORTIMER
Why?

TAYLOR
We wanted to bring them back to
question 'em. We reckoned they
was up to something - sinful.

MORTIMER
Then what happened?

TAYLOR
The knife - it flew into
Johnson's back and he cried-out!

MORTIMER
Flew?

TAYLOR
As if by magic! One of 'em... I - I
don't know how.

Mortimer looks at the crowd in triumph

MORTIMER
As - if - by - magic!

An excited murmur runs through the crowd.

TAYLOR
Then I tried to take the knife
off the tall one there! She moved
like a shadow and the knife flew
into my arm! Look!

Taylor holds his arm up.

The crowd gasp.

Reynolds bangs the handle of his pistol on the table.

The crowd settles.

REYNOLDS

It has been proven that there is indeed a case of murder by witchcraft to be answered here!

The priest pushes forward again.

PRIEST

One man's lies and a sack of everyday objects! There is no witchcraft - there is no proof!

REYNOLDS

The bloodied knife is proof!

The priest points at Taylor.

PRIEST

This man may be the murderer for all we know!

The crowd start to get behind the priest. They push and shout.

Reynolds holds-up the mirror.

REYNOLDS

This mirror! This is proof!

The crowd go quiet.

REYNOLDS

The mirror bears the crest of Viscount Ranelagh! One of the accused was maid to Lady Ranelagh. They admit the theft!

Nuala and Emer shake and whimper.

Nuala pushes her shoulder under Emer's head and looks around defiantly at the gawping crowd.

Her eyes meet the priest's. They plead with his - fit to break his heart.

Reynolds points at the priest.

REYNOLDS

And you - priest! Do not attempt again to obstruct this court!

Reynolds throws back his chair and leans his fists on the table.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

This hearing is adjourned until tomorrow so that the accused can be examined for marks of witchcraft! Take them away!

Reynolds waves his arm dismissively as he turns away and heads down the steps.

The accused are dragged away by soldiers.

The priest stands frozen to the spot in disbelief as the crowd is herded away by soldiers. They shout and jeer but are fearful and compliant.

Mortimer regards the priest. His eyes narrow.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The girls are thrown on the floor by soldiers.

Mortimer struts in and casually circles the girls with his hands behind his back.

He points to Nuala.

MORTIMER

This one first. Bring her!

Mortimer struts out as two soldiers grab Nuala and drag her, screaming and struggling, out of the cellar.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - NIGHT

Lit only by the red glow from the turf fire, Ciarán consoles a devastated Mary.

The priest appears in the doorway.

Ciarán and Mary look up at him sadly.

The priest walks over to them and stands beside Mary. He places his hand gently on her shoulder.

PRIEST

My poor child - I...

Mary takes his hand and squeezes it gently.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I will pray with you...

Ciarán looks up at the priest.

CIARÁN

Prayer will not see them free! We
must do something!

The priest shakes his head sadly.

PRIEST

What do you suggest we do?

Ciarán jumps up and paces the room, rubbing his forehead.

CIARÁN

I don't know! We could get word
to Dillon - ask him for help?

The priest turns to face Ciarán.

PRIEST

I think you have too much faith
in that man, my son.

CIARÁN

Then I'll...

PRIEST

Do what? Ciarán - one man is not
enough to take on an entire
regiment of hardened soldiers.

Ciarán throws himself down on the bed in frustration.

Mary watches him with a pained expression.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The door opens with an awful groan.

Emer stares with wild eyes at the sudden light that
bathes her face.

Nuala is thrown onto the floor in front of her sister.

She is naked, bloody and shaven.

She shudders violently as a dirty sack is flung onto her.

Rough hands reach down and grab Emer.

She shrieks as she is dragged out.

The door slams shut and there is total darkness.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Drizzle falls in the early morning light.

Soldiers place a long wooden bench next to the dais.

Mortimer paces casually along a row of fifteen SORRY-LOOKING MEN lined-up in front of the dais.

Soldiers with upright pikes face them.

Mortimer casually paces up and down the line.

He stops and eyes one of the Sorry Looking Men.

MORTIMER

You!

SORRY-LOOKING MAN #1

Yes sir?

MORTIMER

Look up man!

Sorry-Looking Man #1 slowly raises his head.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

Do you believe in witchcraft?

SORRY-LOOKING MAN #1

Yes sir.

MORTIMER

Good!

Mortimer smiles and pushes the man towards a group of soldiers.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

He'll do for one!

The soldiers march him to the long wooden bench and force him to sit on it.

Mortimer, still smiling, moves on to the next man.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

What about you?

Sorry-Looking Man #2 looks Mortimer in the eye.

SORRY-LOOKING MAN #2

I don't believe in witches sir.

The smile disappears from Mortimer's face.

MORTIMER

Well you're no good!

Mortimer turns to one of the soldiers.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Get rid of him!

The soldier grabs Sorry-Looking Man #2 and drags him off.

An irate Mortimer moves on to the next man.

He puts his face close.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
You!

SORRY-LOOKING MAN #3
I believe in witches sir!

Mortimer smiles again.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Right answer!

Mortimer nods to a soldier and moves on to the next.

The soldier grabs Sorry-Looking Man #3 and hauls him off to the long wooden bench.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

The market place is packed with a noisy, volatile crowd.

Reynolds takes his seat on the dais.

He looks down to the long wooden bench and smiles.

Twelve Sorry-Looking Men fidget nervously on the bench.

Reynolds bashes the butt of his pistol on the table.

The crowd goes silent.

REYNOLDS
(shouts)
Bring in the accused!

The crowd GASP.

Nuala is dragged in with chains around her wrists and ankles. Her head is shaved, her face bloody and bruised. She is dressed in sackcloth.

She looks defiantly into the faces of Reynolds and Mortimer.

Emer is then dragged in, manacled, shaved and bruised. She is also dressed in sackcloth.

Their bodies are hunched, their wills all but broken.

The crowd surge forward in an angry wave but the soldiers batter them back.

The priest, held back by soldiers, shouts.

PRIEST

What have you done to them?

Mortimer smiles and points at Emer.

Soldiers drag her screaming onto the dais.

Mortimer grabs her arm and holds it in the air.

MORTIMER

Behold! The Witches' teat!

Mortimer proudly shows Emer's armpit to the crowd. In it is a wart.

The crowd GASP.

Mortimer grabs her by the throat and throws her head back, revealing a mole on her neck.

MORTIMER

Another!

PRIEST

That is just a mole! A natural blemish!

Mortimer draws a dagger and sticks the point of it against Emer's mole.

MORTIMER

It does not bleed!

The crowd murmur.

Mortimer throws Emer into the arms of a soldier and points at Nuala.

Nuala is dragged onto the dais.

She stares coldly into Mortimer's eyes.

Mortimer smiles confidently.

He spins Nuala violently and rips the sackcloth from her back.

A small birthmark is visible on Nuala's left shoulder.

MORTIMER

More proof!

PRIEST
That's not proof!

Reynolds points rabidly to the priest.

REYNOLDS
Priest - be silent! Or face
arrest!

PRIEST
I will not be silent!

Reynolds sighs.

REYNOLDS
So be it! Seize him.

Soldiers grab hold of the priest.

REYNOLDS
I warned you that your outbursts
would not be tolerated!

PRIEST
This trial is a travesty! You
have no right to do this.

The priest stares at the jury as he is dragged towards
the dais.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
There are seven things which are
an abomination to God: a proud
look, hands that shed innocent
blood, a lying tongue!

He points at Mortimer and Reynolds.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
A heart that devises wicked
imaginings, feet which run
swiftly to evil.

He points to Taylor.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
A false witness who speaks lies
and he that sows discord between
brothers!

He looks around the silent crowd and shouts.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Evil men do not understand
justice!

Reynolds stands and jabs his finger at the priest.

REYNOLDS

Satan disguises himself as an
angel of light!

The priest glares around at him, stunned.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Yes priest! I too can quote
scripture!

Reynolds scans the entire crowd with his outstretched
arms.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

For just as the serpent deceived
Eve, all your minds have been led
astray from simplicity and purity
by his disciple!

Reynolds points at the priest.

PRIEST

There are no serpents in Ireland!
Except those brought here by you
English!

REYNOLDS

Let him be stripped and examined
for the marks of Satan!

The soldiers manhandle the priest, kicking and
struggling, onto the dais.

The crowd, its anger raised to new heights, tries to
break through but the soldiers draw their swords and
force the crowd back.

The priest's robes are ripped from his body.

He stands naked before Reynolds.

The priest places his hands on Reynolds' table and slowly
looks Reynolds in the eye.

The crowd GASPS. Many cover their eyes as others stare
open-mouthed.

Mortimer addresses the crowd with a broad, evil grin and
deep satisfaction in his voice.

MORTIMER

Behold! Your beloved priest! See
the devil's caress upon his
flesh!

The priest's back is covered in livid red scars.

PRIEST
I was flogged!

The priest turns to face the crowd. He covers his modesty with his hands.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Eight years ago! I was flogged
for my faith by protestant
planters!

MORTIMER
Lies! We can all see that Satan
has raked his vile talons upon
you and marked you as his
servant!

PRIEST
(shouts)
No!

MORTIMER
It is the sign of his evil
covenant! This man has made a
pact with the devil!

The crowd hurl insults and point accusingly at the priest.

Reynolds sits down with a smile of contentment upon his face.

Emer screams and covers her ears.

Nuala's eyes sadly search the crowd.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The priest, dressed in dirty sackcloth, kneels and prays quietly.

The girls huddle together.

Nuala, her face full of hatred, silently watches the priest.

NUALA
Why do you pray - when God has
forsaken us?

The priest stops praying and looks at Nuala.

PRIEST
God will never forsake us my
child.

Nuala laughs joylessly.

NUALA

Really? Do you hear that Emer?
Rejoice! Rejoice in the Word of
God for we will be saved!

PRIEST

I will pray for you Fionnuala.
May you find strength.

NUALA

Don't waste your breath!

The priest resumes his prayer.

The door opens and light cascades onto the priest's face.

He looks up passively as soldiers drag him away.

Emer and Fionnuala, arms around each other, whimper.

EXT. STABLE YARD - NIGHT

The stable block is lit dimly by lanterns and a brazier
sits in the yard with soldiers huddled around it.

The priest is dragged into a dimly-lit horse stall and
thrown on the hay.

The hay is wet and sticky and he lies there for a moment.

Blood drips onto the priest's head and he looks up.

Three rebels dangle by ropes tied around their right
wrists.

Unconscious, battered and bleeding, they rotate slowly.

The priest stares up at them then bows his head.

A hollow laugh rings out but the priest ignores it.

Mortimer strolls up behind the priest.

MORTIMER

I thought you might like to see
how we like to deal with rebels.

PRIEST

Show mercy on them - I beg you.

MORTIMER

They are traitors! And traitors
deserve to be punished!

The priest closes his eyes.

PRIEST

And is it to be thus for me?

MORTIMER

You? Oh no!

Mortimer leans in close to the priest.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

You're going to burn!

Soldiers grab at the priest and yank him to his feet.

A soldier punches the priest in the mouth and he crumples to the ground.

Mortimer smiles as he walks casually away.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

But not just yet.

Behind him the soldier's pummel and kick the priest.

EXT. STABLE YARD - NIGHT

Small knots of English soldiers mill around the yard.

A glowing brazier sits in the centre. Soldiers warm themselves by it.

Two soldiers drag the semi-conscious priest into the centre of the stable yard.

They kick and punch the priest viciously.

Mortimer slowly removes a red hot poker from the brazier and casually ambles over to the priest on the ground.

Laughing, he applies the poker to the priest's flesh.

The priest writhes and screams.

MORTIMER

Do you know why I take such
delight in your agony, priest?

Mortimer lifts the priest's head and examines him.

The priest glares back defiantly.

MORTIMER

I expect you have never heard of
the Mayfield Martyrs.

The priest closes his eyes and shakes his head.

Mortimer walks slowly back to the brazier.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Do you know how many Protestants
were murdered by your papist
Queen Mary for refusing to
renounce their faith?

Mortimer replaces the poker in the brazier. He turns it
slowly in the fire.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
No? Two hundred.

Mortimer removes the glowing poker and blows on it.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Four score.

He turns to the priest.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
And four.

He walks back to the priest.

MORTIMER
Murdered by papists. Just - like
- you.

He laughs as he jabs the poker onto the priest's skin.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

The three battered rebels stand on the dais before
Reynolds.

A subdued but sullen crowd surround the square.

Soldiers watch for trouble.

Ciarán stands in the crowd, face hooded, watching the
Rebels.

REYNOLDS
Sean O'Farrell, James McGinty and
Michael Gorry - you are found
guilty of high treason. You will
suffer the just and righteous
punishment of this court.

One of the rebels lifts his gaze and fixes it upon
Reynolds

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
You will be taken henceforth to a
place of execution where you will
be hanged, drawn and quartered!

Reynolds smiles.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
Sentence to be carried out
immediately.

Reynolds glares at the rebels.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The door opens and cast daylight on the bloodied face of the manacled priest.

The priest looks up through swollen eyes as hands reach down and grab him.

EXT. HANGING TREE - DAY

The priest is thrown to the ground at the foot of a large oak tree.

He kneels and looks around. His eyes fix on Reynolds, who sits smugly on horseback.

A small, muttering crowd huddles nearby.

Mortimer strolls up with his hands behind his back.

MORTIMER
We have a little show for you to
watch, priest.

Reynolds nods to Mortimer, who turns and barks.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
Bring the prisoners!

The rebels are dragged to the foot of the tree and thrown on the ground.

Their eyes meet the priest's.

A noose is placed around each of their necks and the ends of the ropes thrown over branches.

The priest mutters a quiet prayer as the rebels are hoisted-up by the neck.

The rebels kick and swing as two soldiers pull each rope.

Mortimer looks down at the priest and snorts.

Reynolds watches the rebels kicking with great interest.

The kicks are less frequent.

REYNOLDS

That'll do!

The soldiers let go of the ropes and the rebels drop to the ground with loud THUMPS.

The priest closes his eyes.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Make sure that damn priest watches!

Reynolds rides off.

Two soldiers drop a pile of metal tools and weapons on the grass between the priest and the rebels.

The clatter makes the sobbing priest jump, but he does not open his eyes.

Mortimer grabs the priest's head and twists it towards the rebel.

MORTIMER

You will see this!

A soldier picks-up a wickedly sharp knife from the pile.

The first rebel screams in agony, then the second, then the third.

The priest, eyes still tightly shut, yells.

PRIEST

God have mercy!

Mortimer laughs like a maniac.

EXT. HANGING TREE: PRESENT - DAY

The oak tree is unchanged.

The man walks slowly around the tree, stroking the bark on the trunk.

He looks into the branches and smiles.

He turns to face the spot where the rebels were quartered and tilts his head.

He steps over to the spot and crouches, gently rubbing the grass.

He grabs a handful and sneers.

INT. O'CONNELL' BRIDGE - NIGHT

The sun begins to set and the sky turns to blood.

Mary stands staring at the black bridge.

She slowly walks onto it.

She stands in the middle of the bridge and holds her arms out wide.

MARY

Take me you bastard! Take me!
Leave my sister's alone! Leave
their souls and take mine
instead!

She sobs loudly. She wails.

MARY (CONT'D)

I offer you my soul freely - that
you let my sisters go!

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mortimer lets himself into the room and carefully closes the door behind him.

Reynolds leans against the fireplace and stares into the glowing embers. In his hand is a letter.

He doesn't look around.

REYNOLDS

Cromwell grows impatient. We are
ordered to join him at Wexford.

MORTIMER

But the trial?

REYNOLDS

Evidently it is not a serious
enough matter. We are to finish
it quickly and leave.

Reynolds drops the letter in the fire and watches it burn.

Mortimer laughs scornfully.

MORTIMER

Then we should make it a more
serious matter!

Reynolds turns to look at him.

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE - DAY

The priest's battered body, bound tightly in thick rope, lies on the bridge.

He is picked-up by two soldiers who dangle him over the parapet.

He stares at the water for a moment - then looks up.

Both banks of the river and the bridge are lined with sullen villagers and wary soldiers.

The priest is shoved violently into the water.

He sinks.

The crowd hold their breath.

Nothing.

His face emerges from the water, gasping of breath.

His body floats.

The crowd GASPS.

Mortimer, standing on the bridge points and screams.

MORTIMER

See! His unholy body is rejected
by water! Proof - he has
renounced God in his heart and
given himself over to the devil!

Reynolds nods to the waiting soldiers who drag the priest out by a rope, shivering and coughing.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

Next!

Nuala, also tightly bound with rope, is dragged to the parapet and thrown straight into the water.

She quickly surfaces.

The crowd MURMUR.

Mortimer points dramatically.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

Again the water repels her unholy
body. She is a Witch!

Reynolds nods and Nuala is dragged out.

Emer screams as she struggles with the soldiers who hurl her into the water.

The crowd hold their breath.

Some women pray.

Mary watches horrified from in front of the cabin.

Everyone watches keenly.

Nothing.

The water babbles.

Everyone edges closer to the water for a better look.

Nothing

People exchange glances.

Nothing.

Mary screams.

MARY

Get her out!

A CROWD MEMBER shouts

CROWD MEMBER

She's innocent!

MARY

Get her out - for pity's sake!

The shout is taken-up by the crowd.

Reynolds coolly holds up his hand

REYNOLDS

Wait!

Nothing.

Mary is hysterical.

MARY

Get her out! Get her out! Get her
out!

Mortimer looks at Reynolds.

Reynolds nods casually to the soldiers on the rope

REYNOLDS

Pull her out!

Emer's body is dragged out and placed on the bridge.

She does not move. Her eyes are closed and her skin is blue.

Mary runs across the bridge.

Mortimer holds up his hands for calm.

He looks at the lifeless figure with mock sympathy.

Mary rushes to cradle the body of her sister.

MORTIMER

Clearly this poor creature was
innocent! Let her body be
released - and may her soul find
rest!

She wails as she gently rocks Emer against her breast.

Mary looks up at Mortimer and screams.

MARY

The Divil has her soul now! This
is his bridge!

The stunned crowd cross themselves and pray.

Mary rocks and weeps as the soldiers march the other
accused away.

She glares at Reynolds.

Reynolds is momentarily un-nerved but quickly recovers.
He turns and leaves.

INT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

Ciarán watches Mary from the dark cabin.

Tears well in his eyes.

He turns his back to the wall, closes his eyes and slowly
slides to the floor.

EXT. O'CONNELL CABIN - DAY

Mary shovels wet earth into a half-filled grave at the
back of the cabin.

She falls to her knees in tears.

Ciarán kneels next to her.

MARY

What am I going to do?

Ciarán shakes his head slowly

Mary looks into Ciarán's eyes. Her expression hardens.

MARY

Why didn't you try to stop them?

Ciarán looks shocked as he gets to his feet.

CIARÁN

How could I stop them?

Mary stands and faces him.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

MARY

You stood here and watched them
kill my sister! What use are you?

Ciarán sighs painfully.

Mary pummels his chest as she shouts in his face.

MARY (CONT'D)

Go. Just go, leave. I don't want
to ever see you again.

CIARÁN

I'm sorry.

SHOUTS and clattering come from nearby.

Mary and Ciarán look at each other with wide eyes.

Mary grabs Ciarán's arms.

MARY

Run!

CIARÁN

What about you?

MARY

Run!

Mary steps away from him.

She gives him a long, mournful look, then rushes around
to the front of the cabin.

Ciarán crouches low against the back wall of the cabin.

ENGLISH VOICE O/S

Oi! Grab her!

Mary SCREAMS as she is dragged to the road by two
SOLDIERS.

Ciarán crawls to the edge of the cabin and peers around carefully.

Mortimer sits on horseback in front of a squad of pikemen.

Mary is thrown at the feet of Mortimer's horse by the soldiers.

She looks up defiantly.

Mortimer looks over to another soldier.

MORTIMER

Burn it!

Mary jumps to her feet and shrieks.

MARY

No! You can't!

Mary runs at the soldier with a flaming torch but is grabbed around the waist by another soldier.

The soldier with the torch walks around the cabin and lights the thatch.

When it is well alight he throws the torch in through the doorway.

Mary, still held by the soldier, turns to Mortimer with tear streaming down her face.

MARY

Why? Why do you do this?

Mortimer laughs.

MORTIMER

You are a witch and witchcraft won't be tolerated!

MARY

I am not-

MORTIMER

(shouts)

You are guilty by association.

Mortimer turns to his men.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

Bring her!

Mortimer and his troops march away.

Mary sinks to her knees and howls as the soldier drags her away.

The cabin collapses in a raging inferno.

MARY
(screams)
Ciarán! Ciarán!

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As the red sun sets, the room is dark except for the glow of the fire.

Reynolds and Mortimer lounge in chairs by the fireplace.

The worse for wear, they both drink from pewter goblets.

MORTIMER
I think that all went rather well, don't you? Half the bog-dwellers believe it all and the other half are scared witless!

Reynolds drains his goblet and pours himself another.

He stops mid pour.

REYNOLDS
I wonder what she meant - it's the Devil's bridge?

Mortimer leans forward and whispers loudly.

MORTIMER
Some ridiculous local legend.

REYNOLDS
Really?

MORTIMER
The Devil built the bridge or some such nonsense.

REYNOLDS
Why on earth would the Devil build a bridge?

MORTIMER
Exactly!

Mortimer slumps back in his chair and stares into the fire.

Reynolds places his goblet on a small table beside him and leans forward, fixing his eyes on Mortimer.

The glow of the fire gives him a demonic appearance.

REYNOLDS

I have sent a dispatch to Cromwell telling him that the situation is far worse than we first thought. But - don't worry - I made it quite clear we could handle the situation ourselves!

Mortimer laughs loudly.

REYNOLDS

He won't be able to ignore it!
(beat) If we want to dominate this place we need more! More confessions, more accusations, more arrests!

Mortimer nods almost imperceptibly.

MORTIMER

As you wish.

There is a loud KNOCK at the door.

REYNOLDS

Enter!

The door opens and Mary is thrust in. She stands defiantly in the middle of the room.

Reynolds eyes her greedily.

REYNOLDS

Ah! The new witch!

MARY

I am not a witch - and neither is my sister!

Mary tries to keep her voice calm.

Reynolds looks at Mortimer, who smirks knowingly.

REYNOLDS

You may leave us now.

Mortimer looks offended, but recovers quickly.

MORTIMER

Of course!

Mortimer gets out of his chair very slowly and saunters towards the door.

He eyes Mary up and down, like a piece of meat, as he passes her.

She ignores him and does not take her eyes off Reynolds.

Reynolds takes a deep draught of wine.

He watches Mortimer leave and places his goblet down delicately.

MARY

If you let my sister go - I'll
confess to witchcraft.

Reynolds gets out of his chair and circles Mary like a vulture.

REYNOLDS

That's an interesting idea.
Perhaps we can come to some -
arrangement.

Reynolds takes some of Mary's hair in his hand and sniffs it.

Mary pulls her head away and looks round at him in disgust.

Reynolds chuckles.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

You expect something from me -
do I not have a right to expect
something in return?

MARY

I've offered you a confession!
What more do you want?

REYNOLDS

Only a little - gratitude!

Mary inhales sharply.

MARY

What?

REYNOLDS

Take your clothes off!

MARY

No!

REYNOLDS

Don't get all indignant with me
you little whore! I said strip!

Reynolds grabs the front of Mary's dress and rips it.

They struggle.

Reynolds tries to kiss her.

She bites his neck and draws blood.

He reels back in pain.

He clasps a hand to the wound. Blood oozes between his fingers.

REYNOLDS

Argh! You damned witch!

Reynolds viciously strikes Mary with the back of his hand.

Mary takes it and gives him an evil look back.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Guards!

Two soldiers burst in.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

This demon tried to kill me! Lock her up with the others!

The soldiers grab Mary and drag her kicking and screaming out of the room.

MARY

You'll burn in Hell for this you evil bastard!

Reynolds angrily pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and applies it to the wound on his neck.

EXT. STABLES - NIGHT

Ciarán, covered from head to toe on dark mud, sneaks in the shadows and crouches by a row of horse stalls.

He looks around carefully.

Three soldiers warm themselves by the brazier in the centre of the stable yard. They have their backs towards him.

Ciarán spies a chunk of bread on a stool. He grabs it, throws a satchel over his shoulder and puts the bread in it.

He silently slips the bolt on a horse stall and creeps inside.

The soldiers share a joke and laugh heartily.

Ciarán quietly leads a bridled horse out of the stall and into the shadows.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

The dying sun casts long, dark shadows across the green fields either side of a dirt track.

Ciarán gallops his horse as fast as he can.

He hears HOOVES and looks up in surprise.

He reins the horse in and comes to an abrupt stop.

Ciarán looks around nervously. His horse is restless.

Two RIDERS canter towards him. They are English cavalry troopers.

RIDER #1
Would you look at the state of
this one - a real-life bog-
dweller!

They sidle close to Ciarán. Rider #1 draws a pistol and points it at Ciarán's head.

RIDER #2
Where d'you get that 'orse?

RIDER #1
Ee's gotta be a rebel!

Rider #1 grins at Rider #2

RIDER #2
Get down!

Ciarán slowly gets off the horse.

Rider #1 points to a satchel over Ciarán's shoulder.

RIDER #1
What's in the bag?

Ciarán looks at him defiantly.

RIDER #1 (CONT'D)
Hand it here!

Ciarán glances calmly from one Rider to the other.

RIDER #1 (CONT'D)
Now!

Ciarán reluctantly throws the satchel to Rider #1.

Rider #1 laughs as he opens it. His grin vanishes.

He pulls out a lump of bread and chucks it to Rider #2 who takes a huge bite and grins.

Rider #1 turns the satchel upside down and shakes it.

RIDER #1
Is that it?

RIDER #2
What - no coin?

Ciarán shrugs.

CIARÁN
What you see is what you get.

Rider #1 points his pistol at Ciarán again.

RIDER #1
Don't get smart with me bog man!

Rider #2 draws his pistol.

RIDER #2
Let's just shoot him!

Ciarán looks carefully from Rider #1 to Rider #2.

CIARÁN
Aw, c'mon now! Can't we talk this
over like gentlemen?

Both Riders laugh.

RIDER #2
We aint gentlemen!

Rider #1 relaxes and drops his guard slightly.

Ciarán glances at Rider #1's pistol hand.

Ciarán grabs Rider #1's pistol and jumps away as he
raises it towards Rider #2.

Rider #2 reacts slowly and levels his pistol just as
Ciarán fires at him.

Rider #2 pitches backwards off his horse with a spray of
blood from the back of his head.

Rider #1 draws his sword and slashes wildly at Ciarán's
head.

Ciarán rolls out of the way and jumps up.

He looks from side to side and makes to dart to Rider
#2's pistol lying on the ground.

Rider #1 rushes his horse forward and slashes his sword
at Ciarán.

Ciarán rolls under Rider #2's horse and draws Rider #2's sword.

Rider #1 cackles.

RIDER #1
I'll crush you - you filthy Irish
bastard!

Rider #1 charges at Ciarán.

Ciarán parries the sword swipe but the force knocks him onto his back.

He rolls as Rider #1's horse rears up over him.

Ciarán grabs Rider #2's pistol and fires blindly at Rider #1.

Rider #1 grins manically. He slowly looks down at his chest which rapidly turns red.

Rider #1 pitches sideways off his horse - dead.

Ciarán stands and drops the pistol.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The door opens and candlelight illuminates the bruised faces of Nuala and the priest.

Chains RATTLE and a dark figure crashes to the floor in front of them.

Nuala sobs as she shuffles over to the figure on the floor.

NUALA
Mary!

The priest sits up, concern etched on his face.

EXT. TYRRELLSPASS CASTLE - DAY

A tall, forbidding castle is silhouetted in the first rays of the morning sun. It is surrounded by a rebel camp of tents and campfires and knots of swarthy rebels.

Ciarán threads his way through a gang of sleeping men clustered around a dying campfire.

In the gloom Ciarán leads his horse up to a fierce looking REBEL GUARD standing with a wicked halberd.

Ciarán talks to him.

The guard nods and points to a nearby campfire.

Ciarán nods his thanks and, leading his horse, settles down beside the fire where he warms his hands.

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - DAY

Reynolds and Mortimer study a map spread across the table.

Reynolds rubs his chin.

MORTIMER

Our patrols have flushed out the odd rebel here and there - mainly hiding in barns. We believe Dillon's force to be here..

Mortimer points to Tyrrellspass on the map.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)

He has around eight hundred men, but few horses and no canon.

REYNOLDS

And you know this how?

MORTIMER

One of the rebels we captured kindly shared this intelligence with us - before he died.

REYNOLDS

Is it accurate?

MORTIMER

I believe so.

REYNOLDS

Tyrrellspass is only fifty miles away.

MORTIMER

Dillon is, by all accounts, a poor leader and prone to caution. He will not attack us.

Reynolds places his hands on the map and studies it intently.

REYNOLDS

You are sure?

MORTIMER

I am certain of it.

REYNOLDS

Keep a close watch on him. If he moves I want to know about it.

MORTIMER

Indeed.

INT. TYRRELLSPASS CASTLE - DAY

A knot of men armed with swords stand in the entrance.

Ciarán bows to the group and hands a piece of paper to DILLON (49), honourable and heroic but cautious, who stands at the centre of the group.

Dillon opens the paper and reads.

He nods grimly and fixes Ciarán in the eye as he passes the letter to one of his officers.

DILLON

What's your name?

CIARÁN

Ciarán Nangle.

DILLON

Ciarán Nangle? Kin of George Nangle, Baron of Navan?

Ciarán nods.

CIARÁN

A distant cousin.

DILLON

I fear your journey has been in vain. We cannot march on this Reynolds.

Dillon gestures for Ciarán to leave.

Ciarán stands his ground, his face stern.

Dillon raises an eyebrow.

DILLON (CONT'D)

There is something you wish to say?

CIARÁN

Why will you not act?

Dillon gives Ciarán a patronising smile.

DILLON

We are here to defend Mullingar and Athlone. I am not about to go on a jaunt up the Boyne that will leave the centre of the country open to attack.

CIARÁN

Attack from whom? Cromwell is besieging Wexford! You have greater numbers than Reynolds - t'would be an easy victory!

Dillon shakes his head slowly.

DILLON

Two years ago, at Dungan's Hill, I was assured of an easy victory. One thousand of my men died that day At Rathmines, this last month - the same! I am not about to do it again! (beat) I'm sorry.

Ciarán glares at Dillon for a moment, then throws his arms up in despair and storms to the door. He glances back round to see the group arguing.

EXT. TYRRELLSPASS CASTLE - DAY

It is raining softly.

Ciarán tightens his horse's saddle and checks the bridle.

He stops and scans thoughtfully from the dark castle to out over the Irish countryside.

He shakes his head bitterly as he places his foot in the stirrup.

JONES O/S

Wait!

Jones, dressed in breastplate with red sash across it, steps up and pats the horse's neck.

JONES (CONT'D)

(whispering to the horse)

Hello my beauty, shoosh now.

Jones smiles at the horse, then turns to face Ciarán.

JONES (CONT'D)

His name is Ganymede.

Ciarán takes his foot out of the stirrup and eyes Jones cautiously.

JONES (CONT'D)
And he used to belong to me.
(beat) I hear you're looking for
help to take on Reynolds.

Jones smiles and offers Ciarán his hand.

JONES (CONT'D)
I'd like to help you.

Ciarán hesitates, then slowly takes Jones' hand.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Mary, head shaved and dressed in dirty, soaking wet sack
cloth, thuds to the stone floor.

She shivers. Her face is bruised, but her eyes are alert.
They flick from Nuala cowering in the corner to the
priest who stares at her with tears in his eyes.

The door slams closed.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Reynolds and Mortimer ride casually down the road past
the high cross.

Locals give them angry stares and cower away.

REYNOLDS
Cromwell is still not convinced.
He is insisting we march to
Wexford, or he'll send Ireton to
find us

MORTIMER
That is indeed bad news.

REYNOLDS
I will not let Ireton have these
lands!

MORTIMER
So do you wish us to find more
witches?

REYNOLDS
Yes. Yes I do.

Mortimer nods in agreement.

They stop outside the church.

Mortimer looks up at it with pure hatred.

MORTIMER

I would very much like to see
that monstrosity burnt in flames.

REYNOLDS

Really? Why is that?

MORTIMER

Just short of one hundred years
ago my grandfather was burnt to
death by papists in Colchester.

Reynolds looks the other way.

REYNOLDS

Then burn it.

He looks back at Mortimer.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Just make it look like an
accident. Don't want the natives
blaming us for it.

Mortimer looks up at the church again with a grin.

MORTIMER

We can blame it on witches!

REYNOLDS

Yes! Good!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Ciarán rides fast across an open field.

He rides up to O'Connell's Bridge but the horse rears up.

Ciarán manages to stay on and tries to calm the horse.

CIARÁN

Steady boy! It's alright. Hup!

He spurs the horse on across the bridge and past the
ruins of the O'Connell cabin.

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Reynolds sits at the dinner table and pours himself a
goblet of wine.

Standing in front of him, weak and manacled, is the
priest.

REYNOLDS

Would you care for some wine?

The priest eyes him silently.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

No?

PRIEST

What do you want from me?

Reynolds laughs.

REYNOLDS

From you? Not a thing. Except, perhaps, the satisfaction of destroying you and your kind. (beat) Have you ever heard of Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli - a Florentine thinker and politician?

PRIEST

Of course I have.

REYNOLDS

And are you familiar with his work, De Principatibus?

PRIEST

The Prince? Yes.

Reynolds drains his goblet and grins as he pours another.

REYNOLDS

Good! To take control of a new land or province you must first destroy the old order - the people with power. That, my friend, is you!

PRIEST

Eliminate the old bloodline - deprive the people of those they look to and trust. Spread mistrust and discontent.

MORTIMER

Exactly! Ruin them first, then rebuild them with your own colonists!

Mortimer spreads his arms triumphantly.

PRIEST

I think you underestimate the strength of the Irish people. They are proud! They are strong! They are not easy to control!

Mortimer tuts mockingly.

MORTIMER
Never use force when deception
will achieve your aims for you.

The priest looks crestfallen.

Mortimer laughs.

MORTIMER (CONT'D)
There - you see! The reality
finally dawns! The serpents are
returning - and they're going to
destroy you!

The priest looks at Mortimer coldly.

PRIEST
The serpents were driven out of
this land once before and they
will be driven out again!

Mortimer furiously throws back his chair and jumps to his feet.

He flies up to the priest, who does not flinch.

He goes nose to nose.

MORTIMER
But - not - by - you!

INT. HOTEL ROOM: PRESENT - NIGHT

The room is a homogenous, soulless hotel bedroomroom with dull beige and brown features.

The man opens a suitcase on the bed and removes a report folder. Underneath it are two books neatly placed side by side:

"OLIVER CROMWELL AND THE CONQUEST
OF IRELAND" by Doctor Micheál Ó
Siochrú.

"THE PRINCE" by Niccolò
Machiavelli.

He glances down at the books and smirks as his hand reaches down to stroke the cover of "The Prince".

He tosses the report on the bed, picks-up "the Prince" and opens it.

EXT. CELLAR - NIGHT

Ciarán sneaks unseen up to a semi-circular, grilled opening at the back of the Manor House.

He peers in but it is pitch black inside.

The sound of keys jangling makes Ciarán jump as the cellar door opens and yellow candle light spills in.

Ciarán lies flat and strains to see inside.

The light falls on three faces. Mary and Nuala huddle together. Nearby the priest raises his head off his knees.

Ciarán smiles grimly and melts away into the night.

EXT. O'CONNELL CABIN RUINS - NIGHT

The crumbled cabin looks strangely welcoming in the bright moonlight.

Ciarán rides up and dismounts.

A figure emerges from the ruins. It moves towards Ciarán.

JONES

Well?

CIARÁN

They are still alive, for now.

JONES

We must act quickly.

CIARÁN

What news from Dillon?

JONES

He will not come.

CIARÁN

Then it is hopeless!

Jones puts his hand on Ciarán's shoulder.

JONES

Never give up hope my friend!

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Fire and smoke belch from the church as it burns.

SHRIEKS echo around the market place as a shocked crowd gathers to watch. Many cross themselves as they gawp.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD whispers loudly.

VOICE IN THE CROWD
'Tis witchcraft!

The shout goes up and dances around the crowd like electricity.

CROWD
'Tis witchcraft! 'Tis witchcraft!

INT. HOTEL BAR: PRESENT - DAY

The man sits in an easy chair with mobile phone to his ear and the report on his lap.

A waiter places a glass of whiskey on the small table in front of him.

The man totally ignores the waiter.

MAN
I'm looking at it right now. Yes.
Yes that's it. Across the whole
county. Average depth is... in the
range of six and a half to nine
thousand feet. That's right -
we're talking significant
reserves. Well, we won't actually
know that until we've drilled it.
They estimate we'll need to drill
fifty wells a year. Yes.

The man leans forward and takes a drink of whiskey.

MAN
Well, tell the same lie often
enough and eventually some people
are going to believe it - right?

He smirks.

MAN
That's where I come in.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

With the smoking ruins of the church behind him, Reynolds holds his hands up to quieten the baying crowd

REYNOLDS

Silence!

The shouting stops. The crowd stare up at Reynolds with baited breath.

Reynolds points to the church.

REYNOLDS

The proof is undeniable! The evil
curse of Satan is upon this
place.

Nods and MURMURS of agreement from the crowd.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Clearly there are more cursed
devilish creatures hiding among
you!

GASPS of astonishment from onlookers.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

I promise you now - I will not
cease until all foul traces of
witchcraft and sorcery have been
destroyed. With your help, I will
make this land is made pure
again!

ROARS of approval from the crowd.

Reynolds laps up the adulation.

INT. MANOR HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Reynolds stands staring into the glowing fire. He face
pensive.

Mortimer enters and closes the door. He beams.

Reynolds does not look up.

MORTIMER

Another four accusations of
witchcraft today - and it seems
the fear is spreading to
neighbouring parishes.

REYNOLDS

The fools will believe anything!

MORTIMER

And we shall have our first
burning tomorrow.

REYNOLDS

Good.

MORTIMER

Dry wood has proved difficult to
come by.

REYNOLDS

There's hay in the barns, isn't
there? Use that.

MORTIMER

But that is the winter feed. If
we burn that...

Reynolds looks round angrily.

REYNOLDS

Do it!

MORTIMER

As you wish.

Mortimer bows and leaves whilst Reynolds turns back to
the fire.

EXT. MARKET PLACE -DAY

Mary, Nuala and the priest stand on the dais in front of
the seated Reynolds. They look a shocking sight.

The crowd hurl insults at them.

Reynolds stands and the crowd hushes expectantly.

REYNOLDS

Having been found guilty of the
charges of murder by witchcraft
and of consorting with evil
spirits, it is the sentence of
this court that you shall be
burnt to death.

SHOUTS and JEERS echo around the crowd.

Reynolds raises his hands and the crowd go silent.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Is there anything you wish to say
before sentence is carried out?

Mary looks at Reynolds contemptuously.

MARY

May the curse of your master fall
upon you and yours. The Devil
take you!

Mary turns to face the crowd.

MARY (CONT'D)

And all of you as well!

The crowd surge forward angrily. Soldiers struggle to
hold them back.

Mary laughs manically.

MARY

I curse you! All of you!

Mary, Nuala and the priest and grabbed by soldiers and
dragged to three waiting pyres.

They are tied to wooden stakes and wood, twigs and hay
bales are piled around them.

PRIEST

(shouts)

May the Lord forgive you all!

The crowd CHANT.

CROWD

Burn them! Burn the witches!

Ciarán throws back his hood and strides in front of
Reynolds.

CIARÁN

Stop!

He climbs the base of the high cross and loops his arm
through the circle of stone.

CIARÁN (CONT'D)

Let them go!

Mary cries with joy.

MARY

Oh my God! Ciarán!

Reynolds leans forwards and regards Ciarán eagerly.

REYNOLDS

Who the Hell are you?

CIARÁN

Who I am is of no concern! What
you do here today is evil! Let
them go I say!

Reynolds holds out his arms.

REYNOLDS

I am doing the Lord's work!

CIARÁN

And was it the Lord's work at
Drogheda? I was there! I saw what
you did and it was not the Lord's
work. It was the Devil's!

Reynolds laughs.

REYNOLDS

Kill him!

Ciarán draws his sword as soldiers approach him. He
prepare to defend himself.

SHOUTS echo around the market place. Some villagers begin
to jostle the soldiers.

More soldiers arrive and a full-scale battle begins.
Villagers use clubs, knives, sickles and pitchforks
against soldiers armed with swords and pikes.

Reynolds turns to Taylor next to him who holds an unlit
torch.

REYNOLDS

Light it man!

Taylor fumbles with a tinderbox. Eventually the torch
lights.

Reynolds grabs it and advances towards the priest.

Ciarán fights two soldiers. He slays one and grabs hold
of the other's pike.

Reynolds thrusts the torch into the pyre beneath the priest.

Mary screams.

MARY

Ciarán!

Ciarán looks up.

He dispatches the pikeman and pushes his way through the skirmish to reach the priest.

Mortimer steps in front of him, sword in hand.

Jones steps in front of Ciarán and smiles eagerly at Mortimer.

JONES

This one's mine!

Mortimer smirks and launches himself at Jones.

They fight desperately.

The priest's pyre is burning.

Ciarán runs up to it but can only look impotently at the priest.

PRIEST

Save the girls Ciarán! Save the girls!

Ciarán looks around to see Reynolds lighting Mary's pyre.

Mary screams.

CIARÁN

No!

Taylor jumps on Ciarán and knocks him to the ground. Ciarán's sword skids away from him.

They roll around as Taylor draws a knife.

Taylor straddles the prone Ciarán.

Ciarán grabs Taylor's hands.

The knife plunges down next to Ciarán's face.

Taylor grins as he tries to plunge it down again.

Ciarán punches Taylor in the face and throws him off.

They get to their feet.

Taylor lunges at Ciarán who grabs his injured arm.

Taylor screams in agony and wildly slashes at Ciarán.

Ciarán jumps for his sword as Taylor lunges again.

Ciarán brings his sword up and Taylor impales himself upon it.

He falls to his knees, dead.

Ciarán looks up to see Reynolds watching Mary's pyre start to smoke.

Ciarán chases Reynolds who brandishes the flaming torch at his face.

REYNOLDS

You're too late!

Reynolds touches the torch to Nuala's pyre.

Nuala shrieks and thrashes violently, trying to free herself.

Reynolds grins, then hurls the flaming torch at Ciarán and runs away.

MARY

Ciarán!

Mary's pyre is smoking and flames are licking around the brushwood.

Ciarán jumps onto the pyre and desperately struggles with the knots tying Mary to the stake.

The flames start to take hold.

Mary coughs violently.

MARY

No!

Ciarán manages to cut the bonds and scoops Mary in his arms.

He jumps down from the pyre and embraces Mary.

She looks into his face and pleads quietly.

MARY

Nuala!

Ciarán nods and jumps up onto Nuala's pyre.

He cuts her bonds and carries her down to Mary.

Mary and Nuala embrace.

Mary looks at Ciarán and smiles.

MARY

I owe you my life!

CIARÁN

Now we're even!

Ciarán turns to the Priest.

The priest's pyre is a raging inferno.

PRIEST

Dear Lord! Forgive me my sins and
accept my soul into Your kingdom!

Jones and Mortimer duel in front of the pyre.

Jones runs Mortimer through with his sword.

He pushes the wounded Mortimer onto the priest's pyre.

Paralysed by his wound, Mortimer lies there and catches
fire.

He looks up at the priest with pleading eyes.

PRIEST

I forgive you!

Mortimer screams in agony as he burns.

Ciarán and Jones shield themselves from the heat and step
back as the flames engulf the priest and Mortimer.

A loud SHOUT goes up and ranks of pikemen and musketeers
advance to clear the market place.

Sporadic musket shots hit random villagers.

Ciarán tries to form the villagers into a fighting column
to meet the attack.

The nervous villagers face the mass of the English phalanx.

The phalanx begins to collapse as rebel cavalry attack from behind.

Desperate battles erupt as the soldiers try to face this new attack.

The horsemen hack at the soldiers.

The ranks of pikemen and musketeers crumble and they are routed.

Ciarán grabs hold of Jones and shouts for joy.

CIARÁN

It's Dillon!

A figure on horseback leads a charge of rebels that chases the remaining soldiers.

The figure spies Ciarán and trots over to him and winks.

DILLON

Better late than never, eh?

Ciarán and Jones look at each other and chuckle.

Dillon smiles smugly and turns his horse towards the fleeing soldiers.

DILLON (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Come on lads! Let's finish them!

Jones spies Reynolds jumping onto a horse and fleeing.

Jones grabs Ciarán.

JONES

Look! Reynolds!

Ciarán whips round and sheaths his sword.

He runs to a horse and grabs hold of the bridle.

CIARÁN

That bastard's mine!

He jumps on the horse and sets-off in pursuit.

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE - DAY

Reynolds whips his horse up to the bridge.

Ciarán races behind him.

Reynold's horse rears up in panic and throws its rider.

Now rider-less, it bolts away from the bridge, past Ciarán.

Reynolds rolls around dazed for a moment before scrambling to his feet and running onto the bridge.

Ciarán throws his feet out of the stirrups and launches himself from his horse onto Reynolds.

Reynolds punches Ciarán in the face and Ciarán releases him.

Reynolds jumps to his feet and draws his sword.

He launches a vicious attack at Ciarán before Ciarán can draw his own sword.

Ciarán desperately swerves away from the attack and Reynolds stumbles past him, ending-up in a heap on the ground.

Ciarán draws his sword and steps back. He takes a deep breath and points his sword deliberately at Reynolds.

Mary runs up but stops short of the duel. Anxiety etched into her face.

Reynolds gets up and smirks wickedly.

REYNOLDS

Think you can best me, boy?

CIARÁN

Come on.

Reynolds launches into the attack and Ciarán is forced to parry.

Reynolds brings his sword down like a cleaver. Their swords and arms lock above their heads.

They struggle and push.

Reynolds pulls backwards and Ciarán stumbles onto his knees.

Reynolds, triumph in his eyes, lunges at Ciarán.

Ciarán rolls to his side unscathed.

Mary bites her fingers as other locals arrive to watch.

Ciarán jumps to his feet as Reynolds launches a low attack.

Ciarán parries his sword past his midriff, but the momentum of the lunge takes Reynolds into Ciarán and he grabs him round the waist.

Ciarán staggers backwards to the parapet and the two fighters, locked together, pitch into the water.

Both sink.

Mary rushes forwards in tears.

Nothing.

Mary cries out.

MARY

Ciarán!

Nothing.

A BYSTANDER points and shouts.

BYSTANDER

Look!

The body of Reynolds surfaces face down and floats gently towards an arch of the bridge, where it disappears into the shadow of the arch.

No sign of Ciarán.

Mary begins to wail.

MARY

No! No! No!

Ciarán's upper body erupts from the water like a leaping salmon.

He gasps for breath.

Mary, overjoyed, runs into the water towards him.

She stumbles and disappears under the water.

Ciarán waits a moment for her to reappear. She doesn't.

He frantically wades towards the spot where she fell and scans the water.

CIARÁN

Mary!

Mary emerges from the water.

She laughs.

MARY

I tripped!

They embrace and kiss passionately.

EXT. O'CONNELL'S BRIDGE: PRESENT - DAY

A black Range Rover drives across the bridge and stops near the ruins of the O'Connell Cabin.

The man gets out of the front passenger seat and looks around casually as he buttons his overcoat.

The driver, a LOCAL TD (50s), short, fat, balding, smartly dressed, gets out and walks around to the Man.

The Local TD smiles warmly at the Man and gestures towards the bridge.

They stroll.

LOCAL TD

So, I think it's safe to say there should be no other major problems.

MAN

Apart from the local activists, but I can handle them.

They stop in the middle of the bridge.

LOCAL TD

Excellent! I'll be making a full public statement tomorrow. Then test drilling can start whenever you want!

The two shake hands.

The Man smirks.

MAN

You know - I had an ancestor who died on this very bridge. Three hundred and fifty years ago.

LOCAL TD

Really? That's fascinating. Are your family from round here?

MAN

No. This ancestor was a colonel in Cromwell's army.

LOCAL TD

I see. (beat) You know, the locals call this the Divil's Bridge.

MAN

Interesting.

LOCAL TD

There's a legend about how the Divil made it.

MAN

Is there now? Do tell.

LOCAL TD

In ancient times there was an auld shepherd named Fintan Uí Chonaill who was separated from his flock by the river here, when it was in flood. He couldn't get to them no matter how hard he tried. When he saw a wolf prowling on the other side - desperate as he was, he made a pact with the Divil. Auld Nick would build him a bridge across the river, in return for the soul of the first living thing to cross upon it. Now auld Fintan tricked his dog into running across the bridge and the Divil - he was furious. He vowed to have his vengeance of the descendants of Fintan O'Connell. One soul for

every arch of the bridge. Nine
arches, nine souls.

The Local TD leans on the parapet and casts his eye
thoughtfully along the river.

LOCAL TD (CONT'D)
People say he's still to collect
the ninth soul.

The Local TD turns to the Man. Uncertainty spreads across
his face.

The Man grins diabolically as he stares into the face of
the Local TD.

MAN
Yes.

FADE OUT

THE END