

SCRIPT TITLE

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FADE IN.

EXT. MEDIEVAL VILLAGE- DAY.

GAINFORD DURHAM, a mid-twenty year old man, wearing chainmail and plated armor, and the long black and red coat of a medieval warrior, rides atop a white stallion adorned in a black and red blanket and brown leather saddle.

A thick fog keeps his visibility low, also muffling cries of mourning and distress of a nearby village. He rides up the main cobble-stoned road, smelling smoke and seeing piles of burned rubble and debris.

He kicks his horse, urging it forward a little faster as people appear through the fog.

Many people are still wearing night clothes, some covered in soot, others in mud. The screams are louder now as he gets closer to the main block.

Gainford looks up and sees that the mayoral manor is still on fire. He drops from the horse's back and quickly grabs a bucket of water, running along with several others as they move from a nearby well to the house, throwing the water over the fire.

After a short amount of time, the fire is doused. Gainford sits back, taking in a deep breath as he looks around.

WILLIAM DE TEES, a late twenties man, medium build, wears black breeches and tunic and leather boots, stands behind Gainford, sneering. He wipes soot from his hands on Gainford's back.

Gainford stands and faces William.

GAINFORD
How dare you touch me?

WILLIAM
(laughs)
So is this how you greet an old friend after five years of war?

GAINFORD
Friend?

WILLIAM
Or foe. Whichever you prefer, I do not care.

Gainford turns back toward the smoking manor, coughing as smoke reaches his lungs.

GAINFORD

What happened?

WILLIAM

Well, since you left to play soldier, not many men stayed behind to protect this village. Craddock has been wreaking nasty havoc over the northern lands.

GAINFORD

Craddock? Thought he had left Bailol.

WILLIAM

Soldiers are not known for knowing much, are they?

GAINFORD

(glares)
You would not know, coward.

WILLIAM

I am no such thing!

BERNARD

Both of you quit your quarrel!
There are far more important tasks at hand!

An older man, still wearing a plain robe and low cut boots, Bernard comes between Gainford and William, separating them. He looks very tired, and very stressed, and except for his boots, he is fairly clean.

Gainford bows.

GAINFORD

I am sorry, my lord. What would you have us do?

Taps William's knee, who then bows.

WILLIAM

My apologies, my lord.

BERNARD

Stand, as men, and come with me.

He leads the two men to a make-shift tent set up around a street corner. There are very few items inside on an old, half-burnt table and two leather, studded sofa seats. Bernard leans against the table, rubbing his chin.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

My Daughter Eleanor has been taken.

WILLIAM

By the beast?

GAINFORD

Take me to the dragon's lair!

Gainford stands, reaching for the sword pommel at his waist.

Bernard raises his arms to calm the younger men.

BERNARD

No, sit. We must remain calm. Craddock is not himself. This beast has developed a brain. He knew where to strike us first.

GAINFORD

How so? The dragon is a mindless, wild beast.

BERNARD

And you have been gone for some time, Gainford. We were left to face this dragon without soldiers.

William sits in one of the chairs.

WILLIAM

Never fear, the hero returns to save us all!

BERNARD

William, please do shut your mouth.

Gainford smiles.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

While I know you two have personal matters between each other, my daughter's affection notwithstanding, set it aside, and bring together as many soldiers you can find. I will grant my cook Snively to follow. Track this beast, kill it, and bring me Eleanor.

Gainford bows before Bernard, takes his hand, and kisses the family crest ring.

GAINFORD

I will find Eleanor, and bring her home. William and I will set aside our differences until it can be settled when we have peace.

Stands, nods to Bernard, scowls at William, and leaves the tent, leaving William and Bernard alone.

WILLIAM

He will know that you have promised me her hand.

BERNARD

I suggest you keep that to yourself.

WILLIAM

Well, since war did not finish it, perhaps I shall.

BERNARD

Not before the beast is slain, and we know exactly why it took MY daughter.

WILLIAM

You have my word, my lord.

He leaves the tent.

INT. CAVE-NIGHT

The cave is dark, save for a torch light near the middle of a flat area. Water drips along the walls, and a cold air blows quietly through the tunnels, sometimes whistling.

A man in a hooded, red robe, SIMEON, stands behind ELEANOR UMBERSON tied to a chair. The woman is gagged, hands and feet bound by rope. She is breathing heavily, jumpy at every little sound.

SIMEON

(whispers)

My sweet, do not tremble, for it is not you I wish to harm. Oh, sweet child, you are but a pawn of this game.

He reaches for her mouth gag, pulling it free.

ELEANOR
 (screams)
 What do you want with me then?

SIMEON
 (smiles)
 All will be revealed. Then you will understand. Only the truth will set you free!

Simeon slides his finger on her cheek, slightly grazing her with sharpened, gnarly fingernails.

An animal's growl bellows through the cavern.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 Ah, my pet has returned. Like I promised, I will bring you know harm, nor will our friend Craddock.

Eleanor screams as she struggles against the ropes and chair until Simeon replaces the gag. He unfolds a blanket and drapes it over her.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 I will return with food and drink. All you have to do is wait for rescue.

He leaves her alone in the cave, walking into one of the tunnels and disappearing in the dark. The growl gets louder, then all is silent.

INT. TENT - DAY

GAINFORD
 Unbelievable.

He angrily stuffs some clothing and a few personal items into a thick, burlap sack, quickly looking around the rest of the tent.

Everything my father left for me is gone, nothing but rubbish left behind, the refuse nobody else wanted to steal!

William pokes his head inside the tent.

WILLIAM
 A word?

GAINFORD
 Be quick.

William walks into the tent and looks around.

WILLIAM

This is what we could salvage after Craddock-.

GAINFORD

Do not think me a fool, William. Nothing in here looks to be damaged by flame. Dust and neglect have claimed these items. I wonder who has claimed the rest?

WILLIAM

Your father, as you know, was a gambler. He lost everything during the festivals after you were called into service.

Gainford stops packing and glares angrily at William.

GAINFORD

Mind your tongue, or lose it, civilian. I am no foot soldier, and you are not nobility.

WILLIAM

(scowls)

My place will be changed soon enough, so mark my words: For every insult you throw at me, it will be revisited on you ten fold when I rise to power!

He turns and throws open the tent flaps, rushing from the tent.

GAINFORD

What is he up to?

EXT. HORSE STABLES - DAY

William straps saddle to a brown stallion, pulling tight enough on the straps to make the horse whine. He slaps his flank solidly.

WILLIAM

Quit your bitching.

He sees SNIVELY walking toward him, so he turns his back to the man.

Snively is a little older than William, and very thin, with pale skin and walks with a strange gait, dragging one foot behind.

SNIVELY
 (speaks nasally)
 What troubles you, good sir?

WILLIAM
 The damned soldier, that's what.

SNIVELY
 You mean the knight?

WILLIAM
 (Raises an eyebrow)
 The knight.

SNIVELY
 Worry not, aristo-brat.
 (taps his fingers on the
 uneasy horse's back)
 Worry not.

Snively walks away, leaving William to finish preparing his horse.

Gainford and Bernard now walk toward the stables, both with serious faces as they look toward William. William puts his hand on his stomach, feeling it churn.

BERNARD
 William! Come to me, please!

WILLIAM
 Wonderful.

He takes a last look at his horse, pushing aside the animal's head and walks toward the mayor and Gainford.

BERNARD
 Like I said to you this morning, I want the both of you to find my daughter and slay the dragon.

WILLIAM
 I have not yet forgotten.

GAINFORD
 We need men. Bernard has already lent us his personal cook. Now we need men we can dare call soldiers.

WILLIAM
 (growls)
 You think us all weak?

He clenches his fists, but Bernard raises his hand.

GAINFORD
 There are a few strong, able men here. Then there are young, strong men, too. We need to recruit ten more to follow us, and the rest to rebuild our town.

WILLIAM
 Our town?

GAINFORD
 It is my home, not matter how long I've been away.

BERNARD
 (sneaks a reassuring nod toward William)
 I am sure the two of you will set aside prior conflict long enough to complete the quest?

GAINFORD
 (Bows)
 Yes, my lord.

WILLIAM
 Of course, my lord.

GAINFORD
 I have a list of men ready.
 William, will you take me to them?

He holds out a piece of paper. William grabs it, looking at all the names. He takes a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

WILLIAM
 I suppose.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

A small place, full of smaller wooden tables and chairs, many occupied by variously aged men. There is a bard in one corner, playing a quiet tune on a shameful violin. William leads Gainford to a table toward the back, waving at barkeep MALAN LUDLUM. Ludlum shakes his baldhead, throwing a towel over his broad shoulders and turning his back to them.

GAINFORD

Skip a tab?

WILLIAM

Started a fight, then skipped the
tab. Shut your mouth.

He shuffles through the myriad of tables and guests until the reach the back, and all four men already knew they were coming. Uilleam stands tall, a hulking figure of a man, full beard and long hair, broad shoulders and massive hands.

UILLEAM

Welcome, Knight Gainford.

He looks at William, and hardly gives him a yawn.

GAINFORD

(Leans toward William and
whispers)

Sparring partner?

WILLIAM

Shove it. Uilleam, I can guess you
already know why we are here.

UILLEAM

I know, but I will not listen to
the likes of a chicken shit like
you.

William GROWLS angrily as he clenches his fist.

GAINFORD

You really haven't been making any
friends, have you?

Gainford puts a hand on William's shoulder, pinching his collarbone. William flinches and brushes his hand away, stepping back.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

I am asking for your assistance.

UILLEAM

Payment?

He crosses his arms over his chest, still larger than life.

GAINFORD

Adventure, most likely death, and a
hero's funeral.

Uilleam looks to the other three men, AODH, OBEOLAN, and LESLIE sitting next to him. No one even moves as they all look right at Gainford's unflinching eyes.

UILLEAM

My brothers Aodh, the skinny one, Obeolan, the fat one, and Leslie, the odd girly one, and I accept. Besides, this town is boring as shit anyway.

GAINFORD

(Nods his approval with a smile)

Great!

UILLEAM

And we be chasing dragons, and they like gold, so perhaps we will get paid and no longer be poor bastards!

All four brothers laugh.

GAINFORD

Mother will let all four go?

UILLEAM

(bows his head)

Rest her soul, we may see her soon!

GAINFORD

One request: Can you tone down the swearing.

Uilleam bends down to be face to face with Gainford, his breath afoul with ale.

UILLEAM

Fuck you.

EXT. BLACKSMITH - DAY

WARIN, a man covered in black soot, pounds away with an iron hammer at a flatter piece of steel on an anvil. He molds it to take the shape of a crude blade, turning it over each time he hammers it down, sparks flying around him. He has big arms and short legs, and a rather large belly almost protruding through a thick leather apron. Gainford and William are standing behind him.

The blacksmith is an open area, covered by a thin metal roof, lean-to style, with two, stone fire pits and two anvils and two large barrels of water for cooling. Various tools hang along the outer rim of the structure.

WARIN
So that's your pitch?

GAINFORD
Pretty much.

WARIN
What about my shop?

GAINFORD
No one will touch it. You can have your assistants run things until you return.

WARIN
(laughs)
Return?

GAINFORD
No promises.

WARIN
At least your honest. And I have three assistants, none of which have half a brain to keep this place, so maybe two can work together, at least until I get back.

(grins and winks at Gainford)
I'm in. And I'll take one assistant: Fitz.

He points toward a skinnier kid, hopelessly pounding on a deformed hunk of metal as another assistant feeds the flames of a nearby fire.

Before anyone can look up, the fire explodes, throwing Fitz and his piece of metal flying backward. He lands on his butt, his back against a pillar, the hunk of metal buried in the wood just above his head. The other two assistants laugh and point.

Warin shakes his head.

WARIN (CONT'D)

I'm surrounded by idiots all day long. A journey out might not be so bad!

WILLIAM

Can't guarantee you won't be surrounded by idiots!

The three men go to Fitz. Warrin picks him up, smacks him upside the head, knocking him toward the door with a swift kick to the rear.

WARIN

Tell your mother you won't be back for some time! She owes me!

EXT. ARCHERY RANGE - DAY

Three men, FALLON, AGNES, and HENRY are knocking arrows, aiming at the same target, and letting them loose. All three bolts hit near center mass on a paper target.

FALLON

Aye, I got closest. Pay up, you ninnies!

Agnes reaches into his pouch and pulls out a dull silver coin.

AGNES

Double or nothing?

HENRY

(Slaps his coin into
Fallon's hand)

That was double, nitwit. Now I'm empty!

FALLON

I'll spot ya! I know you're good for it!

He laughs as he drops the coins into his heavy pouch.

Gainford and William come walking out. Gainford picks up a bow, knocks an arrow, and takes aim at the target. With a trained breath, he releases the arrow. It strikes dead center mass.

GAINFORD

Wager on that?

All three men are dumbstruck.

FALLON
What be the wager?

GAINFORD
If I can't do that again, you don't
have to tag along.

FALLON
Tag along?

HENRY
They've been recruitin' suicides to
chase ol' Craddock.

FALLON
Nods, waving for the two other archers to come closer.

HENRY
You're not thinkin' about takin
that bet, are ya?

FALLON
Aye.

AGNES
Are you crazy?

FALLON
I'll throw coin into it! We could
eat like kings tonight!

All three nod in agreement with greedy smiles on their faces.

FALLON (CONT'D)
So, how much have ya got?

EXT. UMBERLAND'S MAIN ROAD - DAY

Gainford is walking down the middle of the road, smiling as
he taps a heavy COIN PURSE. William is sulking behind.

WILLIAM
So, when did you learn to shoot
like that?

GAINFORD
When swords don't work against an
enemy, you have to find a secondary
skill to kill them. Archery is
mine.

WILLIAM

I suppose that will come in handy
should Craddock want to fly off.

GAINFORD

I can teach you.

WILLIAM

Shove off, I don't need anything
from you.

William storms down a side street, leaving Gainford alone. Suddenly, he is shoved from behind. He stumbles forward, but doesn't lose his footing. He turns in time to see ISABEL, a strong young woman with long shorter hair, ready to strike him with a long sword. He pulls out his sword, barely able to deflect her accurate, powerful swing. She strikes three more times, stepping into his guard, not giving him a chance to parry her. As she goes for a fourth swing, Gainford turns his body so that his back is against hers, and gives her an elbow to the back of the ribs. She screams and twists quickly, swinging wildly. Gainford catches her sword arm, grasps her throat, and drops her to her back in the mud. The wind is knocked out of her as she struggles to catch her breath.

ISABEL

You struck a woman.

GAINFORD

I struck an enemy. Are you still
one?

ISABEL

(shakes her head)

Non-combatant.

GAINFORD

(lifts her to her feet)

Where'd you learn to fight?

ISABEL

My father. He wanted a boy.

GAINFORD

You are talented, but
undisciplined. Come with me, and I
can teach you to best every other
man.

ISABEL

Even you?

Gainford sheathes his sword and laughs.

GAINFORD

Never.

Isabel shrugs her shoulders.

ISABEL

Would be nice to show my father
what more I can do.

GAINFORD

Then it is settled. I have my crew!

WE KNOW THE DANGERS OF HUNTING A DRAGON ARE AHEAD FOR OUR
NEWLY FORMED TEAM, BUT THERE ARE OTHER DANGERS TO CONSIDER.

This scene will serve as our first major turning point, the
second twist to this complicated story of "friendships." We
will meet the turncoat of this hunting party and his relation
to the greater happenings of the story.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

GAINFORD

Snively, heard you will be
providing our troop with food for
our journey.

SNIVELY

I am, and treats we shall have!

GAINFORD

I only hope you do not have to
carry too much, or burden my men
with extra supplies.

SNIVELY

No, no, no. A simple pouch of
spices and herbs, and a bag full of
veggies! The trip over the plains
and hills, through the old forests,
and over the mountains should
provide the meat!

GAINFORD

Do not be so sure it will be easy
to hunt!

SNIVELY

Even still, a cart of barreled and salted pork and beef will burden no one. I will stay close!

GAINFORD

(eyes Snively through squinted eyes, nods)

I sure hope so! We cannot lose the food!

Gainford laughs as he turns to walk away, reaching for a fresh apple and taking a bite of it.

SNIVELY

(rubs hands together)

Worry not, for you will eat well. Whom has a last supper unworthy of their final moments?

He slowly slides a few pans and utensils into a burlap sack and ties it to a small wooden cart.

A bird COOS from the trees. Snively tilts his head, quickly taking a look around the area. No one is around.

He walks to the back wall, takes a final look around, and ducks behind the building.

A large crow is sitting on an abandoned carriage wheel, eyeing the slender elder man.

SNIVELY (CONT'D)

All is well, master. I am to follow with food and drink.

CROW

(with Simeon's voice)

You have placed yourself well, apprentice. Stay the course, and your rewards will be plenty!

SNIVELY

When shall I begin?

CROW

Let them track dear Craddock as far as the forest. They will have to travel the woods, and they will be plenty troubled.

SNIVELY

And myself, master?

CROW
 (hops closer, knocking
 beak into the wood)
 Worry not, for you are under my
 protection. Should the forest be an
 easier road than I suspect, make
 sure they do not make the
 mountains.

SNIVELY
 (smiling wickedly)
 All this time, and we are finally
 going to make them suffer!

CROW
 Tell me, though. Should there be
 any concern on your role?

SNIVELY
 No, no, my lord.

CROW
 Anyone that should be bothersome?

SNIVELY
 Well-

CROW
 Spit it out!

The crow CAWS, flying at Snively's head, brushing by his
 hair.

SNIVELY
 (ducking)
 Sir Gainford has returned!

CROW
 Gainford? Did not Umber send him to
 die?

SNIVELY
 Does it surprise you he did not?

CROW
 His love may be difficult to
 extinguish. Do not underestimate
 him. He is not to reach the
 mountains!

The crow CAWS one more time, circling overhead and flying
 into the nearby trees.

Snively takes a deep breath, looking into a leather pouch on his belt. He pulls out a vile, and inside is a white powder.

SNIVELY

Sugar this be not, take them to the grave to rot!

Snively clasps the vile in his palm, returning it to the pouch before looking around the area and returning to pack his cart.

EXT. DAY - OPEN PRAIRIE

The entire group is on horseback, riding through the hills of a vast and open prairie. The sun is bright and hot overhead, hardly a cloud in the sky. There is little wind blowing.

Uilleam wipes sweat from his brow, taking a long swig of his drink.

FALLON

Maybe you want to share?

Uilleam squints at the skinny archer. He scowls, raising his hand to keep the sun from his eyes.

FALLON (CONT'D)

Guess not.

Agnes and Henry laugh as Fallon falls back in line, tossing each a silver coin.

Gainford is in the lead, followed closely by Isabel and then William.

ISABEL

Not much shade here.

GAINFORD

No shelter, either. We are heading straight for the trees.

WILLIAM

Scanlon Forest? Great danger lurks in that ancient place.

GAINFORD

It will give us shelter. I'm sure we can make do with the creatures inside.

WILLIAM

If you say so, soldier.

GAINFORD

Knight.

WILLIAM

No, it's day.

William snarls as he slows his horse, putting some distance between them.

ISABEL

Will he brood the entire journey?

GAINFORD

Most likely.

ISABEL

(rolls her eyes)
Wonderful.

GAINFORD

What's your story?

ISABEL

When I have it, I may tell you.

She takes a deep, long breath, pulling on her horse's reins to slow its pace, leaving Gainford alone up front.

FALLON

Double or nothin, brothers?

HENRY

On what?

FALLON

She'll fall in love with me!

Fallon points to Isabel with a huge grin on his face.

AGNES

Should we take it?

HENRY

He hasn't ever been a ladies man,
so I'd call it a safe bet!

AGNES

(nods)
Alright then, I'm taking it. You've
got by the end of this.

FALLON

Let me work my charm!

He kicks his horse forward, brushing past Warrin and Fitz.

FITZ

Sir, I don't know why you chose me.

WARRIN

We will find the answer to that soon.

FITZ

(shakes his head)

I'm no good, sir.

WARRIN

(smacks Fitz across the head)

Talking like that, you sure as hell won't! Better yet, just don't talk.

Fitz nods, pulling his horse out of Warrin's reach. Warrin smiles at the gesture.

Snively is following slowly behind the group, keeping a watchful eye on everyone. He grips a leather pouch tightly in his hand.

Not far from the group, a herd of gazelle-like creatures are grazing in a field.

WILLIAM

Snively, got anything that'll go with gacela?

SNIVELY

Maybe.

WILLIAM

When we stop, we'll go hunting.

EXT. EVENING - OPEN PRAIRIE

The group has set up their sleeping rolls near a small fire. Snively is away from the group, building his own fire.

William, Fallon, Agnes, and Henry are off hunting.

Gainford is sitting, staring at the fire. Warrin sits next to him.

WARRIN

What troubles you?

GAINFORD
This whole journey.

WARRIN
Aye, it is a bit strange.

GAINFORD
We're chasing a dragon that has
kidnapped a girl.

WARRIN
Damsel in distress. A great many
bards sing of those heroic tales.

GAINFORD
Dragons do not kidnap people. They
eat them.

A large gacela is dropped right behind the two men, with an
arrow sticking out of its chest. Fallon stands over it
proudly beaming.

FALLON
We got this one early on. Didn't
realize how far we had traveled.

Gainford gets up, dusting off his hands.

GAINFORD
Well, let's feast tonight!

EXT. NIGHT - OPEN PRAIRIE

The fire is larger now, with the meat slow cooking over it.
Several pieces have already been cut, with Snively working
away quietly as he seasons the meat.

Snively reaches into his bag of spices, choosing between the
two.

SNIVELY
This should slow us down a bit.

He sprinkles half the vile of powder over the cut meat,
walking around to the others as they sit eating their first
plates. He walks to Uilleam first.

UILLEAM
This is just right! Goes great with
ale!

He takes the second helping, takes a bite, and follows it
with a gulp from his flask.

Snively offers the other three brothers a plate, all but Aohd take one.

SNIVELY

I insist!

Again, the quiet, skinny man refuses, and Snively moves on to the archers, who all gladly take another portion. He then offers to Warrin and Fitz, and they eat too.

He circles around to William, then to Gainford and finally to Isabel. Every one but Snively and Aohd are eating. Snively sits near his cart, watching the others.

EXT. LATER - OPEN PRAIRIE

Everyone is sleeping except Aohd. He is keeping watch, kicking rocks around the camp site. There is a HOWL in the distance.

AOHD.

Stupid lobos. Scavengers.

He is near Snively's cart when he notices the man is not there. He looks around, but Snively is missing. He squints his eyes, looking in the dirt.

Discerning tracks, he tries to follow them some distance into the fields. The camp disappears as he drops into a small valley.

EXT. NIGHT - VALLEY

It is dark and Aohd can hardly see. He hears soft MUMBLING around the next bend. He follows the noise, soon coming across Snively talking to a lobo, a wolf-like dog with large build, big paws and claws, and razor sharp teeth.

The lobo instantly sees him, and Snively is startled.

Aohd pulls out a sword, standing guard as the lobo steps toward him.

AOHD

Get away, Snively! It might attack!

SNIVELY

(shakes his head)

Not me.

The lobo leaps toward Aohd, who is ready for the attack. With a firm stance, he shoulders the lobo away, watching as it rolls in the dirt. He turns to face it.

The lobo is GROWLING, baring teeth as it faces Aohd, staying a fair distance away.

AOHD

Snively, get back to camp! I'll
take care of-

He reels in shock as a sharp pain races through his spine. He looks behind him to see Snively slowly pulling a dagger from his back, the blade dripping with blood.

Aohd is shocked, the feeling in his legs is fleeting as he stumbles to the ground. He can't stay up, and he can't shout for help either.

The last thing he sees is the lobo pouncing with gaping jaws over him.

EXT. MORNING - VALLEY

Gainford pounds the ground with his fist, kneeling over what is left of Aohd's body.

Uilleam is furious.

UILLEAM

No lobo could take him down! None!
He was too good for a damn dog to
kill him!

William and Obeolan are holding Uilleam, keeping him back. Fallon, Agnes, and Henry are standing on the hill overhead, watching the fields.

Warrin turns to Gainford.

WARRIN

He wandered alone at night while on
watch, probably to take a piss.

GAINFORD

Why did he walk so far?

SNIVELY

I woke first, and noticed he was
gone. I followed his trail here,
and there are a lot of lobo prints,
too.

WARRIN
 (looks around the body)
 He is right. About five or six.

Uilleam calmed down enough for the two to let him go.

UILLEAM
 Sounds like Aohd. Took a whole
 pack.

GAINFORD
 (stands)
 We'll need to be careful. The pack
 is going to follow us the rest of
 the way.

EXT. DAY - OPEN PRAIRIE

To the north is a vast forest, with bright green foliage and
 thick underbrush. Beyond the edge of the forest is shadowed.

Gainford looks at the forest with squinted eyes and gritted
 teeth. His jaw muscles are flexing.

WILLIAM
 Scared?

GAINFORD
 Concerned. Trees are foreboding.

WILLIAM
 Could provide good cover.

GAINFORD
 Or ensnare us in another trap.

WILLIAM
 It will take four days to travel
 around.

GAINFORD
 And two to get through.

WILLIAM
 Then we have a decision to make.

FALLON
 How shall we decide, my friends?

GAINFORD
 Flip of a coin. Both roads are not
 safe.

FALLON
 (grins greedily)
 I wager heads.

WILLIAM
 We haven't even said what is what.

HENRY
 Then I say tails, the forest.

AGNES
 No, heads and the long road.

HENRY
 Forest!

AGNES
 Open road!

FALLON
 It'll be heads, and I wager
 Gainford will flip!

GAINFORD
 (grins)
 Why do you say that?

FALLON
 (squints)
 You have all my coin.

All start to laugh.

UILLEAM
 Fine time to make merry.

He takes a swing of his flask, reaching up to wipe a dribble from his chin with his arm. He rides on by with his two brothers.

FALLON
 That man hasn't stopped drinking
 since-

GAINFORD
 I know, but he'll be good when we
 need him.

WILLIAM
 Bet on that?

Fallon, Agnes, and Henry all look at each other and shrug.

FALLON

We're with Gainford. He'll pull through.

Gainford reached into his full coin purse.

GAINFORD

Call it, William. You win, you choose.

HENRY

I'll split my earnings if you pick tails and the forest!

Gainford flips the coin in the air.

WILLIAM

Heads.

Henry scowls.

Gainford catches the coin in a closed fist, slapping it onto the back of his hand. It's heads.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

The forest.

GAINFORD

(sighs)
So be it.

The three archers squabble over their bets, with William throwing his coin to Henry. Henry took it with a smile.

Gainford re-wrapped the reigns around his hand and urged his horse forward. He petted her powerful neck.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Let's be careful, girl.

EXT. LATER - OPEN PRAIRIE

The forest is a lot closer now, but still beyond a few hills. Several HOWLS are heard not far away.

Gainford pulls back on his reigns, turning the horse sideways.

GAINFORD

I don't like the sound of that.

WILLIAM

Damn beasts. Always hungry.

GAINFORD

Fallon, Agnes, and Henry, take up each flank. Anyone else good with a bow, keep your eyes open!

Uilleam pulls out a war hammer, twirling it once in his big hand.

Obeolan and Leslie each carry slightly different maces. Isabel unsheathes a long sword, moving toward the center of the group.

Snively urges his smaller, white horse a little faster, pulling the cart to the middle of the group. He looks a little too casual.

ISABEL

You don't seem afraid.

SNIVELY

(smiles with closed eyes)
They're scavengers, simply waiting for us to drop dead.

ISABEL

There's something twisted about you.

SNIVELY

I am not worried.

Isabel shakes her head, turning her attention back to the hills.

She sees a shadow break through a valley and disappear behind another hill.

ISABEL

To the east, about half a kilometer out!

Gainford and Fallon move toward that front, looking past the hills.

WARRIN

Another to the west!

HENRY

I think they're trying to surround us!

GAINFORD

This isn't right. They don't hunt
in the open.

WILLIAM

Well, these ones do!

GAINFORD

Tighten up. Archers, make sure your
shots are true!

HENRY

I'll take 'em out before they come
close!

AGNES

Not if I take 'em down first!

HENRY

Challenge accepted!

The lobos CRY OUT again, and as they wind through the hills
closer and closer, their SNARLS get louder.

GAINFORD

Here they come!

The first lobo breaks into a sprint, racing straight for the
group. Gainford aims, takes a breath, and releases.

The arrow sinks into the lobo's shoulder and it cries out as
it crashes to the ground tumbling.

Three more spring from hiding, coming over the closest hill.
Fallon turns toward them, loosing his first arrow. He misses.

Henry and Agnes take aim at four more lobos, hitting two of
them right in the chest.

Uilleam ROARS, breaking through the line and toward the other
two lobos before Henry and Agnes can knock their bows again.

He turns his body a full 360 degrees and slams the head of
his hammer into the first lobo's skull.

A loud THOCK sound is heard as the beast drops dead.

The other lobo lunges at Uilleam, but an arrow rips through
its neck before it reaches him. Uilleam throws up his hands
and slams its body to the ground.

Gainford and Fallon shoot down two more lobos, but another
group is coming fast.

HENRY

There are too many of them!

Another four bound over the hills, sprinting to the group with teeth bearing. Henry shoots one down as another races past him.

Someone SCREAMS, but Henry is aiming at another lobo, striking it down with an arrow to its right eye.

Uilleam crushes the last lobo with his hammer to its rib cage. The lobo whimpers until Uilleam crushes its skull with the hammer.

Henry turns around to see Agnes laying on the ground reaching toward his leg. A dead lobo with an arrow burried in its neck lays next to him. He rushes to his friend.

HENRY (CONT'D)

How bad?

Blood is oozing through his pants as Henry starts tearing at his own shirt.

AGNES

Bad, friend.

FALLON

(calling from the other
side)

Is he alright?

HENRY

He will be! Give us a minute,
dammit!

Henry wraps the wound, and ties a belt tightly around Agne's leg. Fitz comes over, helping Agnes stand, and leads him to the center and onto his horse.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll hold the wager until its fair!

AGNES

Ha, I had three!

Henry nods with a nervous laugh as he turns back toward more charging lobos.

GAINFORD

Make for the trees!

WILLIAM

They hunt in the woods!

GAINFORD

Not these woods. These lobos are
set upon us!

Gainford knocks an arrow and fires, killing another lobo. More keep coming as he kicks his horse and she responds, lunging ahead with great speed and power.

The whole group is in flight, the lobos not far behind. Snively is whipping his horse, and it's struggling to keep up. Isabel is next to him.

ISABEL

Worried now?

SNIVELY

Only about my cart!

As they ride, Fallon and Gainford take aim at the lobos, but are not hitting their targets. The forest is very close, and Gainford urges his mare on just a little faster.

EXT. DAY - FOREST EDGE

Tree branches whip at Gainford's face as he bursts into shadows, leading the group into the forest. It is considerably darker, and branches and foliage provide lots of shade from the bright sun.

GAINFORD

Turn and face them! Take up swords!

He shoulders his bow and draws his sword, turning around as the lobos stop just at the edge of the tree line. The group waits on horseback, standing in a line and waiting.

The lobos growl and snarl, snapping their jaws in frustration.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

(catching his breath)

Very strange.

Henry is already helping Agnes down, tearing away his first wrap. Snively hands him a pouch with cream in it.

SNIVELY

To clean the wound. Burns like
hell.

HENRY

Thanks.

He opens the container and dips his fingers in the cream, then rubs it over the bite wound. The leg isn't bleeding anymore because of the tourniquet.

HENRY (CONT'D)

He needs more help than I can give him.

AGNES

Just leave me. I'll slow you down.

HENRY

No!

AGNES

I'll be fine here. Give me some food, and come back in a week. I can hold my own.

HENRY

I can't.

GAINFORD

We just may have to.

Henry stands up and gets in Gainford's face. Gainford doesn't flinch.

HENRY

The hell I will!

UILLEAM

He cannot go on like this. He will need more rest than we can afford.

GAINFORD

We can supply him enough until we come back for him.

Fallon places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

FALLON

We will come back for him after we slay Craddock and bring Eleanor back. He cannot help us now.

AGNES

Like I said, leave me some food, and get your asses moving.

Leslie stepped forward.

LESLIE

I can stay with him, watch his back.

AGNES

No, they need all the help they can get.

The rest of the team checks their gear, preparing to move on.

Snively reaches into his pouch and pulls out a small vile. He walks to Agnes.

SNIVELY

Take this if the pain is too much.

AGNES

(nods)

Thanks, but I don't need that.

Snively shrugs his shoulders, then turns away.

The lobos howl again and again, but none step into the forest.

GAINFORD

There is something unnatural about them.

INT. DAY - CAVE

Eleanor struggles against a chain that now leashes her to the wall. A small pile of straw is nearby, and a plate of some kind of porridge.

SIMEON (V.O.)

Dear child, struggling is futile. Please, be patient. Your heroes are coming, and so is the truth.

ELEANOR

I hope they skewer you!

SIMEON (V.O.)

Tsk, tsk. I hear that your brave Gainford is leading the party.

Eleanor stops struggling, processing the information.

ELEANOR

He is?

SIMEON (V.O.)

Ah ha. You would like that, would you not?

ELEANOR

He left me! I only want to smack him!

SIMEON (V.O.)

He was ordered to leave, sweet child.

ELEANOR

By whom?

A misty aura appeared in front of Eleanor, and soon it solidified, taking the form of Simeon.

SIMEON

Your father.

Eleanor reeled in shock, shaking her head.

ELEANOR

No. He said it was the king's order! He showed me the seal!

SIMEON

Only the seal? And does he always tell you the truth? The whole truth?

ELEANOR

(shaking her head)

I don't believe you!

She turns back toward the chain, tearing furiously at them, straining her muscles, but the chain held.

SIMEON

Daddy's girl. Shame on him.

He turned to the tunnel, leaving Eleanor alone to sob quietly.

EXT. DAY - FOREST

The group rides quietly through the forest.

A branch snaps into Gainford's face.

UILLEAM

Bloody trail!

GAINFORD

Keep it down. There is no trail.

UILLEAM

(growls)

This whole trip is a farce.

He pulls out his flask, taking another drink. He sways in the saddle.

GAINFORD

That will be your last drink,
Uilleam. Tomorrow, you focus on
revenge.

Uilleam sneers, putting the flask away. Gainford pushes ahead.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

We find a road, gather a bearing,
and then move on!

The rest of the group follows behind, no one talking, and everyone keeps an eye out through the thick trees and bushes.

EXT. NIGHT - FOREST

Camp is set. The crew is eating quietly.

Snively is a fair distance away, looking back toward the edge of the forest. A crow lands on a branch nearby.

SIMEON (V.O.)

Did you fear the lobos?

SNIVELY

No, master. Very wise of you to
send them! They wounded one, and
the medicine I gave him will not
heal him.

SIMEON (V.O.)

Good. Now that they've reached the
forest, perhaps you can suggest the
road east. They are not far from
it, and it will lead near the
trolls.

SNIVELY

Trolls cannot be summoned.

SIMEON (V.O.)
Then tread carefully, my
apprentice.

The crow takes flight.

EXT. DAY - FOREST

The camp is packing gear and loading back packs.

GAINFORD
It may be slower, but we will be
safer through the woods.

WILLIAM
It will take days if we cannot find
the road!

GAINFORD
I am sure we will.

SNIVELY
Yes, lords, the road is close. I
have been here before.

Gainford eyes the smaller man with distrust.

GAINFORD
Do you know how far?

SNIVELY
(looks around)
Close, very close. Then we should
head east. The trees thin out that
way.

William pull Gainford aside.

WILLIAM
I do not trust him.

GAINFORD
At least we agree on that. But we
have no choice but to trust him.

WILLIAM
So be it.

The two men turn back to Snively.

GAINFORD

Then we find the road and head east. But you'll have to lose the pack.

SNIVELY

(groans)
Fine, but there goes your seasonings!

He stomps to his cart to load his bags.

EXT. LATER - FOREST

The group starts moving through the trees, still fighting the bushes and shrubs and branches. The sun barely makes it through the top.

Gainford is the first to break through, stumbling on the roadway.

GAINFORD

I'll be damned! Little bugger was right.

Soon after, the rest of the crew made their way onto the road.

WILLIAM

Let's move east.

SNIVELY

(catching breath)
Told you.

Uilleam looks at his flask with a longing stare before tossing it into the trees. Gainford sees it and nods his approval.

UILLEAM

Bet it's going to be a shitty day to quit drinking.

FALLON

I'll put a bet on that!

Uilleam huffs and shakes his head as he starts down the road.

UILLEAM

Keep your eyes peeled. Don't much like this path.

INSERT SCENE BRIDGE HERE!!!

EXT. DAY. FOREST

GAINFORD and WILLIAM, men in their late twenties, medium builds, Gainford with long black hair, scruffy beard, and dark blue eyes, William has short blonde hair, clean shaven, thinner build. Both men wear black clothes with plated armor and carry long swords, WALK through a brightly sunlit forest, trekking through low level bushes and plants.

GAINFORD

I cannot believe this.

WILLIAM

It is your fault.

GAINFORD

(shouts, turns toward
William)

My fault? How dare you?

WILLIAM

(raises his sword, points
tip at Gainford)

If you had not taken the long road,
the others would not have gone
missing.

GAINFORD

(scoffs, shakes head)

You told me it would be dangerous
through the forest!

WILLIAM

It was supposed to be.

GAINFORD

Yet, we still find ourselves in the
forest!

WILLIAM

(sheathes sword, wipes
sweat from brow)

They can't have gone too far.

GAINFORD

Seriously, who runs off with ten
grown men?

WILLIAM

(grinning)

A giant troll.

GAINFORD

Trolls? Wonderful.

Gainford and William walk silently through the underbrush, occasionally snapping twigs, or stopping to survey their route. The SUN is high in the sky, shining through a medium canopy of tree branches and leaves. The forest is thick with DOUGLASS FIR trees, some ASH TREES, and lots of FERNS and SALLOW. Gainford SPIES a broken trail, seeing broken branches and DRAG MARKS through the trees.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

(pulls his sword out,
moving toward the trail)
Well, looks like our troll grew
tired and couldn't carry his load
anymore.

WILLIAM

(kneels, puts hand in the
dirt, stares at a large
foot print)
Or we are very close.

Loud THUD sound in short distance. Both men turn toward the noise, creep as quietly as they can closer to the source. Gainford is ahead, moving behind a tree, spies movement in a clearing just ahead. He motions for William to stay low and quiet. Gainford hides behind a tree, slowly peeks out.

EXT. DAY. FOREST CLEARING

TROLL, large man-looking creature with darker yellowish skin, scrag of hair on his head, in his pits, and across its chest and belly, lanky arms and slouched shoulders, bent back, cracked, fungi-infected nails and teeth, with big, brown eyes, stands next to a large fire, dancing horribly as he mumbles ?????? To himself.

WILLIAM

(steps to get a better
view, branch SNAPS)

TROLL

(stops moving, sniffs the
air, looks around
clearing)

GAINFORD

(glares at William)

TROLL
 (Looks at two large BURLAP
 SACKS, grabs one, opens
 it, and dumps its
 contents on the ground)

Five men, all bound and gagged, drop to the ground. All of them are unconscious.

TROLL (CONT'D)
 (starts to hum, grabs
 other BURLAP SACK, dumps
 it)

Five more men bound and gagged fall to the ground roughly, all still unconscious. TROLL grabs a stick and stokes the fire. He grabs three poles and lashes them together, creating a tripod over the fire. He moves toward a large tent and disappears inside.

WILLIAM
 We must move quickly!
 (steps from behind the
 tree)

GAINFORD
 (in a raised whisper)
 No!

WILLIAM
 (ignores Gainford, steps
 quickly toward the other
 men)

TROLL
 (comes out from the tent
 with a large, BLACK
 CAULDRON)

WILLIAM
 (drops to the ground next
 to the other men)

GAINFORD
 (gasps, ducking behind a
 tree)

TROLL
 (stops again, sniffs the
 air. He moves toward the
 fire and hangs the BLACK
 CAULDRON from the tripod)

GAINFORD

(peeks out again, grips
sword even tighter)

TROLL

(turns in Gainford's
direction, sees him and
roars)

This one still moves! I'll put him
down like the others!

Runs toward Gainford, raises both fists, but as he passes William, William swings his sword into the back of the Troll's leg, slicing it open. The Troll screams and stumbles, grabs his leg and lands on the flat of his back, holding his leg like a child would a skinned knee. Both William and Gainford look on bewildered, glancing back and forth between each other.

WILLIAM

(steps closer to the
Troll, sword raised)

Be still!

GAINFORD

(rushes to the opposite
side of William)

Stay back, William, do not trust
him.

WILLIAM

(sneers)

I trust him more than you, Durham!

TROLL

(seeing the tension in the
two mens' voices,
stretches his arms out,
and wails)

Please, please, take pity on me!

GAINFORD

(pauses, looking even more
confused)

Pity? You were about to cook our
friends!

TROLL

No, no, no! T'was but a test for
me, set by my nasty brothers! I
cannot kill a man, much less eat
one! They are all too skinny and
smell so foul!

WILLIAM
 (sniffs at his own
 garments, nods, still
 pointing his sword at
 Troll)

GAINFORD
 (lowers guard)
 A troll who will not kill a man?
 You must get bullied by your
 brothers quite often!

TROLL
 (whimpers)
 Yes, yes, yes, they do razzle me! I
 try to please them, I do, I do!

WILLIAM
 (kicks at some of the
 men's legs to wake them)
 Then what are we to believe you
 were going to do with our friends
 here?

TROLL
 (reaches for a LARGE STONE
 just above his head)
 Cook them for my brothers!
 (throws the LARGE STONE
 toward Gainford and jumps
 to his feet)

GAINFORD
 (rolls out of the way as
 the stone crashes into
 the tent)

TROLL
 (dashes toward William,
 striking him with his
 large FISTS, knocks him
 into the trees. Bellows
 deeply as he heads for
 the trees)

GAINFORD
 (Yells to the other men)
 Get up, you fools, we have a troll
 to hunt!
 (runs toward William,
 makes sure he is okay,
 lifts him to his feet)
 Soldier up, aristo-boy!

WILLIAM
(growls)

EXT. DAY. FOREST.

Gainford and the ten other men, all wearing a mix of brown or black leather, none with armor, follow the path of destruction left in the wake of Troll's escape, with William in the rear.

GAINFORD
(first to reach a not so thickly covered part of the trail, has a sudden gut instinct to duck and roll)

TROLL
(swings a large tree BRANCH just over Gainford's head, smashing it on a tree trunk)

GAINFORD
(jumps back to his feet)
Close!

The other soldiers, picking up their own branches and rocks, circle around Troll, who stands in the center, his EYES wide and jumping from man to man to man.

TROLL
T'is not fair, I cannot count!
There be many of you, but one of me!

GAINFORD
True, but you've the strength of ten of us, to bind us in our sleep and make way through the forest!
That about evens the fight!

WILLIAM
(sidles up next to Gainford)
You rather enjoy this, don't you?

SOLDIER 1
(throws rock at Troll's head)

Other soldiers follow, throw rocks at Troll, who raises his arms to block the smaller stones as they pelt off his thick, dry skin. He roars, annoyed, lashing out at the nearest soldier. He knocks Soldier 2 backward. Soldier 3 throws a rock that hits Troll square in the nose.

TROLL

(grabs his nose as a green
and red gooey liquid
falls out)

Enough! Enough! They hurt, they
hurt!

GAINFORD

(Raises his arm, halts the
attack)

Do you yield?

TROLL

(scoffs, takes another
look around, and nods)

GAINFORD

Then kneel, and apologize!

TROLL

(annoyed)

Sorry, sorry, sorry, t'is but a
game gone awry! You win, you win.

(sits on the ground,
placing his hands beneath
his bottom)

WILLIAM

Do we have a rope?

GAINFORD

To tie him up?

WILLIAM

You're the soldier, what the hell
do you think it would be for?

GAINFORD

(sighs)

Back at camp.

A SOUND like the wind WOOSHES down over the group, causes the men to panic, and Troll to scream. Like a hawk to his prey, CRADDOCK the dragon SWOOPS down, landing hard on Troll's head, SNAPS his back and neck like a twig. Before the dust settles, Gainford and William stare into the massive, pale-green scaled dragon's lavender cat-like eyes.

CRADDOCK roars, flaps its BAT-LIKE wings and takes flight, gripping Troll's body in it's strong, taloned grip.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

(whistles)

WILLIAM

(drops his sword, rubs
sweat from brow)

Did not see that coming.

GAINFORD

Craddock knows we track him. This
will be much more interesting.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - DAY

GAINFORD

Keep moving, people.

ISABEL

How are we getting out of this?

GAINFORD

Going forward, not looking back.

ISABEL

We cannot outrun a blood-crazed
troll.

GAINFORD

Maybe not, but we can't fight it
here, either.

ISABEL

And the wolves beyond the forest?
There are too many.

GAINFORD

They won't come in the forest,
which is beyond me.

The group runs down the open road. Through the trees some distance away, crashing branches and angered growls echo through the trees.

FALLON

I will make a stand here, slow them
down.

He stops and knocks an arrow.

HENRY
I stand with him.

He also knocks an arrow.

Gainford stops running, motions for the others to stop.

William keeps going forward.

WILLIAM
You can die here if you want. At
least I can run free while you
distract them.

GAINFORD
Die where you please, this is good
as any place.

UILLEAM
I fight here.

He stops and unstraps his battle axe, swinging it with both hands.

The others follow, pulling out their weapons of choice. Fitz stands close to Uilleam. Isabel and Gainford stand in front of the others, and Fallon to Isabel's left.

Fallon winks at Isabel. She smiles back.

GAINFORD
You can run if you like, William.

William curses as he unsheathes his sword.

WILLIAM
Damn you all.

The noises in the trees and shrubs and bushes gets closer. On the road, some yards ahead, three TROLLS break through. They stop, turn toward the group, and then raise their war clubs.

GLUM, the tallest ogre, with hairy, yellowish skin, a protruding belly, and lanky arms and legs, looks to his brothers and nods, his eyes wide open and bloodshot.

GLEE and GROUT, the two smaller trolls with similar builds as Glum, shout curses and bound toward the warriors.

GAINFORD
Give them hell, Fallon.

Fallon and Henry loose their arrows, hitting their targets.

The arrows barely stun the enraged trolls, as they snap the wooden shafts from the tips.

Gainford and Uilleam sprint toward Glum as Glee and Grout make a move toward Fallon, Isabel, and Henry.

Gainford ducks under Glum's first swing and cuts a gash in the troll's leg while Uilleam goes high, slicing a cut in Glum's shoulder.

Glum favors his hurt leg, turning on the other leg. He swings toward Uilleam, slamming his club into the larger man's back. Uilleam screams as he falls face-first into the ground.

Gainford swings with both hands into Glum's other leg, hears BONE BREAKING as he hits the appendage. Glum ROARS in pain.

Fallon and Henry shoot two more arrows into Glee and Grout before they reach the group. An arrow pierces Grout's throat. Isabel makes quick work of the distraction, slicing the troll's stomach as Fallon pulls a dagger and throws it into the troll's chest.

Fitz freezes as Glee moves quickly over top of him. Glee raises his club to strike.

William lunges into Fitz, tackling the kid out of the way as Glee smashes the club into the ground.

WILLIAM

You okay?

FITZ

I think so, thank you.

WILLIAM

Don't mention-

Glee grabs William's leg before he can stand, swinging him around once before letting him go. William slams into a tree, drops his sword, and falls into a ditch.

Glee limbers toward Fitz again.

GAINFORD

Strike hard and fast!

Uilleam, a little dazed, picks up a large stone and throws it into Glum's back. The troll stumbles toward Gainford. Gainford swings his sword toward the troll's fighting arm, slices open a wound on its forearm.

An arrow whistles into Glum's forehead. The troll's eyes go cross as he reaches for the shaft, pulling the arrow from his head. Blood flows from the wound. The troll drops.

William wakes up, grabs his sword.

Isabel turns toward the last troll, toward Glee.

Glee holds Fitz's crumpled, lifeless body in the air, then takes a bite of his head. Glee tosses the body aside as two arrows fly into the troll's chest and neck, followed by Uilleam's blunt war hammer.

Isabel, Gainford, and William sprint to Glee, all stabbing their swords into the troll's stomach, chest, and back. They pull out their swords. Glee bleeds out, falls dead.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

God damn them all!

He kneels at Fitz's body, drops his cloak over the kid's body.

Everyone gathers around.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Too much has been lost already.

UILLEAM

And we haven't fought our prize, yet.

GAINFORD

(lowers head)

I will not begrudge anyone for leaving.

WILLIAM

This whole mission is-

UILLEAM

Fucked. From the beginning.

WILLIAM

What the hell do you mean?

UILLEAM

Fallon and Henry have been betting on who might be the mole.

FALLON

Damn straight. Snively's just a pawn.

UILLEAM

Exactly.

WILLIAM

What would you know?

GAINFORD

I think they're right. What is your stake here?

WILLIAM

What stake? How about Eleanor's hand in marriage?

GAINFORD

Bullshit.

WILLIAM

She agreed the day before the attack.

GAINFORD

Then what is Snively's stake?

WILLIAM

We should ask him.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - LATER

Snively is bound and gagged to a tree. William and Gainford stand in front of him. The others sit back on the other side of the road.

GAINFORD

Why do you not want us to find Craddock?

William rips the cloth from Snively's mouth.

SNIVELY

A dangerous beast like that? Isn't it obvious?

WILLIAM

(sneers)
Enlighten us.

SNIVELY

We are all going to die out here. I tried to make it a little more pleasant.

GAINFORD

By letting Aohd get eaten by Lobos?
Agnes bleeding to death? Warrin and
Fitz clubbed by trolls? How the
hell is that any more peaceful?

William punches Snively in the stomach. Snively dry heaves,
then catches his breath.

SNIVELY

The poison works slowly, but I was
to slit your throats.

GAINFORD

Who sent you?

SNIVELY

Who told you to bring me?

GAINFORD

Lord Bernard Umberson?

SNIVELY

(spits)
Yes, him. Your dear, lord, William.

WILLIAM

He lies.

GAINFORD

How so? Umberson did send him
personally.

WILLIAM

I don't care. He lies.

GAINFORD

Is it that hard to believe?

William and Gainford stand nearly nose to nose.

WILLIAM

I ask you to trust me on this.

SNIVELY

What do you know of it, William?

William sends another punch to Snively's soft belly.

GAINFORD

Enough. What are you playing at?

SNIVELY

You really don't know?

WILLIAM

Shut your mouth, you snake!

He punches Snively across the mouth. Before he can punch again, Uilleam sprints across the road and grabs William's arm, holding him a foot off the ground.

UILLEAM

We need him to talk.

WILLIAM

Put me down.

UILLEAM

Play nicely.

He drops William to his feet.

GAINFORD

Tell us who sent you and why they sent you to stop us.

SNIVELY

Lord Umberson doesn't want Eleanor back. In fact, he doesn't want you back, either, Gainford.

WILLIAM

Stop your lying!

GAINFORD

Tell me the truth.

SNIVELY

He sent you into the army, and not by note of the king. He also gave William his blessing, to sell her off to his family. That's all he wants: power and wealth.

WILLIAM

You lying, sack of -

GAINFORD

William, enough.

WILLIAM

He lies.

GAINFORD

How do you know so?

WILLIAM

Because Lord Umberson sent me to
kill Simeon, his long lost brother.

Snively scoffs, turns his head away.

GAINFORD

And you weren't going to tell us?

WILLIAM

I was supposed to get ahead, sneak
into Simeon's lair-

GAINFORD

Then how is Craddock involved?

UILLEAM

Simeon is a name told in secret and
shadows. A dark wizard, he is.

GAINFORD

A wizard?

He laughs, shakes his head.

WILLIAM

A wizard who speaks to animals of
all kinds.

GAINFORD

(turns to Snively)
Is this true?

Silence.

WILLIAM

That is answer enough.

GAINFORD

This changes everything.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - EVENING

Simeon lays a plate of warm bread out for Eleanor. She sits
against the far wall, unchained.

SIMEON

Eat, child, for I know your stomach
churns with hunger.

ELEANOR

I will take nothing from you. It is
poisoned.

Simeon takes a bite of the bread.

SIMEON
Dear girl, I will not harm you.

ELEANOR
What do you intend to do with me?

SIMEON
Take back everything stolen from
me.

Eleanor eyes the plate of food. Simeon notices and takes a few steps back. She walks slowly to the plate, lifts it, sniffs it, then takes a bite of the bread. She eats more of it, emptying the plate.

ELEANOR
Is there more?

Simeon nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
May I have more?

SIMEON
Tell me first: what does your
father say of your dearest mother?

Surprised, Eleanor thinks back.

ELEANOR
He has never said much. She died
giving birth to me.

SIMEON
Pity. She was a beautiful woman.

ELEANOR
(angry)
What would you know of her,
villain?

SIMEON
(smiles)
I know more about your family than
you do, sweet child.

ELEANOR
Why do you keep calling me child?

SIMEON
I was hoping your father might tell
you the truth one day.

ELEANOR
(shakes head)
I do not like the course of this
conversation. Why the riddles?

GROWLS echo off the walls.

SIMEON
I must feed my pet, and then I will
return with more food for you.

He reaches for the plate. Eleanor grabs his hands.

ELEANOR
Tell me why I am here.

Simeon raises his hood, reveals his scarred face, glass eye, and crooked teeth. Eleanor eyes his features and their uniqueness.

SIMEON
Bernard Umberson stole something
from me, and I will take it back.

He stomps from the cave, lightning-like tendrils of blue magic crackled from his finger tips and dance between him and the walls.

Eleanor looks up and down the hall, then back toward the chains. They do not move toward her. Simeon left her unbound.

She reaches out her hand, feeling a cool breeze blowing from the right. She races in that direction, sprints toward the breeze.

For several moments she runs, turning toward the crispiest air. The light fades, but her eyes adjust.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

Eleanor realizes she is outside. A strong, cold wind, chills her so she wraps her thin veil of cloth around her shoulders and rubs her arms with her hands. She looks in all directions, and then heads downhill.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - NIGHT

SIMEON
I do hope you enjoy-

He enters the chamber, sees the loose chains.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Damn my stupidity!

He races up the tunnel, whistles a sharp cry, and alerts his dragon Craddock.

(O.S.) Craddock roars, his cry echoes off the walls.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

(O.S.) ROAR echoes through the cold night air. Eleanor hears and continues running down the mountain.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Gainford paces back and forth, watching Snively and William.

GAINFORD
You all know what we are up
against. You all have your own
reasons. No one will judge you but
God himself.

UILLEAM
You have led us this far.

FALLON
We fight to the end.

HENRY
I wager you'll win.

ISABEL
I have not come this far to give
up, either.

WILLIAM
Well, you know what I am in this
for. Can't let Gainford get all the
credit.

GAINFORD
Then we drag Snively behind us and
march up the damn mountain,
tonight.

He pulls his sword from the ground and cuts the binds holding Snively. Snively falls and smacks his face to the ground, groans.

Uilleam lifts Snively over his shoulders, follows steps with Gainford up the road, the mountain reflecting a full moon's light from its snow cap.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Gainford and William tie Snively to a tree. Snively is yelling until William gags him with a dirty rag.

Gainford stands in front of Snively, arms crossed.

GAINFORD

You will answer only what I ask of you. If you lie and I find out, you will die slowly. Do you understand?

Snively nods.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Who sent you?

William pulls the gag out.

SNIVELY

You know who! That bumbling mayor Umberson!

GAINFORD

Now why would he delay the rescue of his daughter?

SNIVELY

(laughs)
You really do not know, do you?

GAINFORD

I would not ask it if I knew.

SNIVELY

She is a troublesome brat-

Gainford lands a jab on Snively's jaw. William lands a right cross on Snively's other cheek, and then stuffs the gag back in his mouth.

WILLIAM

He lies.

GAINFORD

I know, but who would he be working for?

WILLIAM
His own means?

GAINFORD
He is not that smart a man.

Snively grunts his objection. William backhands him.

WILLIAM
So then who might he be answering
to?

GAINFORD
What if he is telling the truth?

WILLIAM
He is lying!

Gainford steps back, looks at William, then at Snively.
Snively gives up trying to spit out the rag.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Umberson would never risk his
daughter's life like that.

GAINFORD
(keeps his eyes on
Snively)
I don't believe he would.

Gainford grabs the rag from Snively's mouth and tosses it
aside.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
What have you got to say?

SNIVELY
(looks at William)
He lies better than I do.

GAINFORD
You better stop lying then.

SNIVELY
Umberson sent me.

William lands another punch on Snively.

WILLIAM
Liar!

Snively spits blood, smiling with blood-stained teeth.

SNIVELY
How would you know?

William raises his fist again, but Gainford stops him.

GAINFORD
Enough! Nothing on this journey
makes sense to me, so how do we
know Umberson didn't send him? He
told me to bring him.

WILLIAM
Because.

GAINFORD
Not good enough. What do you know?

Gainford moves closer to William, who steps back. Gainford
presses closer.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
What do you know?

WILLIAM
He sent me to kill his brother.

GAINFORD
Brother?

WILLIAM
Simeon. Umberson had a brother. He
is the one who took Eleanor.

GAINFORD
How?

WILLIAM
Simeon controls the dragon.

Uilleam, Isabel, Fitz and Fallon all stand up from their
perches along the wooded road.

FALLON
A wizard?

ISABEL
That controls a dragon?

UILLEAM
And you weren't going to tell us?

Uilleam heaves his battle hammer into his outstretched arms,
launching it toward William. Gainford pushes William out of
the way.

Fallon knocks an arrow to his bow and takes aim, but Gainford slashes the bow string with his dagger.

Gainford knocks the smaller man down as he races to Uilleam. Uilleam is already reaching for his sword, but Gainford lunges into him.

The two roll on the ground and Gainford settles on top, his dagger touches Uilleam's neck.

GAINFORD

Don't you think we've lost enough blood?

Uilleam growls, but says nothing.

WILLIAM

No one was supposed to know.

GAINFORD

It makes sense now, about Craddock, and the lobos, and the trolls.

SNIVELY

Bloodlust.

GAINFORD AND WILLIAM

Shut up!

Overhead, Craddock ROARS. Everyone scrambles toward the trees, getting out of sight.

Craddock lands heavily on the ground with a THUD, kicks up dust and dirt in a cloud around him. With piercing yellow eyes, the dragon stares at Snively, still tied to the tree.

With another bellowing roar by Craddock, Snively trembles as saliva splatters his face and chest.

SNIVELY

Help me!

GAINFORD

Attack him while he's on the ground!

Gainford rushes out as Fallon resets his bowstring frantically. Uilleam reaches for a weapon, but realizes he lost it. William is scared stiff.

Craddock turns to Gainford, slamming him down easily with his tail. He roars again, then opens his wings and flaps them until he rises, flying away.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

(moans)

Damn.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - DAY

GAINFORD

Keep moving, people.

ISABEL

How are we getting out of this?

GAINFORD

Going forward, not looking back.

ISABEL

We cannot outrun a blood-crazed troll.

GAINFORD

Maybe not, but we can't fight it here, either.

ISABEL

And the wolves beyond the forest? There are too many.

GAINFORD

They won't come in the forest, which is beyond me.

The group runs down the open road. Through the trees some distance away, crashing branches and angered growls echo through the trees.

FALLON

I will make a stand here, slow them down.

He stops and knocks an arrow.

HENRY

I stand with him.

He also knocks an arrow.

Gainford stops running, motions for the others to stop.

William keeps going forward.

WILLIAM

You can die here if you want. At least I can run free while you distract them.

GAINFORD

Die where you please, this is good as any place.

UILLEAM

I fight here.

He stops and unstraps his battle axe, swinging it with both hands.

The others follow, pulling out their weapons of choice. Fitz stands close to Uilleam. Isabel and Gainford stand in front of the others, and Fallon to Isabel's left.

Fallon winks at Isabel. She smiles back.

GAINFORD

You can run if you like, William.

William curses as he unsheathes his sword.

WILLIAM

Damn you all.

The noises in the trees and shrubs and bushes gets closer. On the road, some yards ahead, three TROLLS break through. They stop, turn toward the group, and then raise their war clubs.

GLUM, the tallest ogre, with hairy, yellowish skin, a protruding belly, and lanky arms and legs, looks to his brothers and nods, his eyes wide open and bloodshot.

GLEE and GROUT, the two smaller trolls with similar builds as Glum, shout curses and bound toward the warriors.

GAINFORD

Give them hell, Fallon.

Fallon and Henry loose their arrows, hitting their targets.

The arrows barely stun the enraged trolls, as they snap the wooden shafts from the tips.

Gainford and Uilleam sprint toward Glum as Glee and Grout make a move toward Fallon, Isabel, and Henry.

Gainford ducks under Glum's first swing and cuts a gash in the troll's leg while Uilleam goes high, slicing a cut in Glum's shoulder.

Glum favors his hurt leg, turning on the other leg. He swings toward Uilleam, slamming his club into the larger man's back. Uilleam screams as he falls face-first into the ground.

Gainford swings with both hands into Glum's other leg, hears BONE BREAKING as he hits the appendage. Glum ROARS in pain.

Fallon and Henry shoot two more arrows into Glee and Grout before they reach the group. An arrow pierces Grout's throat. Isabel makes quick work of the distraction, slicing the troll's stomach as Fallon pulls a dagger and throws it into the troll's chest.

Fitz freezes as Glee moves quickly over top of him. Glee raises his club to strike.

William lunges into Fitz, tackling the kid out of the way as Glee smashes the club into the ground.

WILLIAM

You okay?

FITZ

I think so, thank you.

WILLIAM

Don't mention-

Glee grabs William's leg before he can stand, swinging him around once before letting him go. William slams into a tree, drops his sword, and falls into a ditch.

Glee limbers toward Fitz again.

GAINFORD

Strike hard and fast!

Uilleam, a little dazed, picks up a large stone and throws it into Glum's back. The troll stumbles toward Gainford. Gainford swings his sword toward the troll's fighting arm, slices open a wound on its forearm.

An arrow whistles into Glum's forehead. The troll's eyes go cross as he reaches for the shaft, pulling the arrow from his head. Blood flows from the wound. The troll drops.

William wakes up, grabs his sword.

Isabel turns toward the last troll, toward Glee.

Glee holds Fitz's crumpled, lifeless body in the air, then takes a bite of his head. Glee tosses the body aside as two arrows fly into the troll's chest and neck, followed by Uilleam's blunt war hammer.

Isabel, Gainford, and William sprint to Glee, all stabbing their swords into the troll's stomach, chest, and back. They pull out their swords. Glee bleeds out, falls dead.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
God damn them all!

He kneels at Fitz's body, drops his cloak over the kid's body.

Everyone gathers around.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
Too much has been lost already.

UILLEAM
And we haven't fought our prize, yet.

GAINFORD
(lowers head)
I will not begrudge anyone for leaving.

WILLIAM
This whole mission is-

UILLEAM
Fucked. From the beginning.

WILLIAM
What the hell do you mean?

UILLEAM
Fallon and Henry have been betting on who might be the mole.

FALLON
Damn straight. Snively's just a pawn.

UILLEAM
Exactly.

WILLIAM
What would you know?

GAINFORD
I think they're right. What is your stake here?

WILLIAM
What stake? How about Eleanor's hand in marriage?

GAINFORD

Bullshit.

WILLIAM

She agreed the day before the attack.

GAINFORD

Then what is Snively's stake?

WILLIAM

We should ask him.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - LATER

Snively is bound and gagged to a tree. William and Gainford stand in front of him. The others sit back on the other side of the road.

GAINFORD

Why do you not want us to find Craddock?

William rips the cloth from Snively's mouth.

SNIVELY

A dangerous beast like that? Isn't it obvious?

WILLIAM

(sneers)
Enlighten us.

SNIVELY

We are all going to die out here. I tried to make it a little more pleasant.

GAINFORD

By letting Aohd get eaten by Lobos? Agnes bleeding to death? Warrin and Fitz clubbed by trolls? How the hell is that any more peaceful?

William punches Snively in the stomach. Snively dry heaves, then catches his breath.

SNIVELY

The poison works slowly, but I wanted to slit your throats.

GAINFORD

Who sent you?

SNIVELY
Who told you to bring me?

GAINFORD
Lord Umberson?

SNIVELY
(spits)
Yes, him. Your dear, lord, William.

WILLIAM
He lies.

GAINFORD
How so? Umberson did send him
personally.

WILLIAM
I don't care. He lies.

GAINFORD
Is it that hard to believe?

William and Gainford stand nearly nose to nose.

WILLIAM
I ask you to trust me on this.

SNIVELY
What do you know of it, William?

William sends another punch to Snively's soft belly.

GAINFORD
Enough. What are you playing at?

SNIVELY
You really don't know?

WILLIAM
Shut your mouth, you snake!

He punches Snively across the mouth. Before he can punch again, Uilleam sprints across the road and grabs William's arm, holding him a foot off the ground.

UILLEAM
We need him to talk.

WILLIAM
Put me down.

UILLEAM
Play nicely.

He drops William to his feet.

GAINFORD

Tell us who sent you and why they sent you to stop us.

SNIVELY

Lord Umberson doesn't want Eleanor back. In fact, he doesn't want you back, either, Gainford.

WILLIAM

Stop your lying!

GAINFORD

Tell me the truth.

SNIVELY

He sent you into the army, and not by note of the king. He also gave William his blessing, to sell her off to his family. That's all he wants: power and wealth.

WILLIAM

You lying, sack of -

GAINFORD

William, enough.

WILLIAM

He lies.

GAINFORD

How do you know so?

WILLIAM

Because Lord Umberson sent me to kill Simeon, his long lost brother.

Snively scoffs, turns his head away.

GAINFORD

And you weren't going to tell us?

WILLIAM

I was supposed to get ahead, sneak into Simeon's lair-

GAINFORD

Then how is Craddock involved?

UILLEAM

Simeon is a name told in secret and shadows. A dark wizard, he is.

GAINFORD

A wizard?

He laughs, shakes his head.

WILLIAM

A wizard who speaks to animals of all kinds.

GAINFORD

(turns to Snively)

Is this true?

Silence.

WILLIAM

That is answer enough.

GAINFORD

This changes everything.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - EVENING

Simeon lays a plate of warm bread out for Eleanor. She sits against the far wall, unchained.

SIMEON

Eat, child, for I know your stomach churns with hunger.

ELEANOR

I will take nothing from you. It is poisoned.

Simeon takes a bite of the bread.

SIMEON

Dear girl, I will not harm you.

ELEANOR

What do you intend to do with me?

SIMEON

Take back everything stolen from me.

Eleanor eyes the plate of food. Simeon notices and takes a few steps back.

She walks slowly to the plate, lifts it, sniffs it, then takes a bite of the bread. She eats more of it, emptying the plate.

ELEANOR
Is there more?

Simeon nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
May I have more?

SIMEON
Tell me first: what does your
father say of your dearest mother?

Surprised, Eleanor thinks back.

ELEANOR
He has never said much. She died
giving birth to me.

SIMEON
Pity. She was a beautiful woman.

ELEANOR
(angry)
What would you know of her,
villain?

SIMEON
(smiles)
I know more about your family than
you do, sweet child.

ELEANOR
Why do you keep calling me child?

SIMEON
I was hoping your father might tell
you the truth one day.

ELEANOR
(shakes head)
I do not like the course of this
conversation. Why the riddles?

GROWLS echo off the walls.

SIMEON
I must feed my pet, and then I will
return with more food for you.

He reaches for the plate. Eleanor grabs his hands.

ELEANOR
Tell me why I am here.

Simeon raises his hood, reveals his scarred face, glass eye, and crooked teeth. Eleanor eyes his features and their uniqueness.

SIMEON
Bernard Umberson stole something
from me, and I will take it back.

He stomps from the cave, lightning-like tendrils of blue magic crackled from his finger tips and dance between him and the walls.

Eleanor looks up and down the hall, then back toward the chains. They do not move toward her. Simeon left her unbound.

She reaches out her hand, feeling a cool breeze blowing from the right. She races in that direction, sprints toward the breeze.

For several moments she runs, turning toward the crispiest air. The light fades, but her eyes adjust.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

Eleanor realizes she is outside. A strong, cold wind, chills her so she wraps her thin veil of cloth around her shoulders and rubs her arms with her hands. She looks in all directions, and then heads downhill.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - NIGHT

SIMEON
I do hope you enjoy-

He enters the chamber, sees the loose chains.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Damn my stupidity!

He races up the tunnel, whistles a sharp cry, and alerts his dragon Craddock.

(O.S.) Craddock roars, his cry echoes off the walls.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

(O.S.) ROAR echoes through the cold night air. Eleanor hears and continues running down the mountain.

EXT. FOREST ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Gainford paces back and forth, watching Snively and William.

GAINFORD

You all know what we are up against. You all have your own reasons. No one will judge you but God himself.

UILLEAM

You have led us this far.

FALLON

We fight to the end.

HENRY

I wager you'll win.

ISABEL

I have not come this far to give up, either.

WILLIAM

Well, you know what I am in this for. Can't let Gainford get all the credit.

GAINFORD

Then we drag Snively behind us and march up the damn mountain, tonight.

He pulls his sword from the ground and cuts the binds holding Snively. Snively falls and smacks his face to the ground, groans.

Uilleam lifts Snively over his shoulders, follows steps with Gainford up the road, the mountain reflecting a full moon's light from its snow cap.

FADE IN

EXT. UMBER TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Bernard kicks a pile of ash, the cloud mushrooms toward his face. He coughs, waves his arms in front of his face.

BERNARD

What is bloody taking them so long?

Townfolk pile pieces of fresh cut wood near the water fountain in the center of town while others continue to rake or sweep piles of ash and burnt materials in alternate piles.

Three men raise scaffolding along the mayoral house. Bernard watches them as they check its sturdiness.

CHARLOTTE COLLIER, a middle aged woman with dark hair and dark skin, walks up to Bernard, hands him a mug.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
What is this?

CHARLOTTE
Ale, mi-lord.

BERNARD
Oh.

He takes a sip, then exhales.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Cold, crisp.

CHARLOTTE
Freshly fermented, lord.

They stand silent a moment.

BERNARD
You may speak freely, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
How are you, mi-lord?

BERNARD
Fine.

CHARLOTTE
I mean about your daughter.

BERNARD
What? Oh, yes, Eleanor.

CHARLOTTE
Mi-lord?

BERNARD
I'll feel better when those fools return.

CHARLOTTE
I am sure they will.

BERNARD
With that dragon's head.

Charlotte said nothing as she turned toward the mountains.

CHARLOTTE
Can't say what will happen in the
wild, mi-lord. They will not come
back the same as they left.

BERNARD
(squints eyes at her)
Of course they will.

CHARLOTTE
The wild changes a man. What you
have sent them after is much worse.

Bernard downs the rest of his ale, shoving the mug in
Charlotte's hands.

BERNARD
See to it every one is well fed.
Thanks.

Bernard stomps toward his house, shouts at the men on the
scaffolding.

Charlotte takes the mug, heading toward a smaller building,
unscathed by the dragon attack.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Charlotte moves past the two patrons at the bar and tosses
the mug into a tub of soapy water. Ludlum enters from the
kitchen.

LUDLUM
Anything?

CHARLOTTE
Something isn't right.

LUDLUM
This is about more than just a
dragon. He would have called the
men-at-arms for that.

CHARLOTTE
Gainford knows that, too. He is a
smart soldier.

LUDLUM

Well, he can't do it alone.

CHARLOTTE

He is not alone.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY

Gainford steps up the steep incline, eyes a wider, flat edge just ahead. He turns and offers a hand to Isabel.

Isabel takes his hand, pulls herself ahead of him. Fallon follows suit.

Gainford offers a hand to William. William ignores it, nearly trips but catches himself.

Uilleam lets out a hearty laugh, pushes William forward.

William glares at Uilleam, who is just as tall as he is with the incline. William turns and struggles to climb higher.

Uilleam hands the rope he is holding to Gainford as he pushes forward. Gainford yanks on the ropes.

GAINFORD

Keep up, Snively. We haven't got all day.

Snively sneers, and then pouts. His breathing is labored. He clambors ahead. Henry is close behind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE ROAD - DAY

The ledge is more than three men wide, snaking around the mountain. There are crops of trees spotted along the path, mostly bare. Traces of snow cover the ground.

Fallon and Henry stand to one side.

HENRY

We did not sign on for this.

FALLON

Aye, we did.

HENRY

No, we signed on to rescue a girl from a dragon. Not put up with rivaling suitors.

FALLON
I've never trusted that William.
But Gainford was a good young man
before he left.

HENRY
Why did he leave?

FALLON
Called to duty, I suppose.

HENRY
The king doesn't call just one man,
he calls all able-bodied men. And
for what purpose?

FALLON
Border skirmishes?

HENRY
Have there been border problems?

Fallon stands straight, thinks.

FALLON
Not for ten years now.

HENRY
Exactly.

FALLON
Umberson sent him away.

HENRY
We should know why.

Gainford watches Fallon and Henry talk about something, but
can't hear them.

Uilleam sits on a rock, staring at his flask.

GAINFORD
How much is left?

UILLEAM
Enough to feel it.

GAINFORD
Perhaps we can share it-

Uilleam reaches to pop the top. Gainford raises his arm.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
After. After we slay the beast.

UILLEAM

You still think that's all this is?
A possessive, treasure hoarding
dragon?

GAINFORD

Until I know more.

UILLEAM

Ask your friend. He's been all chum
with Umberson since you first left.

Gainford looks at William, who is standing at the edge of the path. William stares down the mountain.

GAINFORD

I have no reason yet to think he
knows anything more than I do.

UILLEAM

The lobos on the plains? We should
have been dead meat in the trees!
And the half crazed trolls? They
weren't right in the head!

GAINFORD

Trolls? Right in the head? Are you
sure you haven't been drinking?

ISABEL

(stands over Gainford)
If he does drink today, I win a
nice sack of coin.

Gainford eyes her.

UILLEAM

Aye, lassie there bet I would drink
it today. Fallon calls tomorrow.

GAINFORD

There's a pool on when you'll have
a drink?

Uilleam and Isabel nod.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Fallon! Fallon!

Fallon and Henry look up, step toward Gainford.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Put me down for the end of this trip, when we slay the beast! Ten silver coins!

Fallon and Henry look at each other with surprise.

FALLON

Will do, but that's a long shot!

WILLIAM

This whole rescue is a long shot. We'll be dead before-

Uilleam stands to his feet, towering over William.

UILLEAM

Shut your mouth as tight as your ass or I'll see to it you don't speak like that again!

WILLIAM

You'll murder me? Wonder what Umberson will think.

Everyone looked at each other.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I know nobody cares about me, and I couldn't give a damn! But no one, no one, will threaten me!

GAINFORD

Why don't we just calm down and rest for a bit. Clear our heads.

William walks down the path, away from the group. Uilleam returns to his perch. Henry moves up the road to scout. Isabel and Fallon take a seat near each other.

Gainford sighs, shakes his head. He glares at Snively. He takes out a dagger, grabs the ropes that bind the traitor, and pulls him up.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Come with me.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE FOREST EDGE - EVENING

Eleanor squats in the shrubs, breathing hard. She breathes in her mouth and out her nose, tries to calm down. Her eyes dart wildly around her. Wind rustles leaves, knock branches together.

Eleanor listens, but hears nothing. The ground is cold, covered in a thin layer of snow. She sees a broken branch, the end of it sharp at the break. She grabs it, and then runs from her hiding spot.

She looks toward the sun, moving south, toward her village, and down the slope of the mountain. She sees a shadow in the brush.

Eleanor stops, takes a stance, raises the broken branch like a spear.

The shadow grows bigger, reveals itself.

ELEANOR

An oso?

The oso is a man and a half tall, black fur with large paws and long sharp claws. It snarls, revealing sharp, yellowish teeth in its snout.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Calm down, friend. Take it easy. No trouble here.

Eleanor lowers her branch, raising her arms.

The oso lowers to all four, not coming any closer. IT grunts at her, sniffs the air.

Eleanor steps in a half circle around the oso, never taking her eyes off it. Once around the oso, she backed away slowly. The oso turns its attention back to the shrubs it was sniffing through.

Eleanor runs down her path.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE FOREST EDGE - LATER

Simeon stops walking. He raises his half staff over his head, leans back with his face to the sky, eyes closed.

SIMEON

Tell me where she is.

A flash of light brightens the area and a ghost-like aura floats from Simeon's body. The apparition moves quickly over the trees and ground, floats from animal to animal. As it passes over birds and other animals, it touches them with a small spark.

The aura moves over the oso, touches it, and the spark flares. The aura stops. It reaches for the oso and touches it again, holds its energy on the oso.

Faster than it traveled this far, the aura snaps back toward Simeon's rigid body. Upon contact, Simeon doubles over forward, drops to his knees and gasps a lung full of air.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

I've got you now, little girl. You will not spoil my plans!

Simeon raises his staff. A light shines at one end, and from it shoots a bolt of lightning to the sky.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE ROAD - EVENING

Lightning strikes the side of the mountain.

Gainford wipes clean his sword, sheathes it, and sighs.

GAINFORD

Looks like rain the rest of the way.

UILLEAM

Storms can be nasty this far up.

GAINFORD

Then we'll have to get moving. Now.

(louder)

Let's grab what we have left, and make a final push to the dragon's lair.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE ROAD - NIGHT

Henry crouches along the road. He spies ahead. The wind is strong and cold, his face is red. He is down wind.

Ahead, he sees a large, moving shadow. He lets out a sharp whistle, carried by the wind.

Gainford hears the whistle, calls a halt. He creeps quietly and sidles next to Henry.

GAINFORD

What is it?

HENRY

A dragon, I think.

GAINFORD

Craddock?

Henry shakes his head.

Gainford walks quick and quiet to the rest of the group.

UILLEAM

What is it?

GAINFORD

Dragon.

UILLEAM

Dragon? Not Craddock?

GAINFORD

I do not think so.

FALLON

Care to wager?

GAINFORD

(shakes head, smiles)
He blocks our path.

FALLON

Then we push past him.

GAINFORD

Might go bad.

FALLON

What has gone good?

UILLEAM

He has a point.

Henry pushes his way into the circle.

HENRY

He's sleeping. We can sneak around
him.

GAINFORD

Then let's do so quickly!

The group sets forward. The dragon is laying across most of the road, with its head leaning over the down-slope edge of the mountain road.

Gainford treads lightly first. The dragon's tail is laying over the width of the road, with the end closer to a cropping of trees.

He takes a deep breath, looks down the dragon's scaled body. The moon is partly covered in clouds, casting dancing shadows over the beast and road as the trees are pushed by the strong cold winds.

He steps over the appendage, careful not to slip and touch the tail. He makes it to the other side and waves for the others to follow.

One by one, they make it by the dragon, leaving Uilleam and Snively as the last.

UILLEAM
You're next, snake.

SNIVELY
(mumbling)
Hm, mm.

He looks at the dragon, then at Uilleam, his eyes wide open. He straightens his back, shakes his head.

SNIVELY (CONT'D)
Oh, hmmm mo!

UILLEAM
Get going, or I leave you behind.

Snively snears, shakes his head, mumbling to himself.

Uilleam smacks the back of Snively's head.

UILLEAM (CONT'D)
Quietly, or be dragon fodder.

Snively shuffles toward the dragon's tail. He stops, stares at the sleeping dragon.

Uilleam shoves Snively, who stumbles, falls face first inches from the tail.

Snively mumbles a curse and scrambles to sit up.

The dragon inhales deeply, lets out a long breath. The tail moves, hitting Snively.

Uilleam stops, eyes wide open, hands on the handle of his war hammer.

The dragon stirs, stretching muscles, shifts long neck.

Uilleam and Snively hold their breath, unflinching.

The dragon settles, and breathes in a rhythm. Uilleam sighs, slapping Snively as he lifts him over his shoulder. Uilleam leaps over the tale, moves faster to the rest of the group.

Fallon flips Henry a silver coin with a look of defeat.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

Eleanor rests in a cropping of rock. She pulls her shawl tightly around her shoulders. She shivers.

ELEANOR
Should have thought this through a
little more.

She sits silently, listens to a distant sound through the wind.

It sounds like cloth flapping in the wind.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Wings!

She throws herself flat against the rocks as the sound comes closer. It is so close, now she hears a guttural growl. She feels the ground shudder, followed by a heavy thud. Strong steps pace the grounds nearby.

SIMEON (O.S.)
Eleanor, you must be cold. Do not
keep me angry.

Eleanor stops breathing, the veins in her neck pulse.

SIMEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This plan has everything to do with
you! I need you alive and well -
for now! This mountain will kill
you far worse than Craddock ever
could!

The sounds come closer, and now she sees shadows over the ground near her head. She stays low and quiet.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Damn your fallible nose, dragon!
She is not here. Keep searching!

Eleanor listens as the dragon opens its wings and begins to flap. She waits until she can't hear the beast's wings in the distance, and then waits longer.

Craddock roars in the distance.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE ROAD

Gainford urges everyone further up the road. The snow is falling now, and it collects on the rocks, trees, and road.

UILLEAM

We need to find a way up that will be a little faster than this.

GAINFORD

Safer as well.

UILLEAM

Has Henry seen anything?

Henry sits, waits for the group.

GAINFORD

What do you see?

HENRY

There are paths up the mountain, but they are all open.

UILLEAM

Meaning?

GAINFORD

We'll be exposed most of the way up.

HENRY

This mountain is unusual, as in it offers another tree line, but it's high up there.

(points)

GAINFORD

We move quickly then.

He motions for everyone to gather.

A dragon's roar is heard.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

That was close.

FALLON

That one was Craddock. Heard it just before the attack.

HENRY

We all heard it on the road, when
it ate the troll.

GAINFORD

Well, let's make it to the next
treeline. Start moving.

He moves up the steep incline, clambers over the snow covered ground. He is followed by Fallon, then Isabel. Uilleam drags a resistant Snively behind him. William follows. Henry takes up the rear.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - LATER

Eleanor peeks her head around the rocks, assures herself no one is around, and stands up slowly.

The clearing is well-lit and she is alone. She closes her shawl around her, then starts back down the mountain again.

She hears something approach, turns each way to find a place to hide. There is a single stone, not much larger than herself. She runs to it, ducks behind it.

GAINFORD

(takes a sharp breath)
Damn this mountain.

FALLON

Craddock's lair is not far.

WILLIAM

Can we trust he knows what he is
talking about?

FALLON

I've tracked the beast many times,
just never with anyone else.

UILLEAM

My brothers and I were dared to
follow him here, when we were young
and stupid. We did.

FALLON

So now we're old and stupid?

Uilleam chuckled.

WILLIAM

Gainford, we do not know what
Craddock-

ELEANOR

Gainford!

She leaps from behind the rock, startles everyone. Each draws a weapon.

Gainford lowers his as he lays eyes on Eleanor. His lips turn to a smile. He moves toward her.

Eleanor runs to Gainford, but before she embraces him, she lays a hard smack across his face. Gainford stumbles back. William laughs.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That was for leaving me!

She embraces him, holding tightly. William frowns. Fallon and Henry laugh.

GAINFORD

It was not my choice.

ELEANOR

I know. Can we hurry away from here?

GAINFORD

We have a task to finish.

ELEANOR

You cannot defeat him.

GAINFORD

Craddock? I am sure we can.

ELEANOR

No, not just Crad-

WILLIAM

I can take her back to a safe place.

GAINFORD

And miss the fight?

ELEANOR

Listen, please.

WILLIAM

No, this is personal.

ELEANOR

Damn you men! It isn't just Craddock!

A sharp wind blows through the group, stirs the newly fallen snow.

Uilleam ties Snively to the rock as the others gather around Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

The dragon was his cover. He somehow controls it, like a pet.

GAINFORD

Who?

ELEANOR

His name is Simeon, and he really does not like my father.

Gainford looks at William. William stares into the distance.

GAINFORD

Son of a bitch.

He lunges for William, strikes him across the face. The two men scramble on the ground for control, land punch after punch to the body and head. Eleanor screams.

Uilleam runs over, grabbing William by the neck. Henry and Fallon drag Gainford away. Isabel and Eleanor stand between them.

WILLIAM

This is why I was supposed to go alone!

GAINFORD

We were not prepared for this!

WILLIAM

You were never supposed to be here, but you came home early.

GAINFORD

And you not telling us about the wizard was a smart idea?

SNIVELY

Well, he was never really sure there was a wizard.

Everyone glares at the captive.

Gainford fights free of the two archers and marches to Snively.

GAINFORD

Spill your guts or I will.

He pulls out his sword, pressing the tip into Snively's stomach.

SNIVELY

Okay, okay, okay!

Gainford leaves the tip pressing into his stomach.

SNIVELY (CONT'D)

Like William said, you weren't to be here. Lord Umberson gave me the poison to slow you down, but William was too afraid to leave on his own!

WILLIAM

Liar! You were not the plan!

GAINFORD

Umberson never told you.

WILLIAM

He lies through his damned teeth!

William struggles uselessly in Uilleam's grip.

GAINFORD

Snively, did you know of the wizard?

Before he answers, Craddock flies in, landing very close to the group, knocks everyone to the ground. He roars, defeats everyone.

Gainford scrambles back from Snively. Uilleam looks for his battle axe.

William runs toward Eleanor, grabs her arm, and pulls her away. Isabel screams. Henry and Fallon knock arrows.

Craddock turns toward the two men, inhales deeply, releases white hot flames from his mouth.

Fallon shoves Henry to one side while he lunges the other way.

Craddock looks hungrily at Snively, inhales, and exhales flame. Snively screams as the fire incinerates his body.

In one fluid motion, Craddock blankets the area in fire, snatches Snively's burning corpse in his jaws, and flies into the night.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - MORNING

Gainford opens his eyes. He struggles against ropes that bind him. He looks around at the others. Everyone is bound.

Simeon stands in front of Gainford.

SIMEON

The prodigal son of Umber returns.

GAINFORD

You must be the wizard.

SIMEON

The one and only.

GAINFORD

So now what?

SIMEON

I offer you this: Turn around, go anywhere but to Umber, and no harm will come of you.

GAINFORD

And what of Eleanor?

SIMEON

She is safe with me.

GAINFORD

What if I can't do that?

SIMEON

Then more blood will be on your hands. Trust me when I say this: You do not understand this.

GAINFORD

Enlighten me.

Simeon walks toward Gainford, waves a bony finger.

SIMEON

Tsk, tsk. Too soon.

GAINFORD

If you harm her-

SIMEON

Gainford Durham, you have a stout heart, much like your father. Stubborn, like your mother. Use your brain. You are out-matched.

Gainford tries to stand, his hands still bound. Simeon points a finger at him, sends a bolt of magic lightning into his chest. Gainford falls to his back, coughing.

GAINFORD

I cannot be stopped so easily.

SIMEON

You are worthy of her heart. Be there when she can give it away.

Simeon leaves Gainford on the ground, walks to Eleanor's unconscious body. He turns his palm upward and she floats in the air. The body follows as he walks up the mountain side. He disappears from Gainford's sight.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - LATER

Fallon kneels over Henry's body. Henry's body is burned badly. Fallon sheds tears quietly. Isabel stands over him, holding his shoulder.

FALLON

This is madness.

ISABEL

We do not know what we are fighting against.

UILLEAM

Or what we are fighting for.

WILLIAM

For your lord's daughter.

UILLEAM

Do not think for a moment I did this for that man. A friend asked me to go along.

WILLIAM

Then run away with your tail between your legs.

Uilleam stands tall over William, his eyes open wide and bloodshot. His face reddens and the veins in his neck and bare arms pulse.

GAINFORD

I can ask none of you to go any further. I will fight for Eleanor, or die trying.

No one looks up.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

I will not hold any ill toward those who decide to return. You have all sacrificed so much this far.

Uilleam turns from William.

UILLEAM

I can go no further, brother. I am sorry.

Fallon stands up, holds Isabel's hand. He looks at Gainford, shakes his head, and turns away. Isabel looks to the ground, walks with him.

GAINFORD

William?

WILLIAM

I have a mission to finish.

GAINFORD

Then watch my back, and I'll have yours.

The two men grab their weapons, leave everything else behind. They walk up the mountain.

Fallon, Isabel, and Uilleam start their walk down the mountain.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE/CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Gainford and William pull themselves over the ledge, sit for a moment. Gainford looks around the flat edge and the large cave entrance just ahead.

William scoffs as he stands to his feet.

WILLIAM

Simeon is mine.

GAINFORD

What about Craddock?

WILLIAM
I'd rather avoid him.

Gainford laughs.

GAINFORD
If that were possible. We cannot
take them both down ourselves.

WILLIAM
If I take out the wizard, then we
can handle the beast.

GAINFORD
Can I trust you?

William says nothing, stares ahead.

WILLIAM
You can do as you wish.

He walks toward the cave entrance.

INT. UMBER'S TENT - NIGHT

Umberson sleeps in the bed, snores. Charlotte sneaks inside. She steps silently, moves her feet and body around stacked boxes and objects.

She looks at a half-burned desk. She stands in front of it. There is a lock on the lower drawer. She takes out a knife. It glints in the candle light. Quickly, she breaks the lock, reaches inside the drawer, and pulls out a sealed envelope.

Umberson groans, shifts his sleep position. Charlotte ducks into the shadows. After a moment, she moves into the light.

Charlotte reads the papers, most of which are useless. She finds one, and reads it through. Her eyes grow wide and she grinds her teeth to keep from beating Umberson in his sleep.

Charlotte rushes from the tent and into the night.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

Fallon, still holds Isabel's hand, stops walking. Uilleam brushes by him. Isabel urges him down. He lets her hand go and turns to look up.

Uilleam stops. Isabel looks at both men.

ISABEL

We cannot leave them, can we?

FALLON

(shakes his head)

I can't leave Gainford now either. This isn't his fight. It is ours, on our home. You barely came back to it.

UILLEAM

We can make no difference. They are doomed.

FALLON

Should the wizard follow? Eleanor said he had a hatred for her father.

Uilleam growls, flexes his muscles, contemplates his odds for each decision as he looks up the mountain.

UILLEAM

What are you willing to wager we make it back?

FALLON

My life.

Uilleam nods.

ISABEL

Mine, too.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Gainford and William creep through the dark, rock tunnel. Water drips from the ceiling, air whistles through cracks along the path.

Gainford snorts, covers his mouth.

William spits, then snorts.

WILLIAM

Dragon's breath.

Gainford nods, moves against the far wall. They continue forward.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - NIGHT

Candle light flickers from burning candles along the walls. Eleanor sits tied to a chair and gagged. She cries and tears fall down her face.

Simeon stands in the middle of the room, arms raised above his head. He stands motionless. His eyes move behind closed eyelids and his lips quiver as if he is talking silently.

After a moment, his arms drop and he opens his eyes. He stares at Eleanor with a smile.

SIMEON

It is done.

With a flick of his wrist, Eleanor's gag falls from her mouth.

ELEANOR

What are you talking about?

SIMEON

The truth is out.

ELEANOR

What was all of this about?

SIMEON

You will know soon enough. Your father and I have an old score to settle.

Simeon walks toward a candle-filled altar.

Gainford and William stand at the entrance, hidden in shadow.

ELEANOR

Why him? What has he done?

Simeon snaps his head toward her.

SIMEON

He took everything from me!

Simeon removes his hood.

Eleanor shrieks.

Simeon reveals his scarred, bald head. Burn marks cover half his face. He has a glass eye and his bottom right lip droops.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

Everything.

Eleanor looks on in horror, stares into his good eye.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 Everything I loved, everything I
 never had the chance to love. He
 ripped out my heart!

Magic, blue lightning tendrils crackle from his hands. He
 walks toward Eleanor.

Gainford tenses, steps forward. William stops him.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 I will make him suffer as I have.

He reaches up, then stops, a few steps from Eleanor.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 But I cannot hurt you, dear
 Eleanor.

Simeon turns his head down as if shamed.

ELEANOR
 (stammers)
 Why not?

Simeon turns his back to her, head still down.

SIMEON
 He took everything from me.

Eleanor doesn't question him. She stares at Simeon's back,
 her eyes search for an answer in his riddles. Her eyes grow
 wide as she discovers it.

ELEANOR
 He took me from you.

Gainford looks at William, both in shock.

Simeon raises his arms again, his magic lightning cracks
 against the wet rock around him. The candles flicker in
 spasms.

SIMEON
 And he dares to take you away from
 me again!

Simeon throws his arms toward the entrance. The lightning
 shoots toward Gainford and William.

Both men lunge forward as the magic explodes in flame behind
 them.

Gainford somersaults to his feet, his sword in front of him. William rolls closer to the side wall, he rises to his feet.

Simeon whistles a loud, piercing sound. Gainford and William cover their ears. Eleanor cringes.

Simeon points toward Gainford and blasts him with the lightning. Gainford falls backward into the wall. William moves closer to Eleanor.

Simeon turns to see him. He speaks a foreign language toward the candles. The fire explodes, sends walls of flame toward William. He stumbles back and away from Eleanor.

Gainford pulls out a dagger and throws it at Simeon. Simeon throws up his hand, knocks it away with an invisible blow. The dagger clangs as it lands on the floor.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

You will not deny me this victory!
It is already too late!

He fires another lightning strike at Gainford, who rolls out of the way. He sprints toward Simeon and swings his sword. The wizard slides out of the way.

Simeon slams his fist into Gainford's back and knocks him to the ground.

William makes a break for Eleanor again.

Simeon reaches toward her, closes his fist, and pulls his arm back. Eleanor's chair lifts and moves across the wide, open cavern.

Simeon grimaces and he reaches his hand to his forehead. Gainford sees the pain on his face. He kicks at Simeon while he is distracted and knocks Simeon back a couple of steps.

Simeon points a finger at Gainford and strikes Gainford's chest with white-hot lightning. Gainford flies back into the wall, his chest smokes.

William grabs several candles and hurls them at Simeon. They burst in balls of fire as Simeon knocks them away one by one. William reaches for his dagger, pulls it, and throws.

Simeon slaps it from the air with his thin hand. He winces in pain as the blade cuts his skin.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

You were never supposed to be here!

William shrugs as he draws his sword.

WILLIAM

But I am.

SIMEON

To do the bidding of a lying thief!

WILLIAM

So says the kidnapper.

William jumps side to side toward Simeon as the wizard launches fireball after fireball at him. The fireballs shrink smaller the more he creates.

Gainford shakes his head dazed. He stands to his feet, watches as William distracts Simeon. He runs to Eleanor's side.

ELEANOR

Cut me loose! We have to stop this madness!

GAINFORD

I still cannot understand what's going on.

Gainford cuts her ropes.

Eleanor lunges into his arms, planting a kiss on his cheek.

William sees.

ELEANOR

Stop Simeon.

GAINFORD

You run for safety.

Eleanor runs down the tunnel.

Simeon yells in frustration. He raises both arms at the men. Gainford struggles to move closer, his body stuck in place. William also struggles to move.

Simeon takes several deep breaths.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

(through strained teeth)

You cannot keep this up, Simeon.

SIMEON

Fools! I am a powerful wizard!

Simeon lights the room with his magical lightning. Tendrils strike both William and Gainford.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE/CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Loud crackles and booms echo from the tunnel. Fallon and Isabel stand just outside the entrance. Uilleam struggles to pull his large body up over the edge.

He lays on his back a moment, catches his breath.

UILLEAM

Not as young as I used to be.

Fallon draws his bow and an arrow.

FALLON

The battle has started.

He steps toward the entrance when Isabel grabs his arm.

A loud roar fills their ears.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - NIGHT

Gainford screams in agony. William cringes in pain. Simeon holds both men in place and streams his magical lightning into their chests.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Eleanor runs for the exit. Before she makes it, she runs into Fallon. Both collapse on the floor.

Uilleam reaches down with both hands, grabs their shirts, and pulls them to their feet.

UILLEAM

Not the time to rest! Now run!

ELEANOR

Run? Which way?

Before anyone answers, Craddock roars from the cave entrance.

FALLON

Away from here!

They run toward the cavern.

INT. CAVE DWELLING - NIGHT

Simeon's magic fluctuates, gets weaker. Gainford realizes as he rises to his knees.

GAINFORD

(struggles)
You cannot keep this up, Simeon.
You will lose yourself.

SIMEON

(strains)
No, I have waited too long for
this.

GAINFORD

(struggles)
Not long enough. Your power wanes.

The magic lightning stops and Simeon falls to his hands and knees.

Gainford stands tall.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

You will pay for what has happened.

William lunges through the air, dagger in hand. He stabs the blade deep in Simeon's back.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

No!

Simeon arches his back, spits blood from his mouth as he screams.

William removes the dagger slowly.

Simeon falls to his knees, bleeding profusely from the wound.

William stands over him.

WILLIAM

It is done.

He spits on Simeon.

SIMEON

(raspy voice)
Fool, he has used you to his own
means.

WILLIAM

Tell us what you had planned.

Gainford stands listening, looks at Simeon's wound and knows the wizard is dying.

SIMEON

To cover his tracks. He could never find me and finish me, until now.

Gainford sidles next to William.

GAINFORD

To what end? What is this quarrel?

Simeon collapses onto his back, stares at the ceiling.

SIMEON

He is my younger brother, and he took everything from me. Even my pregnant wife.

He breathes his last, expels his cold breath. Suddenly, like a tornado, the wind centers around Simeon's body, and just as quickly explodes outward through the cavern.

Gainford regains composure. William looks lost.

Craddock's screeching roar echoes off the walls.

Gainford and William turn toward the roar just as Fallon, Uilleam, Isabel, and Eleanor stumble into the cavern.

FALLON

No time to explain, dragon's on our ass!

Fallon turns and knocks an arrow in one smooth motion, releases it after a breath.

The arrow sails into the darkened tunnel just as it lights bright as fire. A wall of flames burst into the cavern, lighting up the whole cave.

The cavern is tall and wide, with stalactites dangling overhead, shadows obscure view all around.

Craddock lunges through the opening in the tunnel, pushing past the warriors.

Gainford scrambles toward a side wall, pulls Eleanor with him. Fallon and Isabel move back toward the entrance. Uilleam and William scramble to the opposite side as Gainford.

Craddock moves on all fours like an agile cat rather than lizard. His eyes look in all directions, wide open as if to see everything around him all at once. His large, clawed paws dance over the rocky ground, constantly in motion.

Gainford watches as Craddock catches sight of Fallon.

GAINFORD

Fallon, he's right on you!

The archer preps his bow and fires an arrow. The arrow sinks into Craddock's cheek.

Isabel is close to the dragon's neck and she takes a swing, cutting a chunk of flesh from it.

Craddock swings his head, easily knocks Isabel back into a wall. She falls unconscious.

Gainford takes a few steps toward Craddock, then swings his sword. Craddock doesn't look at him, but swings his tail under Gainford as he jumps. Gainford stabs his sword into Craddock's side.

Craddock roars again and quickly turns his body around, sweeping his tail around him. He knocks Fallon, Uilleam, and William to the ground. Gainford leaps over the tail.

Craddock spews fire toward him. Gainford drops behind a rock, the flames incinerate the stone between them. Craddock bursts forward through the tunnel entrance.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)

Is everyone alright?

FALLON

Bump on the head. Isabel is down, but breathing!

UILLEAM

Aye. Carry on!

WILLIAM

Hurry, before he decides to roast the tunnel behind him!

Fallon digs into his pocket for a small vial. He snaps it and rubs it under Isabel's nose. Instantly she wakes.

ISABEL

What happened?

FALLON

Little sea salt, hun. We have a dragon to slay yet!

He helps her stand and the group runs toward the tunnel.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE/CAVE ENTRANCE

The group races outside into the cold, the wind whips at their faces and hands, stings their skin bright red.

GAINFORD

Keep your eyes to the sky!

Craddock flies overhead in a tight circle like a vulture to its prey.

Fallon knocks an arrow. Uilleam spins his war hammer. Gainford holds his sword in front of him with both hands. Isabel stands upright, sword in one hand. William holds his sword. Eleanor stands next to Gainford.

ELEANOR

Have an extra weapon for me?

GAINFORD

I don't-

ELEANOR

I'm going to help you.

GAINFORD

You should stay back.

Eleanor huffs, crosses her arms.

Fallon pulls out his sword, hands it to her.

Eleanor smiles matter-of-factly to Gainford, twirls the blade in her hands.

ELEANOR

I'm not the same girl you left behind.

GAINFORD

And I did not leave by choice.

ELEANOR

Could have said "goodbye."

GAINFORD

No, no I couldn't. How do you tell the woman you love goodbye, I go to die now?

ELEANOR

Like this.

Eleanor reaches up and grabs Gainford's shoulder, pulls him close to her, and kisses his lips.

William sneers, everyone else smiles wryly.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Goodbye, my love.

Gainford stands dumbfounded.

UILLEAM
Whatever happens, I am proud to say
we made it this far.

FALLON
How about you shut up and buy
drinks when we get back.

Uilleam shrugs.

Craddock starts his descent with a growl. He pulls his head back, bends his neck, then thrusts it forward. From his mouth, fire spews like a waterfall toward the ground below.

Everyone scrambles out of the way as the flames hit rock and Craddock lands hard on the ground. The rocks below him crack and split, and debris flies up around him.

Gainford rushes at the dragon's head, slashes at its neck with his sword. Uilleam follows and swings his hammer for its skull. Fallon shoots an arrow toward its exposed throat. The arrow sinks in, but not deep. Isabel stabs through Craddock's shoulder. Eleanor runs forward last, but William grabs her arm and holds her back.

ELEANOR
What are you doing?

WILLIAM
Wait just a minute.

Craddock roars as he is injured, then stretches out his wings. The wings knock everyone around him to the ground. He prepares to spit fire again.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Now!

William races forward. Eleanor pauses. William reaches for the arrow in Craddock's throat. He looks at Gainford.

Gainford looks up at William.

William shoves the arrow deep into Craddock's throat, then stabs his sword into Craddock's neck and pushes it deep.

Craddock rears up his head and yanks William into the air. As William goes up, the sword and arrow pull free. Fire ignites from the wounds, and from Craddock's mouth. William catches fire, then falls over the edge.

Eleanor screams, runs at the dragon, and stabs her sword in Craddock's chest.

Craddock brings his head back down. Eleanor rolls out of the way.

Gainford grabs Eleanor as Fallon fires another arrow. It pierces Craddock's eye. Craddock swipes his tail, slams it into Fallon's chest, knocks him back into the mountain wall by the entrance.

Isabel takes a swing at the tail, slices it. Craddock looks at her.

Uilleam jumps in front of the dragon's face, arms overhead with his hammer, and slams it down right between its eyes. He turns and shoves Isabel to the side.

GAINFORD

Get out of there, Uilleam!

Craddock shakes his head, glares at Uilleam. The dragon opens its jaws, spits saliva. As if confusion strikes, Craddock tries again.

Uilleam laughs, starts to swing his hammer.

Craddock opens his jaws, snaps them over Uilleam. Uilleam sets his feet on Craddock's lower jaw, his arms on the upper jaw, and his back against the roof of the dragon's mouth. He strains every muscle to keep the jaws from closing.

UILLEAM

Do something fast, I implore you!

GAINFORD

Shit.

Gainford runs toward Fallon's fallen bow, takes it up, and turns toward Craddock.

The dragon thrashes its head. Uilleam yells and grunts.

Isabel and Eleanor raise their swords and run toward Craddock. Gainford knocks an arrow, aims for Craddock's other eye.

Craddock opens jaws and Uilleam falls out to the ground. Gainford re-aims, releases the arrow. Craddock's jaws clamp shut as the arrow flies inside its throat, piercing through the back of its neck.

Craddock screeches with a high, shrill scream. Eleanor and Isabel stop, cover their ears. Gainford and Uilleam cover their ears.

Another roar replies from above. For a moment, the night sky becomes darker.

Gainford looks up. His eyes fill with terror.

A much larger dragon descends toward the mountain side. Its scales are dark green, eyes a haunting yellow, with wings twice as long as Craddock from head to tail. Its body is three times Craddock's size, easily dwarfs Craddock.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
Everyone, get inside the cavern!

Isabel and Eleanor run in first, followed by Uilleam. Gainford quickly picks up Fallon and carries him inside.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
Keep running!

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - NIGHT

GAINFORD
Find a side cave!

Gainford turns to look back and sees an intense, bright fire orange glow growing brighter as it moves closer to them.

He starts to sprint. Suddenly, arms reach out and grab him and Fallon. The arms yank them around a back-turned corner as the fire races by. The intense heat instantly makes Gainford sweat and his skin red.

Uilleam, Eleanor, and Isabel take a relieved breath.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE/CAVE ENTRANCE - DAWN

The group emerges to a new day. Craddock and the other dragon are gone.

GAINFORD
Home?

ELEANOR
Somewhere like it.

Eleanor grabs Gainford's hand.

Uilleam stretches, slaps Fallon's shoulder. Fallon grimaces.

UILLEAM
Sorry, little man.

Isabel lightly touches Fallon's shoulder.

ISABEL
Looks like you could use a good
massage.

Fallon smiles ear to ear.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(winks)
My uncle is a massuese!

Everyone laughs.

A GROAN comes from over the edge.

Gainford and Uilleam peer over the edge. William waves his
arm, his clothes mostly burnt.

They lift him onto the ledge.

WILLIAM
What happened?

GAINFORD
I'm guessing Mama came and took her
baby home.

WILLIAM
Mama?

GAINFORD
Took Craddock before we could kill
him.

William moans in discomfort.

GAINFORD (CONT'D)
We'll get you home soon enough.

WILLIAM
And show that bastard Bernard the
glint of our steel.

ELEANOR
Yes, yes we will.

EXT. UMBER VILLAGE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Bernard Umberson is standing in front of a newly constructed fountain, arms open as the heroes return. There is an unusually large crowd gathered around.

Gainford approaches in front, Eleanor at his side. Uilleam and William walk side by side, followed by Fallon and Isabel.

UMBERSON
A mere three week's since
departure, and our hearty heroes
return victorious! Welcome!

Gainford stops a step away from the outstretched arm of Bernard Umberson. He does not shake it.

UMBERSON (CONT'D)
(in a hushed voice)
Come on now, shake my hand.

GAINFORD
You have some explaining to do.

UMBERSON
You saved my daughter from the
clutches of a dragon!

ELEANOR
Kidnapped by a wizard. Craddock was
a distraction.

Umberson gulps, his hand shakes. A bead of sweat drops from his brow. He looks to William.

William spits on the ground at Umberson's feet.

UMBERSON
How dare you!

WILLIAM
You sent me to kill your brother.

ELEANOR
My real father.

The crowd gasps.

Umberson stumbles a few steps backward.

UMBERSON
 No, it is not true! The wizard has
 affected your mind!

Gainford looks into the crowd, sees Charlotte. He nods.

CHARLOTTE
 I hold proof!

She raises her hand, in it is a piece of paper.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
 Simeon is your elder brother!
 Eleanor was in his wife's womb when
 you disfigured him!

UMBERSON
 (stammers)
 How would you know of that?

CHARLOTTE
 Simeon wrote it down, and you kept
 it in a journal.

Umberson looks stunned, his face reveals the truth.

GAINFORD
 A journal you have been too
 distracted to get rid of. We even
 have birth records, something I
 sought since I was banished.

UMBERSON
 Banished?

GAINFORD
 The king never called for soldiers.
 They enlisted me anyway. You sent
 me away because Eleanor loved me.

ELEANOR
 Loves.

UMBERSON
 Don't be fools! This is Simeon's
 doing!

Several men step out from the crowd, pull off their tattered
 cloaks to reveal shiny, plated armor. One man pulls a flag
 out.

MAN
 This is the banner of our lord and
 king.

(MORE)

MAN (CONT'D)

I am the captain of his guards.
Long have we suspected such
indignity and now there is proof.

The other guards march forward. Umberson stumbles and falls into a muddy puddle.

UMBERSON

No, no, no, I can refute their -

MAN

You have nothing more to say. The
burden of proof is in surmountable.
You are coming with us.

The captain of the guard turns to Gainford. Gainford nods.

The guards drag a childish, screaming Umberson away.

The whole crowd cheers.

ELEANOR

Now what?

GAINFORD

We decide who will lead us.

WILLIAM

I know who I would pick.

Uilleam, Fallon, and Isabel nod in agreement.

GAINFORD

I would be honored.

FALLON

First things first! Uilleam owes us
all drinks!

The group laughs.

FADE OUT