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THE PRINCE

By

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FADE IN:

INT. ROYAL BEDCHAMBER, CASTLE ELSHIRE - NIGHT

It's the late seventeenth century, in a land that never was. KING JOHN (68), of Elegonn, sleeps in his bed in his richly appointed bedchamber, next to his wife, QUEEN ANNA (32). It's very quiet, and dark, the only light starlight coming in through the windows, and the full moon.

A LITTLE GIRL (5) enters via the doorway to the balcony. She's bathed in a vague glow. She giggles and comes over to stand next to the bed, on John's side. She reaches over and "boops" him on the nose and giggles. Then she does it again.

John begins to stir. Finally he opens his eyes and sees the child. He sits up abruptly as the child exits, running back through the doorway onto the balcony.

The Queen does not stir. John shrugs into his robe and follows the child.

EXT. BALCONY TO ROYAL BEDCHAMBER, CASTLE ELSHIRE - NIGHT

The balcony is fairly large, and there is no sign of the child. Instead, there is MOIRA (24, female, tall and regal). She's glowing a bit more brightly than the child. John stops to stare at her a moment and then approaches her.

MOIRA

Greetings, John. Or, should I say,  
Your Majesty, now?

JOHN

In your case, John will do. What  
brings you to visit me?

MOIRA

Can I not come by to visit an old  
friend?

JOHN

Can a man be friends with a fen?

MOIRA

That would depend upon the meaning  
of the word "friend." Perhaps it  
has different shadings for us.

JOHN

Perhaps.

MOIRA

I always find men's rules, rituals, and behaviors so puzzling. I suppose I should offer congratulations on your becoming king of ... Elegonn? Isn't that what this country of yours is called?

JOHN

Yes. And I became king many years ago so, while I appreciate the congratulations, they are not necessary.

MOIRA

Very well. I'm here to honor the promise I made to you, all that time ago, by your reckoning.

JOHN

You have a warning for me?

MOIRA

Yes. I think you would consider it a warning. I would think of it as an opportunity.

JOHN

Really?

MOIRA

Yes. That's what most warnings are, are they not?

JOHN

What is it?

MOIRA

You've received word that Charles, King of Lennox, has died?

JOHN

Yes. It came tonight.

MOIRA

Which of your sons are you sending to the funeral?

JOHN

That's why you're here? I'd think you'd be more concerned about the war with Wynland coming to an end.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm going to begin negotiations with Marcus tomorrow, after kicking his arse all over the battlefield at Hastings today.

MOIRA

I care nothing about your wars. You kill your own kind by the thousands for the slightest cause. Or for no cause at all.

JOHN

This war has been going on for years. It cost my eldest son his life, among thousands of others. It's finally ending. Isn't that important?

MOIRA

I suppose.

JOHN

But the funeral of a grouchy old man who has been dying for years is more important?

MOIRA

Isn't Lennox an old ally of Elegonn? Didn't many men from Lennox also perish in this war of yours, fighting alongside your own?

JOHN

Yes.

MOIRA

So, answer the question: which of your sons will you send to the funeral?

JOHN

I suppose I'll be sending Phillip. I think it's only appropriate to send the Crown Prince.

MOIRA

I see.

JOHN

Why? Is that a problem?

MOIRA

Who would you send, if not Phillip?

JOHN

Not Horace. He is to serve as Regent when I'm away. Not Thomas. That would be a bad idea, for a number of embarrassing reasons. That only leaves --

MOIRA

Willard. Yes.

JOHN

Lennox will be insulted if I send Willard. This is not some minor official or unimportant ceremony. This is the funeral of the sovereign of our neighbor and ally.

MOIRA

If you insist.

JOHN

So, you're saying I should send Willard, instead of Phillip?

MOIRA

That is for you to say. I'm merely letting you know that this is not as unimportant a decision as you may believe.

JOHN

How so?

MOIRA

Here is what guidance I can offer you, John, from my limited experience with the world of men. Where my kind sees strength, you see weakness. Where we see weakness, you see strength. Which of us is the wiser?

JOHN

I see. I think. No, I don't. Wait. This makes no sense, Moira. What are you saying I should do?

MOIRA

I'm saying you should send the strongest to this funeral.

JOHN

Willard? Are you saying Willard is stronger than Phillip?

MOIRA

It would depend on how you define strength.

JOHN

You would not have come here to warn me if sending Phillip was what I should do, yes? Because that was what I was planning to do anyway.

MOIRA

Possibly. I'm just telling you that you will want to give this decision more careful consideration than you have.

JOHN

Dammit. Fen speak in riddles. Can't you speak more plainly?

MOIRA

That is all I can tell you. Good night, John. It was good to see you.

JOHN

Thank you, Moira, for your appreciated, albeit confusing advice. Will I see you again?

MOIRA

No.

She begins glowing, brighter and brighter. Then the light dims quickly and she vanishes. John turns and heads back inside.

JOHN

(muttering)

Damn. Damn damn damn ... .

EXT. BATTLEFIELD AFTER THE BATTLE - DAY

Day is breaking over a field littered with the dead and the dying. Corpsmen from both sides move among the casualties, helping those they can. Off to one side brightly dressed heralds for both sides are talking quietly, their horses tethered nearby.

## INT. KINGDOM OF ELEGONN TENT - DAY

Sitting on the floor of the tent is ABRAHAM MOSELEY (40), a sergeant in service of Elegonn. Nearby is BENJAMIN TILLEY (24), Abraham's corporal. Also nearby is ISRAEL BIGGS (18).

There are several other men in the tent, all of them soldiers. They're all filthy and exhausted. Their weapons, mostly swords and other blades, are nearby, as is their armor, mostly chain mail.

ABRAHAM

Damn. I'm starving. I hope they don't forget our morning biscuits.

BIGGS

How can you eat with that smell?

ABRAHAM

That smell is courage, my lad. Men who died bravely for their country.

BENJAMIN

And you get used to it.

ABRAHAM

That, too.

The flap to the tent opens and in strides the DUKE OF HASTINGS (46), the commander of Elegonn's forces in the field. All of the men in the tent leap to their feet and stand at attention.

HASTINGS

As you were. (Men relax) Sergeant Moseley? A word?

Moseley goes over to Hastings where they have a quiet conversation.

HASTINGS (CONT'D)

I just received a letter via courier from His Majesty. He needs five men to act as bodyguards for one of the royal family for a funeral.

ABRAHAM

Funeral? Whose, Your Grace?

HASTINGS

King Charles. Lennox.

ABRAHAM

Ah. So the old bugger finally  
kicked off.

HASTINGS

We'll have none of that, sergeant.

ABRAHAM

I'm sorry, Your Grace.

HASTINGS

Yes, the old gasbag has finally  
succumbed. Somebody has to go to  
the funeral but with Wynland now  
willing to discuss terms His  
Majesty is going to be in  
negotiations. And his bodyguard  
will need to accompany him here,  
when he arrives to meet with  
Wynland's representatives.

ABRAHAM

What does this have to do with me?

HASTINGS

I'm asking you to head this detail  
for me. You can pick four men.  
Lennox is an old ally, and most of  
the trip will be through friendly  
territory, so it shouldn't be too  
eventful. But we do need men we can  
count on, men who know their  
business with a sword, to ride with  
the Prince just in case.

ABRAHAM

Which Prince? Phillip?

HASTINGS

No.

ABRAHAM

Please tell me it's not --

HASTINGS

Prince Willard.

ABRAHAM

Saints preserve us.

HASTINGS

Sergeant, you are referring to a  
member of the Royal Family and my  
nephew.



ABRAHAM  
Sorry, Your Grace.

HASTINGS  
I know you'd rather wait here while  
the negotiations are in progress,  
but we really don't need you.  
Wynland has nothing left now, they  
couldn't muster an army if they  
tried. Think of it as a holiday.

ABRAHAM  
But, Your Grace --

Hastings puts a reassuring hand on Abraham's shoulder and  
favors him with a small smile.

HASTINGS  
Sleep in a soft bed for a few  
nights. Eat some good food. Get the  
stench of death out of your nose  
and the blood out of your clothes.  
You deserve it.

ABRAHAM  
(sighs)  
Yes, Your Grace.

HASTINGS  
Pick good men who won't cause  
trouble. Understood?

ABRAHAM  
Understood, Your Grace. If you're  
sure I won't be needed here.

HASTINGS  
We'll be fine. I'll probably be  
home before you.

ABRAHAM  
Thank you, Your Grace.

HASTINGS  
Good. I'm looking forward to  
getting a good report from the  
Prince regarding your service.

ABRAHAM  
You will, Your Grace.

HASTINGS  
Good.

Hastings exits and the men relax.

ABRAHAM

Ben?

BENJAMIN

Yes, sir?

ABRAHAM

Don't you have family somewhere out Lorraine way?

BENJAMIN

Yes, sir. My sister and her husband have a farm there.

ABRAHAM

Would you like to visit them?

BENJAMIN

I'd love to, sir, but I don't see when I'll have the chance.

ABRAHAM

We've been given an errand that will take us by there. Perhaps you'll have time to drop in.

BENJAMIN

Really? What kind of errand?

ABRAHAM

One that shouldn't involve any swordplay or spilled blood, for once. Now, we need to pick three more ... .

INT. WILLARD'S QUARTERS, CASTLE ARDEN - DAY

It's morning and the drapes are pulled tightly around the windows. In the big bed is PRINCE WILLARD (26), with two young women. All of them are naked and passed out drunk. The room is a mess.

DUCHESS SARAH (38) enters, goes over to the windows, and rips open the curtains, admitting the bright morning sunlight. The three in the bed all utter pained cries.

SARAH

Rise and shine! Rise and shine, my lovelies!

WILLARD

My God, Aunt Sarah, have you no pity?

SARAH

Not the last time I checked. Put some clothes on, Will. Your uncle needs to speak with you.

WILLARD

Now?

SARAH

Yes. Now. He's in the wardrobe. Will your friends be joining us for breakfast?

One of the young women rolls over on the bed and vomits onto the floor.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I guess not.

INT. DUKE ARDEN'S WARDROBE, CASTLE ARDEN - DAY

The wardrobe's a large room and is full of clothing for all occasions. REGINALD (45), Duke of Arden, is picking out Willard's clothing for the trip. He has a FEMALE SERVANT (20) helping.

REGINALD

He'll need something for the funeral itself. Something formal and somber.

The servant selects a shirt from a rack and holds it up.

REGINALD (CONT'D)

I guess that will do. It looks like it'll fit him. Put it in.

There is an opened trunk on the floor and she folds the shirt and puts it inside. Willard, now fully dressed, enters.

REGINALD (CONT'D)

Ah! Will! Glad you could join us. Could you give us a moment, my dear?

FEMALE SERVANT

Of course, Your Grace.

The servant leaves.

WILLARD

What's going on?

REGINALD

A couple of things, actually. Wynland has sent a message to your father that Marcus wants to discuss terms.

WILLARD

Excellent news.

REGINALD

Indeed it is. This awful, bloody war is nearly over. But, of more immediate import, Charles died day before yesterday.

WILLARD

The old fart couldn't hold on any longer?

REGINALD

Yes. His Majesty wants you to go to Lennox to attend the funeral.

WILLARD

What? Are you serious?

REGINALD

Yes. Is that a problem?

WILLARD

A problem? Riding in a bumpy carriage for two days to sit in a drafty old church while some old mumbly mumbly mumbles his way through a eulogy so we can put the old relic in a hole in the ground? Do you have any idea how boring and uncomfortable that will be?

REGINALD

I know precisely how boring and uncomfortable it will be. I think you could use a little boredom and discomfort in your life right now.

WILLARD

Uncle, I --

REGINALD

This is your father's doing, not mine.

(MORE)

REGINALD (CONT'D)

And I trust you will behave  
yourself, and not embarrass the  
Crown. Am I right?

WILLARD

Well --

REGINALD

Am I right, Will?

WILLARD

Fine. Yes, I'll be on my best  
behavior. But I'm expecting to be  
invited to a party celebrating the  
end of war when I get back.

REGINALD

Of course.

WILLARD

Though there is a little more to it  
... .

Reginald sighs wearily.

REGINALD

Who was she?

WILLARD

Her name is Laura.

REGINALD

Would that be Lady Laura of  
Greensbury?

WILLARD

The same.

REGINALD

Daughter of Harald?

WILLARD

Yes.

REGINALD

Who is about to be crowned king of  
Lennox?

WILLARD

That's the very one.

REGINALD

When did this happen?

WILLARD

It was about a year ago. Remember when father signed that trade agreement with Lennox? She accompanied the Lennox delegation, and I was staying at the palace.

REGINALD

I remember. Yes, she was there.

WILLARD

Yes.

REGINALD

With her husband.

WILLARD

He's thirty years older than her, Uncle Reggie! The poor woman can't even get a decent --

REGINALD

Who is a trusted adviser to the soon-to-be king. That is remarkable, how many different things you've managed to cock up at the same time.

WILLARD

Pardon the pun? Sorry, Uncle, sorry.

Willard looks in the trunk.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

Is that what you're picking for me to wear?

REGINALD

Yes.

Willard holds up the shirt Reginald had just selected.

WILLARD

Really? This?

REGINALD

What's wrong with it?

WILLARD

What's wrong with it? Are you joking? No, no, no.

He tosses it on the floor and starts looking through the clothes. He finds a beautiful scarf that he takes down and wraps around his neck.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

Now, this is more like it. I bet there are some shirts and breeches in here that would really set this off.

REGINALD

No. Not that.

Reginald gently removes the scarf from Willard's neck.

WILLARD

Why not?

REGINALD

It was Joseph's. His favorite.

WILLARD

Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know.

REGINALD

It's fine. I'd forgotten it was in here. Now, you run down to the kitchen and grab something to eat. Hugo's getting the carriage ready and your bodyguard for the trip is waiting in the courtyard. Send the girl back in here and we'll finish packing your luggage. And you will wear what we select and you will not complain about it. Is that clear?

WILLARD

Uncle, I think --

REGINALD

Is that clear?

WILLARD

Clear. Uncle.

REGINALD

And you will avoid the Lady Laura and her husband as much as possible, and, if you do encounter them, you will not insinuate or flirt or whatever else may occur to you.

WILLARD

Yes, Uncle.

REGINALD

In fact, whatever you feel like doing, do the opposite. Can't go wrong like that.

WILLARD

Yes, Uncle.

REGINALD

There's a good lad. Now run along to breakfast. And try not to get us into another war before we're done with the one we're fighting now.

Willard leaves. Reginald holds the scarf, lifting one end to his nose and sniffing it, and smiling. He has tears in his eyes.

EXT. COURTYARD, CASTLE ARDEN - DAY

Willard's carriage, hitched to its team of horses, is being loaded with the luggage by Willard's coachman, HUGO (48). The bodyguard is there, each of them with their own horse.

Along with Ben, Abraham, and Biggs, are HOSEA WELK (20), and ISAAC LASHER (30). Hosea is helping Hugo wrestle the trunks into position atop the carriage.

HUGO

I think that's almost all of it.

HOSEA

What's he got in these trunks?  
Rocks?

HUGO

If we're lucky he's got flagons of Rouche's finest ale in some of them. Or bottles of that lovely red from Blackberry Hill. The Prince never travels without something drinkable handy.

HOSEA

Not that we'll get to taste any of it.

HUGO

I've worked for Willard going on six years now.

(MORE)



HUGO (CONT'D)

Best job I've ever had. He treats me quite well. You'll see. Why, just the other day, Willard --

Willard enters the courtyard.

WILLARD

Hugo! I'd like to get on the road before sunset, if you don't mind.

HUGO

Yes, My Prince. Indeed. You heard the Prince, get busy!

HOSEA

(muttering)

A prince who's a prince. In a pig's arse.

BENJAMIN

Quiet, Mr. Welk.

Abraham approaches Willard, who is about to enter the carriage.

ABRAHAM

M'lord, I'm Sergeant Abraham Moseley. I'm in charge of this lot here. The man over there is my corporal, Ben Tilley. Big mouth there is Welk. That's Lasher and Biggs.

WILLARD

I don't need to know the names, Sergeant. I just want to get under way.

ABRAHAM

Yes, m'lord. Mr. Welk will be riding inside the carriage with you at the start.

Willard climbs into the carriage, Welk climbing in behind him and closing the door. Abraham looks at Hugo, who climbs into position and takes the reigns as the others climb onto their horses, Welk's unmounted horse among them. Hugo nods and flicks the reigns.

HUGO

Hee-yah!

EXT. MONTAGE - ON THE ROAD - DAY

Two horsemen are in front, two behind the carriage as it heads out, Welk's saddled but riderless horse trailing behind. The terrain gets gradually hillier and more wooded.

They travel most of the day, finally arriving at a keep.

EXT. EARL OF BROOKHAVEN KEEP GATE - DAY

The travelers gather up at the gate as the portcullis is being raised. While this is going on Abraham rides over to Benjamin.

ABRAHAM

It's not far to Lorraine if you want to go visit your kin. Still got some daylight left.

BENJAMIN

Are you sure it'd be all right?

ABRAHAM

It'll be fine. We'll spend the night here, inside these walls. Nobody to harm Willy here.

BENJAMIN

Good. I'll see you in the morning, then.

ABRAHAM

See you then.

Benjamin turns his horse and rides away as the portcullis is fully raised and the remaining riders and the carriage go inside.

EXT. FARM OF LARKEN HOBBS - DAY

It's a small farm, with a few chickens and goats, and a field with crops growing, and a horse. There is a barn and some storage sheds, a house in the back. Working in the barn is LARKEN HOBBS (30).

Benjamin rides up and climbs down off his horse as Larken sees him, running over to embrace him roughly.

LARKEN

Benny! Glory be! What a surprise!

BENJAMIN

Good to see you, too, Lark. Where is Abigail?

LARKEN

She's gone to town. Should be back any time. What brings you here? We heard you were involved in that bloody terrible battle out Hastings way.

BENJAMIN

I was. But we won. Now I'm here escorting Prince Willy to the funeral at Lennox.

LARKEN

Ah. Yes. Prince Willy, you say? What's he like?

BENJAMIN

He's about what you'd heard. Typical royal. Spoiled drunkard who thinks with his willy.

They both laugh as two women approach from the direction of town. One is ABIGAIL HOBBS (28). The other is JULIA COLBY (20). They are carrying some items they'd purchased in Lorraine.

ABIGAIL

Is that -- well, I'll be!

She runs to Benjamin and embraces him.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Look at you! My little brother! Come from the battle, all your arms and legs still attached! Saints be praised!

BENJAMIN

Good to see you, too, sister!

LARKEN

He's escorting Prince Willy to Charles's funeral.

ABIGAIL

I see, I see! Well, let us take this inside and we'll make you some supper, and you can tell us all about your adventures!

Abigail goes inside and Julia approaches Benjamin.

JULIA

Hello. I'm Julia. I live up the road a bit.

BENJAMIN

We've met. Remember? When I visited last summer? I'm Abigail's brother.

JULIA

Oh! Right! Thomas, isn't it?

BENJAMIN

Ben.

JULIA

Oh. Yes. Sorry. Ben. I'm terrible with names, especially for people I only see every year or so. Excuse me.

Julia follows Abigail into the house. Larken is trying not to burst out laughing and not being very successful.

BENJAMIN

Oh, shut it.

LARKEN

I didn't say anything.

BENJAMIN

Your face speaks volumes even when your mouth is closed.

INT. DINING HALL KEEP BROOKHAVEN - NIGHT

Willard's quiet night has become quite noisy, with a loud, raucous party. There is food set out on a long table, and minstrels are playing.

Willard and BROOKHAVEN (40) along with several other local dignitaries are feasting and drinking as Willard's bodyguard stands and watches. There is food for them, too, within easy reach.

BROOKHAVEN

As I said, I'm so sorry that we didn't have much time to prepare but I only found out yesterday.

WILLARD

No need to keep apologizing,  
Brookhaven. No need.

Willard is watching a SERVING GIRL (19) who is filling goblets for diners from a large wine bottle. She meets Willard's gaze and smiles at him. He raises his goblet to her in a silent toast.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

No need at all.

INT. HOBBS FARM BARN - NIGHT

There are a couple of horses and a few chickens in the barn. Benjamin and Julia are lying together in the loft atop a makeshift bed of loose hay.

BENJAMIN

Does your father know you're here?

JULIA

Yes, he knows. I told him I was  
spending the night to help Abigail.  
He won't be out looking for me.

BENJAMIN

Good.

JULIA

Of course he doesn't know that  
you're here or that would make  
quite a bit of difference.

BENJAMIN

Oh. Well, my intentions are the  
most innocent and pure.

JULIA

Oh, sure, now they are.

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry.

JULIA

About what?

BENJAMIN

About whatever it was you were  
angry with me about, earlier.

JULIA

Oh, I was just a little put off  
that you were off to war and you  
didn't have the inclination to  
write a short letter to someone  
you'd spent so much time with, to  
let her know you were all right,  
that you weren't injured or  
anything, that you were still alive  
... .

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry. Really. I thought of you  
all the time. It's just that ... I  
can't describe it.

JULIA

What? War?

BENJAMIN

Yes.

JULIA

At supper you made it sound so  
adventurous.

BENJAMIN

It's not like that. Really. I was  
just trying not to worry Abigail.  
In reality it's ... there are no  
words.

JULIA

You killed people?

BENJAMIN

Yes.

JULIA

How many?

BENJAMIN

I have no idea. You lose count,  
standing at the front lines,  
swinging a blade for hours, it  
seems. Almost like clearing brush,  
or felling trees. That last battle,  
at Hastings, we were all covered in  
blood from Wynland's soldiers that  
we'd killed.

JULIA

I'm so sorry.

BENJAMIN

Something inside me died, I think.  
I don't look at the world the same  
way. It all seems so trivial.

JULIA

I see.

BENJAMIN

Look, I need to finish this job,  
escorting Willy, but when I'm done  
with that I'll officially be  
discharged from the army. I'll go  
home to visit my mother and father  
and then I'll come back here. When  
I do, I'd like to have a  
conversation with your father.

JULIA

About what?

BENJAMIN

About us.

JULIA

About -- Ben? Are you serious?

BENJAMIN

Is it what you want?

JULIA

My God. Oh, my God. Of course. Of  
course. Oh, my love!

She kisses him, and the kisses grow more and more passionate.

EXT. FARM OF LARKEN HOBBS - DAY

Willard's carriage is coming up the road, with the escort  
minus Benjamin, and with Lasher riding inside the carriage  
with Willard. They stop in the road in front of the farm.

Benjamin emerges from the barn with Julia. Larken and Abigail  
emerge from the house. Benjamin is leading his saddled horse.  
Abraham rides over to him.

ABRAHAM

Are you going to be joining us,  
Ben?

BENJAMIN

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir. I got a bit  
distracted.

ABRAHAM

So I see. Well, the Prince is in a hurry.

BENJAMIN

Yes, sir. Could I have a moment?

ABRAHAM

Just one, Corporal.

Abraham rides back over to the carriage.

ABIGAIL

(to Benjamin)

You'll be stopping by again on your way back through?

BENJAMIN

If I can. I'll be back in the next week or two in any case. I've got some business I want to take care of here.

ABIGAIL

What kind of business?

Julia giggles, and Benjamin looks abashed.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Oh. That kind of business. Well, then, little brother, you take care of yourself, and I'll see you again, really soon.

Benjamin gives her a kiss, roughly hugs Larken, then kisses Julia before getting on his horse.

BENJAMIN

See you all soon!

He rides off, taking his position in the escort. Hugo flicks the reins and they resume their journey.

INT. CASTLE MORWEN GRAND HALL - NIGHT

The residence of the royal family of Lennox is crowded with dignitaries. There is a reception, presided over by PRINCE HARALD (50).

Also nearby is the EARL OF GREENSBURY (60), with his wife and daughter of Harald, LAURA (28). Near him is his man SILVEY (30), wearing Greensbury's colors.



The doors open and the COURT CRIER (30) enters.

CRIER  
Prince Willard, of Elegonn!

The Crier steps aside and Willard enters, with Abraham and Ben trailing behind. Willard's two bodyguards are wearing stiff formal gowns over their light armor for the occasion.

Harald comes forward to face Willard, Greensbury just behind him. He's holding a mostly empty goblet. Harald's speech is slurred.

HARALD  
Well. I'm guessing the chambermaid  
was too busy to attend.

WILLARD  
I'm sorry, Harald?

HARALD  
Tell me, Willard, why King John of  
Elegonn sees fit to send you  
instead of coming himself?

WILLARD  
Father is busy ending the war with  
Wynland. As you well know, since  
Lennox had soldiers fighting  
alongside ours.

HARALD  
Then where is Phillip? Surely the  
Crown Prince can be spared. After  
all, we are mourning the death of  
the sovereign of one of Elegonn's  
oldest and steadiest allies, yes?

WILLARD  
Phillip is assisting father.

GREENSBURY  
As always. Send Willy when nobody  
cares. It was ever thus, My Prince.

WILLARD  
I apologize if my presence here  
gives offense, Greensbury. I'd be  
more than happy to leave if that  
would help.

HARALD  
No. Damn you. And damn John.

WILLARD

I believe you're drunk.

HARALD

What if I am? My father is dead, boy! You have no idea what this means.

WILLARD

Let's lay your father to rest tomorrow morning and then I'll be gone and trouble you no more. Is that acceptable?

HARALD

Very well.

Harald turns away.

GREENSBURY

I just hope that --

HARALD

Greensbury! Come!

Greensbury turns to follow Harald. Abraham steps up to Willard. Silvey follows, as well.

ABRAHAM

I think those two bear watching, My Prince.

WILLARD

Indeed.

INT. PHILLIP'S QUARTERS CASTLE GREY (FLASHBACK) - DAY

The Crown Prince's quarters are large and luxurious, with a nice bed and heavy draperies and wall hangings. PHILLIP (36, tall and athletic, charismatic) is sitting at his desk reading by candlelight over a thick document covered with spidery handwriting.

Willard enters, letting himself in. He's carrying his sheathed sword.

PHILLIP

(sarcastically)

Oh. Come in. It's open.

WILLARD

I'm happy to see you, too, brother. What are you doing?

Willard makes himself comfortable, stretching out on Phillip's sofa.

PHILLIP

Reading this treaty between Alacia and Elegonn.

WILLARD

God. That must be ancient.

PHILLIP

It's signed by John the Second.

WILLARD

Don't you have anything better to do?

PHILLIP

No. Father insists I must know this document, backwards and forwards, when I ascend to the throne.

WILLARD

But you won't be ascending to the throne for quite some time.

PHILLIP

We don't know that. And I've got a lot of catching up to do. John was raised studying this stuff, and I'd always assumed that he would be crowned when the time came and I could go about my merry way. Now that he's gone ---

WILLARD

Yes. It still seems so strange.

PHILLIP

So, now I need to study this treaty. Father and Minister Crowley will be testing me on it come the morning.

WILLARD

You need a break.

PHILLIP

No.

WILLARD

Get the blood pumping.

PHILLIP

No.

WILLARD

Come on, Phil! You have no idea how bored I am. Save me! Besides, how long as it been since you've broken a sweat?

PHILLIP

What are you offering?

WILLARD

To best you yet again at fencing.

PHILLIP

Oh. Right. I thought you were offering me the opportunity to break a sweat.

WILLARD

I have four silver florins in my purse that could be yours, should you defeat me.

PHILLIP

Let me see them.

Willard gets up and takes out his coin bag, pouring the coins on the desk. Phillip inspects them.

WILLARD

What do you offer as stakes?

Phillip looks around, finally opening the desk drawer and taking out a small bag, with a string around the top.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

What's that?

Phillip hands it to Willard, who sniffs it.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

Ah. Saffron. Where did you come by this?

PHILLIP

That's for me to know.

WILLARD

As you wish. (Draws sword) En garde, Crown Prince Phillip!

PHILLIP  
Let me find my --

He looks around and finds his sword in its scabbard, on a belt hanging from a peg near the bed. Phillip draws the sword as Willard closes the latch on the door.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)  
En garde, brother!

Phillip lunges and Willard blocks his attack. The two brothers fence ferociously, destroying many of the furnishings in the room.

Phillip is a good fencer but Willard is an expert. He's extremely quick and a lot stronger than he looks as well. After totally wrecking the room Phillip holds up a hand, stopping Willard's attack, and lowers the sword.

Phillip is sweaty and panting. Willard is barely winded.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)  
Enough! I concede.

WILLARD  
Again.

PHILLIP  
One day I'll find an antidote to  
that confounded quickness of yours!

WILLARD  
Oh, that's a day that will never  
come.

Willard scoops up the florins and the pouch with the saffron as a pounding starts on the door.

PHILLIP  
That will be Lady Margaret.

MARGARET (O.C.)  
Phillip? What's happening? What is  
all that noise?

PHILLIP  
Look at this room! She's going to  
skin both of us!

WILLARD  
Oh, just you. I'm afraid I must be  
going.

PHILLIP

What? No. No, you helped me make this mess, you're going to help me deal with the consequences.

Willard opens the door. There stands LADY MARGARET (60), who maintains the royal household.

MARGARET

Willard? I might have known, with all the crashing and shouting coming from this room. Oh, my God, look at this mess! What have you been doing?

WILLARD

Ask him. And I'm off! I will see you later, Brother! Margaret! Please be forgiving. He's had a long day.

Willard exits.

INT. HALLWAY AT CASTLE GRAY (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Willard closes the door and pauses for a moment, eavesdropping.

MARGARET (O.C.)

All of this rough-housing and wreckage may be permissible when you're a child, but you're a grown man. And you're the Crown Prince now, God rest your brother John's soul.

PHILLIP (O.C.)

But ---

MARGARET (O.C.)

You have duties and responsibilities. You need to take them seriously.

PHILLIP (O.C.)

But ---

MARGARET (O.C.)

What would your father say if he saw this room? What do you think he'd say?

(MORE)

MARGARET (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You must understand that he has the weight of this whole corner of the world on his shoulders and you are to help him bear it. You must --

INT. CATHEDRAL AT CASTLE MORWEN - DAY

Willard snaps awake. He'd been dozing during the funeral. The pews are filled at King George's funeral service. The BISHOP OF LENNOX(70), is praying in Latin. In front of the altar is a closed coffin with the flag of Lennox draped over it.

The Bishop gestures for everyone to rise. The pall bearers come down to pick up Charles's coffin and carry him away, followed by Harald and his wife, DRUISA (40).

As they leave the cathedral Harald does manage to shoot Willard a nasty look. Greensbury is also staring at Willard from his place a few pews behind him.

EXT. COURTYARD OF CASTLE MORWEN - DAY

Willard's carriage is there, hitched to the horses and loaded, with Hugo in position to drive. The bodyguard is there, as Willard walks up to the carriage. Ben and Abraham approach Willard.

WILLARD

Are we ready to go?

ABRAHAM

We are, My Prince.

WILLARD

Then let's get going.

ABRAHAM

Yes, m'lord. Benjamin will be riding with you this time.

WILLARD

Very well.

Willard gets in the carriage, Ben following him inside.

INT./EXT. WILLARD'S CARRIAGE - DAY

Benjamin settles across from Willard.

BENJAMIN

Are you comfortable, m'lord?

WILLARD

I'm never comfortable in these damned things. But there's nothing you can do about it.

BENJAMIN

I understand completely, m'lord.

The carriage starts moving.

WILLARD

Who was that young woman?

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry, m'lord?

WILLARD

Yesterday. Outside of Lorraine. I know you couldn't have forgotten her already. She was quite lovely.

BENJAMIN

Ah. Yes. Julia. Yes.

WILLARD

She's dear to you?

BENJAMIN

Yes, m'lord. We're thinking about getting married.

WILLARD

Married? Really?

BENJAMIN

Yes.

WILLARD

Wonderful! You must invite me to the wedding.

BENJAMIN

Really? I wouldn't think someone of your ... Well, station, would be interested in attending a commoner's wedding.



WILLARD

I love commoner's weddings! When someone in my family gets married it's all solemn ceremonies, unendurable rituals, and often as not the couple can't stand each other because they're marrying for political expediency. Commoners marry for love, and it's a joyous celebration. Lots of dancing and drinking and everyone having a good time. That, my good man, is a real party.

BENJAMIN

Well, I haven't exactly spoken to her father about it yet so it may never happen.

WILLARD

Does he like you?

BENJAMIN

I can't say. I've only had one conversation with him and that was many months ago.

WILLARD

Oh, he'll be glad his daughter is marrying herself off to someone like you, I would suspect. Nobody would dare bother her, knowing you're about. Make him sleep better at night.

BENJAMIN

If you say so, m'lord.

WILLARD

So, I'll be looking for my invitation, then?

BENJAMIN

Of course, m'lord. I'm sure we'd all be quite honored if you should come.

WILLARD

Then it's settled. At least someone would be happy to see me.

BENJAMIN

Yes, m'lord.

## EXT. WILLARD'S CARRIAGE - DAY

They're riding through a hilly area. Lasher is riding his horse near Hugo's perch, so they can talk without shouting. Abraham and Biggs lead the carriage, with Welk and Benjamin's saddled but riderless horse bringing up the rear.

They pass a boulder that has a chalk marking that looks like a stylized letter "F."

WELK

What is that?

BIGGS

What? That?

WELK

Yes.

BIGGS

That's a marking that means the fen have been spotted in the area.

WELK

God. Really?

BIGGS

You don't believe in the fen?

WELK

Do you?

BIGGS

I grew up hearing the stories. Dad used to say that, way back in the day, we had fen blood in us.

WELK

Right. I'm sure.

BIGGS

So, you don't believe?

WELK

You'd think, with all the stories and legends there are, that we'd encounter them a lot more often, wouldn't you?

BIGGS

Well --

WELK

I mean, there must be at least as many of them as there are us. You'd think we'd run into them on the road, or we'd find an old campsite or a place where they used to live, right? Something you can hold in your hand, like an arrowhead or something.

BIGGS

I think --

WELK

But nothing. No sign. Just vague stories told by drunkards and fools.

BIGGS

They're magical.

WELK

Oh. Right. Magical.

BIGGS

They are! They could be anywhere and we wouldn't see them, unless they wanted us to see.

WELK

Ah. Yes. That makes so much more sense.

BIGGS

Are you having me on? I can't tell.

WELK

I'd never do that.

BIGGS

Are you sure?

WELK

Quite sure, Mr. Biggs. Quite sure.

The terrain is heavily forested and hilly and the road is about to pass through a narrow slot between two rises, after they round a sharp curve. The trees crowd up close to the road. There's a deep ditch on either side of the road.

LASHER

So, you've worked for Willy for six years, you say?

HUGO

Yep. Best six years of my life.

LASHER

Really? How did you come to work for the royal family?

HUGO

I didn't say I work for the family. I work for Prince Willard. Look, I promised not to say anything to anybody.

LASHER

About what?

HUGO

The circumstances of how I met the Prince.

LASHER

We won't tell anyone, will we?

HUGO

Fine. Well, remember when John declared a celebration when his grandson, Jacob, was born?

LASHER

I remember. I was drunk for a solid week, I think.

HUGO

Yes, and so was I. John and his court were sailing up the Toka River and I wanted to get a good look. I was drunk, as I said, and I fell in the river. Next thing I knowed I was in the deepest part. Water was way over my head. And me not knowing how to swim a lick. I knew I was drowned for sure. Suddenly I felt someone grab my collar and drag me up, pulling me all the way to the bank. I coughed up water and rolled over to see who my rescuer was, and it was none other than our Prince Willard.

LASHER

Really? I would see Phillip doing something like that, but Willy?

HUGO

I'm telling you, Mr. Lasher, he saw me fall in and dove into that river without a second thought. Found me, grabbed me, and towed me to shore like I weighed no more than a pebble. And me fully dressed and soaked to the skin.

LASHER

Willy did that? Prince Willy?

HUGO

Indeed. There's more to him than meets the eye. You'd do well to remember that. I promised him that I'd spend the rest of my life in service to him, and he made me promise not to tell anybody about what he'd done.

LASHER

Why?

HUGO

I'm not sure, but I broke that promise telling you, so I'd appreciate it if you'd keep it to yourself. Got me?

LASHER

I do. I do indeed.

The carriage rounds the curve in the road.

HUGO

Hold up. What do we have here?

Hugo tugs the reins, stopping the carriage. In front of the carriage the road is blocked with chopped down trees. It's a narrow spot with no room on the road's shoulders. Abraham looks at it a moment before turning to Hugo.

ABRAHAM

Turn the carriage around.

HUGO

There's no room.

LARKEN

What is it?

ABRAHAM

It's an ambush. Ben, look alive!

WILLARD (O.C.)  
Is there a problem, Sergeant?

ABRAHAM  
Possible, m'lord. Just stay where  
you are.

There's the sound of a shot and Hugo takes a musket ball in the chest. He gasps and falls over to the side.

LASHER  
Hugo!

The bodyguard all draw their blades as eleven men charge out of the woods, five of them pointing pistols at the bodyguard.

The five men with pistols all fire, though their shots mostly hit the carriage or miss entirely. The men draw their swords and charge.

ABRAHAM  
Dismount and draw weapons! Defend  
the Prince!

The bodyguard climbs off of their horses and draw their swords, preparing to face the oncoming charge. The riderless horses run away.

EXT. FOREST NEAR AMBUSH PASS - DAY

From cover of the forest, the highwayman HENRY ROBERTS (36) lays down his second rifle next to the first and grabs his own pistol before walking towards the carriage where his men fight Willard's bodyguard. He's also carrying a sword.

INT./EXT. WILLARD'S CARRIAGE - DAY

Benjamin has drawn his own sword and is looking through the windows.

WILLARD  
What is it?

BENJAMIN  
An ambush! Men charging out of the  
forest!

WILLARD  
What do we do?

BENJAMIN  
Can you ride, m'lord?

WILLARD  
Ride? Of course.

BENJAMIN  
My horse is behind us. When I dash out wait a moment and then run out and make for him.

WILLARD  
I can't leave you here.

BENJAMIN  
We are here to protect you, my Prince. Welk will go with you. Go back to Brookhaven and alert the Earl's guard.

WILLARD  
Very well.

Willard draws his own sword.

BENJAMIN  
And you won't be needing that.

WILLARD  
What? I can't defend myself?

BENJAMIN  
You would be better off just running, m'lord. Please forgive me, but you'll probably be more of a hindrance with that thing than a help.

WILLARD  
Oh. Still, I'll keep it handy.

BENJAMIN  
Very well.

Benjamin pauses a moment, readying himself, before opening the door and leaping outside, his sword drawn.

EXT. WILLARD'S CARRIAGE AMBUSH PASS - DAY

Benjamin is engaged by two men immediately and he keeps them at bay as Willard emerges from the carriage, his own sword in hand.

BENJAMIN  
Welk! Go with him!

Benjamin cuts down one of his assailants as Willard runs to the back of the carriage. Welk is fighting two men of his own. One turns to engage Willard.

Willard fences with the man a moment before expertly disarming him, as Welk runs his foe through. As the man bends to pick up his blade Welk and Willard mount the horses and ride away.

The fight continues. Biggs kills his man and is cut down by another moment later, though he is wounded, not dead. Lasher and Benjamin each kill a man. Roberts emerges from the forest, holding his own sword.

ROBERTS

Enough! Enough, I say!

His men disengage, stepping back from the bodyguard.

ABRAHAM

Who the hell are you?

ROBERTS

Someone who has no interest in more bloodshed. Especially on behalf of royalty.

BENJAMIN

He'd be Henry Roberts.

ABRAHAM

Oh. I should have known.

ROBERTS

At your service.

ABRAHAM

Bastard.

ROBERTS

I've got rifles trained on all of you even as we speak.

ABRAHAM

Bull. You have two rifles, at best. It'll take him a good couple of minutes to reload, and likely as not the damned thing will blow up in his face when he fires it. If it weren't you who fired them in the first place.



ROBERTS

I admire confidence but in this case it's misplaced. Lay down your weapons and you will not be harmed.

ABRAHAM

How am I to trust the word of an outlaw and brigand?

ROBERTS

Don't trust me and die right now.  
Or trust me and perhaps die later.  
If at all.

There's a long pause as Abraham and Roberts eye each other. Finally, Abraham drops his blade. The other bodyguards do the same.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)

Wise choice. See to the wounded.

EXT. ROAD FROM AMBUSH PASS - DAY

Willard and Welk are galloping away from the ambush. Willard halts his horse. When Welk sees that he does the same.

WELK

Is there a problem, m'lord?

WILLARD

I think we've ridden far enough. We need to go back.

WELK

What? I'm sorry, m'lord, but that would be folly.

WILLARD

Do you have any other ideas?

WELK

Let us go to Brookhaven and fetch the Earl's guard. He has nigh on a score of men who can handle these brigands. I know a back way where we could get there before midnight.

WILLARD

We can't bring a group of armed military men across the border into Lennox, Welk. That would be an act of war.

WELK

Then let us return to Castle Morwen  
and fetch Harald's men.

WILLARD

I don't think that would work,  
either. I'm more than half  
convinced that those brigands are  
working with someone back there.

WELK

Lennox? Hiring outlaws to accost  
you, m'lord? Why?

WILLARD

It's personal. If we take the time  
to fetch help, either from  
Brookhaven or from Lennox, by the  
time it gets here your mates will  
all be dead, or taken deep within  
the forest where they will never be  
seen again.

WELK

Then what do we do, m'lord?

WILLARD

We'll quietly go back to where we  
can watch what's happening back at  
the carriage.

WELK

And then what? M'lord?

WILLARD

That depends upon what we see. Come  
on.

EXT. WILLARD'S CARRIAGE IN AMBUSH PASS - DAY

Roberts and his second-in-command, WESLEY FIELDS (28) look  
through the luggage atop the carriage for valuables.

Roberts and Fields find a purse with some gold coins in it.  
Benjamin, Lasher, and Abraham are in a group on the ground  
being watched over by five men, their swords drawn.

Hugo is stretched out on the ground nearby, with Biggs and  
the brigands who fell in the fight. BRIGAND 1 (30) is looking  
them over. He gets up and walks over to Abraham.

BRIGAND 1  
Sorry, mate, but the old guy is  
dead.

ABRAHAM  
What about our other man?

BRIGAND 1  
He's hurt bad. May not last the  
night.

ROBERTS  
What about our mates?

BRIGAND 1  
Dead, Henry. All of them.

FIELDS  
Bastards.

ABRAHAM  
We weren't the ones who laid in  
ambush. Mate.

ROBERTS  
(holding up the purse)  
This should keep us in wine and  
women for a while!

Fields opens a trunk and finds it's full of wine bottles.

FIELDS  
Not that we'll be needing to buy  
wine for a while.

Fields opens another trunk.

FIELDS (CONT'D)  
There's some fine clothes here.  
Silk and whatnot.

ROBERTS  
Almost makes it worth our while.  
Almost.

Roberts hops down off the carriage and draws his sword.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
(to the guards)  
Blades up.

The guards grab the three prisoners by the hair and pull them to their feet, holding a sword under their chins as Roberts approaches Biggs. He looks over at Abraham and grins, then draws his pistol and shoots Biggs in the head.

Biggs spasms, and dies.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
(to Abraham)  
Oh, you hate me now, don't you?

He walks over to Abraham.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
I killed your mate. We'll leave him here to be picked over by the birds, just like you've done to Elegonn's enemies over the years. Left in the field to rot. Right?

ABRAHAM  
You bastard. I'm going to kill you. Mark my words.

ROBERTS  
I'm all a-tremble. Your words are marked. Now, back on the ground.

The guards force the remaining bodyguards to kneel on the ground.

ABRAHAM  
What are you going to do with us?

ROBERTS  
Good question. I'm always in need of good men. Are you a good man?

ABRAHAM  
I'll never work for you.

ROBERTS  
I think everyone holding a blade on you now has said those very words to me. Now look at them.

FIELDS  
We could use some help with this stuff.

ROBERTS  
Aye! There's an idea! You gents carry this loot back to our place for us.

ABRAHAM

And what after that?

ROBERTS

After that ... Who knows? Perhaps somewhere along the way you'll decide there are worse things than working for me.

EXT. ROAD JUST BEYOND AMBUSH PASS - DAY

Willard and Welk have found a place where they can observe the carriage unseen. They have a whispered conversation.

WELK

That bastard murdered Biggs!

WILLARD

I saw, Mr. Welk. Keep your voice down.

WELK

Looks like Hugo is dead, too.

WILLARD

I know. Oh, my God. I know.

WELK

What do think they're going to do?

WILLARD

Looks like they're going through the luggage. My guess is they'll use your comrades to carry anything they want to keep back to wherever they are camped.

WELK

Then what?

WILLARD

Then they'll have no further use for them.

WELK

That's what I'm afraid of. M'lord, can I ask a question?

WILLARD

Of course.

WELK

That man you fought? You fought him well, disarmed him, but you didn't kill him. Why not? M'lord?

WILLARD

Well, I ... I ... .

WELK

You've never killed anyone before, have you, m'lord?

WILLARD

I'm sorry. No, I haven't. Unlike my brothers I've never been in the military so I've never had occasion.

WELK

No need to apologize. But, m'lord, the rules have changed now. We're in a battlefield situation. Do you understand what that means? M'lord?

WILLARD

No mercy.

WELK

Yes, m'lord. You have a chance to kill one of these men you take it. Don't worry about being polite or fair or merciful.

WILLARD

You've done this sort of thing before?

WELK

Indeed. In service to the Crown.

WILLARD

I see. Oh, looks like they're moving out.

EXT. TREKKING THROUGH THE FOREST - DAY

Lasher, Abraham, and Benjamin carry big bags of loot. The terrain is hilly and heavily wooded.

## EXT. CAMPSITE IN THE FOREST - NIGHT

There's a small campfire burning in the middle of a clearing. Next to it is Silvey with three more brigands, who looks up at Roberts and smiles, then frowns as the party enters the clearing. Silvey has a pistol tucked in his belt.

ROBERTS

You lit a fire? You know it can be seen for miles.

SILVEY

So? Let it be seen. I have no enemies here.

ROBERTS

You ain't the only one here.

SILVEY

Where the hell is Willard? Or Willard's head?

ROBERTS

He got away.

SILVEY

Got away? You incompetent lout! He was the whole point!

FIELDS

He slipped out of his carriage and nipped away on horseback, quick as a jackrabbit. Probably left a trail of piss behind him.

The others laugh as Lasher, Ben, and Abraham are forced to kneel on the ground.

SILVEY

And who are these?

ROBERTS

They'd be the Prince's bodyguard.

SILVEY

You fool. You should have killed them.

ROBERTS

Then who would carry the loot?

SILVEY

You damned idiot.

ROBERTS

It wouldn't look right, if we came away from the ambush with no loot, would it? People might wonder if it was something besides a simple robbery, wouldn't they? People wouldn't know it was me, if nothing was taken. Ain't that what you want? Besides, I lost some good men because of this. Maybe one or two of these will make an adequate replacement.

SILVEY

Don't be a fool, Roberts.

ROBERTS

That's how I got some of my best men, Mr. Silvey. You never know.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE OF THE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Willard and Welk are watching the men make camp from hiding. They have a whispered conversation.

WELK

Who is that?

WILLARD

I'll be damned if that isn't the Earl of Greensbury's man.

WELK

Looks like you were right, m'lord.

INTERCUT - WILLARD AND WELK SPYING ON THE CAMPSITE

The brigands are binding the bodyguard's wrists behind their backs with rope. They are near the edge of the camp, the dark forest right behind them.

SILVEY

I wonder about your reputation, Roberts. I'd always heard you were better than this.

ROBERTS

It was not an ideal situation for an ambush, Mr. Silvey. You didn't give us much time to plan it out.



SILVEY

And now Willard is on his way back to his father to tell him about how he was ambushed in Lennox.

ROBERTS

By brigands, Mr. Silvey. No way to trace it back to you and ... You know who.

SILVEY

Right. You're right. But you still need to decide what do to with this lot here.

ROBERTS

Indeed.

WELK

(whispering)

What do we do?

WILLARD

(whispering)

How many do you see? Eight?

WELK

(whispering)

Not counting Greensbury's man.

WILLARD

(whispering)

I think we're safe ignoring him.

WELK

(whispering)

If my mates were free I think we could take them. But it looks like they're bound securely.

WILLARD

(whispering)

Watch. You'll know what to do.

Willard gets up and walks into the light of the campfire, his sword in his hand.

ROBERTS

Who the hell are you?

WILLARD

I am Willard, of Elegonn.

FIELDS

What?

WILLARD

(points at Silvey)

Ask him.

SILVEY

Yes, it's him.

ROBERTS

Are you a fool?

WILLARD

I've been called such.

With all eyes on Roberts and Willard, Welk carefully makes his way up behind the single guard left watching Abraham and company. He covers the man's mouth with his hand and stabs him in the back and holds him as he collapses.

Welk positions the man's body at the base of a tree so it looks like the dead man is just sitting there, watching the confrontation.

Welk kneels behind Abraham and cuts the ropes binding him, then hands him the dead man's sword.

ROBERTS

Well, this is an interesting development.

WILLARD

It's me that you want. Here I am.  
You can let my people go.

SILVEY

No, I'm afraid he can't.

ROBERTS

He's right. You've all seen him, right? Can't have any witnesses. Because that would be a cause for war, wouldn't it? Between Elegonn and Lennox.

SILVEY

Like anybody cares what happens to this cod swallow.

WILLARD

I'll fight you for their freedom, then.

ROBERTS

You? Fight me?

WILLARD

Yes. Unless the idea frightens you,  
since you won't be able to hide in  
ambush this time.

ROBERTS

Well, I may as well have some fun  
earning my pay, right mates?

Roberts' men laugh. Roberts and Willard face each other,  
blades drawn, and give a brief salute. All of the men are  
watching intently.

INT. TRAINING ROOM AT CASTLE ARDEN (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Willard is practicing his sword fighting with SIR PATRICK  
ROLAND (60), Elegonn's master-at-arms.

SIR PATRICK

Watch your feet. Watch your feet!  
Balance, Willard. Balance!

WILLARD

I'm trying!

SIR PATRICK

Distribute your weight evenly.  
Stand on the balls of your feet.  
You'll be able to move in any  
direction in an instant.

WILLARD

Yes. I think I see.

They continue to fence, Willard actually able to parry some  
of Sir Patrick's attacks and riposte.

SIR PATRICK

That's it. That's better. Better.  
Much better. Now you're getting it.

WILLARD

Yes. Yes, I see it. Yes!

The training continues, Willard getting better and better.  
Patrick baits him into lunging, steps inside the lunge and  
hip tosses Willard onto the floor.

Willard props himself up and finds Patrick's blade under his  
chin.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

What? You cheated!

SIR PATRICK

Indeed I did, my Prince. I'm not training you for a tournament, where there are rules, scoring, referees. This is life and death. The only point is the blood of your enemy. The only prize is survival. There is no place for honor for someone who desires your death. Now, get up. Let's try again.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The outlaws are watching Willard's challenge with interest. They don't notice Welk working around the periphery of the camp, freeing the others.

Roberts lunges and Willard engages him. They begin fighting. Abraham slips up behind one of the men who is isolated a bit from the others and stabs him with a dagger, taking his sword.

Lasher does the same thing to another man, grabbing his sword. The others are still watching the fight. Willard uses his flashiest attacks to keep them interested. Because of this Roberts almost gets through a couple of times.

ROBERTS

Oh, that fancy royal training. I can see you studied under Sir Patrick.

WILLARD

Indeed. Good eye, Roberts.

ROBERTS

He'll be disappointed when he hears of your efforts to show off.

WILLARD

You're not a bad swordsman, Roberts. You fight like a navy man.

ROBERTS

I was a navy man! Not saying which navy, though.

The fight continues, neither man gaining much of an advantage for a while.

Finally, Willard gives Roberts an opening and Roberts takes it. Willard ducks inside the lunge and throws Roberts over his shoulder.

When Roberts tries to get up Willard kicks him in the head. Roberts falls on the ground. Willard stands over him, sword at his throat, as Roberts lies on the ground.

WILLARD

I would ask if you yield, but then  
I saw you murder Mr. Biggs.

Willard forces his sword through Roberts' chest. Then he withdraws it.

ROBERTS

Oh, basely done, Willy! Basely  
done! I am impressed.

Roberts coughs and dies.

While they stare Benjamin, who had quietly slipped up behind one of the brigands, covers the man's mouth with his hand and stabs him. As the man falls he grabs his blade. The man next to him turns and attacks him with his sword.

Benjamin parries the sword with the dagger and Welk stabs the man from behind.

Abraham is fighting with Fields.

FIELDS

Looks like I'm in charge now!

Abraham says nothing, grimly and efficiently fighting Fields. Fields begins giving ground, intimidated by Abraham's skill and his cold and emotionless demeanor.

EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE OF CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Silvey has fled into the woods but is watching from the shadows, pistol in hand.

EXT. CAMPSITE IN THE FOREST - NIGHT

Fields backs into a big tree and can flee no further. Fields drops his sword and raises his hands.

FIELDS

I yield. I yield! Dammit, I  
surrender! I know who hired  
Roberts! I can tell you ---

There's a single pistol shot and a bloody hole appears in Fields's forehead. Silvey has slipped in and shot him from a few feet away. Then Silvey flees back into the woods.

Distracted by the shot, Benjamin gets stabbed in the chest by his foe, who is the last survivor. Abraham rushes up and runs the man through from behind.

Benjamin sinks to his knees, looking at the blood pouring from his chest.

Benjamin falls face first onto the ground. Willard and Abraham kneel next to him, turning him over.

BENJAMIN

Thank you, My Prince. Thank you.  
Give my love to ... .

Benjamin gasps out his last breath.

ABRAHAM

Ben? Benny?

WILLARD

He was a good man. I'm so sorry,  
Bram.

ABRAHAM

Indeed, he was one of the best. Now  
I got to tell his family.

WILLARD

I'll go with you. We'll tell them  
together.

ABRAHAM

What, m'lord?

WILLARD

It's the least I can do. I'll go  
with you to tell Bigg's family,  
too. And I'll tell Hugo's sister.

Willard crawls a short distance away and vomits into the grass.

ABRAHAM

My Prince? Are you all right?

WELK

Roberts is the first man he's ever  
killed.

ABRAHAM

Really?

WELK

Really.

Abraham whistles, impressed.

EXT. FARM OF LARKEN HOBBS - DAY

The carriage is parked out front, Welk holding the reins. Lasher waits by the open carriage door. The carriage itself is empty. Other people from Lorraine have come, attracted by the site of the royal carriage.

An OLD DRUNKARD (75) approaches the bodyguard, and addresses Lasher.

OLD DRUNKARD

I heard what happened. Prince Willy in there?

LASHER

Yes, he is.

OLD DRUNKARD

God. I bet he was pissing his pants when that Henry Roberts drew down on him! Good thing he had you boys handy to sort it out!

Behind him, atop the carriage, Welk is reaching for his sword. Lasher catches his eye and gives him a very slight shake of his head. Welk relaxes, reluctantly.

Willard and Abraham emerge from the house, Larken, Abigail, and Julia following. They all have tears in their eyes. Willard approaches Lasher, the drunkard making a hasty departure.

WILLARD

Corporal?

LASHER

Yes, m'lord?

WILLARD

Where is Mr. Biggs's family?

LASHER

Blackberry Hills.

WILLARD

Very well. Let's go to Blackberry Hills.

LASHER

Yes, my Prince.

Willard climbs into the carriage, Abraham getting in with him, pulling the door closed. Lasher climbs the carriage to sit next to Welk. Welk flicks the reins.

WELK

Hee-yah!

The carriage leaves, heading to Blackberry Hills.

FADE OUT