

LEGENDARY
EPISODE 1: EINHARDT'S STAND

Teleplay for a Pilot

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EXT. BOHEMIA - COUNTRY PATH - NIGHT

Moonlight glints off the heavy scale armour of a knight - JOHN THE TANKARD - as he rides at a steady pace. A not so white cloak with a lion insignia hangs from his back and over it is strapped a sword. The full saddle bag on his horse suggests a journey that's one-way.

A voice recounts the knight's tale. A rather twangy one.

BARD (O.S.)

'Twas the whispers of the folk of
Decín which resounded as a call;
"By the blade of John the Tankard
the boiley Gov'nor did fall!"

Into frame steps a BARD, himself lugging a journeyman's bag. He carries a large open book in his hands on which he balances an ink well. He stops to dip a quill in and write words in the book by the moonlight. He then hurries to keep up.

BARD (CONT'D)

Hero of Bohemia! Burster of
pustules!

EXT. BOHEMIA - HILL - CHURCH - NIGHT

The knight rides his weary steed up the slope of a forested hill. Still the Bard waxes lyrical with his rhymes behind. Between scribblings, he swishes his quill like a sword.

BARD

Brave John popped that scoundrel
publicly in his hall.
(he swishes the quill like
a sword)
Sworn he was to lance the
gluttonous carbuncles of all!

John at last stops and turns in his saddle to the Bard.

JOHN

What's with all the boils and puss?

BARD

It's a me-ta-phor? Would you please
just trust me? This is my job.

John shakes his head, lifts his cloak and pours a cup of wine from a leather bottle strapped to his side. He necks it in one and they continue on towards a church silhouetted ahead.

BARD (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 Our greedy oppressors would surely
 quiver;
 Like a protruding abscess when its
 owner does shiver...

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

John dismounts and ties up his horse. In the distance behind them a beacon lights up. Not good. But the bard is excited by the sight.

BARD
 Alas! A beacon lit behind - did a
 bounty hunter see John pass?
 He stepped into the holy church to
 pray that God would save his...

JOHN
 Enough! I've changed my mind. I
 don't want to be 'renown-ed'.

BARD
 But I'm not finish-ed.

JOHN
 I don't care. You said you'd write
 a poem. Roses are red, violets are
 blue. Why the fuck are you still
 here?

BARD
 It's an epic poem. All heroes have
 one.
 (beat)
 And violets are violet.

John glowers death. Bard shrinks.

John turns and slams his palm on the heavy door of the church. It flies open. Unchurchly sounds spill out.

INT. SACRED HOP INN - NIGHT

It's not a church but an inn. Groups of travelers, farmers and humble artisans are gathered around different tables. A hearty fire is burning. Bard sighs and crosses out his last stanza. A man stands on one of the tables and shouts to all.

QUIZMASTER
 Right - quiet please! Last question
 for this round.

The inn goes very quiet as all wait for the question - clay tablets and nails at the ready - no one even looks at John as he marches straight up to the bar. DASA, a buxom beer-serving wench who gives him a smile and a wink. They clearly have a history.

DASA
Hello, John.

JOHN
(sweet memories)
Dasa.

She puts six beers on a table, bending low as she knows how to. The six men ignore the beers, hypnotized by her cleavage.

QUIZMASTER (O.S.)
So, question six, a real toughie...
What colour are Dasha's eyes?

The inn roars with laughter. Dasa gives a wink to them all.

BAR

John reaches the bar. BERRY THE BARKEEP has a full tankard ready for him. He nods thanks and begins to drain it in one.

Bard appears next to him, book in bag but still orating.

BARD
He swug down the golden nectar and
put paid to his fires of rage.

He gestures for a beer for himself before turning to John.

BARD (CONT'D)
We need an ending, I'm afraid.
Something cathartic.

John finishes his beer and puts his arm around the Bard to speak in confidence.

JOHN
I've got a good one.

And he slams the bard's head on the bar knocking him out cold - Bard drops to the floor.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Felt pretty cathartic to me.

Berry places down the beer the Bard ordered, John takes it for himself with a cheers and drains that too.

BERRY

Heard about Governor Leiman. Good on ya, John. Scourge of Decín he was. A thief, and a murderer too.

John burps and wipes his mouth.

JOHN

I didn't do it. Wasn't me.

Berry's eyes widen in surprise. John looks at him, waiting for him to get it. The penny drops.

BERRY

Mila?

John nods grimly. He shakes his empty tankard for another.

INT./EXT. FOREST GLADE - SOOTHSAYER'S HUT - MORNING

JOHN'S POV

A hand shakes at a door's lock, trying to open it - light peeks through the cracks in the door. At last - success - the door opens. Blinding sunlight pours in. John's hand goes up to shield his hungover eyes. He staggers outside. Birdsong pierces his mind like daggers.

Through the blinding light of the morning sun, slowly a figure comes into shape - MILA. She punches him square in the face and he falls onto his back like a felled tree.

END POV

John is lying with just his breeches on. His armour is strewn in a long line from the forest to the door of the hut - a painful indication that he started undressing before he even got near the hut.

JOHN

Mila...

Mila, an assassin clad tightly in black with knives in straps all over her and a large amethyst crystal pendant on a cord around her neck. She stands over him shaking her hand in pain. She really clouted him.

MILA

You fucking pig! You started undressing all the way back at Sadova junction!

JOHN

I was drunk. Am drunk. Nothing happened.

The door opens and reveals KAZI, an exotically stunning young woman with a not-so-lengthy green nightgown and black touselles of hair tumbling down her shoulders. She rubs her eyes to see what all the fuss is about. Those eyes quickly widen as she sees Mila. She slams the door shut again just as four throwing knives thud into it.

KAZI (O.C.)

He was drunk, Mila! I made him sleep on the floorboards!

Mila storms off.

MILA

Bury him under them next time, witch!

She looks at John one last time - this time it's genuine pain not anger is in her eyes.

MILA (CONT'D)

I thought we were better than this.

And she's gone - a blur of magical assassin swiftness.

John lies his head back in the grass with genuine regret.

INT. SACRED HOP INN - BAR - NIGHT

John finishes the story as Berry serves him another.

JOHN

Next thing I know, she shape-shifts into me for her next job - which of course had to be her highest profile hit in three years.

BERRY

Governor Leiman...

John nods and sighs.

JOHN

Moral of the story?

BERRY

Don't drink so much your Jimmy goes to sleep?

John considers.

JOHN

Also true. But I was thinking
 "don't give magic pendants to your
 girlfriend as birthday presents."

(beat)

And I lost my frigging codpiece.

He points at the spot of armour between his legs that's not there.

BERRY

Oh, the irony.

Berry gestures at the Bard under the bar.

BERRY (CONT'D)

Well, look on the bright side - now
 you're the new hero of the people.

JOHN

The 'people' don't pay for your
 pitchers, pies and plans.

With a final swig, John stands and straightens to leave.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Best be off before my orificial
 orator wakes up. The beers are on
 him, by the way - book rights.

Berry nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I don't suppose you've seen
 Mila come through this way?

Berry shrugs hopelessly.

BERRY

With that pendant of hers, it's
 certainly possible.

THE DOOR OF THE INN

opens, slamming against a farmer who is about to complain but sees six heavily armed men and a very short halfling file in. Their eyes glower at all present.

BERRY'S EYES

widen and he hisses to John.

BERRY
Sit. Bounty Hunters.

John does what he's told, lowering his head to be as inconspicuous as possible.

JOHN
How many?

BERRY
Too many.

Berry pours John another beer.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

stand menacingly over an already taken table and stare at the two farmers sitting there. The farmers get up and leave. The hunters sit in their place. The rest of the bar avoids eye contact with the new arrivals.

The LEADER of the Bounty Hunters, a scarred, battle-hardened sort with a rapier at his belt, walks up to the bar, eyeing everyone present.

He doesn't notice the Bard under the bar and treads on him, making him stir. He just scowls without apology.

BARD
Uhh.

BERRY
What can I--?

LEADER
--I'm looking for a knight. They call him John the Tankard.

John can't bow his head any lower without joining the bard on the floor. His hand loosens a dagger on his own belt.

BERRY
Never heard of him.

LEADER
Is that right?

Leader looks at John suspiciously. But there's no recognition - he evidently has no details of what John looks like. He scowls like he'd slaughter everyone just for sword-practice.

LEADER (CONT'D)
 (deep voiced)
 Seven cucumber smoothies. And you
 got any mint?

BERRY
 Uh-huh.

LEADER
 Seven cucumber smoothies with a
 sprinkling of chopped mint.

BERRY
 We'll bring 'em over to you, sir.

And the leader returns towards his band, still eyeing John.

Two seconds after, the Bard pulls himself up to the bar
 beside John and is about to say something. John smashes his
 head on it again. Back down he goes.

The inn slowly adjusts back to normality and the Quizmaster
 resumes from the top of a table. The Bounty Hunters watch.

QUIZMASTER
 So, round two is "Current Affairs".
 This is a quick fire round - so
 just raise your hand and shout out
 the answer.

There is a murmur of affirmatives.

QUIZMASTER (CONT'D)
 So - question one. Who has a price
 on his head for the murder of
 Governor Leiman of Decin?

John can't believe his ears.

A BLIND MAN is super excited and waves his hand in the air.
 One of his team mates glares at him but then quickly looks at
 the floor as he notices the bounty hunter Leader eyeing him.

BLIND MAN
 John the Tankard!

QUIZMASTER
 Correct! One point for the Dirty
 Ditchers.

BLIND MAN
 Yesss!

The Blind Man goes to high-five but is left hanging. A tension fills the inn. Several people put coins on the table and leave.

QUIZMASTER

Question two: Name one distinctive feature by which you could identify John the Tankard.

No one says anything. They all look at the Blind Man with borderline panic. He waves his hand excitedly in the air.

BLIND MAN

He wears an off-white cloak with a gold lion on it!

JOHN

winces and turns as subtly round as he can so his cloak faces the other way, not towards the bounty hunters. But they are already looking at him.

BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

And! He's missing a cod piece!

Jon tries to cross his legs, which armour isn't designed for.

Leader stares at John. His team are already passing whispers between each other.

Quizmaster is looking at John with a wicked smile - hanging from his finger is John's missing metal codpiece.

QUIZMASTER

Correct. And correct.

Just then, the door opens again and QUIZMASTER #2 staggers in - HE'S THE SPITTING IMAGE OF THE QUIZMASTER STANDING ON THE TABLE. Quizmaster #2 pulls a dart from his neck. He slurs.

QUIZMASTER #2

Someone stuck me with a fff...

And he passes out, collapsing on the floor.

THE BARD stands up to the bar again. John knocks him out again.

JOHN glares at the Quizmaster, who, with a flick of his finger tosses his codpiece in the fire. All customers except the bounty hunters hurry out, hauling the blind man and the passed out Quizmaster #2 with them.

JOHN

This has gone too far, Mila.

QUIZMASTER now reaches to his neck and removes a crystal pendant from his tunic which is glowing bright purple - the light fades and the illusion dissipates, revealing a still scowling Mila; all this time she was using the pendant to masquerade as the quizmaster.

MILA

I bet you never said that to HER.

LEADER looks at Mila and considers the new situation - he figures nothing important has changed.

LEADER

Finish your drinks lads.

The other bounty hunters finish sucking their smoothies and stand. They draw swords and widen into a circle around John. The fighting arena is littered with chairs and tables. The leader just watches from his chair.

The other six advance on John, who looks to Mila imploringly.

JOHN

I told you - nothing happened.

MILA

Only cause you drank so much "your Jimmy went to sleep."

BERRY scratches his head and winces - she heard.

MILA leans against the wall and crosses her arms to show she has no intention of helping John. The attackers charge.

JOHN picks up a tankard with the tip of his blade and with a sharp flick of his wrists, flings it at HUNTER #1 - it smacks him in the face and knocks him out - and he uses the same motion for a round house slash that sinks into Hunter #2's side as he lunges at John.

John's next four moves need to be parries and then a kick as the others swing or stab at him.

JOHN

I'm sorry, okay? It was a mistake.

MILA

Not good enough, John.

He parries Hunter #3 mid-blade, they lock for a moment and then John uses the opposing force as a pivot to punch with the guard on his hilt into Bounty Hunter #3's skull. A gory end.

The leader, while sucking his smoothie, studies John's fighting style, looking for weaknesses.

THE HALFLING bounty hunter is armed with a wicked ragged dagger and is fixated on a very specific target at eye level.

HALFLING POV

John's chink in his armour is the open space where the cod piece should be. Halfling stabs at the exposed trousers, John moves aside and the blade is deflected by his thigh plate.

The halfling stabs again. John spares time to parry this low blow. And again. John's desperate.

JOHN

Aaaa!! You little fucker!

RETURN

Mila shouts advice.

MILA

Little man. Try feigning first.

The halfling nods and pretends to stab but then holds back, John goes to parry and only when the parry misses does the halfling stab for real. John only manages to save his balls by twisting his hips.

MILA (CONT'D)

Perfect. Keep it up.

John is struggling against the onslaught now. Hunter #1 wakes up from the tankard in the face and also rejoins the fray.

JOHN

Mila, please!

MILA

It's over, John. I need a man I can settle down with. Someone I can trust. Someone *not* a drunk. I told you I want to start a family...

The halfling nearly gets him again. John is furious now and goes into a fighting frenzy.

JOHN

...And that you want to buy back your childhood house in Stary Tyn Valley. I know! You told me twenty-four and a half fucking times!

He slams his sword through Hunter #4's helmet and halfway through his head, and then backhands the halfling in the face.

The halfling smashes his head on a chair and passes out.

John jumps up onto a table - he has time to look at Mila while he speaks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Do you wanna know why I started drinking again? It's because with me it's a good day if I have two ducats in my pouch. Where am I gonna get *two thousand* to buy a house?

He parries two more blows and hooks the top of a chair with his foot and with a full swing of his body to do a round house with his sword, he smashes the chair devastatingly into Hunter #1 and finishes his spin by cutting half way into Hunter #5's chest - awesome move.

Mila is quiet for once as she considers whether in fact this was partly her fault.

The Leader is the last left and he stands casually and walks over to the panting John. He reaches the table John is stood on and jumps up on the other end, rapier drawn. He smiles like a father to a child - it's scary as hell - and then attacks with wicked rapier skills

It is instantly clear that he is a tougher adversary than all the others together. He times his secondary attacks at the end of John's moves - he clearly spotted John's tendency to over-swing. He keeps smiling beautifully through his scarred visage - it's sinister and wreaks of death.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Please, Mila.

Driven back by a blow that exploits one of John's fighting stance weaknesses, John falls off the table backwards with a crash.

On his back on the ground, a smashed chair beneath him and Mila looking down at him from the next table, John speaks to her, his eyes are soft with truth.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You know what the witch told me at the Red Lion when she read my palm, that night before you found me? She told me the only riches I'll ever see will be the price others put on my head.

Mila's eyes soften a little.

The Leader drops to the ground over John and deftly inverts his sword ready for the death blow.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If I can't be your man, Mila. I'll be no man at all.

John doesn't even try to defend himself. He just pushes his chest up to receive the blade. With a final smile of cucumber serenity, Leader heaves the rapier downwards with both hands.

TIME SLOWS ALMOST TO A STANDSTILL

Mila is the only one who moves. She steps down, first onto a chair and then onto the floor. She goes over to John as he braces himself to die - his arms out wide and his raised chest up, his eyes fearless.

Mila kneels down to him and looks into those eyes.

MILA

You old fool.

And she kisses him.

TIME RETURNS

Almost faster than the eye can see, Mila draws two knives from scabbards on her thighs, parries the rapier and slices open the leader's throat.

She looks down at the dying Leader.

MILA (CONT'D)

Men drink ale.

John can't believe he's still alive. He looks to Mila and takes in what this means. She spared him.

A shout rouses them.

BERRY (O.S.)

The halfling!

John sees through the forest of table and chair legs the halfling making a run for it.

MILA

Let him go.

John jumps up to both feet.

JOHN

Not before I have a word or two with him about fighting etiquette.

He stamps towards the terrified halfling, who struggles to open the door and escape.

John is just about to grab the little fucker when the halfling at last gets the door open and dashes out...

...and through the wide legs of someone huge. Something huge. Holding in one hand an open Reward poster that reads "John the Tankard Dead or Alive," in the other is a wicked scimitar.

The ogre opens its mouth wide and roars at John, just centimetres away from his face. Before John can react the ogre has stabbed him through his side. John looks down, aghast, as blood pours from the wound. He drops to his knees - he can't believe it.

MILA

No!

Mila races forward and bursts into action, driving the ogre away from John as he clutches his bleeding side in shock. Mila is a whirlwind of action...

CUT TO BLACK

The screech of ogre pain and the sound of a massive thud on the floor. Then silence.

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH - DAWN

An ogre lies on its back dead, fifteen knives stuck in various points of his body and head. Behind his carcass the sun starts its slow rise through the mist over the hills.

Mila, with the help of Berry, loads John's horse with the body of John The Tankard. They say nothing.

The Bard picks up the poster from the Ogre's dead fingers.

BARD (O.C.)

The reward - Dead or Alive - it
would be stupid not to take it.
Mila'd had enough of her job, and
with this money she could at last
forsake it.

The Bard opens the scroll as Mila sets off towards the rising sun and Berry heads back towards the bar. It reads "Reward - 2,000 ducats."

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

And so she set off with the body of
the man for whose husbandry she'd
always hankered;

The real John the Tankard steps into frame with a beer in his hand and drinks deeply.

The body of the man strapped to the horse who looks like him jolts on the back of the horse and the crystal pendant swings out from the man's shirt - it is glowing bright purple.

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

But her pendant also worked well on
the dead and that body was not the
Tankard's.

John watches Mila ride off towards the rising sun and takes a swig of beer.

He pulls off with a snap the leather wine bottle from under his arm and holds it up - a sword stab through it and red wine still leaking. He tosses it.

BARD (CONT'D)

A quiet life awaited Mila and John -
more years than they could tally.
In their new home, her childhood
home, at the foot of Stary Tyn
Valley.

As John watches Mila ride, he sees a good future open out before him. A new day. He smiles to the bard.

JOHN

I'd say that's pretty cathartic.

FADE IN:

CLOSE UP TRACKING across the wall of the Sacred Hop Inn

Animal head trophies - a deer. A bear. An Ogre's head with knives stuck in it.

A tankard, a sword and a codpiece. There is the growing sound of a raid going on in the distance - a battle. John's gauntleted hand suddenly appears and snatches the sword, the codpiece and, after a moment, he comes back to get the tankard. This story has not ended...

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

CARD: TWO YEARS LATER

The faint sound of medieval fighting in the distance - as if underwater, slowly growing clearer, sharper. A premonition.

KAZI (V.O.)

Memories come to me - of the times when I had good premonitions, of happy times to come. A visitor bringing sweets; a magpie stealing bread; the sun. I still have my memories...

EXT. STARY TYN VILLAGE - SLOW MOTION

In the brilliant pool of Ayra's green eyes is a reflection - a large knight with cast metal horns upon his helmet swings a heavy-bladed sword at her.

KAZI (V.O.)

...but my premonitions are no longer good.

EXT. STARY TYN VILLAGE - DAY

PREMONITION - AYRA'S POV

Rain falling. Ayra staggers back from a body at her feet. A knight with his head severed. But it's not the body that she looks at now...

A behemoth of a black-plated knight with horns like a bull heaves slow heavy breaths - like an ox in winter - as he turns his helmeted head round to her. Rain spatters on the armour. From within the slits of the helmet, eyes glow red. His wickedly serrated bastard sword readies to face her.

There are many other knights in the background, mostly mounted on horses.

Ayra looks about her for help but there are only bodies - an ETTIN, a ROBED WOMAN with black hair and an ARMY CAPTAIN. All fallen. All dead.

There is no one left.

Ayra stumbles back as her adversary swings. She parries the with her sword but the knight's strength knocks her to the floor.

He smashes her blade aside to open up the space he needs, turning his sword downwards in his hands and plunging it towards her chest in a death blow.

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. VILLAGE BONFIRE - NIGHT

Kazi wakes with a gasp as if she'd been underwater a whole minute and only now broken the surface for air. She is the woman seen in her own premonition; but her hair is white as she 'sees.'

Gradually, her hair darkens to black as she emerges from the vision.

The present is no better than the future - Kazi is tied to a stake rising out the centre of assembled wood, completely naked with arms bound above her.

Conspicuously *not* naked, and tied on the other side of the stake is JOHN The Tankard, the soldier also featuring in Kazi's premonition.

JOHN

Do you burn faster after drinking?
God, I hope you burn faster.

KAZI

It's going to be okay.

JOHN

How is it going to be okay?

KAZI

I saw us die.

JOHN

What? How the hell is that 'okay'?

KAZI

No. I meant I saw us die somewhere else. In a few days. It won't happen here.

JOHN

Joy.

A rabble of villagers flock around the high-built pyre jeering and loud - crowd fever in full flow. Some even carry children on their shoulders - clapping and thinking it's a game.

CROWD

Witch! Diseased traitor! Jezebel!

Several hold up torches to illuminate the dread of the accused. Two of the crowd are half-ogres; shorter than the Ettin but only slightly and much uglier.

A grim-looking VILLAGE ELDER points to a FARMER holding a torch.

VILLAGE ELDER

Alfred. You can light it.

Farmer hesitates.

FARMER

I only brought the torch so I can see.

VILLAGE ELDER

Well, now that you have it, you can use it to light the fire.

BACK OF THE CROWD

An enormous fist covered in metal clenches - an Ettin's.

AYRA (O.S.)

No, V-Tor. Not enemy. Just idiots.

And another hand rests calmly on his fist - AYRA, the woman in Kazi's premonition - steps forward to deal with this herself.

Her hood is up and a blade-tipped bow on her back as she pushes through the crowd, the towering Ettin, V-TOR, follows right behind her. The two half-ogres narrow eyes at V-Tor; he narrows eyes back.

Kazi notices Ayra, recognises her.

KAZI

She's here - the last to die.

JOHN

There's something crawling up my leg.

(to the crowd)

Hey! There are innocents in here!
Could be whole families.

One of the women in the crowd, ALFRED'S WIFE, hasn't once taken her eyes off Kazi. She grabs the torch from her guilty-looking husband, ALFRED, but he won't let go.

ALFRED'S WIFE

I'll bloody do it. The whore.

ALFRED

Alison. I'nt it enough you got her up there on a peg? Do you have to be the one who burns her too?

ALFRED'S WIFE

Too bloody right I do.

And she grabs the torch. She's just about to toss it on the fire, when a hand grabs hers. Ayra is not calming now but restraining.

She pulls back her hood to reveal green eyes and a scowl she wears like armour. She speaks so all can hear.

AYRA

Really? The whole realm is burning and the only thing you can think of is torching your own?

JOHN

Not to mention all these guiltless wood lice!

KAZI

Not now, John.

CROWD

They're not one of ours!

ALFRED'S WIFE

They wandered in just two days back. And did more mischief in them two days than any of us do in a year.

AYRA
What, exactly?

VILLAGE ELDER
She's a witch.

AYRA
I got that part.

VILLAGE ELDER
She says we'll all be dead within a week.

KAZI
I meant it as a warning, for Seven Sakes!

AYRA
You don't need a witch to predict that. Yours is the only village in ten leagues that's not had the riders rip it down.

VILLAGER #1
He's diseased! He's plague-ed!

Ayra looks at him.

AYRA
No he's not.

Alfred's wife tries to get her second hand on the torch. Ayra punches her in the face. She collapses.

ALFRED'S WIFE
(holding a bloody nose on the floor)
That harlot bewitched my Alfred.

AYRA
Then why isn't Alfred burning on a stake?

Alfred shrinks at the suggestion - probably not the first time he's heard it spoken.

Ayra notices Kazi is entirely bare.

AYRA (CONT'D)
And *why* exactly is she naked?

She looks into the face of another man to the left of her, who just shrugs as if to say 'it seemed like a good idea.'

VILLAGE ELDER

Enough! Leave here and take your
liberty-lovin' mercifulness with
ya!

Ayra locks her target. A glint is in her eye now.

AYRA

Or what?

Half Ogre #1 has had enough and swings a fist at Ayra. A huge hand stops it dead, like it hit a tree. The next hand is a fist - V-Tor knocks the ugly brute to the dirt with a flinch of his shoulders.

Half Ogre #2 pulls an axe from his belt but Ayra is quick and uses his arm to swing and twist inside his embrace so that she is facing away from him right up close to his chest and too close for him to attack with the weapon.

V-Tor looks at Ayra for a command.

V-TOR

Enemy?

She nods low as if that is the way to say yes to someone very low on IQ but then brings her head up hard and fast to slam into the face of the half-ogre behind. The fight is on.

Half Ogre #2 is too big and his nose already too flat for the reverse head-butt to do much harm but he is dazed long enough for V-Tor to pick him up and hurl him at the Village Elder, who is about to order an attack.

But Alfred's Wife sees the torch that Ayra dropped, picks it up and tosses it onto the pyre. It immediately catches light. John struggles in vain to get free.

JOHN

Bloody hell!

It's instantly clear no one could pass through the flames to climb up and free the two on the stake.

Ayra uses Alfred's Wife as a springboard, kicking her heavily to the ground, and leaping over two village men advancing on her with daggers.

As she ascends, she swings her bow forward and draws the string. She fires three arrows in super-fast succession before somersaulting over the two villagers and, with a single swipe of the blade at the tip of her bow, hamstringing them both from behind.

The arrows are perfect, each flying to a point between wrists or ankles and severing the ropes binding the captives. Kazi and John tumble out through the flames and safely onto the grass.

The rest of the villagers back off.

AYRA
 (to Kazi and John)
 I'm Ayra - this is V-Tor. Maybe we should go?

KAZI
 I'm so done with villages.

Kazi raises a palm towards the fire and a staff shoots out of the flames into her hand - a simple retrieve spell. The staff is smoking a little but is fine.

She hits the ground with the staff's base and grass grows up to weave itself around her naked body to form a kind of hemp cloak.

KAZI (CONT'D)
 "Witch!" Who's a witch?

And she sets off. Ayra shakes her head. John scrambles up and forward too.

JOHN
 My moccasins are crispy.

They escape into the darkness.

EXT. HILLS - CAMP - DAY

Kazi wakes in a blanket. The first thing she observes as she opens her eyes are two, green, studious eyes looking back at her - Ayra.

AYRA
 We're breaking camp. Let's go.
 (to a man sleeping nearby)
 You too, slumberjack.

And she gives John the Tankard a none-too-small kick in his back to wake him. John stirs in his blanket.

AYRA (CONT'D)
 Or you can stay behind - be my guest.

John rubs where he was kicked and turns irritable eyes at Ayra as she goes to finish packing her things.

JOHN
(to Kazi)
Her toes are as sharp as her
tongue.

KAZI
But not her sword. I saw her die
too. We will go our own ways at the
next village.

Kazi rises up and gets her bearings.

JOHN
Why not send them on their way now?
They're about as fun as tax.

KAZI
Because at least I know we'll be
safe with them until the time comes
when we're not.

John rubs his head in pain.

JOHN
All this clear-headed talk. I need
another hangover or I'm going to
eye-fuck my sword.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The four are walking, V-Tor and Ayra at the front. There is the smoke of a burning farm on the horizon.

AYRA
They were here yesterday, maybe
even this morning. Let's go look.

V-Tor chews on something and snorts.

V-TOR
Walked slow. Missed kill. Bad.

He sets off at a faster pace. John is in thought. At last he speaks to Kazi.

JOHN
Did you see that big guy die too?

Kazi nods. John is surprised. Then a thought occurs to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And... erm, are you sure I died too? I mean, in the heat of the battle your mind can play tricks...

Kazi walks ahead - no interest in this.

KAZI

We all died, ok? But it was at some bigger village. Trust me, alright? I'll tell you when we need to disappear.

John doesn't seem comfortable about all this.

JOHN

Definitely need a drink.

EXT. FARM - DAY

The farm buildings are intact but the yard is filled with the bodies of the farmer family and their hired farmhands. Smoke hangs like the spirits of the dead.

They cast their eyes around the scene of the attack. John is not with them.

AYRA

Same. No children. No attackers among the dead.

KAZI

John! Any sign of kids in there?

John opens the window of one of the houses and shakes a large bottle upside down - not a drop.

JOHN

Who drinks everything in the fucking house before dying?

Ayra scowls.

KAZI

We were wondering if there were any kids who survived in there.

JOHN

(still muttering about the lack of alcohol and turning back inside)
No. No kids either.

V-Tor lifts a cart with one hand to look under there. Ayra takes Kazi's arm.

AYRA

What happened here? The villagers
back there said you are a seer.
What happened to the children?

Kazi doesn't like this treatment at all and the top of her staff begins to pulse with blue magic as her anger flares. Her hair turns white with a red stripe - just for a moment - as she sees something.

KAZI

I see the future not the past.
(shaking off Ayra' arm)
But I do see that you'll figure out
what happened here yourself. Only,
why do I see that, huh? Why all the
emotion? What are the kids to you?

Ayra answers with a look that says she'll not answer and sets to finding out what she can herself, feeling the floor with her hand, while moving quickly and lightly, almost dance-like around the site of the battle as she deduces.

Images - small punctuated flashes of actions - come to her mind as her deductive powers set to work.

SERIES OF SHOTS (INTERCUT WITH PRESENT)

- Hooves on ground. Leaving prints.

AYRA

Horsemen, eight.

(Ayra touches the prints and follows a line round, and then another.)

- Legs of horses running in a curve and passing another line of four horses the other way, encircling a group of people. Screams.

AYRA (CONT'D)

Double-surround formation. Highly-
trained. Military.

(John throws another empty keg out of the window and peers out curiously after hearing military speak.)

JOHN

What? Is she a witch an' all?

KAZI

A hunter. An average one.

(Ayra doesn't break her concentration. She finds two heel prints and another two.)

- Two knights drop to the ground on their feet.

AYRA

Two dismount.

(She heads towards the building, past a body. She picks up a tiny chip of metal and matches it to the sword in the body's hand).

- A clang of blades and a sliced cut; a body tumbles to the floor and a knight's foot steps past him towards the door.

AYRA (CONT'D)

The eldest son tries to stop them.
Parries a forehand, is cut down by
a backhand.

(She looks at Kazi as if to say 'average, huh?' Excitedly now, she notices heavier footfalls returning).

AYRA (CONT'D)

The two went into the house and
returned carrying something heavy.

JOHN

A year's worth of barley wine, no
doubt.

(Ayra briskly follows the tracks back to a point where two lines are on the ground - cart tracks; and on the floor a bitten finger nail - from a small child).

- Little kicking legs are pushed into a cart and a door is closed.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Ayra studies a collection of large footprints at one point behind the cart.

AYRA

The cart had one entry point - it
was closed. And inside were kids.
(holds up the finger nail)
Nervous kids, who bite their nails.

Ayra points to another path leading away from the farm.

AYRA (CONT'D)

They went that way.

That's all V-Tor was waiting to hear. He starts marching in that direction without waiting. Ayra follows.

John leaves the building and trots over to Kazi, examining a sword he's picked up.

JOHN

I get the feeling they are running towards danger not away from it.

KAZI

Same.

EXT. MEADOW - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The four sit and share their thoughts with the flames licking the wood in the fire as they stare. At last Ayra looks up to Kazi.

AYRA

Do you see anything ahead for us, Vate?

KAZI

My name is Kazi. And no, I have seen nothing. But that doesn't mean anything won't come.

AYRA

What is it that brings the visions on? You said emotion.

KAZI

Emotion, stress, fear, fate. But Fate blocks my visions too; she feeds me what she wants me to know and holds back what she doesn't.

AYRA

Fate is a pattern you put on the past that sometimes echoes into the future. Nothing more.

KAZI

That's what they all say when they haven't seen her hand at work. Only by acting how we normally would not can we resist the course she has set for us.

Ayra shrugs - she doesn't believe, but doesn't not.

AYRA

I have my own hands. That's all there is to it.

KAZI

And what 'pattern' brought you here? What 'echo' makes you chase these raiders and search for the children they hold? They took one of yours?

Ayra pulls off her boots.

AYRA

Enough traveling for one day. And enough talking.

She lies down with her knapsack as a pillow. Her eyes do not close.

EXT. BURNT OUT VILLAGE - OUTSKIRTS - DAY

An otherwise picturesque village is marred by the charred remains of buildings and bodies, smoke rising its wispy warning to anyone still in the region.

In the centre, one person is upright - on her knees.

AYRA

holds close her dying mother, the pale-skinned lady's clothes are soaked with her own lifeblood. Ayra has pressure on the wound but the blood is escaping through her fingers.

AYRA

(trying not to sound desperate)

I can stop the bleeding. Just keep your hand here, Mum. I'll go find needle and thread.

Ayra removes the hand supporting her mother from behind and that too is covered with blood. She looks and sees there is an exit wound.

MOTHER

It went right through, didn't it? I could've kissed the hilt it were so close.

Hope bleeds out of Ayra.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Your uncle... One eye blue, the
other green. I saw him.

AYRA
Uncle Garrick? Was he with the
Guard? Why didn't they do
something?

Mother turns her eyes to Ayra.

MOTHER
'Twas his blade I could'a kissed.

Ayra is shocked into silence.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
He is... changed.

The mother feels an urgency.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
They took Sam. The other children
too... alive...

Her mother's eyes well with tears until at last they become
still and staring. Alive no longer.

EXT. MAIN VILLAGE - OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The four approach a large village. The day is clear. On the
outskirts, some men are putting wooden spikes into the ground
to keep riders at bay. Inside, two families are loading carts
with everything they own.

John looks at Kazi - worried.

KAZI
It *is* the village, but it was
raining when I saw it. Death won't
come today.

EXT. MAIN VILLAGE - SQUARE - DAY

The village is busy with activity.

A bull-necked but narrow-shouldered man, the MARSHALL, loads
a cart with crates. His daughter, a young girl of 8 years,
NAOMI, and her GRANDMOTHER, stand defiantly as he works.

GRANDMOTHER
The other men are staying.

MARSHALL

The other men have no families. Or
little love for them.

He picks up his daughter and puts her on the back of the wagon.

NAOMI

I don't want to go.

MARSHALL

It's too dangerous here, honey.

GRANDMOTHER

You know what you are? You're a
coward. The men here need you.
Their deaths will be on your--

He growls close to her.

MARSHALL

--their deaths are their choice.
Now accept mine - we are leaving.
(pointing at Naomi as she
climbs down again)
Brand me how you like - my
daughter's not staying here.

The grandmother is not deterred and she follows him as he turns back to the cart to put his daughter back up there.

GRANDMOTHER

What are you going to teach her
with this? "Look after your own
and to hell with everyone else"?

MARSHALL

Hell is already here, mother.
(to Naomi)
Jump down from the cart again and
I'll spank your bum to bacon. Now I
need you here to keep watch while
we're traveling, okay?

Naomi just starts to cry. He looks skyward as if women are the bane of his life and climbs up to the driver's bench.

His young wife finishes hugging her own parents and hurries over to join him, passing him up a basket with food for the journey.

GRANDMOTHER

You'd leave your own mother to die?

MARSHALL

I asked you to come. Don't hold me
to ransom like this.

(whipping his horse into a
trot)

Farewell.

His cart passes our party of four, who are just entering the square. Marshall only now realises this is the last he will ever see of his mother and turns, sadness in his eyes.

The grandmother hobbles after them.

GRANDMOTHER

Go round the forest! Please! Go
round!

She passes Kazi, who hears this and turns. Kazi's eyes glaze over as she sees something, but her hair stays the same.

FLASHBACK

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

BEAST POV

Moonlight breaks through the trees. The forest is silent but for the barrel breaths of a giant beast stalking; heavy crunching thuds of its footfalls on the drum of the forest floor.

The beast remains about 50 metres from a clearly very lived-in cabin with an oil lamp glowing from inside. It circles round. There are clouds of condensation from its breath.

At last it reaches a point facing the cabin door. It is closed.

And here the beast charges, springing right and left around the trees as it gathers speed. Its breathing sounds canine now as a growl starts gathering. It is charging right at the thick wooden door. Surely it can't open it.

It hits the door and it breaks off the hinges - this is no wolf, but something far more powerful.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

BEAST POV

It doesn't stop.

Kazi is on her back with a TEENAGE LAD enjoying one of his early sexual experiences on top of her. Eyes wide with terror, Kazi pushes the boy off her and clambers back up the bed, reaching for her staff.

The beast leaps high and down on her before she can defend herself. It goes straight for the neck. Her scream is cut short by the crunching sound of a crushed trachea.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - EVENING

Kazi wakes up in her bed from the premonition. She is alone. Panicked, she grabs a rucksack, stuffs it full of essentials and dashes out of the door, leaving it open.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The same Teenage Lad from her premonition is approaching the cabin, whistling all jolly about what's to come. She runs past him.

TEENAGE LAD
Kazi! What's going on?

KAZI
Not horny now.

She dashes off through the forest, leaving him there, perplexed. He hears a snort from a huge animal not far away.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. MAIN VILLAGE - SQUARE - DAY

Kazi watches the cart leave. The grandmother falls to her knees and whimpers to herself now.

GRANDMOTHER
Not the forest...

John appears at Kazi's shoulder.

JOHN
Another premonition?

KAZI
A memory.

EXT. MAIN VILLAGE - SQUARE - DAY

Ayra and V-Tor are looking for someone to talk to but everyone is too busy. At last she finds a FARMER who is ordering a FARMHAND.

FARMER

We need more pikes. Get Robert and cut down another score of saplings from the brook. Quick.

FARMHAND

Sure.

AYRA

Who's in charge here?

The farmer points at the Marshall's cart now quite a distance away.

FARMER

He was.

The farmer doesn't seem interested in talking more, but Ayra takes hold of his arm.

AYRA

What comes? An attack?

FARMER

Aye - word is that Muckov was raided yesterday, and Levin afore that. We'll be next fer sure.

AYRA

Any word on where the raiders are coming from?

FARMER

Just talk. No one knows. Hang around and you can ask them yourself.

AYRA

If you're making a stand, we can help.

FARMER

Might soon be a fall, but sure. How many are with you?

AYRA

We're four.

The farmer nods but Kazi steps in before he can speak.

KAZI

That will be two. Us two are just
holidaying in these parts.

In the background, John finishes pulling down a poster and
stuffs it in his pants. He heads over to them.

AYRA

What? You're leaving?

KAZI

Err... yes.

John arrives.

JOHN

Yeah sorry. Got to go. Things to
do, lands to flee...

(to Farmer, pointing at a
boarded up building)

That's the inn right? Can we lodge
there tonight? We'll be gone on the
morrow.

FARMER

Keepers left yesterday. Sure -
knock yourself out.

John smiles.

JOHN

You read my mind.

And John immediately walks up to the Inn. Kazi shrugs an
apology to Ayra and follows. Ayra lets the farmer go and
follows too - not giving up.

John kicks the door in and enters, the others behind him.

INT. INN - CONTINUOUS

John drops his stuff on the floor and immediately starts
scouring the place for alcohol left behind. Kazi drops her
bag on a table and lies down on a bench to rest. Ayra and V-
Tor follow, both standing defiantly.

AYRA

So this is the thanks we get for
saving your lives.

KAZI

Precisely why I intend to keep on
living mine.

John has already cleared an entire cupboard. But everything
is empty - he looks around as if listening to a call.

JOHN

Come to Daddy.

Ayra can't believe this.

AYRA

Look, we've been on the move for
two weeks and this is the first
village we've come across that's
taking a stand. You've seen what's
happening to our kingdom--

KAZI

--our kingdom? Look, you and ham-
hands over there obviously need
this crusade - and that's just
great - but in case you didn't
notice, folk in 'the kingdom' don't
care much for me. For John neither.
And in case you didn't realise,
fights with knights don't go well.

There is a pause as Ayra realises something.

AYRA

Knights? How do you know they're
knights? Have you seen them?

KAZI

(recovering)

You said yourself they were
military. Who else rides horses?

Ayra glares at Kazi - not believing her one bit.

John rips up a floorboard and, with triumph, pulls out a full
keg of spirit - immediately he pops the cork and drinks
deeply.

AYRA

How long will you stay?

JOHN

(shaking the keg to
measure its contents)

Sixteen hours, give or take.

AYRA

Is there nothing that can change
your mind?

Kazi's hair turns white for a moment, with its red stripe, and she gestures to a table in the shadows at the end of the room.

KAZI

Ask him - he's got an idea.

Ayra looks across the room as a hooded figure behind one of the tables leans forward into the light. His legs are crossed and his hands are closed together beneath the loose arms of his brown robe.

He briefly looks skyward and the hood slides off his head revealing the wise-looking face of a neither young nor old man with a bun tied behind his head and a short beard: PRIOR SAN.

Ayra loosens her sword in its scabbard.

AYRA

Who are you?

KAZI

You'll like him; he's your kind of
crazy.

There is a moment when everyone expects him to speak but he only sits. At last he lifts his eyes to Kazi.

PRIOR SAN

Your foresight burdens you with
fear, daughter of Ealga, Vate of
Licken Forest. But you are right to
wish to leave this place. None of
you possess anything that may harm
them that ride.

(casting eyes across all)

My name is Prior San. I am here to
give you such a thing.

John finds beakers to pour his newly found spirit in. He pours one for Kazi and a large one for himself.

JOHN

Sounds like a 'something' *they*
would be interested in - not us.

AYRA

Speak. *I* am listening.

PRIOR SAN

The knights - and they are knights -
are not living. They are born of
the dark and must be banished with
that which carries light.

John is happily drinking.

JOHN

It's okay - I am half way drunk.
Y'all can talk as much bullshit as
you want now.

AYRA

(to Prior San)
How do you know this?

PRIOR SAN

It is my purpose to know, and when
I do not, to find out.

AYRA

What do you want from us?

PRIOR SAN

In a church one day west of here,
the Blade of Einhart is kept by the
Widows of Lhotsko. And a day to the
south, at the monastery of Polepy,
lies The Annals of Einhart. These
are what I want. The book gives the
relic power.

AYRA

And exactly why can't you get these
items yourself? You're a monk, you
will have the trust of those that
keep them.

PRIOR SAN

I, like you soldier, am a fugitive -
all monks were arrested after the
king's edict against our faith.

JOHN

But it's fine for you to send
another fugitive. You know what?
For a god-guy, I actually like you.

AYRA

And this relic - with this book -
can be used to defeat the raiders?

The monk nods.

AYRA (CONT'D)

What else do you know about them?
Whence do they come?

PRIOR SAN

That I cannot say.

John goes to sit next to the monk on the same bench.

JOHN

I know - why don't you just send
off Good Samaritan one and two over
there and the rest of us can have a
tipple here till we're dry. How
does that sound?

He claps a hand on the Prior's shoulder, sitting next to him
as if beside a new drinking buddy.

But there is nothing there to sit on. John falls onto the
ground, spilling his cup all over himself. It is only then
that he notices Prior San is not seated on a bench behind the
table but levitating cross-legged there.

JOHN (CONT'D)

He's bloody floating!

PRIOR SAN

I wish for *all four* of you to go.
The road is no longer safe. Much
has changed.

KAZI

That's the truth. But John and I
are taking a different road.

JOHN

(licking the liquor off
his armour)
Amen to that.

With a sigh, Prior San opens his arms and shows a pouch of
coins - a none too small pouch.

PRIOR SAN

Perhaps you would find some use for
coin? One day you might find a
tavern that is still open.

John's eyes light up - by the swell of the pouch, it's a
handsome sum within.

JOHN

Maybe. But in my experience, when people who can fly have a mission for people who can't, it's best to politely decline.

Without looking, the Prior tosses the purse to John on the floor.

PRIOR SAN

Half now. Half when the relic is here with me - and *before* the raid.

AYRA

V-Tor and I are in. And it's not for the money.

V-Tor nods.

Kazi looks at John - he's unable to say no with so much cash in his hand and just makes a complaining groaning sound.

KAZI

We're in too.

JOHN

And it is for the money.

PRIOR SAN

Good. But you will not work together. I wish you, Vate, to go with the huntress to the monastery; for the book. You, soldier, go with our Ettin friend to the church for the blade.

JOHN

I charge double for child-care.

V-Tor growls. Ayra stays him with her hand.

KAZI

(to Prior San)

If that's the way it has to be - fine.

JOHN

Why 'fine'? Does this guy even know how to talk?

AYRA

He knows when not to. A talent entirely lost on you.

KAZI
 (to Prior San)
 We're gonna have to leave soon,
 right?

PRIOR SAN
 Immediately, if you are to return
 before the attack. As a vate, you
 will know when that is.

He sees the fear in her eyes as she remembers her death.

KAZI
 Aye, I do.

EXT. MAIN VILLAGE - OUTSKIRTS - HILL

The four stand before parting company. Prior San is not with them.

JOHN
 Do you think the hermit is telling
 us everything?

KAZI
 No. But I think his choices are for
 others's sakes as much as his.

AYRA
 Aye - deceivers are much less at
 peace with themselves than he.

JOHN
 Well, I have run the mill a few
 more turns than any of you and the
 best 'deceivers' I've met are as
 they want to seem.

AYRA
 Well, what do you suggest? Take
 your half of the money and continue
 on your way?

John looks at her ironically - clearly that's exactly what he was thinking.

KAZI
 John. Let the women decide who to
 trust and who not - you worry about
 making that one weight of gold two.

JOHN
(to V-Tor)
A world on its head it is, my
friend, where them that spin and
sew are the same that lead men.

AYRA
It is a world righted. I hope one
day you'll see.

John isn't interested in arguing - he has some drinking to do from the amphora he carries with him.

Ayra nods a farewell to V-Tor and he back to her.

Kazi stops before John, for the first time showing a maternal instinct, as if here was her son about to set off for school.

KAZI
Don't drink so much that you can't
walk, man.

JOHN
I'll drink only so much that I can,
woman.

KAZI
Keep your eyes peeled, and be
friendly to the Ettin.

JOHN
This 'mother hen' thing. It's
strangely calming.

She gives him one of her smiles - one that could be flirtatious, or could just be how she smiles.

AYRA
Right - let's get to it. Noon
tomorrow back here.

John nods reluctantly and the two pairs set off in separate directions.

John walks behind V-Tor mimicking the Ettin's oafish gait, which Kazi notices, amused.

V-Tor turns around, John immediately stops his charade and shrugs as if to say 'what?' V-Tor eyes him sternly.

John throws a cheeky glance back to Kazi and bats a fly away from his face.

FLASHBACK

INT. CITADEL - BARRACKS HOSPITAL - DAY

John is laid up on a blanket on the floor - he bats away a fly which is getting in the way of looking at a nurse's behind as she finishes with a patient. She leaves. The long room is filled other soldiers clearly sick from the plague.

There is the sound of men carrying something. He looks through the doorway where another body is being carried out. This is not good.

A young PHYSICIAN comes in, holding a cloth over his mouth and waving incense in front of him. He briefly checks two patients who are worryingly still. He draws a sheet over both their faces. He then comes to John, who instantly plays sick.

PHYSICIAN

How is the fever?

John's head is perspiring.

JOHN

No better. I'm telling you, the only time it lets up is when you give me some of that laudanum.

The doctor checks his tongue.

PHYSICIAN

Well, we've run out of opiates, I'm afraid. And you still aren't showing primary symptoms.

JOHN

Medical spirit? That might help.

The physician ignores John as a NURSE hurries past, also with a cloth over her face.

PHYSICIAN

Nurse.

(pointing at the two still bodies)

Two more. Have them removed.

NURSE

Yes, doctor.

And she hurries out.

PHYSICIAN

(to John)

I'll check on you tomorrow. We'll
try leeches.

John smiles sarcastic thanks. The doctor leaves.

No one else is in the room but the dying and the dead. John springs up and rushes over to one of the expired soldiers. The guy has horrible sores on his face from the plague.

Winching with disgust, John lifts the dead body up and puts it into his own sleeping place. Covering up the face just enough to conceal the man's identity.

He then jumps in the dead guy's now empty place opposite and pulls the sheet over his face - repulsed by the bloody stains.

The nurse comes in again, this time accompanied by two scruffy men with cloths tied over their face.

NURSE

Those two.

They lift John and carry him out.

INT. CITADEL BARN - NIGHT

John pushes a body off him and sits up. He is on a stack of bodies. There is the sound of flies and the squeak of rats.

He goes to the door and forces it open. He peers outside but immediately steps back inside as the whinny of horses and the clattering of hooves come by. Hidden again, John watches. Black-armoured knights come past on horses. Behind them trails a cage on a cart driven by a dark-cloaked man.

John steps out onto the street as the troop pass by - heading out of the citadel. He stealths through the shadows in the same direction.

A piercing cry of a child splits the night - John turns and looks up to the shadow of the tower behind. The child's scream ends suddenly. Then another begins. And it too ends.

Chilled to the bone, John hurries away.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

John climbs up to the top of a hill, panting with exertion. The screams of children follow him. The castle he has just left is in the distance behind him. As he approaches, tears are in his eyes.

He looks across the landscape ahead and sees the train of knights and their cage on a cart gallop off along a road, also away from the castle. He stares at them - knowing full well what the cage in the cart is for.

EXT. OPEN FORESTLAND - DAY

Standing, looking across the landscape of widely-spaced trees, John wakes from his memory. As if to help him forget, he takes a long swig from the amphora he took with him. He is already quite drunk.

V-Tor looks at him.

V-TOR
Drink. Bad.

John walks past him.

JOHN
Is exactly why I'm not offering you
any.

He swigs more. V-Tor shakes his head and walks after him.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - DAY

V-Tor and John emerge from the forest and into open meadows. They walk along a grass footpath, John a little wobbly as he still drinks.

V-TOR
Kill.

JOHN
I understand that you want to kill
them. But why?

V-TOR
They kill master.

JOHN
Now we're getting somewhere - so
the knights killed your employer.

V-TOR
Emp-loy-er?

JOHN
Employer - yeah, the guy who gives
you money for your work.

He shakes the purse from Prior San to help explain.

V-TOR
Master no give money.

John stops in disbelief.

JOHN
You were working on a farm for a
guy who didn't pay you?

V-TOR
No money.

JOHN
So - some mystical knights ride
down and free you from slavery -
and... you want to kill them.

V-Tor won't listen to human deceptions and looks sternly
ahead.

V-TOR
Kill.

John raises his eyes skyward in disbelief. But an idea then
comes to him and he catches up with the Ettin. The two wonder
off into the distance.

JOHN
Maybe you could work for me? I'll
give you a job. It's easy: For
every jug of this stuff you find
for me, I'll give you... nothing.
Cause money is bad, or whatever the
fuck it is you think. And if you
bring me a girl, I'll give you
double the price.

V-TOR
Master say no talk to humans.

JOHN
Yeah - well, look where that got
him.

V-Tor waves a hand and slaps John away like a fly. The soldier goes flying three metres into the grass to his right.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Aww. I was kidding!

V-Tor keeps walking.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Kazi and Ayra walk along in silence. Ayra always one step ahead - always alert and focused.

EXT. MORE HILLS - DAY

And still they walk. And still they don't talk - Kazi looks at Ayra and sees nothing but grim determination in her eyes. She shakes her head.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Ayra finishes drinking from a stream and gestures to Kazi to drink, while she hops up onto a rock to keep her eyes open, a deer ever on the watch.

Kazi kneels down.

KAZI
(while drinking)
There was a squirrel before last year's snow. It used to come by my place each day. I watched it gathering acorns and storing them in a tree not far away. That's all I saw it ever do.

Ayra is disinterested.

AYRA
They are good roasted. Squirrels.

Kazi splashes water on her chest and under her arms.

KAZI
You know what happened to the squirrel? And it had gathered a lot of acorns up till this day. I mean, a lot. But one day a wolf came by, scavenging, and still the squirrel dropped down from the tree to gather up more acorns.
(MORE)

KAZI (CONT'D)

The wolf praised the wood nymphs
for its fortune and had the
squirrel for lunch. Unroasted, of
course.

AYRA

(never stopping watching)
I'm sure there's a point to this
story...

Kazi shakes water from her hands and stands, ready to go.

KAZI

The squirrel could've been doing
anything - playing with other
squirrels, fucking, just sitting on
a branch in the November sun. But
no - it was on a mission. And, when
that mission eventually killed it,
that was the end of its life. No
more playing. No more fucking. No
more sitting on a branch in the
sun.

AYRA

The November sun is cold. And the
squirrel was just being a squirrel.

KAZI

And you are just being a woman,
right?

At last Ayra turns to her, anger winning over her.

AYRA

I am being a sister. I am not a
squirrel. My five year old brother,
who they took, is not a fucking
squirrel. And my mother, who they
left gutted like a spring trout, is
definitely not a squirrel either.
Are we done with squirrel stories?

Ayra sets off, Kazi follows.

KAZI

Fine, fine. I was just saying it's
a shame to waste your life running
around like a--

AYRA

--person who cares?

KAZI
He might be dead, Ayra.

AYRA
Then I'll gut the ones that killed
him.

KAZI
And he'd want you to die trying?
Really?

AYRA
He's five. He's not old enough to
want anything for anyone. He just
wants the people he knows to be
around him again. He wants to be
safe.
(tears forced back)
I am who I am. Don't talk to me.

And Ayra marches ahead in a manner that shows she wants Kazi to keep a distance behind. Kazi looks after her - genuine pity in her eyes.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - DUSK

V-Tor breaks out of the forest into a meadow. He turns and waits for John to catch up.

John sways as he approaches, clearly drunk. He finishes the amphora and tosses it but the action of swinging almost makes him fall - he holds onto the fur on V-Tor's torso for stability.

JOHN
You're a very hairy tree.

V-Tor knocks John's hand away and scowls, John falls over into the grass. He doesn't move. He begins to snore.

V-Tor shakes his head in disapproval and puts down his things.

V-TOR
Early for camp: Bad. Drink bad.

John snores.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - CAMP FIRE - NIGHT

V-tor runs a ham across the blade of his scythe. A slice falls off, which he eats.

He leans forward and reaches into the fire to pull out four potatoes. Apparently not caring about the heat, he starts to eat one. He looks over at John, who still snores not far away from the fire.

MOMENTS LATER

V-Tor drops two potatoes and a slice of ham near John's sleeping head. He then strides off into the dark, scythe in hand.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

The moon is bright and V-Tor looks out across the landscape below. On a small hill not far away sits a church - its spire visible in the moon-blue sky behind. There is the orange light of candles from the church's window holes.

V-Tor furrows his brow as he looks at this candle light. He crosses his big chest - the sign of the cross - and then turns back towards the camp.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - DUSK

Kazi and Ayra leave the forest and reach open fields. Ayra points to a large town in a valley ahead.

AYRA

Polepy.

Kazi looks - it is a dull blot on the landscape with no sign of life.

KAZI

Doesn't seem the most lively town there ever was.

AYRA

I'm glad. We go in, we get the book and leave.

KAZI

Tonight? We could do it in the morning and still be back at the meeting spot by noon.

AYRA

My father always said: hunt even in the rain today for tomorrow might bring a storm.

KAZI

I never knew my father but I say:
sleep today for tomorrow will bring
rested legs.

Ayra starts walking off - not prepared to get into an argument.

AYRA

I can get the book myself and take
it back. You sleep as long as you
like.

Kazi's blood boils. She bangs her staff on the ground. It is not the act of frustration it first appears to be - a blue light glows from the black orb at the head of her staff, lighting her way.

She follows Ayra.

EXT. POLEPY TOWN - NIGHT

The two pass down a street in the dark. The only light is from the moon above and the glow from Kazi's staff. The town is utterly silent - not a sign of life. But, unlike the farmstead before, there is no sign of death either.

Ayra moves her palm across the ground, seeking a story in the dirt. Kazi lowers her staff to help Ayra see.

AYRA

They all left on the same day.

KAZI

If a whole town won't stand and
fight, what chance has that village
got?

Ayra throws a challenging and knowing look at Kazi.

AYRA

You're the vate - you tell me.

KAZI

Look, if you don't trust me, why
don't you--

Ayra holds up a hand for silence.

AYRA

--shhh.

A breath of air gathers down the street, gently blowing at the stray strands of Ayra's blond hair. Upon the wind is the sound of song - a young woman's song; it is gentle and mournful, the kind you'd hear from someone lonely and lost.

AYRA (CONT'D)
Someone stayed behind.

KAZI
Perhaps in more ways than you think. It's not just my ears that hears her song, my spirit does too.

And they move forward through the shadows of the abandoned town towards the source of the song.

EXT. POLEPY TOWN - STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Ayra passes a corner - the next street opens onto a square. Like everywhere here - it is abandoned and no signs of life comes from the houses. But the singing is louder here. It's echo is ethereal and there is something chilling in its sound.

Ayra points at Kazi's glowing staff.

AYRA
Snuff out the light.

Kazi taps the floor and the blue glow of her staff wanes and fades to nothing.

AYRA (CONT'D)
There's the monastery. The singing seems to be coming from there.

And Ayra advances into the square.

EXT. POLEPY TOWN - SQUARE - NIGHT

As Ayra reaches the square, she does not pass through it but hugs the buildings around its sides. She keeps to the shadows that the newly waning moon cannot reach from its position in the sky. Kazi follows.

The singing continues. Words can almost be made out. It is an old song.

EXT. POLEPY TOWN - MONASTERY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ayra reaches the large oak door of the monastery. Kazi joins her.

KAZI

The song comes from inside alright,
somewhere deep inside. Is it open?

Ayra tries the cast iron handle of the door but nothing happens - she shakes her head. Kazi gestures for Ayra to step aside.

KAZI (CONT'D)

Where there is wood there is a way.

Kazi places her hand on the door. It begins to tremble and the grain of the wood around her hand starts to shift: squeezing together and then relaxing almost like a woman giving birth.

The metal lock begins to lose hold, to be pushed out by the wood of the door.

The lock drops out, which Kazi catches and silently places on the ground. The door swings open revealing only darkness inside.

Kazi gestures at her staff's orb - should she turn it back on? Ayra shakes her head and goes in. Kazi is wide-eyed - this is mental.

INT. POLEPY TOWN - MONASTERY - ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

The only light is from the moon through the open door. The song is much louder but still just as chilling, echoing as it does through the corridors and halls within.

And then it stops. Suddenly. There is the sound of wind passing through the monastery. It catches the door. Kazi goes to stop it but too late. It slams shut, the sharp sound reverberating through the halls of the monastery.

Blackness and silence. The sound of hushed whispering from the very borders of material reality.

KAZI

(whispering)

I really want to make some light
now. Like, *really*.

A moment as Ayra deliberates.

AYRA

Alright...

There is the sound of staff hitting stone and the blue orb stirs into life, brightening a circle of three metres around the two women. But the only surface that comes into view is the floor - the hall is large and vacuous.

AYRA (CONT'D)

Let's find the chapter hall.

Ayra arms her bow and moves forward. A large open door ahead leads down a cloister walk. Moonlight breaks in from the windows running down its right side. There is the sound of whispering up ahead. And then again nothing.

AYRA (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

KAZI

Aye. And felt it too.

The two advance steadily.

INT. POLEPY TOWN - MONASTERY - CLOISTER WALK - NIGHT

The two move through the cloister walk - the silence and stillness combined with the moonlight and the mist hanging in the cloisters outside make the place seem unearthly.

Ayra stops and looks at a mark on the wall, presumably by the tip of a blade, then at the floor beneath she finds a tiny piece of stone chipped off.

AYRA

A sword did this. And Monks sweep the floor daily so I wager this cut was made on the day of their arrest.

KAZI

A sword's blow but no blood.

Ayra examines the wall around the chip. There is a small nail just above the chip in the wall.

AYRA

It was not a man that was cut. Someone did not like what hung here.

Kazi shines the light closer - the shadow of where a cross once hung for many years is visible on the white wall.

As they look at the mark, behind them at the end of the corridor, a ghostly figure - a woman - walks across from left to right. Her feet do not move as she goes.

Kazi feels the presence and turns - but too late, she sees nothing.

KAZI

Let's get this book and get out of here.

They move along the cloister walk. At the end, Kazi gestures a question - left? - Ayra shakes her head; they should go right.

INT. POLEPY TOWN - MONASTERY - CHAPTER HALL

The door to the Chapter Hall is open. Ayra steps in first - bow at the ready. The blue light from Kazi's staff leads the way. The moon comes through the windows to the chapter hall adding its own ghostly hue to the scene.

In the centre of the hall is a large lectern with a book laid open upon it.

But behind it, at the back of the room, is a set of shelves and a whole ensemble of other books.

AYRA

Go and see if that is the right book. The Annals of Einhart he said it was called.

KAZI

You look.

AYRA

I need to take guard.

KAZI

I can guard.

AYRA

You don't have a weapon.

KAZI

I have my staff.

AYRA

I can guard against more than rats and sheep. Go and check if that's the book.

Kazi shifts uncomfortably - she is going to have to tell the truth.

KAZI

Look, I cannot read words, okay?

AYRA

What do you mean you can't read?
You're a witch, aren't you?

KAZI

You think we keep a personal
library of spell books?

AYRA

I don't know - I guessed you'd need
to write things down.

KAZI

Our craft is of the spoken word.
You see if that's the book.

Ayra heaves a sigh of frustration.

KAZI (CONT'D)

You're not telling me... you can't
read either?

AYRA

My father taught me to hunt. The
forest has its own symbols.

KAZI

Great. What are we going to do -
take all the books?

Ayra approaches the lectern and closes the book to reveal its
title - "Reports of the Bishops of Passau."

AYRA

I don't think this is it.

KAZI

I thought you said you can't read.

AYRA

I can count words. There are too
many.

Ayra turns to the book shelves and the thirty or so books and
a lot many more scrolls are kept.

AYRA (CONT'D)

The annals of Einhart. Four words.
We need to find books with four
words.

She begins looking.

KAZI

Are you sure it wasn't Einhart's
Annals? That's two words.

Ayra huffs in frustration.

AYRA

Ok - titles with two or four words.

She looks along a line of books, Kazi joining - standing just
behind. Each begins 'Annals of' and then a different name.
Ayra looks desperate. Kazi shakes her head behind.

Suddenly behind them, in the centre of the room appears the
ghostly female figure from the cloisters. Standing, feet not
touching the ground, in the centre of the room. It speaks.

TETA

If you are here to take what does
not belong to you, I ask that you
leave.

*

This time when Kazi turns, the apparition remains. Kazi
tenses and Ayra senses the alarm, turning herself. In a flash
her bow is drawn and directed at the cloaked figure.

AYRA

Who are you?

TETA

You bring violence to a place of
worship.

AYRA

There are no places of worship. Not
anymore. Who are you, I said.

Teta pulls back her hood - her face is young and with angled
features not dissimilar to Kazi's but the wall behind can be
seen through Teta's visage. She is, by all appearances, a
ghost; she does not raise her eyes.

TETA

I am Princess Teta, daughter to
King Krok.

Kazi nods in recognition and Ayra lowers her bow.

KAZI

She speaks the truth. I saw her
once; at a parade.

TETA

And, as I said, if you are here to
steal, I ask that you leave.

AYRA

Our intentions are honest. We are
here to collect a tome - it is
needed in a village, Stary Tyn.
Many lives depend on it.

Teta considers, deliberating its truth.

TETA

You have the relic of Jeremia?

AYRA

(not appreciating the
test)

Of Einhart you mean? Our comrades
are traveling to Lhotsko to claim
it as we speak.

Teta considers again. She raises a finger to a book in the
library, which leans against a large candle on one shelf.

TETA

The Annals of Einhart is the book
to the left of the candle. My
prayers that your cause will find
fruition.

Teta raises her eyes for the first time - they are white.

TETA (CONT'D)

But I fear you will meet only with
your deaths.

Ayra takes a step back and her breath quickens with fright.

Kazi seems less perturbed and goes to the book - as she moves
her staff's glowing orb in front of her, she blocks the light
with her form. At this moment Teta disappears - she is
invisible when not lit by Kazi's staff.

Kazi turns again with book in hand and Teta reappears. The
book is modestly bound and not as large as many of the
others. She examines the title but has no idea what it says.

Ayra nods a question to Kazi - is it the right one? Kazi
shrugs a 'maybe' in reply.

KAZI

Four words.

Still a little unnerved, Ayra turns back to the apparition.

AYRA

Our thanks.

Kazi steps forward with her staff aglow to cast more light on the apparition.

KAZI

Why do you remain, princess? What tragedy befell you?

Teta lowers her eye lashes and tears begin to well in them.

TETA

Not me - my father, the king.

AYRA

What do you mean?

TETA

When the plague took me, my father could not bear the grief. He fell ill. He grew weak. A demon... came. It seduced him to make a deal.

AYRA

What deal?

TETA

The King's life, his soul and his kingdom so that I may live again. His edict to ban worship and arrest the monks - that was but the first of his sacrifices.

Kazi shakes her head.

KAZI

And then the demon went back on his word...

Teta doesn't appear to understand.

TETA

No, he didn't. Why do you say that?

KAZI

(it's obvious - Teta is
dead)

Well, because you're--

AYRA

--your father did not foresee just how much harm the deal would cause others.

Ayra whispers into Kazi's ear.

AYRA (CONT'D)

(in private)

She thinks she's alive.

Realization blinks on in Kazi's head.

KAZI

Ohhhhhh...

AYRA

And the knights. They are the Royal Guard?

Teta nods.

TETA

General Nebrith - leader of the Guard. For now he is the vessel of the demon, the vessel of the evil in our realm. It is he who must be stopped.

Ayra gulps as if to ask another question, but she can't.

KAZI

Well - we should be on our way. You're alright here, yes?

TETA

I cannot leave. I tried but I grow weak when I step from the building...

KAZI

(not wanting to get into this)

Very peculiar. I hope it passes. We'd best be off. Cheers for the book!

And Kazi gestures to Ayra that they should go; herself walking back towards the exit.

KAZI (CONT'D)

Be careful to step around our host now.

Ayra allows herself to be led away past the ghostly Teta. But Teta's shout stops them.

TETA

Wait!

Kazi sighs. She and Ayra turn back.

KAZI

Yes?

Teta looks at them, slightly humbled.

TETA

Forgive me - I feared you would not act if I told you... but tell you I must. There is a spell upon the book. A trap. If you remove it from this room, forces will be unleashed to stop you.

Kazi looks at Ayra - they both have the same thought.

AYRA

The sword fight in the cloisters.

TETA

Another came - he failed.

Kazi tries to go back with the book but Ayra stops her.

KAZI

(gesturing to her staff)
Like you said, I'm just good for sheep and rats. Best we put it back.

AYRA

We have to take it.

KAZI

Derr. "Forces will be unleashed."

TETA

You must take it. The kingdom is empty of warriors...

KAZI

Yeah - there's a reason for that.

TETA

You must at least try.

KAZI
Easy for you to say, you're dead.

Ayra puts her hand on her face.

TETA
No I'm not.

KAZI
Yes you are.

Kazi waves a hand gently through Teta's head - Teta is about to flinch away but decides to succumb to the test. True enough, Kazi's hand passes through - she's a ghost.

KAZI (CONT'D)
I know princesses are generally air-
heads but they usually have a skull
at least...

Teta begins to sob.

TETA
No!

Ayra stares daggers at Kazi for her cruelty. Kazi shrugs a 'what?' and promptly puts the book back on the shelf.

KAZI
I'll leave it here for when some
heroes show up.

No sooner has she put the book on the shelf does Ayra snatch it back up again.

AYRA
I'll take it then.

And Ayra marches back towards the exit.

KAZI
What are you doing? Are you crazy?
'Forces will be unleashed'!

AYRA
Then they should worry about what I
unleash on them. Stay here with
your new friend if you like.

Kazi looks at the sobbing ghost, shakes her head and runs after Ayra.

Ayra puts the book in her knapsack, readies her bow, two arrows notched and, without breaking her step, marches through the threshold of the chapter house towards the cloisters.

The moment she breaks the plane, a thin white flash of light glimmers over the threshold - the spell is activated.

Kazi looks at the dissipating light, wide-eyed, before also breaking the plane.

KAZI

I hope you know what you're doing.

INT. POLEPY TOWN - MONASTERY - CLOISTER WALK - CONTINUOUS

Ayra's eyes are set grimly as she marches through the ghostly cloisters - a cloud passes over the moon through the window, and darkness reaches into the corridors. Still she marches, Kazi hurrying behind, staff at the ready.

But nothing comes.

They reach a corner and Ayra passes it with bow up and drawn, ready to let fly at anything in the next corridor.

But still nothing.

She marches on. Her steely eyes glare forward, she whispers to herself.

AYRA

Come on. Just the hall and we're out of here.

She starts to jog. Kazi does too. Both feel they are nearly there.

One more corner. Ayra nods to Kazi for light as she swings round.

The staff passes the corner with Ayra. Still more emptiness.

KAZI

Maybe the spell got used up with the last guy?

AYRA

Maybe. Fast. Let's get out of here.

And they march through the large hall - this is the worst because the room is so high that they cannot see what lurks in the shadows at any side. Their breaths accelerate as they break from jog to a run.

The blue light from the staff suddenly picks out a surface ahead - the door. Ayra flings it open and dashes out.

EXT. POLEPY TOWN - SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Kazi is right behind Ayra and slams the door closed behind, panting for breath. She turns to see Ayra stood statue-still, staring ahead.

In the square outside the monastery, lit by the moon as it breaks out of fast-moving clouds in the sky above, is a long line of a dozen hooded monks. These are not dressed in the light-grey habit of a hermit like Prior San, but of the heavy brown habits of the monastery.

The whole line is stood with fist against palm, heads covered.

AYRA

Erm... Can we get back in?

Trying to conceal her action behind her back, Kazi tries the door.

KAZI

It's locked.

A stand off - nobody moves. Silence hangs heavy as if the passing clouds were rocks.

A moment and then the line of monks raise their hooded heads and orange eyes gleam from the darkness beneath.

Kazi's hair turns white - a premonition. Her eyes glaze over, and then she returns. Ayra notices.

AYRA

What did you see?

KAZI

Nothing good. They're not human. We need to do something different to change Fate's course or we're fucked.

Ayra gently places a third arrow in her teeth and looks around for anything they could use.

Her eyes fix on the well behind the line of monks - it has a roof that is not so steeply sloped.

AYRA

We should climb on top of the--

Kazi has her own idea and steps forward.

KAZI

(to the monks)

--Hi guys. We just saw this really suspicious-looking guy go out the back - he was carrying a brown book and going 'he-he-he, I got me the Annals, he-he'. You should go and check it out.

Just hooded monks with burning eyes and stillness. Ayra looks at Kazi.

Kazi shrugs.

KAZI (CONT'D)

Different.

Mayhem breaks out in a moment. The monks burst into action, but not by simply charging, by bursting into flips, rolls and arcing somersaults.

Ayra unleashes two arrows, loading the third from her mouth as she shouts instructions to Kazi.

AYRA

Stay behind me. We need to get on top of that fountain.

Kazi gulps.

KAZI

Sure.

Both of Ayra's arrows miss their targets - the monks are too fast. It is like shooting at bats.

Her third hits - piercing a monk's side as he flips towards the two. He loses the perfection of balance from the injury and collapses on the dirt, coiling and hissing - more like a snake than a man. And then the habit becomes empty suddenly as the possessed form within him expels its energy - just a heap of robe and rope remains.

Ayra quits firing arrows and adjusts her hands to hold her bow as a two-handed weapon - spinning its bladed ends in a whirl.

She dashes towards the fallen monk and the gap he has left open in the line, which is fast becoming a semi-circle around the pair.

One monk to her right finishes a jump by landing on one hand and propelling himself towards Ayra in an upside down kick. She ducks and he sails over her. Where Kazi, clearly the less trained of the two in combat, nonetheless manages to direct a wide, sweeping strike of her staff into the monk's chest.

KAZI (CONT'D)

Immobilialia!

A flash from her staff as she casts the spell and the monk hits the ground and freezes, statuesque.

Ayra ducked so as to face the monk on her left as she advances at a run - he is grounded on two feet and hisses a battle cry as he goes at her. He dodges her first three swings, moving from two hands to a longer one-handed swing attack at his legs.

That he jumps and, in air, spins a roundhouse kick in return which she has to sink low to herself avoid.

She grabs the bladed bow in her second hand and drives it an upward angle as the monk descends, stabbing him in the midriff and bringing him to an end almost immediately. As he too is expelled from the material plane, Ayra finds the blade suddenly holding nothing but a habit on its tip.

She is sent careering forward by a blow to the side of her head from another monk who completes a long arcing somersault with a punch. Ayra has the sense to roll as she hits the floor and her head evades the follow-up stamp by the monk's bandaged foot.

Kazi tries to take him out from behind but he blocks her staff blow expertly and sends a flat-handed punch into her chest, sending her backwards. But that's enough time for Ayra - from the floor she notches and fires an arrow at the monk's head.

An arrow through a hood, a hissing sound, and then a crumpled heap of clothes.

Ayra leaps up to her feet but there are three more around her and she is separated from Kazi, who is winded and vulnerable.

Ayra throws a look at the well - there is no way they can get there. Her face is desperate as she launches herself at the three - spinning the blades of her bow in a non-stop blur as she goes.

SLOW MOTION

Ayra ducks a kick and slices the hamstring from the other leg, before evading a punch and responding with a kick of her own. But all the time she is watching not her but Kazi on the floor as a fourth monk arcs through the air towards her, putting all his might into a power punch that will certainly crush whatever it connects with.

Ayra goes low to evade a flying kick and uses this moment to draw an arrow from her quiver, notch it and begin to draw back her bowstring. But before she can draw it even half way, the monk to her left kicks the bow upwards. She holds onto the bow but the shot is gone. She can only watch as the monk descends on Kazi - fist smashing towards her head.

What happens next is too fast for even Ayra to follow.

RETURN

From nowhere another form catches the descending monk by his fist and throws him over a shoulder into the ground, using all available forces to break the monk's back. Immediately the newcomer launches himself at the three around Ayra.

It is now that Ayra recognises their new ally - Prior San. He fights in a similar style to the other monks but with greater poise, speed and strength. With a block, snap, punch, block and kick, he sends all three monks around Ayra flying back. A fourth lands behind him, but he flips backwards over the attacker grabs his head and breaks it with a single fast twist of the hands. An empty habit drops to the ground.

There are still seven or more remaining but, before Ayra can return to the fray herself, Prior San leaps high in the air and suspends himself there, levitating, while drawing a glass vial on a metal chain.

PRIOR SAN

(bellowing)

Behold the light and be gone!

The relic suddenly ignites in white fire that dazzles and blinds everyone in the space. There is a simultaneous shriek of agony from the unholy monks and each cower and crumple until they are nothing but heaps of habits upon the floor.

The light goes out and Prior San drops to the floor in a crouch. All is still.

Prior San doesn't even look at the two - his eyes go directly to one of the monks Kazi immobilized with a spell - eyes still glowing with evil and hate.

Prior San goes to the body solemnly and kneels beside him in prayer, whispering devotedly in an ancient tongue.

He gently reaches for the monk's head and, then in a sudden move, twists it with a crack - there is the expulsion of air and the monk's habit becomes empty.

Kazi and Ayra watch in respect until Prior San opens his eyes and looks up. Tears are there.

PRIOR SAN (CONT'D)

These are... were my brothers.
Things are much worse than I
thought.

EXT. HILL - WEST SIDE - DAWN

The party sit around a small fire near a cart on a hill. Near them is a small cairn built of stones, and Prior San prays to the dead they buried there - a silhouette before the red light of a young sun in the east.

Prior San makes a triangle with his hand, kisses his relic pendant and leaves the cairn.

He goes to Ayra and Kazi, who wait by the fire, quietly staring inside.

PRIOR SAN

I wanted you to work together.
Fight together. It is necessary for
what is to come. My apologies.

The silence that Ayra and Kazi offer has nothing beneath: his apology is accepted.

PRIOR SAN (CONT'D)

The sickness stems from the
citadel. From the king. My brothers
were jailed there. My brothers
were, I'm sure, turned there too.

AYRA

The king is dead. We met with the
ghost of Princess Teta in the
monastery. He forfeited his life
and his lands to bring his daughter
back to the world.

This news weighs heavily on Prior San and he is lost in thought for a time.

PRIOR SAN

Things are much much worse than I thought.

AYRA

The raiders. They are the King's Guard.

Prior San lowers his head and nods.

PRIOR SAN

They were. Now they are both less and more.

Ayra gulps as she musters the courage to ask a question.

AYRA

The children will be at the citadel, right? We could find them there...

Prior San sighs. He did not want to say this.

PRIOR SAN

You have lost one of your own...

AYRA

My brother. Of five years.

PRIOR SAN

Ayra, what I feared before I am sure of now. That which we faced outside the monastery is the product of a certain ritual. General Nebrith seeks an army. To turn the living to shadow he needs an elixir. Of blood. From the young... I am sorry.

Ayra tries to swallow this information.

AYRA

It's okay. My brother is smart. And quick. I'm sure...

PRIOR SAN

Yes, I'm sure.

Kazi remains silent.

Ayra too says nothing - she only stands up and walks away.

EXT. HILL - EAST SIDE - DAY

Ayra sits with her knees up to her chin staring at the rising sun. It is beautiful. No tears come to her eyes but the depth of her melancholy is clear.

There is the sound of gentle footfalls and Kazi appears beside her. She sits down next to Ayra and says nothing.

Ayra looks to the glowing morning sun - a sign of rain to come. Like the great ember over the horizon, death burns in her eyes.

PRIOR SAN (V.O.)

Nothing is changed - we still have but one path to follow. We will go to the meeting point and pray that the soldier and the barbarian have fortune on their side.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - CAMP FIRE - DAWN

John stirs from the position he passed out in. Dew is on the grass nearby and a crow flies off with his piece of ham. It's clear he was passed out completely until now. He looks around him.

V-Tor sits by the fire, poking it with a stick - he throws a disdainful look at the soldier.

V-TOR

Drink. Bad.

John rubs his eyes and then smooths his hand up to his head, wincing at the ache coming from there. His voice is coarse and his lips are dry.

JOHN

Mornings I don't argue with that.
You got any water?

V-Tor tosses a skin over to John, who gently undoes it and takes a long draft.

V-TOR

Drink. Eat. We go.

John lies back down.

JOHN

How about I pray for your success from here and you collect me when you're done?

V-Tor's look remains impassive and resolved.

V-TOR
Drink. Eat. We go.

John sighs as he gives up.

JOHN
Drink. Eat. We go. Okay, fine.

EXT. LHOTSKO CHURCH - DAY

The pair approach the small church by the main path. The church is as picturesque as one can be; only a scattering of gravestones around it speak of anything other than the ideal.

V-Tor looks at the church suspiciously as they get near to the surrounding wall.

V-TOR
Last night. Light in church.

John is disinterested and kicks open the small gate leading in.

JOHN
Please talk stop. Head fucking hurt. Words boring.

He shakes his head and continues up the path. V-Tor considers ending the human but decides against it for the time being.

Suddenly, the door to the church opens. John stops to see who will emerge.

What comes is neither wholly human nor wholly lizard but something of both - and almost as tall as V-Tor. It is armed with a halberd and the rings of chain mail around its body and neck are not so different to the scales on the skin of its face.

John's eyes widen - it is clear he has never met with such a being.

Fortunately, the path running up to the church is from the side and the reptilian hasn't seen the pair.

John sidesteps behind a small gravestone, deft and quiet for someone hung over and wearing armour. He immediately gestures for V-Tor to also get into cover.

V-Tor agitatedly looks for anything large enough to hide him. There's nothing - he charges.

LIZARD MAN

Is oblivious as he looks off, blinking, at the red burning sun. He steps forward, sweeps aside his chain mail and pulls something large from his trousers.

He begins to urinate an orange liquid onto a gravestone. The stone immediately starts to hiss, steam and dissolve beneath the acid urine.

The ground begins to shake and the trajectory of the lizard man's urine starts to bounce strangely. He looks up to see what possibly might be causing this just as a massive Ettin slams into him. He squeals in fright as he's knocked to the floor.

The gravestone continues to hiss and dissolve, pieces fall off it. There are the sounds of lizard squealing, a strange slapping sound of flesh against flesh and then a single punch sound accompanied by the crunch of a collapsing skull.

V-TOR gets up from the twitching body of the lizard - whose head is pulp. He looks at the fist of his dripping gauntlet with a sneer - blood and lizard brain all over - before wiping it on the grass.

John comes over and looks at the body.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What was it trying to slap you in the face with?

V-Tor gives a disgusted look and wipes his face.

John leans down to look closer at the body.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ewww. I wonder if it would have grown back.

EXT./INT. LHOTSKO CHURCH - ATRIUM - DAY

John leads the way as they enter the atrium. He sees a side door in the small room and some stairs leading up - he beckons V-Tor to go with him as he ascends. A groan comes from inside the church along with the clucking of chickens.

INT. LHOTSKO CHURCH - TRIFORIUM - CONTINUOUS

As soon as John leaves off the steps for the triforium (an elevated corridor looking down on the inside of the church) the last sound he expected to hear echoes through the rafters: sex.

The scene below would be a vision of hell for anyone holy, but it's one of enormous joy and amusement for John. Tied to the altar in the sanctuary is a young male cleric, as denoted by his mail jacket and robe with its Royal Order of Clerics insignia. He is naked from the waist down and whining in a mix of pain and guilty satisfaction.

On top of him is one of the nuns, mostly naked and loudly taking pleasure from him of the most forbidden kind. As her head leans back in ecstasy, her eyes shine, yellow and unnatural.

There are some eight or nine nuns either waiting their turn on the cleric or sat in a corner whispering in demonic to the embryo in their bellies.

There are chickens scattered around in the church. One of the waiting nuns takes two eggs and cracks them open into the mouth of the pained cleric, before clamping down on his mouth and nose to make sure he swallows.

About ten more armed guards - lizard men - occupy the church in total, each clutching halberds.

The nun atop the cleric finally reaches a climax. The cleric also issues a pitiful moan.

John punches the air.

JOHN

Yes!

The entire church, including the two copulating, turn round at John. The only sound is of a chicken as it lays another egg.

V-Tor shakes his head at John, who is grinning like a kid.

And mayhem breaks out. The nuns hurl themselves back, hissing and hiding in the shadows. The guards leap onto the offensive and two halberds are somehow thrown like spears and with such force they embed most of their blades into the wood to the right and above John's head.

John leaps down, swinging from a low beam into the fray, sword drawn. V-Tor sighs resignedly.

V-TOR

Kill.

And he jumps down too.

The guards are well-armed but not as dexterous with their heavy weapons. John spins away from the first thrust and uses the force of his turn to cut the head clean off the attacker.

He parries, stabs, sidesteps and thrusts. Three in total are felled before V-Tor even hits the ground by his side.

V-Tor coordinates his attacks with John - when the soldier parries, he finishes with scythe or fist, and vice versa. Another two go down.

John takes a high position on a pew, jumping two rows to flank the remaining five guards.

V-Tor snatches a stabbing halberd and buries his scythe into two lizards at once. He wrenches the blade out and turns on the three behind but John has already dispatched them.

All that remain are the nuns, who stayed out of the fray and now crouch hissing from the corners.

John sits down on a pew and puts his feet up - admiring the scene.

JOHN

Ok! Carry on!

V-Tor looks at John, amazed.

Another nun clambers on top of the cleric.

CEDRIC

NO! Not again. Please, help!

John pulls out some sunflower seeds from his pocket - medieval popcorn - and starts eating them.

V-Tor won't follow suit and marches up to the altar.

JOHN

Hey! What are you doing? Do you know how much people pay to see stuff like this?

The nun atop the cleric is slapped by a backhand from V-Tor and tumbles across the floor.

CEDRIC

Please. Please.

V-Tor rips the cords binding the man, who immediately rolls off the altar and curls up into a pitiful ball.

John sighs and gets up. He takes his sword with him, pulls out a rag and starts cleaning it as he approaches the altar.

A door opens in the back of the church and the nuns immediately make a dash for it, hissing and wailing with their glowing eyes as they go.

JOHN

Great. Fucking great.

He stands over the pitiful cleric, huddled beside the altar.

CEDRIC

Thank you.

JOHN

Thank you? You God people are a fucking mystery to me. What do you think heaven's like, huh? I'm curious. Tell me.

Cedric just pulls his clothes together and doesn't answer.

CEDRIC

Three days I was here.

John shakes his head in continuing disbelief. He looks up as V-Tor stands behind the altar with a fist raised high.

JOHN

I'd get out of the way of the altar if I were you.

Cedric doesn't understand until the nick of time, he leaps forward just as V-Tor smashes his fist down and breaks the altar in two with a booming sound.

Lying on a cushion in the centre of the rubble is a carving knife. It's a large one, but it's still a knife for cooking.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's the relic?

V-Tor shrugs.

John kicks the cleric.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hey - Lucky - is that thing holy?

Cedric sees it and his eyes open.

CEDRIC
The relic of Einhart!!

John starts walking towards the exit of the church.

JOHN
Right. We're done here. Come on big
guy.

Cedric rises and goes to follow.

CEDRIC
Where are you taking it?

JOHN
Erm, that will be none of your
business.

CEDRIC
You must tell me. I'm a cleric of
the Order of Whitestaff... I am
duty bound to protect the relics.

V-Tor walks past him too, carrying the relic. John turns and
gestures to see it. V-Tor throws it to him. He catches it and
examines it - a carving knife. His eyes are all disbelief.

JOHN
A holy frying pan and we're set.

He huffs a sigh and slides it into his belt.

He and V-Tor leave. Cedric follows them outside, still
reorganising his clothes and armour.

EXT. LHOTSKO CHURCH - DAY

Cedric keeps up with the striding two - his mace on his belt
and his loose armour seem ridiculous after his compromising
situation just two minute before.

CEDRIC
May I come with you at least?

John shrugs.

JOHN
If I were you, I'd stay - seems
they like you...

CEDRIC
They are possessed - I came to pay
homage.

(MORE)

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

When I found them, I tried an exorcism but... there were too many.

JOHN

What happens to them now? I know a few places they could get work.

CEDRIC

I'll send a delegation to deal with them the moment I can contact our Chaplain.

He overtakes John so as to show his beseeching eyes.

CEDRIC (CONT'D)

Let me come. I beg of you. I carry the blessings of healing - I might be of help.

John considers for a moment.

JOHN

If you come. Two conditions. First, you shut the fuck up.

CEDRIC

Okay.

John stops to underline the second point.

JOHN

Second - we rescued your puny ass back there. So you get paid nothing on this gig of ours, alright? Nothing. Even if you save the world tomorrow, that's not you saving the world, that's us saving it after freeing your world-saving ass. Understood?

CEDRIC

Yes. Yes.

(the information sinks in)

You are going to sell the relic?
You can't sell--

JOHN

(stern)

--Condition one.

Cedric controls himself and falls back to a safe distance as the three march northward back in the direction of Stary Tyn village.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

The Marshall watches the trees intently as the cart moves deeper into the wood.

MARSHALL'S WIFE

If we can find someone who'll sell us a loaf or two tomorrow, then we can keep the potat--

MARSHALL

Be quiet, dear. Please. I am concentrating.

LIBUSHE

Daddy. I don't want to be here.

MARSHALL

That's why we're moving forward, honey.

LIBUSHE

I want us to go back. Suzie says it's bad here.

MARSHALL

Well, Suzie is a doll and she has only been in the world for about three months, so if I were you I'd listen to your Pa instead.

LIBUSHE

Ok.

At the back of the cart, Libushe sits with a small doll and watches the road behind, more as a means of not looking into the dark forest either side than checking for pursuing bandits. Her legs dangle as the cart rumbles forward.

There is a flash of movement in the trees to the right. She turns. Suddenly, her hair turns from auburn to white.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

BEAST POV

A premonition just like Kazi would have: The cart is moving along the road, still in the forest. Moonlight casts a cold blue light on the path. The beast snorts and runs after the cart, keeping inside the line of trees and out of sight.

On the back of the cart is Libushe. The beast gathers speed and begins to catch up with the cart, its breaths falling more and more heavily. As it closes in, it leaps the small ditch and is on the path, chasing the cart. Libushe sees it and raises her doll in protection as she screams.

LIBUSHE

Daddy!

Marshall and his wife turn to watch as the beast leaps high and lands on the little girl, going straight for her face, a faced wracked with terror.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

Libushe is wide eyed as her premonition comes to an end and her hair changes from white back to its auburn hue. She takes one look at her foster parents and then jumps off the cart into the ditch to one side.

She gets up and, with doll in hand, starts running the opposite direction to her parents and their cart.

FADE TO BLACK