

Rielle and the Owl Hunter

The King's Plague - Part I

Written by

Daniel Prillaman

1/22/2023

1315 S Lake Wilmer Dr. Apt 202
Sandusky, OH. 44870
434-981-0043

*The following play is copyrighted material, the sole owner of which is the author, Daniel Prillaman. If you enjoy it, please feel free to share it with whomever you like or leave a recommendation on NPX.

For performance/royalty rights, please contact me at danielprillaman@gmail.com, through the New Play Exchange, or through www.danielprillaman.com.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

KING AYMON ÆGENWULF: King of Rivka.

QUEEN WINFRID: Queen of Rivka

ATTICUS: Firstborn son of Aymon and Winfrid.

LORENZ: Secondborn son of Aymon and Winfrid.

FRIEDE: Youngest child and only daughter of Aymon and Winfrid.

SUN: A Sage.

MOON: A Sage.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE: A man on the road.

MÆRWYNN: An Owl Hunter.

VERMILLA: A common whore. (Portrayed by Sun.)

THE MAN IN THE ROAD: A man in the road.

OTHSRYD: A servant of the royal family. (Portrayed by Moon.)

MASKED FIGURE: Someone who wants to hide their identity.

BARNABAS: A facilitator of sorts.

CLIENT: A client of Vermilla.

GIDEON: A servant of Countess Ankaret.

NEERABOSI: A guest of Countess Ankaret. (Portrayed by Moon.)

SIGEBERT: A guest of Countess Ankaret.

COUNTESS ANKARET: A wealthy widow. (Portrayed by Sun.)

OTHER CHARACTER NOTES:

DOUBLING: With regard to doubling, SUN and MOON portray the roles noted above.

The rest of the cast may be doubled as is reasonable to serve the producing company's needs, but some suggestions are:

- The same actor may portray THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE and CLIENT
- The same actor may portray THE MAN IN THE ROAD and GIDEON
- The same actor may portray BARNABAS and SIGEBERT

THE HORSES: The two horses, LÆNDIRIL and SURTHAAR, may be created by actors, puppets/puppeteers, or any chosen means of the producing company.

THE IDENTITY OF THE MASKED FIGURE: The Masked Figure's identity, while not explicitly revealed, is heavily implied in the penultimate scene of the play. Should a producing company wish, it should be possible for the actor who portrays the character behind the disguise to do so without trouble. They do not have to do so.

For the purposes of making this design choice, the identity of the figure as [REDACTED] is confirmed in an appendix following the play.

SETTING:

- *Wolcairn - The Ægenwulf Castle
- *The Capital of Rivka (and surrounding countryside)
- *The Estate of Countess Ankaret

The scenes of this story should flow together
As seamlessly as possible

Regarding that goal
The sets should probably be more suggestive
Rather than constructed in painstaking detail
Having said that
Chart what territory thou wishest

TIME:

Spring.

CONTENT WARNING:

Graphic violence, sexual content, false imprisonment.

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.”

-Lao Tzu

*“The most loving parents and relatives commit murder with smiles on their faces.
They force us to destroy the person we really are: a subtle kind of murder.”*

-Jim Morrison

Darkness.

QUEEN WINFRID (V.O.)

Hearken to me
My children

And lend thine ears to what we must impart

If ne'er before hast thou given my words their weight
Thought them false wisdoms
Or the follies of an aging woman
Act not in kind now

No matter thy station, nor thy birth
There comes a day for e'ery man
When forces beyond him make arrival at his house
And whether they do knock with humbled hand or batter down the door
Their advent etches a mark upon the course of our lives
And changes them fore'ermore

That day is here.

I. WOLCAIRN. AYMUN'S ROOM.

Light rises.

*KING AYMUN ÆGENWULF rests on his
deathbed, sickly and frail.*

*QUEEN WINFRID stands before her three
children, ATTICUS, LORENZ, and
FRIEDE.*

QUEEN WINFRID

Thy father is dying

Without aid, he will last not a fortnight
Misfortune hath gifted him with an affliction
A malady heretofore unseen
That none in our kingdom of Rivka possess the skill to cleanse

We tell thee this not to frighten
Nor impress upon thee a gravity so great as to emburden thy spirits in the nights to come
When the world of man falls silent and the wilds awaken
And there be naught but our untamed thoughts and the scavengers of the night to keep us
comfort
Let this revelation not dismay thee
But give unto thee a fire
A light for the blackness of those witching hours
A salve of resolve for thy hearts, despite thy fears

Five days' ride to the west
Two past our borders
In Gonærik
There is a village called Mithun

Inside its fences, there is an apothecary by the name of Iosefka
A woman, knowledgeable in more of our world and its obscurities than any we have met
Time allows not us the story of our encounter
But it is our hope that yours will be no less fortuitous
(Removing a glass vial with
parchment inside from her
robes)

Inscribed on the papers inside is a list of his symptoms

Thou wilt take this list to Mithun
To the apothecary, Iosefka
And ask what she might do to save thy father's life.

Silence.

No one says anything.

QUEEN WINFRID

Has our speech muddied its own intent?
Step forward, one of thee.

Beat.

ATTICUS steps forward.

QUEEN WINFRID

Atticus.

ATTICUS

...

Perhaps
It is his time, Mother.

Beat.

*QUEEN WINFRID steps forward and
slaps ATTICUS across the face.*

He returns to where he stood.

QUEEN WINFRID

I should have thy tongue removed for such insolence.

Thy standing as firstborn might allow thee certain entitlements, but apathy o'er thy
father's life is not amongst them. Not in our presence.

We shall address with thee later.

Lorenz.

LORENZ steps forward.

Wilt thou dishonor us, too?

QUEEN WINFRID

No, Mother. But--

LORENZ

But?

QUEEN WINFRID

Wherefore do you not send one of the knights?

LORENZ

Because we are asking thee.

QUEEN WINFRID

Wilt none of thee do this?

Thou wouldst rather succumb to fear or greed?

FRIEDE steps forward.

Give me the vial. I shall see it done.

FRIEDE

...

QUEEN WINFRID

My dear Friede

A just world would not find one as thee charged with this task

As thou takest it up, the more blessed thou shalt be for it

We will pack rations and supplies

Thou shalt set out at first light

Follow the darkness, then into the setting sun

May the Lord keep and protect thee

And give thee great haste.

II. WOLCAIRN. FRIEDE'S ROOM.

FRIEDE and LORENZ.

FRIEDE packs a bag with clothes and travel tools.

Silence.

LORENZ

You should not be the one to do this.

FRIEDE

Are you volunteering now?

LORENZ

No! I--We should not be the ones to do this. Wherefore do we not send one of the knights?

FRIEDE

Do you ever leave the castle? Go into the Square?

LORENZ

Of course.

FRIEDE

When did you last?

LORENZ

I do not know. Several days ago?

FRIEDE

And what did you see?

LORENZ

I...visited the blacksmith. Spoke a while to--

FRIEDE

Nay, I do mean amongst the people. Were they happy? Did you sense an unease in them?

LORENZ

No. It was normal.

FRIEDE

Precisely. Nobody knows that Father is dying. That the King is dying.

The fewer people who do, the better. That is why we do not send one of the knights. Because it is far better to send one of us under the guise of visiting a cousin or nuncle than to send off a knight with fanfare and pomp.

Words travel quickly. If we cannot render them unnecessary, we can at least do our part to slow them.

LORENZ

I had not considered that. I see.

But still...the journey is one far too dangerous for--

FRIEDE

For whom?

LORENZ

...

FRIEDE

For a girl?

LORENZ

For a princess.

FRIEDE

Are you volunteering?

LORENZ

...

FRIEDE

Easy.

Lay to rest your worries, brother. I shall return before you e'en realize I am gone.

ATTICUS (O.S.)

Oh, do tarry as thou needst!

ATTICUS swaggers in.

ATTICUS

Lorenz is right, dear sister of mine

Many a peril, man and beast
Lie in wait outside the Capital walls
Jaws agape, teeth dripping with sticky saliva
A hunger in their bellies louder than chapel bells

You try to hurry past them, something bad could happen, no?

FRIEDE

You would like that, wouldn't you?

I suppose you would prefer I did not return at all.

ATTICUS

Whether you return or no, I care not. So long as whichever you manage lies outside of what time our darling father has left.

LORENZ

(Underneath his breath)

Monster.

ATTICUS

(To LORENZ)

What was that?

LORENZ

...

FRIEDE

He called thee a monster.

And I must agree. Thou hast made vocal thy impatience towards the throne for several years now, but this is a whole new tide of heartlessness.

ATTICUS

O come down from thy pedestal, Friede. Weariness is not heartless. I am simply tired of waiting for my birthright.

FRIEDE

Thy life is thy birthright. Not the throne.

ATTICUS

Everything is my birthright.

The two of thee best start being kinder to me. When I am king, there's going to be many changes around here.

FRIEDE

I'm sure. Why do you not go back to your room, then, and plan them out some more? You'll have a lot more time to think about them yet.

ATTICUS

No need. I have had them all worked out for quite some time now. And thy...comfort, siblings, will be the first thing I see to.

Godspeed. Dear sister.

The Lord keep thee safe.

ATTICUS exits.

Beat.

FRIEDE
(To LORENZ)

Are you well?

LORENZ
(Overlapping)

I'm fine.

He means to kill us.

FRIEDE

He cannot.

LORENZ

But he will be king.

FRIEDE
The people would revolt.

LORENZ
Would they?

FRIEDE
Of course. Such an act would--the honor of our family name, our entire line, would be besmirched.

LORENZ
I think you might have more faith in the people than I.

FRIEDE
Would you let such a king rule o'er you?

Trust me. Any king to commit such atrocity would face abruptly the end of his reign.

LORENZ
Either way, we would be dead.

FRIEDE
Which is why...we are not going to let that happen. Me in my way, and you in yours.
Stay here. You look after Mother. Watch o'er Father. And I shall see you in ten days.

LORENZ
...

You should not be the one to do this.

FRIEDE
But I can.
It is well.

Beat.

LORENZ
Take Lændiril.

FRIEDE
I was planning to.

LORENZ chuckles.
They share a final moment.

III. WOLCAIRN. A HALL.

*LORENZ and FRIEDE (her bag packed)
separate and light shifts.*

Music.

Soft. Gentle. Mournful.

But always pressing forward.

*QUEEN WINFRID appears between them,
holding another bag of supplies and a
rapier in its scabbard.*

QUEEN WINFRID
(Giving FRIEDE the bag)

Travel lightly
Keep watch o'er thy shoulder.

FRIEDE

Aye, Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

Use not thy name upon the road. Let no one know of thy heritage.

FRIEDE

I know, Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

We cannot give thee our family's sword.

FRIEDE

I know.

QUEEN WINFRID

This blade is weathered
E'en lame to the eye
But it is still sharp
And a most trustworthy companion.

*FRIEDE pulls the sword from its
scabbard.*

Feels its weight.

FRIEDE

What is it called?

QUEEN WINFRID

It hath no name.

FRIEDE

Then we will be in kind.

*FRIEDE sheathes the sword and attaches
the scabbard to her person.*

Mother...
FRIEDE

My darling.
QUEEN WINFRID

I must ask.
FRIEDE

I have calmed Lorenz, but...why do you not send one of the knights? E'en an escort?

QUEEN WINFRID smiles and takes her daughter's hand.

She touches her head. Her face.

...
QUEEN WINFRID

If thou shouldst still wonder upon thy return
I shall tell thee on that day, my love.
(Pulling FRIEDE into an embrace)

Go with God.

I love thee.

And I you, Mother.
FRIEDE

QUEEN WINFRID kisses FRIEDE goodbye.

They separate.

QUEEN WINFRID disappears.

FRIEDE walks to LORENZ.

LORENZ leads LÆNDIRIL, his horse, to FRIEDE.

She startles softly at FRIEDE'S approach.

FRIEDE
There. There girl. It's just me. You know me.

FRIEDE loads her bags onto the horse.

She shares a final moment with LORENZ.

Then departs.

IV. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY I.

The music swells.

LORENZ disappears.

Two Sages appear, one dressed in golden fire, the other in starry silver. Together, SUN and MOON.

They dance the song of their eternal romance, never touching.

FRIEDE travels away from the SUN.

Until mid-day.

She then follows the SUN.

The SUN beckons her on.

The MOON urges her forward.

LÆNDIRIL is tired.

FRIEDE and LÆNDIRIL pass by a fence along the roadside.

Further along the fence, they encounter a water trough resting at its feet.

They stop.

The music stops.

The SUN and MOON stop.

And watch.

FRIEDE lets LÆNDIRIL drink from the trough.

She gets a waterskin from her bags.

She drinks.

She returns the waterskin to the bags.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE appears on the other side of the fence.

FRIEDE startles and pulls the sword a little from its sheath.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
(Raising his hands up)

Woah, woah! Friendly.

Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

FRIEDE
It is well.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
You're quick on the draw, aren't you?

FRIEDE
...

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
Are you--going to put that away?

FRIEDE
You're making me nervous.

FRIEDE
...
(Resheathing the sword)
Aye. Forgive me. Thou didst--you just startled me.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
My apologies. Again. I understand. You can't be too careful.

FRIEDE
I have stopped only to give my horse rest. Give us but a moment and we shall be on our way.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
Nay, take all the time you need. I appreciate the company. Don't get much folk out this way.

That is a beautiful horse.

FRIEDE
Thank you.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
He looks sturdy.

FRIEDE
She is.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
Aha...

(A request to pet the horse)
May I?

FRIEDE

...

Of course.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE pets/
pats LÆNDIRIL from the other side of the
fence.*

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Where are you two headed?

FRIEDE

West.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

What's west?

FRIEDE

What business is it of yours?

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

None.

Just making conversation. I didn't mean to offend.

Beat.

But it goes on.

*And THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE is
just staring at FRIEDE.*

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

You know...you look like someone I know.

FRIEDE

I do not believe we have met.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

No, we haven't. I just mean you look like someone I know. That's always kind of frustrating, isn't it? You have a sister? Or cousin?

FRIEDE

Not that I am aware.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Strange.

Beat.

FRIEDE

Thank you for your conversation, good sir, but we should be off.

Wait. Stop!

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE hops
over the fence now.*

He looks into FRIEDE'S face.

Sir?

FRIEDE

...

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

It's your cheekbones.

FRIEDE

Excuse me?

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

You have the same cheekbones. As my friend.

FRIEDE

Please get out of my way.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Aha...afraid I can't do that just yet.

FRIEDE

And why is that?

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Because this is a toll road.

FRIEDE

...

On whose authority?

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

I have credentials.

FRIEDE

On whose authority?

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

...

The King's.

FRIEDE

That is a lie.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Are you calling the King a liar?

FRIEDE

I am calling thee a liar. That is a lie.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Well, even if it was, which it isn't...King isn't here right now. Is he?

FRIEDE

I have no wish to hurt thee, sir.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

(Laughing)

Hurt me? That's precious.

FRIEDE draws her sword.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
continues laughing, pulling a dagger from
his clothes.*

FRIEDE

I'm precious? Mine is bigger.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Size doesn't matter.

FRIEDE

I assure thee, it doth.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Look here, girlie
I see the greenness in your eyes
And the tremble of your hand
You want to act the part of a wayfarer? Swordsman?
You want to pretend to be someone you're not, that's fine

But don't you for a second
Dare think that means you can avoid the law of the land

Fork over your coin
Now
Or I'll slice those fair cheekbones apart
And you won't look like someone I know no more.

FRIEDE

Please get out of my way.

Beat.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
advances, attacking FRIEDE.*

She parries his strikes.

He is surprised.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
advances again.*

Again, FRIEDE parries his strikes.

He is confused.

Embarrassed.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE
advances a third time.*

Still, FRIEDE parries his strikes.

She disarms him.

The dagger falls near his feet.

He is between FRIEDE and LÆNDIRIL.

And he is defenseless.

Angry.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Who are you?

FRIEDE

I am not a swordsman.

Get out of here.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE doesn't
move.*

FRIEDE

Go.

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE slowly
bends down, reaching for the dagger.*

FRIEDE

Dost thou not hear me?

Go!

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

You won't kill me.

Go!

FRIEDE

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE picks up the dagger.

FRIEDE makes a move for him, but he backs away and shoves the blade into LÆNDIRIL'S neck.

NO!

FRIEDE

Blood.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE runs away.

FRIEDE runs to LÆNDIRIL, panicked.

No! No!

FRIEDE

She drops her sword, inspecting the wound, unsure what to do.

No. No no no no no no no no no no.

FRIEDE

FRIEDE pulls out the dagger.

Blood.

She tries to stop the bleeding.

But she can't.

There is nothing she can do.

I can't stop it.

FRIEDE

I can't stop it.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

LÆNDIRIL slowly passes.

FRIEDE slumps to the ground.

Shocked.

Dazed.

Unaware of anything else.

Silence.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE slowly returns.

FRIEDE is unaware.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE creeps closer.

FRIEDE is unaware.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE creeps closer, clearly now going for a discarded weapon.

At the last moment, FRIEDE senses him.

They each grab for the nearest blade.

FRIEDE wins and stabs THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE through the gut.

Blood.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE slowly passes.

FRIEDE returns to the ground.

She lies on the ground in silence.

The Sages mournfully look on.

The SUN turns and leaves, slowly taking the light of day with her.

The wilds awaken.

The MOON comes close to FRIEDE, then lies with her, an embrace to comfort.

Long silence.

FRIEDE gets out of the embrace and stands.

Collects herself.

Retrieves her sword.

She goes to LÆNDIRIL and retrieves her bags.

She takes everything in for one last moment.

Then she moves on.

V. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT I.

She walks on into the forest.

The MOON looks on, watching her.

A long string/thread appears at FRIEDE'S feet.

She does not see it, and she trips over it.

She clatters to the ground, as something else (light, but distinct) clatters elsewhere, off.

FRIEDE gets herself up.

She walks on.

The MOON looks on.

FRIEDE comes to an empty campsite.

She slows.

Looks around.

But sees nobody.

She stops.

She sees nobody.

Behind her, MÆRWYNN stealthily approaches, an arrow nocked in her bow.

FRIEDE doesn't sense her.

MÆRWYNN closes the distance, pointing her arrow straight into the back of FRIEDE'S neck.

FRIEDE senses her.

MÆRWYNN
(Before FRIEDE can turn
around)

Don't move.

Hands up. Slowly.

FRIEDE slowly raises her hands.

FRIEDE

I mean you no harm.

MÆRWYNN
Says the girl sneaking about in the dead of night wearing blood.

FRIEDE

It is not my blood.

MÆRWYNN

That is not a point in your favor.

FRIEDE

I was forced to defend myself! It belongs to a man who set upon me, I mean you no harm.

MÆRWYNN

...

Where is the man?

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

You kill him?

FRIEDE

I did not mean to.

MÆRWYNN
You killed a man who attacked you, but you didn't mean to?

FRIEDE shakes her head.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

Turn around.

FRIEDE slowly turns around.

The women look at each other.

MÆRWYNN

Have you killed before?

FRIEDE shakes her head.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN unnocks her arrow.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

(Pointing to a bag that's part
of the campsite)

There's a skin of water in there. You can clean yourself up.

After that, take the blanket. Rest.

*MÆRWYNN turns and walks into the
forest, leaving FRIEDE alone with the
MOON.*

Silence.

*The MOON exits, taking what little light
there is with her.*

Darkness.

VI. THE CAPITAL. A BROTHEL - NIGHT I.

In the darkness, the splash of water.

The giggle of a woman.

Voices, now:

VERMILLA (V.O.)

You are going to drip everywhere!

ATTICUS (V.O.)

It's water. It will dry.

VERMILLA (V.O.)

I could slip and fall.

ATTICUS (V.O.)

Then do not go anywhere.

*Light rises on ATTICUS and VERMILLA,
fresh out of a bath.*

*ATTICUS stands behind a dressing screen,
drying himself and putting on clothes.*

*VERMILLA adjusts and brushes her hair, a
towel wrapped around her.*

ATTICUS

You have still not answered my question.

VERMILLA

I will. Once you tell me how I am expected to take such a question to heart.

ATTICUS

You should be honored. I could have any woman I desire.

VERMILLA

You do. And yet, you always come back to me.

I didn't say I wasn't honored, love. But you will forgive a lady her hesitance to believe something too good to be true.

ATTICUS

You think me false?

VERMILLA

I think men promise women like me all sorts of things. I am sure they do intend their proclamations at the time. That doesn't mean I've e'er seen one deliver.

ATTICUS

You mean to tell me, then, you consider me no different along the sides of other men?

VERMILLA

Why should I?

ATTICUS

I could kill you, you know.

*(Coming out from behind the
screen, without a shirt)*

I could order you executed. With the snap of my fingers.

VERMILLA

(Going to ATTICUS)

You could. But you won't.

ATTICUS

Why would I not?

VERMILLA

Because if you were going to kill me you wouldn't have asked the question.

Beat.

ATTICUS grins, and the two kiss.

It ends.

ATTICUS

Yes or no?

VERMILLA

...

You're serious.

ATTICUS

Of course I am.

Beat.

VERMILLA

The people of Rivka would ne'er accept a common whore as their queen.

ATTICUS

The people of Rivka will accept what their king tells them to accept. What their queen tells them to accept.

VERMILLA

My dear Atticus. How is it you still know so little of the world?

ATTICUS

How is it you still deny the magnitude of such a gift?

VERMILLA

Because I would see your reign. And I would not see it fail the very moment it begins.

A king's word does not law make. The will of your subjects is not trivial, but fickle. It must be controlled. People are malleable, but if you provoke them too much, if you deny them enough...should too many of them decide their dissatisfaction, they outnumber you. You haven't the power to crush them all.

Hate him if you must, but your father has walked that line--

ATTICUS

Do not speak of my father.

VERMILLA

Then do not be naive. Use me as your mistress behind the back of another match, like e'ery other king. Like your father. Do not have the gall to claim me your queen and think you will not face the repercussions of the world.

ATTICUS

Fuck the world. You think anyone else matters to me?

VERMILLA

I think your fortune and nobility have allowed you to believe yourself invincible. And no one truly is. Not forever.

ATTICUS

...

VERMILLA

I would do anything for you, you know that.

But some things cannot be done.

Beat.

ATTICUS nods to himself and returns behind the screen.

After a moment, he re-emerges, shirt on and holding a coin purse.

He gives the purse to VERMILLA.

She takes it, but ATTICUS does not let go.

ATTICUS

Then I will find a way.

Beat.

VERMILLA kisses ATTICUS.

He kisses back.

VERMILLA

You do that.

ATTICUS exits.

Light begins to fade, except around VERMILLA.

Discordant notes/chimes.

VERMILLA removes her towel, revealing and becoming the light of the SUN.

Her light spills over all.

FRIEDE, clean of blood, enters the light.

She sees the SUN and shields her eyes.

The SUN speaks, perhaps distorted:

You need her help.

SUN

What?

FRIEDE

You need her.

SUN

Who are you?

FRIEDE

You are running out of time.

SUN

The SUN looks at FRIEDE, who cries out in pain from the brightness.

All light disappears with a bang.

Silence.

VII. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY II.

The morning forest wakes and light rises.

Birds chirp and sing.

FRIEDE wakes from her dream, startled, but not screaming.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN enters and drops a dead animal carcass by her side, snapping FRIEDE out of her thoughts.

Break fast.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

MÆRWYNN sets about making a fire to cook.

FRIEDE takes in her surroundings, ruminating on recent events.

She notices MÆRWYNN'S horse, SURTHAAR, tethered to a post or tree nearby.

Silence.

That's a beautiful horse.
FRIEDE

He's sturdy.
MÆRWYNN

Beat.

Thank you for the water and blanket. And for allowing me to rest.
FRIEDE

You're welcome.
MÆRWYNN

Beat.

And for breakfast as well, but I must be on my way.
FRIEDE

Stay.
MÆRWYNN

You need to eat.

I cannot.
FRIEDE

Your first kill takes a physical toll on your body. It's not just mental stress that you're wading through right now. Your muscles are tense. Traumatized. You need to eat, for strength's sake.
MÆRWYNN

Even if you don't feel hungry.

It's not that.
FRIEDE

I am running out of time.

Whatever it may be, it can wait until you break your fast.
MÆRWYNN

It cannot.
FRIEDE

Why?
MÆRWYNN

...
FRIEDE

My father is sick. I am headed to an apothecary. In Mithun, in hope she might mix for him a cure.

Mithun? MÆRWYNN

Aye. FRIEDE

That's at least three days' ride from here. More. MÆRWYNN

Which is why I cannot stay. FRIEDE

I will eat as soon as I might. Thank you.

FRIEDE moves to leave.

But she stops.

And eyes SURTHAAR.

MÆRWYNN looks at FRIEDE.

Follows her gaze to her horse.

And back to FRIEDE, who turns back to MÆRWYNN.

No. MÆRWYNN

Three days' ride. At least. I cannot make that on foot. FRIEDE

I said no. MÆRWYNN

My condolences for your father, girl, but my generosity stops at giving strangers use of my horse. I have matters of my own to attend to.

Which direction? FRIEDE

... MÆRWYNN

East.

Not headed towards Mithun. Sorry.

FRIEDE

There must be something I can offer you in exchange.

MÆRWYNN

Unless you have a prettier sword in your bags, I'm afraid little will sway me.

FRIEDE

I do not, but I have money.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

Do you?

FRIEDE

Aye.

MÆRWYNN

How much?

FRIEDE

As much you as could want. Whate'er your price.

MÆRWYNN

That means you're either a noble or a thief. And you're not dressed like a noble.

FRIEDE

I am neither.

MÆRWYNN

Right.

Who are you, then? What's your name?

FRIEDE

...

My name is Rielle.

I run an inn with my father in the Rivkan Capital. We see a multitude of clientele, many of whom are nobility. They compensate us handsomely. Whate'er your sum, if we do not have it on hand, we will obtain it sooner or later. I will inherit the business upon his death. Of natural causes. And would be in your debt until mine own.

MÆRWYNN

Name some of your clients.

FRIEDE

Lord Briceus

Lady Thomasin of Esobel
Sir Istvan Hakker

Many more.

MÆRWYNN

I suppose they would pay well.

FRIEDE

They do.

MÆRWYNN

If I had any love of money, it would be a tempting offer.

FRIEDE

Please. I am not so raw to think money does not bring privilege. Or convenience.

What would you want? Anything. I will find a way.

MÆRWYNN

I want to attend to my matters.

FRIEDE

Could they not wait a week? In the time it would take for me to return?

Or the time to walk to your destination? Is it in the Capital?

MÆRWYNN

Aye. It is. But you are still mad if you think I'll allow you my horse without my attendance.

FRIEDE

What are your matters? What do you do?

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

I'm an owl hunter.

Beat.

FRIEDE

Hunting is illegal.

MÆRWYNN

Are you a knight?

FRIEDE

No.

MÆRWYNN

Do you intend to tell one about me?

FRIEDE

...

No.

MÆRWYNN

Maybe I should solve your problem for you. Put your inn into new ownership now.

FRIEDE

I have no quarrel with your profession.

MÆRWYNN

No?

I see nerves twitching at work behind your eyes. "How many people has she killed?" you're wondering.

FRIEDE

For money, you mean?

MÆRWYNN

I do not do what I do for the money. I hunt because I am good at it. Quite good. But aye, like you, I am compensated handsomely.

FRIEDE

...

Owl hunter or no, I need your help.

Please.

I must save my father.

MÆRWYNN

I'm touched.

But surely you understand, even amongst my circles, a reputation must be upheld. I will not keep a client waiting.

FRIEDE

When do they expect you?

MÆRWYNN

I'm done, girl. You've stayed your welcome. Declined my food. Leave.

FRIEDE

Please.

MÆRWYNN

I will not tell you again.

FRIEDE

Then let me be your client!

MÆRWYNN

...

You?

FRIEDE

If that is what it takes. Let me be your client.

Delay your meeting, fulfill my request, I will compensate you for it.

MÆRWYNN

Handsomely?

FRIEDE

Whate'er you wish.

MÆRWYNN

I am not an escort.

FRIEDE

I did not ask for one.

MÆRWYNN

...

You're grasping at straws. You expect me to believe you want somebody dead?

FRIEDE

Everybody wants somebody dead.

MÆRWYNN

And who is it that, Rielle, the Inkeeper's daughter, wants dead?

FRIEDE

It's a long story. I'll have to tell it on our way west.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

(Laughing)

...

You're a queer one. You know that?

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

You know how to use that sword?

FRIEDE

I killed someone, didn't I?

MÆRWYNN

By accident.

FRIEDE

Which means I could use a lesson from a professional.

Do we have an accord?

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

My fees are high, but fair.

FRIEDE

I will see them paid.

MÆRWYNN

...

Okay, then.

Let's hear your story.

VIII. WOLCAIRN. A DINING HALL - DAY II.

QUEEN WINFRID and LORENZ.

They break their fast with one another in silence.

LORENZ does not have much of an appetite.

QUEEN WINFRID

My son.

Wherefore dost thou not break thy fast?

LORENZ

I do not feel much of a hunger this morning.

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou needst eat.

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

She will be fine. Surely thou knowest this.

LORENZ

Aye.

I do. Of course.

I am just not that hungry.

Silence.

ATTICUS enters, whistling, and begins helping himself to the food.

ATTICUS

Good morning!

Sibling.

Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

Atticus. We see thou didst elect, once again, to spend thy night in the brothels.

ATTICUS

Your deduction is correct! That is, unless, you sent another one of your rats to spy upon me?

QUEEN WINFRID

Unfortunately, rats do not frequent the establishments thou enterest.

ATTICUS

Ooh. Lovely riposte, Mother. I can see we are going to have an excellent day.

QUEEN WINFRID

That makes one of us

Art thou not ashamed?

To saunter carefree throughout these halls while thy father breathes his last?

ATTICUS

On the contrary, I would have you appreciate my fortitude. Did you not speak to us of strengthened resolve, and not succumbing to fear?

QUEEN WINFRID

We did. But thy behavior feels akin to a fear that thy father might live, instead of die.

ATTICUS

Well, I think everyone here can attest to that

I would be the first to admit the only shame I feel comes from the thought of neglecting joviality in the face of my dear Father's death

We are family
We should not keep secrets away from one another
Allow them time and board to ferment and fester within us
And take on purpose malcontent
Rather we share openly our thoughts
To keep that devil, Suspicion, at bay
And abort the monster before its conception

Be not afraid
My loving family
I have learned my lessons
And am ready to rule
I am eager
Even

So yes
I walk through this home of ours with my head high
I weep at the loss of a great king
A great father
Think not I do not
But I will not keep him here in a frail body past its natural waning
That would be the greater insult

...

Forgive me, Mother
You are right
I speak out of turn

My arrogance comes from an impatience
I do concede that

I hear your words and will think on them
And do a part in marking my demeanor with more respect.

Beat.

ATTICUS exits.

Silence.

LORENZ

While perhaps spoken with faulty purpose
His words on secrets do have some insight.

QUEEN WINFRID

Aye?

LORENZ

May I speak freely with you, Mother?

QUEEN WINFRID

Aye, my son.

LORENZ

I believe my brother has ill intentions beyond the throne.

I believe he intends to murder Friede and me.

And if he intends ill upon us, that malice may extend to--

Stop.

QUEEN WINFRID

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

Dost thou hear thyself?

Thy speech is wild.

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

Hath he spoken of this to thee? Or is it suspicion?

LORENZ

Mother--

QUEEN WINFRID

If Atticus proved a threat to this family, dost thou not believe we would not attend to such a course of events?

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou must calm thy mind, my dear boy. If thou dost allow them, thy worries shall bring thee to demise.

LORENZ

...

Aye, Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

Eat.

LORENZ doesn't.

IX. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY II.

*FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN, atop
SURTHAAR.*

MÆRWYNN
So you believe this man...poisoned your father?

FRIEDE
He did.

MÆRWYNN
You are sure.

FRIEDE
Aye.

MÆRWYNN
How long ago?

FRIEDE
Two weeks.

MÆRWYNN
Mmm.

...

FRIEDE
What?

MÆRWYNN
There are few poisons mixed to kill that act so slow. You are dealing with a very patient man.

FRIEDE
I can tell you only what I know.

MÆRWYNN
His name?

FRIEDE
I do not have it.

Will that be a problem?

MÆRWYNN
Just more work. For me. Which means it will cost more. For you.

FRIEDE
That will not be a problem.

MÆRWYNN
See to that.

Atop Surthaar, we can make Mithun in just three days. That is only if we do not stop for distractions. We do not stop for distractions.

I have no desire to.

FRIEDE

Good.

MÆRWYNN

You will make your dealings with your apothecary, then upon our return arrival to the Capital, I will kill your poisoner.

Thank you.

FRIEDE

Thank me when it's done.

MÆRWYNN

They ride in silence for a moment.

How does one discover themselves in the profession of owl hunting?

FRIEDE

Are you asking to know in sooth? Or just filling the silence?

MÆRWYNN

A bit of both, mayhap.

FRIEDE

MÆRWYNN smiles, but says nothing.

They ride in silence.

The SUN enters and observes, moving slowly, marking the passage of travel.

Hold!

THE MAN IN THE ROAD (O.S.)
(Yelling to the duo)

The SUN looks off towards the sound.

Hold!

THE MAN IN THE ROAD (O.S.)

MÆRWYNN scowls and SURTHAAR slows as the SUN exits.

THE MAN IN THE ROAD enters, wearing a cloth around his lower face.

You have to go around!

THE MAN IN THE ROAD

MÆRWYNN
(Referring to off, behind THE
MAN IN THE ROAD)

What is this?

THE MAN IN THE ROAD

Flowers! The fuck it look like?

(Lowering the cloth from over
his mouth)

You have to burn the bodies, otherwise the plague will spread.

MÆRWYNN

I know that, you imbecile. Why are you doing it in the middle of the road?

THE MAN IN THE ROAD

Well, I don't want to burn the grass, do I?

Again, MÆRWYNN scowls.

She maneuvers SURTHAAR to go around.

FRIEDE

They had the plague?

THE MAN IN THE ROAD

Nasty business, aye. So much blood.

MÆRWYNN

Rielle. We do not stop.

FRIEDE

Of course not.

Go on.

*MÆRWYNN commands SURTHAAR, and
they continue to ride, going around.*

THE MAN IN THE ROAD disappears.

FRIEDE

I did not know the plague had stretched its hand so close to the Capital.

MÆRWYNN

No? Is information not the inn's trade? No one in your multitude of clientele's crossed paths with a pack of coughers?

FRIEDE

Do not call them that, there--

There is no plague in the Capital.

MÆRWYNN

Not for now.

FRIEDE

There will be no plague in the Capital.

MÆRWYNN

Aye.

Aye, lie to yourself. I suppose a poisoned father is the more preferable belief compared to one stricken with plague.

FRIEDE

He does not have the plague!

MÆRWYNN

...

I care not, girl. Either way. As long as I am paid.

FRIEDE

For the last time. You shall be.

MÆRWYNN

Good.

Remember that we do not take kindly to debts.

FRIEDE

Just ride, owl hunter. I wish to speak no more of this.

MÆRWYNN

Mærwynn.

FRIEDE

What?

MÆRWYNN

It's my name. Do not refer to me by the profession. It is tactless.

FRIEDE

Fine. Mærwynn. Let us ride in silence for a time.

X. WOLCAIRN. AYMON'S ROOM - NIGHT II.

KING AYMON on his deathbed.

LORENZ sits nearby, praying.

LORENZ

I ask thee, Lord
Give Friede haste

And Father strength
That he may cling to life
Hold onto his vigor
And that her speed will carry her home with remedy

Forgive me my...

...

*OTHSRYD enters, carrying a loaf of
bread wrapped in cloth.*

Master Lorenz? OTHSRYD

Othsryd. LORENZ

OTH SRYD
Forgive me for this interruption. But Her Majesty has requested once more that you eat.

LORENZ
That is well.

But I still do not hunger.

OTH SRYD
No?

LORENZ
Thou canst...

Just leave it by the door.

OTH SRYD
...

LORENZ
Thank you, Othsryd.

OTH SRYD
...

Her Majesty has instructed me that I am not to leave you until you have eaten.

Beat.

LORENZ
Wilt thou tell her that I have?

OTHSRYD

Um.

If you wish that--

LORENZ

Do not. Forget the request. It is improper of me to ask thee to lie to the Queen. It is my business to bear.

Give it here.

OTHSRYD crosses and hands the loaf to LORENZ.

He takes it, unwrapping it.

LORENZ

Wouldst thou like any?

OTHSRYD

I should not.

LORENZ

That is not what I asked. I am offering. If thou shouldst like any.

OTHSRYD

Aye. Please.

LORENZ breaks the loaf in two.

He hands a half to OTHSRYD.

OTHSRYD

Thank you.

LORENZ

Thou art welcome. I thank thee.

They eat for a moment in silence.

OTHSRYD

(Re: the king)

How is he?

LORENZ

Much the same.

OTHSRYD

I have been praying for him. And Mistress Friede.

LORENZ

As have I.

OTHSRYD

It shakes me to see him like this. I cannot imagine what you must be feeling, Master Lorenz.

LORENZ

...To be frank, I feel much in my normal state. Fearful, anxious.

Ineffective.

OTHSRYD

Do not say that.

LORENZ

Think thee I am a coward?

Beat.

OTHSRYD

Of course not.

LORENZ

In sooth?

OTHSRYD

...

I do not believe cowardice aligns itself with fear. Fear is rational. Bravery is the acknowledgement of that and doing what is right despite it.

LORENZ

Would that everybody in this house thought as thee.

Father certainly thinks me so. Mother. A worried boy who must be all but forced to eat.

OTHSRYD

And Mistress Friede?

LORENZ

She would say no. But in her heart? We would have to ask her upon her return. Since I was too afraid to go in her stead.

OTHSRYD

Lorenz.

LORENZ

Othsryd.

OTHSRYD

That you remain here is not a weakness. The Lord hath writ different paths for all of us. We may find ourselves on roads unanticipated, or walks that bring us strife, but in the end, He leadeth us precisely where most we need. For His glory.

LORENZ

Aye.

Wilt thou keep with me a confidence, Othsryd?

OTHSRYD

Always.

LORENZ

I know not if I care of the Lord's glory. My deepest wish is that but the world not fall apart, and that I and those dear to me stay in it.

OTHSRYD

Whether you care for it or not, our actions either give Him glory or take from it.

LORENZ

So they teach us.

OTHSRYD

...

LORENZ

I wonder. Which one is it, if we do a bad thing for good reason?

OTHSRYD

I suppose that would depend on the thing. And the reason.

LORENZ

...

OTHSRYD

What is in your mind?

LORENZ

A budding thought. A truth, perhaps. That if somebody means me harm, there is only one ultimate way to prevent it.

OTHSRYD

Who is it that means you harm?

LORENZ

...

Will you help me with something?

Discordant notes/chimes.

*Light begins to fade, except around
OTHSRYD.*

*She removes or unwraps a piece of
clothing, revealing and becoming the light
of the MOON.*

XI. THE CAPITAL. AN ALLEYWAY - NIGHT II.

The MOON travels overtop the Capital streets.

Below her, a MASKED FIGURE appears, traversing the alleyways and back paths.

The MOON watches the MASKED FIGURE as they approach a humble door.

The MASKED FIGURE knocks.

An unconventional knock, signifying it is precisely them who has arrived.

The MOON watches.

BARNABAS opens the door.

BARNABAS

Ah! A pleasure to make your acquaintance once again. Some of it.

The MASKED FIGURE responds, but as another measure to protect their identity, they do so through the MOON.

MOON

What is it? I have little time.

BARNABAS

I'll say it a second time, that mask is certainly more than enough. Though it be a fine trick, there is no need to disguise so your voice.

MOON

I will do as I please. Why have you summoned me? Is she inside?

BARNABAS

No. Not yet. Our deepest apologies, my good patron.

MOON

Then why am I here?

BARNABAS

The Hunter you have requested. She has been delayed.

MOON

What? Wherefore?

BARNABAS

She did not say. She was traveling from outside the Capital, it could be any number of things. Bad weather. Dead horse. Other business.

MOON

Other business? Does she not know who I am?

BARNABAS

We don't know who you are. Aye?

MOON

Do not be impudent.

BARNABAS

Good patron, you have gone to great lengths to hide from all your identity. Of course we know you who are. There is not an amateur amongst us. But as you wish your particular quarry handled with the utmost discretion, we have done nothing and will do nothing to betray those efforts.

Unless you should wish me to let her know who has requested her services?

Beat.

MOON

How long will she be delayed?

BARNABAS

Eight to ten days.

MOON

Ten days?!

BARNABAS

Eight to ten.

MOON

That is far too long.

BARNABAS

We are deeply sorry for this inconvenience.

MOON

I am sure you are.

BARNABAS

It is the price of anonymous business, good patron. Should you like, there are other Hunters I might provide you. If you tell us more of your quarry--

MOON

No. I want only your best.

BARNABAS

Aye. She is delayed eight to ten days.

MOON

Then you are of no use to me.

BARNABAS

If that is your belief.

The MASKED FIGURE turns to leave.

But stops at:

BARNABAS

A word of wisdom. If you would hear it.

MOON

You are fortunate I do not kill you where you stand.

BARNABAS

If you intend still your course, pursue your quarry with care. Consider your surroundings and timing. Killing someone is the easy part. Making it look otherwise is not.

Beat.

The MASKED FIGURE exits.

BARNABAS bids farewell to the space they inhabited, then exits through the door.

The MOON is left alone once more.

She moves through the space, sending everything deeper into the night.

XII. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT II.

As she speaks, the capital streets give way to a campsite in the forest.

MOON

Seldom do I give others the use of my voice
The reasons wherefore shall remain between myself and the borrower

Though I suppose
You might say I am simply
Kinder than my heavenly counterpart

It is said we chase one another
As we dart across the sky about the stars
But nay
The pursuit is mine and mine alone
Without me, she would stay rooted
Content as her gaze doth blind us all
Without my tempering hand, she would pierce and destroy
All that we do know

She cannot help her nature

Birthed in rage
One day, her anger
Her resentment will o'ertake everything
All that has not already been taken away

Until that time I watch with gentler eyes
Curious
Avid
Keening

I was born in grief
Far more than any of you will e'er know

If you have felt them, you understand

Flame drowns
It is water that burns.

FRIEDE enters the forest campsite.

Beat.

Speak, child. MOON

Do I know you? FRIEDE

In a sense. MOON

Who are you? FRIEDE

... MOON

What are you? FRIEDE

I am MOON
Older

Let us call it that.

This is not real. FRIEDE

I am dreaming once more.

MOON

Dream or no
We are both here

If you have found your way to me
Then there is something one of us wishes to say.

FRIEDE

Do you wish to say something to me?

MOON

...

Not at this time.

So what say you?

Beat.

The MOON smiles a wide, open teeth grin.

Her mouth is stained with dripping blood.

FRIEDE

You are bleeding.

The MOON begins to laugh.

FRIEDE watches in awed horror.

The MOON laughs.

*Then, without warning, she rushes
FRIEDE, tackling her to the ground.*

MOON

Let me see those cheekbones!

I will slice them apart! Give them to me!

*FRIEDE pushes the MOON off of her,
who reacts as if stabbed in the gut.*

The MOON quickly passes.

*FRIEDE stares at the lifeless body,
catching her breath.*

MÆRWYNN enters.

*She does not see the MOON. It's as if
she's not even there.*

Nightmare?
MÆRWYNN

FRIEDE
(Nodding)

...

I will be well.

MÆRWYNN
You should sleep if you can. We still have a long road ahead.

FRIEDE
I could say the same for you. Do you e'er sleep?

MÆRWYNN
I get what I need. One of us has to keep watch.

FRIEDE
Is that not what your traps are for?

MÆRWYNN
Traps are for the perimeter. During the witching hour, I trust nothing but mine own eyes and ears.

Beat.

FRIEDE
I could keep watch.

MÆRWYNN
Oh, can you?

FRIEDE
I think I have had my fill of sleep for the night.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN
Your kill haunts you.

FRIEDE
...

It had to be done, I know it.

MÆRWYNN
That does not mean it easy.

FRIEDE
Aye. Perhaps if I were you?

MÆRWYNN

It is no simpler. To take a life is to remove a piece of the world. That is not something done lightly. It cannot be done without, too, removing a piece of yourself.

That is the price paid. The only difference is that I choose to pay it.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

If you were attacked, you were robbed of that choice. For that, I am sorry. It is never easy.

Beat.

FRIEDE

I was trained from birth--

My father, he--prepared me for the wielding of a sword. What a blade means. Represents. I am not without mine own skill.

But he did not...prepare me for killing.

MÆRWYNN

Nor should he have. No one should be. If one becomes accustomed to killing, that is a truly dangerous enemy. For their mind is gone.

FRIEDE

You mean to say you are not...?

MÆRWYNN

No, I remember them all. I grieve them all. I carry the weight of each and every quarry in my mind every night.

And every day, my mind stays clear. You must do the same.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

The hour is almost gone.

Keep watch.

Grieve. Feel. You cannot wish the thoughts away.

MÆRWYNN lays down and sleeps.

Beat.

The MOON slowly rises.

She waves at FRIEDE and crosses the space.

She exits, giving way to day as the SUN enters from the opposite side of the space.

MÆRWYNN wakes.

FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN exit.

The SUN follows after them.

XIII. WOLCAIRN. AYMÓN'S ROOM - DAY III.

KING AYMÓN on his deathbed.

ATTICUS sits nearby, not praying.

He has not slept.

Across the space, he and the SUN share a brief moment.

The SUN exits.

QUEEN WINFRID enters, and stops at the sight of ATTICUS.

ATTICUS

Good morning, Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou art ragged. Didst thou spend this whole night by thy father's side?

ATTICUS

I did.

I am a man of my word. I said I would think on yours and I have done so.

QUEEN WINFRID

...

Good.

ATTICUS

You do not believe me.

QUEEN WINFRID

We did not say that.

ATTICUS

You had no need to

I can see it in the way you look at me

Give me credit, if my nature
My buckwildery have given me anything
It is the power of discernment

I did learn it as a child
It hath always been plain to see
The servant who insists I stole that extra loaf of bread
E'en though I had not visited the kitchens that day
The Master-at-Arms, convinced that that one training
I meant to nick him, twas no mere chance
Why would my hand have slipped?
Father, himself
I could excel during the hunt
Remember all my histories
I could move him a mountain
But still it would ne'er be enough to o'ercome the mischief of the day
The fault of which surely must lay at my feet

My whole life
Despite my pleas, attestations of innocence
Your faces remain as stone
Pitious and casting judgment
I am a liar
I must be
For who else in this house is capable?

Why think you I feel no welcome in this place?
Why I make a haven of the brothels?
I know I pay them for their love
But I would spend every coin on this earth to be gazed upon as a man
Instead a lying child

I have made my mistakes
But I am not the part I play, Mother

I am simply the script that has been given me.

Beat.

QUEEN WINFRID

Ne'er afore hast thou shared with us these thoughts.

ATTICUS

Why would I? Am I to be believed?

*QUEEN WINFRIED places a hand of
comfort upon her son.*

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou hast always had our love. E'en if thou hast not felt it.

ATTICUS

That no was answer to my question.

QUEEN WINFRID

...

Lorenz believes you intend to kill him. And your sister.

ATTICUS

(Half scoffing, half laughing,
half weeping)

...

I am sure he does.

I am sure he does.

QUEEN WINFRID

...

ATTICUS

How am I to fight such an enemy?

Something so insidious and entrenched?

QUEEN WINFRID

Begin with sleep. And when thou wakest, thy actions fight that enemy.

One cannot make another believe anything. But trust is earned through good work.

ATTICUS

...

QUEEN WINFRID

When you are king, that is something you will need to remember.

Beat.

ATTICUS

But Friede--

QUEEN WINFRID

Will succeed or will not. Whene'er the day comes, you must be ready.

Beat.

QUEEN WINFRID

You should rest. My son.

Mother.

ATTICUS

ATTICUS exits.

*QUEEN WINFRID watches him go, then
afixes her gaze to KING AYMUN.*

Beat.

*She places a hand of comfort upon her
husband.*

KING AYMUN wheezes.

It should be me upon this bed
And you where I do stand

I will not let our kingdom fall.

QUEEN WINFRID

*KING AYMUN coughs, wet and full of
detritus.*

*QUEEN WINFRID leans down and kisses
him.*

XIV. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY III.

The roads west.

*A marking post appears alongside the
road.*

*Fixed to the post with rope, a headless,
legless torso with a large "A" carved into
its chest.*

*There is blood, but it is dry. It has been
here long enough.*

*FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN, atop
SURTHAAR enter.*

At the grisly sight of the post, they stop.

In God's name...

FRIEDE

MÆRWYNN
(Unable to take her eyes away)

...

She's expanding her territory.

FRIEDE
Have you seen this like before?

Beat.

MÆRWYNN
Shit.

FRIEDE
Mærwynn.

MÆRWYNN
(Snapping out of it)

...

Answer me plainly. What know you of the Beast Countess?

FRIEDE
The what?

MÆRWYNN
You have no knowledge of her?

FRIEDE
No.

MÆRWYNN
What sheltered life is it you have led?

FRIEDE
What life have you that has made you her companion?

MÆRWYNN
Oh, she is no companion of mine. Nor anyone's.

Any fool enough to set foot unto her estate receives her hospitality. She calls you guest, but that is not what you are. What you are is her prisoner.

You know what people do to their prisoners, at least?

...

FRIEDE
MÆRWYNN
Anything they want.

And in the case of Countess Ankaret, sooner or later...

(Nodding at the post)

That.

FRIEDE

That's...that's inhuman.

MÆRWYNN

Aye.

FRIEDE

How has she been allowed this? No one has stopped her? The knights? The king?

MÆRWYNN

The king knows. Everyone knows.

FRIEDE

That's impossible, the king--

MÆRWYNN

It's only way its possible. They have some unspoken or written accord, it matters not. She keeps to her territory, and he stays out of her affairs.

Until now.

She is testing his resolve.

We cannot cross.

FRIEDE

But this is the road to Mithun.

MÆRWYNN

Not anymore. We will have to go around.

FRIEDE

But that would--how long would that take?

MÆRWYNN

It depends. On how far she has pushed herself.

FRIEDE

Another day? Two?

MÆRWYNN

I do not know. It will take as long as it takes.

Beat.

FRIEDE

Mærwynn, I--

MÆRWYNN

This is not a discussion.

You are afraid.

FRIEDE

I am. Aye. As you should be.

MÆRWYNN

My father has no time for uncertainties.

FRIEDE

He has no time if you die, either.

MÆRWYNN

We go around. Or you are welcome to get off and walk. And consider our business together done.

FRIEDE

I--

Beat.

Well?

MÆRWYNN

FRIEDE

Mærwynn. I thank you for your service.

MÆRWYNN

Oh?

FRIEDE

And I must also ask for your forgiveness.

MÆRWYNN

Forgiveness? For what?

Beat.

FRIEDE heaves and pushes MÆRWYNN off SURTHAAR. She yelps in surprised anger as she falls to the ground.

FRIEDE
(Kicking SURTHAAR into motion)

Yah!

SURTHAAR takes off with FRIEDE alone atop him.

MÆRWYNN screams in frustration as she watches FRIEDE take off down the road, straight into the Beast Countess' territory.

MÆRWYNN rages to her feet.

Beat.

She screams a primal fury.

XV. THE CAPITAL. A BROTHEL - DAY III.

VERMILLA.

And a CLIENT.

CLIENT

Oh.

Oh, Vermilla.

Thou art everything.

VERMILLA

And you talk too much.

They continue kissing.

OTHSRYD enters.

She is not noticed.

She clears her throat, uncomfortable.

VERMILLA and the CLIENT break away.

CLIENT

The fuck?

VERMILLA

If she's yours, recall, I charge by the body.

CLIENT

I have never seen this woman in my life.

OTHSRYD

Please give this interruption your pardon. I must speak with Vermilla.

CLIENT

She's busy.

VERMILLA

Who e'en let you back here?

OTHSRYD removes a coin purse from her clothes and tosses it to VERMILLA.

Rielle and the Owl Hunter, Daniel Prillaman, 58.

She catches it or it just lands at her feet.

She opens the purse and looks inside it.

It is more than she expected.

Come back in an hour darling.

VERMILLA

The hell I will.

CLIENT

*OTHSRYD removes another coin purse
and holds it out.*

VERMILLA laughs in tickled curiosity.

Just made of coin, aren't you?

VERMILLA

Well?

Beat.

One hour.

CLIENT

*CLIENT grabs the coin purse from
OTHSRYD.*

This is also for your silence, good sir.

OTHSRYD
(Not yet releasing hold)

Fuck you.

CLIENT

*OTHSRYD lets go of the purse and the
CLIENT exits.*

Few others have paid as much for some of my time.

VERMILLA

You've my full attention. What is it I might do for you?

*LORENZ enters, dressed in garb to
dissuade recognition.*

Recall, I charge by the body.

VERMILLA

LORENZ

We have no wish for thy services.

(Revealing himself)

Not to those thy custom.

VERMILLA

My my...look at you. Lorenz Ægenwulf, to what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?

LORENZ

Othsryd.

OTHSRYD does not move.

LORENZ

Wilt thou give us the room?

Beat.

OTHSRYD exits.

VERMILLA

My curiosity only grows. Please.

LORENZ

I know that my brother is fond of thee.

VERMILLA

Very.

LORENZ

I know also that thou art fond of him.

VERMILLA

It is my trade to be fond, good Master.

LORENZ

Aye. I do suppose.

VERMILLA

Allow me to speak plain, whate'er it is you wish to ask of me, 'twill serve us both if you do not so color your speech.

LORENZ

I want you to kill my brother.

VERMILLA

...

...

Are you mad?

LORENZ

Perhaps I am. But no more than he. I ask it all the same.

VERMILLA

What makes you think that I would--

LORENZ

I will see you never want for anything again.

VERMILLA

...

LORENZ

Whatever you wish. It will be yours. Coin. Trinkets. Titles.

VERMILLA

Hahaha. You are mad.

You leave now, I will not tell Atticus of this farce.

LORENZ

There is nothing you aspire to? You are satisfied with the life you live?

VERMILLA

And what if I wanted to be queen? What of that?

LORENZ

Done.

VERMILLA

...

LORENZ

Anything else?

VERMILLA

I am a common whore. The people of Rivka--

LORENZ

Will accept a queen promoted to a proper title.

And if still they speak, I will lower taxes.

VERMILLA can barely comprehend what she's hearing.

VERMILLA

It seems I underestimated you. I didn't think you had desired the throne more than your brother.

LORENZ

I do not. This is alone for my and my sister's safety. He means to kill us.

I know he hath spoken of this to you.

VERMILLA

I think you may be mistaken.

LORENZ

Certainly.

Art thou interested or no?

Beat.

VERMILLA

Well, when you put it like that.

Have you a preferred method in your mind? Or shall I improvise?

LORENZ removes a small vial full of dark powder from his clothes.

LORENZ

This.

He hands it to VERMILLA.

VERMILLA

And they say poison is a woman's weapon.

LORENZ

Place it in his drink. He will pass during the night.

VERMILLA

And I wake up next to a poisoned man?

LORENZ

The fault will not be traced to thee. It will seem as if his heart simply stopped. Through reasons only the Lord will know.

VERMILLA

And you and I.

LORENZ

...

VERMILLA

Royal prince dying in a whorehouse will surely cause quite the commotion.

LORENZ

My mother will handle that.

What sayest thou?

VERMILLA

...

Master Lorenz, no doubt you've come to me because you believe if you attempted this same task he would catch you. Your thinking is correct. I am the only one he would not foresee coming.

But I must ask you. If I am as fond of your brother as you think, then your presence here is either most intelligent or gravely foolish.

You do not perceive it the latter?

Beat.

LORENZ

No. I do not.

I believe thy decision will make that choice.

Beat.

VERMILLA

Indeed.

Good day, Master Lorenz.

LORENZ

Good day.

LORENZ exits.

VERMILLA is left alone, with much (or little) thinking to be done.

XVI. THE CAPITAL. OUTSIDE THE
BROTHEL - DAY III.

OTHSRYD.

She holds down a simmering anger.

LORENZ enters.

LORENZ

Anyone?

OTHSRYD
(Not looking at LORENZ)

...

Othsryd? LORENZ

Nay. OTHSRYD

We may return home. I thank thee. LORENZ

Do not thank me. OTHSRYD

Art thou well? LORENZ

That is your inquiry? Am I well? OTHSRYD

... LORENZ

Is something wrong?

How dare you? OTHSRYD

...Othsryd-- LORENZ

OTHSRYD
When, precisely, were you going to inform me the goal of this business of ours?

I guided you through this city, to the apothecary, to this brothel. When you asked me for my assistance, had you any intention of revealing it for the darkness it is?

... LORENZ

I asked thee to give us the room.

OTHSRYD
I did. And more than thin walls will betray you. You think that woman will do your bidding?

LORENZ
It is the only way.

OTHSRYD
You know not that. This is rash. And wrong.

LORENZ

My brother is rash and wrong!

He is a blight
Upon everything and everyone he doth encounter
Behind his smiles hides the forked tongue of a serpent
One that charms and seduces its way into a man's good graces
A lady-in-waiting's heart
He beguiles and uses people as he pleases
Like a thief in search only of an innocent's hope and happiness
Instead of what material trinkets they carry

Thou knowest of what I speak firsthand, Othsryd.

OTHSRYD

I have forgiven him.

LORENZ

How?

OTHSRYD

Because the Lord hath commanded it.

LORENZ

Aye, the Lord! It is that simple?

OTHSRYD

Of course not.

It is the most difficult thing I have ever done.

And it is my business
Not yours to meddle with and give voice to in attempt to sway me

I am a rock of our Lord
And though the scope of mine own forgiveness may falter next to Him
You will not mistake it for weakness.

Beat.

LORENZ

I am sorry.

But despite thy grace
My brother is still a robber of dreams
A revealer of confidences
He doth birth misfortune for everyone around him
Always

I care not what he does to himself
But I am amongst him
As are those whom I do love
And care for

If no one else will stop him
Is it not my duty?

OTHSRYD

Killing is wrong.

Setting it in motion is wrong.

If you think it your duty to do so, then you are a coward.

And not the man I thought you were.

LORENZ

...

OTHSRYD

If you are finished with my services, Master, I should like to return home by myself.

LORENZ

Othsryd.

OTHSRYD

Please.

Beat.

LORENZ nods.

OTHSRYD exits.

*LORENZ is left alone, with much (or little)
thinking to be done.*

XVII. COUNTESS' TERRITORY - DAY III.

FRIEDE, atop SURTHAAR.

She rides onward.

The SUN enters.

*Her light blinds FRIEDE, who slows and
raises an arm to shield her eyes.*

*The SUN crosses behind FRIEDE,
relieving some of the glare.*

The SUN speaks, distorted.

SUN
(Unintelligible)

...

What?

FRIEDE

SUN
(Unintelligible)

...

What say you?

FRIEDE

SUN
(Clearly, pointing)

Look out.

*FRIEDE looks as an arrow pierces
SURTHAAR'S head.*

*The horse topples (along with FRIEDE) to
the ground.*

She is hurt.

SURTHAAR is dead.

GIDEON enters, bow in hand.

He looks at his handiwork.

*Without a word, he pulls another arrow
from his quiver and walks towards
FRIEDE.*

FRIEDE
(Struggling to unsheathe her
sword)

No. No.

*GIDEON plunges the arrow into the back
of FRIEDE'S knee.*

She screams.

He rips the arrow out and tosses it aside.

*He grabs FRIEDE'S sword and tosses it
aside.*

*He then picks up FRIEDE and slings her
over his shoulder.*

GIDEON

Come on, then.

The SUN watches as GIDEON exits with FRIEDE.

Beat.

The SUN snaps her fingers and all light disappears.

SUGGESTED INTERVAL

The play may be performed without intermission, but an interval is strongly suggested at this juncture.

XVIII. COUNTESS' ESTATE. A DINING HALL - NIGHT III.

FRIEDE, NEERABOSI, SIGEBERT, and GIDEON, seated at an ornate dining table.

Around FRIEDE'S knee, a bloodied bandage. Her leg has been seen to, but is by no means painless.

Over SIGEBERT'S head and face is a stained, burlap sack. It has a single hole for the mouth.

In front of each of them, a covered dish.

FRIEDE

Please.

Please, I have no wish to beg of you.

GIDEON

Then don't.

NEERABOSI

I am sorry to hear that your father is sick.

FRIEDE

If you do not let me go, he will die.

GIDEON

No one leaves without permission from the Countess.

NEERABOSI

It is true.

FRIEDE

Where is she, then, that I may speak to her?

GIDEON

She will come anon. So be patient.

If you move, I'll cripple your other leg.

Beat.

NEERABOSI

Rielle, you said you are from the Capital?

I have never been there. What is it like?

FRIEDE

It is beautiful.

Though I have known it all my life, still its marvels refuse to fade. When the sunlight strikes the blue waters of the canals and sets the whole city ashimmer. When the heat of the smithy's labor rolls and winds itself through the smells of the market. When I breathe the very air, I weep. For it has shown me the grandeur of all things, large or small.

NEERABOSI

It sounds as a dream.

FRIEDE

Aye.

It doth.

Beat.

A bell chimes.

GIDEON stands.

NEERABOSI stands and helps SIGEBERT to do the same.

FRIEDE looks to GIDEON.

He nods.

FRIEDE slowly stands, her weight on her good leg.

COUNTESS ANKARET enters.

She is immaculate.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Please! Please sit, my dearest ones. Sit and eat.

GIDEON immediately sits, removes the cover of his dish, and eats.

NEERABOSI follows suit, helping SIGEBERT to do the same.

Over the following, she will feed him from time to time.

FRIEDE simply sits.

COUNTESS ANKARET

I must ask your forgiveness for placing you in this odd limbo. I was attending to the needs of another guest.

Rielle?

FRIEDE

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

That is correct? Rielle?

Beat.

FRIEDE

Aye.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Welcome. My dear girl. You must be hungry. Eat. Please.

FRIEDE is.

She removes the cover to her dish.

Beat.

FRIEDE eats.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Neerabosi, iyesh kabat nikoto rek?

NEERABOSI

Ness Ankaret, seeask libella, pas cono nikoto rek.

COUNTESS ANKARET

A Sigebert? Esko neosi chakata?

NEERABOSI

Yes. He has. Mueoso laja sikret, aksana foto i ikaretas.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Hahaha. Sen. Sen.

FRIEDE

Is that Igrathi?

COUNTESS ANKARET

You have a fine ear.

NEERABOSI

Have you been? It, too, is beautiful.

FRIEDE

No. But I have heard stories.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Traveling is something I have missed a great deal. The jagged peaks of mountains. The cool of lakewaters.

FRIEDE

Good Countess, I must--

COUNTESS ANKARET

Please, Rielle. Let us contribute to some light conversation before we turn our tongues to the weight hanging above our heads.

FRIEDE

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

Very well. The particulars of your situation, Rielle, have been made known to me. I must first extend to you my sorrows to hear that your father has taken on such an illness. That is followed by my commendation, for your courage and valiance shows much character. Would all be blessed to have a daughter the like of thee.

My heart reaches out to thee and thy quest. But I cannot allow thy departure from this estate. Not at this time.

FRIEDE

Why?

COUNTESS ANKARET

...

Again, I must ask your forgiveness. In order to answer that inquiry, I must needs first ascertain what you believe that reason to be.

I have, at this stage of my life, confined myself to my house and its grounds. But I am well aware of the tales they tell of me. What misdeeds I have done. The atrocities I have committed. In the dead of night, all their hushed, little whispers find their way to me.

They wash over me and bathe me in slanders and rumor, until they and time have transmogrified me into a beast of nightmares. An evil of fable that haunts and slaughters. Words have such power, don't they? At times, I almost believe them myself. I peer into the depths of the looking glass, and in mine own reflection I espy teeth growing behind my other teeth. When I partake of wine, it tastes of lifeblood, stolen from another's veins. I see in the dark, eyes aglow with brute light.

But these are fancies.

I am not these things. I am misrepresented.

Have I been so to thee?

FRIEDE

A small amount.

COUNTESS ANKARET

And still you dared step inside my borders?

FRIEDE

I need to get to Mithun.

And with the utmost respect I am capable, I inform you if you intend to play an obstacle to that task, then you will have to kill me for I shall do all that is in my power to escape--

COUNTESS ANKARET

Calm thyself, little girl, do not be rash.

FRIEDE

Then tell me thy reasons plain, I would not surmise whate'er they be.

COUNTESS ANKARET grabs FRIEDE'S dish and hurls it across the room.

She leans into FRIEDE, poring into her face.

A standoff.

FRIEDE does well.

But eventually, she gulps.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

I'll grant thee one praise, there is little fear to be found in thy words.

Truly, I am sorry. The rules and strictures I have in place, they are regrets. I take no pleasure in them. They must be so. If I make exception for even one, the Haven we all have built here will come crashing down.

Haven from what?
FRIEDE

Everything.
COUNTESS ANKARET

Plague. Wickedness. One day, even death itself.

...
FRIEDE

COUNTESS ANKARET
Here, my dear, thou wilt be safe. Free from rampant disease. From the sins of mankind. There is no evil within these grounds. It hath been purged. So shall thine.

I realize this is frightening. The transition is hard for many. But what worth is the reward, if it was not obtained through effort?

Let me go.
FRIEDE

Rielle.
COUNTESS ANKARET

No.

My father--
FRIEDE

COUNTESS ANKARET
Thy father died the very moment thou didst enter my domain.

Shouldst thou attempt to leave before thy mettle is tested, thou shalt meet the same fate.

FRIEDE stands in fear and fury.

GIDEON stands, awaiting orders.

COUNTESS ANKARET holds out her hand to GIDEON.

Hold.

COUNTESS ANKARET
I admire thy spirit, Rielle.

But whatever thy next words be, they will change nothing.

FRIEDE
My name is not Rielle. It is Friede. Friede Ægenwulf. Daughter of King Aymon Ægenwulf of Rivka, Wielder of the Keeping Faith, the Stonebreaker, and the Uniter of Man. I am owed allegiance by all here. And you will make exception for me.

Beat.

You are the Princess of Rivka?
COUNTESS ANKARET

I am.
FRIEDE

...
COUNTESS ANKARET

Gideon.

GIDEON moves and seizes FRIEDE.

She struggles, but he is stronger.

Easy. Easy.
GIDEON

It is an honor to have you with us, Princess.
COUNTESS ANKARET

But the King has no reign here. You stupid fucking girl.

...
FRIEDE

...
COUNTESS ANKARET
Thou wilt quarter with Neerabosi this eve. If thou so much as touchest the door to the room, she is under order to kill thee.

...
FRIEDE

...
COUNTESS ANKARET
Sleep soundly. Tomorrow we begin.

COUNTESS ANKARET nods to GIDEON.

He takes a struggling FRIEDE and exits.

NEERABOSI stands.

My Lady.
NEERABOSI
(Bowing)

NEERABOSI exits.

SIGEBERT eats.

XIX. WOLCAIRN. AYMUN'S ROOM - NIGHT
III.

KING AYMUN on his deathbed.

LORENZ sits nearby, praying.

ATTICUS enters, disrupting LORENZ from his prayers.

For a moment, the brothers do not speak.

They search for the words.

I can return anon.
ATTICUS

No. No need, I am--I am finished.
LORENZ

Beat.

Lorenz, I--
ATTICUS

Are you not to the brothels this night?
LORENZ

If it is well with you, I did but wish bid our dear father goodbye first.
ATTICUS

Although, it gladdens me to hear such concern regarding my coital exploits.

I did not mean--
LORENZ

Fret not. I am being...
ATTICUS

I know not what I am being.

...
LORENZ

Where is Friede to spark the conversation when you need her? Ey?
ATTICUS

...
LORENZ

She should be about halfway there now.

She should. ATTICUS

Beat.

I shall leave you to it. LORENZ

Come with me. ATTICUS

... LORENZ

Wha--? To the brothel?

Yes. Why not? ATTICUS

... LORENZ

ATTICUS
There are all manner of companions there, even to your tastes.

LORENZ
Stop. What is this? What are you doing?

... ATTICUS

I am your elder brother. I was simply attempting to...
If you do not want to, 'tis well.

Beat.

LORENZ
Would you not say it is somewhat too late? For this?

ATTICUS
The sun has barely set.

LORENZ
Too late for us.

... ATTICUS

Only if you think it so.

Beat.

Perhaps
Another time.

LORENZ

Perhaps.

ATTICUS

Beat.

Good night, Atticus.

LORENZ

Good night.

ATTICUS

LORENZ exits.

*Silence, save for whatever noises ATTICUS
makes while replaying the preceding
conversation in his head.*

What am I doing?

ATTICUS

Surely, you are having a grand time listening to all of this. Aren't you, Father?

...

How strange it is
To look upon you now.

The face I know so stern and strong, rigid and unyielding...it is so feeble now.

Silence.

*KING AYMON coughs, wet and full of
detritus.*

He speaks.

Son?

(Weakly)
KING AYMON

Father?

ATTICUS

My son.

(Weakly)
KING AYMON

Father!

ATTICUS

Lorenz.

KING AYMON

Beat.

He has just left. I will fetch him.

ATTICUS

Lorenz, my boy. Come here.

KING AYMON

Beat.

Yes, Father.

ATTICUS

Let me see thee.

KING AYMON

ATTICUS goes closer.

KING AYMON touches his son's face and cries.

My sweet boy. My Lorenz.

KING AYMON

How I wish thou wert my first.

Thou shouldst have been my firstborn.

KING AYMON'S hand falls and he continues to weep.

ATTICUS stands still, tears forming, killed by four short remarks.

KING AYMON weeps.

After a moment or an eternity, ATTICUS finds the strength to move.

KING AYMON disappears as ATTICUS exits the room.

XX. THE CAPITAL. VARIOUS - NIGHT III.

The MOON enters as ATTICUS traverses the city streets.

She watches him wander aimlessly, without purpose.

*In her own space in the brothel,
VERMILLA appears.*

*In front of her, a small table with two
chalices. Between them, the vial of dark
powder.*

She stares at them all intently.

ATTICUS wanders.

VERMILLA stares.

CLIENT appears on the city streets.

*ATTICUS, still lost in his mind, mistakenly
bumps into him, but keeps walking.*

Hey! Watch it, kid!
CLIENT

ATTICUS keeps walking.

Oi! Fucker!
CLIENT

ATTICUS stops.

I'd say thou owest an apology. Nay?
CLIENT

ATTICUS turns around to face CLIENT.

My Prince.
CLIENT

(Bowing and holding)
Forgive me. Please. I did not recognize thee. You. I did not recognize you.

Beat.

On your knees.
ATTICUS

Your Highness?
CLIENT

On. Your knees.
ATTICUS

CLIENT gets down on his knees.

ATTICUS stares at him.

Behind ATTICUS, the MOON removes a knife from her clothes.

MOON

Atticus.

ATTICUS looks to the MOON, who offers him the knife, handle toward his hand.

ATTICUS looks at the knife, then to the MOON.

Beat.

He takes the knife.

CLIENT

(Seeing ATTICUS and the knife, but not the MOON)

...Your Highness?

ATTICUS

...

Thou mayest recover.

CLIENT stands and runs off.

ATTICUS chases after him.

And catches him.

Off, the sounds of ATTICUS ruthlessly stabbing CLIENT, over and over.

He is killing him.

He is not stopping.

The MOON exits after them, taking the light over the city streets with her.

VERMILLA stands alone.

She picks up the vial.

Considers the weight of it in her hands.

She has not yet made her decision.

She opens the vial.

Sniffs it.

She has not yet made her decision.

She sets the vial on the table.

The light around her shifts.

She becomes the SUN.

*The SUN crosses away from the brothel,
into her own time and space.*

SUN

It changes thee
To hold such colossal power
And within the very limits of thy hand

The die cast between life and death hath always been a single act
But ne'er before has the source been so
Small
A thing

In the old days we made grander gestures
My first?
I allowed her but a glimpse of my full glory
My wrath
Her heart melted
Becoming the rock on which all you do stand

That was not my intention
But I do not regret the additional worship
It humours me
I've taken little delight in this age
But watching all your
Ripples

They ne'er fail to amuse
No matter who the boy kills
Be the whore's cup tainted or no
The cycle keeps spinning
Day in
Day out
Day in
And day out
Until no one is left to revenge

Save me
And my
Shadower

She would say 'tis I that wants to butcher you
Set ablaze the remains
Nay

Trust thine eyes, my congregation
Not mere words

I am content to watch thee tear one other apart

But she did hand him the knife
Did she not?

The sound of a hurried knock.

Beat.

The sounds again.

ATTICUS (O.S.)

Vermilla!

I need a confidence with thee.

SUN

A moment! Atticus.

She will be with thee anon.

Light disappears.

XXI. COUNTESS' ESTATE. NEERABOSI'S
ROOM - NIGHT III.

FRIEDE.

She sits, praying softly.

*Her words are audible, but whispers, not
loud enough to discern.*

The room door unlocks.

*NEERABOSI enters, holding a small
container of ointment.*

She locks the door again.

FRIEDE pays her no mind.

And NEERABOSI does not interrupt.

She just watches FRIEDE.

FRIEDE feels this.

After another few moments:

FRIEDE

If thou dost not mind, I would prefer not to be stared at.

NEERABOSI

Forgive me, your Highness. I have been tasked with watching you.

FRIEDE

And that means thou canst not lift thine eyes from me e'en for a moment?

NEERABOSI does not look away.

FRIEDE sighs, giving up.

FRIEDE

What dost thou want?

NEERABOSI

I want nothing, Your Grace. I am doing my task, nothing more.

FRIEDE

We will stare at one another all night, then?

NEERABOSI

If you would have it so?

Might I tend once more to your knee? I have with me an ointment that will help it heal.

FRIEDE

Do tell me, how am I supposed to believe anything you people say?

NEERABOSI

The ointment heals. Whether you believe me or no will not change that.

Beat.

*FRIEDE shifts and offers her leg to
NEERABOSI.*

NEERABOSI unwraps the bandage.

NEERABOSI

Ah.

Gideon has perfected his technique. Older guests have parted from him with wounds much greater. But your bleeding has already slowed.

FRIEDE

What a blessing.

NEERABOSI

If you let it heal without agitation, it might only leave the scar.

NEERABOSI readies the ointment.

This will sting a little.

NEERABOSI

Just do it.

FRIEDE

NEERABOSI begins to apply the ointment.

FRIEDE tenses, gritting her teeth.

She works through it.

Over the following, NEERABOSI tends further to FRIEDE, eventually rewrapping the bandages.

Beat.

Your prayers.

NEERABOSI

What of them?

FRIEDE

You pray with such stillness. So quiet. I could not make out your words.

NEERABOSI

Thou needst not. My prayers are between my God and me alone.

FRIEDE

The One God? Your people call him, yes?

NEERABOSI

Aye.

FRIEDE

How does he hear you if even I could not?

NEERABOSI

...

He doth. He knoweth our thoughts as they do enter our heads. I need not e'en speak aloud.

FRIEDE

It is so? Even mine?

NEERABOSI

Aye.

FRIEDE

But I do not believe in him.

NEERABOSI

FRIEDE

...

Your ointment heals, my God hears.

Beat.

NEERABOSI

In Igrath, we do not worship the One God.

My homeland teaches that we were made by the stars. As it is so, as a child I prayed to the lights in the heavens. They are so far from us. If we did not shout our prayers, if our pleas did not disrupt the air and traverse the vast distance between us, they would not be heard.

FRIEDE

If thou art going to pray this night, then I should ask thee to do it in another room.

NEERABOSI

(Chuckling)

...

I no longer pray. Not to any gods.

FRIEDE

Nay?

NEERABOSI

No matter the prayer, in my life's time, I have not seen one answered.

FRIEDE

Depends on the prayer.

NEERABOSI

Oh? And what has the One God done for you?

Allowed your father his disease? Filled you with recklessness, so that you waded into these lands? Given you unto Gideon, so that he did maim you? These are answered prayers?

FRIEDE

Depends on the prayer. Perchance they are tests.

NEERABOSI

But are they tests of your faith or your folly?

FRIEDE

Who are we to understand the mysteries of God?

NEERABOSI

Your Highness, this is why I do speak. One day, we shall all end. But gods are infinite. They care not for us. So I will swear no devotion to them. While I have what is mine, I will hold dear to it. And give myself to only what and whom I choose.

FRIEDE

Like thy Countess?

NEERABOSI

She answers prayers. Her goodness is real. With no meaning hidden beneath its words.

FRIEDE

And yet she keepeth me here against my will. You think she doth not fancy herself a god?

NEERABOSI

We are all equal here. She leads, but she does not command.

FRIEDE

You are doing her task.

Beat.

NEERABOSI

You have been here less than a sun's crossing. You will come to see.

FRIEDE

And if I do not? You will post whate'er remains as a warning on the road?

NEERABOSI

The path forward is your choice and yours alone. That is the goodness the Countess offers. She gives unto you the opportunity of rebirth.

FRIEDE

As what?

NEERABOSI

As whomever you desire. The person you have always wanted to be, but could not.

FRIEDE

I am the person I want to be.

NEERABOSI

No, you are not. For you have not abandoned anything. You strut about with the stain of your parents upon you. To be reborn is to first renounce their ways, the teachings of your culture. You cannot belong to yourself if you have never made the choice to do so.

You travel to Mithun to save your father, have you ever asked yourself if he is worth saving?

Do you believe in the legacy you fight to uphold? Or does the obedient child simply do as she is told?

The King of Rivka is not a good man.

FRIEDE

...

Neither is thy Countess.

NEERABOSI

Then decide that for yourself. Not because others have told you so.

FRIEDE

...

NEERABOSI

My mark is thus...

Your name may not be Rielle. But it could be.

She could be anything. And she would be free.

Beat.

FRIEDE

My decision now is that I would prefer silence to the foul soundings of thy voice.

NEERABOSI

That is well, Your Highness.

Whatever you wish.

Silence.

XXII. WOLCAIRN. A DINING HALL - DAY IV.

QUEEN WINFRID and LORENZ.

They break their fast with one another in silence.

LORENZ eats.

QUEEN WINFRID

It gladdens us to see thee eating, Lorenz.

LORENZ

I am feeling better.

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou doth look it. We can tell thou art rested.

LORENZ

Aye.

QUEEN WINFRID

Should it also be so, then? That thy thoughts bend not towards fears invented?

Beat.

LORENZ

I am as well as I can be, Mother. These are trying times.

QUEEN WINFRID

Aye. There is truth in that.

Silence.

ATTICUS swaggers in.

ATTICUS

Good morning, my family!

How are you all?

QUEEN WINFRID

'Tis a well morning.

LORENZ

...

ATTICUS

I, for one, slept most soundly.

And to awake to such a grand day as this?

How fortunate am I to be alive?

LORENZ

...

May I please be excused?

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou mayest.

LORENZ exits.

ATTICUS

Did I say something? What has gotten into him?

QUEEN WINFRID

Not e'eryone possesses thy penchant for optimism.

ATTICUS

No.

I shall after him, then. See if I might bring to his spirit some brighter humour.

QUEEN WINFRID

If that is thy wish. But do pay heed to thy words. He is more impressionable than thee.

ATTICUS

Younger brothers. Good day, Mother.

QUEEN WINFRID

Good day.

XXIII. WOLCAIRN. A HALL - DAY IV.

LORENZ.

Searching.

Worried.

He cannot find the target of his search.

ATTICUS enters.

LORENZ sees him and freezes.

ATTICUS

Brother. You gawk at me as if I were a ghost.

Art thou well?

LORENZ

Aye.

I am.

ATTICUS

Lorenz
You storm about the place in a fit
If a fear or malady doth plague thy mind
Thou mayest speak it to me.

LORENZ

I am well.

I am looking for a change of dress. I have in the Square some business. I would wear not this.

ATTICUS

Business?

LORENZ

Aye.

What manner of business? ATTICUS

... LORENZ

I have some of mine own. Perhaps I could join you.

Beat.

Out with it. LORENZ

What? ATTICUS

Torment me no further! Just say it. LORENZ

Say what? ATTICUS

... LORENZ

... LORENZ

What art thou speaking of? ATTICUS

... LORENZ

I--... ATTICUS

Thou shouldst say it. I want to hear it from thine own tongue.

... LORENZ

...Please. ATTICUS

Please what? ATTICUS

Shall I say it with thee? Would that make it easier?

I'm sorry. LORENZ

ATTICUS
For what? What art thou sorry for?

LORENZ
...

ATTICUS
For going to Vermilla and asking her to kill me?

LORENZ

...
(Nodding)

ATTICUS
Do not nod thy head, say it!

"I am sorry for going to Vermilla and asking her to kill me."

LORENZ
...I am sorry...

ATTICUS
Good. Keep going.

LORENZ
I am sorry for going to--

ATTICUS
"I am sorry, Atticus."

LORENZ
...

I am sorry, Atticus, for going to Vermilla and asking her to kill you.

Beat.

ATTICUS
There now, that wasn't so hard, was it?

LORENZ
(Fully weeping now)

...
ATTICUS

Thou art a blubbering jelly, brother.

In sooth, I have always known thee for a fool, but I never thought thou wert an imbecile. You quivering dunce, what thoughts went through thine empty head to think it a good idea? She is mine. I am hers. How is it my cock holds more wisdom than thy brain?

LORENZ

Please do not hurt me.

ATTICUS

Oh, I am.

I am going to hurt thee.

But I shall touch thee not. Lest any of thy filthy cowardice latch itself to me.

I think it fitting

Poetic

If you will

To serve thee what thou didst so uneloquently plan for me.

LORENZ

...

Please. I was not trying--

ATTICUS

Thou wert not! I know, thou wert just trying to protect thyself! Dost thou want to hear the irony?

I had no intentions of killing thee. Such a notion never bore fruit in my mind. I was fucking with thee. To scare thee.

It seems I did exceed my own expectations.

LORENZ

...

ATTICUS

'Tis good that I did. I tire of having a craven for a brother.

Tonight, at dinner, thou shalt drink thy little poisoned drink. And rid thyself from me.

LORENZ

Please.

ATTICUS

Well, thou leavest me no choice, dost thou? How am I to feel safe in mine own home?

LORENZ

I will do nothing!

ATTICUS

Aye. The drink will see to that.

LORENZ

...

ATTICUS

If thou dost not drink? If thou speakest of this to anyone?

Then thy servant bitch is as good as dead.

LORENZ

Whither is she?! What hast thou done to her?!

ATTICUS

Nothing. As of yet.

But if thou dost force my hand, I think I might skin her alive and have thee watch.

LORENZ

...

ATTICUS

Dost thou doubt me?

LORENZ

No.

ATTICUS

Good.

Beat.

LORENZ

Thou art a monster.

ATTICUS

We both are, sibling.

The difference is but I pretend not otherwise.

Do enjoy thy day.

ATTICUS exits.

LORENZ is left alone, with much (or little) thinking to be done.

XXIV. COUNTESS' ESTATE. ROOM OF REFLECTION - DAY IV.

COUNTESS ANKARET and SIGEBERT.

SIGEBERT sits in a chair off to the side.

COUNTESS ANKARET stands by a table and chair, drinking from a glass of wine.

Built into the table, closer to the chair, is a pillory with holes for wrists. In front of the pillory rests a large, metal sphere. It has one opening at its base, and a second on the side, where a tube is inserted. The tube runs off the table and across the floor into SIGEBERT'S hands.

A knock.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Enter!

NEERABOSI enters with FRIEDE in tow, now walking with the assistance of crutches.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Ah! Good.

NEERABOSI

My Lady.

COUNTESS ANKARET

I trust thou didst sleep well? Friede?

FRIEDE

Well enough.

Mine own bed is much softer.

COUNTESS ANKARET
(Chuckling)

...

(To NEERABOSI)

Skriet nabakar.

NEERABOSI nods and exits.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Hath she told thee the purpose of this time?

FRIEDE

Only 'twould be best if I did relieve myself beforehand.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Mmm. That can make the experience less pleasant.

Have a seat.

FRIEDE walks to the table and sits in the chair.

COUNTESS ANKARET

When I was a child...

I worked my father's farm. I tilled the land, baled hay, milked the cattle. I shepherded.

My parents were most loving. But they did misinterpret the grandeur of life. And they were quick to anger. They suffered no mistakes. Even though I might, I will presume no assumptions of thy upbringing. I assure thee, the mistakes one might make in the working of a farm? They are plentiful.

In our house, there was a section of floor where the boards to the earth did not fasten themselves. The space underneath was hollow, we kept herbs there, dried goods. And when occasion of my mistakes did make appearance, my father would store me there as well. "Time given unto thee, that thou mayest reflect upon thy actions." His words.

Hast thou ever been in the dark? An engulfing dark whither not even the wind can reach thee? The only sounds and feelings the skittering and nibbles of rats? My father was wrong about many things, but with enough time and dark, a person truly can reflect on everything. Time misbehaves, dost thou understand? The dark gives it this power, while taking thine own away. Time slows down. It learns patience. And no matter how much thou thinkest thou hast? Time has more.

(Opening the pillory)

Please.

Beat.

FRIEDE places her wrists in the pillory.

COUNTESS ANKARET

(Closing the pillory and locking it)

See it. So many of us know not who we truly are. I was so fortunate. For it was not until the dark that I did find my resolve.

I did not want to work a farm. I wanted to live in luxury. Drink wines and eat of meats and cheeses. I wanted to dress myself in fine silks and immaculate gowns. I did not want to be my father's child. I deserved more.

So one day, when my father released me, I took action towards those desires.

That is all we are doing here, Friede. Whatever thy wishes be, they shall be fulfilled.

FRIEDE

I have told thee my wishes. Again and again.

COUNTESS ANKARET

No. Thou hast told me the wishes of Friede Ægenwulf.

(Lifting the metal sphere)

We desire to know the wishes of the woman inside thee.

And for that, she must be given time to think.

COUNTESS ANKARET places the metal sphere over FRIEDE'S head and face.

FRIEDE tenses and screams, but there is nothing she might do.

COUNTESS ANKARET watches FRIEDE struggle and slowly settle.

COUNTESS ANKARET

There, there.

All shall be well.

FRIEDE

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

Sigebert. Deprive her not of life.

SIGEBERT lifts his end of the tube to his mouth and blows.

FRIEDE squirms in disgust.

COUNTESS ANKARET watches.

GIDEON enters, crossing to COUNTESS ANKARET.

He whispers into her ear.

COUNTESS ANKARET

...

See thyself about it.

GIDEON exits.

All light slowly fades.

XXV. ??? - DAY IV.

Complete darkness.

Complete silence.

Suddenly, sharp, anxious breaths.

FRIEDE'S attempt to calm herself.

Slowly, the breaths are joined by the chattering of rats.

The chorus of squeaking, scampering, and breath grows and grows until its unbearable.

It peaks.

And stops as FRIEDE screams.

Another scream.

Silence.

Unnatural light strikes FRIEDE, alone in the abyss, the pillory table and metal helm nowhere in sight.

She looks at her body.

Her surroundings.

Taking everything in.

Discordant notes/chimes.

The MOON appears.

MOON

Breathe as is custom.

You go too fast, you will lose yourself.

FRIEDE

Neerabosi?

MOON

...

FRIEDE

Nay.

Nay, it's you.

MOON

Quite the predicament in which you have found yourself.

FRIEDE

Art thou here to help me? Or speak at me?

MOON

No need to be rude, Princess. 'Tis clearly the latter. We are all weaker in this place.

FRIEDE

Then make known your intentions or leave me be.

MOON

Well, I cannot do that, can I?

Not until you are ready to listen.

FRIEDE

'Tis I who have asked the question!

'Tis thee that hath appeared before me!

I see you and your companion waking and dreamt
Wearing others' faces and manners
Be you witches or pagan gods
Or e'en the fevered conjurings of mine own mind
What are you?

No more riddles

I beg you, tell me wherefore you haunt me.

MOON

...

It is not we who haunt you, Friede.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE appears.

Beat.

MOON exits.

FRIEDE

(Yelling after her)

No. Come back here!

Return! I demand to know!

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

You already do.

FRIEDE

...

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

It does not matter what they be.

To them, we are but dolls.

FRIEDE

No.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Playthings in the loom of the giants. They did but nudge us together and so we met.

FRIEDE

Thou art dead.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Only in the world. In thy head, in thy marrow, thou shalt carry me for the rest of thy days. Thou didst ensure that.

FRIEDE

I did not make thee return.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

I did not make thee refuse the toll.

FRIEDE

Thou wert a bandit. A cutthroat.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Was I? Not the King the bandit? For instilling the cost of the road upon travelers?

FRIEDE

The King has reasons for what he enacts. If his laws were unjust, the people would say so.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

They do, you girl.

FRIEDE

They do not! They do not revolt.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Because the King snuffs them out. He is the King.

FRIEDE

But--

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

Just as thou didst me.

FRIEDE

...!

Like father, like daughter.

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE

...

FRIEDE

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE laughs.

Stop it.

FRIEDE

THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE laughs.

Stop laughing!

*THE MAN BEHIND THE FENCE laughs
louder.*

He is joined, once more, by ratsound.

*It builds and builds and chitters and
distorts to a peak.*

FRIEDE screams.

All light disappears.

Then all sound stops.

XXVI. COUNTESS' TERRITORY - DAY IV.

*GIDEON, armed with bow, arrows, and
sword.*

He stands alone, scanning the horizon.

*He spys the target of his search, and
nocks an arrow.*

He aims.

He does not release.

He stops aiming, but keeps his bow raised.

Beat.

*MÆRWYNN enters, her own bow raised,
now carrying FRIEDE'S sword.*

Beat.

Very well.

GIDEON

*He unnocks and tosses his bow and arrow
aside.*

With blades, then.

GIDEON

He removes his quiver and tosses it aside.

There is no need. You might let me pass.

MÆRWYNN

None who step over the border can forego an audience with her Grace.

GIDEON

And that is where the girl who carried this sword is?

MÆRWYNN

Where else? What is thy concern with her?

GIDEON

Unfinished business.

MÆRWYNN

Mmm.

GIDEON

'Tis a most fortunate day, then. It is finished now.

I have no wish to kill you.

MÆRWYNN

Nor I you.

GIDEON

But if you intend to pass and cause disruption in the House, I must prevent that.

Beat.

*MÆRWYNN tosses her bow and arrow
aside.*

Her quiver.

GIDEON pulls his sword.

Beat.

*MÆRWYNN pulls FRIEDE'S sword, as
well as her own dagger.*

Rielle and the Owl Hunter, Daniel Prillaman, 101.

They begin.

Fighting.

They pause, evenly matched.

They begin again.

Fighting.

They pause, evenly matched.

MÆRWYNN

This is a moment to reconsider.

Or we shall be at this for some time.

GIDEON slowly stalks forward and attacks.

MÆRWYNN parries.

Fighting.

Through dirty trick, skill, or a combination of both, GIDEON cuts MÆRWYNN.

They pause, for the moment, less evenly matched.

GIDEON

No, I do not think so.

XXVII. WOLCAIRN. A HALL - DAY IV.

QUEEN WINFRID and OTHSRYD, entering from another space.

QUEEN WINFRID

We thank you, good Othsryd.

OTHSRYD

The pleasure lies with me, your Highness. It is my honor.

QUEEN WINFRID

That shall be all.

OTHSRYD

(Bowling)

Your Grace.

From the other direction, LORENZ enters.

He and OTHSRYD make eye contact.

OTHSRYD exits.

LORENZ
(Going after her)

Wait!

QUEEN WINFRID

Lorenz.

LORENZ
(Stopping)

Aye, Mother?

QUEEN WINFRID

Art thou well?

LORENZ

Aye.

I but need to speak with Othsryd.

QUEEN WINFRID

...

'Tis well.

LORENZ

By your leave.

LORENZ turns to exit after OTHSRYD.

QUEEN WINFRID

Lorenz.

LORENZ stops again, but does not turn around.

QUEEN WINFRID

Remember that thy mind too often doth work against thee. All shall be well.

LORENZ

...

Aye, Mother.

LORENZ exits.

XXVIII. WOLCAIRN. ANOTHER HALL - DAY
IV.

OTHSRYD, hurrying away.

LORENZ enters after her.

LORENZ

Othsryd! wait!

She does not stop.

LORENZ

Please!

She does not stop.

LORENZ

I command thee to wait!

OTHSRYD

(Stopping)

Do you require my services, good Master?

LORENZ

...

No. I--

OTHSRYD

Then with respect, my good Master, I have nothing I wish to say to you.

By your leave.

LORENZ

No. I have something I must tell thee. Thou shalt listen.

OTHSRYD

What is it?

Beat.

LORENZ

You are right.

I am sorry. I should not have withheld my intentions from you. I should not have even embarked upon the path.

OTHSRYD

No. You should not have.

LORENZ

I am sorry.

OTHSRYD

...

That changes not what will happen.

LORENZ

I do not, um...I think not she shall go through with it.

OTHSRYD

No?

LORENZ

No.

OTHSRYD

Then she will tell Atticus.

LORENZ

Aye. She may.

OTHSRYD

He will not take that news well.

LORENZ

That is my burden to bear.

Do not concern thyself with such brotherly squabbles. In fact, thou shouldst take the night for thyself. Go about the Square.

OTHSRYD

...

I have my duties to attend.

LORENZ

Of course. Aye.

OTHSRYD

...

Are you well, Master?

LORENZ

(Laughing)

...

Everyone hath inquired that of me this day.

OTHSRYD

And are you?

LORENZ

...

Lorenz? OTHSRYD

Thou art a good woman. LORENZ

... OTHSRYD

LORENZ
I thank thee for thy counsel. Especially that that rebuketh my mistakes. There are many who would fear to speak up as you do.

Thank you. OTHSRYD

That will be all. LORENZ

Thou mayest see to thy duties.

OTHsRYD
(Bowing)
Master.

OTHsYRD exits.

LORENZ is left alone, with much (or little) thinking to be done.

All light disappears.

XXIX. ??? - DAY ???

FRIEDE enters, once more in unnatural light.

FRIEDE
How long have I been thus?

My thoughts rage in my head
And I feel naught but of the pain in my leg
And the bruising of my wrists
Spreading faster through me than the plague

How long have I been thus?

That man's breath
It tastes foul
Covers my face
And all my senses in heat and damp

How long have I been thus?

That woman is a devil
And this House her perdition

There is no escape

Wherefore am I here?

I ventured from my home to save my family
And have found myself cast from hell to hell for which I was not prepared

What have I done, Lord, to deserve such torment?!

...

...

Surely my father is dead

It is too late

I have failed.

*Unnatural light reveals the pillory table
and metal helm.*

*Seated at the table, but not in the pillory, a
bloody, wounded MÆRWYNN.*

Mærwynn.

FRIEDE

Such a queer one thou art.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

The answers thou seekest are as clear as glass.

MÆRWYNN

Shall I tell thee why thou art here?

FRIEDE

...

The decrees are against killing.

MÆRWYNN

I had no choice.

FRIEDE

MÆRWYNN

That matters not. You are a killer now, Friede. And a liar. Act not so stupefied. Thou art receiving what desserts all we killers deserve.

FRIEDE

Thou art not here.

MÆRWYNN

Aye. I am dead.

I did follow thee, and am here to suffer the same fate.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

Sit down.

FRIEDE

Please, no.

MÆRWYNN
(Perhaps amplified by
unnatural forces)

SIT DOWN!

Beat.

*FRIEDE crosses to the table and
MÆRWYNN stands.*

*MÆRWYNN forces FRIEDE to sit and
begins locking her in the pillory.*

FRIEDE

Please do not do this.

MÆRWYNN

If I wert thee, I should consider myself fortunate. Thou didst kill but one man. Think of the anguish that I shall endure. Or thy father.

FRIEDE

Please.

MÆRWYNN

Breathe, little Princess. There is still much ahead of thee.

FRIEDE

Nay.

MÆRWYNN

Shhhh.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN places the helm over FRIEDE'S head.

FRIEDE slumps in defeat.

MÆRWYNN admires her work.

The lights shift.

XXX. COUNTESS' ESTATE. ROOM OF REFLECTION - NIGHT IV.

MÆRWYNN shifts.

The room looks as before, SIGEBERT off to the side.

MÆRWYNN looks at the nightmarish contraption in awe and disgust.

Fuck me...

MÆRWYNN

SIGEBERT blows once more into his end of the tube.

MÆRWYNN scowls in disgust.

She removes the helm from FRIEDE and throws it across the room at SIGEBERT.

He squeals in surprised pain and terror and runs from the room (that can take the time it takes).

Rielle? Rielle, can you hear me?

MÆRWYNN

FRIEDE is unresponsive, save for her body's natural reaction to sudden light.

Rielle!

MÆRWYNN
(Lightly slapping her face)

FRIEDE
(Perhaps mumbling)

...

Oh my god.

MÆRWYNN

*MÆRWYNN attempts to undo the pillory,
but it is locked.*

Shit.

Where's the key?

FRIEDE

...

Rielle?

Rielle?!

FRIEDE
(Mumbling)

...

Where is the key?

FRIEDE

You're dead.

MÆRWYNN

What? No, I'm not. But we both will be if we don't get out of here.

FRIEDE
(Coming to)

...

Mærwynn!

MÆRWYNN

You awake now?

FRIEDE

You came for me?

MÆRWYNN

Of course I did. So I could kill you myself! Right now, we have to get the fuck out of here. Where is the key?

FRIEDE

...

I have it not.

MÆRWYNN

Clearly.

COUNTESS ANKARET and NEERABOSI enter, flanked by a whining SIGEBERT.

MÆRWYNN twirls and draws FRIEDE'S sword.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Good evening. This is a most unexpected surprise.

I would welcome you, stranger, but it seems thou hast already made thyself at home.

MÆRWYNN

Aye. Well, I have heard of the wonders of your hospitality. I figured you would not mind.

COUNTESS ANKARET

(Laughing)

...

I allow most anything, but I must insist thou disturbest not the young girl's training. Do you two know one another?

MÆRWYNN

Well enough.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Well enough? Thou art whom, then? The Princess' bodyguard?

MÆRWYNN

Princess?

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Aye. The Princess of Rivka.

MÆRWYNN

...

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

Art thou sure thou knowest one another?

MÆRWYNN

Whoever she is. We shall kindly take our leave. If you would hand me over the key to this pillory.

COUNTESS ANKARET

And wherefore would I do that?

MÆRWYNN

Because I have no wish to kill you. But if I must, I will.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Like thou didst kill my servant?

MÆRWYNN

He killed my horse.

COUNTESS ANKARET

That doth not precisely balance the scales.

MÆRWYNN

I offered him the opportunity to stand down. He chose not to.

Will you do the same?

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

What is your name, stranger?

MÆRWYNN

My name matters nothing. You shan't ever see me again.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET stalks forward.

MÆRWYNN readies FRIEDE'S blade, but the COUNTESS stops right at the tip.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Friede?

Shouldst thou like to leave my estate with this woman?

FRIEDE

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

...

FRIEDE

I would love nothing more.

Beat.

Rielle and the Owl Hunter, Daniel Prillaman, 112.

COUNTESS ANKARET removes the pillory key from her clothing.

She walks over to the pillory and releases FRIEDE.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Neerabosi.

NEERABOSI fetches FRIEDE'S crutches and brings them to her.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Then you shall.

As long as it is your decision alone.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

...

COUNTESS ANKARET

I wish you fortune in your errand, Princess.

Go on.

FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN head to exit.

COUNTESS ANKARET

Thou art mistaken, however, Stranger, on one account.

MÆRWYNN

And what is that?

COUNTESS ANKARET

Although I know not the circumstances, I do sense that we shall meet again.

'Twill be another surprise.

Beat.

FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN exit.

Beat.

COUNTESS ANKARET
(To NEERABOSI)

Follow them.

They do not pass the border.

NEERABOSI bows and exits.

*COUNTESS ANKARET picks up the metal
helm and returns it to the pillory table.*

*SIGEBERT crawls to her and hugs her
legs.*

She pats his head.

XXXI. WOLCAIRN. A DINING HALL - NIGHT
IV.

QUEEN WINFRID and ATTICUS.

Dinner is ready.

QUEEN WINFRID

Hast thou seen thy brother?

ATTICUS

Not since midday, dearest Mother. I wonder whither he should be?

Do you think I should I call for him?

LORENZ enters.

LORENZ

No need. I am here.

Forgive me my delay. I became lost in my thoughts.

ATTICUS

Art thou well, dear brother?

LORENZ

Aye. I am. And thee?

ATTICUS

I am most well. Thank thee.

QUEEN WINFRID

We shall lead us now in prayer.

ATTICUS

May I, Mother? I feel called upon this eve.

QUEEN WINFRID

Of course.

Heads are bowed.

ATTICUS

Dear Lord

As we do seat ourselves at this table
Let us forget not that these are simple moments

A sip of wine
The breaking of bread
To be amongst family in these
Seconds all too brief
Is something not us guaranteed

LORENZ looks up.

*Over the following, he looks at ATTICUS,
his cup, and his own poisoned cup.*

He could switch them.

The opportunity is right here.

He considers it.

ATTICUS

Help us cherish these times
Take them not for granted
But remember them as flashes of peace and sanctity
Rare in these eras of uncertainty and strife

We thank thee for them
May we hold them dear to our hearts

Amen.

LORENZ/QUEEN WINFRID

Amen.

The opportunity is gone.

QUEEN WINFRID

Well spoken.

Beat.

LORENZ

May I add something?

ATTICUS

What?

LORENZ

...

A toast.

*LORENZ raises his cup, fully aware it is
poisoned.*

LORENZ

These moments are rare
They should be cherished
As Death, in his eternal game of chance, may surprise us all

But we cannot fear him
Or what He might do

Someone dear to me once said that "fear
Is rational"

And what greater fear is there
Than suddenly ending?
Losing all that you hold affection for?
All whom you love?

But the Lord is Death!
Wearing but another face
All must one day meet their end
And at that time may we not fear
But greet the Lord with a vast smile upon our face
With bravery
And the knowledge that in the end, we did choose to do what is right
And honorable
Despite what things we could have done
And the paths we might have tread

To family!
To honor!

To Friede.

LORENZ drinks.

ATTICUS

Here here!

Well spoken, brother.

ATTICUS drinks.

QUEEN WINFRID

Aye. Lorenz. Well spoken, indeed.

Thank you.

LORENZ

Let us eat.

XXXII. COUNTESS' TERRITORY - NIGHT IV.

FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN, hurrying.

FRIEDE is tired.

A moment!

FRIEDE

You need a moment?

MÆRWYNN

Just a moment.

FRIEDE

Aye. We might rest a moment.

MÆRWYNN

They stop.

MÆRWYNN turns and punches FRIEDE in the face.

She goes down.

MÆRWYNN screams at FRIEDE in fury.

Beat.

YOU FUCKING CUNT!

MÆRWYNN

Beat.

MÆRWYNN sits on (or plops to) the ground, her energy spent.

All she can do is laugh.

FRIEDE slowly gathers herself and sits up.

Beat.

You're the goddamn princess?

MÆRWYNN

FRIEDE

...

I am.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

And you elected to keep that information to yourself why, exactly?

FRIEDE

Would it have made a difference?

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

Oh my god.

Did you tell me complete fabrications? Or is the king actually dying?

FRIEDE

He is.

MÆRWYNN

...

What have you pulled me into?

FRIEDE

For what it might be worth. Thou wert not my ideal companion either.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

Forgive me my lies. But thou must see that I live.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

Thy service will be rewarded beyond--

MÆRWYNN

Silence thy wretched face, girl.

My feelings matter nothing. Our fates are twined together now. You have seen to that.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

How bad is the leg?

FRIEDE

I'll manage.

Beat.

The MOON enters, holding a spear.

She just watches the women.

MÆRWYNN stands and removes the dagger from her person.

She hands it to FRIEDE.

MÆRWYNN

Here. I'll hold onto your sword for now.

FRIEDE takes it.

MÆRWYNN

You should stay as unencumbered as you can.

MÆRWYNN offers her hand to FRIEDE.

FRIEDE takes it, and MÆRWYNN helps her stand.

MÆRWYNN

And as a matter of note...the next time I say we go around, the next time I say anything. You fucking do it.

God only knows how much time you've added to this trek. I should punch you again, you got a good horse killed.

FRIEDE

I'll buy you another.

MÆRWYNN

Sure.

FRIEDE

...

MÆRWYNN

You ready?

Aye. Let's go.

FRIEDE

A moment more. If you would.

MOON

*FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN turn towards
the MOON, MÆRWYNN drawing
FRIEDE'S sword.*

You?

FRIEDE

The MOON becomes NEERABOSI.

She now brandishes the spear.

Me.

NEERABOSI

No.

FRIEDE

Oh, come on!

MÆRWYNN

My sorrows I express to you both. But you cannot pass the border.

NEERABOSI

Fie!

MÆRWYNN

It is not safe.

NEERABOSI

Yet you hold the spear. If this is your choice, then let us finish it.

MÆRWYNN

...But it is not my wish to hurt you.

NEERABOSI

I cannot say the same.

MÆRWYNN

...

NEERABOSI

Stand back, Friede.

MÆRWYNN
(To FRIEDE)

NEERABOSI attacks and the fight begins.

MÆRWYNN defends.

It is wild, beautiful, and remarkable.

A pause.

You are quite skilled.

NEERABOSI

It is not too late to turn away.

MÆRWYNN

No. It is not. Will you?

NEERABOSI

The fight resumes.

FRIEDE watches, tense.

She has to move further away to avoid being struck by the two dueling women.

MÆRWYNN gains the upper hand.

But only for a moment.

Another pause.

The way you move. You strike with passion and precision. As does the Owl Hunter.

NEERABOSI

What does it matter?

MÆRWYNN

If I am right? Everything.

NEERABOSI

NEERABOSI attacks.

MÆRWYNN defends.

The assassin is trained to strike true. But once.

NEERABOSI

The snake's advantage lies in his surprise.

It means, compared to a former Igrathi general, you have less stamina.

The fight continues.

But MÆRWYNN is tiring.

NEERABOSI

It means, no matter your skill, sooner or later, you will be the first to make a mistake.

MÆRWYNN does.

NEERABOSI takes advantage.

She cuts MÆRWYNN.

She disarms her.

MÆRWYNN falls to the ground.

*NEERABOSI closes in, spear pointed at
MÆRWYNN'S neck.*

NEERABOSI

Do not dismay. You have lasted longer than many.

Do you still refuse?

STOP!

FRIEDE

NEERABOSI does.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

If I return with you. You will let her live?

MÆRWYNN

No--

FRIEDE

Quiet, Mærwynn.

MÆRWYNN

...

FRIEDE

Well?

NEERABOSI

I regret to say you both must come alive. There is too much past these lands. It is only safe for the dead to leave.

Beat.

FRIEDE

Then we will both come.

Friede! MÆRWYNN

Mærwynn! FRIEDE

We will come.

Beat.

I am glad to hear this. NEERABOSI

Just put down the spear. FRIEDE

No. I will hold onto it. NEERABOSI

... FRIEDE

Fine.

Then at least help her up.

I can get up myself. MÆRWYNN

NO. FRIEDE

(Coming forward, right to
NEERABOSI)
Thou didst start this fight, thou wilt help her up.

*NEERABOSI smiles and offers her hand to
MÆRWYNN.*

Beat.

MÆRWYNN takes it.

*NEERABOSI helps MÆRWYNN to her
feet.*

*In the middle of the movement,
NEERABOSI'S strength shifted towards
pulling MÆRWYNN up, FRIEDE pulls the
dagger and stabs NEERABOSI in a vital
spot.*

Blood.

NEERABOSI gasps.

All three of them probably fall back to the ground in some measure.

NEERABOSI slowly passes.

Long silence.

Art thou well?

FRIEDE

...

I'll manage.

MÆRWYNN

Beat.

You killed her.

MÆRWYNN

I did.

FRIEDE

...

I think have I grown more.

FRIEDE

In my understanding of you. And the nature of all this.

I will grieve appropriately. But I will not be haunted by this act.

Let's go.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN grunts and stands.

She'll manage.

She, once again, offers a hand to FRIEDE.

FRIEDE, once again, takes it, and MÆRWYNN helps her stand.

They make their way forward.

Behind them, NEERABOSI stands up.

She becomes the MOON.

Well done, Princess.

MOON

FRIEDE turns back, while MÆRWYNN does not.

The MOON blows FRIEDE a kiss.

She walks back, then turns away, and exits.

MÆRWYNN notices FRIEDE has stopped.

You well?

MÆRWYNN

Aye. Forgive me.

FRIEDE

XXXIII. WOLCAIRN. LORENZ' ROOM - DAY V.

LORENZ, lying still.

Silence, save for the morning sounds of the Capital.

LORENZ wakes.

He realizes that he has waked.

He marvels that he has waked.

He does not understand.

QUEEN WINFRID enters.

Thou art awake.

QUEEN WINFRID

...

LORENZ

Aye.

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou art surprised.

LORENZ

Nay, I am--

QUEEN WINFRID

Lorenz. Did we not tell thee that if thy brother proved a threat to this family, we would attend to such a course?

LORENZ

...

But...how? I--

QUEEN WINFRID

We switched your cups before dinner.

LORENZ

Then that means...

QUEEN WINFRID

Aye. He is dead.

LORENZ

What?

QUEEN WINFRID

Keep thy composure. Thou wilt listen to us now, for we shall speak of this only once.

Thy brother was weak. With the confidence of a great fool. He is dead because no matter his path he would bring about the end of our family's line. Thou shalt not blame thyself for thy part in his downfall. His fate was sealed before thou didst set foot in that brothel.

LORENZ

How did you know?

QUEEN WINFRID

My son. We are thy mother and thy queen. We know everything.

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

In sooth, it is most fortunate thou didst. Our own machinations for Atticus' undoing were... delayed. If not for thee taking matters into thine own hands, such a graceful opportunity would ne'er have presented itself.

We are proud of thee, son. Thou hast shown such bravery.

LORENZ

...I--

QUEEN WINFRID

But there is still much thou must learn. Thou mistakest too costly to bring his whore into this web. She must be dealt with.

LORENZ

Wait. You mean--

QUEEN WINFRID

Precisely. Stayeth silent she will not. At the very least, we must remove her from the streets.

LORENZ

...

QUEEN WINFRID

Let this be a lesson to thee. E'ery course of action, small or large, will dictate another. Thou must foresee each and e'ery one thou might.

Thou art now thy father's heir. And should Friede fail, quite soon thou shalt be King.

LORENZ

...

...

QUEEN WINFRID

Thou art affected.

We concede this is much to learn at one time
But let not thy mind become a deluge of rabid thought
Focus thy intentions.

LORENZ

...!

Oh god.

QUEEN WINFRID

Indeed.

Mourn how thou wishest, dear boy
But with haste

We have work to do.

QUEEN WINFRID turns to exit.

LORENZ

Othsryd!

QUEEN WINFRID
(Turning around)

...

LORENZ

Othsryd knew too. She...

You will not hurt her? Will you?

Beat.

QUEEN WINFRID

Worry not, my son.

QUEEN WINFRID exits.

*LORENZ is left alone, with too much
thinking to be done.*

XXXIV. THE RIVKAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT
V.

Music.

SUN and MOON enter.

*They dance the song of their eternal
romance, never touching.*

It ends.

*FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN enter, walking
towards the SUN.*

MÆRWYNN stops.

MÆRWYNN

Here.

FRIEDE
(Stopping and turning)

...

A little further.

MÆRWYNN

No. We need to rest. We sleep here.

MÆRWYNN sits.

FRIEDE reluctantly follows suit.

Silence.

FRIEDE

How many people hast thou killed?

What?
MÆRWYNN

FRIEDE
Thou didst say thou rememberest them all. How many?

MÆRWYNN
...
Two and sixty.

FRIEDE
...

MÆRWYNN
No.
Three and sixty.

FRIEDE
...

I am truly sorry I have brought you into this. But I am most thankful for your company.
Thank you for saving me.

MÆRWYNN
Let's try and ensure that's the last time, aye?

FRIEDE
Aye.

Beat.

MÆRWYNN
Besides.

I'm more sorry than you are.

They chuckle.

Silence.

MÆRWYNN
Tomorrow morning, we should reach the borders of Gonærik.

FRIEDE
Aye.

MÆRWYNN
Unless much has changed since my last visit, there is still a great deal of plague to be found there.

FRIEDE

...

Aye. I have heard the same.

I have heard also that my father is not thought of as highly of in Gonærík.

MÆRWYNN

No. We will need to watch ourselves carefully.

FRIEDE

I have been thinking on those points.

And concluded that it would perhaps be best, for now, if any should inquire, that I remain Rielle.

MÆRWYNN

Aye. 'Tis a fair thought.

Beat.

FRIEDE

Can I ask of thee another thing?

MÆRWYNN

Never stopped you before.

FRIEDE

I am thinking, for the first time, on my father's reputation. I must ask...

In your eyes, is the King cruel? Or just? Is he a man fit for the title?

Beat.

MÆRWYNN

No.

But what man is?

FRIEDE

...

I wonder.

Beat.

The SUN exits, slowly taking the light of day with her.

The wilds awaken.

FRIEDE and MÆRWYNN lie themselves to sleep.

Rielle and the Owl Hunter, Daniel Prillaman, 130.

*The night light slowly fades, save for
around the MOON.*

Beat.

*The MOON snaps her fingers and her
light disappears.*

Darkness.

Perhaps, softly, the chittering of rats.

END OF PLAY.

APPENDIX - THE MASKED FIGURE:

The Masked Figure is Queen Winfrid. Again, they may be played by the actor portraying Queen Winfrid or not. It is up to the producing company.