

"A Knight's Tale"

written by
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"And at a Knight I therefore will begin."

-- Geoff Chaucer
prologue, The Canterbury Tales

OVER A BLACK SCREEN:

A fanfare of horns. The cheer of a crowd swells and then releases. We hear familiar rhythmic stomping in the stands. Queen and the voice of Freddy Mercury:

*Buddy you're a boy make a big
noise playing in the streets
gonna be a big man someday...*

As "We Will Rock You" continues and opening credits roll:

FADE IN ON:

WILLIAM THATCHER. With a full beard and shoulder length hair, he stands looking down at something. With disgust, a ragged piece of linen shoved up either nostril. We hear the sound of some wet excretion accompanied by moaning.

William wears a squire's houppelande with dagged edging, the breast bears the heraldic badge of his lord: a leaping white stag. Plated shin guards are his only armor. Proud William wants his life to be more than it was preordained to be. Right now, it's less.

INSERT: Tournament grounds. Flanders. 1370 AD.

Another moist flapping sound. As William lets out a deep sigh, he's joined by ROLAND. A varlet, Roland also wears the white stag on his tunic. Hulking Roland, with his soft heart. He looks down where William is looking.

ROLAND
Should we help him?

WILLIAM
He asked not to be molested. Not even should the trumpets blow and the rapture occur.

Roland looks up toward the heavens. A trumpet blows, but it's not from up there. Another moan as well.

WILLIAM
Besides, I wouldn't touch him now with St. Dunstan's tongs.

Roland winces at another dank effluvium.

ROLAND
I know that mercy resides in the bowels, but this is more grace than a man should possess.

There's a long shuddering moan and then silence.

WILLIAM

He has to be in the lists in two minutes. Two minutes or forfeit.

ROLAND

(re: nostril linens)

Lend us those.

William pulls the linen strips from his nostrils, hands them to Roland who shoves them up his own. Moving forward:

Roland kneels behind a bush beside a prone SIR ECTOR. In his mail hauberk, plate armor and white stag insignia on his surcoat, Sir Ector is...

ROLAND

Dead.

A second varlet arrives. WAT. A 135 pound powderkeg, Wat personifies the medieval saying: "It's not the size of the cock in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the cock."

WAT

(cheery)

Two scores to none after two lances. All Sir Ector needs to do is not fall off his horse and we've won.

ROLAND

He's dead.

WAT

What do you mean dead?

ROLAND

The spark of his life is smothered in shite. His spirit has left him, but his stench remains. Does that explain it?

WAT

No. He sleeps. Rouse him.

Roland shakes his head. Wat's good cheer withers, dies on the vine. His grape not destined for wine but for raisin.

WAT

We're minutes from victory. I haven't eaten in three days!

WILLIAM

None of us have, Wat.

WAT

Sir Ector has or where would all
of this shite've come from?!

Tsk-tsking, Roland joins the others.

ROLAND

We need to fetch a priest.

WAT

He's not dead; he's asleep and
I'll wake him if I have to fong
him in the hole of his arse!

In a fury, Wat stumbles over, starts to kick Sir Ector.

Roland sighs, but William looks grim, full of resolve.

From a distance, the KING-OF-ARMS, a major tournament
official, approaches.

KING-OF-ARMS

Hoy, squire!

William turns, keeping his body between the king-of-arms
and Sir Ector and his bush.

KING-OF-ARMS

Sir Ector must report at once or
forfeit the match.

Roland starts to point to the body. William grabs his arm.

WILLIAM

He's on his way!

As the king-of-arms moves off...

WILLIAM

Strip his armor. I'm riding in
his place.

(moves forward; to Wat)

Stop kicking him and help me!

Incredulous, Roland watches as William starts to take off
Ector's armor. Wat helps him.

ROLAND

What's your name, William?

(no answer)

I'm asking you, William Thatcher,
to answer me with your name!

William stares at Roland, dumbfounded.

ROLAND

It's not Sir William. It's not Duke or Count or Earl William and it's certainly not King William!

WILLIAM

I'm aware of that.

ROLAND

You have to be of noble birth to compete!

WILLIAM

A detail. The landscape is food. Do you want to eat or don't you?

ROLAND

If the nobles realize who you are there'll be the devil to pay.

WILLIAM

Then pray that they don't.

William takes Sir Ector's helmet, pulls it down over his own head. Roland finally starts to laugh.

ROLAND

God love you, William. No one else will.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - DAY

The king-of-arms, the NOBLES in the grandstands, the crowd of townsfolk standing in the wings, all wait impatiently. The tourney host, a DUKE, sits with his LADY in a box above the lists: a jousting field nearly a hundred yards long. A wooden four foot barrier separates two well-trodden runs.

At the end of one waits a KNIGHT in armor with his SQUIRE and VARLETS. They all wear their 'team uniform,' a lion passant: a lion walking with right forepaw raised.

The squire steadies on end the knight's LANCE, twelve feet long with a cupped shield to protect the hand and arm at one end. The sharp point is studded with a three point iron coronal, making the lance non-lethal for competition.

The impatience of all assembled eases as 'Sir Ector' rides toward his end of the list. His varlets Wat and Roland run alongside, Roland bearing a lance across his shoulders.

They're met by the timid white stag team herald - EUSTACE.

EUSTACE
Where's William?

ROLAND
Don't let it trouble you.

Trumpeters stand, play a martial flourish on their horns.
The king-of-arms steps forward, announces:

KING-OF-ARMS
The score stands at two lances to
none in favor of Sir Ector,
second son of Henry Earl of
Surrey, liege knight to Duke
Robert of Essex... Lord Philip
of Aragon, first son of Prince
Philip of Aragon, stand ye ready?

The lion knight nods, lowers the visor on his helmet.

WILLIAM

Through the slit of his visor he takes it all in. Banners,
knights and pageantry. And suddenly we're on...

LONDON BRIDGE

Over the muddy Thames. As it was in its day lined with 136
shops with dwellings above them.

A 10-year-old BOY runs along behind a crowd watching a
procession go by. What it is we cannot tell, and every
time the boy tries to squeeze in to see, he's shoved back.

MAN'S VOICE
William! Here!

The boy William rushes up to a stout looking man. His
FATHER. He scoops the boy up, stands him on the rump of a
HORSE. The boy now has a view of the procession: A parade
of resplendent KNIGHTS and their SQUIRES, arriving in
London for tournament. Armor gleams, war horses tip the
scales at 2000 pounds. William's eyes shine.

WILLIAM
Someday I'll be a knight.

The TOOTHLESS MAN on the horse looks back, cackles.

TOOTHLESS
The son of a thatcher? A
knight? You might as well try
to change the stars.

It's like a slap in the face, little William looks down at his father for reassurance.

WILLIAM

Can it be done, father? Can a man change his stars?

FATHER

Yes, William. If he believes enough, a man can do anything.

It's like a promise. And as William smiles at his father:

RETURN TO:

EXT. LISTS - DAY

Roland punches the daydreaming William in the thigh as:

KING-OF-ARMS

(exasperated)

Sir Ector, stand ye ready or no?

William nods, takes his lance from Roland. Wat helps William to get the shaft of the lance into a U-shaped cradle bolted to the right side of his breastplate.

EUSTACE

(realizing)

Where's Sir Ector?

ROLAND

Don't let it trouble you.

WAT

Ready?

WILLIAM

Of course. I've tilted against Sir Ector many times.

WAT

In the practice lists. As his target. You were never allowed to strike him.

WILLIAM

Badger me not with details!

ROLAND

The landscape then. Stay on the horse. He needs three points to beat you. A broken lance will not win it for him.

WILLIAM
I know how to score!

EUSTACE
What's... happening?

They step back from him. He stares down across at his foe.

WILLIAM
And I've waited my whole life
for this moment.

WAT
You waited your whole life for
Sir Ector to shite himself to
death?

WILLIAM
Get into position.

Wat and Roland trot to the center of the list. Point of impact. The lion knight's varlets wait on the other side. They smile across the barrier, nod at their counterparts.

WAT
Abandon those smiles or I'll
fong you in the holes of your
arses till you're both dead.

As their smiles fade...

BOX SEATS

A PURSUIVANT raises the Duke's banner. The crowd is filled with anticipation as the banner comes down.

LION KNIGHT

Urges his big horse forward, lance pointed 45° skyward. His squire runs along behind him.

WILLIAM'S HORSE

Rears up. A moment to master him and William is on his way. But the shaft of the lance is jarred free of the cradle. William tries to remedy this as he rides.

LIST

The crowd begins to rise as 1000's of pounds of flesh and force hurtle toward each other. As impact approaches:

The lion knight lowers his lance level, aims it at:

William. His lance finally drops into the cradle. But as William looks up...

CRACK! The coronal of the lion knight's lance strikes him flush on the helmet just below the eye slit.

The lance splinters, shatters under the impact. It knocks:

William senseless. He drops his own lance along with the reins of his horse. It's only the high back of his saddle that keeps him from tumbling backwards off the horse.

But it looks like he'll pitch off the side. Finally, he ends up across the horse's neck, but still in the saddle.

WAT

We've done it! We've won!

Roland brings the horse under control. The face of the helmet is noticeably dented. Roland whispers:

ROLAND

William, are you alive?

WILLIAM

I think my face is broken...

INT. PAVILION - TOURNAMENT GROUNDS - DAY

A feast is about to get underway. The Duke stands before the assembled guests. Beside him, his lady stands holding a velvet pillow on which rests a GOLD PEACOCK FEATHER.

Across from them William, still in his armor. Wat, Eustace and Roland wait a few steps behind.

DUKE

Sir Ector, receive your prize.

William steps forward. The Duke frowns.

DUKE

Sir Ector. Remove your helmet.

Roland and Wat exchange a look of dread, begin to edge back.

WILLIAM

My lord, I'm afraid the final blow of the lance has bent it onto my head.

The Duke nods, understands. As the Duke hands William his feather, Roland gives Wat a nudge and a smile.

DUKE

I present your champion!

Polite, not overwhelming applause. And as the Duke starts to catch the miasmatic odor wafting off William's armor.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAVILION - DAY

William exits, flanked by Roland, Eustace and Wat who carries the feather. Roland chuckles.

ROLAND

"The final blow bent it onto my head." Brilliant, William.

William stops short, struggles mightily with the helmet.

WILLIAM

It's the truth! I'm suffocating under here!

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

Wat, Eustace and Roland wince at the sound of each hammer strike. Stripped of his armor, but still wearing the helmet, William is bent over, his head on the anvil as a SMITH brings a hammer down on it. CLANG! CLANK!

ROLAND

I'm not sure this is what King Arthur had in mind.

WILLIAM - INSIDE HELMET

His nose flattened against the side. Each hammer strike shivers the metal. Like being trapped inside a bell.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CROSSROADS - SUNSET

Eustace, Wat and William wait as Roland does business with a medieval FENCE who examines the feather. William's nose is swollen. In b.g. a BODY in chains twists from a gibbet. Finally, Roland receives a clinking pouch. Waving goodbye to the fence, he joins his two compatriots. Laughing, he dumps a palmful of small gold coins into his hand.

ROLAND

Twenty gold florins.

(handing them out)

Five for William, five for Wat,
five for Eustace and five for
Roland who's going straight home
to England.

As William stares at the five gold florins in his palm:

WAT

It's straight to the pub for me:
eel pie, brie tarts and tansy
cakes with peppermint cream.

William's seen the future there in his hand. He looks up.

WILLIAM

We can do this.

ROLAND

Do it? We've done it, boy!
That's gold in your hand.

WILLIAM

I mean we can do this. We can be
champions... Give me your coins.

Wat, Eustace and Roland hesitate, exchange a look.

WILLIAM

Give them to me.

Wat and Roland hand over their florins. Eustace will not.

EUSTACE

Whatever your scheme, I'm not
interested! I've had it with the
hunger! With all the big plans!
Sir Ector's! Yours! No more!

(clutching coins)

I have my own plans now. Good
bye and good luck.

Eustace turns, starts off. William looks to Wat and Roland.

WILLIAM

Will you hear me or will you
march?

ROLAND

You have our money, don't you?

William smiles. That's right. He sets the remaining
fifteen gold pieces on the ground, gives one to Roland.

WILLIAM

That's one for you. And one...
(to Wat)

For you. That leaves thirteen.
Thirteen for training and out-
fitting. The tournament at Rouen
is a month from now. In one month
we could split a prize bigger than
this one. In one month we could
be on our way to glory and riches
none of us ever dreamed of.

ROLAND

I don't want glory and riches,
William, I want to go home.

WAT

Tansy cakes with peppermint
cream. Dilled veal balls with
ginger and squash fritters.
I'll take my five now.

William stares at them, boring in the guilt.

ROLAND

But you can't even joust.

WILLIAM

Most of it is the guts to take a
blow in order to strike one.
That I have. And technique? I
have a month to learn that.

ROLAND

You're not of noble birth!

WILLIAM

So we lie! How did the nobles
become noble in the first place?
They took it. At the point of a
sword. I'll do it with a lance.

WAT

A blunted lance.

WILLIAM

No matter! A man can change his
stars. I won't spend the rest
of my life as nothing.

Roland points up at the corpse hanging from the gibbets.

ROLAND

That is nothing. And nothing is
right where glory will take us.

WAT

We're the sons of peasants. Glory
and riches and stars are out of
our reach But a full stomach...
That dream can come true.

Resigned, indignant, William gives them each four florins
more to make them both whole at five.

WILLIAM

Goodbye and good luck.

ROLAND

William...

WILLIAM

Goodbye. Good luck.

With a sigh and a shrug, Wat and William turn their backs
and start down south away from the crossroads. Hold on
William, the hanged man behind him, watching them go.

WILLIAM

(under his breath)

You will not leave me. Your
hearts are too big to walk away.

Wat and Roland walk. Finally they stop and look back. Wat
looks pissed. So does Roland. Finally he shouts back:

ROLAND

Well, thirteen is a damned
unlucky number! Thirteen sat at
the Last Supper and we all know
how that turned out!

William smiles; they're in. He takes one gold florin,
reaches up for the dead man's hand. He slaps the coin in
the corpse's palm, closes the stiff fingers around it.

WILLIAM

Twelve it is then!

With a huge grin, William hurries forward to his friends.
As he puts his arms around their shoulders...

ROLAND

God love you, William...

WILLIAM

(laughing)

I know, I know, no one else will.

As "Low Rider" by War begins, so does the Training Montage.

THE QUINTAIN

A swiveling, 'T-armed' wooden post. One arm holds a wooden shield, from the other hangs a heavy sack of sand.

As William, stripped of armor, rides through, his lance strikes the shield. But his horse hitches in stride and as the quintain swings around, the sack of sand strikes him in the back of the head. As he pitches off the horse...

WAT & WILLIAM

Looming over him. William blinking up.

WILLIAM

Again?

ROLAND

Glory and riches, William. Again.

QUINTAIN

William's lance misses. As his outside shoulder slams into the shield, the sack of sand swings into the back of his head. He's got it coming and going.

ROPED OFF RING

William uses a wooden sword to fight Roland also armed with a wooden sword. Wat is behind William holding a third wooden sword.

WAT

Switch!

William spins, starts sparring fiercely with Wat. Roland wipes the sweat from his brow, catches his breath. William is fierce, obviously accomplished with sword play.

ROLAND

Switch!

William turns just in time to block Roland who's on him in an instant. As Wat catches his breath...

A BRASS RING

Hanging in the air from a string. William rides past, aiming the lance at it, misses by a mile. A series of quick cuts as he misses half a dozen times.

ROLAND
Slow down! Speed kills accuracy!

THE RING

Snapping off its string as the tip of the lance plucks it from the air. William smiles at the ring at the end of his lance. He looks back over his shoulder at Wat and Roland.

WILLIAM
I did it! I did it --

Not looking where he's going, William rides into a low hanging branch. WHUMP! It sweeps him from the horse.

WILLIAM

Lying on his back, his wind knocked out. He looks to his left, sees Roland and Wat running toward him. As he holds up his hand to be helped, they run past him. To the horse. It's right foreleg obviously tender. Roland examines it as Wat steadies the big beast.

ROLAND
Lame. He'll need a week.
(to William)
Watch where you're going, you
goddamn fool!

As William drops his waiting arm back down...

WILLIAM

Lance in hand, headed at the quintain. Only, he's sits on a saddle mounted to the top of a HAY CART. Wat and Roland run ahead, pulling the cart with ropes. William smiles.

WILLIAM
Faster! Faster!

Roland and Wat want to kill him. As they churn faster:

HILLSIDE

Silhouetted, Wat and Roland pulling William and the cart as fast as they can. TWO passing MONKS stop to watch them.

MONK ONE
Mon dieu... Those fellows work
hard to get to Hell.

CAMPFIRE

As our trio chew on the remains of dinner, William draws in the dirt with a stick. The outline of a banner.

WILLIAM

We need a banner. Our emblem.
I was thinking of a phoenix.

ROLAND

Why waste the money? He have
Sir Ector's white stag.

WILLIAM

Someone may recognize it. We
need to be reborn. Like a
phoenix rising from the ashes.

William scratches a rough phoenix into the dirt.

WAT

A lion. Lying down, head raised.

ROLAND

Yes, a lion. But walking, right
forepaw raised.

WAT

How about rearing up on its hind
legs, weight on the left?

ROLAND

The right.

WILLIAM

Everyone uses a lion! Can't you
see? The phoenix. It's end is
its beginning. Like myself.

ROLAND

Ah, well, if it's just about
you, pick whatever you like.
You're the knight; we're just
your humble servants.

WILLIAM

I meant a phoenix like the three
of us! Not just me.

Wat reaches, traces two more in the dirt with his finger.

WAT

Three phoenixes then.

William looks to Roland who grudgingly nods.

WILLIAM
Three it is!

DORY

Being pulled along the river's edge by Wat and Roland with ropes from the shore. Toward a quintain set up on the riverbank. In full armor, ankles tied together, William stands, lance in hand. William can barely balance.

WILLIAM
Slower! Slower! Accuracy!

ROLAND
Faster! Faster! Balance!

As William strikes the quintain, he falls off the back off the boat, disappears under the surface with a splash. Roland and Wat stand watching the ripples widen.

ROLAND
Any moment now. Like a phoenix.

WILLIAM

Flat on his back in three feet of water. Held down by his armor. Bubbles rise from his visor. Suddenly, as Wat and Roland bring him spluttering to the surface...

ROPED OFF RING

William drenched in sweat, the cries coming rapidly.

WAT & ROLAND
Switch! Switch! Switch!

He turns over and over, alternately blocking their sword thrusts. Finally, exhausted, Wat and Roland drop to their knees. As he drops alongside them...

ROLAND
Whatever happens with the lance,
we have the sword to save us.

A LOCK OF HAIR

Drops to a pile on the ground. Reveal William, freshly shaved, nearly totally shorn. You wouldn't recognize him. A whole new face. As Wat saws at a last lock with a knife:

Roland's meaty fists subtly works a needle and thread.

Biting off the knot, he holds up a BANNER: three red phoenixes on a field of jet black. It's:

WILLIAM
Beautiful...

ROLAND
And just in time, William. We leave for Rouen in the morning.

WILLIAM
No more William. Ulrich von Lichtenstein. From Gelderland. That's the name I'll fight by.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE ROAD TO ROUEN - DAY

Wat and Roland walk, leading a small palfrey or pack horse. William rides the war-horse.

WAT
It's my turn to ride.

WILLIAM
No. We haven't reached the mile marker yet. And I'm not sure you should. Suppose we pass another knight. How would it look if my squire rode while I walked?

WAT
I don't give a witches teat! It's my turn.

ROLAND
Maybe none of us should be riding. He's not the horse he used to be and we need him.

WILLIAM
Hoy... Look ahead.

Ahead, a NUDE MAN walks slowly along the side of the road. Slowly, deliberately, his feet obviously in pain. As they come up alongside, the nude man barely notices.

WILLIAM
What are you doing?

NUDE MAN
Trudging. The slow, weary, yet determined walk of one who has no other choice but to soldier on.

WILLIAM

Were you robbed?

NUDE MAN

Yes, a sort of involuntary vow of poverty. But to trudge represents pride. Pride, resolve and a trust in God to deliver me from my current tribulations.

ROLAND

Who are you?

NUDE MAN

Lilium inter spinas.
(off their blank looks)
The lily among the thorns.
Geoff Chaucer. I'm a writer.

Indeed, we're looking at the 29-year-old GEOFFREY CHAUCER. The first rainbow of English writers. Buck solid naked.

WAT

A what?

NUDE MAN/CHAUCER

Writer. With ink and parchment? For a penny, I'll scribble all you want: summonses, warrants, decrees, edicts, patents of nobility. Even a poem or two. Perhaps you read my Book of the Duchess? It was allegorical.

ROLAND

We won't hold that against you. That's something each man has to decide for himself.

As Chaucer wonders how exactly Roland has misunderstood him:

WILLIAM

Did you say patents of nobility?

CHAUCER

Yes. Now who are you, gentlemen?

Wat starts to answer. AHM! William interrupts.

WILLIAM

I am Sir Ulrich von Lichtenstein. And these my faithful squires:
(re: Roland & Wat)
Delves of Doddington. And Fowlehurst of Crew.

As Roland and Wat react to their new names, Chaucer laughs.

CHAUCER

And I am Richard Lion Hearted.
No wait, my name is Charlemagne.
(laughing harder)
No, I'm St. John the Baptist.

They watch as Chaucer laughs: Roland and Wat realizing how easily they've been seen through; William, furious. He jumps down from the horse, drawing a DAGGER.

He lifts Chaucer's chin with the point.

WILLIAM

Hold your tongue or lose it.

Chaucer stops laughing, but keeps the twinkle in his eye.

CHAUCER

Now that I believe. Sir Ulrich.

WILLIAM

(lowers dagger)
Thank you... Geoff.

ROLAND

Do you have anymore to say,
Master Nude, or, having failed
your test, may we be on our way?

CHAUCER

Are you going to the tournament?

WAT

This is the road to Rouen, isn't
it?

CHAUCER

That remains to be seen. They're
limiting the field at Rouen.
Noble birth must be established
for four generations on each side
of the family. Patents of
nobility must be provided.

The words hang in the air. William waits.

CHAUCER

Dress me, feed me, shoe me, let
me ride a bit. And you'll have
your patents. I'm thinking your
mother's father was Shilhard von
Rechberg. His crest a peacock.

William exchanges a long look and finally a shrug and nod with Roland and Wat. Finally, Wat turns to Chaucer.

WAT

Betray us and I'll fong you in
the hole of your arse till your
outside is in and your inside is
out. Your ears'll blow snot and
shite'll squirt from your naval.

CHAUCER

I'll keep that in mind, Squire
Fowlehurst. Now, if you'll
kindly give me your shoes...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUEN - DAY

The town abuzz. Flags flutter from the rooftops. Acrobats tumble past Punch & Judy shows. It's like having the NCAA tournament in town. Money and excitement for everyone.

The GREAT CATHEDRAL looms as knights ride in with their retinues. On a tabletop a GRAYBEARD table jousts with his GRANDSON. Each hold a stick with a mounted knight figurine attached to the end. As they run them together.

BELLS TINKLE. Townsfolk get out of the way as two mounted KNIGHTS round a corner, mock battling. Bells on their horse and weapons warning pedestrians of their approach.

Meanwhile, an arriving Wat and Roland eye two comely MILKMAIDS as they pass with their pails.

A one-armed man hawks relics. He holds a RUSTY NAIL.

ONE-ARM

Own the marvel of all Christendom!
The very nail that held Christ's
left hand to the cross!

Chaucer walks beside William who rides. Chaucer wears a triple phoenix badge, holds a ROLLED PAPER in his hand.

CHAUCER

Tournaments. Ladies can show new
dresses, beggars their afflictions
and pickpockets their agility.

Chaucer's attention is taken by several men playing 'sixes & sevens' with DICE up against a wall. Money changes hands and Chaucer is quite taken. A gambler perhaps?

William slows as he sees something ahead.

WILLIAM
Ready Herald Chaucer?

Chaucer looks ahead, sees what William is referring to.

CHAUCER
All they can do is put us in the
stocks. Or brand us perhaps?

TOURNAMENT ENTRY TABLE

William sits proudly on his horse as Chaucer reads from his
scroll to the tournament KING-OF-ARMS.

CHAUCER
...Duke Guelph of Saxony son of
Ghibellines, son of Wendish the
fourth Earl of Brunswick. The
same Wendish who inherited the
fief of Luneburg from --

KING OF ARMS
That'll do Herald. Six
generations is more than enough.

He takes the patents from Chaucer. Everything in order.

KING-OF-ARMS
Indicate in which events shall
your lord Ulrich compete.

Chaucer takes a waiting STAFF. A series of shields are
hung overhead, each painted with a representation of six
different events. Chaucer touches one painted with a SWORD
and one with a LANCE. As a scribe notes this:

KING-OF-ARMS
The entry fee is two florins.

Chaucer takes out a heavy sack of gold, opens it. We see
his POV: two florins rest in a bag of sand. He plucks them
out, hands them over. It looks like 'Ulrich' is cash fat.

KING-OF-ARMS
Sir Ulrich's number is 32. He'll
first meet Roger lorde Mortimer
in the lists tomorrow morning.

The king-of-arms bows to William. William nods nobly,
rides off with Chaucer as the next contestant steps up.

WILLIAM
(low exultation)
You did it, Geoff! You did it!

GEOFF

My pleasure, William. If you don't mind, I'd like to stick around, see how things turn out.

WILLIAM

Act as my Herald and you'll receive a share of the winnings.

GEOFF

Done. Now if you'll excuse me.

Chaucer heads off for the dice game. William watches after him a beat then continues riding. He can't help but smile to himself. He's so happy he starts to sing.

WILLIAM

Walking off of London Bridge my fortune for to seek. I passed along the river Thames its waters they did reek. Twas there I met a pretty lass she said her name was Nell. She --

William stops short. Ahead, he sees her:

JOCELYN, a princess in every sense of the word: beautiful and haughty, kind and cruel. If you know your Keats, she is William's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." But much more the Dicksee painting than the Waterhouse. (In other words, you're going to have to work for this one.)

Jocelyn walks the streets with her MAID. As they disappear around the corner, William comes out of his trance.

WILLIAM

Bell or Hell. Rhymes with Nell.

Cupid's arrow is so deep in him, it might be fatal. As he urges his horse around...

THE CORNER

And nearly runs down an old CHAR-WOMAN. As he reins up:

CHAR-WOMAN

The cheek of you no-good bloods. You think you own the streets. A poor old woman doesn't mean more than a bump beneath your hooves.

William watching desperately as Jocelyn disappears into the crowd. The Char-Woman begins to beat on his leg.

CHAR-WOMAN

But Judgment day comes! The
meek will inherit the earth!

WILLIAM

(riding around her)

I assure you, Mum, I'm as common
and meek as you are!

STREET

Jocelyn walks purposefully with her maid who's quite a
looker herself. Still, no comparison. Jocelyn's eyes
flash quicker than her smile; they could cut you in two.

We hear approaching and then slowing hoof clops. William
rides parallel, ten feet away. Staring, his mouth agape.
Jocelyn doesn't look over but she knows he's there.

JOCELYN

I am not your missing rib, sir.

WILLIAM

If you were, then my ribs are
made of gold. Wrapped in
samite. With emeralds for --

Jocelyn disappears around another corner even as William
rides smack into a low hanging WOODEN PIG advertising the
butcher's. As he struggles to unencumber himself.

CLOSE ON JOCELYN

As William catches up once again. She's climbing broad, low
rise stone steps. Stricken, William rides right with her.

WILLIAM

Would you speak to me?

JOCELYN

Speak? But, sir, my sex are
marked by their silence.

And they're passing through two huge wooden doors. The
sunlight cuts out as we're now inside. William oblivious.

WILLIAM

I would hear you speak if it
cost me my ears.

JOCELYN

That is well for I do not want
silence in my life.

The hooves echo as he rides down some wide passage that we're still too tight on them to make out.

WILLIAM
Tell me your name.

JOCELYN
Would you care if I were ugly?

She stops, steps to her left, her maid, looking aghast, alongside her. William reins to a stop. We're aware of the sound of shocked voices in the b.g..

VOICE
You desecrate the house of God!

Widen TO REVEAL that William has ridden into: The nave of the magnificent CATHEDRAL OF ROUEN. Framed by stained glass, William realizes as well.

An OLD BISHOP swings his crosier. A DOZEN YOUNG PRIESTS rush at him. PARISHIONERS here for Mass are shocked.

William is shoved back, but still enchanted. His horse rears. And Jocelyn isn't completely unimpressible. This is the most amazing thing she's seen in awhile.

WILLIAM
Tell me your name, woman!

JOCELYN
What would you do with my name, sir hunter? Call me a fox for that is all I am to you.

Jocelyn laughs as William is swept back through the doors.

JOCELYN
A handsome hunter, I give him that.

And William is gone. Jocelyn finally stops laughing under the remonstrative stare of the old bishop.

OLD BISHOP
Does this not shock you, Jocelyn?

JOCELYN
Certainly, father. I only laugh to, to, to keep from weeping.

She sells it pretty good. He softens.

OLD BISHOP

Ahh, beauty is a curse. Pray
for your years to come swiftly.
Pray for beauty to fade so you
may concentrate on God.

JOCELYN

Oh, I do, father. I pray for it
all the time. Why did God curse
me with this face?

OLD BISHOP

His ways have purpose, but we
cannot know them.

Jocelyn winks to her maid. As they try not to laugh again:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PAVILIONS - NIGHT

A tent encampment housing knights, judges, heralds,
surgeons, musicians, armorers, lance-makers, you name it.
Right now it's late, quiet.

INT. PHOENIX TENT - NIGHT

William lies staring up at the roof. Wat and Roland are
curled up on either side facing away. Armor, equipment and
an empty space for Chaucer take up the rest of the cramped
camp. Wat snores softly, almost whimpering in his sleep.
William, wide awake, heaves a SIGH.

ROLAND

What was that?

WILLIAM

It was the sound of love, Roland.

ROLAND

For the love of victory, William,
go to sleep.

WILLIAM

I can't. Love has given me
wings and so I must take flight.

It's Roland's turn to sigh. Deep, surrendering.

WILLIAM

I can't explain it. She makes
me feel like a poet.

ROLAND

You might feel like a poet, but
you sound like an idiot. You
don't even know her name.

WILLIAM

Her name is Aphrodite, Calypso,
Venus. Take your pick.

Finally, Roland rolls over, looks at his friend.

ROLAND

Women weaken the heart. Without
your heart, you cannot win.
(William sighs)
Concentrate!!!

Wat sits bolt upright.

WILLIAM

You're right, Roland. I will.

They both close their eyes. Wat rubs his, looks about.

WAT

Where's Chaucer?

ROLAND

Never showed up. We're without
a herald I'm afraid.

WAT

No loss. In fact, it'll keep
the skin on my knuckles

As Wat lies back down, we enjoy a peaceful moment before:

HARD CUT TO:

ROGER LORDE MORTIMER

Filling frame, headed right for us until a LANCE SHATTERS
against his chest. That slows his momentum considerably.

And as William rides past, only three feet of his twelve
foot shaft is left...

WAT & ROLAND

Exchange a look of disbelief. He did it.

WILLIAM

Acknowledges the measured CHEER from the crowd, rides past:

ROUEN KING OF ARMS

After three passes Sir Ulrich von
Lichtenstein defeats Roger lorde
Mortimer one lance to none!

William rides back to vocal and hearty congrats from Wat
and Roland. He's caught up in it a moment, before:

WILLIAM

Easy, lads, they're likely to
think this is the first time
I've broken a lance.

WAT

But it is, William!

WILLIAM

Sir Ulrich has broken 1000 lances.

ROLAND

Well dismount, master of 1000
lances. We're due in the sword
ring in two minutes.

MEANWHILE, NEARBY:

COUNT ADHEMAR

The velvet covered razor, premiere jousting of a generation.
He watches from a distance as his SQUIRES strap beautiful
armor onto his dramatically outstretched limbs.

ADHEMAR

Germaine...

He doesn't call loudly. People are expected to listen when
they're near him. His toady Herald, GERMAINE, steps over.

ADHEMAR

The knight there. What badge is
that?

GERMAINE

(squinting)

Triple phoenixes on sable, perhaps
marking him as a third son.

Germaine rolls through his tournament scroll, finds it.

GERMAINE

Ulrich von Lichtenstein. A Duke
of Gelderland.

ADHEMAR

Gelderland?

GERMAINE

Well east of the Rhine I believe.

Adhemar reacts as one of the Squires pinches him on the arm cinching a strap. The squire tenses, expecting... The backhand, WHAP!, which sends blood trickling from his lip. Adhemar pulse rate doesn't break 60.

ADHEMAR

(re: William)

Make me aware if it looks like I should face him.

GERMAINE

Yes, my Lord Adhemar.

CUT TO:

A KNIGHT IN FULL ARMOR

Standing stock still as TWO VARLETS use wooden clubs to beat on his shoulders, back and chest. Finally they stop, out of breath. The knight lifts his visor, troubled, uncertain.

KNIGHT

No, it still feels loose somehow.

The varlets go about tightening the straps on the armor as William, Roland and Wat hurry past.

MOVE WITH them as they pass by several knights having various wounds and muscle pulls bound up.

WILLIAM

Two events was a mistake. I don't have time to breathe. I should withdraw from the sword.

ROLAND

But the sword is by far what you're best at.

WILLIAM

The prizes are bigger in the joust, the prestige as well --

They're interrupted as a man steps in front of them.

MAN

Ulrich von Lichtenstein?

Our trio exchange suspicious looks. Who the hell is this?

MAN

I am Simon, the Summoner.

The summoner is pimply with scabby eyebrows and a fiery complexion. In a word: venereal. His physical corruption reflecting a spiritual corruption as well.

WILLIAM

Good for you. And I'm overdue at the sword arena.

William's about to move past him, when:

SIMON SUMMONER

I am bid detain you on behalf of your herald.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND PAVILIONS - MOMENTS LATER

Chaucer stands, naked again, hands bound together, looking across at William, Roland and Wat. Simon the Summoner is here as well as the corpulently corrupt PETER the PARDONER. Peter holds a dagger vaguely directed at Chaucer.

WILLIAM

You were never robbed, were you?

CHAUCER

I, ah, no. I have a gambling problem. I sell my clothes when I've exhausted all other funds.

WILLIAM

And what do you expect us to do about it?

PETER PARDONER

He assured us that you, his liege, would pay us.

We see the outrage on our trio, Wat in particular.

WILLIAM

And who are you?

PETER PARDONER

Peter. A humble pardoner and purveyor of religious relics.

WILLIAM

How much does he owe you?

SIMON SUMMONER

Ten gold florins.

Wat goes after Chaucer, grabs him in a headlock and begins to rabbit punch him on the top of the head.

CHAUCER

Get him off me!

A mini-melee as Roland and William pull Wat off. Furious now, William faces the Summoner.

WILLIAM

And what will you do to him if I refuse?

SIMON SUMMONER

We, on behalf of the Lord God, will take it from his flesh. In order that he may understand that gambling is a sin.

The Summoner, in light of his physical condition, should never utter the word *flesh*. William looks at Chaucer.

CHAUCER

Please Will --

(catches himself)

Please will you help me, Sir Ulrich? You won't regret it.

Roland clinches Wat as the little man lunges again.

WAT

You can take it out of whatever flesh I leave behind!

WILLIAM

Wat! Enough!

(to: Summoner)

I don't have the money now, but release him, return his clothes and I swear you'll get it.

SUMMONER

Done.

The Pardoner uses the dagger to cut the ropes.

CHAUCER

You've a great heart beating in you, Ulrich. I see that now.

WILLIAM

Shut up.

CUT TO:

WILLIAM & CHAUCER

William strides with extreme purpose, Chaucer struggles to keep up and pull his tunic over his head at the same time.

WILLIAM
Why didn't you tell us the truth?

CHAUCER
I was trying to engender pity.

WILLIAM
You lied.

CHAUCER
Of course I lied! I'm a writer!

They're at the roped off SWORD RING. William continues in receiving a BLUNTED SWORD from Roland who stands alongside a TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL.

CHAUCER
Behold my lord Ulrich von
Lichtenstein, son of --

OFFICIAL
Too late. He's been announced.
(to crowd)
Ten blows by sword! Sir Ulrich
to receive first!

As William lowers his visor, a knight with a HAWK BADGE waits no time as he steps up, takes his best ten whacks at William. William is a whirlwind, blocking (and only blocking) the first five swings the Hawk Knight gives.

The sixth glances off William's sword and just catches his shoulder. TWO JUDGES raise flags indicating a strike.

Blows seven, eight and nine, all delivered in an obviously practiced sequence, are all blocked.

Frustrated, the Hawk Knight circles left, feints several times before it looks like William's committed to a block. At that moment, he reverses, brings down his sword which William simply sidesteps allowing it to dig into the dirt.

OFFICIAL
One strike for Sir Walter Loring!

A beat as the knights catch their breath. Then:

WILLIAM
Stand ye ready?

HAWK KNIGHT

Aye!

William starts in with three almost lazy, albeit powerful strokes. The hawk knight blocks all three, but they're like body shots in a boxing match.

William spins, swings the flat of his sword into the knight's side. Two more swings bat the knight on either side of the head. As he stumbles, the judges raise their flags three times. The crowd cheers appreciatively.

William stops, raises his visor.

WILLIAM

I yield my final four blows.

OFFICIAL

Very well. Sir Ulrich yields his final four blows and has won three strikes to one!

Applause at this act of chivalry. Chaucer steps up.

CHAUCER

Behold my Lord Ulrich. His sword is swift, yet his mercy is swifter! The flower of chivalry still blooms upon this earth!

The Hawk Knight bows. Cheers as the crowd gets behind William. He looks across in surprise at Chaucer.

CHAUCER

Your arm and my tongue and there'll be no stopping you.

William smiles; Chaucer smiles back. And as Bachman Turner Overdrive launch into "Taking Care of Business..."

CUT TO:

INT. ROUEN CATHEDRAL - DAY

ON A YOUNG priest moving down a line of parishioners. A WOMAN holds out a BABY. The priest sprinkles HOLY WATER on the its head. Then a second baby. The priest looks like he does this all day long. Then he stops short.

A knight stands holding out his sword. Other knights hold armor, lances. Wat and Roland present the phoenix banner. The priest sighs, starts shaking out the holy water.

CUT TO:

EXT. TILTING LISTS - DAY

As William shatters a lance on another knight's chest:

WAT

He improves with each pass.

ROLAND

He's a natural he is.

As Chaucer nears, he's met by Adhemar's herald Germaine.

GERMAINE

Good Herald Chaucer!

CHAUCER

Do I know you?

GERMAINE

I am Germaine, Herald to Count Adhemar and poet of renown. Your Lord Ulrich is unknown to me.

CHAUCER

And you utterly unknown to him.

As Germaine pretends to chuckle at the jest, Chaucer just walks away. Time to entertain the crowd.

CHAUCER

Behold my lord Ulrich! Like a wind from Gelderland he sweeps by. Blown far from his homeland in search of glory and honor!

Cheers. As Germaine walks off, Chaucer watches after him.

EXT. SWORD FIGHTING RING - DAY

White scoring flags go up as William delivers blow after blow with the sword. As the crowd goes crazy...

EXT. BAKER'S SHOP - DAY

Roland, William, Chaucer and Wat watch the pies coming out of the ovens, patrons leaving with cakes. Wat may faint.

ROLAND

All we have left is a penny.

WAT

Only enough for one of us to eat.

WILLIAM
 We're all hungry, but... The
 food should go to the one who
 most needs his strength.

As the three of them look at William...

CUT TO:

THE FOUR OF THEM

Chewing air, watching their war horse chew through a barrel
 of oats. The horse is the one who most needs his strength.

EXT. LISTS - DAY

William is slammed in the shoulder with a lance. His
 armor, in fact, splits open. As Roland rushes over...

WILLIAM
 We should have saved the penny
 for the blacksmith.

INT. ARMORER'S PAVILION - DAY

Hammers clink or pound depending on the severity of the
 damage. William talks to a series of SMITHIES.

SMITHY ONE
 Sorry, I'm up to my hips in it.

SMITHY TWO
 It's cash first, no promises.

SMITHY THREE
 You might try the farris.

WILLIAM
 A woman?

SMITHY THREE
 Beggars can't be choosers, lord.

RED HOT HORSESHOE

Being pounded on an anvil. Then thrust into a barrel of
 water. Rise up with the steam to reveal KATE, the farris.
 Her head is wrapped loosely in wet wool to kill the sparks.

KATE
 I don't work for free.

William stands here with Roland and Wat who carry his armor.

WILLIAM

And I can't joust with split
open armor.

KATE

Your problem not mine.

She looks over her handiwork. One tough chick. As she
tosses the shoe in a pile and starts on another one,
William looks to Roland, winks.

WILLIAM

Just as well. They said I was
daft for even asking.

KATE

Who?

WILLIAM

The other armorers.

KATE

They said I couldn't do it
because I was a woman?

WILLIAM

No. They said you were great
with horseshoes, but shite with
armor. The fact you were a
woman wasn't mentioned.

She does a not so slow burn. As she steps over, grabs the
breastplate from Roland's hands:

CUT TO:

INT. ROUEN STREET - DAY

Passing knights are looked on with awe. Especially by kids.
People stream toward the grandstands. A VENDOR hawks:

VENDOR

Cat's meat and hot wine! Cat's
meat and hot wine here!

EXT. TILTING LISTS - DAY

The grandstands by the point of impact packed with nobles
including several outrageously beautiful women. The wings
packed with poor townsfolk. This sport cuts through class.

A roar builds as below, two knights hurtle at each other on
horseback, their varlets in position and squires following
after them. A huge cheer as both lances splinter to bits.

As the knights return to their starting points, water carriers rush out to sprinkle water to keep down the dust.

VIP BOX

Jocelyn sits stunningly bored with her maid and several other more enthusiastic YOUNG NOBLES. Jocelyn wears a low-cut bodice embroidered with ermine. There are pearls in her hair. She should be on the cover of *Medieval Vogue*.

Jocelyn's arrogant BROTHER steps over with Adhemar. It may not seem it, but this is a formal introduction.

BROTHER

Sister, may I present Count Adhemar who for some mad reason wishes to meet you.

ADHEMAR

If wanting to be introduced to the most beautiful woman in Europe is mad, then so be it.

Jocelyn gives a nod of acknowledgment to Adhemar's bow. The crowd cheers at a spectacular pass in the lists. Adhemar's attention is obviously immediately there.

JOCELYN

Do you only pretend to fight, Count Adhemar, or do you wage real war as well?

ADHEMAR

I am the leader of the Free Companies. My army is in Southern France for the moment.

She just nods. Does she think this is better than just pretending or worse? Regardless, she is faint of praise.

ADHEMAR

What do you think of the joust?

JOCELYN

It's very, abrupt, and I'm afraid I don't understand the rules.

ADHEMAR

I shall educate you. A match is three lances. One point is awarded for breaking a lance on a man between the waist and neck.

EXT. TOURNAMENT LISTS - DAY

In quick succession, several lances are broken on several different knights. The judges raise single white flags.

ADHEMAR'S VOICE

Two points for breaking on the helmet. It's difficult. The helmet sweeps back. Most blows glance to left or right leaving the lance unbroken.

Again, in quick succession several knights duck under or flinch away from head shots. Also, several lances find the mark, but deflect unbroken to the left or right.

Finally, Adhemar lands a lance directly on a helmet. It shatters and the knight's helmet is shredded off his head.

ADHEMAR'S VOICE

Three points are awarded for bearing the rider to the ground.

Adhemar at tournament. His lance lands high on the opposing knight's chest. The knight is borne into the air and lands flat on his back. Like diving into wet concrete.

VIP BOX

Adhemar looks at her a beat.

ADHEMAR

I myself Jocelyn, have never been unhorsed.

JOCELYN

Nor have I.

ADHEMAR

Also should you bear the rider to the ground, you win his horse. You can ransom it back to him or keep as you see fit.

EXT. LISTS - DAY

A knight handing over GOLD to buy back his horse.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

What of the horse? It wears armor as well. You don't strike the horse, do you?

ADHEMAR'S VOICE

Its armor is to protect it from splinters only. You lose a point if you strike the horse.

We see an example of this, judges raising black flags, knight's cursing their own incompetence.

JOCELYN

And do men die in the joust?

ADHEMAR

The lances are tipped with coronels. This blunts the tip, makes the lance non-lethal.

LANCE MAKERS

Sawing the lance tip flat, hammering on blunt iron coronels.

ADHEMAR'S VOICE

Of course, accidents happen.

ADHEMAR IN THE LISTS

His lance shatters on impact. A huge splinters breaks free and penetrates the slit in the opposing knight's visor. The body reacts, then slumps, no way he survived it.

Adhemar flips up his own visor, watches without pity.

ADHEMAR

Fall, goddamn you...

The dead knight falls from his horse to the ground. Adhemar looks to one of his varlets.

ADHEMAR

Retrieve his horse...

EXT. VIP BOX - DAY

ADHEMAR

Some men call it sport. Myself: an exercise to stay limber for the more noble pursuit of war.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A not so noble Adhemar leading his blood-soaked men on a rape and pillage run through a defenseless little town.

EXT. VIP BOX - DAY

JOCELYN

Why doesn't anyone stay limber
for poetry?

Adhemar smiles, allows himself a moment to look her over.

ADHEMAR

What a splendid gown you wear.

JOCELYN

There's been criticism I believe
of the cut below the neck.

Germaine is here to get his attention. Adhemar looks over.

GERMAINE

You wanted to be informed, lord,
should the tri-phoenixed knight
appear on your horizon.

Adhemar follows Germaine's gaze below to where William
rides in. Jocelyn sees him as well, can't help but smile.

GERMAINE

If he wins this tilt, he'll face
you for the championship.

THE LISTS

A SKINNY HERALD drones on listing the lineage of William's
formidable opponent, THOMAS COLVILLE Dreadful, boring
stuff. Scanning the crowd, William grips Chaucer's arm.

WILLIAM

Geoff -- It is my lady...

Chaucer follows William's gaze up, spots Jocelyn.

CHAUCER

Jesu... You aim high, William.

WILLIAM

If there's another way to aim, I
don't know it.

SKINNY HERALD

(finishing)

Sir Thomas Colville!

Applause for crimson-clad Colville and the exhaustive
listing of lineage. Chaucer gives William a wink.

CHAUCER

Get ready. I have something special in mind...

(steps forward)

My lords, my ladies, my gracious. I am the Herald with the best job in the tournament! For I have the privilege, the pride and the pleasure of introducing a knight sired by knights. A knight who can trace his lineage back beyond Charlemagne! I met him praying on a mountain top near Jerusalem. Asking God's forgiveness for the Saracen blood on his sword. He amazed me in Italy where he saved a fatherless beauty from the would be ravishings of her uncle. In Greece he spent a year in silence so to better understand the sound of a whisper!

(medieval Jimmy Lennon)

And so I give you the Seeker of Serenity, Protector of Virginity, Enforcer of the Lord God... Sir Ulllriccchh von Lichtenstein!

VIP BOX

Adhemar looks at Germaine; I never had an intro like that.

CHAUCER

As the crowd cheers, he steps back over to William.

CHAUCER

That got their attention. Now you win their hearts.

William nods, but his eyes remain fixed on Jocelyn. The only heart he's interested in.

EXT. VIP BOX - DAY

Adhemar sits with Jocelyn. They watch William and Sir Thomas Colville shatter their lances simultaneously. The impact is awesome. The crowd roars.

WILLIAM

Returning to his end. One thing on his mind. To Chaucer:

WILLIAM
Was she watching! Did she see me!

CHAUCER
(glancing up)
She sees you...

EXT. VIP BOX

They watch as they hurtle again. Again both lances shatter. The crowd erupts. Adhemar looks back to Jocelyn's brother behind him.

BROTHER
Colville has perfect technique.
Yet I've never seen him before.

ADHEMAR
Nor I, but this Lichtenstein. His technique rudimentary. Style non-existent. Still, he is fearless.

JOCELYN
Fearless. How so?

BROTHER
The slit in the helmet visor is narrow, but splinters can penetrate it. Most knights raise their chins at the last instant. You lose sight of your opponent, but you protect your eyes.
(re: William)
He doesn't. He keeps his eye on the target till the end.

JOCELYN
(aside to maid)
As I said. A true hunter...
And you, Count Adhemar? Do you raise your chin at the last? To protect yourself.

ADHEMAR
Of course. My style and technique are impeccable. I don't need my eyes at the end. And would prefer to save them so I may look on you.

A little round of applause from the surrounding nobles in appreciation of this 'gallantry.'

LIST BARRIER

As Colville and William pass each other on their way back to position one. Colville reins up. He lifts his visor. Beard, mustache. Blood runs from both nostrils.

COLVILLE

(breath labored)

Sir Ulrich, I'm through. But
I've never not finished before.
I wish to keep my honor in tact.

William smiles, nods he understands.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIP BOX - DAY

The flags are up. It's tied: two points to two. Upon the signal the two knights start toward each other, but with none of the usual fury.

JOCELYN

They're slower.

The lances are lowered from 45° to level. But neither William nor Colville try to hit each other. They pass completing the joust. As the match is announced a tie and Colville is helped down heavily from his horse.

BROTHER

A draw. And Colville is hurt.

Colville's HERALD drapes white over Colville's banner.

ADHEMAR

Colville withdraws. Ulrich
advances. But why didn't Ulrich
finish him?

JOCELYN

He shows mercy...

EXT. LISTS - DAY

William hurries over to where they tend to Colville, pulling off his armor to ease the pressure on his ribs.

WILLIAM

Are you alright, Colville?

COLVILLE

I'm fine. Thank you.

WILLIAM

I'm late to the sword ring.
They've called me twice already.

COLVILLE

(calling after them)
Good luck, Ulrich...! Good God.
Someone fetch my surgeon.

EXT. SWORD RING - DAY

Where a knight with a FLEUR-DE-LIS badge wails away his ten strokes on William. He swings expertly. William blocks well. Still, when it's over FOUR WHITE FLAGS are raised.

William goes to his corner (Roland, Wat and Chaucer) examining a dent in the armor by his shoulder.

WILLIAM

That farris did well. I bend
but I do not break.

ROLAND

(re: fleur-de-lis)
He shuffles left when striking.
He'll shuffle right blocking.
Step into your blows, to his
right. He'll lose balance.

William nods, claps Roland on the shoulder for the advice. He turns, across from fleur-de-lis, awaiting the signal.

WAT

Five strokes does it.

They drop the signal to start. As William steps forward:

INT. ADHEMAR'S PAVILION - DAY

His attendants, varlets and squires wait silently, as Adhemar considers a half dozen sets of glistening armor.

ADHEMAR

The suit from Seville. For the
mobility at the waist.

As they go about fetching it, Germaine arrives bowing.

GERMAINE

I spoke to one of the varlets.
Colville could not continue, but
Sir Ulrich agreed to a lanceless
pass. For Colville's honor.

ADHEMAR

Interesting. His heart is his strength. And... His weakness.

EXT. WILLIAM IN THE SWORD RING - SUPER SLOW MO

"Sirius" by the Alan Parsons Project plays. As William moves, whirls and strikes, he becomes something abstract, something beautiful. This is personal expression; this is catharsis; this is substantiation; this is identity. And the flags go up: one, two, three, four, five and six.

Return to speed as the CROWD CHEERS! Wat and Chaucer embrace. Roland steps over to his old friend, grinning.

ROLAND

You've done it! You're champion!

WILLIAM

Of the sword...

ROLAND

That's why we're standing here, isn't it? Now off to the lists!

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - DAY

Adhemar rides into position. In jet black armor on a jet black horse, he looks quite awesome. Across the way, with Roland standing alongside, William watches.

WILLIAM

Count Adhemar. I don't think I've ever seen him lose. You?

ROLAND

No. But defeat him and you'll see it firsthand.

Chaucer steps over with Jocelyn's maid (Christiana) in tow. She carries a diaphanous scarf sewn with pearls.

CHAUCER

Sir Ulrich, this is Christiana.

MAID

My lady Jocelyn bids you wear this token.

WILLIAM

Yes, but what is it a token of?

MAID
Her appreciation. Of your eyes.

WILLIAM
My eyes?

MAID
You keep them on the target.

As William smiles, takes it from her.

COUNT ADHEMAR

Mounted. Receives a lance from one of his varlets. He hefts it, casts it to the ground.

ADHEMAR
Heavier.

At once they have another one for him to heft. He nods, satisfied with the weight. With eyes slit toward William:

ADHEMAR
By God and my arm, this Gelder-
lander will know he was struck.

WILLIAM

Mounted. Scarf fluttering from the top of his helmet. He looks across at an imposing Adhemar then down at Roland.

ROLAND
He has no weakness, William, no
bad habit to exploit. Just aim
it dead center and hang on.

GERMAINE

Stepping up in his finest finery, bowing grandly to the stands. Then, with the utmost self-importance:

GERMAINE
My lord the Count Adhemar son of
Philippe de Vitry, son of Gilles
of Champagne. Master of the
Free Companies! A shining
example of chivalry and manhood!

Healthy applause. More for Adhemar's prowess than the stiff introduction. Chaucer passes Germaine, whispers:

CHAUCER
You're not fit to be herald to a
wood chopper.

The crowd quiets to listen as Chaucer moves down the line.

CHAUCER

I cannot look upon my lord for I
weep to see his shining face!
Sir Ulrich is a gift to your
eyes for you shall not see his
like upon this earth again.

Chaucer dramatically lowers his head. Several moment pass:

CHAUCER

I would list his lineage if it
served to honor him. Most men
here look to the past to prove
their worth. They look to deeds
of their father's. Sir Ulrich has
great ancestors, make no mistake.
Sir Shilhard von Rechberg, Duke
Guelph of Saxony, Wendish fourth
Earl of Brunswick. But his great
ancestors pale in comparison to
him. I don't list them to honor
him; I list him to honor them!

The crowd loves how clever Chaucer is. We particularly see
a recovering Colville enjoying himself.

As Adhemar glares at Germaine.

CHAUCER

And so without further gilding
the lily. I give you, the Keeper
of the Flame of Aragon! First
man through the breach at
Bethlehem! Seeker of Serenity,
Protector of Italian Virginity,
Enforrrcerrr of the Lord God...
Sir Ullriccchh von Lichtenstein!

The crowd goes crazy. Chaucer walks back past William.

CHAUCER

It's up to you now...

THE START FLAG

Suspended for a fluttering instant. As it ripples down:

WILLIAM

Eyes clear and on target, he urges his horse forward.
Clods of dirt rip up under its hooves.

ADHEMAR

One with his horse whose haunches ripple with power.

JOCELYN

Holding her breath.

GRANDSTANDS

Kate the farris here to see if her handiwork will hold up.

WILLIAM & ADHEMAR

This shot is why the two-point-four-zero format was invented. Fucking Adhemar hurtling forward from one end of the frame; goddamned William pounding in from the other. And the best dolly grips and camera operator in the world keeping them edged as we hurtle in, T-boning right into...

The point of impact! Both lance are reduced to shards.

Roland and Wat cover up under the spray of splinters.

William's horse veers hard left under the impact.

Adhemar's horse rears back. The reins wrapped around his left hand the only thing keeping him from tumbling off.

The crowd detonates! A collective release of everything that brought them here in the first place.

WILLIAM

Roland and Wat arrive. The wind's been knocked out of him.

WILLIAM

Ugh -- Can't breathe --

As they loosen the straps on his armor.

ADHEMAR

Trying not to scream. Clutching at his left shoulder.

ADHEMAR

For pity's sake, ease me...

One of the varlets reaches up into the arm pit, pulls back a thin, bloody three inch sliver of lance. That eases him.

Adhemar looks back through watering eyes toward William.
It's been a long time since he met his match.

ADHEMAR
No style whatsoever... But
neither has an anvil.

WILLIAM

Breathing easier, looking back toward Adhemar.

WILLIAM
He hits like a hammer. Amazing.

ROLAND
But not perfect. He aims high on
the chest. Roll back your right
shoulder as you strike and his
blow may glance to your right.

WILLIAM
Only if he strikes on the right.
If he strikes on the left, I'll
be obliterated.

ROLAND
I didn't say it wasn't a gamble.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - THE SECOND PASS - DAY

Ground zero. William commits his lance, twists his right
shoulder back. Adhemar's lance glances off William's armor
to the left. William's lance breaks! As they gallop past
each other...

ADHEMAR

Looks down at the lance in his hand. Unbroken. He looks
back see a second white flag raised for William to his one.
To see William being congratulated by Roland and Wat;
Chaucer strutting along the stands like a rooster. Then
back to his lance: Unbroken. And it rocks his world...

VIP BOX

Her brother looks from William to Jocelyn. She beams.

BROTHER
Well, there may be some
technique there after all.

EXT. LISTS - DAY

As they ride back past each other, Adhemar reins up.

ADHEMAR

A word with you, Sir Ulrich.

WILLIAM

Certainly, Count Adhemar.

There is no rancor in William. He considers Adhemar a highly worthy opponent. Adhemar breathes hard.

ADHEMAR

I heard of the mercy you showed to the knight Colville. If the circumstances were similar, could I rely on the same, graciousness?

William claps Adhemar on the shoulder, nods. Adhemar watches him go, breath returning to normal, Pulse under 60.

WILLIAM

Riding past Wat and Roland, speaking low.

WILLIAM

He's through. The last pass is for show and honor. We've won.

Wat and Roland clasps hands.

THE START FLAG comes down.

THE LISTS

Adhemar and William start forward, but under reduced speed, their lances are at 45° angles. As they lower them, William holds his dead ahead, never crossing the barrier.

As they approach, at nearly the last instant, Adhemar spurs his big black horse. At its burst of speed, Adhemar swings his lance across the barrier. Cheater!

The coronel just kisses William's helmet an instant before shattering. The helmet is literally ripped right off his shoulders, his head lucky to stay behind.

Roland and Wat rush to William who's barely conscious.

The flags go up for Adhemar: two for striking the helm. Adhemar has won 3 strikes to 2!

Adhemar rides back past, pausing, his horse trampling Jocelyn's scarf underfoot.

ADHEMAR

Is he aware?

WAT

Aware?

(rushing forward)

I'll fong you in the hole of your arse! Fong you till you're aware of your knees!

The black horse takes a step back as Wat hits the barrier, starts to scale it to get at Adhemar. Chaucer swoops in from nowhere to restrain Wat in a headlock.

CHAUCER

Pardon, my Lord Adhemar. He isn't right in the head and losing twists in his bowels.

Adhemar visibly decides not to kill Wat, abruptly rides away.

CHAUCER

(fierce; to Wat)

See to Ulrich.

Chaucer reaches under the barrier, retrieves the tattered scarf. He looks up into the vip box, but Jocelyn is gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

WILLIAM - IN THE PAVILION

Sits beaten on a bench, a towel over his head. Hunched over a steaming bowl of herbs set down before him. Wat, Chaucer and Roland stand helplessly nearby.

WAT

Treacherous lying scum. A true nobleman to be sure.

ROLAND

The whole of the tournament will know before my lips are through.

WILLIAM

(from under towel)

No... You will tell no one.

William looks up. His cheeks puffy, both eyes black.

WILLIAM

I am a knight. I take what comes, good or bad, without complaint. I will not cheapen his victory nor my own defeat with words. Words that won't change the outcome regardless.

He says it with finality and sadness. Pulling the towel back over, he lowers his head. Roland whispers to Chaucer:

ROLAND

Now he thinks he's a knight.

Chaucer looks at William. After a beat:

CHAUCER

He is...

EXT. ROUEN LISTS - DAY

Where prizes are being given out in order of prestige.

MASTER OF ARMS

For long spear on foot: Pandolf Malatesta!

PANDOLF receives a small gold helmet.

MASTER OF ARMS

For halberd on foot: Folgore di San Gimignano.

FOLGORE receives a medium gold helmet, stands by Pandolf.

MASTER OF ARMS

For sword on foot: Ulrich von Lichtenstein!

A big increase in applause as William steps up. He's given a large gold helmet. As he receives it, he scans the crowd, does not see who he's looking for. Jocelyn...

MASTER OF ARMS

And finally, for the mounted joust and tournament champion. Adhemar, Count of Anjou!

The same applause as William got. Adhemar receives an extra-large gold helmet with a jewel-encrusted, gold peacock feather on top. He stands alongside William smiling as though nothing wrong happened.

The crowd stomps its feet, cheers as the four champions take a bow. Smiling at the crowd, William asides:

WILLIAM

The next time I face you,
Adhemar, you will look up at me
from the flat of your back.

ADHEMAR

Please...
(dismissive)
You have been weighed, you have
been measured, and you have been
found wanting.

Adhemar strides away, leaving William in a foul, prideful mood. He steps over where's he's congratulated by a very pleased trio of Chaucer, Roland and Wat.

ROLAND

Keep winning the sword and we'll
be rich.

WILLIAM

I won't compete in the sword
again!

CHAUCER

But it's your best event.

WILLIAM

Exactly. I will concentrate on
the joust. I will be tournament
champion or nothing at all!

CUT TO:

INT. PAVILION - DAY

William, Roland, Wat and Chaucer stand across from the summoner and pardoner. Kate waits to one side. Holding the gold helmet under his arm, William wrenches at the helmet's visor, finally tears it loose.

WILLIAM

Ten florins. That should do.

William tosses it to the summoner who looks it over, nods.

SUMMONER

It's sixes and sevens tonight,
Chaucer. Do you feel lucky?

PARDONER

Do you wear enough clothes?

CHAUCER

Begone. I'm through with you.
Except to exact my revenge.

PARDONER

What could you possibly do to us?

CHAUCER

I'll eviscerate you in fiction.
Every last pimple, every last
flaw of character. You two will
be 'naked' for eternity.

Laughing at the absurdity, the pardoner and summoner move
off. William hands the rest of the helmet to Kate.

WILLIAM

Here. Take what we owe you.

Kate has metal shears, is about to cut up the helmet when:

KATE

The armor you wear, it was not
made for you.

Is she suspicious of them. They exchange looks.

WILLIAM

So what of it?

KATE

I could make such armor, you
wouldn't even know you wore it.

WILLIAM

How much would that cost me?

KATE

Take me with you. Make me part
of this.

WILLIAM

Part of what? We are nothing,
farris. Take your gold and go.

Pissed, Kate chops off a piece, tosses the helmet back at
him and stomps off. William's in a foul mood; no one wants
to make it worse. He gives the tattered helmet to Roland.

WILLIAM

Get what you can. The rest of
us will pack camp.

WAT

Pack camp? Why, William?

WILLIAM

We're leaving. The tournament at Lagni-sur-Marne starts in a week. Leave now and we can walk most of the way and save the horse.

CHAUCEUR

What about the banquet tonight? The dance? You won the sword. You have to make an appearance.

WILLIAM

So Adhemar can have another laugh? I think not!

Roland is suddenly clearing his throat, gesturing as Jocelyn's maid (Christiana) stands at the pavilion entrance. As they all smile at her, she addresses Roland.

CHRISTIANA

My lady would know the color of your lord's tunic tonight?

ROLAND

His tunic?

CHRISTIANA

Yes. So that my lady may dress to match him.

CHAUCEUR

We regret to inform your lady that we won't be attending the --

WILLIAM

Herald. Do not answer questions you don't know the answer to.

(to Roland)

Squire, answer her. What, ah, color is my tunic tonight?

Roland looks about, spots the green of the pavilion tent.

ROLAND

Green.

(spots black edging)

Green with black trim.

Christiana curtsies, smiles at Roland and starts off. As Roland watches after her, interest growing...

WILLIAM

Och... This is a disaster.

Roland feels the cloth side of the pavilion fabric.

ROLAND

No, William, it'll tunic up very nicely. Wat, your dagger.

WILLIAM

No, that's not the disaster.
(as they all stare)
I don't know how to dance!

CUT TO:

INT. STABLES - SUNSET

Where dance-master Geoff Chaucer, pounding a beat on the floor with the end of a stick, walks William, Roland, Wat and the horses through the steps of an elaborate courtly dance. They smash into each other, walk into the rear ends of the horses. It's hilarious.

STABLE DOOR

Kate enters carrying a heavy load of new horseshoes. She spots dance class, moves quietly for a closer look.

As Chaucer and Roland separate, William and Wat step in between them, take each other's hands and start to twirl.

CHAUCER

No, Wat doesn't lead! He follows!

Kate bursts out LAUGHING. They all stare at her for a moment, but it takes awhile for her to stop.

CHAUCER

And you can do better?

INT. STABLE

Chaucer dances with Kate, Wat with William.

KATE

And on the up-beat.

They switch. Kate dancing with William, Wat with Chaucer:

WAT

In fact, she does much better than you, Master Mumblemouth.

Off to the side, Roland sews. William's green tunic with black trim is almost done.

EXT. ROUEN STREET - NIGHT

Wat, Roland, Chaucer and Kate walk William to the banquet.

WAT

Remember not to belch, William.

ROLAND

And don't pick your teeth with your knife.

KATE

And don't wipe your hands on the tablecloth or your tunic.

WAT

You can't do that either?

CHAUCER

No. And you eat in pairs, sharing the wine cup. You must wipe the edge clean after each sip. And put the meat scraps in the voider, not back on the serving dish.

WILLIAM

Right, right, got it.

KATE

Here. Hold still.

They stop by the entrance. Kate, some goop in the palm of her hand, wipes a thumb of it under each of William's eyes. Both of his black eyes essentially disappear.

KATE

There. You're perfect.

WILLIAM

If only it could loosen my tongue. Geoff, give me an opening line. For Jocelyn.

Chaucer thinks, whispers something low to William. William smiles, nods, then looks to them all.

WILLIAM

Well... Wish me well.

They all do, watching like proud parents sending their son off to the prom as William heads in. Finally:

KATE

I'll drink any man here under the table.

It sounds good to them.

ROLAND
Let's get piss-eyed.

INT. GUILD HALL - DAY

William is met at the door by a PAGE. The page walks William in past pyramids of exotic fruit, trays of elaborately prepared and colored illusion foods, fountains bubbling up red and white wine. There's something sexual about it all. Then the long elaborate series of tables.

William spots Jocelyn seated at one end. "Above the salt" as it were. He unhappily is being led to the opposite end. But they keep going, around the far end and then back behind the table, back toward the way they came. Finally, William finds himself being seated right beside Jocelyn.

She wears a dress of green cendal silk trimmed in black samite. This is the one they show in the best costume design ads in the trades. William can't believe his eyes.

JOCELYN
Sir Ulrich. You look well.

WILLIAM
Jocelyn... You look... You, um, remind me of the Bible.

That gets the attention of all the women sitting nearby.

WILLIAM
(unsure)
When God stopped the sun in the sky at Gibeon to give Joshua more time to defeat the Amorites.

The hell's he talking about? Is this what Chaucer told him?

JOCELYN
I don't understand.

WILLIAM
If I could ask God for a favor, it would be to stop the moon. To stop the moon and make this night and your beauty last forever.

Oohs and ahhs from the other women. Jocelyn melts a little before our eyes. And then Count Adhemar is here, being shown to the seat on the other side of Jocelyn.

ADHEMAR

Lady Jocelyn, what fortune to be seated beside you.

JOCELYN

Count Adhemar, do you know, Sir Ulrich?

ADHEMAR

(a perfect gentlemen)

Yes, we met in the lists. Congratulations on your victory with the sword.

WILLIAM

(perfect as well)

And on yours in the joust.

Enough of that. Adhemar looks Jocelyn up and down.

ADHEMAR

You look...

Adhemar is unaware, but anticipation is high all around.

ADHEMAR

Great.

He may as well have shit himself. As Jocelyn turns her full attention to William.

CUT TO:

INT. GUILD HALL - NIGHT

Blackbirds take wing from steaming pies. Mounted servitors bring platters to the table on horseback. Serving the cockatrice: the uppers of a baked chicken sewn to the nethers of a roast pig.

Jocelyn takes a cup of wine, drinks. She wipes where her lips were and sets it down on the table. William follows suit. Something amazingly charged about it.

And then a MONK is there. In fact, several. They go from table to table. Some bear large wooden platters bearing scraps of food, others small wooden bowls for coins. Mostly silver or copper. It's a banquet tradition.

MONK

For the poor gathered outside.
For the poor.

Most people scrape a few of the scraps on their plates onto the platters; several drop a few coins in the bowl.

William is the most generous by far, three gold florins.

ADHEMAR

Well, they won't be poor anymore when Ulrich is through emptying his pockets.

WILLIAM

No, there will always be poverty, Adhemar. It's the one possession the poor have that no one would envy or take from them.

An odd answer for a noble. No one quite knows what to think. Jocelyn is inspired to take off a gold bracelet, drop that in the bowl as well. She says sincerely:

JOCELYN

You're wrong, Sir Ulrich, the poor have something that I envy greatly. They can marry for love while we cannot.

Adhemar makes a show of dropping not one, two or three, but four gold florins into the bowl.

ADHEMAR

Marry for money, lady, and the love will follow.

Laughs all around. This is more the frothy banter everyone appreciates. And then: PIPE & TABOR MUSIC. It's time to boogie. As the nobles and knights and ladies rise...

DANCE FLOOR

Several people cry out to the DANCE MASTER which dance to play. Suddenly, Adhemar steps forward.

ADHEMAR

Sir Ulrich. Give of us a dance of your country. Give us a dance of Gelderland.

Horrified, William tries to beg off, but the crowd loves the idea, insists that he show them. Nowhere to hide.

WILLIAM

It's like a galliard, but... with some differences.

The dance master nods, strikes up the band. William does a few of the steps he learned in the barn, then adds an odd spin, a hop, a hand clap to one side, then to the other.

Count Adhemar was hoping to embarrass him, but it's got an interesting rhythm to it. Jocelyn steps out with William, partners with him on the moves. Then it gets weird...

The music morphs from 13th Century flute into 20th Century electric guitar. The pipe & tabor band sound like K.C. & the Sunshine Band. And because of a very talented choreographer, the steps seem to match in both centuries.

K.C.

...and do the things that we like to do. Do a little dance, make a little love, get down tonight...

Soon the whole joint is jumping. Only Adhemar is not dancing. He watches after William and Jocelyn a moment.

As we move in on him, we get inside his head. For him, the bottom drops out of the music. It's discordant, arrhythmic. Finally, Adhemar turns and heads out. As the music returns:

CUT TO:

EXT. REAR OF THE GUILD HALL - NIGHT

The music drifts out behind him as Adhemar exits. Maybe 250 people have gathered back here in the courtyard. The fabled 'POOR' everyone have been talking about. Only now they have faces; now they are people.

GUILD HALL GUARDS keep order as the monks prepare to pass out the food and money. It's very quiet. The head of the order looks over at Adhemar.

HEAD MONK

You're not dancing, lord?

ADHEMAR

I don't enjoy or understand music. It sounds like children fighting to me. A physician said I was deaf to the tones. Blind to the color of the instruments.

HEAD MONK

Some say music is a sin... I enjoy it.

ADHEMAR

Then we're an odd pair, sir monk. For I enjoy helping the poor.

(re: food platters)

May I?

CUT TO:

INT. GUILD HALL - NIGHT

Where the dancing is in full swing. William still partnered with Jocelyn. He holds her hands, moves around the floor with her. As the music ends, it feels very intimate between them. They may as well be alone.

JOCELYN

The drummers are very good.

She reaches out, presses her palm to William's chest, feels his heartbeat.

JOCELYN

They pound away like mad men.

William gently turns Jocelyn's hand, feels the pulse on her wrist with his fingertips.

WILLIAM

But they know to play softly as well...

There's something wholly sexy about it. As music resumes:

CUT TO:

EXT. GUILD HALL - DAY

Adhemar has the platter up on the rail. He looks down on those gathered just below.

ADHEMAR

Your empty bellies sent you! So fill them!

Adhemar flings a handful of food scraps into the crowd. Some people are hungry enough to scramble after them. Some are confused by this act of contempt. Others are angered. Laughing, Adhemar flings another handful, then dumps the platter into the dirt below.

HEAD MONK

Lord, what do you do?!

Adhemar shoves him away, grabs the bowl of coins. He runs his hands through them, sifting them for everyone to see.

ADHEMAR

Is this what you want?! Is this why you're here?!

The crowd shouts for the money. The few guild guards here look at each other nervously.

Adhemar retrieves his own four florins, pockets them. Then, holds a single florin up for everyone to see. He throws it into the crowd. Several surge to that spot. A scratching scramble before one man comes up with it.

The anger is being replaced by want. People in the crowd cry out for Adhemar to toss out more. He makes several false throws, moving them about like a puppet master. The crowd feels dangerous. An empty gleam in Adhemar's eyes, as he whips out a handful of coins to one end of the courtyard, then another. The people dash for it. The ones that fall are trampled. As the screams go up...

ADHEMAR

There. That sounds better.

Adhemar flings the entire bowl glittering up into the air.

INT. GUILD HALL - NIGHT

As the screams take over the music. William stops short to listen a beat. Then, he's dashing out.

EXT. GUILD HALL - NIGHT

As Adhemar enjoys the sight, William rushes out. William jumps down to vainly try to stop the panic and disaster going on. Over the cries and screams, we PAN UP to heaven. No one's listening up there tonight. As the sounds fade...

PAN DOWN TO:

THE BOY WILLIAM

At twilight. He slings two big bundles of straw over his shoulder, starts up the ladder of a half-constructed BARN. Halfway up the ladder, he turns at the drum of hoofbeats.

Beyond, riding down from a CASTLE is the LOCAL LORD. He's followed by a HENCHMAN carrying a torch. They rein up.

LOCAL LORD

Boy! Fetch the thatcher!

Young William continues up, slowed by his load.

LOCAL LORD

Move, boy!

A strong hand grabs the boy's shoulder and hauls him firmly up to the roof. William's father. Imposing, he stands at roof's edge, looking down at the local lord.

FATHER
I am the thatcher.

LOCAL LORD
The sun sets. Why aren't you finished?!

We see the roof behind him, about 3/4s thatched.

FATHER
It will be finished tomorrow noon, lord.
(looks up; shrugs)
There is no rain in the sky.

LOCAL LORD
Don't look to the sky, thatcher. Look to my roof. It will be finished tonight or I won't pay.

A beat as William's father, a proud man, stares. Finally:

THATCHER
Tonight. Yes.

The local lord heads off with a snort. William's father unslings the straw from his son's shoulders. He falls to, thatching on hand and knee. William notices something on his own shoulder. Where he was hauled up. BLOOD.

WILLIAM
Father.

William crouches down, turns his father's hands. The palms are cut, bloody from the long day. His father smiles.

FATHER
It won't kill me, William.

He goes back to work. William watching, in love with him.

FATHER
Don't watch me, boy. I won't have you learn to thatch.

William leans back, looks up into the sky. As the light fades the stars have begun to burn through.

WILLIAM
Father, look. The stars.

His father turns, looks up to the twinkling stars. Then looks to his son. He's just as in love.

FATHER

Change them, William. Change yours.

As young William smiles at the thought. We hear more drumming of hooves. But these are much heavier, and:

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - DAY

A new fierce urgency about him, William's lance shatters.

SUPER: Tournament grounds. Lagni-sur-Marne.

Having defeated another knight, he rides back toward Roland and Wat. The horse stumbles, comes up lame. William dismounts as Wat takes a foreleg, checks the hoof.

WAT

He won't last another run.

William pats the horse on the side of the neck.

WILLIAM

The plow for you, old chops.

(to Roland)

How much money do we have left?

ROLAND

Not enough for a good horse. And we've ten minutes to find one.

As they all think, Chaucer steps up.

CHAUCER

Is there a problem?

CUT TO:

EXT. STABLES - DAY

Like a used car lot. WAR HORSES are lined up. Prospective buyers check hooves, teeth, etc... The PROPRIETOR finishes haggling with one group, turns to Chaucer.

CHAUCER

My lord would buy a horse.

Chaucer points back to where William stands an "I don't haggle" distance away.

PROPRIETOR

Certainly. I've a very nice animal right here.

They take a few steps over to a big BROWN GELDING.

PROPRIETOR
Several have been champion on
his back. Twenty-five florins.

As William looks him over.

WILLIAM
I'll have to take him for a
ride. Perhaps around this
square of buildings here.

PROPRIETOR
Of course. Be my guest.

William hops up, guides the gelding out, barely riding past
a walk. Chaucer and the proprietor watch him go.

CHAUCER
Twenty-five seems a nice price.

The proprietor smiles as William disappears...

AROUND THE CORNER

The instant he's out of sight, William digs his heels in
and takes off. Galloping hard down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - LAGNI-SUR-MARNE - DAY

William rides it to the starting position. Wat and Roland
smile at the impatient looking MASTER-OF-ARMS. William's
opponent waits at the end of the list astride a magnificent
looking CHESTNUT with a white face.

WILLIAM
Look at that horse.

ROLAND
Knock him off. It will be ours
and our worries will be over.

WILLIAM
Who's the knight?

ROLAND
Piers Courtenay.
(winks at Wat)
Raised the taxes on his land
three times in the last year to
raise money for tournament.

WAT

His people starve while he sits
at banquet.

Furious, William drops his visor, takes his lance from Wat.

WAT

(low; to Roland)
It's probably true.

As they move off to position, the start flag comes down.

William flies down the list. Lowering the lance, leaning into it. SMASH! As Courtenay is violently removed from the back of his horse.

CUT TO:

EXT. STABLES - DAY

Chaucer and the Proprietor watch as William trots the gelding back around the corner. As he hops down...

PROPRIETOR

Well?

WILLIAM

Not interested. He pulls to the left.

William and Chaucer head off. As the proprietor looks suspiciously at the foam on the gelding's neck.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORGE - DAY

Sparks fly as Kate makes a suit of armor: sturdy, light, with just enough ornamental fluting to make it beautiful. Kate engraves her trademark on a shoulder piece. It will look amazingly like the Puma logo if New Regency produces.

CUT TO:

WILLIAM

Wearing the armor. It gleams. He looks more like a knight in it than any knight we've seen. Kate adjust the straps, measures. He pivots at the waist, moves from side-to-side.

WILLIAM

Kate, it's amazing.

KATE

What did you expect it to be?

Roland looks at Kate's marks

ROLAND
What are these marks?

KATE
The marks of my trade. Should
another knight admire the armor.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - LAGNI-SUR-MARNE - DAY

William, Chaucer, Wat and Roland in the stands. Spectators
as Germaine announces Adhemar in the lists below.

ROLAND
Watch his hands. There's
something there to exploit.

As Adhemar's opponent is announced.

SKINNY HERALD
...Sir Thomas Colville!

Crimson Colville, the knight William showed mercy in Rouen.

WILLIAM
Colville looks fit again. He'll
give Adhemar a go of it.

The start flag is raised. It'll drop any moment when,
suddenly, below: Germaine rushes forward waving Adhemar's
banner. He speaks a moment to the master-of-arms.
Suddenly, three white flags go up on Colville's side.

WILLIAM
Adhemar has withdrawn.

Adhemar salutes Colville with his lance, then turns and
rides away. Remarkable.

ROLAND
A withdrawal like that can only
mean one thing.

WAT
Royalty...

CHAUCER
You face him next, William.
I'll see what I can find out.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - DAY

Lance in hand, William sits on his beautiful chestnut in shining new armor. Wat and Roland stand by. At the other end Colville arrives. Chaucer rushes up, breathless.

CHAUCER

I found out who Colville is.
Edward, the Black Prince of
Wales, heir to England's throne.

WILLIAM

Jesu... He disguised himself so
he could compete.

CHAUCER

He has never met the enemy
without victory, never attacked a
town he did not take; he is
feared as another Hector by
Pagans and Christians alike --

WAT

We're English, Geoff; we know
who he is!

ROLAND

You must withdraw, Will.

William nods, looks to Chaucer.

WILLIAM

Make it brief.

CHAUCER

Sir Ulrich von Lichtenstein!

Colville is in position. So is William. We move in on
William's face. The word pride stamped on his forehead.

The white flag is raised.

Chaucer starts forward with the banner to withdraw.

William spurs his horse. He's going!

The banner drops. Colville goes.

CLOSE ON WILLIAM

The whole run. Grit, determination and never surrender
etched. As the lances shatter...

LISTS

Both knights wheel around to go return to the starting position. As William arrives:

CHAUCER

Are you mad?! You knowingly endanger a member of the royal family!

WILLIAM

He knowingly endangers himself!

Wat hands him a new lance. He wheels to position. The flag comes up, goes down.

WILLIAM & COLVILLE

As both their lances shatter again.

CHAUCER, ROLAND & WAT

Watching.

ROLAND

We'll say William didn't know.

CHAUCER

But the Prince of Wales own herald told me.

WAT

We'll say you didn't tell us.

WILLIAM & COLVILLE

Meeting for the third time. Both lances shattering for the third time. They're both credited with three white flags.

MASTER OF ARMS

The match is a draw!

The Black Prince (Colville) rides over across from William.

THE BLACK PRINCE (COLVILLE)

Well fought as it was in Rouen,
Sir Ulrich.

WILLIAM

And you as well, Prince Edward.

The Black Prince lifts his visor, looks at Will.

THE BLACK PRINCE
 The word is out then?
 (William nods)
 Fie! There'll be no more sport
 for me. Till I dream up a new
 identity. Just as well...

The Black Prince pulls off the false beard he wears.

THE BLACK PRINCE
 It itched like the devil.
 (as William smiles)
 You knew me and still you rode?

WILLIAM
 It's not in me to withdraw.

THE BLACK PRINCE
 Nor me. Though it happens.

The Black Prince salutes William, turns and rides away.

CUT TO:

A 3-FOOT LONG GOLDEN LANCE

Being presented to William.

LOCAL EARL
 The winner of the mounted joust
 and tournament champion: Ulrich
 von Lichtenstein!

William holds the trophy up over head to cheers of the crowd. MOVE WITH him as he walks off into the wings. He tosses the lance grimly to the waiting Roland who stands with Kate and Wat.

WILLIAM
 Here. Melt it down. Sell it.
 Do whatever you do.

ROLAND
 (sarcastic)
 Yes, your majesty.

WAT
 You're champion, William.

WILLIAM
 I'm not champion till I defeat
 Adhemar! And Adhemar withdrew!

Chaucer arrives, ever the source of news.

CHAUCER

I have word. Adhemar was called back to the Free Companies. The Black Prince commanded it. He may be gone for the rest of the season.

William takes the news hard. Eyes smoldering, he strides away. As they all follow after him, the music comes up. "Gimme Some Lovin'" by the Spencer Davis Group.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOURNAMENT GROUNDS - DAY

Three quick shots of William riding from three different directions as he breaks three different lances on three different knights

SUPER: Bordeaux.

EXT. BANQUET HALL - DAY

William stands across from the LOCAL DUKE who holds a jewel-encrusted GOLDEN BOAR TUSK.

LOCAL DUKE

The winner of the mounted joust and tournament champion: Ulrich von Lichtenstein!

William nods glumly to the cheers, then starts to walk off.

LOCAL DUKE

Sir Ulrich!. Your prize.

William looks back. He forgot the boar's tusk. As he goes back to get it, Wat and Roland exchange a concerned look.

CUT TO:

A KNIGHT

As William's lance nearly takes his head off. The knight tumbles off the back of his horse, unconscious.

INSERT: Venice.

Riding back, William scans the appreciate crowd in the stands. Watching him, Roland turns to Chaucer.

ROLAND

Still he looks for Adhemar.

CHAUCER

He's looking for someone, but
it's not Adhemar.

ROLAND

Jocelyn...

CUT TO:

EXT. STOCKS - DAY

As a rotten zucchini is flung into the face of a KNIGHT IN THE STOCKS. You may recognize him as Roger lord Mortimer, one of the knights William defeated at Rouen. Mortimer's face is swollen from the beating he's taken in the stocks. Not to mention, his pride broken.

INSERT: Prague.

William, Wat, Roland, Chaucer and Kate watch from a distance.

CHAUCER

His patents of nobility were
questioned. Everything was as he
claimed except a third generation
on his mother's side was false.
And so, stocks and humiliation.

Sobering news indeed. As they consider the implications:

WILLIAM

I wonder how my father would've
felt if he could have heard me
introduced as another man's son.

ROLAND

He would've been proud, William.
Proud of what you've done.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - PRAGUE - DAY

As the crowd chants his name: Ulrich! Ulrich! Roland looks to Wat, amazed. The legend grows. Across from them, William's opponent, a knight with a GRYPHON BADGE, looks to his identically badged HERALD. Holy cow! It's Eustace: Sir Ector's herald from Flanders!

GRYPHON KNIGHT

Good God... Who is this knight?

Eustace shrugs. But then as he looks closer. Recognition!

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK ALLEY - PRAGUE - DAY

Where Wat and Roland complete fencing off another prize. The golden statue of a knight. As they count their sizable amount of gold coins.

VOICE

William! Wat! My long lost companions!

They look up, see Eustace standing there. This isn't good.

EUSTACE

How goes it with you?

ROLAND

We're well, Eustace. And you?

EUSTACE

Oh, very, very well. And William? How goes it with William? Or should I say Lord Ulrich.

WAT

Say a word and you're dead.

EUSTACE

For all your talk, Wat, murder was never in you.

ROLAND

What do you want?

EUSTACE

My five florins are long spent. I miss them. I've missed you. I want back in the partnership.

WAT

Go hang yourself.

EUSTACE

If that's how you feel... Look for your Lord Ulrich tomorrow. In the stocks.

Eustace starts away. Roland cuts him off.

ROLAND

Alright, damn your eyes. What do you want?

EUSTACE

My entitlement. One quarter of all winnings from here in.

(re: coins)

You can start with that lot. To
make up for prizes I've missed.

Exchanging a glance with Wat, Roland holds out the coins.
As Eustace cups his hands to receive them, Roland drops
them on the ground. Eustace just laughs.

EUSTACE

It makes no matter how I get it.
So long as I do get it.

As Eustace bends down to pick up the coins, Wat clubs him
over the top of the head. As Eustace drops out cold...

CUT TO:

EXT. VLTAVA RIVER - PRAGUE - NIGHT

Roland and Wat hand gold to a CAPTAIN of a ship loaded with
cargo including PILGRIMS. A long bundle rests nearby.

ROLAND

It's the strangest vow any
pilgrim has ever taken. To not
move or speak again until he
reaches Jerusalem.

The Captain looks from Roland, to the gold, then down at
the bundle. EUSTACE: bound, gagged and unconscious. He
motion to TWO of his CREW. As they load Eustace aboard:

CAPTAIN

Jerusalem it is.

The captain boards as well. As they throw the lines.

ROLAND

No need to worry Ulrich with this.

WAT

None at all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STABLES - DAY

Kate shoes horses. They now have four. Roland embroiders
a new phoenix badge. Wat polishes the armor. Chaucer,
meanwhile, is at work writing notes. Everyone content.

WAT

What do you scribble, Geoff? A
list of your debts?

GEOFF

Tales of knights and nobles. In Latin of course. I call them the Bristol Tales. It's one of the reasons I travel, Wat. To observe higher human activity.

William strides in with purpose.

WILLIAM

Geoff!

CHAUCER

Yes, sire!

WILLIAM

I need to write a letter.

CHAUCER

Alright... To who?

WILLIAM

Jocelyn. Make it, Dear Jocelyn. Then put in a bit about her beauty, how her eyes are amazing and then a poem or two.

CHAUCER

A love letter then?

ROLAND

No, a bill for lodgings and beer!

WILLIAM

Finish it with a bit to bring a tear and melt her heart, alright?

CHAUCER

No. I won't. Not a love letter.

Chaucer goes back to his notes leaving William incredulous.

WILLIAM

Why not?

CHAUCER

Because. Your love letter must come from your heart, not mine.

WAT

William. If you like, I'll kick master Geoff until he agrees.

CHAUCER

Kick me, fong me, I won't do it.

WILLIAM
 Fine. I'll do it. Will you
 scribble it for me at least?

CHAUCER
 Yes.

William sets a clean piece of parchment in front of him.

CHAUCER
 On parchment?

WILLIAM
 What else?

CHAUCER
 Vellum. Parchment is for edicts,
 decrees and death warrants.
 Vellum is for bibles, pardons and
 love letters. Scented of course.
 I have one sheet.

WILLIAM
 Good. Vellum. My dearest
 Jocelyn... I miss you.

Chaucer frowns, but dips his pen and prepares to write.

WILLIAM
 Hold! Is that wrong?

CHAUCER
 Your letter. It's up to you.

Desperate not to make a mistake, William looks to the
 others. Wat and Roland both shrug.

WAT
 Say something about her bosom.

ROLAND
 Yes, you miss her bosom.

CHAUCER
 Look above her bosom, William.

WILLIAM
 I miss her throat?

CHAUCER
 Higher! To the heavens.

KATE
 The moon at least. Her bosom
 was not that impressive.

WILLIAM

The moon. Hmm... It is strange to think... I haven't seen you since a month. I have seen the new moon... but not you. I have seen sunsets and sunrises, but nothing of your beautiful face.

He looks at them. They're stunned. Finally:

CHAUCER

Very good, William.

As Chaucer begins to write it down...

ROLAND

I once knew a girl who broke my heart. I used to say that the pieces were so small that...

CUT TO:

A PARAPET SOMEWHERE

With a verdant countryside as a backdrop, Jocelyn reads the letter to herself. Messenger Wat stands watching.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

(finishes Roland's words)
...the pieces of my shattered heart could be passed through the eye of a needle.

Jocelyn, affected, looks across at Wat.

JOCELYN

He writes as though I had died.

WAT

Yes, madame... He dies as well.

INT. STABLES - DAY

Still letter writing. Wat relates his own broken heart.

WAT

She used to cook for the Duke of York and I missed her like the sun misses the flower.

EXT. PARAPET - DAY

Jocelyn reading. Her voice then replaced by William's.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

Like the sun misses the flower
in the depths of winter.

WILLIAM'S VOICE

Instead of beauty to direct its
light to, the heart hardens like
the frozen world your absence
has banished me to.

INT. STABLES - DAY

The muse is in William's heart now.

WILLIAM

I next compete in the city of
Paris. I will find it empty and
in winter if you're not there.

CHAUCER

(scribbling)

I like it. Now to finish it...

KATE

With hope. The first man who
ever made my acquaintance told
me something I never forgot.

EXT. PARAPETS - DAY

Jocelyn reading.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

Hope guides me; it is what gets
me through the day and especially
the night. The hope that after
you're gone from my sight, it
will not be the last time I look
upon you.

Tears well in her eyes taking us back to:

INT. THE STABLES - DAY

Chaucer looks William, Wat, Roland and Kate over with
newfound respect.

CHAUCER

You're poets. All of you.

WILLIAM
 (moved himself)
 Finish it: With all the love
 that I possess... William.

CHAUCER
 You mean Ulrich.

William looks at him, regretting the name with each use.

EXT. PARAPET - DAY

JOCELYN
 (aloud)
 With all the love that I
 possess, I remain yours, the
 knight of your heart.

Jocelyn holds the letter to her belly. Beneath it all, an unabashed romantic. Wat waits a discreet beat. Then:

WAT
 My master hoped you might have
 something to send to in return.

As Jocelyn looks over at him:

CUT TO:

EXT. KING OF ARMS RING - PARIS - DAY

Chaucer has presented William's patents. He touches the shield indicating that Ulrich will compete in the joust.

INSERT: Paris.

William, Roland and Kate wait nearby. William looks at the emblem displays of knights already registered to compete.

WILLIAM
 No Adhemar.

They turn at the sounds of hoofbeats, shouting. Wat rides up on the palfrey, jumps down.

WILLIAM
 Did you see her? Did she read
 the letter?

WAT
 Yes and yes.

WILLIAM
 And?

WAT
(grinning)

Yes. She's coming to Paris.

William wants to scream out in happiness, but he suppresses it, just manages to hold it in.

WILLIAM
And did she give you anything in return? A letter? A token?

Wat suddenly doesn't want to talk about it; he nods glumly.

WILLIAM
Well...? Give it to me, Wat!

Cursing himself, Wat leans in, kisses William on the lips. William stands blinking a moment. She sent a kiss!

WILLIAM
Yes! Yes! Hell, yes!

William pumps his fist in the air in exultation. Wat spits on the ground. Roland sympathy spits. Watching, the Paris King-of-arms hands the patent papers back to Chaucer.

PARIS KING-OF-ARMS
His patents are impeccable. As for the rest of him... It's not for me to decide.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAVERN - PARIS - DAY

Roland, Wat and Kate stand in a corner opposite THREE FRENCH SQUIRES. Chaucer mediates in the middle.

CHAUCER
The wager they wish to make is that a Frenchman and not Ulrich will win the tournament. The amount is fifty florins.

KATE
That's all we've got.

CHAUCER
Yes. If we had sixty, the bet would be sixty.

ROLAND
Even money, but Ulrich against every Frenchmen here?

CHAUCER

Our lord Ulrich has won four tournaments in a row. And Adhemar once again is not here.

ROLAND

I check shields, too. John Beaumont is here. Count Theobald of Chartres. Philip of Burgundy. All three are French champions.

WAT

It's a good bet, Roland. Win and I could buy my own tavern.

CHAUCER

I could write full time.

KATE

And a forge for me.

ROLAND

Well I only wish to go home and I already have enough to make the trip a hundred times!

FRENCH SQUIRE ONE

An Englishman will not win this French tournament! English legs are unsteady on French soil.

FRENCH SQUIRE TWO

Yes, and because French wine is too much for English stomachs.

FRENCH SQUIRE THREE

And most importantly, because the Pope himself is French!

ROLAND

Well, the Pope may be French, but Jesus is English. You're on!
(to the phoenixes)
He won't lose. Not with the princess here watching him.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL - DAY

William waits, watches the people going into the cathedral. A nearby RELIC SELLER holds up a chicken leg to passerbys.

RELIC SELLER

Buy the foot of the cock!
 Withered in despair! Three times
 did St. Peter hear it crow!

Then, there she is. Jocelyn! With Christiana in tow. As they disappear inside, William hurries after them.

INT. ENTRANCE - NOTRE DAME - DAY

Jocelyn and Christiana both dip their fingers in the HOLY WATER basin, cross themselves before continuing inside.

William rushes in, sliding to a stop across the stone floor. He steps back, dips his fingertips in the water, then holds his hand only to his heart.

LEFT AISLE - NOTRE-DAME

Jocelyn pauses, framed by a magnificent stained glass window. William steps up quietly behind her.

WILLIAM

You favor cathedrals.

Jocelyn recognizes his voice, but doesn't turn.

JOCELYN

I come for confession.

(a beat)

And the glass. A riot of color
 in a dreary gray world.

(look to window)

Don't you think?

William stays focused on the side of her face.

WILLIAM

It's beautiful...

Christiana has the good sense to tiptoe away.

JOCELYN

A riot... I feel the same way
 about the letter you sent.

WILLIAM

I'm glad.

JOCELYN

Speak to me. Speak those words.

Unfortunately, William picks the wrong ones.

JOCELYN

Then you do not love me!

Every eye in Notre Dame is on them. They stand there like two tigers. Finally, furious, William turns and strides away. Jocelyn turns and strides the other way.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS LISTS - DAY

Chaucer finishing his intro of William. The crowd is very enthusiastic. This knight's reputation has preceded him.

CHAUCER

Keeper of the Flame of Aragon!
The lance that thrilled France!
The harrasser of Paraser!
Enforcer of the Lord God! Sir
Ullriccchh von Lichtenstein!

Big cheers from the French crowd. As Chaucer walks past the other herald, he shows a sheathed dagger.

CHAUCER

Would you kill yourself, or do
you actually mean to follow that?

Beyond, Roland and Wat attach William's helmet. He scans the crowd, spots a resplendent Jocelyn in the box seats.

As Roland lowers the visor on William's dark countenance:

JOCELYN

Sitting with Christiana, still pissed.

JOCELYN

His horses flanks!

CHRISTIANA

Oh my lady...

EXT. PARIS LISTS - DAY

William mounted on the chestnut, in position, lance in hand. Chaucer, moving back, winks at Roland and Wat.

CHAUCER

To wealth.

EXT. SCORER'S BOX - DAY

Anticipation huge as the start flag goes up. Then down!

WILLIAM'S OPPONENT

Spurs his massive horse forward.

ROLAND

Starts to run to follow William. But he runs past William who just sits there on his horse. Frozen like a statue.

ROLAND

What are you doing?!

WILLIAM

Losing!

ROLAND

I don't understand.

WILLIAM

Neither do I!

JOCELYN

Rising from her seat at the sight of William motionless, making no move to attack or defend himself.

WILLIAM

SMASH! His opponent breaks his lance on William's chest.

JOCELYN

As a smile blossoms. She grips Christiana's hand.

JOCELYN

He loves me.

WILLIAM

As his opponent goes back to his starting mark, he just sits there. Chaucer rushes out to join Roland and Wat.

CHAUCER

Are you blind? The flag.

WILLIAM
I saw it, Geoff!

WAT
I know! You want to drop behind
for a more dramatic victory!

WILLIAM
Jocelyn said that I should lose
to prove my love.

CHAUCER
(floored)
I would rather you were blind.

ROLAND
Don't be foolish, Will. Each
woman wants proof. That's all.

WILLIAM
Proof of what?

ROLAND
Proof that their legs have not
been uncrossed for nothing.

WILLIAM
But I haven't uncrossed her legs.

WAT
So why in the name of St.
Swithin are we doing this!?

WILLIAM
Because...

WHACK! The approaching opponent knight's lance shatters
across William's chest. As he continues past.

WILLIAM
I love her.

Music starts: "Get Ready" by Rare Earth. "Never met a girl
who makes me feel the way that you do... You're all right!"

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

As William gets the shit kicked out of him. Knight after
knight breaks a lance on his chest on his helmet. As he
just sits there, taking the battering with silent stoicism.

WAT

Trying to attack Chaucer. Restrained by Roland and Kate.

WAT

I'm going to lose everything!

CHAUCER

That's why it's called gambling!

KATE

It is very romantic though.

ROLAND

What are you, Kate, a woman or a blacksmith?!

JOCELYN

Watching William's battering. Smiling. Wincing. For all her beauty, never has a man done this for her.

CHRISTIANA

He loses all pride.

JOCELYN

And at the same time it swells
till it exceeds Achilles himself.

CUT TO:

INCOMPETENT KNIGHT

Trying to balance his lance. The start flag drops; he rides. The target of William grows closer. Out of control, Incompetent lowers his lance. Too low, it catches the ground, 'pole vaults' him out of the saddle. He crashes into the barrier like a car at the third turn at Indy.

Wat and Roland look at each other in amazement.

WAT

We win the horse!

As they rush out to retrieve the animal, William simply slips from his saddle, drops to the ground below. A draw after all. As Wat and Roland move to help him...

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL PAVILION - PARIS - DAY

Looks like an NFL training room. Knights sit with dislocated elbows and knees, muscle pulls, you name it.

William lays on a bench stripped to the waist, his lower armor still on as Wat and Roland tend to his black & blue body. Chaucer and Kate look on.

CHAUCER

I checked with the scorer. No one knight has distanced himself with victories yet. If you were to win your remaining matches and some of the others took key losses, who knows? You could make the semis, even the finals.

WAT

Have you proven your love yet?

Worn out, William shakes his head.

WILLIAM

Remember church as a boy, Wat? The fear, the passion? She makes me feel that. I say my rosary to Jocelyn and no one else.

WAT

William, that's blasphemy.

WILLIAM

Then may I burn in hell.

ROLAND

(can't take it anymore)
Withdraw! Lose that way! But don't take this beating!

A beat. Then they're suddenly aware that Christiana is standing there watching them. Roland composes himself, tries to look a little better.

ROLAND

Yes, m'lady?

CHRISTIANA

My lady sends this token.

She hands William a lock of Jocelyn's hair. A big deal in those days. But William doesn't actually think so at this moment. He's at wit's end and doesn't even look up.

CHRISTIANA

She says that if you love her --

WILLIAM

I know, I know. Lose. Isn't she watching?

CHRISTIANA

She says that if you love her,
you will not lose another match.
My lady says that if you love her
you will win this tournament.

A beat. William slowly raises his head. Beat to hell, but he suddenly has the eyes of a winner. Sometimes, and this is one of those times, William can burn like the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras. I love this guy...

WILLIAM

Tell her not to take her eyes
from me.

It's a charged moment and it leaves Christiana breathless.

CHRISTIANA

I will tell her exactly that.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - PARIS - DAY

William rides up into position. Chaucer joins him.

CHAUCER

Love is a wonderful, cruel thing.
(gesturing to stands)
But there she is. The embodiment
of love, your Venus.

WILLIAM

Yes... How I hate her. HAW!

As the flag drops, William spurs his horse forward leaving Chaucer scratching his head.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF THREE KNIGHTS

Each built like brick shithouses, 240 pounds plus of muscle, sinew and bone. They look smart and fierce as well.

INSERT: Count Theobald of Chartres. William shatters a lance across his chest.

INSERT: John Beaumont. William knocks his helmet off.

INSERT: Philip of Burgundy. William knocks Philip flat across the back of his horse.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Prizes are awarded. Wat, Kate, Roland and Chaucer stand with William. Chaucer and Roland are actually holding him up. As Wat snatches a pastry off a passing tray:

PARIS MASTER OF ARMS
And finally, for the mounted
joust and tournament champion.
Ulrich von Lichtenstein!

Wild applause. Chaucer and Roland release him, hope for the best. Stiff, but hiding his pain, William steps up, receives a crystal studded GOLDEN SADDLE. \$\$\$\$. He holds it over his head. Ouch! As he pivots, showing himself to the crowd, he makes eye contact with Jocelyn. Electricity between them. Finally, he rejoins his team.

WILLIAM
(low; to Roland)
My ribs have come apart again.
Shove them back.

Roland reaches under William's tunic, discreetly adjusts his ribs. We hear the crack, cartilage crinkle. As William tries to stay conscious and smile at the same time.

WILLIAM
Get me to the surgeon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PAVILIONS - NIGHT

Chaucer receives payment from three grumpy French squires.

CHAUCER
...49, 50. Nice doing business
with you. Look us up at the
World Championships in London.

MOVE WITH Chaucer as he walks off. Happily humming. Fat with cash. Ahead, William's tent, tri-phoenix on the side. As Chaucer nears, he stops short, steps back in a shadow.

The caped FIGURE OF A WOMAN slips in past the folds.

Chaucer watches her candle-lit form against the canvas. Sees the shadow of the cape drop to the floor, then the shadow of a second garment, leaving just the shadow of a nude woman. As the candle within is snuffed out: darkness.

CHAUCER
Guinevere comes to Lancelot...
Bed her well, Sir William.

Smiling, Chaucer moves off another direction.

CUT TO:

INT. INNER CHAMBER - WILLIAM'S PAVILION - NIGHT

A curtain separates the tent in two. William lies in a featherbed, a poultice on one eye, chest wrapped in bandages. Blood seeps from the bandage on his left forearm. Three fingers on his right hand are in splints.

A shadow slips into the room. William stirs, smells the air around him. As he grows aware.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

We missed you at banquet, Sir Ulrich.

WILLIAM

We?

JOCELYN'S VOICE

I. Jocelyn. Your prize.

William catches a glimpse as she slips between shadows.

WILLIAM

I am not worthy...

JOCELYN'S VOICE

Then who is? My maid says that sometimes your varlets call you William.

William doesn't answer. Another glimpse of her.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

Is this so, Sir Ulrich?

WILLIAM

Yes. It's so.

JOCELYN'S VOICE

Your name makes no matter to me. So long as I can call you my own.

WILLIAM

I am your own.

Sifting through the shadows, she slides under the blanket, into bed with him. She leans in, kisses him.

WILLIAM

(in pain)

Arghh! Damn, woman...

She pulls back, sees what a mess he is. Bruised bruises.

JOCELYN
You need a surgeon.

WILLIAM
He's been. He says I will live,
though it doesn't feel that way.

She leans in to gently kiss his bruises, face, neck, body.
His initial wincing gives way to little smiles of pleasure.

JOCELYN
This pain. It's my doing.

WILLIAM
My father always taught me to
take the bad with the good.

It hurts, but he leans up to kiss her back.

JOCELYN
This good you speak of. It will
be my doing as well.

She leans in. The kiss is long, soft and lingering. And
as we leave it to them and our imagination.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLAT BOAT - RIVER - DAY

Socked in with thick fog, neither bank is visible. Half a
dozen horses stamp nervously as misty tendrils cling at
them. TWO MEN pull at a rope running down the side,
ferrying the passengers across a river.

The passengers are Chaucer, Roland, Wat, Kate and off to
the side, William. All the baggage bears the tri-phoenix
badge. It's a long way from nothing. William stares at
one of the ferrymen. About 40, missing the three middle
fingers on his right hand. It doesn't stop him hauling.

CHAUCER
How long since any of you've
been back? I've only been gone
four months.

KATE
Two years for me.

WAT
Three for my eyes.

ROLAND
Five. Five long years.

William still stares at the man's hand.

CHAU CER
William?

WILLIAM
Eighteen years.

And as he says this... The man pulling the rope is suddenly in his early 20's. William is now young William, maybe 10. His father stands beside him carrying a bedroll.

'TWO FINGERS'
(to father; re: William)
He's to be apprenticed then?

William's father looks at Two Fingers, finally nods.

'TWO FINGERS'
How long then?

FATHER
Seven years.

Two Fingers nods, spits over the side. It is what it is. As they near the far shore, a KNIGHT waits with his retinue. They all wear a LEAPING WHITE STAG as a heraldic badge. If you remember, it's the device William wore in the opening.

FATHER
Sir Ector?

KNIGHT (SIR ECTOR)
Yes?

FATHER
I'm the thatcher. I spoke to you on the London Bridge.

SIR ECTOR
Yes, of course. This is the boy?

William's father looks at his son, then nods again.

SIR ECTOR
You've got most of your teeth?

William pulls back his lips in a grimace, shows his teeth.

SIR ECTOR
I'll show you a great wide world.
If you can pack a horse, lead it?

Frightened, William nods that he can. Sir Ector points to a palfrey with gear piled before it.

SIR ECTOR
Say goodbye to your father and
get started.

Sir Ector steps off to tend to something else.

FATHER
He's a real knight, William.
Watch and learn all you can.

William nods solemnly. His father sets down the bedroll, gets on one knee, embraces the boy. He chokes up.

FATHER
It's all I can do for you, son.
Now, go change your stars and
live a better life than I have.

William's father stands, steps back on the ferry. Two fingers pulls away. William watches, tears on his face.

WILLIAM
Father, I'm afraid!

Several of the varlets let out not-so-sympathetic laughs.

FATHER
Of what?

WILLIAM
That I won't remember how to get
home!

FATHER
Don't be foolish, William! You
just follow your feet!

William's father waves good-bye, disappears into the fog.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. FLAT BOAT - RIVER - DAY

Where eighteen years later the same ferryman is bringing William back, as the fog clears, to:

ROLAND
London...

There they are, the white walls of the tower, the urban sprawl of 'the city'. Kate nudges Chaucer, points out William who wipes tears from his face.

CHAUCER

Up, down, up, down. He's like a
bucket in a well.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOURNAMENT GROUNDS - LONDON - DAY

Located between St. Paul's and Cheapside. Construction still wrapping on parts of the grandstands. They are massive. They'll hold 10,000 people easy.

INSERT: London. THEN BENEATH THAT: The World Championships.

Knights sign up for events, presenting patents of nobility. As Chaucer does this for William, the LONDON KING-OF-ARMS hands the patents back without looking at them.

LONDON KING-OF-ARMS

No need to introduce Sir Ulrich.
A more noble knight we haven't
seen. In fact, I've got my
money on him. How's his health?

CHAUCER

Physically or emotionally?

As the King-of-arms tries to figure the answer out, Chaucer stops short, spots the emblem of an entered knight: a BOAR.

CHAUCER

Count Adhemar is entered?

LONDON KING-OF-ARMS

This morning.

CHAUCER

Bet everything you've got.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - LONDON BRIDGE - DAY

Like the Rose Bowl Parade. Each knight, armored but sans helmets, rides his finest horse, accompanied by his retinue of squires and varlets. The crowd cheers, vendors hawk.

RELIC PRIEST

Found in Turin! The shroud
which covered our Christ in the
tomb! Only two left!

William rides. Kate, William and Wat on foot around him. Crowd favorites, wearing their finest tri-phoenixes livery. A panoramic view of the city opens before them as they near

the end of the bridge. The 14th Century Tower and St. Paul's dominate. Emotion for William as he waves at a BOY who stands on the rump of a horse. Just like he once did.

CHAUCER

(rushing up)

News! News! Adhemar is here!

He's entered!

William clenches his fist. Yes! They slow as they come off the bridge, allowing others retinues to pass.

ROLAND

He must've grown bored with whatever war they're fighting.

CHAUCER

No. The Black Prince forced him to disband his army. They were pillaging town after town. Mercenaries waging an undeclared war for booty. Reveling the night, robbing, murdering...

ADHEMAR

(finishing it)

Committing the oldest sins in the newest ways.

They all look back to where Adhemar rides up. Coming alongside William, he bumps Chaucer away with his horse, almost knocking the herald on his ass. Still riding:

ADHEMAR

Sir Ulrich, at last we have the chance to face each other again.

WILLIAM

As I promised you before, Adhemar. You'll see me from the flat of your back.

ADHEMAR

(laughing)

Let the past die. You've done well in my absence. On the field and off I'm told. Winning trophies, horses, women...

WILLIAM

Do you put them in that order?

ADHEMAR

Generally. With a few exceptions.

Adhemar looks to the reviewing stand by St. Paul's. The Black Prince is there with his wife, the stunning JOAN OF KENT. Other nobles as well. And Jocelyn. The exception.

ADHEMAR

Beautiful. A real thoroughbred trophy. Don't you think?

WILLIAM

You talk about Jocelyn like she's a target.

ADHEMAR

Isn't she?

WILLIAM

No. She's the arrow.

Jocelyn sees William. Her smile is for him.

ADHEMAR

I've entered negotiations with her father. I aim to make her my wife. She will be saddled and placed on my mantle.

William looks at him a long beat, unable to respond. Adhemar pulse is, as always, under 60 as:

ADHEMAR

Target or arrow, it makes no difference; I will have her.

He says it with a simple, detached conviction that makes it frightening. Having said it, Adhemar spurs his horse away, nearly trampling Wat. As Roland and Kate restrain Wat from following, Chaucer looks at a very troubled William.

CHAUCER

Armor vincit omnia, William.
Love conquers all.

WILLIAM

Does it? Well, hatred doesn't do a bad job either.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - LISTS - LONDON - DAY

William vs. The Duke of Beaumont. William breaks his lance on Beaumont's helmet. Beaumont stays in the saddle, but he's out. The flags go up. William has won four to one.

Above, Adhemar watching with an old RETIRED KNIGHT.

RETIRED KNIGHT

So that's the Ulrich that's torn
up the tour... Magnificent.

ADHEMAR

What is his weakness?

RETIRED KNIGHT

I can't see one. Except youth.

ADHEMAR

What do you mean?

RETIRED KNIGHT

That I'm glad I'm old. His
youth means no one expects me to
take the field against him.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - LISTS - DAY

William vs. Maris Montacute. William's lance shatters on
Montacute's chest. William's won three flags to none.

Above, Adhemar watching with Jocelyn's brother from Rouen.

ADHEMAR

It seems he leans to the left.

BROTHER

No. It was only a reaction to
Montacute's committing his
strike to the right. This
Ulrich has had us.

ADHEMAR

How do you mean?

BROTHER

He obviously hid his talent at
the beginning of the season, so
that he could win more money
betting on himself.

ADHEMAR

But how would you beat him?

BROTHER

With a stick while he slept.
But on a horse? With a lance?
That man has become unbeatable.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Germaine stands watching with an UNKNOWN MAN as:

Stripped to the waist, physically awesome, Adhemar trains. Armed with a club, ringed by varlets holding shields, he whirls and swings furiously, landing one heavy blow after another. For no particular event, he's just getting off.

Straining against their shields, the varlets exchange glances. They don't like this. Adhemar finishes by side-stepping a shield and swinging the club into one of the varlet's leg. Breaking it. As the man howls...

ADHEMAR

Tend to him.

Wiping his brow, he joins Germaine and the unknown man.

GERMAINE

Count Adhemar, I present Arnold van Gennep, a merchant visiting us from faraway Gelderland.

Adhemar looks him over. Chubby, middle-aged, a merchant.

GERMAINE

Tell the Count what you told me.

MERCHANT

Happily. In Gelderland we have many fine jousts. But I have never heard tell of one Ulrich von Lichtenstein.

The words hang heavy in the air. Finally:

ADHEMAR

I'd like to have our noble Ulrich watched. Pick someone discreet.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAVILIONS - NIGHT

William, Roland, Kate and Wat walk, sharing a laugh. Roland stops short, places a beefy hand across the chest of the others to stop them short. As they follow his gaze:

Ahead, Chaucer hurries through the moonlight, naked except for an apple in his hand. Their chronic gambler disappears inside a tent. Disgusted, they hurry after him.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

As William, Roland, Kate and Wat charge in.

WILLIAM
Chaucer, how much did you lose!?

Naked Chaucer turns from the foot of a cot.

CHAUCER
What?

ROLAND
Gambling. Your clothes even!

CHAUCER
Not a penny. There lie my
clothes.

Indeed, Chaucer's clothes are heaped on the floor.

WAT
Then why are you out naked?

CHAUCER
If you must know, she was hungry.

WILLIAM
Who?

CRUNCH... The sheet pulls down just enough to reveal a slender, freckle-faced REDHEAD munching on an apple.

CHAUCER
I'd like you all to meet my
wife: Philippa Chaucer.

WAT
You lying shite.

PHILIPPA
You must be Wat. Your Roland.
Kate. And you? Will -- Ulrich.
Geoff's told me all about you.

They all stand there blinking. Philippa holds out the apple. Beautiful enough to be Eve in the garden.

PHILIPPA
Anyone like a bite?

Chaucer takes it from her. CRUNCH... He holds it out to the others, raises his eyebrows as if to ask, "Anyone?"

WILLIAM
Sorry to barge in, Mrs. Chaucer.

As they make their apologies and exits...

PHILIPPA
So much nicer than the pilgrims
you traveled with last year.
(he just looks at her)
What is it?

CHAUCER
Paradise, my dear, stands formed
in your eyes.

PHILIPPA
Come to bed, Geoff.

EXT. PAVILIONS - DAY

William, Roland, Kate and Wat continue, laughing at their mistake. Then they stop short again. There ahead, in the moonlight, Jocelyn stands with Christiana.

WILLIAM
Good night, Roland. Good night,
Wat. Kate.

William moves off to his right, Jocelyn to her left. As they meet, he takes her hand and they slip into the trees.

Christiana still stands there.

ROLAND
Good night, Wat.

Roland meets up with her. They head off. Wat and Kate are now all alone. Wat looks at her, smiles. A beat as Kate reaches into her pouch, pulls out a pastry dripping with clotted cream and honey. She hands it to Wat, then walks quickly away. Alone, Wat considers the pastry. He smiles.

WAT
Hello, beautiful...

CUT TO:

EXT. GROVE - NIGHT

All is a whirl as William and Jocelyn stand ringed by trees, exchanging tender kisses.

JOCELYN

If I could I'd move the trees.
Set them dancing around us. And
when they clapped their hands,
leaves would fall about us.

She does a slow whirl around him, clapping her hands,
dancing for him. It ends in another kiss.

WILLIAM

And I would move the stars.

JOCELYN

You already have. You took them
away from my eyes and made me
see you.

WILLIAM

Then I should move them back.

JOCELYN

Because of Adhemar?
(William nods)
You could talk to my father as
well.

WILLIAM

Hmmm...

JOCELYN

Or you could joust him for me.

William just grunts again. Jocelyn laughs. But she stops
when she sees just how far he is from joining her. She
slips a hand behind his neck.

JOCELYN

Don't be sad, William.

WILLIAM

No. You know what Chaucer says?
He says *amor vincit omnia*.

JOCELYN

Love conquers all... Do you
believe it?

WILLIAM

I don't know. Do you?

Jocelyn looks at him a beat, then shrugs. She doesn't know
either. As they look on each other beneath the moon...

CUT TO:

WILLIAM

Galloping the list. Inexorable. A wall of flames behind him. The phoenix. And we're back to reality as...

Roger V'Lereon is the umpteenth knight to have William's lance shatter across his chest. As he gasps for breath... William wins three flags to two.

CUT TO:

GERMAINE'S SPY

Reports in to Adhemar. We can't hear what he's saying, but as he grabs at the air, pumps his pelvis to signify sex, we get the idea. So does Adhemar who backhands him.

CUT TO:

COUNT ADHEMAR

Lowering his lance. Lest we forget the formidable jousting he is. It sounds like a crack of THUNDER as Adhemar knocks his opponent clear off the back of his saddle.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORM CLOUDS - ABOVE GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Lightning zigzags across the sky. And the deluge starts. As spectators flee the deluge. The rain comes in buckets.

EXT. LISTS - DAY

Where wet tournament officials measure the mud, shake their heads. This won't work. Various knights and their squires and varlets wait.

OFFICIAL

That's it, gentlemen! We're rained out for the day. All results to this point stand!

EXT. STABLES - DAY

Where the stable boys watch the rain drip down from the thresholds. In a stall, William saddles the chestnut. As he leads it out, Roland arrives.

ROLAND

Didn't you hear? We're canceled.

(smiles)
 You'll have to win the
 championship tomorrow.

WILLIAM
 I'm going riding.

ROLAND
 In this?

WILLIAM
 (mounts up)
 In this.

William rides out. As Roland watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON BRIDGE - DAY

London Bridge isn't falling down, but the rain is. William rides slowly down the bridge, his mood matching the weather. Looking about, a thousand memories flooding in. He rides past shops, each with a dwelling above. But only those who have to be are out. Until...

William reaches a spot where CHILDREN play the game of the day: TWO BOYS, facing each other, hang by their hands from a beam protruding out over the river.

The children cheer. One boy screams defiance at the other who hangs silently. The screaming boy finally lets go, dropping down into the water below. William leans out, sees that the boy is swimming for shore.

As William leans back up, he finds himself looking at a LONE BOY, crouched under an awning to stay dry.

WILLIAM
 Hello.

LONE BOY
 (in awe)
 You're -- you're Sir Ulrich von
 Lichtenstein.

William looks at his tunic's tri-phoenix, back to the boy.

WILLIAM
 Yes...

LONE BOY
 You're my favorite knight, Sir.
 When we joust I always say I'm
 you.

WILLIAM

Do you win?

LONE BOY

Of course, Sir. I couldn't say it if I didn't. But what are you doing here on London Bridge? There's no parade today.

WILLIAM

Can you keep a secret?

The lone boy nods solemnly.

WILLIAM

I was born on London Bridge.
(pointing)
Right over there.

LONE BOY

Truly, Sir Ulrich?

WILLIAM

Truly.

Amazed, the boy points a little further down.

LONE BOY

I only live just there.

WILLIAM

How old are you?

LONE BOY

Nine and one half.

WILLIAM

I wonder if you remember a man? Though he may have died before you were born. Tall as a knight. His name was John Thatcher.

LONE BOY

Of course I remember him.

WILLIAM

You do?

LONE BOY

Well, yeah. He lives there still.

The words hit William like a ton of bricks.

WILLIAM

John Thatcher. You're sure?

LONE BOY

The fish monger's wife looks after him. Sometimes we see him sitting in the window, but no one knows why.

WILLIAM

What do you mean?

LONE BOY

He's blind, sir...

WILLIAM

Take me to him.

The boy starts off with William following on the chestnut. Six doors down, watching out of earshot, is Germaine's spy.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRS - LONDON BRIDGE APARTMENT - DAY

Twisting, no building codes here. The boy leads William up. They stop below an open door at the top. William gives the boy a gold florin. His eyes go wide.

WILLIAM

Look after my horse.

LONE BOY

Yes, sir...

The boy bounds down the steps. And for the first time in a long time, William is scared. He stands there, until:

WILLIAM

Just follow your feet...

THE SOLAR

William's father, very old at 60, sits, his eyes milky with cataracts. Working by feel, he loops twine into a FISHING NET. This is how he gets by. He suddenly hesitates.

FATHER

Is someone there?

WILLIAM

Aye. May I come in?

FATHER

If you're here for the net, I haven't finished yet.

WILLIAM
 (remembers)
 There's no rain in the sky.

FATHER
 Certain there is. Who are you?

WILLIAM
 A knight. My name is... Ulrich.

FATHER
 What do you want?

WILLIAM
 I have word, Master Thatcher.
 Word of your son.

The only sound is water dripping from a leak in the roof.

FATHER
 Of my William? Come in, sir.

William enters. His father staring even though he's blind.

FATHER
 What word? Does he live?

William places his hand on his father's shoulder.

WILLIAM
 Oh yes. He's very well. He
 wanted you to know... he changed
 his stars after all.

William's father covers his face with his hands. It takes
 him a long time to find his voice again.

FATHER
 And has he found his way home at
 last?

WILLIAM
 Yes...

William's father reaches up, blindly touches William's
 chest, traces the emblem on his tunic, reaches up and
 touches his son's face.

FATHER
 Oh, William. Oh my boy...

And he cries. And just for a minute William is ten years
 old again. And as he melts into his father's arms...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINDOW - THE SOLAR - NIGHT

The rain falls. A warm glow shines from inside. No more crying. We hear laughter. Joy has shown its other face.

FATHER'S VOICE
I should like to meet this Wat.
And Roland, as well.

WILLIAM'S VOICE
You will, father. You will.

INT. THE SOLAR - NIGHT

William smiles to see his father laugh. Candles burn. There's food all around. Wine.

FATHER
And what of women? Is there a
certain one or many?

WILLIAM
There is a certain one.

A quiet beat. William looks up to the ceiling where the rain drips down.

WILLIAM
But this leak won't do, father!
Not in the chamber of a thatcher.

FATHER
(laughing)
For a blind thatcher it's quite
fitting.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANE - LONDON BRIDGE - NIGHT

Germaine's spy rides up, stops in the shadows. Count Adhemar rides up, stopping alongside him. The spy points up toward the lit window of the solar.

SPY
Up there, M'lord. All day long.

As Adhemar wonders, they see William climb out of the window, pull himself easily up onto the roof. Curiosity raging, Adhemar gives the spy his reins, dismounts.

ADHEMAR
Wait here.

INT. STAIRS - LONDON BRIDGE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Adhemar makes his way up. He reaches the top, looks in...

THE SOLAR

Where William's father sits alone. Drip, drip. Seeing he's blind, Adhemar enters. His feet creak on the floor.

FATHER

William...

William's father holds out his hand...

FATHER

Give me your hand, son.

Adhemar steps over, places his hand in the old man's.

FATHER

They're strong. But not scared
like a thatcher's. Truly,
you've the hands of a knight.

A creak overhead and then the dripping stops. Then:

WILLIAM'S MUFFLED VOICE

I think I did it, father!

William's father lets go, draws his own hands back.

FATHER

Who are you?

Adhemar smiles to himself, then quietly slips away out the door. William's father reaches out, but only touches air.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SKY OVER LONDON - MORNING

Dead gray and then a break in the clouds. Sunlight streams down like God himself was reaching down. Maybe he's got tickets to the tournament.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - LONDON LISTS - DAY

Flourishing fanfares from the trumpeters as spectators fill the seats. A glorious day for sport.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD GARDEN - DAY

Seen from above. Jocelyn walks silently among the blooms. In love. She smells one flower, puts another in her hair and twists the stem of a third between her fingertips.

Christiana enters with Adhemar in tow. She presents him with a half-apologetic shrug. Jocelyn smiles and dismisses her. As Christiana leaves, Adhemar begins to speak.

Serious, his best heavy-hearted news look on his face as he tells Jocelyn something. Her smiles fades as she listens. The flower slips from her hand, falls to the ground. She looks for a moment, like her knees are going to buckle.

Adhemar steps forward, places a hand on her shoulder. His foot crushing the flower as he does so. The lip readers in the audience will be able to make out: "I'm sorry."

The fire returns to her eyes as she looks back at him. And she slaps him! Hard enough to turn his face. Adhemar looks back; she slaps him harder. This girl's got an arm on her.

Jocelyn turns and walks out of the garden. Adhemar dabs at the blood running from his nose. So it goes for messengers.

INT. PAVILION - DAY

Kate nails a horseshoe onto the chestnut's hoof. Wat and Roland get an ebullient William's armor on and cinched, can't help but grin as he tells them:

WILLIAM

Alive! Can you imagine. And I thought he was dead, which is mad. He was always the strongest man on the bridge. Always! I remember once --

Chaucer enters with Jocelyn. They both look terrible.

WILLIAM

Geoff. Jocelyn. This day just gets better!

They just stand there; neither can bring themselves to tell him. As William catches the vibe, so does Roland:

ROLAND

Did someone die?

CHAUCER

Sir Ulrich von Lichtenstein. They'll bury him any moment now.

WILLIAM

What?

JOCELYN

Adhemar followed you last night.
To London Bridge. He says he
saw your father.

WILLIAM

He may have. I don't know.

CHAUCER

I was asked for your patents.
They're waiting at the lists.
They're going to arrest you.

William says nothing. He's eerily calm.

CHAUCER

I saw them myself. A dozen
royal guard. They'll take you
to the stocks in Cheapside.

WILLIAM

But I face Adhemar. In five
minutes time.

CHAUCER

No. It's a forfeit. They've
already marked it.

ROLAND

Saddle the horses! They can
arrest your baggage, not you.

As Wat and Kate begin to move:

WILLIAM

Hold!

(turns to Jocelyn)

What do you think? Now that you
know what I am.

JOCELYN

To know what you are, William,
would take a lifetime. One I am
most willing to give. But right
now, you must run. What else is
there to do? Run and I'll run
with you.

WILLIAM

I cannot run. I am a knight. I
will put myself to the hazard.

ROLAND

A knight in your heart, but not
on paper. And paper is all that
matters to them.

He just shakes his head, still can believe this.

JOCELYN

William, I love you. I love
you. And I won't see you led
away. Bound. For the stocks.

WILLIAM

But you would see me run? No.

JOCELYN

Goddamn your pride! You won't
see you run.

WILLIAM

My pride is the only thing they
can't take from me.

JOCELYN

Oh but they can. And will.
It's love they cannot take.

WILLIAM

And where will we live?! In my
hovel, with the pigs inside for
the winter so they won't freeze?

The tears on her cheek are heartbreaking.

JOCELYN

Yes. With the pigs, by God,
with the pigs!

(then softly)

The poor can marry for love.

WILLIAM

You speak of what you don't
know. There's more money in the
dress you wear than we would see
in a year. The poor don't have
time to love; they're too busy
trying to stay alive.

JOCELYN

(raw: open)

William, I beg you. Please.

He can't face her on that one; he turns to Roland.

WILLIAM
Roland, you would have me run?

ROLAND
(choked up)
Yes.

WILLIAM
And, Geoff? You?

CHAUCER
I beg it as well. With all the
pieces of my heart.

William turns to the toughest one of the bunch.

WILLIAM
Wat? Run? Are we runners now?

The tough little nut is actually crying.

WAT
Aye, Will. Today we are.

KATE
Run, William.

They're all in agreement, except:

WILLIAM
I will not run! For nothing!
For no one!

Furious, William fastens the last strap on his chest armor himself. Mounting his horse, he rides out. Roland, Chaucer and Wat exchange a look, a sigh, then hurry after him. Jocelyn watches him go.

JOCELYN
I want to fly away from him.
But if he didn't follow, I think
I would die.

Kate puts a comforting hand on Jocelyn's shoulder, then hurries after William herself. Leaving Jocelyn all alone.

CUT TO:

HERO SHOT

William riding toward us, flanked by Chaucer, Roland, Wat and Kate. They look grim. They also look as noble as the Royal family itself. And as they ride out onto the list...

LONDON KING-OF-ARMS

Turning, watching with contempt, then moving to intercept William as he takes the starting position. Accompanied by another official and soon after the DOZEN ROYAL GUARDSMEN.

LONDON KING-OF-ARMS

You will remove yourself from this position of honor.

WILLIAM

I am here to compete.

LONDON KING-OF-ARMS

You are here to be arrested.

The king of arms takes hold of the reins. William shoves him back. It ends less than nobly, with half the royal guard hauling William from his horse, the other holding Wat and Roland and Kate back as William is taken forcibly away.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL - DAY

William alone. Arms bound to a wooden pole that runs across his back. The cell door opens. Adhemar enters.

Carrying a wooden club, Adhemar picks up a piece of straw off the cell floor, holds it out for William to see.

ADHEMAR

He that strives to touch a star,
oft stumbles at a simple straw.

Adhemar waits for an answer. William looks away, is going to give as little satisfaction as he possibly can.

ADHEMAR

You have been weighed.

WHUMP as Adhemar swings the club into William's side.

ADHEMAR

Measured.

WHUMP! He swings it in again.

ADHEMAR

And found wanting.

A final swing drops William to the ground. Finally Adhemar's pulse is over 60. As he turns, exits...

CUT TO:

EXT. STOCKS - CHEAPSIDE - DAY

An ugly, albeit boisterous, crowd has gathered. Most have something in hand to throw. As William is placed hands and head in the stocks, a STREET CORNER PRIEST announces:

S.C. PRIEST

From the devil he came and to
the devil he will go!

The crowd cheers. William looks broken more in spirit than body. The guardsmen step away. He's fair game now. But there's a rhythm to it. First come the taunts. The sad thing is, they're going after one of their own.

Standing to one side FIVE HOODED MONKS stop to check it out.

One exuberant youth rushes out of the crowd, cuffs William on the ear then dashes back. He's applauded. But as he rushes back to do it again, he bounces off Roland's chest.

Roland has stepped out in front of the stocks, a HEAVY CLUB in his hand. He's anything but a big, gentle seamstress now. The youth scrambles back to the safety of the mob. Suddenly, Roland just howls at them. As they quiet...

WILLIAM

Leave me, Roland, I won't have it.

ROLAND

God love you, William. So do I.

A YOUNG MAN flings a rock. Reacting instinctively, Roland swings the club, WHACK!, sending a line drive over their heads which smashes through a window. As Roland considers the club, amazed, Wat appears ballistic.

WAT

Go! Disperse! Or I will fong
each and every one of you, as
Jesus Christ the Nazarene and
his mother the most Holy Virgin
Mary are my witnesses, I will
fong each and every one of you
up the hole of your arse!

A BEHEMOTH steps from the crowd, looms, eclipsing Wat.

BEHEMOTH

What was that?

Wat socks his nose. Behemoth covers it with both hands.

BEHEMOTH

You broke my nose...

WAT

Good. Then you won't feel this.

Wat kicks him in the balls for all he's worth. ANOTHER ANGLE as Behemoth falls away to reveal the little mixer.

Chaucer appears alongside William And Kate is here as well, a forge hammer in either hand.

CHAUCER

It may be, William, that the purpose of your life is to serve as a warning to others.

The crowd is really starting to feel dangerous now. It's two hundred vs. four as Wat, Roland, Chaucer and Kate link arms, form a human shield in front of William.

The crowd closes. A hunk of rotten vegetable sails overhead, splats on a wall beyond. A stick pinwheels by after it. But our four stand firm; it's all for one time.

CHAUCER

Listen to me! Listen! We're cut from the same cloth you and us!

A hunk of some old food sails in, splats across Chaucer's chest. The crowd laughs with a kind of killer instinct.

Chaucer dabs at his chest, takes a taste, looks up.

CHAUCER

Mother? Is my mother here?! I'd recognize that taste anywhere.

That gets a genuine laugh from the crowd. Chaucer seizes it. As he pretends to search for her...

CHAUCER

You at least go home, mum! I'll tell you tonight how it turns out!

Another laugh, even the five hooded monks seem to chuckle.

CHAUCER

I hope it's good news, mum! I hope I can tell you that I convinced these good people to leave my lord William unharmed! Or at least not to hurt him any worse than he already is. For I have never seen a heart like the one that beats inside this man! Great it is with all the virtues risen of pride! Forthright and

free! Courageous and constant!
 And most of all filled with hope!
 At least until today. And what
 fills it now? I don't know for
 he won't speak of it.

Chaucer looks back at William who finally looks up from the ground to one who has proven to be a most loyal herald.

CHAUCER

I ask! What makes a man noble?
 His lineage or his heart?!

VOICE IN THE CROWD

His heart!

CHAUCER

Of course! Thank you, mother!
 You can go home now!

Warm laughter. Chaucer has them in the palm of his hand.

CHAUCER

And what are the knightly
 virtues? And who may possess
 them!? My Lord was born poor!
 On London Bridge! But he is as
 true as steel! No truer! For
 he is like gold to me and to all
 who truly know him.

Affirmative nods from William's assembled body guards.

CHAUCER

And you people would come here
 and see him rust. For shame.
 For shame. For if gold would
 rust, what should iron do?

The words echo across the silence. Indeed, they do feel shame. Chaucer may have saved him.

CHAUCER

Leave him now. Leave him to his
 sorrow. Isn't that enough?

VOICES IN CROWD

Ulrich! Ulrich!

CHAUCER

His name is William!

"William!" it is. Another voice takes up his name and soon they're chanting it, stomping their feet, like they did in the grandstands. Wat steps to Chaucer, embraces him.

And then... The five monks start forward, one in the lead. He flings off his cowl and cape with a flourish. It's Edward the Black Prince! The other four: knights of his household. A BUZZ runs the crowd as he's recognized. He looks at them all, finally resting his eyes on William.

THE BLACK PRINCE

What a pair we make. Both trying to hide who we are. Both unable to do so... Your men love you. If I knew nothing else about you, that it would be enough.

(to guard)

Release him.

William is unlocked from the stocks. The Black Prince motions him over.

THE BLACK PRINCE

Please.

William steps over, moving like a man recently beaten with a club. The Black Prince looks to the crowd, wings it.

THE BLACK PRINCE

He may appear to be of humble origins, but my personal historians have discovered he is descendent from an ancient royal line! This is my word and as such is beyond contestation!

The Black Prince draws his sword, looks to William.

THE BLACK PRINCE

If I may repay the kindness you once showed me. Take a knee.

It hurts, but William manages to get to one knee.

THE BLACK PRINCE

By all the witnesses here, I dub thee... Sir William!

Edward touches his sword flat to both William's shoulders, knighting him. He then gives William a hand to his feet.

WILLIAM

Thank you, lord.

THE BLACK PRINCE

Can you joust?

WILLIAM

What?

THE BLACK PRINCE

There's my tournament to finish.
Now are you fit to compete or
shall the forfeit stand?

WILLIAM

I'm fit.

THE BLACK PRINCE

I'll have your opponent informed
of it. To the lists!

As William turns in disbelief to Wat and Roland...

CUT TO:

EXT. LISTS - WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS - LONDON - DAY

S-R-O. The place is rocking. The Black Prince takes the
royal box. At one end of the list Germaine introduces...

COUNT ADHEMAR

As Germaine drones, Adhemar is on foot conferring with his
squire and varlets. They're in a circle examining a lance.
Adhemar looks at the coronel on the tip.

ADHEMAR

Are you sure?

VARLET

Aye. It's nothing but spun
sugar and boot black.

Adhemar puts his fist around the coronel. It turns to dust
in his hand revealing a lethal-looking point. Adhemar
casually snaps off the tip so no one sees.

ADHEMAR

Bring me another.

As Adhemar mounts his remarkable black horse...

WILLIAM

Staring up in the stands. The seats Jocelyn usually
occupies are empty. She's not here.

William tries to get up on the chestnut, but it hurts. As
Wat and Roland get him into the saddle...

Chaucer hands him his lance.

CHAUCER

It's a small target, Will, but
aim for his heart.

COUNT ADHEMAR

Given his lance as well. We just see him smile at his
cruel secret before lowering his visor.

THE BLACK PRINCE

Nods at... A Tourney official who drops the start flag.

LISTS

And we're overhead, dropping down as the two riders hurtle
for the point of impact. William's lance deflects unbroken
off Adhemar's armor, even as Adhemar lance penetrates
William's armor.

William howls as the lance shatters, leaving the last two
feet sticking out of William's right shoulder. As William
corkscrews off to the left...

One flag goes up for Adhemar, none for William.

Wat and Roland catch up to William. He's in agony although
it doesn't look lethal.

ROLAND

I'll fetch the surgeon, Will.

WILLIAM

No. You're the surgeon now.
(Roland hesitates)
Be quick.

Roland reaches up, wrenches the head of the lance free.
William shudders, but holds. Roland touches a fingertip to
the bloody, very sharp point. Wat looks back over his
shoulder to where Adhemar waits back in position one.

WAT

Dirty sonuvabitch...

WILLIAM

To one. Get me to one or I
forfeit.

As Roland leads William back to the starting point, Wat
rushes over to a FIELD OFFICIAL.

EXT. ADHEMAR - LISTS - DAY

The field official steps over to Adhemar who waits, 2nd lance in hand.

FIELD OFFICIAL

I'm sorry, Count Adhemar, but
your opponent has bid me examine
your coronal.

With disdain, Adhemar lowers his lance. The field official grabs hold, tries to wrench it off. Legitimate, it doesn't budge. As the field official waves the protest off...

WILLIAM

Receives his lance from Wat. They set the end in the cradle. But as William tries to grip, he winces in pain.

WILLIAM

I can barely grip it.

Wat and Roland don't know what to say. With the shoulder wound, the arm is barely functional.

TOURNEY OFFICIAL

Drops the flag.

LISTS

The two knights ride at each other. As William lowers his lance, he can't control it. As it pitches wildly...

SHATTER! Adhemar's lance breaks squarely, cleanly, and most of all, heavily across William's chest.

Once again Wat and Roland rush over. William's armor is caved in. He pulls off his helmet, in great discomfort.

WILLIAM

Can't breathe. Can't --

Wat and Roland reach up, undo the straps to remove the breast plate. William's tunic is bloody on the right side. It's two flags to none as Adhemar reins up across the list.

ADHEMAR

If you'd like to keep your honor,
I'll ride the third pass clean so
you won't have to withdraw.

Only his eyes give away that he's mocking. But then, Chaucer is there.

CHAUCER
William. She's here!

Chaucer points: Jocelyn makes her way down to her seats with Christiana. Between them, they lead William's father!

CHAUCER
She bids you wear this token.

Chaucer holds up a short surcoat. Embroidered in the middle: a HEART with a CROWN over it. Beneath it the words: *armor vincit omnia*. Love conquers all.

William looks at Adhemar.

WILLIAM
Let's dance you and I.

Adhemar nods, wheels, starts back to one.

WILLIAM
(re: surcoat)
Help me with it.

They get it on him. It looks good. And it hides the blood. As Wat leads the horse back to one.

ROLAND
It's two lances to none. You must unhorse him or kill him. That's the only way to win.

WILLIAM'S POSITION ONE

As William turns to face Adhemar.

WILLIAM
My lance!

ROLAND
Your breastplate first.

WILLIAM
No. I can't move in it.

Wat gives the lance to William who nearly drops it.

WILLIAM
Lash it to my arm... Do it.

Wat and Roland exchange an awful look. As Roland nods, William closes his hand around it. As they start to bind a long strip of rawhide around his hand and forearm...

ADHEMAR

Sits on his horse. His squire slides a piece of wood into a slot in the back of the saddle. It raises the back six inches. No way Adhemar's getting knocked off this horse.

IN THE GRANDSTANDS

The crowd is going crazy as Chaucer steps before it.

CHAUCER

Lords! Ladies! People! I've
been remiss in my introduction!
May I present my lord! Born on
London Bridge and here before you
now! William Thatcher! Son of
John Thatcher!

Jocelyn takes William's father's hand in hers.

LISTS

William hadn't expected it. Invigorated by the words, he rides to his start position under big applause.

TOURNEY OFFICIAL

He raises the flag. Trumpets blow and down it comes!

ADHEMAR

Digs in, heaves forward. Ready to crush any living thing.

WILLIAM

Riding. His helmet jostling. He flings it off with his left hand, continues. His life flashes by with each stride.

A flash of the boy watching the parade from the back of the horse is superimposed for a moment.

YOUNG WILLIAM'S VOICE

Someday I'll be a knight.

TOOTHLESS' VOICE

The son of a thatcher? You might
as well try to change the stars.

A flash of William, Wat and Roland at the crossroads.

ROLAND'S VOICE

God love you, William. No one
else will.

A flash of Jocelyn, the first time William saw her in the
streets of Rouen.

WILLIAM'S VOICE

She makes me feel like a poet.

William grits his teeth, leans into his lance.

CHAUCER'S VOICE

Enforrrcerrr of the Lord God...

A flash as for a moment William is a ten year old boy on
horseback, lance and all.

YOUNG WILLIAM'S VOICE

Father, look. The stars.

FATHER'S VOICE

Change them, William. Change
yours.

And the boy is a man again, his lance exploding across
Adhemar's chest. It's that zen thing about the archer
actually aiming at himself.

ADHEMAR

Villains get their comeuppance in movies at least. As the
back of his saddle snaps off and he tumbles head over heels
off the rump of his horse. He falls in slow motion as we
flash forward to the near future where Wat leans over him.

WAT

You have been weighed.

Roland leans over him. The smile is huge.

ROLAND

You have been measured.

Chaucer leans over him.

CHAUCER

And you absolutely have been
found wanting.

Finally William. Only now Adhemar is locked in the stocks.

WILLIAM

God save you if it is right that
he should do so.

Return to real speed as Adhemar connects with the
tournament ground like a 200 pound sack of potatoes.

THREE WHITE FLAGS

Go up for William. He's won!

THE CROWD

Goes nuts!

THE BLACK PRINCE

Smiles, laughs to himself.

WILLIAM

Rides back, high fives Roland and Chaucer and Kate with his
left hand while Wat cuts the lance handle off his right.
Then he turns and rides toward the grandstands.

Chaucer shares a monumental decision with Wat and Roland.

CHAUCER

I will not write my tales in
Latin. But in English! Write
them about common people as well
as knights and nobles.

ROLAND

The hell are you talking about?

CHAUCER

Don't you see, Roland? All
human activity lies within the
artist's scope. All of it!

WAT

What he's saying is, there's no
translation in Latin for: I'll
fong you up the hole in your arse.

CHAUCER

Exactly.

STANDS

William reaches in from his horse to embrace his father.
Then he looks to Jocelyn, gravely, humbly.

WILLIAM

To know you would take two life-
times. Could you ride with me
now so that I may begin to learn?

JOCELYN

Of course. But I'm really quite
simple.

Then he pulls Jocelyn onto his horse, kissing her forever.
And as they ride across the length of the list to the
cheers of the adoring crowd, what else?

Gary Glitter's "Rock and Roll #2."

Freeze Frame.

Roll Credits.

The End.