

CENTURION

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1 **ANCIENT MAP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

1 *

CAPTION:

*AD 117
The Roman Empire stretched from Egypt to Spain,
from the Black Sea to northern Britain.*

FADE OUT.

We move over the MAP, north-west, toward ancient Britain.

CAPTION:

*Here, on its farthest frontier, the onslaught
of invasion and conquest ground to a halt.*

DISSOLVE TO:

2 **AERIAL - SCOTLAND**

2

We glide over rugged mountains and deep valleys...

CAPTION:

*In this unforgiving land, the Roman army
encountered an adversary unwilling to yield.*

FADE OUT.

CAPTION:

*This enemy used stealth against might,
striking from the shadows and preying upon the
superstitions of the invaders.*

FADE OUT.

CAPTION:

They were known...as the Picts.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO BLACK.

3 **EXT - INCHTUTHIL - ROMAN OUTPOST - NIGHT**

3

CAPTION:

*INCHTUTHIL
Most northerly garrison on the frontier.*

FADE OUT.

SNOW is falling. It's cold, bleak and desolate.

WE CRANE down through the white flecks towards a ROMAN CORPORAL
or 'OPTIO', called **QUINTUS DIAS** standing upon the palisade.

*

(CONTINUED)

QUINTUS stares out into the black night, his hot breath clouding in crisp air, he's alert and watchful. *

A few braziers are placed irregularly along the palisade. Soldiers huddle around them, clinging to the warmth.

The wind blows hard. Standards flap, rusting hinges creak, armour chinks and rattles. Horses move restlessly. QUINTUS tenses. His hand finds his sword, second-nature. *

He relaxes as his superior approaches: CENTURION GRATUS.

CENTURION GRATUS
Optio Dias. *

QUINTUS
Good evening Centurion Gratus. *

CENTURION GRATUS
What's good about it? It's too damned cold to be standing watch. *

QUINTUS
It's not my watch. *

GRATUS gives him a curious look... *

CENTURION GRATUS
You're a good soldier, Quintus, but you must have screwed the wrong senators daughter to wind up here...the arsehole of the empire? *

QUINTUS
...I volunteered. *

GRATUS
Did the Goddess Minerva abandon your senses?! No man ever volunteered for this post. *

QUINTUS
(smirks to himself)
I wanted to see the last frontier ...before all the world is Rome. *

GRATUS
If you came for glory you'll find none here. Too many good men have died for this wet, worthless rock already. These Picts do not fight a man's war. *

QUINTUS
Rome will overcome. *

GRATUS

Right, and your tan will soon fade.

*

QUINTUS

*

Good night sir.

Gratus watches QUINTUS walk down into the centre of the FORT, past a huddle of soldiers, exchanging greetings...to his tent.

*

ON THE PALISADE - GRATUS pulls aside his skirts and takes a piss over the fortifications.

CENTURION GRATUS

Picts....I piss on the lot of em!

SUDDENLY, out of the darkness comes a PICT WARRIOR, daubed in blue woad, his hair stiffened with lime white into spikes.

Caught, mid-flow, GRATUS is helpless to prevent the PICT's SPEAR from skewering his groin.

A GUARD on the palisade turn to the fort and calls out...

*

GUARD

*

SOUND THE ALARM!

*

The fort is manned by 20-30 ROMANS. They scatter for their weapons and one of them rings the alarm bell. In the panic, the brazier is kicked over, setting ablaze to several tents.

*

MARCUS emerges from his tent as a ROMAN SOLDIER runs to and rings the alarm bell, only to be silenced by a flying AXE!

*

*

Caught unawares, the ROMANS are helpless against the SPEARS and BATTLE AXES of the PICTS. One ROMAN rushes out of his burning tent only to have his head taken clean off.

QUINTUS grabs a young RECRUIT and steers him toward the HORSES.

*

QUINTUS

*

Ride to Agricola! Get help! GO!

He helps the boy onto his horse and runs to open the GATE.

QUINTUS hacks down another PICT, opens the GATE and gives the horse a hard slap as it gallops past, away into the night.

*

Turning his attention back to the fight, QUINTUS watches helplessly as 10-20 PICTS surge over the walls and jump down into the compound, slaying anyone who gets in their way.

*

*

QUINTUS runs for the palisade as the PICTS rampage through tents, killing the ROMANS as they wake, setting fire to the wooden fort.

*

QUINTUS fights his way up the steps to the palisade, cutting *
down any PICT that gets in his way. He battles through to *
CENTURION GRATUS and crouches beside.

GRATUS

...Save yourself.

QUINTUS

Save your breath.

A giant PICT GENERAL jumps over the palisade behind QUINTUS who *
turns and rises to meet him. *

The PICT swings a war club into QUINTUS' guts sending him flying *
from the PALISADE down into the fort.

QUINTUS lands, bleeding and bewildered as the mammoth man steps *
over him, covered in ROMAN blood. He raises his club to deliver *
the coup de grace.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

Go to hell!*

** ALL DIALOGUE IN ITALICS TO BE SPOKEN IN PICT AND SUBTITLED*

He freezes. Then grabs QUINTUS by the throat and hauls him to *
his feet, head butts him and shoves him to 2 more PICT warriors. *

PICT GENERAL

I want this one ALIVE!

QUINTUS is dragged away as the PICT GENERAL surveys the carnage *
and lets rip a guttural war cry and then joins the other PICTS, *
stealing the horse and fleeing back into the darkness as quick *
as they came. *

The fort left to burn in their wake.... *

4 EXT - ROMAN HQ - DAY

4

VFX wide - A lone horseman gallops at speed toward and through
the gates of a large ROMAN citadel.

CAPTION:

CARLISLE

Headquarters of Julius Agricola, Governor of Britain.

FADE OUT.

5 INT - AGRICOLA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

5

*

AGRICOLA

ENOUGH!

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

AGRICOLA's temper isn't helped by a streaming cold. But his eyes burn at his war council of grizzled old Generals.

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

We have superior troops, superior weapons, superior tactics. So can anyone tell me why THEY ARE WINNING?

GENERAL TESIO

The Pict King, Gorlacon, has united the tribes against us. He has four thousand warriors at his command...

GENERAL ANTONINUS

And yet he refuses to fight like a soldier.

AGRICOLA

Gorlacon! Gorlacon! All I hear is Gorlacon. He's ten feet tall. He devours children. He's no man, but a beast! And with each ambush, each night assault, his legend grows while our morale diminishes. ...Something decisive must be done NOW.

GENERAL CASSIUS

Strengthen the frontier forts. Reinforce the garrisons. Show them we're not going anywhere.

AGRICOLA

I said decisive, not defensive.

GENERAL ANTONINUS

I say we send in an entire legion, wipe them out, settlement by settlement, until no Pict dares to oppose us.

AGRICOLA

Now we're getting somewhere.

GENERAL TESIO

But sir, the legions are stretched thin.

AGRICOLA

So is Rome's patience!

The Generals consult the map board, scrabbling for solutions.

GENERAL ANTONINUS

The Second and Fifth Legions are still fighting in the Rhineland.

GENERAL CASSIUS

The Eleventh has been despatched to Syria.

(CONTINUED)

DRUSILLA (O.S.)

Then send in the Ninth.

All eyes turn to see AGRICOLA's young wife, DRUSILLA. An icy beauty, her blue blood runs cold. They both love power, if not each other.

AGRICOLA

My beloved Drusilla... Impeccably timed as ever.

Swiping away the scrolls to reveal a rough MAP OF NORTHERN BRITAIN, he places a CARVED WOODEN MARKER over the fort at YORK.

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

The Ninth are marshalled at York, five days' march away. Trust my wife to provide the perfect solution.

GENERAL TESIO

But sire, they've only recently returned from fighting in Iberia. The men will be in no condition to mount a fresh campaign.

DRUSILLA

Did they win?

GENERAL TESIO

Yes, my lady. A conclusive victory.

DRUSILLA

Well then, while I gladly leave the maps and chess games to the generals, I do claim to know a thing or two about MEN. ... A warrior's appetite for glory is never satisfied. Their blood will still be boiling from the fire of war. *They will relish the chance to crack a few Pict skulls.*

*
*
*

AGRICOLA

Hah! I'll make a general of you yet!

(to the men)

Tesio, what is the current status of the Ninth?

*
*

GENERAL TESIO

They're at two thirds strength, but they still have the advantage...General Titus Flavius Virilus, the hero of Spain.

6 INT - TAVERN - YORK GARRISON - NIGHT

6

ECU - TITUS FLAVIUS VIRILUS' eyes straining as we PULL OUT to reveal he is ARM WRESTLING with another man.

Battle-hard and battle-smart, he is a talisman to his troops. *

Behind him [to the death], his men cheer on their leader:

MEN

VIR-IL-US VIR-IL-US VIR-IL-LUS!

Leading the cheers:

- CENTURION SEPTUS: Virilus's loyal war dog, bark and bite. He'd gladly die for his boss and has the scars to show.

- BOTHOS: part man, part bear. A good man to watch your back.

- THAX: Civilian life wouldn't suit him: they don't let you kill people.

The GENERAL forces his opponent's arm to the table and, drunk on victory, he roars, fists raised. His opponent, a MERCENARY, isn't best pleased.

OPPONENT

Again!

All eyes are on VIRILUS as he eyes the angry man opposite.

VIRILUS

Enough! You put up a good fight now share a drink with me! Centurion Septus, more ale!

Septus sets a jug of ale in front of VIRILUS. VIRILUS offers his OPPONENT the jug but the man swipes it aside.

OPPONENT

Again, Virilus!

VIRILUS

You're drunk. An ugly drunk.

As VIRILUS turns away, his opponent slams a dagger in the table.

SEPTUS

And not too bright.

OPPONENT

Again, damn you!

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

VIRILUS

Isn't ten times enough to know when
you're BEATEN?

His OPPONANT looks him in the eye, and VIRILUS stares back,
sizing him up, before offering his hand.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

One more.

The crowd goes wild as they clasp hands.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Centurion Septus, your ruling.

(quiet aside)

And watch my flanks.

Septus nods to his men: Bothos downs his drink; Thax slips a
knuckle-duster onto his hand.

In seconds VIRILUS SLAMS his opponent's hand onto the table.

SEPTUS

Virilus wins, fair and square!

His OPPONENT is furious but VIRILUS holds his hand down.

VIRILUS clocks him looking at the DAGGER but before he can make
his move, VIRILUS grabs the dagger with his free hand and
skewers his OPPONENT'S arm to the table.

The man screams in rage at VIRILUS who grabs the man's hair and
smashes his face down onto the table, knocking him senseless.

VIRILUS

Sore loser.

The man's comrades stand up, itching for payback.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Centurion....charge.

SEPTUS

What are you waiting for, an order?! GET
STUCK IN THERE!

The two sides charge at each other. Flagons are smashed, tables
fly, men fly, chaos ensues as WE leave them to it.

7 EXT - VIRILUS' TENT - DAWN

7

VIRILUS pulls his head from a trough of icy cold water.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

VIRILUS

Damn that'll sober a man up quick!

(to Septus)

When are people going to learn not to mess with the Ninth?

Septus yanks out a loose tooth, flicks it away.

SEPTUS

You know General, some say its irregular for you to be drinking with the men of the Legion.

VIRILUS

Septus my old friend, you forget, I AM a man of the Legion!

VIRILUS washes the blood out of his mouth, spits it out...onto a mans boot... The boot's WEARER looks down in disdain, clearly mistaking Virilus for a common soldier.

CARLISLE MESSENGER

Soldier, have you been fighting?

VIRILUS

Fighting is my job.

CARLISLE MESSENGER

You men of the Ninth Legion are a disgrace to the uniform. A rabble of drunken thugs. I have a message for your General, now point me in his direction before I have you flogged!

VIRILUS

Who are you? So I know whose widow to send the flowers to.

CARLISLE MESSENGER

I am the personal envoy of Governor Agricola.

Virilus and Septus exchange glances.

VIRILUS

Then I suggest you get down off your horse and deliver your message before I have you flogged!

(aside to Septus)

Centurion....!

SEPTUS snap to attention at VIRILUS' side.

SEPTUS

General, sir!

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

The MESSENGER quickly grasps his mistake and hands over the SCROLL. VIRILUS quickly reads it as the MESSENGER quakes in his boots.

VIRILUS

Leave is cancelled. Alert the senior legates to break camp and prepare the men.

SEPTUS

Yes sir!

CARLISLE MESSENGER

General, sir, please forgive my presumption. It was....

VIRILUS

(cuts him off)

Return to Agricola at once. Tell him we ride out within the hour.

CARLISLE MESSENGER

Yes General!

The MESSENGER jumps back on his horse and gallops away through the camp as fast as his horse will carry him.

8 EXT - HIGHLANDS - DAWN

8

Horses hooves splash through a peat bog, followed by another, and another, then a man, falls to his knees in the black mud.

It's **QUINTUS** DIAS. He is being taken deep into PICT territory by the raiding party. 6 horses and riders, with **QUINTUS** alone and helpless among them. They're dwarfed by the vast spectacle of the landscape. *

QUINTUS *

Where are you taking me? *

PICT GENERAL *

Gorlacon wants a word, before we kill you. *

PICT WARRIOR *

Sorry...orders are orders. *

9 EXT - CARLISLE - NIGHT

9

VFX - Several riders, including VIRILUS, gallop toward the city, bearing the standard of the NINTH LEGION.

10 INT - AGRICOLA'S VILLA - DAY

10

Over the MAP, VIRILUS and AGRICOLA, the warrior and the politician.

AGRICOLA

These Picts hide behind a shroud of superstition, spreading fear like a palsy among the men. Cut through this veil General, and I promise you they're nothing but flesh and blood. Meat....for the butcher!

*

He stick his DAGGER into the map of CALEDONIA (SCOTLAND). By the DOOR a SLAVE eyes the DAGGER with great interest.

*

*

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

*

I don't care how you do it, but wipe them out, and bring Gorlacon before me in chains.

VIRILUS

*

Governor, you are the politician. I am a simple soldier. But not so simple that I cannot see you are looking for a way back to Rome.

*

AGRICOLA

I won't lie. My bones ache for Rome. ...This place is the graveyard of ambition.

VIRILUS

*

And men.

(beat)

I will not sacrifice mine as pawns in your game.

Another figure is in the room, watching and listening from the shadows, silent and unseen by the others.

*

*

AGRICOLA

I see.... Then let us be frank, General. The conquest of Britain is a lost cause. We've been here 70 years with nothing to show for it but a stalemate. The money is drying up and our new Emperor is "dissatisfied with progress".

*

*

*

*

(beat)

With one bold stroke we can change all that. With the Ninth Legion at your command we can crush this enemy, return to Rome with Gorlacon a prize and claim a mighty victory. You and your men could retire in wealth...and honour.

*

*

*

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

VIRILUS

My men have honour enough....!

The figure moves stealthily, we catch a glimpse of an eye, then it's gone again...

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

To kill the snake you must cut off it's head. The do that, I must find Gorlacon.

AGRICOLA

For that I have someone special in mind.
Come, let me introduce you...

AGRICOLA and VIRILUS turn from studying the map and walk toward the main door together.

Behind them, a HAND pulls the DAGGER from the map.

The SLAVE rushes at AGRICOLA's back, VIRILUS automatically turns and goes for his SWORD, but AGRICOLA stays his hand. Before the SLAVE can get anywhere near AGRICOLA a SPEAR blade whooshes down out of the shadows and cuts the SLAVE'S hand off. The DAGGER clatters to the floor. A blur of motion lunges from the shadows.

The SLAVE screams out in pain, but is quickly silenced as the SPEAR swings around and takes his head clean off!

The SPEAR belongs to ETAIN, a savage-looking Pict warrior woman, garbed in leather, bearing the scars of war. She looks like she'd cut you in half as soon as blink.

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

General Virilus, meet Etain. She's a Brigantes tracker. 'Can't speak a word, but she can hunt anything over any terrain. I swear she's part wolf...

VIRILUS

Wolves can't be tamed.

AGRICOLA

Her allegiance is to Rome. ...I trust her with my life.

VIRILUS

I don't know whether to fight her or...

AGRICOLA

She's mute. Not deaf.

VIRILUS

I have my own scouts.

AGRICOLA

Not like her. She knows the Picts, knows their ways, knows their hideaways. She will guide you into the mountains.

11 EXT - PICT VILLAGE - NIGHT

11

QUINTUS, hands tied behind his back, is shoved into the centre of an angry mob of PICTS, all itching to have a go at him. He's kicked, punched and shoved until he collapses to the ground in the centre. The PICT GENERAL grabs him by the hair and pulls his head back, showing him row of wooden stakes, each with a ROMAN SOLDIERS HEAD impaled on it. *

QUINTUS *

You bastards! *

His words are cut short as his head is plunged into a large bucket of icy cold water. Under the water, QUINTUS comes face to face with CENTURION GRATUS, his severed head lying at the bottom of the bucket. *

QUINTUS thrashes, struggles and splutters until he's pulled back up again. Towering before him now is GORLACON, King of the Picts. QUINTUS spits water at him. *

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

Damn you, Pict!

GORLACON

He's a stubborn one this.

QUINTUS *

I am a soldier of Rome! I will not yield!

GORLACON

Tell me soldier of Rome, since you're clearly no fool.... *

(QUINTUS looks surprised that GORLACON speaks his language too) *

....what does Agricola intend for us? When will he send his armies north, and who will lead them? *

QUINTUS *

.....I will not yield.

GORLACON *

Oh, I think you will, Roman. *

GORLACON sighs, stands up and takes a long steaming piss into the bucket. QUINTUS knows what's coming. GORLACON nods to his men and they shove QUINTUS's head back into the bucket. *

GORLACON waves someone to join him, and a young BOY (12) steps from the crowd to stand at the Kings side.

GORLACON (CONT'D)
(quietly to the boy)
Know your enemy, my son.

QUINTUS is pulled, gasping and choking from the foul water, and once again, his head pulled back and held firmly.

QUINTUS
Rome will make you bleed for this!

GORLACON holds the boy's head in his grasp, forcing him to watch as he nods to one of the PICTS holding QUINTUS. The PICT GENERAL draws a crude knife and cuts QUINTUS slowly across his chest.

The BOY tries to turn away but his father won't allow him. QUINTUS cries out in pain.

INT - PICT HUT - NIGHT

QUINTUS, his hands still bound, is shoved unceremoniously to the floor inside the hut. The door is shut, and a PICT GUARD placed outside. QUINTUS looks a mess, but his torment has just begun. In anger he kicks out at the rough wattle and daub wall, and it crumbles at the impact.

His body may be battered but his spirit remains, and he immediately begins planning his escape. Using his fingers he begins pulling away the cement.....

DISSOLVE TO:

12 EXT. 9TH LEGION CAMP, CARLISLE - NIGHT

12

VFX WIDE - The LEGION is now encamped outside of CARLISLE.

ELSEWHERE IN THE CAMP...

SEPTUS pours BOTHOS a golden liquid.

SEPTUS
This is what the Picts drink...They call
it 'water of life'.

BOTHOS drinks, splutters at its kick... Laughter. SEPTUS slugs down a mouthful without a splutter.

BOTHOS
Water of death more like.

THAX

Bloody witches brew!

SEPTUS

Call it what you will... I like it.

BOTHOS

What do you think our orders are chief?

THAX

Kill as many Picts as the Gods ordain,
then kill some more for good measure!

SEPTUS

That's enough, Thax.

THAX

Don't fret sir, me and the Gods have an
understanding.

BOTHOS

Keep mocking them and you'll curse us
all!

THAX

Do I look like I care? There's only thing
I'm afraid of....and here he comes.

VIRILUS approaches...

SEPTUS

It's speech time.

SEPTUS and the others jump to their feet.

SEPTUS (CONT'D)

LOOK LIVELY YOU MONGRELS! GATHER ROUND!

VFX - VIRILUS is encircled by a throng of his hard-core troops.

VIRILUS

Soldiers of the Ninth, together we have
crossed seas and deserts, fought through
fire and water, and won noble
victory...in Gaul, Ilerda, Pharsalus..and
Hispania!

(the crowd goes wild)

Tomorrow we face a new enemy. A savage
people who live in mud huts. Who paint
their faces like old wives and yet
believe in monsters and magic like
children. Well, I believe in only two
things...

(BEAT)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

In my sword!

(cheers)

In my soldiers!

(cheers)

We stand together. We bleed together. We die together. Who are we?!

THE LEGION

THE NINTH!

VIRILUS

When no other Legion is up to the task,
who do they ask?

*
*

THE LEGION

THE NINTH!

*
*

VIRILUS

When they find their backs against the
wall, who do they call?!

*
*
*

THE LEGION

THE NINTH!

*

VIRILUS

Well they have called and we have
answered!

(BEAT)

Our brave frontier guards have paid a
heavy price at the hands of these godless
heathens. Tomorrow we march north and
take the fight to them. BLOOD..for BLOOD!

*

The crowd go wild as VIRILUS looks out over the sea of faces,
filled with pride for his men.

13 EXT. CAMP - DAWN

13

The first glimmer of the sun shines out across the CAMP as the
horses are harnessed, swords are sheathed and spears are racked.
Helmets and breastplates are buckled into place.

Clouds of hot breath fill the cold air. The men stamp their feet
to keep warm. Camp dogs fight over scraps of food. Finally, the
standard of the Legion - the golden EAGLE - is hoisted up high.

14 EXT - FORT OF CARLISLE - DAWN

14

VFX wide - The VAST ARMOURED COLUMN of the NINTH LEGION - 3,000
MEN , horses, livestock and wagons - march out, heading for
Scotland. At their head rides ETAIN, bareback.

*

14A INT - PICT HUT - DAWN 14A *

The PICT GENERAL opens the door to find an empty hut and a hole
in the wall. QUINTUS has gone! He turns and calls out the
alarm.

14B EXT - PICT VILLAGE - DAWN 14B *

VFX WIDE - The PICT VILLAGE nestles in a stunning valley as the alarm cry echoes among the mountains.

14C EXT - MOUNTAIN TOP - DAWN 14C *

QUINTUS, his hands still bound, flees south toward distant storm
clouds.

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15      EXT - HEAD OF THE COLUMN - DAY                                15      *
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THUNDER shakes the sky. The men flinch, expect VIRILUS. *

16 **EXT - BOG - DAY** 16

Horses' hooves and Roman sandals tramp through the quagmire of peat and mud.

17 **EXT - MARCHING COLUMN - DUSK** 17

VFX wide - We see the LEGION marching toward a range of mountains as the sun sinks in the west..

DISSOLVE TO:

18 EXT - ROMAN CAMP - NIGHT 18

VFX wide - A sea of tents and campfires within a forest.

SEPTUS, THAX and BOTHOS sit with other soldiers around a fire, drinking, laughing. ETAIN sits alone, at the edge of the fire.

Thax, emboldened by booze, fancies his luck, advances on her.

THAX

Come on love, it's a cold night. Let me warm you up.

BOTHOS

She's speechless Thax.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

SEPTUS

She's got no tongue, you fool.

BOTHOS

All the more room for this...

Thax lifts his skirt, exposing himself. Unfazed, **ETAIN** reaches in, grabs and twists...Thax drops to his knees in agony. The others LAUGH. *

19 INT - VIRILUS' TENT - NIGHT

19

VIRILUS sits alone in his tent, studying maps, planning his strategy in his head.

From outside comes a distant scream... VIRILUS looks up.

20 EXT - ROMAN ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

20

VIRILUS, SEPTUS and others find a ROMAN sentry, strung up to a tree, his belly slashed open spilling his guts onto the ground.

VIRILUS

Damn them!

He gives **ETAIN** cold, hard glare. **ETAIN** stares back at him, emotionless, hard. Another OFFICER runs in and makes a report.

ROMAN OFFICER

Sir! Two more sentries have been attacked.

VIRILUS

Are they alive?

ROMAN OFFICER

No sir. They're gone. *

VIRILUS

At first light send out scouts. *

(to **ETAIN**) *

You find them! *

21 EXT - HEAD OF THE COLUMN - DAY

21

VIRILUS, SEPTUS and others stare at something, their bodies numb from the cold, their emotions blunted by years of bloodshed..

ETAIN sits on her horse beside the 2 dead SENTRIES. They are hanging upside down from a tree above the road. Their heads and shoulders are charred black from the small fires that had been lit underneath them. *

VIRILUS

Cut them down.

As a party of soldiers goes about the grisly business, the first body is cut loose and drops to the ground. VIRILUS is livid...

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Hold!

He climbs down from his horse and hurries over to help.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Gently...Treat them as though they are sleeping. Treat them with care. These are our men.

VIRILUS helps lower the second man down himself, and they lay him softly upon the ground. He looks up at ETAIN...

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Agricola may hold you in high esteem, but
you've yet to prove you're worth to me.

*
*

22 EXT - FORESTED VALLEY - DAY

22 *

VFX wide - The LEGION are making their way slowly along a narrow track, snaking it's way along the bottom of a spectacular valley.

SEPTUS rides up the column, past grim-set faces, pulls up beside VIRILUS.

SEPTUS

The men seem more edgy than usual.

VIRILUS

Good, it will keep them alive.

23 EXT - FOREST VALLEY - DAY

23 *

QUINTUS is trying to cut the tight leather straps binding his wrists when he hears a noise... RIDERS approaching.

*
*

He turns and runs as he sees 6 PICT HUNTERS crest a ridge behind him. They quickly spot him too and pick up the pace.

*
*

QUINTUS runs like crazy but he has no chance. The RIDERS soon bear down on him and surround their prey.

*
*

Up on another ridge, watching from a distance, is ETAIN.

*

24 DELETED

24 *

25 **EXT - HEAD OF COLUMN - CONTINUOUS**

25

SEPTUS and ETAIN gallop back to VIRILUS...

*

SEPTUS

*

Four Pict riders, and another, on foot.

*

VIRILUS

Easy pickings.

*

(to ETAIN)

*

Perhaps you've proved your worth after
all. Centurion Remus, take the
column. Advance party with me!

*

*

*

26 **EXT - FOREST VALLEY - DAY**

26

*

The PICT RIDERS have QUINTUS surrounded. They playing with their
catch, jostling and pummelling him with the hilts of the their
spears, until one blow to the skull knocks him to the ground.

*

*

*

Three of the riders dismount to pick him up, when they hear
another noise and look up.

*

*

VIRILUS, SEPTUS and 10 other riders are charging down the hill
toward them, SWORDS drawn and revenge on their minds!

*

*

The PICT horses scatter first, deserting their riders. The
remaining PICT RIDERS flee in different directions, each pursued
by ROMANS. THAX peels off from the others and goes after his
target.

*

*

*

*

The PICT is either insanely brave or just insane. He draws his
AXE and runs at the ROMANS only to be trampled beneath VIRILUS
and SEPTUS horses.

*

*

*

Of the two remaining, one PICT grabs QUINTUS, intending to use
him as a hostage. The other makes a break on foot, hotly pursued
by BOTHOS.

*

*

*

QUINTUS is still half dazed at the PICT puts a knife to his
throat and VIRILUS rushes at them, sword raised. With one fell
swoop VIRILUS cleaves the unfortunate PICT's head in two and he
falls lifeless to the ground, the blade falling from QUINTUS
neck.

*

*

*

*

*

BOTHOS grabs his man by the collar and runs him into a tree,
spattering his brains.

*

*

THAX catches his man at the gallop and lances him in the back
with his spear.

*

*

The last two are overrun and surrounded....

*

27 **EXT - FOREST VALLEY - LATER - DAY**

27 *

BOTHOS and THAX have the two PICT prisoners on their knees. *

VIRILUS

We can't take prisoners on the march. You
know what to do. *

SEPTUS nods to THAX and BOTHOS and they casually toss a coin
between them. THAX wins.

THAX

I win.

(to the PICTS)

Sorry, orders are orders. *

THAX casually cuts the throat of the first prisoner. *

We leave them to their grisly work as VIRILUS approaches QUINTUS
and crouches before him, using his own knife to cut his bonds.
All the time QUINTUS stares at ETAIN, mistrust in his eyes. *

VIRILUS

What's your name soldier? *

QUINTUS

Optio, Quintus Dias. Second in command.
Inchtuthil frontier garrison. *

VIRILUS and Septus share a look - respect for this soldier.

VIRILUS

Sorry we couldn't get here sooner.

QUINTUS

Are you the relief column? *

VIRILUS

Not quite. I'm General Titus Flavius
Virilus, commander of the Ninth Legion. *

(we see the awe in Quintus eyes)

We've come looking for a fight. *

QUINTUS

Then you'll get one. Gorlacon says we
will all die here, and be left to rot in
this land we grave so much. *

VIRILUS

Do you believe him? *

QUINTUS

If I believed him I wouldn't bothered
escaping. *

VIRILUS

But you understand his language?

*

*

QUINTUS

Enough to keep me alive.

*

*

VIRILUS

Hah! I must have conquered fifty tribes in fifty countries and in all those battles I've never understood a bloody word they've said. If they ever catch me...I'm fucked.

(he gives QUINTUS a hand up)

*

Welcome to the Ninth.

28 DELETED

28

*

29 EXT - CAMP - NIGHT

29

VFX wide - Campfires are spread throughout the pine forest, lighting up the area. Men huddle around their warmth. Edgy. Aware of the danger that lurks in the dark. Wolves howl in the distance.

30 INT. VIRILUS'S TENT - NIGHT

30

VIRILUS

Septus, double the watch. Full panoply. I don't want to lose any more men tonight.

SEPTUS

Yes sir.

SEPTUS leaves as QUINTUS enters. He still covered in a few cuts and bruises, but back in battle dress.

*

VIRILUS

Optio Dias! Now you look like a Roman. How do you feel?

QUINTUS

*

Cuts and bruises sir. Nothing that won't heal in time.

VIRILUS eyes him with compassion.

VIRILUS

Sometimes the scars cannot be seen. You escaped from Gorlacon's clutches. You know where he is. So I must ask you to return to the lions den.

*

*

*

*

QUINTUS

I believe its best to get back into the fight, General.

*
*
*

VIRILUS

Spoken like a soldier.

QUINTUS

A gladiator sir. They are the words of my father, Scipio Dias.

*

VIRILUS

Scipio Dias was your father?! I saw him win the fight that bought his freedom. He was magnificent. In the arena there was none better.

*

QUINTUS

He was more than just a brute spectacle. He taught me how to fight, and when to choose my battles.

*
*

VIRILUS

I meant no disrespect. I can see you are your father's son.

(beat)

Come, meet the men.

31 EXT. FIRESIDE - CAMP - NIGHT

31

QUINTUS is welcomed to the fire, to the place of honour at VIRILUS's side. As they settle down to eat, ETAIN watches from the sidelines, expressionless. Tonight THAX doesn't bother her but QUINTUS briefly catches her eye.

*
*
*

BOTHOS

So, you saw Gorlacon in the flesh?

SEPTUS

(smiles)

Is he really ten feet tall?

QUINTUS

He's not so big as he thinks he is. But you should see his wife - now that's scary!

*

He pulls a fright face. Roars of approval. SEPTUS tosses QUINTUS a sheep's bladder of wine.

*

VIRILUS

Septus, give the man a drink, I think he's earned it. Tomorrow you ride at my side.

*

(MORE)

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Perhaps you can teach me a thing or two about Pict hospitality. Gentlemen... I must make my rounds.

SEPTUS, THAX, BOTHOS

Sir...!

QUINTUS watches VIRILUS leaves, chatting amongst the men.

QUINTUS

I've never seen a General so beloved of his men, nor so humble before them.

BOTHOS

In training he is our scholar. At the feast he is our father. In the ranks he is our brother. And in battle he is the god we pray will save our souls.

SEPTUS

Where did you read that?

BOTHOS

On the shit-house wall, sir.

THAX

He probably wrote it himself.

SEPTUS

He's a ruthless, reckless bastard. And I'd die for him without hesitation.

VIRILUS and the others sit astride their horses, drenched in rain. It literally pours from their helmets, the wind driving it into their faces. This is Scottish weather at its worst.

Further back, QUINTUS rides up front with VIRILUS, with SEPTUS, BOTHOS and THAX close behind.

QUINTUS

How can these Picts survive in this damned weather?

VIRILUS

This land breeds men of thick skin and granite will. Men born to endure.

QUINTUS

And women too it seems...

He gestures to ETAIN up ahead...

VIRILUS

You mean our tame she-wolf. A gift from Agricola....

Up ahead ETAIN has stopped. VIRILUS orders the column to halt.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

See what the problem is Quintus, it's time you two were introduced.

SEPTUS

And mind she doesn't cut your balls off!

QUINTUS rides forward and halts beside ETAIN.

ETAIN looks at him but says nothing, just points her spear.

QUINTUS follows her gaze to a distant peak and on it a LONE RIDER, watching them.

MOMENTS LATER...

QUINTUS has pointed them out to VIRILUS.

VIRILUS

Damn it! They know we're coming. Surprise may be lost but we still have momentum on our side. We cannot allow Gorlacon time to assemble his army. We must double our speed and march the legion right down their throats. This war is won or lost, here and now. ...Centurions, get the column moving. Etain, lead the way.

ETAIN pulls her horse around and spurs off along the trail as the VIRILUS and the column follow her.

33 DELETED 33 *

34 DELETED 34 *

35 DELETED 35 *

36 DELETED 36 *

37 EXT - FORESTED GORGE - DAY 37

VFX wide - The huge Roman column snakes through the bottleneck pass.

37 CONTINUED:

37

The rain has stopped now, instead a mist begins to form, gathering, thick and impenetrable in the valley before them. *

The same mist is now forming at the rear of the column, surrounding them. They have no choice but to press on.

VIRILUS

Scouts forward!

ETAIN and several other scouts ride forward into the mist. ETAIN pauses and looks back at VIRILUS and their eyes meet as she is engulfed by the mist. *

VFX wide - Like a train, the entire column heads into the mist. *

38 **DELETED**

38 *

39 **EXT - FORESTED GLEN - DAY**

39

The COLUMN stretches for over a mile through the fog. By the time the REAR GUARD are trudging through the mud, it's already been churned up by 6000 human feet.

At it's head ride VIRILUS, QUINTUS and SEPTUS, followed by THAX and BOTHOS. *

One SCOUT hears a noise and turns to find a huge black shape with antlers, bringing a battle axe down upon his helmet.

A 2ND SCOUT is slain as another 'forest demon' rushes out of the mist and cuts him down.

An arrow skewers the neck of a 3RD SCOUT. All without a sound. *

QUINTUS shifts nervously in his saddle as the head of the column has emerges into a more open valley, but it is a dead end. *

QUINTUS

Where is she? Where's Etain? *

VIRILUS halts the column, listening carefully... A low RUMBLE builds. VIRILUS nods to SEPTUS.

VIRILUS

She sacrificed her own to gain my trust
and led us into a trap! *

SEPTUS

Column! Form up! *

THAX and BOTHOS dismount as the ROMAN's have form an armoured shell with their SHIELDS. In the center sits VIRILUS atop his horse with QUINTUS and SEPTUS close by, waiting, listening as the LOW RUMBLE gets louder. *

VIRILUS

Quintus, ride to the rear, find Centurion
Remus and tell him to pull the column
back!

QUINTUS

I will not leave your side!

Then they see it. FIREBALLS, rolling down the slope out of the
mist toward them, hotly pursued by the PICTS!

VFX wide - showing FIREBALLS rolling down along the entire
length of the column!

VIRILUS

GO NOW! Or the Legion is lost!

QUINTUS gives the GENERAL a grave look and spurs his horse down
the length of the COLUMN.

SEPTUS

STAND TO!

40 **DELETED**

40 *

41 **EXT - HEAD OF COLUMN - DAY**

41 *

PICT WAR HORNS echo through the valley.

The ROMAN's defense shatters at the impact of the FIREBALLS. The
PICTS see the gap and jump through the flames into battle.

VIRILUS

Hold the line!!

Keeping it close and brutal, we intercut between QUINTUS'
desperate race and scenes of the slaughter as the ROMAN line is
broken and the PICTS attack on both flanks!

QUINTUS races along between the FIREBALLS and the wall of
SHIELDS narrowly avoiding their impact!

VIRILUS, SEPTUS and the others fight like tigers, but the column
is stretched too thin, the gorge is too narrow. There's nothing
they can do to turn the tide.

SEPTUS is pulled from his horse by the giant PICT GENERAL,
surrounded and cuts to pieces.

VIRILUS too is pulled (in SLO MO) from his horse into a throng
of PICT WARRIORS.

41A **DELETED**

41A *

42 **EXT - FOREST - DAY**

42 *

QUINTUS finds himself in the thick of the fighting, hacking down PICTS left and right until one PICT steps out ahead of him with a huge WAR HAMMER and knocks him from his horse! *

Badly winded, QUINTUS manages to slay the attacking PICT then drags himself along the ground as ROMAN bodies fall on top of him, first slowing his progress but eventually burying him beneath their weight. *

FADE TO BLACK. *

43 **EXT - FOREST GORGE - DAY**

43

VFX - The mist has cleared now to reveal the devastation. The column has been totally wiped out. The BATTLE over. Only bodies remain, in their hundreds. A sea of ROMAN bodies. We CRANE down toward them, and from beneath this sea a HAND pushes through grasping at air. *

Then another hand reaches down and clasps it firmly, pulling QUINTUS free of the mass of corpses. QUINTUS is relieved to see it's BOTHOS. *

QUINTUS *
Bothos.... You made it. *

BOTHOS *
Only just, Brick here pulled me clear and saved my hide. *

He is stands with another survivor, a veteran of the legion known as BRICK. *

Hearing a noise, the men take cover. *

A wagon, driver-less and still burning, pulled by two lumbering OXEN appears, trundling aimlessly through the forest. *

DISSOLVE TO: *

44 **EXT - HEAD OF THE COLUMN - DAY**

44

QUINTUS leads the others through blood soaked battlefield, the ground strewn with bodies, armour and weaponry, arrows stuck in trees, until they come across a familiar face - SEPTUS, cut to ribbons, his eyes staring blankly at the sky. BOTHOS kneels beside him and closes his eyes. *

QUINTUS *
Are they all dead? *

SLAM! THAX drops into the ground directly in front of QUINTUS. *
THAX...has been hiding in the tree-tops.

THAX *
Not quite. *

QUINTUS *
Thax! *

THAX *
Thank the gods somebody else made it.

QUINTUS *
Only you?

TWO more ROMANS drop down from the trees. *

THAX
The mist betrayed the legion, but saved a
few.

The new men introduce themselves... *

1ST MAN *
MACROS, 2nd cohort.

Fast and slick. He's an athlete, born to run.

2ND MAN *
(the youngest)
LEONIDAS, junior scout and peltast.

BOTHOS
Are we all that's left?

They remain silent, stunned by the realisation of it all.

QUINTUS *
We must find the General's body. He *
deserves a nobler tomb than this.

LEO *
The General is alive.

ALL eyes turn to LEO...

QUINTUS *
Are you sure?

LEO
I saw them take him away in chains.

QUINTUS *
Which way?

LEO

North.

*

Farther away, a PICT WARRIOR opens his eyes. He's still alive....

QUINTUS

*

Then we follow.

THAX

*

Follow? *That's crazy!* The frontier is South.

*

QUINTUS

*

If he's *still* alive, it's our duty.

*

THAX knows he's right. He knows it from the faces of the men around him: fearful though they are, they couldn't live with deserting their GENERAL now.

*

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

*

Let's get moving...

*

From out of NOWHERE the PICT WARRIOR comes charging in, straight toward *QUINTUS*, BATTLE AXE raised above his head. *QUINTUS* reaches for his SWORD but it's not there. At the last moment, the PICT is struck in the side of the head by a CLEAVER.

*

QUINTUS looks to his right to find a soldier - BRUCHNAUR, a stocky German walks towards and past them.

*

BOTHOS

Where the hell did you come from?

BRUCHNAUR plants his foot on the dead PICT's head and yanks out his CLEAVER.

BRUCHNAUR

The kitchens.

BRICK

Nice work soldier.

BRUCHNAUR

My name is Bruchnaur, I'm not a soldier, I'm a cook.

*

QUINTUS

*

Not any more. All of you, scavenge what you can. Food, supplies, weapons...

BOTHOS

Taking from the dead? It's not right.

44 CONTINUED: (3)

44

QUINTUS

*

No, it's WAR.

DISSOLVE TO:

45 EXT - FOREST MONTAGE - DAY

45

We follow the progress of this band of men through the depths of the forest, keeping low, keeping silent, avoiding search parties of mounted Picts, out hunting for stragglers.

46 EXT - FOREST RIVER - DAY

46

A giant tree has fallen across the river. They stop to rest and drink.

Hearing a ruckus upstream they take cover behind the tree.

2 ROMAN TROOPERS are being chased downstream by several mounted PICTS. Among the PICTS rides a familiar face - ETAIN.

In fury at the betrayal, BOTHOS raises his sword, ready to charge. QUINTUS blocks him, stays his hand, shakes his hand. *

Staying hidden, they watch helplessly as the ROMANS are overtaken by the horsemen. The 1st is shot in the back with arrows from 2 different riders.

The 2nd man makes it the furthest, close to where QUINTUS and the others are hidden. One rider pursues him, hurling an axe spinning through the air. It sticks between his shoulders and he collapses on all fours, crawling away. *

ETAIN rides forward, dismounts and unsheathes her sword. The dying ROMAN looks directly at QUINTUS, pleading, desperate. *

QUINTUS can only watch as ETAIN beheads the soldier before his eyes. The river turns red with blood and flows past QUINTUS. *

Just then a PICT rider approaches ETAIN and calls to her, in PICTISH... *

ETAIN thinks she hears something. She begins moving slowly toward the TREE. QUINTUS and the others cower in fear. QUINTUS spots their horses, hidden from ETAIN's view. *

ETAIN is almost at the TREE now, the soldiers hiding on the other side. Suddenly a crow flies into the air, it spooks the horses and they bolt away through the forest. ETAIN thinks she must have spooked them herself.

She rejoins the others and gallops away through the forest.

THAX
(angry and frustrated)
We never should have trusted that
Brigantes bitch.....!

*

QUINTUS
Wherever they've taken the General,
she'll lead us right to him.

*

47 EXT - PICT ROUNDHOUSE - DAY

47

GORLACON emerges from the building to where several PICT
WARRIORS and a throng of villagers are gathered around.

PICT GENERAL
My lord, we have the beast.

GORLACON
Show me.

They part the crowd and move to the center of a rough 'arena'.
There, GENERAL VIRILUS is chained to post.

GORLACON (CONT'D)
General, welcome.

VIRILUS looks up, surprised that he can speak the same language.

GORLACON (CONT'D)
It's wise to understand your enemies,
don't you think?

*

GORLACON beckons over his SON. He holds his dagger in his hand.

GORLACON (CONT'D)
It's important that my son sees that Rome
is not invincible. If the bloodshed does
not end with me, he must be prepared to
carry on the fight.

*

VIRILUS
Where are my men?

GORLACON
With your Gods. ...A few survived, and I
am willing to call off the slaughter and
spare their lives in return for yours.

*

*

*

VIRILUS struggles to keep his anger cool.

VIRILUS
Then let us settle this, warrior to
warrior.

*

*

GORLACON

Do you think Agricola would have accorded
ME the same courtesy? What were your
orders? "Bring him before me in chains"?

*
*
*

VIRILUS looks at GORLACON in surprise...how could he know that?

*

ETAIN steps out from behind GORLACON. She's changed her
appearance, she now has the same lacquered and spiked white hair
as the other PICT warriors.

GORLACON (CONT'D)

To kill the snake, you must cut off it's
head...

*
*
*

VIRILUS

Traitor!!

VIRILUS lunges at her, but his chains hold and she easily side-
steps him. Pict warriors laugh at the sport. ETAIN punches him
hard with right hook, then tears open his tunic.

*
*
*

GORLACON

She would answer your charge, but her
tongue was cut out of her mouth, that she
may not speak ill of the bloody
...Roman...empire. Her story is just one
of thousands amongst our people. A
thousand reasons to hate. A thousand
reasons to make Rome bleed.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

VIRILUS sees that a line of warriors and their wives have lined
up behind Gorlacon's son. They all have knives. GORLACON ushers
his SON on...He walks up to VIRILUS with his knife.

*
*

His son makes the first cut, then ETAIN...The PICTS line up to
make cuts...None deep, just nicks. Symbolic slices. Death by a
thousand cuts.

*
*

GORLACON (CONT'D)

*Gather their dead. Stack them high and
burn them! Turn their bodies to ash and
their armour to dust! I want no trace of
the Roman Empire in our land!*

*
*
*
*
*

DISSOLVE TO:

*

47A EXT - MASS PYRE - OUTSKIRTS OF PICT VILLAGE - NIGHT

47A

*

VFX - Starting on the face of a dead ROMAN burning, we pull back
to reveal a vast mound of hundred of corpses burning. Atop the
pile, the EAGLE standard of the NINTH LEGION is slowly engulfed.

*
*
*

VIRILUS looks on in despair, as ETAIN stands beside him, both
lit burning red by the flames. VIRILUS stares daggers at her as
she turns coldly away. *

48 **EXT - PICT STRONGHOLD - DUSK**

48

QUINTUS and his men crawl on their bellies through long grass
and purple heather toward a low rise to look down on the PICT
STRONGHOLD - a collection of mud and wicker huts gathered around
the central ROUND-HOUSE. *

In the centre of the open area is a large post, and chained to
it is VIRILUS. Half naked and streaked with mud and blood, his
head hangs limply forward.

We can see the vast pyre of ROMAN dead lighting up the village,
and the ashes fall like snow on our heroes.... *

BRICK *

It's snowing. *

QUINTUS *

That's not snow. It's our men. *

BOTHOS *

May the gods preserve them... *

BRICK *

Rome isn't going to take this lying down.
They'll send more legions to avenge the
Ninth and make them pay in blood. *

THAX *

We should kill every last one of them. *

(beat) *

So, what's your plan, Optio? *

49 **EXT - PICT STRONGHOLD - NIGHT**

49

A PICT SENTRY stands on the hillside overlooking the village.

Without warning, THAX jumps him and drives a dagger into his
neck, quickly silencing him. Lowering the body to the ground,
he's joined by QUINTUS and the others. *

Moving quickly and silently, QUINTUS leads the men into the PICT
village. *

A PICT warrior emerges from a hut and dunks his head into a
barrel of freezing water then comes up for air. QUINTUS is
waiting for him, swinging his sword. Looking up from inside the
barrel, the PICTS severed head drops into the water. *

Firelight and rowdy drunken cheering comes from the LARGE *
 ROUNDHOUSE, a victory celebration is underway. *

Moving from HUT to HUT, the two parties cover each others' progress as they make their way cautiously yet urgently through the village, until they link up at the edge of the OPEN AREA.

FOUR SENTRIES are posted at each corner of the SQUARE, watching the GENERAL.

This will call for extreme stealth and careful timing.

QUINTUS signals THAX, BOTHOS and BRICK to circle around behind *
 the SENTRIES to make a coordinated attack.

They split up and make their individual ways through the camp, trying not to wake the dogs or cause any undue stir, picking their way between the shadows until they approach their targets.....

QUINTUS, accompanied by LEO, sees the others are in position, *
 and moves in behind the first SENTRY.

As one they strike. QUINTUS is clean and quick, covering the *
 SENTRY'S mouth and driving his blade up under the rib-cage and into his victim's heart!

BRICK spins his man around and head butts him with his helmet, caving his face in and killing him instantly.

THAX is more cruel, stifling his victim's scream as he slashes his groin first, then his throat.

BOTHOS fucks up. A dog is roused and growls at him, the SENTRY spins around with the butt of his SPEAR and knocks him flying backwards to the ground! The PICT spins the SPEAR above his head, ready to bring the point down into BOTHOS' guts!

LEO rushes forward, whirling a SLING-SHOT in his hand! With a sharp flick of the wrist he sends a pebble whizzing through the air and hits the PICT in the back of the head, killing him, stone dead.

The body drops next to BOTHOS but he doesn't hang about, he grabs the dead man's SPEAR and hurries to join the others, nodding thanks to LEO.

QUINTUS *
 Thax, Brick, watch the perimeter. The
 rest of you, with me.

THAX and BRICK separate and keep watch while QUINTUS hurries *
 over to VIRILUS. *

The GENERAL's head is hanging limply forward, congealed blood dripping from his nose and mouth. QUINTUS lifts his head.... *

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

General.....?!

VIRILUS stirs.

VIRILUS *

Optio Dias...

QUINTUS *

General.

BOTHOS and LEO work at his chains.

VIRILUS

The Legion?

QUINTUS *

They're all gone sir. Only myself and a small cohort remain.

VIRILUS

Even Septus...?

(Quintus look is enough) *

My loyal war dog.

BOTHOS and LEO are having little success.

QUINTUS *

Come ONNNN!

BOTHOS

The chains are too strong.

THAX hears a noise from outside the CAMP. A SCOUTING PARTY is riding in! He turns to see how QUINTUS and company are doing.... *

THAX

(thinking aloud)

What are you waiting for? *

QUINTUS tries the chains, using BOTHOS' spear as leverage.... *

but they won't break. Using his entire weight, the spear snaps.

QUINTUS *

Shit!

VIRILUS

Leave me.

QUINTUS *

We will not abandon you sir.

THE RIDERS are entering the village now, heading for the ROUND-HOUSE, directly toward THAX.... He looks again to see how QUINTUS and the others are doing.... *

THAX

Damn.....!

BOTHOS hears the riders approaching....

BOTHOS

It's no use. We have to go!

VIRILUS

Bothos, I want you to bear witness...
Septus is dead, I name you, **Quintus** Dias,
Centurion of the Ninth. What remains of
the Legion is yours to command.

*

(to **QUINTUS**)

*

Now GO. GET THEM HOME.

QUINTUS and **VIRILUS** stare deep into each others' eyes **before**
breaking off and following BOTHOS and LEO into the darkness.

*

*

THE RIDERS are close to THAX now, seeing the others have gone,
he finds himself trapped behind a hut with the RIDERS coming
around both sides. There is only one course of action left open
to him, at the last second he ducks inside!

50 INT - PICT HUT - NIGHT

50

GORLACON'S SON (wearing **VIRILUS'** HELMET) is startled by this
ROMAN'S sudden intrusion. We can hear the RIDERS passing by
outside.

*

*

*

The BOY bolts for the door. THAX pounces on him, covering his
noise and mouth, stifling any noise he can make as the SCOUT
PARTY take what seems like an age to ride past....

*

*

*

THAX doesn't even look at the BOY, just presses his weight upon
and covers his mouth. The BOY struggles at first, but slowly
weakens and stops. THAX attention is totally on the men outside,
and it's only when they've passed by that he looks down sees
he's smothered the BOY to death.

*

*

*

*

*

THAX looks cold and aloof as he backs away and looks out of the
door to check the coast is clear, then casts one last look at
his victim before dashing out into the night.

*

*

*

51 EXT - PICT STRONGHOLD - NIGHT

51

Running from the scene, the group gather on the fringes of the
village.

*

QUINTUS

*

Where's Thax?

51 CONTINUED:

51

THAX (O.S.)
 Just taking care of a small problem...
 (they turn to face him)
 I have the Generals helmet, where is he?

QUINTUS
 We couldn't free him. Come on!

THAX
 We came all this way for nothing?!

52 DELETED

52 *

53 EXT - ROUND HOUSE - NIGHT

53 *

GORLACON, flanked by ETAIN, emerges from the building as the PICT GENERAL hurries up to him, carrying the young BOY in his arms.

GORLACON takes the BOY's body and collapses to his knees, crying out in grief and rage!

CUT TO: *

54 EXT - MOUNTAIN RIDGE - NIGHT

54 *

QUINTUS and the others can hear this cry as they keep running, putting as much distance between themselves and the PICTS as possible before dawn.

QUINTUS
 They'll be coming after us now.

They continue climbing. They've no time to waste.

DISSOLVE TO: *

55 EXT - PICT VILLAGE - DAY

55 *

GORLACON gestures to his SON, lying atop an unlit funeral pyre, as he stands before VIRILUS. GORLACON is a changed man. He looks weak and frail now....

GORLACON
 See what you have done!?

VIRILUS shakes his head, speechless.

VIRILUS
 You have me. Spare my men!

GORLACON

Before you die, know that the men that
did this will not live to tell your tale.

*

GORLACON nods. A PICT FIGHTER cuts VIRILUS' bonds. VIRILUS falls forward into the mud as the PICTS clear a circle around him. A SWORD is thrown into the mud before him.

VIRILUS

Then let's get on with it.

VIRILUS picks up his SWORD and gets to his feet.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Well, what are you waiting for?! Do you
fear me?! Does no man amongst you have
the courage?!

*

The circle of WARRIORS parts to reveal ETAIN, SPEAR in hand. She steps forward into the mire of the 'arena'.

VIRILUS (CONT'D)

Let's see what you're made of ...Pict.

*

They circle each other. VIRILUS is a brutal beast. ETAIN is lithe and lethal. With the SPEAR she has the advantage from a distance, but if he can get close enough with his SWORD, she's dead.

They circle each other, sizing each other up.

ETAIN lunges and VIRILUS parries. A succession of blows are exchanged. None finding its target of flesh.

She spins, he ducks, the blade of her spear barely missing the crown of his exposed head.

He comes up again, trying to get within the effective range of her SPEAR. He makes it, but she grabs his wrist before he can strike. Close up, face to face, they stare into each others' eyes, pupils wide with adrenaline, hate, and the fear of death.

He head butts her backwards into the mud and she loses her SPEAR. Coming in for the kill, VIRILUS bears over her, but ETAIN side-swipes him with the heel of her leather boot.

They both roll in the mud now, grabbing their weapons and facing off once more!

They lunge, strike and block, VIRILUS cuts a great slice out of ETAIN's upper left arm, but she barely notices as the crimson tide gushes down her arm to mingle with the mud.

VIRILUS tries kicking mud in her face to blind and distract her. It fails as she counters his every move, wearing him down slowly.

(CONTINUED)

Finally, the mistake comes, VIRILUS over-reaches and loses his balance.

ETAIN side-steps and brings the butt of the SPEAR up into his neck! VIRILUS staggers backward, choking, trying to get his breath back!

ETAIN knows he's finished, but draws out the final blow....

VIRILUS is on his knees before her. ETAIN stands with SPEAR poised. VIRILUS looks up at her, then turns his face skyward, he sees AN EAGLE, soaring. Free.

ETAIN thrusts her SPEAR into and through VIRILUS' heart with such force that the tip of the blade protrudes from his back! The PICT roar in defiance!

56 **EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS - DAY**

56

The sound carries far and wide. All turn back, except **QUINTUS**. *
He knows it's over.

57 **EXT - PICT STRONGHOLD - DAY**

57

ETAIN tries to join the crowd but only exhales a hoarse, rasping breath. Finally, she collapses to her knees, triumphant but spent... She's been holding onto her hate for so long. This is just the beginning of her vengeance. *

58 **EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS - DAY**

58

QUINTUS closes his eyes, knowing the General is dead. Steeling himself, he turns to the others.... *

QUINTUS *

Come on. While we have the lead.

THAX

On foot, over this terrain. I give us an hour-

QUINTUS *

You want to stay here, and beg for mercy?

THAX stares daggers at him.

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

We head North.

MACROS

North?! *

QUINTUS

*They'll be looking for is in the south.
We can't outrun them, so we have to
outsmart them. We head North then double
back. It's our only chance...*

QUINTUS waits for complaints or better suggestions. THAX tosses VIRILUS' HELMET to QUINTUS.

THAX

You'll be needing this then, Centurion.

As the others move off, QUINTUS places the helmet upon a rock, as a monument to their General, then hurries after them...

DISSOLVE TO:

59 EXT - PICT ROUNDHOUSE - DAY

59

Following GORLACON out of the ENTRANCE of the ROUND HOUSE we emerge into the daylight to see his finest PICT WARRIORS mounted upon their hill ponies, awaiting their orders.

GORLACON

*Send word to the other tribes. Hunt them
to the ends of the earth. Show them no
mercy!*

The hunters turn and charge out of the village in every direction.

AT THE FUNERAL PYRES - ETAIN fills a leather satchel with fists full of ROMAN ashes, then walks over to mount up at the head of her hunting POSSE of 12 RIDERS including the PICT GENERAL. She looks down at GORLACON with a cold, hard gaze.

GORLACON (CONT'D)

*Etain, you are my wrath. Send their
bodies to hell, and bring me their heads.*

She nods at GORLACON then rides away. He watches them go, his eyes sunken in his skull, a broken man.

DISSOLVE TO:

60 EXT - HIGHLANDS - DAY

60

QUINTUS's band are now heading into the Caledonian forests and a better chance of evasion. The weather is beginning to turn.

61 **EXT - CALEDONIAN FOREST - DAY**

61

Tracking with the ROMANS as they move at a steady trot, the rain pours down upon them, making the going difficult. They are now running every step. Running for their lives.

QUINTUS pauses to check the moss growing on the south side of a tree to check which way is north. He signals the others to change direction. *

THAX and MACROS share a mutinous look as the soldiers splash up a small stream to cover their tracks... *

DISSOLVE TO:

62 **EXT - MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY**

62

The weather is closing in here too as ETAIN and the HUNTING PARTY work their way along a mountain slope. Looking for tracks or other signs of passing...

Etain spots a dislodged stone: its unweathered side darker and smoother than the mossy, weathered side. She tracks the trail...

They head down the opposite slope and we look out over the valley, swathed in rain and dark hanging clouds.

63 **EXT - CALEDONIAN FOREST - DAY**

63

The rain has reduced the forest floor to a bog now, making the going much slower...

THAX *

This fucking country...! *

QUINTUS *

Be thankful. The rain covers our tracks.
...Keep moving.

They press on, trying to gain as much distance as possible.

64 **EXT - CALEDONIAN FOREST - DAY**

64

The Pict hunters are spread out now, moving slowly. They can no longer find any tracks...the rain has washed them away.

ETAIN is hunting by instinct and intuition now. She signals them to head SOUTH and they canter away, the tough mountain ponies making light work of the terrain.

65 **EXT - CALEDONIAN FOREST RIVER - DAY**

65

QUINTUS and his men reach a freezing river: now a torrent thanks *
to the rain.

MACROS

*

Now what?

QUINTUS

*

Wherever they might hesitate, we must go.

QUINTUS strips off his top. BRICK, BOTHOS, BRUCHNAUR and LEO *
follow suit. The rest have little choice but to follow.

Holding their tops high and dry, they wade across the river.
It's tough and dangerous, freezing...

LEO stumbles, but BOTHOS hauls him out on the far side.

They grab fistfuls of grit and sand and rub themselves hard,
warming and drying their bodies before they put on their dry
clothes. Bothos cracks out a bottle and they pass around the
fiery 'water of life'.

66 **EXT - FOREST - DAY**

66

THAX and MACROS up front, pause to take breath... *

MACROS

*

Taking orders from an Optio! You should *
take charge, Thax. My sword is yours. *

THAX

*

All in good time Macros....patience. *

MACROS takes off again leaving THAX to glances back at QUINTUS, *
running beside BRUCHNAUR. *

QUINTUS

*

Shit, that Macros can move! *

BRUCHNAUR

He was a marathon runner before he joined
up!

QUINTUS

*

How do you know that?

BRUCHNAUR

We make the food. We know everything.

Behind them come BRICK and BOTHOS, stalwarts, and LEO, *
shivering. *

(CONTINUED)

AHEAD, **MACROS** finds a narrow cleft in the rocks. Exploring further, he finds it opens out into a cave. Clawing at the soil with their bare hands, they dig the opening wider and crawl inside. *

67 **EXT - PICT STRONGHOLD - DUSK**

67

With his people gathered around him, GORLACON, stolid and resolute, lights the huge funeral pyre of his SON. **As the flames rise, GORLACON looks on through cold dead eyes, his spirit broken.** *

68 **INT - CAVE - NIGHT**

68

Another fire, with **QUINTUS** and his men huddled around it, warming their hands, feet and faces, drying their clothes, steam coming from their wet shoes. *

BRUCHNAUR and BRICK, on foraging duty, return with berries, nuts, roots and mushrooms...A starving **BOTHOS** pinches a mushroom from BRICK's hoard. *

BOTHOS

Good man.

As his hand goes to his lips, BRUCHNAUR slaps the mushroom away.

BRUCHNAUR

Not that one. Death Cap. Will kill you in minutes. To the untrained eye, they look just like these. Which are delicious.

BRICK hands a good mushroom to **QUINTUS**. *

QUINTUS *

Thank you Brick. Brick.... What kind of name is that anyway?

BRICK

Short sir, for Ubrickulius.

QUINTUS *

Your mother must have been...wise.

BRICK

She was a bloody comedian, sir.

QUINTUS *

Brick it is then. And you, Leonidas?

BOTHOS

Another comedian?

LEO

Greek father, sir.

THAX

Now that IS funny.

The men laugh, but **QUINTUS** notices LEO's teeth rattle. *

QUINTUS *

Move closer to the fire LEO.

BOTHOS rubs his back and the others huddle closer, keeping him warm with their heat. **QUINTUS** tries to distract them from their misery... *

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

Where are you from Bothos?

BOTHOS

I was born on the slopes of the Dolomites. My family were farmers. Dirt poor. My only hope of bettering myself was the army.

THAX

So do you feel better, or worse?

BRICK

This was supposed to be my last tour.

MACROS

(brooding) *

It still could be. *

BRICK

I've got my eye on a farm in Tuscany. Where the sun warms the skin.

BOTHOS

Alright, don't rub it in.

QUINTUS *

Bruchnaur, Germanic right?

BRUCHNAUR

From the Rhineland.

BRICK

It shouldn't come as much of a change for you then, having icicles for testicles.

QUINTUS *

My last legion was the same. So many faces from so many lands.

(CONTINUED)

LEO

I fight for Rome. I've never been.

MACROS

Rome is over-rated. The sewers stink, so does the senate.

QUINTUS

Rome isn't the city. Or the senate. Or any of that shit. It's US. WE are Rome.

BOTHOS

Now you're starting to sound like Virilus.

THAX

Yeah. Full of it.

They laugh.

QUINTUS

Get some sleep. All of you. I'll take first watch.

They huddle up.

BOTHOS

Macros, mind where you put that hand.

Laughter. As they settle, **QUINTUS** sits by the entrance, looking out at the night sky through the gently swaying tree tops. A distant wolf HOWLS.

FADE TO BLACK.

69 EXT - CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

69

A PICT emerges from the cave and hands ETAIN some ash from the campfire.

PICT GENERAL

Still warm.

She lets the ashes fall through her fingers as she scans the horizon. She knows they are out here somewhere....

70 EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS MONTAGE - DAY/NIGHT/DAY

70

QUINTUS and his band, running along the high mountain tops. The stoney ground is hazardous, with dead falls and loose rocks. But they cannot be tracked over rock.

VARIOUS SHOTS: the Romans, running, **QUINTUS** rallying stragglers...The Picts chasing, fanning out, relentless...

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

ETAIN, eyes like a hawk, running with her horse, checking for signs of passing, then remounting and riding on. *

71 EXT. MOUNTAIN TOPS - DAY

71

A MOUNTAIN STAG, backlit by the winter sun...

LEO's hand shivers with the cold as he puts a rounded pebble in his sling. He whirls it above his head and in an instant, fells the deer...

BRICK

Not bad, for a Greek.

The men gather round the fallen deer. Cups out. BRUCHNAUR makes an expert incision so blood streams into their cups.

QUINTUS

Drink it while it's hot. *

BRUCHNAUR cuts deeper, plunging his hand inside and pulling out a mucky steaming sack... *

BOTHOS

What's that?

BRUCHNAUR

The stomach. The moss inside's half-digested. Easier to eat.

(to Leo)

Eat. It's good.

72 EXT - MOUNTAIN SIDE - DUSK

72

ETAIN is still in the valleys, looking for signs of passing. She finds a pile of HORSE SHIT and picks up an 'apple' crushing it in her hand, then moves on. *

She arrives at the edge of the forest, a vast mountain range before her. She's got a good idea where they're heading... *

73 EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS- AERIAL - DUSK

73

QUINTUS and his men, silhouettes struggling along a snowy ridge as the sun sinks beneath the horizon. *

74 EXT. MOUNTAIN TOPS - CONTINUOUS

74

Freezing north winds, snow in the face, treacherous ice underfoot. Led by QUINTUS, the Romans press on... *

LEO struggles in the cold, stumbles. BOTHOS helps **QUINTUS** *
support him; they share a concerned look....

QUINTUS *
Leo you've got to keep moving!

LEO
I can't, it's too cold!

BOTHOS
Quintus! We have to rest! *

QUINTUS *
There!....Find shelter among the rocks.

BOTHOS picks him up and supports him as they hurry on as best
they can. **MACROS** pulls **QUINTUS** aside... *

MACROS *
He's slowing us down. Just say the word,
I'll take care of it.

QUINTUS *
We live united, or die divided...
Starting with you.

MACROS can tell he means it. **QUINTUS** hurries to help LEO as THAX *
approaches **MACROS**. *

MACROS *
(to THAX)
You can stick this out if you want to,
but **first chance I get**, I'm looking after *
myself.

THAX
It's your funeral.

75 **EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS - DUSK**

75

ETAIN is perched like a bird of prey, spear resting upright
beside her, listening, watching, honing in on them...

76 **EXT - ROCKY ALCOVE - MOUNTAIN TOP - DUSK**

76

Finding the only shelter from the howling wind and snow, **QUINTUS** *
and the others huddle together beneath an overhanging rick.

THAX
Quintus, we can't stay up here! *

QUINTUS *
We move slower in the valleys, and we're
easier to track.

THAX

But we'll die up here! Starting with Leo.

QUINTUS looks around their faces, frozen and shuddering.

*

QUINTUS

*

Alright...we head down at first light.
Until then, everyone stay close together.
Take turns in the centre...Leo, you
first. Just make it through the night,
that's an order, you hear me?

LEO nods weakly as the freezing men sit clinging to each other,
all except MACROS, waiting to make his move.

*

77 EXT - PICT CAMP - NIGHT

77

ETAIN and the others aren't so bothered about being noticed....
They have a roaring fire going and are sitting around it,
watching ETAIN create something in a clay pot.

She adds the ROMAN ASHES to the mix, stirs them in, then sticks
in her fingers and smears the BLUE WOAD MIXTURE in patterns
across her face. The rest of the HUNTERS follow her lead. They
are preparing for battle.

78 EXT - ROCKY ALCOVE - NIGHT

78

QUINTUS stirs and wakes, he's surprised to find a roaring
CAMPFIRE, but then he sees something else through the flames.

*

*

It's ETAIN, covered in war paint, hair white and spiked! She
charges toward him, her face contorted with rage, her SPEAR held
high, ready to throw!

QUINTUS is frozen in fear as she charges like a tiger!

*

She hurls the SPEAR through the fire toward him and just as it
strikes his chest we

*

CUT TO:

79 EXT - ROCKY ALCOVE - DAWN

79

QUINTUS, caked in snow, wakes with a start. The others, frosted
together, slowly stir. QUINTUS looks out over the snow covered
landscape as we

*

*

*

DISSOLVE TO:

*

79A	EXT - MOUNTAIN TOPS - DAWN	79A	*
	ETAIN and her POSSE ride through the snow, finding the carcass of the DEER		* *
		DISSOLVE TO:	*
79B	EXT - AERIAL - MOUNTAINSIDE - DAWN	79B	*
	QUINTUS leads the men back down into the valleys		*
		DISSOLVE TO:	*
79C	EXT - MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY	79C	*
	ETAIN finds the spot where they slept the night, the ground disturbed, patterns in the snow. She looks down into the valleys, staring into the far distance...		* * *
79D	EXT - MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY	79D	*
	Entering the forest, QUINTUS, as if feeling her gaze, stops and glances back up the mountain. They can't see each other, but they can sense each other.		* * *
	He turns and continues running, catching up with the others heading down the slope into the forested valley.		* *
80	DELETED	80	*
81	DELETED	81	*
82	EXT - FOREST PEAT BOGS - MONTAGE - DAY	82	*
	- QUINTUS and his men running, evading, using the terrain and cover, over fallen trees and through bogs, desperate to throw off their hunters.		*
	- The Romans wade through endless peat bogs.		*
	- ETAIN and her posse must dismount and wade through the bogs, slowly and relentlessly pursuing them.		*
	- Bothos feels a tick, gorging on his blood, and squashes it between his fingers.		* *

83 **EXT - FOREST - DAY**

83

QUINTUS turns, and in the far distance he sees them, ETAIN and her POSSE, coming after them relentlessly. *

Doubling their speed, they must keep running as fast as their tired legs can carry them. *

Suddenly BRUCHNAUR's foot goes into a small hole and he topples forward, cracking his knee the wrong way. BRUCHNAUR lets out a howl of agony and QUINTUS rushes in to cover his mouth. *

84 **EXT - FOREST'S EDGE - DAY**

84

Reaching the more solid ground of the forest, ETAIN splits her posse up. *

85 **EXT - FOREST - DAY**

85

BRUCHNAUR sucks in the pain as QUINTUS and the others pull his leg free and see the damage. There's no blood, but his leg is bent at an unnatural angle. *

THAX

They'll have heard his cries for miles around.

QUINTUS

We have to move him. *

All around goes silent. QUINTUS freezes, listening.... *

THAX

What's wrong?

QUINTUS

They found us. *

An AXE whirling through the air toward them! QUINTUS shoves THAX aside and the AXE embeds in a tree between them. *

It's followed by a screaming PICT WARRIOR, charging at them.

LEO slings a stone in return and hits the RIDER square in the temple, knocking him from his horse. BRICK and BOTHOS pounce on the fallen rider, hacking him to pieces!

More RIDERS are closing in on them.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

Move! Come on! *

THAX

THIS WAY!

The men break and run, following THAX's lead up a steep and rocky incline. It's too steep for the horses, so the PICTS must dismount and follow on foot.

THAX and MACROS, climbing like hell, leading the way, reach the top and suddenly stop in their tracks.

QUINTUS, supporting BRUCHNAUR catches up with them, and they are quickly joined by BOTHOS, LEO and BRICK. *

BOTHOS

Oh shit!

They are poised on the brink of a sheer cliff. Below is a deep river gorge and a raging torrent of white water.

Glancing behind them they see the PICTS are gaining fast.

QUINTUS

We have to jump! *

THAX

Are you out of your mind?!

A PICT arrow slams into a tree between them.

QUINTUS

Do it! GO! *

QUINTUS and THAX glare at each other, a look of madness in both their eyes. *

THAX

Fuck it.

THAX runs and jumps off the edge, closely followed by MACROS. *

QUINTUS helps BRUCHNAUR to edge as BRICK jumps next. *

LEO

I can't!

BOTHOS

Piece of piss!

BOTHOS grabs LEO and hurls him off the edge.

BOTHOS (CONT'D)

QUINTUS come on! *

BOTHOS jumps next.

85 CONTINUED: (2)

85

QUINTUS and BRUCHNAUR are about to jump as the PICT shoots. *
 BRUCHNAUR is hit in the back. He looks at QUINTUS before falling *
 off the edge. *

QUINTUS *

NO! *

QUINTUS looks back, he meets ETAIN's glance, then turns and *
 leaps! *

QUINTUS splash down and search for BRUCHNAUR but loses him in *
 the torrent and is swept away downstream.

ETAIN and her men stand on the cliff edge, watching QUINTUS and *
 the others carried away, out of reach.

86 EXT - MOUNTAIN RIVER - DAY

86

BOTHOS manages to grab hold of a branch and pull himself out of *
 the river on the opposite bank. BRICK drifts past and BOTHOS
 grabs him, hauling him onto the rocks. LEO comes next, then
 QUINTUS. *

They collapse, freezing, wet and exhausted...

BRICK

Where's Bruchnaur?

QUINTUS *

I lost him. What about Thax and Macros?

BOTHOS

I don't know...

In time they haul themselves to their feet and head off into the
 tree line.

87 EXT - MOUNTAIN RIVER - DAY

87

Further downstream, THAX and MACROS come to a calmer stretch of
 water and haul themselves out onto the riverbank.

They lie there, gasping in air. They're alive, Just. They begin
 to laugh, until THAX spots BRUCHNAUR's body floating past, two
 arrows sticking from his back.

Then he notices something else... A LONE WOLF, standing on the
 opposite bank watching the body before turning its eyes on them.

THAX sighs and the MACROS sees what he is looking at...

THAX

Shit. ...Can you walk?

(CONTINUED)

MACROS

Yes..

THAX

Then you can run.

He pulls MACROS up and they run off once more.

88 EXT - FOREST VALLEY - NIGHT

88

QUINTUS stands in the moonlight, watching the opposite side of the valley as the lights of several flaming torches appear along the ridge across the valley, riding in single file. *

QUINTUS

They've followed us downstream. *

Behind him, BOTHOS is tending to LEO, who now has a fever.

BRICK moves to stand next to QUINTUS, watching the torches. *

BRICK

That's right.... keep on going....

After a breathless moment they disappear from sight. BRICK breathes a sigh of relief turning to QUINTUS... *

QUINTUS

Shit.... *

The torches reappear, back tracking to a point and stopping.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

...she's onto us. *

BRICK

Damn witch. How can she do that?

QUINTUS

It's no magic, she's a tracker...
(he licks his finger and holds it up to
the breeze)
...and she's down-wind of us. *

Across the valley ETAIN mirrors his gaze, as if she can hear their conversation.

QUINTUS and BRICK head back to the others... *

BOTHOS

What's happening?

QUINTUS

They're making camp across the valley. *

BRICK

They don't care. They WANT us to know where they are.

QUINTUS

You know what she won't expect?

(beat)

US. ...Bothos, you watch over Leo.

BOTHOS

Where are you going?

QUINTUS

To even the odds.

At that QUINTUS and BRICK disappear into the night.

89 EXT - FOREST RIVER - NIGHT

89

Lit only by the moonlight, QUINTUS and BRICK, creeping like commandoes, forge their way across the river, then climb up the opposite bank disappearing into the forest once more.

90 EXT - PICT CAMP - NIGHT

90

A PICT stands watch, as BRICK creeps up on him, pulling back his head and cutting deep into his throat. In silence the PICT slumps and the two ROMANS move on.

Climbing up onto the rocky ledge where the PICTS have made their camp, QUINTUS and BRICK have their weapons at the ready.... but are surprised to find only 3 PICTS lying asleep.

BRICK

...She's not here.

With a sudden realisation, QUINTUS knows he's been duped.

91 EXT - ROMAN CAMP - NIGHT

91

LEO screams as ETAIN rushes toward him and hurls her SPEAR, hitting LEO right in the mouth. The SPEAR driving straight through the back of his head.

BOTHOS cuts down another PICT with his AXE but is struck by an ARROW in the THIGH and falls down an embankment.

ETAIN strides into camp, focused on LEO. Yanking the SPEAR from his mouth, she draws her AXE and swings for his exposed neck.

92 EXT - PICT CAMP - NIGHT

92

Suddenly the PICT lying asleep next to **QUINTUS** wakes up, only to *
be silenced by a blow from **QUINTUS**' sword, wedging in his mouth. *

BRICK attacks the next PICT, holding his hand over his mouth as
he drives his knife up under his jaw and scrambles his brains.

The last man comes at **QUINTUS**, slamming him against a rock. *

PICT

This is for the boy!

As he is about to strike, **Quintus** ducks beneath the blow and *
brings his own blade up into the man's ribs. The PICT drops his *
own weapon as **Quintus** pins him against the rock.

QUINTUS *

Boy? What boy?

BRICK

Quintus come ON! *

QUINTUS twists the blade in the Pict's side... *

QUINTUS *

Speak and I'll grant you an quick death!

PICT WARRIOR

*You killed the King's son. Gorlacon has
sworn an oath of vengeance on all your
heads.*

QUINTUS *

(under his breath)

Thax.

BRICK

Kill him and be done with it!

PICT WARRIOR

You promised me a quick death!

QUINTUS pulls his blade free and the PICT falls to the ground... *

QUINTUS *

I lied.

QUINTUS turns his back and walks away. *

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

He should slow them down a bit.

BRICK grabs a bundle of fur clothes tied across a horse and they
hurry away into the night once more.

(CONTINUED)

BRICK
And I mistook you for a soft touch.

93 EXT - FOREST RIVER - NIGHT

93

QUINTUS and BRICK hurry back across the river in one direction, *
and just after they've gone, further downstream, we see ETAIN
and her posse hurry back in the opposite direction.

94 EXT - ROMAN CAMP - NIGHT

94

QUINTUS and BRICK rush back into their camp. To find LEO's *
headless body.

QUINTUS *
Ahhh no! BOTHOS? BOTHOS...?!

Searching the darkness they a faint hear GROANING. And
scrambling down a steep embankment find BOTHOS. An arrow in his
thigh.

BOTHOS
They had the same idea as you.

QUINTUS snaps off the ARROW. It's not bleeding too badly, but *
it'll have to be stopped.

BRICK
They aren't defending their lives or
their country anymore. They've sworn
blood vengeance on us, and they won't
rest until we beg them for death.

QUINTUS *
Are you ready to get on your knees and
beg?

BOTHOS *
I'm finished Quintus. It's hopeless.

QUINTUS *
Hopeless? Hopeless is what they sing
songs about. Write poems about. Hopeless
is the stuff of legend, Bothos.
(smiles)
And being a legend will get you laid.

Amid the horror and death, they manage a wry smile.

BOTHOS
So what do we do?

QUINTUS

*

Get moving while we still have darkness on our side.

(Beat)

The gods have forsaken us. We make our own chances now...

95 EXT - MOORLAND - DAWN

95

Looking out across a vast, endless wilderness, we close in on two figures running for their lives.

THAX and MACROS are beyond exhaustion, they are running now on pure fear and the will to live. The WOLVES shadow them, not allowing them to stop or rest for a moment.

MACROS is beginning to get away from THAX. If he can't keep up he's screwed.

96 EXT - FOREST - DAY

96

ETAIN and her POSSE draw to a stop. The wounded PICT is having difficulty riding and slowing them down.

ETAIN draws alongside and sees his thigh is bleeding badly...

PICT WARRIOR

Do what you must.

ETAIN, wracked with remorse, draws her dagger and cuts his throat, he slumps off his horse to the ground before taking his reins and riding on. *

97 EXT - FOREST VALLEY - DAY

97

Now wearing FURS, the Romans look every bit PICT savages.

QUINTUS and BRICK support BOTHOS between them. The trees sway in the wind...strange murmurs travel on the breeze. *

For the first time, BRICK looks spooked... Wind chimes and other strange trinkets hang in the trees: bones bent into pagan shapes; twigs woven into human form; dead rabbits and headless birds strung up from branches. Signs of sacrifice...

BOTHOS

We should give this place a wide berth.

QUINTUS

*

We need food and you need help. We must appeal to their better nature.

97 CONTINUED:

97

BRICK
They have no better nature.

98 EXT - FOREST CLEARING - DAWN

98

QUINTUS and the others stagger out into an open area of the forest. Nestling within it is a single PICT dwelling.... *

There is smoke coming from the chimney, but no-one is in sight.

Swords drawn, they move towards the small building. Beside it is a vegetable patch. Cows and goats are kept in small enclosures, and beyond it, a river flows, carrying fresh water.

They reach the front door and cautiously go inside.

99 INT - PICT COTTAGE - DAY

99

Inside is a stone fireplace, a table and chair, a bed. The bare essentials for one person to live out here.

Quintus sets BOTHOS down on the bed, he groans in pain. *

QUINTUS *

(to Brick)

Stay with him, I'll fetch some water.

100 EXT - PICT COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

100

Hurrying outside he collides with a young woman. She is equally startled and falls backwards, spilling the pail of water she's carried from the river. Terrified, she scrambles away from QUINTUS.. *

QUINTUS *

It's okay! We don't want to hurt you!

Only now does he notice that she is very beautiful, and has a large scar down her left cheek. *

GIRL

Who are you? What do you want here?!

Hearing the commotion, BRICK hurries outside, dagger in hand.

QUINTUS *

It's alright Brick! It's okay! Go back inside! NOW! GO!

BRICK sees the girl on the ground...

BRICK

I'll leave you to it then shall I....

(CONTINUED)

QUINTUS turns back to the girl, still on the ground. As he calms *
down, so does she....a little.

GIRL
I have nothing of value!

QUINTUS *
*We're not thieves, we're soldiers. We
need food and shelter. And we have an
injured man...he needs help.*

She's very surprised that he can speak in her language.

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *
We're just trying to get home.....

He throws his sword on the ground before her, holds out his arms
and turns around 360 degrees.

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *
Here, take it, I mean you no harm.

QUINTUS offers his hand. She looks at him, reading him... He's *
so tired he would be incapable of lying to her right now.

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *
What is your name?

GIRL *
Arianne.

QUINTUS *
My name is Quintus Dias. *

She leaves the sword and takes his hand.

ARIANNE *
You speak my language.

Now he's the one who's surprised.

QUINTUS *
And you, mine.

ARIANNE *
*Are you from the garrison? I thought
you'd stopped coming this far north.*

She picks up her pail and heads down to the river again, with
QUINTUS following. *

QUINTUS *
Garrison? What garrison?

ARIANNE *
Two days south of here.

QUINTUS

They come here?

ARIANNE

How do you think I know your language? I do what I can to discourage them...

(she gestures to the chimes and totems)
They think I'm a necromancer and leave me alone. It usually works on others, why not you?

QUINTUS

We're too tired to be afraid. We've been running for... days. We were three thousand. Now we are three.....

She takes the pail and heads back to the COTTAGE, with QUINTUS following again.

101 INT - PICT COTTAGE - DAY

101

ARIANNE's enters and BRICK spins around, knife ready.

QUINTUS

Brick, put the *fucking* knife down!

BRICK eyes her up, then slides his dagger back into its sheath.

QUINTUS (CONT'D)

Bothos, did you hear? There's a Roman garrison just two days from here! It must be the western frontier post at Mentieth. We're almost home....!

BOTHOS

Thank the gods.

ARIANNE checks out BOTHOS' leg.

ARIANNE

Let's take a look at your friend...

BRICK is now inherently suspicious of anyone indigenous to this landscape and hesitates, looking to QUINTUS.

ARIANNE (CONT'D)

The wound is dirty. I'll make a poultice to stop any infection.

BOTHOS

(afraid of the unknown)

What's she going to do me, *Quintus*?

BRICK

Sounds like a witch's brew.

BOTHOS

What?!

QUINTUS

Relax. She's trying to help.

*

BRICK

She's a Pict, and a woman. Two good reasons not to trust her.

ARIANNE

Would you rather he lives by my hand, or dies your Roman way...slowly, in pain?

*

QUINTUS

(looking at Bothos)

I trust her. You're just going to have to trust me.

*

102 EXT - MOORLAND - NIGHT

102

THAX and MACROS are still running.

The WOLVES hang back and let their prospective victims tenderize their own flesh.

THAX stumbles and falls into a bog.

MACROS stops to help him out.... and with great effort manages to haul him back onto firm ground.

THAX slumps down on the grass as MACROS keeps an eye on the WOLVES who, sensing the end is near, have started to close in.

THAX's muscles are burnt out, there's not enough air in his lungs to fuel them....

THAX

(gasping)

I can't do it Macros.....I can't keep up.

MACROS

Are you sure?

THAX

...I'm sorry.

THAX draws his dagger and slices through the tendons in the back of MACROS knee! MACROS howls in pain, as THAX clanks the blade on his victims tunic...

THAX (CONT'D)

This way at least one of us can make it.

MACROS

You bastard!

THAX

Don't cry out Macros..... they'll end it quicker if you don't cry out.

MACROS

Don't leave me!

But THAX is already leaving him, and the WOLVES are happy to let him go. Now they have their prey. They simply lie down and wait.

103 **AERIAL - MOORLAND - CONTINUOUS**

103

We pull away from THAX as he leaves MACROS to the WOLVES, lifting up and away revealing the vast expanse of wild moorland they are in, stretching away for miles, until they are just distant specs.

104 **EXT. PICT COTTAGE - NIGHT**

104

A full moon. Smoke plumes from the chimney.

105 **INT. PICT COTTAGE - NIGHT**

105

QUINTUS feeds the fire. ARIANNE prepares a stew. BRICK and BOTHOS watch her as she adds mushrooms to the pot... *

BRICK

Death caps?

QUINTUS joins them. *

QUINTUS *

How's your leg?

(smiles)

Has our witch worked her magic?

BRICK

Quintus, the mushrooms... *

QUINTUS *

The what?

BOTHOS

I think she's trying to poison us.

QUINTUS *

Why heal your leg, only to kill you?

ARIANNE serves up...the pot steams, smells great, but the men *
hesitate to eat. She shovels stew into her mouth. BRICK and
BOTHOS breathe a sigh of relief and tuck in.

ARIANNE *
Death caps have white gills. It pays to
know your mushrooms.

QUINTUS grins. It's good stew. Warming. Restorative. *

QUINTUS *
It's good.

BOTHOS
It's really good.

BRICK
Delicious.

A small smile punctures ARIANNE's face. QUINTUS is enthralled as *
she meets his eyes.

LATER... *

BOTHOS and BRICK are fast asleep as QUINTUS and ARIANNE sit by *
the fire... *

ARIANNE *
You're men are very nervous. *

QUINTUS *
They ought to be. A demon stalks us day *
and night, relentless as death itself. *

ARIANNE *
A demon? *

QUINTUS *
They call her Etain. *

ARIANNE sits up, a look of genuine fear on her face. *

ARIANNE *
If Etain is hunting you, you're already *
dead. *

QUINTUS *
That's comforting. You know her? *

ARIANNE *
I knew her once. She was a child when *
she came to my village, fleeing from the *
Romans. *

QUINTUS looks at ARIANNE, not sure where she's going with this. *

ARIANNE (CONT'D)

Her own village had been slaughtered as punishment for resisting Roman will. To set an example they burnt out her father's eyes and crucified him. They raped her mother, all of them. By the end she was begging to die, and they granted her wish. Etain was forced to watch, before she too was raped, and mutilated.

(beat)

Now she lives only to avenge herself and her parents. Her soul is an empty vessel. Only Roman blood can fill it. She will not give up.

QUINTUS looks at her, a new understanding of his enemy sinking in.

106 INT - PICT COTTAGE - DAWN

106

QUINTUS wakes up suddenly, sucking in a deep breath! Behind him, BRICK is watching over BOTHOS.

BRICK

Bad dream?

QUINTUS

Etain.

BOTHOS

But you wouldn't kick her out of bed on a cold night?

QUINTUS

How are you feeling?

BOTHOS

Better than I did yesterday.

QUINTUS

Where's Arianne?

BRICK

'Went to fetch us some breakfast.

107 EXT - PICT COTTAGE - DAWN

107

QUINTUS steps outside into the chilly morning air and stretches, and spits, then becoming self conscious he checks to see ARIANNE is not in sight and heads for the river....

108 EXT - RIVER - DAWN

108

Still half asleep, **QUINTUS** stands on the river bank, hitches up his tunic and begins pissing in the water, head rolled back, sighing in pure relief and satisfaction..... *

ARIANNE (O.S.) *

Is that for bait?

QUINTUS looks ahead to see **ARIANNE** standing, knee-deep in the river before him. He quickly ducks behind a tree... *

QUINTUS *

Where I come from it's considered rude to interrupt a man mid-flow.

ARIANNE *

Where I come from, it's considered only fair to warn a man when he's pissing on his breakfast.....!

She pulls a fish from the river and throws it at **QUINTUS**'s feet. *

QUINTUS *

Good point.

She hitches up her skirts, revealing an eyeful of toned, slender thigh as she wades slowly upstream. **QUINTUS** is entranced. He watches her work in silence as she stoops to gently cajole and catch another fish. *

He sits down beneath a tree and begins carving a piece of wood.

She casts him a glance, smiling softly through her veil of red hair, then returns to her work... only the water turns murky and she can no longer see the fish.

ARIANNE *

.....Must have been a storm in the hills last night.

QUINTUS sees the water and knows what it means. He leaps into action, and into the river, grabbing her by the wrist. *

QUINTUS *

Come on!

109 EXT - RIVER - UPSTREAM - DAY

109

We see the legs of several HORSES wading downstream in single file, slowly, quietly, deliberately.

110 **INT - PICT COTTAGE - DAY** 110

QUINTUS bursts in and BRICK stands ready.... *

QUINTUS *

Trouble...!

BRICK

Let's get out of here.

We already hear the sounds of approaching horses outside.

QUINTUS *

Too late for that.

ARIANNE *

Stay here and don't make a sound...

ARIANNE grabs her pail and goes outside. *

The men look at each other. Will she sell them out? Well she protect them? They're trapped like fish in a barrel.

111 **EXT - PICT COTTAGE - DAY** 111

ETAIN and the others are not dissuaded by WIND CHIMES or TOTEMS.

ARIANNE fills her pail and walks back to the cottage as the RIDERS approach. *

PICT HUNTER

Witch, we are looking for Roman dogs.

She eyes them all with resentment. ETAIN dismounts and walks up close to ARIANNE, glaring menacingly.... *

ARIANNE *

Then look, if you must....Just don't leave your stench in my home..... it's all I have.

ETAIN stops and turns back to her....

112 **INT - COTTAGE - DAY** 112

QUINTUS glances down at the floor on the cottage.... *

113 **EXT - COTTAGE - DAY** 113

ETAIN stares daggers at ARIANNE, then turns, and goes inside.... *

but nothing happens.

114 INT - COTTAGE - DAY

114

The COTTAGE is empty.

ARIANNE follows ETAIN inside as she paces about the room, *
looking for evidence. She spots a bloody bandage lying near by.
Stepping in front of it, she grabs it.

ETAIN doesn't notice a small trap door in the floor, leading to *
a small grain bunker.

Below, MARCOS and the others cower, too afraid to breath, as
ETAIN stands directly above them.

ARIANNE figures out where they're hiding, so tries to distract *
ETAIN.

ARIANNE

*

*What's the matter, Etain? Cat got your
tongue?*

ETAIN storms toward ARIANNE, knife drawn and ready, grabbing her *
hair and dragging her outside.

QUINTUS goes for his blade too, and BOTHOS who stops him. *
QUINTUS backs down, reluctantly.... *

115 EXT - COTTAGE - DAY

115

ETAIN has her knife to ARIANNE's throat but one of the other *
PICT WARRIORS stops her.

PICT WARRIOR

Etain, NO! She'll put a curse on us!

A breeze blows through the trees, rattling the chimes....

ETAIN refrains from killing ARIANNE and instead pushes her head *
forward, forcing her to look at her own reflection in the PAIL
of water. Then she lets go and mounts her horse.

116 INT - COTTAGE - DAY

116

QUINTUS is fuming, itching to kill ETAIN as she rides away with *
her posse in a cloud of dust....

117 EXT - COTTAGE - DAY

117

QUINTUS hurries outside and picks ARIANNE up in his arms... *

QUINTUS

We've put you in too much danger. We'll leave.

ARIANNE

Leave now and she'll have you gutted and skinned before nightfall. Stay until morning, and your friend will be fit to travel.

QUINTUS

I cannot ask you to betray your own people.

ARIANNE

They are not MY people.

(beat)

Not since Gorlacon accused me of witchcraft and gave me this...

(she gestures to her scar)

...to mark me forever as an outcast, and banished me to live out my days here, alone.

She picks up her pail and heads for the river before her strong shell cracks.... QUINTUS watches her, fascinated, entranced.

118 INT - COTTAGE - NIGHT

118

BRICK is watching over BOTHOS as QUINTUS continues carving some kind of animal... studying ARIANNE as she makes a fire.

QUINTUS

Brick, get some sleep. I'll stand watch.

QUINTUS goes outside as BRICK stands up and approaches ARIANNE...

BRICK

I'm a cantankerous old soldier, but not too stubborn to admit when I'm wrong. I'm sorry I misjudged you.

He says no more than is needed, then goes to lie on the floor at the far of the croft, his back to her.

ARIANNE follows QUINTUS outside.

119 EXT - RIVERBANK - NIGHT

119

QUINTUS stands alone beneath the moonlight, staring at the ominous dark shapes of the mountains, listening to the steady ripple of the stream.

ARIANNE joins QUINTUS...

*

QUINTUS

*

You have given us the shelter of your home, the warmth of your fire, and risked your life for us....why?

ARIANNE

*

I owe allegiance to no man, but whom I choose.

QUINTUS slowly reaches to touch her face. Initially she flinches, but he persists and gently runs his fingers down the scar.

*

This is the first tender touch she's had in years, and despite QUINTUS's rough hands, it feels good.

*

The emotions rise between them, and QUINTUS presses her back against a tree. ARIANNE doesn't resist. She wants him as much as he wants her. This is passionate, primitive stuff - two lost souls colliding in the night.

*

*

*

120 EXT - COTTAGE - DAWN

120

ARIANNE gives QUINTUS a leather satchel...

*

ARIANNE

*

Some food for your journey...

BOTHOS and BRICK nod their thanks to her as QUINTUS must force himself to leave her.

*

ARIANNE (CONT'D)

*

Good luck, Roman.

QUINTUS

*

Good luck...Witch.

She turns away and goes inside, closing the door. QUINTUS turns away and follows the others.

*

121 INT - COTTAGE - DAWN

121

ARIANNE spots the small wooden carving of a horse QUINTUS has left for her. A simple token of his love.

*

122 EXT - FOREST - DAWN

122

QUINTUS leads the others up a ridge, at the summit he pauses to look back as we

*

DISSOLVE TO:

123 **EXT - FOREST - DAWN**

123

ETAIN leads her POSSE slowly through the depths of the forest, always watching, always listening.

124 **EXT - ROMAN FRONTIER FORT - DUSK**

124

QUINTUS, BRICK and BOTHOS emerge from the forest onto a rough track, gasping air into their lungs, barely able to stand. *

BOTHOS

Quintus, I can't run another step....! *

Then QUINTUS glances down the trail and sees something to give them hope. A column of smoke is visible over the next rise... *

QUINTUS *

You see there. The fire is burning. Hot food and a dry bed....One last effort.

BOTHOS stands up, and the three of them stagger to the top of the rise, gaining speed as they get closer until...

They stop dead. Hope crushed. The fort is a deserted.

125 **EXT - INSIDE ROMAN FRONTIER FORT - DUSK**

125

QUINTUS pushes the GATE open, but it falls off its hinges and crashes to the ground. The place is empty. *

They find it hard to take in. It leaves them numb.

QUINTUS sees a leather pouch nailed to the inside of the GATE. *

He hurries over and pulls out a folded parchment....

QUINTUS *

Agricola has fallen back. Emperor Hadrian has given orders to form a new defensive line, to the south.

BRICK

Giving up the ground we fought for.

BOTHOS

Where does that leave us?

QUINTUS *

Fucked...and 50 miles behind enemy lines.

A drop of rain falls on the parchment, then another, and another. The clouds open and rain begins to pour down on them.

Just then a WAR HORN sounds, echoing across the valley...

Followed by the others, **QUINTUS** runs and climbs atop the palisade above the GATE, looking out over the forest. On a ridge above the fort sit ETAIN and the remains of her POSSE. *

BRICK
How does she DO that?!

QUINTUS *
I don't know about you, but I'm tired of running.

BOTHOS *
It's three to one **Quintus**.

QUINTUS *
And if Virilus were here he'd say the odds were in our favour.

BOTHOS and BRICK look at him. They know what he means....

BRICK
We stand.

BOTHOS
Let's finish this.

QUINTUS *
Brick, man the defences. Bothos, check for weapons! **Prepare for battle!** *

QUINTUS jumps down to the GATE, pushing a old cart into place behind the GATE to form a crude barricade. *

126 **EXT - ROMAN FRONTIER FORT - DUSK**

126

ETAIN looks mad as hell as she and the PICT WARRIORS gallop toward the fort, fearless.

127 **INT - INSIDE ROMAN FRONTIER FORT - DUSK**

127

It's a hopeless defensive position, but they're going to give it all they've got.

BOTHOS scrambles around inside one of the smouldering structures skirting the palisade, and eventually finds something useful.

TWO BOWS, but only a handful of arrows apiece. *

128 EXT - INSIDE ROMAN FRONTIER FORT - DUSK

128

BRICK is up on the palisade above the GATE as BOTHOS comes out and throws him up a BOW and 4 arrows...

BOTHOS
That's all I could find.

QUINTUS
Make them count! Bothos, help me with
this!

BOTHOS and QUINTUS tip the cart over, spilling it's contents toward the open GATE. Then he grabs an old OIL LAMP and splashes it's contents over the barricade before setting it all ablaze with a flaming brand.

BOTHOS joins BRICK up on the palisade, flanking his position, QUINTUS waits in the centre.

The PICTS are streaked with BLUE WOAD, made from the ashes of the Ninth Legion. Three riders are up front. BOTHOS shoots and takes out the first. BRICK then hits the second. The third charges towards the GATE and jumps his horse over the burning cart into the central courtyard.

He slashes at QUINTUS, who dodges his blows, rolling under the horse and dragging the PICT to the ground. Before the man can recover, QUINTUS rams his sword through the PICT'S neck.

Yanking out his sword, he takes the PICTS bow and climbs up onto the palisade to take up position at the rear of the FORT.

ETAIN signals her men to storm the walls.

The PICT WARRIORS launch a violent assault on the thinly defended fort. They leap from their horses onto the top of the FORTIFICATIONS and scramble over, onto the palisade.

There BRICK, QUINTUS and BOTHOS are waiting for them!

QUINTUS sees a PICT climb over to BOTHOS's rear. With the bow he takes aim across the fort. He shoots and hits the PICT in the groin, just as another WARRIOR jumps over the PALISADE behind him. Now he draws his sword and defends himself.

BOTHOS hacks his first opponent down before turning to the PICT with the arrow in his groin. He grabs the man's neck in his left hand and the protruding ARROW in his right, twisting it and driving it deeper as he hefts the PICT backwards over the wall.

ETAIN charges toward the GATES, SPEAR in hand and hurls it at BRICK. He's trying to re-load his bow when he's hit in the torso by ETAIN'S SPEAR. But this just makes him more furious.

(CONTINUED)

QUINTUS is battling another PICT on the wall, sword in one hand, *
dagger in the other.

BOTHOS is also fighting for his life, his thigh bleeding *
heavily, but he manages to out-manoeuvre his PICT opponent until
he is teetering on the brink of the palisade. BOTHOS boots him
backward and he crashes through the burnt out wooden roof of a
hut below, landing and impaling himself on burning stake. *

A PICT climbs the palisade and rushes toward BRICK. He holds the
SPEAR (through his gut) with one hand, his sword in the other,
and keeps fighting.

A PICT lunges over the wall taking QUINTUS by surprise, smashing *
him in the face and getting the advantage. With QUINTUS under *
his boot, the PICT raises his sword to bring it down on
QUINTUS's head, but at the last moment he's hit in the chest by *
an arrow.

Scrambling free from under the dead man, QUINTUS glances over to *
see BOTHOS shot the arrow.

They exchange a brief nod of thanks before BOTHOS is attacked *
again and QUINTUS sees the GATE is just about to give way. He *
picks up his BOW, 2 arrows left.

TWO PICTS kick the burning GATE down before rushing in! QUINTUS *
takes aim and kills the first easily, but as he draws down on
the second, a PICT lunges over the wall behind him and grapples
him.

The two men roll off the palisade, drop onto a roof and roll off
that, landing with a crunch in the stables.

QUINTUS is defenceless, as he's cornered by not one but two PICT *
WARRIORS within the FORT.

BOTHOS cuts the arm off his attacker and then his throat. He *
sees QUINTUS' predicament, he's in trouble...

QUINTUS, backed into the stables, grabs a bridle from the wall *
and swings it above his head, keeping the PICTS back.

BOTHOS hurls his own sword, spinning through the air, and it *
hits one of the PICTS square between the shoulder blades. The
PICT topples face first into the mud, and QUINTUS uses the *
sudden distraction to swing the heavy metal bridle into the side
of the 2nd PICT'S head.

The PICT reels from the blow just long enough for QUINTUS to *
pull BOTHOS' SWORD from the dead man's back. Now he has a
fighting chance.

BOTHOS picks up his bow and picks off another PICT storming
through the GATES and shooting BRICK with his bow, hitting him
in the thigh.

BRICK is now fighting for his life atop the GATES with an ARROW and a SPEAR sticking out of him. ONE PICT knocks his SWORD from his hand, but BRICK merely pulls the ARROW from his chest and drives it into the PICTS eye. Another PICT lunges on his back, but BRICK pushes the SPEAR through his own body, into the PICT! The attacker falls down, dad, but BRICK is lost too...

BOTHOS turns to see as BRICK falls from the palisade...

BOTHOS

BRICK....!!!

QUINTUS uses the bridle to lash the ankle of his opponent and pull him over, then skewers him with the sword. He looks up and sees BRICK lying in the mud beneath the GATES just as... *

QUINTUS *

NOOOOO!!!!!!

ETAIN charges through the GATES and leaps from the horse towards QUINTUS, driving him backwards through a wall. *

The last PICT WARRIOR jumps over the palisade next to BOTHOS, catching him off guard! BOTHOS can't bring his bow to bear in time. The PICT has an AXE and BOTHOS is now unarmed. BOTHOS manages to grab the PICT'S swinging arm and the two men crash down on the palisade, engaged in a furious life or death struggle.

Inside the structure, QUINTUS and ETAIN are knocking 7 bells out of each other. It's raw, physical, brutal stuff, culminating in QUINTUS kicking her backwards through the same wall she drove him in through. *

She stumbles and lands in the mud and QUINTUS seizes the advantage, pouncing on her back and pressing her face into the mud. *

BOTHOS and his man are rolling back and forwards, close to the edge of the PALISADE, threatening to drop off at any moment.

ETAIN isn't finished yet though, and digs her elbow into QUINTUS' ribs with an audible crack. He flinches in pain and she kicks him hard in the face, sending him barrelling backward. She spots a SWORD lying in the mud near the gate and dashes for it. *

Above on the PALISADE, BOTHOS is kicked backward by his opponent, tumbling off the edge and dropping into the mud between ETAIN and QUINTUS. *

BOTHOS is battered and dazed as ETAIN pounces on his back, holding her blade to his throat.

On the palisade, the last PICT (the GENERAL) draws his bow and aims at QUINTUS, unarmed and in the open, facing ETAIN. *

It's a stand off. QUINTUS stops dead, weighing up his options. *

BOTHOS looks terrified as ETAIN presses the blade harder, glaring at QUINTUS, her eyes burning with hatred, not of him, but of his kind. We can see she's reached an emotional zenith, the rage and pain overflowing. *

QUINTUS spots his dagger lying in the mud between them. BOTHOS sees it too and knows what he has to do. *

BOTHOS throws his head back against ETAIN knocking her off balance. QUINTUS dives and rolls. The PICT shoots, missing QUINTUS. ETAIN's blade cuts BOTHOS but not too deeply. BOTHOS rolls clear and grabs a spear. QUINTUS grabs his knife and comes out of the roll lunging at ETAIN, embracing her and driving the blade into her chest. BOTHOS thrusts the spear up through the palisade into the groin of the PICT, skewering him to the spot, revenge for GRATIS. *

ETAIN drops to her knees in the mud. QUINTUS still cradling her. Their faces close. A sense of relief washes over ETAIN. QUINTUS looks at her, not in hate, but in understanding. She collapses and he catches her fall, cradling her in his arms as the last light fades from her eyes. *

No words are spoken between them. ETAIN doesn't even look at him. Her eyes are turned to the heavens as she dies, and QUINTUS lays her gently on the ground. *

QUINTUS, solemn and grave, stands up and turns to BOTHOS... *

QUINTUS (CONT'D) *

....Let's go home brother.

129 EXT - WOODLAND - DAY

129

Tracking alongside QUINTUS and BOTHOS, both in pain, one with cracked ribs, the other bleeding badly, as they ride on captured PICT PONIES, heading SOUTH for the new ROMAN LINE. *

130 EXT - CAMP - NIGHT

130

QUINTUS and BOTHOS huddle tight in the night. Wrapped in Pict furs. Lying close to the heat of their Pict ponies. *

BOTHOS
How much further do you think?

QUINTUS *

Another day's ride...maybe two. How's your leg?

BOTHOS

The bleeding's stopped. The pain
hasn't...

The PONIES neigh anxiously and a twig snaps in the darkness...

QUINTUS and BOTHOS, still on edge, grab their weapons. QUINTUS *
hurries away into the darkness, leaving BOTHOS alone, as bait.

BOTHOS waits nervously, then freezes as he feels a blade at his
shoulder!

It's THAX. But now he freezes as he feels a blade is HIS *
shoulder. It's QUINTUS.

QUINTUS *

That's close enough, Thax.

THAX

Shit! I thought you were Picts!

BOTHOS

Thax, you miserable bastard! We thought
you were surely dead!

THAX

I thought I was surely dog food!

BOTHOS and THAX exchange a warm embrace, slapping each other
hard on the back. QUINTUS isn't so welcoming. *

BOTHOS

Here...

Pict supplies, which Thax wolfs down.

QUINTUS *

What happened to Macros?

THAX

...Wolves took him.

BOTHOS

Shit.

THAX

Is this it? Are we all that's left?

A shared silence, a realisation of the sheer volume of men,
colleagues, friends who have been lost along the way.

THAX (CONT'D)

Well, at least some of us made it.

QUINTUS *

We're still a long way from home.

THAX

What do you mean? We should be at the frontier by now.

BOTHOS

A lot's happened while we've been away. Agricola's been given his marching orders.

THAX

So, Rome's finally given up on this shit-hole country? Can't say I'm sorry.

QUINTUS

Then the legion died for nothing. *

THAX

Maybe there are places Rome wasn't meant to conquer.

QUINTUS and THAX look at each other. One hiding a guilty secret. *
The other knowing what it is.

131 EXT - CAMP - DAWN

131

The Romans ready their horses. BOTHOS is first off. Quintus *
mounts up and offers his hand to pull THAX onto the PONY. With
Thax locked in his grip, he stalls a second.

QUINTUS

What happened with the boy Thax? *

THAX

I don't know what you're talking about.

Thax feels Quintus's ferocious gaze as he pulls him up behind *
him.

QUINTUS

You on? *

THAX

Yes.

QUINTUS spurs after BOTHOS and we *

DISSOLVE TO:

132 EXT - WILD MOORLAND - DAY

132

TWO PONIES, one carrying BOTHOS, the other QUINTUS with THAX *
sitting behind him. They gallop to the top of a ridge and stop
to look at the impressive view before them.

VFX wide - A vast construction is under way. The foundations of HADRIAN'S WALL have been laid and the first stones are in place. It stretches in a long line as far as the eye can see. Thousands of slaves are working on it.

QUINTUS

*

This is Hadrian's big plan? A fucking wall?

BOTHOS

Who gives a damn? We made it!

BOTHOS spurs his horse toward the wall...

QUINTUS

*

Bothos, be carefu....

QUINTUS is about to follow when he feels the point of a BLADE in his side, and THAX's hot breath on his ear.

*

THAX

What's your hurry, Centurion?

QUINTUS

*

What are you doing Thax?

THAX

Making sure we understand each other...

QUINTUS

*

I understand that good men died because of what you did, and you will answer for it.

*

*

THAX

Why did I just know you'd feel that way!

THAX draws back to stab him, but QUINTUS digs his heels into the PONY'S side and it rears up suddenly on it's hind legs, throwing both QUINTUS and THAX to the ground.

*

*

THAX recovers and stands waiting to kill QUINTUS. His sword has landed just out of reach, and THAX moves to block any attempt to reach it.

*

133 **EXT - GATE - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

133

BOTHOS, ecstatic with relief, rides toward the GATE. But he's still wearing the PICTISH furs.

ON THE GATE, two GUARDS see him coming. From their point of view, BOTHOS, covered in mud, blood, and furs, doesn't resemble a ROMAN.

BOTHOS calls out to them...but his words are unintelligible.

134 **EXT - MOORLAND - DAY**

134

QUINTUS and THAX face off, with one of them armed. *

THAX cuts and jabs at QUINTUS, but manages to avoid the shimmering blade. Impatient and impetuous, THAX rushes at QUINTUS, but QUINTUS blocks the blow, and they end up, face to face, the blade inches from QUINTUS' throat. *

QUINTUS uses all his might against THAX's equal strength. The point of the blade pierces QUINTUS neck, drawing blood, but the pain only serves to fuel his rage and double his strength. *

Grabbing THAX by the throat he squeezes hard... *

135 **EXT - GATE - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

135

BOTHOS continues to ride toward the GATE, waving his arm in the air in greeting.

ON THE GATE, the TWO GUARDS are growing ever more concerned that he's a PICT, attacking them. He certainly looks savage enough.

136 **EXT - MOORLAND - DAY**

136

QUINTUS and THAX are locked in a grim struggle, until QUINTUS forces THAX to drop the dagger as he finally strangles the life out of him. Just as he did the boy. *

137 **EXT - GATE - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

137

On the WALL, the GUARD raises his bow and shoots.

BOTHOS is hit by the ARROW and recoils, falling off the back of his horse.

138 **EXT - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

138

QUINTUS cries out to his friend... *

QUINTUS
NOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!! *

BOTHOS crashes heavily to the ground.

139 **EXT - MOORLAND - DAY**

139

QUINTUS tears off his FURS as he arrives at the scene and cradles BOTHOS' head in his arms. But the giant warrior is dead. QUINTUS turns his face to the sky and rages at the heavens. *

140 **EXT - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

140

Looking down on **QUINTUS**, still holding BOTHOS, as his horse *
wanders up to them. He slowly reaches out and takes hold of the
dripping wet reins, forcing himself to his feet...

He hauls BOTHOS up and slumps his body over the back of the pony
and leads them towards the WALL, his arms outstretched in a
gesture of surrender.

DISSOLVE TO:

141 **EXT - GATE - HADRIAN'S WALL - DAY**

141

The senior GUARD calls down to him.

GUARD

Halt, and be recognized....!

QUINTUS

Quintus Dias... Centurion... of the Ninth *
Legion....!

The GATES open and **QUINTUS** enters...before they close behind *
him.

142 **EXT - PICT ROUND-HOUSE - DUSK**

142

ETAIN's horse, riderless, wanders back into the village. *
GORLACON comes outside to meet it and it walk right up to him. *

He knows it can only mean one thing. He turns toward the *
mountains and we *

DISSOLVE TO:

143 **INT - COUNCIL CHAMBER - NIGHT**

143

QUINTUS stands before **AGRICOLA** [still full of cold] and his *
COUNCIL. **AGRICOLA** holds the parchment of his report.

AGRICOLA

Your report confirms our worst fears.

GENERAL ANTONINUS

Virilus was a brave general- but
reckless.

QUINTUS

He fought and died for Rome. *

(CONTINUED)

AGRICOLA

That's as may be, but an entire legion slaughtered by Pict savages and only your word to testify it's true?

QUINTUS

You don't believe me?

GENERAL ANTONINUS

An entire legion massacred by savages?
You're a damn liar!

Quick as lightning QUINTUS has his dagger to ANTONINUS' throat. *

AGRICOLA

Hold Centurion! I still command here and by the Gods, you will obey me!

QUINTUS lowers his knife. *

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

I swear Virilus' heart still beats..in YOUR chest. You have fought your war soldier, and earned the gratitude of Rome.

AGRICOLA signals to an AID...

AGRICOLA (CONT'D)

Now, go with this man to the kitchens. You look half starved.

QUINTUS

Yes...I am hungry. *

As QUINTUS wearily leaves, DRUSILLA moves to AGRICOLA's shoulder. *

DRUSILLA

We cannot return to Rome in disgrace. Better that the fate of the legion remain a mystery than the truth of the their failure be known. So long as he lives, he is a threat to us all.

AGRICOLA turns to the assembled council.

AGRICOLA

If word were to get out that savages had slaughtered an entire legion, every tribe of every nation would rise against us. The Empire would surely fall.

ANTONINUS

It's too great a risk.

AGRICOLA

Then we agree? The fate of the Ninth Legion shall be struck from the record?

TESIO

Aye.

CASSIUS

Aye.

AGRICOLA

Antoninus?

ANTONINUS

What is one more life to protect the honour of Rome?

AGRICOLA looks to DRUSILLA. She knows what to do.

144 INT - KITCHENS - NIGHT

144

Two ARMED GUARDS stand by the door. **QUINTUS** is tucking into his food as DRUSILLA enters with a jug of wine. *

DRUSILLA

I hope the food is to your liking.

QUINTUS, his mouth full, grunts approval. *

DRUSILLA (CONT'D)

I brought you some wine.

Setting a glass next to him, she pours RED WINE (SLO-MO) into it. We suspect it's laced with poison.

QUINTUS *

Your hospitality overwhelms me.

DRUSILLA

It is the least we can do for a hero of Rome.

DRUSILLA passes a casual nod to the GUARD at the door.

QUINTUS takes the jug. We suspect it's laced with poison. He takes a deep mouthful, but as he does his ears pick up the sound of one of the GUARDS unsheathing his SWORD behind him... *

QUINTUS knows something is wrong. His sword is out of reach. The GUARDS rush him. He turns and spits the WINE into the face of the FIRST GUARD, smashing the JUG into the side of the SECOND GUARD'S head. *

The FIRST GUARD drives his sword into **QUINTUS**' thigh but he uses the broken jug, stabbing it into the GUARD'S JUGULAR! *

(CONTINUED)

DRUSILLA recoils with shock as the SECOND GUARD rushes back into the fray.

QUINTUS draws the SWORD from his thigh and rolls over the table. *
Landing on his feet QUINTUS turns to meet the SECOND GUARD as he *
jumps up onto the table. QUINTUS swipes low, cutting the man's *
leg off at the ankle. He topples to the table and QUINTUS drives *
the sword through his breast plate and through the table itself.

Furious, he storms back over the table and thrusting DRUSILLA against the wall, blade to her throat.

QUINTUS *
Is this how Rome honours her heroes?!

DRUSILLA
We had no choice!

QUINTUS *
You want to bury the truth and me along
with it?

DRUSILLA
You're too much of a risk.

QUINTUS understands his predicament now. *

QUINTUS *
The truth may die WITH me, but call for *
help and you will die BEFORE me. *

She nervously nods....He eases his grip and lets her go. He *
picks up his kit, sheathes his sword and heads for the door. *

DRUSILLA
Where will you go?

QUINTUS *
Where I belong, with the legion. *

QUINTUS ducks out into the darkness. *

FADE TO BLACK.

ARIANNE is fishing in the stream and concentrating on a big fish *
inches from her grasp...

She's startled when she hears a HORSE whinny and looks up to see *
QUINTUS, sitting atop his mount on the bank of the river. *

QUINTUS *
Hello witch.

145 CONTINUED:

145

ARIANNE's face lights up.

*

ARIANNE

*

Hello Roman.

QUINTUS rides toward her....

*

QUINTUS

*

Fuck Rome.

He bends down from the saddles and takes her in his arms, lifting her off her feet and kissing her deeply.

146 EXT - COTTAGE - DAWN

146

Leaving his horse outside, QUINTUS dismounts and ARIANNE leads him inside, before closing the door behind them. *

FADE TO BLACK.

147 CREDITS ROLL

147

THE END