

"DRAGONHEART"

Screenplay by
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by

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FADE IN:

EXT. STONE RUIN - DAY

A SWORD flashes in the sunlight as it whirls down on...

SIR BOWEN...a ruggedly handsome knight who catches the blade on his own, just inches from his face, and smiles through the crossed swords, eyes gleaming like the sunlit steel.

BOWEN

Not bad!

He disengages his blade with swift flare and, in a dazzling series of sallies, forces his OPPONENT back.

BOWEN

But not good enough to...

The opponent, BACK TO CAMERA, is shoved to the ground, Bowen's sword tip at his throat.

BOWEN

...to live!

Bowen grins down at...

PRINCE EINON...a fourteen year old boy, his face flush from exertion. Emblazoned on his surcote is a DRAGON'S HEAD impaled on a sword. A HERALDIC COAT-OF-ARMS.

Suddenly, Einon kicks Bowen's blade aside with his boot, rolls, and springs up, lunging at the knight. Again, Bowen deflects the blade by inches. Smiling. Pleased.

BOWEN

Better!

Einon is also pleased. He smiles at Bowen's praise and lets down his guard. Just slightly. But enough. With a nimble parry, Bowen blade arcs down, striking the startled boy...but only with the flat of the blade on his shoulder.

BOWEN

But you'd still be dead!

Einon reels back and, with a snarl, charges wildly at Bowen who, laughing, leaps upon a crumbling piece of stone, easily deflecting or ducking the violent but clumsy blows.

BOWEN

Purpose, not passion, Einon! Fight with your head, not your heart!

He punctuates each maxim with a slap of his sword flat, obviously toying with the boy.

BOWEN

Nerve cold-blue, blade blood-red.

Einon slices wickedly at Bowen's legs. Bowen leaps up as the blade swishes harmlessly under him. But as he lands, the edge of the stone crumbles beneath the heel of his boot. He teeters, then tumbles off the rock, out of sight behind it.

Einon's savage fighting demeanour slides into a shocked gasp of concern.

EINON

Sir Bowen?

He scrambles over the stone to find Bowen sprawled out on the ground, apparently unconscious. As Einon leans down to examine him, he's suddenly distracted by HOOFBEATS. He whirls to the sound as...

RIDERS...gallop toward them. As Einon squints in the sun to identify them, A FIGURE towers up behind him and a sword glints at his throat. Bowen leers over his shoulder.

BOWEN

Dead again, Prince! How many times must I tell you?

BOWEN & EINON

(reciting together)

Only expose your back to a corpse!

But the fencing lesson is over. Einon points to the riders.

EINON

It's happened.

Bowen scowls as Three Riders approach, led by A MASSIVE BRUTE OF A KNIGHT...SIR BROK...Einon knows why he's come.

EINON

The peasants are revolting.

BROK

(grins)

They've always been revolting, Prince. Smell one sometime. But now they're rebelling.

(to Bowen)

King Freyne would have his son witness his noble victory.

BOWEN

(contemptuously)

Noble...? Crushing desperate, frightened men...?

BROK
 (sharply)
 Traitorous scum! The King commands.
 Bring him. You can watch too, nursemaid.

He whips his horse and rides off with the others. Bowen turns to get his and Eionon's horses. Eionon is disappointed that Bowen allowed Brok's insult to go unchallenged.

EIONON
 Why do you let him insult you like that?
 You, a Knight of the Old Code! You're
 not afraid of him!

BOWEN
 (laughs)
 Nor his opinions. I expect no less.
 (distaste)
 He's the king's man.

Eionon registers Bowen's contempt for the king with an uneasy scowl, but as Bowen turns to hand him his reins, the boy beams affectionately at him.

EIONON
 When I am king, you will be my man,
 Bowen.

Bowen claps him warmly on the shoulder and helps the prince into the saddle.

BOWEN
 I am already your man, my prince.

He swings into the saddle and, as the two ride after Brok,
 CAMERA PANS TO THE GALLOPING HOOVES.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - FIELD - DAY

CAMERA PULLS BACK FROM MANY MORE GALLOPING HOOVES TO REVEAL:

A TROOP OF MOUNTED, ARMOURED KNIGHTS...as they ride out of the smoke and dust of battle. At their head is...

KING FREYNE...sword aloft. Visor raised. Eyes hard and hateful. On his helmet glints a GOLD CIRCLET. A CROWN. Emblazoned on his surcote is the same DRAGON'S HEAD impaled on a sword we saw on Eionon's surcote.

He rides through the carnage of a 10th CENTURY BATTLE, leading mounted SOLDIERS against a RABBLE OF PEASANTS.

Slashing with mad glee, Freyne mows down men armed only with crude farm implements. It is slaughter as the rebels are driven back through their own crude lines of defense...overturned carts, ditches, an earthen bulwark. None of which impede Freyne's onslaught.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - HILLOCK - DAY

Bowen and Eimon sit their horses on a hillock behind the lines watching the carnage. Bowen is disgusted, Eimon fascinated.

EIMON

I wish we were down there.

BOWEN

(curtly)

You don't.

EIMON

I do. Just to see you in action, Bowen. Yours would be the finest blade on the field.

BOWEN

Too fine to foul with your father's slaughter.

In a quiet, hurt tone, Eimon gently reminds Bowen of good manners and protocol.

EIMON

He is my father, Bowen. And the king.

Bowen takes the admonishment with a kind smile.

BOWEN

Yes...But when you are king, remember today. Remember the difference between battle and butchery. And remember the Old Code. Restore its forgotten glory, so that the crown will shine with honour once more and never again will men have to take up arms against their sovereign. Then you will be a greater king than your father.

Bowen turns to watch the ungallant battle with weary eyes and thus doesn't see the dark glint in Eimon's gaze.

EIMON

I promise, Bowen, I will be greater. And no one will take arms against me...Look! Father's breached the village.

He points to the king down below, galloping toward the bulwark, cutting down men right and left.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - BATTLE - DAY

Freyne descends on a YOUTH -- wearing a BUCKET with one side cut out as a crude helmet -- who stumbles between two HAYRACKS mounted in a gap in the bulwark.

A large meaty paw reaches out and grabs BUCKETHEAD by the jerkin, yanking the youth behind...

THE BULWARK...Buckethead flops into a LARGE MUD PUDDLE on the other side. Buckethead's saviour is a RED-BEARDED GIANT, whose unruly mane is bound by a LEATHER HEAD-BAND.

Armed with a scythe, Red-beard knocks the sword from Freyne's hand as the king rides in through the breach. Another rebel charges the king with a burning torch, but gets a gauntlet in the face as Freyne punches him and snatches his torch. He whirls his steed back for the bulwark.

But Red-beard signals several men at the hayracks, who pull SPIKED WOODEN BREASTWORKS out from under the racks and cut off Freyne's escape route.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - HILLOCK - DAY

Bowen and Einon watch from their vantage point as a HORDE OF VILLAGERS chase the trapped Freyne. Freyne zig-zags his horse in and out and under the stilts of SEVERAL RAISED GRAINHOUSES, torching some as he passes. But the peasants are closing in.

EINON
(anxiously)
He's trapped!

The boy draws his sword and spurs his horse down the hill through the melee!

BOWEN
Einon, no!

He follows after the boy.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - BATTLE - DAY

Bowen closes in on his young charge when he's beset by REBEL WARRIORS. He ducks the savage thrust of a pitchfork and, grabbing the shaft, cracks the WIELDER under the jaw with the blunt end. Another rebel gets clouted by Bowen's boot even as the knight knocks another down with the shaft of the pitchfork. He kills no one. But even as he scatters them, he's lost Einon in the dusty haze of the battle. He shouts.

BOWEN
Einon!

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - BATTLE - ON FREYNE - DAY

Red-beard and a MOTLEY BAND OF REBELS close in on Freyne, the king's horse snorts and rears as Freyne whirls his torch, trying to pry an opening through the rebel mass.

But they catch him under one of the granaries and pull him from the saddle. Freyne clanks to the ground in a cacophony of armour and chainmail. at the feet of...

BUCKETHEAD...who's shoved aside again as Redbeard and the others crowd around the fallen king. Crude weapons rise and fall. Buckethead jerks away, unable to watch.

Then it's over as RED-BEARD and the others race to defend their village from Freyne's men who have breach the barricade. Only Buckethead remains, queasily staring at the dead king. A WILD WAIL pierces the battle clamour.

EINON(OS)

Father!

Buckethead swiftly clambers up the granary ladder as...

EINON...gallops through a veil of smoke over the bulwark. Dismounting, he scrambles to his father, laying a hand to his lifeless breast... and pulling it back with a shudder, covered in blood.

Stunned, Eimon stares from his hand to his father and then...to the crown...perched atop Freyne's helmet. Trembling, he reaches over the body for it. As he does, Freyne's eyes suddenly FLICKER OPEN AND STARE into Eimon's, who hesitates...then snatches the crown off anyway...even as Freyne groans his last and his eyes glaze in deathly admonishment at his heir.

As Eimon pulls back from his dead father, he holds up the crown. It glints brilliantly in the firelight. Something else also glints. Buckethead's KNIFE as Eimon sees the flying body leap off the granary platform down onto him.

The impact of their collision sends the boys sprawling across the ground spilling against a breastwork, a jumble of arms and legs. The bucket helmet clatters off as the rebel flops face-down, a cascade of red hair falling to his shoulders.

Eimon lurches off the breastwork, grasping a STAKE for support. It is sticky with BLOOD. His blood. It oozes from a gash in his chest, spilling across his ripped dragonhead crest.

Eimon spies the CROWN half-in, half-out of a mud puddle. He weaves toward it on unsteady legs, then sags into the mud, his fingers locking on the circlet. Gasping weakly, he stares glassy-eyed at Buckethead, staggering up.

Even unhelmeted, Buckethead's face is A BLUR in Eimon's hazy vision. All he sees is flaming hair, blending into the fiery light of a hut burning behind them.

BOWEN(OS)

Eimon!

Einon's vision pops into crystal clear FOCUS as Buckethead whirls to the anguished CRY...and we discover THE BOY IS A GIRL!. Her name is...as we later learn...KARA. She's roughly Einon's age and even the grime of battle cannot hide her beauty, haloed in an aureole of gleaming red hair.

As Kara sees Bowen's steed leap over the breastworks and her. Bowen wildly spins the horse toward the fallen Einon, leaning down in the saddle and scooping up his wounded charge.

EINON

Bowen!

BOWEN

I'm here, my prince...my king.

He whirls his horse back around and, sideswiping, a BARRELL OF MILK, bounds over the barricade once more. Kara dives out of the way, landing near the spilt milk now running into and mixing with the blood of battle.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - BATTLE - ON BOWEN & EINON - DAY

Einon slumps back in Bowen's arms as the horse charges through the battlefield.

EXT. OLD CASTLE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - AFTERNOON

A WOODEN FORTRESS looms out of the shadow of a mountain. Grimly impressive. Bowen's steed breaks from the forest and races across the plain toward the Fortress gates.

INT. QUEEN'S CHAMBER - OLD CASTLE - CLOSE-UP - BLOOD - NIGHT

A wounded Brok kneels before AISLINN, the Queen.

BROK

Dead, Madam...King Freyne, your husband, slain.

She takes the news stoically, staring out the window in impassive resignation. A DOOR slams open. Aislinn spins to the sound. Silhouetted in the light of the open door stands a KNIGHT, A LIMP FORM CRADLED IN HIS ARMS.

With a gut-sinking premonition, Aislinn weaves to the door. A single TEAR trickles muddily down Bowen's grimey face as Aislinn gasps at her crumpled son.

BOWEN

Forgive me, my Queen.

QUEEN

It's not your fault. The cruel excesses
of his father brought him to this end.

She gestures to a bed. Bowen lays him on it.

EINON

The crown...

QUEEN

He lives!

BOWEN

He dies, Madam...

Bowen slides the crown off his arm and places it in the boy's
hand.

BOWEN

...Beyond all help.

AISLINN

Not all...

Aislinn turns to Bowen...curiously calm even hopeful.

EXT. RUINS ON PROMONTORY - LOOKING UP - DUSK

The sun sinks behind a promontory as FIGURES trek through the
RUINS OF AN OLD CASTLE up the mountain.

EXT. RUINS - MOUNTAIN TRAIL - DUSK

Aislinn, on horseback, leads Bowen and a body of GUARDS up a
mountain path, through the RUINS OF AN ANCIENT ROMAN CASTLE.
Brok and the others bear Einon on a hide stretcher supported
on spears. Walking his horse, Bowen hovers over the semi-
conscious boy who still grips the crown and talks to him.

BOWEN

(reciting)

A knight is sworn to valour...

EINON

...sworn... to valour...

BOWEN

His heart knows only virtue...

EINON

...virtue...

BOWEN

His blade defends the helpless. His
might upholds the weak...

Bowen is suddenly distracted by an EERIE MUSICAL TRILLING. Sad and melancholy. It comes from further up the mountain. The others hear it as well. Except for Einon whose mumble drifts to a groan. Bowen shakes him.

BOWEN
You must stay awake, my lord. You must!
Recite the code...

EINON
...code...

BOWEN
Yes! His might upholds the weak...

EINON
...his...word speaks only truth...

BOWEN
Yes... yes... His wrath...?

BOWEN & EINON
(reciting together)
His wrath undoes the wicked.

EXT. CAVE - VISTA SHOT - NIGHT

Night has descended. The moon glows a bright scarlet. The party stops before a CAVE, lighting torches. Bowen dismounts and gathers Einon off the stretcher into his arms.

EXT. CAVE MOUTH - NIGHT

Aislinn takes a torch and starts into the cave. From within echoes the mournful, musical TRILL. Bowen eyes her warily.

BOWEN
I know what place this is. It has the
stink of dragon.

AISLINN
Not the Dragon's stench; merely man's
pollution of him. Come and fear not!

Aislinn enters. Bowen, Einon in his arms, hesitantly follows.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Even torchlight cannot dispel the gloom. Their light and shafts of scarlet moonlight, seeping through two holes in the cavern roof, illuminate bubbling mud pits and bones. Steam wreathes through the place. From the cave's recesses comes a faint IRRIDESCENT RIPPLE OF MOVEMENT. And the melancholy TRILL. Toward this Aislinn cautiously, humbly, approaches.

AISLINN

Lord! Serene One!

Her voice echoes. The TRILLING stops. The Guards murmur uneasily. Bowen warily eyes The GLOW. It seems BRIGHTER. Defining an UNCERTAIN SHAPE. Aislinn signals for silence.

AISLINN

Your song is sad tonight.

DRAGON

There are no stars in the sky?

The VOICE...sad yet strangely soothing... comes from the large, eerie shape shimmering in the shadows. It, too, is large and eerie. Aislinn moves to the glow.

AISLINN

No...only a moon. Blood-red.

Bowen eases Einon down. Hovering protectively over him, suspiciously listening, his eye never leaving the creature in the shadows. The peculiar iridescence is the beast's scaly hide that emits a wavering glow as he shifts.

DRAGON

Aislinn. Daughter of Athelstun.

AISLINN

Yes, Lord, whose people loved you and called your kind friend.

DRAGON

Once. Long ago. No more. No longer fickle man's friend. Feared. Forgotten.

AISLINN

I have not forgotten. I do not fear.

Einon sighs. Aislinn kneels beside Bowen to comfort her son, stroking his brow, as the boy feverishly fondles the crown.

The Dragon's half-hooded eye glints from the darkness, surveying the prince. The crown caressed in his hands.

DRAGON

Freyne's child.

Aislinn desperately whirls on the dragon.

DRAGON

Is this why you come, Draonslayer's wife?

AISLINN

Dragonslayer's widow! A bride of conquest! My people driven out and slaughtered even as yours.

(kneels)

Please! He's not his father.

(points to Bowen)

This knight is his mentor. He has taught him the Old Code. And I will teach him your ways.

The dragon's scales brightly ripple. He considers her plea, his baleful eye falling on the boy's bloody breast.

DRAGON

The wound is deep. You know what you ask?

AISLINN

(kneels before him)

I swear. He will grow in your grace. Grow just and good.

The dragon's shadowy head inclines toward Eion.

DRAGON

He must swear. Your sword, knight.

Aislinn nods to Bowen. He reluctantly unsheathes it to hand to her, but the Dragon's CLAW emerges from the dark and grips the blade in his talons. Bowen instinctively lets go.

The dragon extends the hilt to Eion who stirs and, seeing the shadowy creature above, gasps.

AISLINN

Fear not, child, he will save you.

DRAGON

But first, boy, by the cross of the sword, swear that your Father's bloodlust and tyranny die with him. Swear that you will live and rule with mercy. And come to me and learn. The Once-ways. Swear!

"Swear, swear, swear..." his sibilance echoes through the darkness. Eion clutches the sword to his breast.

EION

I...swear...

Eion leans up to kiss the pommel, then suddenly slumps in Bowen's arms. Bowen shakes him.

BOWEN

Eion? Eion! He's dead!

In angry grief, Bowen grabs the sword hilt to wrest it from the Dragon. But as he yanks, the Dragon's TALONS SCRAPE DOWN THE LENGTH OF THE BLADE WITH A WHINING SCREECH, SCORING A GROOVE INTO IT FROM GUARD TO TIP.

DRAGON

Peace, Knight of the Old Code...

The Dragon suddenly blows out the torches, immersing them in darkness. Save for the occasional glint of his shimmering scales and his glowing eyes.

DRAGON

...And witness the wonders of an even more ancient glory.

The Dragon releases the sword and places a talon against his breast, IMPALING it in the scales of his hide. As he slices down his chest, a RED GLOW issues from the wound. Not blood, but LIGHT. The dragon reaches into the cut. Sighs. Groans. And captures a PULSATING SCARLET BRILLIANCE in his claw, as the wound closes over.

He holds the glowing orb over the boy. Eionon's eyelids flutter open. He smiles, as the beast gently reaches down and the glowing redness seeps into Eionon's wound.

DRAGON

Half my heart to make you whole. It's strength to purify your weakness. Live and remember your oath.

He pulls his claw back and a THIN SLIVER OF FIRE shoots from the Dragon's nostril along the wound, cauterizing it. But Eionon feels no pain. He smiles and his eyelids grow heavy and flutter down. Eionon sleeps peacefully. Aislinn gasps a joyous sob and hugs the sleeping boy. Bowen is dumbfounded.

Once more FLAME sprays from the Dragon, relighting the torches. Aislinn rises and bows to the Dragon. She turns, Bowen lifts Eionon up in his arms, and, with their entourage, they turn to leave. Bowen hesitates and turns to the dragon.

BOWEN

I've served the father only for the sake of the son. In him go all the hopes of my heart. Forgive a doubting fool. Call when you've need of me, ask what you will of me. My sword and service are yours.

The dragon has faded into the darkness. Only an occasional shiny scale flickers.

DRAGON

Only remind him always of his vow, Knight of the Old Code.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - ROMAN RUINS - ON CROWN - NIGHT

Bowen, on horseback, leads Aislinn's steed down the mountain through the Roman ruins once more. Behind them comes Brok and the guard with...

EINON...asleep on his stretcher, unconsciously fondling the crown in his hands.

The crown slips from his fingers, clanking to the ground. Einon jerks awake, sitting up bolt straight. A strange, fierce light in his eyes. He's tense with coiled energy. Brok signals the guard to halt and kneels beside Einon.

BROK

Your Majesty? Is all well?

Einon unconsciously feels the scar on his chest. Einon gazes at it, remembering. The Dragon. He smiles at the memory.

EINON

All is very well. The crown.

Brok picks it up and offers it to Einon. Eyes afire, Einon takes the crown and firmly plants it on his head. He likes the fit.

BROK

Anything more, Your Majesty?

Einon turns from his regal reverie to smile grimly at Brok.

EINON

Much more.

He rises off the stretcher. Brok goes to support him, but Einon pushes him away. He's a little rocky on his feet, but he stands, staring out on the Roman ruins.

EINON

The Romans built a great castle here.
Mine will be greater.

BROK

It will take many men, milord, to rebuilt this ruin.

EINON

Yes...

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - DAWN

THE SOLDIERS OF THE KING swarm through the burnt ruin of the village. WAILING WOMEN and even SOME CHILDREN have been put to work filling in the barricade ditch, THE VILLAGE MENFOLK are being rounded up from hiding places and shackled in WOODEN NECK STOCKS.

BROK, in charge of this foray, steers his horse through the trampled shambles of a hut and scrapes away debris with his sword, ferreting out a TRAPDOOR beneath the charred clutter. He motions to TWO SOLDIERS who jerk open the door, exposing a dishevelled REDBEARD hiding below in a root cellar full of cheese.

Brok's sword jabs downward. Into a ROUND OF CHEESE. As Brok takes a bite of the cheese, Redbeard is yanked out and herded toward the other prisoners. Kara, working at the ditch, drops her spade and rushes to him.

KARA

Father!

Tears in her eyes, she clings to him, but Brok yanks her roughly by the hair and shoves her away. She falls to the ground, rising up to see REDBEARD yoked into a stock with two other prisoners.

EXT. STONE QUARRY - DAY

Firelight flickers over Eimon's face. He sits his horse, next to a SMITHY'S FIRE, savouring the SOUNDS OF CLINKING CHAINS AND SPLINTERED STONE, as he gazes out over...

A STONE QUARRY...FETTERED PEASANTS break rocks under the watchful eyes of ARMED GUARDS. Eimon watches in malevolent satisfaction as Brok rides in with a half dozen more QUARRY SLAVES harnessed together with a length of rope about their neck. Among them is REDBEARD.

EINON

Hold, Brok!

Brok stops his charges with a rough jerk on the rope. Eimon appraises Redbeard suspiciously. Even in defeat, the big man stares up at the new king with cold contempt. Eimon cannot match his stern gaze. Redbeard smiles.

REDBEARD

Come to thank me, boy? You should. It was my stroke that made you king.

Brok yanks Redbeard's head back by his headband, exposing his neck to his blade.

BROK

My stoke will make you a corpse!

EINON

No!

The command halts the throat-slitting. Eimon glares at Redbeard glaring at him.

EINON

I want no martyrs. And death is a release, not punishment.

Einon smiles evilly at Redbeard whose glare hardens but also flickers with faint worry.

EINON

It's an insolent gaze. Look good, dog. And remember. I am your king. The one who crushed you. And the last thing you will ever see.

Einon grabs an iron from the smithy's fire. Its tip is white-hot. He flings it to Brok.

EINON

Burn that insolence out of his eyes!

Grinning, Brok picks up the iron. Redbeard, pale but proud, gazes up into the rocks. He shakes his head from side-to-side, almost imperceptibly. To anyone observing, it would merely seem dazed defiance or maybe trembling fear, but it is, in actuality a signal. A signal to...

KARA...hidden up behind a boulder. Redbeard is warning the girl to stay put. Stay safe. Weeping, Kara obeys as...

BROK...approaches Redbeard, head still high. Eyes still on the rocks above. But as Brok raises the iron a SWORD BLADE swoops down and strikes it from his hand. It is...

BOWEN'S SWORD...as he gallops past Brok to the prisoners, his blade slicing the ropes binding them together.

BOWEN

Run!

No encouragement needed, the prisoners scatter for the forest. Bowen's whirlwind appearance confuses Einon's men. But one snaps out of it and tries to stop an escapee. Bowen comes between them and cuts the soldier down. Meanwhile...

KARA...scrambles out of the rocks and, in the confusion, rushes down to Redbeard.

KARA

Father!

REDBEARD

Kara! Quickly!

Einon spots the girl and charges after them, but once more, Bowen rides between the pursuer and the pursued, who duck into the woods. Enraged, Einon bears down on Bowen with drawn sword. Bowen reluctantly but skillfully defends himself against the attack.

EINON

How dare you defy me!

BOWEN

Einon! You're unwell! Bewitched!
(pleading)
Don't do this! Remember the code!

EINON

The king is above the code!

Dismayed by this declaration, Bowen drops his guard and Einon unseats him with a stab in the shoulder. The knight topples from his mount, falling between the skittish horses. Einon rides over him, whirling triumphantly to acknowledge the cheers of his men. His mistake...for...

A MUDDY HAND...reaches up and yanks Einon's leg from the stirrup, shoving it out and up, heaving....

EINON...off his horse. The boy reels over the right flank of his horse, flopping to the ground to find...

BOWEN...grimly grinning at him through the legs of the horse.

BOWEN

Only expose your back to a corpse. You forget everything I've taught you!

Bowen, braced on his blade, bleeding from his shoulder and his head, tries to stagger up.

Einon angrily leaps up and, whipping his horse away, lunges at Bowen, still on his knees. But even kneeling, Bowen deflects Einon's wild charge.

BOWEN

Control, little warrior!

His blade knocks Einon's aside, then rips across the dragon's crest on the surcote. Bowen, still on his knees, counters Einon's fierce but undisciplined, crazed sallies, critiquing the boy's technique as he does.

BOWEN

Purpose, not passion, Einon. Fight with your head...

He slashes Einon's belt. It slides down his legs and trips him up. He lunges savagely atop the tottering Einon, forcing him down, poisoning his sword tip on the boy's heart.

BOWEN

...not your heart.

The heart. His eyes smoldering with pained hurt, Bowen spies the torn dragon on the surcote, which rises and falls, along with his blade, in chaotic rhythm to Eionon's racing heart. The dragon's heart. The dragon. It's almost as though he can hear the cursed heart beating. Thump. Thump. Thump. Pulsing with treacherous life.

With a mad, griefstricken wail, Bowen raises his sword...and jabs it in the ground beside Eionon's head, staring at the boy with sorrow-filled eyes. His voice rasps with choked emotion.

BOWEN

No one is above the code. Least of all,
a king!

He leans down and kisses the boy. Tears well in his eyes as he whirls up and sharply whistles. As Bowen's steed gallops up, Eionon scrambles away, grasping his cheek where Bowen kissed him. His confused fear quickly turns to anger once more as Bowen mounts and spurs his steed off into the forest.

EINON

Seize him! Bring him down!

EXT. STONE QUARRY - FOREST - DAY

Bowen gallops off through the sun-streaked trees. THE CAMERA PANS UP TO:

KARA & REDBEARD...hiding in a tree, as Eionon and his minions ride in pursuit of Bowen.

EXT. CAVE - SUNSET

Bowen emerges from the dragon cave. In frustrated fury, he clangs his drawn sword against the rock. His horse whinnies nervously, as the shrieking clang echoes out over the mountains where a shimmering half-orb of SUNLIGHT splays across a purple-orange sky.

BOWEN

No matter where you fly, Dragon, no
matter where you hide, I will find you!
My oath will not save you! All bonds are
broke by your betrayal. I make a new
vow! I will undo your treachery!...Even
if I must spend the rest of my life
hunting you and your kind down!

In the distance, Bowen's echoing oath is answered by A MOURNFUL TRILL...Every mountain seems to reverberate with the tortured KEENING as the CAMERA PULLS BACK, capturing Bowen in the golden flood of the sinking sun. WE HEAR A VOICE.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - WHEAT FIELD - DAY

FRIAR GILBERT(VO)

This is the tale of a Knight who slew a
Dragon and vanquished Evil.

GOLDEN LIGHT overwhelms the screen as a SUPERIMPOSED LEGEND
APPEARS:

"TWELVE YEARS LATER"

The GOLDEN LIGHT becomes...

WHEAT...waving gently in the morning breeze. Behind the wall
of grain comes a VOICE...the same we just heard...reciting.

GILBERT'S VOICE

(reciting)

"A solitary pilgrim rode
Upon his lowly mule,..."

CAMERA PANS over the rolling hill of wheat, finding...

FRIAR GILBERT...a monk...riding a MULE on a path between the
wheatfields.

Both mule and monk are laden with scrolls and manuscripts.
Bundles of parchment protrude from the saddlebags. Slung
about the monk's middle is a clothsack filled with scrolls.

As Gilbert recites, he scratches a quill across a scroll
unrolled against the mule's neck.

GILBERT

(writing)

"Content with this his humble mode,
His quest was spiritual..."

Except it comes out "spirichool" as he tries to rhyme it with
mule. The mule itself begins to buck.

GILBERT

Whoa, Merlin! Whoaaa!

But Merlin doesn't "whoa" and bucks Gilbert off, who tumbles
cassock over crucifix, the scrolls from his pouch spilling
out on the ground with him.. He sits up with as much dignity
as he can muster and glares at the mule.

GILBERT

Everyone's a critic.

But the mule's only response is to bray nervously and stomp
impatiently at the ground. Ignoring the tempermental animal,
Gilbert crawls about gathering up his scrolls, grumbling to
himself.

GILBERT

Keep faith, Gilbert, keep faith! True,
thus far, this quest has been uneventful
...if not altogether fruitless and boring
...But remember its goals, its glory!
Soon, something's bound to happen.

Something does. A SUDDEN WHOOSH OF WIND violently rustles the wheat and tears at the monk's cassock. The just-gathered scrolls go flying from his grip once more and Gilbert goes flat on his back once more. His eyes widening with fear as they gaze upward, following the path of the wind.

GILBERT

D-D-Dragon!

The GUST OF WIND subsides and the RUSTLING OF WINGS whips away over a hill of wheat which wavers violently in its wake.

Scrambling up, Gilbert scoops up precious scrolls as he tears off for the opposite wheatfield. But he screeches to a panicked halt as SOMETHING ELSE charges out of the wheat.

Wailing, the frenzied friar flings himself to the ground once more in a welter of flying manuscripts.

GILBERT

(crosses himself)

Jesu!

Gilbert peeks up to see...

A KNIGHT...reining in his horse, frowning down at him. It is BOWEN.

But Bowen is mightily changed since last we saw him. Time has passed and not been kind. His hair is now laced with grey. His face is unshaven. His surcote frayed and torn. His armour dented and dull.

He and his steed are laden with assorted weaponry. Broad sword, lance, bow and arrows, mace, battle axe, and buckler. This SHIELD gives grim evidence of his trade...and that he has been successful in his vow...an awesome assortment of DRAGON HORNS protrudes from it.

Bowen snaps at the friar in curt irritation.

GILBERT

Dra...dra...drag...

BOWEN

Yes! Where?

Gilbert gestures with a bent scroll clutched in his shaking hand. Bowen gives chase, he and his mount disappearing over the hill of wheat.

A painful HOWL jerks the priest up, shivering. A BURST OF FIRE erupts in the sky from over the hill. The stalks quiver in manic agitation. SOMETHING'S coming toward him!

It's Bowen's riderless horse. Gilbert kneels in prayer. He's interrupted by ANOTHER HORRIBLE YOWL! Then...

STILLNESS! Gilbert creeps to the wheat, listening. Nothing. Then RUSTLING. Close by! A DRAGON HORN pokes through the stalks. Gilbert falls back with a yelp. It's only...

BOWEN...holding a SEVERED DRAGON HORN.

Bowen goes to his horse and begins to affix his latest trophy to his shield. Gilbert scrambles to his feet and, plucking up scattered scrolls along the way, rushes to the knight.

GILBERT

(arms full of manuscripts)
Magnificent! Marvelous! Heroics
befitting the days of Arthur and the
Round Table. Never have I seen such
skill!

BOWEN

Then you must've led the life of a...
monk.

GILBERT

A...Yes...Also scholar, scribe,
historian, and poet. Your servant,
Brother Gilbert of Glockenspur. My
humble life is in the debt of your
exalted prowess, dauntless courage, and
superb, swift sword.

BOWEN

You have a poet's gift of exaggeration.

Gilbert thinks it's a compliment and holds up a scroll.

GILBERT

Oh, sir! You should read my histories.
But you belittle your talent. A great
victory for you and the Lord.

Bowen wearily examines the mottled, scarred horn.

BOWEN

Then may the Lord savour it. There's too
little glory to be shared in this kill.

GILBERT

Modesty as well as valour. The code of
ancient Camelot still lives.

Bowen jerks his head up with a hostile glare at the mention of the code. Then the glare glazes into wistful sadness. He shakes the melancholy from him with a sardonic grin.

BOWEN

Hardly worthy of Camelot...Still it's one less dragon...

Bowen looks at the new horn and all the others on his shield with bitter satisfaction. His grim rumination is interrupted by CLATTERING HOOVES. An effete, oily lord, FELTON, rides up with THREE BURLY MEN-AT-ARMS. Felton deigns to salute Bowen with a bejewelled hand.

FELTON

Well done, Knight. Our gratitude. Mine and King Eionon's.

Felton yawns blasely. That's it. Interview's over. He turns his horse to go, but Bowen catches the reins.

BOWEN

Keep the gratitude. I'll take gold. Yours or the King's.

FELTON

Gold, knight?

Felton cocks an imperious eyebrow and smiles. Unpleasantly. Bowen gets the picture. He's getting the shaft.

BOWEN

We struck a bargain. One dragon put down, one pouch of gold.

Gilbert's idea of chivalry is dismayed by this mercenary display.

GILBERT

Your honour has a price, knight?

BOWEN

It has expenses! Honour cannot fill my belly or shoe my horse.

(wheels to Felton)

I ask no more than any man. A fair price for a fair skill.

FELTON

The priest is right. It is your duty to protect King Eionon's vassals as a knight of the realm!

BOWEN

Not of this realm! I bend no knee to Eionon.

FELTON

No? Then begone, vagabond, before I
arrest you for...for...

(an inspiration)

Poaching the king's wildlife!

Felton jerks a finger at the dead dragon. Bowen almost laughs at the ludicrousness of it and he fingers his sword hilt, debating whether to cut this popinjay down to size.

But the thugs-at-arms give Felton's threats weight. Bowen grimly smiles and, with a curt bow, mounts up.

Suddenly, the timid faces of PEASANTS begin to poke out of the wheat. Felton turns his disdain on them.

FELTON

Back to work you, lazy scum. If King
Einon's wheat isn't cut before the rain,
I'll do some cutting of my own.

Felton's bully-boys whip the peasants back to the fields. Gilbert, who's watched all in befuddled confusion, grabs his mule's reins and timidly approaches Bowen.

GILBERT

Forgive me, Sir knight, for questioning
your motives. Times are topsy-turvy and
the world is not as it once was.

BOWEN

I've noticed.

GILBERT

Let me make amends. I've a fair culinary
flair. Please join me in my evening
repast.

BOWEN

Come evening, I shall be far from here,
priest.

Gilbert mounts and the two head up the ridge.

GILBERT

So shall I. For I am on a pilgrimage.
Might we travel together?

BOWEN

Unless Einon's taxed it, the road's still
free and a man may travel which way he
chooses.

Bowen addresses this last to Felton as he passes by, who idly ponders as he watches them go...

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Einon's prediction was right. His castle is greater than the Roman one. And it's not yet completed. But even behind a WARREN OF SCAFFOLDING, it rises out of the spine of the mountain impressive and forbidding. FELTON AND HIS RETINUE come riding up the road in through the castle gates.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

The courtyard is abuzz with WORKMAN and SERVANTS. GROOMS ATTEND to SADDLE HORSES. FALCONRY MASTERS stand with HOODED BIRDS OF PREY perched on their gloves. There is RAUCOUS LAUGHTER as A GROUP OF MEN move out of the shadow of a portico, led by...

EINON...now in his twenties. Tall and tough. Eyes sharp. Mouth cruel. Armed with sword, dagger, and quiver. He's cultivated a wispy beard. He's followed by a COTERIE of KNIGHTS, all dressed for the hunt, among them Brok and Felton who buzzes in his ear.

FELTON(OS)

A road tax, King Einon.

Felton, weighted down with hunting equipment, trips on his bow. Brok smirks at him. Felton cocks an imperious eyebrow at Brok and turns to Einon who weighs Felton's suggestion as he mounts a strong steed laden with armour and weapons like himself. Felton fans the flame of his idea.

FELTON

They use it. Let them pay for the privilege.

Again, he gets caught up in his bow. He untangles himself and indignantly flings it to a nearby servant, finishing his thought.

FELTON

And those that can't, can work it off!

All wait for Einon's response. It comes in a sly smile. He leans over and pats Felton's balding head.

EINON

Ingenious, Lord Felton.

He plays with a wispy strand of thinning hair.

EINON

There may not be much on top, but there's plenty underneath.

He playfully thumps a finger on Felton's skull. Felton makes a sweeping bow.

As Felton comes up, Brok reaches in front of him and takes his FALCON from an attendant, sweeping it close to Felton's face. The bird screeches and flaps its wings, Felton cringes back. Brok smirks.

BROK

He likes to bring down peacocks.

Shrinking back from Brok, Felton clammers on his horse, but is so weighted down with his hunting paraphernalia, he has a tough time swinging into the saddle.

Brok grabs him by the seat of the pants and roughly shoves him up.

BROK

Fly, peacock, fly.

The others laugh as Felton clumsily grabs the horse's neck to keep his balance. Once more, he comes face to face with Brok's hawk that screeches again, eliciting more laughter from Brok and the others...all but Einon.

EINON

Lord Brok. Some are good at hunting men.
Some are good at hunting money. Both
have value to me.

Felton's turn to smirk. But his triumph's shortlived as Einon snatches Felton's bow from the attendant and tosses it to the haughty fop.

EINON

So don't forget your bow, Felton, you may
need to shoot a ferocious coin purse.

Einon joins the others in their laughter this time. And so does a reluctant Felton who gives forth with a forced giddy giggle.

EINON

To the hunt!

He spurs his horse out the gate, followed by his minions.

EXT. STONE QUARRY - DAY

Many are still working off debts to the young tyrant. Though the quarry is all but gutted, half-starved ragged PEASANTS toil in the sun under the watchful eyes of GUARDS.

Many of the QUARRY SLAVES clamor for water, doled out by...

KARA...Now grown into a beautiful woman. But both her beauty and her lush, wild mane of red hair are hidden underneath a ragged cloak. But her proud, youthful face cannot hide eyes that are much older, weary with grim experience.

Dispensing drinks, she makes her way up behind AN OLD MAN chipping at stone with a chisel and hammer. She scoops a ladle of water out and proffers it to him. We recognize the HEADBAND the old man wears.

KARA

Drink, Father.

The old man turns. It is REDBEARD! No longer a virile, haughty rebel. Einon recaptured him and carried out his threat. Redbeard is BLIND. Scar tissue surrounds the sightless eyes staring at nothing.

But even though his red hair and beard are streaked with white, even though his once-strong body is frail and stooped, he still manages an air of his old defiance.

REDBEARD

I told you not to come here anymore, Kara!

KARA

I am a disobediant child, Father. Drink.

REDBEARD

No longer a child. A woman. And it takes no blind man to tell a beautiful one.

His gnarled hand gropes for her face. She leads him to her cheek. He caresses it.

RED-BEARD

One day on of these dogs will notice too. Go home, Kara.

KARA

You are my home, Father.

She kisses his palm. Then takes some COOKED MEAT from her jerkin and stuff it inside his shirt.

KARA

Here is meat for later. Now quickly, drink. The guard is watching.

She places the LADLE in his hand and he starts to lift it to his lips. Suddenly AN ARROW ZINGS INTO FRAME, striking the ladle and knocking in from his hand. Kara wheels to LAUGHTER. IT IS...

EINON...and his hunting party, laden down with game... pheasant, boars, even a stag. Einon has shot the arrow.

FELTON

I don't believe...I mean, magnificent shot, Your Higness.

EINON

And profitable. Unless you care to
double the wager, Felton?

FELTON

(takes the bet)

Through his legs!

Einon notches another arrow and lets fly at...

RED-BEARD...already panicked by the first arrow. He hears
the whizz of the second as it zips through his legs and
clinks on the rock behind him. He whirls frantically.

RED-BEARD

Kara!

KARA

Stand still, father!

Felton shouts out another target.

FELTON

The bucket-handle!

Another arrow slices the air, striking the water bucket
handle next to Red-beard and sending it clattering against
the bucket, causing the old man to jump.

RED-BEARD

Kara!

KARA

Don't move!

Kara steps in front of him and heads for...

EINON...indignant someone should interfere with his sport.
He notches another arrow and shoots it in front of Kara's
feet. She keeps coming. Another arrow. Only inches from
her. She keeps coming. He aims directly at her. Not a
flinch. She keeps coming. Einon lowers his bow, intrigued.

EINON

You've got nerve for a spoilsport.

KARA

There's no sport in tormenting a sick old
man. I beg Your Majesty. Let him go.
It's been fourteen years. Your castle is
built. He can do you no harm. For
pity's sake, release him.

Einon stares at her curiously. Then smiles.

Einon

Release him?

In one flashy blur of motion, he's notched another arrow and sends it flying. Straight into Red-beard's heart. The Old Man gasps and staggers back against the rocks.

KARA

Father!

She runs to him, her hood flying back, unleashing her wild red tumble of hair. It catches Eimon's attention.

EINON

I've always said death was a release.

He spurs his horse and he and his flunkeys ride off as...

Kara...kneels beside her father.

RED-BEARD

K-K-Kara...

He goes limp and his head sags. His headband falls off and his hair spills down over his blind eyes. Kara takes the band and, in stunned grief, presses it to her face, sobbing into it.

ON EINON

Turning on Kara's heartbroken wail. Her rich red hair is captured in the burning light of the Smithy's fire behind her. The image strikes a memory with Eimon, but he can't bring it forth and shrugs it off with an uneasy shiver.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - DUSK

Bowen and Gilbert sit at a campfire, gnawing on roasted mutton joints. As Bowen affixes his latest trophy to his dragon-horn shield, Gilbert recites from a parchment, spraying bits of half-chewed food in his bombastic style and waving his mutton joint in time to his suspect meter and dubious rhythm.

GILBERT

In Avalon, Lost Avalon, so the legends
say,
In mystery and mist, there valiant King
Arthur lay.
And resting with him, the brave, bold
heroes of his day.

Gilbert has risen and paces, carried off in the throes of his overwrought rhyme. Bowen winces as the Priest starts his third stanza off with a piercing, dramatic, declamatory wail.

GILBERT

Ohhh, Avalon! Bright Avalon! The worried
world's astray!
Return forgotten glories that once held
noble sway,
And sweep the world's dank darkness away,
away, away!

Gilbert glances at his audience in excited expectation!

GILBERT

What do you think?

BOWEN

Your mutton is very good...Avalon is a
fable, priest.

Ego ruffled, Gilbert rummages through his bag of scrolls.

GILBERT

A fable? That's uneducated piffle,
Bowen. I can prove it. I have it right
here. Somewhere here.

(He can't find it)

But I remember it. "Upon his death, King
Arthur was taken to Avalon, a land of
mist, to lie among his brother knights in
a grove of stone upon a tor." Aha, here
it is!

He jerks out a scroll and unravels it, thrusting it out to
Bowen. It's upside down. Gilbert twists it right side up.

GILBERT

From the venerable history of Gildas the
Scribe. Facts, my friend! Avalon is a
holy place. And my pilgrimage a sacred
duty. I will find it.

BOWEN

And when you do?

GILBERT

I'll pray to the souls of the sainted men
buried there...Arthur and all the knights
of Camelot.

BOWEN

But, you know, Brother Gilbert, it's said
not only Arthur lies at Avalon, but also
the Gateway to the Underworld. So take
care. The spirits you call may come.

He tosses his mutton bone into the fire and works on his
shield.

GILBERT

I wish they would and bring back the days
of chivalry and the Old Code.

BOWEN

No prayers can resurrect that pale
ghost...

Gilbert has caught the regret in Bowen's voice.

GILBERT

Ride with me, my son. All knights need a
quest. I think ours is the same.

BOWEN

Men of faith may follow a fable, priest.
But my only faith is my sword...And I
already have a quest.

GILBERT

What quest?

BOWEN

To slay all dragons...And one, in
particular...

Bowen's shield is finished, he holds up in the firelight to
inspect it. Gilbert's face lights up in awe and pleasure, as
though he's found the hero of his next epic poem.

EXT. WATERFALL - ON BOWEN - DAY

Bowen rides out of a dark forest into the light along the
bank of a shallow creekbed. As his horse steps into the
water, Bowen reins him up, leaning down in the saddle,
examining...

A DRAGON TRACK...impressed in the mud, visible through the
clear, rippling water.

Bowen glances up and smiles. A gentle WATERFALL spills over
an OVERHANG OF ROCK. His dragon will be there. Bowen jerks
up his lance and reins his steed toward the falls.

GILBERT(OS)

Yoo-hoo!

GILBERT..."halloing" for attention, stands atop a clump of
rocks on the opposite bank.

Muttering an oath, Bowen rides over to Gilbert who plops his
literary bag on the rocks and rummages through it.

BOWEN

What are you doing here?

GILBERT

(pulls out ink)
How do you prefer I write this?

BOWEN

Far away.

Gilbert doesn't get it, chuckles, and fumbles in his bag.

GILBERT

Oh, please, don't concern yourself with my safety. No, I meant style. Verse. Meter. Shall I spice it up with a poetical flourish or just the cold hard facts?

Gilbert's voice booms out above even the rushing falls. He unrolls some blank manuscript. Bowen seethes exasperatedly.

BOWEN

Ssssh! We'll be the only things cold and hard around here if you don't shut up!

Bowen pokes his lance through the scroll, jerking it away. Gilbert indignantly snatches it back.

GILBERT

That's a fine attitude. I come to immortalize you and you try to muzzle the mouth of chronicle, lop off the tongue of truth. It's all very well to go about hacking and whacking dragons, but if a dragon falls in the forest and no one hears about it, does it make a thud?!

Exasperated, Bowen starts to ride off. Gilbert squats down on a rock still, preparing to write, still railing at Bowen.

GILBERT

You're nothing without the likes of me. Heroics don't make heroes, ballad-makers do. The quill is mightier than the swo..!

Suddenly, AN GIANT EYE opens up between Gilbert's legs, Gilbert lays his parchment on the "rock" and scrawls across it with his quill. The eye blinks in agitation and suddenly the "rock" starts to shift and move.

GILBERT

...ord ...duh ...duh ...aah!

Gilbert falls from the shifting "rocks", tumbling down toward...

BOWEN...crashes onto him, then over the horse's back, splashing into the water. Bowen whirls back to the sound of more splashing, just in time to see...

A DRAGON TAIL...slither along the creek, disappearing into the waterfall. The "rock" on which Gilbert was perched has also disappeared.

Bowen spurs his horse and charges for the falls. But he's stopped by...

A BATTERED BREASTPLATE...flying out from the waterfall, splashing in the stream in front of Bowen who steadies his nervous steed.

DRAGON(OS)

That's what's left of the last fellow who entered uninvited.

BOWEN

That doesn't frighten me.

DRAGON

No? How about this? Or this? Or this?

A barrage of crumpled armour and bones careens out. Half of it crashes into Gilbert, trying to rise out of the stream. The monk scampers out of the debris and has barely got to his feet when suddenly the complete skeleton of a horse and rider comes jangling through the falls, clattering in a heap. Their splash washes over Gilbert and sends him flopping back into the stream. Bowen's horse whinnies and rears.

DRAGON

I could go on. I've quite a collection.

BOWEN

I won't be added to it.

Bowen thrusts his lance at the figure on the other side of the fall. But the pike is yanked on from the other side of the waterscreen and Bowen, still gripping it, is yanked along with it. He spills from the saddle, somersaulting into the creek.

A moment later, the two pieces of his broken lance shoot out of the waterfall, the steel pointed end nearly impaling Bowen as it jabs into the creekbed beside him.

ON GILBERT

Supine in the creek. Water spritzes from his mouth. He sits up in time to see Bowen draw his sword and buckler and enter into the cave through the waterfall.

Gilbert sees his canvas sack floating by, he snatches it up and, rummaging for another quill and parchment, starts to compose out loud.

GILBERT

Into the mouth of death he strode
 Into the grimey gloom.
 Into a pit of fear unknown,
 Perhaps to court his doom.

A FLASH OF FLAME backlights the waterfall, followed by a BLAST OF STEAM that rolls out from the falls, slamming Gilbert back into the creekbed.

INT. WATERFALL CAVERN - ON FIRE - DAY

A BOLT OF FLAME deflects against Bowen's shield, sparks hiss and smoke against the moist cavern floor. Bowen grins up at the DRAGON -- A HULKING, HAZY SHADOW, in the smoky dark -- lurking on a shelf of rock above him. The Dragon does have quite a collection. Bones and armour litter the place.

BOWEN

Little damp for fire, isn't it?

DRAGON

Why must you knight-errants out to make a name for yourselves always pick on us dragons?

BOWEN

I don't need a name...and I have a collection of my own.

Bowen holds out his shield. The dragon horns glint in a rainbow of sunlight prised through the waterfall.

DRAGON

Oh! One who kills for money, are you?

BOWEN

It's honest enough work! Ridding the country of you lot. One must earn a living.

DRAGON

Yes...one must live. No way round then but to have at it, since you seek profit in this.

BOWEN

Don't flatter yourself. No profit this time, purely pleasure.

Bowen draws his sword. The dragon's eyes widen in recognition!

DRAGON'S POV - THE SWORD

...And the talon-scratched GROOVE in the blade.

BACK TO SCENE

The dragon eyes Bowen warily.

DRAGON

Perhaps less pleasurable and more costly
than you think.

Bowen's mouth drops as the Dragon swoops off the ledge.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

The Dragon swoops out of the waterfall in a GUSH OF WIND AND WATER. Spreading out his magnificent wings to their full extension, he sweeps up over a startled Gilbert. Patches of his hide glisten irridesciently. An awesome, glorious creature.

EXT. WATERFALL - CRANE SHOT ABOVE GILBERT - DAY

Gilbert, craning back to gaze at the creature in dropped-jawed amazement, gets smaller and smaller as the dragon circles higher and higher in the sky. Gilbert, leaning back a little too far, flops back into the water.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

BOWEN...dashes out of the falls and onto his horse. Gilbert, just rising, ducks for cover in the water again as the knight gallops past him into the woods after the dragon.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Bowen races through the trees.

EXT. WOODS - SKY - DAY

The Dragon skims the treetops.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Bowen, at full gallop, places his reins in his teeth, and yanks a set of KNOTTED STRINGS from his saddle pommel.

The flaps of his saddle-bags pop open. A BOLO-CHAIN catapults out, shoots skyward.

EXT. WATERFALL - SKY ABOVE - DAY

The chains BOLOS spread and widen as they spin up.

EXT. WOODS - DRAGON - DAY

The Dragon looks back to see the Bolos ensnare one of his hind legs.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

In Bulldog fashion, Bowen wraps the chain around his saddle horn, continuing to keep pace with the Dragon above.

Then the saddle harness snaps...and both saddle and Bowen, still grasping the chain, are dragged across the ground as...

EXT. WOODS - SKY ABOVE - DAY

The dragon lunges through the sky.

EXT. WOODS - ON BOWEN - DAY

Clutching the chain for dear dear, still in the saddle, careening through the underbrush, sometimes dragging on the ground sometimes, whirling in the air, clanking stones and trees. Birds and small animals scurry from thickets. He avoids a near-collision with a tree as the Dragon suddenly veers his course, taking Bowen straight into the path of...

ANOTHER TREE...with a dead log leaning against it. Both Bowen and the saddle ride up the log. Bowen leaps from the saddle running up the leaning log as he sees the chain thread through the forked branches of a tree. Grabbing the saddle, Bowen wedges it in the fork.

It works. For a moment. Then the Dragon's momentum partially uproots the tree, causing Bowen to leap from the jostled dead log which comes careening down behind him. He tumbles and rolls and the tree just misses him. He peeks over over the trunk to see...

EXT. WOODS - SKY - DAY

A BLUR OF DRAGON, at the end of its snared chain, plummet downward behind a clump of trees. There is a CRASH as the air fills with dust and dirt and broken tree limbs.

EXT. WOODS - GILBERT - DAY

Gilbert, on Merlin, rides in pursuit of the duel, composing as he goes, voice vibrating, ink slopping all over the place.

GILBERT

The sword against the fang and claw
The flame against the shield.
The man, the beast, which would win?
Ahhhh!

The scream is because his ink has spilt all over the manuscript, obliterating it.

EXT. WOODS - BOWEN - DAY

Bowen staggers up, dazed and dizzy, and starts to follow the trail of chain. up over the ridge where the dragon crash-landed.

No sooner has he disappeared than Gilbert arrives, mumbling to himself trying to re-capture his poem as he ties Merlin up.

GILBERT

Blahblah Sword...fang and claw
...Flame against...shield...
Blah, blah, blah, which would win?
Unhh...shield, field, wield,
peeled...Aha!
Whose bones would flesh be peeled? Eww!

Making a face at the line, he grabs more quills, manuscript, and ink.

GILBERT

No, no...Whose fate would soon be sealed!

He likes the line. Smiling, he scurries over the ridge to find...

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - DAY

Bowen, sword drawn, charging down into a small clearing where the Dragon, snarls and snaps, struggling to untangle the bolo from his ankle.

BOWEN

Fleeing from an honourable challenge?
What manner of Dragon, are you?

DRAGON

You won't live long enough to find out!

The dragon's tail flanges out with sharp serrated edges and swipes at Bowen. Bowen blocks the blow with his blade, but nearly loses his balance. Again, the tail strikes, smashing against his shield.

Again, the tail flails out. Too close. Bowen ducks just in time as the tail slices a tree behind him in half.

BOWEN

You're good. Haven't had this sort of challenge in some time.

DRAGON

Nor likely to again.

Bowen has rolled for cover behind a thick log. The dragon's tail follows him, chopping huge chunks out of the log as though slicing celery.

Bowen rolls to the end of the log, inches ahead of the carving tail which suddenly bites a little too deep and gets wedged in the trunk of the log.

The dragon shakes his tail, trying to get it loose, bouncing the log up and down. Realizing, the Dragon's tail is out of commission, Bowen springs up, grinning.

BOWEN

Over-confident, aren't we?

DRAGON

Hardly, but if you win, you'll be out of work.

Bowen approaches cautiously as the Dragon manuevurs to confront his enemy.

BOWEN

Ha! I'll keep on till I've exterminated every last one of you.

DRAGON

I am the last one.

Bowen stops dead in his tracks. And lets down his guard...as the Dragon snorts a FIREBALL from his nostril. Bowen leaps back as the fire explodes against the tree.

BOWEN

You're just trying to save your scaly hide with tricks.

Bowen ducks as another fireball strikes behind him.

DRAGON

Haven't you noticed pickings rather slim of late?

They have been. And Bowen realizes it. But as he cautiously edges in toward the dragon, he brazenly taps the latest addition on his dragon-horn shield.

BOWEN

I got this one just the other day.

DRAGON

So you killed the Scarred One? He and I were the last. Must have been a proud kill, warrior. How much gold did his toothless, tattered carcass put in your purse?

BOWEN

What business is it of yours?

The Dragon's taunts rankle Bowen, which is just what the Dragon wants. For he notices Bowen is stepping very near the chain still attached to the Dragon's foot.

DRAGON

Couldn't have been much. And you'll kill me for sport. And when there are no more dragons to slay, how will you make your way, knight?

BOWEN

Shut up, you!

Bowen raises his blade to strike, but as he does he straddles the chain. The Dragon pulls back his foot, the chain snaps up and catches Bowen mid-crotch. Bowen goes tumbling, losing his shield.

The Dragon rears up, opening his jaws. AND OPENING! They DISTEND like a snake's, stretching inordinately wide as sharp eyeteeth fangs suddenly spring out...

ON GILBERT

Who screeches and cover his eyes.

ON BOWEN

Watching as the the black maw of the Dragon descends on him. ALL BECOMES BLACKNESS, until...

GILBERT

...Uncovers his eyes, expecting the worst. It isn't...

GILBERT'S POV - DRAGON & BOWEN

Bowen lies in the dragon's jaws, his sword tip tickling the Dragon's palette. And no one's moving.

BOWEN

If your teeth come down, my sword goes up. Right into your brain!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - GILBERT'S POV - NIGHT

They're still not moving. Still in the same positions. The dragon's unhinged jaws still stretched to their aching maximum. Bowen tries to discreetly sneak his blade up.

DRAGON
(tongue-tied)
Ifb your sworb cums upf, ma teef cum
down.

ON GILBERT

...wearily watching and writing...

GILBERT
(scribbling)
Till moonlit night, the titans duelled.
In deadly combat bound...
(yawns)
Oh, who'd the fatal falter make, Whose blood
...would...stain.....the ground...

Gilbert's quill slides off the parchment as his head flops down on it and he falls asleep, his mouth agape in mid-yawn.

INT. DRAGON'S MOUTH - NIGHT

Bowen crouches uncomfortably inside the mouth, propping his sword arm up with his other hand, staring up at the fangs.

He notices a PIECE OF CLOTH stuck between the back teeth. Bowen gives it a tug. It's a sleeve...with a SKELETAL HAND still in it. Bowen recognizes the ring on the bony finger and drops it.

BOWEN
Good Lord, Sir Eglamore!

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - ON DRAGON & BOWEN - NIGHT

Bowen throws the hand away in disgust.

DRAGON
Thanffs! Been stug upf dere fa monffs!
Cuud you ged your elba aff ma tongue.

BOWEN
Why should you be comfortable? My armour
is rusting in your drool. And your
breath is absolutely foul!

DRAGON
Wad da you expekd wiff Sir Eglamaa
rotting batwan ma molars?...Oh, my mouf
ith dry...

Suddenly, the dragon starts to cough. Hacking rumbles roll up his throat. Bowen, rocking on the tongue, winces at the smell of the breath.

BOWEN

Hey!

INT. DRAGON'S MOUTH - NIGHT

A HUGE BALL OF SALIVA rolls up the Dragon's throat and smacks Bowen in the face. He wipes off, growling.

BOWEN

Watch it!

DRAGON

Sorry! Seems we'rr in a bid ab a stalemade, wuudn't you thay?

BOWEN

(not giving an inch)

But I can go three days without sleep.

DRAGON

I can go fhree weegs.

This rattles Bowen's confidence, but he rebounds.

BOWEN

I'll stab you before I nod off.

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - ON BOWEN & DRAGON - NIGHT

The Dragon, jaws aching, eyes rolling, is peeved.

DRAGON

Und I'll chompf you. Marbewous. We kull eagh ofper, doen neiffer aff us any guud.

BOWEN

What do you suggest?

DRAGON

A troose! Ged out aff ma mouf and led's tag aboud it face-ta-face.

More than happy to leave, Bowen starts to edge downward off the tongue, but before he pulls his sword away he has second thoughts.

BOWEN

How do I know I can trust you?

DRAGON

I gib you ma word!

BOWEN

A dragon's word is worthless.

INT. DRAGON'S MOUTH - NIGHT

The dragon's tongue flaps up with an exasperated snarl, jostling the precarious perched Bowen.

DRAGON

Stubborn lout!

The dragon suddenly arches his tongue up and Bowen slides off his slippery perch...falling out of the Dragon's mouth.

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - NIGHT

Bowen plops from dragon's mouth onto the ground, his sword clattering nearby. He looks up as a scaly paw clamps down on him, pinning him in place. The Dragon cranes his neck down, his eyes searing into Bowen.

BOWEN

I should have known. Go on! Kill me!

DRAGON

I don't want to kill you! Never did!
(quietly;solemnly)

And I don't want you to kill me...
(savagely)

How do we gain? If you win, you lose a trade. If I win, I wait around for the next swordslinger thirsting to carve a reputation out of my hide...

(laments)

I'm tired of lurking in holes and skulking in darkness! My life may be miserable, but I must not di...!

He mysteriously stops, the thought unfinished.

DRAGON

Now if you insist, we can pursue this fracas to its final stupidity. Or you can listen to my alternative.

The Dragon releases Bowen. Perplexed but suspicious, he staggers to his feet, reeling for his sword. He's exhausted and the sword is too heavy to lift. He can barely turn back to see if the dragon is coming in for a sneak attack.

But there is no attack, The Dragon hasn't moved. He too is spent and sags to ground with a heaving sigh, gazing at Bowen with disappointed eyes.

Bowen drops to the ground too. He's tired...and curious.

BOWEN

What alternative?

EXT. THE WOODS - ON GILBERT - DAWN

The rosy rays of dawn filter through the forest foliage. Birds twitter. Crickets chirp. And someone snores. Gilbert. Still face down on his epic poem.

A PINE CONE falls from above, thudding on his rump. Gilbert snorts, stirs, and rises, his face smeared with ink. He tries to decipher his equally blotched parchment. Then he remembers and, staggering to his feet, panics.

GILBERT

Bowen!

He scans the area. Nothing. No signs of victory or defeat. Or even that a battle had taken place.

Gilbert spies something in a bush. He gingerly plucks it up. It's a SLEEVE. A BONY HAND slips from it. Yes... the late Sir Eglamour. But Gilbert jumps to the wrong conclusion.

GILBERT

Oh, dear. Poor chap. Picked clean.

Gilbert crosses himself and, sadly looking at the ink-blotched manuscript in his hand, crumples it up.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - MILL - DAY

SEVERAL PEASANTS manually turn a LARGE GRINDING WHEEL around a flat mill stone under the supervision of Felton's BULLY-BOYS. OTHER PEASANTS nearby thrash the wheat. STILL OTHERS collect the milled flour.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY

SCAFFOLDING and ACTIVITY surround Felton's stone manor house. As MASONS measure and trim and CARPENTERS pound, A PRETTY LITTLE MINX with tousled hair languorously leans in the doorway, lacing up her undone doublet.

A HAND reaches over her shoulder and slides a money pouch down into her ample cleavage. She smiles up to find...

FELTON...smiling back, his own jerkin undone, holding up his pants in one hand. With the other, he leads the girl back into the house. CAMERA PANS UP TO:

THE WORKERS...on the scaffolding. It overlooks the wheatfield, where labourers are harvesting the wheat.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - WHEATFIELD - DAY

As the peasants harvest the crop, A YOUNG BOY looms INTO FRAME, staring wide-eyed up at the sky and...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - SKY ABOVE FIELD - DAY

...the Dragon suddenly swoops down PAST CAMERA.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - ABOVE WHEATFIELD - DAY

The boy turntails and runs, frantically waving his arms at the others and yelling.

BOY
Dragon! Dragon!

The workers looks up and then scatter to safety.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - SKY ABOVE FIELD - DAY

The dragon dive-bombs the wheat, loosing TWO STREAMS OF FLAME through the now-empty field.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - WHEATFIELD - ON PEASANTS - DAY

The peasants flee from the fire behind and the billowing black cloud of smoke.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - SKY ABOVE FIELD - DAY

The Dragon sweeps through the column of smoke, causing a huge vortex, winging his way to...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - MILL - DAY

...the Mill. The workers, spying the dragon, abandon their post. A BULLY-BOY grabs a whip and starts after them, but a sudden wind blows chaff into his face. He swats it away in time to see...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - SKY - DAY

The dragon takes aim at the mill and...shoots TWO FIRE BALLS from his nostrils.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - MILL - DAY

The Mill explodes. The Dragon swoops through the burning wreckage. The dazed bully-boy watches him go. He hears a CREAKING behind him and turns. The MILL WHEEL teeters unsteadily on the stone.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY

There are cries and smoke and people dashing to and fro. Felton, jerkin undone, holding up his unbelted pants, rushes out of the house, his dishevelled Minx behind him. He's aghast at the chaos, then hears a voice behind him.

BOWEN(OS)

Pesky critters, dragons...

Felton whirls to see Bowen, a horse, armed to the teeth.

BOWEN

...like big rodents. You never seem to get rid of them...

Felton loses a grip on his pants. They fall to his ankles.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY (LATER)

Felton, still holding up his pants, dickers hotly with Bowen.

FELTON

Thievery! Gouging!

BOWEN

You owe me from last time and I want that in advance too!

The Minx strokes Bowen's horse and smiles coyly at the knight. Bowen smiles back and winks.

FELTON

I won't pay it!

He gestures emphatically with his arms. And his pants fall down again. As he leans over to pick them up, the MILL WHEEL suddenly rolls past him. Felton jerks up. And his pants go down again as he, Bowen, the Minx, and the horse all turn their heads and watch the twirling juggernaut collides into...

THE SCAFFOLDING...sending stone, wood, and workers flying. Felton stares at his damaged house. Then at Bowen. Then at the Minx. He grabs the drawstring dangling from the Minx's cleavage and yanks out the MONEY PURSE he gave her earlier. He flings it at Bowen with a disgruntled gesture...and, once more, his pants fall down.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY (LATER)

PEASANTS line the walls and yard of the manor house. Felton, pants secure, sits in a chair in the front of the crowd, flanked by his Bulley-boys, with the Minx at his feet. Everyone is staring at...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - LAKE - DAY

...a harvested wheatfield at the edge of a LAKE. Bowen is maneuvering an OX towing a CART OF BOULDERS. He brings the ox to a halt.

The cart is ballast, attached via ropes and pulleys to a CATAPULT CONTRAPTION called "A WHACKER". Bowen goes to an adjustable TRIPOD and loads it with a heavy HARPOON.

Calculating and adjusting, Bowen sights...

THE DRAGON...who comes sweeping into view.

BOWEN...slices the ROPE-TRIGGER with his sword and...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - LAKE - DRAGON'S POV - DAY

...the HARPOON shoots from its cradle and zooms up toward its target.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - SKY ABOVE LAKE - DAY

The Dragon skillfully positions himself to take the harpoon under his wing where his claw clamps shut on the shaft, catching it in mid-flight. But to...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY

THE CROWD and FELTON...it looks like Bowen's scored a direct hit. An impression helped immeasurably by Dragon's spectacular, if overwrought, death scene.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - ON DRAGON - DAY

The Dragon gasps a yelp, does mid-air pirouette, a twisting half-gainer, and then a death-throe spin captured in SLOW-MOTION, before he does a final spiral tha sends him plummeting below the surface of the lake.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - STONE HOUSE - DAY

The crowd breaks into raucous cheers as the dragon hits the surface. All but Felton who turns to his Thugs.

FELTON
Get my money back.

They start down the hill.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - LAKE - DAY

Bowen's foreseen this. He gives a shrill whistle. Bowen's horse, awaiting cue, emerges from behind a haystack and as it gallops past, Bowen swings in the saddle and rides off...

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - MILL - DAY

...toward the still-burning mill, laughing, jingling the money pouch in a nose-thumbing taunt as he chokes the Thugs on his dust.

EXT. FELTON'S MILL - THE LAKE - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

Under the crystal surface of the lake, THE CAMERA PICKS UP...

THE DRAGON...gracefully swimming along, leaving in its wake a stream of bubbles from his nostrils.

EXT. THE LAKE - FURTHER BANK - DAY

As the Dragon stealthily creeps onto the bank from the lake, he hears a "BAAA!".

A FLOCK OF SHEEP...graze by the bank. The Dragon's eyes gleam as his tongue flicks hungrily across his lips.

DRAGON
Hellooo...

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

Bowen rides across a grassy steppe, counting the day's take. Suddenly the dragon floats by him in the air, belly up, his wings flapping idly as he circles Bowen and tries to blow a patch of wool from the corner of his mouth.

BOWEN
Most profitable. I should have met you long ago, Dragon.

DRAGON
There is much gold in the world. When you have your fill of it and no longer need me...

BOWEN
I am a Knight of the Old Code. My word is my bond.

DRAGON
No compunctions then?

BOWEN
About what?

DRAGON
Well, such deception hardly befits a...
(emphasizing)
...Knight of the Old Code...

Dragon finally knocks the wool off his mouth with his paw. Rankled, Bowen angrily snatches it out of the air, wheeling on the Dragon who's not longer there as he keeps idly circling Bowen. Bowen whips his head back to the Dragon now on his other side.

BOWEN
That's debatable! Fleecing Einon's lordly lackeys is a service to mankind.

DRAGON
Is it? When you squeeze the nobility, it's the peasants who feel the pinch.

The Dragon's hit a sore spot and Bowen surily tries to deflect the blow.

BOWEN
Not my concern. Why stick my neck out for people afraid to risk their own? Don't clutter up a clever scheme with dubious morality. And stand still! I'm getting dizzy!

The Dragon surreptitiously studies Bowen's vehement reaction with interest. He stops circling and lights.

DRAGON
So be it...
(emphasizing)
Knight of the Old Code.

The dragon strides along beside Bowen's horse.

BOWEN
(hotly)
If I wanted my conscience pricked, I'd have stayed with the priest. And what does a dragon know of the Old Code, anyway?

DRAGON
(quotes)
"His blade defends the helpless. His might upholds the weak..."

BOWEN

Stop it! I remember the words. And that's all it is! A memory. Dead and gone. And nothing...nothing... can bring it back.

Bowen, voice thick with emotion, turns from the Dragon.

DRAGON

You sound like one who tried...

BOWEN

And failed...So I no longer try to change the world, Dragon, but try merely to get by in it.

DRAGON

Yes, it's better than death, I suppose...

BOWEN

Is it?

It comes out too bitter...Bowen self-consciously shifts tone.

BOWEN

...For you, I mean. I should think you'd welcome death. The last of your race. All your friends dead. Hated and hunted wherever you go...

DRAGON

Do you delight in reminding me? Yes, Knight, I long for death...but fear it.

BOWEN

Why? Aside from your misery, what's to lose?

DRAGON

My soul.

The two disappear over a dip in the road.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Einon's castle looks even more forbidding at night. RAUCOUS LAUGHTER ECHOES from within its towering walls.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

A ROASTED PIG twirls on a spit over an open fire. SERVANTS with food and drink, hustle about to serve...

EINON & HIS KNIGHTS...and THEIR ROWDY WOMENFOLK, dining alfresco by torchlight. Einon sits at the head of a huge BANQUET TABLE, drunkenly laughing as he watches...

SIR BROK...bare-chested, atop the table, wrestle TWO MEN at once. Brok tosses one over his shoulder and off the table into the bonfire. With a yelp, the wrestler rolls on the ground and servants obliging beat the flames off him.

The lords and their "ladies" roar with approval and urge Brok on. Brok slings his opponent down the length of the table, sending food and crockery flying. The wrestler slides past the howling, drunken crowd to the end of the table where his head flops over the edge as he groans and passes out, his rolled eyes blaring vacantly up at...

AISLINN...primly seated at the table end, the only point of stillness in this rowdy revelry. Weary despair, not age, has faded her beauty. Eionon shouts down the table at her.

EINON

Can he continue, Mother?

Aislinn lifts the unconscious man's arm off her plate by its sleeve in dainty disgust, dropping it contemptuously over the edge of the table.

AISLINN

The field is Sir Brok's, my son.

Brok does a victory dance on the table to the delighted roar of the crowd, while Eionon spins to Felton beside him.

Nestled drunkenly in Felton's arms is his PRETTY LITTLE MINX. Purses and STACKS OF COINS litter the table. Eionon scoops two stacks from Felton's pile to his.

EINON

Twenty you owe me, Felton!

Felton starts to feebly protest.

AISLINN

Ten...my son.

The correction is spoken in flat calm. Eionon frowns at his mother, then at Felton whose Pretty Little Minx has started to slide one of the stacks back. Felton smiles uneasily at the displeased king and, slapping away Minx's hand from the coins, scoots them back to Eionon's pile.

FELTON

The spectacle of Sir Brok's prowess is worth double the wager, sire!

Eionon, reeling up, snatches a PITCHER to pour more wine. It's empty. He bangs it on the table.

EINON

More wine!

Suddenly, in the polished sheen of the pitcher's metal, Eionon catches something.

EINON'S POV - THE PITCHER - NIGHT

Reflected in the pitcher, he sees a FIGURE, ARMED WITH A KNIFE, CREEPING DOWN THE LOW ROOFTOP, DIRECTLY BEHIND HIM.

BACK TO SCENE

As Eionon once more bangs the pitcher on the table.

EINON

Wine! The King's thirst must be quenched!

Suddenly, from off the rooftop THE FIGURE comes flying. But Eionon's timing is perfect. He ducks and the attacker goes flying over him, sprawling onto the table amid the feast and screams of the stunned women. Eionon is atop the body in an instant, spinning it over, and wrenching the knife from the grasp of...

KARA...who struggles in Eionon's grasp, her red hair flying. A half-dozen swords fly out, ready to stab her to death.

EINON

No!

The blades stop. Eionon's sobering gaze intently scrutinizes the girl. About her neck, she wears her father's headband. Once more her flame hair glows against the fire-light jarring an elusive memory for Eionon.

EINON

I know...you...

(recognition hits)

The quarry! The blind dog's whelp!

(laughs)

Family devotion! A fine thing! Isn't it, mother?

Only Aislinn's sad eyes respond to his sneering question...or accusation, they are filled with quiet admiration for the girl. Eionon turns his sneer on Kara once more.

EINON

First you beg mercy for his fate. Then try to avenge it. And now you'll share it.

But it's said with fleeing conviction, even as Eionon's sneer flees...for he's become aware of her beauty.

KARA

In your kingdom, Eionon, there are worse fates than death.

The sneer is back.

EINON

I'll think up one for you! Lock her up!

Brok and others haul her away. Eimon picks up the dagger then gazes at his mother, watching him in inscrutable silence.

EINON

Where's my wine!

He jabs the dagger into a hunk of meat and tears off a bite with his teeth.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - KARA'S DAGGER - DAY

Kara's dagger furiously chops at a wooden branch. CAMERA BACK on Eimon, dressed in an open jerkin, on the battlements amid the work rubble of renovation.

Eimon idly chops at a piece of scaffolding with Kara's knife, mesmerized by the glow of...

THE FORGE...fiery hot. Sweaty bodies toil over it, hammering out hinges and bars. Other workers scuttle about, banging and sawing in counterpoint to...

EINON'S VIOLENT WHITTLLING...As he watches, the noise seems to get louder in his head, swirling and jarring, TRANSFORMING INTO OTHER SOUNDS...SOUNDS OF BATTLE...clanking metal and clashing arms! Suddenly, Eimon's eyes spark with ferocious light. He charges down a stairway.

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - STAIRWAY - DAY

Eimon flies down a flight of stone steps.

EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Eimon stalks through the courtyard with determined purpose, bolting into a grated doorway.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

Eimon barges into the dungeon, startling Kara, chained to the wall. His intense gaze is unnerving. He idly strokes his chest with the knife. As he presses into her, he slides the blade from the folds of his shirt and caresses her throat with it.

EINON

I remember now...

He rips open her blouse with the dagger. She gasps as he slides the blade along her chest. Over her jerking heart. He flips aside the torn flaps of the garment to peer at her breasts.

EINON

I remember...

INT. BEDCHAMBER - EINON'S CASTLE - ON KARA - SUNSET

Kara, in a simple shift, lies amidst the rumpled coverlets of a bed. The unspilt tears in her eyes glisten in the candle-glow of a nearby sconce.

Einon sits on the edge of the bed, his jerkin open and loose. He sneers in amused contempt as her first tear falls.

EINON

(drunkenly)

You weep? You could be on the battlements as buzzard bait rather than in the royal bed. Rebels must learn to love their king.

He lurches up and weaves to the nightstand where he refills his wine cup. Kara spies his discarded belt on the floor ...and her dagger tucked in it.

EXT. PLATEAU - ON DAGGER - SUNSET

A dagger plunges down...against a flint. CAMERA BACK. Bowen and the Dragon camp in a canyon. A plucked bird is skewered on a spit. Bowen tries to start a fire with a flint. The Dragon watches in amusement. Flame snorts from his nostrils and the campfire's ablaze. So's the bird. Bowen nods a dubious thanks as the Dragon wipes the black rings from his nostrils with a sniff.

DRAGON

Hope you like it well done.

Bowen jerks the spit from the fire, beats the flames off the bird, and eats. Firelight flickers over the shiny horns on Bowen's shield. Bowen notices the Dragon staring at them.

DRAGON

Did you hate us so much?

BOWEN

I hated one of you.

(refers to shield)

These I killed, because I wanted to kill him. But never found him. Never shall. If you are the last, he must be dead.

DRAGON

Yes..What was he like? This Dragon you hated.

BOWEN

He had only half a heart. But even one half held enough evil to pollute an innocent.

Dragon, forgetting himself, rises up, hotly.

DRAGON

Einon was no innocent! He polluted the heart!

Now Bowen rises. The pair stare wildly at each other...Bowen surprised the Dragon knows this history...The Dragon worried he might have tipped his hand.

BOWEN

So you know the story, Dragon?

DRAGON

All Dragons knew it! What was to be their hope became their doom. A spoiled, ungrateful child was given a great gift and destroyed it!

The words cut through Bowen, prodding the suspicion he has always held...and never wanted to confront.

BOWEN

No! I knew that boy. Taught him. Taught him the ways of honour and right. The Old Code.

DRAGON

Then he betrayed you, even as he betrayed the dragon whose heart he broke!

BOWEN

That's a lie, Dragon!

DRAGON

Stop calling me dragon! I have a name!

BOWEN

What is it then, Dragon?

This breaks the tension. The Dragon shrugs sheepishly.

DRAGON

Well...uh...you couldn't possibly pronounce it in your tongue.

Bowen turns away in exasperated disgust, flinging his bird into the fire. Behind him the Dragon suddenly clutches at his shoulder and staggers in pain. A RED GLOW PULSATES BENEATH THE SKIN OF HIS AILING SHOULDER. THE DRAGON MOANS.

DRAGON

Arr...er...awwrr.

BOWEN

You're right. I couldn't pronounce it...

Again, the Dragon moans and Bowen realizes he wasn't getting a language lesson. This language is universal -- PAIN! He wheels to see the Dragon fall, wincing to the ground.

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - BEDCHAMBER - ON WINE CUP - NIGHT

Einon's wine cup rolls on the floor, the wine seeping across the stones like blood. CAMERA UP. Einon, a startled glaze in his eyes, slumps against the wall. HIS DAGGER is buried hilt deep in his left shoulder. Kara glares at him.

KARA

A love dart from Cupid, Einon!

Einon jerks up, wrenching the blade from his jerkin sleeve, which he cuts open, exposing the wound...A thin line of blood trickles from his shoulder, but the wound is surprisingly slight. Einon laughs, wiping at the blood and sucking it from his finger.

KARA

No!

EINON

Not as deep or deadly as you thought?
Next time stab more flesh, less cloth.

KARA

Next time I'll pierce your heart!

He grabs her arm and throws her on the bed, hovering over her, pulling close.

EINON

You already did, sweet, in more ways than one. A very special heart. Like no other.

He places her hand against his chest. She yanks it back.

KARA

A black withered thing devoid of pity.

Einon brings the knife to her throat. But as he gazes at her lovely face twisted in hate for him, he calms, caressing her with the dagger, wiping his blood on her cheek. In his eyes is a pathetic perverse look of pain.

EINON

Then teach me. Pity me... Everything. I would give you everything. Even power. You are so...beautiful.

Knife still against her cheek, he kisses her reluctant lips in awkward tenderness. As she pulls back, he shoves her on the bed and sticks the knife in the bedpost. Kara glares up and sees...

HIS WOUND...is almost ENTIRELY HEALED. As though she only scratched him!

EINON

Even power...even a throne...

He staggers drunkenly from the room. Kara fights back fresh tears, her hands scraping down her body as though trying to rub his foul touch from her. In manic fury, she rips the covers from the bed, then collapses on it, tears flooding.

EXT. CANYON - ON DRAGON - NIGHT

Firelight reflects across his face as...

BOWEN...concern etched in his face, uses a wet saddle blanket as a compress for the Dragon's shoulder, still glowing hot. STEAM puffs up in a SIZZLING HISS as Bowen places the blanket over the wound and the glow subsides.

DRAGON

Thank you. It's passed now.

BOWEN

What was it?

DRAGON

An old complaint that acts up now and again...

BOWEN

Forgive me if anything I said...If I upset you...

DRAGON

It wasn't you...not you...

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Kara fitfully sleeps. A SHADOW falls over her. She stirs as a hand pulls the dagger from the bedpost. She jerks up, cowering. Aislinn steps into the candlelight.

KARA

How did you come here?

AISLINN

I have my ways.

KARA

Why did you come?

AISLINN

To help.

KARA

I need no help from her who bore the
beast.

AISLINN

I bore a child...An innocent child. Was
it his fault he was the bitter fruit of a
seed sown without love?

KARA

I would have smothered such a child in
his crib.

AISLINN

You say so now. I thought so once. But
when you hold him in your arms, you do
not see the monster he can become...Only
a small something that is a part of you,
crying for your nourishment, frail and
helpless... And you do not realize you
are the helpless one.

(bitter outburst)

How could I guide him when I was merely a
bit of plunder? A creature of
submission. Allowed no pleasure. No
feelings. No voice. How could he hear
me? What was left for him but his
father's taint?

Aislinn, trembling with emotion, regains her regal composure.

KARA

Is this the help you offer? To foretell
my future in your past? Give me the
dagger. Let me kill myself before I am
accomplice to this vile legacy.

AISLINN

Why wish for death, when there is
freedom?

The Queen takes a candle and goes to a corner of the chamber,
illuminating a stone wall. She presses a hidden spring and
the wall creaks open, exposing a secret passage.

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - CISTERN - NIGHT

A stone wall slides open and Kara and Aislinn step out into a large CISTERN. Below them is the water. Aislinn leads Kara down a stone path that runs along the wall of the cistern.

Kara sees the door on the other side and starts to open it, but Aislinn stops her, sliding open a small hatch in the door. Through the peephole, Kara can see...

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

...The guards patrolling the courtyard.

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - CISTERN - NIGHT

Aislinn points to an iron door, just above the water's surface. Kara heads for it, stopping before it to turn back.

KARA

Thank y...

But Aislinn has disappeared once more into the shadows.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BASE OF THE WALL - NIGHT

Kara stealthily emerges from a crevice of the castle wall's rocky foundation and slides down a steep pass into the darkness of the night.

EXT. CANYON - ON BOWEN - NIGHT

A cape around his shoulders, nodding off to sleep. As his head slumps forward, he jerks it back, popping his eyes open.

DRAGON(OS)

Have you been watching over me all night?

CAMERA BACK. The Dragon is curled on the ground behind Bowen, who has indeed been holding vigil, though he's embarrassed by it.

BOWEN

I've...been thinking...

DRAGON

About what...?

BOWEN

Many things...Mostly what to call you.
I've found you a name.

DRAGON

You say that as though you reached up and plucked it from the sky.

BOWEN

I did. Up there. See that cluster of stars there?

EXT. STARRY SKY - NIGHT

A SERIES OF STARS shine brilliantly against night's black curtain. It is the CONSTELLATION OF DRACO.

(NOTE: The radiance of these stars should be highly exaggerated to make the pattern of the constellation plainly visible.)

The Dragon's head looms into frame, staring at the stars.

DRAGON

I know those stars very well.

EXT. CANYON - NIGHT

The Dragon gazes up at the stars in fervent longing.

BOWEN

Do you see the shape they make?

DRAGON

A dragon.

BOWEN

Yes. We call it DRACO. It means dragon in the scholar's speech.

DRAGON

So instead of calling me Dragon in your tongue, you'll call me Dragon in some other tongue.

BOWEN

You're right. It's a silly idea.

DRAGON

No...I would be honoured to be named after those stars. Draco. Thank you, Kni...Do you have a name?

BOWEN

Bowen.

DRAGON

Thank you, Bowen.

DRACO looks skyward at his namesake.

DRACO

...Draco...

The serpentine constellation glows in the night sky.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - LONG SHOT - NIGHT

CRASHING & YELLING echoes from within the forbidding edifice.

EINON(OS)

Dogs! Fools!

INT. BEDCHAMBER - EINON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

A GUARD flies across the room, clattering into a table and chairs. ANOTHER GUARD staggers out of the debris of overturned bedding and a nightstand. An enraged Einon grabs him by the neck and flings him into the open fireplace.

A nervous Brok and an inscrutable Aislinn watch Einon's lethal tantrum as the guard rolls yelping out of the fire and Einon descends on him with the IRON FIREPLACE POKER, repeatedly beating the man on the back and legs.

EINON

If you can't guard a simple girl, then go guard shades in Hell.

Brok intercedes with wary caution.

BROK

Sire! How could they have known of that?

Wild with fury, spittle flecking his lips, he spins on Brok, pressing the tip of the poker against the Knight's throat as though he'd plunge through the other side. Brok points to the open secret passage. Einon turns to it, his rage subsiding slightly as he's struck by a thought.

EINON

More importantly, how could the girl know?

His dark gaze shifts to his mother as he lowers the poker from Brok's throat. He kicks the guard at his feet and flings the poker at the other.

EINON

Get out!

The guards scurry out the door. Einon, still staring at his mother, issues a command to Brok.

EINON

Get my best men!

Brok bows and exits. Aislinn coolly returns Eionon's gaze.

AISLINN

I'll send someone to clean up this mess.

She exits. Eionon suspiciously watches her go.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - DAY

A BARRAGE OF VEGETABLES COMES FLYING AT THE CAMERA, which PANS TO:

AN ANGRY MOB...pursuing A DISHEVELLED YOUNG WOMAN through the village, pelting her with rotten vegetables and handfuls of mud. Shouting above the crowd, the girl futilely tries to hold her ground. Underneath the mud, splattered produce, and grungy clothes, it's KARA!

KARA

Throw off the yoke of Eionon's oppression.
Raise arms, I say!

SPLOTTCH! A ROTTEN CABBAGE plows into her chest. SPLAT! A GLOP OF MUD smacks her forehead.

KARA

Listen to me!

WHACK! MORE MUD sprays across her. A strapping blacksmith, HEWE, sporting an EYEPATCH, has thrown it.

HEWE

To treason! Your father sang that sour
tune once, Kara.
(points to his eye)
And once was enough. We'll not dance to
it again!

KARA

No, just cringe like dogs under Eionon's
boot.

HEWE

A cringing dog's a live one!

Hewe rears back to toss a SQUASH, but ANOTHER HAND plucks it from his grasp. The peasant angrily wheels about to confront...

BOWEN...breaking the squash in half and biting into a piece. Kara remembers him instantly and a smile of recognition breaks through the veil of dripping vegetables.

BOWEN

Why waste good food on bad rhetoric?

Kara's smile disappears as she snarls in umbrage.

KARA

I speak truth!

BOWEN

(munching squash)

Truth is rarely inspiring, lass, and never wins rebellions. But it can stretch rebels' necks...if there is a neck under that vegetable patch.

Kara self-consciously wipes at her face. Grinning, Bowen, offers her the other squash half. She indignantly shoves it in his face. The crowd laughs then...

A WOMAN SCREAMS...and points skyward...A WIND rustles through the village as the crowd dives for cover. Bowen wipes the squash from his eyes just in time to see:

DRACO'S WING...dip past, knocking a PATCH OF THATCH off a hut roof. It plops on...

BOWEN...who falls to the ground underneath it. He comes up spewing thatch and glaring skyward, mumbling to himself.

BOWEN

Show-off...

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - LATER - DAY

Draco, smoke curling from his nostrils, perches on a rocky ledge overhanging a GROVE OF TREES a short distance from the village like a vulture, hungrily eying...

THE VILLAGERS...huddling behind their hut. Hewe dickers with a peeved Bowen, still picking thatch out of his clothes.

BOWEN

Where's the Lord responsible for this village?

HEWE

In a fine house six miles away. He'll just blame any destruction on us and pluck our pockets to pay for it.

This remark nettles Bowen's latent conscience but not enough to dissuade him.

BOWEN

Well, I won't pluck them as deeply! It was a fair offer, take it or leave...him!
(points to Draco)

The villagers mumble among themselves as Kara shoves through the crowd, dripping mud and mushy vegetables in her wake.

KARA

(points to Bowen)

Leave him! It's bad enough you grovel to Einon. Will you be bullied by some blackmailing broken-down knight? You don't need him to get rid of a dragon!

Bowen glares, caring neither for her insults nor meddling. He turns to a ROTUND VILLAGER with THREE ROTUND DAUGHTERS.

BOWEN

That's right. Perhaps you'll part with one of your delectable daughters instead of gold. Dragons are partial to maiden sacrifices.

The Rotund Villager fans his arms in front of his daughters to protect them from such a horrid thought. But Hewe likes the idea, with alterations...

HEWE

Why must it be a daughter?

The crowd turns with him as his shifty gaze falls on...

KARA...jaw dropping as she realizes their intent.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - THE FIELD - DAY

The VILLAGERS roll a rickety CART out to an open field, the old battlefield where they fought King Freyne. Kara, strapped to a pole wedged into the back of the cart, yells her head off.

KARA

No! No! Please! I'm not even a virgin!

Bowen watches in exasperated disgust.

BOWEN

Superstitious yokels.

He mounts up and rides out of the village.

EXT. ROCK SPIRE - DAY

From his perch, Draco watches the shenanigans of the villagers in utter befuddlement. Suddenly, he sees Bowen below, riding up to the base of the rock.

DRACO

Who's the girl?

BOWEN

A nuisance. Get rid of her.

DRACO

Why?

BOWEN

They're trying to placate you with a sacrifice.

DRACO

Whoever gave them that bright idea?

BOWEN

Never mind! They're imbeciles.

DRACO

Barbarians!

BOWEN

Just get rid of her!

DRACO

How?

BOWEN

How should I know? Eat her.

DRACO

Oh please! Yecch!

BOWEN

My, aren't we squeamish? You ate Sir Eglamore.

DRACO

I never swallowed! Merely chewed in self-defense.

BOWEN

Oh...then I suppose torching her's out of the question.

DRACO

Absolutely!

BOWEN

It would impress the yokels.

DRACO

Will you listen to yourself?

BOWEN

Well...then...improvise!

Draco heaves a sigh and swoops off the rock towards...

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - THE FIELD - DAY

KARA...who screams. Draco reaches out a claw to her whereupon she faints. Draco wrenches the stake out of the cart, flies off with the limp girl OUT OF FRAME.

As the empty stake plops back down to the ground, the CROWD pours out into the village, cheering.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A sour-faced Bowen comes riding through. Suddenly he hears TRILLING. The strange DRAGONSONG. But this time the musical trill is light and happy, not melancholy as before.

Bowen spurs his horse to the sound, coming to a clearing where he spies...

EXT. WATERFALL - DUSK

KARA...sits on a rock, soaking up the sun, as Draco contentedly trills. Kara is transported, touched by the strange music. She smiles at Draco.

KARA

You have a beautiful voice.

Draco BLUSHES A BRIGHT CRIMSON. Kara laughs at his awkward shyness.

KARA

You're not like a dragon at all.

DRACO

How many do you know?

KARA

None that serenade maidens instead of devouring them. You're entirely too happy for a dragon. I bet you don't do any of the horrid things they say.

DRACO

Minstrels' fancies. Never hurt a soul unless they try to hurt me first.

KARA

Then why were you in that village?

DRACO

Oh?...Oh! The village!

BOWEN(OS)

Yes! You remember the village.

Both Kara and Draco turn to...

BOWEN...stomping toward them. Kara emits a warlike screech and leaps onto his horse. She plops in the saddle, face-to-face with Bowen and starts to pummel him.

KARA

Leave him alone, you bully! Run, Draco, fly! I'll hold him.

(to Bowen)

Pick on someone your own size!

Draco suppresses his laughter as Bowen and Kara tumble from the saddle in the pond. Bowen sputters at Draco.

BOWEN

Where have you been?

DRACO

I've been...distracted...Bowen, meet Kara.

Bowen turns to Kara and, with an exasperated sigh, grabs her floundering arm to help her up. She slaps him away. He lets go. She flops back down in the pond.

BOWEN

You should have eaten her!

DRACO

Now don't be angry.

BOWEN

Why not? You left me high and dry. Worried to death...

DRACO

Worried? Over me?

BOWEN

...Here I am waiting around...I don't know what's happened? Where you are? When you're coming back?...

Suddenly Draco tenses. All aquiver. Listening. He whirls back behind the waterfall. Kara watches him go.

BOWEN

...If you're coming back? You just...

Bowen wheels back to Draco, only to discover him gone.

BOWEN

...disappear...

He glares suspiciously at Kara, as though she's hidden him. Before she can respond, Draco's head pops through the waterfall.

DRACO

Horses. Someone's coming.

Draco ducks back behind the falls as Bowen and Kara also hear the horses. Bowen turns to face them.

THE RIDERS emerge from the trees. Kara recognizes them. And they, her! It's EINON with a search party.

As the Riders charge up, Bowen leaps protectively in front of the frightened girl, his sword whirling in a flashy display as Einon's minions hesitate. As they slowly surround him, Bowen tensely holds his ground. BOOMING LAUGHTER suddenly breaks the stand-off.

EINON

It can't be! But it is! The king's old mentor! Still giving carving lessons?

Bowen sizes Einon up. He doesn't care for what he sees.

BOWEN

Get off your horse and I'll give you one.

EINON

I'm bigger now. Perhaps, I'll give you one.

BOWEN

Stick to slaughtering peasants. It's safer.

EINON

Oh, we don't slaughter them anymore. They can't pay their taxes if they're dead.

(surveys Bowen's
ragged condition)

Seems times have not been kind, Bowen. You should never have broke with me.

BOWEN

It was you who broke with me.

Einon idly strokes his scar in dark and, perhaps, even regretful remembrance. But he shakes off old memories with a twisted smile.

EINON

Yet you return to me and with my lost lady.

Bowen turns to Kara, surprised. She shakes her head in vigorous denial.

BOWEN

I think the lady wants to stay lost.

EINON

Not her choice, I'm afraid.

BOWEN

My three feet of steel says it is.

Kara laughs, delighted to have a defender. Einoon flushes with anger. Then he slowly smiles as he unsheaths his sword.

EINON

I'm ready for my lesson now, knight...

As Bowen tenses, on guard, expecting an honourable fight. Instead, he gets a dirty trick.

EINON

But first, one for you!

Einoon flings his shield at him. Bowen is knocked into the water. He deftly rolls and uses the shield to protect himself from the flailing hooves of Einoon's horse as, laughing savagely, Einoon charges over him and grabs Kara by the hair, jerking her head back.

EINON

Don't go anywhere, sweet. This won't take long.

He bends over and ruthlessly kisses the squirming girl. As he does, Bowen springs up and slams the shield against Einoon's back, unseating him from his horse.

BOWEN

Only expose your back to a corpse.
That's one lesson you never learned.

Einoon's men start to rush in, but Einoon comes up shaking water, eyes flashing.

EINON

Stand back!
(to Bowen)
You are a corpse!

The two engage. Trading fast and furious blows. As they fight, a shadow watches from behind the waterfall.

INT. WATERFALL - CAVE - DAY

The two combatants are watched through the cascading water. The clank of steel is heard above the rushing water. And the laboured breathing of Draco.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

The swordplay is dazzling and Bowen's holding his own. But Eion's younger. And faster.

EINON

Lie down, knight. Life has passed you by. You're the sorry scrap of dead world and dead beliefs!

The taunts renew Bowen's fury.

BOWEN

They were your beliefs!

EINON

Never! Never mine!

BOWEN

They were! The old code...

EINON

I spit on your code! I spit on it then. And I spit on it now!

BOWEN

No! You knew the words! You spoke them!

EINON

I vomitted them up because I couldn't stomach them.

Bowen doesn't want to hear it. His sad fantasy that the Dragon tainted Eion is unravelling. Tears well in his eyes. He tries to shout down the truth.

BOWEN

Lies! I taught you...

EINON

...to fight! That's all! I took what I needed from you, knight. You taught me to fight! And well!

It's the coup de grace. Bowen, dazed by his broken dream, attacks sloppily. Eion's blade rips across his shoulder and sends the shattered knight spinning back onto his knees in the water.

Eion charges in, blade upraised. But before he can deliver the deathblow, he's blinded by a SWOOSHING SPRAY OF WATER. Growling, he shakes it from his eyes to discover...

DRACO...between Eion and Bowen. Roaring fiercely. His wings swing up and the scales on his chest fall back, exposing...THE RED SCAR on his chest. Eion, quaking in fear, recognizes the Dragon...and his death and SCREAMS.

Dashing for his horse, the terrified king mounts and gallops away. The rest of his minions follow him. Bowen staggers out of the water and sashes over to Draco. He is still shaken and angry from his encounter with Einon.

BOWEN

Who asked you to butt in? I had everything under control!

Draco doesn't answer. He watches Einon ride off, disturbed and concerned. Someone else is disturbed by something. Bowen feels a tug at his sleeve. It's Kara.

KARA

Just how is it you two know each other?

Bowen and Draco trade a sheepish glance.

EXT. SWAMP VILLAGE - BRIDGE - DAY

Bowen leads his horse across a rickety bridge over a swampy river. Kara walks along side him. Bowen winces and rubs his wounded shoulder.

KARA

Here. Let me see.

She opens his jerkin and tenderly removes the ragged bandage. Bowen watches her. Her head close to his. She looks up and catches him staring at her. He quickly shifts his gaze.

KARA

It's all healed, Bowen. Just a little stiff.

Bowen limbers up his arm. His eyes rove downriver where a cluster of MUD HUTS sit on an island in the middle of a DREARY, MIST-ENSHROUDED MARSH.

BOWEN

That village ought to give it a little exercise.

He looks up as a SHADOW passes overhead.

KARA

But no medicine for your other wound.

Bowen rubs his shoulder and glares at her. She appraises him with hurt, disappointed, pleading eyes.

BOWEN

I have no other wound.

KARA

You won't soothe your sick heart, Bowen,
by wasting your courage and skill on
worthless acts.

BOWEN

What wound festers in you, girl?

KARA

A deep one. It hurts to know my heroes
are nothing more than charlatans looking
out only for themselves.

A SHADOW intermittently passes over the pair.

BOWEN

Well, that's the way the wretched world
turns, girl.

KARA

And those who cannot look out for
themselves?...You could lead them, Bowen.
Give them hope.

BOWEN

False hope! Even if you could raise a
ragtag army, what chance do they have
against seasoned troops? The last time
they tried it ended up a massacre. I
remember! I was there!

KARA

So was I. And I remember more. One lone
knight who dare to stand against the king
and saved a rebel from a blinding.
(Bowen turns sharply)
...for a little while anyway...You,
Bowen. The rebel was my father.

She sadly fingers Red-beard's headband about her throat.
Bowen looks at her, the memory slowly crystallizing.

KARA

Let others stand with you and this time
the end will be different.

Bowen takes her gently by the shoulders, gazing sadly in her
flaring eyes, drinking in her angry beauty with melancholy
yearning. Unable to stand his probing gaze, Kara breaks
away.

KARA

What are you looking at?

BOWEN

Myself once upon a time...

Bowen mounts his horse. As the Shadow passes overhead again, he calls up to it.

BOWEN

I'll see you in the village, Draco.

As he mounts up, Draco floats down beside Kara, appraising her with sad, disturbed eyes.

DRACO

What will you do, Kara?

KARA

Try to turn the wretched world the other way.

Bowen turns back and looks at them for a moment and then spurs his horse over the bridge.

DRACO

Einon will not fall in my lifetime.

Unable to look at her any longer, Draco zooms off downriver. Kara watches him go.

EXT. SWAMP VILLAGE -DAY

Bowen swats at BUZZING MOSQUITOS as he rides through a marshland river toward...

A VILLAGE...situated on an island in the middle of a DREARY, MIST-ENSHROUDED MARSH. From the looks of it, the village is fairly dreary too. From the mud and straw huts emerge SEVERAL TALL BRUTISH WARRIORS who come forth to meet Bowen.

They hesitate as the RUSTLE OF WINGS and WIND kicks past them, looking skyward. So does Bowen. Then he looks dubiously at the village. With a weary shake of his head, he swats another mosquito and leads his horse through the shallow marsh.

EXT. SWAMP VILLAGE - MONEY SACK - DAY

A MONEY SACK is passed from hand-to-hand...each dropping something of value in it. A coin or two...a tarnished goblet ...a ring. CAMERA BACK as the sack is given to the VILLAGE CHIEF -- a gaunt giant who holds the sack out to:

BOWEN...miserable. The village is miserable. The villagers are miserable. Towering, ragged giants, hollow cheeks and haunted eyes. No minion of Einon's here to gouge. Nor to act as a salve to his guilty conscience. Mortified, Bowen swats at the mosquitos that seem to abound. Even the climate and the livestock are miserable. He stares up at...

DRACO...who menacingly flies over the swamp.

KARA(OS)

Wait!

KARA...pushes through the press of villagers.

KARA

This man is a fraud!

The Chief jerks the money back. Kara smiles in gloating triumph. Bowen thrusts out his dragonhorn shield.

BOWEN

Is this a fraud? That girl's a wandering idiot, babbling nonsense!

KARA

That's a lie! This Knight is no Dragonslayer.

GILBERT(OS)

You're mistaken, my child.

FRIAR GILBERT...emerges from the crowd, his parchment sack slung on his back, swatting at the mosquitos with a scroll. A welcome sight for Bowen.

BOWEN

Gilbert!

GILBERT

(embraces him)

Bowen, my lad! Praise the Saints, you're alive! And whole!

(feels Bowen's arm to make sure; to Chief)

You couldn't put your trust in a better man. I have personally seen him slay almost two dragons.

KARA

Almost?

GILBERT

Well, I didn't actually witness the deathblow to the second, but since Sir Bowen's here, he must have won!

BOWEN

(smugly)

I never lose.

Chief thrusts the money at Bowen again, but Kara stops him.

KARA

No! He's in league with the dragon!

Everyone stares at her. Bowen. Gilbert. The Villagers. Their Chief...who slowly starts to chuckle, then laugh. He hands the money to Bowen who also laughs and makes a crazy sign in reference to Kara.

BOWEN

Told you. An addle-pated ninny!

Everyone is laughing now, except a fuming Kara!

EXT. SWAMP VILLAGE - EDGE OF SWAMP -DAY

Bowen has once again devised "A WHACKER". Gilbert gleefully helps out, driving the ballast-cart ox into position until Bowen signals him to stop.

BOWEN

Whoa, Gilbert. Hold it steady there!

As Bowen loads and sights "The Whacker", Kara, like one of the constantly buzzing mosquitos, hovers beside Bowen, speaking so Gilbert cannot overhear.

KARA

I thought you had sunk low, Bowen. But not this low.

BOWEN

Wait till you see how low Draco sinks.

Twang! Bowen slices the rope-trigger and the HARPOON flies off toward...

DRACO...who expertly snares the lance under his wing and, as before, goes into his death-throes and swoons down into the marsh. But not under! He lands with a huge muddy splat that sprays both Kara and Bowen.

Bowen wipes off muck, finding Draco at the edge of the swamp, belly up, eyes closed, frozen in an awkward death pose.

BOWEN

Well, sink! Sink!

DRACO

(not breaking his
pose)

How? It doesn't get any deeper.

Kara laughs at their predicament. Bowen wheels and glares at her, just as Gilbert coming joyously running up.

GILBERT

You've done it again, Sir Knight! Oooh, look at the brute. Bigger than the last one you tangled with.

BOWEN

Actually, he's about the same size.

Bowen steers Gilbert away. But he can't steer away...

THE SWAMP PEOPLE...charging up. Armed to the teeth with axes. Mouths watering. Chanting rapturously.

SWAMP PEOPLE

Meat! Meat!

BOWEN

Uh-oh...

Shocked, Draco breaks his death tableau, jerking his head up.

GILBERT

Good Lord, It's alive!

The swamp people halt when they see the dragon's not dead yet! But their Chief urges them on.

CHIEF

Quickly! Kill it while it's down.

Bowen, having mounted, rides out to stop them.

BOWEN

No! Stay back!

They don't...rushing by him, chanting "Meat!", toward...

DRACO...flopping up and fluttering about like a duck stuck in the mud. He finally gets unstuck and, just as the swamp dwellers descend on him, whooshes out of the mud and out of reach.

The swamp people turn back, glaring with suspicious hunger at...

BOWEN & KARA...who watch them start to close in.

BOWEN

(to Kara)

Happy now? They're on to us.

KARA

Us?

BOWEN

Come on. We don't want to stay for dinner.

He scoops Kara over the back of the saddle like a sack of wheat and spurs his horse through the pack of angry swampers. More swampers rush...

GILBERT...utterly baffled by all this. He hollers a startled screech and sloshes through the marsh, joining the panicked parade of swampers, Bowen, Kara, and the horse.

He runs smack dab into the chief, who raises his huge cleaver. Before it can come down, the money sack smacks him in the chops...flung by Bowen, riding up.

BOWEN

No dragon, no charge!

Bowen gives the priest a hand onto the rump of the overburden steed. Gilbert clutches slumped-over Kara's rump.

KARA

Hey!

GILBERT

Forgive me!

Kara squirms right side up, only backwards on the horse, facing Gilbert who reaches again for support, nearly grabbing Kara's breasts. Her scandalized look dissuades him and he clutches Bowen's sides which causes his bald pate to nestle in Kara's cleavage as the two are bobbed by the swerving horse. But no matter which way they turn, swampers are closing in.

But there's one way left to turn. Up. And Draco provides it. Swampers go squealing, as Draco's wings FILL THE SCREEN. When he swoops OUT OF FRAME, all that's left in the swamp are the swampers. The horse and its riders are gone.

The swamp folk watch the low-flying Dragon and his cargo disappear into the DENSE FOG enshrouding the heart of the swamp. The Chief's sharp eyes stare up into the mist...to the craggy TOR jutting up out of the haze.

EXT. TOR - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

The SCREEN IS FILLED WITH THICK FOG, we hear FLAPPING WINGS. A FRIGHTENED NEIGH. THEN GILBERT'S QUAVERING VOICE.

GILBERT(OS)

Saints perserve us! I nearly have my bald pate trimmed at my neck. I find you in league with a pair of rogues...one, a Dragon who kidnaps me...! Only to get us lost in this dreadful fog!

DRACO(OS)

Not lost. Never lost.

Draco's firm voice shushes the whining. As does the SIGHT looming out of the thinning fog....

THE RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CASTLE...seen from above. At its center is a RING OF EERIE STONE COLUMNS.

GILBERT (OS)
What deadly, unholy place is this?

DRACO (OS)
Most holy, priest. More than death dwells here, Brother Gilbert.

GILBERT (OS)
W- What more?

DRACO (OS)
A spirit. Beyond death. Alive and eternal. That remembers the Once-ways and the glory of one who shared our name.

BOWEN (OS)
What one?

DRACO (OS)
The Pendragon!

GILBERT
Pend --! Arthur Pendragon!... King Arthur! A land of mist...Avalon!

Avalon! Coming closer and closer into view!

EXT. TOR - NIGHT

Gilbert prays before the tallest column in the circle of stone.

GILBERT
So it was foretold. And so I have found you, Brave Arthur. Among your brother knights in a grove upon a tor. Not a grove. But the Round Table of Camelot...

This mention of the Round Table has it's affect on...

BOWEN...moving solemnly among the stone columns, talking to himself, touching the stones.

BOWEN
The Round Table..Here was Sir Gawain's place...Here Galahad...

GILBERT
Let us who remember the glories of your golden kingdom feel your noble spirit, O King.

Bowen weaves through the columns, stopping at the one just to the right of Arthur's.

BOWEN

...Lancelot...the right hand of Arthur.

GILBERT

..and let the Song of Excalibur echo in our enemy's ear. Amen...I'm ready, my child.

He rises and joins Kara. Both turn to Bowen, moving slowly to Arthur's stone.

GILBERT

And you, Bowen?

Bowen is obviously moved by this experience, but not moved enough to give Gilbert the answer he hopes for.

GILBERT

My son...This is Avalon. The shadow realm of the Round Table. It is a divine omen!

BOWEN

Omens and shadows won't win battles. Nor will you. You'll find out soon enough when you try to raise your army.

(to Kara)

You already know the courage of your village. They're very brave at pelting girls with vegetables.

KARA

It must start somewhere.

KARA

Will you wish us luck, Draco?

She turns to...

DRACO...perched on a crumbling castle turret framed between two of the stone columns, gazing up at the sky...at the DRACO CONSTELLATION.

DRACO

Long ago, when man was young and the dragon already old, the wisest of our race took pity on man and shared with him our secrets. And when this Wise One was dying, he gathered together all the dragons, making them vow to watch over man always. And at the moment of his death, the night became alive with those stars.

DRACO'S POV - THE DRACO CONSTELLATION

It glitters brightly in the black sky.

DRACO(OS)

Through the years, his shimmering soul
was joined by others, as the dragons kept
their pledge to serve man...until the
heavens were aglow with stars.

BACK TO SCENE

Draco looks back down on the trio below.

DRACO

But then man grew arrogant with the gift
of our power and shunned our guidance.
And fewer stars ascended the sky to hold
back black night.

Draco gazes forlornly at the sky.

DRACO

All my life I've longed to perform one
deed worthy of those shining above.
Finally my chance came. A great
sacrifice that would reunite
man and dragon and ensure my place
among my ancient brothers of the sky...
But my sacrifice became my sin.

BOWEN

It was you. Your half-heart beats in
Einon's breast.

Draco descends into the circle of stone, baring the scales on
his breast, revealing a jagged crimson scar.

DRACO

Yes. My half-heart that cost all my
soul. Even then I knew his bloodthirsty
nature, but I thought the heart could
change him. My God, I was naive.

Bowen barks a short savage laugh, then the bitterness in his
eyes is overwhelmed by tortured melancholy.

BOWEN

(quiet hollowness)

No more than I...Always I dreamed of
serving noble kings and nobler ideals.
But dreams die hard. And you hold them
in your hands long after they've crumbled
to dust. And in your heart long after
they've soured to bitter poison... I will
not be that naive again.

DRACO

Kara, I will go with you.

Bowen wheels to Draco, stunned by the declaration...And the sudden realization that now he is alone. But it does not change his conviction. He turns from the others and walks out of the circle of stone. Draco sadly watches him go.

DRACO

So be it. Farewell, Bowen.

EXT. TOR - ON SKY - NIGHT

RAIN comes down in torrents. CAMERA PANS TO...

BOWEN...who seeks shelter in the hollow of crumbling turret. The wind howls. The rain lances through the ever-present mist. Bowen pulls up his cloak. Then he hears...A HOARSE WHISPER.

WHISPER

Valour...Valour...

Bowen springs up, peering into rainy, windswept mist.

WHISPER

Valour...

Bowen whirls to the sound...It comes the stone columns.

GHOST VOICE #1

A knight is sworn to valour...

GHOST VOICE #2

His heart knows only virtue...

Rising up, Bowen walks from his shelter, listening to the voices. Then a third VOICE joins the other GHOST VOICES...then a FOURTH...

GHOST VOICE #3

His blade defends the helpless...

GHOST VOICE #4

His might upholds the weak...

Their hollow voices echo and overlap in the wind. A VOICE floats out of LANCELOT'S stone next to Bowen, who falls back.

LAUNCELOT'S VOICE

His word speaks only truth.

Then THE LAST VOICE...ARTHUR'S rises from his stone. Bowen collapses to his knees as more than Arthur's voice emerges from the stone...

ARTHUR'S GHOSTLY IMAGE...floats before the stunned knight. Eerie and majestic. Pale and as wispy as the swirling mist. Slashed by the rain. Wavering in the wind.

ARTHUR'S VOICE

His wrath undoes the wicked!

More GHOST VOICES OF THE ROUNDTABLE JOIN the echoing brotherhood, reciting the Old Code in a crescendoing cacophony accompanied by the roaring thunder and the driving rain, whirling about Bowen in the whipping wind.

Drenched in rain and tears, Bowen covers his head from the forbidding image of Arthur, from the jumble of sound, reciting the code himself in a breathless, rushed litany, trying to shout down the mad singsong racket of the spirit voices, trying to keep the sense of the words and their meaning.

BOWEN

A knight is sworn to valour. His heart knows only virtue. Blade defends the helpless. Upholds the weak. Speaks only truth...!

He's stopped, realizing his is the only voice he hears. The others are silent. All but one...Arthur's image is fading back into the stone.

GHOST OF ARTHUR

(faintly)

His wrath...

He's gone. Head bowed, Bowen kneels before Arthur's rock, reaching out to touch it.

BOWEN

(whispering)

...undoes the wicked.

Thunder roars. Lightning flashes. In its jagged light, something new is revealed..

DRACO...Bowen stares up longingly at him and Draco, the rain streaming down his face, into his kindly eyes, stretches out his wing to shield the knight from the storm.

There they stay, huddled in the shadow of the rocky symbol of their once-lost dreams and their new-found hope...two lost souls cleansed and purified in the heavenly rain and reunited in a common vision.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - ON QUARTER-STAVE - DAY

A QUARTER-STAVE smashes down on another. CAMERA BACK, as one-eyed Hewe drives Kara to the ground with the blow. OTHER VILLAGERS crowd around, laughing and mocking. Gilbert scrambles to Kara's side and helps her to her feet.

HEWE

And we're suppose to follow you and a Priest against Einon! To Hell, more likely! We've had enough of your moon-eyed mischief, girl! Begone!

Hewe raises his staff to beat them off. But AN ARROW suddenly imbeds itself in the staff. All eyes turn to...

A RIDER...who slings his bow and gallops into the village, framed against the rising sun. His horse rears as the rider halts between Gilbert and Kara and Hewe. It is...

BOWEN...scrubbed and shaved. Clothes and armour, though frayed and worn, are clean and mended as best can be. His eyes shine with a fierce fine visionary fire. He plucks his arrow from the staff.

BOWEN

Save your strength for the fight against Einon.

HEWE

(contemptuously)

There isn't any fight against Einon.

BOWEN

I'm going to start one.

Kara and Gilbert react to this good news.

HEWE

You and what army, knight?

BOWEN

He'll enlist!

He jerks a thumb over his shoulder at...

DRACO...as he rising up from behind the horizon of a ridge. Majestic. Aglow. Like fire. Ablaze in the morning sun.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - TRAINING GROUNDS - MONTAGE - DAY

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR - SERIES OF SHOTS

A FORGE blows fiery hot, as HEWE and the other BLACKSMITHS smelt plowshears back into molten metal. OTHER PEASANTS contribute metal farm implements to the piles rising high for the war effort. MOLTEN METAL is poured into MOLDS for swords, and pike-tips and arrow points. RAW WEAPONS hiss as they are dipped in cold water and dumped onto tables where MEN hone and sharpen them.

PEASANTS are flocking to the cause. Men come with their own crude weapons and bring their families with them. Bowen and Gilbert sort them out and direct them to functions and camp placements.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN work an arrow-making assembly line, stripping the shafts with "strippers, affixing points with sinew, gluing feathers on. Finished arrows are bundled and stacked.

BOWEN watches in amusement as GILBERT gets an archery lesson from some of the villagers. He struggles to pull back the bowstring. When he lets go of it, the bow goes flying and he's still holding onto the arrow.

HEWE watches men run through a series of exercises with a PIKE, tilting at wooden models.

A COMMAND TENT is going up behind Bowen as he discusses strategy with Gilbert, Kara, Hewe, and the other chosen generals. Parchment maps are strewn over a rickety table and Gilbert, with a quill, draws lines and swirls on them at Bowen's direction.

GILBERT (VO)

The sky's untouched without the reach,
The dream's no good without the dare,
And one must fight for what one wants,
Tis purpose God attends, not prayer.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - DAY

Kara swings a heavy BATTLE-AXE through a series of exercises. As she whirls it above her head, the momentum sends her staggering back against...

BOWEN...who stops her fall..

BOWEN

Easy...

KARA

(shyly)

Oh...Thank you...

She doesn't move. Nor is he in any hurry to dislodge her. They're very close, staring stupidly at each other, before Bowen awkwardly seques from romance to warfare. Not letting go of her, he nudges her legs apart with one of his own.

BOWEN

Here...widen your stance.

He guides her arms up, holding the axe aloft.

BOWEN

Up...then down.

Their arms swing down together. Their bodies sway forward, his pressed tightly against her from behind.

BOWEN

That's it...One fluid stroke..

The downward arc of the axe almost throws Kara off-balance. But Bowen's enfolding arms steady her. Her hair brushes his face. Her lips almost touch his cheek as she turns to him.

KARA

That could cleave a man's skull.

BOWEN

Like a pudding.

Neither moves from their awkward embrace. Her warm breath intoxicates him and he reels back from her spell, axe in hand. Then grinning with school-boy bravura, he flings the axe. It spirals through the air, striking a PUMPKIN and splitting it neatly in two.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - ARCHERY RANGE - DAY

A BOWSTRING is pulled tentatively back...

GILBERT...is the archer, receiving patient instruction from Bowen.

BOWEN

That's it! Sight along the arrow. Now release!

"THWACK!" THE ARROW buries itself right in the middle of a STRAW MAN'S HEART. CAMERA PANS to Gilbert. He smiles proudly over at...

THE DUMBFOUNDED PEASANTS...mouths agape...including Hewe.

HEWE

Beginner's luck! Try again!

Gilbert eagerly notches another arrow, consummately performing Bowen's directions and lets fly. This time it hits the straw dummy right between the eyes. Bowen lets out a long, impressed whistle.

BOWEN

Brother Gilbert, you're a natural.

GILBERT

This is fun!

BOWEN

Not for the fellow you're aiming at. Try again.

He points at the straw target again. Gilbert delightedly lets fly with another direct hit. Right in the dummy's crotch. Bowen grins and looks over at a disbelieving Hewe and shrugs.

BOWEN

A natural.

INT. TENT - ON BOWEN - DAWN

Bowen sleeps in his tent. Suddenly, A BELLOWING HONKING WAIL pierces his slumber. He jerks awake, naked to the waist, his eyes wide with a startled groggy glaze. He turns to see...

Kara...holding a war trumpet.

KARA

Battle horn! Good tone, don't you think?

No, Bowen doesn't think. He just mumbles inarticulately. Kara throws his jerkin in his face.

KARA

Sun's up, Knight. So's the army. Why aren't you? Breakfast!

She stuffs a hunk of bread into his mouth. Bowen heaves a muffled groan.

KARA

Too dry?

She yanks the bread from his slack-jawed mouth. He puffs his lips and sleepily tries to blow the sprinkled crumbs off them. Kara dips the bread in a goblet of wine and crams it back into his mouth. Both bread and wine dribble down his chin. He looks at Kara in sleepy irritation. She's just too perky.

KARA

Come on. Time's awasting.

She hustles behind him, slapping a wet cloth on his back. He yelps his first word of the morning.

KARA

Well, good morning to you too! Too cold?

Bowen snatches the cloth from her and wipes the sleep from his eyes.

BOWEN

Too fast! What's the hurry?

KARA

There's much to be done. Troops to train, strategy to plan, crises to be solved.

BOWEN

(pulls on his jerkin)

What crises?

Kara grabs his jaw in her hand and, mushing up his cheeks, jerks his face back and forth.

KARA

That beard, for one. It could use a trim.

She holds up her axe. Bowen grabs her arm.

KARA

Don't worry, you taught me well.

BOWEN

To cut throats, not to shave them!

KARA

(shrugs)

Well, if you don't want to look like a victorious general...

BOWEN

I'm not yet! Don't be overconfident.

KARA

You're my confidence! I've never been more sure of anything in my life! Come!

She takes his hand and yanks him toward the tent exit.

EXT. BOWEN'S TENT - REBEL CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

HQ TENT...waiting there is a delegation of chiefs and generals lead by Gilbert and Hewe. Many other warriors and villagers crowd about. Before the tent is a cross-pole covered by a heavy cloth.

KARA

Tomorrow we will look to you... glowing at our head like a shining beacon...

She gestures to the draped poles. Hewe whip off the cloth...revealing A BEAUTIFUL SET OF GLISTENING ARMOR. The emblem on the breastplate is Draco's golden profile. Gilbert hands him the helmet. Bowen admires it in stunned awe.

KARA

They made it for you...All of them, out of old kettles and plows and horseshoes ...Gilbert designed it. Hewe hammered and polished it. And over your heart...Draco as the emblem of your courage.

Bowen is touched. His fingers lightly caress the golden profile of Draco.

GILBERT

It was all Kara's idea.

KARA

A knight's armour should be as bright as his honour.

AN OLD WOMAN emerges from the crowd and, in silent reverence, touches Bowen's face. Others then reach out to touch him. Warrior, women, children. All press close to touch him or give a word of thanks. Speechless, overcome with emotion, Bowen bolts to his tent.

INT. TENT - REBEL CAMP - DUSK

Outside, they shout for him. Bowen stares at the helmet in his trembling hands.

KARA(OS)

Shall I help you put it on?

Bowen turns. Kara stands there with the rest of the armour.

BOWEN

Please...

He attends to the arm guards while she fastens the leggings. He feels her soft hands on his calves. So close. So beautiful. She helps him on with the breastplate.

KARA

How fast your heart beats...

BOWEN

They expect much.

KARA

They will give much.

BOWEN

And if I don't lead them to victory?

KARA

Then you'll have lead them farther than they ever dared go before...

She steps back to inspect him.

KARA
There. All done.

BOWEN
Not quite. It is custom to bestow a favour on a knight.

KARA
A favour?

BOWEN
A veil or a scarf that he wears into battle as a token from his lady.

KARA
Do you have a lady?

BOWEN
I should be honoured to wear your favour.

KARA
I...I have no such finery. I'm not a lady. I'm a peasant.

BOWEN
You are the woman I love.

Kara stiffens at this blunt confession. Thrilled by it, but frightened by it. He gently turns her to him.

KARA
I can give no favour. I can give nothing. Lost honour can be recovered, not so lost youth. The one thing that was mine to give Einon stole forever.

BOWEN
No...not your heart...

Kara looks into his eyes, bright with love. She takes her father's HEADBAND from around her neck and ties it to his arm. He leans down and kisses her.

EXT. THE FIELDS - DAY

Brok rides through a field, his Falcon perched on his arm. TWO BEATERS marching before him flush A COVEY OF DOVES from the undergrowth.

BROK(OS)
Hungry, Pet...?

He removes the hood from his Falcon's head.

BROK
Eat...

He watches the Falcon soar skyward with bloodthirsty amusement and, spurring his horse, he follows the flight of birds over....

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - WAR CAMP - DAY

...the crest of the ridge. In the valley below, Brok sees...

THE REBEL CAMP...teeming with well-armed peasants as far as the eye can see. A SUDDEN ROAR echoes out over the valley. It is an ALARUM that alert the entire camp to readiness. BROK suddenly sees...

BOWEN...ride out on his charger. He turns back and signals to Gilbert, Hewe with a small body of armed men behind them. He also signals to...

DRACO...perched on the rocky cliff rising up out of the grove behind the village, roaring out his alarum again. This is enough for...

BROK...who gazes at the dragon with startled eyes, then at Bowen charging up toward him. Brok whips his horse around and takes off the way he came..

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Brok tears into the castle gates.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

GALLOPING WARRIORS ride into a castle courtyard, bustling with war preparations. Weapons are cached. Food and provisions are stored. Guards prowl the battlements.

EINON(OS)
I'm served by fools and dolts!

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - WAR-ROOM - DAY

Einon is in council with his lords and generals.

EINON
Peasants fleeing right under your noses.
And taking my grain and livestock with them!

FELTON
But how could we know, Your Majesty? A few peasants here and there...

BROK
A few, fop? Hundreds! Armed and spoiling for a fight!

FELTON

Then let them have it! One of us is worth a hundred of them. Are you afraid, Sir Brok?

With a snarl, Brok almost charges across the table at Felton, but Einon slams him back and smiles calmly at Felton, patting his cheek.

EINON

My brave Felton. A regiment unto himself.

Einon slams Felton down on the table onto a clutter of maps.

EINON

Idiot! I know this man who leads them.
(shouts to all)
And I will beat him! But I will not underestimate him! And do not forget the dragon.

AISLINN(OS)

Fear not the dragon, my son.

AISLINN...stands silhouetted in the doorway and crosses to him.

EINON

I fear nothing. Nothing! Do you understand?

He pulls her aside.

EINON

It's just that...sometimes I sense him. Feel him. As though he were close. But be clear. I don't fear him!

AISLINN

No need to, my son...

She motions him to follow her outside. Curious, he does.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Einon follows his mother out. She gestures to the courtyard below. FIVE BURLY TARTARS, all armed to the teeth, stand in the courtyard below.

AISLINN

A mother's gift to her son...Uhlric, Volney, Jugurtha, and the brothers Odolf and Oram. The finest to be had.

The Five all bow. Einon looks from the men to his mother.

EINON
Finest what...?

AISLINN
Dragonslayers.

Struck by this uncharacteristic kindness, Einon's disbelief slowly shifts to sly amusement. Aislinn returns her son's smile. He impulsively grabs his mother's hand and kisses it.

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - REBEL CAMP - MAGIC HOUR

A guardpost BONFIRE burns brightly as Bowen approaches it, carrying something in hand. It is his DRAGON-HORNED SHIELD. He casts it into the flame. It burns furiously with an almost SUPERNATURAL LIGHT...LIKE MAGNESIUM. Brilliant glows spark and flare off the burning horns.

DRACO (OS)
Well done.

Bowen turns to see Draco behind him.

BOWEN
A knight of the Old Code needs no such
adornment.

DRACO
(agrees)
No...It burns brightly.

BOWEN
Like a promise of hope.

DRACO
No, Bowen, your hope lies down there.

Draco nods to...

THE VALLEY...below. It is alive with the cookfires gleaming in the twilight. We hear singing, children crying, laughter. All the sounds of life going on.

DRACO
The one I've waited for. Man must now
make of the world what he can...The day
of dragons is done.

BOWEN
Not done for you. If we are victorious
tomorrow, we'll have need of you.

DRACO

You'll have victory, but no need of me.
Listen to them, Knight of the Old Code.
The Once-ways are in their songs and
their laughter and the cries of their
children. Listen and look.

Draco's voice is strangely cryptic and wistful. Bowen looks at him in suspicious concern.

BOWEN

What do you see?

DRACO

Everything. It yours now.

His sad eyes turn once more to the bonfire and the brightly burning dragon shield. Its glow becomes...

EXT. KARA'S VILLAGE - DAY

...The DRACO EMBLEM on Bowen's armour glinting gold in the sunlight. Tied to his arm is Kara's favour. He is at the head of his ARMY. Draco's image is also on the banners flapping gloriously in the morning breeze.

IN SEVERAL SHOTS AND ANGLES, THE CAMERA CATCHES the motley, but proudly determined army as it MARCHES out of camp. Kara and Gilbert ride by Bowen's side. Hewe, foot, marches at the head of the troop with the other "GENERALS". Hewe glances up. Others follow his gaze as...

DRACO...swoops overhead. He dips a wing in salute.

BOWEN...acknowledges Draco's salute with a raised sword as the dragon banks left in the direction of Eion castle.

ANGLE DOWN ON ARMY

As they, too, raise their weapons in salute to the dragon, whose SHADOW ripples over them.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - FOREST EDGE - ON ARROWS -DAY

A VOLLEY OF FIRE ARROWS SHOOT through the sky, bouncing harmlessly off the castle wall and sputtering out. CAMERA PANS TO:

A SMALL TROOP OF REBELS...shabby and pitiful, led by Bowen, down in the field before the castle have fired the arrows. A MERE FRACTION OF THE REBEL FORCE. LAUGHTER RIPPLES DOWN FROM ABOVE.

EINON(OS)
 (laughing)
 Seems you overestimated their numbers,
 Brok.

EXT, EINON'S CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - DAY

Einon, Brok, Felton and others observe the puny rebel force as another PATHETIC VOLLEY OF FIRE ARROWS plunk against the parapet wall. ONE ARROW actually makes it over the wall. Einon calmly reaches out and catches it in mid-air in his gauntleted hand. He blasely inspects it.

EINON
 And twelve years hasn't improved their
 aim.

Felton chuckles and smirks at Brok.

FELTON
 They'll get bored and go home before
 dark.

EINON
 Why wait? We'll send you out to chase
 them off. After all, "One of us is worth
 a hundred of them." The numbers seem
 about right.

Felton gulps uneasily as Einon wags the fire arrow in his face. But a worried Brok is unamused, ominously scanning the sky.

BROK
 There were more! And where's the...?

Brok chokes on the question as the answer comes in view...

DRACO...suddenly flies out of the sunlight and, swooping down, sprays the battlements with fire, sending soldiers screaming and leaping to safety. As Einon and his generals also dash for cover, they look up to see...

DRACO...flying out of the smoke of the explosion.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - FIELD - DAY

In a field between the castle walls and the forest masses the peasant army, BOWEN and HEWE at its head. The rebels cheer as Draco rains more flame down on the denizens of the castle.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - INSIDE THE WALLS - DAY

THE DRAGONSLAYERS manuever a LARGE CATAPULT THAT SHOOTS HARPOONS into place, scanning the sky for...

DRACO...who suddenly swoops up from behind the castle wall, surprising the Dragonslayers who abandon their catapult as Draco looses a firebomb at them.

As the catapult swerves, Volney is knocked against the triggering mechanism, discharging the harpoon which goes flying and strikes....

A STUNNED JUGURTHA...right through his chest, impaling him to the wall. His giant axe, still gripped in his hand, knocks a soldier off the battlements, sending him plummeting to the ground at the feet of...

EINON'S HORSE...the young king is mounted, at the head of armoured knights. The horse rears as Einon frowns at the dead soldier, then at the blazing catapult on the battlement.

EINON

Oh, lovely...

He draws his sword and shouts to his men.

EINON

Well, do we stay in here like sitting ducks or crush those rebellious dogs?

Brok leads a chorus of war-cries. And as the gates are opened, Einon and his mounted horse, followed by foot soldiers, pour out of the castle, watched by...

AISLINN...from a tower window. Einon and his men rush the peasants who retreat for the forest. She glances up at...

DRACO...hovering above, oblivious to the spears of the Dragonslayers, watching the peasants run...almost smiling.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - THE FIELD - DAY

The peasants retreat without a blow being struck. Einon, spies Bowen in the rout. He laughs deliriously.

EINON

After them! Shear them like the sheep they are.

And Einon and his riders give chase into the woods.

EXT. FOREST BATTLEFIELD - DAY

BUT EINON HAS MADE A TACTICAL MISTAKE.

As soon as all the king's riders are wheeling amidst the trees, Bowen wheels his horse on a rise.

BOWEN

Now!

Behind Eimon's calvary, A REBEL swings by on a rope out of a tree, a FLAMING FAGGOT IN HIS HANDS. He dips the torch in a TRENCH filled with PITCH. The fire runs across the forest and up both sides creating a U-shaped barrier boxing in the knights.

The horses panic as the walls of flame rise around them.

Then they descend...

HUNDREDS OF PEASANTS...Bowen motions them forward with his sword and they charge en masse. Panicked knights try to jump their horses through the flames as pikemen pick knights off horses and the swordmen and axe-wielders fall upon them.

CAMERA CLOSES IN ON EINON as he realizes his mistake but assumes comand.

EINON

Scatter or die!

Eimon leaps his horse over the fire. Others follow his example as his force splits up in the forest and comes face-to-face with more rebel mischief.

Barrages of arrows fly out of bushes and trees picking men off. More rebels lie in wait in the forest.

The peasant assault is swift and surprising and deadly. As men are dvided and trapped, overwhelming numbers of rebels appear to finish them off in hand-to-hand combat.

THE CAMERA PANS THROUGH THE MAYHEM...

BROK...bashes through a phalanx of peasants with a mace and chain and encounters Hewe with his quarter staff. The two tangle it up.

ELSEWHERE...

GILBERT AND OTHER ARCHERS...perched in an archer blind watch THREE ARMED RIDERS charge a group of rebels. With lightning speed Gilbert notches an arrow and shoots.

THE ARROW...strikes a TAUT ROPE tied off to a tree branch and neatly slices it in two. The rope slides through the branches, releasing...

A LOG...suspended overhead which comes crashing down in front of the three riders. Their horses rear up and the riders rock off their saddles. As they tumble to the ground, the rebels rush them.

GILBERT...crosses himself.

GILBERT

Pride goeth before a fall, brother!

Meanwhile below...

FELTON...sword in hand, helmetless, cowardly scurries from tree to tree through the commotion, avoiding any fight he can. But as he creeps around the bole of a tree, a pitchfork is thrust at his face. He jerks back and the tines of the fork embed in the tree trunk. Felton whirls face-to-face with...

HIS MINX...she's gone over to the rebels! Felton's stunned rage gives him a sudden flash of courage.

FELTON

You traitorous witch! After all, I've spent on...

(catches himself)

...done for...you!

She sneers and tries to yank her pitchfork from the tree. But before she can, Felton, brave against a helpless woman, snaps the shaft in two with his sword blade.

The minx staggers back with the broken end. Felton advances on her, but...

GILBERT...has spotted them and looses an arrow from his bow. It pierces...

FELTON...in the rear. Dropping his sword, he yelps in pain.

GILBERT...also yelps for joy.

GILBERT

Turn the other cheek!

However, it is...

THE MINX...who turns Felton's other cheek, by whacking him on the jaw with her broken shaft. The lamps go out in his eyes and he crumples to the ground.

Elsewhere...

KARA...fights among a group of peasants and soldiers. Whirling her axe with expert skill she holds her ATTACKER, also wielding an axe, at bay. But she is so busily engaged, she does not see the other two ENEMIES rushing up to help their companion. But..

BOWEN...riding across the field does. He gallops his horse between the two swordsmen and extending his legs, kicks both of them into the dirt as he rides by.

He then leaps from his charging horse and rushes to Kara's side just as she neatly dispatches her adversary and grabs his axe as he falls. Whirling both axes, she smiles over to Bowen.

KARA

Like a pudding!

BOWEN

More pudding's coming.

Kara's being rushed by two men. Bowen by three. One he quickly dispatches and takes his sword. He grips his two blades, Kara her two axes. Grinning grimly, shoulder-to-shoulder, they take on all-comers.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - DAY

Volney the Tartar supervises the loading of hideous barbed GRAPPLING HOOKS into the bowls of THREE CATAPULTS, cranked and ready.

Draco streaks right to left directly overhead. Commanding the king's soldiers, Volney cranks the first lever.

VOLNEY

Now!

The catapults wang off in order, hurling their nasty load at the dragon.

But Draco is a skilled warrior. He sees the missiles coming and dodges them all. With his right hand, he catches the last hook and, yanking viciously, he does a barrel roll out of frame.

Back on the platform, the BOLTS fastened to the catapult give way like driven into balsa. The catapult skews sideways and wedges under two others. The force of Draco's pull rips up the whole mess SMASHING into Volney and the soldiers against the stone walls, crushing them to death and taking out a fair piece of new masonry. Through a window arch below, Volney hangs upside down, his eyes sightless in death...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Out of the smoke and confusion rides...

EINON...slicing through a band of rebels. The battle goes badly for him. He shouts above the fray.

EINON

Retreat!

His men readily obey and scatter through the woods. He spurs his horse and joins their flight.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - DAY

Bowen and Kara are pressed back-to-back as Einon suddenly rides by. Both recognize him.

BOWEN
Gilbert, stop him!

Gilbert also recognizes Einon and notches a METAL-PIERCING ARROW. As he tautly, tensely pulls back the bow, he is grimly aware for the first time of the full power of his remarkable talent. But though his conscience wavers, his bow-arm does not.

GILBERT
Thou...shalt...not...kill...

He lets fly.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - FOREST EDGE - DAY

The arrow strikes true.

Einon jerks in his saddle as the arrow pierces his mail and imbeds deep in his heart! Staggered by the impact, he sucks in his breath. But he does not fall. He doesn't even feel the pain.

THE CAMERA MAKES A QUICK PAN TO:

EINON'S CASTLE...where Draco suddenly recoils in mid-air and, grasping his chest, howls in real pain, no scam this time.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

With devastating skill, both Kara and Bowen dispatch their enemies. For both have witnessed all... Einon taking the arrow, Draco's screech of pain and fall.

BOWEN
Draco!

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - FOREST'S EDGE - DAY

EINON...still alive, also watching the Dragon spiral and flutter down. He looks at the arrow in his breast and, his eyes glinting with understanding, calmly pulls it from his chest and smiles at its bloody tip.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

As the pain-wracked Draco flutters into range, Uhlric springs the catapult. NETS OF IRON MESH shoot out.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - THE FIELD - DAY

Einon sees the Iron Nets enfold the dragon as he topples behind the castle walls with a groan. Realizing, what this means, Einon spurs his horse toward the castle gates.

EINON

The Dragonslayers! Noooo!

He rides hell-bent for leather as...

BOWEN(OS)

Nooo!

EXT. FOREST - ON BOWEN AND KARA - DAY

With an anguished shout, Bowen tears down the hill for Einon. Kara watches his furious, futile chase and exchanges a worried glance with Gilbert, who rushes up to her. They both look to Bowen who has given up his chase. He turns to them, his face a mask of anguished determination.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

The remaining dragonslayers...Uhlric, Odolf, and Oram... have netted the limp form of Draco. He lies still and quiet, several of his horns are broken off. The Dragonslayers move in cautiously, when Draco suddenly shifts on his side, moaning, clutching his chest.

Uhlric and the brothers swarm in on the beast. But suddenly a wild Einon is upon them, beating them back with his sword.

EINON

No! I want it alive!

Einon grimly leers at the pain-wracked, semi-conscious Draco.

EINON

Chain it! Bind its wounds! I want it alive...And safe!

DRACO

(whispered groan)

No...

EINON

Yes...Safe for all eternity. Fear not, dragon, Bowen will come. A knight of the Old Code does not abandon a comrade-in-arms.

He laughs and departs. Draco struggles weakly under the nets.

BUT THE CAMERA PANS UP TO...

AISLINN...on the battlements...gazing on Draco in solemn concern.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Hewe and the rebels survey the carnage they have wrought. Savouring the taste of victory. Tall and proud. Men once more. As Bowen, Kara, and Gilbert emerge into the forest, Hewe salutes them with an upraised sword and a smile. But his smile vanishes when he sees their long faces.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Einon stands on the battlements, gazing out at the forest below. It is dotted with THE GLOW OF THE REBEL CAMPFIRES. Then reverberating from the castle walls comes A MOURNFUL TRILL. Einon looks down into the courtyard below where Draco is chained.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Draco's MELANCHOLY TRILL echoes from the castle walls out across the night to the forest's edge where camp a dispirited group of rebels. CAMERA PANS TO:

BOWEN...listening to Draco's sad song in anguish as Gilbert dresses a wound on Kara's shoulder.

BOWEN

Why does he keep him alive! He must be torturing him.

KARA

No, Einon will not torture him. He will not harm him in any way.

Bowen turns to her, not understanding.

KARA

(remembering)

"Einon will not fall in my lifetime"
...Draco's words to me once. I saw him go down. No one touched him. It was when Gilbert shot Einon.

BOWEN

What are you saying?

GILBERT

When my arrow pierced Einon's heart that was when Draco screamed and fell.

Bowen stares at them in dumbfounded disbelief, refusing to contemplate what is being suggested.

KARA

Don't you see? It's the heart. The Dragon's heart. For Einon to die, Draco must die!

BOWEN

No! No...Gilbert must have missed.
(fiercely)
It doesn't matter. Nothing matters except that Draco is still alive.

Bowen hops up on a stump and shouts to his men.

BOWEN

I go to save the Dragon. Who goes with me?

No rush to volunteer. Just muttered oaths and sullen faces. Bowen turns in disgust to find Kara holding out his sword.

KARA

You do not go alone.

GILBERT

No...not alone...

GILBERT...who plops his helmet on his head.

Bowen slides the sword into his scabbard. Hewe and the others watch in silent shame, as the three march off.

EXT. COURTYARD - EINON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Draco lies heavily chained in a dark courtyard. His back feet and front paws are shackled tightly to the ground, as is his tail, allowing almost no movement. His neck and head are also chained down to keep him from breathing fire on his restraints. His chin upon the cold stone, he can only look at the wall straight ahead of him...or out of the corner of his eye, where he sees...

UHLRIC...on guard, appraising Draco, spitting with distaste. Then he hears...A FOOTSTEP. Challenging with his spear, Uhlric recognizes a DIM FIGURE in the shadow.

UHLRIC

Oh...Come for a peek at the royal pet?

Suddenly, Uhlric's eyes widen in surprise. A KNIFE flashes out of the dark in the shadow's hand.

ON DRACO

He hears a STRANGLED GASP. Uhlric WEAVES INTO VIEW, grasping his throat. He collapses to the ground. His spear rolls from his lifeless fingers almost to Draco's snout.

Out of the corner of his eye, Draco sees the Shadow.

DRACO

Come from the shadows, Aislinn. Stand where I can see you.

Aislinn comes forth. Sheathing her bloodstained dagger. Gazing down on the man she killed. Then at Draco.

AISLINN

You know why I've come?

DRACO

I know.

AISLINN

A sorry end...

DRACO

The only end. In giving my heart, I have taken on every pain and poison stirring in his black breast. Even the pain of his death must be mine. Too long I've waited...

AISLINN

(sits by him)

No one would blame you...Death without immortality.

DRACO

That was not the only reason...To rid the world of Einon, would not rid it of evil. I had to wait. Wait for a time when mankind would not repeat my sin and let tyranny thrive. When there would be those who remembered the Once-ways. Remembered that even in the darkness there is still light and those who watch over them...I cannot see. Are the stars shining tonight?

AISLINN

(weeping)

Brightly, my lord, brightly.

DRACO

Then there is light enough. My soul need not flicker above.

AISLINN

It is my sin, Dragon Lord, for a mother's misguided heart, you gambled eternity and lost...Forgive me.

Aislinn rises. Picks up Uhlric's spear. It is heavy, but she manages. But suddenly A HAND tears the spear from Aislinn's grasp. Einon's hand!

EINON

I know why you brought me the dragon-slayers, Mother. You wanted them to kill him. You wanted me dead.

AISLINN

I wanted to correct a mistake made years ago when I saved a creature not worth saving.

EINON

How unmotherly of you.

His voice is like ice, but Aislinn does not flinch.

DRACO...eyes filled with terror, watches...

DRACO'S POV

TWO SHADOWS on the wall, one raising a SHADOW SPEAR to strike the other.

DRACO (OS)

No-o-o-o!

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BASE OF OUTSIDE WALL - NIGHT

Kara leads Gilbert and Bowen to the hole in the wall's rocky foundation. As they are about to enter, Draco's wailing lament echoes from inside. The three exchange a worried glance and dart into the passage.

INT. CISTERN - NIGHT

Kara leads Bowen and Gilbert into the cistern from the passageway. Bowen charges for the courtyard door.

KARA

Not that way. Too dangerous.

HEWE(OS)

Then that's our way.

Bowen and the others wheel around to see...

HEWE...and a SMALL BAND OF MEN enter the secret passage.

HEWE

We've got to open the gates for rest of us waiting outside.

Touched by this loyalty, Bowen warmly claps Hewe on shoulder.

HEWE

Go save your dragon.

He opens the door that leads to the castle grounds and, taking a cautionary peek, motions his men out. Kara points to the other stairwell.

KARA

This leads to the castle. We can see the whole courtyard from there.

Bowen starts up, but Kara holds him back. Their eyes meet. Both know this may be the last quiet moment they share. She tightens her "favour" on his arm.

KARA

You carry my favour. Carry this too...

She leans up and kisses him. Bowen enfolds her in his arms.

INT. BEDCHAMBER - EINON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

The secret passage opens. Bowen, Kara, and Gilbert creep in...only to find Einon comfortably sprawled on the bed.

EINON

What a pleasant surprise. I expected you, Knight. But my bride-to-be, as well? And with a priest to wed us.

BOWEN

To bury you, Einon.

Blade out, Bowen charges, stabbing only the bedclothes, as Einon whirls off the bed, arrogantly grinning.

EINON

Well, to bury one of us!

His blade meets Bowen's in mid-air. And the two engage in fast and furious swordplay. The clanging blades attract TWO GUARDS outside the chamber. Gilbert and Kara intercept their charge as Bowen and Einon duel near the fireplace. Einon is good. Very good. Bowen has taught him well. He ducks a slash of Einon's blade and executes an athletic drop-kick against the king that sends him careening down the stairwell of the secret passageway. Bowen leaps down after him.

Kara, dispatching her guard, begins to follow Bowen and Einon. But Gilbert, the sword not being his weapon, is hard-pressed and she goes to his aid instead.

INT. EINON'S CASTLE - CISTERN- NIGHT

Einon rumbles down the stone steps and slumps lifelessly there. Bowen rushes dwn on the limp form...

...and nearly gets decapitated, as Einon's eyes flick open and he lunges.

Angered, Bowen attacks with a wild sally. Einon, confident in his invincibility, coolly deflects the blade and forces Bowen back into the cistern.

EINON

Practice what you preach, mentor.
Purpose, not passion, remember?

The jibe only intensifies Bowen's reckless assault.

EINON

Nerve cold blue...

Taunting, Einon nimbly ducks a vicious swipe, executes a swift thrust that scores a vicious slash across Bowen's calf.

EINON

...Blade blood red.

Bowen ducks a vicious thrust and nearly loses his balance at the edge of the cistern pool. As he teeters there, Einon takes a savage swipe, but this time it is Bowen who flips away...over the water on the other side of the cistern. Even Einon's impressed. He barks a laugh.

EINON

Still have a few lessons to teach me,
mentor?

BOWEN

Just one more.

EINON

What, pray, is that?

BOWEN

The last one your father learned.

The wound has renewed Bowen's cool vigor. He is calm and hard as he drives Einon up into a dark cistern tunnel. All that can be seen in the blackness are the blue sparks of the clanging blades.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - A STAIRWELL - NIGHT

A cringing FELTON flattens against a staircase wall. Rapid steps descend and Kara appears, gripping her axe, trying to decide which way to go.

Felton, realizing his enemy is only a woman, sweeps out of the shadows like a spider, his sword at her throat as he leers triumphantly over her shoulder.

FELTON

This will put me in good with his
majesty.

HEWE (OS)

I doubt it.

A quarterstave crashes down on his head. The lamps go out in his eyes and, as his blade slides harmlessly away from Kara, he crumples slack-jawed to the ground. Kara wheels to find Hewe standing over the collapsed Felton.

KARA

I'm in your debt.

HEWE

I'm in yours. Your father would be proud.

They continue on their separate ways.

EXT. CASTLE STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Einion drives Bowen up a castle stairwell. The knight is hard-pressed, but holding his own.

EINON

We know each other's every move. But I'm younger and faster.

BOWEN

I'll slow you so you won't get any older.

The duellists fight their way up the stairs.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Kara, axe in hand, whirls onto a battlement through the wreckage of the dragonslayers' catapults. She turns to get her bearings straight and sees A HUGE SHADOW looming on the wall behind her, hoisting a HUGE SHADOW SWORD..

Kara wheels around to confront Brok, but her axe is no match for Brok's heavy descending sword. The impact tears the weapon from her hand and sends her careening into the dead dragonslayer, Jugurtha, still impaled on the wall.

She snatches THE GIANT AXE still clutched in his dead hand and jerks the heavy shaft with two hands to fend off Brok's blade.

But the sword slices right through the shaft. The weight of the axe jerks Kara to safety. The blade whizzes by her. Brok wheels, Kara swings the butt of the broken axe-pole up against Brok's shield. It cracks him under the jaw and throws him off-guard. She twirls the axe, blade up, and thrusts it up between Brok's legs. He crumbles to the ground, devastated.

BROK

A girl?...a girl?

Kara jerks the axe from the corpse.

KARA

Like a pudding.

EXT. CASTLE GATES - NIGHT

Hewe and his marauders descend upon the guards, slaying them and opening the gate...only to find AN OUTER GATE beyond. Also guarded. Before Hewe's men can cut them down, one SENTRY blows ALARUM on a Ram's horn.

EXT. CASTLE TOWER - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Bowen and Eion ascend the tower steps, blades flashing furiously. They've heard the alarum. Bowen grins.

BOWEN

My rebels are storming your castle.

EINON

Pity you won't live to see them fail.

Eion's blade nearly slices off an ear. Angered, Bowen maneuvers Eion around and proceeds to back him up the stairs.

EXT. CASTLE GATE - NIGHT

Hewe and his band are beset by Eion's SOLDIERS as they struggle with the gate. But suddenly, several GUARDS pitch forward, slain by a rapid volley of arrows fired by...

GILBERT...Hewe smiles and salutes him with a wave. Then the gates open and, with wild war shouts, the REBELS pour in.

EXT. COURTYARD - ON DRACO - NIGHT

Odolf, in the courtyard, looks to Oram on the parapet. Both grip their spears in edgy tenseness, reacting to the sounds of battle, the fight up the tower, and Draco's writhing agony. His arm GLOWS A THROBBING RED where Bowen cut Eion.

EXT. TOWER ROOM - NIGHT

Bowen and Eion burst through the door into a half-crumbled TOWER-ROOM. It is roofless, most of it's walls destroyed, open to the elements. Its vantage point gives us a spectacular view of the whole castle and the country beyond. And Draco chained in the courtyard below.

They duel over and around building materials and scaffolding, locked in fierce combat. Sparks fly from their clanging blades. Bowen presses Eion hard.

BOWEN

(cold hate)

Once you held this sword in a sacred oath, which you broke. Now embrace it again.

Bowen swipes a wicked thrust that Eion barely sidesteps. Bowen blade cracks against a piece of masonry. Eion whirls in with no mercy. Bowen tosses his broken hilt at Eion and dives into a clutter of scaffolding. Eion chops and hacks at it sending splintered chips flying as he tries to finish Bowen off. He laughs in malicious glee, eyes glinting like a madman.

EINON

Fool! You lost before you began. I am immortal!

Bowen leaps up, twirling onto a crossbeam, out and over Eion, who spins to cut him down before he lands.

KARA

Bowen!

Kara has appeared on the roof and throws her axe to Bowen, still in mid-air. Catching it, he lands and catches Eion blade on it. Eion is jarred back and Bowen sends the axe flying. It shrieks through the air, just missing Eion's head and burying itself in the heavy wooden shutter of a window in a partially rebuilt wall. Still off-balance, Eion strikes. Bowen leaps the thrust and jumps onto the low sill to yank his axe free. It won't budge.

Eion snarls a laugh and lunges. Bowen pushes off from the sill and, clinging to the axe-handle, rides the shutter as it swings out. Eion cannot stop his momentum and he spills out of the window into space.

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

As Eion's body tumbles from the window, crashes through scaffolding, sending building materials as well as himself careening down on top of and into the cistern in a cacophony of clatter, clutter, and dust.

INT. CISTERN - NIGHT

As Eion along with wreckage, plunges beneath the surface of the water.

INT. TOWER ROOM - NIGHT

Kara dashes to the window, as Bowen clings to his axe-handle on the swinging shutter. Both look down.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE -THEIR POV - CISTERN - NIGHT

Einon has disappeared into the watery depths beneath the wreckage of scaffolding and cistern.

EXT. TOWER ROOM - WINDOW SHUTTER - NIGHT

Bowen looks over at Kara.

BOWEN

So much for his immortality.

But echoing below comes Draco's AGONIZED GROAN! Bowen calls to the dragon, whose pain-wracked body GLOWS RED TORMENT.

BOWEN

Draco!

Just then...the axe gives in the shutter! Then unwedges itself and Bowen falls out into space.

KARA

Bowen!

But he doesn't go far. He has grabbed hold of a PULLEY-LINE that is attached to the tower and is fast spiralling down to the courtyard below...and Draco!

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Odolf, realizing Einon's dead, wheels on the chained dragon and, grinning, utters a war-cry and charges with his spear. But he suddenly hears something behind him. It is...

BOWEN...riding the pulley-line down and swooping in on Odolf from behind. Odolf holds up his spear to block the descending axe. But the blade slices through the shaft and buries itself in Odolf's chest. A WAIL OF GRIEF AND OUTRAGE echoes from...

THE BATTLEMENTS...where ORAM, having witnessed his brother's death, pulls his bow string taut. But before he can unleash his arrow, Draco's nostril shoots a SPRAY OF FLAME that engulfs the dragonslayer, the impact knocking him off the parapet with an agonizing scream, as..

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - OUTER WALLS - ORAM - NIGHT

...his body, a spiralling fireball, plummets down the wall and down the mountain.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Bowen pilfers the keys off Odolf's belt and starts to unlock the shackles about Draco's neck. Draco stretches his neck.

DRACO

You should have let them do it. Now you must.

BOWEN

What?

Kara arrives in the courtyard from the tower, overhearing Draco.

DRACO

Even as the heart binds Einon to me in life, it binds us in death.

BOWEN

That is not true.

DRACO

You've seen that it is. Through the heart we share each other's pains and power. But in my half beats the Life Source. For Einon to die, I must die.

BOWEN

(refusing to believe)

Einon is dead! Tell him, Kara!

But Kara can't. She is uncertain. She knows what she's seen. But she also knows Draco.

KARA

I...I...don't know...

BOWEN

You saw it!

DRACO

He lives!

Bowen is desperate.

BOWEN

It doesn't matter!

(gestures to the
battle noise)

Don't you hear it? Our rebels...our silly, sorry little band of rebels have stormed the castle. Alive or dead, Einon's beaten. We've won!

DRACO

You will never win until Eimon's evil is destroyed. And to do that, you must destroy me!

BOWEN

No!

DRACO

Once you swore your sword and service were mine. To call when I had need of you. To ask what I would of you. I ask now! I need now. I hold you to your vow, Knight!

Suddenly Draco's sixth sense picks up something. He winces in pain, hissing breathlessly.

DRACO

He's coming! Coming to stop you!

Bowen frantically whirls to the wreckage. But there is nothing. No one.

DRACO

Strike before it's too late!

BOWEN

(torn)

You're the last!

DRACO

My time is over. Strike!

BOWEN

You're my friend!

DRACO

Then as my friend, Strike! Please!

BOWEN

I can't! I can't send you soulless into Hell!

DRACO

(snarling)

Then I will make you!

With a roar, Draco lunges at Bowen with his snapping fangs. Bowen evades the blow. Again, Draco lashes out, trying to provoke Bowen, but again the knight dodges the sharp teeth.

DRACO

Fight back, Dragonslayer!

Once more, Draco dives at him with his flashing fangs. Bowen leaps out of the shackled dragon's range. Rattling his chains wildly, Draco shoots a jet of flame at Bowen. Kara screams, but Bowen holds ground, as the flames just misses.

DRACO

Defend yourself!

Bowen flings the axe to the ground, near the wreckage of the cistern. Draco shoots another bolt of fire. This one closer. Bowen recoils.

DRACO

Pick it up!

His chest heaves out ready to spew more fire.

KARA

No! I will do it!

She runs for the axe. Bowen moves to stop her.

BUT SOMEONE ELSE STOPS HER.

EINON!...suddenly leaping up out of the wreckage of the cistern and scaffolding. Bloody and battered but very much alive! Draco wails in misery.

Einion grabs Kara by the arm and whirls her to him, sword blade at her throat. Bowen snatches up the axe and hoists it back, aimed at Draco.

EINON

Move and she dies!

STALEMATE. Bowen freezes...until...

DRACO...viciously sinks his fangs into his chained claw.

But it is Einon who FEELS THE FANGS. In his sword hand. The blade clatters to the stone as he recoils...and...

BOWEN...in that instant realizes WHAT HE MUST DO. He yanks Kara from Einon's grasp and, shoving her to safety, spins around, back to Einon, and raises the axe to strike...

DRACO...exposing his breast for the blow; his scales falling back, revealing his scar. But...

EINON...is already pulling his knife from his belt to plunge into Bowen's neck.

EINON

Only expose your back to a corpse!

His blade comes down, but...

THE AXE...leaves Bowen's hand and, twirling in the air, buries itself in Draco's scarred breast.

KARA...stifles a scream as...

DRACO...reels. Suddenly his old wound SHIMMERS BRILLIANTLY. Then it FADES TO DULLNESS once more as Draco falls, his grateful eyes staring into the anxious face of...

BOWEN...his own eyes flood with tears, wheeling on...

EINON...who staggers, clutching his chest. His eyes filled with stunned disbelief. His mouth agape in a silent scream. As he lunges forward, Bowen, sneering through tear-dimmed eyes, grabs Eion's upraised knife and folds it under, jamming the blade into Eion's chest. Momentum carries king's body over the top of Bowen.

BOWEN

You are a corpse.

Eion flops down beside Draco and, with a strangled groan, his eyes close. Just a brief second before Draco's own dim and close, with one last GRATEFUL LOOK at...

BOWEN...who sees Draco SMILE BEATIFICALLY as his eyelids flutter down. Going to his final rest with SERENE PEACE OF A SAINT. Bowen kneels forlornly over Draco's still body. Kara joins the vigil, oblivious to the ringing shouts of victory elsewhere in the castle.

Hewe, Gilbert, and a vanguard of the rebels rush in and...seeing the dragon, their jubiliation is quickly forgot. Gilbert joins his friends, crossing himself. The others enter in solemn reverence for their dead comrade and their grieving commander. They drift silently in from everywhere, filling the courtyard and the battlements.

BOWEN

(anguished)

What now, Dragon?! You abandon us alone in our freedom! Without you, what do we do? Where do we turn...?

DRACO (VO)

To the stars, Bowen. To the stars...

The VOICE is a whisper, warm and reassuring. Bowen turns to Kara. She's also heard it. So has Gilbert. ALL HAVE HEARD IT. NONE WILL FORGET IT. Bowen turns back to...

DRACO...AN EERIE, ETHEREAL GLOW OF TRANSLUCENT IRRIDESCENCE oozes out of his wound like a strange, glowing mist covering his corpse. Then it spreads out over the ground. Draco's body dissolves in the mist, becomes one with it, as the strange glow begins to float upward. Past Bowen, Kara, and Gilbert, past...

THE REBELS...Their awed faces awash in the ethereal glow as it rises above the castle walls and...

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - SKY - NIGHT

...out into the night. The LIGHT swiftly swirls behind the mountains and suddenly the night becomes alive with CELESTIAL COLOUR...an AURORA BOREALIS OF FIREWORK FLASH. Then echoing on the air, comes DRACO'S DRAGONSONG, sweet, clear, and joyous.

EXT. COURTYARD - EINON'S CASTLE - ON BOWEN - NIGHT

Bowen gazes heavenward. Expectant. Waiting. Smiling. A strange look on his face. A knowledge in his eye. A PERCEPTION. Gilbert and Kara wonder what he sees. If he's mad with grief. They look from him to...

EXT. STARRY SKY - NIGHT

As the Light behind the mountains spins and concentrates into a shimmering STREAK, lancing through the darkness. The stars suddenly DIM, fading from the sky as the strange light shoots across night's black curtain toward...

THE CONSTELLATION DRACO...where the streak of light ERUPTS into a BLAZING STAR whirling with dazzling splendour into the formation, becoming the eye of the constellation.

The whole constellation sparkles and, for an instant, A PROFILE OF DRACO, looms along the outline of the constellation. But just for an instant, then fading along with Draco's song as the other stars return to the heaven.

EXT. EINON'S CASTLE - COURTYARD - ON BOWEN - NIGHT

Smiling. Kara hugs Bowen. Gilbert crosses himself. All stare transfixed...

EXT. STARRY SKY - ON THE CONSTELLATION - NIGHT

The new star glitters brilliantly...more vivid, more lustrous than the others, its' gleaming rays beaming out to and down upon...

EXT. COURTYARD - EINON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

BOWEN...And Kara and Gilbert...their upturned faces bathed in its glow. A trio of stillness amidst the raucous celebration of their fellows. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK. UP. The noise grows dimmer. And the light that frames them grows more intense.

AND THE CAMERA CONTINUES BACK.

GILBERT(VO)

This is the tale of a Knight who slew a
dragon and vanquished evil.

The three look very small now. Seen from above. As all things must look from Heaven. All that keeps them from blending into the rest of the surging mass is the beam of starshine that falls down upon them. Smiles upon them. And seems to gleam ever brighter. And brighter. Until the dark is swept away and all is...

EXQUISITE LIGHT!

FADE OUT.

THE END

