

The Pirate Queen

"Pilot"

Written By

Laura Pusey

TEASER

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

A galley cuts through the waves, sixty oars splashing in the water. Far ahead, fog covers the cliffs of the Irish coast.

CALAHAN (O.S.)
Captain! We have sails, port side!

CALAHAN'S POV - THROUGH TELESCOPE

Two sails peak over the horizon. A flag depicting a snake wrapped around a sword billows atop the mast.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - DAY

GRACE O'MALLEY (33) jumps down from her perch. Captain of the Hibernia and the only woman for miles, Grace wears a calculated hardness to survive.

Grace marches over to CALAHAN (late 30s), a hard and loyal worker for a pirate, staring at the distant speck of a ship.

GRACE
The banner?

CALAHAN
O'Donovan.

GRACE
O'Donovan has no ships.

CALAHAN
See for yourself.

Grace takes his brass telescope, holding it to her eye.

GRACE
(bitterly)
The snakes.
(shouting)
Take chase.

Calahan nods at the crew. You heard her. They pick up speed.

ROWERS
Heave! Ho! Heave! Ho!

Grace retakes her spot at the bow, staring ahead at her prey.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. THE THAMES - WESTMINSTER

The equally determined eyes of QUEEN ELIZABETH I (late 20's) stare ahead. A Naval procession carries her down the Thames.

On the street, COMMONERS push and shove to catch a glimpse. Elizabeth ignores them, keeping her eyes fixed ahead.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - DAY

The Hibernia is upon the enemy ship. Calahan shouts up to Grace as the crew clamors around the deck.

CALAHAN

Their flag still flies high. No sign of surrender.

GRACE

Then we'll board.

CALAHAN

(to crew)

Grapples at the ready!

EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

Queen Elizabeth steps from her carriage, taking in the imposing facade of Westminster Abbey.

EXT. O'DONOVAN SHIP - DAY

Grace's crew climbs the ropes, boots dropping onto the deck of the O'Donovan's smaller ship. Swords CLASH. Arrows FLY.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

A cape of fur and velvet brushes along the marble floor of Westminster Abbey. A crowd of impassive COURTIERS stare silently as Elizabeth passes.

EXT. O'DONOVAN SHIP - DAY

Grace's boots are the last to hit the deck. She draws her two swords from her belt, ready for a fight.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

Elizabeth ascends the stage, turning to the crowd of spectators and slowly taking her seat on the throne.

The HIGH BISHOP holds the crown to the heavens.

HIGH BISHOP

To the North, I present onto you Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen!

He turns to face the opposite direction.

EXT. O'DONOVAN SHIP - DAY

Grace spars with the other CAPTAIN as their men clash all around them. He swings his broadsword, but she crosses her smaller swords in front of her, CATCHING his blade.

HIGH BISHOP (V.O.)
To the South, I present onto you
Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen!

The Captain takes another swing, but Grace PARRIES, spinning around and ELBOWING him in the back of the head.

HIGH BISHOP (V.O.)
To the East, I present onto you
Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen!

Grace has the upper hand now, and he stumbles back to dodge each QUICK STRIKE she throws at him.

HIGH BISHOP (V.O.)
And to the West, I present onto you
Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen!

Grace finds the opening she was looking for, SLASHING STRAIGHT ACROSS HIS THROAT with both swords.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

The High Bishop places the crown on Elizabeth's head. She is handed the scepter and orb, completing the image of her famous coronation portrait.

COURTIERS
Long live the Queen! Long live the
Queen! Long live the Queen!

The chant echoes through the halls of the church, intense and deafening. Elizabeth stares ahead, silent and unreadable.

EXT. O'DONOVAN SHIP - DAY

The chant continues as we find Grace, standing breathless over the captain's corpse. Surviving enemies jump overboard. Grace's men SHOUT victory cries, but she is as silent and unreadable as Elizabeth.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. HIBERNIA - CREW QUARTERS - DAY

OWEN (17), too fresh-faced for this dank room, presses his ear to the door, listening to SHOUTS and FOOTSTEPS on deck.

DUNCAN (O.S.)
Sounds like it's about time to get
back out there.

Owen whips around to find DUNCAN (20), lying comfortably in an uncomfortable cot. Duncan smirks at Owen's embarrassment.

OWEN
I just left the brawl, came to grab
my sack to carry loot.

DUNCAN
Where's your sword then?

OWEN
I left it in a gunner's chest.
Stabbed him so hard it stuck.

DUNCAN
(mock impressed)
How many men'd you kill?

OWEN
Four, easily.

DUNCAN
And how'd you do that with your ear
to the door this whole time?

Owen turns red, caught in his cowardice.

OWEN
I don't see you with a sword.

DUNCAN
I'm a carpenter. My skills are too
precious to risk in battle. Guess
mummy doesn't feel the same about
you.

OWEN
I'll be your captain one day.

DUNCAN
I never heard of a captain hiding
from a fight. Captain O'Malley
would be crushed to hear it of her
son and heir.

Owen looks away, ashamed. He sighs.

OWEN
What do you want, then?

DUNCAN
Books.

OWEN
Books? Anyone can get books.

DUNCAN
Then it won't be a problem for you,
son of O'Malley.

Loud footsteps stomp just outside the door.

OWEN
(urgent)
Alright, I will get you books.

The door swings open and BALFOUR (30s), always sporting a jovial grin, enters. He retrieves a sack from his bunk.

BALFOUR
What are ye lads doin'? There's
still work to be done.

DUNCAN
(tossing Owen a sack)
Owen came for his sack to carry
loot. He killed four men himself,
you know?

Balfour ruffles Owen's hair, pulling him out of the room.

BALFOUR
Aye? Good for ye, Owen! The
Captain'll be proud to hear of it.

Owen looks back at Duncan gratefully. Duncan mimes opening and closing a book before he's out of sight.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - DAY

Owen and Balfour pass an assembly line of men moving cargo as others clean their weapons or toss bodies overboard.

The crowd parts for Calahan and TOBY (38), Grace's half brother worn from years at sea, escorting a PRISONER (30s) in chains. They force him to his knees in front of Grace.

TOBY
We caught a survivor attempting to
flee, Captain.

Grace surveys the man, who keeps his eyes fixed at her feet.

GRACE

Owen!

Owen looks up. Balfour nudges him. He walks over, nervous.

OWEN

Mother?

(off Grace's look)

Captain.

GRACE

We have an enemy survivor. What do you suggest we do with him?

OWEN

Kill him?

GRACE

That is one option. What is a better one?

(beat, no answer)

Who does he answer to?

The prisoner opens his mouth to speak but Grace silences him with a sword pointed at his throat. She looks to Owen.

OWEN

The O'Donovan's, I would guess.

GRACE

So when this ship refused to pay the tax owed the O'Malley's for passage through our ancestral waters, what must we assume?

OWEN

O'Donovan ordered it so?

GRACE

How will O'Donovan learn without knowing what's happened here?

OWEN

We send a message.

Grace smiles, slightly but unmistakably. She nods for him to continue. He hesitantly walks up to the prisoner.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Tell O'Donovan he must pay if he is to enter our waters.

Unsatisfied, Grace turns to Toby and Calahan.

GRACE

Is he fit?

Toby nods. Grace circles the survivor, putting her sword to his back, pushing just enough to scratch as she etches the image of a SNAKE curving up his bare back.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Take this message to O'Donovan. The O'Malleys are born of the sea. If he thinks to challenge me, he is fatally mistaken.

She presses down, drawing droplets of BLOOD that form the snake's tongue.

GRACE (CONT'D)

If I ever see another snake in my waters, it will be the end of the O'Donovan line.

She leans down, bringing her face to his. He finally looks up from the ground, fear of God in his eyes. Owen looks away, squeamish at the blood dripping down his back.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - LATER

Owen watches the prisoner hurriedly row his dinghy out to sea. Behind him, the crew secures the grappling ropes connected to the other ship. Grace watches next to Owen.

OWEN

The man cannot row to County Cork himself, he will die of exhaustion.

GRACE

There's nothing a body or soul cannot do when survival's at stake.

Owen contemplates this as a DECK HAND hoists the sail.

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

The Hibernia drags the O'Donovan ship behind as it heads to shore. Its large single sail displays the O'Malley crest, a tusked boar beneath a single ship.

EXT. BELCLARE BEACH - DAY

The tide laps at the hem of a dirty autumn dress. MAEVE (14), still shedding her youthful naivety, scans the horizon with her spyglass.

MAEVE

Sail, ho!

She sticks her spyglass in her belt and takes off running.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

FIELD HANDS wave as Maeve sprints past fields of roaming cattle and sheep. She's too excited to notice, running straight for the CLIFFSIDE CASTLE ahead.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - HALL - DAY

The castle feels utilitarian, the focus on defense over style and comfort. Maeve rounds a corner, passing two NUNS.

NUN
Slow down, child!

Maeve doesn't hear, she's already around the next corner.

EXT. BELCLARE CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Maeve runs into the courtyard at the heart of the castle, where MURROUGH (13), far too serious for his age, spars with his INSTRUCTOR (40s) using wooden swords.

MAEVE
Murrough, mother's home!
(no response)
She'll be at the dock soon.

MURROUGH
If she wanted to see me she would
never have left. She would be here
as a wife and mother should.

Maeve huffs. Murrough keeps his eyes on his opponent's blade.

MAEVE
Perhaps she would stay if you
weren't such a fiendish child.

Murrough points his sword at Maeve, but the instructor uses the opening to swiftly disarm him. Maeve runs off.

MURROUGH
Ow!

As Murrough nurses his bruised hand, the instructor walks over to a SERVANT, whispering something to them. The servant nods, heading off into the castle.

INT. DONAL'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

A WHORE grips the wall as she rides DONAL O'FLAHERTY (late 40s), battle-hardened with a weakness for women and booze.

A tentative KNOCK at the door disrupts their rhythm. Donal ignores it. A louder KNOCK this time.

DONAL
Fuck off!

SERVANT (O.S.)
I am sorry, Chief. I was told to
find ye.

Donal grabs her hips, indicating her to continue as he talks.

DONAL
What news?

SERVANT (O.S.)
It be your wife, Chief. She is
returning.

Donal grunts, taking his hands off the whore.

DONAL
Alright, woman, off then.

The whore dismounts, but waits expectantly.

DONAL (CONT'D)
The job's only half done.

She waits. He sighs, reluctantly tossing her a sack of coins.

EXT. BELCLARE CASTLE - DOCK - DAY

Grace walks down the dock with Owen. Maeve pushes through the crew until she reaches her mother. She curtsies.

MAEVE
Welcome home, Mother! I want to
hear all about Scotland.

GRACE
It was not so exciting, I'm afraid.

MAEVE
Surely you fought a great number of
warriors.

GRACE
Aye, pirates, too. It sounds more
exciting told than lived.

Duncan shouts to Grace from the side of the ship.

DUNCAN
Captain! You should see this!

GRACE

Your brother will tell you all
about it.

Grace walks over to Duncan, where he points at some damage on
the hull of the ship.

Maeve deflates as her mother walks away. She turns to Owen,
but he's already walking away down the dock. She follows.

MAEVE

Tell me about the pirates.

OWEN

What about them?

MAEVE

What kind of swords did they use?

OWEN

I don't know. Normal ones.

MAEVE

You are so lucky Mother takes you
on these adventures. The least you
could do for your poor sister is
share the tales.

OWEN

I am tired, Maeve, I would just
like to sleep in my soft bed.

MAEVE

I would sleep in a ship's cot over
my bed any day.

OWEN

In a small room with a hundred
other men? Where the stench is so
terrible it wakes you? And you
can't escape the pitter-patter of
bilge rats scurrying on the floor?

MAEVE

You are teasing.

OWEN

It's all true. Still want to sail
with us?

Grace walks back over before Maeve can respond.

GRACE

Where's your father, Maeve?

MAEVE

The armory. He said he should return before dark.

(beat)

Do you listen to rats scurry at night in a room of a hundred men?

GRACE

I am the captain. I have my own sleeping quarters.

MAEVE

(to Owen)

I will just be captain, then.

Grace heads for the castle, leaving the children behind.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

Grace looks into different rooms as she passes, searching for something. A TUTOR runs up to her.

TUTOR

Madam, I to speak with you about Murrough. He has dedicated all of his time to weapons practice and is completely ignoring his studies.

He rushes to keep up with Grace as she continues her search.

TUTOR (CONT'D)

And Maeve has been skipping her domestic lessons.

GRACE

What do you want of me?

TUTOR

If you admonish her, I am sure she will listen.

Grace looks in a door where a SHIPWRIGHT writes in a book. She pokes her head in the door.

GRACE

The Hibernia suffered damage to her hull, let me know the materials you need to get it done.

SHIPWRIGHT

Of course, madam, right away.

He heads from the room and Grace finally turns to the tutor.

GRACE

I no longer have the time I once did to manage my children. If you are unable discipline them, we will find a tutor who can.

She walks away, leaving him to consider this.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Grace kneels before an altar in a small chapel, lighting six candles. Painted all along the walls are depictions of legendary warriors of Irish history. Donal enters.

DONAL

Welcome home, my love. I thank God for your return.
(re: candles)
Six men lost. I'm sorry to hear it.

GRACE

I lost no numbers. Fourteen gallowglass joined along the way.

DONAL

We cannot pay fourteen wages.

GRACE

I made more than enough profit in Scotland to support my crew.

Grace stands, making the sign of the cross before facing him.

DONAL

You swore this voyage was your last.

GRACE

I must set my father's affairs in order before I abandon the trade.

DONAL

Your father did not intend you to become his successor. Your brother can serve as captain in your stead.

GRACE

Toby refused the position. He meant to retire until I convinced him to stay on. Until there is someone else worthy of manning my father's fleet, I am needed at sea.

DONAL

You are needed at home.

She takes a calming breath, lowering her voice.

GRACE

For 18 years I have been a dutiful wife to you. But I am Chieftain of my clan now. You must accept you are no longer my only duty.

DONAL

I am in the eyes of the law. If I demanded it, you'd have to stay.

GRACE

You would hold me captive in our home?

Donal shuts his mouth, knowing he's pushed too far.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Our fathers married us in the belief that with O'Malley's fleet and O'Flaherty's army, no one could stand in our way. I am doing my part at sea. While you do nothing.

DONAL

I have always protected this family from its enemies.

GRACE

What of the MacNallys then?

Donal shifts. He'd hoped she wouldn't bring it up.

DONAL

We have yet to reach an agreement.

GRACE

There is no agreement to be made. Glenhest is our territory. Slit their throats and be done with it.

DONAL

I believe we can settle things peacefully.

(nervous beat)

In fact, I have invited them to a feast. In their honor.

GRACE

For God's sake.

DONAL

We don't need another war on our hands, Grace.

He moves towards her, begging her to see it his way.

DONAL (CONT'D)
Come home. Forget your father's
ships. The children miss you...

He steps closer until their faces are inches apart. His hands move to her shoulders, then to her breasts.

DONAL (CONT'D)
I miss you...

Her hand moves up his thigh in response.

GRACE
Ready so soon after a trip to the
"armory"?

DONAL
What's a man to do when his wife is
married to the sea?

Donal smiles as Grace leans in to his neck, but he stops when she SQUEEZES HIS BALLS.

GRACE
Fuck all the whores in Ireland
while I'm away, but you'll be
playing your own pipe until I see
our flags flying in Glenhest.

She walks out of the room without another word.

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Nobles in elaborate collars and fine gowns dance the pavane, a slow and dignified processional dance.

Elizabeth is led down a line of subjects by WILLIAM CECIL (40s), her trusted advisor. They bow as she passes.

CECIL
Sir Bingham of Dorset.

SIR RICHARD BINGHAM (late 40s), a short-statured man with intense eyes, leans down to kiss her ring.

BINGHAM
Your Majesty. I have just returned
from a great victory in Scotland.
Those who would threaten your reign
answered swiftly to my blade.

Elizabeth barely acknowledges him. She watches ROBERT DUDLEY, a handsome, lively man, as he dances, longing in her eyes.

ELIZABETH

Thank you for your service.

Cecil leads her away from the crowd. If Bingham is offended by her lack of attention, he doesn't let it show.

CECIL

Madam, Lord Dudley is no longer suitable for marriage. You are the queen now.

ELIZABETH

I know who I am.

CECIL

Your suitors await a decision. The Duke of Anjou-

ELIZABETH

The Duke of Anjou's aunt threatens my kingdom with French forces. Am I to ignore these transgressions?

CECIL

The Catholics will plot to seat your cousin on your throne until you produce an heir.

ELIZABETH

I will not marry for the satisfaction of my enemies.

CECIL

Then perhaps for your subjects. The royal coffers are empty. The army dwindles. If Spain allies with Ireland, we are at God's mercy. The French may be our only hope.

ELIZABETH

I do not need foreigners to control my realm. Ireland shall remember that I am their Queen.

CECIL

In name, yes, but the clans have ruled themselves for centuries. They feel no loyalty to you.

ELIZABETH

Their power is a privilege the crown extends them. We only need remind them the transience of privilege.

Cecil nods as Elizabeth locks eyes with Robert Dudley. She smiles as he beckons her to join him on the dance floor.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

This banquet could not be farther from the well-mannered affair of the palace. The dancing is quick and lively. Spectators CLAP to the music, CHEERING the dancers on.

At the head table, Grace and Donal sit with GORDAIN MACNALLY (40s), the honored guest. He makes small talk with Donal as Grace watches the dancers, not paying attention.

MACNALLY

Is it true, O'Malley?

GRACE

Hmm?

MACNALLY

O'Flaherty tells me you've been sailing your father's ships since he passed.

GRACE

Aye. For eighteen months now.

MACNALLY

Life at sea must be trying for a woman's sensibilities.

GRACE

No harder on body or soul than housework, I assure you.

He laughs. Grace sips her wine.

DONAL

She'll return home soon enough.

MACNALLY

Who will run the enterprise?

DONAL

Grace is determining a worthy successor.

Grace bites her tongue. SIR HENRY SIDNEY (40s), a cunning Englishman who can twist any situation to benefit his self interests, approaches the table.

SIDNEY

Lady Grace, may I have this dance?

GRACE

Of course, Sir Sidney.

Donal shoots her a look of disapproval as she walks away.

On the dance floor, she and Sidney join the dancers.

SIDNEY

How was your voyage?

GRACE

Very profitable. Once the cargo is sold you will get your cut.

SIDNEY

It is not my money I am concerned about. I heard you slaughtered an O'Donovan ship.

GRACE

Aye. They would not pay my tax, and so they paid a different price.

SIDNEY

You need to be cautious, my lady. He may have pirated some, but your father was careful to avoid attention and always kept the business primarily in shipping and trading. You should be more wary of your growing reputation.

GRACE

You are Governor of Connacht and you support my enterprise. Who should I have to fear?

He lowers his voice, wary of the other dancers.

SIDNEY

There are whispers of an alliance against you. Some clans fear that unchecked, you will rule more than the sea.

GRACE

And what am I to do? Put down my arms and let the other clans tread on us? Either I plunder or I am plundered. That is the way.

SIDNEY

It may not be the way much longer. The Queen wishes to see Ireland united under English law.

GRACE

What does a lady of the English
court know of Ireland?

SIDNEY

Enough to know you are weak. The
clans fight each other for power
and wealth. When they're not
fighting each other they fight
within themselves for titles. All
it will take is one swift blow from
above and the cracks in the system
will splinter until it comes
crumbling down.

The music ends and they bow, Grace deep in thought. Sidney
nods at her and exits the dance floor, passing Owen.

Owen carries an armful of books to Duncan, who claps along to
the music.

OWEN

Here are your books.
(beat)
Thank you for not giving me away.

Duncan sifts through the books, feeling the covers.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Please be careful with them,
they're my favorites.

DUNCAN

What's so great about them?

OWEN

They take you away from yourself.
The words of a true poet can whisk
you to another world.

DUNCAN

I look forward to it. Next battle,
come find me in the cabin and you
can teach me to read them.

OWEN

You can't read?

DUNCAN

We're not all born to chieftains.
Do you want a place to hide or not?

As Owen considers this, loud CHEERS pull our attention away.

A crowd surrounds Balfour and his partner in mischief, FINNIAN (30s), cheering as they chug pitchers of ale. Finnian finishes and SLAMS his glass on the table.

FINNIAN

Ye drink like a girl, brother!

Balfour finishes his and slams it down.

BALFOUR

Would ye say that again if I called the Captain over to drink ye under the table?

FINNIAN

The Captain is no girl. She's a woman.

He pauses a quick moment to belch before turning to the GIRL sitting next to him.

FINNIAN (CONT'D)

How about you, love? Are you a girl or a woman?

GIRL

If you ask after my maidenhead, that I will never tell.

Her girlfriends snicker as Finnian smiles.

FINNIAN

I like a woman with some mystery.

GIRL

And I like to know exactly what I am getting.

She traces her hand down his chest, but before she gets far her FIANCÉ, strong and muscular from years of working the land, appears behind them.

FIANCE

That is my betrothed, you fiend.

He picks Finnian up by the collar and PUNCHES him in the face. Everyone CHEERS as Finnian dodges his swings. He ducks, then pops up and throws his fist into the large man's face.

FINNIAN

Ow!

As he shakes out his bruised hand, the man throws one final blow, PUNCHING Finnian so hard he hits the ground. Balfour rushes to check on him while the girl pulls her fiancé away.

BALFOUR
Finnian! Are you alright?

FINNIAN
Yes, I'm alright.

He starts to get up, but sees a cute SERVING GIRL leans over him as well. He falls back down, holding her for support.

FINNIAN (CONT'D)
Oh, no. I see stars.

BALFOUR
Can you stand?

FINNIAN
Not on my own.

Finnian looks at Balfour, then at the serving girl. Balfour sighs in relief as he realizes Finnian's intentions.

BALFOUR
(laying it on thick)
I would help you to the private upstairs washroom to clean up, but if I leave my post in the great hall, Master will have me hanged.

SERVING GIRL
Oh, dear. I can take him. Let's get some alcohol in those wounds.

She helps Finnian up and he leans heavily on her.

BALFOUR
Thank you, Miss, you are so kind.
Take good care of my friend!

Finnian winks at Balfour as they leave, passing Maeve and Murrough standing on a table to see over heads. Toby swoops in, throwing them over his shoulders.

TOBY
I think that's enough excitement for you two. Time for bed.

MAEVE
It's still early, Uncle Toby! What if we miss another fight?

MURROUGH
Release me, I am not a child!

Sipping his drink at the bar, Calahan smiles as Toby passes with the squirming children. His smile fades when MacNally takes the seat next to him.

MACNALLY

Calahan, how was the voyage?

CALAHAN

Fine.

MACNALLY

Did you consider my offer further?

CALAHAN

The answer is still no, MacNally.

MACNALLY

Be reasonable, Calahan. You have worked for the position of captain your entire life. O'Malley passed you over again and again and now his daughter has taken charge, you think she will be any different?

CALAHAN

Grace is about to name a successor.

MACNALLY

From what I see, she has no real plans to relinquish her command.

CALAHAN

Even so, I expect your crusade will not last long. You cannot defeat her on the water.

MACNALLY

I wouldn't be so sure of it.

Satisfied with his pitch, MacNally gets up and walks into the crowd. Calahan takes another swig of his drink, thinking.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - HALL

Toby exits Maeve's room to find Donal waiting in the doorway.

TOBY

The children are in bed.

DONAL

That's alright. It's you I wanted to speak with.

Toby watches Donal curiously as they walk down the hall.

DONAL (CONT'D)

I fear my wife has no intention of coming home. It is clear to me now she loves the sea more than I. More than the children. Perhaps she always has.

Toby is silent, knowing there is nothing he can say.

DONAL (CONT'D)

I need things to return to the way they were. If the business were in the capable hands of her brother-

TOBY

You and I have fought together many times, I'm sure you understand my wish to leave that life behind.

Donal sighs. He does understand.

TOBY (CONT'D)

But I will speak to her about it.

Donal nods his thanks.

INT. DONAL'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Donal removes his boots and unlaces his linen shirt. He senses a presence behind him and turns, finding Grace hovering in the doorway.

DONAL

Come to warm my bed now you've seen my side of things?

GRACE

The dispute with the MacNallys is settled then?

DONAL

Aye. We divided the clans among us and will take our proposal to them.

GRACE

They should all be ours.

Donal sighs. He doesn't want to fight.

DONAL

Grace, why have you come?

GRACE

I wish to speak about Maeve. It's time we settle on a suitable husband. An alliance of clans plots against us. Her marriage could provide us a strong ally.

DONAL

You didn't see the lass listening to bedtime stories just moments ago. She's too young.

GRACE

I was fifteen when we married.

DONAL

And do you not remember how frightened you were? I could not stand to be around you for months. I felt as though I was your jailer.

GRACE

Still, I had to grow up and play my part. And so does she.

DONAL

Is that all our life is? A burden you had to learn to shoulder?

Grace leans over and kisses Donal softly, leaving him wanting more. She doesn't answer. Just waits.

DONAL (CONT'D)

I will consider it.

She nods and walks out of the room.

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - HALL - DAY

Sir Richard Bingham pauses outside the doorway to the Queen's terrace, adjusting his military pins and smoothing his hair.

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - TERRACE - DAY

A large open room sized for parties, currently furnished with only a small table and chairs. Elizabeth sits alone, sipping tea as she stares out over the Thames.

BINGHAM

Your Majesty.

He bows deeply. She gestures for him to sit.

ELIZABETH

Sir Bingham, my advisors sing praises of your military prowess in Scotland.

BINGHAM

It is my greatest honor to serve our honorable nation, your Majesty.

ELIZABETH

This pleases me greatly. You see, I am in need of a capable leader.

Bingham beams with pride.

BINGHAM

Anything for you, my Queen.

ELIZABETH

I am sure you are aware of my campaign in Ireland.

Bingham nods.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

It has recently been brought to my attention certain representatives have not always had the crown's interest in mind. They do not have a firm enough hand to keep the Gaelic clans under control.

BINGHAM

What do you require of me, madam?

ELIZABETH

I would like you to serve as my governor in Connacht.

BINGHAM

Move to Ireland?

Bingham's excitement falls. Elizabeth notices his hesitation.

ELIZABETH

You would be Lord Governor, a higher title with more land and subjects than a mere knighthood will ever grant you.

(with finality)

Your country and I would be grateful for your service.

Bingham nods, reluctantly accepting. He kneels in front of Elizabeth.

BINGHAM

Your Majesty is gracious to bestow
this honor. I swear, I will bring
the Gaelic savages to their knees.

He leans down and kisses her ring.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Two FOOTBALLERS COLLIDE, scrambling for a leather ball, KICKING each other savagely as teammates pile on.

Rowdy fans CHEER from the stands adorned with O'Flaherty and O'Malley banners. Grace and Donal sit front and center, Donal engrossed in the game, Grace wishing she was somewhere else.

DONAL

Left swipe, get 'em. Oh, look to your right! Your right!

The player kicks the ball under the defender's legs, picking it up on the other side and running for the end of the field, where two branches lean on each other to form a goal.

The player drops the ball and kicks it through the goal to enormous CHEERS. Donal stands as he CLAPS.

DONAL (CONT'D)

Good play! Good play!

A MESSENGER walks through the stands, slipping Grace a note as he passes. She reads, then suddenly stands to leave.

DONAL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

GRACE

I feel a bit ill, I thought I might lie down.

DONAL

Grace, you've missed the last three matches since you've been home. It's part of our duty to oversee the clan games.

GRACE

You will be fine without me, you love the games.

DONAL

That's not the point.

He grabs her hand, a plead to stay. Grace pulls her hand away and walks toward the castle.

EXT. BELCLARE CASTLE - DOCK - DAY

The shipwright shouts to Grace from aboard the Hibernia, where he works with a small crew.

SHIPWRIGHT

She's almost finished. I relaid the wood in the hull and enforced the gunwale with a layer of steel, as you instructed. But she'll need a few more patches to be seaworthy.

GRACE

I need it ready. Tomorrow at the latest.

SHIPWRIGHT

Aye, madam.

Grace walks back down the dock as the shipwright turns nervously to his crew.

INT. BELCLARE BEACH - EVENING

Grace sits on the beach, sketching in a notebook overflowing with drawings and numbers. She sketches the relative positions of the setting sun and rising moon.

Toby walks up and sits next to her. She keeps drawing.

TOBY

Preparing for a voyage? I thought Scotland would be your last.

She hands him the note she received.

GRACE

O'Donovan has taken an O'Malley ship prisoner. My crew needs me. And I have not yet decided who will run the business.

TOBY

Do not think to fool me, Grace. There are many worthy crew who could lead a rescue expedition.

She doesn't reply, drawing in silence for a moment.

TOBY (CONT'D)

When we were children I thought you naive, begging father to let you sail. I thought, once she's been to sea, she'll understand why I love nothing more than coming home.

(beat)

Yet now you've known the taste of the sea and long for it even more. Tell me, what is so detestable about standing still a moment?

GRACE

When I am home I am reminded of all
that I am not. I am not the wife
Donal desires or the mother my
children deserve or the chieftain
my people need.

She looks out at the water.

GRACE (CONT'D)

But I am a good captain.

She turns back to her notebook, uncomfortable. Toby takes this in, but is interrupted by SHOUTS in the distance.

DONAL (O.S.)

Grace! Are you out there?!

Grace sighs, thinking she's in trouble for sneaking away. Donal's horse gallops over the small hill and onto the sand.

GRACE

You didn't have to leave the match-

DONAL

We've been summoned to the
Governor's Castle.

Donal hands her a LETTER. Toby reads over her shoulder.

TOBY

Sir Sidney arrested? By God.

Grace looks up at Donal. This is not good at all.

EXT. IRISH COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

The sun sets over the hills as Grace and Donal ride swiftly on horseback through the lush countryside. On a distant hill, the Governor's Castle stands tall.

INT. GOVERNOR'S CASTLE - DINING HALL - NIGHT

A SERVANT opens the doors, leading Grace and Donal inside. Sir Bingham sits alone at the head of the huge banquet table.

SERVANT

Lord and Lady O'Flaherty, sir.

BINGHAM

Yes, thank you.

The servant exits, leaving Bingham alone with his guests.

BINGHAM (CONT'D)
I trust your journey was pleasant.

GRACE
Where is Sir Sidney?

BINGHAM
(sighing)
You Irish are terrible at
pleasantries. Henry Sidney has been
arrested as a traitor.

GRACE
That is absurd.

BINGHAM
Do you argue he is not guilty of
embezzlement, abuse of title,
slandering the crown, and
consorting with pirates?

GRACE
Who are you to hand down sentence?

BINGHAM
Sir Richard Bingham. Newly
appointed Lord Governor of
Connacht.

Grace and Donal share a look.

BINGHAM (CONT'D)
Please sit, both of you.

Donal takes a seat at the table. He stares at Grace, begging
her not to be stupid. She slowly takes her seat.

BINGHAM (CONT'D)
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth
believes you, with your station as
local leaders, are invaluable
assets to the crown.

He produces a letter, sliding it across the table to Donal.

DONAL
(reading)
A Lordship? That is very generous.

GRACE
To be the wife of an English Lord,
just as I've always dreamed.

DONAL

A title does not come without conditions.

BINGHAM

You will simply be expected to support the crown in all matters.

GRACE

And if we don't accept? Will we be hanged as Sir Sidney?

BINGHAM

Based on stories I have heard there is much you could be hanged for.

He lets the threat hang for a beat before changing his tone.

BINGHAM (CONT'D)

Of course, the crown pays no heed to idle rumors. It is in both our interests to settle this peacefully.

DONAL

What would you have me do?

BINGHAM

Certain clans need...guidance adjusting to the new way of life. Lord MacNally informed me that based on your recent agreement, the Barrets fall under your control.

GRACE

MacNally took the lordship?

BINGHAM

(ignoring her)

The Barrets are feuding with the English settling in Partry. Perhaps with a few words from you we can avoid any need for warfare.

GRACE

The Barrets have lived in Partry for centuries, it is their right to strike down invaders.

Donal places a quieting arm on Grace's leg.

DONAL

If we end the feud, will you release Sir Sidney?

BINGHAM

I suppose I can delay his execution. Two weeks. If the Barrets are dealt with and Sir Sidney begs forgiveness, I will consider a pardon.

Grace fights her instinct to argue as Donal squeezes her leg.

DONAL

That is very generous. We are grateful to you and her Majesty.

INT. GOVERNOR'S CASTLE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Grace paces around their guest room as Donal sits quietly on the bed, letting her rant.

GRACE

He invites us to Sidney's home, threatens us with his life, then has the audacity to insist we stay the night. I cannot believe you agreed.

DONAL

I haven't made any decision, I simply recognize the need to proceed delicately.

GRACE

You are blinded by the promise of a lordship. If he had real power he wouldn't need you to settle things peacefully. Clearly, he doesn't have the resources to fight.

DONAL

Neither do we.
(off her look)
Not to fight the English crown.

GRACE

You've charged into battles with all odds against you before. When you were a warrior.

She means it as an offense, but he's unaffected.

DONAL

That is how I know when to lay down my arms. The world is changing, Grace. If we refuse to adapt we will find ourselves extinct.

GRACE

If we bow to England our entire way
of life goes extinct.

Donal sighs, exhausted. Grace starts to gather her things.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Do whatever you like, but I refuse
to be Bingham's gracious hostage.

DONAL

You must learn to temper your rage
or it will be the death of us both.

GRACE

And your cowardice will be the
death of our people.

She finishes gathering her things and leaves.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Sidney sits alone in a dank below-ground stone cell,
illuminated only by the moonlight streaking through a barred
window. He startles when he hears Grace's voice.

GRACE (O.S.)

I demand to see him.

GUARD (O.S.)

I'm not sure Sir Bingham would want-

GRACE (O.S.)

I am Sir Bingham's guest, he would
want my demands met. Will you let
me by or shall I wake your master?

A moment of silence. Sidney walks up to the bars, standing on
the cot to see out. Grace has to lay on the ground to speak
through the little window.

SIDNEY

Lady Grace! What are you doing
here?

GRACE

We got your execution delayed until
the end of the month.

SIDNEY

I don't wish to sound ungrateful,
but rotting in this place a month
longer awaiting death doesn't sound
like something to celebrate.

GRACE

It gives us time. Bingham wants us to put down a rebellion.

SIDNEY

And you will?

GRACE

Donal will handle it.

SIDNEY

What will you do?

Grace pauses, unsure how to answer.

GRACE

I will sail for Castle Donovan. O'Donovan has taken an O'Malley crew prisoner and I will need all my men to set this right.

SIDNEY

You can't mean you intend to fight?

GRACE

If we bend the knee now we are forever Bingham's lap dogs. Even if he spares your life, you will be imprisoned or exiled. But if we exhaust England's resources in a fight, they may decide it is not worth continuing, and things can return to the way they were.

SIDNEY

You are only one clan in one county of dozens. I would prefer my life not depend on you defeating the Queen of England.

He tries to smile with humor, but it's clear he's afraid.

GRACE

Your death is not part of my plan.

Checking the guards' backs are still to them, she discreetly pulls a small DAGGER and CHISEL from beneath her cloak and slides it through the bars.

SIDNEY

There isn't the time.

GRACE

I suggest you start now.

He contemplates the small tools a moment before taking them with an appreciative nod.

GRACE (CONT'D)

One way or another, you will be free next time I see you.

She briefly touches Sidney's hand that grips the bars of the window, a quiet moment between friends. He nods.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Grace finishes saddling her horse and mounts, riding off into the night alone.

From a castle window, Bingham watches, intrigued. Once Grace has disappeared behind the trees, he blows out the candle in his hands, shrouding the castle in darkness.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - OWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grace sits on the edge of Owen's bed, shaking him awake.

OWEN

(still half asleep)
Mother? What is it?

GRACE

The crew is loading the ship. We are leaving before first light.

OWEN

Can't I just sleep a bit longer?

GRACE

Owen, I know that it has been a harsh adjustment, but one day you will lead our clan on the sea. I would fail as a mother and a leader if I did not prepare you for that.

OWEN

I know, Mother.

He doesn't move. Grace sighs and stands up, pulling the blankets off the bed and leaving Owen in the cold.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Mother!

She's already out the door.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - MAEVE'S ROOM - DAY

Grace stirs Maeve awake.

GRACE

You brother and I are leaving. It is only a short journey. Take care of your father and brother.

MAEVE

(mumbling)

Mother, I want to come with you.

GRACE

I know.

MAEVE

Why can't I come?

Having asked this many times in her own childhood, Grace knows the importance of answering honestly.

GRACE

It is easier to stomach the cages of life when you know nothing of the open air.

She walks to the door.

MAEVE

Mother, please.

Grace pauses, then walks out of the room..

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - MURROUGH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Murrough sleeps in his bed as Grace watches silently from the doorway. After a moment, she turns and shuts the door without waking him.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE DOCK - DAWN

The sun barely peeks over the horizon as Calahan supervises the loading of the Hibernia. Owen boards, yawning. Finnian and Balfour stumble after him, still drunk from the night.

CALAHAN

Pull yerselves together, drunks.

BALFOUR

The Captain should be wiser than to call on us in the wee hours.

Calahan shoots them a look, then nods at Toby as he boards.

CALAHAN

Alright, cast off the spring lines!

Crew members untie the ropes securing the ship to the dock as Calahan jumps aboard. They use their oars to push off from the dock and begin rowing.

INT. GOVERNOR'S CASTLE - STUDY - DAY

Bingham writes at his desk when a SERVANT escorts Donal in.

SERVANT
Lord O'Flaherty.

The servant exits. Donal bows slightly, an English gesture.

DONAL
Our great thanks, Sir Bingham, for your hospitality. I will ride for Castle Barret as soon as possible.

BINGHAM
Donal, I must tell you that this offer, the lordship, could do great things for your family. I would hate to see a reasonable man brought to ruin by an unruly wife.

Donal stiffens.

DONAL
I assure you, she is under my control. I will not let her be any trouble to you or our plans.

Bingham nods, sizing up Donal as he bows again.

EXT. HIBERNIA - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Grace waits as Toby finishes reading the letter from Elizabeth.

TOBY
You want to fight?

GRACE
Do you think we should?

TOBY
The clan selected you as chief, not I. Only you can say how to proceed.

GRACE
You have fought, sailed, and seen more than I have in this world.

TOBY

Experience is not a teacher of all things.

GRACE

Submitting to England will surely be the end of the O'Malley clan, but will fighting mean certain death?

TOBY

Nothing is certain, though it would be hard-won. If you were to create an alliance of the great clans, perhaps then it would be enough.

GRACE

Unite the great clans? They would sooner shoot me full of arrows than listen to my plan. O'Donovan has my crew prisoner, he's all but declared war.

TOBY

I know you are angry, but think about the future. We may need the O'Donovans.

Calahan shouts from the deck.

CALAHAN

Sails!

Grace and Toby look at each other and exit the room.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - DAY

Toby and Grace make their way to Calahan, who points to a ship in the distance.

CALAHAN

English.

Grace pauses as she stares out to sea.

GRACE

Let them pass.

CALAHAN

(signaling crew)
Press on!

Toby turns to Grace, surprised.

GRACE

Until my plan is decided, it is best not to provoke aggression.

Calahan looks back through his scope.

CALAHAN

Captain, they have signaled intent to board. What shall we do?

GRACE

They want to board us?

She shares a concerned look with Toby.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Lower the flag.

CALAHAN

Are you certain?

GRACE

Aye.

She doesn't look as certain as she says she is.

EXT. HIBERNIA DECK - LATER

The English ship has pulled along side and grappled the Hibernia. The English CAPTAIN climbs aboard.

CAPTAIN

Who speaks for this ship?

GRACE

I do.

Grace steps out from the crew.

CAPTAIN

A woman?

GRACE

Ay, and Captain of this vessel, so speak your business.

CAPTAIN

We are under orders to board any vessel on our route and seek proof taxes have been paid the crown.

GRACE

The crown earns no tax here, these are O'Malley waters.

CAPTAIN

Not according to this edict.

He produces a letter, stepping forward to hand it to Grace. Everyone is on edge as the Captains come into weapon's range of each other.

GRACE

(reading)

Signed Sir Richard Bingham.

CAPTAIN

As you can see, we have authority to detain any dissenting parties.

GRACE

And of course, he gave me no warning of a tax in the hope this exact encounter would occur.

She looks up at the Captain and TEARS THE LETTER IN TWO. He draws his sword, his crew following suit.

CAPTAIN

You mean to disobey Her Majesty?

Toby steps forward and places a hand on Grace's shoulder. She takes a calming breath.

GRACE

I will not ask the permission of a foreigner to traverse my own waters. I suggest you get back on your ship and be on your way.

She turns away, her crew still frozen in anticipation, hands on their weapons. The captain reaches out to grab her.

CAPTAIN

Then, madam, you are under arrest by order of Sir-

As he grabs her arm, she swings around and stabs him in the gut with her sword. SHOUTS from all around as a brawl ensues.

We stay with Owen as he hurriedly makes his way to the crew quarters.

INT. HIBERNIA - CREW QUARTERS - DAY

Owen shuts the door behind him, breathing heavily.

OWEN

Duncan?

The room is empty. Owen's books lay on Duncan's bed, but no Duncan. He cracks the door, searching the deck until he spots-

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - SAME

-Duncan fighting his way through the crowd with his crossbow, unaware of a large ENEMY approaching from behind.

INT. HIBERNIA - CREW QUARTERS - SAME

Owen looks back at the safety of this room and the chaos of the deck. Deciding, Owen draws his sword and runs out.

INT. HIBERNIA - DECK - CONTINUOUS

Duncan runs for the crew quarters, SHOOTING someone in his path. He spots Owen running at him, sword raised. Duncan ducks as Owen swings, CLASHING swords with the enemy about to strike Duncan from behind.

Owen shuts his eyes and THRUSTS his sword forward, straight into the man's gut. He drops to his knees. Owen's first kill.

Owen stands frozen as Duncan pulls him away. The fight rages on around them, but Owen only hears SILENCE, his eyes fixated on the man he killed.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. ENGLISH SHIP - DECK - LATER

In the aftermath of the fight, Owen sits on a crate, shaken, as the rest of the crew collects loot. Grace approaches, oblivious to the shell-shocked look on his face.

GRACE
You fought well, son. Sword
training has helped, I think.

Toby walks up, signaling to Grace.

TOBY
Captain, you are needed below deck.

INT. ENGLISH SHIP - BRIG - DAY

Toby leads Grace below deck, where a man is chained to the floor. This is HUGH DE LACY (30s), a handsome Englishman with just enough charm and wit to make up for his arrogance.

TOBY
We discovered him already chained.

GRACE
What say you?

Hugh doesn't answer, looking her up and down.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(to Toby)
Kill him.

HUGH
Wait. I'm a prisoner of the
English, I'm no threat to you.

GRACE
You're no use to me either.

HUGH
I will tell all that I know. Trust
me, you want to hear it.

Grace contemplates. She nods to Toby and sweeps out of the room. Hugh looks away as Toby raises his sword. A loud CLASH. Hugh looks back to see Toby cut his chains.

INT. HIBERNIA - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Hugh now sits chained to a chair. Grace leans on her desk as she questions him.

HUGH

We were on our way to County Mayo, where we were meant to settle the lands near Westport.

GRACE

Those are O'Malley lands, they are not for settling.

HUGH

I don't pretend to know the politics of Ireland. I was caught thieving in England and given a choice. The Tower, or Ireland.

GRACE

You are the most finely dressed prisoner I've ever encountered.

HUGH

Thievery pays.

GRACE

Do you know why the Queen is so intent to fill our lands with Englishmen?

HUGH

It is said that Catholic Ireland may turn on Her Majesty and aid Spain in the event of war.

GRACE

That is all you have to tell me?

HUGH

I admit I only sought to buy time until I could charm you into sparing my life. Has it worked?

GRACE

I don't appreciate having my time wasted.

Grace winces as she shifts her weight. Hugh smiles.

HUGH

Then allow me to appeal to your pragmatism. I've astutely noted you are bleeding through your shirt.

Grace looks down at the blood stain.

HUGH (CONT'D)

I happen to be a surgeon.

GRACE

Is that so?

She doesn't move to unchain him.

HUGH

I can sew your wound.

GRACE

It's merely a scrape.

HUGH

Even so, it will never heal properly without attention.

GRACE

Why would I trust you?

HUGH

I'm a healer not a fighter.
(she still doesn't move)
No need to take my word for it,
though. I can do it handcuffed.

This surprises her. She considers him, curious.

INT. HIBERNIA - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

There's an intimate silence as Hugh sews up Grace's wound, still chained. Under her shirt, scars cover Grace's stomach.

HUGH

So what is a woman doing in a place like this? No husband I take it?

GRACE

I wouldn't bet your life on your charm in the future.

HUGH

Married then?

GRACE

I can still have you killed.

Hugh works silently a moment before running his thumb over one of her scars. She looks down at him threateningly, but his face shows only medical curiosity.

HUGH

Your ship's surgeon is careless.

GRACE

We don't have a proper surgeon. Our carpenter has had to make do.

HUGH

I suppose the trades are similar in some respect. In a body, as in a sinking ship, when there is a hole it must be patched. But of course, the body has an artistry and function beyond staying afloat.

He looks up at her. A spark between them. He finishes stitching her up, his face close to hers as he speaks.

HUGH (CONT'D)

I can be of use to you. If you like.

GRACE

I am to trust an English thief?

HUGH

That is your choice, but your crew needs a surgeon aboard. How many men did you lose in that fight?

She lowers her shirt and pushes him back into his seat.

GRACE

Tend the wounds of the rest of the crew. If you prove your competence, I will consider it.

HUGH

That is very kind of you, my lady.

She goes to leave, but pauses in front of him.

GRACE

If I discover you have deceived me in any way, or hear of any treachery you plan to commit, you will wish you had chosen the Tower.

She leaves the room. Hugh let's out a long breath of relief.

EXT. CASTLE BARRET - DAY

Donal rides through the bustling castle grounds, a company of servants in tow. Around them, SOLDIERS clean their armor, sharpen their weapons, or train in groups.

INT. CASTLE BARRET - WAR ROOM - DAY

EGON (40s), burly, built for battle, sits around a table, strategizing with his CLANSMEN. Donal enters and everyone stands, smiling.

EGON
O'Flaherty, old friend! Welcome!

Egon shakes his hand warmly.

DONAL
I was hoping we might speak in
private.

Egon's jovial demeanor falters at Donal's serious tone. He
nods to the clansmen, who silently exit the room.

DONAL (CONT'D)
You must make peace with the
English, friend.

EGON
So you've taken the deal, then.

Donal doesn't reply, ashamed.

EGON (CONT'D)
You must know it is empty promises.
They have offered so many titles
and riches to every clan leader in
Ireland, there is no way to deliver
it all.

DONAL
Maybe so, but fighting is not the
answer.

EGON
How many times in the past have we
imperiled our lives to protect what
is ours? This battle is no
different.

DONAL
I am trying to protect what is
ours.

EGON
The English cannot sail over an
ocean and claim our homeland. They
know nothing of the Gaelic way.

DONAL
I am not here to argue with you,
Egon. I am here as your superior
and I order you to stand down. You
cannot win this war without the
O'Flaherty army behind you.

EGON

That may have been true once, but
O'Malley has become your equal in
power.

DONAL

O'Malley and O'Flaherty act as one.

EGON

And yet, while the O'Flaherty army
drinks and gambles the days away,
O'Malley is at sea, her fleet
always growing.

DONAL

Grace will not support you against
my wishes.

EGON

Forgive me if I would like to hear
it from her.

Donal's eyes narrow, his power slipping away from him right
in front of his eyes.

EXT. GALWAY PORT - DAY

The Hibernia drops its anchor into the water at the dock of a
lively port, bustling with MERCHANTS and PATRONS.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - DAY

As the crew excitedly disembarks, Toby pulls Grace aside. He
looks at Hugh, who sits handcuffed to the mast of the ship.

TOBY

What do you make of him?

GRACE

He says he wants to be our surgeon,
but there is something more to him.
I can feel it.

TOBY

Should I instruct Duncan to keep an
eye on him?

GRACE

No need. He will be coming with us.

TOBY

I thought you did not trust him?

Grace ignores him and walks over to Hugh. She begins to
uncuff him.

HUGH

Thank God, my wrists are bruising-

As soon as one cuff is off, Grace LOCKS IT AROUND HER OWN WRIST. Hugh stares at her in surprise.

GRACE

Try anything and-

HUGH

You'll kill me. I have heard.

He groans in pain as she pulls him up and off the ship, passing Owen approaching Duncan, inspecting the damaged mast.

OWEN

Are you coming, Duncan?

DUNCAN

No, I have to repair the damage from the fight. I know they don't plan it, but I wish they would keep the fighting on the other ship.

(turning to him)

But thank you. For what you did. You may have O'Malley in you yet.

Owen smiles. Duncan turns back to his work.

OWEN

Can I help? I am not skilled with woodwork but I can hold a hammer.

DUNCAN

You aren't going with the others?

OWEN

They typically drink lots of ale and talk about women they've bedded and men they've killed. There isn't much for me to contribute to the conversation.

DUNCAN

Alright. Take this piece of wood and hold it right...here.

Owen leans in close as Duncan shows him what he needs to do, but he is distracted by their proximity.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

If you feel the scratch like so-
(moving Owen's hand along
the scratch)
-you can tell how deep it runs.

Owen blushes at the contact, then looks away. Trying to shake sense into himself.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Hugh sits at a table with Calahan, Balfour, Finnian, and a few GUNNERS who laugh and drink. Under the table, we see that Hugh is handcuffed to his chair. Calahan keeps watch on him.

Hugh watches Grace play a medieval card game with three drunk male GAMBLERS. Grace makes a joke as she loses a hand and they all laugh. She touches one of their arms flirtatiously.

HUGH
So she is capable of charm. And in the face of loss at that.

GUNNER
I wouldn't count her out yet.

FINNIAN
She always loses the first few rounds, then, like a miracle, takes the whole pot in the end.

GUNNER
We all learned it the hard way.

Hugh watches the men confidently throw more coins in the pot.

FINNIAN
It's cruel if you ask me, playing with a man's heart like that.

GUNNER
(to Hugh)
He's upset because he thought the Captain was going to bed him with all her flirting. Then she stole all his coin and left his cock dry.

They all laugh as Finnian pouts.

HUGH
How did you all come to follow such a baffling woman?

CALAHAN
They're gallowglass, they follow the money.

They all quiet down. Calahan clearly intends this as a dig.

HUGH
But not you?

CALAHAN

My family has been in the service
of the O'Malley's for generations.

HUGH

Then you know the Captain well?

CALAHAN

Aye, since she was a babe.

HUGH

I can't imagine the life she had to
lead her to such a profession.

CALAHAN

She has always lusted for the sea.
Wouldn't listen to anyone who told
her otherwise. Always beggin' her
father to take her with us. Once he
told her she couldn't sail because
her long hair would snag in the
sails. The next time I saw 'er
she'd chopped it all off. Looked
like a peasant boy.

HUGH

Did he allow her to sail then?

CALAHAN

Of course not. No one imagined
there was a place for a woman at
sea. Even now, with all she's done,
people can't see her as more than a
girl playing sailor.

Hugh looks over at Grace as she wins the hand. The gamblers
groan as she collects their coin purses.

INT. BELCLARE CASTLE - DINING HALL - DAY

Donal eats dinner with Maeve, Murrough, and Bingham. Bingham
taps his glass and a SERVANT refills his drink.

BINGHAM

So there I stand with the greatest
war criminal in the Ottoman Empire
at my feet, praying for mercy.

MURROUGH

What did you do?

BINGHAM

I bit him in the neck. Right
about...here. And I didn't let go
until he was dead.

He stabs his fork into the roasted pig on the table, right where an artery would be. Murrough stares in awe.

MAEVE

But he had surrendered? By killing him needlessly did you not lose a valuable prisoner for trade?

DONAL

Maeve, don't insult our guest.

BINGHAM

You are a clever girl aren't you.

Donal nods at a GOVERNESS, who makes her way to the children.

DONAL

Maeve, Murrough, I believe it's time you said your prayers.

MAEVE

Yes, Father.

MURROUGH

But I want to hear another story.

Donal glares. Murrough sulks out the door with his sister.

BINGHAM

I must admit, the purpose of my visit is not purely convenience. My men report the Barrets continue their tirade against the settlers.

DONAL

Not for much longer, I assure you.

BINGHAM

I inquire only out of concern for Sir Sidney. His hanging approaches.

DONAL

It will be done.

BINGHAM

Is she betrothed, your daughter?

DONAL

(surprised)
Not yet.

BINGHAM

There are quite a few unwed English lords migrating to Ireland. Perhaps there is a match to be made.

DONAL
That is a consideration.

BINGHAM
I myself am a widower.

DONAL
My sympathies.

BINGHAM
It is quite alright. I see it as a blessing from God that I may wed a wife of child-bearing age and produce an heir.

Bingham taps his glass again and the servant girl refills it. Donal tenses as he notices Bingham glance at the door where Maeve exited moments ago.

EXT. HIBERNIA - DECK - NIGHT

The Hibernia sails along the coast, under the moonlight and multitude of stars that can only be seen in pure darkness. Toby and Grace look at the coast as they talk.

TOBY
You know what you must do.

GRACE
Statesmanship is not my most fluent tongue. I should not be the one to ask favors of our enemies.

TOBY
Bingham will discover in time we have slaughtered an English ship. I fear there is no choice any longer.

Grace looks at him, knowing he's right.

GRACE
(shouting)
Drop anchor!

CALAHAN
We are miles from Castle Donovan.

GRACE
Aye. I don't wish for them to see our sails and think this an ambush. I will enter alone and attempt a negotiation.

CALAHAN
Negotiate with O'Donovan?

GRACE

A war is brewing, Calahan. We must
come to see our enemies as allies
if we are to survive.

She looks back to the water as Calahan takes this in.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Dozens of boats row to shore from the anchored Hibernia. As Grace's boat is pulled onto the beach, she jumps down to the sand. Hugh attempts to do the same, but falls on his face because of his handcuffs. He scrambles to his feet.

HUGH

Are we just about finished with
these shackles? If you've brought
me to shore I assume you have
accepted me as part of the crew.

She walks past him to Calahan, handing him the key to Hugh's handcuffs and whispering low.

GRACE

Release him. I need his services
available at a moment's notice, but
keep a close watch on him.

CALAHAN

Are you certain about this,
Captain? We have the advantage of
surprise in an ambush-

GRACE

I am sure.

She leaves him with a nod, turning towards the cliffs that house her enemy.

EXT. CASTLE DONOVAN - NIGHT

A CHAMBERLAIN opens the door, surprised to find Grace alone. The servant's face falls as Grace forces a smile.

INT. CASTLE DONOVAN - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

O'DONOVAN (40s), built like a Viking, eats with rowdy CLANSMEN. No one notices the chamberlain leading Grace in.

CHAMBERLAIN

The Chief O'Malley.

Silence falls over the room as everyone turns to stare at Grace. The chamberlain quickly exits. O'Donovan stands.

O'DONOVAN

O'Malley, I am surprised to see you. I was prepared for an ambush.

GRACE

I do not seek a fight, only to discuss our situation. I am sure as Chieftains we can devise a solution beneficial to both our clans.

O'DONOVAN

You are no Chieftain. Your clan of heretics may have elected you, but Gaelic law and the law of God forbids it of women.

The clansmen all shout agreements.

GRACE

I do not wish to debate the law of God, O'Donovan. I wish to discuss the release of my crew. And the possibility of an alliance.

O'DONOVAN

An alliance?

GRACE

The English seek to destroy us-

O'DONOVAN

Destroy you, perhaps.

(he draws his sword)

What do we think the notorious Grace O'Malley will fetch me? A knighthood? A barony?

GRACE

You filthy snake.

O'DONOVAN

You are in no position to speak to me, woman.

The clansmen move in, but Grace's men BURST through the door. We see Hugh among them. He glances back at the door, a chance to escape. He turns back, running out unnoticed in the chaos.

Grace holds out her hand, stopping her men in their tracks.

GRACE

I challenge you to single combat, O'Donovan! We cannot afford the needless deaths of able fighters.

O'DONOVAN

Fool, we will destroy your crew of pirates and outlaws in an instant. There is no need for single combat.

Grace changes gears, addressing his clansmen instead.

GRACE

What does it say to you that your chieftain refuses the sacred ritual of single combat? O'Donovan seeks favor from the English, a lordship that will leave him in comfort as your lives are destroyed. He trades your lands and your livelihood to foreigners. Ask yourselves if he is worth dying for in this fight.

The clansmen look at each other, not sure what to do. O'Donovan grunts and steps forward, sword pointed at her.

O'DONOVAN

I will fight you, pretender. If only to show my men that I fight with God on my side.

Grace pulls her two swords. The clansmen retreat, watching with bated breath.

O'Donovan and Grace circle, daring the other to make the first move. Finally, O'Donovan lunges and they CLASH blades.

She strikes quickly, beating him back. They seem equally matched until-

A heavy strike from O'Donovan KNOCKS one of Grace's swords from her hand. Her crew tenses as Grace struggles to block his blows with only one blade.

He pushes her back, his sword getting closer and closer to her neck with each swing.

Toby grips his sword, ready to interfere. But suddenly, Grace DIVES UNDER O'Donovan's blade, rolling to her dropped sword.

She quickly picks it up and THROWS it, slicing O'Donovan's leg. He falls to the ground with a SHOUT.

He moves to get up, but finds a blade AT HIS NECK. Grace stands over him. He's finished.

GRACE

You are a selfish pig, O'Donovan. Your people deserve a better leader than you.

O'DONOVAN

Do it, then.

Her blade hovers at his neck, itching to strike, but she moves it away.

GRACE

I am in no need of vengeful
O'Donovan's after my blood. And I
believe you will see my side. After
all, God appears to fight with me.

She looks around at the watching clansmen.

GRACE (CONT'D)

O'Donovans, understand how dire the
situation that I spare your
chieftain's life today. He will
accompany us home to Belclare. I
suggest any of you not needed here
follow us. To ensure the protection
of your chieftain and our homeland.

O'Donovan looks up at his men and nods.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. CASTLE DONOVAN - CLIFFSIDE - NIGHT

O'Donovan is escorted from the castle in chains. His SON (20s) walks up and embraces him.

SON
We will be close behind, Father.

O'DONOVAN
(whispering)
Get word to MacNally.

SON
Safe journeys to you as well.

Grace's men pull O'Donovan along, leading him down towards the beach. Grace watches on the cliffside when Hugh walks up.

GRACE
You should tend to O'Donovan's leg before it infects.

HUGH
Of course, my lady.

GRACE
Do you think I've made a mistake?
Deciding to fight the English?

Hugh is taken aback. He considers his response.

HUGH
You clearly understand the responsibility of war. But I've only known you a short while, I may not be the best to say.

GRACE
I only ask as I seem to have inspired you to escape.
(off his look)
I am not interested in excuses, only in why you returned.

HUGH
I suppose I have a few responsibilities of my own I would like to evade.

GRACE
And I have some I must face.

She stares out at the water, lost in thought.

EXT. OPEN SEA - EVENING

The Hibernia cuts through the waves, oars splashing in time with the rowers chants.

ROWERS

Heave! Ho! Heave! Ho!

Grace tunes out the noise, standing again at the bow of the ship, fully focused ahead, where the shore awaits.

EXT. BELCLARE CASTLE - NIGHT

A hundred O'Malley CLANSMEN are gathered in the grass, lit only by torches. In the center is Grace, commanding their full attention with her booming voice.

GRACE

I have called this meeting to discuss a great matter. England, our sovereign once only in name, has declared its intent to colonize Ireland, and to bring us under strict English law.

Mumbles of disapproval and annoyance from the crowd.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Our O'Flaherty brothers have voiced their decision to bow down, accept the rewards and titles offered and become slaves to the crown.

From the window of the castle, we find DONAL watching the O'Malleys, his anger brewing.

GRACE (CONT'D)

But we are O'Malleys. We create our own destiny in this world.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Sir Henry Sidney's cell, now empty. We move under his cot to find a hole in the stone wall, painstakingly carved over weeks with only a chisel and dagger.

GRACE (V.O.)

How we choose to proceed will have consequences not only for us, but for every O'Malley after.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S CASTLE - GROUNDS - NIGHT

Just outside of the dungeon, Sir Sidney breaks through the dirt. He rolls onto the ground, gasping in fresh night air.

Getting up, he finds himself staring into the face of Richard Bingham, flanked by two GUARDS. He flashes a wicked smile and Sir Sidney collapses, any hope of escape lost.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - NIGHT

Hugh stands on the edge of a cliff, a letter in his hands. "TO MY RIGHT WORSHIPFUL LORD HUGH DE LACY, I PRAY YOU HURRY TO YOUR NEW COUNTSHIP, WHERE THE IRISH CONTINUE TO REBEL--"

GRACE (V.O.)

We have a responsibility to our
descendants as to our ancestors to
stay true to the O'Malley way.

Before we can read any more, Hugh tosses the letter off the cliff, watching it as it falls into the rocky waters below.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Grace writes by candlelight at the altar. The letter from Elizabeth asking for fealty open beside her. All around, the painted figures of Irish legend look down upon her.

GRACE (V.O.)

This choice would not be easy. The
Queen of England commands men and
fleets far outnumbering our own.

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - TERRACE - DAY

A royal MESSENGER presenting a letter on a small pillow. Sipping her tea, Elizabeth nods and the messenger slices the letter open, hands it to her, and retreats from the room.

GRACE (V.O.)

But she sits on a throne across the
sea, entangled in conflict with
empires on all sides. If she means
to prove herself in our motherland,
we will not aid her in it.

Elizabeth reads. "YOU ARE NOT MY QUEEN. SIGNED GRACE O'MALLEY, CHIEF OF HER NAME." Elizabeth raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S PALACE - HANGING GROUNDS - DAWN

Sir Sidney is led to the noose. He steps onto the platform, looking into the crowd, locking eyes with Grace.

He nods, a gesture of both forgiveness and apology. He makes the sign of the cross as the noose circles his neck.

GRACE (V.O.)
If we fight, we must be willing to
lay down our lives to defend what
is ours. To die for Ireland.

The EXECUTIONER pulls the lever and Sir Sidney falls. He twitches, then silently swings. Grace looks on, determined.

EXT. BELCLARE CASTLE - BACK TO SCENE

Grace looks at each of her men.

GRACE
But I cannot fight without you
behind me.

A moment of silence before a WARRIOR shouts above the others.

WARRIOR
For Ireland!

Soon all of the clansmen are joining in the chant. They use "umall," the ancient name for their land, and "abu" an Irish war cry meaning "to victory."

CLANSMEN
Umall, abu! Umall, abu! Umall, abu!

Grace stares ahead, fire in her eyes.

END OF PILOT