

THE WHITE COMPANY

screenplay by
Nicholas Meyer

based on the novel
by
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

c/o Alan Gasmer
William Morris
Beverly Hills, CA
310-274-7451

BLACK SCREEN - TITLE CRAWL...

The 14th Century...

The Crusades are over...

Chivalry is dying...

The printing press does not exist...

Gunpowder does...

MAP OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE FEATURING

England, France, Spain and Italy... as WE DRIFT CLOSER...

WHOMP!

THE COAT OF ARMS OF EDWARD III erupts over the map of England!

TITLES CONTINUE:

*With his son, the Black Prince,
Edward III rules England - and much of France.*

WHOMP!

THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE BLACK PRINCE erupts out of France...!

TITLES CONTINUE:

*Together they dream of placing their ally,
King Pedro, upon the throne of Spain.*

WHOMP!

KING PEDRO'S COAT OF ARMS erupts out of Spain...!

TITLE:

THE WHITE COMPANY
by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

WHOMP! WHOMP! WHOMP! Other HERALDIC COATS OF ARMS clutter the screen, erupting from different parts of the European Map.

CREDITS

NAVARRÉ, BURGUNDY, FRANCE, BRABANT, ARAGON, CASTILE, SICILY, LEON, etc. - all with their colorful imagery and LATIN DEVICES, we are in the world of KNIGHTS and ARMOR...

CREDITS OVER... until the screen is filled with HERALDRY...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A BELL TOLLING UNDER grows steadily LOUDER... suddenly...

1 EXT. BEAULIEU ABBEY BELL TOWER - DAY 1

Title: ENGLAND

The huge BELL at Beaulieu tolls, echoes reverberating in...
the MONASTERY FIELDS and WALLED GARDENS, where

Cistercian MONKS in white cassocks look up from their chores in confusion. They look at the sun, still high in the sky - too early for Vespers... Why is the bell ringing?

SEVERAL ANGLES

MONKS at different occupations - crushing grapes for wine, cleaning fish, chopping and stacking firewood - all REACTING to the Bell. They wipe hands, brush off cassocks...

2 CU BEAUTIFUL ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT - 2

INT. BEAULIEU ABBEY SCRIPTORIUM - DAY

gilt lettering and deepest BLUE. A BRUSH hesitates in mid-stroke and we PAN UP TO REVEAL

ALLEYNE EDRICSON, NOVICE (though clearly a Master Illuminator), all confused by the bell. Alleyne is 19. His clear eyes are almost as blue as his ink. His face is handsome, intelligent and humorous - but *innocent*. He has not yet been fully formed.

Because he is a novice, his HAIR remains untousured...

Alleyne looks at other perplexed MONKS in the Scriptorium.

What can the bell mean? No matter - it calls...

3 EXT. BEAULIEU ABBEY - DAY 3

...and the MONKS FILE SILENTLY uphill towards the Great Chapel of Beaulieu, atop which the bell continues to SOUND.

4 INT. THE GREAT CHAPEL - DAY 4

The large and splendid stone edifice is dark save for the candles and rays of sunlight piercing the colorful STAINED GLASS as...

THE MONKS file into the Chant of Plainsong sung by 2 AGED MONKS who sit holding an ENORMOUS hymnal.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

ABBOT BERGHESH

a stern, unsmiling old man, watching as the place fills up.

AT THE CENTER

ONE GIANT MONK, almost seven feet tall, with a thatch of RED HAIR, waiting. His expression is at once humorous and defiant and there is something of the prisoner/defendant about him. Maybe it's the TWO MONKS guarding him on either side. (Like Alleyne, he is an untonsured Novice.)

ANGLE ON STONE LATTICE WORK

Behind which, separated from the rest, are the NOVICES, among them Alleyne. All watch with fearful interest and curiosity. The SINGING stops. The two Monks tuck their arms in the sleeves of their cassocks - and wait.

WIDE ANGLE

All present and correct. The Abbot remains in his high oaken chair, dominating the scene. VOICES ECHO on stone.

ABBOT

Prefer the charges.

BROTHER JEROME

Brought in the year of our Lord 1366 against Brother John, also known as Hordle John, a novice in Beaulieu Abbey - Item: that Brother John consumed an entire pot of beer, intended to be shared with Brother Ambrose, who could scarce eat his salted fish on account of his exceeding dryness.

Some smiles. Including the Prisoner, who looks over at the thin, petty BROTHER AMBROSE, who does not smile back...

BROTHER JEROME (CONT'D)

Item: having been ordered to fast two days for the greater glory of Saint Monica, Brother John was heard by Brother Ambrose to say that he wished 20,000 Devils would fly away with Saint Monica or any other saint who came between a man and his meat.

No one smiling now. Except for Alleyne, who doesn't realize it. The poker-faced Abbot, however, takes note of his smile.

(CONTINUED)

BROTHER JEROME (CONT'D)

Item: that when Brother Ambrose rebuked the penitent for this blasphemous wish, Brother John did hold brother Ambrose outside a second story window long enough for said brother Ambrose to say four Hail Marys.

No one smiling now. Even Alleyne.

BROTHER JEROME (CONT'D)

Item: that on the Feast of Saint James, Brother Ambrose saw Brother John in conversation with a person of the opposite sex.

(gasps!)

One Mary Sowley, upon the Brockenhurst road, and that after several jokes and smiles, Brother John did carry said Mary Sowley across a stream, to the infinite relish of the Devil and the eternal damnation of his soul.

All horrified. Only Brother Ambrose bears anything like a smile - a smirk of satisfaction. Alleyne is awestruck.

ABBOT

What have you to say, Brother John?

Brother John scratches his head in something like amusement.

BROTHER JOHN

True, I drank the beer and before I knew it I was staring at the bottom of the pot. I'm a big man, reverend father and I work up a big thirst.

(shrugs)

It is also true that I held Brother Ambrose out of the window - yet all can see I did him no harm.

You wouldn't know it to look at Brother Ambrose...

BROTHER JOHN (CONT'D)

As for the maid - I helped her cross the stream without wetting her shoes. I would have shamed my manhood to have done otherwise.

ABBOT

You have freely confessed your crimes; for spiritual penance of which you must be expelled from this order.

4 CONTINUED: (3)

ANGLE ON ALLEYNE

horrified. Brother John starts to leave...

ABBOT (CONT'D)

Stay! But first, you must also be
punished corporeally.

Huh? The TWO adjacent MONKS make to seize Brother John, but he steps back as the Brethren close in and rips up an OAK PRIE DIEU, swinging it like a club...!

The two Old Singing Monks react in surprise!

BROTHER JOHN

Not so fast...! Throw me out if
that is your pleasure, but anyone
lays a hand on me and I promise
he'll meet the Devil before I will!

ABBOT

Restrain him...

They try. Brother John swings and the fight is on! MONKS in a riot at the Abbey - things get broken, heads, chairs... A donnybrook! Brother John doesn't scruple to swing himself on the belfry BELLROPE, kicking out in all directions. There goes the STAINED GLASS!

The two Singing Monks duck behind their big book..!

ANGLE ON THE LATTICE

from their protected vantage point, the novices watch with horror - except for Alleyne, who cannot quite suppress a smile of appreciation. The BELL is deafening!

Brother John is easily capable of defending himself. He holds back the lot with a single PEW. As he trashes the chapel and the Monks SCREAM -

Alleyne sees BROTHER AMBROSE - the little pissant is sneaking up behind Brother John with a Holy Scepter, ready to bash him on the head from behind!

Alleyne can't resist - and, leaving the protection of the lattice work, sticks out -

CLOSE UP - HIS FOOT! Down goes Brother Ambrose!

Hordle John reacts - realizes Alleyne has helped him... With a mighty bound, Brother John makes for the quaking little tattletale...! What a RACKET!! In the midst of which, we
CUT TO:

5

INT. ABBOT BERGHESH'S CELL, LATER - DAY

5

Silence. The Abbot faces the small window, his back to us.

A KNOCK. The Abbot turns; he holds a PARCHMENT in his hands.

ABBOT

Enter.

Alleyne comes in.

ABBOT (CONT'D)

Alleyne Edricson.

(sighs)

It is a cruel chance of Fate that our Abbey loses two Novices in a single day, our worst and our best.

ALLEYNE

Because I tripped Brother Ambrose? Reverend father, I know I did wrong, but it seemed unfair that all those -

ABBOT

(smiles)

Your high spirits are not on trial here, my son. Today is your nineteenth birthday.

(Alleyne's baffled look)

Under the terms of your late father's will,

(the Parchment)

You were to find shelter and learning within these walls until your nineteenth year - at which time the will stipulates that you spend twelve months in the world of the flesh, to discover for yourself whether you are made for that place or for this.

ALLEYNE

(appalled)

I am to leave? When?

ABBOT

This day.

ALLEYNE

(groping)

With no warning? Sir... The church is my calling - and my home... I do not wish to go, reverend father.

(CONTINUED)

ABBOT

(gently)

You are a second son, Alleyne Edricson, and Fate has not been kind to second sons. You have no rights, no fortune - and no say in this matter.

ALLEYNE

I know I shall return when the time has expired.

ABBOT

Do not presume to anticipate God's will. Where will you go?

ALLEYNE

(considers)

I shall seek out my older brother, the Squire of Minstead. I have never met him;

(realizes)

I know nothing of the world...

The Abbot frowns, paces about the room as Alleyne watches.

ABBOT

Listen to me, Alleyne: within these walls the world is simple; there are rules. Outside, there are no rules. Choose your friends wisely.

ALLEYNE

Jesus Christ is my friend.

ABBOT

You misunderstand me. Outside these walls, you will meet many who call themselves men. Be not deceived. Seek out a true man and model yourself upon him.

ALLEYNE

A True Man. Yes, reverend father.

ABBOT

One final word: at all costs avoid Woman, who is the spawn of the Devil.

ALLEYNE

Yes, reverend father.

ABBOT

Now kneel and receive my blessing.

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

Alleyne kneels in a RAY of sunshine coming through the window and receives the Abbot's blessing as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

6 EXT. BEAULIEU ABBEY - DAY

6

MONKS line the walls and watch as Alleyne says farewell and begins his journey. He carries a SATCHEL with some food and clothes but nothing else save a walking STAFF.

His eyes wet with TEARS to leave the only home he's known.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (LATER)

7

Alleyne on the road. The countryside is so beautiful that it is hard for a young man to stay in low spirits. Alleyne is on the point of recognizing this and smiling, when he HEARS the CRIES of an OLD MAN in PAIN. He sees:

TWO THIEVES robbing an OLD MAN, mercilessly beating him.

ALLEYNE

Stop! STOP!!

He rushes to the rescue, whirling his staff and FIGHTS with the THIEVES, brawny and desperate men in colorful garb...

Alleyne's intentions are good, but these are professionals. They pull KNIVES and CUDGELS and dance about until one grabs him in a bear hug, while the other continues pilfering the old Man. Alleyne's struggles are useless. He is about to be knifed when...

The sound of HOOFBEATS sends one of them running...

Alleyne hangs onto the other one for dear life.

AN ARMORED HORSEMAN and MOUNTED ARCHERS arrive. The SHERIFF wears the king's heraldic device and a plume in his helmet.

They seize the nearest Thief. The SECOND THIEF takes off across the heather...

SHERIFF

Bind them!

Alleyne is to be tied with the Man he was fighting!

ALLEYNE

Wait! I am no thief...!

OLD MAN

(gasps)
'Tis true, my lord. He was my
rescuer!

ALLEYNE

I am a clerk from Beaulieu Abbey
and I -

SHERIFF

I am the Law of England, and the
mouthpiece of His Gracious Majesty
King Edward the Third. Do you
dispute that?

ALLEYNE

No, sir.

SHERIFF

(looks around)
There were two on the run from
Southampton where I am Sheriff.
Where is the other?

Shielding their eyes, they can see the Second Thief, halfway
across the field.

1ST ARCHER

There, my lord.

SHERIFF

Spread yourselves lads and do your
work.

The Archers fan out and calmly string their bows as though
they had all the time in the world.

Alleyne watches in disbelief, looks at the old Man, then back
at the fleeing Figure, while the other Man lies pinned.

1ST ARCHER

Seven yards windage, Hal.

2ND ARCHER

(shoots)
Five...

As Alleyne watches, wide-eyed, the ARROW misses. Whew!

1ST ARCHER

Seven, you jack fool!

He shoots. The Second Thief, quite far away by this time,
springs up into the air and falls dead.

Alleyne may be sick.

7 CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF

Now as to the other knave. Draw thy sword, Thomas of Redbridge and chop off his head.

The man prepares to obey...

ALLEYNE

But, sir - he has not yet come to trial!

SHERIFF

The trial has come to him.

He nods. The Man raises his SWORD and carries out the sentence. Some BLOOD hits Alleyne in his face. He faints!

Without further ado, the Sheriff and his Archers march off. Waiting until he is sure they are gone, the Old Man commences rifling Alleyne's possessions. Some world...

WIPE TO:

CU: A PAINTED SIGN - "THE PIED MERLIN" - WIDEN TO REVEAL

8 INT. "THE PIED MERLIN" - NIGHT

8

The NOISE is huge. MEN Talking, cursing, drinking, laughing.

A bedraggled and shaken Alleyne totters into the confusion.

There's WAT THE LIMNER, drunk and asleep, his trade proclaimed by his brushes... A DENTIST is pulling someone's tooth, amid a deal of BLOOD and groans... FORESTERS talking by the huge FIRE... STUDENTS from Cambridge spouting theology... Someone JUGGLING...

Alleyne stumbles his way through and bumps into the hearty if elderly DAME ELIZA... Jesus, a Woman! Spawn of the Devil.

DAME ELIZA

Bless my soul, a prince!

(busses him)

Umm! I'd've made short work of you in my youth!

She laughs as does the company. Alleyne is mortified - she kissed him and she's from Hell! His hand covers his cheek as if she had planted a brand there.

ALLEYNE

I, uh, seek a bed for the night.

DAME ELIZA

I've got one...!

(CONTINUED)

ALLEYNE
 (she can't mean -)
 But I no longer have any money...

DAME ELIZA
 (grins)
 Then I'll take it out in trade!

Laughter all around. Alleyne makes to leave, but she grabs him good-naturedly, reassuring.

DAME ELIZA (CONT'D)
 Stay, I'll not bite. What's your poison?

ALLEYNE
 My - ?

DAME ELIZA
 It's beer for the foresters, mead for the gleeman, ale for the students, strong waters for the tinker and wine for the rest.

ALLEYNE
 Uh, beer...?

DAME ELIZA
 Bravely spoke, lad. Sit you down. No brawling gentlemen! Remember the good name of the house!

She beams someone amiably with a flagon as she bustles off and Alleyne tries to make himself as inconspicuous as possible, listening to all the chatter.

VOICES
 A song...! Let's have a song, Will!

The jongleur called WILL twangs his instrument in response and launches into a raunchy BALLAD, cheered and hooted in encouragement by the others.

Alleyne blushes CRIMSON and jumps up, interrupting.

ALLEYNE
 For shame!

The singing stops; all look at him. Alleyne has about had it.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)
 For same that good Christian company should sing such filth.

WILL
 (ominous)
 Here - what're you calling filth?
 (MORE)

8 CONTINUED: (2)

WILL (CONT'D)

I've sung in every court from Tweed
to Trent and I'll cut off your ears
for hearing so bad.

He whips out a KNIFE and no one makes a move to stop him.
On the contrary, the company is excited by the prospect of
Alleyne's losing his ears. He backs away.

VOICE

JUST A MINUTE.

From out of the pile of bodies, Hordle John emerges wearing
civilian clothing. Standing, he must stoop in the low-
ceilinged place; he practically takes up all of it.

ALLEYNE

Brother John!

The others react. Will turns, knife in hand.

HORDLE JOHN

It may be that my young friend
spoke too sharply - he is cloister-
bred and easily shocked. Yet in
fact the song was none of the
cleanest and you know it well.
Therefore leave his ears alone.

WILL

And who will make me, infant?

HORDLE JOHN

You're getting warm...

ALLEYNE

Peace, Brother John. I will go...

HORDLE JOHN

Hush, lad, I count him not a fly.
(to Will)
Come on then...

He pulls forth his STAFF and swings it - it makes a whoosh -
as the company shrinks back in fear. Will is uncertain,
looks at his knife, moves forward when -

BANG!

the door opens, REVEALING a mid-sized, grizzled SOLDIER with
a LIVID SCAR on one cheek, a LONGBOW on his back and a sword
at his side - SAM AYLWARD. He has a dented steel cap and a
surcoat of white with the LION OF ST. GEORGE in red upon it.

SAM

Ha! Good evening all! Hola, by my
soul, a woman! Kiss me, *ma coeur!*

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (3)

He seizes Dame Eliza and plants a firm kiss on her lips, releases her before she knows what's happened and does likewise to the startled BARMAID. Alleyne can't keep up!

SAM (CONT'D)

C'est l'amour, l'amour! By God, I have been away from home so long I have forgot my native tongue. Sam Aylward is my name, a true English bowman in the service of his Majesty, lately returned from France. *Entrez, mes gars!*

At this command, FOUR COMMON MEN enter with bundles, including a large FEATHER BED...

SAM (CONT'D)

See the wages of valor, gentlemen! A feather bed from Flanders; seven yards of red Ottoman cloth and nine of gold Wine, *ma cherie!* I have acquired a large thirst on the road! Swine!

(to one of the men)

Thou hast brushed dirt on this ermine! I have slain men for less!

COMMON MAN

Not I, master -

SAM

And besides the ermine, this cup of Flemish gold!

He holds it forth - the company is flabbergasted by the whole performance. There's no doubt: war pays.

HORDLE JOHN

Where got you these goodly things,
O boastful one?

SAM

Where there is as much more
awaiting the brave lads who will
pick it up -

He seizes the flagon of wine and pours it into the golden goblet, brandishing it aloft -

SAM (CONT'D)

Join me, *mes amis*, and drink to my comrades - to the White Company!

ALL

The White Company!

(CONTINUED)

Will sheathes his knife and Alleyne watches, absorbed. Food is brought to the Archer and he cuts and eats it lustily.

HORDLE JOHN

What is the White Company?

SAM

(eats as he talks)

Ma foi! Never heard of the greatest band of warriors since Alexander? You strapping boys stay home and plow the pasture when you might be sharing glory and gold in the service of the King!

A STUDENT

Your White Company's nothing but a band of mercenaries...

SAM

Soldiers of fortune!

STUDENT

Who plunder for the highest bidder! White Company, Blue Company... Men with no cause but their purses!

SAM

Look at me! I sleep and eat of the best, my women wear silk and gold. Which of you will join the White Company, take your prisoners, and ransom them to claim his fortune? You, *mon brave*?

He looks at a young Forester.

FORESTER

I have a wife and child...

SAM

Aaah - tied to apron strings. What about you, young man? Hast no desire to cut a foe in two?

ALLEYNE

I fear I have not.

SAM

More's the pity. Are there no men left in England?

HORDLE JOHN

Archer, I believe you to be a liar.

SAM

(stops eating, grins)
By my hilt, here's a man at last.
What say you, small one?

HORDLE JOHN

That you boast of exploits you
never did perform - I will show you
what a real man can do...

He pulls off his shirt and reveals a chest the size of a mountain. The others pull back, eager to watch. Sam rises, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

SAM

I like your spirit, infant - but
stay, we must have a wager.

He takes off his surcoat and chainmail...

HORDLE JOHN

If I win - I'll take that feather
bed of yours and give it to my
mother.

SAM

(pointed)
But when you lose?

HORDLE JOHN

(confused)
Nay, I have only these clothes to
call my own...

SAM

You have something better, *mon ami*:
you've got that fine corpse to
offer in the service of the Black
Prince.

Hordle John realizes...

HORDLE JOHN

Done! If I lose, I am the
Company's man.

Without further ado, the wrestling match is on...

SAM

The first to be pinned...

HORDLE JOHN

Say farewell to your bed, archer...

Hordle John is by far the bigger - but Sam is a soldier and knows a thing or two... Alleyne watches, agog at the sight.

CONTINUED: (6)

As the others watch and duck out of the way, the fight moves all over the room. It looks as though Hordle John must win, but Sam is too quick and knows too many moves...

After a particularly close call, he flips the giant and sits on top of him. A great CRY goes up.

HORDLE JOHN (CONT'D)

(gasping)

How did you do that?

SAM

Nay, come with me to France and I'll teach thee that and more!

HORDLE JOHN

(grins)

You needn't worry. I'd made up my mind to go before we ever fought.

SAM

(helps him up)

Bravely spoke, *mon ami*.

ALLEYNE reacts - can it be? Things happen so fast out here...

HORDLE JOHN

Sure you don't want to try two out of three?

SAM

I've no desire to press my luck..

(to Dame Eliza)

Ma cherie - drinks again for the company to celebrate this baptism!

He is cheered for his largesse, the drinks are poured and Alleyne finds himself chugging down a HUGE QUAFF...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. "PIED MERLIN" INN - DAY

Alleyne, fast asleep, lies among a gaggle of Sleepers... A FLY BUZZES over the Men and remains of food and drink...

Alleyne is awakened by a BUCKET OF WATER thrown at his face! He awakens, screaming and hungover at the same time. Sam Aylward holds the bucket.

ALLEYNE

Whaa...?

9 CONTINUED:

SAM

Best way to fight a hangover, lad.
Painful at first but done with all
at once. Are you coming?

ALLEYNE

(blinking water)

Coming - ?

SAM

Your oversized friend says we may
not leave you here unprotected. We
are headed for Castle Twynham.
Will you walk with us?

Alleyne wonders how he can tactfully decline.

SAM (CONT'D)

Never fear, boy - you do not
compromise your soul by taking the
air with two fellow Englishmen.

That's true.

WIPE TO:

10 EXT. ROAD - DAY (LATER)

10

Alleyne walks between Hordle John and Sam, literally a babe
in the woods between these seasoned men of the world. His
clothes are drying and his spirits risen.

SAM

How did a man of your stripe come
to take Holy orders?

HORDLE JOHN

Meg Forsythe refused me for a
husband and I fell into a
melancholy.

ALLEYNE

(startled)

Is that a reason to enter the Holy
church?

HORDLE JOHN

It seemed like a good idea at the
time, though I confess I'm not
scholar like yourself, Master
Edricson.

(to Sam)

He's bright mettle, our lad - knows
how to read.

(CONTINUED)

SAM

Indeed. Can you make this out?

He hands over a PARCHMENT which Alleyne unfolds.

ALLEYNE

"To Sir Nigel Loring, commander of
the White Company -"

SAM

The most valiant knight who ever
drew breath -

ALLEYNE

"Greetings and salutations -"

SAM

Amazing!

HORDLE JOHN

I told you...

ALLEYNE

"...from Sir Claude La Tour -"

SAM

His deputy -

ALLEYNE

"Stationed presently in France..."

SAM

But this is wondrous! Go on, lad!

ALLEYNE

"There is talk of brave deeds to be
done should the Black Prince take
the field against the Spanish..."

SAM

(seizes the parchment)
A war, I knew it! O happy day -
(to Hordle John)
Did I not promise thee, *mon ami*?

HORDLE JOHN

That you did, Master Aylward.

SAM

Well, *mon enfant*, do you not wish
to journey with us to sunny Espana?
Mark my words, this will be the
last campaign of true men.

ALLEYNE

(startled by the phrase)
True Men? What do you mean?

SAM

(bitter)

I have only one word to say to you, my boy: GUNPOWDER! Strike a spark and BOOM! your enemy dies. In five years there won't be anything personal about killing. What kind of warriors will there be then, eh? Little boys with lighted fuses! It's now or never, lad; last chance if you want to go with the men.

ALLEYNE

(smiles)

I would see more of the world one day, but first I must seek out my brother, the Squire of Minstead... This stone proclaims my path...

A ROUGH STONE with the words MINSTEAD hacked into it... Indeed, they have arrived at a fork - one way leads into the WOODS. They stop, a little depressed at having to part.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

God be with you both.

SAM

He will lad, never fear.

HORDLE JOHN

And with you, Master Edricson - for there is much goodness in you.

They embrace fondly and go their separate ways.

SEVERAL ANGLES

Sunlight streams through the branches as Alleyne makes his way. BIRDS sing; the forest is alive with possibilities.

A DEER stares at Alleyne before ANGRY VOICES startle it and drive it off.

Alleyne REACTS and conceals himself behind a tree.

ALLEYNE'S POV

A MAN and a MAID in heated argument. We CAN'T HEAR, but the body language is clear: the MAN (he's over 30), is tugging at the MAID (she's young and easily the most beautiful thing Alleyne has ever seen), doesn't want to go with him. Complicating matters is a HOODED FALCON on her arm, flapping its wings in blind panic.

11 CONTINUED:

The Maid trails a DISTINCTIVE *GREEN SCARF*...

MAN

Nay, lady, you will go with me!

MAID

Never, on my life!

MAN

So be it! I'll have you, though I
roast in Perdition for all eternity!

Not exactly sure of himself, Alleyne steps forward.

ALLEYNE

Surely sir, you do not mean to hold
this lady against her will.

MAN

Who in Hell are you?

ALLEYNE

It does not matter who I am. Leave
go the lady -

MAID

Bless you, kind sir -

MAN

Quiet, wench, or I - !

But she acts first and BITES the hand that holds her. With a YELL he lets go and she shields herself behind Alleyne.

MAN (CONT'D)

Get off my land, rogue, or I'll
kill you where you stand.

ALLEYNE

(horrified)

But - this is your land?

MAN

I am the Squire of Minstead and all
about here know what is mine.
Stand off, I say.

ALLEYNE

I am sure you did but tease the
lady, and will let her go of her
own free will. If not, you must
deal with me.

The Squire's eyes blaze with fury and he hesitates, looking for a weapon. Something in Alleyne's cold demeanor makes him pause. Abruptly he takes off, blowing a WHISTLE at his neck.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

Stay, can we not talk? I am your
brother, Alleyne Edricson, raised
at Beaulieu -

MAID

(grabs him)

Are you out of your wits? He's
gone to summon his dogs! Run!

She frees her FALCON, which flies off...

ALLEYNE

His dogs? But -

MAID

RUN!

She pulls him through the WOODS...

12 EXT. THE SQUIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

12

Sure enough, the Squire is releasing 8 bridled GREAT DANES!

13 EXT. WOODS - DAY

13

The chase is on! The Maid races through trees and bracken
tugging Alleyne, who can't quite believe this is happening.
In the distance we HEAR and BAYING of the pack.

MAID

Hurry. HURRY!

INTERCUT SEVERAL ANGLES OF

the furious contest as the howling DOGS race after them.
They are getting nearer...

There's a STREAM. She slogs through it, heedless of her
gown; both of them are gasping for breath by the time they
get across. She falls on the earth on the far side of some
bushes, panting, pulls Alleyne down with her. They lie there
heaving, watching as the DOGS approach the stream, get
confused, wander around... the Squire goes off in search...

MAID (CONT'D)

(smiles)

They've lost the scent.

God is she pretty, even disheveled. Alleyne can only gape.

MAID (CONT'D)

Look at my gown. My mother will
flay me... Why did you not kill him
when you had the chance?

(CONTINUED)

ALLEYNE

Kill my own brother?

MAID

He would have killed you.

She wrings water out of her **SCARF**. Alleyne sits up heavily.

ALLEYNE

The world must be insane. Since yesterday morning I have witnessed monks brawling, highway robbery, two executions, one knife fight, one wrestling match and now God help me, another instant and I would have murdered my own brother.

He puts his head in his hands. She's offended.

MAID

If that's how you feel, perhaps you'd best return and surrender me.

ALLEYNE

I could never do that.

MAID

I am relieved to hear it. Come, we are safely off his land; let us see if we can find Giles...

Giles? They pick themselves up and start walking...

MAID (CONT'D)

I've only myself to blame. My horse shied at a badger and threw me to the ground - his ground.

ALLEYNE

Could you not read the sign and know you where you were?

MAID

(awkward)

I saw no sign.

(before he can respond)

The villain dreams of marrying me and so gaining my father's property. O that I were a man and could take my own vengeance!

ALLEYNE

Is fighting all everyone thinks about in this world? I wish I had never left Beaulieu Abbey.

MAID

(stung!)

Thank you, kind sir. This path is
my way; therein surely lies yours.
I will trouble you no further.

She strikes off before he can speak. Feeling overwhelmed,
Alleyne starts to call after her, realizing it is pointless,
and starts walking - where? He hardly knows by now.

Before long she has joined him again. Challenged - and she's
not inclined to walk away from a challenge.

MAID (CONT'D)

(stoic)

Pay me no mind. I will say nothing.

ALLEYNE

Lady, it is I who must beg pardon.
I know not how to speak to a fair
maid such as yourself.

MAID

Then say I was right to wish for
vengeance.

ALLEYNE

Vengeance is never right.

MAID

Spoken like a Cardinal. You
presume to lecture me? Men fall at
my feet. All the time.

ALLEYNE

I am sure they do.

No irony intended. He looks miserable. She relents.

MAID

Well, well, for your sake I shall
forgive the man.

(steals a look)

What think you now?

This must be the sort of Woman the Abbot was warning about -

ALLEYNE

I was only wondering - are there
more in the world like you?

(off her look)

Forgive me - I can see there are
not...

MAID

(can't follow this mumble)

Ha! Here is Giles!

She bounds forward to her liveried PAGE and handsome HORSE. Alleyne realizes she is very well off indeed.

PAGE (GILES)

I have sought you everywhere, my lady.

MAID

(she mounts her horse)
All's well, thanks to this gentleman, who came as a true knight, between dragon and damsel.

She spurs her horse to Alleyne, leans down, offers her hand.

MAID (CONT'D)

My father is not rich, kind sir, but he is honored and honorable. How can I repay your heroism?

ALLEYNE

I need no payment. I have but two friends in the world and they have gone to the castle of Sir Nigel Loring. Perhaps you could direct me there?

She looks at him in astonishment, then bursts out LAUGHING.

MAID

Follow the stream! Giles!

She takes off at a gallop, followed by her page.

Alleyne stands alone in the wood, where this adventure began. Not his day. Alleyne starts walking, slowly...

CLOSE ON DICE - WIDEN TO REVEAL

A high street, if you can make it out, a bunch of HUTS...

Sam and Hordle John are playing and John has won just about everything Sam is standing in, when Alleyne appears, tired. Sam is almost naked, his arms and armor piled up...

SAM

Who comes here - ?!

ALLEYNE

Hordle John! Sam!

HORDLE JOHN

Master Edricson...

SAM

You're just in time, lad - he's cleaned me out.

HORDLE JOHN

(throws Sam's junk back)
Keep your property, man, I was only having fun. Did you not find your brother, Alleyne?

ALLEYNE

(wretched)
I found him - and came within an inch of killing him.

HORDLE JOHN

Killing him!

ALLEYNE

Aye, my brother proves to be a very devil. I know not where to go, now.

Sam collects his things; they walk into the village.

SAM

With us, by all means! Come to Sir Nigel's castle and take shelter for the night...

HORDLE JOHN

Aye, come and see if this hero is everything Sam says. I'm sick and tired of hearing Sir Nigel this and Sir Nigel that and Sir Nigel...

SCREAMS!

VOICES

BEAR!

PEOPLE RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES. As Alleyne and his friends gape, the VILLAGERS split in all directions as an ENORMOUS BEAR, slathering at the mouth, bounds towards them at tremendous speed. A rope round his neck indicates he has escaped from somewhere...

Abruptly, an older, distinguished-looking MAN steps into the path of the bear!

As Alleyne and the TOWNSFOLK watch in disbelief, the BEAR runs right up to the grey-haired Gent, who flicks a handkerchief sharply at his nose!

The odd movement startles the beast, who rears up, confused, and touches his snout with his paw, sitting in the road...

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

The respite is sufficient. Villagers rush out - a net is thrown over the Bear and he is recaptured...

The older Gent turns away, brushing an imaginary speck of dust with the same handkerchief. Sam puffs with pride.

SAM

That, friends, is Sir Nigel Loring!

Alleynes reacts, mumbles to himself -

ALLEYNE

A True Man...

14A EXT. TWYNHAM CASTLE - SUNSET

14A

SAM (V.O.)

A letter for you, Sir Nigel...

15 INT. GREAT HALL, SIR NIGEL'S TWYNHAM CASTLE - NIGHT

Big, drafty, grim. Seated on his chair of state, SIR NIGEL scowls at the parchment before him. LADY LORING, a veritable Katisha, tries to read the DOCUMENT, sitting by him.

Standing at attention next to the venerable Knight, his SQUIRES, PETER TERLAKE & WALTER FORD, lads of Alleyne's age.

SIR NIGEL

Hmmm...

Alleynes, Sam and Hordle John stand facing Sir Nigel who holds the PARCHMENT and turns it this way and that, clearly having some difficulty with it.

Sam eyes Alleyne, jerks his head, telling him to help out.

ALLEYNE

If my lord would permit...

He indicates the letter. Sir Nigel gestures him to approach.

SIR NIGEL

I'm having a bit of trouble with this first word... if I could just get a run at the thing...

He hands the document to Alleyne, who turns it right-side up!

ALLEYNE

I believe it will flow better this way, my lord.

(reads:)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

14A CONTINUED:

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)
"Know in this that Edward
Plantagenet, Black Prince of Wales,
authorizes you to recruit 75 archers,
50 men-at-arms and 20 cavalry to
bring the White Company up to battle
strength. When they are trained and
ready, bring them to Southampton,
where a ship is waiting to carry you
to Bordeaux. Your comrade-in-arms,
Sir Claude La Tour."

SIR NIGEL
(stands; roars)
War at last!

Then, realizing Lady Loring is displeased, sits again

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
I mean - war, what a shame...

LADY LORING
You know right well you have prayed
for it, my lord.

SIR NIGEL
Now, my suckling dove.
(hastily)
What say you, young man? The White
Company could use a fighter versed in
letters. Will you come with us in
the service of glory and the King?

ALLEYNE
I am a man of peace, my lord.

SIR NIGEL
Tut, lad, such a fault can be
easily remedied. We have a month
before we march to turn you into a
squire like Peter and Walter here.
You merely exchange one white
company for another. What say you?

Before Alleyne can refuse again -

VOICE
Father, why must I always sit and
study when great matters are - !?

In comes the very Maid Alleyne rescued! She's all put
together and looks fabulous, trailing her **GREEN SCARF**.

LADY LORING
Be still, Maude. Can you not see
your father is in conference?

(CONTINUED)

MAUDE sees Alleyne - smiles broadly at his confusion, then assumes a maidenly demureness, still grinning discreetly.

MAUDE

I beg pardon, my lord.

SIR NIGEL

I ask you again, lad: will you stay and learn to fight - and now I think of it, will you teach this daughter of mine her letters, before departing with us for the lily fields of France?

ANGLE ON ALLEYNE

tries to keep his eye on Sir Nigel, but can't help straying to the beautiful lady Maude... what a dazzling smile...

ALLEYNE

I don't suppose I could do one without the other?

SIR NIGEL

Tush, lad, be no lawyer and make conditions! In for a penny, in for a pound! Drink the cup to its dregs!

Alleyne stares at Maude... the cup is running over...

WHAM!

WIDEN TO REVEAL

16 EXT. SIR NIGEL'S CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

16

where BLACK SIMON OF NORWICH is training Alleyne with a SWORD SLICE that almost cut him in two!

Alleyne gapes.

BLACK SIMON

Come at me, boy! AT ME!

Confused, Alleyne rushes him clumsily. Simon steps aside and Alleyne sprawling over an extended foot as BLACK SIMON'S SWORD catches him by the throat.

Above, on the battlements, Maude watches, expressionless...

Sam, Hordle John and other YOUNG RECRUITS also watch. Simon withdraws the point, grabs Alleyne and pulls him up.

SIMON

Again!

Alleynes hesitates.

SIMON (CONT'D)
What ails thee, lad?

ALLEYNE
I have no quarrel with you, sir.
Jesus Christ says, "If thine enemy
strike thee, turn the other cheek."

SIMON
And where is this Jesus Christ?

ALLEYNE
(astonished)
Why, sir, he was crucified.

SIMON
And why was he crucified?

ALLEYNE
Why? Why because -

SIMON
*He was crucified because he
couldn't defend himself!!!*

ALLEYNE
(scandalized)
You mean Our Lord should have died
by the sword?

Simon grabs his BLADE and presents it, hilts up, beneath
Alleynes's nose, a crucifix.

SIMON
What is this? WHAT IS THIS??

ALLEYNE
A sword.

SIMON
A CROSS!

Alleynes is stunned to realize.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Can you think of a better way to
die than by the cross?

That does it; Alleynes lays on and Simon, satisfied, starts to
teach. The lesson becomes a -

MONTAGE of Alleynes, Hordle John and the other RECRUITS,
learning to become fighting men. They fight with dummies,
they fight each other;

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

they wrestle, they use SWORDS, AXES and the famous LONGBOW as Simon and Sam urge them on like the DRILL SERGEANTS they are...

Alleyne does get better at it... cutting at MELONS...

And better. Occasionally, as he practices, he looks up; sees

MAUDE on the battlements, staring at him, her Green Scarf billowing behind her in the wind... he's on her mind...

Black Simon sees this - and cuts Alleyne open. Not badly, but enough to keep his mind on the job...

The ARMORERS at the FORGES, busy turning out new weapons...

HORSES are being trained, as well... Alleyne tries riding and is unceremoniously dumped...!

BLACK SIMON (V.O.)
Know your enemy!

17 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

17

Black Simon lecturing the RECRUITS before HERALDIC SIGNS. He points to A DISTINCTIVE FORKED FLAG.

BLACK SIMON
This is the ORIFLAMME, the enemy flag of NO PRISONERS. Remember and beware this pennant - for on the day you behold it, that day shall be your last.

Alleyne studies the sinister BANNER... THWACK, THWACK!

18 EXT. AT THE ARCHERY BUTTS - DAY

18

CAMERA TRUCKS WITH SAM as he walks past the line of BOWMEN firing LONGBOWS at TARGETS...

SAM
Be on your mettle now, lads, for you will be tested in the School of Hard Knocks! Do not wink with one eye and look with the other, Silas. ...Don't hop and dance after your shot, Arnaud... that's it, good..! Steady, Robert don't stick your tongue out, man stand tall and steady, a crouch will shake your aim... *tres bien, mes gars*...!

THWACK, THWACK, THWACK! The ARROWS hit their targets...

(CONTINUED)

SAM (CONT'D)

At the battle of Crecy, the filthy French swore to cut off the fingers of the English archers! Here was their response!

Sam triumphantly holds up his two arrow-holding fingers - an arrogant V!

SAM (CONT'D)

SHOW ME, *MES GARS!*

They all hold up their 2 fingers in a V.

SAM (CONT'D)

And if they chop off one finger?

The MEN respond by flipping the bird - true story.

PETER TERLAKE (V.O.)

Besides fighting, a squire's duties are to look after his knight...

19 CU PEPIN, SIR NIGEL'S HUGE BLACK WAR HORSE

19 19

being brushed by Peter Terlake...

PETER

See to his needs...

WIDEN TO REVEAL INT. SQUIRES' HAYLOFT - DAY

Nothing more than straw in a part of the stables where Walter, Peter and Alleyne make their home.

Walter is polishing Sir Nigel's ARMOR with SAND. Chores...

WALTER

Mend his clothes, see his armor is bright and cut his hair.

ALLEYNE

He has no hair.

PETER

Aye, and therefore he's most particular how you cut it.

WALTER

Also groom Pepin, his warhorse, more precious to him than gold...

Alleyne, soaping Pepin's Bridle, considers all this...

ALLEYNE

Sir Nigel - would you say he was a typical knight?

The two Squires look at each other.

WALTER

Not too typical...

PETER

There is one word which we never use: Retreat.

ALLEYNE

Re-

WALTER

NEVER USE.

PETER

Sir Nigel believes a knight's job is to fight.

ALLEYNE

For what?

WALTER

For whatever.

PETER

He calls it "advancement."

WALTER

Or "recreation"...

PETER

Or "glory"...

WALTER

(echoes)

Or "glory," right... what say you, Edricson?

ALLEYNE

(musing)

And his daughter, Lady Maude...?

WALTER

(smiles)

Ah, there you hit upon a sore point-

Peter walks away. Walter smiles -

WALTER (CONT'D)

Peter here is hopelessly in love with her.

ALLEYNE
Why hopeless?

PETER
Sir Nigel would never agree to such
a match. Second sons count for
nothing, as you must surely know...

ALLEYNE
Is there no way to advance your suit?

PETER
(shrugs)
Should I win my spurs in battle and
become a knight - only then...

ALLEYNE
Ah. And does she, Lady Maude, I
mean...
(changes his question off
their look)
Is she his only child?

They exchange glances and sigh.

WALTER
He had a son.

ALLEYNE
A son?

WALTER
He died in the Plague.

PETER
It is never spoken of.

Alleyne takes this in.

20 OMITTED

20

MAUDE (V.O.)
...and then spake Guinivere...

21 INT./EXT. CLOISTER - DAY

21

Seated next to one another on a bench, Maude practices
reading from a HEAVY VOLUME, as Alleyne looks over her
shoulder. She reads with hesitation but with feeling.

MAUDE
"... '0 Lancelot, if thou lovest me
get thee hence!' cries -

ALLEYNE

"cried"...

MAUDE

"Cried the Queen. Passion-pale they met and greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye, low on the border of her couch they sat stammering and...?"

ALLEYNE

(reluctant)

"Staring."

MAUDE

"Staring. It was their last hour, a madness of farewells - "

Alleyne is made uneasy by the erotic text... staring himself, he can't keep his eyes off her neck, her smooth skin, her heaving bosom, luxuriant hair - all so close to him...

ALLEYNE

Have you no other books to read?

MAUDE

(startled)

What is the matter with this one?

ALLEYNE

It seems - indecent...

MAUDE

It is romantic...

ALLEYNE

But this Lancelot - he is no husband to Queen Guinivere...

MAUDE

He is her lover, her true knight! Their love is... a miracle!

ALLEYNE

Miracle?

MAUDE

Do you not believe in miracles, master Edricson?

ALLEYNE

Of course. The church teaches us there are miracles, but somehow I don't think that is what they -

MAUDE

(looks him in the eye)

Love IS a miracle.

(MORE)

MAUDE (CONT'D)

It is the explosion that comes when
two souls recognize each other
forever! Is such a miracle not worth
fighting for?

ALLEYNE

If it is a miracle, surely no fight
is necessary.

Gently he closes the book, reaching across her lap to do so.
They are inches from one another, her LIPS moist...

MAUDE

Why are you afraid? Have you spent
so long behind cloistered walls,
there's not an ounce of passion in
you? Can you not feel your heart
beat in time with theirs?

He can feel it alright...

ALLEYNE

(gulp)

I will be late for confession...

MAUDE

Why? Why are you afraid to feel?

ALLEYNE

Why are you afraid to think?

MAUDE

Think? Think about what? I am
afraid of nothing... I am certain.

ALLEYNE

(smiles)

I envy you your certainty.

Maude reacts. Alleyne rises to leave, then stops, carefully
forming his words.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

You think I am afraid. Time will
soon tell if that is true. But I
am not afraid to think.

He walks away, leaving her alone on the bench. Frustrated
but thinking. She is too bright not to consider.

No light to speak of, save a patch of MOONBEAM. Peter and
Walter come in, exhausted from their labors; as they speak,
they strip off muddy clothing and make preparations for bed.

WALTER
Did you tell her?

PETER
Aye, that I did.

WALTER
What said you?

PETER
That my family was as old as hers
and as worthy. That I loved her;
that I desired to be her champion
and wear her colors - you know,
that green silken scarf she favors.

WALTER
What said she?

PETER
(sighs)
That she was saving her love for
another.

WALTER
Another? What other?

PETER
(shrugs)
I did not entirely comprehend.
Something about thinking...

More mumbles, as the CAMERA REVEALS ALLEYNE already in bed,
but awake, his heart pounding. TRUMPETS!

23 EXT. CASTLE - DAY

23

Departure time! MEN MOUNTING HORSES, girding WEAPONS and
armor, drums BEATING, MEN run every which way... Sam and
Black Simon SHOUTING ORDERS... FLAGS WAVING...

WOMEN looking silently down from the battlements - they have
seen the men leave before...

24 INT. SIR NIGEL'S APARTMENTS - DAY

24

CAMERA FOLLOWS the sounds of crying to REVEAL - Sir Nigel
holds the sobbing Lady Loring in his arms.

SIR NIGEL
Now, then, my beauty, light of my-

LADY LORING
 (through her tears)
 I am no beauty but a used up hag
 and well you know it, my lord.

Sir Nigel kisses her with surpassing tenderness.

SIR NIGEL
 You are my own true love and the
 very picture of womanly perfection.

LADY LORING
 I am old.

SIR NIGEL
 Green trees break; the seasoned
 branch makes the finer bow.

He takes her gloved hand and kisses it.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
 Will you give me your glove to wear
 in my cap so that all men may know
 I am your champion?

LADY LORING
 You will appear foolish, my lord,
 at your age to wear a lady's favor.

SIR NIGEL
 (gently)
 I will kill the man who says so.

He affixes the GLOVE to his cap, gracefully - and there it
 will STAY. He embraces her tenderly; offers his arm.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
 Shall we go?

Stoically, drying her eyes, she allows him to lead her.

More departure chaos. Peter and Walter weaving through the
 courtyard, looking...

PETER
 Alleyne? ALLEYNE!!--

WALTER
 Where the devil can he be?

They bump into Sam, Hordle John and Black Simon.

PETER
 Have you seen Master Edricson?

25 CONTINUED: 25
 They are surprised by the question, look around...

26 INT. CASTLE CHAPEL - DAY 26
 Rays of light stream in through high windows - otherwise it is quite dark. Feature the CONFSSIONAL...

27 INT. CONFSSIONAL - CONTINUOUS 27
 Alleyne, in Squires' armor sits. A DOOR CLICK. The priest is ready...

ALLEYNE

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.

(no response)

The Abbot was right - the world IS a complicated place. I know that woman is the cause of all our griefs, of Adam's fall from Grace... but Father?

(silence)

You must add my sins to those of Adam, father, for I have fallen in love with a woman...

Silence. He tries to see through the lattice work; there is someone there alright. Alleyne forces himself to continue.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

I cannot believe there be sin in Lady Maude, for she is beautiful as the sun and moon, the purest creation of Nature and - though she knows it not - I have promised her my soul through all eternity...

A MUFFLED SOUND from the other side of the Confessional. Reacting, slowly and then with resolve, Alleyne slams out of the door and pulls open the Priest's.

ALLEYNE'S POV

MAUDE sitting in the priest's place, sobbing.

Before Alleyne can react, she leaps up and kisses him passionately in the darkness - an explosive kiss, which he ardently returns. When they part, breathless -

MAUDE

My soul is yours for all eternity - for you will save it!

ALLEYNE

I would die for you...!

27 CONTINUED:

MAUDE

Don't die for me, Alleyne! LIVE
for me!

They kiss frantically once more, then part, panting -

MAUDE (CONT'D)

Win your spurs and come back for me!

ALLEYNE

I fear I'll never see you again.

MAUDE

Do you believe in miracles?

ALLEYNE

You know I believe!

MAUDE

Then believe in our love!

Another kiss and Alleyne sinks to his knees before her in the church, clutching her HAND in the darkness.

The hand slowly pulls away from his and Maude is gone.

ALLEYNE'S POV

he is holding her **GREEN SCARF!**

28 EXT. TWYNHAM CASTLE - DAY

28

SEVERAL ANGLES

Sir Nigel's TROOPS marching out across the drawbridge...

CU BLACK SIMON - he starts singing the war chant of the WHITE COMPANY "**Personent Hodie**"... one by one, Sam and the rest chime in, the chorus swelling as -

TRUMPETS, DRUMS and

SILENT WOMEN watching on the battlements...

SIR NIGEL on PEPIN, his great Black charger, turns and looks up at LADY LORING... gently he taps the GLOVE in his cap, a SALUTE...

She waves slightly in acknowledgement of his gesture.

Next to her stands Maude, her eyes red, looking down at

Sir Nigel's 3 SQUIRES. Peter. Walter. Alleyne.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

Maude proffers the faintest of waves... to one of them...
Alleyne has tactfully concealed the SCARF...

Away to the horizon, they march... the singing FADING...

29 EXT. BEAULIEU ABBEY - DAY

29

The GREAT BELL tolling, as at the beginning.

PULL DOWN TO REVEAL

Sir Nigel's column clanking down the road.

Only Alleyne stops, transfixed by the BELL, as the others
pass. Hordle John comes up behind him, quietly...

HORDLE JOHN

We've come a long way since
Beaulieu Abbey, that is sure.

ALLEYNE

Have we...?

Hordle John moves on, leaving Alleyne listening to the BELL,
before he hastens to join the march - and his new life.

The CAMERA RISES UP BEYOND THE TREES REVEALING THE COLUMN'S
DESTINATION - THE ENGLISH CHANNEL...

30 OMITTED

30

DISSOLVE TO:

PEPIN, BLINDFOLDED, BEING LED UP THE GANGWAY ONTO A SHIP -

SIR NIGEL'S VOICE

Careful! Steady, Pepin...!

WIDEN TO REVEAL

31 EXT. SOUTHAMPTON - DAY

31

Sir Nigel's TROOPS being loaded aboard a large YELLOW COG for
the channel crossing. SUPPLIES. Chaos. Horses NEIGHING...

Alleyne has never seen so much activity in his life.

A TUBBY KNIGHT, waving a large chicken leg, a napkin still
round his neck, forces his way through the crowd: SIR OLIVER
BUTTESTHORNE, accompanied by his Squire, NORBURY, a young man
of Alleyne's age. Alleyne listens:

31 CONTINUED:

SIR OLIVER

Sir Nigel!

SIR NIGEL

Sir Oliver Buttethorne - old friend! You got here!

SIR OLIVER

I left home as soon as I received your message. I wouldn't miss this campaign for the world.

SIR NIGEL

What news?

SIR OLIVER

Good news. This fine capon comes from a wayside inn, not ten paces from -

SIR NIGEL

I mean the ship, my friend. When do we sail?

SIR OLIVER

Ah, that is a problem -
(off Sir Nigel's look)
- the captain is worried about pirates.

SIR NIGEL

Pirates?

SIR OLIVER

The infamous Frenchman, Tete Noir has been sighted in these waters. It appears we must wait until -

SIR NIGEL

No waiting! The Prince expects us! Tell the Captain we'll settle his pirates for him. We sail with the tide!

Responding, Sir Oliver flips the bird leg over his shoulder, where it is caught by Hordle John, who eats with relish. Alleyne smiles - this is more like it! - as we find ourselves

32 EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

32

aboard the yellow COG, bouncing on rough water...

33 EXT. YELLOW COG - DAY

33

Hordle John being seasick over the side.

SAM

Roughest body of water there is,
lad. Never eat before a channel
crossing, myself.

HORDLE JOHN

Now you tell me...

Suddenly a CRY from the crow's nest: "Ship off the larboard
beam!" All look.

CLEARING THE HEADLAND

a SHIP with no flag. The Captain blanches.

CAPTAIN

It's the pirate, I'll be bound!

SIR NIGEL

The great Tete Noir himself!? What
luck! On your knees, men! On your
knees!

The entire company obeys. Alleyne, kneeling, looks at Sam.

ALLEYNE

To make confession before battle?

SAM

(poker-faced)
Well - yes and no.

The Men, now invisible to the other ship, are busy stringing
their BOWS, drawing SWORDS, etc.

Buckets of WATER and of SAND passed hand-to-hand...

CAPTAIN

My Lord, I beg you - this is not a
fighting ship. Let us flee these
pirates...

SIR NIGEL

FLEE?! What, man, English soldiers
fly before a scurvy Frenchman?
Have you no appetite for glory?

CAPTAIN

I'm not especially hungry, my lard.

SIR NIGEL

Then I will eat for two!

The Pirate Vessel approaches the Yellow Cog.

- 24 CONTINUED: 24
- NEARER THE PIRATE VESSEL
- we can see she boasts a HUGE CATAPULT, now being cranked for operation. TETE NOIR and his PIRATICAL CREW, suspecting nothing, are gleeful with anticipation...
- 35 THE PIRATES' POV - CLOSER STILL - DAY 35
- The yellow Cog strangely passive...
- 36 ABOARD THE COG - DAY 36
- Alleyne, kneeling amongst the Bowmen, sweats with fear... he looks over at
- Sir Oliver, who, crouching, is eating a sandwich! He winks.
- 37 ON THE PIRATE SHIP - DAY 37
- TETE NOIR
Un... doux...
- When suddenly...
- 38 EXT. YELLOW COG - DAY 38
- SIR NIGEL
FIRE!!!!
- A forest of BOWMEN rise from the decks of the yellow Cog and loose a HAIL of ARROWS...
- 39 EXT. PIRATE SHIP - DAY 39
- causing a rain of death and chaos aboard the Pirate galleon. The Catapult Operators are killed where they stand!
- TETE NOIR'S eyes widen in shock! Then narrow in anger.
- TETE NOIR
Plus proche! Plus proche!
- The TWO SHIPS draw together, despite the flights of ARROWS from the Cog...
- 40 EXT. YELLOW COG - DAY 40
- The PIRATES come swinging aboard and bloody hand-to-hand combat ensues...

CONTINUED:

Pails of WATER thrown on FIRES...

Pails of SAND thrown on BLOOD...

Sir Nigel, as always, in the thick of it, his three Squires struggle to keep up with and protect the old Knight...

Sam's Men fire their deadly arrows but the fire is returned from the PIRATES' crow's nest, killing the Cog's HELMSMAN with an arrow through the neck...! The ship comes about...

The CATAPULT goes back into action, smashing the Cog's TOPMAST, which comes down in a welter of ROPES, SAIL and TIMBERING...

Sir Oliver fights; Black Simon fights; Sam fights...

Hordle John fights off TEN PIRATES at once!

Alleyne fights off PIRATES, doing his best to keep them from reaching Sir Nigel... It's EXCITING. He's getting into this!

In the process, quite suddenly, a PIRATE impales himself on Alleyne's SWORD, eyes BULGING -!

Alleyne has KILLED a man! He's momentarily shocked, but recovers, plunges on, swinging! He's never felt more alive!

TETE NOIR gets past him to confront Sir Nigel!

Alleyne, hastily going to his aid, slips on a POOL OF BLOOD!

Sir Nigel seizes a halyard.

SIR NIGEL

Follow me!

41 EXT. PIRATE SHIP - DAY

41

Tarzan-like, the old boy swings over to the pirate ship, followed by as many of his men can make it before the ships drift apart, trapping Sir Nigel et al on the pirate vessel!

42 EXT. YELLOW COG - DAY

42

Peter and Walter have been taken off guard by Sir Nigel's move. Their Master is now left to his doom!

PETER

My Lord!

Peter makes a desperate leap to join Sir Nigel, but the distance is too great and he disappears beneath the WAVES!

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

Sir Nigel whirls in time to see Peter's death but must defend himself...

Alleyne, staggering up from where he slipped, also tries to fling himself after Sir Nigel, but a strong pair of arms grabs him.

HORDLE JOHN

Nay, lad, you'll only drown as well!

ALLEYNE

Better to drown, then abandon my master!

Alleyne slips from Hordle John's grasp and runs for the shrouds of the MAST, starts climbing furiously. He pulls out his DAGGER...

43 EXT. YELLOW COG, CROW'S NEST - DAY

43

AS THE FIGHTING RAGES BELOW

Alleyne reaches the CROW'S NEST. Working on pure adrenaline, he grabs A SECOND DAGGER from a dead BODY up there and gauges his distance...

ALLEYNE'S POV - THE MAINSAIL OF THE PIRATE SHIP

billowing close to the Yellow Cog as the two Ships drift towards each other again...

Taking a breath, Alleyne jumps at the PIRATE MAINSAIL!

44 EXT. UP ANGLE BETWEEN THE TWO SHIPS - DAY

44

IN SLOW MOTION

as Alleyne jumps - he'll never make it...!

and, lands, plunging his TWO DAGGERS into the CANVAS, breaking his fall *as he slides down the face of the sail!!*

45 SEVERAL ANGLES

45

EXT. PIRATE SHIP - DAY

as Alleyne slides to the deck of the Pirate vessel, he finds himself back to back with Sir Nigel.

ALLEYNE

Sword!

Sir Nigel throws one of his - he was using TWO!

45 CONTINUED:

Alleyne fights back-to-back with Sir Nigel!

SIR NIGEL
(over his shoulder)
Edricson! How came you here?

ALLEYNE
(ditto)
I - uh - flew...

Simultaneously they run through their adversaries. A GREAT CRY goes up.

Sir Nigel and his few men have captured the Pirate vessel!

SIR NIGEL
The ship is ours!

46 EXT. ABOARD THE YELLOW COG - DAY

46

confusion on the part of the PIRATES, who are now overpowered by the White Company RECRUITS.

SIR OLIVER
(yells back to Sir Nigel)
And so is this!

47 EXT. ABOARD THE PIRATE VESSEL - DAY

47

Alleyne, streaming blood, is SHAKING...! What has happened?

Sir Nigel reacts to the news; he stands there, heaving with satisfaction; looks up at the PIRATE MAINSAIL.

SIR NIGEL'S POV

the MAINSAIL in 3 FLAPPING PIECES where Alleyne slid down.

SIR NIGEL
You dared attempt my rescue though
it cost you your life. I am in
your debt, Edricson.

High praise from someone Alleyne idolizes. But -

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
What ails thee, boy?

ALLEYNE
I have killed a man, my lord. Nay,
more than one.

47 CONTINUED:

SIR NIGEL
 (sympathetic)
 For the best possible reason,
 Alleyne - they tried to kill you.
 Remember, lad, this is what you
 signed for; to drink the whole cup.

ON ALLEYNE

so he did...

DISSOLVE TO:

48 LATER - BACK ABOARD THE YELLOW COG - DAY

48

The Two Ships are grappled side-by-side. TETE NOIR,
 manacled, is yanked before Sir Nigel.

SIR NIGEL
 For your crimes, Monsieur, you
 shall be brought before the Black
 Prince in Bordeaux, there by him to
 be sentenced.

Tete Noir bows in acquiescence, then suddenly he breaks free
 of his captors - but not his bonds.

TETE NOIR
 I prefer a death of honor,
 Englishman!

Bound, he hurls himself into the sea! Alleyne is stunned.

SIR NIGEL
 He fought well and bravely. It is
 fit he chooses the manner of his
 death. Captain, we thank you for the
 loan of your ship. I now present
 you with another craft in payment.

CAPTAIN
 (awestruck by Sir Nigel)
 Under these conditions, Sir knight,
 you may have the loan of my vessel
 whenever you wish!

A CHEER goes up for Sir Nigel who pulls forth a BLACK PATCH
 from his shirt.

SIR NIGEL
 Now, behold this black patch, which
 I affix to my right eye! I wear it
 in honor of my squire, Peter Terlake
 and I will keep it so until I perform
 some deed worthy of his memory!

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

48

The men kneel and cross themselves respectfully, as Walter drifts behind Alleyne -

WALTER

Poor Peter will never marry Lady Maude, now.

ALLEYNE guiltily sneaks a look at the GREEN SCARF: it is now stained with BLOOD.

OMIT 49

A MEDIEVAL RENDERING OF A CITY ON PARCHMENT -

TITLE OVER:

**"BORDEAUX - THE ENGLISH STRONGHOLD IN FRANCE,
WHERE THE BLACK PRINCE HOLDS COURT"**

50 INT. GREAT CATHEDRAL AT BORDEAUX - DAY

50

The GREAT DOORS CRASH OPEN at the end of the NAVE!

Sir Nigel, (with eye-patch) ON HORSEBACK!, Sir Oliver and OTHER KNIGHTS, accompanied by Alleyne, march down the nave, sunlight streaming through the stained-glass. The place is packed with KNIGHTS and their MEN standing in FULL ARMOR. BANNERS! DRUMS! TRUMPETERS stand forth! MUSIC!

AT THE TRANSEPT, a FIGURE SEATED ON A THRONE...

Alleyne is thrilled by the spectacle - his master riding a horse in church before all these splendidly dressed MEN!

They reach the THRONE, upon which sits a HANDSOME KINGLY type. Next to his throne, a LARGE MAP of FRANCE AND SPAIN...

ALLEYNE

(sotto voce; impressed)
Is that the Black Prince?

SAM

He looks the part, but no, lad - that's the Prince.

He points to a genteel-looking Man, sitting next to the throne on a modest STOOL. Alleyne is shocked.

ALLEYNE

Then who - ?

SAM

Ssh...

(CONTINUED)

The Black Prince rises and greets Sir Nigel, who halts before him as the drums and trumpets cease.

BLACK PRINCE
Greetings, Sir Nigel and welcome!

A GREAT HUZZAH! of Welcome ECHOES from every man in the cathedral as Sir Nigel dismounts and drops to one knee, tossing Pepin's reins to Alleyne.

SIR NIGEL
Your highness! I am yours to command!

BLACK PRINCE
Glad we are to hear it! First, know this to be the rightful king of Spain, Don Pedro, to whose restoration we are pledged.

Sir Nigel bows before the handsome KING on his throne.

SIR NIGEL
Your majesty.

KING PEDRO
We welcome you to our cause, Sir Nigel. We hear you battled pirates to reach us?

SIR NIGEL
Scarcely a battle, your highness. Merely a little... recreation.

Alleyne's eyes bulge - that was recreation? What's a battle?

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
What news, my liege?

BLACK PRINCE
This map shows our dilemma.
(illustrates as he talks)
In order to reach Spain, we must pass through the Pyrenees, here - which pass belongs to Charles, King of Navarre...

CLOSE UP MAP - the MOUNTAIN pass indicated, Navarre, etc.

SIR NIGEL
(studies the Map)
Sire, give me The White Company and we'll force a passage, though the King and his fifty of his brothers refuse it.

The Prince is pleased, but something is being avoided - he doesn't want to look Sir Nigel in the eye -

50 CONTINUED: (2)

BLACK PRINCE

Bravely spoke, Sir Nigel, but our problem is winter, not the King of Navarre. Snow, not soldiers, block the pass. Our glorious campaign to seat this worthy gentleman on the throne of his ancestors must wait for the spring to complete its work and melt our passage to Spain. Before the moon is full, we expect to learn the road is free!

KING PEDRO

(mild)

And while we wait..?

BLACK PRINCE

While we wait, I shall decree a great tournament! Let the finest of my knights, the flower of our chivalry, keep their mettle bright in the lists at Bordeaux!

A GREAT SHOUT OF JOY ECHOES throughout the CATHEDRAL! which CROSS FADES with THE SCREAMS of the CROWD as

51 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY 51

Horses smash together with LANCES! The tournament is on! TEN TRUMPETERS sound the CHARGE!

SEVERAL ANGLES OF THIS HIGH-RISK SPORT as

ENGLISH & GASCON KNIGHTS unseat one another with LANCES and go FLYING!

52 OMITTED 52

53 EXT. THE LISTS - CONTINUOUS - DAY 53

In the thick of the action, SIR NIGEL, in his element! Also SIR OLIVER, who fights better than you'd imagine!

53A OMITTED 53A

53B EXT. THE ROYAL BOX - CONTINUOUS - DAY 53B

King Pedro on his "throne" watches with the Black Prince, who sits modestly beside him.

(CONTINUED)

53B CONTINUED:

KING PEDRO
'Tis good sport...

BLACK PRINCE
I am glad your majesty is pleased.

Another CRASH of Lances!

54 INT. INSIDE SIR NIGEL'S TENT - CONTINUOUS - DAY 54

Walter and Alleyne run about like madmen, keeping up with their Knight's needs, changing pieces of armor, fixing leather stays that have snapped - the business of squiring.

SIR NIGEL clomps in from his latest pass. There's a bit of blood, but nothing serious as they help him off with his helmet and stuff - rather like a fighter's cornermen, between rounds. As always, he wears his EYEPATCH.

SIR NIGEL
(gasping happily)
These Gascon knights are worthy fellows. 'Tis a good match, though we shall prevail.

WALTER
Let me change this breastplate -

SIR NIGEL
Alleyne, some water for Pepin...?
The horse is parched...

ALLEYNE
Aye, my lord...

He looks about; there IS no Water. Goes to find some...

55 EXT. THE PEANUT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS - DAY 55

Amongst the "groundlings" Sam Aylward, Black Simon and Hordle John watch as Sam provides "Color." The others Ahhh...

SAM
See, how he dips his lance at the last possible moment! 'Tis a French trick, but 'twill carry the day..!

56 EXT. THE WATER TROUGH BEHIND THE LISTS - CONTINUOUS 56

a LOT OF SQUIRES gathered here on various errands or goofing off as Alleyne rushes up with a BUCKET for water.

56 CONTINUED:

As Alleyne hastily makes his way through the young men, a LARGE SQUIRE named TRANTER sets a FOOT in front of Alleyne, tripping him with the water. He goes sprawling.

TRANTER

It seems these new squires from England are a clumsy lot.

Alleyne knows he's been insulted - but Pepin's water!

ALLEYNE

Pardon me, I am in a hurry...

He reaches for the bucket but Tranter kicks it out of reach. The other SQUIRES are watching now.

TRANTER

We can't be this hard up. They're taking babies from the cradle...

ALLEYNE

My master needs -

TRANTER

And cowards.

Alleyne realizes he is being watched. He gets up.

ALLEYNE

You seek to provoke a quarrel.

TRANTER

(grins)
But not fools.

ALLEYNE

You challenge me like a country boor. I serve a master who could show you how such things are done.

TRANTER

Such as.

ALLEYNE

He would say, in the softest and gentlest voice, "Sir, I should take it as an honor to do some small deed of arms against you, not for my own glory but for the honor of my lady."

Tranter is embarrassed, furious.

TRANTER

I wager your lady is a slut.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (2)

56

ALLEYNE

(contains himself with
effort)

And then my master would calmly
take his glove - and dash it in
your face - AS I DO NOW!

WHAM! A GASP from the SQUIRES. Smiling evilly, Tranter
picks up the glove. Another CRASH FROM THE LISTS!

57 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY

57

BACK AT THE TOURNAMENT - CONTINUOUS

a KNIGHT goes flying off his horse into the dirt as -
Sir Nigel comes out of his tent, followed by Walter...

SIR NIGEL

Never mind Pepin's drink; after the
next pass...

WALTER

But -

Sir Nigel steps into the DERRICK, signals and is hoisted
aloft over his horse. Walter runs for the BERIBBONED lance.

58 EXT. BY THE BANKS OF THE GARONNE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

58

A MOB of 30 Squires assembled on the river bank as Alleyne
and Tranter face off.

SQUIRE NORBURY faces between them.

NORBURY

Tranter, you are by far the better
swordsmen. Stop this before the
lad is hurt...

TRANTER

(smiles)
Willingly.
(to Alleyne)
I did but jest. Apologize and we
will be friends.

ALLEYNE

You called my lady a slut. It is
you who must apologize.

Norbury shrugs, leads Alleyne to one side briefly.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

SQUIRE

He's got a much heavier sword.
Take this.

Alleyne considers.

ALLEYNE

Nay, I'll fight with my own weapon
I know it better.

He returns to face Tranter; they nod. The fight is on! It is an uneven match. Tranter is more experienced and has the heavier weapon. He forces Alleyne back and back, cutting open first a bit of his sleeve, then opening a gash on his forehead, which starts to BLEED into Alleyne's eyes. Norbury rushes forward to stop the fight.

NORBURY

Edricson, you have been hit. Honor
is satisfied. Will you cease?

ALLEYNE

(wipes blood from his face)
Will he apologize?

Norbury turns to Tranter, who smiles, shrugs. The duel resumes as we WIPE TO:

59 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS, ROYAL BOX - CONTINUOUS

59

King Pedro reacts to something -

KING PEDRO

Who comes here?

SUDDENLY a NEW KNIGHT GALLOPS INTO THE LISTS. HE IS ALL IN BLACK, his COAT-of-ARMS hidden' by his SHIELD.

BLACK KNIGHT

Sire! I am a knight of France.

A STIR in the CROWD - the enemy.

60 EXT. IN THE PEANUT GALLERY - DAY

60

Sam reacts, narrowing his eyes.

60A BACK IN THE ROYAL BOX

60A

BLACK PRINCE

You are welcome to our sport, Sir
Knight. Which of our knights do
you wish to challenge?

(CONTINUED)

60A CONTINUED:

60A

BLACK KNIGHT

If they are English, all of them!

Sensation in the crowd as we WIPE BACK TO:

61 EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

61

Alleyne's duel by the river. Alleyne is now bleeding at the shoulder and neck, slowly being cut to ribbons.

After another blow, the Squires intervene. "Enough!" "He has done enough!" cry several voices.

NORBURY

Edricson, let us stop!

ALLEYNE

(breathing hard)

Does he apologize to my lady?

Tranter, a bit tired and confused by this doggedness, shakes his head, NO. Norbury is worried...

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

Then come on!

The fight resumes and Alleyne, more agile than the big man, slips in and slices him open at the thigh.

Tranter is shocked! Damn! He comes forward, a wintery smile on his sweaty features.

62 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY

62

TOURNAMENT - CONTINUOUS

The Black Knight is toppling English Knights like Nine Pins.

63 EXT. PEANUT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS - DAY

63

Sam, Black Simon and Hordle John.

SAM

I have seen that knight before...

64 EXT. END OF THE LISTS - CONTINUOUS - DAY

64

Sir Nigel's turn, as he slips on his helmet...

SIR NIGEL

What's become of Alleyne? Never mind, I cannot wait...

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: 64

Walter looks around, anxiously..

65 EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY 65

ALLEYNE'S DUEL - CONTINUOUS

Alleyne's more slender SWORD gets caught in the guard of Tranter's heavy blade and snaps off - 15 inches left. Cries of "Another sword!" "Throw him another!"

NORBURY

(reluctant)

Nay, it's not the rule. He must surrender or fight on as he is.

ALLEYNE

Does he apologize to lady?

Norbury looks to Tranter, who is bewildered, but: No.

Alleyne leaps into action with the stub of his sword. His attack is so furious that Tranter has to back up as -

66 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY 66

SIR NIGEL, on foot, with broadsword, duels the BLACK KNIGHT. An even match, which is more than can be said for...

67 EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY 67

ALLEYNE, who is tiring. If he can't keep moving with his sword-stub, all will be over for him - as Tranter knows.

68 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY 68

SIR NIGEL & the Black Knight, thrashing away, their huge swords ringing... not so with -

69 EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY 69

ALLEYNE, who is exhausted, but keeps moving with his broken Sword. Tranter sees his time has come - he winds back his big sword behind his head -

AND FALLS INTO THE RIVER!

In the excitement, no one noticed how close to the banks the duel had gone!

Astonishment. And, as the swift current makes away with him, it is clear that Tranter can't swim..!

69 CONTINUED:

69

The Squires run along the bank, shouting. Alleyne, his fury changed to pity in an instant, DIVES IN AFTER HIM.

SEVERAL ANGLES

Alleyne's attempts at rescue, INTERCUT WITH

70 EXT. BORDEAUX LISTS - DAY

70

SIR NIGEL & the Black Knight, fighting each other to an exhausted stand-still... BLOOD pours on the black armor.

BLACK PRINCE
Hold your swords, gentlemen!
(to the Black Knight)
Sir, you are wounded.

BLACK KNIGHT
My wound is nothing, sire.

BLACK PRINCE
Nevertheless. I declare a draw.

71 EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

71

AT THE FAST-FLOWING RIVER

ALLEYNE manages to get Tranter back to shore. Eager hands help the big man and then Alleyne onto the bank, where they land, more dead than alive.

Tranter recovers first, looks over at Alleyne.

TRANTER
I am beholden to you, Edricson.

Alleyne can only nod, BLOOD is streaming from him again.

TRANTER (CONT'D)
The river has been my enemy, but it
has saved your life.

He reaches out, friends help him up and throw a cloak over his shivering body. They start off.

ALLEYNE
One moment.

They stop. With difficulty, Alleyne gets to his feet.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)
It may be that my ears have water
in them, but I have not heard you
apologize to my lady.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

Tranter is stunned; looks around.

TRANTER
You STILL pursue this quarrel?

ALLEYNE
YOU pursued it; I will finish it.

Tranter considers - what a stubborn man.

TRANTER
Look, it was all a joke - to see
what you were made of...

ANOTHER SQUIRE
And you found out, Tranter!

Laughter. Tranter grins. To Alleyne -

TRANTER
Very well; I apologize to your lady
and bravely have you defended her
honor, you mad rascal.
(laugh)
Now come, we are soaked...

Alleyne realizes.

ALLEYNE
Sweet Jesus - the WATER!

To the Squires' amazement, Alleyne runs off...

72 EXT. ROYAL BOX - CONTINUOUS - DAY

72

the Black Prince addresses Sir Nigel and the Black Knight,
who is dripping BLOOD.

BLACK PRINCE
You have both done valiant combat.
(to the Black Knight)
And you, Sir Knight, have
vanquished the best of my
champions, save Sir Nigel here.
Will you not remove your helmet and
drain a cup of wine at our table?

BLACK KNIGHT
I will neither drink your wine nor
sit at your table. I bear no love
for your invading race. I pray for
the day you return to your own land
and leave France to the French.

BLACK PRINCE
Bitter words, Sir Knight.

(CONTINUED)

BLACK KNIGHT

They come from a bitter heart.
Does not one kingdom content you
but you must also steal another?

King Pedro looks at the Prince, curious to see how he will react. The Prince stays cool.

BLACK PRINCE

Sir knight, you speak your mind
like the brave warrior you are.
How is it you have come here to
fight with no safe conduct?

BLACK KNIGHT

Because I knew that YOU were here,
sire. Had I been at the tender
mercy of the man who sits beside
you, I would have thought twice.

Before King Pedro can react, the Black Knight regains his charger (without a derrick!) and gallops away.

73 EXT. PEANUT GALLERY - DAY

73

In the PEANUT GALLERY Sam still can't place the Knight...
The Tournament breaks up. Sir Nigel goes back to his

74 INT. SIR NIGEL'S TENT - DAY

74

TENT, where Walter starts to help him off with his armor.

WALTER

Will you not now remove your eye-
patch, my lord?

SIR NIGEL

In consequence of this little
recreation? Never.

Alleyne runs up, breathless, BLEEDING all over, carrying the bucket of water. Sir Nigel is astonished by his appearance.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

Great heavens, lad, where've you
been?

Alleyne thinks about this.

ALLEYNE

Recreation?

It takes Sir Nigel a moment - then he laughs heartily and clasps Alleyne to him in a bear hug... what a boy!

74 CONTINUED:

74

SIR NIGEL
Edricson, you're a lad after my own
heart!

75 CU MAP OF THE PYRENEES LEADING TO SPAIN

75

BLACK PRINCE (V.O.)
I have word this day the snows have
melted, clearing our way to Spain.

WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. BLACK PRINCE'S PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

By torchlight, the Prince and his chief KNIGHTS, including
Sir Nigel, contemplate the map.

BLACK PRINCE (CONT'D)
Therefore, assemble our army and
make them ready to march.

SIR NIGEL
Sire, tell me where the rest of the
White Company is camped and I will
lead them joyfully into hell.

The Prince exchanges a mordant glance with some of his other
KNIGHTS. He sighs. Sir Nigel looks around, confused.

BLACK PRINCE
I can delay telling you the truth
no longer. Sir Nigel, it grieves
me to inform you that your men are
currently running wild under the
command of Sir Claude de la Tour,
pillaging the French countryside
near Villefranche, laying waste to
all they touch.

Sir Nigel is mortified to learn this. Stiffly -

SIR NIGEL
I leave at dawn to collect them, sire.

He starts for the door.

BLACK PRINCE
Sir Nigel.
(he stops)
The countryside south of Bordeaux
is not under English control -
there is famine. The place is
about to erupt. Take care.

Sir Nigel bows and stomps out. The Prince shakes his head.

Sir Nigel paces furiously. Walter and Alleyne are trying to get him undressed but he's so mad he won't hold still.

SIR NIGEL

Pillaging! Laying waste! The shame of it! My White Company, upon which there should be no stain!

(smashes a fist)

We leave at dawn for Villefranche. Bring only Sam Aylward and that redheaded giant as our sole escort.

WALTER

Aye, my lord.

He leaves at the double. Alleyne starts to follow.

SIR NIGEL

Stay, Edricson, a messenger leaves for Southampton this night and I must bid my wife farewell...

Alleyne sits at the table and prepares to write as Sir Nigel gathers his pained thoughts - what to tell her, how much..?

ALLEYNE

...my lord?

SIR NIGEL

"Queen of my captive heart, all is well here except that Pepin has mange." Got that?

Alleyne, writing, nods.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

"We enjoyed a skirmish with some pirates and a tournament and my constipation is much improved for the exercise."

Alleyne shakes his head, keeps writing...

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

"Today I leave for Villefranche, there to assemble the White Company for Spain. I send you all the love that is."

ALLEYNE

"...love that is..."

Sir Nigel takes the letter, folds it...

SIR NIGEL

What about you, boy? Send a letter while you can. It may be your last chance.

ALLEYNE

Alas, my lord, there is no one to receive it.

SIR NIGEL

What, no one?

ALLEYNE

My brother and I do not speak.

SIR NIGEL

Does no one else pine for news of you?

ALLEYNE

...None to whom I dare write.

SIR NIGEL

But someone you love.

ALLEYNE

(very soft)

Aye.

SIR NIGEL

I knew it - all those sighs. Boy, why do you not send word to your lady?

ALLEYNE

Uh, I feel I am unworthy.

SIR NIGEL

But you have hopes?

ALLEYNE

I could not live without them. I have turned my life upside down, forsaken everything I believe for love of her.

SIR NIGEL

Everything you believe?

ALLEYNE

(flushes)

Everything I thought I believed.

SIR NIGEL

There is no difference between thought and belief.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

No man can stand before you and say
 "You merely THINK you're in love,
 but you are deceived." If you THINK
 you're in love, you're in love.

ALLEYNE

(reassured)

Aye, sir.

SIR NIGEL

Is she of noble birth?

ALLEYNE

(heavily)

Yes.

SIR NIGEL

(kindly)

Take care, Alleyne. Your family is
 good, but while your brother lives
 the title is his - and with no
 title, a noblewoman is beyond your
 reach.

ALLEYNE

(looks at him)

I know it, my lord.

SIR NIGEL

Win your spurs, lad! Win your spurs
 and claim her by the laws of chivalry!
 As a knight, you may claim her!

On Alleyne. Out of Sir Nigel's sight, he clutches the SCARF.

ALLEYNE

That was her very idea, my lord.

SIR NIGEL

And count on me to help you!

ALLEYNE

Thank you, my lord.

Sir Nigel starts out; something makes him stop.

SIR NIGEL

Last chance, boy. Is there nothing
 you wish to write?

ON ALLEYNE

gulp...

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED: (3)

ALLEYNE

With your permission, my lord - I will add a note of greeting to your lady wife.

SIR NIGEL

By all means, lad...

He hands over his letter, which Alleyne opens. He looks over Alleyne's shoulder as Alleyne writes: I LOVE YOU, MAUDE...

Sir Nigel squints, grunts, approving! The uses of illiteracy! Alleyne folds the paper, hands it to him.

ALLEYNE

That should do it...

Sir Nigel pours WAX onto the letter and seals it with his ring. He and Alleyne look at each other, smile and POOF!

Sir Nigel blows out the CANDLE as we WIPE TO:

77 EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - SUNRISE

77

SNOW-COVERED. DESOLATE. Sir Nigel rides ahead. Alleyne, Walter, Sam and Hordle John ride behind. Spooky stillness.

SEVERAL ANGLES

Surly PEASANTS, who look more like human pack animals, carry wood and watch them as they pass BURNED OUT FARMHOUSES, broken FENCES... crumbling WALLS, collapsed stone BRIDGES... BEGGARS pick through refuse or the SNOW, looking for food.

HORDLE JOHN

By the mass, it is the poorest country I ever saw.

He looks over at Alleyne, who is deep in thought.

HORDLE JOHN (CONT'D)

A penny for your thoughts, Master Edricson - you seem lost in them.

ALLEYNE

What kind of world is it that allows people to live like animals?

HORDLE JOHN

Could it be God's will?
(off Alleyne's look)
I'm no philosopher like yourself, Master Edricson. Wiser heads than mine have decided what is best.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

HORDLE JOHN (CONT'D)
The way I see it now: our job is to
fight, not to reason the ins and
outs of the matter.

ALLEYNE
(finally)
I hope and pray the White Company
bears no responsibility for any of
this.

They march in silence through the POPLAR-lined, SNOW...

A PEASANT approaches Sir Nigel, who offers him some COINS...

SUDDENLY, the PEASANT attacks Sir Nigel with his DAGGER,
almost unhorsing him! Pepin neighs, rears! Coins go flying!

Instantly, Alleyne, Walter and Hordle John grapple with the
desperate man; seeing himself surrounded, the man hesitates,
then PLUNGES the dagger into his own BREAST, his blood
splattering the snow as he dies before them. Alleyne is ashen-

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)
My lord - are you alright?

Sir Nigel is as stunned as by anything in his life. Then
looks down, notices, focusses -

HIS POV - Pepin is losing a SHOE...

DISSOLVE TO:

78 OMITTED 78

79 EXT. VILLAGE BLACKSMITH'S - NIGHT 79

Next to an INN across the courtyard.

As SURLY PEASANTS watch, the SMITH bangs out a new RED HOT
shoe for Pepin as Sir Nigel looks observantly about.

SIR NIGEL
This land of France appears most
unhappy...

SMITH
So would your turf, (BANG) if it
was the constant prey of
freebooters and Warlords. (BANG)
They steal our few possessions,
(BANG) ruin our women (BANG) and
tax us unto death. (BANG)

Walter catches the eye of an angry Peasant; looks away. More
PEASANTS are gathering... the SHOE hisses in WATER.

(CONTINUED)

SIR NIGEL
 (wincing)
 Any English among these robbers?

SMITH
 There were, but they cleaned us out.
 Moved south. Come to join them?

SIR NIGEL
 Come to stop them.

He looks around at the unhappy place - then smiles.

SIR NIGEL'S POV OVER PEPIN'S BACK

in front of the inn, glinting in the blacksmith's FIRE is a familiar SUIT OF BLACK ARMOR slung over a BLACK HORSE.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
 Saints be praised!

Sir Nigel enters with Alleyne and Walter, to HEAR -

VOICE
 Landlord! When I brought my lady
 here, did you not assure me that
 your inn was clean of rats?

They stop to listen.

2ND VOICE
 I did, sir knight...

VOICE
 Then how is it we have been here
 less than an hour and already I
 hear ENGLISH voices!!!??

SIR NIGEL
 (steps forward)
 Indeed, sir knight, it appears we
 have much to say to one another.
 Could I invite you to step into the
 fresh air for a bit of exercise?

We now see the MAIN ROOM of the inn. Before the FIRE, the anxious LANDLORD stands in front of -

a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, dark as night, Moorish; exotic, almost alien in her loveliness. Most Europeans have ever seen a black person. Seated next to her, his arm in a SLING, is a powerful, very craggy KNIGHT, who turns to see -

An older Man with an eye patch. Then he sees the heraldry on Sir Nigel's shield and he smiles broadly!

KNIGHT (THE VOICE)
By Saint Denis, it is my joyous
opponent from Bordeaux! Sir Nigel,
you owe me for this!

He laughs and shows his wounded arm. Sir Nigel is ecstatic.

SIR NIGEL
(gone to heaven!)
BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN! Can it be
that I have crossed swords with the
greatest warrior of our age? Wine,
landlord! Squires, doff your caps!

Walter and Alleyne bow, hatless, as the two Knights exchange a fond embrace. The beautiful LADY smiles.

SIR BERTRAND
It is well I ride with my visor
down, for this face of mine
proclaims my name to all! When my
arm is better, we will continue our
debate! This is my lady Tiphaine.

Sir Nigel bows low; the Lady inclines her head gravely.

SIR NIGEL
I have heard many tales of your
magical talents, my lady. They say
you can foretell the future.

LADY TIPHAINE
(she has an odd accent)
I have some small skill. Though I
cannot control those moments when I
am granted the power...

Alleyne has wandered to the window - peers out...

80A HIS POV - EXT. BLACKSMITH - NIGHT

80A

a MOB gathering... .

80B INT. FRENCH INN - NIGHT

80B

SIR NIGEL
Where lies your destination?

SIR BERTRAND

The chateau of Villefranche, two leagues hence where Sir Tristram de Rochefort is the Senechal in charge of this district.

Alleynes turns back from the window -

ALLEYNE

Pardon the interruption, my lord, but -

Sam and Hordle John enter hurriedly -

SAM

My Lord - we must leave at once...

HORDLE JOHN

These people are in an ugly mood, ready to attack - it seems they have recognized our colors...

Sir Nigel winces, but no more need be said. Instantly, Sir Bertrand and Tiphaine are on their feet and moving swiftly. The Inn has become a mini-fortress. They peer through the windows at the PEASANTS outside; they can see their HORSES.

ALLEYNE

But how will we ride in the dark?

Good point. Sir Nigel sees TORCHES near the hearth. He gestures. They plunge the torches into the fire and set them ablaze, as the DOOR BURSTS OPEN and the PEASANTS arrive!

A FIGHT ERUPTS as Sir Nigel, Alleyne, Sam and Hordle John, along with Sir Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine battle their way

81 EXT. OUTSIDE TO THE INN COURTYARD - NIGHT

81

to the HORSES as PEASANTS endeavor to stop the beasts, pull their riders from their saddles. Sir Nigel and his men have swords and they use torches as weapons (as do Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine) to ward off the mob. CRIES of "Kill them!!" and the neighing of horses as the group struggles to gallop out of the courtyard.

SIR NIGEL

For Villefranche!!

82 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

82

82 CONTINUED:

82

SEVERAL ANGLES

Holding TORCHES over their heads as they gallop, Sir Nigel, Alleyne, Sam, Walter, Hordle John, Sir Bertrand, and Lady Tiphaine race through the night for the chateau!

83 EXT. CHATEAU VILLEFRANCHE - NIGHT

83

A huge, forbidding CASTLE, up to which ride our torch-carrying Riders. We can see LIGHTS on the battlements.

SIR BERTRAND

Hola! Bertrand Du Guesclin, his lady and escort, beg shelter of Sir Tristram de Rochefort, Seneschal of Villefranche!

Answering cries - torches on the move and the DRAWBRIDGE is lowered and the PORTCULLIS raised to admit the Riders.

WIPE TO:

84 INT. CHATEAU DINING HALL - NIGHT

84

A LUTENIST and RECORDIST accompany the meal with MUSIC.

CU SIR TRISTRAM DE ROCHEFORT, a stern-looking warrior, head of this remote fortress in the French line - eats daintily.

SIR TRISTRAM

So you had an encounter with the natives, did you?

(drinks)

We offer you the hospitality of Villefranche. We seldom receive visitors in this barbaric place.

WIDEN TO REVEAL AS THEY TALK

SERVANTS pour wine into goblets...

LADY ROCHEFORT

(a haughty beauty)

Swine. Cattle. Were you not struck by their ugliness, messieurs? No hair, no teeth, all twisted and bent.

CU the LUTENIST'S HANDS FREEZE on the LUTE, then resume playing. PAN UP to his IMPASSIVE face as she goes on...

LADY ROCHEFORT (CONT'D)

Such rabble. I have my servant beat them aside with a club when I pass.

(CONTINUED)

Alleyne, sitting across from Sir Nigel, is incensed; he looks to Sir Nigel, who eyes him to restrain himself. Mildly -

SIR NIGEL

These people seem in a very desperate plight - and capable of anything, for they have nothing to lose...

Next to her husband, the beautiful Lady Tiphaine is weaving, her EYES fluttering - she is going into a TRANCE...

SIR TRISTRAM

I assure you, they are animals without souls, unworthy of your attention.

There is a KINDLY-LOOKING PRIEST eating with them.

PRIEST

All men have souls, my lord. It behooves us to treat them as men.

ALLEYNE

(pointed)

I agree with the reverend father... (all stare at him) That is... knights are supposed to help those in need... aren't they?

More stares. Alleyne flushes - However attention is diverted by Lady Tiphaine, who gives an odd MOAN! All look.

LADY TIPHAINE

The blessed hour has come!

Her eyes are closed, the whites rolling; she is deep in trance, swaying rhythmically in her chair...

SIR TRISTRAM

Is she ill? What has happened?

SIR BERTRAND

It is nothing - my wife has the gift of second sight... I knew it would come upon her soon... I saw the signs -

LADY ROCHEFORT

It is witchcraft..!

SIR BERTRAND

Not so! Can you not see the crucifix about her throat?

LADY TIPHAINE
Hurry, Bertrand! The blessed hour
passes... use it while you may!

SIR BERTRAND
I will, my love. Tell me what
fortune comes upon me.

LADY TIPHAINE
Danger - deadly pressing danger!

SIR BERTRAND
(laughs)
That has been true for twenty
years, my love...

LADY TIPHAINE
But this danger is HERE - in the
very air I breathe... so close...!

Sir Bertrand looks around, shrugs, urges Sir Nigel to ask...

SIR NIGEL
Lady Tiphaine, can you tell me
about England? What has chanced in
my absence at Castle Twynham?

She slews around briefly in the chair -

LADY TIPHAINE
Your castle is... but stay, there
is one here who wishes to know as
badly as you!

ECU Her eyes roll upwards into their sockets as we CUT TO:

MAUDE
"Arma... rerumque... cano..."

WIDEN TO REVEAL

INT. TWYNHAM CASTLE - DAY [FILTERED]

A shaft of sunlight pours down a window on Maude, beautiful
as ever, puzzling over a VOLUME in her lap.

Mother and daughter alone in a huge room. Lady Loring has
embroidery on her lap - she looks older...

LADY LORING
What is that?

MAUDE
It is Latin.

LADY LORING
Where did you get it?

MAUDE
(soft)
From Master Edricson.

LADY LORING
Can you tell the sense of it?

MAUDE
It says... "Of arms... and the
man... I sing..."

LADY LORING
Humph. Arms and the man, indeed.
BOY is more like it.

MAUDE
(sharp; defensive)
Alleyne is no boy.

LADY LORING
(without humor)
I meant your father.

MAUDE
(persists)
If I were a man I would BE Alleyne
Edricson!

LADY LORING
And failing that, you will LOVE
Alleyne Edricson.

She shows Maude the postscript of Sir Nigel's letter. Maude
gasps at the words - looks back at her mother.

LADY LORING (CONT'D)
You think I cannot understand your
feelings? I too was young - and I
believed all the things you
believe. The tales of glory. Now
I dine with widows and orphans.
Does that fate appeal to you?

MAUDE
If it did, I would not have loved
Alleyne Edricson.

Nevertheless, Maude looks into the distance and shivers...

LADY LORING
Are you cold? Where is your scarf?

MAUDE
I, uh, I lost it.

85 CONTINUED: (2)

85

LADY LORING
 (sighs, shakes her head)
 Along with your heart, no doubt.

CU MAUDE, her expression suffused with longing...

86 INT. BACK AT VILLEFRANCHE, DINING HALL - NIGHT

86

WIDEN FROM LADY TIPHAINE'S EYES

flickering as she points a finger at - Alleyne!

LADY TIPHAINE
 Your son! HE! He cares no less than
 you for news of Twynham castle...!

Sir Nigel shoots Alleyne a puzzled look - Alleyne flushes.

SIR NIGEL
 (pained by the error)
 You mistake, lady, this is not my
 son...

LADY TIPHAINE
 His heart! His heart is held
 prisoner!

SIR NIGEL
 What does she mean, boy?

Alleyne is stupefied, groping to speak, when -

LADY TIPHAINE
 He is enslaved by a river green as
 emeralds! Will the green river
 ever run pure again?!

She sways, then faints into her husband's arms. Walter reacts, shoots Alleyne a look...

Long pause. Finally -

SIR TRISTRAM
 It is late.

He rises. All follow suit. Alleyne is conscious of Sir Nigel's gaze upon him as he rises...

WALTER
 I will see to the horses...

86A INT. STABLES, VILLEFRANCHE CHATEAU - NIGHT

86A

Walter grooms Pepin as Alleyne enters. They regard each other.

(CONTINUED)

ALLEYNE

You think I did wrong to speak?

Walter hesitates, says nothing. Alleyne comes forward, helps him with Pepin's heavy harness, etc.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

These people feast while the rest are left to starve? I did not come here to make war on beggars.

WALTER

Why did you come?

(before he can reply)

You needn't answer. The black witch, she unmasked you. I know where the green river flows...

He pulls Maude's green scarf from Alleyne's breast - the scarf is filthy and bloody. Alleyne gently tucks it away.

ALLEYNE

I never spoke against Peter. Not one word. Do you believe me?

WALTER

...Yes. Yes, I believe you.

ALLEYNE

(relieved)

You're a good man.

WALTER

(smiles, then)

When will you tell Sir Nigel?

ALLEYNE

(considers)

When I have earned the right.

87 INT. ALLEYNE'S ROOM IN THE CASTLE - NIGHT

87

Alleyne in bed, staring at the ceiling, clutching Maude's blood-stained SCARF. A lone CANDLE guttering to extinction.

Sighing, Alleyne ties the scarf mournfully around his neck against the cold. Blows out the CANDLE. Lies in darkness.

A CREAKING causes Alleyne to open his eyes. What can it be?

Alleyne sits up, listening. The CREAKING comes from outside his window.

He crosses the stone floor to the SHUTTERS and pulls them open. What he sees causes him to stagger back, gasping.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

HANGING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

is Walter Ford, hanging by a rope in the moonlight - DEAD!

Even as he stares, we are aware of SCREAMS!

Alleyne grabs his sword; races for the DOOR of his room TO

88 INT. THE CASTLE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

88

The CANNIBALISTIC PEASANTS have entered the place like VERMIN! They are filthy, half-naked, all hair and teeth and clubs. Leading them, a venomous regard stamped on his features, is the LUTE PLAYER!

Sir Nigel, Sir Bertrand and Sir Tristram are battling the MOB, retreating towards Alleyne, who races to their aid.

Sir Tristram is cut down, his head chopped off by the ape-like men! They pull him apart, limb from limb...

Alleyne races the other way to where Lady Rochefort is SCREAMING! Before he can reach her on the spiral stairs leading DOWN, her HEAD is thrown into the air! Alleyne catches it by instinct...

A HAND grabs Alleyne - it is Sam Aylward! Alleyne flings the head at their pursuers!

SAM
This way, lad!

He fires off an ARROW at the nearest of Alleyne's pursuers, whose falling BODY blocks the rest for an instant on the narrow stairs, providing cover for Sir Nigel, Sir Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine.

ALLEYNE
Walter's dead!

89 INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

89

They start up the stairs of the tower, passing a WINDOW.

90 EXT. CHATEAU COURTYARD - NIGHT

90

Through the window they can SEE: the COURTYARD is filled with the crazed PEASANTS; they are overwhelming the ARMED SOLDIERS, tearing them apart! TORCHES everywhere as the PEASANTS set fire to the castle! BELLS PEAL somewhere.

91 INT. STAIRS - NIGHT 91

ALLEYNE

But how did they get in?

SIR NIGEL

Don't waste your time over things
that can't be changed. How do WE
get out? - That's the question.

Sir Nigel, Sir Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine, along with Hordle John fight their way to the stairs.

92 INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR - NIGHT 92

as our group emerges from the stairs - FIRE rages at the end
of it, the PEASANTS rampaging after the kindly PRIEST.

PRIEST

My children, hear the voice of our
Savior..!

They slaughter him even as Sir Nigel fights to reach him.
Oil is poured on the stone floor and picks up the FIRE...!

The Invaders are careless of how many are killed as they
overwhelm Sir Nigel, but Sir Bertrand, swinging his huge sword
and Alleyne fighting desperately manage to free him...

SIR NIGEL

The Keep! Our only chance!

SIR BERTRAND

Two archers in front, my lady in
the center and we two behind to
beat back the pursuit!

93 INT. STAIRS - NIGHT 93

A furious battle on the stairs and in the burning corridor as
Sir Nigel and Sir Bertrand attempt to forge a passage to the
KEEP, the tallest tower of the castle, assisted by Sam, Hordle
John and Alleyne, as they form a shield about Lady Tiphaine...

94 INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT 94

The Invaders are distracted by the booty of the castle. They
are ripping tapestries off the walls, brandishing goblets and
the silken gowns belonging to the dead Lady Rochefort...

95 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

95

Sam and Hordle John keep firing ARROWS...!

The FIRE draws nearer our group, the heat SEARING...

The DOOR to the TOWER is locked! A FRENCH SQUIRE makes his way to them, covered with wounds.

FRENCH SQUIRE

They have seized the castle and
murdered all. We are lost!

SIR NIGEL

How better to die than defending this
lady? Can we not force this door?

Hordle John is the man for the job. As Sam keeps firing arrows through the FLAMES which separate them from their pursuers, Hordle John hurls himself against the massive PORTAL again and again as -

THE PEASANTS leap BURNING through the flames in the mania of their pursuit. Sir Nigel and Sir Bertrand and Alleyne fight with swords until the DOOR snaps off its hinges...

96 INT. THE STAIRS TO THE KEEP - NIGHT

96

are NARROW. They retreat upwards, fighting off their attackers - Hordle John and Sam fire arrows from above - the rest use swords and axes below...

The French Squire is hacked to pieces... they stop to pull his BODY apart, giving the others a breathing space.

The stairs now slippery with BLOOD...

The PEASANTS return with "fardels" of dried wood, soaked in OIL. They set the staircase on FIRE, forcing our group ever upwards, coughing with the SMOKE...

THE FLOOR DROPS AWAY BENEATH THEM!

97 EXT. ROOF OF THE KEEP - NIGHT

97

They emerge onto the roof and the MOONLIGHT. On the roof, they regroup, Sam and Hordle John firing arrow after arrow into the mob and flames below...

Sir Nigel and Sir Bertrand case the roof. Lady Tiphaine shelters below the stone battlements.

SAM

Well, this is a pity.

98 EXT. CHATEAU COURTYARD - NIGHT 98

Fires an arrow. A distant SCREAM. BELOW them, the enraged MOB of PEASANTS HOWL like animals and keep feeding the FLAMES of the huge fire that licks the base of the Keep.

99 EXT. KEEP ROOF - NIGHT 99

ALLEYNE

It is more than that, surely; these wretches are starving...

SAM

I mean it is a pity you will never get to see any real action.

ZIP... Another arrow - another SCREAM. ARROWS FLY UP harmlessly from below, whizzing about them like insects.

ALLEYNE

REAL ACTION!? What do you call this?

SAM

One good thing: I'm glad my feather bed is safe in England, even though I won't ever get to sleep in it...

HORDLE JOHN

We've no more arrows!

Sam looks around, spies a large SHIELD propped against the crenelated wall. He puts an arm through the Shield and raises it. INSTANTLY it is shot through with ARROWS from BELOW, looking like a PORCUPINE.

SAM

Here's a fresh supply, *mon brave!*

They pull arrows out of the Shield and shoot them BACK...

Meantime, Sir Nigel and Sir Bertrand are searching the roof of the Keep, looking for a solution. They come upon a HUGE WOODEN KEG and several IRON BALLS. They look at each other.

SIR NIGEL

Gunpowder! This place will explode to high heaven with a single spark!

He eyes the door to the roof through which they came, now streaming BLACK SMOKE. Lady Tiphaine crawls over to them. Bertrand holds her in his arms.

Alleyne takes all this in...

SIR BERTRAND

For me one death is like another
but my heart breaks to think of
such a death for my sweet love.

LADY TIPHAINE

My good lord, it is my dearest wish
that we go together.

SIR NIGEL

Bravely spoke, my lady. I know my
own dear wife would say the same.

ALLEYNE

Uh - my lord?

SIR NIGEL

What is it, Edricson? I know you
to be religious. Would you like to
make confession?

ALLEYNE

I was just wondering - what if we
drop this gunpowder on those below?

They look at each other, intrigued. Sam has heard.

SAM

'Tis a coward's weapon, my Lord!
Let us not stoop to the use of it.
Better to die like men.

ALLEYNE

(re: Lady Tiphaine)
But we are not men only, Sam.

SIR NIGEL

(this decides him)
Good point, Edricson; there is a
damsel to rescue, if we may.
Hordle John, can you lift this box?
Sir Bertrand - let us each drop one
of the bombards at the same time.

All go to work grabbing the things. Sam hesitates, then
flings down his bow and grabs one of the iron BALLS.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

On my count. One. Two. THREE!

ANGLE OVER THE SIDE, looking up: AS ONE they all lean
suddenly over the parapet and DROP THE BOX and IRON BALLS.

100 CONTINUED:

100

LOOKING DOWN

we see the GUNPOWDER and BALLS hit the FIRE BELOW.

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION! EVERYTHING and EVERYONE BLOWN AWAY!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

101 EXT. CHATEAU - DAWN

101

When the SMOKE CLEARS, the KEEP is lying at A TERRIFYING ANGLE, like the LEANING TOWER OF PISA - and then some!

The rest of the castle is a burnt-out ruin.

102 ON THE ROOF OF THE KEEP - CONTINUOUS

102

Their faces BLACKENED, ALL creep to the precarious EDGE and look DOWN. The Tower's STONES GRIND OMINOUSLY as they move.

The GROUND IS BLACK for 40 yards in every direction, covered with BLOWN APART BODIES.

SAM

That stuff does have its uses.

Sir Nigel is appalled - the Bodies...!

SIR NIGEL

It is the devil's work.

ON ALLEYNE - no, it was his work. He's heartsick.

Sir Bertrand crawls over at a steep angle...

SIR BERTRAND

The explosion has blocked the steps. There is no way down.

HORDLE JOHN

And that's not all, friends.

He points. They look.

103 EXT. CHATEAU COURTYARD - DAY

103

MORE PEASANTS appearing - if anything, angrier than before, gradually re-converging on the Keep.

104 EXT. KEEP ROOF - DAY 104

SIR NIGEL
They'll pull this tower apart stone
by stone.

SAM
And then they'll do the same for us.

105 EXT. CHATEAU COURTYARD - DAY 105

SEVERAL ANGLES as all watch helplessly.

The PEASANTS, ominously silent now converge concentrically on
the precariously tilting tower.

PEASANT VOICE
NOW!

They rush forward and start pulling at the stones, when
suddenly A SOUND!

106 EXT. KEEP ROOF - DAY 106

ALLEYNE
Listen... do I hear singing?

The PEASANTS HEAR IT too... it IS singing...! *Personent Hodie!*

SIR NIGEL
By heaven, I know that march!

107 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY 107

As the PEASANTS react, HUNDREDS OF ARMED MEN in soiled WHITE
TUNICS arrive and drive them off in unequal combat!

SIR NIGEL
It's the White Company!

Sam jumps up and down in his excitement, waving - !

SAM
Bravo, *mes gars!* It's me, Sam! Sam
Aylward!! Come sing your songs to me!!

In complete possession of the field, the Company surrounds
the base of the tower. Their COMMANDER, SIR CLAUDE DE LA
TOUR, looks up - a grizzled, unsmiling warrior.

SIR CLAUDE
Sir Nigel?

107 CONTINUED:

SIR NIGEL
Sir Claude de la Tour - how timely
your arrival!

SIR CLAUDE
But how are we to get you down?

108 EXT. COURTYARD, LATER - DAY 108

An ARCHER of the WHITE COMPANY shoots an ARROW with a STRING
on the end of it...

109 EXT. KEEP ROOF - DAY 109

Sam catches the arrow - as before - on his SHIELD.
They reel in the STRING, which turns into a ROPE...

DISSOLVE AND SOON:

ALL are sliding down the ROPE to SAFETY. Hordle John is LAST
and his great WEIGHT pulls the ruined tower DOWN BEHIND HIM!

EXT. CHATEAU COURTYARD - DAY

LATER, at tower's base, Sir Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine are on
HORSES, leading down to say farewell to Sir Nigel.

SIR BERTRAND
Farewell, Sir Nigel! We have run a
good course together!

NIGEL
I shall ever treasure the memory of
my encounter with the greatest of
all French knights.

Their hands clasp in friendship as Alleyne, Lady Tiphaine et
al, look on.

VERY CLOSE ON THE TWO MEN.

SIR BERTRAND
(soft; sad)
When next we meet, it will be as
enemies.

SIR NIGEL
(tears in his one eye)
I know it.

CONTINUED:

SIR BERTRAND

You shall find me at the head of
4,000 lances in the heart of Spain.

SIR NIGEL

To die at your hands would crown my
life. My lady...

He kisses her hand.

LADY TIPHAINE

Farewell, Sir Nigel - my thanks to
you and your men.

(she looks at Alleyne)

And to you, young man, whose heart
is pavillioned in the fields of
England. May your emerald river
run as pure as your love.

ALLEYNE

Nay, my lady. I have sinned so
much my emerald river can never
again run pure.

LADY TIPHAINE

(smiles)

Do you believe in miracles, young
man?

Alleyne hesitates, he can't help seeing all the BODIES...

ALLEYNE

I - no.

VERY CLOSE Lady Tiphaine leans over to Alleyne.

LADY TIPHAINE

Neither do I. Which is why I am so
surprised when they occur.

Ever exotic, she touches Alleyne in a sort of benediction on
his NECK, around which is twisted the filthy green SCARF...

Bertrand and Lady Tiphaine ride off as Sir Nigel watches, the
White Company behind him. Sir Claude approaches.

SIR CLAUDE

You come in good time, Sir Nigel.
The pickings here are lush and easy
for there's none to oppose us, and
though you wouldn't believe it, the
women are of surpassing beauty -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIR NIGEL

(roars)

Is that what the White Company has become? A pack of ravening wolves, preying on helpless sheep?!

REACTIONS from Sir Claude and the MEN - shocked; affronted.

SIR CLAUDE

Have a care, my lord. You owe us your life.

Sir Nigel clammers on a heap of STONES.

SIR NIGEL

I count my life as nothing if no honor be attached to it! The White Company! Where is your whiteness now? Look at yourselves - fat and filthy, sullied with rape and pillage! Better I put patches over BOTH my eyes than see you thus! How long since you fought with warriors who will give you a run for your money?

SIR CLAUDE

Times have changed, Sir Nigel. War is changing...

SIR NIGEL

I do not change! You sent me word, my lord!

(brandishes his letter)

"Come to Spain with the Black Prince, there is much honor to be gained" - and I have come. But not for THIS.

(tears up the letter)

I go to Spain, where the sun is warm and blood is hot - to follow my Prince!

SIR CLAUDE DE LA TOUR

I have heard it said King Pedro is not the true king of Spain...

SIR NIGEL

(contemptuous)

Politics? Oh, let us not corrupt this great enterprise with any hint of reason. Men do not fight for reasons but because it is in their nature. A man has only one choice: to fight well or fight badly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He doesn't have to tell them what sort of fighting he thinks they've been doing. Alleyne is listening attentively.

SIR CLAUDE
What bounty do you promise these men?

SIR NIGEL
(promptly!)
Death! I promise them an honorable death! Do you (all) want to do a man's work or stay here and grovel like pigs at the trough? I STAND FOR GLORY!

He leaps off the rocks onto the back of Pepin, drawing his huge sword and holding it aloft.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
Those who would still be men - form up!

Silence. Then Sam moves to Sir Nigel. Then Hordle John. Then Alleyne. More silence. An interminable pause. Then -

One MEMBER of the White Company crosses over to Sir Nigel. Then ANOTHER. And ANOTHER. Sir Nigel breathes an imperceptible sigh of relief...

CLOSE ON SAM AND ALLEYNE

SAM
(sotto voce)
You going for the glory?

Alleyne looks at him - he speaks in a new voice.

ALLEYNE
You see those corpses. There is no glory.

SAM
For the Spanish gold then?

ALLEYNE
I have my reasons.

SAM
(studies him)
You're growing up, boy.

Soon Sir Nigel has 90% of his men back. A handful stay with Sir Claude, watching grimly.

SIR CLAUDE
I trust you will not live to regret this choice, my lord.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SIR NIGEL
 In my life, Sir Claude de la Tour,
 I do not regret the things I have
 done - only the things I have left
 UN-done.

Alleyne reacts to this.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
 TO SPAIN!

He seizes the BANNER of the White Company and swings it,
 WIPING THE SCREEN TO:

THE MAP WE SAW IN BORDEAU CATHEDRAL

as we CLOSE IN on A MOVING LINE - taking route across the
 Pyrenees... We EXPLODE THROUGH THE MAP, emerging at -

111-113 OMITTED

111-113

114 EXT. THE WALLED CITY OF NAVARRE - DAY

114

VOICES SHOUTING "SPAIN! SPAIN!"

TITLE: "THE CITY OF NAVARRE, IN THE VALE OF PAMPLUNA..."

as the ARMY rushes towards it... CHEERING... The White
 Company is just one company among many... GREEN PENNANTS,
 BLUE PENNANTS, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

114A BEFORE THE WALLS OF NAVARRE

114A

SEVERAL ANGLES

the ARMY encamped. MEN, TENTS, etc. SOLDIERS occupying
 themselves, waiting. They look towards the CASTLE - plans
 are being made there that will decide their fate... we HEAR
 "We'll find out soon enough," and other like phrases...

Sam is drilling his ARCHERS as Sir Nigel & Sir Oliver gallop
 over from the castle.

SIR NIGEL
 Make ready the men, Sam.

SAM
 Aye, sir. For what mission?

(CONTINUED)

114A CONTINUED:

114A

CU SIR NIGEL

grins at Sir Oliver.

SIR NIGEL

Before the main army makes the attempt, the Prince orders us to cross the river Ebro and spy out the enemy!

He wheels off; Sir Oliver speaks with his squire, NORBURY.

HORDLE JOHN

I don't exactly see him as a spy.

BLACK SIMON

It only means we'll be the first to fight.

SAM

(chuckles)

And die.

Alleyne goes to Sir Oliver, holds the bridle.

ALLEYNE

I take it we volunteered for this mission?

SIR OLIVER

(happily)

Aye, that we did.

ALLEYNE

You will go with us?

SIR OLIVER

I wouldn't miss it for the world.

ALLEYNE

(grim; the new Alleyne)

You pine for glory?

SIR OLIVER

Glory? I pine for Spanish pheasant. They say the birds are tastiest on the other side of the Ebro!

He gallops after Sir Nigel. Alleyne watches; what a bunch.

115 OMITTED

115

116 EXT. RIVER EBRO - DAY - CAMERA ARMS DOWN TO REVEAL 116

the White company, splashing their way across the RIVER - 320 ARCHERS, 67 MEN AT ARMS and various KNIGHTS - SIR WILLIAM FELTON, SIR SIMON BURLEY, THE EARL OF ANGUS...

SEVERAL ANGLES - Sir Nigel, Hordle John, Sam Aylward, Black Simon...

SAM
KEEP YOUR BOWSTRINGS DRY!

The Men tuck their Bowstrings under their helmets...

116A EXT. EBRO, SOUTHERN BANK - DAY 116A

SIR NIGEL, SIR OLIVER and ALLEYNE dripping wet, gain the southern bank. Alleyne stands next to Sir Nigel on Pepin, watching the White Company struggle across...

SIR NIGEL
I like not this river. The Prince will be vulnerable to attack when he crosses it...

Alleyne looks up at the crusty Knight.

ALLEYNE
My lord.

SIR NIGEL
Edricson.

ALLEYNE
When I heard you speak with Sir Claude, you said it made no difference why a man fights - only that he fight well.

SIR NIGEL
If a man would be a man.

ALLEYNE
But isn't a knight supposed to have a cause? Isn't that what makes him a special man?

SIR NIGEL
Would you feel better if you had a cause?

ALLEYNE
(fractional pause)
Oh, I have a cause. I was wondering about you.

116A CONTINUED:

116A

Sir Nigel glances at him, puzzled.

WIPE TO:

117 EXT. THE RAVINES - EVENING

117

as the day wanes, Sir Nigel and his men stumble through the tricky RAVINES, leading their horses on foot, struggling to be as QUIET as possible.

DISSOLVE TO:

117A THE SAME - MOONRISE

117A

The men still stumbling forward. Someone DROPS A SHIELD AND SPEAR with a CLATTER!

Sir Nigel holds up his hand: silence! They wait. Nothing. Sir Nigel waves them forward again.

DISSOLVE TO:

117B THE SAME - DAWN

117B

The men still marching.

SAM

I declare we've been through this ravine before...

HORDLE JOHN

Aye, I can't tell whether we're moving backward or forward...

BLACK SIMON

We're lost...

As he says this, Sir Nigel's hand goes up again in front of them. He waves them forward. They creep up beside him.

Alleyne reacts to the sight:

118 EXT. SPANISH ENCAMPMENT - DAY

118

THEIR POV

below them an ENDLESS HOST on the PLAIN! More MEN AND TENTS than you can imagine! Omigosh!

SIR NIGEL

Sixty thousand, at least! See - their king is in their midst!

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

He points and we can make out a LARGE PAVILION with the ROYAL ARMS OF CASTILE waving atop it.

Nearby, THOUSANDS OF SPANISH BOWMEN, FOOT SOLDIERS, CAVALRY etc. are DRILLING.

119 EXT. RAVINES - DAY

119

SAM

Alright, now we've found them, what the Devil are we to do with them?

SIR OLIVER

Report back to the Prince, of course - this is what we came to learn.

SIR NIGEL

What, come all this way and have nothing to show for it?

ALLEYNE

My lord, we are only four hundred men.

SIR NIGEL

Where's your sporting instinct, squire? Sixty thousand to four hundred? These seem about the right odds to me. Let every man remove his helmet and any object that shines. When the sun is full I want no glinting steel to reveal our presence.

SEVERAL ANGLES

The order is passed down the line. The MEN start taking off their helmets, breastplates, etc.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

Eat and rest. Later, we will spread our colors and drums atop these ridges so that when the time comes, our foe may think us more numerous than we are.

ALLEYNE

What are we seeking to prove here, my lord?

SIR NIGEL

We seek to prove ourselves, boy.

Before Alleyne can respond, a HORSE NEIGHS below them.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

Conceal yourselves!

Before they can execute the order, a SPANISH KNIGHT rides into their midst, with a FALCON on his arm.

Seeing all the SOLDIERS, the Knight tries frantically to wheel his horse around and flee, but Hordle John jumps off a boulder and tackles him and his horse, bringing both crashing to the ground the falcon's wings flapping!

The KNIGHT struggles but Hordle John holds him fast.

Sir Nigel and the others converge on the enraged Spaniard.

HORDLE JOHN

My first prisoner! How much ransom may I demand, my lord?

SIR NIGEL

Speak softly, Hordle John - we are yet in hiding. But stay - is this not Don Diego Alvarez, who was once at the Prince's court?

DON DIEGO

May I rise?

HORDLE JOHN

First agree to the terms of your ransom: I want ten cows and a bull, but it can be a little one. Also a blue dress for my mother and five acres of pastureland, two scythes and a grindstone. Likewise a small house with stalls for the cows and 36 gallons of beer.

The Knight is flabbergasted; Sir Nigel amused.

SIR NIGEL

I can see you have given this matter much thought, my son. Perhaps a simple five thousand crowns would be easier to remember?

DON DIEGO

(heavily)
Agreed.

Hordle John lets him stand.

SIR NIGEL

And now I must ask you for the loan of your horse and armor, Don Diego.

119 CONTINUED: (2)

119

DON DIEGO

They are yours by the law of arms,
Sir Nigel.

SIR NIGEL

You shall have them back, I swear
it. I only want them for -

A GREAT CRY GOES UP from the Camp below them. All scramble
to the rocks to see -

120 EXT. SPANISH ENCAMPMENT THEIR POV - DAY

120

FOUR THOUSAND CAVALRY have added to the odds against them,
raising a cloud of dust as they gallop in to camp.

BLACK SIMON

The French have arrived...

SIR NIGEL

Under the command of Sir Bertrand
Du Guesclin - see his double eagle!

The sight causes the one-eyed Knight a pang - his worthy foe
and one-time ally from the siege of the chateau.

121 EXT. RAVINES - DAY

121

SIR OLIVER

See - the false king rides out to
greet him!

Yes, there's KING ENRICO, riding to meet them...

SIR OLIVER (CONT'D)

Sir Nigel, should we not send word
to the Prince?

SIR NIGEL

eyes the huge encampment below them - then looks at the SUN,
high in the sky...

SIR NIGEL

When we have something worth
reporting, we will. Alleyne.

ALLEYNE

My lord?

SIR NIGEL

I will need an extra horse.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED: 121

ON ALLEYNE

What is the old man thinking of now?

122 ON THE BLISTERING SUN 122

123 EXT. HUGE SPANISH ENCAMPMENT - DAY 123

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SAME - DUSK

124 EXT. SIR NIGEL'S ROCKS - CONTINUOUS - EVENING 124

Sir Nigel has changed into Don Diego's armor and mounts Don Diego's horse. Other KNIGHTS - Sir Oliver, Sir William Felton, Sir Simon Burley, the Earl of Angus - mount their horses, as well. As Alleyne watches -

Sam leads a RIDERLESS HORSE up to Sir Nigel, who takes it.

SIR NIGEL

Sir Richard Causton, you have the command until our return.

SIR RICHARD

Godspeed, Sir Nigel...

Sir Nigel is about to leave when Alleyne rushes up and grabs the bridle of his horse.

ALLEYNE

Take me with you, my lord.

SIR NIGEL

Alleyne Edricson - this is no deed for a Squire. It is dangerous...

ALLEYNE

Let me win my spurs with it then!

SIR NIGEL

You can have no idea of my plan...

ALLEYNE

Sir, I have served you faithfully and never asked for anything.

SIR NIGEL

(leans to speak privately)
Alleyne, I have found an exploit worth dying for.

124 CONTINUED:

124

ALLEYNE

I have something worth living for,
my lord.

SIR NIGEL

(acknowledging)

It is the same thing, but -

ALLEYNE

(last cards)

On the pirate ship you said you
were in my debt. In Bordeaux, you
said I could count on your help..!
Sir, I don't THINK I'm in love - I
AM in love!

Sir Nigel studies him carefully, smiles...

125 EXT. THE GORGE LEADING TO THE PLAINS - EVENING

125

Out of the RAVINE rides Sir Nigel (dressed as Don Diego),
followed by the others - INCLUDING Alleyne, who leads the
RIDERLESS SEVENTH HORSE...

They TROT casually as we TRACK WITH THEM... RIGHT INTO -

126 EXT. SPANISH CAMP! - EVENING

126

The place is so HUGE that six MOUNTED KNIGHTS do not cause
much notice! They cross other HORSEMEN who hail "Don Diego."

OTHER MEN bustle about their tasks and campfires as

THE KNIGHTS TROT PAST TENT AFTER TENT AFTER TENT...

SIR NIGEL'S POV

in the distance, the PAVILION WITH KING ENRICO'S BANNER!

They are going to snatch the King!!!

DEEPER and DEEPER into the HEART OF THE ENEMY CAMP they
ride... now they are CANTERING...

THEIR POV

THE KING'S TENT GROWS CLOSER...

THEIR FACES

or rather, their helmets, SIR NIGEL'S, SIR OLIVER'S, etc...

and ALLEYNE as exhilarated and alive as he will ever be,
should he live to be a thousand...!

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

Which doesn't seem to be too likely at the moment.

SPANISH SOLDIERS now are calling after them, the alarm is being raised! Who ARE THESE MEN??

VOICES

Give the word...! The Password...! It is not Don Diego! We are attacked!

On the word ATTACKED! Sir Nigel spurs his horse to a GALLOP!

SIR NIGEL

Charge!

Followed by the rest they RACE for the TENT OF THE KING!

CHAOS and FIGHTING BREAK OUT as

SPANISH KNIGHTS and Sir Bertrand attempt to stop Sir Nigel, but who is who? Much confusion in the Spanish ranks -

Only Sir Nigel's party know who they are and exactly what their task is...

FIGHTING ON HORSEBACK as Sir Nigel rides INTO

127 INT. THE SPANISH KING'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

127

and GRABS THE SPANISH KING!!

128 EXT. SPANISH ENCAMPMENT - DAY

128

SIR NIGEL'S MEN hack down the ROPES, collapsing the tent, as WITH ALLEYNE'S HELP,

the KING is thrown onto the RIDERLESS HORSE and

AMID MORE FIGHTING

and increasing CHAOS, Sir Nigel and his MEN race through the SPANISH CAMP, heading like madmen for the safety of the Ravines..!

129 BY NOW IT IS VIRTUALLY NIGHT

129

AHEAD OF THEM IN THE DISTANCE

TORCHES are lit by the White Company to light their way!!

TRUMPETS and DRUMS ahead of them suggest a large army!

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED:

129

It's going like clockwork. They ride down everything and everyone in their path, putting distance between themselves and their frantic pursuers.

The TORCHES & DRUMS GROW NEARER...

130 EXT. INTO THE RAVINES ENTRANCE - NIGHT

130

THEY RACE as the torches are PUT OUT behind them, confounding

131 EXT. RAVINES ENTRANCE - NIGHT

131

The SPANISH PURSUERS, who suddenly can't see a thing and are obliged to stop!

SIR BERTRAND

raises his VISOR and looks after the retreating party. He has to smile at Sir Nigel's daring!

132 EXT. SIR NIGEL'S ORIGINAL POSITION AMONG THE ROCKS- NIGHT 132

Sir Nigel and his Men ride into the clearing, breathless and triumphant, their horses shaking with exhaustion, covered with foam.

Sir Nigel, dismounting, tears off his EYEPATCH and flings it to Alleyne, who grabs it. Sir Nigel then hands down his Prisoner.

SIR NIGEL

Good evening, your majesty.

(to the rest)

It may be that we have plucked the heart out of our enemy.

CHEERS from the White Company - !

In the midst of which, Don Diego steps forward...

DON DIEGO

You are mistaken, Sir Nigel -

(off their looks)

this is not the King.

SIR OLIVER

It IS! He wears the false king's livery!

DON SANCHO

I am Don Sancho Penelosa - the King's Decoy. There are eleven of us.

Sir Nigel studies the man, realizes he's telling the truth. He holds out his hand. Alleyne doesn't need to be told - he hands Sir Nigel back the eye patch, which Sir Nigel proceeds wearily to re-attach...

DON DIEGO

May I speak? You do wrong to call King Enrico false. He is in true descent; it is Pedro, who murdered his own sister to make his claim. HE is the false king.

SIR NIGEL

What?

DON SANCHO

All of Spain knows this. In our country, he is called Pedro the Cruel. You are fighting for the wrong man.

Long silence. Stunned FACES among those we know and some we don't. All astounded. Alleyne looks to Sir Nigel.

SIR NIGEL

Forgive me, Don Sancho - and return to your master. Tell him I am sorry not to have made his acquaintance.

He walks away. Others give Don Sancho his horse and the man rides slowly back the way they came, careful in the darkness.

Alleyne looks at Sir Nigel, heartbroken, follows him.

ALLEYNE

But still, my lord - as a feat of arms, it has no parallel in history! Six against 60 thousand!

ALLEYNE'S POV

Sir Nigel, his back to Alleyne, who tries to console him -

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

You followed the Black Prince, as I follow you; it is not your fault we are fighting for nothing...

Long pause. When Sir Nigel turns, patch on, he is grinning.

SIR NIGEL

Now it is perfect.

ALLEYNE

(shocked)
It is pointless!

SIR NIGEL

It is pure. It is a fight
uncorrupted by any goal. I
wouldn't have it any other way.

(before he can answer)

And make no mistake: now there IS
no other way.

ALLEYNE

That much I know.

132A EXT. WHITE COMPANY CAMP - NIGHT

132A

Gloom settles about the camp as the White Company settles for
the chilly night...

Alleyne wanders among the ARCHERS and overhears...

HORDLE JOHN

Too bad it wasn't the king...

SAM

More than that, my lad. Fatal.

Sam sees Alleyne take a seat by himself on a rock. He goes
over and sits next to Alleyne.

SAM (CONT'D)

What ails thee, lad?

ALLEYNE

Nothing.

SAM

Nay, you're bluer than the sky at
noon. What is it? Is it death?

ALLEYNE

Honorable death. How can Sir Nigel
be content to fight for no cause?
Worse - for the wrong cause?

SAM

Sir Nigel's only a man - he's not a
god.

ALLEYNE

(fierce)

I do not ask him to be a God!

SAM

Are you sure?

ALLEYNE

What do you mean?

132A CONTINUED:

SAM
You're seeking perfection, lad;
you'll never find it. Didn't your
father teach you that?

ALLEYNE
I never knew my father.

Sam shrugs, rises...

SAM
Take Sir Nigel as he is, not as you
would have him be. You will not
find yourself in other men. You
must learn to be your own father.

He leaves Alleyne staring at

133 EXT. SPANISH ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT 133

a million glowing TORCHES below them. Alleyne turns away with
a heavy heart. He looks up -

134 THE NIGHT SKY COVERED WITH STARS 134

ON ALLEYNE

ALLEYNE
Maude... never to see you again...

135 EXT. SPANISH ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT 135

WIDE ANGLE FEATURING

the Spanish camp with the mountains in the background -

135A CU A MAILED FIST 135A

punching through a FROZEN surface of WATER in a HELMET.

WIDEN TO REVEAL

136 EXT. SIR NIGEL'S ENCAMPMENT - MORNING 136

MIST HANGS HEAVILY OVER ALL. The soldiers move stiffly,
drinking from their helmets, then filling them with STEW from
the cooking pot and eating from them. Some exercise.
ARCHERS string their bows, men sharpen their SWORDS, etc.

Alleyne eats from his helmet, startled by a HUM...

ALLEYNE, WITH OTHERS, joins the SENTRIES and watches through the MIST below as the Spanish Army starts towards them. It is their movement which creates the HUM like a swarm of bees.

ALLEYNE

It is Sir Bertrand...

Sir Nigel joins him.

SIR NIGEL

Aye, lad, come to bring us glory,
though we do have the advantage.

ALLEYNE

WE have the advantage?

The men of The White Company collect beneath the rock...

SIR NIGEL

Harken to me! He who controls the ground, controls the battle! The Prince and his army must cross the river safely! It is up to The White Company to buy their passage with our lives! Thousands depend upon our valor. We are perfectly placed: only a few can penetrate this gorge at any one time. Thus did Leonidas and 300 Spartans hold the pass against a million Persians! The White Company in its finest hour can do no less!

HORDLE JOHN

Did he say "finest hour" or "final hour"?

SAM

Did he say "a million"?

SIR NIGEL

Here is the glorious death I promised you! Now order the ranks and fling wide the banners, for our souls belong to God and our bodies to the King; our swords for Saint George and for England!

A MIGHTY CHEER from the MEN.

Sir Nigel leaps off the rock, moving amongst his Men as he gives his instructions. SOLDIERS race to obey his commands.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

Take Sam Aylward here and Johnston and Hordle John and a company and form a harrow on the ridge...

136 CONTINUED: (2)

They start off; Sir Nigel never breaks stride...

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
Lord Angus and his men on the right
wing, the left to Sir Leonard
Burley and Sir Richard Causton...

SIR LEONARD & SIR RICHARD
(overlapping)
Aye, my good lord...

They split, followed by their ARCHERS... Alleyne must race to
keep up with Sir Nigel.

SIR NIGEL
Godspeed! Myself and Sir William
Felton will hold the center.

The MEN get into their positions, even as the HUM STOPS,
leaving in its place a deadly SILENCE.

RUNNERS distribute sheaves of ARROWS to each ARCHER...

ARCHERS string Bows, throw tufts of GRASS into the air,
gauging the WIND... more SILENCE...

137 THEIR POV SPANISH CAMP - DAY

137

BROKEN by a SPANISH BUGLE in response, we can SEE the HUGE
SPANISH ARMY ordering itself for battle, row on row of
HORSEMEN, PLUMES, BANNERS, ARCHERS as the MIST REVEALS THEM.

Sir Nigel is thrilled at the sight.

SIR NIGEL
Do they not look brave? Is it not
a fit spectacle to close your eyes
on? See, Alleyne! This is not about
King Pedro. This isn't even about
the Black Prince! It's about THIS!

138 EXT. RAVINES - DAY

138

ALLEYNE
Could I have a word, my lord?

SIR NIGEL
This may not be the best moment,
Edricson.

ALLEYNE
I know that, sir, but I may never
have another.

We now HEAR the CLASH OF MOORISH CYMBALS and DRUMS as the huge ARMY marches forward again...

SIR NIGEL
Speak fast, lad.

ALLEYNE
Do you remember when Lady Tiphaine said my heart was held prisoner at Twynham Castle?

SIR NIGEL
Something about a river of emeralds?

ALLEYNE
And do you remember asking me if the lady I loved was of noble birth?

SIR NIGEL
(looks at him)
And you said she was.

ALLEYNE
That lady is your daughter.

SIR NIGEL
(pause, then a smile)
Do you think I cannot read, master Edricson?
(off Alleyne's shock)
And does she return your love?

Alleyne pulls forth the tattered, filthy remains of her silken, Green Scarf.

ALLEYNE
Here is the emerald river she gave me to wear in token of her pledge.

Long pause. Sir Nigel contemplates him; the advancing army.

SIR NIGEL
So you do have a cause, after all - your own cause.

ALLEYNE
It is for that cause alone I have drained the cup you offered me.

Strong words - from a strong man.

SIR NIGEL
You aim high, Alleyne Edricson. Our blood is very old.

138 CONTINUED: (2)

138

ALLEYNE

As is my own, Sir Nigel, for I
trace it back to Adam.

Sir Nigel studies the approaching Spanish Army, looks at
Alleyne - he smiles.

SIR NIGEL

So be it. By my soul, Edricson, if
God spares you, I will consign you to
the tender mercies of my daughter.

139-142 OMITTED

139-142

143 EXT. SPANISH CAMP - DAY

143

A SPANISH KNIGHT rides out before the rest... he carries a
FLAG - they strain to look. Alleyne PALES at the sight:

CU: It is the ORIFLAMME - the death pennant he was taught to
recognize - the colors of NO QUARTER.

144 EXT. RAVINES - DAY

144

BLACK SIMON

(at his side)

Do you remember?

ALLEYNE

(nods; voice constricted)

No prisoners.

Sir William Felton mounts his horse.

SIR WILLIAM

Let us proclaim our defiance!

Before anyone can stop him, he has charged out of the shelter
and made straight for the Spanish Knight.

145 EXT. SPANISH CAMP - DAY

145

Sir William impales the Knight right off his horse - and
spits him on the end of his LANCE, where he twists!

Sir William keeps going, right into the mass of the Spanish
soldiery, where he is cut down, disappearing forever!

146 EXT. RAVINES - DAY 146

SIR NIGEL
I can do that!

He climbs onto Pepin, his black charger.

147 EXT. SPANISH CAMP - DAY 147

As if in answer to his prayer, a second Knight breaks ranks and rides to the base of the gorge - we recognize the ARMS.

148 EXT. RAVINES - DAY 148

ALLEYNE
 It is Sir Bertrand!

SIR NIGEL
 Noble friend, to honor me thus!

ALLEYNE
 Sir Nigel!

But before he can say more, Sir Nigel has charged.

149 EXT. SPANISH CAMP - DAY 149

SIR BERTRAND

raises his visor at the sight of the lone Horseman galloping towards him, hell bent for leather. Smiling, he slams down the visor.

Mortal combat commences as the two armies watch. The horses rear and plunge as their riders struggle for advantage, steel ringing on steel, echoing like a blacksmiths' forge.

They start with lances, then go to hand arms... Sir Betrand favors the MACE & CHAIN; Sir Nigel his huge BROADSWORD...

Sir Nigel is unhorsed!

Alleyne and the White Company take in a collective breath as Sir Bertrand dismounts and moves in for the kill.

It looks bad for Sir Nigel, as Sir Bertrand appears to overwhelm him, but when he draws back his mace for the final blow, Sir Nigel impales him beneath the arm upwards with his blade.

BLOOD explodes through the eye slits of Sir Bertrand's visor as he topples!

Alleyne's eyes close, briefly - Jesus Christ...

149 CONTINUED:

149

Sir Nigel clammers back on Pepin, circles Sir Bertrand on the ground, and raises his visor. One eye streams TEARS. He plucks off his EYEPATCH - the other eye also weeps - holds the patch before him in front of the entire Spanish host, and lets it flutter to the ground - his farewell salute...

...Like the dropping of a flag at the start of a race. The entire Spanish Army launches its attack behind him, and Sir Nigel gallops madly back to the shelter of the gorge!

The ENTIRE SPANISH CAVALRY right behind him at the gallop, banners flying, lances lowered!

150 EXT. SIR NIGEL'S POSITION - CONTINUOUS

150

Sir Nigel rides up triumphantly!

SIR OLIVER
FIRE!!!

151 EXT. RAVINES ENTRANCE - DAY

151

THE BATTLE IS ON!

The Spaniards try and get into the gorge but it is too narrow. The White Company archers shower down a HAIL of ARROWS and throw back the Spanish, who reel in disarray.

The Men start to pursue but Sir Nigel leaps in front.

SIR NIGEL
HOLD YOUR POSITIONS! HOLD!! If we
leave this place all is lost!

SAM
Shoot long, not short, mes gars!
There's always men behind but none
in front!

BLACK SIMON races up to Sir Nigel.

BLACK SIMON
We cannot keep up such tactics for
long, my lord. There are not ten
score arrows left in each quiver!
See, they are springing from their
horses as we speak!

SIR NIGEL
Hold your fire until they come
within range, men! Shoot while you
may and then out swords and let us
live or die together!

THE BATTLE

soon arrows are exhausted. The Spanish force their way into the pass but are repulsed by The White Company, amid much bloodshed... now it's hand to hand...

We glimpse our heroes... Sir Nigel, everywhere at once Sir Oliver takes out 2 MEN and hurls them over the cliff Alleyne duels with a KNIGHT and slays him... Sam... Hordle John... the clash of steel...

Black Simon is dying, amid the ring of those he has slain in a circle around him - a broad smile on his face...

Next the Company is showered with a hail of STONES from the rocks above...

Sir Oliver, impaled on a sword...

Alleyne's forehead cut open...

Sir Nigel's armor is in tatters but he fights on cheerfully... helping up Sir Leonard Burley...

As the center pushes the Spanish back, Lord Angus from the right and Sir Richard Causton from the left with their men fall upon the enemy and push them BACK... granting them -

A brief breathing space. The White Company takes stock. Corpses are all around them. Of 370 original men, only 172 are still standing...

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

By St. Paul, I have fought many a little bickering but never one I have enjoyed so much as this.

He shades his eyes and sees the Spanish regrouping for another attack, even as STONES start flying again above.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)

These gentlemen of Spain seem to be a most courteous and worthy people. I see them preparing to continue this debate with us.

(he looks at his men)

Sam Aylward, you are a trusty soldier...

SAM

Thank you, my lord.

SIR NIGEL

You will take charge of the right.

HORDLE JOHN

Ho, for SIR Samkin Aylward!

151 CONTINUED: (2)

151

Laughter, including Sam.

SAM
A knight at last!

SIR NIGEL
I will hold the center, Lord Angus
the left.

LORD ANGUS
Aye, Sir Nigel.

Lord Angus goes with his men to assume positions. Arrows and increased STONES announce the renewed onslaught.

152 EXT. RAVINE CLIFF - DAY

152

SIR NIGEL
Alleyne... Norbury... follow me...

They follow Sir Nigel to the edge of the cliff at the rear of their position.

SIR NIGEL (CONT'D)
The White Company is finished. The
Prince must be told.

NORBURY
Aye, sir, but how?

SIR NIGEL
See those stray horses down there?
A rider could take a message back
on one of them...

ALLEYNE
If he could get down this cliff to
reach them...

SIR NIGEL
Here's rope, but 'tis only 100
feet. For the rest, you must trust
to God and your fingers...

Norbury is already peeling off his armor and tying the rope round his waist... he and Alleyne eye their FAREWELLS...

153 EXT. RAVINES - DAY

153

ANOTHER ANGLE

the attack has resumed, a bloody fray as the beleaguered White Company holds the mouth of the pass...

153 CONTINUED:

153

Sam wounded, fights on...

154 EXT. THE CLIFF - DAY

154

The ROPE only reaches halfway down it as Norbury attempts his perilous descent...

As others watch, he inches his way down and seeks a foothold to continue where the rope ends, untying it from his waist.

CU NORBURY - a Spanish ARROW goes through his chest.

WIDE ANGLE - Norbury drops like a stone on the rocks below.

REACTIONS

the rope is hauled back... Sir Nigel looks at Alleyne.

SIR NIGEL

I will go...

ALLEYNE

No, sir! Your place is with the White Company... your men... I was never really one of them...

He takes the rope from Sir Nigel and ties it round his waist, wiping the blood from his eyes as Sir Nigel watches.

SIR NIGEL

Godspeed, Alleyne.

Alleyne clammers onto the rock, ready to lower away...

ALLEYNE

If my fate should prove the same, I pray you give my humble service to the Lady Maude. Say I loved her always.

Sir Nigel reaches across the rock and holds Alleyne's hands, tears in his eyes.

CU THEIR HANDS

SIR NIGEL

We see the world differently, but you're a brave lad; in my book that's all that counts. And if it should be you who sees my family again, tell them I had no regrets - except parting from them. Chivalry is done; I have no desire to slay men by lighting a fuse. It's your turn now, boy. Find your own world.

154 CONTINUED:

154

CU ALLEYNE

reacts, nods, closes his eyes briefly, then begins his descent down the cliff face...

THE FIGHTING RAGES

above him... Spanish archers loose arrows at him...

ALLEYNE SWINGING

on the rope at least presents a moving target ... ARROWS WHIZ around him like nasty WASPS...

DOWN ANGLE

dizzying as we see what it means for the rope to be short.

ALLEYNE REACTING

nothing to reach onto by way of a hold - except...

THREE FEET OUT OF REACH

an outcropping... how to reach it?

A HAIL OF STONES

clobbers Alleyne and he almost lets go!

ALLEYNE CLAMBERS UP THE ROPE

a few feet, and, holding it secure between his knees, he undoes his FILTHY GREEN SCARF and attaches it to the end, giving himself some more LENGTH as

AN ARROW PIERCES HIS SHOULDER!

155 INT. TWYNHAM CASTLE - DAY

155

ECU LADY MAUDE

looks up, EYES WIDE in shock!

BACK TO SCENE

156 EXT. RAVINE CLIFF - DAY

156

Alleyne holds onto the rope with one hand, almost letting go in his agony from the arrow. He barely manages to hang on to his newly lengthened rope...

CLOSE ON HIS FIST clutching the green scarf, now almost black-

156A EXT. RAVINE - DAY 156A

ABOVE IN THE BATTLE

Hordle John is wounded, but fights on - the place is piled with BODIES...

156B EXT. RAVINE CLIFF - DAY -CU ON THE BLACKENED GREEN SCARF 156B

taut with tension, its silken threads snapping. Will it sustain Alleyne? (Some metaphor, huh)

THE OUTCROPPING

Alleyne's feet barely scraping it. It's now or never. With his DAGGER, Alleyne cuts free the SCARF and drops! He almost slides off the cliff face but finds his grasp just in time. He is lying right next to poor Norbury, a mangled corpse...

Using it as a tourniquet, Alleyne winds the remains of the GREEN SCARF around his bleeding upper arm...

Now he must make it down the rest of the cliff-face, but the work is easier. The arrow still in his shoulder, his eyes partially blinded by the BLOOD that won't stop flowing, Alleyne makes his way down...

156C EXT. RAVINES - DAY 156C

ABOVE - THE BATTLE

rages. Men use STICKS, STONES, HANDS... Lord Angus dies... Sam, Hordle John, Sir Nigel fight on...

157 EXT. CLIFF BASE - DAY 157

BELOW ALLEYNE GRABS "PEPIN," SIR NIGEL'S BLACK CHARGER but a STONE on the head knocks him almost unconscious!

A SPANISH SOLDIER

creeps forward to strip him of his possessions!

Alleyne wakes and wrestles with the man, one arrow sticking out of his arm, when SUDDENLY -

AN ARROW PIERCES THE SPANIARD'S CHEST, FIRED FROM ABOVE -

It has been fired by SAM AYLWARD.

SAM

That's all there is, boy! Say
goodbye to the MEN!

157 CONTINUED:

157

He flings the bow over the cliff...

Alleyne, gasping, waves up at Sam, then, stumbles blindly towards the horse and mounts...

amid a HAIL OF ARROWS and now a mounted pursuit...

CU SAM

watching Alleyne take off - the last he'll ever see of him. Behind, the Spaniards chopping their way to him...

158 SEVERAL ANGLES OF ALLEYNE'S WILD RIDE

158

Alleyne can no longer see; Blood streams from his forehead and mouth. With his last energy he reaches down and ties the STIRRUPS round his legs.

The effort exhausts him and he faints in the saddle...

THE HORSE plunges through the mountains... across fields... Ravines... into the river Ebro...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

VULTURES CIRCLING DOWN, REVEALING -

159 EXT. THE GORGE - LATE DAY

159

Nothing but DEAD. More dead than one can imagine. SMOKE... FLIES BUZZ. And VULTURES. Only the BLOODY BANNER of The White Company still flutters in a faint breeze...

WIDEN TO REVEAL

THE BLACK PRINCE, SIR HUGH CALVERLY and SOLDIERS combing the place, and...

ALLEYNE

held up by TWO SOLDIERS, his face obscured by dirt and blood, his eyes barely able to focus. The arrow has been removed from his arm but the once-GREEN tourniquet remains.

BLACK PRINCE

The last stand of the White Company.

Alleyne squints around - there's Sam. Black Simon. Sir Oliver. Sir Richard. Sir William. All dead.

ALLEYNE

What for?

SIR HUGH

What did you say, Edricson?

ALLEYNE

I said - nothing.

BLACK PRINCE

When King Pedro sits upon the throne of Spain, they shall be avenged.

Alleyne closes his eyes: isn't that just great.

SIR HUGH

(confidential)

You'll win your spurs out of this, Edricson.

Alleyne looks at him pitifully. He walks forward, looking...

Then... HIS POV: THE ORIFLAMME lies on the ground!

Alleyne reacts and staggers over to it, tries to pull the French pennant of death up. A BLOODY FIST holds one edge. Alleyne lifts it: Sir Nigel!!

He's alive. Barely.

ALLEYNE

MY LORD!

Sir Nigel, covered in BLOOD, opens his eyes slightly.

SIR NIGEL

The Prince --?

ALLEYNE

Safe across the river.

He nods, makes a gesture. Alleyne understands - he takes Lady Loring's GLOVE from the helmet, pulls it forth with difficulty and puts it in Sir Nigel's hand. Sir Nigel clasps it; smiles.

SIR NIGEL

My son.

He dies. Alleyne falls sobbing on Sir Nigel. Then...

A VOICE

I'm due 5,000 crowns, or ten cows and a bull, but it can be a little one. Also a blue dress for my mother and five acres of pasture-land, two scythes and a grindstone. Likewise a small house with stalls for the cows and 36 gallons of beer.

159 CONTINUED: (2) 159
 Alleyne looks up in teary disbelief.

160 EXT. SMOKY BATTLEFIELD - SUNSET 160
 Alleyne on his knees is KNIGHTED by the Black Prince as his Knights stand and watch. Knighted on the field of battle...

MESSENGER (V.O.)
 I bring sad tidings, my lady...

161 CU TIRED MESSENGER 161
 MESSENGER
 All are dead.

WIDEN TO REVEAL

161A INT. TWYNHAM CASTLE - DAY 161A
 Lady Loring closes her eyes briefly in response to the news. They were dipping CANDLES when they were interrupted...

MAUDE
 (very soft)
 Did you say "all"?

MESSENGER
 It's certain there's not a man left.

ECU LADY MAUDE
 dry-eyed. Instinctively her hand goes to her throat.

162 ALONG SERIES OF CORRIDORS & ARCHES 162
 Maude walks away from us through the arches, getting smaller and smaller...

SOUND OF A BELL TOLLING OVER.

DISSOLVE TO:

LEAVES TURNING ON THE TREES - months are passing...

BELL CONTINUES TOLLING UNDER -

DISSOLVE TO:

162A EXT. BEAULIEU ABBEY IN THE DISTANCE - DAY

162A

The bell tolls as at the opening of our story. At the bottom of the hill a crude CARRIAGE heads slowly towards the Abbey.

A HUGE GOLD SPUR RIDES INTO FRAME - WIDEN TO REVEAL

A KNIGHT ON HORSEBACK WITH A VERY TALL SQUIRE

CLOSER

it is Alleyne, recovered from his wounds. He rides PEPIN, Sir Nigel's black charger.

The innocence is gone from Alleyne's face - that unformed, unfinished look. His face has a SCAR on it.

Next to him, Hordle John... they look at the Abbey.

HORDLE JOHN
England looks the same.

CU ALLEYNE

ALLEYNE
It may look the same...

But it's not, his expression tells us.

HORDLE JOHN
The war is over. Thanks to us, King Pedro sits upon the throne of Spain.

Alleyne doesn't bother to reply. Hordle John follows his gaze.

HORDLE JOHN (CONT'D)
A year has passed since we left this place. You've fulfilled the terms of your father's will. You've become a man.

ALLEYNE
(soft)
But am I a True Man?
(pause)
Is there any such thing?

HORDLE JOHN
Will you go back to the Abbey?

ALLEYNE
(pause, then)
There's no going back.

HORDLE JOHN
What then?

(CONTINUED)

ALLEYNE

That depends on -

Before he can say "Maude," there s a faint CRASH. They look:

THE CARRIAGE BELOW THEM HAS LOST A WHEEL

They ride up to help. The DRIVER rounds up the wheel as Alleyne and Hordle John assist the PASSENGER, a YOUNG LADY.

YOUNG LADY

O, thank you, sirs. I told that fool Catesby the pin was loose on our axle but he must deny all - and now I shall be too late!

ALLEYNE

We shall soon put matters to rights. Too late for what?

YOUNG LADY

Do you hear the Abbey bell? My friend is to be married this day and I swore to be the bridesmaid at her wedding.

Hordle John, using his huge strength has hauled up the carriage by its axle as the Driver coaxes the wheel back on.

ALLEYNE

You shall be on your way in short order.

YOUNG LADY

Lady Maude has always teased me for my lack of punctuality, but this will sorely try her patience -

Alleyne is thunderstruck.

ALLEYNE

Lady Maude - Lady Maude Loring? Married?

YOUNG LADY

(resigned)

With her true love and her father dead, she had little choice in the -

Alleyne has dropped the wagon and sprinted to Pepin.

To the astonishment of the Lady, the Driver and Hordle John, Alleyne gallops full tilt towards the Abbey.

162B INT. ABBEY - EARLY EVENING

162B

The rays of the FADING SUN stream through the stained glass. PLAINSONG CHANT is heard. 1,000 CANDLES illumine the place.

LADY MAUDE and HER BRIDEGROOM stand before the Abbot Berghesh, their backs to us as he concludes the wedding by drawing the sign of the cross in benediction -

ABBOT
*In nomine patrii et filii et
spiritu Sancti -*

THE HUGE DOORS AT THE BACK OF THE NAVE SLAM OPEN!

Confusion as SIR ALLEYNE strides in forcefully.

REACTIONS FROM OLD ABBOT BERGHESH

and others.

Maude (in her VEIL) and her BRIDEGROOM whirl around he is Alleyne's BROTHER, the Squire of Minstead!

Alleyne stops dead. Maude is in complete shock.

MAUDE
Alleyne!

ALLEYNE
Maude...

MAUDE
They said you were dead!

ALLEYNE
You told me to live.

THE SQUIRE OF MINSTEAD
(smiles)
I said I'd have her. You're too late, brother -

ALLEYNE
(to Maude)
And what of your soul that was to be mine through all eternity?

MAUDE
(head down)
He holds my mother and threatened to kill her if I did not give consent -

The Abbot reacts to this news.

THE SQUIRE OF MINSTEAD

(to the Abbot)

She gave herself to me of her own accord.

(to Alleyne)

And now she is my wife.

Alleyne draws his sword.

ALLEYNE

Your widow.

The fight is on between the brothers as the Abbot, Maude and the assembly looks on and tries to stay out of the way as the fight moves all over the church, whacking CANDLES in half and committing general mayhem. The Squire fights dirty, but Alleyne has been through the wars and knows his stuff.

The Squire is tripped up and Alleyne pounces, ready to plunge the sword into his chest as his brother looks up, helpless. Alleyne looks over at

MAUDE - her expression says it all: *Kill him and I am yours.*

Alleyne hesitates, gasping, and lowers his sword. Smirking, the Squire starts to rise. Alleyne suddenly punches him once with his steel-gloved FIST and he goes down unconscious.

Slowly Alleyne crosses to the altar, where Maude and the Abbot have not moved. He bends down and pulls off his SPURS, flinging them to the stone floor with a ringing CRASH.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

A sword may look like a cross -

He undoes his swordbelt - it clatters to the stone, as well.

ALLEYNE (CONT'D)

- but it is NOT a cross...

ABBOT

No.

ALLEYNE

There must be some other way for men to live - Maude, will you help me find it?

Maude is totally confused.

MAUDE

Reverend Father, am I not married?

162B CONTINUED: (2)

ABBOT

A marriage vow obtained by force is
no vow at all, my child - but for
the rest, these are matters for
your own conscience and heart.

Maude realizes this is so; she turns to Alleyne.

MAUDE

Have you my green scarf - the token
of my faith?

Alleyne's eyes fall; he hesitates.

ALLEYNE

Alas, Maude. I have failed you.
That scarf is stained with blood
and sin. It is not fit for your
sight.

ABBOT

She asks if you still have it, my
son.

Sighing, Alleyne reaches inside his breastplate -

ALLEYNE

I have it, reverend father...

HE PULLS OUT THE SCARF, BEAUTIFUL AND PERFECT AS EVER!

The expression on his face tells us how astonished he is.

Maude's face shines. She pulls off her veil.

ABBOT

Do you believe in miracles,
Alleyne?

Alleyne and Maude have eyes only for each other. They look
like a couple taking their wedding vows before witnesses.

ALLEYNE

I do now. Maude - will you help me
find my way - whatever the journey
holds? Will you be my White
Company?

Off her glistening eyes...

DISSOLVE TO:

163 EXT. HORIZON - SUNSET

163

Over a swelling CHORUS of *Personent Hodie*, the battle song of the White Company, now an anthem of ecstasy, a Man and a Maid on a big horse gallop towards eternity...

FADE OUT.