

THE KING

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EXT. ENGLISH COAST -- MORNING

A YOUNG GIRL of 9 walks along the beach. The morning fog still hangs over the English Channel.

The Young Girl spots something shiny in the sand. She runs over to investigate. It's an arrow, perhaps from a hunter or a battle long ago. She doesn't care, she just smiles gleefully over her new find.

Suddenly she hears a noise. A RHYTHMIC THUMPING. She looks around to the trees but soon realizes it's coming from behind her, over the waters. She strains to see through the fog. Soon the thumping is joined by SPLASHING.

THUMP-SPLASH...THUMP-SPLASH...THUMP-SPLASH

Out of the fog it appears. A DRAGONS HEAD. Like something out of a story her older brother would tell to scare her. Then next to it another DRAGON'S HEAD. Two Dragons swimming ashore!

The Dragon's Heads come out of the fog, they are the bows of two VIKING LONGSHIPS, also called DRAGON BOATS.

On each side of the Dragon Boats, oars splash down with perfect precision, carrying the huge ships ashore.

The Young Girl backs up, but is too astonished to run.

The Boats are soon beached and dozens of huge BEARDED MEN jump off onto the sand. They are VIKINGS. The Norwegian plague of England.

They wear conical iron helmets with nose or eyes guards. Axes and broad swords strapped across their backs. Their round wooden shields are decorated in varying colors. All have an iron boss in the center. The Vikings gather around the bow of the largest ship.

Then he appears, a RED-HEADED VIKING. A purple cloak (the color of royalty) drapes his large frame. His flaming red beard plaited and his hair braided into a pony tail. His helmet's eye guards frame his green eyes. His broad sword is strapped to his back. The shield he carries is decorated just like the others, but the boss has been sharpened to a point. He is one of the few who wears chainmail.

He is the VIKING CHIEF, and they await his orders.

A YOUNG VIKING stands beside him. Too young for a beard his blonde hair juts out from under his helmet. He also wears chainmail and carries a double-bladed axe.

The Chief spots the Young Girl sitting in the sand and leaps off the boat. The Vikings part to let him walk over.

He towers over the small child, looking her over. He looks back at his men and, without a word, swings his sword towards the trees. The Vikings silently swarm up the beach and disappear into the woods.

The Chief looks back down at the girl, who by now is too petrified to move. Smiling, he reaches down and grabs her.

EXT. A VILLAGE NEAR BATH, ENGLAND -- DAY

The morning fog has lifted and the sun shines bright. PEASANTS go about their daily tasks. Two BOYS chase a chicken with sticks, giggling as the squawking bird tries to escape the insanity. All is perfect in this little borough.

Suddenly one of the Boys stops his chicken torture. He's spotted something.

BOY

Mum!

His MOTHER comes out of the house. Wearing her apron she has a dead, half-plucked chicken in one hand and a fistful of feathers in the other. She's about to speak when she sees what her son spotted. A SOLDIER in full battle dress atop a horse. He slowly trots down the hill. Directly behind him a whole REGIMENT on horseback follows. Several HORSEMEN carry RED FLAGS bearing a BLACK LION in attack posture.

Instantly the entire Regiment goes into full gallop. HORSEMEN withdraw their swords as ARCHERS release a volley into the small town.

MOTHER

IT'S KING RICHARD, RUN!

She grabs her son and runs inside. The other Villagers scramble for safety, but it's no use. The Horsemen are upon them in no time. WOMEN and CHILDREN are cut down or trampled by horses. The MEN of the Village try valiantly to defend their homes. But they are no match for seasoned Warriors bent on destruction.

When the slaughter is complete a MAN rides through. He wears a gold crown, his cloak is fastened with golden LION broaches.

He is RICHARD, KING OF MERCIA, mid 20s. Dark hair, dark eyes... dark soul.

Next to him rides LORD BERWYN, 30s. Lord Berwyn dismounts to retrieve arrows from his dead targets.

Richard dismounts and enters the only home not in flames.

INT. HOME

Richard enters followed by Lord Berwyn. The Mother who was plucking the chicken stands in front of her son. Terrified she tries to hide the boy behind her dress, but curiosity has the best of him and he keeps peeking around.

Richard approaches the woman, his sword held firm in his hands. Without a word he swings his sword effortlessly through her neck. The Boy just stares at Richard as his Mother's headless body falls away.

Richard gives the Boy a look... turns and walks out. Lord Berwyn loads a bloody arrow, aims at the Boy, and fires.

EXT. HOME

Lord Berwyn exits, mounts his horse and looks at his King. Richard nods to a SOLDIER who throws a torch into the home. It quickly erupts in flames.

Two SOLDIERS bring a beaten YOUNG MAN to Richard. They throw him down on his knees.

SOLDIER
One Villager alive, my King, as you
commanded.

Richard looks at the Young Man.

RICHARD
You live for one purpose. Go to
Athelney and tell King William what
you have seen. Tell him I await him
at Bath.

The Soldiers lift the Young Man to his feet.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
GO!

The Young Man runs off. Richard's hate-filled eyes watch him.

EXT. COURTYARD, CASTLE AT ATHELNEY -- DAY

Two YOUNG MEN are suited for battle; conical iron helmets, light chain mail and round wooden shields. Armed only with wooden swords.

One is ALFRED, PRINCE OF WESSEX, 18,

Clean and perfectly manicured... as a Prince should be.

The other is ROLAN STEWART, 19. Rolan moves around Alfred with swift proficiency. Unlike Alfred, Rolan has seen battle before. The scar above his left eye is proof.

But Alfred's training is apparent, his sword is a part of him. He counter's Rolan's every swing. He thrusts and almost gives Rolan a wood jab to the gut.

Rolan parries... Alfred loses his footing... Rolan grabs Alfred's sword hand, twists it and brings him to his knees.

ROLAN
You still put too much weight
behind your thrusts.

Alfred breaks away and stands, rubbing his hand.

ALFRED
I almost had you there.

ROLAN
Almost will not save your life on
the battlefield.

Alfred looks down and nods. Rolan eyes him with unease. Suddenly a GUARD runs into the courtyard.

GUARD
My Prince! Come quickly! A
Messenger has arrived from the
North! Richard's invaded!

ALFRED
Where?

GUARD
Bath, the Messenger awaits your
father at the front gates!

ROLAN
Go get my Father and the King,
bring them down immediately.

GUARD
(bowing)
Yes, Sire.

The Guard runs off as Alfred and Rolan run for the gates.

EXT. GATES OF ATHELNEY

Alfred and Rolan see the Young Boy who witnessed Richard's slaughter being attended to by four GUARDS. Exhausted, he drinks heartily from a water bucket. He painfully rises and bows to Alfred.

ROLAN
What happened?

YOUNG MAN

It's Richard, Sire. He's invaded Bath. He destroyed my village... he killed everyone.

ALFRED

(to Rolan)

He could be in Athelney in less than two days.

YOUNG MAN

He's not coming here, your Highness. He wants to meet King William on the field of Bath.

VOICE (O.S.)

And that he shall.

The voice belongs to WILLIAM, KING OF WESSEX, 40s. A proud and confident man, he carries himself with a reserved self-assuredness.

Next to him stands GENERAL CEDRIC STEWART, late 30's, an intense man, always on guard. He's also Rolan's Father.

KING WILLIAM

See that he is attended to.

The Guards bow and lead the Young Man off. King William turns to his son.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Are you ready, Alfred?

ALFRED

Yes, Father.

King William lays his hand on Alfred's shoulder, he looks his son deep in the eyes.

KING WILLIAM

As King, you are protector to your people. You defend them from your enemies. It is through this sacrifice, this service, that you prove your worthiness to be King.

ALFRED

I will not let you down.

KING WILLIAM

It is not me who depends on you.

Alfred nods in solemn understanding.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Go, prepare.

Alfred bows to his Father and goes inside. King William watches him with concern.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Is he ready, Rolan?

ROLAN
The Prince is quite skilled.

KING WILLIAM
But?

ROLAN
I fear he has no taste for battle...

Off a harsh look from his Father.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
My King.

KING WILLIAM
In better times that would be a good thing.

ROLAN
Forgive me, my King. I have trained him to the best of my ability.

KING WILLIAM
You have taught him well, Rolan. But there are some things he must learn for himself.

EXT. CASTLE -- LATER

Alfred walks along a calm stream flowing near the castle.

His sister, LILLA, 16, skips stones. She possesses the air of royalty with a soft, quiet grace.

She flicks a stone, skipping it four times. Alfred grabs a small stone off the ground and sends it across the water eight times.

LILLA
How do you do it?

ALFRED
Here.

Grabbing a rock off the ground he places it in her hand. Standing beside her he manipulates her fingers around the small, smooth stone.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Now hold it down by your waist and flick your wrist the way I showed you.

Lilla does so... five skips. She turns to him with a huge smile of satisfaction.

LILLA
I did it! See, with a bit more practice I shall be better than you.

ALFRED
You'll have plenty of time to practice while I'm gone.

LILLA
Where are you going?

ALFRED
King Richard has invaded. We leave for Bath in the morning.

Lilla touches his cheek.

LILLA
You're ready for this.

Alfred nods, reveling in his sister's confidence.

ALFRED
I'll race you back to the castle.

LILLA
You don't stand a chance.

Alfred takes off getting a head start.

LILLA (CONT'D)
Hey!

She hikes up her dress and takes off after him. They both run at full speed back to Athelney castle.

EXT. CASTLE, ATHELNEY -- NIGHT

Torches light up the exterior grounds. Just out of reach of the torches glow TWO SHADOWS make their way across the grounds. Both run from the castle towards the outer wall. They sneak out through a hidden gate.

EXT. CEMETERY

The gate leads to the Royal cemetery. In the glow of the FULL MOON we see they are Rolan and Lilla.

LILLA
(whispers)
I can't see anything.

ROLAN
 (whispers back)
 Just a little further.

Lilla bumps into a gravestone.

LILLA
 Ow! Why are we here?

ROLAN
 What?

LILLA
 Why are we here?

They stop.

ROLAN
 Why are you whispering?

LILLA
 Why are you whispering?

ROLAN
 Because you were.

Back to normal tone.

LILLA
 Why are we here?

ROLAN
 I wanted us to be alone.

Rolan takes her hand in his. Nervous he musters all of his courage and finally speaks.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
 Lilla, in all of England there is
 no Lady more beautiful and elegant
 than you.

He fidgets about. All his training as a soldier has not prepared him for this challenge.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
 I've spoken with your Father, and
 he has given us his blessing to be
 wed... if you will have me.

He gets down on one knee.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
 Princess Lilla, will you marry me?

Her face lights up.

LILLA
Yes, yes I will.

They embrace. Finally she breaks the embrace and gives Rolan a bewildered look.

LILLA (CONT'D)
But... why here?

ROLAN
What do you mean?

LILLA
You've just proposed to me surrounded by... *dead people*. This is a bit odd to say the least.

He desperately tries to find the right answer.

ROLAN
Where better to propose marriage than in the only place that a true loving union could ever end?

Although not taken in by his bluff, she smiles. They kiss deeply, passionately.

EXT. CASTLE BALCONY -- EVENING

Alfred looks out over Athelney. His Mother, QUEEN IDA, 40s, walks up and stands next to him. An extravagant woman who carries herself as the revered Queen she is.

ALFRED
The time has finally arrived.

QUEEN IDA
And now?

ALFRED
Now...

He turns to her, desperately trying to quell the tears.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
I have never been so frightened.

QUEEN IDA
Only a fool would go into battle and not be afraid.

ALFRED
But why must I fight?

QUEEN IDA

What talk is this? You are the
Prince of Wessex, the son of King
William...

ALFRED

Of course I *should* go into battle.
But to lead, not to fight. How can
I lead if I am dead?

QUEEN IDA

How can you lead if you not with
your men? How can you lead if you
do not have their respect?

ALFRED

Don't you ever wish that Father
would not have to fight? That every
time he rode out you knew there was
more than just a slight chance he
would come home?

Queen Ida steps closer to Alfred trying desperately to
control herself.

QUEEN IDA

Your Father is the finest Warrior
in all of England. And he is
surrounded by the best Army who
ever walked these lands.

Alfred looks away in shame over what he has told his Mother.
She places her hand on his shoulder.

QUEEN IDA (CONT'D)

Perhaps one day Kings shall not
have to fight with their men. But
now is not that time. Now your
Father must... as must you.

ALFRED

Forgive me Mother.

She cups his face in her hands.

QUEEN IDA

You are the son of King William. The
grandson of Aethelrod the Brave. It
is in your blood to be great.

Alfred smiles, but just slightly. This doesn't soothe him.

EXT. BATH -- NIGHT

The ARMY OF WESSEX has set up camp. At the foot of a hill
dozens of tents and fires dot the landscape. GUARDS patrol
the perimeter as SOLDIERS prepare for the battle.

They sharpen their swords and spears. ARCHERS load arrows and check the tension on their bows. CAVALRYMEN see to their HORSES checking their shoes. Some brush, clean and talk to their Steeds.

In the middle of the encampment is a large tent, surrounded by GUARDS. The tent is topped with YELLOW FLAGS with the HEAD of a SNARLING WOLF sewn in BLACK. This is the flag of William.

INT. TENT

King William stands at the entry to his tent watching his Men prepare for war. Alfred enters from the other end and walks up behind him.

ALFRED

Father? May I ask you something?

King William turns to Alfred, giving him his full attention.

KING WILLIAM

Yes, Alfred.

ALFRED

After you killed Kellen, you gave his ring to Richard and let him live. Why did you not kill him? Why didn't you kill the son of Kellen and march into Mercia. You could have the largest Kingdom in all of England.

KING WILLIAM

A true King rules through love and respect. To earn their love a King must serve his people, they do not serve him. A King who rules through conquest and fear is no King at all.

Alfred looks confused. King William turns from his son.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Alfred, there are some things you must learn for yourself.

EXT. A FIELD OF BATTLE -- MORNING

A fog covered valley. Book ended by two hilltops.

King William's ARMY rides to the crest of a hill under the Yellow flags of Wessex.

Across the valley Richard stands at the head of his Army. Next to him is Lord Berwyn, his piercing eyes stare across the valley. The red flags bearing the black lion wave high above them.

Both sides sit quiet. A cold morning breeze whips through the ranks. Steam billows out the horses nostrils as nervous YOUNG MEN and hardened WARRIORS prepare for the carnage. Some have bloodlust in their eyes, but all have fear.

King William rides down into the valley accompanied by Alfred, General Stewart and Rolan.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR

In the midst of the fog Richard meets them with Lord Berwyn and TWO SOLDIERS. As the two groups converge, Richard sneers at Alfred.

RICHARD

Are you ready to watch your Father die, boy?

KING WILLIAM

Your Father did not beg for his life, that's why I did him the honor of taking it myself.

RICHARD

My Father died on his knees, I expect you to do the same!

He moves closer to King William.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'll look for you.

KING WILLIAM

You will find me.

Both groups ride back.

Alfred takes his place in the ranks with Rolan and General Stewart by his side. King William addresses his men.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Richard of Mercia believes he can achieve his father's dream of taking our home. We crushed the dream of the father, and we shall crush the dream of the son as well.

He draws his sword.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Warriors of Wessex, fight with me, fight for Wessex! Today, Richard's head shall roll on the field of Bath!

King William's Soldiers cheer for their King.

Richard stares back, he has no speech.

RICHARD
ARCHERS! LOAD!

Archers load their bows, draw back their strings and aim high in the air.

KING WILLIAM
ARCHERS!

King William's Archers do the same.

Richard and King William lift their hands and simultaneously bring them down. The Archers release their volley. Hundreds of arrows darken the sky. The silent calm of the morning *ripped* by their hiss.

Alfred, along with the rest of the army, lifts his shield for cover as arrows shower down, striking Warriors on all sides of him. Three arrows pierce Alfred's shield. One almost slices his arm, another stops inches from his face.

Richard rides to the rear of his Army, out of the arrows range. He watches as his Men are struck down.

Both sides remove their wounded from the ranks, but leave the dead where they lie. Those can be gathered up later.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
CAVALRY!

With arrows protruding from their shields, William's Cavalry storms down into the valley.

Richard watches the Cavalry ride into the fog and nods. Lord Berwyn waves his hand... the Archers step aside. Several teams of Mercian's roll HUGE LOGS to the crest of the hill and set them loose into the valley.

King William can only watch as his men, far out of ear shot, and blinded by the fog, ride into the trap. Suddenly the screams of men being crushed to death echo out of the valley. Alfred's face twists in horror.

RICHARD
ARCHERS!

His Archers reload and send down a volley of arrows. The arrows pierce the fog... more screams.

KING WILLIAM
ARCHERS!

William's Archers release another volley at Richard's Men in a desperate attempt to aide their comrades. But it's too late. The logs and arrows have done their damage.

The screaming stops. William's Army waits. The cold quiet has returned. Suddenly a horse is heard galloping up the hill. A white steed exits the fog, his DEAD RIDER dragged behind by the foot. Several arrows protrude from the man's body. A few have wounded the horse, it's white coat streaked with blood.

Alfred watches the body of the Soldier get dragged by until another Soldier stops the horse. He stirs uneasily in his saddle. His fear very evident.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
INFANTRY, NOW!

His INFANTRY charges down the hill. The front lines have their shields up, directly followed by SPEARMEN ready to launch at the first sight of Mercians.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Are you ready, Alfred?

ALFRED
(with bravado)
Yes, Father.

King William looks at Rolan and gives him a nod. A nod which says "watch my Son". Rolan returns the gesture. General Stewart gets fidgety. He hungers for Mercian blood.

GENERAL STEWART
Now, my King?

KING WILLIAM
NOW!

The two Men ride down the hill, swords at the ready.

ROLAN
Alfred, stay near me.

Alfred nods and together they ride into the valley.

Richard watches William's Army charge into the fog.

RICHARD
NOW!

Richard's CAVALRY and INFANTRY rush down the hill. Richard unsheathes his sword and follows. Lord Berwyn joins in with his bow and arrow.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR

The fog has begun to lift. The squishing of boots stomping through bloody grass adds to the cacophony of screams and the clashing of metal on metal.

King William and General Stewart are completely in their element, no MERCIAN lasts more than a few blows with these great Warriors. The Army of Wessex fights well, but the loss of their Cavalry is too great. The Mercians outnumber them.

Rolan and Alfred fight side by side. Rolan is just like his Father, taking out MERCIAN after MERCIAN.

Alfred also fights well. His first kill takes only three swings. Alfred watches the MERCIAN fall at his feet. For a brief second he cannot believe he actually killed a man. But he has no time for reflection. Another MERCIAN charges fast.

ROLAN

ALFRED!

This one fights better than his comrade, but Alfred thrusts and gives him a sword to the gut. Again, stunned by his actions, but this time a smile comes across his face. He *is* very much like his Father after all.

As Richard swipes down each SOLDIER he heads closer to his prey, King William

King William stands ready... blood on his sword... bloodlust on his face. A MERCIAN CAPTAIN comes for him. William deflects a blow with his shield and runs his sword through.

As the Captain falls Richard comes into view. No one stands between them. Richard drops his shield and withdraws his dagger. King William spots a short sword on the ground. Discarding his shield he scoops it up. Both men are now doubly armed.

The two great Warriors clash. Both fight with equal zeal, equal fury. Each Man's swing is countered, parried or blocked. King William begins to get the upper hand. All Richard can do now is block and move away from William's powerful blows. Finally their swords lock.

Alfred sees his Father face off with Richard. A MERCIAN SPEARMAN sees Alfred, lifting his spear he readies a shot. Rolan sees this, but the battle has taken him too far away.

ROLAN (CONT'D)

Alfred!

Richard swings... William barely moves his head as the sword slices through the thick air. William swings with all his might, cutting into Richard's chain mail. Blood seeps through the metal garment. William relishes the sight, but caught unawares *slips* on a blood covered rock.

The Spearman launches his spear, pinning Alfred to a tree.

William almost regains his footing when he sees Alfred. Skewered to a tree.

Richard takes advantage of William's lapse and runs his sword deep into William's gut. As Richard withdraws William drops to his knees.

RICHARD

As I said, on your knees.

Richard swings. The razor sharp edge cuts through the thick English fog, slicing through William's neck.

Writhing in pain, Alfred looks over in time to see his Father's head fall to the ground.

Rolan runs for his Prince, but the same Spearman nails him in the gut.

General Stewart runs for his fallen King. Lord Berwyn spots him and swiftly launches an arrow, hitting him in the chest. The General stumbles but keeps running.

GENERAL STEWART

RICHARD!

Lord Berwyn quickly reloads and shoots again, this one strikes General Stewart in the thigh. He falls, but quickly gets up and continues in a limp run.

GENERAL STEWART (CONT'D)

RICHARD!

Lord Berwyn shoots a third, this time right into Stewart's eye. General Stewart, screaming in pain, falls to his knees. Ripping the arrow from his socket, he finally collapses to the ground. General Stewart lies there, his one eye staring at King William's head.

GENERAL STEWART (CONT'D)

My King.

His eye closes. The battle is done. Alfred has witnessed it all from his tree. Finally he slumps down, still pinned to the tree.

Lord Berwyn joins Richard who stands over the headless body of King William.

LORD BERWYN

I'll have the Men round up any prisoners. Then we can take care of the dead.

RICHARD

Leave them. We take Athelney tonight.

LORD BERWYN

Yes, my King.

Richard bends down and lifts the hand of King William. He removes William's royal ring and places it on the first finger of his right hand. Next to the royal ring of Mercia.

Mercians look through the dead. They give the Soldier pinned to the tree a quick look and move on.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR -- EVENING

No one is left but the dead. Alfred opens his eyes and looks around. He summons enough strength to pull the spear from his shoulder. He collapses to the ground but manages to painfully duck into the woods, escaping the bloody valley.

EXT. CASTLE, ATHELNEY -- NIGHT

The Mercians have taken Athelney, DEAD SOLDIERS and CIVILIANS litter the grounds. MERCIAN SOLDIERS have PRISONERS kneel by the wall. Homes burn throughout the city. The fire gives a hellish glow to the once peaceful city.

INT. CASTLE

Richard walks down the corridor with Lord Berwyn and THREE GUARDS by his side. They stop in front of an elaborately decorated oak door.

RICHARD

Open it!

The Soldiers bust the door open...

INT. QUEEN'S BEDROOM

Queen Ida stands strong dressed in her Royal Gown. Lilla holds her Mother's hand. A HANDMAIDEN stands nearby, not nearly as composed.

Richard and Lord Berwyn enter. Lord Berwyn grabs the Handmaiden and shoves her to the Guards.

LORD BERWYN

Take her.

She screams as they drag her into the hallway, tearing away at her clothes.

Richard approaches the Queen and Lilla. Queen Ida pushes Lilla back behind her.

QUEEN IDA

Do as you wish, but you will never have the pleasure of hearing me beg for mercy.

RICHARD

Good.

Without hesitation Lord Berwyn severs her neck with his dagger. Her blood splatters Richard's face. Lilla screams in horror.

Richard watches as Queen Ida grabs her bleeding neck, falls and dies at his feet. Lilla backs up, bumping into the bed. She cries for mercy. Lord Berwyn pays no heed and walks toward her, dagger in hand. Richard stops him, he has something else in mind for the young Princess.

EXT. DARK WOODS -- NIGHT

Alfred stumbles through the woods. His arm hanging limp at his side. His skin pale... his breathing labored. He's going into shock.

He stumbles out from the trees and carefully makes his way along a dark road.

EXT. ENGLISH COASTLINE -- MORNING

Alfred trudges along a trail. Off in the distance he sees a small fishing village.

EXT. FISHING VILLAGE

The village consists of several small huts with walls made of sticks. Smoke billows from holes in the grass-thatched roofs. VILLAGERS go about their morning chores.

Alfred wanders into the midst of these simple people. A couple of WOMEN scream for help. Several MEN gather around Alfred, asking him if he's all right. Alfred's mind swims in a fog, he can barely make out what they say. He's carried into one of the huts.

INT. HUT

Alfred is lied down on a thin bedding. A Villager, PAUL, 30s, kneels down next to Alfred.

PAUL
Can you hear me?

Paul pats Alfred's face to awaken him.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Stay with me boy, you're bleedin'
quite badly. I've got to sew you up.

Through his haze, Alfred watches Paul thread a needle and stitch close his wound. Dazed, Alfred can feel little pain. After he finishes Paul wraps a clean bandage around the wound and helps Alfred drink some water.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You rest now. It's all fine.

Alfred drifts off to sleep.

EXT. FISHING VILLAGE -- MORNING

Alfred exits the hut and surveys the village. His bloody garments have been replaced with simple peasants clothes.

PAUL (O.S.)
Feeling better?

Alfred turns to see Paul, a short man with a big smile.

PAUL (CONT'D)
How's your arm?

Alfred notes his arm secured in a sling. He nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You must be hungry.

Alfred nods again and follows Paul into the hut.

INT. HUT

Paul scoops stew from a kettle and hands it to Alfred who quickly devours it.

ALFRED
How long... have I been here?

PAUL
Two days.

Paul unravels the bandages and inspects the wound. Satisfied he rewraps it with a fresh bandage. Paul then picks up a sack and produces Alfred's old clothes.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You're Prince Alfred aren't you?

Alfred looks at him uneasily. Paul smiles and tosses the clothes on the fire.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Don't worry, my Prince. There's no love for King Richard here.

The Men watch as fire consumes Alfred's garments.

ALFRED
The Queen, my sister? Have you heard...?

Paul looks down, dreading what he must say. But Alfred's reaction says it all. Paul need say nothing.

EXT. CLIFF LINE -- DAY

Alfred walks alone, lost in his thoughts. He flashes on images from the battle; his Father beheaded... General Stewart shot down... Rolan speared.

Then he flashes on images of his Mother and Lilla. Knowing their fate he begins to cry. For the first time in days, Alfred has time to grieve.

After he has regained control of himself he looks down the cliffs. He sees two DRAGON BOATS beached on the shore.

EXT. VILLAGE

Alfred runs out of the woods and stops at the sight...

Frantic Villagers scurry around. WOMEN try to gather their CHILDREN. MEN arm themselves with axes, pitchforks, anything they can find for defense.

Paul sees Alfred at the edge of the wood. He holds his hand up, telling Alfred to remain where he is. Then they appear.

VIKINGS... the same ones we saw earlier.

With violent screams they charge the Village. The Vikings compose their front lines with overlapping shields. Behind the front line are SPEARMEN, many armed with two spears.

Alfred takes cover behind some bushes.

The Viking Spearmen launch just before their front line slams into the Villagers, crushing them. The front line quickly disperses as the Vikings start hacking away.

The poorly armed Villagers don't stand a chance against these fierce Warriors. Paul fights off a LARGE VIKING. The Viking buries his axe in Paul's gut, rips his axe out and brings it down into Paul's head.

From his hiding place, Alfred witnesses the decimation. Huts burned... Men cut down... Women defiled and killed.

As Alfred turns his head away in disgust he feels the tip of a cold, sharp sword at his throat. He looks up, the Red-Headed Viking Chief stands before him. He is THORGEIR, 40s.

THORGEIR

Up.

Alfred slowly stands, Thorgeir shoves him through the bushes.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Move.

He grabs Alfred by the back of his neck and drags him through the remains of the Village. They pass by the bodies of the Villagers. Thorgeir stops and forces Alfred to look.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
They died *good* deaths.

The Vikings pile up what they can use; food, weapons, livestock. They've also taken the Children, and a few ravaged Women, as Slaves.

Thorgeir wraps a rope tightly around Alfred's wrists. Alfred flinches as his injured arm is tied.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
This wasn't your village, was it?
(beat)
You weep for no one.

Thorgeir looks at the prisoners being dragged away.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
And none of them cry out for you.

ALFRED
I have no family.

THORGEIR
Then no one shall weep for you.
What is your name?

ALFRED
I am no one.

The Large Viking who killed Paul approaches them. He is GORM, 20s, a Bear of a man.

Beside him is the Young Viking we saw earlier. He takes off his helmet, his long blonde hair cascades down his shoulders. He is ARI, 21, Thorgeir's Son. Handsome, he is the vision of Norwegian perfection.

Thorgeir shoves Alfred at Gorm.

THORGEIR
Take him on board.

ARI
Several children and a few fouled women are we have.

THORGEIR
Children are easily broken and trained. They'll become excellent Slaves. The women are still capable of child bearing. I've returned home with much worse.

ARI
 (pointing to Alfred)
 What about that one? The coward.

THORGEIR
 He looks strong, but not much fight
 in him. He could prove useful.

Thorgeir smiles at his son.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
 (to all his men)
 Tonight we sail home!

The Vikings holler and cheer.

EXT. BEACH

The Vikings force the prisoners onto Thorgeir's Dragon Boat.

EXT. THORGEIR'S BOAT

The deck of the boat is nothing more than a cargo hold. Dozens of bags and trunks full of pilfered goods are strapped down. On each side of the boat rest fifteen sets of oars, by each oar is a large box that serves as a bench.

All Warriors who double as Oarsmen set their weapons by their 'bench' and grab hold of their oar, two men to an oar. Many boxes are big enough for two, but some are smaller so the Oarsmen have to scrunch together.

Several Warriors push the huge boat off the sand and climb aboard. A DRUMMER sets the beat and the Oarsmen quickly get into rhythm, swiftly carrying the ship far away from the English coast.

Alfred sits, chained at the rear of the boat with the other Slaves. The Children whimper to themselves. The bloody and defiled Women sit, clinging to each other. Nearby is the Young Girl we saw earlier, shackled to the side of the boat. But she no longer cries. Her tears dried up days ago. We will come to know her as EMMA.

LARS, 20s, approaches them. Dirty and missing a few teeth he is the Viking equivalent of *trailer trash*. Grabbing Emma, he undoes her shackles and gives her a look no child wants to see. Lars looks over at Alfred and smiles.

LARS
 What are you looking at? Would you
 like some when I'm done?

He runs his hand down Emma's face and begins to finger at her clothes. Unable to speak she lets out a low whimper. Lars quickly quiets this with a slap to her small face.

Alfred looks around, no one else has noticed Lars' reprehensible act. Alfred searches his chain and grabs the bolt holding it to the side of the boat. Using all the strength in his one arm he twists it. At first it won't budge, but Emma's horrified face gives him a surge of strength. It finally begins to move. Eventually he works it loose.

Lars is too engrossed in his actions to notice. Alfred slowly rises and swings the chain down hard on Lars' head.

LARS (CONT'D)
AHHHH! YOU BASTARD!

Lars spins around holding his bleeding head. Wasting no time Alfred swings the chain, cracking him upside the head. The filthy Viking falls to his knees. With his one good hand Alfred wraps the chain around Lars' throat and pulls.

The commotion gets the attention of the other Vikings. Gorm, first to respond, grabs his axe. But Ari grabs Gorm's arm. Gorm looks at him stupefied as Ari shakes his head.

Ari looks down at the red-faced Lars. He knows exactly what the sick bastard was up to. Alfred looks at the Vikings as he holds the chain tight. Fear and anger cover his face. Lars desperately tries to pry the chains away from his neck, but Alfred has the leverage. Lars begins to lose consciousness.

Thorgeir finally comes over to investigate the commotion.

ARI
Not much fight in him?

THORGEIR
I told you he could prove useful.

Alfred finally releases his grip and Lars falls to the ground, sucking in air. Alfred stands, holding his chain, ready for an attack. But Ari simply walks up to him, places his hands on the chain and smiles.

ARI
Rest now, English. You'll be fine.

EXT. THORGEIR'S SHIP -- NIGHT

Most on board are asleep. A few Vikings keep watch, the wind fills the sails, carrying the Dragon Ship through the dark waters. A DARK SKINNED VIKING mans the rudder, humming an old tune to himself.

Alfred gets jolted awake by a wave hitting the side of the boat. He looks around and sees Lars staring at him from across the boat. Alfred meets his stare. Lars picks up a bow, loads an arrow, pulls it back and aims at Alfred. Alfred has nowhere to run. Just then Ari opens his eyes.

ARI

Better make that count Lars. If you miss English gets a shot at you.

Lars weighs his odds of making the shot on a moving boat, thinks better of it and lowers the bow. But he still keeps his gaze on Alfred. Alfred averts his eyes, but will not sleep again this trip.

EXT. COAST OF SOUTHERN NORWAY -- DAY

Thorgeir's boat floats into the Bergen fjord. Steep cliffs lines with trees tower over the water. The Dragon Boat heads for the foot of a grassy hillside. A port is nestled at the waters edge. Just beyond lies the village of Bergen.

EXT. PORT OF BERGEN

Dragon Boats docked in range in size from nineteen feet to over forty feet. Thorgeir stands on the bow as his boat coasts in. Although not the longest, it is the most elaborately decorated. VIKINGS run down to help moor it in. FAMILIES await the return of their loved ones.

Alfred and the other Slaves are led onto the docks. They join several other PRISONERS, a mix of EUROPEANS and AFRICANS that were led off another ship.

Alfred suddenly notices a beautiful young girl approaching them. HALLI, 16, Thorgeir's Daughter. A youthful beauty, she is strong from years of hard work. She runs straight for Thorgeir. Father and Daughter embrace.

HALLI

Father, praise Odin you're back.

THORGEIR

He watches over me.

Ari approaches Halli, immediately she breaks away from her Father and hugs her brother.

ARI

I promised you I'd bring him back.

HALLI

It wasn't him I was worried about.

Gorm approaches Halli carrying a burlap sack.

GORM

Halli, I got you some beautiful things from a monastery we found. Crosses, goblets...

She feigns a smile.

HALLI

Thank you, Gorm. That's nice. I'll look at them later.

Halli walks past him to the boats to see what has been brought home. Thorgeir follows her without a word. Ari pats Gorm on the shoulder and follows his Father.

Gorm walks away, embarrassed by Halli's dismissal. A YOUNG VIKING lets out a chuckle... Gorm lets out a left hook. Sending the foolish Young Viking crashing into a cask of ale.

Vikings begin to unload ships. A couple of them start cutting the Slaves ropes so they can carry boxes.

As Alfred and the Slaves get their ropes cut off a FILTH-COVERED EUROPEAN sees an opportunity and makes a run for it. The Vikings just watch, and smile knowingly.

Thorgeir grabs a spear and throws it with amazing force into the European's back. The impact sends him into the frigid Norwegian waters.

ARI

(shaking his head)
He could have gotten us a good price at market.

THORGEIR

We'll do just fine.
(to the Slaves)
I have more spears, does anyone else wish to run?

With the show over the Slaves are given loads of cargo and forced through the village.

The last bit of cargo to be carried off are the bodies of the Vikings who didn't survive. Their bodies wrapped in linen, their weapons strapped to the outside. They're handed down carefully and brought to their families. WIVES, MOTHERS and SISTERS cry over their fallen men. MALE RELATIVES grieve by giving comfort to the Women.

EXT. VILLAGE OF BERGEN

Planks of wood create a makeshift street through the center of town. The homes have stone foundations, wooden walls and turf-thatched roofs. Low lying smoke from fires adds to Alfred's hopeless gloom as he looks around his new *home*.

BLACKSMITHS bang out spear heads and sword blades.

The smell of sweetbreads turns Alfred's attention to a BAKER'S hut.

As he passes an open door he sees a JEWELER painting designs on a beaded necklace.

Five SMALL CHILDREN gather at the side of the road and throw sticks and stones at the Slaves. Their MOTHER runs out and shoos them back inside.

The Slaves continue up the hill to the MEETING HALL. A large rectangular building with high vaulted ceilings. The arched gateway displays a carved DRAGON'S HEAD. The tongue of the Dragon sticks out, ready to spit fire.

INT. MEETING HALL

The vast hall houses a fire pit dead center. Against one wall, behind a long wooden table, sits a large chair. Its high back topped with the skull of a wolf. It's also flanked by several more chairs. On the other side of the fire pit reside several smaller tables. Oak casks line the walls. Above them, trophies of big game. Elk antlers, bear pelts and more skulls of wolves and boar.

The Slaves unload their burdens as Thorgeir addresses his Men.

THORGEIR
Tonight we celebrate, and honor
Odin's wisdom and the good fortune
he's granted us.

Thorgeir removes his sword and holds it high.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
ODIN!

His Men follow suit with their weapons.

VIKINGS
ODIN! ODIN! ODIN!

Thorgeir walks among his men, proud. He stops by Ari and grasps his Son's shoulders.

THORGEIR
Ari, you have first pick of the
slaves. Whoever you want, is yours.

Ari walks along the line of Slaves. A few Men stand strong knowing it would be good for them to be owned by the Chief's son. Some of the Women do the same, hoping the handsome future Chief will take a liking to them.

But Ari stops in front of Alfred.

ARI
He'll do just fine.

Suddenly Emma runs over to Alfred and wraps her arms around him. Both he and Ari take note of this. Ari smiles.

ARI (CONT'D)
And the girl too.

Lars steps forth.

LARS
He can't take two!

Thorgeir backhands him, an insult to any warrior.

THORGEIR
He's my Son!

And that's all he has to say.

INT. MEETING HALL -- NIGHT

The fire pit burns high. Several WOMEN surround it cooking food. In the torch light WARRIORS and other VILLAGERS fill the hall. Thorgeir feasts at the long table with his most honored Warriors and a few distinguished ELDERMEN. Next to him sits Ari, eating heartily he still manages to keep clean.

Halli sits at a table with other WOMEN.

Alfred, along with other Slaves, has been fitted with new attire. A simple grey tunic tied at the waist with a leather strap. Wool leggings and sandals. A leather collar with a steel ring is affixed around his neck.

Alfred is assigned to refilling wine. Some Slaves serve food while others are there for the amusement of the Warriors.

Several Warriors throw axes at a Slave strapped to a target. The game; to see who can get closest to him without striking him. One axe almost takes off the Slave's ear.

Gorm struts into the hall grasping a chicken in his huge hands. He rips the bird's head off with his mouth. The headless body flaps around in his arms, squirting blood over anyone near him. He smiles, blood and feathers all over his plaited beard. The other Warriors holler in approval of Gorm's childish antics.

Gorm looks at Halli, expecting to have pleased her. She gives him a disgusted look. Incensed, Gorm spits out the head, and throws the carcass at one of the Women by the fire.

GORM
Cook it, Woman! I'm hungry!

Gorm takes his seat next to Thorgeir. He washes the chicken bits down with a mug of ale.

Thorgeir stands and raises his hand. Several Warriors bang their metal mugs on the table to get silence. The hall soon quiets down as Thorgeir commands.

THORGEIR

Odin has smiled on us. We have gold, silver and slaves. Many of us returned home to our families. Those who did not, died glorious deaths and are welcome in Valhalla.

Thorgeir lifts his mug high.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

To our fallen Brothers. May they fight by the sides of Odin and Thor until the end of time.

The entire hall joins Thorgeir in his toast.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

And their shares of our spoils go to their families, as they are now *our* families.

In a momentary silence an axe thud is heard, followed by the Slave's screams. An axe has severed his hand.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Who did that?

Lars steps forth. Head hung in shame.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Congratulations, you won.

Actually, Lars has *lost* the game. The other Warriors laugh as he gets his new, maimed, slave.

ARI

There you go, Lars. Now you have two slaves!

A roar of laughter fills the hall.

INT. SLAVE'S QUARTERS -- NIGHT

The Slaves sleep on thin beddings, their neck collars chained to the wall. All sleep but Alfred. Snoring echoes through the small hut, but it's not the snoring that keeps him up. It's *where*, and *what*, he is that keeps Alfred awake.

INT. THORGEIR'S HOME -- DAY

Several Months Pass

Alfred and Emma sew furs together while Halli prepares the mid-day meal with two other FEMALE SLAVES. Alfred's hair has grown and stubble darkens his face.

SNORRI, a short, balding, Viking enters.

SNORRI
Thorgeir needs the slaves at the Meeting Hall.

HALLI
Why?

SNORRI
He's been caught.

Halli nods, the Slaves follow him. Emma begins to follow, but Halli holds her arm and shakes her head.

HALLI
Stay with me, we'll finish the sewing.

INT. MEETING HALL

SLAVES from all over the village convene in the hall. A large board with four straps, two at the top and two at the bottom, occupies the center of the hall.

Thorgeir, Ari and Gorm enter. Behind them a badly beaten SLAVE, stripped to the waist, is dragged in by two other VIKINGS. OLAF, a Warrior around 30, follows them. The Slave is strapped to the board, face down.

THORGEIR
This Slave escaped the night before last. He killed Olaf's wife, and maimed his son.

Olaf approaches the Slave, knife in hand. He straddles the Slave and, without hesitation, cuts two gashes on either side of the Slave's spine. The Slave bellows bloody screams, but Olaf pays no attention.

Reaching in the gaping wounds he pulls out the Slave's lungs. He lies them on the Slave's back. They pulse as he struggles to take in air.

This is called the *Red Eagle Torture*.

The Slaves watch in horror as the condemned man gurgles blood until his lungs cease to pulse. It takes much too long for him to die, but he finally does. Blood pours out of his back and pools on the wooden floor.

Olaf stands over the bloody body. Justice is done, but Olaf is not satisfied. He leaves the hall, the blood covered knife still in his hand. Thorgeir looks at Snorri.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Stay with him. Pray that Odin grants
him the strength he once had.

As Snorri hurries out the hall Thorgeir summons two Slaves.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Bury him. Far away from the Village.
Leave nothing to mark it.

They nod and remove the body. The other Slaves disperse and follow their Masters home.

Ari leads Alfred back to Thorgeir's home.

ALFRED
If I try to escape, will that
happen to me?

ARI
No. We'll just hang you from the
rafters. He got that because he
killed a woman.

Ari stops.

ARI (CONT'D)
Are you planning an escape?

ALFRED
I'm a Slave, should I not?

ARI
Do I treat you poorly?

ALFRED
No, you treat me very well.

ARI
You miss your family?

ALFRED
My family is dead.

ARI
Then where would you go?

Alfred thinks for a moment.

ALFRED
I would go nowhere.

Ari smiles and continues on. Alfred follows him in silence.

EXT. THORGEIR'S HOME -- DAY

Halli walks out of the house and stops short. Alfred catches her eye. He stacks firewood, the hot autumn day has made him remove the top of his tunic. His tan, sweaty body reflects the sunlight. She notices how the months of hard work have built up Alfred's once lithe frame.

HALLI
English, help me fetch some water.

Alfred nods, drapes himself and grabs the buckets.

EXT. RIVER BANK

Alfred secures the filled buckets to the pole. He notices Halli pick up a round stone and attempt to skip it. It sinks immediately. She picks up a second stone and makes another failed attempt.

Just then a stone flies by her and skips several times across the river's surface. She turns and stares at Alfred.

ALFRED
My apologies. I can usually get more, but I have not done it in some time.

Halli smiles slightly.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
You need a flat stone, like...

Alfred searches the ground and scoops up two stones.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
These two.

He gives one to Halli and grips the other in his hand.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Now hold it like this.

She copies his grip.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
And flick your wrist like so.

He flicks his wrist and sends the rock across the water.

Halli copies him and her stone skips twice.

HALLI
I did it!

ALFRED
May I?

Alfred picks another stone off the ground and stands behind her. He places the stone in her hand and manipulates her hand around it. They stand cheek to cheek. She blushes as his breath caresses his cheek.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Now hold it down by your waist and
flick it just as before.

Halli does so and gets five skips.

HALLI
With more practice maybe I'll just
get better than you.

Suddenly Alfred is reminded of his sister, Lilla. He flashes on his family, the battle, memories he's almost forgotten. Guilt washes over him. He turns and grabs the buckets.

HALLI (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

ALFRED
I must get the water back.

Alfred carries the water back up the trail. Halli just stands by the riverbank, confused.

EXT. TRAIL

Alfred carefully navigates the narrow path. As he rounds a bend, Gorm blocks his way.

GORM
What do you think you're doing?

ALFRED
Fetching water.

Gorm slaps him.

GORM
Don't put your filthy hands on her.

ALFRED
I never...

Gorm gives him a hard jab to the gut. Alfred, and the buckets, crash to the ground. Gorm grabs a fistful of Alfred's hair.

GORM
You're lucky you're Ari's Slave. If
you were mine I would cut your throat
and leave you for the maggots.

Gorm walks away. Alfred lies on the trail, covered in fresh mud, and shame.

A few moments later Halli comes around the bend.

HALLI
What happened?

Alfred struggles to get up.

ALFRED
I slipped. I shall fetch more water.

He painfully picks up the buckets and pole.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
I apologize for my carelessness. It shall never happen again.

Alfred loads the empty buckets back on the pole and limps back down to the river. Halli turns and sees Gorm at the top of the hill. He smiles. She scowls back. His smile morphs into a smirk and he walks off.

EXT. THORGEIR'S HOME -- DAY

Four Years Pass

Alfred's hair, now even longer, is neatly plaited. His beard is tied at the chin creating a tail. He chops wood with the assistance of Emma, now 13.

Ari walks out of his father's house and watches them.

ARI
The little one, I've never heard her speak.

ALFRED
She's never said a word, not since she was taken from her family.

ARI
Is something wrong with her?

ALFRED
She's a Slave.

Ari has no retort for this.

ARI
Follow me.

Ari leads Alfred into the woods with Emma following close behind.

EXT. WOODS

Ari and Alfred stand in a small clearing.

ARI
For years I have dreamed of
building my own home right here.

ALFRED
Why haven't you?

ARI
Time gets away from you. But, Thyri
and I will be married in the spring.
I need a home, for our family.

Ari looks Alfred up and down.

ARI (CONT'D)
Do you know anything about building a
long house?

ALFRED
No.

ARI
Good, neither do I. Let's get started.

EXT. WOODS -- MONTAGE

Alfred and Ari cut down huge trees, drag them to the clearing
and clean of the bark.

After digging the foundation they begin building up the
walls. Emma helps them prepare the mud and straw mixture that
will serve as insulation.

Halli and Emma prepare the inside of the home, the fire pit,
kitchen and sleeping areas. Alfred and Ari seal up the roof,
paying special attention to the hole in the roof, the chimney
hole.

With the house almost finished Thorgeir brings a carved
dragon's head. He helps the young men mount it above the
entrance.

EXT. WOODS

In the clearing now stands a new LONG HOUSE. Ari and Alfred
look at the finished home with pride. Thorgeir, Halli and
Emma look on from behind.

ARI
You'll not sleep in Slave's
quarters anymore, English.

Ari glances back at Emma.

ARI (CONT'D)
Nor you little one.

EXT. TOWN OF BERGEN -- DAY

Halli and Alfred walk along the wooden streets. She leads Alfred into the Jewelers Hut.

INT. JEWELERS HUT

Inside the JEWELER busily shifts pokers around a fire pit. He finally notices the two of them.

JEWELER
Halli, welcome.

Halli opens her sack and produces several pieces of silver jewelry; a pair of earrings and several necklaces. Alfred takes note of some crucifixes.

HALLI
Can you use these?

The Jeweler handles the pieces.

JEWELER
These should melt down just fine.
Would you like to see some new
pieces? They are just about to come
out of the mold.

HALLI
Of course.

The Jeweler walks to small table littered with clay molds.

ALFRED
He plans to melt those down?

HALLI
Yes.

ALFRED
Even the crucifixes?

HALLI
I forgot, you're a Christian.
My apologies.

ALFRED
I am a Slave, you need not
apologize to me.

Halli picks out the most beautiful crucifix.

HALLI
Here.

ALFRED

I am not allowed to have such things.

HALLI

If I say you can have it, then you
can have it.

Alfred takes the crucifix and quickly puts it around his
neck, tucking it under his shirt.

ALFRED

I do not know what to say.

HALLI

Then say nothing.

JEWELER

This one's ready.

He sets a clay mold down and carefully breaks it open,
revealing the silver bust of a bearded man.

ALFRED

What is that?

JEWELER

You do not recognize "Odin the Wise"?

The Jeweler just laughs and shakes his head.

HALLI

Do you have any beads left? I saw
that necklace you made for Thyri.

JEWELER

I knew you would like that.

The Jeweler reaches inside a small chest and carefully
removes a glass-bead necklace. The beads have intricate
designs of multicolored glass dots overlaid with lines of
colored glass. The focus of the necklace is a silver statue
of a female with large breasts and a round belly.

ALFRED

Who is that?

HALLI

That is the Goddess Freyja, "the
Fair One". She leads the fallen
heroes to Valhalla.

Halli hands the bag of silver to the Jeweler and takes the
necklace and the small statue of Odin.

JEWELER

Come back next week and I'll have
that arm band ready for your Father.

HALLI

I will.

Halli and Alfred leave as the Jeweler goes back to the fire.

INT. ARI'S HOME -- NIGHT

Alfred helps Emma and a FEMALE SLAVE clean up after the night time meal.

Halli sits at a small table in the corner carving designs on the handle of a bone comb.

Several children surround Thorgeir near the fire pit. The light of the fire casts deep shadows over his face. He has them enthralled with a story. Nearby Ari sits with his new wife, THYRI, a lovely girl of 18. They too are rapt in Thorgeir's tale.

THORGEIR

Aethelwald the Grand would not allow King Harald have his lands without a fight. He gathered all his men, loyal to the death, to help him defend his fjord.

A SCRUFFY-HAIRED BOY speaks up.

SCRUFFY-HAIRED BOY

Where were you Thorgeir? Did you fight against King Harald?

THORGEIR

Oh no. I was but a lad, not much bigger than you.

Thorgeir proudly puffs out his chest.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

It was my duty to protect my Mother and the other women of the village.

Alfred leans in to Halli.

ALFRED

Who is Aethelwald the Grand?

HALLI

My Grandfather. He was the ruler of a small kingdom in Norway, not too far from where we are now.

ALFRED

He ruled a fiefdom?

She nods, her hands never leaving her carving.

HALLI

King Harald was King of Norway. For years he had allowed the rulers of smaller kingdoms to rule as they please and only called on them when he went to war.

She sets the comb down and looks to her Father. But her face is not proud, it is full of sadness.

HALLI (CONT'D)

But his personal wealth was diminishing. So, he decided that since all the lands were his so should the wealth of those lands. Most Lords gave in... some did not.

Alfred glances over at Thorgeir, enwrapped in his story, the glow of the fire giving him dramatic posture. The Children are completely spellbound.

ALFRED

What happened?

HALLI

My Grandfather stood his ground.
(beat)
He lost.

THORGEIR

Aethelwald was struck down by the sword of King Harald.

The Children gasp.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

But before Aethelwald fell Thor granted him the strength for one last swing of his axe. Taking Harald's leg *off* below the knee!

The Children cringe.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

He had to have it replaced with a wooden leg. From that day forth he was known as King Harald 'Treefoot'.

The Children laugh at the funny name.

ALFRED

Thorgeir is the son of a King.

HALLI

Who lost his Kingdom.

Alfred gazes at the mighty chief for a brief moment. He goes back to his chores as Halli continues her carving.

Suddenly screaming is heard outside. Thorgeir jumps up, grabs his sword and runs to the door. Ari right behind him.

EXT. ARI'S HOME

Thorgeir looks outside at the woods. Screams can be heard coming from the Village. Suddenly a noise is heard from the dark trees. Thorgeir raises his sword and prepares. Gorm bursts out of the darkness running to his chief, battle axe in hand.

GORM
Berserks! They've attacked the
Village!

Thorgeir's face whitens, very little scares him, except this. He runs back inside.

INT. ARI'S HOME

Thorgeir grabs his shield.

THYRI
What's happening?

ARI
Bar the doors and windows. Let no
one but myself or my father inside,
understand?

THYRI
What...?

THORGEIR
Do as he says Woman!

ARI
Berserkers are here.

Thorgeir and Ari run out the house, slamming the door behind them. Halli immediately begins to bar the door.

HALLI
You heard him! Bar everything... NOW!

Alfred stands in the middle of the room, completely confused.

ALFRED
What's happening?

HALLI
There's no time to explain, just
help me!

Alfred helps Halli, Thyri and the other Slaves fortify the home. Emma helps gather the children into a corner.

After barring the windows and doors Alfred and Halli crouch in front of the Children. Halli holds a broadsword in her hands. Although huge, she holds it strong, ready for battle.

ALFRED
Who are the Berserkers?

HALLI
Not a who, a what. They're animals.

THYRI
They eat those they kill.

ALFRED
(astounded)
They what?

HALLI
When Berserks attack they are crazed. They wear no armor, just the skins of wolves whose spirits give them the strength to become animals of War.

The sounds of fighting get closer.

HALLI (CONT'D)
It is said they eat the flesh of those they kill.

THYRI
Iron cannot bite them.

ALFRED
Cannot bite... what?

HALLI
My Grandfather told me once that he and his men fought off a Berserker attack. They growled and hissed like animals.

The scream of a MAN being slaughtered tears through the home.

HALLI (CONT'D)
My Grandfather said the Berserkers spit blood when they fight. His sword went *through* the beast five times before he fell.

For the first time Alfred can see true fear in her eyes.

HALLI (CONT'D)
Iron cannot bite them.

Noises that sound like *snarling beasts* reverberate through the wooden home. The Children cry in fear.

HALLI (CONT'D)

He also told me they can kill with their teeth.

Suddenly the door splinters apart as a BERSERKER breaks in. A wild looking man wearing wolf skins, his skin marked with streaks of blue dye. But the most outstanding feature are his eyes. Not the eyes of a human, but a *predator*. He sees his prey huddled in the corner and rushes them.

They all scatter. Alfred makes it to the rear of the home and opens the door. No one's around. He has a clear shot through the woods.

Thyri's screams pierce the night air.

Alfred looks behind him and sees Thyri cornered by the Berserker. Halli jumps on the Berserker's back, but he throws her off like a rag doll, slamming her into the wall. He turns to Thyri and grabs her. Opening his mouth wide he goes in to bite her face off.

Just then three spikes burst through his stomach, he stops and looks down at them. They disappear. He turns to see Alfred holding a large pitchfork. The Berserker screams, blood spitting from his mouth, and runs for him.

Alfred ducks down with the pitchfork held tight. The Berserker runs into it, the spikes boring deep into his chest. Alfred braces the pole in the floor and flips the Berserker over his head, into the fire pit.

The Berserker screams and flays around in the flames. He rolls out, most of his body in flames. Through charred lips he snarls, grabbing Alfred by the throat. Alfred grabs the Berserker's arms and holds on despite the flames that burn his hand.

Suddenly, the Berserker's head splits open, the flaming beast drops to the floor. Halli stands behind him, axe in hand.

Alfred shoves his hand into a nearby bucket of water. It's burned, but not too badly. He quickly wraps his hand, grabs the axe from Halli and runs outside.

EXT. ARI'S HOME

Thorgeir and the other VIKINGS fight off the BERSERKERS. Alfred sees one Berserker bite into the neck of a Viking. He rips apart the Viking's throat, spitting out the remains.

He sees Alfred and runs straight at him. Alfred stands his ground, and takes a swing with his axe. He hits the Berserker square in the chest. The Berserker falls but gets back up.

Alfred grabs the axe and twists it in the wound, carving out a hole in the Mad Man's chest. The Berserker looks down in time to see his heart fall out of his chest onto the ground. He looks up at Alfred. As he falls dead a whimper escapes his bloody lips.

Alfred looks around him, he sees Olaf and Lars tag team a Berserker, chopping him to bits.

Alfred sees Thorgeir fighting off another Berserker. A mace lies near a dead Viking. Alfred grabs it and smashes the skull of the Berserker. The Berserker stumbles, turns around and looks at Alfred. With all his might, Alfred again slams the mace against the Berserker's head. The Berserker stumbles again, but does not fall. Blood begins to pour from his nose, ear, and even his eye.

ALFRED
Why will you not die!

Alfred strikes him in the head three more times. The Berserker weaves back and forth and finally crumples to the ground... dead.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
I have never seen such a thing.

THORGEIR
You're about to see more.

Thorgeir leads the rest of men to the Village.

EXT. VILLAGE OF BERGEN

As the band of Vikings exit the woods Alfred sees dozens more BERSERKERS at the bottom of the hill near the docks. Many WARRIORS and VILLAGERS lie dead at their feet. Their bodies mutilated. The Berserkers growl, holler and shake. Many bite the tops of their shields. Their gums bleed over cracked teeth. One rakes his fingers across his bare chest, drawing blood. This riles him up even more.

The Vikings are outnumbered. Just the way they like it.

THORGEIR
Form a line!

Ari hands Alfred a sword. Alfred takes it, mace in one hand, sword in the other.

ARI
Stay near me.

The VIKINGS form a front line overlapping their shields while second and third lines prepare spears and arrows. Thorgeir and Gorm bring up the rear with Ari and Alfred.

The two armies stare each other down. The Berserkers working themselves into a frenzy, the Vikings beat their weapons against their shields, screaming battle cries.

THORGEIR

For the glory of Odin! For the
souls of our fallen brothers and
sisters! Let's spill these
bastard's blood!

The Vikings run down the hill just as the Berserkers start running up. The second and third lines launch spears, taking out Berserkers just as the two armies slam together. The Vikings immediately split up and begin to hack away. Soon Thorgeir, Gorm, Ari and Alfred are in the thick of it. Alfred swings with all his might, severing the arm of a Berserker. Without missing a beat the maimed Berserker keeps fighting.

ARI

Go for the head, English!

Alfred swings the mace, crushing his head. Taking advantage of the Berserkers lapse Alfred swings the sword. Taking his head. He looks down at the body, flapping around like a headless chicken.

He suddenly sees Gorm with two Berserks on him. One on his back trying to bite into his neck and the other trying to gut him. Alfred grabs his mace and throws it. He misses the Berserker, hitting Gorm in the chest. The huge man stumbles, impaling the Berserker on his back on a broken tree limb. The other Berserker turns and runs for Alfred.

Alfred grabs his sword, but he's too slow. The Berserker tackles him. The two men struggle, finally Alfred gets on top and grabs the Berserker's sword, the Berserker keeps hold. Alfred grips the hilt with his good hand and the blade with his bandaged hand. As he pushes down the Berserker screams opening his mouth wide. The sword comes down on his open mouth and takes off his head at the jaw.

Alfred gets up and looks over at Gorm who rubs his chest where Alfred's mace hit him. He looks at Alfred, pissed.

Gorm turns and sees the Berserker stuck to the tree. The Berserker squirms and growls as he holds the end of the tree branch protruding from his gut. Gorm gets close to the Berserker and smiles. He pushes on the tree, breaking the trunk. The tree falls over and rolls down the hill with the Berserker still stuck to it. It rolls over the docks and into the black water, taking the wriggling Berserker with it.

Gorm walks to Alfred and stares him down. He looks down at the dead Berserker with half a head.

Both men look around. The battle is done, dead Berserkers and Vikings lie everywhere.

Alfred spots Thorgeir and Olaf bending down over the body of a slain Viking. Olaf appears to be consoling Thorgeir. As Alfred gets closer he sees that it's Ari. His throat ripped open, blood stains his beautiful skin and blonde hair. Alfred falls to his knees.

ALFRED

I should have stayed near him.

THORGEIR

There was nothing you could have done, English. Odin has decided to take him home.

Halli and Thyri exit the woods to survey the damage. Halli sees Ari first and is barely able to contain her shock. Thyri sees him and screams in horror. She runs down the hill but is stopped by Olaf.

OLAF

This is no sight for a woman.

Halli runs to Thyri. Both women hold each other in grief.

INT. BURIAL PIT -- DAY

Inside we find the body of Ari housed inside a ten foot long replica of a Dragon Ship. His armor, sword, spear and a sacrificed horse lie with him. He has been cleaned off, a cloak carefully wrapped around him covers his neck wound.

EXT. BURIAL PIT

The entire Village gathers around. A large stone marks his grave. Runes carved on the face of the stone wind around in the form of a snake.

THORGEIR

Odin, we send this brave Warrior to you. With burning steel he fought the world. With his own blood he earned the right to sit in the house of the Gods. Great Odin, let him fight for eternity by your side!

The Slaves stand several paces behind them. Alfred curiously looks on next to an OLDER SLAVE.

OLDER SLAVE

It was a good death.

ALFRED

What does that mean? "A good death"?

OLDER SLAVE

For a Viking there is no greater honor than to die in battle against one's enemy. It is the only way to enter Valhalla. When Vikings go into battle they say, "Today is a good day to die".

Alfred watches as the great Warrior Chief forces his face into a composed mask.

INT. THORGEIR'S HOME -- DAY

Alfred stocks firewood while Halli carves designs into a sword handle. Alfred sits down near her.

ALFRED

Although he was my master, my heart aches for him.

HALLI

You were more than just a Slave to him. He enjoyed your company.

ALFRED

How will he be remembered?

HALLI

We will tell stories about his life and his deeds. He will be the subject of songs and poems. He died a good death.

Alfred sits and stares into the fire.

ALFRED

My family did not die good deaths. No one will write songs about them.

HALLI

It's not your way. Your family will live on in other ways.

She sets down the handle and carving knife.

HALLI (CONT'D)

Ari has gone to Valhalla. Where has your family gone?

ALFRED

They are in Heaven.

HALLI

Is that a good place?

ALFRED

It is paradise.

HALLI

It sounds like Valhalla.

They are silent for a moment. Alfred goes back to his chores, Halli continues carving. Thorgeir enters the home.

THORGEIR

English, come with me.

INT. MEETING HALL -- DAY

Viking Warriors stand in a semi-circle. Thorgeir and Alfred enter and walk into the group.

THORGEIR

The hero Rig once traveled our great lands. He fathered Thrall who fathered the Slaves. He fathered Karl who fathered the free men. And he fathered Jarl who fathered the warriors. Rig, is the Father of us all. Through him we are all equal.

He brings Alfred to him.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

This Slave fought bravely in the attack on our village. He saved my son's wife. He saved my daughter, he saved me.

Thorgeir almost gives in to his emotions, but he regains the control of a Viking Chief.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

For his brave actions I give this man his freedom. Today he crosses the boundaries from Slave to warrior. No longer will he call any of us "Master", but "friend".

Thorgeir gives Alfred a sword.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

We take him as an equal and pray that Odin gives him a death worthy of a Viking. From this time forth he shall be known in story and song as "Rig, the English".

Alfred holds the sword, he examines the rune carvings on the handle. He looks up and scans the faces of the Vikings.

ALFRED

May Odin give me the strength to fight as a Viking.

He suddenly feels a strange sensation move through his body.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 May Odin grant me a death worthy of
 a Warrior!

He lifts the sword over his head.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 ODIN!

All cheer, holler and wave their weapons, except Lars. After the cheering has stopped, Lars steps forth.

LARS
 I don't care what you've named him.
 He's still an English dog to me.

THORGEIR
 Lars, he is no longer a Slave. He
 has the same rights to defend his
 honor as any of you.

LARS
 And what of my honor!

Lars gets in Alfred's face.

LARS (CONT'D)
 Ari is no longer here to defend you!

OLAF
 Let the past be Lars. He's one of
 us now.

LARS
 Time does not heal honor!

THORGEIR
 Are you making a challenge, Lars?

LARS
 Yes! Do you accept?

THORGEIR
 (to Alfred)
 A challenge is to the death.

Alfred and Lars never break eye contact.

ALFRED
 I accept.

With a hard fist to the nose Lars floors Alfred.

LARS

I hope your God wants you, English.
Because when I'm finished Odin will
have none of you.

Alfred stands... blood dripping from his nose... fists out. Without hesitation Lars tackles Alfred, knocking the wind out of him. Lars grabs Alfred and throws him into the excited onlookers. The Vikings throw Alfred back in. Lars lifts him up by his neck, strangling him. Alfred summons enough strength to punch Lars in the throat. Stunned, Lars holds tight. Alfred punches his throat three more times forcing Lars to release him.

Still trying to catch his breath, Alfred head butts Lars. Lars stumbles and falls unconscious to the floor. Alfred finally catches his breath and hobbles over to Thorgeir.

THORGEIR

You must finish it, English.

ALFRED

He's down.

THORGEIR

A challenge is to the death.

Several Vikings shout out; "Finish it"!

ALFRED

I will not kill an unconscious man!

Suddenly Lars grabs Alfred around the waist, throwing him to the ground.

THORGEIR

He's not.

Alfred quickly gets to his feet. Three fast jabs breaks Lars' nose. Lars blocks a fourth jab and lands a hard uppercut. Alfred flies back, crashing to the ground.

Both mens beards are now caked in blood.

Lars grabs a mace, Alfred desperately searches for a weapon.

GORM

English!

Gorm tosses him a length of chain.

GORM (CONT'D)

It worked last time.

Lars looks at Gorm, Gorm just smiles. Undeterred, Lars goes in for the kill, swinging his mace. Alfred holds the chain tight, blocking the mace as it comes down.

Alfred wraps the chain around the mace ripping it out of Lars' hand. An elbow to the face gives Alfred time to wrap the chain around Lars' neck. Alfred chokes him, just as he did on the boat years before. But this time he has two hands on the chain.

ALFRED
Yield, and I will spare your life.

Lars just grabs for the chain. Alfred tightens it.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Yield! Tap the ground and yield!

THORGEIR
He is a Viking. He will never yield.

Alfred looks down at Lars who continues grabbing for the chain, but makes no motion to yield. Alfred tightens the chain and jerks hard to one side, snapping Lars' neck. He releases the chains, letting the body drop to the ground.

Alfred straightens up and looks around. Fear etched across his face. Thorgeir walks to him.

ALFRED
Now what? Does another one challenge me for killing him?

THORGEIR
Lars challenged you. It ended the way it should have.

Thorgeir and Alfred look around at the Vikings. All look back at him with respect.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
You fought well, English. But tomorrow I'll teach you to fight like a Viking.

Alfred nods his head. Through his bloody beard he smiles.

EXT. TOWN OF BERGEN -- DAY

Thorgeir and Alfred spar with broadswords. Alfred goes on the defensive as Thorgeir delivers three powerful swings. The third knocks Alfred's sword away.

THORGEIR
Pick it up!

Alfred picks up his sword. With one swing Thorgeir knocks the sword away, again.

ALFRED
I wasn't ready.

THORGEIR

Do you think your enemy will wait until you're ready?

ALFRED

I will be prepared when I face my enemy in battle.

THORGEIR

When you kill a man do you think others will wait until you're ready to attack you?

Alfred sighs irritably. Thorgeir swings his sword down on Alfred. Alfred just barely gets out of the way.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

You must always be on guard, with or without your weapon!

Thorgeir screams and rushes Alfred. Alfred blocks the swings with his shield until he's backed into a tree. Thorgeir swings hard at Alfred's head. Alfred moves to the side, the sword imbedding itself in the tree. Thorgeir punches Alfred in the chest, knocking him on his back.

Thorgeir tries to pry his sword out of the tree, but the blade snaps. He looks at it and throws the broken sword away.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Damn German steel.

Alfred barely gets to his feet when Thorgeir tackles him. Thorgeir rolls over and grabs Alfred's sword. Kneeling he puts the blade to Alfred's neck.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

If your blade is broken then use your enemies.

Alfred kicks Thorgeir in the gut, then in the face, sending him to the ground. Alfred leaps up, grabs Thorgeir's broken sword, and brings the broken blade to Thorgeir's throat.

ALFRED

A broken weapon is still a weapon.

Thorgeir, shocked at first, smiles.

THORGEIR

Well done, English. You might just make a warrior yet.

Alfred helps Thorgeir to his feet.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
We leave for another voyage in less
than a month. Will you be ready?

ALFRED
Absolutely.

The two Men walk off towards the Village.

THORGEIR
Can you throw a spear?

ALFRED
Yes.

THORGEIR
Can you throw two at once?

ALFRED
Pardon?

Thorgeir smiles.

THORGEIR
Tomorrow... spears.

Thorgeir walks off to the Village. Alfred just stands there
and shakes his head.

ALFRED
Two?

EXT. WOODS, TRAINING ARENA -- DAY

Alfred and Thorgeir are inside a fenced-in ring. Near them
several BOYS are being taught the basics by a WARRIOR.

Thorgeir holds up a spear.

THORGEIR
This is the Vikings most valuable
weapon. Even more than your sword
or your axe.

Thorgeir hands the spear to him. Alfred examines the weapon.

ALFRED
These carvings?

THORGEIR
Your name... in runes. Halli carved
them for you.

ALFRED
You mean...?

THORGEIR
That is yours, English. Always keep
your weapon close.

ALFRED
Thank you.

THORGEIR
Use it like a Viking, make us proud.

Thorgeir turns to a large square bail of hay. With one powerful throw he launches the spear through the air. The spear spins perfectly, slamming straight into the middle of the hay.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Now you try.

Alfred lifts up his new spear and gives it his best throw. It wobbles through the air and flies off missing the target by several feet.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Not as easy as it looks.

The Boys, and the Warrior training them, laugh at the pitiful sight. Alfred shakes his head in shame.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Don't worry, English. You'll get
it, eventually.

EXT. WOODS, TRAINING ARENA -- MONTAGE -- DAY

Alfred continuously throws spears over and over at the hay target. The first several go way off. Then he starts to hit it. Finally he gets the bulls eye! He smiles, but only to himself, he is alone at the practice range as the sun begins to set.

Suddenly it hits him. A sharp pain in his shoulder. His muscles are knotted and sore from throwing all day. He walks off rubbing his shoulder. His smile never leaves his face.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

Alfred stands in front of the target with two spears held up. Taking a deep breath he launches them hitting dead center.

He walks over, admiring his aim. He looks to Thorgeir for approval.

THORGEIR
Ready for your next lesson?

Proudly contemplating his accomplishment.

ALFRED

Yes.

THORGEIR

Catch it.

Alfred looks at Thorgeir dumbfounded.

ALFRED

Catch? No man can catch a spear.

THORGEIR

A Viking can.

Thorgeir walks several paces away.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Throw a spear at me.

ALFRED

Are you mad?

THORGEIR

Throw a spear at me!

ALFRED

I could very well hit you!

THORGEIR

That's what I'm counting on.

Hesitantly Alfred grabs a spear. After a deep breath he throws with all his might and skill. Thorgeir steps to the left and grabs the spear. He spins around and hurls it back at Alfred. The spear plunging in inches from Alfred's feet.

Alfred stares in disbelief at what he just witnessed.

ALFRED

You can teach me that?

Thorgeir smiles.

THORGEIR

Come, you have much more to learn.

EXT. ENGLISH CHANNEL -- DAY

A Year Passes

Thorgeir's dragon boat cuts through the waters. Oarsmen push the boat to its target, a MERCIAN SHIP.

EXT. THORGEIR'S SHIP

Thorgeir and Alfred stand on the bow. Alfred grabs a spear.

ALFRED

It's time to see how well you
trained me.

Alfred reaches under his shirt and pulls out his crucifix. He says a silent prayer, kisses the crucifix and tucks it back under his shirt.

THORGEIR

English, when you pray to your God
do you pray for us as well?

ALFRED

Would you like me to?

THORGEIR

Odin is wise and Thor is strong.
But we could always use another God
on our side.

ALFRED

I pray that God gives us the strength
to be victorious, and for mercy on the
souls of those who fall in battle.

Thorgeir lifts his sword high and turns to his Men.

THORGEIR

Swing your swords strong! Let the
blood of your enemies stain your
boots and Odin shall meet you at the
gates of Valhalla to welcome you
home! Today is a good day to die!

The Vikings let out a deafening roar of approval swinging their weapons over their heads.

The dragon boat soon catches up to the Mercian vessel and runs along side, shearing off the Mercian's oars. Vikings at the stem and stern throw ropes over, lashing the two ships together as their comrades leap onto the Mercian ship.

Alfred spots a MERCIAN CAPTAIN. He recognizes the Captain, it's the same Spearman who impaled him to a tree at Bath. He hoists up his spear and hurls it. The spear nails the Captain in the chest, taking him into the sea.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

We'll make you a Warrior yet.

Alfred grabs a sword and jumps onto the Mercian ship. Gorm and Thorgeir scream a battle cry and leap onto the ship.

EXT. MERCIAN SHIP

It's a bloodbath. Mercians desperately try to save their own skin as Vikings go on a rampage of slaughter.

Axes dig into skulls, swords remove limbs, spears send Mercians into the water. Many Mercians jump overboard trying to swim away, but Archers on board the dragon ship pick them off one by one.

But no man slaughters like Alfred. He takes on a MERCIAN SOLDIER near the bow of the ship. Holding his shield strong he deflects multiple blows. Finally Alfred delivers two swings. The first hits the shield, knocking the Mercian off-balance. The second knocks the shield out of his hand.

The Mercian delivers one strong blow, coming down hard on Alfred. His sword splits through Alfred's shield, the iron boss saving Alfred's hand.

Alfred tosses aside his shield, taking the Mercian's sword with it. Without hesitation Alfred spins and swings his sword, slicing right through the Mercian's midsection. The top half of the Mercian flies overboard while the bottom half collapses at Alfred's feet.

Gorm takes out another MERCIAN SOLDIER. As he falls Gorm sees Alfred facing him. Alfred quickly grabs an axe and throws it right at Gorm. Gorm ducks, the axe flying way over his head. Gorm whips around to see a MERCIAN SOLDIER, with Alfred's axe imbedded in his chest, fall into the waters.

Gorm and Alfred just look at each other, then immediately go back into battle.

EXT. MERCIAN SHIP -- LATER

The battle is done. Every Mercian is dead. Alfred stands in a daze, spattered in blood.

THORGEIR

It's done.

Alfred looks around for more men to fight. There are none.

ALFRED

What now?

THORGEIR

We load up the ship.

Alfred comes back to his senses.

ALFRED

Load up the ship, of course.

Alfred looks up at the flag of Mercia waving high in the ocean breeze. He cuts the flag's ropes and the Lion banner falls to the deck. Alfred kicks it overboard.

EXT. VILLAGE OF BERGEN -- NIGHT

Torches line the streets from the docks up the hill and surround the meeting hall.

INT. MEETING HALL

The Warriors all gather around the table, feasting. Thorgeir sits on his high seat with Gorm next to him. Alfred has his own seat near the end of the table. Ari's seat remains empty.

Thorgeir rises. Gorm beats his fist on the table, the hall falls silent.

THORGEIR

Many years ago I found a young
Englishman hiding in some bushes.
For reasons only known to Odin, my
son Ari took him as his Slave.

Thorgeir falls silent, the pain of his sons death still strong in his heart.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

He proved himself in defense of our
home against the Berserks. The same
bastards who took my son.

GORM

ARI!

The Vikings all raise their mugs.

VIKINGS

ARI!

Thorgeir looks at Alfred who just stares at the table.

THORGEIR

Now I realize that Odin has brought
a worthy Warrior into our midst.

Thorgeir lifts his mug high.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

To Rig, the English!

ALL

RIG!

Alfred stands.

ALFRED

May Odin make me worthy of an
honorable life... and a good death!

Alfred lifts his mug high.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Odin!

ALL

Odin!

Gorm lifts his mug high and looks at Alfred.

GORM

Fight strong, English, and die well.

EXT. A HILLTOP, OUTSIDE OF BERGEN -- DAY

Over twenty large stones are arranged in an oval covering almost half an acre. On the inside face of each stone rune markings wind around like snakes, just like those on Ari's grave marker. Alfred wanders around the stones and examines the runes.

Halli comes over the crest of the hill with a package in her arms. She sees Alfred and stops just outside the circle. Alfred sees her but continues to study the markings.

ALFRED

Who is buried in this place?

HALLI

No one.

ALFRED

Then what are these?

HALLI

They commemorate the battle of Bergen. When my Father defeated Thangbrand the Ugly.

Alfred looks at her skeptically.

HALLI (CONT'D)

Well he was.

She joins him by the stones. Alfred points at some runes.

ALFRED

What do they say?

HALLI

"On this spot Sven Sturgennson fell".

ALFRED

That's all?

HALLI

What else is there?

Alfred notes the package.

ALFRED
What is that?

She hands it to him. Alfred unwraps it. It's a broadsword, with a handle bearing rune markings.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
You made this?

HALLI
I carved the handle.

Alfred studies the markings.

ALFRED
What do they say?

HALLI
"I belong to Rig the English".

ALFRED
Simple, and direct.

HALLI
That's the Viking way.

They look into each other's eyes for a moment.

HALLI (CONT'D)
Well, are you just going to stand there holding it?

ALFRED
What?

He looks down at his new sword.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Oh.

He withdraws his old sword and sheaths his new one. He looks at his old one.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
What will I do with this?

HALLI
Aren't two swords better than one?

Alfred smiles and sheaths his old sword in his belt opposite his scabbard. He grasps the pommels of each sword. He likes the feel of two swords at his side. He notices how Halli looks at him.

ALFRED
I want to kiss you.

HALLI
Simple and direct.

ALFRED
The Viking way.

Halli smiles. Alfred wraps his arms around her and they kiss. Deeply... passionately.

EXT. ENGLISH CHANNEL -- DAY

Thorgeir's dragon ship coasts through the calm English waters. Behind him cruise four smaller dragon ships. His army has grown.

Alfred stands next to Thorgeir on the bow of the ship, they take in the sight of the cloudless day and smooth waters. Thorgeir notes Alfred's new sword.

THORGEIR
How does it feel?

ALFRED
Like it was made for me.

Alfred scans the waters, he sees FIVE BOATS in the distance. He does not recognize the sails but he can tell they are Viking dragon boats.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Over there.

Thorgeir looks, his eyes widen.

THORGEIR
Prepare for attack!

Thorgeir runs down the boat, yelling at his men.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Lower the sails, get your shields up, set the oars!

Vikings lower the sails while Oarsmen drop their oars. Gorm turns the rudder and aims the ship for the oncoming dragon boats. Thorgeir gets to the stern and yells the same orders at his other ships, pointing in the direction of the oncoming boats. Alfred runs up to Thorgeir, thoroughly confused, but ready for battle.

ALFRED
What's going on? Who are they?

THORGEIR
Halfdan.

ALFRED

Halfdan?

THORGEIR

My brother.

ALFRED

Your brother's attacking you?

THORGEIR

Half-brother, *Halfdan*. My Father raped his Mother. He never really got over it.

The two groups of ships close in on each other. Thorgeir's ship takes the lead.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Gorm, oars!

Gorm steers the ship straight for the lead boat. Both ships appear to be on a collision course, but at the last second they both veer off. Both ships rip off the others oars and coast along side each other. Vikings on both ships throw ropes over and secure the ships together. Both lead ships are now strapped to each other forming a large platform for battle. The smaller ships circle around, volleying arrows and spears at each other.

Thorgeir stands by his mast and looks across at HALFDAN, 40'S. He looks like Thorgeir's brother. Just as big with the same fiery red hair. Warriors on both ships attack, launching arrows while other Warriors jump across to the other's ship. Viking against Viking. Axes split helmets... swords splinter shields... spears punch through chain mail.

The smaller ships continue to circle. They watch for any Warriors who jump or fall off the larger ships, ready to strike them down if they're enemies... or save them if they're brothers.

With Alfred and Gorm by his side Thorgeir works his way to the center of Halfdan's ship and finds himself face to face with Halfdan's BODYGUARDS.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Halfdan! Let's finish this now!

Halfdan comes in front of his men, his sword ready.

HALFDAN

Your daughter will bow to me... just before I make her my wife.

THORGEIR

You'll never get close enough to her, you bastard!

They run at each other and clash swords. Alfred and Gorm fight off Halfdan's Bodyguards.

A few times Thorgeir almost loses it. Halfdan slams his shield upside Thorgeir's head, taking off his helmet. Halfdan thrusts into Thorgeir. Thorgeir moves out of the way but the sword grazes his chain mail, cutting through it and slicing Thorgeir's gut.

Thorgeir brings his sword down hard on Halfdan, splintering his shield. Now both men are without shields. Halfdan grabs an axe and is now doubly armed. Thorgeir grabs a spear, evening the odds. Halfdan quickly swings his axe and breaks the spear in two.

Desperate to kill his half-brother, Thorgeir begins to swing furiously. Halfdan blocks every swing. He swipes low and slices Thorgeir's thigh with his axe. Thorgeir manages to remain standing despite the severe pain, but his attack has been halted.

Alfred cuts down another Bodyguard and finds himself behind Thorgeir. He steps in front, both swords at the ready to defend his Chief.

HALFDAN

What is this?

THORGEIR

Back off, English.

ALFRED

You're injured! You'll not win this!

THORGEIR

A Warrior never backs down until he's dead. And I am far from dead!

Alfred sees the seriousness in Thorgeir's face. This man *is* ready to die.

ALFRED

Then kill him, and be done with it.

Thorgeir rushes Halfdan. Halfdan swings his axe down hard. Thorgeir blocks it with a swing of his sword, knocking the axe overboard. Now they are even, one sword each. With three calculated swings Thorgeir pushes Halfdan against the railing. Halfdan desperately fends off Thorgeir while holding himself steady so as not to fall overboard, where he will surely be cut down by Thorgeir's men.

Thorgeir, with all his might, brings his sword down on Halfdan. Halfdan blocks it with his own. Both swords break from the impact. The top half of Halfdan's sword pierces Thorgeir's shoulder. The bottom half of Thorgeir's sword gets buried in Halfdan's neck.

The bastard brother of Thorgeir falls, a broken sword blade protruding from his neck. Thorgeir rips the blade from his shoulder and collapses to his knees. Alfred runs to him.

THORGEIR
I'll live, English.

Several Warriors help Thorgeir back to the ship.

Two of Halfdan's smaller ships have been taken over, their crew's killed. The remaining ships flee. Only about a dozen of Halfdan's Men remain alive. They've been bound and set in the middle of the deck. Gorm faces the prisoners.

GORM
Will you die with honor?

With a nod they accept their fate. Gorm jumps back on the ship and sets Halfdan's ship loose. When the ship is far enough away an Archer launches a flaming arrow onto the ship.

Halfdan's ship floats off as it erupts in flames. The Prisoners just stand there, engulfed by fire. Dying honorably so they may meet Odin.

EXT. ARI'S HOME -- DAY

Alfred, Halli and Emma stand in front of the Long Home. The front door is still shattered, no one has been here since the battle so long ago.

HALLI
You helped him build it, Thyri
wants you to have it.

Alfred looks at her.

ALFRED
I will take it on one condition. That
you live here with me. As my wife.

Halli's eyes fill with tears. Tears of joy. Emma, for the first time in many years, smiles.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
And you as well?

Emma nods excitedly.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
But not as my Slave. You are free,
you no longer belong to anyone.

Emma's face beams.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

We best get to work. This home is in no condition to be lived in.

The three of them head into the home and begin the long process of cleaning and fixing.

INT. ALFRED'S HOME -- DAY

Alfred has put on his cleanest furs and leggings. He drapes a cloak over his shoulder, securing it with a gold pin bearing a carving of Odin. Thorgeir enters.

THORGEIR

I never would have thought a Slave would marry my daughter.

Thorgeir gives Alfred an old sword.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

This is your wedding gift to Halli.

ALFRED

A sword?

THORGEIR

The groom must give his bride a sword that she will hold and give to their son. He will give it to his wife to be passed on to their son in the same fashion.

ALFRED

This is the sword you gave your wife?

A sadness falls over Thorgeir's face.

THORGEIR

She did not live to pass it on, and my Son did not live to receive it. So I pass it to you.

Alfred bows his head.

ALFRED

I am honored.

THORGEIR

You should be. Treat my daughter well, English.

ALFRED

I will treat her as the Princess that she is.

THORGEIR

That makes you a Prince, doesn't it?

Alfred smiles.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
 I'll tell you about the ceremony.
 First, it will occur on Frigga's Day.
 This is the day most sacred for the
 Goddess of fertility.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CLEARING NEAR BERGEN -- DAY

Card: Frigga's Day - Friday

VILLAGERS have all gathered for the ceremony. A large stone with rune carvings stands at the northern point of the clearing. In front of it Alfred stands holding his gift. Next to him is a PAGAN PRIEST dressed for the occasion.

THORGEIR (V.O.)
 The spot chosen for your ceremony
 is sacred. It is a place favored by
 the Gods and Goddesses.

The Villagers make room for Halli to walk up to her groom. She is preceded by Emma who carries a small short sword. As Halli approaches a small goat is led to the priest.

THORGEIR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 A sacrifice will be required. In my
 time we had to kill it and use it's
 blood to make the mead for our feast.
 But now you have the choice to make
 it a living sacrifice. A sacred
 animal that you will keep fed and
 healthy for the rest of its days.

The Priest says a blessing over the goat. He covers his finger in red paint and runs it over the animal's throat, a gesture in place of actually slicing it. Emma leads the goat over to the side and ties it up to keep it out of the way.

Alfred holds up his sword and hands it over to Halli.

THORGEIR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You will say the blessing as I
 teach it to you.

ALFRED
 This is the sword of our ancestors,
 given to you intact and undepreciated.
 Hold it in trust for our son's wife to
 receive in her turn, and give to our
 grandchildren.

Halli takes his sword and, turning the blade downward, stakes it into the ground.

THORGEIR (V.O.)

She will then give you a small sword,
symbolizing her transfer from me to
you. It is now your duty to watch
over her and your bloodline.

Alfred takes the sword from Halli and sheaths it in his belt. Facing the Priest they place their hands on the hilt of the sword Halli stuck in the ground. He recites another blessing. When he finishes he looks at Thorgeir and nods. Thorgeir turns to the Witnesses.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Now, we celebrate!

The Witnesses cheer. Suddenly everyone breaks into a run, racing back to the village.

INT. MEETING HALL

The celebration is in full swing. Alfred and Halli now sit behind the long table. Everyone else, including Thorgeir, take their seats opposite. A jug of mead is brought forth and poured in a *Kasa*, a bowl with handles shaped like wolves heads. Halli takes the mead, presents it to Alfred and recites an old formal verse.

HALLI

Ale I bring thee, thou oak-of-
battle. With strength blended and
brightest honor. 'Tis mized with
magic and mighty songs. With goodly
spells and wish-speeding runes.

Alfred drinks and then hands the bowl to Halli for her turn. Thorgeir presents a reproduction of *Thor's Hammer*, and places it in Halli's lap. Alfred stands and recites the fertility verse.

ALFRED

Bring the Hammer; the bride to
bless. On the maiden's lap lay ye
Mjolner. In Frigga's name sanctify
our wedlock!

The celebration continues with the feasting turning into dancing and games such as wrestling and axe throwing (no Slaves as targets this time).

EXT. ALFRED'S HOME -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Alfred is led back to his home by six VIKINGS carrying torches. Among them Gorm. As they reach the long home Thorgeir awaits them at the entrance. He opens the door and beckons Alfred to enter.

As Alfred steps forth Gorm grabs his arm.

GORM
English, she will make you a good wife.

ALFRED
I know.

GORM
Be a good husband.

ALFRED
I will.

Alfred enters his home accompanied by his new Father-in-law.

INT. ALFRED'S HOME

Alfred finds Halli on their wedding bed. Still dressed in her gown, a new crown of flowers rests on her head. Several LADIES in attendance wait by the bed, Emma among them.

Alfred walks over and sits on the bed. He removes the crown of flowers, handing it to Emma. He leans in, does the sign of the hammer over her belly (another fertility ritual) and kisses her. Satisfied, all leave the long house.

The fire casts long shadows over them.

EXT. NORTHERN ENGLAND -- EVENING

Five Years Pass

A MERCIAN CAMP lies at the edge of a wood. The Mercians have begun to settle in for the night. Most have removed their armor and set their weapons down. Some sleep, others begin their night watch. But these Men are indolent, cozy in their overconfidence.

INT. WOODS

The Vikings silently move through the thick woods. Alfred and Olaf take the lead. Olaf moves with silent precision through the underbrush. A single dagger in his hand he moves for a MERCIAN GUARD. The Guard straightens his belt, paying little attention to the woods behind him.

Suddenly Olaf's hand wraps around the Guard's mouth as the dagger severs his throat. The Guard falls without making a sound. Olaf looks around and motions behind him. Alfred is first to appear. He holds a dagger in one hand and a mace in the other. He spots two GUARDS down the tree line and silently runs for them.

One Guard looks over just in time to see Alfred shove a dagger deep in his throat. The other Guard barely gets out a sound before Alfred crushes his mouth with his mace.

Alfred looks back at Olaf who has now been joined by Thorgeir, Gorm and several other Vikings. Alfred nods to them, Thorgeir nods and waves his hand. Within moments over a hundred VIKINGS emerge from the woods. They silently run down the hill to the Mercian camp.

Just as the Vikings set on the camp they let out battle screams and hurl spears at the unprepared Mercians. Once again they slaughter the Mercians. They've let their guard drop too long and have no time to arm themselves.

The battle ends quickly, every Mercian lies dead. The Vikings gather up weapons and a small cache of gold being held by the CAPTAIN. Whose hand had to be cut away to retrieve the box.

Alfred walks over to a Mercian flag lying in the dirt. He stares at the red flag with the lion embossed in black. He's almost forgotten what it means. Then it comes back to him. The battle, his Father, Mother and Sister. He kneels next to the flag and picks it up.

He looks up at a hillside, near the edge of the woods. He sees three MEN watching them. They were yellow tunics, with a figure embroidered in black. They are too far away for Alfred to make out what it is.

He looks around him, the others are too engrossed in collecting their spoils to notice. He removes the flag from its pole and tucks it under his shirt. He rises and joins his fellow Vikings in celebrating their victory. Looking back at the woods he sees the Men in yellow have disappeared.

EXT. ALFRED'S HOME -- DAY

Alfred walks up to his home. The sacrificial goat from Alfred's wedding stands outside munching on grass. It is healthy and fat. Alfred leans over and rubs its head as though it were a dog.

ALFRED
Hello, Lars.

INT. ALFRED'S HOME

Alfred sits in a wooden chair near the fire pit. A small fire burns to warm the home. After a moment he removes the flag from under his shirt. Holding it firm in his hands he stares deep into the fire. His stare becomes deep, almost frightening. He looks back at the flag and tosses it into the flames. Watching it burn up he smiles.

EXT. THE COAST OF NORTHERN ENGLAND -- DAY

Thorgeir beaches his ship. A Monastery rests on the cliffs above them.

ALFRED
Why have we set here?

THORGEIR
We need supplies, and for that we
need gold.

He smiles.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
Monasteries have plenty of gold.

ALFRED
But... that's a house of God.

THORGEIR
Not my God.

Alfred thinks for a moment.

ALFRED
I can't do it.

THORGEIR
No one's making you. Stay here and
watch the ship.

Thorgeir heads for the beach. Alfred grabs his arm.

ALFRED
They are men of God. They have done
you no harm.

THORGEIR
All they need do is allow us to
take their gold.

ALFRED
And if they defend themselves?

THORGEIR
Monks are not warriors. If they
fight they will die. And those who
survive will become slaves.

ALFRED
You would make Monks slaves?

THORGEIR
I made you a slave.

ALFRED
I'm no man of God.

Thorgeir pulls out his sword.

THORGEIR

All men are equal in the eyes of the
Gods... and at the end of a sword.

Thorgeir pulls away from Alfred and jumps down on the beach.

Alfred sits on a bench, pulls out his crucifix and prays.

EXT. NORTHERN ENGLAND -- DAY

A small village lies in ruins. Alfred walks among the burning homes exhausted, filthy and bloody. Bodies surround him. The SURVIVORS, mostly children, are rounded up.

Alfred sits to rest, just as he finally relaxes he hears screams from a hut several yards away.

INT. HUT

Alfred bursts in and sees a YOUNG WARRIOR attacking a VILLAGE GIRL. He tears at her clothes, laughing at her pathetic attempts to fight him off.

ALFRED

STOP!

The Young Warrior looks at Alfred. The Village Girl's face full of terror.

YOUNG WARRIOR

You can have her when I'm done.

He continues to rip at the Girl's clothes.

ALFRED

I said stop!

He stops, turns and faces Alfred.

YOUNG WARRIOR

Do you plan on stopping me?

Alfred unsheathes his sword.

ALFRED

Leave the girl be.

The Young Warrior smiles.

YOUNG WARRIOR

She's too skinny for me anyway.

He grabs her by the hair and unsheathes his dagger. But before he can cut her throat Alfred's sword erupts through his chest. Blood splatters across the girl's face. Alfred shoves the body to the ground. He turns to the Village Girl who stares at him in abject horror.

ALFRED

Go.

The Girl doesn't move.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Go! Run away from here and never
come back. Your home is gone.

The Girl remains. She cannot move.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I said go!

The Girl looks past Alfred at the doorway. Alfred turns,
Thorgeir stands at the door.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Let her go.

Thorgeir looks past him at the Girl.

THORGEIR

Do as he says girl.

The Girl slowly rises and walks past the Warriors. After she
gets out the doorway she runs off into the woods.

Thorgeir kneels next to the body.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

There is no honor in killing a man
whose back is turned to you.

ALFRED

I could not allow him to violate
and murder that girl.

A sadness comes over Thorgeir's voice.

THORGEIR

He did not challenge you. His back
was turned to you. There was no
honor in his death. He will not be
welcome at the gates of Valhalla.

We now realize this sadness is for Alfred more than the Young
Viking lying on the floor.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Do you realize what you have done?

ALFRED

I could not allow...

Thorgeir suddenly turns and grabs Alfred. His sadness now
multiplied by anger.

THORGEIR
 You should be killed in shame for
 this! I should be the one to rip
 out your lungs!

Thorgeir stops. He lets go of Alfred and walks to the door.
 He stops at the doorway but cannot look at his son-in-law.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)
 He died with honor. That is what we
 will tell the others.

Thorgeir leaves. Alfred stands there, with the body.

EXT. VIKING CAMP -- MORNING

Alfred wraps a few things in a sack and slings it over his
 back. He walks to Thorgeir's tent and sets his sword down by
 the front flap.

GORM (O.S.)
 What are you doing?

ALFRED
 I am returning his sword.

GORM
 It's your sword.

ALFRED
 I do not deserve it.

GORM
 So he deserves to be insulted in
 this manner?

ALFRED
 I mean no offense...

GORM
 Take the sword. A man who faces the
 world alone needs a good blade.

Alfred nods and picks up the sword.

With his swords sheathed in his belt and an axe strapped
 across his back he hikes off, disappearing into the woods.

GORM (CONT'D)
 Watch over him Odin. He'll need it.

EXT. NORTHERN ENGLAND, WOODS -- DAY

Several Months Pass

Surrounded by thick trees Alfred hides... sunlight barely
 penetrates the woods. Completely still he listens.

Finally it comes, a light crack of twigs. A BOAR waddles through the thicket searching for grass. Alfred lifts his crude spear, a long straight branch with a dagger strapped to the end. A single thrust impales the creature. He kills it so fast it doesn't make a sound.

EXT. A SMALL HILL -- AFTERNOON

In a clearing Alfred eats his well earned meal. The animal's hide dries in the sun while the carcass roasts over a fire.

Halfway into his meal Alfred notices a plume of smoke in the distance. Soon the smoke gets thicker, blacker. Alfred sets down his meat and grabs his sword to investigate.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

Alfred sneaks up through the bushes. A farmhouse is completely engulfed by flames. Nearby three MERCIAN SOLDIERS surround a badly beaten FARMER, bound and on his knees. Alfred sees two more MERCIAN SOLDIERS near their horses. He sums up his odds and shakes his head.

ALFRED
(to himself)
Thorgeir, why couldn't you have taught
me to throw five spears at once?

Alfred notices a small weapons cache near the horses. One eyebrow raises. He might actually have a plan.

He sneaks up on the Mercian's standing guard by the horses. Too enraptured by the Farmer's torture they don't even notice him until his dagger bursts through the neck of one. The other spins around just in time to get an axe to the face.

None of the Mercians torturing the Farmer heard the commotion. Alfred quickly grabs a spear and takes aim, skewering one Mercian square in the back.

The other two turn and see Alfred run behind the burning home. They quickly give chase.

As the Mercians round the back of the home their sight is marred by the smoke. They draw their swords and continue through the haze. They barely make out a figure running at them through the smoke. The last thing they see is Alfred with two swords at the ready. His dirty, bearded face contorted in a battle cry.

Alfred walks around to the front of the home and stares at the Farmer. He kneels down next to the man and looks into his dead eyes. He notices another body nearby, the FARMER'S WIFE. Several arrows imbedded in her back.

EXT. FARMHOUSE -- EVENING

Alfred buries the couple and carves runes on a slab of wood for their grave marker. Suddenly the sound of *hoofbeats* can be heard in the woods.

Another group of FIVE MERCIANS ride out of the trees. A CAPTAIN and FOUR SOLDIERS. The Mercian Captain gets off his horse and inspects the bodies by the weapons cache. He notices the other body by the tree. Alfred is gone.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
Find the others, NOW!

He points to one of his men.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
You, come with me.

The Captain and his Soldier ride off. The remaining three dismount and search the grounds.

One Soldier walks over to a haystack, looks around and decides to rest. He sits down and leans against the hay. Just as he takes in a relaxing breath, a sword explodes out of his chest. His blood curdling scream brings the other two running.

Alfred leaps over the hay holding his axe, leaving his sword stuck in the Mercian. He grabs the Mercian's sword and is fully armed. He runs for the nearest Soldier swinging his axe. The Mercian blocks Alfred's axe. Alfred thrusts but the Mercian counters. Being taken off balance Alfred is knocked to the ground. He tries to throw his axe, but the Mercian kicks it away. He flips his sword around to drive it into Alfred's chest.

2ND MERCIAN SOLDIER
Filthy Northman. I'll bleed you slow.

The two Mercians approach Alfred. He sizes up his odds and begins calculating his attack. Suddenly the two Mercians are struck down by arrows. As they fall Alfred sees FOUR MEN standing near the farmhouse. They are dressed in the same yellow tunics as the men Alfred saw earlier. But now he can make out what's embroidered on the front. It's a snarling wolf. *King William's flag*.

Quickly they reload their bows. One of the Men steps forth and looks Alfred up and down. Alfred grabs his sword and scans the grounds for a way out. The Man turns to the others. He motions for them to lower their bows and they obey. Obviously he is their leader.

LEADER
Now why would a Northman be here,
killing Mercians?

ALFRED
The better question is why are you
killing Mercians?

The Leader is taken aback by his voice.

LEADER
You're English?

Alfred tightens his grip on his sword.

ALFRED
Who are you?

LEADER
We are the 'Sons of William'. We
are the true warriors of Wessex...

Alfred suddenly recognizes the Leader. It's ROLAN STEWART.
Rolan looks down at his tunic and places his hand on the
crest of William.

ROLAN
...as King William was the true
King of Wessex.

Rolan looks up at the filthy Northman. Alfred lowers his
sword and walks at Rolan. Rolan lifts his sword up, preparing
for an attack, but there is none. Alfred simply walks toward
him. Rolan looks at him wide-eyed, unsure of what to do.
Alfred stares him in the eyes. Finally he reaches Rolan,
grabs Rolan's sword blade but doesn't lower it. He just holds
it strong and looks Rolan deep in the eyes. Rolan realizes
who this insane Northman is.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
Alfred?

Alfred softens his harsh gaze and smiles, just a bit.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
Alfred! My God you're alive!

He drops his sword. He looks back at his men who are
thoroughly confused.

ROLAN (CONT'D)
Do you know who this is? This is
Prince Alfred! Son of King William!

One of the Men steps forth.

SOLDIER
That's impossible, Alfred is dead.
(to Rolan)
You told us you saw him speared to
a tree yourself.

ROLAN

I did. I was wounded by a spear on that day as well, yet here I stand. God spared Alfred as He did me.

Rolan looks back at Alfred, studying his clothes and hair.

ROLAN (CONT'D)

What in God's name happened to you?

ALFRED

It's a very long story, and I didn't have a chance to finish my supper.

EXT. WOODS, NEAR BATH -- DAY

Rolan leads Alfred and his Men along an overgrown path. Alfred notes the bushes which have been pulled over the road to hide it.

ROLAN

I must confess, Alfred. I never would have thought you capable of such a thing. Becoming a Northman warrior... pardon me, a *Viking Warrior*.

Rolan and his men share a laugh. Alfred almost takes offense, but realizes Rolan is right.

ALFRED

A man never knows what he's capable of until he's put to the test.

(beat)

What of you? You and your men have made it your mission to kill Mercians whenever you cross their path?

ROLAN

We've made it our *pleasure* to kill Mercians when they cross our path.

ALFRED

Where are we?

Rolan points south.

ROLAN

Just past the clearing is a small hillside. Where your father lost his life.

ALFRED

We're near Bath?

Rolan nods.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Why would you hide out here?

ROLAN
Richard never comes near here. He lives in Athelney, has ever since he invaded Wessex.

Alfred's face drops.

ALFRED
Rolan, when he killed my mother and sister... did he make them suffer?

Rolan stops his horse.

ROLAN
You don't know?

ALFRED
What?

ROLAN
Lilla still lives. Richard spared her life.

ALFRED
What? How? I was told...

ROLAN
Richard... he forced her to marry him.

ALFRED
Marry?

ROLAN
She has given him a son, Malcolm.

Alfred's face stiffens, the look of a Viking.

ALFRED
Take me to Athelney, I must see her.

ROLAN
I'll take you next week. It's Malcolm's birthday. There's a celebration you'll want to see.

EXT. ROAD, NORTH OF ATHELNEY -- DAY

Alfred and Rolan slowly ride along a dark path. Alfred has changed some of his clothes, but his hair and beard remain the same. He still looks like a Northman. Alfred's attention is drawn to a horrible sight.

On each side of the road are FOUR VICTIMS of crucifixion. Their hands and feet nailed to the wood like Jesus, their arms strapped with twine to keep them from falling off. They've been dead for days, birds have already begun to peck away flesh for food.

ALFRED
What in God's name has happened?

ROLAN
Richard likes to make examples.

ALFRED
What did they do?

ROLAN
They upset their King, that's all that matters.

ALFRED
The people tolerate this?

ROLAN
They have no choice.

Sickened, Alfred can no longer stomach the scene. He kicks his horse and rides off as fast as he can.

EXT. ATHELNEY -- LATER

Alfred and Rolan ride into Athelney. VILLAGERS take note of the Northman riding through town. The two Men follow Villagers walking to the castle.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD -- DAY

The Villagers crowd around a fighting ring. The same fighting ring where Alfred and Rolan trained as boys.

Several MERCIAN SOLDIERS, stripped to the waist, warm up.

ROLAN
Those are Richard's personal guard.
They are the best fighters in all
of England.

Richard comes onto the balcony. Followed by Lilla, now 26, and PRINCE MALCOLM, 9. Malcolm has the looks of Richard, but his eyes show the kindness of Lilla. Lilla, although well taken care of, possesses a deep sadness.

Alfred cannot take his eyes off his sister and nephew. A painful reminder of how many years have passed.

Richard approaches the banister to address the crowd.

RICHARD

Subjects of Athelney. Is there any among you who believes he can defeat my Guards? Step forward, be victorious and reap generous rewards.

Richard takes his seat. The crowd stirs, people murmur and look around to see if any men brave enough, or foolish enough, will come forth. Suddenly a booming voice from the crowd says; "I AM"!

The crowd parts to allow a HUGE VILLAGER make his way onto the platform. The monstrous man looks as though he could rip an oak tree out by it's roots and break it in half. The Huge Villager points to a bald, muscular MERCIAN.

HUGE VILLAGER

You!

ROLAN

That is Charles Angleman. They call him "Charles the Bald", he is the best of them all.

Charles casually steps onto the platform.

HUGE VILLAGER

I'll snap you like a twig.

Charles smiles and slowly moves around the slow, lumbering giant. The Big Man takes a swing at Charles, one he easily avoids. Several more come but Charles dodges them all. One blow almost gets the Mercian, but he ducks down, kneeling in front of the Huge Villager. Charles shoves both his fists up into the Villager's crotch. The Giant's legs wobble from the low blow, but he quickly recovers.

Charles stands confident as another fist comes his way. This one Charles deflects and, using the giant's weight against him, sends the huge man crashing to the ground. Charles grabs the man's foot, twists the ankle, snapping the bone. The giant screams in pain.

Charles walks to his bench, brushing off the dirt.

ROLAN

A man of few words.

ALFRED

He needs none.

Another LARGE FARMER walks out to the courtyard. One of the villagers near Alfred whispers; "It's his brother". He bows to Charles. Charles returns the gesture. The Villager helps his brother leave the courtyard.

The fights continue on. Villager after Villager is beaten by a Mercian. Beaten badly. Many are carried from the courtyard. But Alfred cannot keep his eyes off Lilla. Lilla is disgusted by the show. Prince Malcolm watches with a reserved awe.

After yet another Villager is dragged off the platform Richard stands.

RICHARD
Are there no more men who can
challenge my guards?

Alfred walks onto the platform.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Excellent.

A Mercian walks out to meet Alfred.

ALFRED
No.

He points at Charles.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Him.

Charles rises. The two men come face to face. Charles slams his fist into Alfred's stomach. Alfred drops to the ground among gasps from the crowd. An uppercut to Charles's jaw gives Alfred a moment to recover. Three rights to Charles's jaw knocks out a couple of teeth. Charles spits blood. Two quick jabs to Alfred's nose sends him stumbling.

Another jab to Alfred's gut and Charles gets him in a headlock, cutting off his windpipe. Desperate for air, Alfred tries to break off. Alfred looks up and sees Lilla watching. Suddenly he finds the strength to wrap a hand around the back of the bald Mercian's head and flip him over. Without missing a beat Alfred stomps on Charles's chest. *Crack!*

Alfred prepares for Charles's attack. Charles tries to get up, but the pain makes it almost impossible even to breathe. Spitting blood and teeth he barely manages to say;

CHARLES
I yield.

The crowd erupts. Guards run out to carry Charles off. Richard gives Alfred a grand gesture of applause.

RICHARD
My congratulations to you on a
spectacular victory.

Alfred finally catches his breath.

ALFRED
What is my reward?

Richard regards him for a moment then smiles.

RICHARD
(to his Guards)
Bring him to my chamber.

Richard and Lilla go back into the castle. Malcolm stays for a moment. He can't take his eyes off Alfred.

LILLA (O.S.)
Malcolm, come inside.

Malcolm runs in as FOUR GUARDS approach Alfred.

GUARD
This way.

INT. CASTLE, THRONE ROOM

The Royal Family take their respective thrones. Lord Berwyn stands off to one side. The Guards bring in Alfred, stopping him thirty paces from the King.

RICHARD
You seem familiar to me. Have you been in my presence before?

ALFRED
No.

RICHARD
You look like a Northman. But you sound English.

ALFRED
My family was killed by Northmen many years ago. They made me a slave.

Prince Malcolm's eyes light up.

PRINCE MALCOLM
You lived among the Northmen? What are they like? Are they really savages? Did they beat you?

RICHARD
Hush!
(to Alfred)
My son has yet to learn the proper manners of a Prince.

PRINCE MALCOLM
My apologies.

Alfred bows to the young Prince.

RICHARD
This talkative little one is my
son, Malcolm.

He looks at Lilla who pays little attention to the dirty, and
bloody, Northman in her presence.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
And this extraordinary, yet quiet
Lady, is my wife, Queen Lilla.

Alfred bows to Lilla.

ALFRED
Your Highness.

Lilla bows her head barely making eye contact.

RICHARD
I'm afraid our Queen finds no
pleasure in the festivities.

LILLA
I find them repulsive and barbaric.

ALFRED
As do I, my Lady.

Lilla finally looks at him.

LILLA
How can one who does it so well
find it repulsive?

ALFRED
One does what one must to survive...
even if they find it repulsive.

She almost recognizes him.

LILLA
Where did you say you were from?

RICHARD
He has not graced us with that
information, my dear.
(to Alfred)
But I have more interest in
discovering where you are going.

ALFRED
I escaped from my captors a year
ago. I felt it best to go as far
South as I could.

RICHARD

I could use good men in my Guard.

ALFRED

I fight for no flag. If it would please you I would have my reward and take my leave.

Richard leans forward on his throne. Quite insulted.

RICHARD

It would not please me! I have made you a generous offer!

Alfred humbles his posture.

ALFRED

I mean no offense, your highness. I beg your forgiveness.

Richard calms himself and leans back in his throne.

RICHARD

These are dangerous times, a man who fights for himself has a most difficult enemy.

Lilla places her hand on Richard's arm.

LILLA

Let him go. He does not want to belong here, therefore he never would.

Richard places his hand on Lilla's.

RICHARD

My wife is as perceptive as she is beautiful.

She feigns a smile.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You can see why I married her.

(beat)

Very well, take your leave. What would you like as your reward?

ALFRED

I could use some gold, I must travel a long distance.

RICHARD

Then it is gold you shall have.

(to his guard)

Take him to the treasury, let him fill his purse, then show him to the gates.

Alfred bows, they nod back. The Guards lead Alfred out of the throne room. Richard looks at Lilla who carefully watches Alfred leave.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Take Malcolm.

Lilla takes her son and leaves. Richard summons Lord Berwyn.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I know I have met him before.

LORD BERWYN
He seems familiar to me as well.

RICHARD
Have him followed. Find out who he is, and why he is here.

LORD BERWYN
Yes, my King.

RICHARD
If he is here for any reason other than passing through... kill him.

LORD BERWYN
(smiling)
With pleasure.

EXT. GATES OF ALTHELNEY

Alfred walks out the gates, carefully watched by Richard's Guards. Rolan awaits him with the horses. He tosses Rolan his gold laden purse and mounts his horse.

ROLAN
Did you see her? Did you talk to her? How is she?

ALFRED
Lilla is well, not happy, but healthy. It appears that Richard treats her appropriately.

Rolan's face drops. Alfred places his hand on Rolan's shoulder.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
You are the only man she ever truly loved.
(beat)
That gold will help us raise an army. We will have our revenge for the deaths of our father's.

Rolan sits for a moment, debating with himself.

ROLAN

There's someone you need to meet.

INT. PUB, ATHELNEY -- NIGHT

Rolan leads Alfred into a seedy pub on the outskirts of Athelney. It is a dark and filthy place filled with the dregs of Wessex. Rolan leads Alfred to the bar, the whole time staring at a MAN sitting in a dark corner. The Man has a patch over one eye, long filthy hair and sits over his drink. He nods back and forth, on the verge of passing out.

Alfred, however, is distracted by the odd looks of the other drunks staring at him.

ALFRED

I don't suppose many Vikings come in here.

Rolan says nothing, he just continues staring. Alfred finally notices the Man.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Who is that?

ROLAN

Both our fathers died that day. But mine died a different death.

Alfred looks closely at the Man in the corner. It's GENERAL STEWART.

ALFRED

My God.

Alfred walks over to General Stewart.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

(whispers)

General? Is it you?

Now we see he's piss drunk.

GENERAL STEWART

I'm no General. Sod off!

ALFRED

General Stewart, do you not recognize me?

GENERAL STEWART

What would I know of a Northman?

Alfred sits across from him.

ALFRED

It's me, Alfred. Son of William.

General Stewart opens his single blood-shot eye wider and looks carefully at him.

GENERAL STEWART
Alfred? William?

He finally recognizes him.

GENERAL STEWART (CONT'D)
Alfred! My boy, it can't be!
(beat)
But how?

ALFRED
Fate spared me... as it did you
and Rolan.

GENERAL STEWART
Fate cursed me. I'd of been better
off dead.

He looks ore carefully at Alfred, taking in his appearance.

GENERAL STEWART (CONT'D)
What happened to you? Why do you
look like that?

ALFRED
Northmen took me prisoner.

General Stewart swallows half his mug.

GENERAL STEWART
Damn filthy heathens. What did
they do to you?

ALFRED
The Chief's son made me his slave.

GENERAL STEWART
You, a slave? You're Prince Alfred.
You're no man's slave.

ALFRED
It's a long story. I thought you
were dead.

GENERAL STEWART
I should have been. That bastard
Richard, kept me prisoner.

General Stewart takes another swig of ale.

GENERAL STEWART (CONT'D)
 He finally let me go. Richard
 thought it was a better punishment
 for me to roam Athelney in shame,
 rather than rot away in prison, or
 be executed. He figured I would
 take my own life.

ROLAN
 (to himself)
 Should have.

General Stewart looks down in shame.

GENERAL STEWART
 I failed you, Alfred. I failed King
 William. I failed my son.

He tries to stifle his tears of shame but cannot. Alfred
 grabs General Stewart's arm.

ALFRED
 I have returned to take back what
 is mine. And I need a good General
 by my side. I need you by my side.

ROLAN
 He's nothing but a drunkard now.

ALFRED
 Damn you man, this your father!

GENERAL STEWART
 He's right! I'm a bloody drunkard.
 I'm nothing.

Alfred looks at both of them with shame in his eyes.

ALFRED
 Is this what's happened to King
 William's great army? Nothing more
 than a father and son bickering at
 one another?

He stands.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 I spent years worrying that my
 father was ashamed of me. But I'd
 hate to think what he feels about
 the two of you.

General Stewart finally stops crying and looks at Alfred.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 Remember who you are? Remember who
 you served?

GENERAL STEWART

Alfred, I haven't held a sword in many years.

Alfred smiles and claps the General on the back.

ALFRED

You are a warrior, it will come back to you.

General Stewart nods.

EXT. WOODS, NEAR BATH -- DAY

In a clearing dozens of tents create a makeshift town. Horses stabled off to one side. BLACKSMITHS make and sharpen weapons. SOLDIERS train, honing their skill with blade and bow. Several WOMEN sit by a large tent, embroidering the black lion onto yellow tunics, and repairing torn ones.

Rolan walks through his town. Stopping at a tent he takes a moment and raps his hand on a wooden beam supporting the doorway curtains. After a moment Alfred appears. He has cut his hair and shaven his beard. Except for a few scars and tanner skin he looks just as he did ten years ago.

ROLAN

Now you look like a Prince.

Alfred says nothing. He walks past the tents getting everyone's attention. *This* is the Prince Alfred they knew.

He stops and looks around. Rolan stands next to him.

ALFRED

Why have you waited so long? Why have you not tried to take back Wessex?

ROLAN

We're too small. We could not get enough to join us. People are too afraid of Richard.

ALFRED

Will they follow me?

ROLAN

Without hesitation.

ALFRED

Then ride out to everyone you know. Spread the word that I'm alive and I've returned. Tell the people that the son of William will sit on the throne of Wessex.

ROLAN
What will you do?

ALFRED
I'm going to see my sister.

EXT. LAKE -- DAY

The same lake where Alfred and Lilla skipped stones years before. Lilla skips a stone ten times.

ALFRED (O.S.)
You have been practicing.

She turns, startled. She immediately recognizes the shaved Alfred.

LILLA
Alfred?

ALFRED
Yes.

She's frozen, unsure of what to do.

LILLA
You're alive!

Tears begin to flow down her cheeks.

LILLA (CONT'D)
I thought you were dead.

ALFRED
And I you.

Suddenly she realizes...

LILLA
It was you who fought Charles. You stood right in front of me and I did not recognize you. How could I not know it was you?

ALFRED
You thought I was dead. If I had not been told you were still alive I would have believed you a ghost.

LILLA
Alfred...

Lilla runs to him and throws her arms around him. They hold this strong embrace for some time. Finally Lilla breaks it.

LILLA (CONT'D)
Alfred... Richard...

ALFRED
I know, I know everything. You've
no need to explain.

LILLA
Please forgive me.

ALFRED
There is nothing to forgive.

He wipes the tears from her cheeks.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
You have a son. My nephew...?

LILLA
He's a good boy. Not like his
father. Rolan, have you seen him?

ALFRED
He brought me to you.

She looks around for him.

LILLA
He's here?

ALFRED
No, he brought me to the castle. He
told me you were alive.

Lilla throws her arms around him.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
I must go, before your Guards find
you and see us.

LILLA
No, don't leave me again.

ALFRED
I'll be back for you, I swear.

He breaks the embrace.

LILLA
When will I see you again?

ALFRED
Soon, very soon.

LILLA
Alfred. What of Malcolm? He *is* my son.

ALFRED
Malcolm will come to no harm, I
swear it.

Alfred leaves Lilla by the lake.

In the woods nearby, a MERCIAN SPY closely watches them.

INT. THRONE ROOM -- DAY

Richard slouches on his throne.

LORD BERWYN
Our stranger from the North has been
associating with several people.

RICHARD
Whom?

LORD BERWYN
General Stewart.

RICHARD
I knew I should have ripped out
that bastard's tongue.

LORD BERWYN
That's not all. He met with someone
else today.

Lord Berwyn stalls, afraid to say what he must.

RICHARD
Well? Who?

LORD BERWYN
The Queen.

Richard bolts upright.

LORD BERWYN (CONT'D)
The Queen ran off to the lake...
he met her there.

RICHARD
What did they do?

LORD BERWYN
Talked, mostly.

Richard shoots him a "Tell me" glare.

LORD BERWYN (CONT'D)
I was told they... embraced.

RICHARD
He knows General Stewart and the
Queen...

Richard finally realizes who he is.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Alfred! Prince Alfred!

LORD BERWYN
It can't be. My men assured me he
was dead!

RICHARD
Then your men lied!

Lord Berwyn bows in deference.

LORD BERWYN
Forgive me, my King. What would you
have of me?

RICHARD
Kill him! Kill him now before he
reveals himself to anyone else! And
kill that old drunk Stewart!

LORD BERWYN
He's also been seen riding with
Stewart's son.

Richard grabs Lord Berwyn's collar.

RICHARD
Just kill them all!

Richard releases him and drops into his throne.

LORD BERWYN
What of the Queen?

RICHARD
I will deal with the Queen.

INT. CASTLE BEDROOM -- EVENING

Lilla sits at her dressing table, a HANDMAIDEN brushes her
hair. Richard enters, waves the Handmaiden off, and stands
behind her.

RICHARD
How was your day?

LILLA
Uneventful.

RICHARD
My Guards informed me otherwise.

She stops brushing.

LILLA
What did they tell you?

RICHARD
That you ran off... again.

LILLA
Sometimes I prefer to be alone.

Richard places his hands on her shoulders and squeezes, hard.

RICHARD
It is not safe. You need protection.
There are those who would wish to
harm me. And they could do that
through you... or our son.

She removes his hands, stands and faces him, with her eyes
down in obedience.

LILLA
I did not mean to make you worry.
Forgive me my husband.

Richard caresses her cheek.

RICHARD
There is nothing to forgive. But I
think it best for you and Malcolm
to remain in the castle.

LILLA
For how long?

RICHARD
However long it takes to ensure
your safety.

As Richard leaves Lilla sees TWO GUARDS outside her door.
Richard closes her door and a bolt lock *slams* shut.

INT. PUB -- NIGHT

Alfred, Rolan and General Stewart sit in the corner table.

ROLAN
Not enough have joined us, they say
we have nowhere near enough men to
mount a revolt.

ALFRED
Too may have forgotten their
loyalty and love for my father.

General Stewart mutters to himself.

GENERAL STEWART
Too many are afraid.

SIX MERCIAN SOLDIERS enter the pub. Their LEADER looks around and spots Alfred.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
That's him.

The Soldiers cross over to the table. Alfred and Rolan spot them and palm the handles of their swords. Although outnumbered they still prepare for a fight.

MERCIAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You're the one who beat Charles?

ALFRED
Yes.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
The King is looking for you.

ALFRED
I spoke with the King already.

The Soldier bends over and whispers.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
But now the King knows who you are.

The Mercian reaches in his cloak and withdraws a dagger. Alfred sees the dagger too late, the Mercian Soldier impales it in the table. The dagger bears the seal of King William.

ALFRED
Where did you get that?

MERCIAN SOLDIER
From your father... Prince Alfred.

Alfred looks at him.

MERCIAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)
King William gave this dagger to my father as a reward for his service. I hope to earn it from you, as a reward for mine.

ALFRED
Who are you?

MERCIAN SOLDIER
I am Nathaniel Murchison. My father fought for King William, he died on the field of Bath that day. Now I wish to fight for you. We all do.

ALFRED
How many men are still loyal?

NATHANIEL

In the castle, twenty, maybe more.

GENERAL STEWART

Nowhere near enough.

NATHANIEL

Once they see you are back and have men behind you many more will come over. You are the son of William. You could have hundreds in no time.

GENERAL STEWART

Richard has thousands.

ALFRED

I know where we can find Warriors.

Alfred looks to Rolan and General Stewart.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Gather as many men as you can. Buy what supplies you need. Whatever you can't buy, steal... from Richard. I shall return soon.

Alfred looks in the General in the eye.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

You shall lead your army once again.

GENERAL STEWART

No, my Prince, I will lead *your* army.

The Men smile.

EXT. ALFRED'S HOME -- DAY

Alfred stands several yards away, watching. Emma walks out to feed Lars, humming a little tune to herself. The only noise she has made since her abduction.

Alfred searches the grounds to make sure the coast is clear and slowly walks towards his home. Suddenly a babies pierce the serenity. Emma turns and goes inside. Hurrying inside she leaves the door open. Alfred walks to the open door.

HALLI (O.S.)

Emma! You forgot to close the door again. How many time...

She comes to the open doorway and sees Alfred. Alfred searches for the words.

ALFRED

You look... wonderful.

Halli is not happy to see him.

HALLI
Why have you returned?

ALFRED
(confused)
What did your father tell you?

HALLI
The truth.

ALFRED
I had no choice, he was going to
kill that girl.

HALLI
What girl?

Now both are confused.

ALFRED
What did he say?

HALLI
That you found your family. That you
discovered your first wife and child
were alive and went back to them.

ALFRED
I've never committed myself to
anyone but you.

HALLI
Commitment? Is that what you call
leaving us for a year.

ALFRED
May I come in?

HALLI
It's your home.

INT. ALFRED'S HOME

The home looks exactly the same, nothing has changed. Except one thing. A small cradle rests near the fire pit. In it an INFANT lies crying. Emma sits near trying to comfort it. Even if she could speak she would have nothing to say to Alfred.

ALFRED
Is that...?

HALLI
His name is Aethelwald.

ALFRED
Aethelwald the grand.

He walks to Halli, tries to hold her but she pulls away.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
I had no idea...

HALLI
We're given shares of the spoils as though you were dead. I live like a widow while my husband provides for others.

ALFRED
Forgive me, I beg you.

HALLI
Just tell me why!

ALFRED
Thorgeir once said he didn't know why Odin brought me into your lives. But I now know why he brought you into mine.

(beat)
I had to become something other than I was to become what I was destined to be.

Halli has no idea what he's talking about.

HALLI
What?

ALFRED
I wish I could explain to you what I was feeling. I found what was lost, and I must get it back.

HALLI
So, you didn't find your family?

ALFRED
I did. My sister, and my nephew.

She looks at him confused.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
My name is Alfred. My father was King William of Wessex. King Richard of Mercia invaded our home and murdered my father and my mother. I thought he murdered my sister... instead he forced her to marry him and bear him a son.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

There are those in Wessex who are still loyal to my father, and to me. I must take back my father's throne.

HALLI

Then why have you come here?

ALFRED

To ask for your help.

HALLI

Mine?

ALFRED

Your father's. I have an offer for him, and the whole village. Take me to him, please.

EXT. VILLAGE OF BERGEN

Thorgeir stands on the docks overseeing the unloading of a boat that has just returned. Gorm stands next to him, he has taken his place as Thorgeir's right hand man. Gorm is the first to notice Alfred approaching.

GORM

By Thor's hammer.

Thorgeir looks up. Although happy to see Alfred and Halli walking together, he is concerned about the return.

Alfred and Gorm grasp arms in greeting.

GORM (CONT'D)

Welcome back brother.

ALFRED

It's good to see you again.

Alfred faces Thorgeir. They are silent for a moment.

THORGEIR

I'm glad to see you're well. Did you find what you needed?

ALFRED

I have a son.

THORGEIR

He is a strong boy, he'll be a good warrior.

ALFRED

He takes after his grandfather.

GORM

Are you back for good?

ALFRED

No.
 (to Thorgeir)
 I must speak with you.

EXT. CLIFF OVERLOOKING THE FJORD

Alfred and Thorgeir walk alone.

ALFRED

I have many men still loyal to my
 father... and I. But they are not
 enough to face Richard.

Alfred stops.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

My offer is this. Help me and all
 lands in North Umbria are yours.
 You'll have land to farm, livestock
 to raise. No more pilfering, no ore
 needless bloodshed.

THORGEIR

English... Alfred. You're one of
 us. All you need do is ask and my
 sword is yours.

ALFRED

The Mercian army is very large.

THORGEIR

So is our taste for Mercian blood.

ALFRED

I thought it was English blood.

THORGEIR

For you, it will only be Mercians
 we kill.

Alfred smiles.

ALFRED

We will need many men.

THORGEIR

You will have them.

ALFRED

Many will die.

THORGEIR

And we will sing songs of their
 deeds for many generations.

ALFRED

How soon can you be ready?

THORGEIR

A Viking is always ready to fight.
I would think you would have
learned that by now.

Alfred smiles.

ALFRED

Good, as soon as we are ready we
sail for England. We shall be met
by my men in Lillap, near York.

Thorgeir is impressed.

THORGEIR

You truly are a Prince.

ALFRED

Soon I shall be a King.

THORGEIR

King Alfred? I like the sound of
that, very fitting.

EXT. THE VILLAGE OF LILLAP -- DAY

Alfred and his band of Vikings arrive in Lillap. Rolan and General Stewart meet the group. Both men wear the armor of Wessex. General Stewart holds out a large package. Alfred unwraps it. It's his father's armor wrapped in the yellow flag of Wessex.

ALFRED

Where did you find this?

GENERAL STEWART

Richard kept it as a trophy.
Nathaniel snuck it out for you.

ROLAN

It is only fitting you wear that
armor when you kill Richard.

Thorgeir looks around at the Villagers who are unafraid of the Viking hoard that has just ridden into town.

THORGEIR

Odd. No one runs away screaming.

ROLAN

You are not the first Northmen to
arrive.

THORGEIR
Northmen?

ALFRED
You're men from the North. *Northmen.*

Thorgeir shrugs.

THORGEIR
Of course.

Alfred smiles.

ALFRED
Where are they?

ROLAN
They have made an encampment on the
other side of the woods.

EXT. WOODS

Alfred, Thorgeir and Rolan come out of the woods into a clearing. A THOUSAND VIKINGS have camped out, preparing for battle. Alfred looks out over the clearing, very impressed.

THORGEIR
Not many Vikings would give up a
chance to kill English, even if
they are only Mercians

He laughs and rides down to meet his men.

ROLAN
Allying ourselves with Northmen.
Are you sure this is a good idea,
Alfred?

ALFRED
I trust Thorgeir more than any man
I know.

He looks at Rolan.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
And given the men I've known,
that's saying a lot.

EXT. EAST ANGLIA -- DAY

Alfred and his ARMY easily defeat a Mercian camp. After the battle Alfred lines up the PRISONERS.

ALFRED
I am Alfred, son of King William of
Wessex.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 Those of you still loyal to my
 family may now once again pledge
 your loyalty to me.

A MERCIAN SOLDIER steps out and kneels.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
 Forgive me. I pledge my loyalty and
 my life back into your service.

ALFRED
 What is your name friend?

MERCIAN SOLDIER
 Edmund.

ALFRED
 My forgiveness is yours, Edmund,
 and your loyalty is mine. Remove
 the markings of Richard.

Edmund pries the crest of King Richard off his shield.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
 King Richard will cut your throat
 for your betrayal.

EDMUND
 My only betrayal was to King
 William... and Prince Alfred.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
 When King Richard defeats these
 filthy Northmen you will die along
 with them.

EDMUND
 Not before you.

Edmund slashes the Captain's throat.

ALFRED
 Are there any others willing to
 pledge their loyalty to me.

A DOZEN MEN step out of ranks. They discard all emblems of
 Richard. The remaining men are taken away.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
 (to Thorgeir)
 More Slaves?

THORGEIR
 Soldiers make terrible Slaves.
 They're yours to deal with.

INT. THRONE ROOM, ATHELNEY -- DAY

Lord Berwyn enters. Richard brews on his throne.

RICHARD

What?

LORD BERWYN

The Northmen have attacked another camp. We lost over a hundred men.

RICHARD

Killed, or did they cross over?

LORD BERWYN

Over a hundred were killed or taken prisoner. Close to two hundred... crossed over.

Richard grabs his goblet and throws it at Lord Berwyn. The goblet misses him but he gets a wine shower. Lord Berwyn wipes wine off his face.

RICHARD

In just under two months Alfred and his band of heathens have managed to wipe out a third of my army!

He grasps the handle of his sword, still sheathed, and tightens until his knuckles turn white.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Tell me how this can be.

LORD BERWYN

They are Northmen. They fight like barbarians.

Richard *slaps* Lord Berwyn.

RICHARD

Then it is time we fight like barbarians. Am I clear?

LORD BERWYN

What of the Queen?

RICHARD

What about her?

LORD BERWYN

What if Alfred comes for her?

Richard goes to his window and looks out over the city.

RICHARD

I told you I would deal with the Queen.

Lord Berwyn leaves. Richard seethes and takes his throne.

INT. CASTLE, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Close in on Lilla sleeping soundly. We soon see that she's alone in her massive bedroom.

We hear the lock on her door click open. The oak door slowly opens sending in a shaft of torchlight. The Guards outside her door lie dead. A MAN, his face hidden by shadow, slowly walks into her room. Carefully he navigates his way to her bedside. Kneeling beside her he is careful not to awaken her until...

He wraps his hand around her mouth, stifling her scream as she awakes.

MAN

(whispering)

Shhh... Do not be alarmed my Queen,
I am not here to harm you.

She quiets down and looks at him, the torchlight now illuminates his face, it's Alfred.

LILLA

What are you doing here?

ALFRED

I'm getting you away from here.
Very soon Richard will no longer
care that you are his wife.

Lilla smiles.

LILLA

You have no idea how much trouble
you've caused him.

ALFRED

I'm about to cause more, let's go.

LILLA

Malcolm.

ALFRED

Show me where he is.

INT. MALCOLM'S BEDROOM

Malcolm lies in his bed, but he cannot sleep. His young eyes are full of worry. His door slowly opens, he starts a bit but does not look at who opened it. He just lies very still. The torchlight reveals Lord Berwyn at his door.

Lord Berwyn steps inside holding his own torch. Closing the door he slides the bolt lock shut.

He walks over to Malcolm's bedside, a similar look in his eye as we saw on Lars when he tried to violate Emma.

Malcolm doesn't move a muscle or say word, he quietly lies in his bed awaiting the horror he knows is coming.

As Lord Berwyn gets closer to Malcolm a sword point suddenly touches his throat. Lord Berwyn moves the torch to see Alfred holding the sword and Lilla standing next to him.

ALFRED

Prince Malcolm *is* a talkative little one.

LILLA

You beast.

Out of the shadows Alfred's fist *cracks* into Berwyn's face.

INT. CASTLE -- MORNING

Richard storms down the hall, his face shows his usual reaction to bad news. Outside Malcolm's bedroom stand TWO GUARDS, deathly afraid of the repercussions of their find.

GUARD

We just found him your highness, when we came to wake the Prince.

Richard shoves them aside and storms into the room.

INT. CASTLE, BEDROOM

Richard stops at the grisly sight.

Lord Berwyn, prostrate on the floor in a pool of blood. His lungs resting on his back. His face perpetually frozen in a contorted scream, muffled by the gag in his mouth.

INT. THRONE ROOM

Richard paces angrily, five of his GUARDS stand at attention. Charles the Bald among them.

RICHARD

He has taken my son! He slipped into this castle and took my son and the Queen!

Richard stops pacing.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

HE TOOK MY SON!

He regains control of himself.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
And no one saw a damned thing?

CHARLES
Begging your pardon my King. But he
did grow up in this castle. If
anyone knows the ways in and out...

RICHARD
I DON'T CARE!

Charles bows humbly.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Do whatever it takes to find my son
and bring him back to me.

CHARLES
What of the Queen?

RICHARD
Kill her.

EXT. VIKING CAMP -- DAY

The open field is covered with dead Vikings. Alfred, Thorgeir and General Stewart walk amidst the carnage. Thorgeir kneels next to the body of Olaf. Five arrows imbedded in his back.

THORGEIR
He never even had a chance to draw
his sword.

GENERAL STEWART
How many men?

THORGEIR
Over two-hundred.

ALFRED
That makes four-hundred men lost in
just under a week.

Alfred turns his back and looks off in the distance.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
We do not have the men to keep
fighting this way.

Alfred looks over the slaughter.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
The time has come to face Richard.

THORGEIR
Face him?

GENERAL STEWART
Yes, face him! The only way to end
this war will be to kill Richard.

ALFRED
(to himself)
On the field of battle.

INT. THRONE ROOM -- DAY

A MERCIAN CAPTAIN enters. More bad news.

MERCAN CAPTIAN
My King. A messenger just arrived
from the North.

Richard says nothing, he just stares *through* him.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
Alfred wants to meet you at Bath...
in two days time.

Richard finally looks him in the eye.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
We have three regiments ready to
meet him. More than enough.

RICHARD
Send a messenger North. Have whatever
regiments we have ride to Bath.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
They may not make it in time.

RICHARD
DO AS I SAY!!

MERCAN CAPTIAN
Yes, my King.

The Mercian Captain bows and leaves.

EXT. A FIELD OF BATTLE -- DAY

The same field of battle where William lost his life. But
this day no fog obscures the view. The sun is completely
unobstructed. Alfred at the North, Richard at the South.

Richard has his red banners, with the black lion, waving high
in the breeze. Alfred also has his father's banners, yellow,
with the wolf, lifted high above his army.

The two kings ride out to meet each other, both accompanied
by their best men.

RICHARD
So, Prince Alfred was in my castle
and I was never the wiser.

ALFRED
My Castle.

RICHARD
A place you will never enter again.

ALFRED
I will enter it only after I stake
your head at the front gates.

Alfred moves his horse a little closer to Richard.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
My father gave yours the honor of a
king's death. I will give you no
such honor today. I will kill you
as the vermin you are and let the
birds eat your eyes for supper.

Richard's arrogance turns to anger.

RICHARD
I will look for you on the
battlefield.

ALFRED
You will find me.

They ride back to await the inevitable.

Alfred looks over his army. He notes a YOUNG SOLDIER ready to
soil himself. Alfred dismounts and goes to him.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Are you afraid?

YOUNG SOLDIER
Yes, sire.

Alfred addresses his entire army. English and Viking alike.

ALFRED
Good. Be afraid! I want you afraid,
for it is through fear you will
discover the man that you are.
Action in time of fear is what
makes you a Warrior!

He gets back on his horse.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Many years ago my father died on this hill. Many of you lost fathers and brothers on that day.

He looks at General Stewart.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Some of you were here, willing to die with King William.

He draws his sword.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I ask you today to fight with me, fight for Wessex, our home!

He holds it high.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Today is a good day to die!

Alfred's Soldiers hold their weapons high.

ALL

ALFRED!

Thorgeir steps out in front of his Warriors. He looks up to the heavens.

THORGEIR

Odin, give us the strength to crush our enemies! Let them taste our steel and feel the heels of our boots upon their chests! Odin, grant us victory!

He looks back at the Army.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

The Gods have sent us to war! Never shall we return home in shame!

The Vikings holler in approval, after a moment so do the English. Thorgeir turns to Alfred and smiles.

THORGEIR (CONT'D)

Odin smiles on you this day. Don't let Him down.

Soldiers on both sides anxiously await the orders to attack.

A MERCIAN SOLDIER stirs in his saddle. He looks at the SOLDIER next to him. They nod and break formation, riding at full gallop through the valley to Alfred. They are quickly followed by dozens of MERCIAN SOLDIERS.

MERCIAN CAPTAIN
STOP! FALL BACK INTO RANKS!

RICHARD
What in God's name are they doing?

Alfred's ARCHERS draw their bows in defense.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
PRINCE ALFRED! PRINCE ALFRED!

Alfred holds up his hand. The Soldiers quickly reach them.

MERCIAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Prince Alfred. Forgive us. Let us
fight for you. Let us fight for
Wessex.

ALFRED
Welcome friends. Remove the seal of
Mercia, and stand proud as a
warrior of Wessex.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
Yes, my Prince.

GENERAL STEWART
He's no Prince, he's a King.

The Mercian Soldier smiles.

MERCIAN SOLDIER
Yes... my King.

The deserters remove the crest of Richard from their shields.

Richard is angry, but not deterred.

RICHARD
ARCHERS!

Richard's Archers load their bows and prepare to fire. The
Viking Archers do the same.

ALFRED
Let's show him how Vikings fight.

Alfred unsheathes his sword and raises it high. He screams a
battle cry and is soon joined by his Army, English and Viking
alike. Alfred's Army rides down into the valley. The Vikings
release their arrows.

RICHARD
RELEASE!

Hundreds of arrows darken the sky, and strike down Soldiers on both sides. Alfred continues his charge at Richard. Richard realizes he has little time.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
ATTACK! ALL OF YOU, ATTACK!

Richard's entire army charges into the valley. Flanked by his Guard, Richard rides down at the rear of his men.

The Viking Archers release another volley straight into the charging Mercian army. As the two Armies collide, Alfred quickly dismounts. A sword in one hand and an axe in the other. He wastes no time cutting down Mercians. Rolan stays near his friend. General Stewart and Thorgeir fight near each other. No man lasts long with either of them.

Nathaniel encounters Richard.

NATHANIEL
For my King.

Richard quickly runs Nathaniel through.

RICHARD
He will soon join you.

Alfred cuts down a horse and quickly sticks it's RIDER. As he spins around he spots Charles the Bald, patiently awaiting his turn for a rematch.

CHARLES
No man has ever made me yield.

ALFRED
Have the ribs healed.

CHARLES
I'll feed yours to my dogs.

Charles charges Alfred. Alfred tries to block a swing with his axe, but Charles easily knocks it out of his hand. He slams the pommel of his sword into Alfred's jaw. Alfred falls on his ass, disoriented. Charles wastes no time and swings his sword. At the last second Alfred regains his senses and leans back. The sword tip barely grazing his chin, leaving a nice clean cut.

But Charles put too mush behind his swing and his sword goes too far, sticking itself into the back of another Mercian Soldier. Undaunted Charles rips his sword out of his comrades back and attacks Alfred again. Alfred rolls over, grabs a spear and crouches down, holding it steady. Charles stops just short of the spear and cuts it in half with his sword.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

What the bloody hell do you take me for?

ALFRED

A dead man.

Alfred shoves the broken spear shaft into Charles' gut, the jagged end juts out of his back.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

A broken weapon is still a weapon.

Charles looks at Alfred, at first he's stunned. Then it dawns on him he has finally met his match. He smiles and falls to the ground dead.

Just as it seems that Alfred's Army is getting the upper hand a REGIMENT of MERCIANS comes over the hill.

The Regiment charges into the valley FIVE-HUNDRED MEN strong. Viking Archers desperately try to stop them, but it's useless. They are cut down. One Archer manages to light an arrow and fire it off before he's cut down.

After decimating the Viking Archers, Richard's Men hit Alfred's rear flank. English and Viking alike fight well, but they cannot fight on two fronts.

Then, summoned by the flaming arrow, Gorm leads an army of THREE-HUNDRED VIKINGS out of the woods. The Vikings launch spears into Richard's side flank just before they slam into them with their shields. Now both armies fight a battle on two fronts.

Richard hacks through Viking and English Soldiers just as Alfred does Mercians. Soon they are face to face.

RICHARD

Now the son shall die just as the father.

ALFRED

Exactly.

Richard and Alfred exchange hard blows. Both men full of rage... driven by vengeance. Suddenly, a Mercian Soldier comes up behind Alfred, ready to stab him in the back.

RICHARD

NO!

Alfred turns and runs the Man through. He quickly turns back to Richard, thoroughly confused.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You're mine!

Richard fights with a new fever. He swings hard on Alfred who can only back away deflecting the vicious blows. Finally Richard knocks Alfred's sword away. He looks at the young Prince, an ill smirk on his face.

The two men look around to find the battle has come to an end. Alfred's Army stands victorious. Only Richard is left to face off with Alfred.

ALFRED

It is done. You've lost.

RICHARD

You will never sit on that throne!

Richard comes at Alfred with all his might. Alfred ducks under Richard's swing. Shoving his shoulder into Richard's abdomen Alfred throws him over his back. Richard rolls and loses his sword, but quickly regains his stance. He spots a spear nearby and grabs it. Thorgeir hoists up his spear.

ALFRED

NO!

Thorgeir holds but prepares to skewer Richard, just in case.

Richard hurls the spear with all his might. Alfred sidesteps, grabs the spear, spins around and throws it back at Richard.

Richard barely has time to be shocked by Alfred's feat before the spear impales him in the chest. The impact of the spear knocks him back a few yards. He lands on the body of a Mercian Captian.

Alfred walks over to the dying Richard.

RICHARD

(gurgling blood)

My son...

ALFRED

Malcolm is my nephew, no harm will come to him.

Richard grabs him by his tunic.

RICHARD

No... kill him, he is my son.

Richard slowly chokes to death on his own blood.

Alfred looks around the bloody battle field. His men, English and Viking alike all look to him.

Alfred grabs Richard's hand and removes his father's ring. He places it back on his finger. He looks down at Richard.

THORGEIR
Take it, English. It's yours.

ROLAN
You've earned it.

GENERAL STEWART
For your father, Alfred.

Alfred lifts his sword high and brings it down on Richard's neck. Grabbing it by the scalp he holds the head of Richard up for all to witness. With his other hand he raises his sword high.

THORGEIR
KING ALFRED!

GENERAL STEWART
KING ALFRED!

ALL
KING ALFRED!

Alfred stands over the corpse of Richard.

EXT. CASTLE -- DAY

A newly crowned KING ALFRED stands at the gates. Halli stands next to him holding Aethelwald, with Emma by her side.

Lilla and Malcolm board a carriage. Rolan helps them inside.

KING ALFRED
God be with you on your journey to Mercia.

ROLAN
Your trust in me is not misplaced my King.

KING ALFRED
I am no longer your King, Rolan. Lilla is Queen of Mercia, as her husband you will be it's crown Prince. My trust in you is to raise Malcolm to be a good King and a worthy ally of Wessex.

ROLAN
One day, your sons and grandsons will rule all of England.

KING ALFRED
Let us pray they rule it well.

FADE TO BLACK.