

Bearskin

(c) Mar. 30, 2008 Michael Shire

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FADE IN:

EXT. COTTAGE IN WOODS - NIGHT

It's summer in a heavily wooded forest. There is a secluded medieval cottage with a wooden railing fence around the yard. It is a single-storey home with two small rooms for bedrooms inside.

CAMERA is hand-held, and moves through woods at the height of a BEAR, swaying and looking around. The cottage is about 100 feet away, we see some light coming through windows. We hear the breathing of the bear. Circling a bit, but coming closer slowly. Going around to the back of the cottage. Just ahead is a small clearing, lit only by moonlight, fenced off by wooden fence. There are a few large racks with deer hides stretched. We don't see the bear yet.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

A mother, 30, and her daughter, 10, are in the house making the evening stew. The little girl chops up vegetables and the mother chops up meat. They put the food into a pot of boiling water, which is in a large walk-in fireplace. By their dress and the décor, it is medieval times.

EXT. COTTAGE IN WOODS - NIGHT

The bears paws come down on the fence railings. And start to shake the fence, until it falls inward, making a CRASH.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mother stops what she's doing after hearing the CRASH of the fence. She looks over at one of several candles

buring at the table. A breeze blows on the flames and one candle goes out. Then the flames are upright again. She goes to the window to look out.

DAUGHTER

What was that?

MOTHER

You don't suppose it's your father, do you?

DAUGHTER

It sounded like something fell.

MOTHER

I better go look.

Daughter looks very worried and holds herself.

DAUGHTER

Be careful.

The mother gets a big cleaver and goes carefully to the back door. She listens carefully at the door. Nothing. Unlatches the door. Opens it slowly, and it creaks. She calls out:

MOTHER

JOHANN? Is that you? (pause)
Someone else there?

She sees nothing moving in the dark.

She waits a moment, looking, then hears another smaller CRASH behind the shed. She turns in the doorway and looks to the daughter.

MOTHER

It must be some animal back there.
I better shoo him away or he'll
ruin your father's hides.

The mother closes the door to a crack, not latching it, and gets down a lantern onto the tabletop.

MOTHER

Get a flame please.

The daughter gets a flame from a straw from the large fireplace.

While she's doing this, the figure of the large GRIZZLY bear stands up and looks into the window. The two people do not see.

The mother lights the candle in the lantern, closes the glass door, and goes to the back door.

Back on the window, the bear is gone.

EXT. BEHIND COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mother opens the door again, closing it as she steps into the yard, leaving it open a crack. She walks slowly across a small cluttered yard, towards a large shed, and lean-to shelter. The yard has a pile of wood to be cut for the fireplace, and several deerskin hides stretched on racks. She goes across the yard holding the lantern high. Reaching the open door of the shed, she calls inside:

MOTHER

Hello? Anyone there? We have
nothing for critters ...

She looks into the shed and it is quiet in here. Then she looks to one side and sees the fence broken down on the edge of her light.

She's a bit puzzled to see the fence down, so investigates.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

The daughter looks out through the window, watching mom. She looks nervously at the back door, now realising it is still open a crack.

EXT. BEHIND COTTAGE - NIGHT

The mother looks carefully at the fence and sees LARGE CLAW marks.

She suddenly is very afraid. She turns to go back to the house.

Between her and the house, the grizzly bear walks toward the back door.

Mother is totally shocked and afraid.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

The daughter sees her mom through the window, but not the bear. Her mother suddenly raises the lantern and shouts:

MOTHER

Lizzy! Close the door! RUN! Do it NOW!

The daughter looks over at the door, seeing it open a crack again.

She is very afraid now too. She runs for the door, and slams the door shut with her shoulder, and latches it. Then she runs back to the window to watch her mom.

EXT. BEHIND COTTAGE - NIGHT

The giant bear comes lumbering toward the mother. The woman raises the lantern and shouts at the bear:

MOTHER

Go AWAY! Get out of here!

The bear comes toward the mother and lets out a big GROWL , and shakes his head.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

ON DAUGHTER - The daughter is terrified.

She sees the giant figure of the bear, and the lantern hits the ground and goes out. Now she sees it in the moonlight only. The bear lumbers over her mother's dark figure on the ground and the mother screams... then is silent.

The daughter covers her eyes and cries , wailing loudly.

DAUGHTER

NO.... Mamma

She moves away from the window, and sits at a chair at the table with her head in her hands - staring like she's gone mad, with tears in her eyes.

She sees the candles on the tables bend as a stiff breeze blows out another candle. She sees a dark shadow in the corner of the house move mysteriously.

She hears the growling and grunting of the bear outside.

DAUGHTER

Oh, God save me. Father, come home
now... where are you?

Then it is quieter, and she gets up to look out the window. As she strains to see what has become of her mother, suddenly the BEAR rises up in front of the window and growls!

The girl SCREAMS, and recoils back. The bear pushes on the window and breaks the glass, making the girl scream again. The window is too small for the bear to come through, but he puts his head in far enough to smell what's cooking.

The girl hides under the table, hoping the bear will go away.

The bear retreats from the window.

The girl is freaked out, still hiding under the table.

The back door starts to be pushed very hard and it is breaking down, splintering.

INSERT: OUTSIDE - the bear is pushing the door to break it down.

INSIDE - The girl sees the door pushed and it strains the latch. Suddenly - the door is broken OPEN. It flings to one side and the figure of the bear fills the doorway.

ON GIRL - She is teary eyed and hiding under the table, holding her knees, and her breath.

The bear steps into the cottage and growls a big roar. He sees the fire and avoids it - going to the kitchen.

With the bear coming toward her, she scrambles on her hands and knees to get to one of the two small rooms in this cottage.

The bear sees this and runs after her. Just as she gets to the room, the bear claws her legs with a big paw. She SCREAMS.... (and it echos ...)

FADE OUT:

EXT. COTTAGE IN WOODS - NIGHT

Johann, a trapper and tanner, is 30 years old, and coming home late. He walks through the woods with no light but the moonlight. He has a shoulder full of some killed rabbits and minks.

He approaches the house, seeing the dim lights ahead. As he approaches the front of the house, he sees the cottage as normal - front door closed. He goes around to the back and notices the fence is pulled down. He examines it closely for a moment and sees it has huge claw marks on it.

He drops his killed critters and steps over the fence into his back yard.

He looks around carefully and sees a heap of a person's body on the ground. The woman is face down. He kneels down and turns her over, looking at her face.

JOHANN

Oh... my dear ... Flora.

He is horrified at seeing his wife's face bloody. She is obviously dead - eyes closed.

He holds her body close for a moment, with great sorrow and anguish on his face. Then he thinks ... what about my girl?

He looks to the house and drops his wife gently to the ground. Standing up, he goes toward the open, back door. He notices it is clawed and broken down.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

He staggers, in shock, into the house, calling out:

JOHANN

Lizzy! LIZZY!

He looks around and sees the window broken, glass everywhere, and the table overturned. The fire is lower now, and the room is dimly lit.

JOHANN

LIZZY! My God. Don't be dead too!

Johann goes to the open doorway of the bedroom and sees a horrible bloodstain leading into the room. He pauses there.

He looks into the bedroom and hears a strange HUFFING, breathing sound of the beast - the bear.

ON JOHANN - He looks confused and panicked. He pulls out his long hunting knife.

JOHANN

(desperate)

My little Lizzy ...

Johann looks into the room and it is dark. He takes a step toward the room, when he sees the bear looking at him. The bear grunts and suddenly attacks him.

Johann is over-powered by the huge bear. The bear walks up to Johann, swipes at him, cutting his face hard, slicing it open to bleed, and it throws him across the room.

The bear roars and goes again after Johann. Johann gets to his knees and puts his large knife in front of him. When the bear gets close, he kicks and punches it - but it is not hurt by the human's attack.

The bear puts his arms around Johann, giving him a crushing hug, and trying to bite his head. Johann thrusts his hunting dagger with all his might into the bear's neck!

The bear lets go of the human and spurts some blood over Johann as the beast retreats.

Johann face is bloody. He also goes backwards on the floor, to a wall, watching the bear roaring, and the bear then lumbers out of the broken down door.

There is now only the sound of heavy breathing of Johann. He sits a moment, then falls over onto one side, passing out.

FADE OUT:

INT. GRACY'S COTTAGE - DAY

Johann wakes up in a bed. His face is entirely bandaged. His eyes look around the room. He puts his hands up to his bandages, then closes his eyes again.

Someone watches over him. It is GRACY, 30, his neighbour's wife. She sees him stir and stands up from her chair, coming to comfort him.

GRACY

I'm so glad that you're awake. You were wounded terribly.

JOHANN

By a grizzly?

GRACY

Yes. George hunted him down and killed it.

JOHANN

And my wife ... daughter.. ?

GRACY

I'm sorry, Johann... they were both....

Johann lays his head back down, and closes his eyes. When he opens them, tears come to his eyes.

JOHANN

Oh.. Gracy. Why do you think God would let that happen ... a BEAST like that, enter my home, and kill my family?

GRACY

I don't know, Johann. Just rest. At least you're still alive.

JOHANN

Yes. But I don't care.

GRACY

We care for you, Johann.

JOHANN

How can I live without my wife and daughter?

GRACY

You shouldn't talk like that. God spared you.

Johann falls silent. His eyes are red and teary eyed.

GRACY

Just rest now...

FADE OUT:

INT. CHURCH , DREAM of BEAR - DAY

FROM BLACK - FADE IN:

Johann has strange dream - a nightmare. He is in a church. He looks over at his family - they look back at him with bloody faces - wounded from the bear.

The bear comes in from the main doors. He runs up down the center aisle, and anyone who turns to see him, falls backwards in fear. A few people get in his way, and he swipes at them with one of his paws.

The bear arrives at the pulpit, and attacks the priest. Everyone starts to SHRIEK and shout as the priest is clawed and batted around on the floor by the bear.

INT. GRACY'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Johann sits up quickly. His nightmare frightened him. No one is here in his room with him.

He puts his hands on his face again - over the bandages.

He gets up from his bed, walks over to a mirror on the wall. He starts to pull back the bandages carefully. We see large, coarse stitches holding the wounds together. His face is a mess.

He tries to open his mouth but he's in pain with the stitches on his face. He puts his hands on his face. Some wounds still bleed a bit. He is horrified, so turns away. He goes back to the bed, laying down.

JOHANN

Why did this happen to me?

INT. GRACY'S COTTAGE - A WEEK LATER.

Johann wakes up. He has a fresh bandage of his face. He sees GRACY.

JOHANN

How am I doing now?

GRACY

The doctor said... you'll be scarred of course ... but you'll recover fine.

JOHANN

I'm not a vain man. I don't care what I look like... I just don't know what to live for when Flora and little Lizzy are gone. They were everything to me.

GRACY

You must live for the memory of your wife and daughter.

JOHANN

I'll try. (pause)
Where's George?

GRACY

He's hunting... as usual.

JOHANN

What about... the girls? Did I miss the funeral?

GRACY

They're taken care of. Don't worry.

JOHANN

Damn. How long have I been out?

GRACY

For about a week now. (pause)
You just rest.

Johann falls silent, looking out the window at the summer day.

EXT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NEXT DAY

Johann struggles outside on the road, with a cane, to go back to his own house. He comes up to the rear of the house. He has a face bandage on.

He sees someone there taking his hides off the racks. It is GEORGE, 30.

JOHANN

Hey George!

George turns from his work to see Johann.

GEORGE

Johann. I'm so glad you're back.

George goes up and hand-shakes with Johann. He motions behind them - on a rack.

GEORGE

There's the devil that did this to your family. He was wounded but still a son-of-a-bitch to track and take down.

Johann walks over to the hide. Looks at it strangely.

JOHANN

The DEVIL, you say?

GEORGE

I don't know. But I am sorry.

JOHANN

It doesn't matter to me anyway. I'm giving up trapping.

GEORGE

I can understand why, old friend. I think you need some time to consider your life now.

Johann looks at his friend a minute. Then he goes to the back door of the house. The door is repaired now. He unlatches it, remembering the nightmare of a week ago.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

He step inside his house. Sees blood stains on the wooden floor into the bedroom. He looks at it, with pain in his eyes.

INT. THREE OWL'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Johann sits in a dark corner of the tavern. It is fairly full of other men drinking and talking loudly. He still has the face bandage on, and he's quite drunk now.

Another drunk man comes to sit with him.

JOHANN

Hello. (pause)
You're not gonna find me good company.

DRUNK

Why not? You got a problem?

JOHANN

Yeah. My wife and daughter were killed.

DRUNK

That sounds like a problem alright.

They're quiet for a bit. Waitress comes over to bring another shot of whiskey for Johann. He pays her with two coins.

DRUNK

That's the hard stuff, friend.
(then to the waitress)
Miss? Another ale for me.

JOHANN

I need the hard stuff. I want to forget...

They watch the waitress go back to the bar.

JOHANN

What cruel twist of fate would have my family killed ... by a bear?

DRUNK

That's the devil I tell you...

JOHANN

It's one thing, having your life turn around in an instant ... and another having to live with the memory the rest of your life.

DRUNK

You DO need a good drink. And I got no good advice for you.

JOHANN

(getting a little violent)
Damn rights you don't. You know NOTHING about what it means to lose everything...

They sit a moment watching other men get drunk.

DRUNK

You're right. You're not good company. You're depressing !

The drunk gets up and goes to another table, finding someone to laugh with.

Johann looks angry, and is jealous of others laughing.

INT. THREE OWL'S TAVERN - LATE NIGHT

Johann has his head on the table. With real effort, he looks up, sees the bartender only, and no waitress. There are only about four other people here. He gets to his feet, and walks staggering to the bar.

JOHANN

Barkeeper. I need another drink.

BARKEEPER

You're out of money, trapper. I
gotta close up. (pause)
I tell you what - one more... see
what you've got.

Johann opens his purse and it is empty. He feels inside and
finds nothing.

JOHANN

Can't you give me a drink and I
pay you tomorrow?

BARKEEP

That's crazy! I don't give
anything if you can't pay right
now!

Johann then turns away and staggers out of the tavern. It
is pitch black outside as he opens the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TAVERN - NIGHT

Johann staggers drunkenly out of the tavern and onto the
road at night. He walks a bit then falls into the mud
beside the roadway. He picks himself up and keeps going.

EXT. COTTAGE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Johann travels up to his house. He enters it, pauses at the
door, and has strange visions of the bear attacking.

INSERT: Flashback shots of bear attacking.

He sees the fire is low, and throws a few more logs to
build it up.

Then he goes to a cupboard and grabs a bottle of special
wine or brandy, then also finds a lot of black mushrooms in
a special jar. He looks at it thoughtfully, but swaying
because he's drunk.

He finally oopens the jar, and carries them to the chair in
front of the fire, sits down, and starts stuffing them into
his mouth... and taking swigs of his bottle alternately.

INT. JOHANN'S COTTAGE - LATER

Johann sits across from the fireplace. It has a good, warming fire. His face is blackened from the poisoned mushrooms. He barely can keep his eyes open, and he winces at the pain in his gut.

He sees the candelabra with four candles on the table. In slow motion he sees one candle only bend over, from a strange breeze that only blows out one candle.

He sits back with eyes now closed, head leaned back. He hears the echoes of the bear in his mind.

Suddenly, he wakes without warning. He heard the front door opening with a creak.

ON JOHANN - He can't understand ... he's drunk and poisoned and he sees things as a blur.

It's a vision of someone entering the house. As he looks, the door opens wider. Backlit from a white light and mist outside stands the REAPER - or DEATH in a black robe and carrying a scythe. One can barely see his skull-face deep within the black hood. He enters the home and comes forward (gliding) towards Johann on the floor.

Johann is gripped with an uncontrollable fear. His eyes go wide and he shakes.

JOHANN

My God. What have I done? Death
comes for me?

The Reaper gets closer to him.

JOHANN (CONT.)

Dam the DEVIL that made me do this
to myself.
Oh God in heaven - where's Saint
Peter? I don't deserve this.

The Reaper is almost upon Johann, when the sound of a horse WHINNYING outside stops him from advancing.

Through the open doorway, a white mist swirls, and the DEVIL himself appears in the doorway. The Reaper - DEATH moves (floats) to one side, and he and Johann witness the devil walking in.

The devil, a 30 yo man, handsome, is wearing all black, but with silver embroidered trim everywhere he looks very finely dressed. He walks with a black and silver ornate walking cane, and grins at Johann on the ground as he walks up to him. Johann sees horns on his head, and his face is now glowing yellow by the firelight.

DEVIL

You called me? Or should I say,
you used my name in vain?

The devil looks to the REAPER and waves him away with his hand, and nods at him.

DEVIL

Not this one quite yet, Death.

The Reaper figure glides out of the room and disappears past the white misty fog outside. The white light outside lessens and becomes just moonlight.

The devil now turns back to Johann.

DEVIL

Seems like you've made a terrible
mistake. Killing yourself like
this. Don't you know that's a sin?
One of the ten commandments
actually : "Thou shalt not kill."

Johann tries to stand up but falls over and grabs his gut in pain again. He moans.

DEVIL

Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot you're not
quite yourself.

The Devil waves his hand at Johann and suddenly his pain is gone! And he is sober and clear-minded. He stands up straight, looking amazed at the Devil.

JOHANN

Is this a dream? You are ... the
Devil?

DEVIL

Yes, of course. Not many people
get to see me. You're very lucky!

Johann now goes to sit down in the chair beside the fire.

JOHANN

Oh... do you mind?

DEVIL

Go ahead. Sit down. It's quite a shock to see me, I'd imagine.

Johann sits down. The Devil smiles and stands beside the fireplace.

DEVIL

If I HAD let Death take you tonight, you'd be condemned, and I would see you below... you-know-where. So, you see - you're mine.

He pauses to let that fact sink in to Johann.

DEVIL

But don't let it be said that I have no heart at all! You've lost your dear wife and child recently, and that was not my doing. I understand how too much grief can make you do something you don't really mean. So ... I think you deserve a second chance.

JOHANN

Oh, thank you. How can I repent?

DEVIL

Repent? That's a deal that God has going. I don't need you to repent to ME. Now that you're mine, I'd really like to keep God out of it... after all, he's the one who took your family, not me.

JOHANN

Then what do you want of me?

DEVIL

I'd like to make you a bargain. I can see to it that you become as rich as you need and live a long

healthy life. What do you think of that?

JOHANN

What about my scarred face?

DEVIL

I'll take care of that too. You can have your old face back.

JOHANN

I don't know... There's always a bad side to a deal.

DEVIL

Yes, of course. I don't hand out gifts. You'll have to earn it. I'd like to see if you can live like the bear that took the lives of your family. That means you must leave this house and wander the land like an animal.

JOHANN

You'll turn me into a bear?

DEVIL

No, course not. Just you ... but you can not wash, cut your hair, beard or fingernails, not even comb your hair, and you must wear the bearskin as your cloak, and it will be your bed every night. Of course, like an animal, you cannot work or earn money, and must not buy anything that you can not carry with you. You can have no property, to speak of.

JOHANN

How can I live with no money? You'd make me a beggar?

DEVIL

I'll make it more interesting than that, my friend. The best part is: I will give you a magic purse that will always be full of gold.

JOHANN

So I'll be rich? Hmm. But can't
buy a house ... or even a horse.

Johann thinks a moment at this. A question occurs to him.

JOHANN

I guess it depends... how long?

DEVIL

Seven years. Not so long
considering an eternity in Hell.
If you break any of the rules then
your life is immediately forfeit
to me. But if you can last, then
the purse remains yours and you
can buy anything you want after
that.

JOHANN

If I don't take the deal am I
damned?

DEVIL

No. That much I'll give you.
Tonight will not have happened and
you will have another chance at
your pitiful life.

Johann puts his hands over his bandaged face.

JOHANN

What about what the bear did to
me?

DEVIL

To show you good faith, I'll prove
my powers to you. Take off your
bandage...

The devil waves his hand at Johann, then waits.

Johann pats the bandage on his face, and carefully unwraps
the bandage.

CAMERA over the shoulder of Johann as he drops the bandage,
then stands up and goes to a mirror. Now we see his face is
healed. He smiles at the miracle, and trembles a bit.

DEVIL

One other thing: During the seven years you can not pray one word to my adversary - the God that left your life torn apart.

Johann turns to the Devil, still smiling, and feeling his smooth face. The Devil steps forward smiling.

DEVIL

Do we have a deal, Bearskin?

JOHANN

Yes. I can do it. You'll see.

DEVIL

If you do or do not, doesn't really matter to me - it's the struggle that I'm interested in.

Johann steps closer to the Devil as he produces a single parchment sheet with strange writing on it and puts it on the table.

DEVIL

Now give me your hand.

Johann brings his hand to shake and the Devil takes his hand. Johann withdraws it quickly with an OUCH. He sees his finger was pricked. The Devil points to the parchment.

DEVIL

Just put a drop of your blood right here...

Johann puts his hand over the contract and lets the blood drip onto the paper. As soon as this is done, the Devil rolls it up and puts it in his inside pocket.

DEVIL

Very good. Now we have a deal... in blood.

The Devil takes a step towards the door, and Johann shouts at him:

JOHANN

What about the golden purse?

DEVIL

Oh. Almost slipped my mind.

He reaches into his side pocket and brings it out. It is a fancy embroidered red velvet purse. He tosses it to Johann.

DEVIL

A final warning: If you lose that purse, you will have to beg to make your way in the world.

The Devil turns away again and steps to the doorway.

DEVIL

I'll check in on you.

The Devil turns the corner, smiles, and is gone, leaving the door open.

Johann opens the purse and pulls out a few gold coins. He smiles.

JOHANN

This will make it a lot easier.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

A summer's day, and a busy town road with carts and people travelling. BEARSKIN enters the edge of the village and a few people see him coming. He looks a bit strange wearing an entire bears hide, including the bears face, as a cloak. He greets a few people and walks to the middle of the town to enter a business. A sign above says TAILOR.

INT. TAILORS SHOP - DAY

Bearskin enters the tailors shop, and it rings a small bell. It's a small one-room shop, crowded with hanging clothing. The TAILOR gets up from a seat and table, where he was working. He sees the bear's head on top and is taken aback.

TAILOR

Good day sir! Oh, it's you!
Johann. Good to see you again.
That's a ... very unusual cloak.

BEARSKIN

I know. Thank you.

Bearskin takes the cloak off, setting it down.

BEARSKIN

I would like some better clothes, friend.

TAILOR

At once. Let me show you some a doublet that might fit you ... and some new leggings.

BEARSKIN

And when I'm done here, I'm going to get a new set of travelling boots.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Bearskin walks down the town main street, wearing the bear hide, but with nicer doublet now showing underneath. We see he also has a nice pair of boots. He passes a few people, again greeting them, and he is fairly well met.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Tavern is half full of men talking and drinking.

Bearskin sits alone at a table in the corner. He lifts a heavy tankard of ale and has a deep drink.

Through the front door, his friend George enters, looks around and sees Johann here. He comes over and sits down across from his friend.

GEORGE

I thought I might see you here...

Then George is surprised that Johann's face is healed.

GEORGE

What happened to your face? I mean ... it's perfectly healed!

Bearskin finishes another long drink, then sets his tankard down.

BEARSKIN

Hello George. I guess I'm a fast healer.

GEORGE

I tell you, it's a miracle. And why are you wearing that old bear's hide?

Johann looks long at his friend, then decides to tell the truth.

JOHANN

It's a curse. I have to wear it.

GEORGE

Well, it's been a few weeks since ... you know, the bear attack. Why don't you come on home now. I'll walk with you.

JOHANN

I can't go back home.

GEORGE

Why not?

JOHANN

I told you. It's my curse.

GEORGE

What curse?

Johann leans forward to talk quieter.

JOHANN

You probably won't believe me.

GEORGE

After tonight, and the way you're acting strangely, I don't see why not!

JOHANN

Alright. I made a deal with the Devil.

GEORGE

(raises his eyebrows)
Now I know you've had too much to
drink.

JOHANN

He healed my face, really! And
told me to wear the bearskin.

GEORGE

Why would you do that?

JOHANN

To save my damned soul. You see, I
was so depressed I tried to kill
myself.

GEORGE

That's crazy. You're just talking
gibberish. Let's get you home now.

JOHANN

I CAN'T go home. That's what I've
been saying.

George sits back in his chair, looking at him in wonder.

JOHANN

I knew you wouldn't believe me.
But come tomorrow, you won't find
me here. You won't see me for
seven years - if you see me
again, that is.

GEORGE

What about your home? How can you
live like that? ... some sort of
pilgrimage.

JOHANN

Ah... don't worry about me. I'll
make out fine. Let me buy you a
drink. We'll have our last drink
together.

GEORGE

I think I will have that drink now
too.

JOHANN

And let me show you one more thing. I have this purse of gold...

Johann pulls out the purse, and puts his hand in and pulls out almost ten heavy gold coins.

GEORGE

That's rent for a year! Where'd you get that...

JOHANN

Shhh.

(he looks around)

It's a secret. I want you to have this money. Just take it. I have more where that comes from.

GEORGE

Is this your deal with the Devil?

Johann shrugs, and lifts his mug to toast to George.

JOHANN

Here's to seven years, George.

They drink deeply.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Tavern is empty except for Bearskin, with his head down on the table. The barkeeper approaches him and shakes him awake.

BARKEEPER

Hey, Johann. It's time for you to go home.

Johan wakes up a bit, still groggy and eyes half open. He pulls out his velvet purse, heavy with gold, and produces another large gold coin.

JOHANN

Is this enough for a bed for the night?

The bartender takes the gold and looks impressed.

BARTENDER

That's more than enough. Come on,
get to your feet.

Bearskin puts his purse back in his pocket and then is helped to walk to the back room.

INT. TAVERN, BACK ROOM - NIGHT

There is a cot here, and with the bartender's help, Bearskin falls into it, wrapping himself with his cloak. He immediately falls asleep.

The bartender pries his cloak open slowly to not wake him and finds the red purse. He pulls it up to see it better, then opens it, putting his hand inside. He pulls out a handful of small black stones.

He feels he was tricked. He throws the red pouch on top of Bearskin, followed by the few stones.

He turns and leaves the room, closing the door.

INT. TAVERN, BACK ROOM - MORNING

Bearskin wakes up and then sits up. His head hurts from too much drink. Then he notices a few stones falling from his cloak and clattering on the wood floor. He looks down and sees his red purse there too. He picks it up, opens it, and puts his hand inside. He pulls out three gold coins that gleam and he sighs a big relief.

He sits for a moment, thinking about the red purse, before putting it into his doublet pocket. He rubs his face to wake up and feels the smooth skin. He stands up and looks into a simple mirror hanging on a wall.

BEARSKIN

Hmmm. At least my face still looks good.

He turns and bumps the mirror with his big cloak, and it falls, SMASHING.

BEARSKIN

Oh shit, that's some bad luck,
isn't it?

He opens the door and leaves.

COLLAGE of various SHOTS over narration:

Bearskin walks through a few towns, stops to talk to a few people. Enters an INN and sits down with a huge meal at his table. He eats like a king, and a harlet woman eats and laughs with him.

NARRATION (V.O)

Bearskin was more careful with his money pouch after that night; keeping it a secret. He had money for food, drink and shelter.

But not long after, he saw something that changed his life ... again.

EXT. TOWN - SUMMER - NIGHT

Bearskin walks along the main street, in the shadows at night. He suddenly hears a woman's cry. She wails a moment and Bearskin is alarmed. He hurries to see what is the matter.

He looks in through an open window to a candlelit bedroom. There is a mother and father bending over the bed here. A small child, perhaps 6 years old, appears dead, lying in the bed.

Bearskin witnesses one of the candles as it blows out.

From behind him, DEATH, the spectre in black hooded cloak, floats through the window. He reaches his boney hand for the little boys hand. The Spirit of the little boy rises up out of his body and takes Death's hand, standing up.

The ghost looks at his mother and father a moment, then the two of them float up out of the ceiling. Before DEATH rises up however he turns and looks directly at Bearskin.

Bearskin turns away in fear, putting his hands to his face, takes a few steps, and then falls to the ground outside the house. He is pretty shaken up at this.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Bearskin sits alone at a table looking quite drunk and with a large drink in his hand. He takes a few deep drinks, trying to forget. He looks out the window and it is snowing.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. DOUGLAS'S COTTAGE - DAY

Bearskin has frost and ice in his short beard. He needs shelter. Just ahead he sees a cottage recessed into the woods, smoke coming out of its chimney.

He walks through the snow and approaches the house. The dog outside runs up to him barking! At the window, children's faces look out, then the mother.

Bearskin reaches down, speaks soothingly to the dog, and pets him confidently. The dog smells him and then wags his tail.

The door opens and it is a man, DOUGLAS, 40. He looks over the man with the bearskin cloak.

DOUGLAS

Hello stranger. What can we do for you?

BEARSKIN

Hello. I've been walking the whole day and trying to get to the next town, but I fear I'm getting too cold. Can I...

DOUGLAS

You want to come and warm yourself by the fire? Of course, come in.

INT. DOUGLAS'S COTTAGE - DAY

Bearskin enters, shakes his cloak and hangs it near the door. His doublet and other clothes are still fine, but his beard and hair look ragged.

Douglas shows him to a chair in front of the fire.

DOUGLAS

Here. You can have my chair.

BEARSKIN

Thank you. I'm chilled to the bone, I fear.

As Bearskin gets to the chair he turns to greet the family, who are in the kitchen area.

BEARSKIN

Oh, Hello. Thank you for having me. I hope I'm not interrupting?

The wife and children look curious at him, and watch him sit down. Douglas sits beside him.

DOUGLAS

My name is Douglas, friend. What is yours?

BEARSKIN

My name is Johann, but you can call me Bearskin.

DOUGLAS

Ah... I can see why? That is a remarkable cloak you have. Must do very well for winter. Uh... where did you say you're travelling to?

BEARSKIN

Just the next town. I think it's Burwell.

DOUGLAS

We are having our meal soon. Would you like to stay?

BEARSKIN

(surprised)

Thank you, yes. I can pay...

Bearskin goes for his purse, but Douglas protests.

DOUGLAS

No, no. No cost to you. It's our gift. Just tell us your story, Mr. bearskin.

The two children come over now to stand beside their father. A BOY, 10, and GIRL, 8.

Bearskin warms himself and looks over at them smiling.

BEARSKIN

Well, I'm travelling from Aylesbury. I used to be a trapper, see?

DOUGLAS

Ahh... that's why...

BEARSKIN

But ... (pauses) last spring my family were killed by ... that bear.

Bearskin motions to the cloak. The children's eyes go wide in wonder.

DOUGLAS

We're very sorry to hear that, Johann.

The WIFE, also calls out to them.

WIFE

Yes, very sorry to hear that. May God rest their souls.

BEARSKIN

(a little upset)

Well, I'm not too pleased with God... you know it was God who took their lives in the first place...

DOUGLAS

I see you're still in grief, friend. I shouldn't have asked...

BEARSKIN

Pardon me. You've been very kind to me. I'm sorry I'm upset.

DOUGLAS

Of course.

They sit and warm themselves more by the fire.

EXT. DOUGLAS'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Bearskin goes and gets his cloak and returns to the fireside chair while Douglas tucks his children in to sleep. Douglas speaks quietly to his wife, in the dark, at their bedroom door:

DOUGLAS

I'll be back very soon. I'll just get him settled down and lock the doors. It'll be OK. God protects us all.

He gives her a kiss and comes back to the fire, throwing another log onto the fire.

DOUGLAS

Before we're all off to sleep, I wanted to ask you something.

BEARSKIN

Let me first say thank you for your kindness. This reminds me of what I used to have ...

DOUGLAS

You don't really blame God for what happened to your family, do you?

BEARSKIN

Well, there can be no one else to blame, can there?

DOUGLAS

What if... it was just a bear, hungry ... or he felt threatened?

BEARSKIN

No. That's not what I've seen. It was DEATH that came for my family. You know... the REAPER. And Death works under God's direction. "He giveth life, and he taketh away..."

DOUGLAS

I see. My family and I will pray for their souls. And I'll be praying for you too, Johann. For you to forgive God.

BEARSKIN

Forgive Gfod? That's very unusual. But thank you, Douglas. You're a good man.

DOUGLAS

(getting up)

Good night, Bearskin.

BEARSKIN

Good night.

Douglas locks the front door, goes to his room as Bearskin settles in to the chair - his cloak wrapped around him.

INT. DOUGLAS' COTTAGE - MORNING

The fire is low, and the chair Bearskin slept in is empty. The dog sleeps by the fire and looks up as the bedroom door opens. Douglas comes into the main room, and sees the chair empty. He is alarmed and looks into his childrens rooms.

He sees his children still sleeping soundly. He closes the door quietly. He returns to the fireplace and grabs another log and places it on the fire. He look to sit down on his chair, and sees ten gold coins there.

He grabs them, and is very excited and happy. He gets up and looks out the window. It is lightly snowing but he sees no one outside.

DOUGLAS

God be with you, friend.

INT. BURWELL INN, COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

In one corner of this busy room, Bearskin is sitting with a three harlet women and two other men, EDWARD, 35, a very large man with beard, and HARRY, 20, a younger thinner man. Bearskin is drinking and laughing with them all, and he raises his mug in a toast.

BEARSKIN

Here's to these fine ladies.

EDWARD

(grinning and grabbing
one of the ladies)

Fine ladies indeed.

HARRY

And to Bearskin. A better friend
you couldn't ask for.

They drink up and laugh. The lady with Bearskin is Mary.

MARY

Why don't you come upstairs and
I'll give you a good bath?

EDWARD

Here, here. It's time for you to
join the human race. You're
starting to resemble the bear
who's skin you're wearing.

They all laugh at this. Bearskin looks less amused.

BEARSKIN

This bearskin cloak is all I have
to remember my family.

MARY

Oh, deary. You don't have to
forget them. You can keep the
cloak.

HARRY

So why don't you get cleaned up
then? You hate soap?

BEARSKIN

No. I just can't. And I can't explain.

EDWARD

Bearskin... why not? The least these fine ladies deserve is a clean man.

HARRY

Is it because of a promise to your family?

BEARSKIN

Not a promise... more like a curse.

They all look at him shaking their heads. EDWARD wants to keep laughing though, so he makes another joke.

EDWARD

Well, Mary just might overlook that, you know.

MARY

Sure. I'm still your girl as long as you pay for everything.

EDWARD

That's a good deal, hey?

They all laugh at that.

BEARSKIN

Just keep the drinks coming. That's what I really need.

Bearskin drinks deeply again. PAN across the room.

INT. BURWELL INN, UPPER ROOM - NIGHT

Bearskin enters the dark room alone, turns and closes the door. Some light comes in from outside. He sits on the bedside and takes off cloak, and then his boots.

From behind him, out of the darkness, the DEVIL materialises and reveals himself in the light. He scares Bearskin who jumps up and falls over.

DEVIL

It's only me, Bearskin. Ha. The one with the contract.

Bearskin gets to his feet and sits down on the bed.

BEARSKIN

You scared the hell out of me ... uh , I mean ... just don't do that again.

DEVIL

Oh. I didn't realise. You know it's been one year tonight. I thought I'd see how you are doing.

BEARSKIN

I'll make it through ... don't worry.

DEVIL

(laughing)

I'm not too worried if you make it ... or not.

BEARSKIN

Then what do you want with me?

DEVIL

Nothing. I hope you do make it seven years. This will be very interesting to watch.

BEARSKIN

I'm glad I amuse you....

He looks, and the Devil is gone!

BEARSKIN

Damn him to hell. (pause)
I guess that goes without saying.

He lays back on the bed, looking up.

BEARSKIN

And damn me for taking his deal.

EXT. BURWELL INN, SIDE of BUILDING - DAY

COLLAGE: - Bearskin and Mary sitting outside the INN, drinking, and Mary getting up, and pouring her drink over his head, and laughing.

- Bearskin INSIDE the INN: Watching as Mary is sitting in the lap of another man, and laughing.

NARRATION:

After a year, his new friends began to see how much an animal he was becoming. Bearskin felt like he needed to move on.

INT. FIREWOOD SHACK - SUMMER - DAY

In a large delapidated shack, there is a bundle of long logs at one side and a huge pile of cut logs into firewood length nearby. EDWARD and Harry work together, one on each end of a long hand saw. They are cutting a more logs to add to the stack. A door is open and it is bright sunshine outside.

Bearskin is here, with them, watching them work.

After a moment the two sawyers are done a log and take a break, sitting down.

EDWARD

So tell me, Bearskin, why don't you work?

BEARSKIN

I get money from my uncle. Enough to live on.

HARRY

We've known you for a few months now. How exactly do you get this money?

BEARSKIN

That is my business, friend. Suffice it to say, I don't HAVE to work.

EDWARD

But you COULD work... just to help us out?

Bearskin looks at him silently.

HARRY

Is this the same curse that makes sure you don't take a bath?

Bearskin looks at his two friends a moment.

BEARSKIN

I know... it sounds strange, doesn't it? But it IS a curse, you know.

HARRY

No, we don't know. Was it a witch ... a wizard?

EDWARD

Yeah. We can't figure you out.

BEARSKIN

Alright. I'll tell you. It was a deal with the devil, see?

He sees they don't believe him.

BEARSKIN (CONT)

I see I shouldn't have even told you that much.

EDWARD

A deal with the devil. (pause)
You gotta wear the bearskin, and not wash, and what do you get in return?

BEARSKIN

I get my soul back.

HARRY

Did you sell your soul?

BEARSKIN

Almost. I was damned when I tried killing myself.

EDWARD

(to Harry)

Well... he might have something there.

HARRY

He might. (then to Bearskin)
And the gold?

BEARSKIN

You're right, it's not my uncle...
it's the devil who brings me gold.

EDWARD

Now that's a tall one! .. hey?
When would the devil BRING someone
gold? He only takes it ... AND
your life, if you're foolish
enough to lose it.

HARRY

Ha. That's a good one, Bear. You
had me going for a minute.

(then to EDWARD)

Come on. Let's get the rest of
this done, so we can deliver it
today.

The two men get back to sawing logs. Bearskin just looks down at the ground.

INT. BURWELL INN, COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Tonight the room is not quite so busy. Bearskin is sitting with EDWARD, Harry and EDWARD's girl. There are finished plates of food in front of them, and bread, cheeses, etc. They all drink some ale as they listen to music coming from a trio of gypsies.

BEARSKIN

Where's Mary?

HARRY

She thinks you're too dirty for her.

Bearskin then watches the Gypsy girl, ELOISE, 20, playing violin. He is enchanted. But she avoids looking over towards him.

EDWARD

(kissing his girl)
I think I'll retire with my
favorite girl.

HARRY

Oh. Go ahead, Edward. We'll just
watch the gypsies.

(he looks over at Bearskin)
- I mean the gypsy girl.

EDWARD gets up and leaves with his girl. Bearskin and Harry
continue watching the musicians. Finally Harry comments.

HARRY

She's pretty, don't you think?

Bearskin says nothing, just looks over at him and then
back.

HARRY

Well ... what is it?

BEARSKIN

I was remembering my own wife. I
think I really miss her.

HARRY

That was over a year ago now,
right?

BEARSKIN

Yes, but I still miss them.
(pause)
You know... I think it's time I
move on.

HARRY

Well, where would you go?

BEARSKIN

I don't know. Just travelling.

They drink up and watch the gypsy girl while the two gypsy men play drums and guitar, and make a nice melody.

EXT. OUTSIDE INN - DAY

Bearskin walks out of the door alone, Kids look at him and call him 'Bear man'. This is the first time people look strangely at him. Mothers pull their kids away from him as he approaches.

He walks down the road and leaves the town as kids follow him, calling him names like: 'Bear man'.

KID1

Why don't you go jump in a lake?

KID2

Watch out for the rain... it might rinse you off!

A few even pick up pebbles and throw stones at him from afar. He turns and they scatter, actually afraid. He turns away again and keeps walking.

EXT. ROAD NEAR COTTAGE - DAY

It is AUTUMN in the forest as Bearskin walks along a rutted road. Four soldiers on horseback, wearing matching cloaks, pass him and call out:

SOLDIER1

Look there! Is that a man or a bear?

SOLDIER2

That's a bear! It walks on it's hind legs. It must be a dancing bear, escaped from the gypsies! Ha ha.

SOLDIER1

Well then good thing we didn't kill it then. It's good for entertainment.

They all have a laugh, and continue on.

EXT. ROAD NEAR GYPSIES - DAY

Bearskin walks along the main road and sees the Gypsy camp and the caravan of three wagons. They are far off the road into a clearing. He decides to go see them and goes down a narrow rutted road.

EXT. GYPSY CAMP IN FOREST - DAY

The camp here has three wagons, and at least twelve horses are tethered nearby. When he's a hundred feet from the camp the dogs see him and come barking at him. He reaches down and pets them and they are assured by his voice and wag their tails.

A gypsy man, DREW, 25, comes forward to meet him.

DREW

What do you want here, Bear-man?

BEARSKIN

I saw you gypsies a few nights ago playing music....

Then another man approaches. He is one of the musicians, the GUITARIST, 40.

GUITARIST

(to Drew)

I remember this man.

(then to Bearskin)

Don't they call you Bearskin?

BEARSKIN

Yes. I was hoping... well, maybe to travel along with you.

DREW

(looking him up and down)

That's not possible, Papa Bear.

Guitarist laughs.

GUITARIST

Come. Let's invite him to our fire at least.

DREW

Alright. Come on.

They lead him to the fire.

From the fire circle, a few other gypsies watch him approach. They talk among themselves.

GYPSY1

Oh, by the saints. He looks like a bear.

GYPSY2

Maybe he wants to scare off any attackers.

GYPSY1

I'd say that will do it.

Bearskin arrives at the fire and greets everyone, smiling and shaking hands.

GUITARIST

Everyone... this is Bearskin.

GYPSY1

Of course he is! Good to meet you.

After he shakes a few hands he sits near the fire on a fallen log and warms himself.

DREW

You want something to drink?

BEARSKIN

Sure.

DREW

And with what will you pay? It doesn't have to be money. Something to trade.

BEARSKIN

I have gold.

He keeps his hands hidden under his cloak and pulls out a gold coin. He hands it to Drew who is amazed.

DREW

This is enough for a month of food
and drink.

BEARSKIN

That's all I have. You can keep
it, for your hospitality.

GYPSY2

Here's my wineskin.

Bearkin drinks from the wineskin, smiling.

BEARSKIN

This is very good.

He drinks again and they laugh at his thirst.

From a wagon nearby, the young gypsy girl ELOISE approaches
him. The others are protective of her because she is
beautiful.

DREW

What are you doing here, Eloise?

ELOISE

(to Drew)

I came on behalf of VIOLA.

(then to Bearskin)

She is our fortune teller, and
seer. She says she wishes to see
... the Bear.

BEARSKIN

Me? Now?

ELOISE

Yes. Follow me.

Bearskin hands the wineskin back to GYPSY2, stands up, and
follows her. Drew is protective, so he stands up and calls
him to stop.

DREW

Hold it. Wait. Let us check you
for weapons.

GYPSY2

He's right. We don't know him.

Gypsy2 pulls out a sword and approaches Bearskin. Drew comes close.

DREW

Remove your cloak, Bearskin.

Bearskin removes his cloak and drops it to the ground. Drew frisks him over, and feels in one pocket his purse of gold coins. Bearskin notices but says nothing.

DREW

OK. He carries no weapons. You may see Viola now.

Bearskin picks up his cloak, wraps it around himself again and follows Eloise to the steps going into a wagon. The wagon has paintings of stars and astrological symbols on it. She steps aside, and motions him to go up holding out her hand.

He takes her hand for a moment, looks her into her eyes, and she sees his kind eyes under the dirt.

He turns and goes up the steps and into the wagon.

Outside, Drew looks at Eloise and he covers his nose. She nods and covers her nose too.

DREW

Like a bear ... in more ways than one.

INT. VIOLA'S WAGON - DAY

Bearskin fills the end of the wagon with his big cloak. VIOLA, 60, is here, sitting opposite him at a table. She motions him to sit, which he does.

VIOLA

My name is Viola. And you are ...?

BEARSKIN

They call me Bearskin.

VIOLA

I can see why. Do you realise you smell like a bear too?

BEARSKIN

Yes. But I can not wash or shave.

VIOLA

Ah... that is why you interest me. I have seen a vision of you.

BEARSKIN

You knew we would meet?

VIOLA

I knew you would come to us. I may be the only one who can guide you.

BEARSKIN

Tell me... will I live six more years?

VIOLA

Let us see the cards.

Viola produces a deck of medieval tarot cards. There are only twenty of them and all have pictures on them. She puts them onto the table face down, swirling them around. Bearskin watches and glances around the room to see interesting things hanging as she does this.

VIOLA

Please remove ten cards. Keep them face down.

He takes five and makes a stack of ten in his hand. She gathers the rest and sets the deck aside.

VIOLA

Now make two stacks of five each... here.

She points out two places drawn on the table cloth for him to place the cards. He does this, then she picks up the first stack.

VIOLA

This is your past.

She flips up each card, making an overlapping column.

She studies the cards carefully. He studies her face.

VIOLA

You have DEATH in this stack.
Someone dear to you has died.

BEARSKIN

Yes. I have been visited by Death.

Viola looks at the other cards. There is a dancing bear,
hunter, mother and child, sea.

VIOLA

I see the BEAR is you. You were a
hunter? And your family?

BEARSKIN

They were killed by the bear. This
bear.

VIOLA

That is too much tragedy to
shoulder. Now you are wandering?
Looking for answers?

BEARSKIN

I know what I must do.

VIOLA

You are fortunate then. Many of us
do not.

She takes the second stack and lays out the cards. It is
the lover, devil, dice, justice (scales), castle.

VIOLA

Ah. I see you have a home in the
future - a castle of sorts. You
will find a new lover, but you
play at chance too much.

BEARSKIN

What about the Devil?

VIOLA

To get Death and also the Devil
card is always bad luck. Let me

hold your hands a moment. I can get a better feeling about you.

Bearskin is reluctant, but holds out his dirty hands to her. She takes his hands in hers and closes her eyes a moment.

SOUNDS OVERHEARD: Bear roaring, wife and child screaming.

Viola opens her eyes suddenly, and the sounds end abruptly. She releases his hands and looks at him with deep concern.

VIOLA

You are cursed, Bearskin. The devil has a hold on you. I feel nothing but grief and sorrow for you.

She puts her head down.

VIOLA

That is all for now. Please leave me. Your fate is not with us. And I hope you overcome the pain you carry.

BEARSKIN

Can't you tell me if I will live six more years? I need to know.

VIOLA

No one can predict that with certainty. I will say though that you are courageous and stubborn. Those traits alone should see you through anything.

She falls silent now. He stands up and turns, opening the curtain to exit.

EXT. VIOLA'S WAGON - DAY

Outside is Drew leaning in to hear. He sees the curtain open and watches Bearskin step down to the ground.

DREW

Too bad. A curse is a tough thing to live with.

BEARSKIN

Thank you for the wine, and the
fire. I'll just be on my way.

Drew watches him walk away and ELOISE comes up beside him.

ELOISE

He's not travelling with us?

DREW

He's got a curse. Viola thinks it
will be for six years. I don't
think we should bring back luck
with us.

ELOISE

Somehow, I hope he makes it.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. FOREST ROAD - WINTER - DAY

Winter, snowing, Bearskin walks along the road. A wagon
passes him. Bearskin looks over at the trees and sees the
leaves are all in autumn again.

NARRATION:

Bearskin spent another winter
wandering from town to town.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HILLTOP ROAD, VALLEY - DAY

Bearskin comes over a rise and looks down onto a valley
below. The forests are mostly gone and it is more brush and
grasslands ahead.

NARRATION

He wandered farther away from
home, and soon another year had
passed.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. ROAD - SPRINGTIME - LATE DAY

Bearskin walks along another road in the spring. It is
lightly raining. He uses a tall walking stick. Ahead in the
rain is a figure in black, sitting on a horse.

Bearskin approaches. It is the Devil. He's not getting rained on, and when Bearskin gets beside the horse, he too is somehow protected from the rain. He looks up at him.

DEVIL

It's been two years. Just making sure that you're still following our deal.

The Devil kicks his horse to go.

BEARSKIN

Why can't you tell me something that will actually help?

The Devil shouts back as he walks the horse away.

DEVIL

It's not in the bargain.

Then Bearskin is getting rained on again. He stands there watching the Devil leave. The Devil goes past a tree and disappears.

EXT. CASTLE, MARKET DAY - SPRING

Sunny day. Outside a castle, a small market is being held. Around 10 vendors and 50 people are here. Bearskin comes walking along the road and approaches.

Many people look at this strange figure with long hair and beard. Bearskin goes to the first vendor, with a cart of vegetables. The VENDOR is an old woman, 60.

BEARSKIN

Don't be alarmed. I'm just a man.

He smiles and she can sense that he's OK. She smiles back with crooked teeth. He hands her a gold coin, keeping it hidden from others.

BEARSKIN

This is for you. Don't let the others see it.

She smiles and takes it quite happily.

VENDOR

That's enough money for a few baskets of food.

BEARSKIN

Good.

He throws his cloak off his right shoulder and removes his shoulder bag, then puts the cloak back on.

VENDOR

I've heard of you. Bearskin, right?

BEARSKIN

That's right. Now, let me load up my pack.

VENDOR

Go right ahead.

Then he grabs handfuls of all sorts of vegetables and some breads, and cheeses.

From nearby there is a commotion. Through the market, Bearskin can see soldiers on horses coming through the people. They get in front of the castle, and one dismounts to nail up a PUBLIC NOTICE on a nearby POSTER board. It is titled 'CONSCRIPTION.'

One of the soldiers - the CAPTAIN, addresses everyone loudly. Bearskin and everyone moves close enough to hear.

CAPTAIN

Attention: This is the 'King's Writ of Conscription'. Our allies to the north are at war. This notice is a summons for all able men to join the king's army to fight with our allies. Any citizen of this kingdom, who is able must apply. Anyone not acceptable will be given a letter of exception.

Bearskin hears this and moves away from the crowd. He backs up and escapes into brush or trees.

EXT. BRIDGE NEAR CASTLE - NIGHT

Bearskin crosses a bridge as hears horses galloping closer. He ducks down beside the end of the bridge and goes under it. In the darkness, he sits down and opens his pack, bringing out some carrots to eat.

Near him, he hears a sound and sees movement. Another man was lying nearby, who now sits up, looking at him with a dirty face. Bearskin sees him.

BEARSKIN

Can I offer you some food to stay here tonight?

HOMELESS MAN

That's fine, squire.

Bearskin offers him some bread and food. They even have a drink from his wineskin. And Bearskin lies down, wrapped up in his cloak, listening to horses across the bridge again.

FADE:

EXT. BRIDGE NEAR CASTLE - MORNING

Bearskin is sleeping and the sounds of horses and men are above him. Suddenly a soldier is beside him.

SOLDIER1

Here he is, Captain.

SOLDIER2

Just like the other one said.

Bearskin is wakened, and brought to his feet. He's taken forcibly up onto the road, where he faces the Captain, still on his horse.

CAPTAIN

All right you animal. We're going to clean you up and train you to be in the army.

SOLDIER2

He needs it Captain.
(then to Bearskin)

I remember you from a year ago.

CAPTAIN

(to Soldier1)

Tie his hands and bring him.

They tie his hands, and have a rope tied to a horses saddle. Beside him is the other HOMELESS man, 25, who is also dirty faced and unshaven.

BEARSKIN

This is how you repay me?

HOMELESS

They said they knew you were here.
I didn't tell them... they just
thought to look under the bridge.

BEARSKIN

Well, now we're both in it.

The soldiers mount their horses too and they walk their horses so the two captured men can keep up. They walk on down the road.

EXT. SOLDIER'S TAVERN - DAY

The three soldiers and two men come upon a Tavern on the road.

CAPTAIN

I think we'd better rest here a
while. We have a few more hours of
travel today.

He looks over at the two, and asks Soldier2 to wait
outside.

CAPTAIN

You wait out here and we'll be
back in a little while.

BEARSKIN

(interupts)

Why don't you invite me? I can buy
us ALL drinks and some food.

Captain looks at him surprised.

CAPTAIN

You? Have enough money?

BEARSKIN

Sure I do. Take me inside. I'll show you.

INT. SOLDIER'S TAVERN - DAY

The Captain brings in both prisoners and they all sit - five of them at one big table.

Bearskin reaches into his purse, his hands tied, but hidden under his cloak, and brings out a gold coin.

CAPTAIN

Ho ho! That's enough for us all to have a fine time.

(then to bartender)

Bring us all some ale, my good man.

When they all get a mug, they toast 'TO BEARSKIN', and drink deeply.

BEARSKIN

What's it like being a soldier?

SOLDIER1

It's good. The King's army trains you, gives you good clothes, and you get to travel.

BEARSKIN

That sounds good. I've been looking for a new start.

SOLDIER2

Oh, they'll clean you up, and get you into shape alright.

BEARSKIN

That's what I thought.

SOLDIER2

Right now, you are the farthest thing from a soldier I can think of.

They all look at Bearskin, in his dirty face and laugh.

Bearskin grins and laughs too, but plays along.

DISSOLVE:

INT. SOLDIER'S TAVERN - LATER

The five travellers are all pretty rowdy and laughing. The other HOMELESS MAN and SOLDIER2 have their heads down on the table. There is lots of empty mugs here on the table. Captain see it and comments:

CAPTAIN

Oh, I think we've had too much.

BEARSKIN

Well ... it's my privelige to contribute to the soldiers.

He raises his mug again, hands still tied, and watches the Captain drink. He, on the other hand, carefully does not drink very much.

The Captain then pushes his chair back.

CAPTAIN

I think I need to go.. you know... then we should get travelling again.

BEARSKIN

I really need to go too. If I go with you, you can watch me to make sure I don't escape.

CAPTAIN

Yes. That's good. Come on.

Captain stands, and Bearskin stands, and follows him out the back door.

EXT. SOLDIER'S TAVERN, BACK DOOR - DAY

Bearskin goes outside, his hands still tied, then the Captain follows. They get to an outhouse out back, and Bearskin thumps the Captain on the head, who goes unconscious on the ground.

Bearskin now runs away, going off into the woods.

FADE:

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - FALL

COLLAGE: - Images of Bearskin turning off a road, going deep into woods.

- He hides behind trees in FALL as he watches soldiers pass by on roadway.

- Up a tree, watching far away at horsemen, in the rain.

NARRATION:

Bearskin now is a fugitive...
wanted by the law. He escapes deep
into the woods again, and survives
until winter sets in.

EXT. OUTSIDE MONASTERY - WINTER NIGHT

Bearskin trudges through snow and arrives at a high-walled monastery. He knocks on the big door, shivering in the cold. Someone opens a small peek-hole.

MONK

Who goes there?

BEARSKIN

A near-frozen man. Please give me
shelter.

The peek-slot closes and the door is opened. Bearskin enters, and is met by JACOB, 40, a monk.

JACOB

You look like a bear. That cloak
must keep you warm.

BEARSKIN

Not quite today. Can I warm up
somewhere? Maybe stay a while?

JACOB

Well, you can stay tonight. If you
want to stay longer you'll have to
talk to the Abbot.

BEARSKIN

Thank you.

JACOB

Come. Follow me.

FADE:

COLLAGE: SCENES during NARRATION.

Jacob leads him to a room beside the stables. There's a cot there, and Bearskin happily lays down in it.

JACOB

You can stay here.

DAY. Bearskin talks with the Abbot in his chambers.

DAY. Bearskin helps by milking cows. Later, he cuts and hauls firewood up the rooms for everyone.

NARRATION (VO)

He stumbled upon a monastery, and found companionship again. Although he could not pray, he saw they lived in peace and harmony.

EXT. OUTSIDE MONASTERY - SPRINGTIME

Bearskin is outside the monastery, working at cutting wood. Suddenly beside him the Devil appears.

DEVIL

How can I talk to you in that place?

BEARSKIN

Any new advice for me?

DEVIL

Yes. Don't give in to the temptation to pray to God. He can't help you anyway.

BEARSKIN

Why are you afraid of that?

DEVIL

Don't worry. It's just against our deal. If you do, I'll have your soul.

BEARSKIN

Then why would I do that?

DEVIL

Good for you (smiling). I'll
visit you again.

COLLAGE:

- SPRING: Bearskin talks to Jacob in the MAIN study hall, and he looks around at the stained glass windows.
- SUMMER: Bearskin reads a big book.
- FALL: The Captain and two soldiers arrive outside the monastery. They get off their horses and are escorted into the buildings. Jacob sees them and sneaks away to tell Bearskin.

NARRATION (VO)

Bearskin stayed there through SUMMER. He was accepted and found a place among the monks. - But eventually the soldiers came looking for him.

EXT. OUTSIDE MONASTERY - FALL

Jacob and Bearskin are at the same wooden entry door. Bearskin looks even more haggard now.

JACOB

It's been very good having you here, Bearskin.

BEARSKIN

Thank you for everything, Jacob. I better leave before they find me here.

JACOB

I hope you find a way to overcome your curse.

BEARSKIN

For now I just have to disappear.

JACOB

Well , God be with you.

BEARSKIN

You too, Jacob.

Bearskin walks away, into the forest, and down the valley toward a town, far away.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - WINTER

Bearskin is walking higher into the mountains and looks down far below. Then, an image of him squatting in a cave, wrapped in his cloak, with a small fire in front of him.

NARRATION (VO)

Bearskin leaves everything behind and goes up into the mountains. Here he feels safe and stays here over winter.

EXT. HIGH MOUNTAIN SPRING - DAY

Bearskin walks up to a spring at the edge of the melting snow. The water is so fresh and cold. He kneels down and fills his wineskin.

He looks up and sees the Devil on his black horse again. not far away from him. Bearskin gets to his feet and meets him.

DEVIL

Very good, Bearskin. You've survived four years now. Good thing you escaped the soldiers... Your soul would have been mine.

BEARSKIN

That was out of my hands.

DEVIL

No. You took control of your own destiny. That was good.

BEARSKIN

At least I'm safe way up here.

DEVIL

You're safe. But is this your life, up here, away from the whole world?

BEARSKIN

Well, I do feel lonely ... and sometimes I find I'm talking to myself.

DEVIL

Would it help if I said the war is over now? And I see a beautiful girl in your future?

Bearskin shows great happiness on his face.

BEARSKIN

Yes, sure ... but do they still look for me?

DEVIL

They've forgotten about you.

BEARSKIN

Then maybe I should go back down the mountain.

The Devil smiles and turns his horse.

DEVIL

But, you know, you look more like a bear than ever now.

BEARSKIN

I don't care. Now you've got me thinking about real food.

Bearskin bends down and picks up his pack, turns, and the Devil is gone again.

BEARSKIN

How does he do that?

DISSOLVE:

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

Bearskin walks down the mountain and walks through some fenced farmland. He is chased by some dogs, and he runs and leaps over a fence to escape them.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. OUTSIDE HOSPITAL - DAY

Bearskin walks through woods, and comes upon a large building near a town. He sees quite a few beggars and cripples lined up by an open door. He sees they get some food and then they leave.

Bearskin enters the lineup at the rear. People look at him and are a bit nervous as he looks very rough by now, and his claws look scary and long. He even has twigs in his cloak, long hair and beard.

Soon enough it is his turn and he comes to the door. The girl serving sees him and is surprised at his cloak and unkept appearance. Her name is OPAL, 18, and is beautiful.

BEARSKIN

I need some food too, miss. But I can pay.

When he speaks his voice soothes her apprehension and she can see he's a good man underneath.

OPAL

No need. We give this food as a charity to the needy.

Bearskin produces four gold coins. And puts them in her hand, holding her hand in his.

BEARSKIN

But I want to help with a donation. Surely you'd let me help too?

OPAL

That is very kind, sir ...

He smiles at her and she smiles back.

BEARSKIN

You can call me Bearskin. Very nice to meet you ...

OPAL

...oh, my name is Opal.

Bearskin accepts her package of food, and he leaves. She watches him go away, with a perplexed look on her face.

Another girl comes to help her.

GIRL

That was a big scary man. We
thought it WAS a bear !

OPAL

Actually he seemed nice enough.

EXT. TREE NEAR HOSPITAL - DAY

Bearskin sits down under a tree from a distance and watches
Opal give out more food. He eats his food, relishing it.
Then they close the back door, and he gets up.

He walks to the front and reads the sign there:
St. Judes Hospital.

He enters the front of the building and is met by nurses.

NURSE1

Oh, by the saints. It's a bear-
man.

BEARSKIN

Hello. I am Bearskin.

NURSE2

Hello dear man. You really need to
come inside and let us clean you
up.

BEARSKIN

No, no. I can not. I just want to
donate some money to your
hospital.

NURSE1

That's very generous of you. Are
you sure you want to give US
money?

Bearskin pulls out his red velvet pouch and brings out a
handful of gold coins. They are very surprised.

BEARSKIN

I have just come into a large inheritance and wish to spend most of it here.

NURSE2

That is a very large savings, Sir. On behalf of the hospital, I will accept, and thank you.

She opens her hands and he puts it all into her hands. She puts it into her apron.

NURSE1

You are most welcome anytime, Bearskin.

Bearskin looks to the back and sees that Opal is watching. He smiles, turns, and leaves.

EXT. CEMETERY NEAR HOSPITAL - LATE DAY

It is past supper, and Bearskin is sitting up on a hill, in a cemetery, looking down on the main road. He watches the road for Opal, and sees her coming with two other nurses. He sees them get excited and pointing past the hill to some smoke rising. He looks and sees it too.

So he gets up and starts running, over the hill, toward the smoke, ahead of Opal by a few minutes.

EXT. OPAL'S HOUSE, BARN ON FIRE - LATE DAY

Bearskin runs from a path onto the road and sees a barn on fire. It is near a house, and the flames are very high now.

Bearskin runs up to the cottage and sees two other girls there, screaming and shouting. They look and see him and are completely startled. The girls are HURDY, 20 and GIRDY, 22.

Bearskin watches the fire for a second and sees DEATH floating toward the barn. He panicks now, and rushes up to the girls, who back away from him.

BEARSKIN

Is someone in there? Is someone IN there?

HURDY

Yes, yes... our father. He went in
to save the horse.

Bearskin wastes no time and runs into the burning structure. He stays hunched down and the hide keeps away some of the heat. He sees DEATH gliding right beside him as he looks for the father.

BEARSKIN

No. Not this one... not if I can
help it.

He sees the father on the ground. He reaches down and picks him up. DEATH is right there, reaching for the soul of the father, but Bearskin ignores him, making his way out.

Outside, the two girls are watching in fear, and Opal arrives with her two girl friends, and two other young men. They all watch as Bearskin's figure comes out of the barn, the hide smoking, and he's carrying the father. He coughs a lot and after a few steps out of the barn, he collapses.

The young men run and pick up the two men the best they can and drag them to safety. Opal runs over to her father with her two sisters. He coughs but looks up at them.

Opal goes to see Bearskin, with the young man on the other side. She checks him and he coughs too, but seems OK.

BEARSKIN

Is he alive?

OPAL

Oh, thank you, Bear. You saved my
father's life.

They all sit on the ground and watch the barn burn in the fading light.

INT. OPALS HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Bearskin is sitting in a chair, without his cloak, face still dirty, near the father, MASON, 40. The two girls are attending their father, while Opal is helping Bearskin. They get them tea to drink and take away cleared plates of food.

BEARSKIN

Thank you so much for breakfast.

MASON

It's the least I can do for the man who saved my life.

OPAL

It's a good thing you were nearby. I remember you from the hospital yesterday.

MASON

He'd be hard to forget.

Bearskin just smiles.

BEARSKIN

I remember you too. It's not often someone shows me kindness.

Opal blushes and leaves. The two girls leave too.

MASON

You sure there's nothing I can do for you?

BEARSKIN

I'm sorry, but you can't do anything for me.

MASON

I see you looking at my youngest daughter. She's beautiful, don't you think?

BEARSKIN

Of course. But I don't think she'd want me...

MASON

Why not? You get yourself cleaned up, I bet she could fall in love with a brave man like you. She seems taken by you too.

BEARSKIN

Sir. I have to confide in you. I have a curse upon me and must

wander for another three years. If she'd have me then, I'd be the happiest man in the world.

MASON

Then you should ask her...

BEARSKIN

I just... I don't know.

Opal comes back with her two sisters. Mason addresses the girls:

MASON

I get a good feeling about this man. He saved my life and I have offered one of my daughters hand in marriage to him... if one of you would so wish.

HURDY

Umm ... he's too much like a bear for me, father.

GURDY

... and I'm practically engaged to the miller's son.

They look at each other. Panicking. They don't want that.

Opal looks at him and says.

OPAL

I won't marry a Bear, but if he cleans up well enough, I think I would.

MASON

That's all I wanted to hear.

Bearskin stands up, and goes to the front door getting his wineskin and huge pouch.

BEARSKIN

That would make me very happy too, but I must leave and can't come back for three more years.

Opal looks downcast and sits down.

OPAL

Three years? That's a long time.

BEARSKIN

Not so long... I've been travelling for four years already.

Bearskin comes back to stand in front of her.

BEARSKIN

I do think I love you, and ... you are the one that I would come back for.

She stands to look up at him.

OPAL

When will you leave?

BEARSKIN

I should leave now. Until my curse is done, I can't live like normal people.

Bearskin removes his old wedding ring from his left finger. It is cracked and he breaks it apart. He hands her one half.

BEARSKIN

This is my promise to you. If I don't come back in three years, then you are free.

Opal has tears in her eyes. She stands on her tiptoes and kisses his cheek. His eyes are teary with joy too. The two other girls in the background make 'OOO, yuck' faces because he's so dirty.

OPAL

I accept.

Bearskin goes to Mason who stands up to shake his hand.

MASON

I do hope you'll make out alright, Bearskin.

Bearskin shakes his hand, then pulls out a handful of gold coins and gives them to Mason.

BEARSKIN

This is my promise to you, that
I'll come back.

MASON

But, don't you need this?

BEARSKIN

I have more inheritance coming.
I'll be alright.

He turns and goes to the front door, opening it, then looks back once at Opal, winking at her. She looks a little lost and emotional. He closes the door behind him.

Opal goes to the window to watch him walk away.

The two other sisters are glad to see him go.

HURDY

That Bear stank up the house.

GIRDY

If Opal marries him they'd have
bear cubs, I think. Maybe they'll
live in a cave.

The older girls laugh.

HURDY

At least he's got some money.

GIRDY

That's true.

MASON

Oh, you two, just shut up. That
man saved my life, remember?

HURDY

Yes. Sorry daddy.

The two sisters laugh and go into the next room. Opal still watches through a glass window as Bearskin walks down the road.

EXT. TOWN of TISBURY ROAD - NIGHT

It is moonlit and Bearskin enters the edge of a town. Only a few people are walking at night here. They look twice, staring to make out what creature this is, then they see it's a man. They get out of his way.

EXT. TISBURY, BRIDGE - NIGHT

He travels over a bridge crossing a creek, stops in the middle and looks out over the black water.

He then goes down beside the bridge to the water's edge. He sees a flicker of a campfire, goes toward the fire, following a path.

EXT. TISBURY, SHANTY TOWN - NIGHT

He enters a shanty town of shacks where homeless people live. All the lean-tos and boxes are layered and built up. There is a community camp fire that many dirt-faced people are huddled around. He sees someone with a cane, and a blind man.

From out of the darkness, he approaches the people here, who look at him with some caution. One homeless meets him. It is PETER, 40, who is also very dirty-faced.

PETER

Hello. Who are you?

BEARSKIN

They call me Bearskin ... because of the cloak I wear.

PETER

Of course. Come to the fire. Warm yourself.

They both go to the fire and warm themselves. Another homeless man approaches him who is WILLY, 50, very likable and funny, but who coughs a lot.

PETER

Willy! This is Bearskin. Oh.. and I am Peter.

WILLY

Where you from, stranger?

BEARSKIN

From over a hundred leagues north of here.

PETER

What can you do? You know... to help us out here?

BEARSKIN

Well I have a little money that could help.

Willy nods. Looks over at Peter, who nods. They all stand at the fire for a moment.

BEARSKIN

Tomorrow, I'll buy food and drink for us all.

PETER

Very generous, Bearskin. In the meantime, you have place to sleep ... here with us.

BEARSKIN

Thank you. I've been walking all day.

WILLY

And it's getting colder out every night. You need shelter.

BEARSKIN

Yes it is. I'm tired. Can you show me now?

PETER

Sure. Come this way.

They go off into the dark and enter a broken little shack.

EXT. TISBURY, SHANTY TOWN - MORNING

It is lightly snowing. About fifteen homeless people, beggars, blind, and crippled are sitting and standing by

the fire to get warm. Bearskin arrives with an armful of food, followed by Peter and Willy.

They hand out food to these people, who sit down and eat their fill. Bearskin also sits down on a log.

PETER

No, no, no... you're our honoured guest. You must sit here.

He helps Bearskin to his feet and they bring a comfy chair for him to sit in. He looks them all over. They're watching him, and smiling at him, and he feels welcome here.

BEARSKIN

Then I WILL sit here. Thank you.

WILLY

We thank you. All of us.

They eat and they all raise a glass or mug to toast him.

PETER

To Bearskin. Our honoured guest.

They all drink, and laugh. Bearskin is pleased.

FADE OUT:

EXT. TISBURY, SHANTY TOWN - SUMMER

Bearskin in summer, living with the homeless. Watching them build their homes a bit better. Bringing a shoulder full of wineskins for them. They stand back and see a better shelter for them here. They all shake Bearskin's hand.

NARRATION (VO)

For the next year he lived with people who only had each other. And now they had him. And he helped them the best he could.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. TISBURY, SHANTY TOWN - WINTER

Bearskin at night, winter, sitting in his chair with his cloak around him.

FADE:

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Peter is here with Bearskin, looking over Willy who is wrapped up in blankets in his bed. He will die tonight.

PETER

Don't worry Willy. We'll pray for you.

(then to Bearskin)

He's deathly sick. I think it's his time.

BEARSKIN

It may be his time. It makes me very afraid.

PETER

It's alright, Bearskin. We all must pass on.

BEARSKIN

I know... it just that... I am cursed ... to see... something.

PETER

To see what?

BEARSKIN

I'm sorry. I don't want to be here.

Bearskin gets up from sitting, turns and opens the door. Backlit in front of him is DEATH. His boney hand carries the scythe and his black robes are shrouded in mist and light snow falling.

Bearskin takes a real turn of fright, and falls on his butt on the floor, staring up.

Peter looks and sees only the open door, and Bearskin staring up.

PETER

Are you alright, Bear?

Bearskin says nothing but he sees the reaper travel THROUGH him, and this sends a cold shiver through Bearskin. He turns and sees DEATH hover OVER Willy.

Peter sees Bearsking staring at Willy and he looks too, holding his hand. Willy exhales his last breath and goes still.

Bearskins POV: He sees DEATH rise up and take Willy's ghost hand and remove his spirit from his body. The white ghost rises and goes up and out of the shack. Death turns, facing Bearskin directly. Then the figure in black POOFS into black smoke that dissipates.

PETER

He's gone.

Bearskin, crawls back inside, and closes the door after him.

BEARSKIN

I know. I had a vision ... of his ghost rising up.

Peter says nothing, just nods and pulls blanket over Willy's face.

FADE OUT:

EXT. TISBURY, SHANTY TOWN - SPRING

Bearskin brings a large sheet tied up full of used clothes for the homeless people here. They open the sack and everyone gets something. Bearskin helps a blind man try on a good used coat.

While everyone is busy, Bearskin sits down in his chair and looks between a lot of people, and sees the DEVIL on his black horse, across the river, watching him. Bearskin stands, and goes through the people, getting to the riverside. The Devil raises his cane, salutes him, and looks behind him, then back to Bearskin.

NARRATION: (vo)

Another year passed, and the Devil appeared to Bearskin. It seems like the Devil brought the soldiers with him, and he knew he must leave now or be caught.

On the bridge are three soldiers on horses looking down at the river. The Captain talks to someone standing.

Back on the Devil, he turns his horse away and leaves through bushes and around a corner.

Bearskin, wraps his cloak around him and walks off down the riverbank, away from everyone without saying a word of goodbye. He disappears from sight.

FADE:

EXT. MEAN TOWN - SUMMER - DAY

At the edge of another town, Bearskin walks away from a crowd of people who throws rocks at him, jeering him.

MEAN MAN

Don't bring your bad omens, and
evil to this town, you filthy
beast.

MEAN WOMAN

Cleanliness is next to Godliness.
Go follow the devil.

Bearskin keeps walking, as the rocks hit but bounce off the cloak. His forehead is bleeding.

EXT. WAR-TORN VALLEY - DAY

It is raining, and Bearskin walks along a road. This valley is terribly scarred and rocky, with sparse trees. He passes a few wagoners with all their belongings, and oxen tied up behind, leaving the valley.

WAGONEER

I wouldn't bother to go in that
direction, mister. Nothing much
left after the big battle
yesterday.

Bearskin pauses to listen, then watches him continue.

Overhead he sees something... it is DEATH flying through trees, going in Bearskin's direction, toward the village ahead.

EXT. WAR-TORN VILLAGE - DAY

It is still drizzling rain. The village has a few buildings standing, but most are burned, with only a little smoke still rising. Some soldiers are here, gathering dead bodies on a wagon and taking it to the far side of town.

A few people are finishing loading up their wagons, and driving off down the road.

Bearskin hears a WOMAN WAILING in one of the houses, so he walks to it. Before he gets there, he sees DEATH rise up through the roof, holding the hand of a ghostly figure. They disappear into the drizzle rain.

He goes to a broken window, and peers inside the house. He sees a woman crying beside a dead man's body, blood soaked chest, on a rickety bed.

Suddenly a hand grabs his shoulder and Bearskin turns to see who it is. A soldier, SERGEANT, 20, who he has not met faces him.

SERGEANT

You there. Come with me. You are recruited to help bury the dead.

Bearskin says nothing. He goes ahead of the Sergeant.

EXT. WAR-TORN CEMETERY - DAY

Still overcast, grey skies. Bearskin is amid a few half-dug graves, and a few soldiers are digging beside him. It is hard work and he stops to take of his cloak. Then he takes a drink from his wineskin.

SERGEANT

Is that wine? Give me some of that.

Bearskin hands it over to him, and Sergeant takes a good drink from it. Then it gets passed around to a few other soldiers. Finally it is passed up to someone sitting on a horse.

It is the CAPTAIN, who drinks from it, then passes it across to a Soldier1, also on his horse. Soldier2 is also here.

Bearskin sees them and turns away his face.

The Captain gets down off his horse, and walks over to Bearskin, still in the half-dug grave. The bearskin cloak is definitely unique, and the Captain sees it.

CAPTAIN

Is this Bearskin? Is that you?

Bearskin now looks at him.

CAPTAIN

I knew we'd find you sooner or later. Get out of there.

Bearskin puts his cloak on and climbs out of the grave, mud on his knees and cloak. Meanwhile the captain two soldiers have joined the Captain. This time they have steel manacles and shackles in their hands.

CAPTAIN

You were going to be a soldier,
but now you're a prisoner.

Soldier1 clasps the irons around his hands.

EXT. OUTSIDE CASTLE - DAY

Bearskin trudges behind them, wearing the chains that bind his feet and hands. They come up to a large door of a castle and meet two guards. They open the doors, and the three horses and walking prisoner enter the yard. The Captain meets GUARD1, 20.

CAPTAIN

Hello. We want to see your
magistrate. This won't take too
much of his time.

GUARD1

Alright. Why don't we put this
prisoner in a cell, until the
magistrate can see you. We'll take
him from here.

Guard1 is joined by two other castle guards and they take Bearskin into the castle.

The Captain and his soldiers dismount and take their horses to the stables (or manger and watering trough).

INT. CASTLE DUNGEONS - DAY

Bearskin is brought down stairs roughly by two guards. At the bottom of the stairs, they remove his cloak, and check him for weapons.

GUARD1

Hold him while I check him for weapons.

Guard2 holds him from behind, while Guard3 watches. Guard1 find a large dagger, removes it, handing it to Guard3.

Then Guard1 finds the purse, jingles it in one hand and feels it is heavy. He looks squarely at Bearskin, wondering if he should mention it, but looks at the two other guards and says nothing.

GUARD1

OK. Throw him in.

They leave the shackles on and throw him into a steel barred cell. Just as they toss him, Guard1 takes a small dagger and expertly cuts the purse strings from Bearskin and hides the purse from the other two guards. They close the door and lock it.

BEARSKIN

What about my cloak? I need it.

GUARD2

Don't worry. Nobody will steal it.

All three guards laugh at that, and go back up the stairs. They pass another cell and someone inside asks for more water.

GUARD3

Shut up in there. Wait for your dinner time.

INT. CASTLE COURT ROOM - DAY

This room is not very large, and has a high desk for the judge to hear the cases. The Magistrate enters the room, followed by two assistants and two guards.

Across from him are the CAPTAIN, and his two soldiers.

The Magistrate sits down and motions to one of the guards.

MAGISTRATE

Guards. Bring in the prisoner.

Guard1 and Guard2 bring in Bearskin wearing his cloak.

MAGISTRATE

This is the accused? Looks like you've trapped an animal, Captain.

(pause)

Alright, present your case.

The Captain steps forward.

CAPTAIN

The prisoner, known as Bearskin, broke the king's writ of conscription to join the army. That was three years ago, and at that time we took him under arrest. But he escaped and after a long time we have him back in custody.

MAGISTRATE

(addressing Bearskin)

You are Bearskin? I can see why, but for legal reasons you must tell me your real name.

BEARSKIN

I am Johann... from Crawston.

MAGISTRATE

And are you guilty of this crime?

BEARSKIN

Yes. But I have a ...

CAPTAIN

You see, he readily admits it your honor.

MAGISTRATE

Alright, enough. The law is clear. Avoiding the conscription is the same as desertion. It is punishable by five years in the Greymarsh Prisons, OR by a fine of 50 gold crowns to pay 'scutage'.

(looks to Bearskin)

I assume you are not rich...

BEARSKIN

I may be able to secure that amount from my rich uncle. Let me give you something in good faith.

Bearskin reaches down to his belt and looks around for his money pouch. He pats everywhere and finally looks at the Guards.

BEARSKIN

Someone took my money pouch. Your honor, you've got to give me time ...

MAGISTRATE

Yes, I will. I give you five years in prison.

Magistrate hits the gavel down, sealing his judgment.

MAGISTRATE

Guards take him away.

BEARSKIN

But your honor. I can come up with the money. I'm rich, don't you see...

They take him away, protesting.

The Captain and the two soldiers exit the room, after Bearskin is dragged out.

EXT. ROAD TO PRISON - SUMMER DAY

Bearskin is in a wagon with steel bars around, with two other prisoners. They travel down road and can see the prison, and old castle, in a barren marsh far ahead.

They pass a few teens who have armsful of bad fruit. They pelt the wagon, and some spray hits the driver.

DRIVER

Hey, you. Stop that. Get away from here.

The kids run off laughing. Far in the distance FOCUS on the prison.

INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - DAY

The cell door open with the sounds of keys jingling. This room is only 10 x 10 feet square. There is one barred window high up on the outside wall, and the door itself has a small barred window. The stone room has straw strewn on the floor.

Bearskin is taken inside and his shackles are taken off, and he is thrown to the floor before the door is shut and locked. He still wears his big bearskin cloak, although it is dirty, and muddy. His beard and hair is long, dirty, tangled, and his fingernails are long claws.

He goes to the window to look out, and a few tears come into his eyes.

BEARSKIN

It's not fair. I'm not a criminal.
I don't deserve this.

COLLAGE: (during some narration)

He watches the sun go down. A metaphor for his life. It gets dark and he looks up at the moon. He shakes and looks like he'll crack soon.

FADE OUT:

NARRATION: (vo)

He endured prison for another year. He still refused to clean up, and he became more determined

than ever to last the seven years.
Finally he got a visitor.

INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - SPRING

The cell door opens with the sounds of keys jingling.
Bearskin stands up and looks at the door, expecting the
guard.

Instead, the door opens, and it is the DEVIL standing there
looking clean and polished, all in black.

BEARSKIN

Where's the guard?

DEVIL

(smiles)

I don't need him. I had my own set
made.

He enters and closes the door behind him, not locking it.

DEVIL

Well... did you think it would end
up like this?

BEARSKIN

No. I thought I'd be rich enough.

DEVIL

Who knew?

BEARSKIN

I would have been able to buy
myself out of this if those guards
didn't steal that purse.

DEVIL

Don't look at me. They did it
without my temptations.

BEARSKIN

Well? Do I have to stay here for
another year?

DEVIL

I can't bail you out. It's against
my rules. You're on your own.

BEARSKIN

Well, you better be ready for an apology in one year.

DEVIL

Yeah? You think you won't lose your mind in here?

BEARSKIN

I'll make it.

The Devil turns around and opens the door.

DEVIL

Ok. You know, I think you just might.

BEARSKIN

What do you mean by that?

The devil exits and closes the door, smiling, and the door locks. Bearskin hammers at the door with his fists.

BEARSKIN

Damn you. Nothing else better happen to me in here... you hear me?

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

It is FALL. At the large doors entering the monastery, George knocks on the big door and waits.

He is wrapped in a wool cloak and looks over at the trees as the leaves are being blown off the branches.

He knocks again. This time, the door is opened by JACOB, Bearskin's old friend.

GEORGE

Hello friend. I'm a traveller and looking for someone.

JACOB

Well, come inside for a moment and warm yourself.

GEORGE

Thank you.

They go inside, and close the door.

INT. MONASTERY, INNER YARD - DAY

They stand beside a fire burning in a brazier. They are joined by two other monks.

JACOB

What is your name?

GEORGE

George. I'm from Crawston, and looking for a friend.

JACOB

Oh? I knew someone from Crawston. Who is it that you seek?

GEORGE

He goes by the name of Bearskin.

JACOB

Ah! Just so! He was here about three years ago. He stayed on for a year.

GEORGE

That's great news. It's been so long that I thought I'd better look for him.

JACOB

We all should have such good friends as you.

GEORGE

He was a good friend.

JACOB

And to us all here.

(pause)

Do you think something happened to him?

GEORGE

I don't know... He told me something a long time ago that I didn't believe... but now I think it's true.

JACOB

Well, I hope you find him then.

GEORGE

I will try.

A bell rings in the distance signifying supper.

JACOB

For an old friend of Bearskin, I think you should have supper with us.

The two other monks agree, nodding.

MONK

Yes, stay.

GEORGE

Alright, I will. Your hospitality is very generous.

JACOB

Good. Let's go eat. You should be strong for your journey.

They leave, shuffling George out of the place with them.

EXT. TISBURY BRIDGE, SHANTY TOWN - DAY

It is WINTER, lightly snowing, and getting dark out. On the bridge in Tisbury, George stands and looks down to the shanty town below. He sees the firepit. He walks along the bridge and finds a path down to the shacks.

Below the bridge in the shanty town, George, Johann's old friend from Crawston, walks up to some homeless beggars. A CRIPPLE puts his hand out for money, and George gives him a few small coins.

GEORGE

Tell me please, have you seen the man they call Bearskin?

The CRIPPLE leans on one crutch.

CRIPPLE

Yes, yes! Have you seen him?

GEORGE

No. I'm looking for him.

Then Peter comes forward. He greets George smiling.

PETER

Hello sir. You're looking for
Bearskin?

GEORGE

So he was here? How long ago?

PETER

About two years ago now.

GEORGE

Where did he go?

PETER

He just disappeared when some
soldiers came looking for him. If
you find him, tell him it's safe
to come back now. We miss him.

GEORGE

Yes. I will. Thank you.

CRIPPLE

He was very good to us. We pray
for him.

PETER

You'll stay here tonight?

George is hesitant.

GEORGE

I don't know...

PETER

We have some extra beds thanks to
Bearskin.

GEORGE

Alright then. If it's no bother.

PETER

None at all. A friend of
Bearskin's is a friend of ours.

George comes even closer to the fire and warms himself.

EXT. CASTLE YARD, MARKET DAY, - DAY

It is SPRING, and some snow still on the ground here and there.

George walks into a animal market place happening in the inner yard of the castle. There is a wagon full of chickens, and other people tending geese, etc.

He approaches a man who is a SHEPHERD, 35. He watches him tend his 5 sheep with his dog. A few nobles, and merchants are here, looking to buy animals.

GEORGE

Have you seen someone come through here? He goes by the name Bearskin?

SHEPHERD

Oh, yes. He was arrested by Soldiers, for desertion I think, and was taken by wagon out to the Greymarshes Prison.

GEORGE

Oh... how far is that?

SHEPHERD

I think it's a few days south, by horse.

GEORGE

You sure it was him? Big bearskin hide for cloak?

SHEPHERD

Yeah. Hard to forget. The only one I remember who had ever worn something like that.

GEORGE

Many thanks. Bless you.

George turns away and goes by a large firepit to warm himself with some guardsmen and merchants. He looks up and sees grey skies - perhaps rain coming.

INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - DAY

Bearskin looks out the window and sees the same grey skies.

He talks to himself:

BEARSKIN

It's almost spring.

He shakes his head. Then he hears a commotion and talking in the hall. His cell door is unlocked, and the door opens. There stands GEORGE.

Bearskin is so happy to see his old friend. He goes over and hugs him so hard. George is happy to see him too, but shocked. He turns away at the smell of his friend.

GEORGE

My God, Johann - you stink.

BEARSKIN

That's my curse, George.

The door is closed by the guard and locked. George sits down on the bed, and Bearskin sits down nearby.

GEORGE

I've thought a lot about what you said seven years ago, Johann, and Gracy and me were worried about you. (pause)
So I came looking for you.

BEARSKIN

You're a good friend, George.

GEORGE

Well, I found a lot of people who knew you, and they all think you were very good to them.

BEARSKIN

So do you believe me now?

GEORGE

Yes. As crazy as it sounds. And I thought you might need help... and well... here you are!

George motions indicating around the prison cell.

BEARSKIN

Yes, I do need help. Another month and I'll be done with the devil, but still not free.

GEORGE

What happened?

BEARSKIN

I couldn't be taken into the king's army. You see - if I lose the cloak, then I lose the deal. And ... I'd lose my soul to the Devil.

GEORGE

That's one hell of a deal you made, Johann.

BEARSKIN

You said it, HELL of a deal.

GEORGE

So you were arrested, and put in here. For how long?

BEARSKIN

Five years.

George thinks about that.

BEARSKIN

Which would be alright, If I didn't have a beautiful fiance

waiting for me to come back to her.

GEORGE

How'd you ...?

BEARSKIN

I saved her father's life, and ...

(pause)

Well, she's just the most beautiful girl I've ever met, and I love her.

(pause)

And I could lose her if I don't return to her this spring.

GEORGE

Can't you pay off someone?

BEARSKIN

I would have, and I still can, if the gold purse wasn't stolen.

GEORGE

Oh. How did that happen?

BEARSKIN

It was one of the guards at the castle where I was sentenced.

GEORGE

Well I know it. I was there. Maybe I could get it back for you.

BEARSKIN

If you could George, you've be saving my life.

GEORGE

I'll see what I can do.

BEARSKIN

But be careful. Don't get yourself arrested.

GEORGE

That'd be foolish.

FADE:

DREAM:**INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - DAY**

Bearskin lays back on the bed. He looks up at the ceiling. He sees a dark spot. Then a he watches it, it grow larger. Soon it reaches the walls and creeps down them like fingers. He looks around in fear, then in the center of the ceiling, a blob of black grows and turns into the figure of DEATH in his robes.

As he watches, the figure floats above his face, and he sees the skull face and boney hands reaching for him. He tries to scream but can't.

Then he wakes up.

INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - DAY

Bearskin's eyes flick open and he sits up quickly. The room is normal... just a dream.

But in one corner a dark shadow moves...

The figure turns and now he sees it's the Devil. He's not smiling anymore. He walks toward Bearskin with his cane in hand.

DEVIL

Today makes it seven years,
Bearskin.

Bearskin stands up.

BEARSKIN

So, I'm free now? Good. But
where's my reward?

The Devil brings out the contract and rips it in half, and it turns into sparks and burns up into nothing.

DEVIL

You mean the gold purse? Remember
you were to be careful not to lose
it?

BEARSKIN

But you said, I'd have my health
AND riches. I need the riches,
Devil, that's why I did it. Take
your damned cloak.

Bearskin takes off the bearskin cloak, throwing it down on
the floor. It bursts into a cloud of smoke and ash and
disappears !

DEVIL

Sorry. The contract stated that
you weren't to lose the gold
purse, or you'd be reduced to
begging.

BEARSKIN

That's not right.

DEVIL

Too bad. The deal is done, and I'm
done with it.

The Devil turns to walk toward the door.

BEARSKIN

Tell me. If I get it back, will it
work for me?

DEVIL

Of course. It will still make gold
for you... and for you only.

The Devil puts his hand out and the door unlocks and opens
for him. He steps at the threshold and turns.

DEVIL

That is... if you get it back.

BEARSKIN

Damn you. Why would anyone take a
deal from you?

DEVIL

Let me see... Greed? Lust? Envy?
And a few more. Hope you make it
out of here, Bearskin.

The Devil laughs and backs out of the doorway, closing the door. Then it locks and Bearskin hears the echos of his laughter in the hallway beyond the door.

BEARSKIN

Damn it. What can I do now?

It is overcast as he looks out the window. He see the birds flying and one lands on his window ledge. He puts his hand out, but the bird flys away.

BEARSKIN

I'm free, but don't have my freedom. I hope George can find it.

Then he looks up into the sky and sees the dark clouds parting a bit and a ray of sunlight comes directly down into his cell.

BEARSKIN

I mean ... I PRAY that George finds it.

Bearskin then gets on his knees and assumes the praying position, and he is surrounded by the light coming in through the window.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. GREYMARSH PRISON, BEARSKIN'S CELL - DAY

On the floor of the cell, there's a large pile of gold coins glittering in the sunlight. Bearskin reaches again into the magic purse and pulls out another 10 heavy coins. As he does this the purse sparkles with gold dust. He adds them to the large pile, which is on a large kerchief. There must be 60 coins there now.

Across from him is George, staring in amazement at the gold. He finishes counting out fifty gold, and sets aside the extras.

GEORGE

It's a miracle.

BEARSKIN

No. It's magic. The Devil's magic, but I'm going to use it for good. That's get his goat.

George and Bearskin both laugh at this heartily.

Bearskin now gets to his feet. He watches George wrap the kerchief with the fifty gold.

BEARSKIN

Now go and pay my fine, and I'll be free.

GEORGE

Gladly, Johann.

BEARSKIN

And take a few extra for bribes if need be.

Bearskin gives him a few more to put in his pockets.

George stows away the heavy pouch in his shoulder pack and hefts it over his shoulder. He knocks on the door, and calls out to the guard.

GEORGE

Guard. I'm ready to leave.

BEARSKIN

Take care, old friend.

GEORGE

This is a burden I gladly bear for you.

Bearskin smiles and pats him on the back.

EXT. STABLES AT TWO ELMS - DAY

It's a sunny spring day, and dirty old Bearskin, now JOHANN again, is without his cloak, but has very long hair and beard. He stands outside a building with STABLES for a sign.

He watches as his old friend George brings out a saddled horse. George checks it over as Bearskin talks to him.

JOHANN

And may I never see that prison again, George. (pause) You know... if it wasn't for you...

GEORGE

Say nothing more about it. I am rewarded enough.

George pats his pockets that clink with coins.

JOHANN

And I hope to reward anyone who ever helped me.

Bearskin helps get George up into the saddle.

JOHANN (cont)

You'll be fine heading north while I go east?

GEORGE

Yes. And I do hope you find your betrothed wife.

JOHANN

I hope she's still faithful to me after three long years.

GEORGE

After everything you've been through, you deserve someone to love you, Johann.

JOHANN

You take care. I'll send you a message in a month.

Johann watches as George spurs his horse and goes off through the town of Two Elms.

Then Johann walks down the main road into the town. Many people walking still point and stare at him. He finally stops at a barber's shop that has a sign outside: BATH. He enters it.

INT. BARBER SHOP, AT TWO ELMS - DAY

The BARBER, 40, is shaving one customer in a chair when Johann enters. The Barber looks over and is shocked. Then he smiles widely, and keeps on shaving the man in the chair.

Johann also smiles and looks in the mirror at himself.

JOHANN

It's been a long time since I even looked in the mirror.

BARBER

I'd say your very much overdo for a haircut, sir.

The man in the chair finally looks over and goes wide eyed at him too.

Johann waits a moment for the barber, who just finished the shave on his customer, and wipes off soap on his face.

The customer feels his smooth face and goes 'Aahhh' , but then looks over at Johann, unsure of his reaction.

He stands and pays the barber a coin, and quickly leaves the shop, while the barber gets the chair ready.

BARBER

What'll it be first? Haircut, shave or bath?

JOHANN

Yes. In that order.

Johann takes out one gold coin and gives it to him.

JOHANN

I expect this will cover everything I need.

BARBER

Yes, sir.

The barber motions for him to sit down. He then brings out large scissors to start.

JOHANN

Not too short, right. But... nice.

BARBER

I know what you need, sir.

He starts cutting and there is a big pile of hair piling up on the floor.

INT. BARBER SHOP, AT TWO ELMS - LATER

Johann is in a back room, steamy from hot water, and sitting in a deep bathtub with soap. Johann's face is clean and his hair is wet but shorter. His eyes are closed but he's enjoying it.

The barber comes in, escorting a young girl, 18.

BARBER

Johann? This is FREYA. She will do your nails for you.

Johann opens his eyes and sees the young girl. He puts out his hands with sharp broken fingernails.

JOHANN

Here you go. I'm afraid they're in bad shape.

(then to Barber)

Can you throw out those old clothes and get me something better to wear? Just don't throw out my shoulder pack.

BARBER

At once. I'll send for the tailor.

JOHANN

That'll be perfect. Thank you.

He sits back again relaxing as the girl cuts his nails and files them.

JOHANN

If you don't have your health, you got nothing.

EXT. TAILORS SHOP, AT TWO ELMS - DAY

Bearskin walks out of the Tailors shop wearing nice new colorful clothes, fitting him nicely. He has a large plain cloak the he wears to cover his nice clothes. He looks out toward the setting sun and decides it's time for a meal. He takes a walk down the board-walks and recieves a smile from practically everyone who meets him. He nods and likes it.

INT. TWO ELMS INN - EVENING

Bearskin enters the large common room, and walks toward one side to arrange a room for the night. There are drinks served to a number of men here, and a few others are eating a meal with women.

Johann talks to the innkeeper at a counter.

JOHANN

I would like your best room and the finest meal you have.

INNKEEPER

Yes sir. (trying to be tactful)
And how will you pay for that?

Johann produces one gold coin. He hands it to him.

JOHANN

I think this will be enough.

INNKEEPER

More than enough, sir. Yes. The best room...

He looks up at some keys and gives him a nice shiney brass one.

INNKEEPER

The room at the top of the stairs.
Our best.

(he nods as he
hands it to him)

And should we bring your meal up to you, sir?

JOHANN

(nodding)

That was what I was thinking. I
need some room service.

Johann takes the key and goes up the stairs slowly.

INT. TWO ELMS INN, UPSTAIRS ROOM - NIGHT

The moonlight comes in through a window, and there are a few large candles burning here.

CAMERA moves across table with large plate of meat and gravy and deserts - everything half eaten.
CAMERA moves to the BED:

Johann lies here, face up in his fine clothes, sleeping. He dreams of the fire, and rescuing the father, MASON.

SOUNDS of the fire, the shouting, coughing, and Opal's voice (echos):

OPAL (vo)

Oh, thank you, Bear. You saved my
father's life.

Johann wakes up with a start. Then he sits up, he looks around, and sees everything is alright. He takes off his new boots, setting them down carefully beside each other, admiring them. He takes off his new coat, setting it carefully onto a chair. Then he lies back down, staring up at the ceiling. A smile comes over his face.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. OPAL'S HOUSE, SUMMER DAY

WIDE:

A beautiful carriage drawn by four white horses drives down the road through the town, as seen from the cemetery. It travels on, toward Opal's house. Note: New barn.

CLOSER:

The carriage gets within a hundred feet of the house and suddenly the horses are spooked by something and they rear up. The carriage goes into the ditch, and one wheel is caught up in the fence railing of Opal's house.

From the house, the father, Mason, comes out, looking concerned. Then he comes forward to help. The two girls Hurdy and Girdy stand at the open door watching.

The COACHMAN, 25, steps down and looks at the wheel caught up. Johann exits the carriage too and joins him as Mason arrives.

MASON

Good day, sirs. Looks like you're caught up here.

JOHANN

Good day to you. Can you call someone to help us out of this?

MASON

Absolutely. I'll fetch some lads I know.

Mason leaves and goes back to the house. He stays inside a moment and then Girdy leaves the house and walks down the road trying to look casual.

Mason calls out after her:

MASON

Please hurry, Girdy.

Girdy looks back at the house then starts jogging the best she can in her dress.

Johann then walks slowly towards the house, looking around the yard.

He gets close to the front door when Mason comes back out.

MASON

Sir, would you like to come inside for some wine?

JOHANN

Yes, I would. Thank you.

He goes in the front door.

INT. OPAL'S HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Johann enters the house and takes off his cloak and he looks very handsome and rich in his new clothes.

Mason hurriedly gets him the best seat to sit in, and motions him to sit.

MASON

Please sir, have a seat. My daughter will bring some wine right away.

He looks over at Hurdy who hurriedly gets two mugs and reaches for the wineskin hanging. Mason sees her and wave her off, mouthing 'no', and pointing to the lone bottle on a top shelf. She gets it brings it over to the table.

MASON

Ahhh.. this is our best wine.
Saved it for a special occasion.
Um, let me open this up.

Hurdy passes him a corkscrew opener and Mason struggles but finally gets the cork out. Johann looks unfazed by any of this, staying calm and looking around politely.

JOHANN

Nice little cottage. Are you a free man?

MASON

No... ah... still renting.

Mason pours the wine and then holds his mug up, waiting for Johann to drink first.

JOHANN

And you have two daughters at home? They look like they should be married.

He picks up his wine and swirls it, smelling it.

MASON

Quite right! Some think my daughters are beautiful, and they ARE ready for marriage, I assure you.

Hurdy overhears them talk. She smiles and quietly leaves the room. Johann raises his mug and toasts with Mason.

JOHANN

Here's to beautiful daughters.

They drink up and smile at each other.

EXT. OPAL'S HOUSE, SUMMER DAY

Near the carriage, the Coachman watches as two lads, TIM and SETH about 18 years old, come jogging up to the carriage, ahead of Girdy.

The boys meet the coachman and examine the wheel stuck in the railing.

TIM

Hello. We're here to help.

COACHMAN

Hello. That's very courteous of you two.

SETH

Well, looks like we're gonna need a couple of long pole to lever it out.

COACHMAN

That would be appreciated.

He nods and the two boys look around and walk over to the new barn. He smiles watching them.

INT. OPAL'S HOUSE, SUMMER DAY

Mason and Johann both look up as the door opens and it is Girdy, out of breath and flustered.

GIRDY

Oh... don't look at me. I'm just a mess. Let me go clean up.

The men watch her go to the back room, as Hurdy comes out, with her hair pinned up. She sees them watching her and stops, blushes, and curtsies to them.

The men see this and nod, and watch her get to lightly cleaning the kitchen.

JOHANN

How many daughter do you have?

MASON

Three. One is working at the hospital. She should be home shortly.

JOHANN

Oh.

Johann takes another drink of wine.

JOHANN (cont)

Your daughters certainly are beautiful. And not married yet?

MASON

Well, they've had some suitors to be sure, but no, not yet.

Mason takes a drink too, faltering. Then Girdey comes out of the back room, looking cleaned up too, and smiling.

MASON

What is your name, sir? And are you married?

JOHANN

I am Johann from Crawston, and no I'm not married.

Johann smiles. Mason stands up and shakes his hand happily.

MASON

I am Mason, and these are my daughters: Hurdy, and Girdey.

Johann stands up and bows to them.

JOHANN

Pleased to meet you, I'm sure. I'll just go see to my carriage.

Johann bows again, walking toward the door.

EXT. OPAL'S HOUSE, SUMMER DAY

Near the carriage, the Coachman watches as Johann approaches.

JOHANN

Well. Can they get us out?

COACHMAN

I think the two boys are coming with some leverage.

JOHANN

Very good.

They sit in the shade a moment and watch as the boys are coming with some poles, and Mason exits his front door to come to them.

JOHANN

That might be the father coming to invite me to supper tonight.

COACHMAN

That's what you hoped for.

JOHANN

I really hope to see Opal.

Coachman nods, smiling, and he meets the boys, carrying poles, as Johann goes and meets Mason.

MASON

Johann. You'd honor us by having supper with us.

JOHANN

Well, it's getting a little late. Alright. I accept. Will your other daughter be joining us?

MASON

Oh, yes, certainly. She is just as beautiful... but...

JOHANN

Something wrong?

MASON

She is already engaged. But I hope you might find one of my other daughters would make a fine wife.

JOHANN

Why don't we just have a good supper and then... we'll see?

MASON

That's good thinking, Sir.

Mason turns and walks a few steps He turns again.

MASON

Just come up to the house when you're ready.

Johann smiles and nods.

EXT. OPAL'S HOUSE - LATER

The railing is removed and the carriage is dropped onto the ground, free to move now. The two boys remove the long poles and wipe the sweat from their brows.

COACHMAN

Very good.

Johann walks up to them and gives them some coins each.

JOHANN

Yes, my thanks, boys.

The boys are happy and they drag the poles back to behind the barn.

The coachman checks all harnesses on the horses.

COACHMAN

I'll take the carriage up to the barn, then.

JOHANN

Very good. Just wait for me there.

The coachman walks the horses, and carriage, up to the barn, and Johann looks just a ways down the road. He sees Opal coming, all dressed in black.

He waits for her to come closer, and he sees her watching him. She smiles, but puts her head down, and continues on to the house.

Johann is happy that he's seen her again. He reaches into his pocket and finds the half ring that he broke three years ago. He puts it back in a pocket and walks to the house.

INT. OPAL'S HOUSE, EVENING

Everyone sits around a table, almost finished eating now. The table has cooked meats, gravy, breads, wine, cheeses. At one end of the table sits Johann, flanked by the older sisters, Hurdy and Girdy. At the other end is Mason, with Opal, wearing black still, and the coachman, sitting opposite each other.

Mason raises his mug to everyone, who raise their drinks.

MASON

Here's to good company.

JOHANN

And to good fortunes.

(pauses and looks at Opal)

Opal, why do you wear black?

OPAL

Because I am waiting for my true love to come back to me.

The two girls snicker and laugh a bit.

JOHANN

I think true love isn't something to laugh about. He must be very important to you.

OPAL

Yes. I think he's a very brave and good man.

JOHANN

Well, here's to him.

They all drink some more. Then Johann stands up. Mason and the girls go to stand too, but Johann waves them to sit down.

JOHANN

In my family it shows respect when you pour wine for your hosts too.

He grabs the bottle of wine, and walks around the table pouring a bit of wine into everyone's cup.

CLOSE UP: At Opal's cup, he drops something in as he pours. He talks as he pours.

JOHANN

I was a trapper for many years, but then I came across good fortune and made my riches.

HURDY

Sounds very exciting.

GIRDY

And you're not married?

JOHANN

No. But I'm ready to marry again, and I think all you sisters are beautiful.

Johann stays standing and raises his glass.

JOHANN

Maybe I'll ask one of you girls to marry me. So here's to true love.

They drink up and put their cups back down. Then everyone notices Johann is looking at Opal, who puts her cup down last.

OPAL

There's something ... what is this?

Mason and the sisters watch her pick out the ring half from the cup and place it on the table. She then reaches into her pocket and grabs the other half of the ring. She puts it together and it fits.

Hurdy and Girdy stare in wonder.

HURDY

Opal. Where did you get that?

Mason meanwhile is looking very carefully at Johann, studying his face.

MASON

It's you... it's Bearskin!

Johann looks around at everyone here.

JOHANN

It's true! I am that dirty beggar who saved your father's life from the burning barn. And now my curse is over.

Opal stands up and looks at him, tears in her eyes.

OPAL

Johann! You came back to me. Oh thank the saints.

Mason stands up to really shake his hand and give him a hug too.

MASON

Three long years. We didn't know if you were coming back.

JOHANN

I always try my best to keep my promises.

The two girls remain seated, looking disappointed. The coachman smiles and drink his wine. Hurdy sees that he's good looking now and smiles at him too.

JOHANN

I'm done with that curse, and now we can build a home together, Opal.

OPAL

I waited so long for you.

She hugs him again.

THE END