

Slay and Rescue

Screenplay by

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from the novel of the same name by

John Moore

NOTES:

This adaptation is unauthorised.

Everything good about the

characters and story

belongs to John Moore.

Read the book.

EXT. MAGELLAN'S TOWER -- NIGHT

Lightning cracks and thunder roars around a stone tower. There is light in a single window at the top of the tower.

INT. MAGELLAN'S TOWER -- CONTINUOUS

The room is stone and lined with shelves and cabinets stacked with beakers, jars and containers. There are thick books of spellcraft and various magical-looking items lying on every available surface. There is a table of dark wood, which has restraints for a human-sized occupant. The wizard MAGELLAN bustles about. He is a creepy man of middle age.

The room's single wooden door opens, and in come two THUGS and the princess GLORIA. GLORIA wears a white shift and is struggling against her captors.

THUG 1

We've got her, boss.

MAGELLAN

Chain her to the table.

Shutting the door behind them, the thugs drag princess Gloria to the table, lie her down and chain her arms and legs.

GLORIA

Whatever you ask in ransom, I promise you'll get it.

MAGELLAN

I have no interest in ransom.

(he picks up a nasty-looking knife)

There are many uses, however, for the blood of a virgin princess drained at the midnight hour. You are a virgin, are you not?

GLORIA

How dare you!

MAGELLAN

Spirited. Good for you.

(to thugs)

Open her gown.

The thugs tear GLORIA's shift from neck to navel, leering at the flesh exposed.

THUG 1

Can't we play for a bit, boss?

MAGELLAN

It's nearly midnight, moron. Now, don't struggle, princess. It tends to make a mess.

MAGELLAN places the blade against her skin. GLORIA screws up her face in terror.

The thugs lean in for a better look.

There is a single, heavy knock at the door. Everyone in the room looks to see an axe blade protruding through the wood. It is withdrawn, a second blow destroys the lock and the door is kicked in.

A young man strides in and takes up an heroic pose. Seventeen years old, his hair cascades in ringlets to his shoulders. His white silk shirt is open, revealing a well-muscled chest. A cape hangs from broad shoulders. A sword is scabbarded at his belt.

GLORIA  
Prince Charming!

THUGS  
Prince Charming!

MAGELLAN  
Shit.

CHARMING  
Hello, Maggie.

MAGELLAN  
Don't call me Maggie! I am the wizard Magellan.

CHARMING  
You know, you'll never get bloodstains out of a white pine table.

MAGELLAN  
It's beechwood. I paid forty shillings for it.

CHARMING draws a dagger and scrapes the table top, leaving a white line. He mouths "pine" to princess GLORIA, and winks. She giggles.

MAGELLAN (CONT'D)  
Never mind the bloody table!  
(to Thugs)  
Kill him!

The two THUGS draw their swords, take a step forward and hesitate.

THUG 1  
Boss, it's... you know... Prince Charming.

MAGELLAN  
He's just one man. Get him!

The THUGS yell ferociously and attack. With fluid and graceful moves, CHARMING draws his sword and engages the two in battle. He makes fools of them without breaking a sweat, clearly showing off for Princess GLORIA, who is like a groupie with a rock star.

MAGELLAN picks up a scroll and starts incanting. CHARMING cuts the paper in two.

CHARMING  
No spells, Maggie. That's cheating.

MAGELLAN  
Magellan! Magellan! Get it right,  
you little twerp!

CHARMING disarms both THUGS and casually scars them on the face. The THUGS leave at speed. CHARMING turns his attention to MAGELLAN, who realises it's time to escape.

MAGELLAN (CONT'D)  
You haven't seen the last of me,  
Charming!

CHARMING rolls his eyes. Like he hasn't heard that a thousand times.

MAGELLAN (CONT'D)  
I'll be back.

CHARMING mimes a chattering mouth with his free hand.

MAGELLAN (CONT'D)  
Fuck it.

MAGELLAN climbs onto the window sill. As he does so, his body morphs into a raven, which caws balefully at CHARMING and then flies off.

CHARMING  
Wendell!

Enter CHARMING's page, WENDELL. A boy of 11 years, he staggers under the weight of a pack and two duffel bags.

WENDELL  
One hundred and eighty-one steps.

CHARMING  
Complainer.

WENDELL  
You carry the bags next time, then.

CHARMING  
Hand me the...

WENDELL  
Peregrine, right.

CHARMING moves to GLORIA and theatrically drapes his cloak over her exposed form. GLORIA is relieved and star-struck at the same time.

GLORIA  
Thank you, my lord.

CHARMING

My dear princess. This will take only a moment.

WENDELL offers CHARMING a cage containing a hooded falcon. CHARMING takes the falcon to the window, removes its hood and releases it into the sky. CHARMING turns his full attention to GLORIA.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Wendell, give me the...

WENDELL hands CHARMING a mirror and brush set.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Free the...

WENDELL efficiently takes a hammer and chisel to GLORIA's chains. CHARMING surreptitiously checks his appearance in the mirror then, as soon as GLORIA's hands are free, hands her the mirror and brush. The falcon returns with a dead raven. CHARMING feeds the falcon a piece of meat, drops the raven into the bag held by WENDELL and returns the falcon to the cage. Princess GLORIA, wrapped (barely) in CHARMING's cloak, hair and face fixed, has eyes only for CHARMING.

GLORIA

Prince Charming, may I speak to you in confidence?

CHARMING

Wendell...

WENDELL

(vanishing out the door)

On my way out.

CHARMING

Dear lady.

GLORIA

Highness, you have saved my life.

CHARMING

I am only glad I arrived in time.

GLORIA

I owe you a debt I can never repay.

CHARMING

(hopefully)

Oh, I wouldn't say that.

GLORIA

My father's kingdom is poor and I cannot offer you the jewels or gold you deserve.

CHARMING

You shine more brightly than any  
jewel, princess.

GLORIA

Still, I have been taught since  
birth that bravery, honour and...  
virtue must be repaid.

CHARMING

Sounds good. I mean, if that's  
the way you feel...

GLORIA

There is but one favour I can offer  
you.

CHARMING

Oh, yes.

GLORIA

Honour demands that honour be  
sacrificed. Do you understand?

CHARMING

Yes, darling...

GLORIA

Good...

GLORIA stands on tiptoes and gives CHARMING a peck on the  
cheek. Then she ducks out of his arms and runs to the  
door. She looks back with the beaming face of one who has  
just completed a noble deed. Then she blushes, giggles  
and exits. CHARMING maintains a look of nobility and virtue  
throughout GLORIA's exit, as if he had no different  
expectations. Once she leaves, however, his face falls.

CHARMING

Shit!

EXT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- DAY

The castle is bright and shining, with waving pennants.  
Its interiors are clean and well-lit. It is surrounded by  
picturesque, rich green countryside.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- LIBRARY -- DAY

The library is full of books and maps. WENDELL is lounging  
in a chair at the table, eating an apple. A fruit basket  
is on the table. CHARMING enters, tossing Endeavour to  
WENDELL. WENDELL starts examining the sword.

CHARMING

Shit!

WENDELL

Hey, new sword!  
(reads engraving)  
Endeavour.

CHARMING

Endeavour? The Endeavour? I've got a whole room full of these pigstickers, and now we're going to start naming them? It sounds like a battleship.

WENDELL

He didn't go for it, did he?

CHARMING

No.

WENDELL

No red-hot weekend?

CHARMING

No.

WENDELL

Did he take you off the hero mission?

CHARMING takes an apple from the bowl and shakes his head.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Oh, well. Reluctant heroes are actually the best kind. If you were trying to be heroic, people would think you were just showing off.

CHARMING

I am trying. I have to watch every word I say, dress like a costume-party warrior, keep in practice with the sword, bow and lance, and be courteous and helpful to everyone I meet. It's a pain in the ass.

WENDELL

But people pick up on that. They all know you'd prefer a quiet life, which is why they appreciate you going on all these adventures. It's the effort Prince Charming puts into being charming that makes him so... well, charming.

CHARMING

I've had enough! Slay and rescue. That's all I ever do any more. I'm sick of it! Every two-bit sorcerer, renegade knight, dragon, troll or ogre that sets himself up around here, the first thing he does is grab himself a piece of ass. And everybody says "Ooh, let's call Prince Charming, he'll save her!" And I do. But do I ever get any thanks for it?

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Noooooo! I mean, I'm laying my life on the line for these babes. I think I deserve a little extra.

WENDELL

I bet he didn't like hearing that.

CHARMING

He had a cow. "The son of the royal family, the symbol of virtue and purity, the epitome of everything that is noble and good in young manhood does not go around rutting like a common sailor!"

WENDELL

This is a really cool sword.

CHARMING

Too gaudy. First chance you get, pry those gems off the hilt, sell them and give the money to the poor.

WENDELL

Hey, look at the handle. All this extra stuff folds out. There's a corkscrew, nail clippers, a file, a leather punch...

CHARMING

The smith must have been Swiss.

WENDELL

What's this one?

It's a piece of springy wire, slightly curved, with a hook at the end.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Is it one of those things for taking stones out of horses' hooves?

CHARMING

No. Maybe it's for splicing rope.

Minister of Intelligence NORVILLE enters. The chief spy of the kingdom, he is middle-aged, dresses habitually in black, and is unfailingly serious. He takes some pages from a thick dossier and passes them to CHARMING.

NORVILLE

Good morning, highness. You know about the situation in Tyrovia?

CHARMING

Norville, I just got back. Can't the next mission wait for a day or so?



NORVILLE

The wicked queen Ruby treats her stepdaughter most cruelly. The queen is extremely vain and is jealous of the princess' beauty.

CHARMING

Forget it. I don't get involved in family squabbles.

NORVILLE

Our information is that the queen forces the girl to dress in rags and work as a scullery maid.

CHARMING

Good. I'm a great believer in vocational education.

NORVILLE

Prince Charming, the queen is capable of powerful magic. She poses a security risk to this kingdom. This mistreatment of her stepdaughter gives King Garrison the perfect excuse to eliminate a dangerous rival. And when the young princess inherits the throne, we gain a grateful and easily manipulated ally to the west.

CHARMING

Excuse me? I'm into political assassination now? I don't think so. I'm a hero, not a hit man.

NORVILLE

The queen has made an attempt on the girl's life.

WENDELL

Why?

NORVILLE

When the girl comes of age, there will be competition for the throne. The woodcutter who brought us this information said the queen offered him a substantial amount of money to cut out the girl's heart.

CHARMING

She has all this magical power and she has to hire a guy to stab someone?

NORVILLE

The girl's name is Ann, highness. She is reported to be very beautiful. Skin like cream, lips like cherries, that sort of thing.

(MORE)

NORVILLE (CONT'D)

This is a sweet and innocent young girl whose life is in danger. Will you not act?

CHARMING

Oh, all right. I'll ride over and scope out the situation. But I'm not promising anything. As long as this Queen Ruby keeps her nose clean, I'm walking away.

NORVILLE

Very well, highness. I hope hesitation does not put your life at risk.

CHARMING

Speaking of risk, what defenses does she have? Any dragons in the kennel? Soldiers on the payroll? Knights?

NORVILLE

Not according to our information. She seems to rely on her magic for protection.

CHARMING

Hmm. Wendell...

WENDELL

Yes, sire.

CHARMING

Pack light. Take the new sword...

WENDELL

Endeavour.

CHARMING

Yeah, yeah. Pack Endeavour, the Nordic sword, the Sheffield sword and the crossbow.

WENDELL

Check.

CHARMING

Take the new shield with the crest, an axe and the oak lance with the bronze handguard.

WENDELL

Got it.

CHARMING

(to Norville)

You say this Ann babe is a real looker?

NORVILLE

Our information is that she is very fine, yes.

CHARMING

Wendell, bring a dozen roses, a box of candy and a bottle of wine.

WENDELL

Okay.

CHARMING

Also a large, stuffed toy animal. It never hurts to be prepared. Off you go.

WENDELL leaves.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Norville. Any progress on the slipper thing?

NORVILLE

We're working on it, highness.

CHARMING was hoping for more. He nods and exits.

EXT. TYROVIA CASTLE -- EVENING

It's raining. A narrow road leads through groves of twisted trees to a small plateau, where a few pathetic houses mark a poor village. Behind the village is the wicked queen's castle, sinister as nightmares. The tallest tower is capped in rubble, as if the top room has exploded. On a spur of rock projecting from the mountainside, the castle is accessible only by drawbridge, which is currently raised.

WENDELL

This is the spookiest place we've ever had to attack.

CHARMING

But it's close to the shops. Location is everything.  
(off his look)  
Lighten up, Wendell.

There is a sudden cranking and grinding as the drawbridge starts to descend. It isn't very well maintained and moves in fits and starts. About halfway down it gets stuck, then breaks loose and falls to the ground. CHARMING dismounts and leads his horse across the bridge. WENDELL reluctantly follows.

WENDELL

Maybe we should scout the place out.

CHARMING

We already did.

WENDELL

Maybe we should do it again. From a safe distance.

CHARMING

Oh, come on, Wendell. We're a team. I need to know you've got my back.

WENDELL

I'm right behind you, sire.

As they approach the castle, a door opens and a woman appears. She is about sixteen years old, with dark hair, pale skin and deep beautiful eyes. Her simple blouse shows plenty of cleavage and the slit in her skirt goes right up her thigh. This is ANN, princess of Tyrovia.

CHARMING

Look, Wendell, a babe! And now she's going to say "Prince Charming!"

ANN

You must leave at once.

WENDELL

Good call.

CHARMING

Hey. I'm Prince Charming!

ANN

I know who you are. My stepmother has been watching you in her crystal ball for two days, planning horrible ways for you to die.

CHARMING

Say, you don't mind if we get in out of the rain, do you?

ANN

No! I mean, yes, I do mind! You can't come in!

INT. TYROVIA CASTLE -- ENTRANCE HALL -- EVENING

CHARMING and WENDELL slip past ANN into the spacious entrance hall. Although grand and richly decorated, things have gone to dust and mildew. There are several doorways and a large staircase to the next floor. CHARMING takes off his wet cloak and hands it to WENDELL.

ANN

Your highness, I appreciate your attempt to rescue me but it is no use. You cannot defeat Queen Ruby's power. Please leave now and save yourself.

CHARMING

Nice dress. Make it yourself?

ANN

(blushing)

Yes. This really isn't me. Your highness, even before my father died, I dreamed of the day some knight would carry me away from these isolated mountains to some more... cosmopolitan city. I made these clothes to appear more... um... inspiring to such a one. But this was an error in judgment. I assure you, I am sweet, pure, chaste and innocent as any princess should be.

CHARMING

Yeah, great.

There is an uneven grinding noise.

ANN

She is pulling up the drawbridge!  
You're trapped!

CHARMING

I guess we'll have to stay for dinner, then.

The grinding noise stops, starts, and stops again. There is a crash as the drawbridge falls back to earth.

ANN

(off CHARMING's  
look)

It's those round things with the teeth on them.

WENDELL

Gears.

ANN

Right. Some of them are broken. She's tried to repair them but there's only so much she can do with magic, especially to iron gears.

CHARMING

Yes. I find that magic tends to be good only for rather impractical things.

ANN

Like killing people in horrible ways.

CHARMING

Yes, like that.

There is the sound of tapping, like high heels on stone.  
A red glow appears at the top of the stairs.

ANN

My stepmother! Oh, Prince Charming!  
May you die as bravely as you have  
lived!

CHARMING

Thanks.

WENDELL

Uh, sire? Maybe we should just  
leave a business card.

CHARMING

Don't be silly. It's raining cats  
and dogs out there. See if there's  
a place to stable the horses.

WENDELL

We're a team. I'm not leaving  
you.

There is a flash of lightning and Queen RUBY appears at  
the top of the stairs. She is in her late twenties, and a  
beauty. She wears a black cloak trimmed in red, a black  
gown, red nail polish and a scowl. The red glow comes  
from a large ruby clenched in her fist.

RUBY

Prince Charming! So, you dare to  
take away my stepdaughter!

CHARMING

Stepdaughter? I would have sworn  
the two of you were sisters.

CHARMING smiles dazzlingly. ANN can't believe it. Even  
WENDELL has never seen the prince try this one before.  
There is dead silence. Then...

RUBY

(grooming her hair)  
Do you really think so?

CHARMING

Absolutely. I really like your  
outfit, too. Black goes so well  
with your eyes.

RUBY

(descending stairs)  
Why, thank you, Prince Charming.  
You don't think the spiked heel  
boots are a bit too dressy?

CHARMING

No, they're perfect.

ANN

Good grief.

RUBY

Well, I try to stay in shape, you know. Eat a proper diet, stay out of the sun. But the magic mirror says she is more beautiful than I!

RUBY waves her hand at an alcove containing an ornate silver mirror.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Mirror, mirror, on the wall. Who is the fairest of them all?

The mirror surface ripples and displays an image of ANN.

CHARMING

Oh, I wouldn't trust that thing. Magic mirrors lose calibration so quickly. And the light in here is so bad.

RUBY

Well, that's true. Perhaps it would see better in the morning sun. I've been meaning to move it, but it's so heavy.

CHARMING

It would be an honour to assist you with it.

RUBY

I was thinking it would be much more suitable in the master bedroom.

CHARMING

(taking down the mirror)

I couldn't think of a better place for it. Wendell, don't wait up.

ANN

I don't believe this!

RUBY

Ann, dear, why don't you get that nice young page some milk and cookies. Then you can amuse yourself until bedtime.

ANN

Why don't you jump...

RUBY

(leading Charming away)

She's such a darling child. You don't think this red nail polish is too much, do you?

CHARMING

No, of course not. Very classy.  
It really suits your theatrical  
style.

ANN looks at WENDELL. WENDELL shrugs.

WENDELL

They don't call him Prince Charming  
for nothing.

INT. TYROVIA CASTLE -- BEDROOM -- EVENING

The bedroom is dominated by a four-poster bed. Paintings  
hang on the walls. There is a doorway to another room off  
one side.

CHARMING

Nice. Very you. I'll just set  
this up here...

RUBY

Silly boy. No woman wants to lie  
in bed looking at her own hips.  
Put it on this wall. I'll be back  
in a moment.

RUBY goes into the side room. CHARMING puts the mirror on  
the floor and turns it over.

CHARMING

Now let's see...

On the back of the mirror, among the carvings, are four  
screws marked "HOR", "VERT", "BRIT" and "CON". CHARMING  
examines them, then makes adjustments with the blade of  
his dagger. He takes down a painting and hangs the mirror.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Mirror, mirror, on the wall. Who's  
the fairest of them all?

The mirror surface ripples and displays an image of  
CHARMING.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Thought so.

RUBY (O.S.)

Is the mirror working?

CHARMING

Works perfectly.

RUBY reenters. She is dressed (just) in a creation of  
black leather and red silk. With the high-heeled boots  
and the mesh stockings, she's got a dominatrix sex-pot  
thing going on.

RUBY

Glad to hear it.



CHARMING  
(almost swallowing  
his tongue)  
Nice stockings.

RUBY moves to the bed.

RUBY  
Do you like what you see?

CHARMING  
Oh, yeah.

RUBY  
Then why don't you join me?

CHARMING suddenly moves into high gear. He tears at his clothes and hops about as he removes his boots.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Are you nervous, darling?

CHARMING  
Who me? Of course not.

RUBY  
Your hands are shaking.

CHARMING  
It's chilly.

RUBY  
But you're sweating.

CHARMING  
Must be those peppers I had for  
lunch.

CHARMING finally gets his pants off and launches himself next to RUBY on the bed. She turns to meet him with open arms, sucking him into a deep kiss while his hands cover as much territory as they can.

RUBY  
Easy, lover. I'm not going  
anywhere. You don't have to act  
like it's your first time.

CHARMING  
Who's acting?

RUBY shoves CHARMING roughly off the bed and he lands in a tangle of arms and legs. He looks up, confused, to find her towering over him.

RUBY  
Say that again.

CHARMING  
Um... who's acting?

RUBY

You are pure?

CHARMING

I wouldn't say that. I was having some very impure thoughts just a second ago.

RUBY

Are you a virgin?

CHARMING

Yes, I'm a virgin! Tell the world, why don't you? Does that bother you? Do you want a certificate of prowess or something?

RUBY sits on the edge of the bed, deep in thought. CHARMING realises that, once again, he's not getting laid.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

I knew it. I knew I should have gone after the stepdaughter.

RUBY tosses CHARMING his pants.

RUBY

Get dressed. I have a proposition for you.

INT. TYROVIA CASTLE -- KITCHEN -- MORNING

ANN is cooking oatmeal. WENDELL sits at the table.

ANN

All I'm saying is that a girl has dreams, you know? A handsome prince rescuing you from some terrible danger, or just a mediocre danger, or just living in a piddling little castle in the middle of nowhere. The danger isn't even really necessary. Just being carried off by a prince would be enough. But how many princes do you ever see passing through Tyrovia? Now the most famous prince in the world is in the castle and what am I doing? Cooking oatmeal.

WENDELL

I was the same. Youngest son of a duke, no chance of inheritance. I'd wind up serving my brothers like a serf. Then one day Prince Charming rescued me.

ANN

How?

WENDELL

Well, he was rescuing someone else, actually. A little girl fell down a well. The prince jumped in and I threw him a rope. He said he could use a quick thinker like me. I've been riding with him ever since.

ANN

You're so lucky.

WENDELL

That's Prince Charming. He's my hero.

CHARMING enters.

CHARMING

Is your stepmother up yet?

ANN

She didn't go back to bed. After you finished fighting she went to her laboratory.

CHARMING

Great. Any idea what she was doing?

ANN

Probably either laying more curses on you or lifting the ones she already laid.

CHARMING

Fabulous.

ANN

You didn't have to sleep down here. We've got lots of empty rooms. I would have made up a bed for you.

CHARMING

I thought you were asleep. I didn't want to trouble you.

WENDELL

Who could sleep with all that yelling?

CHARMING

Sorry. What do you think, Wendell?

WENDELL

I think you had a serious disagreement.

CHARMING

I mean about the mission.

WENDELL

Well, the queen obviously isn't doing a good job. The countryside, the castle... It's falling to pieces. The only thing in good shape is the library. It's packed to the max with books and scrolls and old maps. Mandelbaum would flip over this place.

CHARMING

At least we know what she's spending her money on. It sure isn't maintenance. What kind of books has she got?

WENDELL

Magic books. All sorts of them. Here, I grabbed one.

WENDELL hands CHARMING a well-thumbed old volume.

CHARMING

"Modern Organic Alchemy" by Morrison and Boyd. This woman has really studied it.

WENDELL

How can you tell?

CHARMING

All the important formulas are highlighted in yellow ink. Okay, Ann. I came, I saw, I slept on the couch. Now I'm leaving. The Queen seems kind of bitchy but, frankly, I really don't see any problem here that couldn't be solved by a cold bath.

WENDELL

What have cold baths got to do with anything?

CHARMING

I'll tell you later.

RUBY enters. She is all business. She wears a tight black sweater, still with scarlet lips and nails. ANN begins serving the oatmeal.

RUBY

To breakfast, boys. We have business to discuss.

WENDELL

What business?

CHARMING

She wants me to go on a quest.

WENDELL

Did you tell her we don't do quests?

CHARMING

She thinks I'll change my mind.

WENDELL

Oh, come on. You're Prince Charming, heir to the wealthiest and most powerful throne in the twenty kingdoms. What does she think she could possibly offer you that you...

(noticing CHARMING  
staring at RUBY's  
bosom)

Never mind. What's the job?

CHARMING

It's a grail quest.

WENDELL

Oh, not again. Every knight who ever lived has quested for the Holy Grail.

RUBY

The Holy Grail is just a fantasy.

ANN

There's another one?

CHARMING

Dozens of them. Ancient fertility cults were very big on grails. There are grail legends all over the place and knights have been searching for them since forever. None of them came up with spit.

RUBY

I have studied these legends and found a commonality that hints at a basis in fact. After years of work, I have finally deduced the location of the Fisher King's castle.

ANN

Who is the Fisher King?

CHARMING

The mythical Fisher King had a grail that made his land fertile and his people prosperous. According to the legend, the Fisher King gets mortally wounded, and the land becomes barren as a result. The knight who survives the dangers of the Chapel Perilous gets the grail and becomes the new Fisher

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

King. It's not much of a legend,  
but at least it's to the point.

RUBY

It's an excellent legend. The  
full text contains all the clues  
needed to locate the Grail Castle.

CHARMING

Yeah, sure. And nobody has ever  
figured them out except you, right?

RUBY

Many have located the Grail Castle,  
I am certain. I am equally certain  
none have recovered the grail.  
The ancient texts make it clear -  
only one who is pure can survive  
the Chapel Perilous.

ANN

Pure?

RUBY

Chaste. Virtuous.

WENDELL

Doesn't sound like anyone I know.

RUBY

Must I spell everything out? Only  
a virgin can brave the Chapel  
Perilous.

CHARMING

All right, you don't have to make  
such a big deal out of it.

ANN

You've never...

CHARMING

I've been saving myself for the  
right girl.

WENDELL chokes on his oatmeal.

ANN

Well, I think that's very nice. I  
don't know why you think it's  
something to be embarrassed about.

CHARMING

That's because you're a girl.

RUBY

Could we return to the subject at  
hand?

CHARMING

Look, I told you last night. Slay and rescue, that's my line. Quests are not in the job description. Find someone else. In fact, I can refer you to some knights who do good quests. Grails, the True Cross, enchanted swords, magic rings, a breakfast cereal that tastes good yet is good for you - if it's out there, they'll look for it. I bet there's a couple of virgins among them, too. Some of them are pretty ugly.

RUBY

You are young, strong and brave. Your swordsmanship is without equal. You are too rich and highborn to be bought off. And, of course, you are Prince Charming. You may even be able to talk your way to the grail.

CHARMING

Flattery is not enough to convince me to undertake this futile exercise.

RUBY

You will do it because you are Prince Charming. You've seen this land. The forests are dying and the game is disappearing. The rain is washing the topsoil away. The corn grows shorter every year and the cattle are barren. The people need a fertility grail. They need you to bring it to them.

WENDELL

It is pretty bad.

CHARMING

They're not my people. I've got my own kingdom.

ANN

If this land is dying, it's because of you and your sorcery. The evil influence of your dark magics and toxic potions spread from this place like a poisonous cloud.

RUBY

Shut up. You are not qualified to make judgments about the complex art of sorcery. The spells I cast on this land were for the good of its people, to raise them from squalor and poverty.

ANN

Under daddy's rule, there was no squalor and poverty. Not until you took over.

WENDELL

Have you got any sugar for this oatmeal?

RUBY

No!

ANN

No!

CHARMING

All right. Here's the deal. I'll check it out, okay? I'm not making any promises. I'm not saying I'll get the grail. But I'll take a look around.

RUBY

Very well. I'm sure we can come to an arrangement after you've assessed the situation.

ANN

You don't have to do this.

RUBY

Be quiet!

CHARMING

One thing. If this grail is so valuable, what makes you so sure I'll bring it back to you?

RUBY

The integrity of Prince Charming is known throughout the twenty kingdoms.

CHARMING

Good point.

RUBY

Furthermore, Ann is going with you.

EXT. ALACIA -- DAY

The horses are traveling at a walk as CHARMING, WENDELL and ANN follow a road through picturesque countryside.

ANN

Alacia certainly is pretty. My own kingdom used to look like this.

CHARMING

It will again, Ann. Don't worry. If this grail exists we'll find it.



ANN

Are you sure this is the right way? You haven't looked at the map since we set out yesterday.

WENDELL

This road goes to Briar Rose Village, which is right near the spot your stepmother marked on the map. It's a good-sized village.

CHARMING

Nice tavern.

ANN

If there's a village nearby, surely someone would have found the grail chapel by now.

WENDELL

Maybe the map's wrong.

CHARMING

Let's stop for a bit.

ANN

If we keep stopping we'll never get there.

CHARMING

Quests are supposed to be long and difficult. You can't just nip out and back, like you're going to the market.

They dismount and sit among a grove of trees.

ANN

Why don't you do quests?

CHARMING

Effort versus reward. Dad has me on the slay and rescue gig because it's quick and scores major points with the people and the neighbouring kingdoms. Quests take too long for good PR.

ANN

You've rescued a lot of maidens, haven't you?

CHARMING

Somebody's got to do it.

ANN

Don't you like doing it?

CHARMING

It beats working for a living.

ANN

I think you're amazingly brave.  
Even the dragons must tremble when  
they see you coming.

CHARMING

Dragons fear nothing.

WENDELL

I hate dragons.

CHARMING

Nasty, vicious creatures. Tough,  
too. With that scaly armour all  
over, they're practically  
indestructible.

WENDELL

And they're fast. Over rocky ground  
they can outrun a horse.

CHARMING

They can get up on their hind legs  
and run like blazes. Not the big  
ones, of course. After they get  
over about... oh, fifteen feet,  
they stay down on all fours. Still,  
fifteen feet of dragon towering  
over you, claws extended, smoke  
and flame spewing from its nostrils,  
is plenty enough dragon for me.

ANN

Then how do you slay them?

WENDELL

(excited)

You charge straight at them. A  
fast, brave horse and a sharp lance  
is what you need. Then, when he  
opens his jaw to roast you, you  
put the lance through the roof of  
his mouth and through his brain.

ANN

But that means you charge right  
into the flames!

CHARMING

Well, if it was easy, everybody  
would be doing it.

ANN

Good heavens!

WENDELL

See, the great thing is, if he  
opens his mouth, he's vulnerable.  
If he doesn't open his mouth, you've  
got no problem. Basically, it  
just takes a steady nerve.

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)

And you have to get him on a flat, open stretch of ground, where your horse can build up some speed. It's not really that big a deal.

ANN

What if you're attacked and you're not on a horse and you don't have a lance and you're not on open ground?

CHARMING

Then it's a big deal.

WENDELL

Then you have to go for the eyes.

CHARMING throws a sword and WENDELL smoothly catches it, demonstrating the moves as he makes them. He's pretty good.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Pierce the eye socket with your sword. Zounds! Right through the eye and into the brain! Swish!

ANN

(amused)

Ah. You've killed a dragon, I see.

WENDELL

No. I could, though. I know I could. But his highness thinks I'm too little.

CHARMING

I didn't say that. I said you weren't ready yet.

WENDELL

You go at him from the side, see, 'cause a dragon's eyes are on the side, just like a horse's. That way, you can keep out of the flames. You have to keep moving fast, though, to stay to the side of his mouth. Yah! Tchah! I drive in my mighty sword Challenger to the hilt! Take that! Gotcha!

CHARMING

So perish all our enemies.

WENDELL

Then I offer my arm to the beautiful princess I've just rescued. She takes it, and I swing her onto the back of my horse...

CHARMING

You don't have a horse, remember?

WENDELL

I leap onto the back of her horse, then sweep her up and take her back to her kingdom, where she is so grateful... that...

CHARMING

Yes?

ANN

Yes?

WENDELL

She throws an enormous banquet in my honour. And the food is all dessert. Cakes and pies and whipped cream and ices and pudding and candy. So there.

CHARMING and ANN applaud.

ANN

Brave Sir Knight.

CHARMING

A noble spectacle, good sir.

ANN

It does seem as if dragons are always carrying off maidens young and fair. I shall have to be careful.

CHARMING

Everybody carries off young maidens around here. And then the call goes out for some dumb sap to risk his life rescuing them. Why a dragon should prefer to eat young girls instead of a goat or a cow is beyond me. Or why they carry them back to their lairs instead of devouring them on the spot.

ANN

Oh, but it's so romantic. A beautiful girl in the delicate flower of youth snatched away from the arms of her loving family by a hideous, snarling monster. A monster no doubt drawn to her by her aura of innocence, as a moth to a flame. Then...

WENDELL

Also dogs.

ANN

What?

CHARMING

Dragons love dogs. Beautiful maidens and dogs, that's their two favourite meals.

ANN

Dogs.

WENDELL

We used to have a dog that hunted with us. But a dragon got him.

CHARMING

Scooped him up with his tail and popped him right into his mouth. Two bites and he was gone. Damn good hunting dog, too.

ANN

Girls and dogs. Great. Centuries of romantic epics told, hundreds of ballads sung, scores of tapestries woven, dozens of murals painted, all inspired only by the fact that there weren't any dogs around that day.

CHARMING

Oh, I wouldn't say that. Dogs are a lot harder to catch than girls.

ANN

You are such a jerk!

ANN stomps off to her horse, mounts and begins riding away.

CHARMING

What's her problem?

WENDELL shrugs.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Oh, well. We'd better catch up. There aren't any dogs around. She's a sitting duck.

EXT. BRIAR ROSE INN -- EVENING

Briar Rose Village is a thriving place. CHARMING, ANN and WENDELL ride up to the inn and dismount. WENDELL takes the horses to the stable. CHARMING and ANN enter the inn.

INT. BRIAR ROSE INN -- EVENING

The inn is full. CHARMING surveys the crowd.

CHARMING

I don't believe it.

CHARMING leads ANN through the crowd to a table near the back, where a man stands up to greet them. This is MANDELBAUM.

He is a vigorous man of 50 years, with a full beard and head of salt-and-pepper hair. His simple clothes are well made and he wears a black cloak lined with red. He smokes a long-stemmed pipe.

MANDELBAUM

Prince Charming.

CHARMING

Mandelbaum. What are you doing here?

MANDELBAUM

I saw that you'd need me, highness. I've ordered us a meal. Please sit, little princess.

ANN

But how did he know we'd be here? We didn't even know until two days ago.

CHARMING

Mandelbaum is Illyria's court magician. Not much gets past him. He probably saw us in his magic mirror.

ANN

You have a magic mirror too?

MANDELBAUM

Saw it in the marketplace and couldn't resist. Only thirteen hundred royals. Actually, I paid a little more, but it was worth it to get downward compatibility with my crystal ball.

CHARMING

And they always want to charge you for the cable, too.

WENDELL arrives. At the same time, the innkeeper brings their meal. Four bowls of soup, with bread and fruit.

WENDELL

Hi, Mandelbaum.

MANDELBAUM

Hello, Wendell.

CHARMING

Well, now that you're here, what do you know about this grail thing?

MANDELBAUM

Grail rituals were an important aspect of ancient fertility cults.

(MORE)

MANDELBAUM (CONT'D)

And some of the ancient priests commanded an impressive power, although in those days it could be used only crudely. But sire, even should one of these relics still exist, it would contain but a faded trace of its magical power.

ANN

You mean, if we found it, it would be useless?

MANDELBAUM

Perhaps not. You couldn't make a wasteland bloom but the cumulative effects, over the long term, could be beneficial. Providing the grail was carefully used, and by the right man.

ANN

Or woman.

MANDELBAUM

I'm afraid not, little princess. There are symbolic connotations to a grail that are specifically female. Thus, only a male, the Fisher King, can master the grail and release its power. A magic wand, now, or a staff of power - that would be a male symbol that would be wielded by a woman.

ANN

Why?

MANDELBAUM

These are fertility symbols. The cup is the female. It requires a male to release its power. The staff is the male, and requires a female.

ANN

Why can't it be the other way around?

MANDELBAUM

Uh... well, the cup is female because it represents the... uh... that is, it holds the man's... uh... The staff symbolises the man's... uh... Oh, for goodness' sake! Wendell, you know what I'm talking about, don't you?

WENDELL

No, but if you say it's true, I believe you.

MANDELBAUM

Prince Charming, surely you understand why a cup symbolises a woman and a staff symbolises a man?

They are interrupted by a thunderous bellow from a bearded, muscular man. He wears a short sword at his belt and a crossbow protrudes above his shoulder. This is BEAR.

BEAR

Prince Charming!

The crowd parts, sensing a fight. CHARMING sighs.

CHARMING

Looks like it's time to sign a few autographs.

BEAR

So you're the great Prince Charming. Well, you don't look so great to me.

WENDELL

He must have forgotten his autograph book.

CHARMING

Just as well. I don't have a quill.

CHARMING rises to face BEAR, relaxed and unthreatening.

ANN

Wendell, they're not going to fight, are they?

WENDELL

I hope not. I hate it when the prince kills someone just before dinner.

BEAR

Do you know who I am, princeling?

CHARMING

Bear McAllister.

BEAR

Ah, so you've heard of me?

CHARMING

I saw you in the tournaments last year. You were pretty good with that crossbow, as I recall.

BEAR

I'm the best there is. I can defeat any man alive in single combat, armed or unarmed.

(MORE)



BEAR (CONT'D)

I've kicked ass in every kingdom, from Illyria to Arondel. And yet, people still refuse to give me the respect I deserve. Even here in my home village, I have to constantly beat up people for not getting out of my way. Do you know why?

ANN

Because you're a jerk?

BEAR

Because I haven't got a reputation. Because I don't have a bunch of namby-pamby scribes running around pushing my name in every corner of the kingdom, or a hired bard to sing tales of my exploits.

CHARMING

Life is tough.

BEAR

On the other hand, suppose I was to run into one of these puffed-up, papier-mâché heroes? And suppose I was to defeat him in single combat? Now that would be a tale that would be told and retold.

CHARMING

Have you got an apple?

BEAR

...what?

CHARMING

Have you got an apple?

BEAR

No.

CHARMING

Wendell?

WENDELL takes an apple off the fruit platter and tosses it to CHARMING. CHARMING walks across the room, leans casually against the wall, and puts the apple on his head. His thumbs are tucked into his belt at the buckle, and he is the image of casual unconcern.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Okay, Bear. Let's see how good you really are.

BEAR

(unslinging the crossbow)

This?

CHARMING

Should be an easy shot for you.

BEAR

You want me to shoot the apple off your head with this crossbow?

CHARMING

Well, if you don't think you're up to it...

BEAR knows CHARMING is playing some kind of trick, but he can't figure the angle. Every eye in the room is on him as he puts a bolt into the crossbow and cranks it back.

BEAR

Awfully cocky, aren't you, punk?

CHARMING

Oh, I wouldn't say that. At the tournament, I saw you nail copper coins at four times this distance.

ANN

Mandelbaum, he's going to kill him!

MANDELBAUM

He can't. If McAllister hits Charming, he'll appear to have missed an easy shot. He'll get his reputation, all right. A reputation for killing a prince by accident. It's the last thing he wants. But he can't draw his sword and attack, either. It will look like he refused the prince's challenge.

ANN

But what if he tries for the apple and really misses?

MANDELBAUM

He won't miss. Probably.

ANN

But the light is so poor.

WENDELL

He's Prince Charming. He knows what he's doing.

BEAR puts the crossbow to his shoulder, sights, hesitates, and shoots. CHARMING's muscles bunch and his sword blurs, hitting the bolt in mid-flight. There is a thud as the two halves of the crossbow bolt punch through the apple a quarter-inch apart and slam into the wall.

ANN

I don't believe it.

CHARMING allows his shoulders to relax, takes the apple from the wall and tosses it to BEAR. CHARMING sheaths his sword, and the audience begins to applaud. CHARMING acknowledges the applause as he crosses to BEAR, holding out his hand. BEAR shakes his hand nervously.

CHARMING

You were saying?

BEAR

Huh?

CHARMING

You were talking about reputations, as I recall. Something about my reputation being made by hired bards.

BEAR

Bards. Yes. Great for a man's reputation. Uh... you don't happen to know where I can hire some, do you?

CHARMING

No.

BEAR

Right. Well, then. I'll just be off.

CHARMING

No, no, stay and have a drink with us. As a matter of fact, I was just looking for a man who could fill me in on some of the local folklore.

CHARMING signals for another round and steers BEAR to the table.

BEAR

Uh... well, as long as you're buying, I guess I can't refuse. That's a pretty nice piece of steel, Charming. Did your own armourer make it?

CHARMING hands over Endeavour for inspection.

CHARMING

No, it was a gift.

BEAR

Very nice. Swiss made, I see. What's this curvy thing? Some kind of nut pick?

CHARMING

I think it's for splicing rope. What do you know about a grail in the castle in the woods?

BEAR

I've never heard of a grail, but the castle is supposed to belong to Princess Aurora.

CHARMING

Never heard of her.

BEAR

Strange story. See, King Stephen built his castle in the middle of that fairy wood and he never got along with the fairy who controlled it. Bitchy little thing called Esmerelda. Twenty years ago, on the day of Princess Aurora's wedding, she put a curse on the whole castle and cast the princess into a deep sleep. According to legend, she can only be awakened by the kiss of a prince.

ANN

That's terrible!

CHARMING

The sleep or the kiss?

ANN

She missed her own wedding. Do realise how much work goes into one of those?

CHARMING

Think of her poor fiancé. He missed his wedding night.

ANN

Shut up.

BEAR

Then these thorn bushes grew up around the castle. Huge wall of them. And that's the last anyone saw of the king, the princess and, strangely enough, Esmerelda, too.

ANN

Think of her, sleeping year after year while the seasons change, dreaming of the day her prince will come and awaken her.

CHARMING

I wouldn't put too much stock in that story. A fairy's magic isn't that powerful. There are plenty of guys around who could break a spell like that. Mandelbaum, for instance.

MANDELBAUM

In all modesty, I am compelled to say there are not many sorcerers who are my equal. Nonetheless, Prince Charming's assessment is correct. A grail may be too esoteric and obscure to waste much time on, but that thorn hedge should have been breached within hours.

BEAR

Don't forget, all the nobility was at the wedding, as well as the leading tradesmen, merchants and moneylenders. That damn fairy wiped out the entire leadership of this kingdom in one hit. There were only peasants outside. Nobody had the cash to hire a first-rate magician, or the leadership to take action.

CHARMING

Sounds like a pretty substantial power vacuum. Why didn't the neighbouring kingdoms try to take over?

BEAR

(surprised)

They did, highness. Your grandfather, King Charming, declared Alacia a protectorate.

CHARMING

Illyria owns Alacia?

ANN

You didn't know that?

CHARMING

I don't keep up with the political end. I deal more with tactical matters.

WENDELL

But didn't the people stay loyal to their own king?

BEAR

Well, they could pay taxes to their king, and more taxes to the nobles who held the land. Or they could just pay taxes to a new king. Figure it out.

CHARMING

Mandelbaum, what do you think? Is there a princess in there?

MANDELBAUM

On the one hand, your highness, local folklore is a very unreliable source of information. On the other hand, throwing up a hedge big enough to hide a castle is not a piece of cake. I dare say there's something important behind there.

CHARMING

All right, then. I was ready to blow off this grail thing, but if there's a princess to rescue, then my duty is clear. I'm going in tomorrow.

MANDELBAUM

Very well, sire. I will make preparations tonight and be ready at dawn.

WENDELL

I'll help you, Mandelbaum!

CHARMING

Get some rest, too, Wendell. We don't know what's on the other side of that hedge.

MANDELBAUM

If you will excuse us, sire, we'll get to work. Good-night, little princess.

MANDELBAUM and WENDELL leave.

ANN

What a nice man.

BEAR

I guess I'll be heading off, too. Thanks for the drink, Charming. You're a right good sort.

BEAR exits. The innkeeper approaches.

INNKEEPER

Prince Charming, I can't tell you what an honour it is to have you stay in my humble establishment.

CHARMING

Why, it's not humble at all. I find it to be excellent.

INNKEEPER

Thank you, highness. I have put you in the largest and finest room, with your retinue next door. Your maid can sleep in the kitchen with the other girls.

CHARMING

My maid? Oh, yes. Er... actually, I'd like her close at hand in case... er... I need something... mended.

INNKEEPER

(shocked)

Highness, you're not suggesting I house an unmarried woman in the same wing as the men?

CHARMING

No, of course not. No. Never. Totally unsuitable. She'll be fine in the kitchen. Feel free to beat her if she gives you trouble.

INNKEEPER

Yes, sire. Excuse me, I must attend to my other guests.

ANN

And I must see to my place in the kitchen.

CHARMING

Ann, wait. Ann... Girls!

INT. BRIAR ROSE INN -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

CHARMING is lying on the bed, awake. There is a quiet knock at the door and ANN enters, wearing a white cotton nightshirt.

ANN

Hi.

CHARMING

Hi.

ANN sits on the bed.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell the innkeeper who you were?

ANN

He couldn't put a woman in the same wing as the men, so he would have kicked the girls out of the back room to free it up for me.

CHARMING

Where would they sleep then?

ANN

In the stables.

CHARMING

I see. That was pretty nice of you.

ANN

We don't have staff at home. I'm used to the working girl's viewpoint.

CHARMING

Kindness and beauty. I see why your stepmother is worried. You really are the fairest in the land.

ANN

That's very sweet of you. You know, we have a lot in common.

CHARMING

(putting his arm around her)

We do?

ANN

We both have parents who envy our youth and popularity.

CHARMING

I guess.

ANN

We both feel a strong sense of duty to our people.

CHARMING

Yeah. We do, absolutely.

CHARMING is moving in for the kiss.

ANN

Both our mothers died in childbirth.

CHARMING

What?

ANN

When I was a little girl, I thought of her all the time. Do you ever think of your mother?

CHARMING

Not at a time like this, no.

ANN

It's odd growing up without a mother, especially knowing she died as a result of your birth.

CHARMING

Now, wait a minute...

ANN

It's almost like we're responsible for their deaths, in a way.



CHARMING

Hey!

ANN

Not that I feel guilty, exactly.  
Did you ever think about things  
like this, growing up?

CHARMING

No! No, I never thought about  
things like that. And I don't  
especially want to think about  
them now. Jeez, you know how to  
kill a romantic mood.

ANN

Romantic...? Oh, no. I'm sorry,  
I didn't mean to... Surely you  
didn't think that I... I... I have  
to go now. Well. Um. See you in  
the morning, I guess.

CHARMING

Is it cold outside?

ANN

A little.

CHARMING

Good. I'm going for a walk.

CHARMING stomps out angrily.

EXT. ALACIA CASTLE -- THORN WALLS -- DAY

The thorn walls are enormous and impenetrable. The thorns  
vary in size, from small sharp barbs to long, stiletto-  
like spikes. The thorns grow on cane-like vines that curl  
and interlock.

MANDELBAUM

My goodness.

WENDELL

Wow.

MANDELBAUM takes out a small pair of silver scissors and  
cuts off a piece of vine. Vine snatches at the wizard  
like a living thing.

CHARMING

Look out.

MANDELBAUM

My word!

CHARMING draws his sword and hacks at the hedge, freeing  
MANDELBAUM. The hedge almost immediately grows back where  
it's been cut away.

MANDELBAUM (CONT'D)

Amazing! I must study this in my laboratory. Well, to work.

MANDELBAUM puts away his snippet of vine. WENDELL helps him open two large duffel bags and begin sorting equipment. ANN has sat down under a tree. CHARMING sits nearby, whittling. They're terse with each other.

ANN

What are you going to do?

CHARMING

Ah, it speaks at last. Not that I haven't enjoyed the quiet this morning.

ANN

Shut up. What are you going to do?

CHARMING

Just watch.

MANDELBAUM and WENDELL are hammering wooden stakes into the ground in a circular pattern at carefully measured intervals. Various powders and liquids are poured on the ground and the stakes. Spikes of silver, gold and copper are added to various stakes.

ANN

Aren't you going to do something?

CHARMING

I am doing something. I've made a whistle. See?

ANN

I mean, aren't you going to help them?

CHARMING

I'd only be in the way.

ANN

Oh. Look, I'm sorry. I'm being silly, I suppose. I guess I should thank you for last night.

CHARMING

What for?

ANN

For not... taking advantage of me last night. I guess I got carried away. I was all ready to... kiss you... and things. If not for your strength of character, I might have done something we'd both regret.

CHARMING

Oh. Well. Actually, I may as well be perfectly honest here. I didn't walk out because I'm armoured in virtue. I walked out because that mother thing got me upset. I mean, I was really attracted to you.

ANN

Really?

CHARMING

Really. I think you're beautiful. And not just beautiful. You're wonderful.

ANN

Thank you. That makes me very happy.

CHARMING

You're welcome. You can tell me how handsome you think I am now.

ANN

You look all right.

CHARMING sticks his tongue out at her and ANN giggles.

ANN (CONT'D)

Now tell me how we're going to get through the thorns.

CHARMING

Just wait. They're almost done.

WENDELL is moving the gear a safe distance away. MANDELBAUM gives some last taps with a mallet, then retreats. The ground between the stakes begins to smoke. A small blue flame appears in the center of the circle. Then a sheet of flame covers the ground. Then a huge pillar of fire roars into the air, scattering soot and ash. In a few seconds it vanishes and all that is left is a charred circle of ground.

ANN

That's it? How does that get us through the thorns?

CHARMING

Watch.

A faint rumbling begins. The ground begins to shake.

ANN

What is it?

CHARMING

Stand back.

WENDELL

Here it comes!

A column of water erupts high into the air. They are drenched.

ANN

Oh, no! I'm soaked!

CHARMING

(seeing Ann's  
clinging clothes)

Yeah.

WENDELL is cavorting around happily. MANDELBAUM is waving his arms, trying to get control of the fountain. The column of water eventually settles into an arch over the thorn wall.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Nice job, Mandelbaum.

ANN

But we can't ride on that! We'll be killed!

CHARMING

He's not finished. This is the really good bit.

The roaring of water dies away and ANN starts shivering. WENDELL hands ANN a towel.

ANN

You've... you've turned it into ice!

CHARMING

Don't touch it. Your skin will stick to it. Wendell, get some...

WENDELL hands ANN some gloves.

WENDELL

Put these on.

MANDELBAUM

It should retain structural integrity long enough for you to find the princess, kiss her and get out.

ANN

Oh, come on. You're not really going to kiss this Aurora person, are you? Assuming she exists at all.

CHARMING

Why shouldn't I?

ANN

Prince Charming! You don't even know her!

CHARMING

How can I get to know her? She's asleep!

ANN

That's exactly what I mean. You can't just go into a girl's bedroom and kiss her. She can't give consent. It's like rape!

CHARMING

If rescuing her means kissing her, I'll have to kiss her. That's my job. I'm a prince.

ANN

It's perverse.

CHARMING

You're just jealous.

ANN

Jealous? Ha!

MANDELBAUM

In the interests of expediency, why don't you continue this pointless conversation while you're climbing?

CHARMING

Right. Wendell, get the ice axes.

CHARMING holds out his hand and is momentarily startled to find WENDELL hasn't anticipated his request.

WENDELL

Mandelbaum told me not to bring them.

MANDELBAUM

I've refined the spell since you saw it last. Watch this.

MANDELBAUM produces a small silver teaspoon, polishes it lovingly on his cloak and gives the ice the most delicate of taps. There is a soft "ting" sound, like a tuning fork, which grows louder. Then particles of ice begin raining down around them, as an ornate staircase takes shape in the ice column.

WENDELL

Awesome!

CHARMING

All right!

ANN

Very nice, indeed.

MANDELBAUM

Got me two nominations for the Magician's Golden Pentaflex. Best New Spell and Best Special Effect.

CHARMING

Right. Well, I'd better get over there and kiss this babe. It's a tough job, but somebody has to do it.

CHARMING starts climbing, closely followed by WENDELL. ANN brings up the rear. MANDELBAUM takes out his pipe and settles down to wait.

WENDELL

Look at the size of that hedge!

Looking down on the thorn wall from above, we can see it's at least 30 meters thick. CHARMING stops at the peak of the arch. WENDELL and ANN join him in staring at the castle. Alacia Castle has several towers and a moat. It has lots of high-arched windows and carved shutters. Although the stone is stained, the paint has faded and the exposed wood has rotted, it isn't hard to see that this was once a beautiful place. A double line of carriages is parked in front of the castle.

ANN

Oh, my.

CHARMING

Not bad.

WENDELL

I like ours better.

CHARMING

So much for the grail quest. This place can't be more than thirty years old.

ANN

I like it anyway. What a perfect spot for a wedding.

CHARMING

Dragon.

ANN

What?

CHARMING

Wendell, the carriages.

WENDELL

I see them.

ANN

See what?

CHARMING

See those two carriages at the far end?

There are long, parallel grooves scored into the woodwork, and the roofs have been torn off by force.

ANN

Oh, dear. What do we do now?

CHARMING

Keep our eyes open.

ANN

You're going on?

CHARMING

You can go back if you like.

ANN

If you're going, I'm going.

CHARMING

Fine. Wendell, stay close.

EXT. ALACIA CASTLE -- DAY

CHARMING, WENDELL and ANN approach the castle.

ANN

But what about the dragon?

CHARMING

Probably inside. If he was outside, we'd have seen him.

ANN

But are you really going to try and slay him without a horse and a lance?

CHARMING

One step at a time. Let's take a look around first.

CHARMING pushes on what remains of the front door. The hinge squeals. Putting his finger to his lips, he leads WENDELL and ANN inside.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- FRONT HALL -- DAY

The front hall is dusty but otherwise in good condition.

ANN

Pretty good shape.

CHARMING nods and moves quietly to a window. There are several dead flies. CHARMING pokes at the dead insects.

CHARMING

Dead.

WENDELL

Not sleeping?

CHARMING

Dead. Some spell.

ANN

Where are the people?

CHARMING

Gathered for the wedding. Let's  
look for the chapel.

CHARMING, WENDELL and ANN walk quietly deeper into the castle. They pick their way down a hall and look through a charred hole in a broken door to what is clearly the dining hall. Tables are set up for a feast that was never eaten. The bones of the wedding guests have been gathered into a pile in the center of the hall. On top of the pile is a sleeping dragon. CHARMING motions with his head and WENDELL and ANN follow him back down the hall to a small library.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- LIBRARY -- DAY

The walls are lined with bookshelves and there is one window high up in the wall.

CHARMING

Friendly looking little tyke, isn't  
he?

ANN

I've never seen one before. It's  
so ugly. And it stinks, too.

CHARMING

The smell of carrion. I make him  
about twelve feet long. What do  
you think, Wendell?

WENDELL

Fourteen, counting the spikes on  
the tail.

CHARMING

Did you see the missing scales on  
the back and sides?

WENDELL

Yes, sire. They get awfully mean  
when they're molting.

CHARMING

Okay. We've got a fourteen-foot,  
green-spiked dragon, male, possibly  
in molt, chipped upper-left fang,  
missing one claw on the right hind  
(MORE)



CHARMING (CONT'D)

foot, three claws each on the other feet, crested head, dorsal ridge, apparently healthy, certainly vicious. Presently asleep in a confined space.

WENDELL

Figure a six-foot range for the flame. The hall is about forty feet by one hundred feet. Double-door main entrance on the south end, two doors on each side leading to hallways, two small swinging doors in the back, probably to the kitchen.

ANN

Um... that's how I see it, too.

CHARMING

Twelve windows, evenly spaced, eight feet high and starting four feet from the floor. Lots of broken furniture and debris.

WENDELL

Footwork will be treacherous.

CHARMING

Right.

CHARMING unbuckles his sword and hands it to WENDELL.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Go for it.

WENDELL

Sire?

CHARMING

You said you wanted to slay a dragon. Now's your chance.

ANN

Charming!

WENDELL

No, I can do it.

WENDELL uncertainly draws Endeavour. He holds the naked blade upright. CHARMING looks at him impassively. ANN is horrified.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

All right. Okay. Back in a minute.

CHARMING

Wendell, wait. Give me the sword. I was just kidding.

ANN

That's not funny.

WENDELL

I knew it. You never let me do anything.

CHARMING

Sorry, Wendell. Maybe next time, huh?

WENDELL

You always say that.

CHARMING

(sotto)

Wendell, I'm only doing this one because there's a babe to impress. Otherwise, I'd let you slay him. Really. I mean it.

WENDELL

Well, I guess so. I'll carry your sword up the hall.

CHARMING

You stay here.

WENDELL

You're leaving me back with the girls?

ANN

Well, excuse me!

CHARMING

It's just one girl, and I want you here to protect her. You know how dragons are around maidens.

WENDELL

Oh, yeah. Well, okay.

CHARMING

Fine. You hold the fort here, I nip out and slay the beast, then we can break for lunch.

WENDELL

All right.

CHARMING winks at ANN, slaps WENDELL on the back and makes for the hall. ANN rushes over and hugs him.

ANN

Be careful.

CHARMING

(surprised)

I will.

WENDELL

Sheesh.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- DINING HALL -- DAY

CHARMING tiptoes toward the dragon.

CHARMING

(sotto)

Eye socket. Piece of cake.

The dragon wakes.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Oh, nuts.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- DAY

CHARMING runs down the hallway with the dragon in pursuit. He ducks into a handy room and prepares to kill the dragon as it sticks its head in.

CHARMING

Come on...

The room is full of tapestries. The dragon roars and blasts fire through the doorway. All the tapestries catch fire. CHARMING, coughing smoke, pushes over a table and prepares to make his last stand .

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Come on, then!

The dragon's tail disappears from view as it goes back down the hall.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Oh, bloody hell.

CHARMING drags a tapestry over his head and charges through the flame to the hallway. Tossing the smoking cloth aside, he sees the dragon moving slowly down the hall, sniffing.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Dragons and maidens. Hey! HEY!

The dragon breaks into a run, CHARMING in pursuit. The dragon reaches the library door and, with a roar, smashes it open.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- LIBRARY -- DAY

ANN is perched on top of a bookcase, trying to open the window. WENDELL is pushing her from below. As the door crashes down, WENDELL jumps for one of the extra swords. ANN loses her balance and falls on top of WENDELL. A few books fall on them, then the whole bookcase falls. The dragon roars again and prepares a blast of fire.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- DAY

CHARMING reaches the dragon and hacks at its tail. A thin geyser of blood spurts and the dragon backs out of the library, roaring and furious.

CHARMING

Where's the eye... where's...

CHARMING stabs for the eye as the dragon's head emerges. He barely misses, hitting the armoured forehead instead.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Shit!

Head bleeding, the dragon charges. CHARMING dodges. The dragon hits the wall and masonry dust flies everywhere. CHARMING flees down the hall, just out of range of the blast of fire that follows him. Rounding a corner, CHARMING starts trying doors. They're all locked. CHARMING takes special note of a small door, set so flush with the wall that it's almost disguised. This small door is scored with dragon scratches. CHARMING puts his shoulder to the next door along and takes refuge inside.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- SERVANTS STAIR -- DAY

CHARMING is in a narrow, curving wooden staircase. He moves to a position just out of sight and waits, sword at the ready. The sound of the dragon's clawed feet gets nearer. The dragon is moving stealthily, sniffing out CHARMING. Its head appears at the doorway. It sniffs again, and jams its head and shoulders into the narrow passageway. It draws breath. CHARMING flees as it breathes fire.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- UPPER HALL -- DAY

CHARMING escapes the staircase as flame erupts from the doorway. The dragon's head appears and CHARMING stabs Endeavour through the eye.

The dragon goes berserk, spraying fire in all directions and ripping the sword from CHARMING's grip. CHARMING flees down the hall and takes the main staircase to the front hall.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- DAY

The fire has spread and the lower floor is now filled with smoke. CHARMING bumps into WENDELL, knocking him down. ANN hugs CHARMING with relief. WENDELL gets up and does the same.

ANN

Charming!

WENDELL

Sire!

CHARMING

Wendell, you know all those stories we heard about killing a dragon by stabbing it through the eye?

WENDELL

Yes?

CHARMING

They're all rubbish.

The dragon roars, furious.

ANN

Can we go now?

CHARMING

(leading)

This way.

ANN

The exit is that way!

CHARMING

I know.

ANN

Where are we going?

CHARMING

Princess Aurora. The sleeping babe, remember?

ANN

Are you crazy?

They arrive at the small door CHARMING noticed earlier.

CHARMING

Wendell, find me something to...

WENDELL hands him a metal poker. CHARMING looks at him strangely.

WENDELL

Fireplace in the library.

CHARMING

Right. Give me a hand.

CHARMING wedges the poker into the door frame. He and WENDELL throw their weight onto it.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Dragons and maidens. Look at the claw marks. He wanted to get in here badly.

ANN

Maidens and dogs. You'd better hope this doesn't lead to the kennels.

The door gives. Behind it is an even narrower wooden staircase.

CHARMING

Tower stairs. Let's go.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- AURORA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

CHARMING, WENDELL and ANN emerge from the staircase, wreathed in smoke, shutting the door behind them.

WENDELL

The stair is acting like five flights of chimney, sire. We won't get out that way.

The room fills the entire tower. CHARMING opens a window to clear the smoke. On a table next to the bed is a framed portrait of a young man, with a desiccated bunch of flowers next to it. On the bed is a skeletal corpse in a rotted wedding dress. The face has remnants of skin stretched across the skull, dried lips, and seemingly untouched long blonde hair.

ANN

Look. She was wearing her wedding dress.

WENDELL

That's really gross.

ANN

Shut up, Wendell. This is the saddest thing I've ever seen.

(re: the portrait)

Her prince. I wonder if he ever came for her.

CHARMING

Probably downstairs in that pile of bones.

WENDELL

He looks like you.

CHARMING

I'm better looking.

CHARMING is staring at the corpse. WENDELL opens the door. Smoke and cinders blow into the room before he shuts it again.

WENDELL

Sire, I think we'd better get out of here.

CHARMING

I'm not going to do it.

WENDELL

What?

CHARMING

Kiss the girl. I'm not going to do it.

ANN

Of course not. What are you talking about?

CHARMING

Kiss the girl. Break the spell.

ANN

Oh, for goodness sake! She's dead, Charming. She's not sleeping. Whatever spell was cast on her is long past breaking.

CHARMING

Right. She's dead. A lifeless bag of bones. A dried-out husk. No way she's going to be revived. Right, Wendell?

WENDELL

Well, Mandelbaum did say...

ANN

I don't believe you two. You have to be really sick even to think about kissing this... thing.

CHARMING

Yeah, right. Stupid idea. Well, I guess we should be getting out of here.

CHARMING doesn't move. Neither does WENDELL.

ANN

Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go!

CHARMING

But... it's my duty.

ANN

Don't be stupid.

CHARMING

You never wanted me to kiss her anyway, did you? You were jealous.

ANN

Oh, for goodness sake! I assure you I'm not jealous now. Go ahead and kiss the darn thing. This is too disgusting to argue about.

CHARMING kneels by the bed and gently pushes the hair back from what remains of Aurora's face.

CHARMING

I'm here, princess.

He purses his lips and lowers his head.

WENDELL

What if it really wakes up?

ANN

This is really grotesque!

CHARMING

This is my job! You're not making it any easier! Suppose it was you on this bed? Would you want me to give up before I'd examined every possible recourse?

ANN

I'm not going to watch this.

ANN stares out the window. CHARMING takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and presses his lips to the corpse. The bony arms instantly wrap around his neck.

CHARMING

Mmmmp! Mmmmp!

CHARMING flails his arms desperately, trying to get free.

ANN

Oh, you're getting off on this, are you? I knew from the moment I met you that you were some kind of pervert.

The skeleton has wrapped its legs around CHARMING now, pulling him onto the bed. WENDELL is trying to pry the skeletal fingers apart. CHARMING puts his hands to the skeleton's face, trying to push it off him.

ANN (CONT'D)

I suppose when you're not engaging in necrophilia you're off fondling farm animals.

The combatants roll off the bed, landing with WENDELL on the bottom, CHARMING on top of him, and the fully restored Princess AURORA on top of the pile. Her long, blonde hair is in disarray. Her rotted wedding dress exposes a significant amount of curvaceous body. If ANN is the exemplar of girl-next-door wholesomeness, AURORA is aristocratic class personified. AURORA looks confused, then screams and jumps back into bed, burrowing under the coverlet. ANN jumps a mile.

AURORA

Who are you? What are you doing in my bedroom? Get out, or I'll scream.



WENDELL

You already did that.

CHARMING turns on the smile.

CHARMING

Highness...

ANN

Oh, put a sock in it, Charming.  
We're covered in soot. How do you  
think she feels?

CHARMING

Uh... there's a fire, ma'am. King's  
orders - we have to evacuate.

AURORA

Fire?

CHARMING

Don't worry, everything's under  
control. Step up on the sill,  
here.

AURORA

Did it start in the kitchen? We  
can move the reception out to the  
garden...

CHARMING shoves AURORA out the window. AURORA screams as  
she falls, cut off by a splash as she hits the moat.

ANN

Great, a screamer. You probably  
like that kind, too, don't you?

CHARMING

Don't get catty. You're next.

ANN

You don't have to push me. I can  
jump.

(looking at the  
drop)

On second thoughts, maybe you'd  
better push me.

CHARMING does. WENDELL goes next, executing a stylish  
half-somersault on the way down.

CHARMING

Showoff.

CHARMING jumps.

EXT. ALACIA CASTLE -- DAY

CHARMING swims to the edge of the moat, where ANN and  
WENDELL are helping AURORA out.

AURORA

There's a fire! The castle's on fire! My prince is in there! My papa is in there! Why isn't anyone doing anything?

CHARMING

Time to go.

(dragging Aurora)

Sorry, princess, but you're going to have to trust us for a while.

AURORA

Let me go! We've got to help them!

CHARMING

We'll get help from the village. For now, you're coming with us.

AURORA drags CHARMING around and punches him in the nose. More startled than hurt, CHARMING lets her go. AURORA runs toward the castle .

AURORA

Help! Fire! Help!

The dragon appears at the castle gates, CHARMING's sword still stuck in its eye. AURORA stops dead, turns and flees past CHARMING, WENDELL and ANN, screaming her head off. CHARMING ushers them all up the ice bridge, which is now starting to melt. The dragon reaches the ice and blasts fire at them, but the group is too far up. The dragon roars and starts dragging itself up the arch in pursuit.

CHARMING

Determined sucker. Let's move.

Moving as fast as they can, the group struggles up the arch with the dragon roaring and breathing flame behind them. Water is now flowing past their feet as the arch melts. AT the top, CHARMING inches past them to the front.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Once that dragon reaches the top, all he has to do is let go and he'll land on top of us. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to sit down like we're on a toboggan and slide.

WENDELL

It's a steep drop. We'll be moving pretty fast.

CHARMING

I'll go in front and try to break our fall. Wendell, you're next. Protect the women. Let's go.

As the dragon crests the top of the arch, the group slide down the melting ice staircase. They move at impressive speed.

WENDELL

This is great!

The ground is by now mostly mud. Impact is messy.  
MANDELBAUM regards them curiously.

MANDELBAUM

What was that lunatic stunt for?

WENDELL

Dragon.

MANDELBAUM

Ah.

The dragon bellows furiously and begins to slide toward them. MANDELBAUM calmly taps the ice with the stem of his pipe. The ice instantly dissolves into a fine spray of mist. The dragon falls into the thorn walls and vanishes. All is silent. ANN helps CHARMING stand.

ANN

Well, that takes care of him.

There is a bellow from the depths of the thorns, accompanied by much crashing about. CHARMING groans.

CHARMING

That has got to be the toughest  
dragon I've ever faced. Wendell,  
fetch...

WENDELL hands CHARMING a lance and the reins to his horse.

ANN

You really think he'll get out of  
there?

CHARMING

Depends how smashed up he is.

The sounds of struggling dragon die away and all is silent again.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

I hope that's the end of him. I  
really hate dragons.

WENDELL

I'm hungry.

MANDELBAUM

I think someone should be paying  
attention to the newest member of  
our group. This, I take it, is  
the long-lost Princess Aurora?

AURORA is leaning against a tree, holding her stomach and looking very forlorn.

WENDELL

Is she okay?

AURORA throws up.

CHARMING

I guess not. Poor kid. She's had  
a hell of a shock.

ANN

She's pregnant.

EXT. ILLYRIA -- DAY

The group rides silently through the countryside. WENDELL  
and MANDELBAUM are up front, ANN and CHARMING behind them  
and AURORA bringing up the rear. All are cleaned up and  
in fresh clothes. ANN falls back next to AURORA.

ANN

Try to look on the bright side.

AURORA

Oh, yes? Just what bright side is  
that? Everybody I know is dead.  
My home is destroyed, my kingdom  
has been annexed, and all my shoes  
are out of fashion.

ANN

Sorry. But you're alive, aren't  
you?

AURORA

I can tell you're the life of the  
party wherever you go.

ANN

Listen, before we get to the castle,  
we'll stop off and buy some clothes.  
That always makes me feel better.

AURORA

I don't have any money.

ANN

Actually, neither do I. Oh, dear.  
I had hoped to make a better  
impression than this when we arrived  
at Illyria Castle.

AURORA

You've never been there?

ANN

Oh, no. The prince and I traveled  
straight from my castle to yours.  
We were questing for a fertility  
grail that my stepmother traced to  
the site of your castle.

AURORA

(bitterly)  
Fertility grail.

(MORE)

AURORA (CONT'D)

That would explain a lot. We're a fertile bunch, all right. The girls in my kingdom can hardly pop their cherries without getting knocked up.

ANN

Uh... well...

AURORA

You were wasting your time, though. I never heard any mention of a grail. Daddy wasn't into cults and things, or even collecting antiques.

ANN

Well, my stepmother has been wrong before. When it comes to the black arts, her reach often exceeds her grasp.

AURORA

Your real mother is dead, then?

ANN

In childbirth. My father died a few years ago.

AURORA

My mother died in childbirth, also.

ANN

So did Charming's. He's kind of sensitive about it.

AURORA

Is childbirth as dangerous as all that?

ANN

Mandelbaum says it's because royal families can afford physicians and the very best medical care. Consequently, they die like flies.

AURORA

Ah.

(then)

So. What's with you and this Charming fellow?

ANN

What do you mean?

AURORA

I mean, you like him, right?

ANN

No! Of course not.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)

I don't like him. I mean, of course I like him. But I don't like him.

AURORA

Sure. What's there to like? Just because he's cute, smart, brave, famous and rich is no reason to fall for a boy. I don't know what you could see in him.

ANN

I'll thank you not to put words in my mouth. And he's not so much.

AURORA

So you don't have the hots for him?

ANN

I've never had the hots for anyone. That's not something that happens to nice girls. Charming and I were simply thrown together for the duration of the quest by special circumstances, that's all.

AURORA

I see. Hmm.

ANN doesn't much like that "Hmm". Meanwhile, WENDELL moves his horse next to CHARMING.

WENDELL

Princess Aurora sure is pretty, huh?

CHARMING

Yeah. Nice boobs.

WENDELL

I knew it! I knew you couldn't make it all the way back to the castle without saying something about her breasts. Well, you always wanted to meet a bad girl and now you've got one. I bet you're happy.

CHARMING

Aurora is a nice girl, Wendell.

WENDELL

But she's pregnant.

CHARMING

Which means she's a mother, and all mothers are saints. Even unwed ones. They are always treated with deference and respect, except by other women. That's just the way it is.

WENDELL

You just said she had nice boobs.  
That's not respectful.

CHARMING

So? She wasn't listening.

MANDELBAUM joins them.

MANDELBAUM

Highness, it occurs to me that we should slow our pace. At this rate, we will reach the castle well before nightfall.

CHARMING

So?

MANDELBAUM

Well, highness, with all respect, you have not considered the ramifications of riding into the castle with a pregnant companion.

CHARMING

Hey! That's not my doing. Anyway, you were around from the first time I even heard about Aurora. And Wendell and Ann were with me the whole time.

MANDELBAUM

It is not I who needs to be convinced of the purity of your intent, it is your constituency. And I am afraid they will not consider a page and a sixteen-year-old girl to be adequate chaperones.

CHARMING

How about you?

MANDELBAUM

Wizards are viewed with suspicion even at the best of times. The only credible chaperones are middle aged couples or overweight women.

CHARMING

This is crazy. I've rescued beautiful babes all over the twenty kingdoms and escorted them home. I never laid a hand on them.

WENDELL

They wouldn't let you.

MANDELBAUM

Those women did not arrive home pregnant.

(MORE)

MANDELBAUM (CONT'D)

The gossipmongers will look for a cause, and I fear they will find a living prince makes a much better scandal than one who has been dead for twenty years.

CHARMING

Even supposing your fears are right, wouldn't it be better to arrive boldly in broad daylight than skulk in after dark?

WENDELL

It wouldn't make any difference. All the maids and servants and guards in the castle will talk about it anyway.

CHARMING

That's right. I really don't think Dad's going to lock her away in a tower. We'll just have to brazen it out.

ANN and AURORA join them.

ANN

Brazen what out?

CHARMING

We were trying to decide whether to sneak Aurora into the castle after dark or not. Do you think people will really know you're pregnant? You don't look pregnant.

ANN

Women always know.

AURORA

I am Princess of Alacia. I will not skulk about like a thief.

CHARMING

Okay, that decides it. We'll walk tall.

ANN

Wait a minute. Why don't we just pretend she's married?

CHARMING

What?

AURORA

What?

ANN

Look, nobody really knows what happened.

(MORE)



ANN (CONT'D)

It was twenty years ago. And the castle is a smoking ruin. If we say the spell didn't kick in until a few hours after the ceremony, leaving plenty of time for the eager newlyweds to run upstairs and consummate their marriage, who's to say any different?

AURORA

(unsure)

It'll never fly.

CHARMING

Why not? It's believable. I know the first thing I'll do after I'm married is to...

(off the girls'  
look)

...check to see if my wife is okay.

WENDELL

I don't like it. If something like this came out, it would make the prince look bad.

CHARMING

It's my job to save girls, Wendell, reputations and all. We don't need a marriage certificate because of the fire, and everyone who was there is dead except Aurora. We ought to be able to slip you a ring, coordinate our stories and bluff this one out.

MANDELBAUM

(coughing discreetly)

Prince Charming, may I have a word with you?

CHARMING

Um, sure.

CHARMING and MANDELBAUM fall back behind the group.

MANDELBAUM

Highness, it disturbs me to see a young man who has been well schooled in the practice of honesty and virtue agree so readily to this subterfuge. But that's not my main concern. As a member of the royal court, who accepts the king's coin, my first loyalty is to your father. Do you intend to lie to him as well? And if so, do you expect me to withhold information from him?

CHARMING

Mandelbaum, I'm just trying to protect the girl. So I fib a little. I'm not committing high treason. Besides, a minute ago you were concerned about my reputation. This gets me off the hook as well.

MANDELBAUM

Presenting an elaborate charade to the court is not what I had in mind. There are several nunneries within a day's ride that would provide her with food and shelter, as well as providing an opportunity to serve penance for her moral turpitude.

CHARMING

Moral turpitude? Come on, Mandelbaum. I'm not sending her to a nunnery and she wouldn't go along with it if I tried. She's just a girl who made a mistake.

MANDELBAUM

How do you know she made a mistake? Have you discussed it with her?

CHARMING

Of course not. You can't talk about these things with a girl.

MANDELBAUM

Exactly. So there's no way of telling what deviant behaviours she's been practicing.

CHARMING

This is absurd. Look, Mandelbaum, I'll do you a deal. As soon as we get back, I'll arrange for Aurora to have an audience with Dad. We'll let him decide what to do. Until then, you play along with us. Okay?

MANDELBAUM

Oh, very well. But if his majesty asks me anything, I'm telling him the truth.

CHARMING

Deal.

CHARMING and MANDELBAUM rejoin the group.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Okay, ladies, the game is on. Aurora, from now on, you're a widow.

ANN

We should stop and get her some black clothes, then.

WENDELL

Figures. No matter what you do, girls always fit shopping into it somehow.

AURORA

The clothes don't matter. I just want to start rebuilding my life. Prince Charming, I can't thank you enough for all you're doing for me.

AURORA puts her hand on CHARMING's arm and gives him a megawatt smile. ANN doesn't like this at all.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- EVENING

ANN and CHARMING are walking together.

ANN

You have a lovely castle.

CHARMING

Thanks. Did you find your room comfortable?

ANN

Oh, yes. It was very comfortable. Luxurious, even. Very nice. Yes, indeed.

CHARMING

Well, that's good. I'm glad you like your room. I mean, all the rooms are pretty nice, but if you prefer another room you can have one. Or you can just stay where you are. Whatever you want.

ANN

No, it's fine.

CHARMING

Well, good.

(at his room)

Well, here I am. I'll see you in the morning, I guess.

ANN

I guess. Well, pleasant dreams.

CHARMING

You, too. I'd invite you in, but of course it wouldn't look right, having a girl in my room.

ANN

Oh, no. That night at the inn was an exceptional case. I couldn't possibly enter a man's bedroom.

CHARMING

No. There would be a terrible row.

ANN

Even if we weren't doing anything.

CHARMING

Right.

CHARMING pushes open the door and ANN follows him in.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- CHARMING'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

CHARMING

I guess it's okay as long as we leave the door open.

ANN

Good idea. We don't want anyone to see us together like this, but we don't want to be together where nobody can see us.

CHARMING

Just what I was thinking.

CHARMING gently kicks the door shut with his heel.

ANN

Nice room.

CHARMING

I like it. There's a little balcony over there where you can see the stars.

ANN

That's nice. Do you look at the stars often?

CHARMING

Never. But if I want to, the balcony is there.

ANN

Well, I guess I'd better be going back to my room. I don't even know why I came in here.

CHARMING

Yeah, it's probably best if you don't stay any longer.

CHARMING has his arms around ANN. She closes her eyes and tilts her face as he bends towards her. There is a knock at the door. They jump away from each other.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Er... come in.

AURORA enters. She is wearing a nightdress with the top buttons undone, showing generous amounts of cleavage. AURORA and ANN glare at each other.

AURORA

What are you doing here?

ANN

What are you doing here?

AURORA

What are you doing here?

ANN

I just came in to say good night to Prince Charming.

AURORA

Why, that's what I came to do.

AURORA slips her arm through CHARMING's arm.

AURORA (CONT'D)

My room is very pleasant, Prince Charming. You have a lovely castle.

ANN

That's a silly thing to say. He didn't decorate it.

AURORA

I'm sure he didn't tailor his own clothes, either, but I may still tell him he looks very handsome in them.

CHARMING

Um... thanks. I'll get you in to see Dad in the morning. Oh, and here. I found a gold band for you.

CHARMING produces a ring. AURORA smiles and holds out her hand. CHARMING is about to slip the ring on her finger when he notices ANN's expression. He pushes the ring into her palm instead.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Here you go. Don't worry about returning it. We've got a million trinkets like that.

AURORA

Well, I appreciate it all the same. Just as I appreciate all your kind words and friendship, Ann.

ANN

Why, it was a pleasure to be of help, Aurora.

AURORA

I suppose that, now your quest is over, you'll be returning to your own kingdom.

ANN

I suppose so.

AURORA

I'm sorry you can't stay longer, but there's really no reason for you to stick around, is there?

ANN

I guess.

CHARMING

Oh, hey, what's the big hurry? Hang around for a bit. Take a holiday. There's plenty to do in Illyria, all sorts of parties and balls and banquets. What's a few days?

ANN

No, really, I should be going...

AURORA

She probably misses her boyfriend.

ANN

But if you insist, I suppose I might stay a few days.

CHARMING

Great. Terrific. Well, I guess I'll see you both in the morning. Good night.

ANN

Good night.

AURORA

Good night.

Nobody moves.

CHARMING

Good night. I guess you'll both be getting back to your rooms now.

WENDELL bursts in.

WENDELL

Good evening, sire. Oh, hello, Aurora. Hi, Ann.

ANN

Hello, Wendell.

AURORA

Wendell.

WENDELL

I got one of the cooks to make us a snack. There's toast and eggs and kippers and bacon and sausage. Fresh gingerbread, too.

CHARMING

Sounds good, Wendell. I'll be down in a minute.

AURORA

I don't think I'm hungry. I believe I'll turn in now.

WENDELL

But there's gingerbread!

AURORA

Not tonight, thank you. Good night.

AURORA exits.

ANN

I'll join you downstairs.

ANN exits.

WENDELL

What's eating those two? Girls! Oh, I almost forgot. Norville wants to see you first thing tomorrow.

CHARMING

Tell him I'm not back yet.

WENDELL

He already knows you're back.

CHARMING

Tell him I'm sick.

WENDELL

He says it's real important.

CHARMING

It always is. Let's eat.

WENDELL

Okay.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- EVENING

WENDELL

Mandelbaum is going to mix some new potions tonight for keeping starlings away from wheat fields and he said I could help him. It has something to do with live bats. He has them flying into his tower. Won't that be neat?

CHARMING

Sounds great. You've been spending a lot of time with Mandelbaum lately, Wendell. Thinking of going into sorcery instead of becoming a knight?

WENDELL

Oh, no. I just think magic is really neat. Mandelbaum said he'd consider me for an apprentice, but I said no. Magic is pretty cool, but it's not as good as riding across the kingdoms and fighting with swords and slaying things, and you don't get to wear armour and you don't get a title. And it's years and years of studying out of books and practicing self-discipline and mind exercises. Besides, when I told him how much you depended on me, he knew that you needed me to be your squire.

CHARMING

Right. But you won't be my squire forever, Wendell.

WENDELL

No, one day you'll be king and I'll be your knight and keep the kingdom safe while you're doing kingly stuff.

CHARMING

Of course.

WENDELL

Maybe I could be a knight and a wizard. Hey, that would be wild. A knight who could also work magic. I'd be the most famous knight in the twenty kingdoms.

CHARMING

Just remember that there are more important things in life than fame and glory, Wendell.

WENDELL

You mean truth, justice and family?



CHARMING

Actually, I meant like getting  
laid. But those, too.

ANN joins them as they approach the dining room.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Did you just change your hair?

ANN

I just wanted to tidy it up a bit,  
that's all.

WENDELL

Why? It's fine.

ANN

Let's just have dinner, Wendell.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- DINING ROOM -- EVENING

RUBY is sitting at the table, buttering a scone. ANN turns  
pale. WENDELL's mouth drops open. CHARMING is surprised.

CHARMING

Queen Ruby. How good to see you  
again. What pleasant circumstance  
brings you to Illyria?

RUBY

Cut the chatter, Charming. I want  
that grail.

ANN

What are you doing here?

RUBY

What are you doing here is more  
the question, young lady. I don't  
recall any sleepovers in Illyria  
being on your itinerary. I knew  
from the start you wouldn't keep  
your side of the bargain, Charming.  
I knew you'd try to keep that grail  
for yourself. That is, if little  
Ann here hasn't managed to weasel  
it out of you.

WENDELL

Hey! You can't talk to the prince  
like that!

CHARMING

Nobody has done any weaseling that  
I'm aware of.

RUBY

I'll try it again. Which one of  
you has the grail?

ANN

Nobody has the grail. There was no grail. The site is occupied by a castle of fairly recent construction. Whatever was there before must have gotten destroyed.

RUBY

Don't try to lie to me, young lady. You'll get your punishment when we get home. Charming, I've already requested an audience with your father, where I intend to demand the return of my rightful property.

CHARMING

The whole place was riddled with magic. Dragons, sleeping spells, enchanted woods. Send in a team of archeological magicians and there's no telling what you might find. But if there was ever a grail there, it's nowhere to be found now.

RUBY draws herself up menacingly and is about to speak again when MANDELBAUM enters.

MANDELBAUM

Ah, there you are, Wendell. I heard that there was food prepared and I thought I'd find you here. Oho, kippers - very nice.  
(noticing RUBY)  
Oh. Excuse me. Have we met?

CHARMING

Mandelbaum, this is Queen Ruby of Alacia, Ann's stepmother.

RUBY haughtily offers her hand. MANDELBAUM kisses it.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Queen Ruby, this is Mandelbaum, Royal Sorcerer to the Court of Illyria.

All trace of haughtiness leaves RUBY.

RUBY

Oh, reeeeealy? You must be a very powerful sorcerer.

MANDELBAUM

At your service, madam. I do what I can to lend my humble abilities to the service of my king and country.

RUBY

I just looove magicians.  
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

They have such power, such inner strength. I'd just love to learn their deepest secrets.

MANDELBAUM

The pursuit of knowledge can indeed be very... uh... gratifying. I take it you have some interest in the black arts yourself?

RUBY

Oh, yes. I have long immersed myself in the science of magic. But I fear that, studying by myself, without an experienced magician to guide me, I have gained but a dim and incoherent grasp of the subject.

ANN

No kidding.

MANDELBAUM

These things take time. Would you be interested in a tour of my laboratory?

RUBY

I would love one. Ann, I will want to speak to you in the morning. Uh... not too early.

WENDELL

Mandelbaum, what about the bats?

MANDELBAUM

Another time, Wendell.

WENDELL

But...

MANDELBAUM

Another time, Wendell!

RUBY and MANDELBAUM exit.

WENDELL

What's got into him all of a sudden?

CHARMING

Cut him some slack, Wendell. You'll understand in a few years.

ANN

What a bitch! I just hate her. I can't believe Mandelbaum is such a pushover. Can't he see she's just using him?

CHARMING

A guy's brain sort of fogs up when he's going to get... when he's with a woman. He does things he wouldn't do otherwise. Stupid things.

ANN

Like slaying dragons single-handedly?

CHARMING

I meant like sending flowers and writing poetry. But that, too.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- WAITING ROOM -- MORNING

ANN and AURORA are sitting a few seats apart, waiting. AURORA is dressed in finery that befits meeting a king. ANN wears clothing that is neat and functional. CHARMING enters and AURORA immediately rises and hugs him.

AURORA

Prince Charming, thank you so much for arranging this audience with your father so quickly. I am in your debt.

ANN

Hi.

CHARMING

Hello, Aurora. Hi, Ann. We're pretty lucky, actually. He cleared his calendar this morning to meet with you. Not many people get in with so little notice.

ANN

Has my stepmother got an appointment yet?

CHARMING

She hasn't even gotten in to see his executive secretary.

ANN

That's probably a good thing. If I can get in to see your father first, I might be able to defuse the explosion she'll undoubtedly create.

RUBY enters. She has foregone the usual boots and wears flat slippers instead. While she is still wearing black, she has pink lipstick and a pink ribbon in her hair.

RUBY

Ann, my darling, there you are. How are you this morning? Did you sleep well? You look lovely.

ANN

What?

RUBY

You know, as long as we're in Illyria, we should really get you some new clothes. They have the most wonderful shops here. You really should take more care in the way you dress, my dear.

ANN

What?

RUBY

(kissing ANN's cheek)

While we're about it, we can have our hair done. But not today, I'm afraid. Mandelbaum is taking me on a picnic. Oh, and this must be your friend Aurora. My dear, I'm so sorry to hear about your tragic circumstances. If there's anything I can do, please don't hesitate to call on me. Prince Charming, please convey my warmest regards to your father. Well, I must be off. I don't want to keep dear Mandelbaum waiting.

RUBY breezes out again. CHARMING, ANN and AURORA are stunned.

AURORA

Your stepmother sure is nice.

ANN

What?

CHARMING

Wow. I underestimated old Mandelbaum.

WENDELL darts into the room.

WENDELL

Good morning, sire. Good morning, Princess Aurora. Good morning, Princess Ann. Sire, Count Norville is...

NORVILLE enters.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

...here.

CHARMING

Norville, come on. Can't I rest for even a single day?

NORVILLE

Your highness, I have found her.

With a flourish, NORVILLE produces a glass slipper. CHARMING's attitude changes completely.

CHARMING

Really? That's fantastic! Are you sure she's the one?

NORVILLE

Absolutely. Both the description and the slipper fit perfectly.

ANN

Excuse me. You're trying to match up a girl with a shoe?

CHARMING

Er... a girl lost her shoe at a ball. I'm trying to get it back to her. It's not that big a deal.

AURORA

Pretty. But there must be lots of girls who can wear it.

NORVILLE

One would think so, highness, but that is not the case. We have tried this slipper on the majority of young women in this city and not a single other woman could fit into it.

ANN

May I try it?

NORVILLE, with a knowing look, hands over the slipper. ANN slips out of her shoe and attempts to put the slipper on. She is surprised when it doesn't fit and keeps trying harder. AURORA looks on with increasing condescension.

ANN (CONT'D)

It isn't that the shoe is small. It's sort of narrow in the toes in a strange kind of way.

AURORA

Obviously this shoe was designed for a girl with slim feet. Naturally somebody with chunky feet can't wear it.

ANN

Chunky feet?

AURORA

I just meant that the owner of the shoe probably has a slim rather than a matronly figure.

ANN

Okay, Miss Smartypants. You try it on.

While AURORA attempts to put the shoe on, CHARMING draws NORVILLE aside.

CHARMING

Did you see her?

NORVILLE

Indeed I did, highness.

CHARMING

Pretty hot, huh?

NORVILLE

Prince Charming, please believe me when I say I have made a serious effort to understand this obsession you have with carnal gratification. Still, I fail to understand how you can be attracted to such a... trollop.

CHARMING

Noville, this babe was incredible. The moment we started dancing, she shoved her boobs right up against me. And the whole time, she never missed an opportunity to grind her pelvis into my hip. I thought I was going to explode. And she hardly said a word to me!

NORVILLE

Clearly she relies on body language.

CHARMING

Yeah! I have to see this girl again, Norville. I tell you, she's hot for me. If I can just get her alone, I know she's waiting for me to put the moves on her. You invited her to dinner, right?

NORVILLE

I will alert the public relations staff to prepare for damage control. And, while I hate to disappoint you, sire, the young lady will not be coming alone. Her godmother will be with her.

CHARMING

Her godmother? Don't tell me - her real mother is dead.

NORVILLE

The father is also dead. Perhaps the lack of family structure accounts for her promiscuous behaviour.

CHARMING

I'm going to have to ask Mandelbaum if there is any correlation between good looks and dead parents.

NORVILLE

Apparently there is some friction between the girl and her stepmother and stepsisters. They hid the girl from us, which accounts for the delay in locating her.

AURORA is now using a spoon as a shoehorn.

AURORA

This shoe is smaller than it looks. I think the glass has a magnifying effect.

ANN

Yeah, right.

AURORA

There!

ANN

It's not all the way in.

AURORA

Yes it is!

ANN

No, it isn't. Your heel isn't touching the glass. You won't be able to stand on it.

AURORA

Of course I... aargh! This is the most uncomfortable shoe I've ever tried on. It must be very expensive.

ANN

I know what you mean. There's a shoemaker in my kingdom who makes dress shoes that are superb. They're hideously painful.

AURORA

I had shoes made for my coming-out party that were beautiful. I couldn't walk for two days afterwards. The shoemaker quit a year later to become chief torturer for King Bruno of Omnia.

A palace functionary enters.

FUNCTIONARY

Princess Ann and Princess Aurora?



CHARMING

Let's not stand on protocol today,  
Eddie. I'll announce them myself.

FUNCTIONARY

Very good, sire.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- THRONE ROOM -- MORNING

AURORA enters on CHARMING's arm. ANN enters on WENDELL's arm. KING GARRISON is in conversation with his lords. He looks up at AURORA.

CHARMING

Sire, I have the pleasure to  
introduce Princess...

GARRISON

Aurora!

AURORA

Goopy!

AURORA runs to GARRISON and throws herself into his arms.

CHARMING

Goopy?

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- DAY

ANN and WENDELL walk with CHARMING in the hall.

CHARMING

I can't believe this! All this  
nonsense he's been giving me about  
remaining pure and celibate, about  
morals and virtue, about protecting  
my image and respecting the chastity  
of the girls, and now I find out  
that twenty years ago he was boffing  
blondes in the bushes!

ANN

But why wasn't he caught in the  
spell?

CHARMING

He and the boys went into town for  
a final celebration. They didn't  
stagger back until the next day,  
when it was too late.

ANN

Are you okay?

CHARMING

I'm just shocked, that's all.  
It's a bit of a surprise, Dad  
getting married all of a sudden to  
a girl younger than me.

ANN

Well, he's still engaged, after all.

WENDELL

Not to add to your burdens, sire, but there's someone here to see you.

CHARMING

I'm not really in the mood.

WENDELL

You might as well see what he wants. He's got nerve showing up here, at least.

EXT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- COURTYARD -- DAY

BEAR is sitting on a bench, waiting. He carries a long package wrapped in cloth.

CHARMING

Bear. I'm surprised to see you here.

BEAR

Highness. I just happened to be in the neighborhood, so I'd thought you might want this back.

WENDELL

I know - it's Endeavour! This is such a great sword. It's my favourite of all your swords.

BEAR

A couple of the boys found it sticking out of a dragon skull in the woods. I sort of commandeered it back for you.

CHARMING

I appreciate that. Thank you.

WENDELL

Yeah, thanks!

CHARMING

There will be a reward, of course.

BEAR

Thanks, highness, but that's not what I really came to see you about. See, we've been looking over that castle.

ANN

You got through the hedge?

BEAR

I guess when you burned down the castle you broke the spell. The thorn hedge started drying up and dying. We were able to hack a path through with no problems. We were going to... er... look for stuff.

CHARMING

Loot it.

BEAR

Uh, yeah, I guess. It's a good thing we did, though, because we actually found a couple of survivors. Two stewards, down in the wine cellar. I guess the dragon and the fire couldn't get to them down there. They were pretty confused, so we took them back to town. Then we went down into the well-house.

CHARMING

What well-house?

BEAR

See, that moat is spring fed. And where the spring comes out of the ground, there's this old well-house. The foundations of the castle are sort of built out of it.

ANN

How old?

BEAR

Old old, missy. Real old. Ancient.

CHARMING

Interesting. Go on.

BEAR

There's all sorts of passages and rooms and the like. It was all choked up with debris and stuff. But you could tell it was real old, much older than the rest of the castle.

CHARMING

You don't say.

BEAR

But here's the really good bit. On the wall there's all these pictures carved with crosses and stuff. And in about ten different places, there's a picture of a grail!

ANN

Are you sure?

BEAR

Pretty sure. It's some kind of drinking goblet, at least. Anyway, I remembered you said you were looking for a grail there, so I thought I'd pass on the information.

ANN

It makes sense. A well-house as a chapel. The grail was a fertility symbol. Water symbolises life... birth.

CHARMING

Well, I appreciate it, Bear but, to tell the truth, that quest has been pretty much wrapped up.

BEAR

Oh. So you won't be coming back our way soon?

CHARMING

Probably not. Why don't you go after the grail yourself? It might be worth something.

BEAR

I thought about it. But I'm not that interested in relics. And I don't like to mess with magic stuff.

CHARMING

Very wise.

BEAR

Thing is, though, the village is on edge, see? We had a nice, stable situation until you broke the spell. Now folks want to know just what happened and what the situation is going to be between Alacia and Illyria.

CHARMING

I'm really not into the political end of things.

BEAR

Well, you stirred things up. You ought to see it through.

(off CHARMING's expression)

Not that I'd presume to tell you what to do, highness.

CHARMING

No, you may have a point, Bear.  
(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Let me discuss it with the Minister of Intelligence and see what happens.

BEAR

Fair enough, highness.

CHARMING

For a tough guy, Bear, you're pretty darned diplomatic. And it looks like you've developed some village loyalty, too.

BEAR

Well, your highness, I guess I just figured that, sooner or later, a man ought to make some friends.

CHARMING

Good thinking. Thanks for the news, Bear.

WENDELL

And for the sword.

BEAR

You're welcome.

CHARMING

Don't forget to stop by the exchequer for your reward.

BEAR

I won't.

BEAR exits.

ANN

Well, he certainly changed his tone.

CHARMING

He's a smart man. He found out he couldn't intimidate us, so he stopped trying to be intimidating.

WENDELL

Are we going after the grail again?

CHARMING

I'll think it over later. I've got other things to do tonight.

ANN

Good grief! After all that's happened today, are you still thinking about that girl who lost a shoe? Why don't you just have a messenger deliver it?

CHARMING

Er... it's good publicity to have her over. It wasn't even my idea. Norville came up with it. Her godmother's coming, too. Makes for a nice, family scene.

ANN

I forgot how much you have to be concerned with your image. After all, you're Prince Charming.

CHARMING

Darn right.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Servants with trays of food bustle about. CHARMING, ANN and WENDELL loiter along with the other guests. GARRISON and AURORA arrive.

FUNCTIONARY

King Garrison of Illyria, and Princess Aurora of Alacia.

CHARMING

Your majesty. Your highness.

GARRISON

Not for much longer. Hello, son. Princess, you look lovely. Hello, Wendell.

WENDELL

Hi, sire.

ANN

Your majesty.

CHARMING

What do you mean, "not for much longer"?

AURORA

I won't be a princess after tonight. Garrison and I are going to be married later this evening.

GARRISON

The public seem to be accepting the story that the spell didn't get cast until after the wedding had already happened, back twenty years ago. So we're going to let that stand. Why invite public comment by changing it now?

CHARMING

Very PR-savvy of you.

AURORA

We'll just have a small ceremony,  
nice and quietly. It's a relief,  
really. After the last fiasco,  
I've lost my taste for big weddings.

ANN

I can imagine. Besides, why expose  
your child to the taint of  
illegitimacy?

AURORA

Exactly. Anyway, Ann, I hope you'll  
stand up with me at the ceremony.  
You've been so kind to me since we  
met and you're really the only  
friend I have in the world. It  
would make me very happy if you  
were my maid of honour.

ANN

Oh, Aurora, how sweet of you to  
ask me! Of course I'll be your  
maid of honour. You're such a  
dear, dear friend. I feel as though  
we're sisters.

AURORA

Oh, Ann, I feel exactly the same  
way.

ANN and AURORA hug.

WENDELL

Sheesh.

CHARMING makes his way to NORVILLE, WENDELL in tow.

CHARMING

Do you think she'll like me?

NORVILLE

She liked you at the ball. Very  
obviously so.

CHARMING

Do you think she'll still like me?

NORVILLE

If she does, I can only hope she  
is less demonstrative in her  
affections.

CHARMING

Yeah, well, I hope you're wrong.  
The thing about this girl, Norville,  
is that I never rescued her from  
anything, never saved her life,  
never helped her out of a tight  
spot. She doesn't owe me a thing.

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Which means that when she started rubbing her thighs against me at the ball, she was doing it purely out of...

NORVILLE

Lust.

CHARMING

Yeah! Isn't that great?

NORVILLE

No. And I am compelled to point out, Prince Charming, that none of the young ladies you have rescued owed you a thing, either. One does not expect favours simply for doing one's duty.

FUNCTIONARY

Miss Cynthia and Madame Esmerelda.

CYNTHIA is a sex-bomb on the megaton scale. Long red hair cascades to her waist. She wears a tight, strapless dress and high heels. Her breasts spill over the top of her gown. She looks nowhere but at CHARMING, and her gaze is full of ripe promise. ESMERELDA looks like a short sailor in a dress, with a bent and faded bonnet on her head.

CHARMING

What did I tell you? Isn't she incredible?

WENDELL

She looks okay.

CYNTHIA

Oh, my prince.

CHARMING

Oh, my lady.

ANN

Oh, my stomach.

AURORA

(to ANN)

Hush.

AURORA is staring at ESMERELDA with hatred etched into her face. She draws ANN away from the group.

ANN

What are you doing?

AURORA

I'm going to kill the bitch.

ANN

Why do you care if the prince loses his head over that bimbo?



AURORA

Not her, the troglodyte in the hat! That's the same fairy who cast the spell on me!

MANDELBAUM and RUBY overhear this.

MANDELBAUM

She's a fairy? Are you sure?

AURORA

Of course I'm sure. You don't forget a woman who asks you to... er... never mind.

ANN

What?

AURORA

Put it this way. I wouldn't put her in charge of the royal cherry orchard, if you know what I mean.

ANN

What?

AURORA

That woman is a manipulator of the first order. She always had an angle on everything in Alacia. She kept trying to wangle some political appointment out of Daddy and eventually they had a huge fight, so she cursed us all.

RUBY

That was a hell of a curse. She must be very powerful.

MANDELBAUM

Not necessarily. The spell she cast was crudely handled. She drained all the power from that fairy wood to maintain it. I suspect she only meant it to last for a short time, then discovered she couldn't turn it off.

AURORA

And now she's trying to get influence over Illyria through Charming. Or... what if she's still after me? I'm getting married and she shows up again - what are the odds?

MANDELBAUM

Unlikely. Charming has been searching for that girl for three months, before he even heard of you.

ANN

She probably doesn't even recognise you. Remember it's been only a couple of weeks for you, but twenty years for her.

AURORA

Whatever. I'm going to get Garrison to order Charming to stay away from that girl. She's not even his type.

MANDELBAUM

I doubt Charming would accept an order like that. You'd just push him into her arms.

RUBY

It doesn't look like much pushing is required.

AURORA

Ann, how can you be so calm? I thought you liked Charming. How you you bear to see him hanging all over that slut?

MANDELBAUM

Excuse me, princess, but are you really in a position to cast aspersions on another person's moral character? I ask merely for information.

AURORA

That's different. I was engaged.

ANN

That's right. It's okay for a couple to do it if they're engaged.

RUBY

It most certainly is not.

ANN

Well, maybe not exactly okay. But it isn't as bad as if they weren't engaged.

RUBY

I can see you and I are going to have to have a serious talk, young lady.

ANN

Oh, yes, because you've been the picture of chastity.

RUBY

Mandelbaum and I are just good friends.

AURORA

Well, I'm not waiting around to see what happens. I'm going to get those two gold diggers kicked out. And you don't fool me, little princess, with your oh-so-casual attitude. You're clenching your fists so tight I can hear your knuckles cracking.

AURORA storms towards GARRISON, who is in conversation with ESMERELDA. ANN, MANDELBAUM and RUBY follow.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Garrison, a word with you...

ESMERELDA

No need to be so secretive, dearie. The king and I have just been discussing the true sequence of events twenty years ago. If you wish to make it a public conversation, that's entirely up to you. By all means, let's set the record straight.

AURORA

Straight! What a novel concept for you. You're about as straight as a corkscrew. You and that trollop you hired to seduce the prince.

ESMERELDA

Feeling a little cranky, aren't we, blondie? Cramps? Why don't you lie down and take a nice, long nap. I can arrange it for you.

AURORA

Take your best shot, bitch. Illyria has court magicians that can fry you like a piece of bacon. And they can neutralise anything you cast on Charming, too, so you can forget your little schemes.

ESMERELDA

The spell Cynthia casts on men has nothing to do with magic.

GARRISON

Speaking of Cynthia, where did your goddaughter get to?

ESMERELDA

I shouldn't worry about Cynthia. I'm sure Charming will take good care of her. Let's have a drink and talk about something else, shall we?

RUBY

Let's. Because there's something  
I want to ask you.

INT. ILLYRIA CASTLE -- CHARMING'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

CHARMING and CYNTHIA stumble into the room, locked at the  
lips. CHARMING slams the door behind them.

CYNTHIA

My prince, you cannot know how  
I've longed to see you again.

CHARMING

I do. It's long for me too. I  
mean, it's been long. I've been  
long... er... longing for you,  
too.

CYNTHIA

You've rescued me from my  
stepfamily.

CHARMING

Well, you know, rescue is what I  
do.

CYNTHIA

I hope... that is, I fear that  
after such dreams and endeavours,  
I may be a disappointment to you.

CHARMING

Oh, no. Not disappointing. Not.

CYNTHIA

Because I would do anything to  
avoid disappointing you, my prince.  
Anything at all.

CHARMING

You would? Oh. Okay. I mean,  
good... good... heavens, there's  
no need...

CYNTHIA

But there is need, my lord. There  
is very great need... in me.

CYNTHIA pulls CHARMING onto the bed, and tears at his  
clothing. CHARMING has his hand inside CYNTHIA's dress,  
cupping her breast.

ESMERELDA (O.S.)

Cynthia? Cynthia, open this door  
at once!

CYNTHIA

My godmother!

CHARMING

My God! There seems to be a recurring pattern in my life.

There is a flash of magic and the door flies practically off its hinges. ESMERELDA marches into the room, wand out. RUBY stands in the corridor.

ESMERELDA

Come on, kid. We're leaving.

CYNTHIA

What are you doing? I had him on the hook!

ESMERELDA

Change of plans, kiddo. Forget this so-called prince. We're going home.

CHARMING

No, wait! Esmerelda, I assure you that my intentions were honourable.

ESMERELDA

A great pleasure to make your acquaintance, Queen Ruby. Thank you for your help.

RUBY

The pleasure was all mine.

ESMERELDA and CYNTHIA exit. CHARMING doesn't know whether to scream or cry. RUBY draws a chair near to the bed and sits.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Want to talk about it?

CHARMING

You interfering idiot! I had her on the bed with her legs in the air. It was a sure thing!

RUBY

Yes, what an effort it must have been to overcome the inhibitions of such a shy and modestly clad girl.

CHARMING

Three months I've been searching for that girl. And then, when I finally get her alone, you have to bring that harridan down on top of us. Are you crazy? The old twit was pushing the girl at me when she arrived. What the hell did you say to her?

RUBY

I merely mentioned in passing to Esmerelda that you weren't really a prince.

CHARMING

What? What? Not really a prince? Are you bonkers? I'm Prince Charming! I'm the prince! The most eligible bachelor in the twenty kingdoms and heir to Illyria.

RUBY

Ah, but you are illegitimate.

CHARMING

...excuse me?

RUBY

Garrison and Aurora were married twenty years ago. That means the king's marriage to your mother was not legal, since he was still married to Aurora. Because he was never legally married to your mother, you are, I'm sorry to say, a bastard. Aurora's child is the first legitimate heir to the thrones of Illyria and Alacia.

CHARMING

Oh, for heaven's sake. I've got news for you, Ruby. Dad and Aurora didn't... er... they weren't... um...

RUBY

I suppose you're going to tell me some nonsense about Aurora and Garrison not being married before the spell took effect. That you and she just concocted the story to protect her reputation. That you swore to keep her secret, not realising that the father of her child was also your father.

CHARMING

Suppose, merely as conjecture, that I was to claim something like that?

RUBY

Oh, Charming, you are so cute! That overdeveloped sense of honour compels you to keep Aurora's secret even as your own life is destroyed. I should have slept with you when I had the chance. At least you would have got something out of the deal, you poor dear.

CHARMING

If, as you say, I've compromised my honour by colluding in a lie, what's to prevent me from compromising my honour to correct it?

RUBY

Once you've established that the great and noble Prince Charming is a liar, why should the people believe you're telling the truth now and not then? Your motive for lying to protect yourself is certainly greater than your motive to protect Aurora.

CHARMING

The people aren't going to argue with their king. If dad says I'm the heir, that's the end of it.

RUBY

Well, now. Let's consider what the king will do. He's... what... forty years old? In the prime of life, really. And he has a beautiful young wife, with many childbearing years ahead of her. Why would he be worried about an heir now? Much more likely he'd be worried about his popular son competing with him for the throne.

CHARMING

Dad knows me better than that.

RUBY

Of course. He knows you so well that he sends you out at every opportunity so you won't have time to form alliances or indulge in conspiracies at court.

CHARMING

He does not. Don't be daft.

RUBY

I rule Tyrovia, Charming. Trust me, all rulers have to be a little paranoid. But if the king had a son by his new queen now, then the whole issue of inheritance could be put off for another twenty years. During which time Aurora will have far more opportunity than you to whisper in the king's ear.

CHARMING

Queen Ruby, your mind twists so much that you're incapable of seeing  
(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

how straightforward this issue is.  
I'm my father's firstborn child  
and the heir to the throne.  
Furthermore, the people of Illyria  
know me as a hero. The populace  
won't turn against me because of  
one white lie, and if there's  
anything that can turn my father  
against me, I'd like to know what  
it is.

MANDELBAUM and NORVILLE enter.

NORVILLE

Ah, there you are. I am delighted  
to inform you that the king and  
Princess Aurora have just been  
married.

CHARMING

Norville, I have something to tell  
you...

NORVILLE

More accurately, I should say that  
they have renewed their vows, having  
already been married for twenty  
years.

CHARMING

That's not actually...

NORVILLE

May I say that I have had the utmost  
pleasure in serving you during  
your tenure as prince.

CHARMING

What?

NORVILLE

I assure you, young sir, that we  
would never do anything as serious  
as denying you your birthright  
without a complete examination of  
the facts. Of course, since the  
king and queen are the only  
survivors of the original ceremony,  
their statements under oath are  
practically incontrovertible.

CHARMING

Mandelbaum?

MANDELBAUM

(uncomfortably)

As a citizen of Illyria, and a  
servant to the king, I owe him my  
allegiance.



CHARMING

That's great, Mandelbaum. Thanks a bunch.

NORVILLE

Now, Charming, the king has compiled a list of special missions that require your immediate and personal attention. Coincidentally, they are all beyond the borders of Illyria. Not that you are being exiled, you understand. Far from it. Your usual generous allowance will be forwarded to you during your long absence, and we will expect to hear from you through our diplomatic embassies...

There is a flash of reflected light as CHARMING's sword neatly cuts in half the stack of papers NORVILLE is holding. NORVILLE steps quickly backward, and a squad of royal guards appear in the hallway, weapons ready.

RUBY

Steady, lad.

CHARMING turns on her, his blade an inch from her throat.

CHARMING

This is all your fault, Ruby.

RUBY

Listen, you little simpleton, don't blame me for your problems. If you hadn't been playing your Prince Charming role for so long you actually started to believe in that honour and duty nonsense, you would have seen this coming from a mile away. Welcome to reality, Charming! Honour is just a word that clever rulers like your father use to manipulate dumb kids like you into doing what they want.

CHARMING

That's enough!

CHARMING pushes RUBY back into her chair. He turns, sword drawn, to the guards, who ready themselves for battle. NORVILLE and MANDELBAUM watch impassively.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

All right. I'm going. But I'll be back. And when I return, you'll all wish this night had never happened.

CHARMING sheathes his sword and stalks from the room. NORVILLE and the guards follow close behind. MANDELBAUM helps RUBY up.

MANDELBAUM

Are you all right, my dear?

RUBY

Fine, Mandelbaum dearest. I'll join you in a moment.

ANN has arrived in the doorway. MANDELBAUM leaves ANN and RUBY alone.

ANN

Did he fall for it?

RUBY

He fell for it, indeed. Poor boy. He was very upset. And who could blame him?

ANN

Oh, dear. Being the prince meant such a lot to him. Perhaps I should have told him myself. Broken the news more gently.

RUBY

Don't get carried away by sentiment, Ann. We can't afford to have his anger directed towards you. It would spoil everything. You told me that yourself.

ANN

Yes, I know. You're right. It just pains me to see him so sad.

RUBY

Well, now you can go and offer him comfort. And you'd better leave quickly, before he gets too much of a start.

ANN

It doesn't matter. I know where he's going.

RUBY

Alacia?

ANN

Right. There are some survivors that might testify that the wedding never took place.

RUBY

But will he go for the grail?

ANN

I think so. He's mad enough at you that he'll try to find it just so you can't have it.

RUBY

Good. Still, you should try to catch up to him now, otherwise it will look like you're pursuing him.

ANN

But I am pursuing him.

RUBY

All the more reason not to look like you are. Go on. I've packed you a bag.

ANN gives RUBY an impulsive hug and starts down the hall.  
ANN stops and looks back.

ANN

You know, I always thought you were a bitch.

RUBY

I am, dear, when I don't get what I want. Now I'm getting what I want. And I want you to get what you want, too.

ANN

Thank you.

EXT. ALACIA CASTLE -- NIGHT

ANN picks her way through the ruins of the castle. Near the center of the ruins, ANN sees the light of a fire. CYNTHIA is waiting fireside.

CYNTHIA

Hi. You're Ann, right? A princess. Princess Ann.

ANN

Yes. Any you're Cynthia, aren't you? The one with the slipper.

CYNTHIA

We've been expecting you. Nice night, huh? I guess you're looking for Prince Charming, but he's not here yet.

ANN

What are you doing here?

CYNTHIA

Getting the grail, same as you. Esmerelda needs it to power her magic.

ANN

No, I mean...

CYNTHIA

Of course, a lot of this magic stuff is useless, if you ask me. Most of it is like throwing hexes on your neighbours and making cattle infertile and talking to animals.

ANN

Um...

CYNTHIA

I mean, what's a cat got to talk about, anyway? They've got a brain the size of a walnut. What's the point?

ANN

Uh-huh.

CYNTHIA

Political power, now that's a different story. Boost it with magical power, then you're getting somewhere. That's why Illyria is so strong. That's what Esmerelda says. She's my fairy godmother.

ANN

How did you get a fairy godmother?

CYNTHIA

My mother died when I was born. When I was eight, my father remarried, but then he got kicked in the head by a horse a week later. So my stepmother was pretty pissed about the whole thing, 'cause she had an extra mouth to feed and no payoff. She turned me into the household slave, scrubbing floors, cleaning the fireplace, chopping wood, that sort of stuff. A few years later, when it became obvious that I was going to turn out gorgeous and my stepsisters were always going to be trolls, things got even worse. I couldn't even escape through marriage, since there was no way the trolls were going to let me out of the house until I was an old maid, or they were married first, which is pretty much the same thing. Then, a few months ago, the night of the ball, I was crying in the kitchen all by myself and suddenly the room fills with little sparkly lights and there's Esmerelda.

ANN

Really?

CYNTHIA

Yeah. Then she magicked up a ball gown and these glass slippers. She's got some really awesome clothes spells. And she told me I was going to marry Prince Charming.

ANN

She did?

CYNTHIA

But that's all off now, since he isn't really a prince. Just as well. I mean, he's cute and all, but it makes my skin crawl, having to cosy up to him.

ANN

It does?

CYNTHIA

Oh, yes, but that's just something you've got to do if you want to land a husband. Esmerelda says the way to a man's heart starts below the waist. So I was going to sleep with Charming, he was going to marry me, and then I wouldn't ever have to touch him again. That's what marriage is for.

ANN

I see.

CYNTHIA

You probably never had to think about this, since you're already a princess. You're so lucky. Lucky for Esmerelda and me, though, we heard about this grail thing, so we've still got an angle. We get the grail, use its magic to muscle our way into the court and we're set for life. Esmerelda has it all figured out.

ANN

She sounds very clever.

CYNTHIA

Oh, she is. Come on. She wants to meet you.

ANN

Actually, I'm waiting for a friend.

CYNTHIA

Prince Charming, I know, you said. Don't worry about it. He'll be along in a little while. Let's go.

CYNTHIA takes ANN's arm in a vice-like grip and drags her through the ruins.

ANN

Where are we going?

CYNTHIA

The grail chapel. It's underground. This whole hill has been hollowed out. It's all underground rooms and passages and stuff. It's kind of spooky.

ANN and CYNTHIA reach a small set of stone steps leading down into darkness.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Watch your step. The rock is kind of damp and there's a lot of rubble and stuff.

ANN

Thanks for the tour and everything, but I think I'll just sit up here and wait for Prince Charming.

ANN tries to pull out of CYNTHIA's grip and fails. CYNTHIA stops and looks into ANN's eyes with a steely glare.

CYNTHIA

(menacing)

I think you should wait inside.

ANN

...actually, I suppose I can wait just as well inside as out.

CYNTHIA

That's the ticket! Just stay close to me, it's not that bad.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- TUNNELS -- NIGHT

The tunnels are rough-hewn. There are several side tunnels. Some are covered by curtains but most have solid-looking wooden doors with iron hinges.

CYNTHIA

See? We cleaned it up a lot. Well, I cleaned it up. Esmerelda would live in a pigsty. Too obsessed with magic and scheming to attend to the details of daily living. Look, here's the grail passage.

The entrance to the grail passage is framed by thick, dark wood, intricately carved. The passage beyond the open double doors is impenetrably black.

ANN

Oh, my. The grail's down there?

CYNTHIA

Don't stick your head in too far.  
You're likely to get it lopped  
off.

ANN

What?

CYNTHIA

The wrong person steps into that  
chamber, a ghostly arm swoops down  
and chops his head off.

ANN

That is really stupid.

CYNTHIA

Those ancient priests had a lot of  
power, but not much imagination.

ANN

So you're saying someone like Prince  
Charming, a pure knight, could  
just walk in and take the grail  
without any problems?

CYNTHIA

Nope. Everybody has to fight the  
arm. But only a knight who's never  
got his wick dipped can defeat it.  
Well, if he's good enough with a  
sword.

ANN

Charming is good.

CYNTHIA

Then he shouldn't have a problem.  
I don't know why it should be this  
big a deal, really. It's just a  
crummy fertility grail. So your  
sheep pump out a few more lambs.  
Your peas sprout a few more pods.  
Maybe a barren woman gets knocked  
up. Not exactly something to die  
over.

ANN

There are people for whom the birth  
or death of a single lamb can mean  
the difference between starvation  
and sustenance.

CYNTHIA

Tough break. Because Esmerelda  
has plans for that grail. Once  
she figures out its magic, she can  
use it to power her own spells.  
They won't end at midnight, either.

ANN

That's thrilling. Well, this has been really interesting, but I'm going to be going now. Past my bedtime and all that.

CYNTHIA

Oh, we're just getting started. You haven't met Esmerelda yet.

ANN twists out of CYNTHIA's grip and stares her down.

ANN

I will wait outside. I am a princess and you do not command me.

CYNTHIA

Yes, you're a princess. Bully for you. You give orders, you don't take them. You don't have to work from before sunup to past sundown, bossed around by two hideous teenage trolls and a shrew of a stepmother. You don't sweat until your muscles scream and your back aches and then sleep in the cold by what's left of the kitchen fire. You don't have to dream of a prince to come and rescue you, then have it all melt away in front of your eyes. Well, I've lived that life, princess. I need those dreams. And no soft-skinned, big-eyed, manor-born cream puff is going to take them away from me.

ANN

I'm sorry for you, Cynthia. Our lives are more similar than you realise. Perhaps when this is all over, we can be friends.

ANN turns and starts walking away.

CYNTHIA

Ann?

ANN turns back. CYNTHIA decks her with one punch.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- TUNNELS -- LATER

CHARMING comes down the stairs, holding a lantern. ESMERELDA is waiting for him by the grail doors.

CHARMING

Hello, Esmerelda.

ESMERELDA

Charming. Surprised to see me?



CHARMING

More impressed than surprised. I had no idea when I invited you to dinner that you were responsible for the deaths of an entire castle household and the nobility of a whole kingdom.

ESMERELDA

Dear boy, you can't hold me responsible for that catastrophe. King Stephen's wizards were all off duty, enjoying the wedding festivities, and I took advantage of their distraction to cast a sleep spell over the castle. Purely temporary, I assure you.

CHARMING

So what happened?

ESMERELDA

They must have had a backup spell in place. When all three wizards were disabled, the spell went into effect automatically, erecting the wall of thorns around the castle. I couldn't get in at all. The spell drained so much power from the fairy wood that I couldn't even lift my own spell. Nor could your father break it by kissing Aurora, because he also couldn't get in. So you see, it was a most unexpected and unfortunate chain of events that caused that tragedy.

CHARMING

Very neat story. I'm not sure I believe it, though. I've suddenly become a lot more cynical.

ESMERELDA

I'm not surprised.

CHARMING

So you knew Dad was outside the castle when the hedge went up. He couldn't have made it to the wedding.

ESMERELDA

Correct. And you are the legitimate heir to the throne of Illyria. I can provide evidence to refute the king's story. So... shall we make a deal?

CHARMING

Nope.

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

No, I think I'll just kill you,  
grab the grail and be on my way.  
I've been in kind of a bad mood  
lately, anyway.

ESMERELDA

And I don't blame you. When a  
young man's natural physical desires  
are thwarted by a repressive and  
hypocritical society, small wonder  
that he seeks release in acts of  
violence.

CHARMING

Shut up.

ESMERELDA

Look, Charming, Ruby had me  
misinformed. We were halfway to  
Alacia before we put the whole  
story together. So, as part of  
the deal, I'm giving you another  
chance with Cynthia. I think you'll  
like this.

CHARMING

Don't hold your breath.

ESMERELDA

Cynthia?

One of the heavy doors in the corridor opens and CYNTHIA enters. She wears a dress of thin, red silk and nothing else.

CHARMING

...okay, I'm impressed.

ESMERELDA

Thought so. Listen, you want your  
position back, and I can help you  
get it. You want to sleep with a  
beautiful girl, and I can provide  
one. All I ask is that you give me  
a place in the court of Illyria  
and listen to my... advice.

CHARMING

Advice?

ESMERELDA

Guidance, let's say. So here's  
the deal. Take Cynthia for the  
night and leave the grail for me.

CHARMING

That's it?

ESMERELDA

That's it.

CHARMING

You get the magic cup and I get  
one roll in the hay?

ESMERELDA

I assure you, Prince Charming,  
Cynthia will provide you with a  
night you'll remember for the rest  
of your life.

CYNTHIA stretches, poking her nipples out through the fabric  
of her dress, then runs her hands down her sides,  
accentuating her curves. CHARMING swallows.

CHARMING

I thought only a man could work  
the power of the grail. The Fisher  
King.

ESMERELDA

There are ways around that. But I  
cannot guard the grail at all times.  
After you sleep with Cynthia you  
will not only have to leave the  
grail with me, you'll have to go  
back and report that it was never  
here. Nobody can know I have it.

CHARMING

If... if I leave you alive, with  
this source of power, you're going  
to do terrible things to the people  
of this kingdom.

ESMERELDA

I will do what I feel is necessary,  
of course. But you've defended  
the common people quite enough,  
Charming. Let them find another  
hero. Better yet, let them take  
responsibility for their own lives.  
And this night with Cynthia need  
not be a one-time event. You can  
take her as your queen or, if you  
do not wish to marry a commoner,  
as your consort.

CHARMING

You're asking me... you're asking  
me to sell out my beliefs. To  
betray the people who trust me.

ESMERELDA

I'm giving you an opportunity,  
Charming. An opportunity to stop  
being a slave to an ungrateful  
populace and to be your own man.  
It's what you deserve. It's what  
you want.

CHARMING

...okay.

ESMERELDA

We have a bargain?

CHARMING

Yes.

ESMERELDA

Well done, Charming. You won't regret this. Cynthia, reward the brave prince.

CYNTHIA

My lord.

CYNTHIA leads CHARMING into her room. ESMERELDA listens long enough to hear a key turn in the lock and a bolt thrown. Then she moves down the passage and enters another door.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- ESMERELDA'S LAB -- NIGHT

ESMERELDA has converted this room to a makeshift lab. ANN is chained to a table in the middle of the room. ESMERELDA does a little dance of joy.

ESMERELDA

He went for it! He went for it!  
Prince Charming in my clutches and  
a princess on my dissecting table.  
I should have thought of this years  
ago. Charming can slash his way  
past an army of bodyguards, but  
set him up with the right girl and  
he goes soft in the head.

ANN

He's just upset over what's  
happened. He isn't thinking  
clearly.

ESMERELDA

You have no understanding whatsoever  
of teenage boys. And, sadly, you  
are not going to live long enough  
to learn about them. The blood of  
a princess, killed at midnight  
with a silver blade... well, I  
won't bore you with the necromantic  
details, but your death is the  
necessary key to give me access to  
the power of the grail.

ANN

So you must have been planning to  
sacrifice a princess twenty years  
ago, too. You were going to kill  
Aurora.

ESMERELDA

You understand now why King Stephen  
was so adamant about hiding the

(MORE)

ESMERELDA (CONT'D)

grail from me. But you, my dear, will do just as well. It's a pity, in a way. Once the prince has strayed from the straight and narrow path of virtue, only the gentlest push is required to keep him on the long downhill slide to degradation. It would be so nice to force you to watch his gradual corruption.

ANN

I think you're expecting a lot from one roll in the hay.

ESMERELDA

He'll be back for more. It's always the same with these chivalrous types. They abstain for so long, then they fall in love with the first woman who lets them get their leg over.

ANN

That's nonsense! Boys aren't like that. They want nice girls.

ESMERELDA

Like I said, no understanding. Well, can't stand here gabbing all night.

ESMERELDA picks up a silver knife. She begins slicing ANN's dress, opening it up like a surgical gown, exposing the flesh beneath.

ESMERELDA (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Silver is such a soft metal. So hard to put a decent edge on it. You don't mind being carved up with a slightly dull blade, do you?

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- SEDUCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

CYNTHIA is sitting on the bed. CHARMING is running his hand over the rock wall by the door.

CYNTHIA

What are you doing?

CHARMING

It's dry. But this place is below the water table. I would have expected at least some seepage.

CYNTHIA

The power of the grail holds back the water. Remove it and this place would fill right up.

CHARMING

Really?

CYNTHIA

Don't you want to come over here  
with me?

CHARMING

Why lock the door?

CYNTHIA

We don't want to be disturbed, do  
we? Or would you rather have an  
audience?

CHARMING

(going to the bed)

No, not really.

CYNTHIA

Is this really your first time?

CHARMING

The very first.

CHARMING puts his arm around CYNTHIA. She snuggles closer.

CYNTHIA

Esmerelda says boys are a little  
nervous the first time.

CHARMING

Are you nervous?

CYNTHIA

What is there to be nervous about?  
You know what to do, don't you?

CHARMING

Of course.

CHARMING kisses her deeply.

CYNTHIA

Oh, Prince Charming. I've waited  
so long for this moment.

CHARMING

Me, too.

CYNTHIA

I guess I just didn't think you'd  
be so easy to seduce. I thought  
you'd have all sorts of idealistic  
notions of honour and virtue that  
I'd have to overcome.

CHARMING

Oh, that. Actually, I did.

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

But... um... from the very first moment I saw you, Cynthia, all other thoughts were swept from my mind and I could think of nothing else but being with you.

CYNTHIA

Really?

CHARMING

Sure.

CYNTHIA kisses him deeply.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Uh, listen. What do you say we go topside and... uh... take a walk in the moonlight and make love under the stars. Wouldn't that be romantic and stuff?

CYNTHIA

Silly boy. You don't have to stall. If you need more time, just relax. We've got all night.

CYNTHIA rips open CHARMING's shirt and starts kissing his chest. CHARMING slips the straps off CYNTHIA's shoulders and the dress pools around her waist. CHARMING takes her breasts in his hands. CYNTHIA is undoing the buttons on his pants.

CHARMING

Oh, wow.

CYNTHIA

Oh, Prince Charming, I've waited so long for this night.

CHARMING

Hmmm?

CYNTHIA

For two nights, I've watched you in Esmerelda's magic mirror. All the time you grew closer, my heart beat faster and faster for you. The sound of your horses pounded like... like... wait a minute. Where's your page?

CHARMING

Page? What page?

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- GRAIL CHAPEL -- NIGHT

WENDELL slowly creeps down the passage to the grail chapel, naked sword in one hand and lantern in the other.

WENDELL

Okay, no problem. Sword at the ready. Religious drawings, clearly on the right path. Passage slopes suddenly downward, clearly getting close now. Still talking to myself, clearly have to stop doing that.

WENDELL enters the grail chapel. There is a crunching underfoot. WENDELL lowers the lantern to find that he's standing in a small sea of skeletons, armour and weapons.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

That's not very encouraging. Okay, get a grip, Wendell. Let's just find the grail and get out.

WENDELL takes a few nervous paces forward. At the limit of the lantern light is a small, nondescript altar.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Here we go. Thank heavens. This place is spooky.

A ball of green flame rises into the air above the altar and takes on the form of a ghostly arm with a sword.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Oh, boy.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- SEDUCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

CHARMING is holding CYNTHIA on the bed as she struggles to run for the door.

CYNTHIA

You jerk! Let me go!

CHARMING

Why? I thought we had a date?

CYNTHIA

You liar! You made a deal with Esmerelda. You only get to have me if you leave the grail alone.

CHARMING

I'm not touching the grail.

CYNTHIA

Your page is! It's the same thing!

CHARMING

It is not.

CYNTHIA

Is too!

CHARMING

Is n... OW!



CYNTHIA scrapes her nails down CHARMING's chest and wriggles free. She falls to the floor. CHARMING grabs at her, tearing her dress, and CYNTHIA hits him in the groin. CYNTHIA runs to, and hammers on, the door.

CYNTHIA  
Esmerelda! They're after the grail!

CYNTHIA pulls back the bolt but then sees the key is missing.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
Where's the...

CHARMING sits on the bed, recovering. He holds up the key in one hand, then puts it back in his pocket.

CHARMING  
Give it up. The door is four inches thick and the walls are solid stone. She can't hear you.

CYNTHIA  
You rat! Esmerelda was going to make us both great. Now you're taking away the source of her power.

CHARMING  
That's life.

CYNTHIA  
You cheated. You weren't supposed to bring a back-up virgin.

CHARMING  
I guess this means you're not going to sleep with me? Oh, well. I'm getting used to it.

CYNTHIA  
Charming, I swear...

CHARMING  
Swearing won't help. Neither will screaming, hitting, or wishing I was dead. You might as well get comfortable, Cynthia, because there's nothing else you can do.

CYNTHIA glares at him, then starts to cry.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- ESMERELDA'S LAB -- NIGHT

ANN  
Okay. I'm willing to make a bargain with you.

ESMERELDA  
Well, that's a new twist.  
(MORE)

ESMERELDA (CONT'D)

The usual reaction of girls in your position is to cry a lot and beg for mercy. I hate it when they beg. Well, actually, I rather enjoy it, but I still think they shouldn't do it. A girl should have more dignity.

ANN

Oh, yes. Take Cynthia, for example. I can tell dignity is really important to her.

ESMERELDA

However, I'm afraid you are hardly in a position to bargain. Your life is in my hands and you have nothing to bargain with.

ANN

I'm very rich. I can offer you the wealth of a kingdom.

ESMERELDA

Your country is impoverished. You couldn't provide a glass of water in a rainstorm.

ANN

Magical secrets, then. My stepmother is a powerful sorceress who can weave powerful incantations that even you, with all your knowledge, would yearn to master.

ESMERELDA

Queen Ruby has the skill of a good apprentice, nothing more.

ANN

How about season tickets to the jousting matches?

ESMERELDA

Forget it. I never bargain with my victims.

ANN

You bargained with Prince Charming.

ESMERELDA

That was different. Charming is a vicious son of a bitch. He took out Magellan, one of the most powerful wizards in the twenty kingdoms, without a scratch. Why don't you just accept the inevitability of your fate with calm resignation and good graces? Then you can start crying and screaming, too.

ANN  
 (unconvincingly)  
 I'm not going to scream.

ESMERELDA  
 Spoken like a true princess.

ESMERELDA takes up a leather strop and starts to sharpen her knife.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- GRAIL CHAPEL -- NIGHT

WENDELL is in an en-guard position, sword up, gaze steely and ready for anything. The ghostly arm just hangs there. Eventually, WENDELL waves his sword about a bit, trying to get a reaction.

WENDELL  
 Hello? Hey! Virgin with a sword.  
 I've come to take the grail.

Nothing continues to happen.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 The grail. I'm here to steal it.  
 Take it away. You know, remove it  
 from this place to another place.  
 Just the kind of thing you're not  
 supposed to let happen. Are you  
 going to let me get away with that?

Nothing. WENDELL relaxes his pose.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 What's up with you? You could at  
 least put up a fight. The Prince  
 said that you probably wouldn't be  
 any good, since swordfighting was  
 so primitive in the old days, but  
 I expected at least some kind of  
 challenge. Aren't I worth it? Is  
 that it?  
 (re: dead knights)  
 They were worth it, but I'm not?  
 I'm not just some kid, you know.  
 I was trained by Prince Charming!  
 (fed up)  
 Oh, just give me the grail.

WENDELL marches up to the altar and reaches for the grail. The ghostly arm draws back and lunges, like a bird swooping. WENDELL gets his sword up in time but the floating sword's blow knocks him down. WENDELL clammers to his feet as the ghostly arm swings around for another pass.

WENDELL (CONT'D)  
 Well, it may not have great  
 technique, but it sure is strong.

The arm lunges again. WENDELL is staggered but keeps his feet. He runs for the entrance and stands three paces in front of the wall.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

All right. Let's try this again.

The arm lunges. WENDELL deflects the blade, which crashes into the wall with a ring of steel. The arm hovers for a moment, recovering. WENDELL swings a blow at the ghostly arm. His sword passes right through it without effect.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Not good.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- SEDUCTION ROOM -- NIGHT

CHARMING

Hey, look. Come on, let's not have any of that. Stop it. You're going to ruin your makeup. I didn't hurt you, did I? If I did, I'm sorry.

CHARMING steps close enough to reach for her hands. CYNTHIA throws her arms around his neck and sobs.

CYNTHIA

You don't understand. All my life I've been scorned and abused. And now that Esmerelda is offering me the chance to be someone, you're taking it away from me.

CHARMING

Take it easy. It's not like we're going to destroy the grail. If you want to work some magic, I'm sure we can work something out.

CYNTHIA

But Esmerelda...

CHARMING

Forget Esmerelda. She's bad news. Look, I know plenty of magicians who can spell rings around Esmerelda. If you want an apprenticeship, I'll introduce you around. And if you still need a grail, you can have this one on loan.

CYNTHIA

No. Your little princess friend wants the grail to restore her kingdom. You'll give it to her and, once she has it, she'll never let it get away.

CHARMING

Don't be silly. Ann doesn't tell me what to do, and I have no intention of turning over the grail to...

(MORE)

CHARMING (CONT'D)

(realising)

Ann. She's here, isn't she? That was her horse outside the thorn wall. Where is she? What have you done to her?

CHARMING grabs CYNTHIA's shoulders and shakes her. CYNTHIA knees him in the groin. She laughs and holds up the key.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Where's Ann?

CYNTHIA

With Esmerelda. She's dead meat by now, Charming. With the blood of a princess, Esmerelda will have all the power she needs. With or without the grail.

CHARMING lunges at CYNTHIA. She avoids him, holds up the key for him to see, puts it in her mouth and swallows it.

CHARMING

Damn you.

CYNTHIA

Wish your girlfriend Godspeed, Charming.

CHARMING gives the door a calculating look and tries a shoulder charge. CYNTHIA laughs.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

The door is four inches thick, my prince, and the wall is solid rock. We're in here until Esmerelda lets us out.

Rubbing his shoulder, CHARMING limps over to the bed.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I'm glad it worked out this way, Charming. I'm not sure I could have kept up that wanton woman act for much longer.

CHARMING reaches for his discarded sword. With great menace, he draws Endeavour. CYNTHIA's eyes get very wide.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

You wouldn't dare!

CHARMING

I really hate to do this.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- GRAIL CHAPEL -- NIGHT

WENDELL evades the swooping sword and swings at the ghostly arm again. Again his blade passes through, meeting no resistance. WENDELL is getting winded.

WENDELL

Okay. Can't touch the arm. Only the sword. Can't kill the sword. Only the arm. Problem. Think, Wendell. Think. What would Prince Charming do?

WENDELL mistimes his next parry and loses his grip on his own sword. He scrambles for it.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

No! No! Not good. Losing sword not good.  
(realising)  
Losing sword...

The ghostly arm lunges and WENDELL parries but doesn't disengage. He locks the blades together, then throws all his weight on his opponent's blade, forcing the ghost arm to the wall. With the ghostly arm's sword blade trapped between his shoulder and the wall, WENDELL reaches through the ghost hand and grips his enemy's sword hilt. With a great effort, WENDELL pulls and the ancient blade snaps off cleanly at the hilt. The arm vanishes into green mist. WENDELL takes a moment to gather himself.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Well, that wasn't so hard.

WENDELL makes his way to the altar. The grail is a crudely shaped wooden bowl, very old and shallow. Unimpressed, WENDELL picks it up.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

This is it? A piece of wood?

There is a sudden rumbling noise and a sound of rushing water.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Uh-oh.

WENDELL stuffs the grail into his shirt and runs for the exit.

INT. ALACIA CASTLE -- ESMERELDA'S LAB -- NIGHT

ESMERELDA has cut off much of ANN's clothing and now places a bucket on the floor at the end of the table.

ANN

You're going to need another bucket to hold your own blood when Charming cuts your head off.

ESMERELDA

Prince Charming is humping his brains out right now and doesn't want to be disturbed.

ANN

He'll find out eventually and then he'll avenge me. You'd better let me go.

ESMERELDA

I think not. I know what strings to pull to manipulate Charming. After tonight, I will be the most powerful sorceress in the twenty kingdoms.

ANN

Haven't you ever thought of using your skill to benefit people, instead of hurting them?

ESMERELDA

No, never have. Not nearly as much fun. Take a deep breath, dear.

ESMERELDA picks up the knife. ANN clamps her mouth shut, screws her eyes tightly closed and waits for the knife to touch her skin. After a few moments without feeling anything, ANN opens one eye. CHARMING is leaning over her, grinning like a schoolboy. He holds up Endeavour.

CHARMING

Hey, Ann. Did I tell you I finally figured out what this twisty thing in the handle is? It's a lock pick.

ANN

I am very happy to see you.

CHARMING

Ann, what are you doing here? I thought you were back at the castle, celebrating with the happy couple.

ANN

Uh... you don't happen to see a blanket or something lying around, do you? I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm practically naked here.

CHARMING

Oh, I noticed. Here, I'll get Esmerelda's dress off.

ANN

Please don't!

CHARMING

Oh, all right. Here.

CHARMING takes off his shirt and drapes it over ANN. He starts looking through ESMERELDA's pockets.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

You didn't happen to notice what she did with the key to those things, did you?

ANN

I was unconscious. Can't you use that lock-pick thing?

CHARMING

I'm not so good with manacles. Doors are the main obstacle in the slay-and-rescue business. Tell you what. I'll get some tools from Wendell and we'll pound those things off. I'll only be gone a minute. Don't go anywhere.

ANN

Oh, funny.

CHARMING

Just kidding.

CHARMING opens the door and a two-foot high wall of water surges into the room.

ANN

Water? Something must have happened to the grail.

CHARMING

Wendell snatched it. At least we know he got out okay.

CHARMING unfolds the lock pick from Endeavour's hilt and starts working on ANN's wrist manacles.

ANN

Uh-huh. Can you get these things off?

CHARMING

Hmmm? Oh, sure. No problem. Have them off in a jiffy. Not to worry. Relax. Nothing to it... damn.

ANN

Damn? You're not supposed to say damn.

CHARMING

It's no problem, really. See? There's one.

The water is rising rapidly. It sloshes over the table.

ANN

The grail must be really powerful if it's been holding back this

(MORE)



ANN (CONT'D)

much water for all these years.  
Imagine what a benevolent ruler  
could do with that power.

CHARMING

Ann...

ANN

On the other hand, somebody evil,  
like Esmerelda for example, would  
become almost unstoppable with  
access to...

CHARMING

Ann! You're babbling. Relax.  
I've got it covered. There, your  
hands are free. Uh... better stand  
up.

ANN stands on the table, putting on CHARMING's shirt and  
removing the scraps of dress. CHARMING ducks his head  
beneath the water and continues working on the remaining  
manacles. CHARMING comes up for air.

ANN

Charming, I don't think we're going  
to make it. You'd better leave  
me.

CHARMING

Don't be ridiculous. I've nearly  
got the first one, and the last  
one will take no time at all.

CHARMING ducks beneath the surface again. He opens the  
penultimate manacle and comes up for air. There isn't  
much space left between the water level and the ceiling.

ANN

You have to leave me! Save  
yourself!

CHARMING

Almost have it.

CHARMING takes a breath to submerge again.

ANN

Wait! Prince Charming, I have  
something to tell you. Something  
very important. I should have  
told you sooner. I don't know why  
I didn't but I have to tell you  
now.

CHARMING

Oh, for God's sake! You're not  
going to tell me you love me, are  
you?

ANN

Yes! Yes, that's exactly what I was going to say, damn it!

CHARMING

Well, save it!

CHARMING submerges again. ANN takes a last gasp of air as the water rises above her head. CHARMING opens the last manacles and ANN and CHARMING bob to the surface. The water level is almost to the roof.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

Okay. Deep breath. We'll have to swim for it.

ANN

Swim where?

CHARMING

Trust me. I'm Prince Charming. Ready?

ANN nods her head.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

With me. Breathe...

CHARMING and ANN take a deep breath and duck below the surface. CHARMING leads out the door and along the tunnel. They find an air pocket only a few centimeters deep at the top of the tunnel.

ANN

I'm holding you back. I'm going to kill us both.

CHARMING

You know, for an intelligent girl you spout a lot of rubbish.

ANN

You're not telling me you knew this air pocket was here?

CHARMING

Rough hewn tunnel with an uneven ceiling. Bound to be a pocket or two.

ANN

You really are insufferably smug, you know.

CHARMING

Punish me when we get out. Come on.

CHARMING and ANN take another breath and duck beneath the water.

EXT. ALACIA CASTLE -- NIGHT

CHARMING and ANN crawl out of the staircase, which has turned into a spring pouring a stream of water downhill into the nearby moat. WENDELL sits by the fire, cleaning his sword.

WENDELL

You know, sire, for a guy who is always complaining about his love life, you sure have a lot of women stashed around the place. Hi, Ann.

WENDELL takes a blanket from where it has been warming by the fire and passes it to ANN.

ANN

Hello, Wendell. Thank you.

WENDELL

Cynthia stumbled out a few minutes ago. I gave her the other blanket, so you'll have to stay wet. She didn't have any clothes on, either.

ANN

Where is she?

WENDELL

She went off with Bear. He was guarding the entrance while I went inside.

CHARMING

Did you get the grail?

WENDELL

Sure did.

CHARMING

Any trouble?

WENDELL

An arm with a sword. It was no big deal.

CHARMING

It will be by the time the minstrels get through with rewriting the tale. Is that it?

WENDELL

Uh-huh.

CHARMING

A piece of wood?

ANN

It's olive wood. That's a fertility grail, all right.

CHARMING

We should have grabbed the magic mirror. At least that had some resale value.

ANN

This is what we want. Wendell, are the horses tied up outside the thorn hedge?

WENDELL

Except for mine. I brought it through to carry the gear.

ANN

All right. Take the grail and go back to the Briar Rose. We'll be back by daylight.

WENDELL

Have fun.

WENDELL exits. ANN sits in CHARMING's lap.

CHARMING

Well. How about explaining what you were doing...

ANN stops him with a passionate kiss. Once CHARMING gets over his initial surprise, he enjoys it thoroughly.

CHARMING (CONT'D)

I thought you were supposed to be sweet, pure, chaste and innocent?

ANN begins unbuttoning her shirt.

ANN

It's all right, we're going to be married. I'll tell you about it in the morning.

EXT. ILLYRIA -- DAY

WENDELL is fishing. Castle Illyria is visible in the background. CHARMING makes his way through the trees, carrying a stack of books. CHARMING sits beside WENDELL, who doesn't acknowledge him.

CHARMING

How's the fishing?

WENDELL

Fine.

CHARMING

Catch anything?

WENDELL

No.

CHARMING

Look, I guess you're upset, right?

WENDELL

What do you think?

CHARMING

Come on, Wendell. We can't just spend our whole lives running around the countryside seeking adventure. Sooner or later, you've got to settle down and take responsibility.

WENDELL

I'm eleven.

CHARMING

You'll still have adventure, Wendell, I promise.

WENDELL

Do you think I'm worried about me? Do you think that's what I care about?

CHARMING

Well, what then?

WENDELL

I care about you! You were my hero, and the hero of every boy in the twenty kingdoms. You were Prince Charming and you were going to be King Charming and you're letting Aurora's baby take all that away from you.

CHARMING

Wendell, what did you want me to do?

WENDELL

We could go to war!

CHARMING

What?

WENDELL

We'll go south. We'll raise an army. And when we're ready, we'll march on Illyria!

CHARMING

Wendell!

WENDELL

You'll force your father to recognise you as the true prince and heir to the throne. And if he doesn't, we'll take the throne from him. We can do it!

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)

Then you'll be king! I'll fight by your side, sire. I'll never let you down.

CHARMING

Wendell, I'm already a king.

WENDELL

What?

CHARMING

Ann and I were married last night. I'm king of Tyrovia.

WENDELL

Tyrovia? Why?

CHARMING

They need a king, Wendell. The people love Ann but the country has real problems and she can't do it all by herself.

WENDELL

So that's the end of our adventures. You'll be too busy with Ann and the grail.

CHARMING

It really is a fertility grail, Wendell. But, like Mandelbaum said, it's a male thing. It needs a king to work it. Ann and I figure that with hard work we can turn the country around.

WENDELL

But Ann isn't queen of Tryovia. Queen Ruby is.

CHARMING

Ruby is abdicating in favour of Ann. She's going to stay here and study magic with Mandelbaum. Magic is what she really cares about anyway.

WENDELL

So the women planned this whole thing right from the start. I bet Ruby planted that story about wanting to kill Ann just to get you over there.

CHARMING

I don't know, Wendell. Maybe Ruby knew about Aurora and Cynthia all along. Or maybe Ann had her own agenda and was moving things along, making new plans as the situation changed. She's pretty smart.

WENDELL

What are the books for?

CHARMING

Dad's having his ministers give us a crash course in how to rule a country before we go back. Basics of agriculture, finance, diplomacy and military strategy. Illyria will guarantee Tyrovia's borders so we don't have to sink any money into an army for a while. And Dad's happy about getting a buffer state to the north.

WENDELL

Then the king is happy, too. Everybody is getting what they want.

CHARMING

So are you, Wendell.

WENDELL

What do you mean?

CHARMING

Tyrovia is full of trouble, Wendell. Especially with bandits hiding out in the mountains. Plus they have a persistent problem with mandracores.

WENDELL

Oh, come on. Even I can handle a mandracore.

CHARMING

Glad to hear it. Because a king is busy all the time with affairs of state. He can't go running around chasing after bandits and mandracores. He needs a paladin to fight for him.

WENDELL

Oh, sire! You really mean it?

CHARMING

Of course. You'll start your training when you come back to Tyrovia with us, and you'll be knighted when you turn fourteen. And, of course, you'll need a good sword.

CHARMING unbuckles Endeavour and hands it to WENDELL.

WENDELL

Prince Charming! I mean, King Charming! You're giving me Endeavour?

CHARMING

I know you won't dishonour it,  
Wendell.

WENDELL

I don't deserve all this.

CHARMING

Sure you do, kid. Come on, let's  
get out of here. I need to take a  
break from studying this stuff.  
What do you think we should do?

WENDELL

I think we should eat.

CHARMING puts his arm around WENDELL's shoulder and they  
make their way back to the castle.

THE END