

~~21 EXT. FOREST - DAY 21~~

~~Through thicker mist the group journeys. TRYGGVI appears uncertain of the path forward, stopping often and casting about. VIF is wary, spotting silhouettes here and there.~~

~~HROLF staggers. An intense weariness has overcome him and he lurches on his feet. He finally slumps against a tree and, too exhausted to continue, collapses to the ground.~~

~~HROLF
(gasping)
Rest.~~

~~His companions slow and consider him. As his head lolls, he spots something, further in the forest.~~

~~22 EXT. GRAYSCAPE 22~~

~~Swirled in more mist, HROLF sees a silhouette, a WOMAN, who carries a basket on her hip. This WOMAN turns to him and cocks her head curiously.~~

~~Then HROLF'S eyes shut.~~

23 EXT. FOREST - EVENING 23

Chained once again to a tree, RIOGHAIN sits miserably with her crucifix. All the while, he cannot take her eyes from HROLF, where he slumbers a short distance away.

Then VIF appears before her.

With her foot, VIF sweeps away the pine needles to make a place to sit. In one hand, VIF clutches a bundle of short sticks. In the other, a fistful of pebbles. Once she's cleared a space on the ground, she sits and starts to arrange both into a grid - something like a chessboard.

Start

VIF
White or black?

RIOGHAIN
(beat)
White.

VIF
(smirks)
A harder road for you, then.

Next she produces her small carving - a female warrior, a valkyrie, carved from driftwood.

(CONTINUED)

VIF

This is your king. This is your throne.

(beat)

Your king has one aim. To escape to one of these four corners.

RIOGHAIN

Escape?

(beat)

From whom?

VIF holds up a dark pebble.

VIF

From me.

She smiles. After a moment, RIOGHAIN almost does too.

A short distance away, TRYGGVI sits, throwing his stones. At first, he pays them no attention, until he hears VIF laugh. He glances up at them, watches them for a moment, before returning to his stones.

After a moment, VIF speaks.

VIF

You have a husband?

RIOGHAIN

No.

(beat)

Christ and Christ alone have my devotion.

VIF

Nor do I.

(beat)

Have a husband. Save perhaps my shield.

RIOGHAIN

Sworn to another.

(beat)

You said.

She nods towards the king piece.

VIF

My jarl. My king.

(beat)

Always by their side was I. Even in the afterworld.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
When-

She stops for a moment, her hand hovering over a pebble.

VIF
When Hel came, I-
(beat)
You saw me. I froze. I could not
fight. Same as when she came for
Gunnulf and Oddmarr. And Thorunn
and-
(beat)
From fear. From cowardice.

RIOGHAIN
Women are not warriors.

VIF
(smirks)
You must know my mother.
(beat)
It was her only wish. That I should
marry. My name, even, means wife.
(beat)
Why I took up axe and shield, I
suppose.

RIOGHAIN
In defiance?

VIF
Do not allow anyone to decide your
fate.
(beat)
Except me.

VIF moves something on the board.

VIF
Another?

End

~~24 EXT. FOREST - MORNING~~

~~24~~

~~HROLF snaps awake.~~

~~Gray-blue morning has descended once again over the forest.
HROLF takes stock - he seems not to recognize his
surroundings. Then he starts.~~

~~There is a ring of silhouettes around him. Still distant,
still somewhat intangible, but there nonetheless. Perfectly
spaced, perfectly still.~~

(CONTINUED)